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May 6, 2009

**FOUR-TIME EMMY WINNER VALERIE HARPER STARS
AS TALLULAH BANKHEAD IN *LOOPED*
MAKING ITS D.C. AREA PREMIERE AT ARENA STAGE AT THE LINCOLN THEATRE**

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage in association with Tony Cacciotti and David Steiner presents *Looped* starring four-time Emmy Award winner **Valerie Harper** (*Rhoda*, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*) at the Lincoln Theatre. Created by **Matthew Lombardo** (writer of the hit play *Tea at Five*) and directed by **Rob Ruggiero** (director of Arena Stage's *Ella*) *Looped* tells the story of original celebrity bad girl Tallulah Bankhead. When Tallulah is called into a sound studio to "loop" one line of dialogue for her final film, *Die, Die My Darling*, what ensues is a side-splitting showdown between her uptight film editor, played by Broadway veteran **Jay Goede** (*A Year With Frog and Toad*, *Angels in America*), and the outrageous legend in a hilarious match of wits. *Looped* runs **May 29–June 28, 2009 at Arena Stage at the Lincoln Theatre**. The press opening performance is on **Thursday, June 4 at 8:00 p.m.**

"Arena is thrilled to be working with this talented team of artists on *Looped*, and we are particularly excited to help support another new American play," comments **Artistic Director Molly Smith**. "We welcome back Rob since we last saw his crowd-pleasing work on *Ella*, and we are delighted to introduce Matthew's charged story about one renowned screen legend and starring another—the incomparable Valerie Harper."

Southern, but by no means a belle, Bankhead was known for her wild partying that outshone even today's superstars, including innumerable affairs with both male and female celebrities and outlandish exploits. During *Looped*'s summer 2008 premiere at Pasadena Playhouse and recently at Cuillo Centre for the Arts, critics and audiences agreed that *Looped* fully captured the sultry-voiced stage and film star in what *Daily Variety* called "outrageous fun." *The Los Angeles Times* agreed that in *Looped* "entertainment value is guaranteed...Valerie Harper brings Tallulah Bankhead's outrageousness and glamour to life," and the *Hollywood Reporter* penned, "Harper is a revelation in Matthew Lombardo's riveting new play!"

Since the Cuillo Centre run, Lombardo has continued to rework the script for the Arena production. The company of *Looped* will undergo three weeks of rehearsals to incorporate changes at Hartford Stage in Connecticut before finishing rehearsals at the Lincoln Theatre in D.C. In response to working on *Looped* Ruggiero adds, "It has been an extraordinary experience working with both Valerie and Matthew. They are both valued collaborators and also great friends, and the show has grown tremendously since its initial success in Pasadena due to our great working relationship."

Images and further information are available upon request. Please email press@arenastage.org.

Please be advised that *Looped* contains adult language and content and is not appropriate for children.

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Playwright Matthew Lombardo's last play, *Tea at Five*, (which starred actress Kate Mulgrew as Katharine Hepburn and won Lombardo the IRNE Award for Best Solo Play) had a successful run Off-Broadway at the Promenade Theatre and continues to tour the country, and has just debuted internationally with a Finnish speaking production in Helsinki, Finland. Lombardo's other Off-Broadway credits include directing the hit comedy *End of the World Party* by Chuck Ranberg (47th Street Theatre); *Mother and Child* (Second Stage); and *Guilty Innocence* (The Actors' Playhouse), serving the latter two productions as both playwright and director. Regionally, he has directed the 20th anniversary production of Harvey Fierstein's *Torch Song Trilogy* (American Stage Company) and the West Coast premiere of *Mother and Child* starring Tony Award-winning actress Ann Wedgeworth (Coast Playhouse). Having written for the TV series *Another World*, Lombardo garnered a Writer's Guild Award nomination for Outstanding Achievement. Other plays include *The Kennel Club*, *House of Atreus*, *Trolls* and he is currently writing a new drama entitled *High*.

