

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Contact:

John Fries  
412.760.2299  
[johnfries@comcast.net](mailto:johnfries@comcast.net)

### **Author Maya Angelou's family to visit Pittsburgh, celebrate Angelou's 90th birthday and launch premiere of Prime Stage Theatre's "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings"**

(PITTSBURGH, PA - February 6, 2018) Prime Stage Theatre, a professional Pittsburgh theater organization now in its 21st year of producing and presenting plays based on works of literature, is pleased to announce that two members of author Maya Angelou's family will attend the opening performances of the regional premiere of "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings."

On Saturday, March 10, **Elliott Jones** and **Caylin Johnson**—Angelou's grandson and great-granddaughter—will be guests of honor at the 8:00 p.m. opening night performance at the New Hazlett Theater Center for the Performing Arts, Allegheny Square, on Pittsburgh's North Side. Following the show, they will participate in a question-and-answer session with the audience moderated by State Representative Jake Wheatley.

On Sunday, March 11, Jones and Johnson will mingle with attendees at a 90th birthday celebration for Angelou hosted by Prime Stage prior to the 2:30 p.m. matinee.

The play, adapted from Angelou's 1969 biography and directed by Monteze Freeland, runs from March 9 to 18 at the New Hazlett Theater. Robert Doswell of the Afro-American Music Institute in Homewood provides musical accompaniment.

More information, and tickets for all performances and events, are available at [www.primestage.com](http://www.primestage.com).

Jones, of Miami, Florida, serves as director of community engagement for Caged Bird Legacy, LLC, an organization that administers Angelou's estate. In 2015 he provided a personal tribute to Angelou when a portion of her writings were donated to NASA to be flown aboard the Orion spacecraft.

### **Maya Angelou—Renaissance Woman**

Angelou, widely regarded as one of the most popular American authors and poets of the 20th century, wrote "Caged Bird" following a dinner party she attended with her close friend and fellow author James Baldwin. One of the partygoers told Random House editor Robert Loomis about the stories she related at the party, and he suggested she write her autobiography. Baldwin urged Angelou to write it as well, and she did.

During her lifetime, Angelou, born Marguerite Annie Johnson in 1928 in St. Louis, Missouri and raised in Stamps, Arkansas, wrote books, plays, poems, screenplays, a line of Hallmark greeting cards, and more; acted and danced on stage; was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize; worked as a civil rights activist; and held a variety of jobs including serving as San Francisco's first female cable car operator.

In 1993, she read her poem "On the Pulse of Morning" at President Bill Clinton's first inauguration, making her only the second poet, and the first African-American woman, to read a poem at a U.S. presidential inauguration. She passed away on May 28, 2014 at age 86, at her home in Winston-Salem, NC.

"To say we're excited about this regional premiere is an understatement," said Wayne Brinda, Prime Stage co-founder and artistic producing director. "Pittsburgh is only the second city to experience this brand new play, which was adapted from Dr. Angelou's book by Myra Platt and Malika Oyetimein and presented for the first time last September at the Book-It Repertory Theatre in Seattle."

He continues, "Maya Angelou triumphed over childhood abuse and racism to establish herself as one of the most important, popular and prolific American authors and poets of the 20th century, and she could easily be regarded as one of the true pioneers of the women's empowerment movement. She was a woman of grace and dignity. We're extremely honored to be joined by two of her family members as we tell her story."