



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COCA CELEBRATES 20 YEARS OF SUMMER MUSICALS WITH PRODUCTION OF *THE COLOR PURPLE*, JULY 19–21

Musical to Feature COCA Alumni & Current Students on Stage to Tell a Narrative of Resilience in the Face of Adversity, Redemption, & Hope

ST. LOUIS (July 9, 2024)—COCA Summer Musicals have been a source of inspiration, talent, and community for two decades. In celebration of this special milestone, COCA will present [The Color Purple](#), a musical adaptation of Alice Walker’s Pulitzer Prize-winning novel and the popular 1985 Steven Spielberg film, July 19–21. Performances will be held July 19, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.; July 20, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.; and July 21, 2024, at 1:00 p.m.

Featuring a Grammy Award-winning score infused with jazz, ragtime, gospel, and African blues, *The Color Purple* is a testament to the healing power of love, faith, resilience, and sisterhood. The production is directed by Dr. Duane Foster with music direction by Dr. Philip A. Woodmore and choreography by Christopher Page-Sanders, a COCA alumnus and the longtime choreographer of COCA’s Summer Musicals.

"Watching our cast evolve during rehearsals for *The Color Purple* has been nothing short of inspiring. Each day, they delve deeper into their characters' souls, transforming emotional complexity into powerful performances that breathe new life into this timeless story," said Dr. Duane Foster, Director of *The Color Purple* at COCA. "Their dedication and growth embody the very spirit of resilience and strength that the musical celebrates."

To recognize the contributions of COCA alumni and their significant role in the success and growth of the program, COCA alumni will perform on stage alongside current COCA students for this production. The cast of 35 artists is comprised of 14 professional and apprentice alumni and 21 students.

"COCA is thrilled to honor the 20th anniversary of its summer musical program with this special production," said Shawna Flanigan, COCA Artistic Director of Theatre. "Within the cast we have a mix of COCA’s current students; apprentice performers who are COCA alumni currently in musical theatre programs at colleges across the country; and professional COCA alumni—those who graduated from COCA more than four years ago and are now engaged in their careers. This unique blend both celebrates the rich history of the program and provides the opportunity for mentorship."

On Saturday, July 20, at 6:00 p.m., COCA and [Forward Through Ferguson \(FTF\)](#) will host a pre-show panel that connects the themes of *The Color Purple* with reflections on the 10-year anniversary of the Ferguson Uprising. The panel will feature Dr. Duane Foster, Director of *The Color Purple*; Indigo K. Sams, President & CEO of COCA; Riisa Rawlins, CEO of the St. Louis Regional Health Commission and Board Member of COCA and FTF; Annissa McCaskill, Executive Director of FTF; and Faybra Jabulani, Lead Racial Equity Capacity Catalyst of FTF.

Tickets may be purchased online at cocastl.org or by contacting the COCA Box Office at 314.561.4873. Ticket prices range from \$26–30. *The Color Purple* is best suited for mature teens and adults. The show’s run time is 2 hours and 30 minutes with a 15-minute intermission.

Audio description is provided by MindsEye Radio for the 1:00 p.m. performance on Saturday, July 20. ASL interpretation is provided by DEAF, Inc. for the 7:00 p.m. performance on Saturday, July 20.

The Color Purple is proudly presented by Mary Strauss, who was a driving force for the development of COCA's annual Summer Musical and has remained a steadfast supporter as its presenting sponsor. *The Color Purple* is also supported by Carrollton Bank, Alison & John Ferring, and Mercy.

ABOUT COCA

COCA's mission is to *enrich lives and build community through the arts*. With a commitment to equity and access, COCA serves as a regional hub for learning in and through the arts for all ages from all backgrounds. One of the most diverse cultural institutions in St. Louis, COCA serves more than 60,000 students, audience members, artists, and families from more than 200 zip codes across the St. Louis region every year. The fourth largest multi-disciplinary arts organization in the country, COCA is committed to supporting the vitality and creativity of more than 200 artists at the heart of their work in schools, community centers, local business, cultural organizations, and onsite at its campus in University City.

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