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## MEDIA RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**December 7, 2007**

### ARENA STAGE PRESENTS *ELLA*, A MUSICAL CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE AND MUSIC OF LEGENDARY JAZZ SINGER ELLA FITZGERALD

**\*\*\* Tina Fabrique (Mattie in Arena's *The Women of Brewster Place*) returns to the title role in the inaugural production at Arena Stage in Crystal City \*\*\***

(Washington, D.C.) After extensive renovations, Arena has turned Arlington, VA's Crystal Forum into a fully operable theater space for Arena to use during the 29 months it will take to renovate and expand its historic Southwest, D.C. theater campus. Arena kicks off performances in this temporary location, known now as Arena Stage in Crystal City, with the swinging new musical *Ella*, conceived by **Rob Ruggiero** and **Dyke Garrison** with book by Jeffrey Hatcher. *Ella* takes you inside the heart and soul of the First Lady of Song – Ella Fitzgerald. **Tina Fabrique** (Arena's *The Women of Brewster Place*, *Crowns*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*) returns as the beloved jazz singer, performing such hits as "That Old Black Magic," "A Tiskit, A Tasket" and "They Can't Take That Away From Me." *Ella* is directed by Ruggiero with musical direction and arrangements by Danny Holgate. ***Ella* runs December 28, 2007 – February 24, 2008 at Arena Stage in Crystal City, located at 1800 S. Bell Street, Arlington, VA 22202.** For more information on Arena Stage in Crystal City, including directions, parking and restaurant options, visit [www.arenastage.org](http://www.arenastage.org).



"In the heyday of jazz, world-famous artists like Ella Fitzgerald made regular visits to the theaters and clubs along 'Black Broadway' on U Street in Northwest D.C. Ella thrilled audiences at such local venues as the Lincoln Theatre, Howard Theater, Club Bali and Bohemian Caverns," said Artistic Director Molly Smith. "Tina Fabrique – an extraordinary artist in her own right – now brings *Ella* back to town in this celebration of a woman whom everyone adored, but few ever really knew."

Temporary office:  
2001 Jefferson Davis  
Highway, Suite 701  
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mailing address:  
1101 Sixth Street, SW  
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While rehearsing for an important 1966 concert in Nice, France with her four-piece jazz band, Ella's producer requests that she add "patter" to the show and share more about her personal life than ever before. With this daunting task before her, Ella begins to reminisce and we begin to piece together the usually quiet songstress' life through her vivid stories and songs.

Tina Fabrique has starred in *Ella* at numerous regional theaters during the past two years--having created the original role for the premiere at TheaterWorks in Hartford, CT in 2005--and was recently honored with the 2007 *Carbonell Award* as Best Actress in a Musical for the Florida Stage production. Audiences and critics alike have been charmed by her performances. Variety raved, "Fabrique wondrously echoes rather than mimics Fitzgerald's phenomenal ability to scat-sing, letting the language take playful flight on its own when mere words fail."

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"Ella's amazing body of work seemed to cry out for a theater piece celebrating the life of this woman," said Ruggiero. "She shared many of the same personal battles as so many of us, including her own, painfully familiar, search for love. While this production highlights how she sparkled and triumphed as a performer it is also a rare glimpse of her vulnerability as a person. Ultimately in *Ella*, we are reminded why she has remained a huge defining force in the music world for decades."

Since *Ella's* TheaterWorks premiere, audiences have enjoyed seeing this production at many theaters around the country, and it will be seen at two other theaters later this season. Due to its success and popularity, a second company of *Ella* premiered this past fall.

The book for *Ella* was written by **Jeffrey Hatcher**, who has also authored the book for the Broadway musical *Never Gonna Dance*. Off Broadway, his works include *Three Viewings* and *A Picasso* (Manhattan Theatre Club); *Scotland Road* and *The Turn of the Screw* (Primary Stages); *Tuesdays with Morrie* with Mitch Albom (Minetta Lane Theatre); *Murder by Poe* and *The Turn of the Screw* (The Acting Company); *Neddy* (The American Place Theatre); and *Fellow Travelers* (Manhattan Punchline). His plays—among them, *Compleat Female Stage Beauty*, *Mrs. Mannerly*, *Murderers*, *Mercy of a Storm*, *Smash*, *Korczak's Children*, *To Fool the Eye*, *The Falls* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*—have been seen at numerous regional theaters across the U.S. and abroad. Mr. Hatcher wrote the screenplays for *Stage Beauty*, *Casanova* and *The Duchess*, as well as episodes of the Peter Falk series *Columbo*. He has received grants and awards from the NEA, TCG, Lila Wallace Fund, Rosenthal New Play Prize, Frankel Award, Charles MacArthur Fellowship Award, McKnight Foundation, Jerome Foundation and a Barrymore Award for Best New Play. He is a member and/or alumnus of The Playwrights' Center, The Dramatists Guild of America, Writers Guild of America and New Dramatists.

