A REIMAGINED BLACK NATIVITY NOW PLAYING
ON THE KARAMU HOUSE MAIN STAGE

A reimagined and contemporary version of Black Nativity comes to life on Karamu’s Cleveland Foundation Jelliffe Theatre stage through December 29, 2019

(Cleveland, Ohio)—A reimagined and contemporary version of Langston Hughes’ famed retelling of the Nativity story is now playing on the Cleveland Foundation Jelliffe Theatre stage, through December 29, 2019. This year’s production of this Karamu classic, now set in 2019, features new musical arrangements and captivating, contemporary choreography. Director, Tony F. Sias, leads a talented cast of vocalists who bring this joyful, soulful and vibrant gospel musical to life, under the masterful musicianship of Dr. David M. Thomas, Music Director and brilliant choreography of Kevin Marr II.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR
TONY F. SIAS is the President and CEO of Karamu House, Inc., America’s oldest African American producing theatre. Under the direction and leadership of Sias since 2015, Karamu has been widely accredited for producing professional theatre, arts education, and programming for all communities while honoring the African American experience. Prior to his tenure at Karamu, Sias served in several progressive roles for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) including Director of Arts Education and Artistic Director of Cleveland School of the Arts. As a creative, Sias has produced, performed in, and directed more than 100 productions. Additionally, Sias has received the Ohio House of Representatives Tribute for Excellent Leadership in CMSD’s All-City Arts Program and the Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition for Contributions in Education and Cultural Arts. His work has been highlighted nationally in The New York Times, American Theatre Magazine, and on NBC’s Today, among others. Sias served as a delegate from the U.S. Department of State in Istanbul, Turkey, representing the Council of International Programs in the Youth Arts for Peace Project.

In 2018, Sias was inducted into The HistoryMakers, the largest African American oral history archive collection in the U.S. In 2019, Sias was named the Cleveland Arts Prize Barbara S. Robinson award winner, was selected as a fellow in the National Arts Strategies Chief Executive Program in partnership with Harvard Business School and continues his service as a National Board member for the League of Historic American Theaters. Sias earned a Bachelor of Science degree in dramatic art from Jackson State University in Jackson, Mississippi and a Master of Fine Arts in acting from The Ohio University in Athens, Ohio.
Karamu House Event Fact Sheet

EVENT:  
Black Nativity

DATES/TIMES:  
Thursday, December 5 through Sunday, December 29, 2019
Performances on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays are at 7:30 pm
Performances on Sundays are at 3:00 pm
Select Thursday (11 AM) and Saturday (2 PM) matinees

VENUE:  
Karamu House Cleveland Foundation Jelliffe Theatre
2355 East 89th Street Cleveland, OH 44106

CAST:  
The Narrator-Prophet D. Seay  
Joseph-Rashawn Kadeem  
Dancer-Duave Hairston  
Vocal Ensemble-A. Harris Brown  
Vocal Ensemble-Bonita Jenkins  
Vocal Ensemble-Damon Johnson  
Vocal Ensemble-Delisa Medlea  
Vocal Ensemble-Renata Napier  
Vocal Ensemble-Lillian “Oni” Toon  
Mary-Kailyn Mack  
Dancer-Jameelah Rahman  
Vocal Ensemble-Coley Banks III  
Vocal Ensemble-Darelle Hill  
Vocal Ensemble-Christina Johnson  
Vocal Ensemble-Joshua McElroy  
Vocal Ensemble-Mary Francis R. Miller  
Vocal Ensemble-Susan Perry  
Vocal Ensemble-Clairissa Walker  
Vocal Ensemble-Kodee Williams

CREATIVES:  
Director + Executive Producer-Tony F. Sias
Music Arrangement & Musical Director-Dr. David M. Thomas
Choreographer-Kevin Marr II
Production Stage Manager-Tyree Franklin
Scenic & Multimedia Designer-T. Paul Lowry
Costume Design-Inda Blatch-Geib
Lighting Design-Colleen Albrecht
Sound Design-Richard Ingraham
Props Master-Dred Geib
Interim Technical Director-Prophet D. Seay
Sound Engineer-Ben Takitch
Wardrobe Coordinator-Brielle McGrew
Assistant Stage Manager-Alexandra Jacobs & Kitty (Wanqui) Wen
Director of Production-Vonetta Flowers

SUMMARY:  
Set in 2019, Black Nativity is a Karamu classic—reimagined. Langston Hughes’ famed retelling of the Nativity story, now performed with new gospel musical arrangements.

RUNNING TIME:  
1 hour 45 minutes, with a 15-minute intermission

TICKET INFO:  
Tickets range from $25 to $45. Call 216.795.7077 or visit www.karamuhouse.org
About Karamu House
Recognized as the oldest African American performing arts institute in the nation, Karamu House is listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places and featured in the Smithsonian’s African-American Museum. Legendary artists including Langston Hughes, Ruby Dee, Robert Guillaume, Ron O’Neal, Bill Cobbs, James Pickens, Jr., Vanessa Bell Calloway and Imani Hakim have been associated with the 104-year old “place of joyful gathering” (the meaning of “Karamu” in Swahili.)

In 1915, Oberlin College graduates Russell and Rowena Jelliffe opened the Playhouse Settlement in an area called Cleveland’s “Roaring Third.” The Jelliffes wanted to build an environment where people of different races, religions, and socio-economic backgrounds could come together to share common ventures through the arts. Karamu was established as a gathering place for racially diverse members of the surrounding community at that time. Today, Karamu is a beating heart for the entire community, regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identification, or age. Core programs include socially relevant and professional quality theatre; arts education programming for all ages; and community programming, such as comedy, live jazz, and spoken word performances, that invites participation and engagement, reflection, and a re-commitment to cultural values.

For more information, visit www.karamuhouse.org.