

STOCKTON

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## Stockton Performing Arts Center Celebrates Black History Month with L.A. Theatre Works' 'In the Heat of the Night'

### ***For Immediate Release***

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**Galloway Township, NJ** - The Stockton Performing Arts Center and L.A. Theatre Works celebrate Black History Month by presenting "In the Heat of the Night" on **Friday, Feb. 6** at 7:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$32 and may be ordered online at [Stockton.edu/pac](http://Stockton.edu/pac) or by calling the Box Office at (609) 652-9000. The Box Office is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 90 minutes before the performance. For group sales, call (609) 652-4786.

John Ball's 1965 novel, *In the Heat of the Night*, takes place in Alabama as the whole country grappled with integration and an evolving acceptance of the Civil Rights movement. This was the era of sit-ins and tear gas, of marches and assassinations. This was the era of Martin Luther King Jr., the Kennedys, and LBJ and an America finally, deliberately, moving toward a future of equality regardless of skin color.

Nearly 50 years later, have we arrived? Perhaps not. Just as Ball's white, southern police Chief Bill Gillespie's personal prejudices are tested by working with African-American detective Virgil Tibbs, America continues to confront prejudice, stereotyping and fear.

Playwright and screenwriter Matt Pelfrey sets his riveting stage adaptation of this classic American thriller in the environment of gradual change, rebellion, anger, frustration, and stubborn clinging to old ways of life. Ball's novel reflected the difficult and personal clashes of the time – the kind of daily encounters that showed ingrained racist attitudes and behaviors. The play demonstrates the slow evolution of attitudes, but leaves the characters, and America, with a long way to go.

In 1967, one year before the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., Sidney Poitier played Virgil Tibbs in the film, *In the Heat of the Night*, directed by Norman Jewison. The big-screen

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