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### CROSSROADS THEATRE COMPANY - A History

Crossroads Theatre Company begins its 15th season in the fall of 1992 as one of the country's most distinguished African American theatre companies and a leader in today's professional regional theatre movement.

Propelled by a mission to promote and develop African American theatre for its artistic and social value, Crossroads has emerged as a "World Theatre" that, in the words of one critic, "sets out, consciously and consistently, to engage and illuminate the wider world."

Crossroads was founded in October 1978 by Ricardo Khan and L. Kenneth Richardson, graduates of the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University. The company began with a grant from the Middlesex County Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) and support from New Brunswick's George Street Playhouse. After two years of unprecedented success for a developing artistic entity, Crossroads' leaders believed that as a positive and successful role model, the company should form its own institutional identity. In 1980, Crossroads became an independent, non-profit organization with a board of trustees whose members shared the theatre's vision.

That vision and the quality of work it has engendered has brought Crossroads to national prominence. In 1991, the company's work was seen and publicly hailed by President George Bush, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Colin Powell and civil rights matriarch Rosa Parks. *The Colored Museum*, which premiered at Crossroads in 1986, was seen by millions on national public television when it was produced for WNET's "Great Performances." That year, Crossroads received the National Governors' Association Award for Distinguished Service in the Arts.

In addition, Khan, the company's artistic director, can cite other accomplishments that have earned Crossroads, an Actor's Equity regional theatre, world-class status: a string of acclaimed seasons highlighted by more than two dozen premieres; a growing subscriber base of more than 3,000; an international touring program; increasing support from public and private sources; and recognition in local, state and national media.

Last season, the company entered a new stage when it moved from a century-old former garment factory to a new, \$4 million, 264-seat facility in downtown New Brunswick, taking its place in the heart of the New Brunswick Cultural Center. Entertainer Bill Cosby was part of the city- and statewide celebration, performing five shows for Crossroads.

Crossroads' mission is four-fold:

- To provide a professional environment for artists in Black theatre to develop, explore and practice their craft.
- To educate and to promote public interest in and support of professional Black theatre, and the philosophy that Black Theatre and culture are relevant to and should be shared by people of all backgrounds.
- To present honest and positive portrayals of Black life, culture and art, thereby helping to build bridges of understanding between people in this society and the world.
- To uphold the highest standards of artistic excellence in the production of professional Black theatre.

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