Director and Co-conceiver of *Ella*, **Rob Ruggiero**, has worked on both plays and musicals at many regional theaters. His work was first seen Off Broadway as director of *All Under Heaven* (starring Valerie Harper), which toured regionally and had a critically acclaimed run in Los Angeles. Last year Mr. Ruggiero directed and conceived *Make Me a Song: The Music of William Finn*, which is currently running Off Broadway and won him his second Connecticut Critics Award, this time for "Best Director of a Musical." He also received two Kevin Kline Awards for "Best Director of a Musical" (*Urinetown*) and "Best Director of a Play" (*Take Me Out*). Mr. Ruggiero is the Associate Artistic Director of TheaterWorks, and has been a partner in its Artistic Leadership since 1992.

*Ella's* second Co-conceiver **Dyke Garrison** wrote his first produced play, *They Also Serve*, as a Shubert Playwright Fellow at Occidental College. He then wrote a number of shorter pieces, which have been seen at One Act Theatre, The Marsh and The Guild Theatre among others. His full-length works include *Meadow in the Sky*, *The Finish Line*, *Shall We Dance* and *Dead Languages*. His musical *What's on Tonight?* was produced on San Francisco's own Broadway and his one-man show for Kevin Dixon, *All Present*, appeared at Theatre Rhinoceros. His one-woman show about Pearl S. Buck, *All Under Heaven*, written for and with Valerie Harper, premiered at Ms. Buck's alma mater, Randolph Macon, and went on to productions in New York, Los Angeles and Florida. Most recently, his new play *Thirst* opened the season at AlterTheater in San Rafael. Garrison has studied playwriting with Sam Shepard and Oskar Eustis. He is a member of Playwrights Lab of San Francisco and former President of the Board of Directors for the Playwrights Foundation.

**Ella Cast:**

**Tina Fabrique** (*Ella Fitzgerald*) returns to Arena, having just closed the world premiere of *The Women of Brewster Place* in the role of Mattie. Ms. Fabrique has been touring in *Ella* for the past

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year, having created the role in the world premiere at Hartford TheaterWorks. She has recently been honored with the 2007 Carbonell Award as Best Actress in a Musical for the Florida Stage engagement of *Ella*. Her Broadway credits include *Dessa Rose* at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, *Ragtime*, *Bring in Da Noise Bring in Da Funk*, *Truly Blessed*, *How to Succeed...*, *The Gospel at Colonus* and *Harlem Song*. Her national tours include *The Wiz*, *Bubbling Brown Sugar*, *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, *Once on This Island*, *South Pacific* with Robert Goulet and *How to Succeed...* Other New York credits include *70 Girls*, *70* for City Center Encores! and *Angel Levine* at Jewish Repertory. Regionally, her many credits include *Crowns* (Helen Hayes nomination), *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* and *Constant Star* (Helen Hayes nomination) at Arena Stage; *The Old Settler* at Westport Theater; and *Glass Menagerie* at Cleveland Playhouse. Ms. Fabrique was a featured soloist with The Duke Ellington Orchestra for several years touring in Europe and the United States. In 2005, Ms. Fabrique sang the theme song to the documentary *Mad Hot Ballroom*. She is also the original voice of the "Reading Rainbow" theme song. Her television credits include "Law & Order: Criminal Intent," "When I Grow Up," "The Today Show," "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit," "Mike Mulligan's Steam Shovel," "All My Children" and "One Life to Live."

