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*“That’s why we’re Five Fingers of Funk, ya dig?
‘Cause separate, we ain’t nothing. But together, we’re everythang.”*



FIVE FINGERS OF FUNK

**Major New Musical by the Hip Hop Theater Artist Will Power
Debuts with The Children’s Theatre Company October 24**

Minneapolis, MN—Pioneering hip hop theater artist **Will Power’s** fierce new coming-of-age tale within a classic 70s funk concert debuts October 24 at The Children’s Theatre Company (CTC). **FIVE FINGERS OF FUNK**, created by Power in collaboration with composer **Justin Ellington** and director **Derrick Sanders**, runs through November 16 on the Cargill Stage as the first show in the **ctc4teens** season.

It’s the 1970s and the mystical guru of all things groovy—the soulful Dr. Funk—opens the show with an introduction to the members of the newly formed band, “The Five Fingers of Funk.” The band has big dreams and one goal: to win the contest at Dee Dee’s Nightclub. When struggles with parents, bosses, the neighborhood drug dealer and their own inner demons test the group, the music’s the thing that holds them together. Humor, talent and dedication to the funkalicious fingerings of classic 70s funk music drive this new musical, recipient of a prestigious Joyce Award.

Power, the creator of *FLOW*, the solo tour-de-force seen worldwide, is widely regarded as one of the leaders in hip hop theater. Says Power, “Funk was the soundtrack of my childhood. As I grew into a man and turned to hip hop as my main form of creative expression, I borrowed from the funk. It’s the foundation for what I do today. I wanted to create a work rooted in my

coming-of-age experiences but one that is relevant to today's audiences and to the Twin Cities. As the home turf of Prince and The Time, Minneapolis was one of the epicenters of funk."

Power is co-composing the music for the show with Justin Ellington, whose work as a composer/sound designer with Alliance Theatre of Atlanta helped earn the company the 2007 Tony Award for Best Regional Theater. Director Derrick Sanders is the founding artistic director of Congo Square Theatre Company in Chicago and was the director of the Lortel and Audelco-nominated *King Hedley* Off-Broadway for Signature Theatre.

"The idea of exploring the fabric of teenage American life through funk music intrigues me immensely," says Sanders. "I think there could be no better reflection on the climate today than using the passion of the funk to explore the heights of possibility and the depths of corruption that existed in the 70s and still echo today."

In bringing FIVE FINGERS OF FUNK to the stage, CTC Artistic Director Peter Brosius says, "Like the recent *Passing Strange* and *Spring Awakening*, this show is completely new, completely unique. When we opened our Cargill Theatre with *Flow* and experienced the intensity, power and creativity of Will Power, I knew that I wanted him to create something new for CTC. He is a rare and unique artist—generous of spirit, prodigious in his talent, and vital in his theatricality."

FIVE FINGERS OF FUNK features a cast of eight actors who also serve as the show's on-stage musicians: **Keith Hale** as Big Ced, **Jahi Kears**e as Poppo, **Traci Allen** as Ruby, **Namir Smallwood** as DP, **Matthew Rein** as Falcon, **Edwin Lee Gibson** in several roles including Dr. Funk, **Greta Oglesby** as Big Ced's Momma and Dee Dee, and **Steve Sweere** also in several roles including Falcon's Pa.

FIVE FINGERS OF FUNK opens Friday, October 24 (previews begin Tuesday, October 21), and plays through Sunday, November 16. The show is most enjoyed by ages 13 and older. Tickets range from \$20–\$35 for adults and \$14–\$29 for children (17 & under), students and seniors. Tickets are on sale at (612) 874-0400 or www.childrenstheatre.org.

The Children's Theatre Company (CTC) is the first theatre for young people to win the coveted Tony® Award for Outstanding Regional Theater (2003). Founded in 1965, CTC serves over 300,000 people annually and is one of the 20 largest theater companies in the nation. The company is noted for defining worldwide standards for youth theatre with an innovative mix of classic tales, celebrated international productions and challenging new work.

