



the mead center
for american theater

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

Molly Smith Artistic Director Edgar Dobie Managing Director Zelda Fichandler Founding Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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December 17, 2010

ARENA STAGE AT THE MEAD CENTER FOR AMERICAN THEATER
PRESENTS *THE ARABIAN NIGHTS*
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY TONY AWARD WINNER MARY ZIMMERMAN

*** *The Arabian Nights* is restaged in-the-round for the first time at Arena Stage, in association with Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Kansas City Repertory Theatre and Lookingglass Theatre Company ***

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater is delighted to present *The Arabian Nights*, written and directed by Tony Award winner **Mary Zimmerman** (*Metamorphoses*). The production, presented in association with **Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Kansas City Repertory Theatre and Lookingglass Theatre Company**, has been recognized as “Zimmerman’s most theatrically complete and perfect creation” (*Chicago Tribune*). *The Arabian Nights* explores the humanity that people across all cultures share, as told through a whimsical, imaginative and compelling story. *The Arabian Nights* runs **January 14-February 20, 2011 in the Fichandler Stage.**

“Mary Zimmerman is a seminal theater artist whose gift is the visual,” says **Arena Stage Artistic Director Molly Smith**. “When I saw this production of *The Arabian Nights* at Lookingglass Theatre in Chicago I knew the production would be exhilarating in the Fichandler at Arena Stage. This is a magical story told by a magical director and her company.”

The story is set in ancient Baghdad, when a courageous young girl postpones her execution by weaving magical tales for the troubled king. Genies and jesters, lovers and thieves spring to life from Scheherazade’s imagination—allowing her to win the king’s heart even as she secures her freedom. Zimmerman celebrates the wonder of storytelling and the redemptive power of love in this “exhilarating, imaginative theatrical escape” (*Variety*) that *Chicago* magazine calls a “feast for the eyes and ears.”

“For me, the extraordinary, ever-changing collection of stories originally called *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night* is a testament both to our imaginative abilities as storytellers and the absolutely vital, regenerative power of stories—how stories cultivate empathy, how they civilize us,” says **Zimmerman**. “It is a profound, obscene, poetic, comic never-ending text. I’ve been with it for 20 years and I’m particularly happy, for the first time, to do it in the round; I think that arrangement is particularly well-suited to what the show is, what it is about.”

Mary Zimmerman (Playwright and Director) is the recipient of the 2002 Tony Award for Best Director, a 1998 MacArthur Fellowship and 10 Jeff Awards (including Best Production and Best Direction). Based in Chicago, she is a member of the Lookingglass Theatre Company and an Artistic Associate at the Goodman Theatre and Seattle Repertory Theatre as well as a professor of Performance Studies at Northwestern University. Works which Zimmerman has adapted and directed include *The Arabian Nights* (Lookingglass Theatre Company, Manhattan Theatre Club, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Kansas City

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Repertory Theatre), Leonard Bernstein's *Candide* (Shakespeare Theatre Company), *Metamorphoses* (On Broadway at Circle in the Square, Lookingglass Theatre Company, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Mark Taper Forum, Second Stage Theatre), *Argonautika* (Lookingglass Theatre Company, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Shakespeare Theatre Company, McCarter Theatre Center), *Mirror of the Invisible World* (Goodman Theatre), *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci* (Goodman Theatre, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Second Stage Theatre), *The Odyssey* (Lookingglass Theatre Company, Goodman Theatre, McCarter Theatre Center, Seattle Repertory Theatre), *Journey to the West* (Goodman Theatre, Huntington Theatre Company, Berkeley Repertory Theatre), *Secret in the Wings* (Lookingglass Theatre Company, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, McCarter Theatre Center, Seattle Repertory Theatre), *S/M* (Lookingglass Theatre Company), *Eleven Rooms of Proust* (Lookingglass Theatre Company, About Face Theatre) and a new opera with Philip Glass called *Galileo Galilei* (Goodman Theatre, the Barbican in London and Brooklyn Academy of Music). She made her Metropolitan Opera directorial debut with *Lucia di Lammermoor* in the fall of 2007; subsequent MET productions include *Armida* and *La Sonnambula*.

