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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**GEVA'S 46TH SEASON CONCLUDES WITH
THE WORLD PREMIERE OF
*REVIVAL: THE RESURRECTION OF
SON HOUSE***

*The Geva-commissioned play with music honoring a blues icon concludes the
ESL Federal Credit Union/Rochester Regional Health 2018-2019 Season.*

Revival features Tony Award-winner Cleavant Derricks as Son House.

Rochester, N.Y., April 10, 2019 – Geva Theatre Center's 46th Season concludes with the world premiere of *Revival: The Resurrection of Son House*, written and directed by **Keith Glover**, with music by **Son House**, **Billy Thompson** and **Keith Glover**, musical direction by **Billy Thompson** and choreography by **Norwood Pennewell**, in the Elaine P. Wilson Stage from **May 1 through June 2, 2019**.

Revival brings blues legend Son House back to life on the Geva stage. From his beginnings in rural Mississippi, through personal crises and his relatively obscure life in Rochester, to the stunning rebirth of his career in 1964. A celebration of the musical legacy of the man who inspired generations of blues artists from B.B. King, Eric Clapton, and Bonnie Raitt, to Susan Tedeschi, Joe Bonamassa, and Jack White.

In August 2015, Geva produced a four-day festival, "Journey to the Son: A Celebration of Son House." This unique festival wove together music (both workshops and performances), theatre, film, audio recordings, storytelling and lectures to celebrate Rochester's adopted son, Eddie "Son" House. The festival attracted blues music lovers from all over the globe and featured the first reading of a new, Geva-commissioned play with music - *Revival: The Resurrection of Son House* written by Keith Glover, with music by Son House, Keith Glover and Billy Thompson. Now, Geva presents the world premiere production of this piece.

Born in 1902 in the Mississippi River Delta the son of a preacher, **Eddie "Son" House** was raised to believe that secular music was the work of the devil. In 1927, he was introduced to the slide guitar and was so captivated

by this new style that he bought a used guitar and developed his own blues style, a rhythmic drive with emotionally powerful vocals. He was recorded by Alan Lomax for inclusion in the Library of Congress, and by Paramount Records in 1930 with songs such as "Walking Blues," and "Preachin' the Blues." In 1943 he abandoned the music scene and moved to Rochester, N.Y. to find work. In 1964, a trio of music enthusiasts began a cross country search and found Son living in relative obscurity with no guitar in the Corn Hill neighborhood of Rochester. With their encouragement, Son picked up a guitar once again and played his unique style of music. This re-launched the next decade of Son's career as an internationally recognized folk blues artist, performing around the world and recording several albums for Columbia Records. His style influenced generations of musicians from Robert Johnson and Muddy Waters to Elvis Presley, John Hammond, Bonnie Raitt, Eric Clapton, Mick Jagger and Jack White, among others. In 1976, Son House moved to Detroit where he would live until his death in 1988. In 1980, he was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame. In 2009, he was posthumously given a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Detroit Blues Society, and in 2013 he was inducted into the Rochester Music Hall of Fame.

Playwright and Director **Keith Glover** is the writer of the teleplay *The Fantasia Barrino Story, Life is Not a Fairytale*, premiered on the Lifetime Channel and received the second highest ratings of any show in Lifetime's history. His musical, *Thunder Knocking on the Door*, a Bluesical tale of Rhythm and the Blues written with Grammy Award-winning blues musician Keb' Mo' and directed by Mr. Glover returned to Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park in the spring 2012, where it remains the highest grossing musical in the last twenty years at the Playhouse. He is the author of *Dancing on Moonlight* which was produced at the Joseph Papp Public Theater by the New York Shakespeare Festival. His second play, *Coming of the Hurricane*, premiered at the Denver Center Theater Company and has since been produced at Arena Stage (Washington, D.C.) and at the Crossroads Theater Company (New Brunswick) with Viola Davis. *Coming of the Hurricane* was a finalist for the American Theatre Critic's Award for Best Play as well as a runner-up for the Theodore Ward Prize for Playwrights. In collaboration with Tony Award-winner, Charles Strouse, Mr. Glover wrote and directed the revival of the musical *Golden Boy* at the Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven, and the Leslie Bricusse musical, *Sammy*, based on the life of Sammy Davis Jr. Mr. Glover has directed productions of his play, *In Walks Ed* at the Cincinnati Playhouse and at the Long Wharf Theater. *In Walks Ed* was the recipient of the Rosenthal Prize and subsequently nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Mr. Glover is the writer of the 234th edition of Ringling Bros., and Barnum and Bailey, *The Greatest Show on Earth* which subsequently toured the world.

