

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

Molly Smith Artistic Director Edgar Dobie Executive Producer Zelda Fichandler Founding Director

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ACADEMY AWARD & TONY AWARD NOMINEE KATHLEEN TURNER STARS IN
JOAN DIDION'S ADAPTATION OF HER BESTSELLING MEMOIR
THE YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING
UNDER DIRECTION OF GAYE TAYLOR UPCHURCH

OCTOBER 7-NOVEMBER 20, 2016
AT ARENA STAGE AT THE MEAD CENTER FOR AMERICAN THEATER

(Washington, D.C.) Iconic stage and screen actress and Academy Award and Tony Award nominee **Kathleen Turner** returns to Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater to star in **Joan Didion's** one-woman drama *The Year of Magical Thinking*, adapted from her 2005 bestselling memoir of the same title. Turner, who previously appeared in Arena Stage's *Mother Courage and Her Children* and *Red Hot Patriot: The Kick-Ass Wit of Molly Ivins*, portrays the writer in Didion's penetrating and moving examination of grief. **Gaye Taylor Upchurch** (Studio Theatre's *Animal*) makes her Arena Stage directorial debut in the company's most intimate venue, the 200-seat Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle. *The Year of Magical Thinking* runs October 7-November 20, 2016.

"*The Year of Magical Thinking* is a powerful play," shares Artistic Director **Molly Smith**. "Joan Didion was confronted with extreme personal loss and has bravely shared her story. Our production stars Kathleen, who intimately understands this story and will take the audience gently by the hand as she navigates this story of grief and transition. She is a superb actor and I know her performance will be unforgettable."

In this dramatic adaptation of her memoir, which *The New York Times* called "an indelible portrait of loss and grief...a haunting portrait of a four-decade-long marriage," Didion chronicles the sudden death of her husband, the writer John Gregory Dunne, and illness of her only daughter. Her first-person account weaves together an intensely personal yet universal story of hope in the face of inescapable loss.

"It is a play about grief, yes, but the rigorous assessing of grief and its effects, as delivered by the incomparable Kathleen Turner, is in fact an incredible act of generosity," adds **Upchurch**. "Kathleen's grit and grace and sly sense of humor are fantastically paired with Joan Didion's no-holds-barred piece. I feel honored to be plumbing the depths of this gorgeous work with her at Arena Stage."

"I am drawn to this piece by the exquisite writing and inherent grace that I hope to be able to share with others," says **Turner**.

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Page 2—Full company announced for *The Year of Magical Thinking* starring Kathleen Turner

Joan Didion (*Playwright*) won the 2005 National Book Award for *The Year of Magical Thinking*, one of 13 books she has written. Her other books include *Play It As It Lays*, *Democracy*, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, *The White Album*, *Salvador*, *Miami* and *Political Fictions*. With her husband, John Gregory Dunne, she wrote the screenplays for *The Panic in Needle Park* with Al Pacino; *True Confessions* with Robert De Niro and Robert Duvall; *A Star Is Born* with Barbra Streisand; and *Up Close & Personal* with Michelle Pfeiffer and Robert Redford. She received the 2005 Gold Medal in Nonfiction from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, 1996 Edward MacDowell Medal, 1999 Columbia Journalism Award and 2002 George Polk Book Award. She contributes to various periodicals, most frequently *The New York Review of Books*.

Kathleen Turner (*Joan Didion*) returns to Arena Stage following *Mother Courage and Her Children* and *Red Hot Patriot: The Kick-Ass Wit of Molly Ivins*. Her Broadway credits include *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (Tony nomination); *Indiscretions*; *The Graduate*; *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Tony nomination); and *High* (also national tour). As a screen icon, Kathleen has garnered critical acclaim for her performances in films including *Body Heat* (Golden Globe nomination); *Romancing the Stone* and *Prizzi's Honor* (Golden Globe Award for each); *Peggy Sue Got Married* (Academy and Golden Globe nominations); and *The War of the Roses* (Golden Globe nomination). Additional film credits include *The Man with Two Brains*, *The Jewel of the Nile*, *The Accidental Tourist*, *V.I. Warshawski*, *Serial Mom*, *Naked in New York*, *Moonlight and Valentino*, *The Real Blonde* and *The Virgin Suicides*. She had a starring role in the 2011 film *The Perfect Family* and a recurring role on Showtime's *Californication*. Kathleen's 2008 autobiography *Send Yourself Roses: Thoughts on My Life, Love, and Leading Roles* secured a position on the *New York Times* best seller list.

Gaye Taylor Upchurch (*Director*) directed the world premiere of Clare Lizzimore's *Animal* (Studio Theatre, Helen Hayes nomination). She directed the Off-Broadway productions of Nancy Harris' *Our New Girl* and Simon Stephens' *Harper Regan* and *Bluebird* with Simon Russell Beale (Atlantic Theater Company), *Bethany* with America Ferrera (Women's Project Theater) and Lucy Thurber's *Stay* (Rattlestick, Obie Award for play cycle *The Hill Town Plays*). Other regional highlights include the world premieres of Anna Ziegler's *The Last Match* (Old Globe), Melissa Ross' *Of Good Stock* (South Coast Repertory) and *An Iliad* (Hudson Valley Shakespeare and West Point Military Academy). Her production of *As You Like It* (Hudson Valley Shakespeare) will be reimaged for Folger Theatre this winter. Gaye Taylor is an alumna of The Drama League and University of NC School of the Arts.

