



American Repertory Theater

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For Immediate Release: Friday, January 15, 2021

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**AMERICAN REPERTORY THEATER JOINS COMPANY ONE THEATRE
TO PRESENT DIGITAL VERSION OF
“HYPE MAN: A BREAK BEAT PLAY” BY IDRIS GOODWIN
SPRING 2021**

The Loop Lab to Film Reimagining of Company One’s Acclaimed 2018 Production

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Cambridge, MA—American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.) at Harvard University announces today that it will join **Company One Theatre (C1)** to present a reimagined digital version of C1’s critically acclaimed, Elliot Norton Award-winning production of ***Hype Man: a break beat play*** by Idris Goodwin. The story of friendship, hip-hop, and protest will be filmed this winter by **The Loop Lab**.

The production will stream as part of A.R.T.’s **Virtually OBERON** series in Spring 2021. Tickets will go on sale in February at AmericanRepertoryTheater.org/HypeMan.

The new intimate and cinematic version of the world-premiere production directed by Shawn LaCount will be film-directed by John ADEkoje (2006 Roxbury Film Festival Award for Emerging local Filmmaker) and incorporate animation by Barrington S. Edwards.

Original cast members Kadahj Bennett, Rachel Cognata, and Michael Knowlton will reprise their roles.

Returning original creative team members include Kadahj Bennet (Music Direction), Lawrence E. Moten III (Scenic Design), Lee Schuna (Sound Design), and Cassandra Cacoq (Costume Design). Sean Pieroth (Lighting Design) joins the team. Misha Shields was choreographer and Jessie Baxter was the dramaturg for the 2018 production, respectively.

About *Hype Man: a break beat play*

Frontman Pinnacle and his hype man Verb have been making Hip-Hop together since they were kids. Now that they've got top-notch beatmaker Peep One in the mix, the group is finally on the verge of making it big—until the police shooting of an unarmed black teenager shakes the trio to its core, and forces them to navigate issues of friendship, race, and privilege. From break beat poet and playwright Idris Goodwin (*How We Got On*), this reimagined version of **Hype Man** filmed up close and personal asks us: who has the responsibility to speak up in the face of social injustice?

Hype Man was developed by Goodwin (*How We Got On*) with C1 through a series of workshops beginning in 2017. Following its January/February 2018 world premiere in Boston, the C1 production transferred to Minneapolis's Mixed Blood Theater for a run in November/December 2018. It was briefly remounted at OBERON in November 2019. This reimagined presentation of **Hype Man** marks the sixth collaboration between C1 and A.R.T., which also includes productions of **Greater Good**, **Miss You Like Hell**, and **We're Gonna Die**.

Hype for Hype Man: a break beat play

ELLIOT NORTON AWARDS - Outstanding Production, Small Theater & Outstanding New Script

"SUPERB. Goodwin's play offers music as the lens through which to view our differences without tearing each other apart."

- *The Boston Globe*

"★★★★★... Hype Man is theater at its urgent, vital best. See it and see it again."

- *DigBoston*

"Riveting... The whole show crackles with energy... Something HYPE MAN gets right, where other overtly politically minded plays often go wrong, is that its action is rooted in the engrossing relationships among its three characters."

- WBUR's The ARTery

"Sharply directed. Incredibly well-acted. Absolutely of-the-moment."

- WGBH Executive Arts Editor Jared Bowen

"Idris Goodwin is an unstoppable playwriting force."

- *Bay State Banner*

Company One Theatre is producing HYPE MAN to AMPLIFY:

- Accountability and a commitment to continuously challenge the notion of white allyship
- Advocacy for female artists of color in male-dominated industries
- ARTivism and the responsibility of artists to respond to calls to action through their creative platforms
- Partnership between arts organizations to create mentoring and leadership opportunities for youth
- Black Lives Matter as a movement that is and will continue to grow, protest, and fight

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Idris Goodwin (Playwright)

Idris Goodwin is an award winning break-beat poet, playwright and director of The Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center at Colorado College. In addition to the recently released poetry collection *Can I Kick It?*, he's had several publications from Haymarket Books including *Inauguration* co written with nico wilkinson, *Human Highlight: Ode To Dominique Wilkins*, and the play *This Is Modern Art* co-written with Kevin Coval.

He's appeared on HBO Def Poetry, Sesame Street, NPR, BBC Radio, and the Discovery Channel. His plays include *And In This Corner Cassius Clay*, *How We Got On*, *Hype Man* and *This is Modern Art*. Idris is the co-host *The Same Old New School* Podcast on Vocolo Radio.

