

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

***PLEASE NOTE: this release has been amended as of 2/22/13 to reflect that Naomi Jacobson has replaced Kathryn Kelley in the role of Mary Todd Lincoln.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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January 23, 2013

ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES FULL COMPANY FOR
WORLD PREMIERE OF TAZEWell THOMPSON'S *MARY T. & LIZZY K.*
MARCH 15-APRIL 28, 2013
IN THE ARLENE AND ROBERT KOGOD CRADLE

(Washington, D.C.) Tazewell Thompson's world premiere drama *Mary T. & Lizzy K.* throws open the doors to the Lincoln White House at Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater. As one woman's skilled hands work overtime, creating the most beautiful garments of her career, the other's reality continues to slip ever further from her grasp. Old wounds and new recriminations explode in this riveting drama about loss, love and the importance of promises, both kept and broken. A commission between Thompson (Arena directing credits include *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *M. Butterfly* and *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*) and Arena Stage, *Mary T. & Lizzy K.* stitches together an insider's look at the unique friendship between Mary Todd Lincoln and her talented dressmaker, the successful freed slave Elizabeth "Lizzy" Keckly. Written and directed by Thompson, *Mary T. & Lizzy K.* runs **March 15-April 28, 2013 in the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle.**

Mary T. & Lizzy K. stars D.C.-area actress and Helen Hayes Award winner **Naomi Jacobson** (Centerstage's *The Final Strange Tale of Edgar Allen Poe*) as Mary Todd Lincoln and **Sameerah Luqmaan-Harris** (Urban Stage's *ReEntry*) as Elizabeth Keckly. They are joined by noted local actors **Thomas Adrian Simpson** (last seen at Arena Stage as Col. Pickering in *My Fair Lady*) as Abraham Lincoln and **Joy Jones** (Studio Theatre's *Invisible Man*) as Ivy.

"Tazewell Thompson has written a beautiful play about powerful women in our country's history," shares **Arena Stage Artistic Director Molly Smith**. "It's fabulous to see the fruition of this commission and to be working with Taz as a playwright again. He has a glorious gift with language and helps us to see the humanity in these remarkable people."

"For the time, the nineteenth century, Mary Todd Lincoln and Elizabeth Keckly were individually uncommon women, but as a team, their relationship was unconventional and formidable," adds **Thompson**. "They were independent, ambitious, outspoken and strong-willed women living during the most seminal period in American history. Possessed with their own sense of fashion, personal style and politics, they were intelligent, assertive and proactive. While these traits were understandable for Mary Todd Lincoln, given her privileged upbringing, for Elizabeth Keckly, they were absolutely extraordinary, considering her life as a slave until she was able to buy her freedom."

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Full company announced for *Mary T. & Lizzy K.* at Arena Stage—Page 2

Mary T. & Lizzy K. is the first production of **Arena Stage's American President's Project**, an initiative investigating the lives and legacies of our nation's Presidents and their families. Arena Stage is committed to illuminating the broad canvas of the American experience by delving into the history of Americans of all backgrounds and walks of life, including the first families who have resided here in our nation's capital and have shaped our country's narrative.

Tazewell Thompson (*Playwright/Director*), who, since 1988, was an artistic associate and resident director under Zelda Fichandler and then with Doug Wager, and now as a guest artist with Molly Smith, has directed close to two dozen productions at Arena Stage, including *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *Playboy of the West Indies*, *Glass Menagerie*, *Fences*, *Bloodknot*, *M. Butterfly*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *On the Verge*, *Yellowman* and his own play, *Constant Star*. He has directed numerous productions in theaters across the country, including several world and American premieres. His international opera credits in select cities include work in Milan, Madrid, Paris, Tokyo, Vancouver, Los Angeles and San Francisco, directing *Carmen*, *Death in Venice*, *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, *Norma*, *Patience*, *The Tender Land*, *Street Scene*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Second Hurricane* and *Pearl Fishers*. His New York City Opera production of *Porgy and Bess* received Emmy nominations for Best Director and Best Classical production. Most recently, he directed Kurt Weill's *Lost in the Stars* for Cape Town Opera and Glimmerglass Festival.

The Cast of *Mary T. & Lizzy K.* (in alphabetical order)

Naomi Jacobson (*Mary Todd Lincoln*) is delighted to return to Arena Stage, having performed in *A View from the Bridge*, *Death of a Salesman*, *The Misanthrope*, *The Women* and *Agamemnon and His Daughters*, among others. Most recently, she performed at Centerstage in *The Final Strange Tale of Edgar Allen Poe* and at Signature Theatre in *God of Carnage*. Other Washington credits include Woolly Mammoth Theatre (20 year company member), Shakespeare Theatre Company (a dozen productions), Round House Theatre, Ford's Theatre, Kennedy Center, Folger Theatre, Olney Theatre and Wolf Trap Opera. She's worked at the Goodman Theatre (with Mary Zimmerman), Arizona Theatre Company, Milwaukee Repertory, Delaware Theatre Company and the Berkshire Theatre Festival. Naomi has received a Lunt Fontanne Fellowship (with Lynn Redgrave), two Helen Hayes Awards and 12 Helen Hayes nominations.