Director Rob Ruggiero directed the world premiere of *Looped* last summer at the Pasadena Playhouse, as well as the production that played The Cuillo Centre for Performing Arts this past winter. Ruggiero conceived and directed the highly successful *Ella*, a musical portrait of Ella Fitzgerald (starring Tina Fabrique), which opened Arena Stage's Crystal City venue in 2008. The St. Louis production recently won two Kevin Kline Awards including "Outstanding Director of a Musical." The Chicago production of *Ella* won three Joseph Jefferson Awards including one for "Outstanding Director— Revue". *Ella* continues to play major theaters nationally with productions scheduled into 2010. He also conceived and directed an original musical revue entitled *Make Me a Song: the Music of William Finn*, which had a successful run off-Broadway last year as well as a 2008 London production. The production received nominations for both the Drama Desk Award for "Outstanding Review" and the Outer Critics Circle Award for "Outstanding New Off-Broadway Musical." He made his Off-Broadway directorial debut with the Pearl Buck solo play *All Under Heaven* (also starring Valerie Harper), which toured regionally and had a critically acclaimed run in Los Angeles. Ruggiero's work on both plays and musicals has been seen at many regional theaters around the country. He directed a highly successful revival of *1776* for Goodspeed Musicals, which won him his third Connecticut Circle Critics Award for "Best Director of a Musical." Ruggiero recently returned to Goodspeed Musicals with a critically acclaimed production *Big River*, and he will be directing a summer 2009 revival of *Camelot*. He is the recipient of four Kevin Kline Awards, two for "Best Director of a Musical" (*Urinetown: The Musical*, *Ella*) and two for "Best Director of a Play" (*Take Me Out*, *The Little Dog Laughed*). Ruggiero has been a key partner in the Artistic Leadership of TheaterWorks in Hartford, Connecticut since 1992.

ABOUT THE CAST:

Valerie Harper (*Tallulah Bankhead*) most recently originated the role of Tallulah in the world premiere production of *Looped* at the Pasadena Playhouse and reprised the role again at the Cuillo Centre for the Arts. Harper has also appeared on stage as Golda Meir in the first national tour of William Gibson's acclaimed one-woman play, *Golda's Balcony*, winner of the 2006 Touring Broadway Award. On Broadway she starred in Charles Busch's *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife* and continued in the role for the play's first national tour. Other Broadway credits include Paul Sills' *Story Theatre*; the Paul Sills' production of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; Carl Reiner's *Something Different*, *Subways are for Sleeping*, *Wildcat*, *Take Me Along*, *Destry Rides Again* and *Li'l Abner*. Off Broadway, she starred in *Death-Defying Acts* by Elaine May and Woody Allen and *All Under Heaven*, a one-woman play which she co-wrote based on the life and work of Nobel Prize-winning author Pearl S. Buck, which was directed by Rob Ruggiero and produced by Tony Caccioti. On TV, she achieved worldwide acclaim playing Rhoda Morgenstern on *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and *Rhoda*. During her nine years as Rhoda, she earned four Emmys, a Golden Globe, Harvard's Hasty Pudding Woman of the Year and the Hollywood Women's Press Club Golden Apple Award. She also starred in the NBC series *Valerie*, as well as *The Office* and

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City on CBS. Harper has also had about 20 starring roles in TV movies, numerous appearances on TV specials, as well as guest appearances on TV shows including *The Carol Burnett Show*, *Three Sisters*, *That 70's Show* and *Sex and the City* among many others. She starred in the feature films *Blame it on Rio*, Neil Simon's *Chapter Two*, *Freebie and the Bean* and *The Last Married Couple in America*. In regional theater, she appeared in productions of *All Under Heaven*, *The Dragon and the Pearl*, *Sills and Company*, *Agnes of God*, *Dear Liar*, *Lunchtime* and *Halloween*, *Story Theatre*, *Second City* and *Come Blow Your Horn*. She is the author of a book published by Harper Collins entitled *Today I am a Ma'am: And Other Musings on Life, Beauty and Growing Older*, a light-hearted look at aging. Harper recreated her role as Golda Meir in the film version of *Golda's Balcony*, which opened in October 2007 to rave reviews and is now available on DVD. Since 1977, she's been an active participant in The Hunger Project, a strategic organization committed to the sustainable end of world hunger. Valerie Harper and her husband, Tony Cacciotti, live in Los Angeles and have a daughter, Cristina, who is also an actor.

