

Contact: Richard Kornberg / Billy Zavelson / Tommy Wesely (212) 944-9444
Richard@KornbergPR.com / Billy@KornbergPR.com / Tommy@KornbergPR.com
PHOTOS: <http://www.felaonbroadway.com/epk.html>

FELA!
TO APPEAR ON
“THE COLBERT REPORT”
MONDAY, DECEMBER 7 @ 11:30pm EST
COMEDY CENTRAL

FIRST BROADWAY MUSICAL EVER TO
PERFORM ON THE POPULAR LATE-NIGHT TALK
SHOW

Fela!, the new musical based on the life and music of groundbreaking African composer, performer and activist **Fela Anikulapo-Kuti**, will perform on Comedy Central’s “The Colbert Report” on **Monday, December 7** at **11:30pm EST**. Host **Stephen Colbert** will interview *Fela!* Tony award-winning director & choreographer **Bill T. Jones**, followed by a performance of “Zombie,” led by **Sahr Ngaujah** and accompanied by the world renowned Afrobeat band **Antibalas**. This booking marks the first Broadway production ever to appear on the popular satirical pundit show. *Fela!* is currently in performances at Broadway’s Eugene O’Neill Theatre. Tickets are available through www.Telecharge.com, by calling (212) 239-6200 or in-person at The Eugene O’Neill Box Office, located at 230 West 49th Street.

Directed and choreographed by Tony® Award-winner **Bill T. Jones** with a book by **Jim Lewis**, *Fela!* welcomes its audience into the extravagant, decadent and rebellious world of Afrobeat legend **Fela Anikulapo-Kuti**. Using his pioneering music (a blend of jazz, funk and African rhythm and harmonies), *Fela!* explores Kuti’s controversial life as artist, political activist and revolutionary musician. Featuring many of Fela Kuti’s most captivating songs and Bill T. Jones’s imaginative staging, *Fela!* is a provocative hybrid of concert, dance and musical theater.

Upon its November 23 opening, Ben Brantley of *The New York Times* wrote, “The hot (and seriously cool) energy that comes from the musical gospel preached by the title character of *Fela!* feels as if it could stretch easily to the borders of Manhattan and then across a river or two. There has never been anything on Broadway like this

production." *The New York Post's* Elisabeth Vincentelli cheered, "There's enough energy to short circuit Con Ed." David Cote of *Time Out New York*, in giving it 5 stars (out of 5) raved, "*Fela!* is more than a musical; it's an ecstatic phenomenon." And Jennifer Farrar from the *AP* exclaimed, "An exuberant celebration!"

Fela! is produced by **Shawn "Jay-Z" Carter, Will & Jada Pinkett Smith, Ruth & Stephen Hendel, Roy Gabay, Sony Pictures Entertainment, Edward Tyler Nahem, Slava Smolokowski, Chip Meyrelles/Ken Greiner, Douglas G. Smith, Steve Semlitz/Cathy Glazer, Daryl Roth/True Love Productions, Susan Dietz/Mort Swinsky and Knitting Factory Entertainment.** In association with Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson.

FELA! Performance Schedule

Tuesday at 7pm, Wednesday – Friday at 8pm, Saturday at 2pm & 8pm, Sunday at 2pm and 7pm.

Tickets range from \$27 - \$122 (prices include a \$2 Jujamcyn Theatre facility fee) and can be purchased online at www.Telecharge.com, by phone (212) 239-6200 or in-person at The Eugene O'Neill Box Office, located at 230 West 49th Street. For more information about **Fela!** please visit www.FelaOnBroadway.com.

#

Fela!, the new musical based on the life and music of groundbreaking African composer, performer and activist **Fela Anikulapo-Kuti**, will perform on Comedy Central's "The Colbert Report" on **Monday, December 7 at 11:30pm EST.** "The Colbert Report," a satirical pundit show hosted by **Stephen Colbert**, airs Monday – Thursday on Comedy Central. Check local listings for channels and please visit www.FelaOnBroadway.com or www.ColbertNation.com.

#

Fela Anikulapo-Kuti

Fela Ransome Kuti was born in Abeokuta, Nigeria, north of Lagos in 1938. His father was a Christian schoolmaster, minister and master pianist and his mother was a world-recognized feminist leader, who was very active in the anti-colonial Nigerian women's movement during the struggle for independence.

Fela was educated in Nigeria amongst the indigenous elite. Ironically, many of his classmates in his Nigerian school would become the very military leaders he so vociferously opposed.

With medical aspirations for their offspring (Fela's older brother, Koye, was to become a Deputy Director of the World Health Organization and his younger brother, Beko, President of the Nigerian Medical Association) in 1958 Fela's parents sent him to London for a medical education. Instead, he registered at Trinity College's school of music where he studied composition and chose the trumpet as his instrument. Quickly tiring of

European composers, Fela, struck by Miles Davis and Frank Sinatra, formed the Koola Lobitos in 1961, and his band became a fixture in London's club scene. Two years later, Fela returned to Nigeria, restarted the Koola Lobitos, and became influenced by James Brown. Trying to find an authentic musical voice, he added elements of traditional Yoruba, high life and jazz, and "Afrobeat" was born. In 1969, Fela's Koola Lobitos traveled to Los Angeles to tour and record. During his eight months in the US, with LA as a home base, Fela befriended Sandra Isidore, who introduced him to the writings and politics of Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver and other proponents of Black Nationalism and Afrocentrism.

With this new politically explicit and critical worldview, Fela reformed the Koola Lobitos as Nigeria 70 and returned to Lagos. He founded a commune/recording studio called the Kalakuta Republic, complete with his own private nightclub, The Shrine, and Fela dropped his given middle name "Ransome," and replaced it with a Yoruba name "Anikulapo" (meaning "he who carries death in his pouch"). Playing constantly and recording at a ferocious pace, Fela and band (who were now called Africa 70) became huge stars in West Africa and beyond. His music served as a rallying cry for the disenfranchised, critiquing the military government, and made Fela not only a pop star but thrust him into political life. People took to the streets singing his songs and the military responded by viciously harassing Fela, jailing him and nearly killing him on several occasions.

In 1977, during a government-sanctioned attack on his Kalakuta Republic commune, Fela and other members of his commune were arrested; Fela himself suffered a fractured skull as well as other broken bones; a number of women living at Kalakuta were beaten and raped; and his 82-year old mother was thrown from an upstairs window, inflicting injuries that would later prove fatal. The soldiers set fire to the compound and prevented fire fighters from reaching the area. Fela's recording studio, all his master tapes and musical instruments and the only known copy of his self-financed film *Black President* were destroyed.

After the Kalakuta tragedy, Fela briefly lived in exile in Ghana, returning to Nigeria in 1978. A year later, he formed his own political party, MOP (Movement of the People) and ran for president in two elections, although his campaigning was consistently blocked by the military. As the '80s ended, Fela recorded blistering attacks against Nigeria's corrupt military government.

Fela Anikulapo-Kuti was arrested more than two hundred times in his life, and charged with almost every conceivable crime, although only serving one eighteen month sentence in jail for a currency violation. Despite this constant harassment he continued to live in Nigeria even though, as an icon in the international world of rock and roll, soul, jazz and hip-hop, he could have at any point abandoned Nigeria and led the life of an international music superstar. His death on August 3, 1997 of complications from AIDS deeply affected musicians and fans internationally, as a unique and ineffable musical and sociopolitical voice was lost. In Nigeria one million people attended his funeral. His incredible body of work, almost 70 albums, is now available, through public demand, all over the world.