The Cast of *The Arabian Nights*

Barzin Akhavan (Harun Al-Rashid) recently completed an international tour of the critically acclaimed *Aftermath* with NYTW. Other credits include *The Arabian Nights* (Berkeley Rep; Lookingglass); *The Band's Visit* (Hartford Stage); *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Tempest* (Idaho Rep); *Inana* and *Lidless* (Contemporary American Theater Festival); *Love's Labor's Lost*, *Macbeth* and *The Three Musketeers* (Colorado Shakespeare); *Measure for Measure* (Seattle Shakespeare); *The Poetry of Pizza* (Virginia Stage); *Romeo and Juliet*, dir. Sharon Ott and *Twelfth Night*, dir. David Esbjornson (Seattle Rep); the world premiere of *Vestibular Sense* (Mixed Blood); and four seasons with Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival, where he performed in *As You Like it*, *Comedy of Errors*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Othello*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and an award-winning production of *Twelfth Night*, dir. Nancy Carlin. His film and TV credits include *Anniversary* and *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*.

Usman Ally (Madman) makes his Arena Stage debut reprising the role of the Madman, last played at Lookingglass Theater. He originated the role of VP in the Jeff Award-winning and Pulitzer nominated *The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity* (Victory Gardens, world premiere; Off-Broadway at Second Stage). Chicago credits: *Celebrity Row* (American Theater Company), *The Four of Us* (Theater Wit), *Weapon of Mass Impact* (Red Orchid), *Tranquility Woods* (Steppenwolf), *Relatively Close* (Victory Gardens), *American Ethnic* (Remy Bumppo). Regional credits: *Around the World in 80 Days* (Baltimore Center Stage; Kansas City Rep). Film and TV credits: *Contagion*, *Chicago Overcoat*, *The Group* and *Ride Along* (Fox). He received 2010's nationally recognized Fox Foundation/TCG grant, honoring actors of extraordinary potential. He is an ensemble member of American Theater Company.

Terence Archie (Greengrocer, Robber), a Detroit native, recently played the title role in the Off-Broadway Pulitzer finalist production of *The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity* at Second Stage Theatre. He made his Broadway debut in the 2010 Tony-nominated production of *Ragtime*. Mr. Archie has performed alongside Avery Brooks at Shakespeare Theatre Company in Washington, as well as numerous one-man shows with Urban Stages, portraying Frederick Douglass, Matthew Henson and George Washington Carver. TV credits include *Law & Order*, *One Life to Live* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*.

David DeSantos' (King Shahryar) regional credits include Ben Gordon in *Paradise Lost*, Laertes in *Hamlet* and Marco in *A View from the Bridge* during three seasons at Oregon Shakespeare. He also performed Edgar in *King Lear* and Ferdinand in *The Tempest* at California Shakespeare; Edmund in *King Lear* and the title role in *Liliom* at Kansas City Rep; and Juan Julian in the Bay Area premiere of *Anna in the Tropics* at TheaterWorks. Mr. DeSantos has appeared in numerous productions with A Noise Within; Ojai Shakespeare; South Coast Rep, including Dan Sullivan's *Hamlet*; and Will Geer Theatricum Botanicum. His TV credits include *Crossing Jordan*, *CSI*, *CSI: Miami*, *House*, *Numb3rs* and *Ugly Betty*. He is also the narrator of many audio books, including *The Ice Storm*, *A Manuscript of Ashes* and *Sepharad*.

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Minita Gandhi (Slave Girl) is a Chicago-based artist who has performed at First Folio in *Twelfth Night*, Gift Theater in *Summer People*, Indiana Rep in *Around the World in 80 Days*, Lookingglass in *The Arabian Nights*, and Milwaukee Rep in *A Christmas Carol* and *Half-Life*. Her film credits include *Parvati's Golden Skin*, and her TV credits include *The Chicago Code*. She is a student of Meisner Technique at Black Box Acting Studio in Chicago.

