



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: In-Fin Tuan, 651-292-4323 ext. 106
651-998-4011 cell | pr@historytheatre.com

History Theatre presents a new immigrant tale *A Crack in the Sky*

"If people come together, they can even mend a crack in the sky."
– Somali proverb

SAINT PAUL – History Theatre presents *A Crack in the Sky*, written by Harrison David Rivers and Ahmed Ismail Yusuf and directed by Faye M. Price. This epic new tale, premiering February 10-March 4, 2018, of Ahmed Ismail Yusuf who, inspired by Maya Angelou, discovers the power of the written word.

As a young shepherd boy, Yusuf stands in front of his mother to tell her of the decision he has made in the night. He has had enough of the nomadic life, of herding goats and sheep, and is leaving to seek out a better life. With that, he sets off on an adventure that takes him on the road less traveled from Somalia to Minnesota. This play examines the courageous spirit of the immigrant and the generosity and kindness of spirit in those who opened their hearts to assist in Ahmed's journey.

For 40 years, History Theatre has presented stories of the American immigrant experience and Yusuf's story of his journey from is another such story. "Given the current political atmosphere, this story seems to take on an importance far beyond any of our past creations on the subject. Far too often, we tend to make judgements about our neighbors without ever meeting them. We live in fear of what we don't know, or don't understand," said Ron Peluso, History Theatre Artistic Director.

Ahmed's story is enlightening, and it is a story immigration as old as our nation. His journey is, in many ways, similar to Peluso's own Italian-American grandparents. "I can only imagine how difficult it must be to leave your home country and family behind and seek a better life in the USA."

This play also explores the transformative power of the written word. In the late 1980s, Minnesota-based Yusuf found inspiration in Maya Angelou's "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" and books by Malcolm X. Angelou's autobiography illustrated for Yusuf both insight and compassion which came through vividly through every sentence. "She possessed enormous courage in almost intolerable situations. Her story was both tragic and also hopeful at the same time," shared Yusuf. "The comfort and connection spoke to me in such a profound way. It surprised me how this book seized my psyche."

This story as many presented at History Theatre started with a simple question by Peluso, "So what about yourself? Tell me your story." Peluso paired Yusuf with playwright Harrison David Rivers to compose a lyrical drama as it explores Yusuf's audacity and struggle to create his own American dream. "As an African, I grew up in a society where I didn't even know I was black. I did not know being black was such a burden or a disease."

Talented cast of *A Crack in the Sky* features **M. Hajji Ahmed** as Ahmed Ismail Yusuf, **Ashawnti Ford**, **Rex Isom Jr.**, **JuCoby Johnson**, **Tracey Maloney**, **Rich Remedios**, and **Mikell Sapp**. *A Crack in the Sky's* creative team includes **Joel Sass** (Scenic Designer), **Mike Wangen** (Lighting Designer), **Aaron Chvatal** (Costume Designer), **Kellie Larson** (Properties Designer), **Katharine Horowitz** (Sound Designer) and **Kathy Maxwell** (Video Designer).

A Crack in the Sky Special Events

Opening Night Reception

Saturday, February 10 (6:45pm) | History Theatre | Free.
Featuring dance performance by The Somali Museum Dance Troupe

Hope to Reality: Climate Change, Immigration and Islamophobia

Saturday, February 24, 5pm-7:10pm, History Theatre | Register online at HistoryTheatre.com
Hamline Mitchell Law students Hanna Valento and Darrow Anderson, playwright Ahmed Yusuf and Mariam Mohamed, wife of the former Prime Minister of Somalia Ali Galaydh. \$30-55 includes light dinner, program, show ticket and CLE credit (if applicable)

Somali Poetry Night

Thursday, February 15, 6pm-7pm. History Theatre lobby. Free admission.
Hear from emerging voices of Somali poets in Minnesota. Food from Afro Deli available for purchase.

Afterthoughts

A lively post-performance discussion after Sunday 2pm matinees. Free for ticketed History Theatre patrons.

Feb 11 – Artifacts Exhibition & Presentation

Somali Museum of Minnesota. Featuring hand-made items that pastoral nomads used in daily life.

Feb 18 – Ahmed’s Story

Playwright Ahmed Yusuf shares insights of his journey from Somalia to the United States.