Composer and Musical Director **Billy Thompson's** performances have captured audiences in the U.S. and throughout Europe, setting the tone for this veteran musician's songwriting, singing and guitar playing, both

live and in the studio. In his original music, he combines world-class slide guitar, searing licks and soulful vocals with a unique amalgamation of styles including blues, rock, funk, New Orleans and soul. Some say, "It's like Hendrix meets Little Feat!" Billy has played with legends such as Little Milton, Albert King, Earl King and Art Neville, while opening for the likes of Robert Cray, B.B. King, Sonny Landreth, The Neville Brothers and Joe Cocker, to name a few. He has performed on Barbara Walter's "The View" and with the San Diego Symphony. He also performed for the grand opening of L.A.'s House of Blues. Billy has been invited to play with such icons as the Doobie Brothers, Bill Payne, John Mooney and Ron Holloway. He has provided lead guitar for the Broadway show *Ain't Nothin' But the Blues* and for award-winning playwright Keith Glover's Bluesical, *Thunder Knocking on the Door*. His eighth release, *BT*, boasts familiar sonic shapes thrown in by long-time musical luminaries such as Mike Finnigan, James "Hutch" Hutchinson, Grammy winner Tony Braunagel, BB King's Nola All Star band mate Daryl Johnson, West Coast band mates James East, Michael Leroy Peed, and Danny Campbell, in addition to the East Coast band: Eric Selby, Gene Monroe, Michelle Lucas and Rob Cowart. *BT* made the Top 25 on Blues Charts including *Living Blues Magazine* and *Roots Music Report*. Billy's 2012 release, *A Better Man*, was produced by Grammy winner, Tony Braunagel. *A Better Man* was nominated by *Blues Blast Magazine* for 2012 Contemporary Blues Album of the Year. Recent Billy Thompson solo and band performances include a residency with the BB King's Nola All Stars, 2017 to present, NPR's MountainStage, San Diego Blues Festival 2015, BB Kings (NYC), House of Blues (Chicago/Orlando), Humphrey's Concerts By the Bay (San Diego), Western Maryland Blues Festival, Washington Folk Festival (DC), Paoli Blues Festival (Philadelphia, PA), New York State Blues Festival and the Michelob Blues Festival (Dayton, OH).

The cast of *Revival* is led by Tony Award-winner **Cleavant Derricks** as Son House. Derricks created the role of James Thunder Early for *Dreamgirls*, receiving Tony and Drama Desk awards as well as the LA Drama Circle Award for vocal arrangements. Starring in Bob Fosse's Broadway production *Big Deal*, Cleavant was nominated for Tony and Drama Desk awards for Best Actor. Other Broadway credits include: Revival of *Hair*, Vinette Carroll's *Your Arms Too Short to Box with God*, as well as *But Never Jam Today* and *Brooklyn the Musical*. He received the NAACP Theatre Award for Best Male Performance for his portrayal of Horse in the *Full Monty* national tour. Cleavant was awarded the "Heroes and Legends Award" for Outstanding Achievement in Theatre; served as composer, musical director, and featured actor for the musical *When Hell Freezes Over I'll Skate*, which aired as a PBS special; and starred in Cy Coleman's *Like Jazz* at the Mark Taper Forum. Film roles include: *Moscow on The Hudson*, *The Slugger's Wife*, *Offbeat*, *Carnival of Souls*, *Bluffing It*, *Miami Magma*, *Basilisk*, and *World Traveler*. TV series regular include *Sliders*, *Thea*, *Drexell's Class*, *Good Sports*, and *Whoops!* Some TV guest appearances include *Touched by an Angel*, *Charmed*, *The Practice*, *The Bernie Mac Show*, *Cold Case*, and David E. Kelly's *Wedding Bells*. Regional theatre credits include *Pullman Porter Blues* at Seattle

Repertory Theatre, Arena Stage and Goodman Theatre; Debbie Allen's Musical *Twist* (awarded the NAACP award for "Best Supporting Actor"); *The Piano Lesson* at the McCarter Theatre and Hartford Stage (awarded the "Connecticut Critics Award" for outstanding Featured Actor in a Play); *Trouble in Mind* at the Guthrie Theatre ("Best Ensemble Award"); *Jelly's Last Jam* at Signature Theatre; *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* at Indiana Repertory Theatre and Geva Theatre Center; and *Gem of the Ocean* at South Coast Repertory Theatre.

Mr. Derricks is joined by an ensemble cast which includes **AnnEliza Canning-Skinner** (*Sonata 1962* at the New York Musical Festival); **Badia Fahra** (Broadway production of *School of Rock*, 1st National Tour of *Little Shop of Horrors* and National/International tour of *Rent*); **Clifton Oliver** (Broadway productions of *The Lion King*, *Wicked* and *In the Heights*; National Tours of *Kinky Boots*, *Motown* and *The Scottsboro Boys*); **Tyrone L. Robinson** (National Tours of *The Lion King* and *The Book of Mormon*); **Alexis Sims** (lead vocalist for *Cirque du Soliel's Banana Shpeel*, *Dreamgirls* at Dallas Theater Center); and **Antoine L. Smith** (Broadway productions of *Carousel*, *The Color Purple*, *Memphis* and *Miss Saigon*). Local actors **Philip Detrick**, **Silas Holtz**, **Jared Morgan** and **Anthony Rosado** complete the cast as Roustabouts.

