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**WALLIS ANNENBERG CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
PRESENTS PLAYWRIGHT-ACTOR KEITH A. WALLACE'S *THE BITTER GAME*,
AN IMMERSIVE THEATER EXPERIENCE
THAT EXPLORES THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING BLACK IN AMERICA**

November 14-17, 2018, 7:30 pm

(Beverly Hills, CA October 18, 2018) *THE BITTER GAME*, a "high-impact" immersive theater experience ripe with pain, poetry, and laughter that explores the experience of being black in America, debuts at the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts on Wednesday, November 14 through Saturday, November 17, 2018, outdoors on The Wallis' Promenade Terrace. Playwright-actor Keith A. Wallace's multi-character, solo performance in five acts, structured as the four quarters and overtime of a basketball game, tells the story of Jamel Smith, who witnesses a neighborhood act of violence as a child and later must learn to navigate his interactions with police. It speaks to both a personal and universal truth that is "a sharp reminder of the persuasive powers of live theater," according to *The New York Times*, which also described the play as closing the gap between artist and audience, giving the familiar subject an "unignorable visceral immediacy." Based on Wallace's youth in Philadelphia, *THE BITTER GAME* is created, written and performed by Wallace, co-created by Deborah Stein, and directed by Malika Oyetimein.

"With *THE BITTER GAME* performed outdoors in a non-traditional theatrical setting, we bring audiences up close to Keith Wallace's very direct style of storytelling that explores the issues that have informed and given rise to the Black Lives Matter movement," says The Wallis' Artistic Director Paul Crewes.

According to a *Village Voice* interview with Wallace, "Since the play head-on addresses the epidemic of police violence in this country, a lot of people have been dubbing it a Black Lives Matter play by association. But it's not specifically a BLM play. I think the BLM movement addresses so much more than just the

issue of excessive police force; there are many other racial injustices that the movement is also tackling. *THE BITTER GAME* is semi-autobiographical, in that I pull from my experiences growing up in inner-city in Philly, which mirrors the experiences of many people of color growing up in inner-cities across the country. I've built a composite character not only specific to me but that represents a larger whole. No two audiences experience the same play, because it's constantly evolving as this issue keeps presenting itself."

On why he created the play, Wallace says, "The murder of Michael Brown in 2014 was to me a public display, in the way that public lynching used to take place as a warning sign and display of white power and supremacy. All of the mothers rendered childless from these situations are thrust into the spotlight and not afforded the same opportunities to mourn and grieve in the same way other mothers are. I got tired of seeing black people murdered by police with impunity, and it was time for a reckoning."

Wallace hopes the play will eventually reach beyond the theater to be used as a tool of sensitivity training for law enforcement and performed with schools and communities reflected in the story.

THE BITTER GAME was commissioned by the La Jolla Playhouse for the International WOW Festival while Wallace was still a graduate student at UC San Diego. Since its debut, *THE BITTER GAME* has received critical acclaim not only from *The New York Times* but also the *Los Angeles Times* and the *San Diego Tribune*, which called it "a searing, well-honed one-man show," and others. It has toured internationally, making notable stops at the Skirball Cultural Center, The Public Theater, The Kennedy Center, The American Repertory Theater and the Dublin Theater Festival. The play also won the 2016 Princess Grace Theater Award and was a semi-finalist in the 2016 Sundance Theater Lab and the Eugene O'Neill Playwrights Conference.

Warm attire and comfortable shoes are suggested for audience members, who are also warned to expect the play's strong language.

A post-show discussion takes place immediately after the Friday, November 16 performance. A sign language-interpreted performance is held on Saturday, November 17.

Single tickets are \$40. Visit TheWallis.org, call 310.746.4000, or stop by in person at the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts Ticket Services Office located at 9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills, CA 90210.