Shawn LaCount (Director)

Shawn LaCount is a proud co-founder of Company One Theatre. Recent directorial credits include the regional premieres of Jackie Sibblies Drury's *Really*; Young Jean Lee's *We're Gonna Die* (American Repertory Theater/Company One Theatre); A. Rey Pamatmat's *Edith Can Shoot Things and Hit Them* (Elliot Norton Award Nominee for Outstanding Director and Outstanding Production); Annie Baker's *The Flick* (Elliot Norton Award, Outstanding Production); the world premiere of Kirsten Greenidge's *Splendor* (IRNE Award nominee, Best New Play); the Boston premieres of *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* by Rajiv Joseph; *The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity* by Kristoffer Diaz (Elliot Norton Award for Outstanding Director and Outstanding Production); Annie Baker's *The Aliens* (Elliot Norton Award for Outstanding Director and Outstanding Production); the world premiere of *Grimm* (IRNE Award nominee for Best New Play); the Boston premiere of *The Overwhelming* by JT Rogers (Elliot Norton Award Nominee, Outstanding Production); the Boston premiere of Haruki Murakami's *After the Quake* (Elliot Norton Award Nominee, Outstanding Production); Stephen Sondheim's *Assassins* (IRNE nomination for Best Director and Best Musical); and the Boston premiere of Noah Haidle's *Mr. Marmalade* (Elliot Norton Award Nominee, Outstanding Director/Outstanding Drama). LaCount holds an MA Ed. in theatre Education from Clark University and an MFA in Directing from The University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He has taught at Emerson College, Boston Arts Academy, Huntington Theatre Company, Tufts University, Stage One, and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

John Oluwole ADEkoje (Film Director)

John Oluwole ADEkoje is a national award winner of The Kennedy Center's ACTF Lorraine Hansberry Playwriting Award for the play *Street Hawker*. He received The Roxbury International Film Festival's Emerging Local Filmmaker award for the documentary *Street Soldiers*, which also showed at the Pan African Film Festival in Cannes, France; The World Film Festival-Montreal; and the BronzeLens Film Festival in Atlanta. He was awarded the Emerging Filmmaker Award for *Knockaround Kids*, his first narrative feature, at the Roxbury International Film Festival which all showed at the Urbanworld Film festival in NY. *Knockaround Kids* can be found on Tubi, Amazon prime, Google Play, Apple and other film platforms. He recently served as cinematographer for the film *Memoirs of a Black Girl*, which is being shown at film festivals around the world. ADEkoje was the winner of the National Tri Annual New Play Competition for Professional Writers, received the Brother Thomas Fellowship Award, and is a Playwriting Fellow at the Huntington Theatre Company. He teaches film production and theatre at Boston Arts Academy.

Kadahj Bennett (Verb, Music Director)

Kadahj Bennett's past C1 credits include *Leftovers*, *peerless*, *The T Party*, *An Octoroon*, *Dry Land*, *How We Got On*, as well as music direction for *Vietgone*. Other recent acting credits include *Watertown* *Historical Moving Plays: The Charles W. Lenox Experience* (New Rep) *Pass Over* (SpeakEasy Stage & Front Porch Arts Collective; Elliot Norton Award for Outstanding Actor), *Dream Boston*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (Huntington Theatre), *This Place / Displaced* (Artists' Theater of Boston), *Akeelah and the Bee* (Wheelock Family Theatre) and a feature in *The Halls* web series (Beyond Measure Productions). A Hamilton College and Boston Arts Academy grad, he is Luminary Artist for the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, working on a collection inspired by Boston's gentrification boom. Bennett is also a freelance beat maker, sound designer, audio engineer, and graduate/facilitator from ZUMIX inc, as well as the frontman of two bands: The Downbeat Keys (pop, Brooklyn) and Dancelujah (Hip-Hop/funk, Boston), opening for such acts as Talib Kweli, BADBADNOTGOOD and Jon Bon Jovi.

Rachel Cognata (Peep One)

Rachel Cognata previously appeared at the A.R.T. in *Gloria: A Life* and *Greater Good*, a collaboration with Company One Theatre. She previously appeared in *Really* at Company One Theatre, *Cardboard Piano* at New Repertory Theatre, and *The Book Club Play* at Boston Playwrights' Theatre. She is a graduate of Boston Arts Academy and Tufts University.