Allen Gilmore (Scheherezade's Father, Ishak of Mosul) debuts at Arena Stage with *Arabian Nights*. He has previously performed in D.C. at Shakespeare Theatre in *Argonautika*, dir. Mary Zimmerman, and in *Henry VI*, dir. Michael Kahn. He was recently nominated to Chicago's Jefferson and BTA awards for *Siswe Banzi Is Dead* at Court Theater, dir. Ron OJ Parson. Other recent credits include *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (Writers' Theater), *A Servant of Two Masters* (Yale Rep) and *A Doctor in Spite of Himself* (Intiman).

Susaan Jamshidi's (Butcher, Sympathy the Learned) regional credits include *The Arabian Nights* (Lookingglass, dir. Mary Zimmerman), *The Crucible* (Pittsburgh Public's Young Company, dir. Timothy Douglas) and *Yasmina's Necklace* (Goodman's New Stages Series, dir. Henry Godinez). Her Chicago credits include *The Arab-Israeli Cookbook* (Theater Mir), the world premiere of Nambi E. Kelley's *The Blue Shadow* (Lifeline), *Skin in Flames* and the world premiere of Mia McCullough's *Spare Change* (Stage Left), *Terman Vox Machina* (Oracle) and two festivals at The Inconvenience. She was also privileged to perform the role of Scheherezade/Dahna while understudying the Chicago premiere of *1001* at Collaboraction. Ms. Jamshidi is in the film *A Cadaver Christmas* and the web series *BANGbangShoot!* She has also toured Ireland with Pittsburgh Irish & Classical.

Ronnie Malley's (Poor Man, Musician) recent credits include *The Arabian Nights* (Lookingglass) and assistant music arranger for *Mirror of the Invisible World* (Goodman), both directed by Mary Zimmerman. He has recently composed original film scores for the documentaries *At the Gate* (MPEF Prods.) and *One World Music* (France's FTS Prods.). Mr. Malley has been performing music for audiences since childhood and has spanned multiple genres, collaborating with international musicians from India, North Africa, Peru, Poland, Senegal, Turkey and more. He is a faculty member at Old Town School of Folk Music in Chicago and performs with the music groups Duzan Ensemble, Lamajamal, Middle East Music Ensemble at Univ. of Chicago and Mucca Pazza.

Luis Moreno (Clarinetist, Sage) has performed in New York in *The Age of Iron* (CSC), *Fêtes de la Nuit* (Ohio), *Food for Fish* (Kraine), *Into the Hazard* (Walkerspace), *Straight Up Vampire* (Ars Nova; Joe's Pub), *Three Sisters* (Nature Theater of Oklahoma), *Uncivil Wars* (David Gordon and The Pickup Performance), *Uncle Vanya* (East 13th St.) and many others. His regional credits include *Anna in the Tropics* at Capital Rep and *Moby Dick Rehearsed/The Tempest* with The Acting Company. Mr. Moreno narrated the work of Carlos Castaneda for Recorded Books, as well as many other titles.

Maureen Sebastian's (Dunyazade, Azizah) regional credits include *Around the World in 80 Days* (Virginia Stage, Shakespeare Theater of N.J.); *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Taming of the Shrew* and *The Winter's Tale* (Shakespeare Theater of N.J.) and *Thunder Above, Deeps Below* (Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, Second Generation). Her Off-Broadway credits include *Children of Vonderly* (Ma-Yi); *Now Circa Then* (Ars Nova); *Soul Samurai* (Vampire Cowboys/Ma-Yi) and *Year Zero* (Second Stage Theatre). Ms. Sebastian has also worked on the TV show *Gossip Girl*.

Nicole Shalhoub (Perfect Love, The Other Woman) performed in the 2008 production of *The Arabian Nights* at Berkeley Rep, Kansas City Rep and Lookingglass. Her other regional credits include *Icarus* (Lookingglass); *A Murder of Crows* (Williamstown Theater Festival); *Inana* (Hartford Stage); *Loulou the Acrobat* (Banff Centre); *Mirror of the Invisible World* (Goodman); and *A Lie of the Mind*, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and *Snow in June* (ART). In New York, Ms. Shalhoub performed in *The Clean House* (Lincoln Center); *¿De Donde?* (Turtle Shell Prods.); *Fear Up: Stories from Baghdad and Guantanamo* (New York International Fringe Festival); *The*

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Fifth Column (Mint); *Hell House* (St. Ann's Warehouse) and *Him and 100 Things That Make Your Life Better* (chashama). Her film credits include *Casting About*, *The International* and *Sex and the City 2*, and her TV credits include *The Good Wife* and *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*.

