



**Baltimore Center Stage Prepares for
Regional Premiere of Pulitzer-Winning Play
The Hot Wing King
By Katori Hall
In a new co-production with Hartford Stage**

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Baltimore, MD – Baltimore Center Stage is preparing for the regional premiere production of the Pulitzer-Prize winning comedy-drama *The Hot Wing King*, written by *P-Valley*'s **Katori Hall** and directed by **Christopher D. Betts**. This co-production with Hartford Stage runs for a strictly limited engagement, **April 11-28, 2024**.

“We are thrilled to partner with our incredible friends at Hartford Stage to bring this Pulitzer Prize winning play to life in Charm City,” stated **Stevie Walker-Webb**, Artistic Director of Baltimore Center Stage. “Katori Hall’s hysterical and deeply moving drama puts Black Queer love on full, transparent display, while examining questions around masculinity and what makes a family. Under Christopher D. Betts’ keen direction, audiences should prepare themselves for a raucous and riveting performance.”

Memphis, Tennessee’s annual Hot Wang Festival is quickly approaching, and Cordell Crutchfield is determined to be crowned king of the wings. With support from The New Wing Order, made up of his partner Dwayne and his friends Isom and Big Charles, victory seems inevitable. However, Cordell soon finds himself preparing for the festival while caring for his teenage nephew who moves in after a family tragedy. Will this new arrangement be a recipe for success or disaster?

Betts describes *The Hot Wing King* as “a play that delves into radical intimacy, exploring the complexities of love and the potential harm it can inflict.” He says, “*The Hot Wing King* skillfully navigates nuanced portrayals of Black Queer relationships, giving language to experiences that are usually felt rather than expressed. It’s an invitation for audiences to immerse themselves in the richness of Black love. Love that is not stereotypical or conflict-averse but brave and rooted in emotional safety. As a society founded on narratives of Black suffering, this play prompts a crucial question: ‘What does Black love truly look like on stage?’”

The cast includes: **Bjorn Dupaty** as Cordell, **Israel Erron Ford** as Isom, **Marcus Gladney, Jr.** as Everett “EJ,” **Postell Pringle** as Big Charles, **Calvin M. Thompson** as Dwayne, and **Alphonso Walker Jr.** as TJ. Actors Bjorn DuPaty and Calvin M. Thompson starred in the regional premiere of the play at Alliance Theatre in Atlanta; both are reprising their roles in Baltimore and Hartford.

Betts recently directed a staged reading of Claudine Mboligikepelani Nako’s *Photosynthesis* at Goodspeed’s Festival of New Musicals, and has directed multiple productions at his alma mater, the David Geffen School of Drama at Yale.

The creative team includes Scenic Designer **Emmie Finckel**, Costume Designer **Jahise LeBouef**, Lighting Designer **Adam Honoré**, and Sound Designer **Kathy Ruvuna**, Voice and Dialect Coach **Cynthia Santos DeCure**, Intimacy and Fight Coordinator **Kelsey Rainwater**, with casting by **Alaine Alldaffer**. The production Stage Manager is **Bernita Robinson** and the Assistant Stage Manager is **Makayla Beckles**.

Ticketing Information

For Center Stage: Single tickets are currently on sale by visiting centerstage.org or calling 410.332.0033. Patrons can also visit the box office, located at 700 North Calvert Street.

Reviewing press are invited to the 8:00PM performance on April 13, or any performance afterwards. Please contact bryan@bryanbuttlermediarelations.com for details.

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About Baltimore Center Stage

Designated the State Theater of Maryland in 1978, Baltimore Center Stage provides the highest quality theater and programming for all members of our communities, including youth and families, under the leadership of Artistic Director Stevie Walker-Webb and Managing Director Adam Frank. Baltimore Center Stage ignites conversations and imaginations by producing an eclectic season of professional productions across two mainstages, through engaging community programs, and with inspiring education programs. Everything we do at Baltimore Center Stage is led by our core values—chief among them being Access For All. Our mission is heavily rooted in providing active and

open accessibility for everyone, regardless of any and all barriers, to our Mainstage performances, education initiatives, and community programming.

About Hartford Stage

Hartford Stage has been led by Artistic Director Melia Bensussen and Managing Director Cynthia Rider since the summer of 2019. The theater's mission is to enlighten, entertain, and educate by creating theatrical programming of the highest caliber that has a transformative impact on audiences, the community, and its field. Under Bensussen's artistic vision, the theater has reimagined classics including Eugene O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness!* which reopened the theater to great acclaim following the pandemic and brought more work celebrating the Latine heritages in the region, including *Quixote Nuevo*, the virtual American Voices New Play Festival, *Kiss My Aztec!*, and *Espejos: Clean*. Hartford Stage has presented various world premieres including the Broadway successes *Anastasia* and *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* (winner of four 2014 Tony Awards), and Quiara Alegria Hudes' *Water by the Spoonful* (winner of the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for Drama). Hartford Stage's vast education programs engage students of all ages from across the state through student matinee performances, in-school programs, theatre classes, and youth productions. hartfordstage.org