Michael Knowlton (Pinnacle)

Michael Knowlton's past C1 credits include *Splendor* and *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*. Other recent credits *Come Back Little Sheba* and *Our Town* (Huntington Theatre Company); *Distant Neighbors* (Fresh Ink); *Coriolanus* (Commonwealth Shakespeare); *References to Salvador Dali Make Me Hot* (Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theatre); and *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* (Wax Wings). Knowlton currently resides and grew up in Boston and was a regular cast member of Boston's Shear Madness from 2015 until 2020.

ABOUT THE LOOP LAB

The Loop Lab is a BIPOC-led nonprofit social enterprise specializing in media arts internships and digital storytelling whose mission is to empower Womxn and People of Color in the media arts to develop careers in audio/video through job training and job placement. As an multi-racial organization, they are committed to ending inequality and racism through digital storytelling.

ABOUT COMPANY ONE THEATRE

Company One Theatre builds community at the intersection of art and social change. Founded in 1998, Company One has situated itself as a home for social justice and artistic excellence by connecting Boston's diverse communities through live performance, the development of new plays and playwrights, arts education, and public engagement programming. By establishing a dedicated space for marginalized and alternative narratives to thrive and working with partners and collaborators across the city, Company One has become a local leader in the ongoing conversations that continue to define the era of social change in contemporary America.

Company One Theatre's work falls into four main areas: Productions, Education, New Play Development, and Engagement. Over its 20 year history Company One has produced over 80 productions, employed over 1500 local artists, and have been awarded over 30 Boston theatre awards. We have served over 100,000 audience members and 15,000 students.

"To attend one of their performances is often to feel yourself immersed in exuberance, with waves of energy pouring from the stage, usually reciprocated by an avidly enthusiastic audience that is far younger and more diverse than the Boston theater norm." — *The Boston Globe*

ABOUT THE AMERICAN REPERTORY THEATER

American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.) at Harvard University is a leading force in the American theater, producing groundbreaking work that is driven by risk-taking and passionate inquiry. A.R.T. was founded in 1980 by Robert Brustein, who served as Artistic Director until 2002, when he was succeeded by Robert Woodruff. Diane Paulus began her tenure as Artistic Director in 2008. Under the leadership of Paulus as the Terrie and Bradley Bloom Artistic Director and Executive Producer Diane Borger, A.R.T. seeks to expand the boundaries of theater by programming transformative theatrical experiences, always including the audience as a central partner. A.R.T. is committed to a long-term process of centering anti-racism in its practice, policies, culture, pedagogy, governance, and organizational structure.

Throughout its history, A.R.T. has been honored with many distinguished awards including the Tony Award for Best New Play for ***All the Way*** (2014); consecutive Tony Awards for Best Revival of a Musical for ***Pippin*** (2013) and ***The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess*** (2012), both of which Paulus directed, and sixteen other Tony Awards since 2012; a Pulitzer Prize; a Jujamcyn Prize for outstanding contribution to the development of creative talent; the Regional Theater Tony Award; and more than 100 Elliot Norton and IRNE Awards. Additional Broadway productions include ***Jagged Little Pill***; ***Waitress*** (also US National Tour and in London's West End); ***Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812***; and ***Finding***

Neverland. Under Paulus's leadership, A.R.T.'s club theater, OBERON, has been recognized annually as a top performance venue in the Boston area, and has attracted national attention for its innovative programming and business models.

As the professional theater on the campus of Harvard University, A.R.T. is committed to playing a central role in the cognitive life of the University, catalyzing discourse, interdisciplinary collaboration, and creative exchange among a wide range of academic departments, institutions, students, and faculty members. A.R.T. is engaged in a number of multi-year initiatives with partners at Harvard that explore some of the most pressing issues of our day, including collaborations with the Harvard University Center for the Environment to develop new work that addresses climate change and with the Healthy Buildings Program at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health to develop a Roadmap for Recovery and Resilience for Theater that prioritizes a commitment to ethics, equity, and anti-racism as a guiding principle. A.R.T. plays a central role in Harvard's undergraduate Theater, Dance & Media concentration, teaching courses in directing, dramatic literature, acting, voice, design, and dramaturgy. A.R.T. staff also mentors students in the Harvard Radcliffe Dramatic Club working at the Loeb Drama Center and OBERON.

Dedicated to making great theater accessible, A.R.T. actively engages more than 5,000 community members and local students annually in project-based partnerships, workshops, conversations with artists, and other enrichment activities both at the theater and across the Greater Boston area.

A.R.T. acknowledges that its theaters are situated on the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Massachusetts Tribe.

#MicDropWithC1

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