Louis Tucci (Jafar, Sheik Al-Fadl) is making his Arena Stage debut with *The Arabian Nights*. Mr. Tucci was on Broadway in *Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story*. He was seen Off-Broadway as Cookie in *Return to the Forbidden Planet*; *I Love My Wife* (York); *The Cider House Rules* (Atlantic); *The Fourth Sister* (Vineyard) and *Woyzeck* (Public). Mr. Tucci's regional credits include *The Arabian Nights* (Berkeley Rep, Kansas City Rep, Lookingglass); *American Duet* (O'Neill); *The Last Adam* (Syracuse Stage) and *Paradise by the River* (Centaur), for which he received a Les Masque Award nomination. Mr. Tucci's film work includes *The Firing Squad*, *Flying with Keanu Reeves*, and *State Park* with Ted Nugent. Mr. Tucci co-wrote "Artificial World" for the hit horror film *Scream* and "In My Other World," released on Martin Gore's *Counterfeit 2*. He is currently co-writing *If You Could See: The Alice Austen Story*, set for New York in 2011.

Stacey Yen (Scheherezade) is honored to debut at Arena Stage with *The Arabian Nights*, after enjoying its run at Berkeley Rep, Kansas City Rep and Lookingglass. She has also appeared in Mary Zimmerman's *Mirror of the Invisible World* at the Goodman. Ms. Yen spent three summers at Williamstown Theater Festival, where she performed in *The Winter's Tale*, dir. Darko Tresnjak; *Cyrano*; *Carrie: The Musical*; *Our Country's Good* and the title role in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. She was a performer-collaborator with Pig Iron Theater and Headlong Dance's Atelier residency at Princeton Univ. Her New York theater credits include the American premiere of *Enjoy* (Play Company); David Henry Hwang's *Yellowface* (Public) and *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (Under the Radar Festival, Edinburgh International Theater Festival). Her film credits include *Choose, Girl in the Park* and *Sordid Things*. Ms. Yen has also appeared in several TV shows, including *CSI: New York*, *Daily Pops*, *The Good Wife*, *Gossip Girl*, *Guiding Light*, *Two Chicks* (pilot) and *Ugly Betty*.

Evan Zes' (Sheik Al-Islam, Abu Al-Hasan) credits include *The 39 Steps* (City Theater); *Around the World in 80 Days* (Westport Country Playhouse); *The Comedy of Errors*, *Macbeth* and *The Winter's Tale* (Old Globe); *The Comedy of Errors* (Shakespeare on the Sound); *Full Circle*, *Ivanov* and *The Merchant of Venice* (ART); *Othello* (Pioneer); *Pericles* (Goodman; Shakespeare Theatre); and *Victoria Musica* (Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park). Mr. Zes has appeared Off-Broadway in *American Dreams* and *As You Like It* (The Acting Company); *Around the World in 80 Days* and *White Woman Street* (Irish Rep); *Romeo and Juliet* (Lortel) and *Time to Burn* (Manhattan Ensemble Theater). He was also in Julie Taymor's U.K. production of *King Stag* (Barbican). He has appeared on *All My Children* and in the films *French Fries* and *The Street*. Mr. Zes won an Acclaim Award for outstanding performance for his portrayal of Passepartout.

The Creative Team of *The Arabian Nights* includes Set Designer **Dan Ostling**, Costume Designer **Mara Blumenfeld**, Lighting Designer **T.J. Gerckens**, Original Composition and Sound Design by **Andre Pluess**, Stage Manager **Cyd Cahill**, Assistant Stage Manager **Kurt Hall**, Production Assistant (Berkeley) **Megan McClintock** and Production Assistant (Arena Stage) **Marne Anderson**.

