



Stockton Performing Arts Center Celebrates Black History Month with L.A. Theatre Works' 'In the Heat of the Night'

For Immediate Release

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Galloway Township, NJ - The Stockton Performing Arts Center and L.A. Theatre Works celebrate Black History Month by presenting "In the Heat of the Night" on **Friday, Feb. 6** at 7:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$32 and may be ordered online at Stockton.edu/pac or by calling the Box Office at (609) 652-9000. The Box Office is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 90 minutes before the performance. For group sales, call (609) 652-4786.

John Ball's 1965 novel, *In the Heat of the Night*, takes place in Alabama as the whole country grappled with integration and an evolving acceptance of the Civil Rights movement. This was the era of sit-ins and tear gas, of marches and assassinations. This was the era of Martin Luther King Jr., the Kennedys, and LBJ and an America finally, deliberately, moving toward a future of equality regardless of skin color.

Nearly 50 years later, have we arrived? Perhaps not. Just as Ball's white, southern police Chief Bill Gillespie's personal prejudices are tested by working with African-American detective Virgil Tibbs, America continues to confront prejudice, stereotyping and fear.

Playwright and screenwriter Matt Pelfrey sets his riveting stage adaptation of this classic American thriller in the environment of gradual change, rebellion, anger, frustration, and stubborn clinging to old ways of life. Ball's novel reflected the difficult and personal clashes of the time – the kind of daily encounters that showed ingrained racist attitudes and behaviors. The play demonstrates the slow evolution of attitudes, but leaves the characters, and America, with a long way to go.

In 1967, one year before the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., Sidney Poitier played Virgil Tibbs in the film, *In the Heat of the Night*, directed by Norman Jewison. The big-screen

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version crossed fraught political lines, marking one of the first times in a motion picture an African-American man reacted to – rather than accepted – provocation from a white man. The film won five Academy Awards and spawned a hugely popular television series. *In the Heat of the Night* remains shockingly emblematic of America in the 1960s, and how, almost half a century later, our nation is still conquering the demon of prejudice.

For our patrons with special needs, the Stockton Performing Arts Center offers wheelchair accessible seating, large type programs, and listening assistive devices. Please identify any needs you may have when making a reservation.

The Stockton Performing Arts Center, the Jersey Shore's Center for the Arts, is located on the campus of The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, on Vera King Farris Drive, just off Jim Leeds Road, in Galloway Township. Just 12 miles west of Atlantic City, the center is easily accessible from the Garden State Parkway and the Atlantic City Expressway.

This program is made possible in part by funds from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts and by funds from the National Endowment for the Arts.

STOCKTON
PAC RICHARD STOCKTON COLLEGE
PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

The Richard Stockton College
Performing Arts Center is located
in the M-Wing of the college's
main campus at 101 Vera King
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9441

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