Feb 25 – Behind the Scenes: From Page to Stage

Cast of A Crack in the Sky

March 4 – Being Somali in Minnesota, 2018

Community members talk about issues facing the Somali community in Minnesota.

Ticket Information

OPENS: Saturday, February 10, 2018
CLOSES: Sunday, March 4, 2018
PLAYING: **Thu 10am (2/15, 2/22, 3/1) | Thu, Fri, Sat @ 7:30 pm | Sat, Sun @ 2pm**
Complete performance schedule is included on page 4

TICKETS: Adults: Tier 1 **\$40**; Tier 2 **\$35**; Tier 3 **\$30**; Tier 4 **\$25**
Seniors (60+ years old): Tier 1 **\$35**; Tier 2 **\$30**; Tier 3 **\$27**; Tier 4 **\$25**
Students (age 5 to college students – ID required): **\$15**
Discount rates are available for groups of 10 or more.
Ticket prices subject to change. Dynamic ticket pricing applies.

Performing at History Theatre, 30 East Tenth Street | St. Paul, MN 55101
History Theatre Box Office at 651-292-4323 or www.historytheatre.com/tickets/

About the Play

From Somalia to the U.S.A. 1984. A young shepherd boy stands in front of his mother to tell her of the decision he has made in the night. He has had enough of the nomadic life, of herding goats and sheep, and is leaving to seek out a better life. With that, he sets off on an adventure that takes him on the road less traveled from Somalia to Minnesota. It's the epic tale of Ahmed Ismail Yusuf who, inspired by Maya Angelou, discovers the power of the written word.

About the Artists

Ahmed Ismail Yusuf PLAYWRIGHT

Raised in a nomadic upbringing, Ahmed Ismail Yusuf is the author of three books: "Gorgorkii Yimi" a collection of short stories in Somali, "Lion's Binding Oath," by Catalyst Press, a collection of short stories in English due to be released in June 2018 and "Somalis in Minnesota" by Minnesota Historical Society. His short stories appeared in *Bildhaan: an International Journal of Somali studies*, *Mizna: an Arab-American literary magazine*. His play "A Crack in the Sky" will be in full production at History Theatre in St. Paul in February 2018. His other plays were performed at Pangea as well as Mixed Blood Theatre. His mental health publications appeared in *Journal of*

Muslim Mental Health; Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology; International Society for Traumatic-stress Studies, Psychiatry Times. He has a B.S. in creative writing and psychology from Trinity College in Hartford, CT; and an MPA (Master of Public Affairs) from the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs of the University of Minnesota.

Harrison David Rivers PLAYWRIGHT

Based in Saint Paul, Minnesota, Harrison David Rivers plays include: New York: *Only You Can Prevent Wildfires* (Ricochet Collective), *And She Would Stand Like This* (Movement Theatre Company), *Sweet* (AUDELCO nomination for Best Play, National Black Theatre), *Look Upon Our Lowliness* (Movement Theatre Company), *When Last We Flew* (GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding New York Theater: Off Off Broadway, New York International Fringe Festival). Regional: *Where Storms Are Born* (Berkshire Theatre Award Nomination for Best New Play, Edgerton Foundation New Play Award, Williamstown), *This Bitter Earth* (New Conservatory Theatre Center, Penumbra), *A Crack in the Sky* (History Theatre), *Five Points* (Theatre Latte Da), *When Last We Flew* (TheatreLaB, Diversionary Theatre). Awards: Emerging Artist of Color Fellowship (New York Theatre Workshop), Van Lier Fellowship (New Dramatists), Jerome Many Voices Fellowship, McKnight Fellowship for Playwrights, Core Writer (Playwrights' Center) and New York Stage & Film's Founder's Award. He has twice been named a finalist for the O'Neill National Playwrights' Conference and the Jonathan Larson Grant. He was a Kleban Prize finalist in 2016. Affiliations: Alum of the Public Theater's Emerging Writers' Group, Interstate 73, NAMT and The Lincoln Center Directors' Lab. Member of NYTW's Usual Suspects. Harrison was the 2016 Playwright-in-Residence at the Williamstown Theatre Festival. He serves on the Board of Directors of the Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis. Education: M.F.A, Columbia School of the Arts; B.A., Kenyon College.