Jay Goede (*Danny Miller*) appeared on Broadway in *Angels in America*; *Sex and Longing*; *The Play's the Thing*; and as Frog in *A Year with Frog and Toad*. He starred in the first national tour of Roundabouts revival of *Cabaret* and appeared Off-Broadway in *The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told*; *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde*; *The Miracle Brothers*; *A Letter from Ethel Kennedy*; *Shopping and Fucking*; and *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello* and the title role in *Pericles* at The Public. Goede made his professional debut opposite Joanne Woodward in *Ghosts*. Since then, he's been in dozens of regional productions, incl. *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (Yale); *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet* (Shakespeare Theatre); *The Triumph of Love* (Center Stage); the title role in *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* (Old Globe); *A Midsummer Nights Dream* (McCarter; Paper Mill); *The Real Thing* (Guthrie); *Three Sisters*, *The Singing Forest*, and *The Dying Gaul* (Intiman); *1776* (Goodspeed); *Woman in Mind* and *Cloud 9* (Berkshire); and *Under Milk Wood* (Williamstown). Films include *A Year with Frog and Toad*, *54*, *Girl 6*, *Breaking and Entering* and *Ethan Frome*. On TV, he's been in *Over Here* (BBC), *Law & Order*, *Law and Order: Criminal Intent* and *One Life to Live*. He can be heard on the original cast recording of *A Year with Frog and Toad*.

Michael Karl Orenstein (*Steve*) originated the role of Steve for the *Looped* world premiere at Pasadena Playhouse and was also in the Cuillo Centre production. Active in regional theater since the age of eight, Michael worked at Buffalo, New York's Studio Arena Theater during high school. After a degree in cellular and molecular biology (with a liberal dose of theater and writing classes on the side), he disappointed his parents and dove headlong into the late-80s stand-up boom, performing live comedy throughout North America and the Caribbean. He has also worked with various sketch and improv troupes, including Warped, Danger Zone, Fat Lotta Good, Free Radicals and The LA Connection. His Los Angeles-based theater projects include Sartre's *No Exit*, *Lessons* (with Hal Holbrook and Mare Winningham) and *Taming of the Shrew*, as well as writing and starring in the acclaimed one-man show, *Veni, Vidi, Gradivari* (I Came, I Saw, I Got Her Pregnant). Orenstein is currently teaching at the Lee Strasberg Institute in Hollywood.

The ***Creative Team*** for *Looped* includes Set Designer **Adrian W. Jones**, Costume Designer **William Ivey Long**, Assistant Costume Designers are **Cathy Parrott** and **Donald Sanders**, Wig Designer **Charles LaPointe**, Lighting Designer **Michael Gilliam**, Sound Designer **Michael Hooker**, Stage Manager **Amber Dickerson**, Hartford Assistant Stage Manager **Scott Pomerico**, Arena Assistant Stage Manager **Kurt Hall**, Production Dramaturg **Janine Sobeck**, Assistant Director **Nick Eilerman**, Deck/Props **D'Nesstah Fields**, Sound Board Operator **Mao Clemmons**, Light Board Operator **James Brown** and Hair/Makeup **Amanda Mitchell**.

Looped is being produced by **Tony Cacciotti** and **David Steiner** in association with Arena Stage.

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Looped is sponsored by Gina and John Despres and Margot Kelly.

Arena Stage's 2008/09 season is sponsored by The Family of H. Max and Josephine F. Ammerman, Andrew R. Ammerman, and Hubert (Hank) and Charlotte Schlosberg.

Looped Special Events, Ticket Information & Performance Calendar:

The Salon – Monday, June 1, 2009 at 7:00 p.m.

In the spirit of artistic and literary salons of the past, The Salon features artistic leaders from Arena Stage in a series of lively, in-depth conversations with the playwrights, actors, directors, designers, dramaturgs and audiences that make Arena Stage unique. The Salon is free to Arena Stage subscribers and donors (\$75+) and only \$3 for the general public. Reservations must be made through the Arena Stage Sales Office at (202) 488-3300.