In addition to Keith Glover and Billy Thompson, the creative team includes **Norwood Pennewell** (Choreographer), **David Gallo** (scenic design), **Loren Shaw** (costume design), **Thomas C. Hase** (lighting design), **Andrew Mark Wilhelm** (sound design), **Bettie O. Rogers** (wig design), **Adriano Gatto** (Fight Choreographer), **Viveca Gardiner** (Associate Scenic Designer), **Joe Beumer** (Associate Lighting Designer), **Jenni Werner** (Literary Director/Resident Dramaturg) and **Jenn Lyons** (Production Stage Manager).

Revival is the latest play commissioned by Geva Theatre Center to receive a full production as part of the theatre's season. Last year's Geva-commissioned world premiere of *The Agitators: The Story of Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass* has had four subsequent productions at theatres around the U.S. with several more being planned.

The 2018-2019 Season is sponsored by **ESL Federal Credit Union** and **Rochester Regional Health**. The Honorary Season Producer is **Dr. Dawn Lipson**. *Revival: The Resurrection of Son House* is produced with support from Media Sponsors **News10NBC**, **WXXI** and **Radio 95.1**.

***Revival: The Resurrection of Son House* begins previews on May 1, opens May 4 and runs through June 2.**

**For further information, photographs or to arrange interviews, please contact:
Dawn Kellogg, Communications Manager, (585) 420-2059.**

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

- Previews:** Wednesday, May 1 @ 7:30pm
Thursday, May 2 @ 7:30pm
Friday, May 3 @ 8pm
Saturday, May 4 @ 2pm (Open Captioned Performance)
- Opening:** **Saturday, May 4 @ 8pm**
- Performances:** Sunday, May 5 @ 2pm and 7pm
Tuesday, May 7 @ 7:30pm
Wednesday, May 8 @ 7:30pm
Thursday, May 9 @ 7:30pm
Friday, May 10 @ 8pm
Saturday, May 11 @ 4pm and 8:30pm
Sunday, May 12 @ 2pm (Sunday Salon) and 7pm
Tuesday, May 14 @ 6pm
Wednesday, May 15 @ 7:30pm
Thursday, May 16 @ 7:30pm
Friday, May 17 @ 8pm
Saturday, May 18 @ 4pm and 8:30pm
Sunday, May 19 @ 2pm (Audio Description Performance) and 7 pm
Tuesday, May 21 @ 7:30pm
Wednesday, May 22 @ 7:30pm
Thursday, May 23 @ 7:30 pm (ASL Interpreted Performance)
Friday, May 24 @ 8pm
Saturday, May 25 @ 4pm and 8:30pm
Sunday, May 26 @ 2pm (Sunday Salon)
Tuesday, May 28 @ 7:30pm
Wednesday, May 29 @ 2pm and 7:30pm (Open-captioned performances)
Thursday, May 30 @ 7:30pm
Saturday, June 1 @ 4pm and 8:30pm
Sunday, June 2 @ 2pm and 7pm
- Ticket Prices:** **Tickets start at \$25.**
- Reservations:** (585) 232-GEVA (4382), Website: www.gevatheatre.org
- Location:** **Geva Theatre Center, 75 Woodbury Blvd, Rochester, NY 14607**

* Partial support for open captioning provided by Theatre Development Fund.

GEVA THEATRE CENTER

Founded in 1972, Geva Theatre Center is a not-for-profit, professional theatre company dedicated to creating and producing professional theatre productions, programs and services of a national standard. As Rochester's leading professional theatre, Geva Theatre Center is the most attended regional theatre in New York State, and one of the 25 most subscribed in the country, serving up to 160,000 patrons annually, including more than 16,000 students.

The 516-seat Elaine P. Wilson Stage is home to a wide variety of performances, from musicals to American and world classics. The 180-seat Ron & Donna Fielding Stage is home to Geva's own series of contemporary drama, comedy and musical theatre; Geva's New Play Reading Series and the Hornets' Nest - an innovative play-reading series facilitating community-wide discussion on controversial topics. In addition, the Fielding Stage hosts visiting companies of both local and international renown.

Geva Theatre Center offers a wide variety of educational, outreach and literary programs, nurturing audiences and artists alike. Since 1995, the organization has been under the artistic direction of Mark Cuddy.