The creative team for *The Year of Magical Thinking* includes Set Designer **Daniel Zimmerman**, Costume Designer **Kathleen Geldard**, Lighting Designer **Jesse Belsky**, Original Music & Sound Designer **Roc Lee**, Stage Manager **Kurt Hall** and Stage Management Assistant **Emily Mellon**.

For full company bios please visit arenastage.org/shows-tickets/the-season/productions/the-year-of-magical-thinking.

The Year of Magical Thinking is generously sponsored by Andrew R. Ammerman.

Special Events

Post-Show Conversation

Connect with our shows beyond the performance at a post-show conversation with artists and staff on November 1 following the 7:30 p.m. performance; November 3 following the 8:00 p.m. performance; and November 9 and 15 following the noon performance.

Production Information

The Year of Magical Thinking

By Joan Didion based on her memoir

Featuring Kathleen Turner

Directed by Gaye Taylor Upchurch

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Page 3—Full company announced for *The Year of Magical Thinking* starring Kathleen Turner

ABOUT: There is no way to avoid tragedy, loss or their aftermath. Yet we still hope that when faced with inescapable grief, something miraculous can emerge to ease our pain and guide us back to the joy of life. Few writers have experienced loss so suddenly and profoundly—or chronicled it as beautifully—as Joan Didion. Based on her award-winning memoir, *The Year of Magical Thinking* follows the iconic American author, portrayed by Academy Award and Tony Award nominee Kathleen Turner (Arena's *Mother Courage and Her Children*), as she learns to reconcile the natural instincts that drive us to bargain with the universal forces that giveth and taketh away.

CAST:

Joan Didion: Kathleen Turner

CREATIVE TEAM:

Director: Gaye Taylor Upchurch
Set Designer: Daniel Zimmerman
Costume Designer: Kathleen Geldard
Lighting Designer: Jesse Belsky
Original Music & Sound Designer: Roc Lee
Stage Manager: Kurt Hall
Stage Management Assistant: Emily Mellon

Plan Your Visit

TICKETS: Tickets for *The Year of Magical Thinking* are \$40-90, subject to change and based on availability, plus applicable fees. For information on savings programs such as pay-your-age tickets, student discounts, Southwest Nights and hero's discounts, visit arenastage.org/shows-tickets/single-tickets/savings-programs.

Tickets may be purchased online at arenastage.org, by phone at 202-488-3300 or at the Sales Office at 1101 Sixth St., SW, D.C.

Sales Office/Subscriptions: 202-488-3300
Group Sales Hotline for 10+ Tickets: 202-488-4380
TTY for deaf patrons: 202-484-0247
Info for patrons with disabilities: 202-488-3300

PERFORMANCE DATES:

Sunday, Tuesday & Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.
Thursday, Friday & Saturday at 8:00 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday at 2:00 p.m.
Weekday matinees at noon on Wednesday, 11/9 and Tuesday, 11/15

Full calendar: tickets.arenastage.org/single/PSDetail.aspx?psn=22700

Open-captioned performances: 11/2 at 7:30 p.m.
Audio-described performances: 10/29 at 2:00 p.m.

CATWALK CAFÉ: Prix fixe meals are now available at the Catwalk Café and include a choice of soup or salad, main entrée and dessert. Pre-ordered meals are only \$22 (\$25 if purchased that day). To pre-order and see the menu, call 202-488-3300 or visit arenastage.org/plan-your-visit/the-café/. The Catwalk Café opens two hours before the show, and reservations are recommended.

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To **pre-order drinks** from the Catwalk Café for up to 50% savings (\$6 house wine and beer), visit tickets.arenastage.org/cart/precart.aspx?p=1007.

METRO: Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater is only one block from the Waterfront-SEU Metro station (Green Line). When exiting the station, walk west on M Street toward Sixth Street, and the main entrance to the Mead Center is on the right.

PARKING: Parking is available in Arena Stage’s on-site garage. Subscribers may purchase parking in advance for \$16. Single ticket buyers may purchase parking in advance for \$19 or on the day of the performance for \$22 on a first-come, first-served basis. Limited handicapped parking is available by reservation. Advanced parking must be reserved by calling 202-488-3300. The entrance to the Mead Center garage is on Maine Avenue between Sixth and Seventh streets, and the garage closes one hour after the day’s last performance ends. Patrons can also park at the Public Parking Garage at 1101 Fourth Street, one block from the Mead Center, for \$11. Street parking is also available along Maine Avenue.

VALET PARKING: Arena Stage offers valet service at no additional cost to patrons with accessibility needs who call 202-488-3300 in advance to request valet parking. On days when valet parking is being used for accessibility, it is also available to general patrons one hour prior to show time for \$25, based on availability. To use valet parking, pull up to the main entrance on Sixth Street.

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater, under the leadership of Artistic Director Molly Smith and Executive Director Edgar Dobie, is a national center dedicated to American voices and artists. Arena Stage produces plays of all that is passionate, profound, deep and dangerous in the American spirit, and presents diverse and ground-breaking work from some of the best artists around the country. Arena Stage is committed to commissioning and developing new plays through the American Voices New Play Institute. Arena Stage impacts the lives of over 10,000 students annually through its work in community engagement. Now in its seventh decade, Arena Stage serves a diverse annual audience of more than 300,000. arenastage.org

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