About the Artists:

KEITH A. WALLACE (*Creator, Writer, Performer*), is a playwright, actor, filmmaker, and self-proclaimed "actorvist." As an actor he has appeared in *JUNK: The Golden Age of Debt*, *Blueprints to Freedom*, *Movers + Shakers*, *Death of a Driver*, *Venus*, *In the Crowding Darkness*, and more. Select directing credits include *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* and *The*

Brothers Size (Theatre Bay Area Award for Outstanding Production). Following its 2015 premiere in the international WoW Festival at La Jolla Playhouse, *THE BITTER GAME*, was a semi-finalist in the 2016 Sundance Theater Lab and the Eugene O'Neill Playwrights Conference. Since then, Wallace has toured the show nationally and abroad including Under The Radar Festival at The Public Theater, The Kennedy Center, Segerstrom Center for the Arts, The American Repertory Theater, The Dublin Theater Festival among others. He is also a recipient of the 2016 Princess Grace Theater Award, United Solo Festival Avant Garde Award and a San Diego Critics Award nominee for Outstanding Solo Performance. He has an MFA in Acting, UC San Diego, and a BA in Drama, Morehouse College.

DEBORAH STEIN (*Co-Creator*) is a playwright, director, and collaborative theatre maker. Her play *Marginal Loss* recently premiered at the Actors Theatre of Louisville Humana Festival. Other recent projects include *The Wholehearted* (world premiere at the Kirk Douglas/Center Theatre Group and La Jolla Playhouse) and *Chimera* (Under the Radar; Gate Theatre in London; Drama Desk nominee for Best Solo Performance). Stein's other plays include *God Save Gertrude* (Theatre @ Boston Court, Workhaus Collective), *Wallflower* (Stages Rep), and *Bone Portraits* (Walkerspace, Live Girls!). She has worked extensively with some of the country's leading devised theatre makers including Joseph Chaikin, Dominique Serrand, Lear deBessonnet and most frequently the Pig Iron Theatre Company, with whom she created six original plays. Her writing has been published in *Theatre Forum*, *Play: A Journal of Plays*, and *The Best American Poetry*. Currently on faculty at UC San Diego, she has also taught writing and collaboration at Yale School of Drama, NYU/Tisch, Princeton, Northeastern, St. Olaf, Parsons and Brown (where she received her MFA, advised by Paula Vogel). An alumna of New Dramatists, she has received other grants and awards including NEFA National Theatre Project, New York State Council for the Arts, Bush Artist Fellowship, two Jerome Fellowships and a McKnight Advancement Grant at the Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis. Stein teaches at UC San Diego, where her collaboration with Wallace began.

MALIKA OYETIMEIN (*Director*) recently completed her MFA at the University of Washington's School of Drama and is a member of the Directors Lab at Lincoln Center Theater. In Seattle, she was featured in City Art Magazine's 2016 Future List and her productions (*Bootycandy*, 2016) and (*Hoodoo Love*, 2017) have been nominated for Gregory Awards: Best Production. She recently was the co adapter and director of Dr. Maya Angelou's *I Know why the Caged Bird Sings*. Among her directing credits are the world premiere of *WHITE* (Theatre Horizon), *Milk Like Sugar* (Artswest Playhouse and Gallery), *Barbecue*, *Bootycandy* (Intiman Theatre Festival), *Goin' Someplace Special* (Book-It Theatre Co.) *Hoodoo Love* (Sound Theatre Company, Yancy Girl Productions and Ademide Theatre Ensemble), *Young Voices* (InterAct Theatre Co. and Philadelphia Young Playwrights), and *Topdog/Underdog* (GoKash Productions). Among her assistant director credits are *THE BITTER GAME* (Public Theatre/Under the Radar Festival), *Threepenny Opera*, *Blue Door* (Arden Theatre Co.), and *A View from the Bridge* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival). As a professional teaching artist, Oyetimein has worked with: Seattle Repertory Theatre, Philadelphia Young Playwrights, Arden

Theatre Co., Mural Arts: Project Home and Theatre Horizon's Autism Drama Program.

