



# NEWS RELEASE

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **COCA Presents *Uptown*, a Vibrant, Boisterous, Swinging Tour Through the Harlem Renaissance Era, in Collaboration with Jazz St. Louis**

*The production features live musicians, dancers, singers and actors, and runs April 7-9, 2017*

(ST. LOUIS, MO) – Continuing the celebration of COCA's 30th Anniversary, COCA brings *Uptown* to life in a collaborative production between its five pre-professional dance, voice and theatre companies as well as with musicians from Jazz St. Louis in a showcase celebration of the power of the arts.

Celebrated Alvin Ailey dancer/choreographer Matthew Rushing created the piece and it was originally performed by the Ailey Company in 2009. *Uptown* is an episodic tour through 1920s Harlem bringing to life the rich artistic activity of the era – a busy street, a rent party, a night at the Savoy ballroom—and highlighting major moments in music, literature, the visual arts and dance. Legends like Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Josephine Baker and their contemporaries come alive to the music of Fats Waller, Nat "King" Cole and more.

The COCA artistic team has added a brand new contemporary second act celebrating the inspiration the Harlem Renaissance continues to have on modern artists.

*Uptown* is presented by The Whitaker Foundation with additional support from the Missouri Humanities Council COCA Presents is made possible by Wells Fargo Advisors.

- WHAT:** *Uptown*
- WHERE:** Founders' Theatre at COCA, 524 Trinity Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63130
- WHEN:** Friday, April 7 | 7:00 PM  
Saturday, April 8 | 1:00 PM & 5:00 PM  
Sunday, April 9 | 1:00 PM & 5:00 PM
- PRICES:** \$16-\$30 at [www.cocastl.org](http://www.cocastl.org), by phone at 314.561.4877, or in person at COCA's Box Office.
- PHOTOS:** High-resolution photos available at: <http://www.cocastl.org/about/media-resources/>
- INTERVIEWS:** Interviews are available with the artistic team. Contact Beth McClure at [bmccclure@cocastl.org](mailto:bmccclure@cocastl.org) or 314.561.4868 for availability and to schedule.

### **ABOUT MATTHEW RUSHING:**

Matthew Rushing was born in Los Angeles. He began his dance training with Kashmir Blake in Inglewood, Calif., and later continued his training at the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts. He is the recipient of a Spotlight Award and Dance Magazine Award and was named a Presidential Scholar in the Arts. He was a scholarship student at The Ailey School and later became a member of Ailey II, where he danced for a year. During his career, Mr. Rushing has performed as a guest artist for galas in Vail, Colo., as well as in Austria, Canada, France, Italy and Russia. He has performed for Presidents George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama, as well as at the 2010 White House tribute to Judith Jamison. During his time with the Company, he has choreographed three ballets: *Acceptance In Surrender* (2005), a

collaboration with Hope Boykin and Abdur-Rahim Jackson, *Uptown* (2009), a tribute to the Harlem Renaissance, and *ODETTA* (2014), a celebration of "The queen of American folk." In 2012, he created *Moan*, which was set on Philadanco and premiered at The Joyce Theater. Mr. Rushing joined the company in 1992 and became the Rehearsal Director in June 2010.

#### ABOUT COCA COMPANIES:

**Allegro and Adagio**, COCA's two student vocal ensembles, feature 45 of the region's best young vocalists. Both companies perform a repertoire comprised of musical theatre, with a sampling of pop and seasonal selections sprinkled throughout.

**Ballet Eclectica**, COCA's student ballet company, incorporates the best of classical and contemporary ballet to build its repertoire. Members of the company participate in a minimum of five dance classes a week at COCA and rehearse two times a week.

**COCAdance** is an advanced student dance company. While COCAdance focuses on modern and jazz disciplines, students have the rewarding experience of working in a wide variety of styles due to COCA's commitment to guest choreographers.

The **COCA Hip-Hop Crew** consists of students in elementary through high school, as well as select adult hip-hop performers from the St. Louis region. The company was founded by artistic director Anthony "Redd" Williams, whose fresh style has shaped a repertoire of choreography that always pushes boundaries.

The **COCA Theatre Company** enables young actors to perform in professional productions of thoughtfully selected plays and musicals. Guest directors, music directors, choreographers and designers lead the creative teams, providing cast members with opportunities to work with some of the top regional theatre professionals.

#### ABOUT COCA PRESENTS:

COCA Presents is COCA's performance series featuring the quality family theatre for which COCA has been known for nearly 30 years. Comprised of shows created and produced by COCA, as well as the best touring productions from around the world, the COCA Presents performance series offers bold, cross-disciplinary performances. COCA Presents 2016-2017 is made possible by Wells Fargo Advisors, with additional support provided by Mary Strauss, Aetna, Emerson, The Mary Ranken Jordan and Ettie A. Jordan Charitable Foundation, the Missouri Arts Council, The Cheshire St. Louis, St. Louis Public Radio, Arts & Education Council and Regional Arts Commission.

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#### About COCA

Founded in 1986, COCA is the fourth largest multidisciplinary community arts center in the country and a national leader in innovative arts education. With a mission to enrich lives and build community through the arts, COCA serves 50,000 people of all ages and skill levels, from enthusiastic amateurs to emerging professionals — all taught by a faculty of distinguished arts educators. We provide meaningful arts experiences in our own studios, gallery and theatres as well as in schools, community centers and corporate settings in order to build a vibrant St. Louis that is creative, connected and inclusive. To ensure diversity and inclusion in all of our programs, we are committed to eliminating economic and social barriers to participation in the arts.