



**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**NINA SIMONE IS THE FOCUS OF BISHOP ARTS THEATRE CENTER'S
25TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON OPENER**

The Bishop Arts Theatre Center (BATC), Oak Cliff's multicultural and multidiscipline center for the arts, opens its 25th Anniversary "Silver Stories" season with the regional premiere of playwright Amy Evan's play *The Champion*, running October 11th – 28th. *The Champion* offers a rare look into the heart and mind of Nina Simone, an artist known as much for her indictment of American racism as her artistic brilliance. Based on extensive research including, personal interviews with Simone's bandmates, friends, and family members; *The Champion* is an intimate portrayal of a cultural icon and the turbulent era during which she rose to fame.

The Champion features a cast full of Bishop Arts Theatre Center debuts including Deontay Roaf as singer Nina Simone, Justin White as guitarist Al Schackman, Lorenzo Hunt as bassist Christopher White, and Lawrence Patterson completing the band as percussionist Bobby Armstrong. Additional casting includes Cedisha Pitts as Theresa, a young African-American woman who serves as a waitress for the hungry band mates, Brian Witkowicz as McNeil, a First Sergeant in the North Carolina State Highway Patrol and Nate Frederickson as Frasier McNeil's trainee.

The Champion is directed by Rebecca McDonald with stage management by Katelyn Kocher. The production features set design by Joseph Borunda, costume design by Nathan Scott, with lighting & sound design by Jorge Flores. Teresa Coleman Wash serves as Executive Producer.

Following every performance, Bishop Arts Theatre Center will be hosting a series of "Stay & Say's"; audience discussions on ideas and themes within the production such as mental health, social injustice, and race relations. These post show discussions will last 15 to 20 minutes and will be led local experts, artists, and community leaders guiding the conversation. A complete list of those "Stay & Say" Talk Backs will be released under a separate press release.

ABOUT THE PLAY

It is 1962 in North Carolina on a cold winter night. Nina Simone and her trio have just come off tour and are desperate to get home. When a snowstorm grounds their flight, they wander into a tiny "greasy spoon" run by locals who are dazzled by the presence of four glamorous strangers. When the band suddenly finds themselves accused of a crime they didn't commit, neither local goodwill nor star power will be enough to get them home.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Amy Evans writes about race, gender, and social justice. Her plays include *Achidi J's Final Hours* (Finborough Theatre), *Many Men's Wife* (Tricycle Theatre), *The Next Question* (HB Playwrights Foundation), *The Big Nickel* (Soho Theatre), and most recently *The Champion*. Her political drama *The Most Unsatisfied Town* premiered in April 2016 at English Theatre Berlin International Performing Arts Center. Amy has given

workshops Humboldt University, the Institute of Cultural Inquiry Kulturlabor in Berlin, and is an alumnus of Hedgebrook Women Writers' Residency, BRICLab Performing Arts Residency, 651 Arts' Artist Development Program, and Interstate 73 Playwrights' Group. She holds an MA in Theatre Arts from Goldsmiths College, University of London.

TICKETING INFORMATION

All performances are presented at the Bishop Art Theatre Center located at 215 South Tyler, TX 75208. Show times vary per production, visit www.bishopartstheatre.org to verify dates and times. Ticket prices range from \$12 - \$30. Discount tickets are available for groups of 15 or more and may be purchased by calling (214) 948-0716. Administrative office hours are Monday through Friday 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

ABOUT BISHOP ARTS THEATRE CENTER (BATC)

Nestled in the heart of Dallas' Oak Cliff community, the Bishop Arts Theatre Center is an award-winning, multicultural, multi-discipline theatre company. Founded in 1993, the mission of the organization is to cultivate a diverse and vibrant arts community while creating opportunities for local and emerging artists through performances and education. The BATC offers a full season of theatre performances, jazz concerts, a speaker series and year-round arts education programs.

The Champion is made possible by the generous support of the Embrey Family Foundation.

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