**Elmer Brown** (*Trumpet/Louis Armstrong*) debuts at Arena Stage with *Ella*. He has performed as first trumpet with the National Touring Company of the *Wiz*; *Sing Mahalia Sing*; *Your Arms Too Short to Box with God* in Paris; and *Dreamgirls* at the Schubert Theater in Chicago. Having traveled in the U.S. and abroad with Earth Wind and Fire, Lucky Peterson and the Jaco Pastorius Big Band, Mr. Brown had the pleasure of backing Ella Fitzgerald while a member of the Duke Ellington Orchestra. His live performances include Kenny Rogers, Lori Morgan, Peabo Bryson, Tony Bennet, Gladys Knight and James Ingram.

**George Caldwell** (*Piano Conductor*) is a veteran of Broadway. He has conducted several shows such as *Black and Blue* and *Play On!*, and has served in orchestra pits for *Bring In 'Da Noise, Bring In 'Da Funk* and *The Full Monty*. In addition to musical directing the European tour of *Black and Blue*, and serving as associate conductor for the tour of *Body and Soul* in Europe, Mr. Caldwell has toured the regionally with many shows, including musical directing the original musicals *Thunder Knocking on the Door*, *Golden Boy* at the Longwharf and productions of *Cookin' at the Cookery*. Mr. Caldwell has toured the world with premier jazz orchestras, including three years with the Duke Ellington Orchestra and seven with the Count Basie Orchestra. The Basie Orchestra received a Grammy Award with Mr. Caldwell at the piano for the recording *The Count Basie Orchestra Live at the Manchester Craftsman's Guild* (with the New York Voices). He has performed with many artists including George Benson, Savion Glover, Lou Rawls, Elvis Costello, Art Blakey, Shirley Bassey, Freda Payne, Wynton Marsalis, Lionel Hampton, the Manhattan Transfer, Bobby McFerrin, Al Jarreau, The Coasters, Cab Calloway, Quincy Jones, Gregory Hines, Dizzy Gillespie and even Brenda Lee. Mr. Caldwell has composed and arranged the music for an award-winning short film *Rolling in Dough*.

**Harold Dixon** (*Norman Granz*) has appeared Off Broadway in *The Secret of Mme Bonnard's Bath* (staged reading) and *Intimate Letters*. Regionally, he has worked at San Jose Rep, Asolo Rep, Gloucester Stage Company, Arizona Theatre Company, Phoenix Theatre, Actors Theatre of Phoenix, Shakespeare Sedona, Chamber Music Plus Southwest, Invisible Theatre, Tucson and the Guthrie Theatre among others. Films include *Half Laughing* (independent short) and *The Back of Beyond* (narrator). On television, he has been seen in "Rescue 911," "The Highwayman" and "Enola Gay." He is the narrator on the CD recording of Ravel's *Gaspard de la Nuit*. Mr. Dixon is a Distinguished Professor in the School of Theatre Arts at the University of Arizona, where he is also the founding artistic director of Arizona Repertory Theatre.

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**Rodney Harper** (*Drums*) toured during 2006-07 with the *Ella* production. His professional career includes national touring companies of *Ain't Misbehavin'* and *Bubbling Brown Sugar*. His regional theater productions include *Cookin' at the Cookery: The Music & Times of Alberta Hunter*; *Blackbirds of Broadway*; *Dreamgirls*; *Williams and Walker*; *Satin Sweet (Cotton Club)* produced in Helsinki, Finland; and a Chicago production of *Purlie*. His jazz roster includes backing legends Billy Eckstein, Della Reese, Dakota Staton, Sonny Stitt, Jimmy McGriff, Hank Crawford, Charley Earland, Richard "Groove" Holmes, and most recently Marlena Shaw.

**Clifton Kellem** (*Bass Player*) has been a part of the *Ella* tour since October 2007. He has performed with a variety of jazz artists including John Blake, Christian Sands, Willie Williams, Byard Lancaster and George Benson. He worked in the 1980s with several casino orchestras performing with such headliners as Diahann Carroll, Vic Damone, Jerry Lewis, Rodney Dangerfield, Shirley Bassey, Petula Clark, George Burns, Milton Bearle, Carol Channing, Bill Cosby and Flip Wilson. He toured South America with singer Billy Paul and also with Musiqology. He has toured in the U.S. and Canada with Marion Caffey's play *Cookin' at the Cookery*. Mr. Kellem most recently toured with best selling author James McBride. A native of Philadelphia, he studied with former Philadelphia Orchestra bassists Ed Arien and Henry Scott, and studied jazz with Tyrone Brown.

