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Center REPeritory Company Presents

Ain't Misbehavin':
The Fats Waller Musical Show

Music by Thomas "Fats" Waller

Based on an idea by Murray Horwitz & Richard Maltby, Jr.

Directed and Choreographed by Robert Barry Fleming

Musical Direction by Thaddeus Pinkston

Press Night is Tuesday, September 9th at 7:30 pm

Walnut Creek, CA, July 13th, 2008—Center REPeritory Company presents *Ain't Misbehavin': The Fats Waller Musical Show* from September 4th through October 11th, 2008. Directed and Choreographed by Robert Barry Fleming, *Ain't Misbehavin'* is the first production of Center REP's 42nd subscription season. Press Night is Tuesday, September 9th at 7:30pm. *Ain't Misbehavin'* is made possible by the generous support of the Contra Costa Times, Chevron, and The Diablo Regional Arts Association.

Ain't Misbehavin' is a swinging, rollicking, and finger-snapping tribute to the African-American musicians of the 1920s and '30s who were part of the Harlem Renaissance: an era of growing creativity, cultural awareness, and ethnic pride. Five performers present an evening of rowdy and humorous songs that captures composer Thomas "Fats" Waller's view of life as a journey meant for pleasure and play. The musical captures the spirit and joyousness of the Renaissance music and showcases classic Waller tunes like "Honeysuckle Rose", "Black and Blue" and, of course, the title song, "Ain't Misbehavin'".

Many consider *Ain't Misbehavin'* to be the grandfather of "jukebox" musicals, the popular form that synergizes a composer or performer's lifetime contributions into an evening of dance and music. The mega hits *Mamma Mia!* (ABBA), *Jersey Boys* (The Four Seasons), and *Smokey Joe's Cafe* (Lieber and Stoller) all owe a creative debt to this multi-Tony award winner (Best Musical, Best Director, and Best Supporting Actress for the immortal Nell Carter). The original Broadway run lasted for an incredible 1,604 performances.

The show brings to life the world that Thomas "Fats" Waller lived in and presided over as musical royalty. It moves from Harlem's streets to its nightclub stages, and from the worlds of Harlem's poor and working class to Manhattan's white, moneyed elite.

Waller's history reflects the origins of the Harlem Renaissance. His family left Virginia in the 1880s to settle in Manhattan. They were like many African Americans who migrated to urban centers in the North and Midwest to escape the social and economic injustices of the Jim Crow laws that were enacted in the South after the Civil War.

Waller studied classical piano as a young boy, but his most influential teacher was Harlem jazz pianist James P. Johnson, who helped the teen-age Waller secure gigs at “rent” parties (parties at which apartment dwellers charged guests money to listen to music to help pay for rent). Johnson also helped Waller win his first recording contract in 1922 when he was just 18.

Waller continued to perform in Harlem through the '20s and made his Carnegie Hall debut in 1928. His piano gifts dazzled the rich, the famous, and the infamous. He was so popular that one evening in Chicago in 1926, he was kidnapped by four henchmen and driven to the Hawthorne Inn, owned by infamous gangster Al Capone. He found out he was the "surprise entertainment" for Capone's birthday party! Waller enjoyed the gig so much he stayed for three days and raked in thousands of dollars.

The Harlem Renaissance nurtured an awareness and appreciation of black culture that spread out into mainstream arts and politics, eventually giving rise to new musical forms like rock 'n' roll and the values of the Civil Rights movement.

Waller's music lives on in this foot-stomping and toe-tapping revue at CenterREP, which Artistic Director Michael Butler says is “wonderfully high octane!” Just like “Fats” Waller himself.

The cast is as follows: **Anika Bobb***, **Clinton Derricks-Carroll***, **Tareek Lee Holmes***, **Marcie Henderson***, **Anise Ritchie***.

The production team features **Eric Sinkkonen** (*Scenic Design*), **Cassandra Carpenter** (*Costume Design*), **Kurt Landisman** (*Light Design*), **Jeff Mockus** (*Sound Design*) and **Briana Fahey*** (*Stage Manager*).

*appears courtesy of Actor's Equity Association.

Center REPeritory Company, the resident professional theatre company of the **Lesher Center for the Arts (LCA)**, will be celebrating its 42nd Subscription Season of high-quality theatrical productions during 2008-09. **Center REPeritory Company's mission is to celebrate the power of the human imagination by producing emotionally engaging, intellectually involving, and visually astonishing live theatre and, through our outreach and education programs, to enrich and advance the cultural life of the communities we serve.**

TICKETS: For more information go to CenterREP.org or call 925.943.7469. You can also visit the LCA Ticket Office at 1601 Civic Drive or the Ticket Office Outlet at Barnes & Noble in Walnut Creek.

FREE AT THE CENTER!

Teacher's Night Out. Center REP hosts area teachers from elementary schools, middle schools, high schools and colleges for a pre-show gathering with cookies and coffee. This is a great way to honor teachers while providing them with the tools to broaden their students' understanding of live theatre. Call 925.295.1420 and press 1 for more information or to reserve a ticket.

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