



First Stage presents WELCOME TO BRONZEVILLE
A world premiere play written and directed
by local playwright and dramaturge Sheri Williams Pannell

January 13 – February 5, 2017

Todd Wehr Theater, Marcus Center for the Performing Arts
Suggested for families with young people ages 8 and up

*Tickets can be purchased in person at the Marcus Center box office, 929 N. Water Street,
by phone at (414) 273-7206, or online at www.firststage.org.*

ABOUT THE PLAY

1957. The heart of Milwaukee's Bronzeville neighborhood pulses to the beat of Jazz and doo-wop. Everyone expects Michael Jr. to follow in his father's footsteps, but is this who he's truly meant to be? The local talent show, a visit by iconic jazz singer **Billie Holiday** (played by **Malkia Stampley**), and the wisdom and guidance of a community seeking to lift up their young people help Mike find the path to the man he will become.

Sheri Williams Pannell developed the play with input from elders in the Bronzeville community, their voices lending to the authenticity of this rich, multilayered piece. "In the play, a young African American man is struggling to find his place in his community, and what it means to truly be 'a man.' His parents, siblings, the local police sergeant, and friends, all have expectations for him, but ultimately he must decide which path he will take," said Sheri Williams Pannell. "By sharing his journey and the choices he makes, I hope to inspire young people and families of all races to forge their own journey of self-discovery, re-examine the choices they make, and find ways to connect with and celebrate their unique cultural heritages."

Though not a musical, the play features songs of the period and original music by Sheri Williams Pannell and local composer John Tanner, bringing the songs (including Billie Holiday's *God Bless the Child*), voices, and unique artistry of this African American community to life onstage.

Special events and extended talkbacks are held in conjunction with most performances. For a complete schedule, please visit FirstStage.org/Bronzeville. Highlights include:

OPENING NIGHT RECEPTION

Friday, January 13, 2017

Following the opening night performance, First Stage invites all patrons to attend the Opening Night Reception at the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center, located one mile from the Marcus Center at 325 W. Walnut Street. Patrons can mix and mingle with the cast and crew of WELCOME TO BRONZEVILLE while enjoying refreshments, courtesy of First Stage.

ART EXHIBIT: BRONZEVILLE – A CELEBRATION OF COMMUNITY

On view January 13 – February 5, 2017

Gallery night and Artist Market – Friday, January 20, 5:00 to 9:00 p.m.

This visual art exhibition features artworks by Milwaukee's African American artists. Curated by Della Wells.

GOOD NEIGHBOR DAY EVENT

January 14, 2017, 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. – Bradley Pavilion, Marcus Center for the Performing Arts

An event for children around being a good neighbor, one of the main themes in WELCOME TO BRONZEVILLE. Activities provided by PBS Kids, the Fire and Police Departments, Children's Hospital, and First Stage. Organized in partnership with PBS Kids and the Marcus Center.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY – Pay What You Choose Performance

Monday, January 16, 2017, 3:30 p.m.

Followed by an Extended Talkback about Martin Luther King, Jr., led by First Stage's Education Department

PANEL CONVERSATION: MKE JAZZ – THEN AND NOW

Saturday, January 21, 2017, 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. at the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

In collaboration with First Stage, the Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra, and the Milwaukee Historical Society, join us for a lively presentation and panel discussion to explore the importance of jazz in building community. Moderated by Ben Barbera, Milwaukee County Historical Society curator, with music by Sheri Williams Pannell and MYSO's Bronzeville Jazz Quartet (BJQ). Panelists and special guests include Carl Allen, Cliff Gribble, Billy Johnson, Neil Davis, and others.

TALKBACK: BLACK-JEWISH RELATIONS IN MILWAUKEE

Saturday, January 21 immediately following the 7:00 p.m. performance

Facilitated conversation on the Jewish and African American common history in Bronzeville and how these two communities can work together to help solve Milwaukee's racism and segregation. Presented by the African Heritage Jewish Community Dialogue, First Stage, and the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation, in partnership with Congregation Sinai, Jewish Museum Milwaukee, and the NAACP-Milwaukee Branch.

Performances

Friday, January 13 at 7:00 p.m. – OPENING NIGHT

Saturday, January 14 at 3:30 & 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 15 at 1:00 & 3:30 p.m.

Monday, January 16 at 3:30 p.m. – PAY WHAT YOU CHOOSE: \$5 minimum suggested donation

Saturday, January 21 at 3:30 & 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 22 at 1:00 & 3:30 p.m.

Saturday, January 28 at 3:30 & 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 29 at 1:00 & 3:30 p.m.

Friday, February 3 at 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, February 4 at 3:30 & 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 5 at 1:00 p.m.

ASL Interpreted Performance: Sunday, February 5 at 1:00 p.m. – This performance will be sign-language interpreted. Assistive listening devices are also available at the Todd Wehr Theater.

Ticket and information: Tickets start at \$15. Call (414) 273-7206 or online at www.firststage.org



Families who attend the performance will enjoy a historical photography exhibit of Bronzeville and the African American community, and will also receive a printed Guide to Bronzeville, with the history, a map of the area, and suggestions for exploring Bronzeville and surrounding neighborhoods in interactive ways. A one-of-a-kind piece!

