

**For Immediate Release**

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***AFROSOLO ARTS FESTIVAL 14***  
**CELEBRATES AFRICAN AMERICAN ARTISTS**  
**AUGUST 4 – AUGUST 26, 2007 - SAN FRANCISCO, CA**

AfroSolo Theatre Company launches the fourteenth annual **AfroSolo Arts Festival**, celebrating African American artists giving voice to the Black experience, at three venues in San Francisco, CA; starting on Saturday, August 4th and ending with a grand concert featuring opera soprano Hope Brigg and jazz vocalist Paula West on Sunday, August 26, 2007.

Founded in 1993, AfroSolo Theatre Company nurtures, promotes, and presents the experiences of African Americans and those from the African Diaspora through solo performances, and the visual and literary arts. Through these arts, people of all ethnicities are brought together to explore and share the human spirit that binds us all.

AfroSolo has presented celebrity guests, such as the award-winning Broadway actor Ruby Dee; political humorist and activist Dick Gregory; blues and jazz legend Charles Brown; beloved poet, writer, and teacher June Jordan; Hall of Fame Member Mavis Staples; and gospel artist Emmit Powell. In addition, the AfroSolo Festival has presented the works of over 115 emerging solo artists. For more information, contact AfroSolo at: 415/771-AFRO (2376) or visit: [www.afrosolo.org](http://www.afrosolo.org).

## SCHEDULE FOR AFROSOLO ARTS FESTIVAL 14

### **I. Free Outdoor Jazz Concert in Yerba Buena Gardens**

**When:** Saturday, August 4, 1 – 3 p.m.

**Where:** Yerba Buena Gardens, Mission Street between 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Streets

**Admission:** Free

In collaboration with Yerba Buena Gardens Festival, AfroSolo presents its seventh free jazz concert. This year's concert celebrates the piano. Piano, solo and ensemble, has helped shape jazz since its inception, reflecting many jazz forms with a number of influential artists from Scott Joplin, Jelly Roll Morton and Oscar Peterson to Thelonius Monk, Herbie Hancock and McCoy Tyner. This year's concert in Yerba Buena Gardens presents two diverse takes on jazz piano and one gospel pianist with the talented artists Kito Gamble, Kevan Peabody and Muziki Robertson. Bring a lunch and blanket and enjoy a wonderful afternoon of jazz.

**Featuring:** The Kito Gamble Trio, Kevan Peabody, The Muziki Robertson Quartet

**Kito Gamble** is a multi-talented pianist, rapper, composer, producer and singer. Her father, the late Jim Gamble, began giving her piano lessons at the tender age of 3. He and her mother, legendary vocalist Faye Carol, provided a rich musical environment for her to develop her craft. Kito began to make guest appearances to standing room only crowds when she was 10 years old, but her music career officially began at the age of 16, when she gained international recognition primarily in blues & jazz. In addition to performing with Faye Carol and her own group, Kito has also shared the stage with Albert King, Pharaoh Sanders, Billy Higgins and Bobby Hutcherson, as well as Bradford Marsalis and Roy Hargrove.

Kito will be joined by Eugene Warren on bass and Darrell Green on drums.

**Kevan Peabody**, pianist, presents a blend of traditional and contemporary music, that has universal appeal to both church and concert audiences. He has devoted his life to the study of gospel music and sharing this knowledge. As a producer, songwriter and arranger, he has worked with: Dr. Edwin and Bishop Walter Hawkins' Music and Arts Love Fellowship, Bobby Jones Gospel, the late Rev. James Cleveland, Wanda Nero Butler, Northern California G.M.W.A and Emmit Powell and the Gospel Elites.

**Muziki Robertson** is a gifted jazz pianist and composer who for the last two decades has thrived in some of the most challenging and creative environments of the Bay Area jazz scene. He was the keyboardist for the jazz/funk/Latin poetry group, Mingus Amungus. For 12 years, Robertson also was keyboard player and award winning composer for the San Francisco Mime Troupe. In addition, he has also performed with jazz violinist Michael White, which included a trip to Lagos, Nigeria where he played with Stevie Wonder and members of the Osibisa band.

Joining him on saxophone is Dave Ellis. Aaron Germain will play bass and Babatunde Lea will join them on drums.

**II. Visual Arts Program: OVER THE HILLS AND THROUGH THE WOODS:**

A *Salon* with a panel discussion featuring Karen Carraway-Seneferu (Conceptual Art), Keina Davis-Elwick (Painter), Malik Seneferu, Nena St. Louis (Sculptor), Justice Renaissance (Wood Carver) and writer Carol Marie Daniels, moderated by Thomas Robert Simpson . It will also include a slide presentation.

**When:** Saturday, August 11, 2007 2 pm -4 pm

**Where:** African American Art & Culture Complex, 762 Fulton, San Francisco

**Admission:** Free

This Salon will be in concert with the release of Part 1 of AfroSolo's Visual Arts Programming history by Ms. Daniels. Our first visual arts exhibit took place in 1999. Since that time we have presented over fifty artists that included painters, sculptors, photographers, conceptual artists, multimedia as well as site specific works. The first review includes the works of the artists on the panel.