Faye M. Price DIRECTOR

Faye M. Price is the Co-Artistic Producing Director of Pillsbury House Theatre and the Co Director of the Pillsbury House +Theatre Community Center in Minneapolis. She most recently directed *Nina Simone: Four Women* at Park Square Theatre. As the Co-Artistic Producing Director of Pillsbury House, Faye has brought the voices of some of the country's most challenging and exciting living playwrights to the Twin Cities, including Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*; Nilaja Sun's *No Child* and *Pike Street*; Michael Elyanow's *The Children*; Tarell Alvin McCraney's *Brothers/Sisters Trilogy*, Eisa Davis' *Bulrusher*; Daniel Alexander Jones' *Jommama Jones: Radiate* and the world premiere production of the critically-acclaimed *Buzzer* by Tracey Scott Wilson. As a production dramaturg at the Guthrie Theater, Faye collaborated on over 30 productions working alongside directors Michael Langham, Joe Dowling and Lou Bellamy, among others. As an actress Faye has appeared numerous times at Mixed Blood, the Guthrie and Illusion theaters and is a Company member of Penumbra Theater and has also performed nationally at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, ACT in Seattle, Baltimore Center Stage, the Hudson Guild Theatre and the Circle-in-the-Square Theatre in New York, among others. Faye is an alumnus of the Salzburg Seminar and has served as a dramaturg at the New Harmony Project. She has also served on numerous panels including: the National Endowment for the Arts, Jerome Foundation, the Minnesota State Arts Board, Currently on the Board of Minnesota Citizens for the Arts, Faye is the recipient of the 2006 Catharine Lealtad Service to Society Award from Macalester College. Awarded the August Wilson Fellowship to study Dramaturgy and Literary Criticism, Faye received her graduate degree from the University of Minnesota.

About History Theatre

Since 1978, the History Theatre Experience has created: Inspiration. History Theatre features real stories about real people to the stage in an immediate experience that touches our lives. 120 world premiere performances, more than any other theater in the Twin Cities. History Theatre is one of the country's most impressive new play development homes – bringing to full production new work by Jeffrey Hatcher, Melanie Marnich, Craig Wright, Kim Hines, Dorie Baizley, John Olive, Kira Obolensky, and more. Brave, entertaining explorations of all the histories that make up our diverse community. From *Farm Boys* to *Snapshots: Life in the City*, from the celebratory *Wellstone!* to the dark, complex *Piece of the Rope* about Minnesota's first public execution, HT has moved Minnesotans to rediscover, relive, and respect every piece of their history. More than 200,000 students have connected with history at History Theatre.

Accessibility

History Theatre is equipped with an FM hearing enhancement system. We offer ASL interpreted and Audio Described performances. We have complimentary wheelchairs for those patrons who need extra assistance into the building. The handicap-accessible entrance is on Cedar St. just inside the entrance is an elevator that will take patrons to the theatre level. Patrons are asked to indicate any special needs when ordering tickets.

A Crack in the Sky

Performance Schedule

February 10 – March 4, 2018

History Theatre, 30 E. 10th St, St. Paul 55102

651-292-4323 www.historytheatre.com

Thursday, February 8	<i>Preview</i>	7:30 p.m.
Friday, February 9	<i>Preview</i>	7:30 p.m.
Saturday, February 10	<i>Opening</i>	7:30 p.m.
Sunday, February 11	Afterthoughts: Artifacts Exhibition & Presentation	2:00 p.m. 4:00 p.m.
Thursday, February 15		10:00 a.m. 7:30 p.m.
Friday, February 16		7:30 p.m.
Saturday, February 17		7:30 p.m.
Sunday, February 18	<i>ASL/AD</i> <i>Afterthoughts: Ahmed's Story</i>	2:00 p.m. 4:00 p.m.
Thursday, February 22		10:00 a.m. 7:30 p.m.
Friday, February 23		7:30 p.m.
Saturday, February 24		7:30 p.m.
Sunday, February 25	<i>OC: Open Captioning</i> <i>Afterthoughts: Behind the Scenes: From Page to Stage</i>	2:00 p.m. 4:00 p.m.
Thursday, March 1		10:00 a.m. 7:30 p.m.
Friday, March 2		7:30 p.m.
Saturday, March 3		7:30 p.m.
Sunday, March 4	<i>Closing</i> <i>Afterthoughts: Being Somali in Minnesota, 2018</i>	2:00 p.m. 4:00 p.m.

AD/ASL = Audio Description & American Sign Language interpreted performance
OC = Open Captioning performance