

chichester festival theatre

14 January 2025

Chichester Festival Theatre, Rose Theatre and ETT announce a UK premiere:

**Beverley Knight in
*MARIE AND ROSETTA***

By **George Brant**

Directed by **Monique Touko**

A Chichester Festival Theatre, Rose Theatre and ETT production

25 June – 26 July, Minerva Theatre, Chichester
(press night to be announced)

Chichester Festival Theatre, Rose Theatre and ETT today announce the UK premiere of **George Brant's *Marie and Rosetta***, the roof-raising play with music telling the true story of American singer and songwriter Rosetta Tharpe and her protégé Marie Knight. Multi award-winning singer and actress **Beverley Knight**, whose many West End performances include *Memphis*, *The Drifters Girl*, *Sylvia* (for which she won an Olivier Award) and *Sister Act*, plays Rosetta Tharpe.

Directed by **Monique Touko**, *Marie and Rosetta* will play at Chichester's Minerva Theatre as part of Festival 2025 from 25 June – 26 July; [full details of the Festival season will be announced on 13 February.](#)

Sister Rosetta Tharpe, the roof-raising 'godmother of rock 'n' roll', influenced countless musicians from Elvis to Johnny Cash. This sparkling, intimate portrait of Rosetta and her beloved singing partner, Marie Knight, restores these forgotten musical heroines to the spotlight as one of the most remarkable and revolutionary duos in music history.

Mississippi, 1946. Sister Rosetta has changed the face of gospel music with her exuberant, electric guitar-playing style. Shunned by straitlaced church folk for performing in nightclubs and glorying in rhythm and blues, she's persuaded the saintly young singer Marie to join her on a tour of the segregated southern States. But first she has to convert Marie's pure Sunday sound into something that has just a little more swing...

Featuring a wealth of joyous rock and gospel hits including *Didn't It Rain* and *Peace in the Valley*, the show will feature live musicians accompanying Olivier Award-winning West End star **Beverley Knight** as Rosetta Tharpe.

George Brant is an award-winning American playwright whose work includes *Grounded* (Fringe First and Off-West End Awards).

Monique Touko, winner of the 2022 Stage Debut Award for Best Director, whose acclaimed productions include *The Boy at the Back of the Class*, *School Girls; Or, the African Mean Girls Play*, *Wedding Band* and *G*, directs this UK premiere.

Beverley Knight said: "It is a great honour to be cast in the role of Sister Rosetta Tharpe, one of the unsung architects of rock 'n' roll. I am and have always been a storyteller, whether it be in a purely music form or in a theatrical setting. I'm excited to be able to tell the Sister

Rosetta story in this important play about her life, trailblazing career and her relationship with the legendary gospel singer Marie Knight. This will be my first role in a professional play; I have performed many times in plays at an amateur level and I'm so thrilled that I get to tell HERstory as my debut. Sister Rosetta Tharpe, with her powerful expressive voice, her electrifying guitar and her Gospel message laid the foundations on which Chuck Berry, Ike Turner, Elvis Presley and literally everyone else has walked. The Godmother of rock 'n' roll deserves to be celebrated and remembered".

Monique Touko, Director, said: *"It is truly an honour to stage the UK premiere of Marie and Rosetta by George Brant. Returning to both Rose and Chichester with this needed and powerful story feels very timely. This play allows us to not only celebrate the incredible lives of two trailblazing Black female musicians, but to immerse ourselves in their world, blending song and spectacle to bring their legacy to life. We'll zoom in on the moments of their lives, big and small, and amplify their voices—both literally and metaphorically. It's a privilege and a responsibility to depict these women in their full glory, ensuring they receive the recognition they so deeply deserve for their monumental contributions to music and culture."*

Justin Audibert, Artistic Director of Chichester Festival Theatre, said: *"We are delighted to be co-producing this wonderful play, and welcoming the incomparable Beverley Knight and director Monique Touko to Chichester. It's a joy to renew our relationship with Rose Theatre, with whom we've recently co-produced Headlong's A View from the Bridge, and also hosted Monique's superb production The Boy at the Back of the Class. We know that Chichester audiences will relish this remarkable story, and can't wait to fill the Minerva Theatre with Beverley's renditions of this glorious music."*

Marie and Rosetta runs at the Rose Theatre in Kingston 2 - 24 May (Press performance: Friday 9 May 2025), prior to its Chichester run.

Marie and Rosetta is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals Ltd. on behalf of Samuel French Ltd. www.concordtheatricals.co.uk

Booking details

Full details of Festival 2025 will be announced on 13 February.

CFT Friends and Champions' priority booking will open on Saturday 22 February online and Tuesday 25 February by phone and in person.

General booking opens online on Saturday 1 March, and by phone and in person from Tuesday 4 March. Visit cft.org.uk for further details.

cft.org.uk

Images can be downloaded from www.cft.org.uk/pressimages

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