



***HartBeat Ensemble Announces
Godfrey L. Simmons, Jr.
as Artistic Director***

***Simmons Set to Begin Leadership Role in
Hartford on December 1***

HARTFORD, Conn. – (August 19, 2019) – HartBeat Ensemble announced today that actor, producer, director and playwright **Godfrey L. Simmons, Jr.** will be the 18-year-old company's new artistic director.

Acknowledging the need to secure a top-notch professional for this leadership position, HartBeat Ensemble's board undertook a national executive search process that was funded by the Greater Hartford Arts Council's Ignition Program. Simmons currently serves as co-artistic director of Civic Ensemble in Ithaca, NY, and as senior lecturer in Cornell University's Department of Performing and Media Arts. Simmons is set to assume HartBeat's leadership position full-time on Dec. 1, 2019.

HartBeat Ensemble will be hosting **a fundraising event to welcome Simmons** to the community on **Sunday, September 22 at 2pm at Black-Eyed Sally's Southern Kitchen & Bar** in downtown Hartford. The event will also find the theatre honoring **Immanuel Congregational Church** with the Cultural & Civi Leadership Award and **Looking In Theatre's Director Jonathan Gillman** for his work as an artistic leader. Tickets for the event, which include lunch and beer/wine, are \$75 and can be obtained by visiting HartBeatEnsemble.org or by calling **(860) 548-9144**.

"Simmons is a passionate advocate for the arts, social justice, and diversity, equity and inclusion," said **Joshua Michtom**, president of the HartBeat Ensemble Board of Directors. "The board and ensemble look forward to working with our new artistic director to move the theater company into the future. As an institution that has grown and flourished under the leadership of its founders, HartBeat's transition to a new generation of leadership is among the greatest challenges we can face. We have the utmost confidence Godfrey is the right person to lead us in delivering bold and innovative programs to our city."

Simmons states, "HartBeat Ensemble has a nearly two decade legacy of making sharp political theatre accessible to diverse audiences in Hartford and beyond. I'm humbled to be given the responsibility to co-lead HartBeat with the board, interim managing director Rhoda Cerritelli, and a gifted and committed ensemble. I look forward to continuing HartBeat's tradition of company-created, community-based works, while producing new political plays by our country's finest socially-engaged playwrights."

Simmons is an award-winning actor, producer, director, and playwright who has spent thirty years amplifying the voices of marginalized people and communities. He brings with him an extensive background working with ensembles, as an actor (Off-Broadway and regional theaters), teacher, director, playwright and producer. In 2012, he co-founded Civic Ensemble, a regional theatre in Ithaca, NY. He was a Producing Artist for Off-Broadway's Epic Theatre Ensemble for four years, appearing in a dozen productions. He also co-wrote and starred with Brandt Adams in a documentary play about the election of President Barack Obama, *Dispatches From (A)mended America* after interviewing 100 Southerners about the election. He won the 1999 Audelco Award for Best Supporting Actor for his performance opposite Leslie Uggams in *The Old Settler* at Primary Stages.

In addition to teaching acting at Cornell, he is a lifetime member of Ensemble Studio Theatre and sits on the board of the Network of Ensemble Theaters. Godfrey is married to

theater artist Sarah K. Chalmers, also co-artistic director of Civic Ensemble, and they have a young son, Samuel.

HartBeat Ensemble

Founded in 2001 by Steven Raider-Ginsburg, Julia B. Rosenblatt and Gregory R. Tate (1952-2012), HartBeat is one of Hartford's most important cultural institutions, dedicated to creating provocative theater that connects to the community beyond the traditional barriers of class, race, geography and gender. HartBeat original, full-length creative works, include the award-winning *Flipside*, the critically recognized *Jimmy & Lorraine*, and this year's sold-out hit *Pegao* by Ensemble member Cin Martinez. HartBeat continues to inspire the next generation of leaders to create change for a better world through its *Youth Play Institute*.

HartBeat's plays have been presented at festivals and theaters throughout the region, such as the NY International Fringe Festival (awarded 2012 Best Ensemble), Boston University, Central Connecticut State University, Charter Oak Cultural Center, Yale University, Trinity College, University of Saint Joseph, the Ko Festival of Performance in Amherst, Mass., among others.

In 2013, HartBeat moved into the **Carriage House Theater** located on Farmington Avenue in Hartford. Our home provides an opportunity for HartBeat to produce a season of events that extends beyond its mainstage and education productions. The company's goal is to offer our community consistently dynamic live presentations by HartBeat Ensemble as well as other Connecticut-based artists and organizations.

To learn more, visit [**HartBeatEnsemble.org**](http://HartBeatEnsemble.org).

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