**III. UNITED IN HEALTH 2: Artist, Healthcare and Community**

**When:** Saturday, August 18, 2007, 10:30 am – 4 pm

**Where:** African American Art & Culture Complex, 762 Fulton, San Francisco

**Admission:** Free (Will include Community Forums, health screening, information tables, demonstrations, food and prizes)

In collaboration with Supervisor Ross Mirkamimi and MoMagic, AfroSolo will host a Health Fair and Town Hall Meeting. The objectives of the event are:

- ◆ Increase health awareness by providing health screenings, information and demonstrations
- ◆ Motivate participants to make positive health behavior changes
- ◆ Promote self-care practices
- ◆ Increase awareness of local health services and resources
- ◆ Provide access and interaction with health and medical professionals

**Healthcare Community Forums:**

**A. Building A Safer and Healthier Community**

The focus will be on violence cessation and support programs.

**B. Women's Health Matters:** Presented in collaboration with UCSF National Center of Excellence in Women's Health, the focus will be on breast cancer, fibroids, HPV vaccine, and urinary concerns. Panelists TBA.

**IV. BLACK VOICES SERIES**

AfroSolo presents five of the Bay Area's most exciting solo artists. This year we will feature: Wayne Harris, Uchechi Kalu, Javier Reyes, Nena St. Louis, and Thomas Robert Simpson.

**When:** Thursday, August 23 through Saturday, August 25, 8 p.m

**Where:** Buriel Clay Theatre, African American Art & Culture Complex, 762 Fulton, San Francisco

**Tickets:** **Thursday** (free- must make reservation) **Friday** (pay what you can), **Saturday**, Gala Performance, \$25 (visit [www.afrosolo.org](http://www.afrosolo.org) for reservations)

**Wayne Harris – *May Day Parade***

Wayne offers his love of parades and marching bands in a beautiful snap shot of a time in the early 60s that explores family, culture and community values.

Mr. Harris may be the only solo performer/actor/writer in the country who holds the distinction of beginning his performing career as a horn player in a drum and bugle corps. He remained committed to this avocation throughout his teen years and then turned it into a career as a young adult, teaching and directing drum corps and color guards around Canada and the United States. He is currently the director of the six- time world champion San Jose Raiders Bugle Corps.

**Uchechi Kalu** - *Readings From My Life*

Ms. Kalu is a Nigerian-born poet, performer, teacher and survivor of life. She has conducted writing workshops at universities, prisons, high schools and after school programs and with the San Francisco WritersCorps program. She spent four years with the late June Jordan's Poetry for the People program, teaching at Berkeley High School, the Federal Correctional Institute at Dublin, and at UC Berkeley.

**Javier Reyes** - *SCAM FRANCISCO*

Mr. Reyes takes the audience on an urban safari of San Francisco, emphasizing places that are not on the official tourist map or web site. This piece explores San Francisco's glorious history of flourishing Black and Brown communities. He takes the traveler down memory lane surveying the new desolate landscape.

Javier is an actor, writer, producer and founder and artistic director of Colored Ink Theatre Company. He is a veteran AfroSolo performer who uses theater for its healing, educational and cathartic values. He is a community activist for progressive causes. He also assist youth at San Francisco's Juvenile Justice Center better understand their lives, circumstances and routes to healing through the arts.

**Nena St. Louis**- *Jill: Anatomy of Suicide*

Armed with brain diagrams, star charts, orangutan dissections and dreams of supernovas, an artist struggles to defy a psychotic, suicidal voice in this one-act play about bipolar disorder. Afro Solo veteran Nena St. Louis combines multiple-character work with autobiographical nano-videos in her one-woman play, collaborating with director Rebecca Longworth on the multimedia design. Through larger-than-life characters, imagery from the corporeal to the cosmological and multimedia storytelling, St. Louis achieves a happy ending for her protagonist, leaving her communing with the stars.

**Thomas Robert Simpson** – *There is no Hatred Here*

*There Is No Hatred Here*, a provocative exploration of the Civil Rights movement through the evolution of a young man becoming a Black Militant, and his transformation into an Angel of Love.

Mr. Simpson is founder and artistic director of AfroSolo. He is an award winning actor, director, producer, and writer. Since 1991 he has concentrated on writing and presenting solo works that explore issues related to being Black in the United States. He has received numerous awards for his work as an artist, community activist and public service, including a Bay Area Jefferson Award for Public Service in 2006.

