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Lantern Theater Company Honored With Three Barrymore Awards for 2022/23 Season

***THE ROYALE* Wins Outstanding Production of a Play**

PHILADELPHIA (November 14, 2023) – **Lantern Theater Company** was recognized yesterday with three 2023 **Barrymore Awards for Excellence in Theatre** for its 2022/23 season production of ***The Royale*** by Marco Ramirez, including:

- **Outstanding Overall Production of a Play**
- **Outstanding Leading Performance in a Play for Phillip Brown** (as Jay Jackson)
- **Outstanding Choreography/Movement in a Play for Zuhairah McGill**

Produced by the Lantern in fall 2022 in its Philadelphia premiere, *The Royale* takes inspiration from the life of Jack Johnson, the first African American heavyweight world boxing champion. Marco Ramirez's drama is filled with the rhythms of the ring and of the people fighting for freedom, dignity, and success in a fascinating and important chapter in our national story.

Set in the early 1900s, boxer Jay "The Sport" Jackson is the Negro Heavyweight Champion in a segregated world. "So good at the sport that they call him 'The Sport,'" Jackson dreams of becoming the unquestioned heavyweight champion of the world. His fight promoter, Max, organizes "the fight of the century" between Jay and Bixby, the reigning white heavyweight champion – on the condition that Jay allows Bixby to collect 90 percent of the purse, win or lose. But just before the match, Jay's sister Nina visits him to express her fear of the dangers that their community will face if he wins: "I think you're so caught up in playing David to Goliath, in being the one fish swimming upstream, I think you up and forgot about the rest of us, the ones ain't as strong as you." Jay is forced to confront his desire to break barriers in the ring – and the external consequences that he

and his community will surely face if he does. *The Royale*'s inventive staging resonantly connects the personal and political while exploring powerful tensions between opportunity and inequality.

“Marco Ramirez has created a powerful and moving story of personal triumph that turns the country on its head,” said Lantern Artistic Director **Charles McMahon**. “Loosely based on the story of the great Jack Johnson, *The Royale* takes us back to a pivotal moment in the struggle of Black Americans for respect and the full rights of citizenship.”

About The Barrymore Awards

Presented by **Theatre Philadelphia**, the Barrymore Awards for Excellence in Theatre are a nationally recognized symbol of excellence for professional theater in the Greater Philadelphia region, honoring local artists and theater companies while increasing public awareness of the richness and diversity of our city's thriving theater community. Held on Monday, November 13, 2023, at FringeArts, the 2023 Barrymore Awards represented the first time that a full slate of awards was presented since 2019. More information is online at www.theatrephiladelphia.org.

About Lantern Theater Company

Founded in 1994 and celebrating its 30th anniversary during the 2023/24 season, Lantern Theater Company's mission is to produce plays that investigate and illuminate what is essential in the human spirit and the spirit of the times. The Lantern serves the Greater Philadelphia region with award-winning productions and education programming, notably partnering with middle schools and high schools in the Philadelphia School District to provide in-classroom residencies in support of curricular learning. The Lantern became a national leader in streaming theater during the Covid health crisis, producing ten fully designed plays that were created and filmed in the company's resident home at St. Stephen's Theater, garnering coverage in national media including *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, and reaching more than 30,000 people in 15 countries and all 50 states.

About the Lantern's 2023/24 Season

Lantern Theater Company's 30th anniversary season began with *Tartuffe* by **Molière**, translated into English verse by **Richard Wilbur** and directed by **Charles McMahon**, and is now in performance with **Lynn Nottage**'s *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, directed by **Bianca LaVerne Jones** (opens Wednesday, November 15, 2023, at 7 pm). Following *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, the Lantern's 2023/24 season continues with the company's adaptation of *Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol*, a Philadelphia holiday tradition co-created by local theater artists **Anthony Lawton**, **Christopher Colucci**, and **Thom Weaver (Press Opening: Sunday,**

December 3, 2023, at 2 p.m.); Faith Healer from legendary Irish playwright **Brian Friel**, directed by longtime Lantern artistic collaborator **Peter DeLaurier** (**Press Opening: Wednesday, February 7, 2024, at 7 p.m.**); and **William Shakespeare**'s lyrical and hilarious **The Comedy of Errors**, directed by Lantern Artistic Director **Charles McMahon** (**Press Opening: Wednesday, May 22, 2024, at 7 p.m.**). More information is available online at www.lanterntheater.org.