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**DONALD DRIVER NAMED FIRST EVER CULTURAL AMBASSADOR FOR
THE MARCUS PERFORMING ARTS CENTER**

Green Bay Packer legend and community advocate affirms commitment to making the arts accessible for all

MILWAUKEE – The Marcus Performing Arts Center (MPAC) recently announced Donald Driver as the first Cultural Ambassador in organization history. The announcement came on Friday, June 25 at the MPAC’s 16th Annual BASH — the organization’s signature fundraising event benefiting education and community engagement programs. The four-year partnership with Driver as a Cultural Ambassador will promote the power of the arts, culture and community engagement by making the performing arts more accessible to underserved youth, families and communities of color throughout Southeastern Wisconsin.

“This partnership means that we will be able to reach audiences like never before,” said Kendra Whitlock Ingram, President and CEO of the Marcus Performing Arts Center. “Donald Driver continues to be a patron of the performing arts and an advocate of making the arts available for all — we could not have picked a better fit for our very first Cultural Ambassador.”

In April, the Marcus Performing Arts Center announced its commitment to strengthening racial equity, diversity and inclusion (REDI) with the release of its [REDI Action Plan](#). The plan aims to create a more racially representative and equitable culture on and off the stage at the MPAC. The introduction of the first ever Cultural Ambassador illustrates the intentional actions that the organization is taking to make the arts more accessible, engage a more diverse audience, and focus on building bridges between diverse members of the community through high-quality arts and entertainment that reflect the Milwaukee community.

“I always talk about how I want to see change,” said Donald Driver, MPAC Cultural Ambassador. “As I take on this new role for MPAC, we have the opportunity to make an impact in this world that we never thought was possible.”

Through the partnership, Driver will work with the Marcus Performing Arts Center to create intersections between the performing arts and the community through educational content developed with artists during the Marcus Center Presents season. In this first season of the partnership, Driver’s cultural ambassadorship will connect him with performing artists, including a short residency with [Hipler](#) dance company, during which Driver and dancers from the company will connect to exchange ideas on dance, community, athleticism and breaking down stereotypes in dance.

Future seasons of the partnership will include additional artist collaborations and a co-commission of a new First Stage play for young audiences and their families based on Driver’s successful Quickie Series children’s books.

“Donald continues to inspire people young and old, and his books share his messages about the power of hard work and positivity. I’ve been a fan for years, and we had hoped one day to be part of bringing them to life on stage,” said Jeff Frank, First Stage Artistic Director. “We are looking forward to collaborating with Donald Driver and the Marcus Performing Arts Center to make this happen.”

For more information on MPAC REDI Action Plan, Task Force and regular progress updates, visit [MarcusCenter.org/REDI](https://www.marcuscenter.org/REDI). Visit [MarcusCenter.org](https://www.marcuscenter.org) for information regarding upcoming events.

About Marcus Performing Arts Center

Established in 1969, the Marcus Performing Arts Center (MPAC) is the premier performing arts community gathering space in Southeastern Wisconsin, bringing high-quality arts and cultural programming to the region. As a mission-based 501(c)3 non-profit organization, MPAC strives to act as a bridge between cultures and an energizing force for collaboration and advocacy in the community. The touring Broadway series, sponsored by Johnson Financial Group, is recognized as bringing the best of Broadway entertainment to Milwaukee since 1996, and provides opportunities to educate, entertain, and engage audiences. As a presenter, MPAC offers its own diverse arts and cultural programming and outreach, such as MC Presents, Rainbow Summer Reimagined, KidZ Days, ArtsConnect, and additional performances from internationally-renowned performing artists. The Marcus Center is also home to a variety of resident arts partners, including First Stage, Milwaukee Ballet, Florentine Opera Company, Black Arts MKE, Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra, and more. MPAC is proud to be a dedicated War Memorial facility, honoring those who bravely served our country. For more information, visit www.marcuscenter.org

About Hiplet

Fuses classical pointe technique with African, Latin, Hip-Hop and urban dance styles that are rooted in communities of color. It was specifically designed to make ballet accessible to all, by mixing it with current popular songs that will be familiar to audiences who don't normally attend ballet performances. Performances may incorporate the rhythms of African drums with Tchaikovsky, arabesques and beat-boxing or even Tango en pointe - all while showcasing Hiplet's trademark sass, hip movements, and struts against popular music audiences will recognize from Black Violin to Beyonce. After features on Good Morning America, BuzzFeed, and The Huffington Post the new art form went viral in spring 2016 and has now amassed over a BILLION views. Since then partnerships with Mercedes Benz, Vogue's Anna Wintour, New York and Paris Fashion Week, W Magazine, Versace, and Old Navy to name a few, have culminated in an incredible worldwide demand for a live show featuring Homer Bryant's innovative technique. Featuring 10 dancers, CMDC is excited to partner with ECE Touring to bring its touring show to audiences everywhere.

About First Stage

First Stage is one of the nation's leading theaters for young people and families. First Stage touches hearts, engages minds and transforms lives by creating extraordinary theater experiences through professional theater productions that inspire, enlighten and entertain. Its Theater Academy, the nation's largest high-impact theater training program for young people, fosters life skills through stage skills and serves nearly 2,000 students each year. As Wisconsin's leader in arts-integrated education in schools, First Stage's dynamic Theater in Education programs promote literacy, character building and experiential learning throughout the curriculum, serving over 20,000 students each year. First Stage was selected to participate in the Partners in Education program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (2012) and was the recipient of the *Milwaukee Business Journal's* Eureka Award, recognizing creativity and innovation in business, education and the arts for its Next Steps program for students on the autism spectrum (2013, 2015). First Stage is a member of TYA/USA, the American Alliance for Theatre and Education, the Wisconsin Alliance for Arts Education, Milwaukee Arts Partners and is a cornerstone member of the United Performing Arts Fund (UPAF). www.firststage.org.

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