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"The nation's leading theatre for young audiences"—*New York Times*

The Children's Theatre Company FIVE FINGERS OF FUNK
Performance Schedule

Tickets: (612) 874-0400 or www.childrenstheatre.org

Tue Oct 21	7:30pm	preview
Wed Oct 22	7:30pm	preview
Thu Oct 23	7:30pm	preview
Fri Oct 24	8:00pm	opening
Sat Oct 25	4:00 & 8:00pm	
Sun Oct 26	1:00 & 4:00pm	

Thu Oct 30	7:30pm	
Fri Oct 31	8:00pm	
Sat Nov 1	4:00 & 8:00pm	
Sun Nov 2	1:00 & 4:00pm	

Thu Nov 6	7:30pm	
Fri Nov 7	8:00pm	
Sat Nov 8	4:00 & 8:00pm	
Sun Nov 9	1:00 & 4:00pm	

Thu Nov 13	7:30pm	
Fri Nov 14	8:00pm	
Sat Nov 15	4:00 & 8:00pm	
Sun Nov 16	1:00 & 4:00pm	

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FIVE FINGERS OF FUNK CREATORS

Will Power (Playwright, Composer) is an award-winning actor, rapper, playwright, and educator. His adaptation of the Greek tragedy *Seven Against Thebes*, retitled *The Seven*, enjoyed a successful Off-Broadway run at the New York Theater Workshop in 2006 and The La Jolla Playhouse in 2008. His solo show *FLOW* was featured in the Hip Hop Theater Festival before touring nationally and internationally to critical acclaim. Power's numerous awards include a Lucille Lortel Award for Best Musical, the TCG Peter Zeisler Memorial Award, a Jury Award for Best Theatre Performance at the HBO US Comedy Arts Festival, a Drama Desk Award nomination, and the Trailblazer Award from The National Black Theater Network. Power's numerous film and television appearances include *The Steven Colbert Report* (Comedy Central), and *Bill Moyers on Faith and Reason* (PBS).

Justin Ellington's (Composer, Orchestrations, Music Director) music for the Alliance Theatre's *Topdog/Underdog*, *King Hedley II*, *Shakespeare's R&J*, *Ferdinand and the Bull*, and *Androcles the Lion* were part of the body of work that led to the Atlanta-based company's 2007 Tony Award for Best Regional Theater. Additional Atlanta credits include shows for Push Push Theatre); *Sisters* (Jomandi); *Psalm 13* (7 Stages Theatre); *A Negro Dance Lesson* (Horizons Theatre, Clark Atlanta University, 7 Stages, Georgia State University, and Total Dance. His regional credits include shows for La Jolla Playhouse, Goodman Theatre/Congo Square, Made n Da Shade/Cosmic Theatre Amsterdam, New York Theatre Workshop, and St. Louis Black Repertory. Upcoming projects include *A Twelfth Night* (Bristol Riverside Theatre) and *Class of 3000* (Alliance Theatre). Ellington is a member of Multi-Platinum production company Bangladesh, responsible for hit records of Ludacris, Kelis, Missy Elliott, Lil Wayne, Busta Rhymes, and others.

Derrick Sanders (Director) is the Founding Artistic Director of Congo Square Theatre Company. His most recent credits include *August Wilson's 20th Century Cycle* at the Kennedy Center, *Joe Turner's Come And Gone* at Center Stage, *Elmina's Kitchen* and *Stick Fly* with True Colors Theatre in Atlanta, and his Off-Broadway debut with *King Hedley II* for Signature Theatre (which he received two Lucille Lortel and Audelco nominations). He received three JEFF nominations for *Joe Turner's Come And Gone*, directed the world premiere of the Jeff-nominated *Deep Azure*, as well as *Seven Guitars*, for which he received a BTAA and JEFF Award for Best Director and Black Excellence Award for Best Producer. He was part of August Wilson's world premiere productions of *Radio Golf* and *Gem of the Ocean* on Broadway and at the Huntington Theatre, Mark Taper Forum and The Goodman. He was named 2005 Chicago Tribunes' Chicagoan of the Year in Theater.