**V. Eyes on the Sparrows: Hope Briggs, Opera Soprano and Paula West, Jazz Vocalist In Concert**

**When:** Sunday, August 26, 3 p.m.

**Where:** Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Theatre

**Admission:** \$20 - \$30 (visit [www.afrosolo.org](http://www.afrosolo.org) to purchase tickets)

AfroSolo in collaboration with YBCA is proud to present two of the Bay Area's leading vocalists presenting two very different styles of music: classical and jazz. Presenting these artists continues our tradition of showcasing the diverse talent within our community. Ms. Briggs will present a concert of Black Spirituals. Ms. West and her trio will present a concert focused on her interpretation of American standards.

**Hope Briggs**

Soprano, a native of Jersey City, New Jersey and is well known for her dramatic portrayals and her distinctive soprano voice. In 2004 she made her impressive San Francisco Opera debut as the **Duchess of Parma** in Busoni's *Doktor Faust.*, for which *Opera News* stated,

“In her company debut, as the Duchess, soprano Hope Briggs was stellar, delivering one of the evening's highlights with her lusciously intoned, lovelorn aria.” Other operatic roles have included **The First Lady** in *Die Zauberflöte* at Frankfurt Opera, the **Countess** in *Le nozze di Figaro* and **Micäela** in *Carmen* at Opera Company of Brooklyn, **Donna Elvira** in *Donna Giovannand* **The First Lady** in *Die Zauberflöte* at Opera San Jose, the title role of **Suor Angelica** at Pacific Repertory Opera, **Leonora** in *Il Trovatore* and **Donna Anna** in *Don Giovanni* at Operesque Classical Concerts, and **Strawberry Woman** in Houston Grand Opera's National Tour of *Porgy and Bess*. She created the role of **Paula** in the world premiere of Hector Armienta's *River of Women*.

On the concert stage Ms. Briggs has performed Verdi's *Requiem*, Mozart's *Coronation Mass* and *Requiem* Vivaldi's *Gloria*, Villa-Lobos' *Bachianas Brasileiras*, and Rachmaninoff's *Vocalise* and Lailstork's *I Will Lift Up Mine Eyes*. She has been the featured soloist in San Francisco Symphony's *The Wondrous Sounds of Christmas*; the World Premiere of Marion J. Caffey's *Three Mo' Divas* and the *Rev. Billy Graham Crusade*. She was presented in recital by African-Americans for Los Angeles Opera and has had the honor of performing for Ms. Jessye Norman at the presentation of the *Trophée des Arts* by the Alliance Francais. Ms. Briggs has received numerous awards and also has an extensive solo recital career.

**Paula West**

Ms. West is an extraordinary jazz and cabaret singer known for her rich, powerful contralto voice and for her sensitive interpretations of well-known standards. Paula has a distinctive sound; her voice is a dark, rich, powerful contralto that seems to wrap itself around a song and slide inside all the crevices. Her performances are filled with good tunes sung with style, invention and wit. She has captured the hearts of critics and audiences alike from San Francisco to New York to Europe. Her ten week runs at the Plush Room are a marvel. San Francisco Chronicle's Steven Winn says, "It is doubtful that anyone is singing better than Paula West these days, this extraordinary singer wear each song like perfectly fitted silk."

Funding for the AfroSolo Theatre Company is made possible in part through the support of African American Art & Culture Complex, California Pacific Medical Center, Friends of AfroSolo, LEF Foundation, San Francisco Foundation, San Francisco Grants for the Arts/Hotel Tax Fund, The National Endowment for the Arts, WESTAF and Yerba Buena Gardens Festival.

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Saturday, August 4, 1 pm -3 pm

Featuring: The Kito Gamble Trio, Kevan Peabody and Muziki Robertson

Where: Yerba Buena Gardens, Mission Street @ 3<sup>rd</sup> Street

Free

**Visual Arts Salon**

Saturday, August 11, 2 pm – 4 pm

Release party for Part 1 of AfroSolo's Visual Arts History by writer Carol Marie Daniels.

This event will include a panel discussion with artists showcased in the history and a reception.

Where: African American Art & Culture Complex (AAACC) free parking lot, 762 Fulton Street, SF

Free

**Community Health Fair**

Saturday, August 18<sup>th</sup>, 10:30 am – 4 pm

United in Health: Artists, Healthcare Workers and Community

Panel discussions, medical screenings, information tables, food and prizes

Where: AAACC  
Free

**Black Voices Series**

Thursday, August 23<sup>rd</sup> – Saturday, August 25<sup>th</sup>, 8 pm

Featuring: Wayne Harris, Uchechi Kalu, Javier Reyes, Nena St. Louis, Thomas Robert Simpson.

Where: AAACC.

Admission: Free on Thursday, pay what you can Friday, Festival Gala, Saturday, \$25

**Eyes on the Sparrows Concert**

Sunday, August 26, 3 pm

Featuring: Soprano, Hope Briggs, Jazz Vocalist Paula West and Angela Dean-Baham

Where: Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Theater, 701 Howard Street @ 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, SF

Admission: \$20 - \$30

Visit [www.afrosolo.org](http://www.afrosolo.org) or call 415/771-2376 for more information.

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