**Ella Creative Team:**

**Danny Holgate** (*Music Director/Arranger*)'s Broadway credits include Musical Director and Arranger for *Don't Bother Me – I Can't Cope* and *Bubbling Brown Sugar*; Musical Supervision and Arrangements for *Eubie* and *Rainbow Jones*; and Dance Arranger for *Odyssey* and *It's Nice To Be Civilized*. Mr. Holgate performed the role of Jimmy Powers in *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill* in New York and was the Musical Supervisor and Arranger for the show. Pre-Broadway shows include *Daddy Goodness*, *Two Faces of Africa*, *Golden Boy (revival)*, *Stringbean*, *Sweet and Hot*, *Aretha – Queen of Soul*, *Blackbirds of Broadway*, *Cookin' at the Cookery* and a revival of *Storyville*. For the past 20 years, he has been a vocal coach, put together club acts or arrangements for various performers, and for many years was the Conductor and Arranger for the legendary Cab Calloway.

**Michael Schweikardt** (*Set Designer*) recently created the set for the American premiere of Frank McGuiness' *The Bird Sanctuary*. New York credits include *All Under Heaven*, *Golden Boy*, *Waiting for Lefty*, *Tallulah Hallelujah*, *Amazing Grace* and *The Seagull*. He designed the set for James Taylor's *One Man Band*, which has been touring nationally and internationally and was released last month on DVD. His work has been seen all over the country at regional theaters.

**Alejo Vietti** (*Costume Designer*) has designed costumes in New York for *Make Me a Song*, *Tryst*, *Roulette*, *The Last Sunday in June*, *16 Wounded*, *2 X Tennessee*, *The Wau Wau Sisters*, *Servicemen*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Five Flights*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Measure for Measure*, *Othello* and *Of a White Christmas*. He has designed at numerous theaters across the country, as well as for Donetsk Opera in Ukraine, The Edinburgh Festival Fringe and Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey Gold Unit 2007. Other work includes projects for VH1, Fox TV and MTV among others.

**John Lasiter** (*Lighting Designer*)'s Off Broadway credits include work at Alarm Dog Repertory - Alan Ball, Bluelight Theatre Company, Music Theatre Group and the currently running *Make Me a Song*, a revue of Bill Finn's music. Regionally, he has extensive design credits for theater, opera and dance.

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**Michael Miceli** (*Sound Designer*) was the Audio Consultant for Ridge Theater's *Jennie Richee* and *Ella* at Florida Stage and San Diego Repertory Theatre. His sound design credits include *The Devil's Music*, *Crowns* and *Ain't Misbehavin* at Hartford Stage and *Ella: Off the Record* at TheatreWorks, as well as associate sound design for *Floyd & Clea Under the Western Sky* at Hartford Stage. Mr. Miceli has worked with a variety of artists and clients across the country including Nickelodeon, the Connecticut Forum, Center for Creative Youth and Yale School of Drama. He is currently the Audio Supervisor for Hartford Stage and the founder of the consulting company, Miceli Production, LLC.

**Churck LaPointe** (*Wig Designer*)'s work has appeared in the Broadway shows *The Rivals*, *Henry IV*, *The Lieutenant of Inishmoor*, *Julius Caesar*, *Sight Unseen*, *Radio Golf*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *High Fidelity*, *Good Vibrations*, *Jersey Boys*, *Martin Short's Fame Becomes Me*, *The Color Purple*, *The Apple Tree* and *Xanadu*. His Off Broadway work includes *The Long Christmas Ride Home*, *The Lieutenant of Inishmoor*, *In the Heights*, *Some Men, All's Well That Ends Well*, *The Jew of Malta* and *The Merchant of Venice*.

*Ella* Stage Manager is **Martha Knight**, Assistant Stage Manager is **Kurt Hall**, Production Dramaturg is **Janine Sobeck** and the Directing Fellow is **Vijay Mathew**.

Arena Stage is proud to bring back the **Target Family Fun Pack** for *Ella*: four seats, four non-alcoholic drinks and four snacks for \$100, a substantial discount from the regular ticket price. Target is the sponsor of the Target Family Fun Pack during the 2007/08 season.

*Ella* is sponsored by **The Family of H. Max and Josephine F. Ammerman, Andrew R. Ammerman and Hubert (Hank) and Charlotte Schlosberg**.

