



CYGNET THEATRE PRESS RELEASE

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THE GODMOTHER OF ROCK AND ROLL SWINGS INTO CYGNET THIS JANUARY



SAN DIEGO, CA - Sister Rosetta Tharpe, the godmother of rock-n-roll, and her protégée Marie Knight, shake, shimmy and swing into Cygnet this January for the West Coast Premiere of *Marie and Rosetta*. This play with music runs **January 16 to February 16, 2019** at Cygnet Theatre in Old Town. Opening Night for Media is Saturday, **January 19** at 8:00pm.

Audiences will get a front-row seat to music history in the making. Bringing fierce guitar playing and swing to gospel music, **Sister Rosetta Tharpe** was a legend in her time and a huge influence on Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Jimi Hendrix, and Ray Charles. She was so influential, in fact, that just this year she was inducted into the **Rock & Roll Hall of Fame**. *Marie and Rosetta* chronicles her first rehearsal with a young protégée, **Marie Knight**, as they prepare to embark on a tour that would establish them as one of the great duos in music history. This story of letting loose, finding your voice, and freeing your soul is a soaring music-theatre experience chock full of roof-raising performances that are sure to inspire patrons of all ages.

American playwright **George Brant** (*Grounded*) was inspired by Sister Rosetta Tharpe's transgressive nature. "She pushed the boundaries of what's acceptable musically. And always with a smile on her face, kind of a coo, did just do

Brant's play will give us insight into what it was like to see Rosetta and Marie Knight play together live, but more importantly, it gives Sister Rosetta long overdue recognition. A eulogy of sorts for one of only three women named to Mojo Magazine's list of "*The 100 Greatest Guitarists of All Time.*"

"What we know as rock 'n' roll did not exist before Sister Rosetta Tharpe "says director Rob Lutfy. "Rosetta could sell out a baseball stadium with her music. Two of the songs that critics point to when they name her as the creator of rock are in this show. So why was her funeral attended by only a handful of people? Why was the godmother of rock and roll buried in an unmarked grave until 2008? Why did it take until this past year to have her inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame? In a male dominated field, perhaps giving a black, gospel singing woman all this credit was hard for some (men)."

Cygnnet is excited to welcome two newcomers to its stage. Stepping into the role of Sister Rosetta Tharpe is **Noel Simone Wippler**, a multi-instrumentalist, dancer, actor, and songwriter born and raised in Harlem, New York. Her protégée, Marie Knight, will be played by **Amaiya Holley**, a NYC resident and recent graduate of Bowie State University. Both actors will play **live instruments** as they belt out stirring gospel sounds.

The stellar creative team that will be transforming the Cygnnet stage into a 1946 Mississippi funeral parlor includes **Elizabet Puksto** as Set Designer. **Anne E. McMills** is Lighting Designer. Costumes are by **Chanel A. Mahoney**, and **Peter Herman** will provide wigs and makeup. **Rachel Hengst** is Properties Designer. **Leonard Patton** will provide musical direction. **Matthew Bantock** will stage manage.

Tickets are on sale now and may be purchased in person at the box office located at 4040 Twiggs Street in San Diego Old Town Historic State Park, by calling 619-337-1525 or by visiting www.cygnnettheatre.com. Children 15 and under receive half-off tickets with each paid adult.

MARIE AND ROSETTA FACT SHEET

WHAT:

Cygnnet Theatre presents Marie and Rosetta by George Brandt

WHERE:

Cygnnet Theatre
4040 Twiggs St. in Old Town San Diego State Historic Park

WHO:

Directed by: Rob Lutfy
Music Director: Leonard Patton
Set Designer: Elizabet Puksto
Costume Designer: Chanel A. Mahoney
Lighting Designer: Anne E. McMills
Sound Designer: TJ Fucella
Wigs and Makeup Designer: Peter Herman^o
Properties Designer: Rachel Hengst
Stage Manager: Matthew Bantock

Amaiya Holley: Marie Knight
Noel Simone Wippler: Sister Rosetta Tharpe

*Member of Actors Equity Association, °Resident Artist

DATES:

Previews begin: Wednesday, January 16
Press Opening: Saturday, January 19, 8:00 p.m.
Closes: Saturday, February 16

Performance Schedule:

Wednesday & Thursday at 7:30 p.m.
Friday at 8:00 p.m.
Saturday at 3:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.
Sunday at 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

CYGNATURE EVENTS:

Designer Showcase - January 22
Theatre on Tap - January 25
Wine Night - January 31
Pre Show Stage Chats - February 6 and 13
Post Show Stage Chats - February 8 and 15

PRICE:

\$35 - \$65 with discounts for preview performances

HOW:

Phone: (619) 337-1525
Online: www.cygnetttheatre.com
In Person: Cygnet Theatre - 4040 Twiggs St., San Diego, CA 92110

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ABOUT CYGNET THEATRE



Cygnet Theatre Company produces a year-round season of professional Off-Broadway-style theatre as well as thought-provoking and engaging educational programming. Cygnet is committed to maintaining high standards of artistic and fiscal integrity, and serves more than 40,000 patrons annually from San Diego and beyond. Cygnet performs its mainstage productions at the state-of-the-art theatre in Old Town San Diego State Historic Park. An active member of the San Diego community, Cygnet has outreach programs serving tens of thousands of students and community members annually. For more information, visit www.cygnetttheatre.com.

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