PLATO SETO (*Stage Manager*) Broadway: *Saint Joan*, *The Children*, *Prince of Broadway*. Off-Broadway: *Sugar in Our Wounds*, *In the Body of the World*, *The Portuguese Kid*. Other New York: *Pick a Color* (Dixon Place), *Nan and the Lower Body: The Pap Smear Play* (MTC). Regional: *Beetlejuice* (National Theatre, Pre-Broadway Engagement), *THE BITTER GAME* (Skirball Cultural Center & La Jolla Playhouse: WOW Presentation '16 & WOW Festival '15), *Blurred Borders Dance Festival #17* (Rincon Dance Collective), *John Leguizamo: Latin History for Morons* (La Jolla Playhouse), *Lilith* (Calit2 Theater), *Broadway in Your Backyard* (La Jolla Playhouse), *In Your Arms* (The Old Globe), *Up Here* (La Jolla Playhouse), and various corporate events. Seto has been a part of *THE BITTER GAME*'s journey since its beginning. She holds a BA in Theatre from the University of California, San Diego.

KEISHA A. WALLACE (*Signed English Performer*) is a Philadelphia native and first year ASL/English Interpreting student at The Community College of Philadelphia. She has received a Dual Baccalaureate Degree in Special Education/Elementary Education with a Minor in Deaf Studies. Her passion resides in communicating with the Deaf Community and working to effectively break communication barriers. Wallace has been actively involved within the Deaf Community and Deaf Culture in various ways, including local events within the city of Philadelphia and surrounding counties as well as volunteerism with The Annual Philadelphia AIDS Walk, Pennsylvania School for the Deaf (PSD) and Deaf-Hearing Communication Centre (DHCC).

About the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts:

Since opening its doors in October 2013, The Wallis has produced or presented more than 250 dance, theatre, opera, classical music, cinema and family programs to an ever-expanding audience. Located in the heart of Beverly Hills, California, The Wallis brings audiences world-class theater, dance and music, performed by many of the world's most talented and sought-after artists. Featuring eclectic programming that mirrors the diverse landscape of Los Angeles and its notability as the entertainment capital of the world, The Wallis offers original and revered works from across the U.S. and around the globe. The mission of The Wallis is to create, present and celebrate unique performing arts events and educational programs that reflect the rich cultural diversity of our community. Nominated for 46 Ovation Awards, seven L.A. Drama Critic's Circle Awards and the recipient of six architectural awards since opening in 2013. The Wallis is a breathtaking 70,000-square-foot venue that celebrates the classic and the modern and was designed by Zoltan E. Pali, FAIA, of Studio Pali Fekete architects. The building features the restored, original 1933 Beverly Hills Post Office (on the National Register of Historic Places) that serves as the theater's dramatic yet welcoming lobby, and houses the 150-seat Lovelace Studio Theater, GRoW at The Wallis: A Space for Arts Education (a gift of Gregory Annenberg Weingarten and Family and the Annenberg

Foundation) and the contemporary 500-seat, state-of-the art Bram Goldsmith Theater. Together, these structures embrace the city's history and its future, creating a performing arts destination for L.A.-area visitors and residents alike.

For more information about The Wallis, please visit: TheWallis.org.

For downloadable photos, please visit: TheWallis.org/Press.

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EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:

WHAT:

THE BITTER GAME

Created, Written & Performed by Keith A. Wallace

Co-Created by Deborah Stein

Directed by Malika Oyetimein

Stage Manager Plato Seto

Sound Design Mikhaal Sulaiman

Audio Engineering: Helena McGill , Anna Wozniewicz

Lighting Design Bo Tindell

Costume Design Melissa Ng

Costume Art Direction Walter Myrick

WHEN:

November 14-17, 2018, 7:30 pm

WHERE:

Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts

THE BITTER GAME is an immersive theater experience that takes place outdoors on The Wallis' Promenade Terrace.

9390 N. Santa Monica Boulevard

Beverly Hills, CA 90210

TICKET PRICES AND INFORMATION:

\$40 (prices subject to change)

TheWallis.org

310.746.4000

Box Office – Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts Ticket Services

9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd, Beverly Hills, CA, 90210

RUNNING TIME:

Running time is approximately 55 minutes with no intermission

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