Berkeley Repertory Theatre has grown from a storefront stage to a national leader in innovative theater. Known for its core values of imagination and excellence, as well as its educated and adventurous audience, the nonprofit has provided a welcoming home for emerging and established artists since 1968. The theater welcomes an annual audience of 180,000, serves 20,000 students, and hosts dozens of community groups, thanks to 1,000 volunteers and more than 400 artists, artisans and administrators. With two stages, a school and a Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre, Berkeley Rep is proud to premiere exhilarating new plays. In the last five years alone, the company has helped send five shows to Broadway: *American Idiot*, *Bridge & Tunnel*, *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)*, *Passing Strange* and *Wishful Drinking*.

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Kansas City Repertory Theatre is the premier fully professional resident theater company of the Kansas City metropolitan area. Founded in 1964, The Rep is a not-for-profit corporation producing up to seven plays each season—employing more than 250 professional artists, technicians and administrators. The Rep's mission is to serve the greater Kansas City area as one of the nation's leading resident professional theatres with productions of excellence that are diverse, literate and timely, and by providing educational and outreach services for students and our community. With as many as 190 main stage performances, the Rep serves as many as 100,000 patrons annually.

Lookingglass Theatre is home to a multi-disciplined ensemble of artists who create story-centered theatrical work that is physical, aurally rich and visually metaphoric. Founded in 1988, Lookingglass has staged 53 world premieres at 23 venues across Chicago and garnered 42 Joseph Jefferson Awards and Citations. The Lookingglass Theatre in Chicago's landmark Water Tower Water Works opened in June 2003. Work premiered at Lookingglass has been produced in more than a dozen cities across the U.S. More information at <http://lookingglasstheatre.org>.

Further information and images available upon request. Please e-mail press@arenastage.org

The 2010/11 Fichandler Stage season is sponsored by Life Trustee Jaylee Mead.

The Arabian Nights Special Events, Ticket information, and Performance Calendar

Southwest Night- Sunday, February 13, 2011 at 1:00 p.m.

An invitation is extended to our Southwest D.C. neighbors to buy \$25 tickets, plus applicable fees, for one designated 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. Plays and dates are subject to change.

TICKETS: Tickets for *The Arabian Nights* start at \$55, plus applicable fees, based on availability. Discount tickets are available for patrons purchasing tickets for multiple shows, students and groups. A limited number of **\$15 tickets for patrons age 30 and under** go on sale 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 30 minutes before curtain prior to every performance. With **Metro Mondays**, patrons who present a SmarTrip or Metro card can purchase half-price tickets for the week's performances after noon on Mondays while supplies last. **Tickets may be purchased online at www.arenastage.org, by phone at 202-488-3300 or at the Sales Office at 1101 6th St., SW, D.C.**

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.
Thursday, Friday & Saturday at 8:00 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m.
Weekday matinees at noon on 1/26, 2/9 & 2/15

Sign-interpreted performances: 2/6 at 7:30 p.m. & 2/10 at 8:00 p.m.

Audio-described performances: 2/2 at 7:30 p.m. & 2/19 at 2:00 p.m.

Open-captioned performance: 2/16 at 7:30 p.m.

Post-show discussions: 2/3 & 2/8 after the evening show; 1/26, 2/9 & 2/15 after the noon show.

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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 6th Street, and the main entrance to the Mead Center is on the right.

PARKING: Discounted parking in the Mead Center garage is available by reservation to full-season subscribers for \$18 per show. The entrance for the Mead Center garage is on Maine Ave., SW. Limited handicapped parking is available by reservation, and the proper sticker is required. Remaining spaces are \$20 for non-subscribers. Patrons can also park at either of Central Parking's garages on 4th St. between I and M Streets for \$10.

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater is a national center dedicated to the production, presentation, development and study of American theater. Arena Stage produces huge plays of all that is passionate, exuberant, 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. Now in its sixth decade, Arena Stage serves a diverse annual audience of more than 200,000. www.arenastage.org

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