



P R E S S R E L E A S E

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World Renowned Hip Hop/Theater Artist BABA ISRAEL Says Goodbye to The States at BAMcafé: FRIDAY, MAY 1

Beatboxer, Poet, Educator Heads to Manchester As Artistic Director at Contact

New York City - Hip Hop/Theater Artist **BABA ISRAEL** announced last week that he will head to Manchester, England to serve as Artistic Director at **Contact Theater**. Contact is a one-of-a-kind internationally acclaimed theater for young people. Today, Israel announces his official "Going Away" final performance at **BAMcafe Live**. The show will feature special guests **Yako 440, DJ DP One, Core Rhythm, D-Cross, Eagle Nebula, Duv, and Breez Evahflowin**. The finale is a part of BAMcafe Live's 10th Anniversary Celebration and will take place **Friday, May 1, 2009** at 9:30 pm. BAMcafe is located at 30 Lafayette Avenue, Downtown Brooklyn. The event is free and open to the public. For more event info, contact 718.646.4100 or www.bam.org.

Baba Israel's Background in Theater

Born and currently living in New York, Israel is a poet, emcee, theatre artist, beatboxer, director, producer, and author. He was born into and grew up in **The Living Theatre**, a world renowned theater company founded in 1947 by **Judith Malina** (the German-born student of **Erwin Piscator**) and **Julian Beck** (an abstract expressionist painter of the New York School). The Living Theatre is an imaginative, avant-garde alternative to commercial theater and has staged nearly a hundred productions performed in eight languages in twenty-eight countries on five continents. Baba Israel's parents Steve Ben Israel and Pamela Mayo were core members of this company. They raised Israel amongst The Living Theatre company as they all rehearsed and performed right across from BAM in the 70's.

As a director, Baba Israel's work includes *Project 2050* (New World Theatre), *Maxwell Golden* (UK) and *Sharpening Saws* (UK). He is also Co-founder and Co-Artistic Director of Playback NYC Theatre Company which aims to bring theater to under-represented communities.

Baba Israel's Background in Hip Hop

Having been raised in the tradition where art functions to challenge society, Baba Israel connection to hip hop is quite understandable. Hip Hop is a "culture that has shaped my voice and the way I move through the world." From the mid 80's to current day, Israel has been immersed in hip hop as an emcee, a beatboxer, an educator, a producer, a solo artist, an ensemble performer, and a lover of the culture. From the spoken word scene to the hip hop stage, Baba Israel's skills have earned him opportunity to tour

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extensively across the United States, Europe, South America, Australia, and Asia. Most recently, he toured as a Cultural Ambassador with Jazz at Lincoln Center/US State Department as a part of The Rhythm Road Tour. He has performed with artists such as **Outkast, The Roots, Vernon Reid, Rahzel, Afrika Bambaataa**, and even **Bill Cosby**.

Baba Israel's Background in Education and Activism

Baba Israel is also active in his community, conducting workshops and general assemblies at countless public schools. He notes, "My work in arts education is an integral part of my process....I interact with young generations. I work with a range of communities, from kindergartners with expansive imaginations to high school students with attitude, real world struggles, and deep insight." Israel's arts education and theater work is under the umbrellas of his organization Open Thought Arts and through Playback NYC. As a teacher, he has worked in a wide range of disciplines and with several cutting-edge arts organizations, including **Urban Word, BAM, Arts Horizons, New World Theatre**, among others.

Baba Israel and Contact Theater

When asked to illuminate the significance of this move to Manchester as Artistic Director of Contact Theater, Israel responded: "This is a revolutionary moment. A Hip Hop-based artist moving into a position of sustained leadership with the purpose of energizing the lives of young people through the arts is major. I bring a background and perspective that is grounded in not only Hip Hop but in theatre, jazz, poetry, and other genres."

Charles Lauder, Contact's Chairman says of Israel's new position: "This is a thrilling appointment at a pivotal time for Contact. Baba Israel has an international pedigree and has undertaken remarkable work for and with young people. He brings a range of attributes and talents that make him ideally suited to inspire and lead the young people who are at the heart of Contact's activities as well as its vibrant management team. We are hugely excited at the prospect of Baba taking us on the next stage of Contact's continuing development."

No stranger to Contact, Baba Israel has performed there previously. Last year, he performed in *Process* and *Boombap! Showtime* to rave reviews. He adds: "In 2005, when I came to Contact, I was blown away and returned to New York describing the place as a model venue for cutting-edge art where young people feel at home, take risks, and grow as people. I have worked there in many capacities and I am now honored to become the Artistic Director of such a forward thinking organization."

With a MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts from Goddard College, Israel can also add author to his list of accomplishments. In 2008, he published *Remixing the Ritual: Hip Hop Theatre, Aesthetics and Practice*. In it he comments that it is "From within the popular form of Hip Hop I set out to learn and know its history...and to be part of envisioning new forms and innovations." His move to Manchester is a perfect unification of his passions: merging the worlds of hip hop, theater, and youth arts, and education.

Baba Israel will start the new position at Contact this summer. His "Going Away" finale at BAMcafe does not mark the end of his performance life, for he plans to maintain his career as a hip hop performance artist.

For more information on this artist, please visit www.babaisrael.com. For more info about Contact, please visit www.contact-theatre.org. Send an email to Claire Will, Director of Marketing and Communications, at clairewill@contact-theatre.org. All media inquires for Baba Israel are directed to April R. Silver or Thysha Shabazz at AKILA WORKSONGS, Inc. at 718.756.8501 or via email pr@akilaworksongs.com.