**The Arena Stage 2007/08 Season is sponsored by Donald and Nancy de Laski.**

**Building Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater**

In January 2008, Arena Stage will break ground on its 47-year-old Southwest, D.C. theater campus, and commence 29 months of construction to make way for the new Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater. The Center will be a breathtaking expansion of the current campus, allowing Arena Stage to focus on the strengths of the two existing spaces – The Fichandler Stage and the Kreeger Theater – while reinventing the surrounding building and adding a 200-seat space dedicated to premiering American theater, The Cradle. The theater has currently raised \$106 of its \$125 million fundraising goal since the Next Stage Campaign launched in 2002. Arena Stage at the Mead Center is scheduled to open for the 2010/2011 season.

To allow for a timely and cost-effective renovation, Arena will operate out of Arena Stage in Crystal City, a temporary home in Arlington, VA. A five-minute drive from the current location in Southwest, D.C., the area around Arena Stage in Crystal City boasts many well-known restaurants, is convenient to the Crystal City Metro and has free evening and weekend parking. The theater is roughly the same size as the Kreeger, and seats 460 patrons. Crystal City will also house the Arena Stage administrative offices in a nearby building. In addition, starting in 2008/2009 Arena Stage plans to have a substantial presence at the Lincoln Theatre in Northwest, D.C. Details on the programming at the Lincoln will be shared at a later date. As information changes and/or becomes available throughout the transition, Arena plans to keep its website at [www.arenastage.org](http://www.arenastage.org) as up to date as possible with Frequently Asked Questions, directions and other relevant information.

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## Special events, Ticket Information and Performance Calendar:

### **Crystal City Open Houses: Sunday, December 16 and 23 from 2:00 – 5:00 p.m. at Arena Stage in Crystal City (1800 South Bell Street, Arlington, VA 22202)**

As Arena Stage embarks on this adventure over the next couple years, the theater will hold open houses so that community and audience members may ask questions about the building, their tickets, the temporary home at Crystal City and more. These events will include presentations about the design of the Mead Center and information about Crystal City. To R.S.V.P your attendance, call (202) 488-3300 at least three days before the event of your choice. For media interested in attending please contact [press@arenastage.org](mailto:press@arenastage.org) or (202) 554-9066 ext. 715.

### **The Salon – Monday, January 7 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 which make Arena Stage so 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, January 4 at 8:00 p.m. – *Seats selling fast!***

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 employment must be presented at the time of purchase. Tickets are limited to 4 per person and are based on availability. To purchase tickets, call (202) 488-3300 or stop by the Arena Stage Sales Office.

**TICKETS:** Tickets for *Ella* range from \$55-74, with discounts available for students and groups. A limited number of \$10 tickets for patrons 30 and under go on sale beginning on Monday for the following week of performances (Tuesday through Sunday) until all available \$10 tickets sell out. Patrons may purchase \$10 tickets by phone, online or in person. (All patrons must be 30 or younger.) Patrons will be required to present valid ID for age verification. HOTTIX, a limited number of half-price, day-of-performance tickets, are available from 90-30 minutes before curtain prior to every performance for all patrons. **Tickets are available for purchase online at [www.arenastage.org](http://www.arenastage.org), at the Arena Stage Sales Office at 1101 Sixth Street, SW until December 30, then at 1800 S. Bell Street, Arlington, VA 22202 beginning December 28, or by phone at (202) 488-3300.**

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

Tues., Wed. & Sun. at 7:30 p.m. (no evening show 1/27, 2/5 & 2/10 & 6:00 p.m. curtain 2/3)

Thurs., Fri. & Sat. at 8:00 p.m.

Sat. & Sun. matinees at 2:00 p.m. (no matinee 1/13, 1/20, 1/29, 2/2, 2/3, 2/17 & 2/24)

Weekday matinees at 12:00 p.m. on 1/16, 1/30 & 2/5

**Post show conversations:** 1/16, 1/30 & 2/5 at 12:00 p.m.; 1/15 at 7:30 p.m. & 1/24 at 8:00 p.m.

**Sign-interpreted performances:** 1/31 at 8:00 p.m. & 2/24 at 7:30 p.m.

**Audio described performances:** 2/9 at 2:00 p.m. & 2/13 at 7:30 p.m.

**Out at Arena post show discussion (for GLBT patrons):** 1/18 at 8:00 p.m.

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