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Women's Theatre Festival of Memphis Is Giving Female Artists A Chance to Shine

(Memphis, TENN)--Women's Theatre Festival of Memphis (WTFM) is shining the spotlight on the works of female playwrights, directors, and artists, etc. during a three day event specifically designed to give more exposure to women in the arts. On August 2 – 4, 2012, more than 20 performances, workshops and readings are expected to take place in three different venues in the Midtown Memphis Theatre District. WTFM is currently accepting submissions from the 100 theatrical and dance companies in the Greater Memphis area who wish to participate but have received submission inquiries from as far away as the U.K.

Seasoned playwright Ruby O'Gray and director/event planner Karen Moore are founders of WTFM. WTFM is a sponsored project of local nonprofit Women of Style, Spirit & Success, Inc. WTFM's mission is to provide educational opportunities and performances that represent women on a broader scale and bring recognition to women who have contributed to the theatre over the years. Beverly Robertson, President of the National Civil Rights Museum, is leading the host committee which includes Kathy Cowan, Howard Eddings, Carolyn Hardy, Claudia Haltom, Jackie Nichols, Howard Robertson, Eric Robertson, Calvin Taylor, and State Representative Antonio Parkinson, to mention a few.

O'Gray has written and directed over 60 plays and is a founding member of Bluff City Tri-Art Theatre Company. She believes WTFM is an idea whose time is long overdue. "Women purchase 69% of the theatre tickets sold today in the nation but only 17% of the plays produced are by women. We are grossly underrepresented in this area of the arts. Women's Theatre Festival of Memphis will allow some very talented individuals the opportunity to showcase their work," says O'Gray. "To our knowledge, there are only two other festivals like this in the world, which leaves room for us to make Memphis a destination location for women in the arts. We are very excited about what's to come."

City of Memphis Mayor A C Wharton, Jr. agrees, "Wherever there is injustice there is the opportunity to create equality. This festival is a great way to attempt to bring much needed

exposure to women in theatre. I'm pleased that Memphis was chosen to be the city where this will be done."

Calvin Taylor of the Memphis Convention and Visitors Bureau believes this is the beginning of something wonderful. "Memphis has long been an epicenter for culture whether it was music, art or theatre and to have the opportunity to support and foster women in an area where they have often been overlooked is not only ambitious but the right thing to do. This is an annual event, which means it has the opportunity to get greater every year. The MCVB is happy to support this endeavor."

The three-day festival will consist of a VIP reception, an opening night gala "The Gyneka Awards" hosted by celebrity Honorary Chairpersons honoring twelve (12) women in the Greater Memphis area (to be announced in March) followed by two days of one acts, workshops, readings and dance, operatic, symphonic, musical, comedic, solo and group theatrical performances. The performances will be written and/or directed by women and will be about women. The performances and workshops will be held at Playhouse on the Square, The Circuit Playhouse and TheatreWorks.

Submissions for performances and workshops are now being accepted for consideration. There is also a t-shirt and poster design contest. For more information, visit <http://www.womenstheatrefestivalofmemphis.org>.

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