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An Original Afrikan-American Storytelling "Tales from an Urban Empire" Slated for IWU, Jan. 27

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--"Tales from an Urban Empire"--an original Afrikan-American* storytelling--will be performed at Illinois Wesleyan University on Jan. 27 at 7 p.m. in the Main Lounge of the Memorial Student Center, 104 E. University St., Bloomington.

The performance is open to the public, free-of-charge.

"Tales from an Urban Empire," written by William S. Carroll and Larry Nance, combines music, movement, and the spoken word to bring poignant tales to life. It explores the personal stories and voices of Afrikan-Americans* and the stories they inspire.

The Ma'at Production Association of Afrikan Centered Theatre (MPAACT), which will perform the storytelling, describes it this way: "As it is done in Africa, these tales are created to communicate the values and traditions of the culture to audiences of all ages. With the accompaniment of select members of the Slight Return, MPAACT's musical ensemble, 'Tales from an Urban Empire' takes us on a journey to understanding the ideals, emotions, and messages of African-Americans.

"Storytelling is an oral tradition at the heart of most cultures," MPAACT adds. "'Tales from an Urban Empire' is an exploration of this tradition as it exists within an Afrikan-American context."

The Chicago-based MPAACT, a multi-disciplinary theatre arts organization, is dedicated to producing original works by emerging theatre artists.

MPAACT specializes in Afrikan Centered Theatre, a genre of theatre utilizing the universals of Afrikan ritual and performance--language, movement, and music.

"These disciplines," MPAACT says, "are intricately woven into a medium which much like the ritual at its root, conveys the power, beauty, subtlety and vibrance of the culture it represents."

MPAACT adds that its approach to theatre is a "vehicle for exploration and discovery--instead of mere viewership."

MPAACT's performance at IWU is part of a U.S. and overseas tour with the theme: Personal Stories, Personal Voices. This package includes the poetry production, "The Underground Poetry Jam," featuring the musical ensemble, Slight Return; a mainstage production of "The Inside" by Lydia Diamond; "Tales from an Urban Empire," original Afrikan-American folktales; a holiday special, "A Kwanzaa Carol," and a host of master classes and workshops using MPAACT's corps of interdisciplinary theatre artists.

For more information about MPAACT, contact: Reginald Lawrence, Executive Producer, MPAACT, 7059 South Shore Dr., Chicago, Ill. 60649; telephone: 773/728-7346.

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 2,000 students in a College of Liberal Arts, and individual schools of Music, Theatre Arts, Art, and Nursing. Since 1994, these facilities have been added to the IWU campus: a \$15 million athletics and recreation center, a \$25 million science center, a \$6.8 million residence hall, and a \$5.1 million Center for Liberal Arts.

Editor's Note: The term, Afrikan-American, appears in materials provided by MPAACT.

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