Southwest Night – Friday, June 5, 2009 at 8:00 p.m.

An invitation is extended to our Southwest D.C. neighbors to buy \$20 tickets, plus applicable fees, for one designated Friday evening performance of each production. Proof of Southwest D.C. residency or—continued employment—for each audience member of each party must be presented at the time of purchase. Tickets are limited to four per person and are based on availability. To purchase tickets, call (202) 488-3300 or stop by the Arena Stage Sales Office.

Valerie Harper a Celebrity Grand Marshall of 2009 Capital Pride Parade
Saturday, June 13 at 6:30 p.m.

Approximately 250,000 people attend Capital Pride, making it one of the largest LGBT Pride festivals in the nation. This year's event runs June 5-14 with the theme of "Generations of Pride: Celebrate & Remember—Stonewall at 40." Valerie Harper has the esteemed pleasure to serve as a Celebrity Grand Marshall for this year's parade. For more information go to www.capitalpride.org.

Out at Arena – Wednesday, June 10, 2009 at 7:30 p.m.

For gay and lesbian audience members on selected Wednesday evenings, a post-show discussion with cast members and a reception following the evening's performance are offered. The post-show reception is FREE for subscribers of the Out at Arena series.

TICKETS: Tickets for *Looped* range from **\$25 to 74**. Discount tickets are available for patrons purchasing tickets for multiple shows, students and groups. A limited number of \$10 tickets for patrons ages 30 and under go on sale beginning each Monday for performances that week. (All patrons must present valid ID.) HOTTIX, a limited number of half-price, day-of-performance tickets, are available 90 to 30 minutes before curtain prior to every performance. **Tickets may be purchased online at www.arenastage.org, by phone at (202) 488-3300 or at the Arena Stage Sales Office at 1800 S. Bell Street, Arlington, VA 22202.**

Sales Office/Subscriptions	(202) 488-3300
TTY for deaf patrons	(202) 484-0247
Group Sales Hotline	(202) 488-4380
Info for patrons with disabilities	(202) 488-3300

Tuesday, Wednesday & Sunday at 7:30 p.m. (6:00 p.m. curtain on 6/21, no evening performance 6/23)
Thursday, Friday & Saturday at 8:00 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m. (no matinee 5/30, 6/21 or 6/28)
Weekday matinees at noon on 6/17, 6/23 & 6/24

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Sign-interpreted performances: Sunday 6/14 at 7:30 p.m.

Post-show discussions: 6/16 & 6/18 after the evening show; 6/17, 6/23 & 6/24 after the noon show

Audio described performances: 6/17 at 7:30 p.m. & 6/20 at 2:00 p.m.

Open captioned performance: 6/24 at 7:30 p.m.

ABOUT ARENA RESTAGED

*With construction well underway on the 47-year-old Southwest D.C. theater campus, Arena Stage has launched **ARENA RESTAGED**, a two-year festival celebrating the rich mosaic of our nation's voices. **ARENA RESTAGED**, which will lay the foundation for a new home for theater artists and audiences, will take place throughout the time it takes to finish the expansion of the new theater complex, **Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater**. At the Center, the two existing performance spaces—the Fichandler Stage and the Kreeger Theater—will be fully renovated and a new 200-seat space dedicated to premiering American theater, *The Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle*, will be added. Arena Stage at the Mead Center is scheduled to open for the 2010/11 season.*

*Under the leadership of Artistic Director Molly Smith and Managing Director Edgar Dobie, Washington, D.C.-based **Arena Stage** is the largest theater in the country dedicated to American plays and playwrights. Founded in 1950 by Zelda Fichandler, Thomas Fichandler and Edward Mangum, Arena Stage was one of the nation's original resident theaters and has a distinguished record of leadership and innovation in the field. With the opening of the new Mead Center for American Theater in 2010, Arena Stage will be a leading center for the production, development and study of American theater. Now in its sixth decade, Arena Stage serves a diverse annual audience of more than 200,000. For more information please visit www.arenastage.org.*

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