Joy Jones (*Ivy*) has performed locally at Studio Theatre, Washington Stage Guild, Theatre of the First Amendment and American Century Theatre. In New York, she has performed in *Zaide* at the Lincoln Center Festival, among others. Joy's regional acting credits include *Ruined* and *Tantalus* at The Denver Center; *Well*, *The Little Prince*, *Young Lady From Rwanda*, *Pride & Prejudice*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Pericles* and *Romeo and Juliet* at PlayMakers Repertory Company; and *Romeo & Juliet* and *The Tempest* at Arkansas Repertory Theatre, as well as work at Georgia Repertory Theatre and Playwrights Theatre of New Jersey. Internationally, she appeared in *Tantalus* with the Royal Shakespeare Company. Her television credits include *Homicide* on NBC and *Tantalus* and *The Shakespeare Sessions* on PBS. Joy holds an MFA from UNC-Chapel Hill/PlayMakers Repertory, a BA in Drama from the University of Virginia and a Certificate in Classical Acting from the British American Drama Academy.

Sameerah Luqmaan-Harris (*Elizabeth Keckly*) Off-Broadway credits include *The Emperor Jones* (Irish Repertory Theatre; Soho Playhouse) and *ReEntry* (Urban Stages). New York credits include *Lady Percy* (The Public Theater/Shakespeare Lab 2012), *Unheard Voices* (American Slavery Project), *Fefu and Her Friends* (Culture Project), *Come Back to Me* (Cherry Lane Theatre), *A Raisin in the Sun*, Jaques in *As You Like It*, Adriana in *A Comedy of Errors* and Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Regional credits include *ReEntry* (Actors Theatre of Louisville; Baltimore Centerstage; Round House Theatre; Two River Theatre), *Doubt* (Asolo Repertory Theatre; Cape May Stage), *Equus* and *The Constant Wife* (Asolo Repertory Theatre). TV/film credits include *The Bravest*, *The Boldest*, *The Good Wife*, and *The Bitter End*.

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Full company announced for *Mary T. & Lizzy K.* at Arena Stage—Page 3

Thomas Adrian Simpson (*Abraham Lincoln*) returns to Arena Stage, where he was last seen as Col. Pickering in *My Fair Lady*. Other Arena appearances include *The Light in the Piazza*, *The Fantasticks*, *The Great White Hope*, *The Seagull*, *Antigone in New York* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. Tom's recent D.C.-area performances include Ed Earl in *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* and Von Golum in *The Boy Detective Fails* (Signature Theatre); Witherspoon in *1776* and King Louis XVI in *Liberty Smith* (Ford's Theatre); and *Candide* and *The Boys from Syracuse* (Shakespeare Theatre Company). Regional credits include *Candide* (Goodman Theatre) and Papa Charlie in *Shenandoah* and Quixote in *The Man of La Mancha* (Wayside Theatre). Tom is a graduate of the NC School of the Arts.

The creative team for *Mary T. & Lizzy K.* includes Set Designer **Donald Eastman**, Costume Designer **Merrily Murray Walsh**, Lighting Designer **Robert Wierzel**, Sound Design & Composition by **Fabian Obispo**, Stage Manager **Scott Pomerico** and Production Assistant **Kristen Harris**.

Full company bios and images available upon request. Please e-mail press@arenastage.org.

Mary T. & Lizzy K. is a recipient of an Edgerton Foundation New American Plays Award. Additional funding is provided by the National Endowments for the Arts.

Mary T. & Lizzy K. Special Events, Ticket Information and Performance Calendar

Public Arena post-show discussions

The Public Arena creates and maintains a dynamic dialogue between Arena Stage artists, audiences and staff about the work on stage. Post-play conversations are free and open to the public but a ticket to the show is encouraged.

Saturday, April 13, 2013, following the 2 p.m. matinee

Explore the tumultuous relationship between First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln and Elizabeth Keckly with special guest Jennifer Fleischner, author of *Mrs. Lincoln and Mrs. Keckly: The Remarkable Story of the Friendship Between a First Lady and a Former Slave*. At a time when race was tearing the nation apart, what brought these two women together? Join cast members and author Jennifer Fleischner for a post-show conversation about the relationship of these two amazing women who survived the ravages of the Civil War, the assassination of President Lincoln and finally, Mary's own incarceration in a mental hospital.

Tuesday, April 16, 2013, following the noon matinee

Enjoy a conversation about the life and work of Elizabeth Keckly featuring cast members and special guest Rosemary E. Reed Miller, author of *The Threads of Time, The Fabric of History: 38 Profiles of African American Designers and Dressmakers from 1850-1950*.

Piano Bar—Wednesday, April 17, 2013

Following the success of last season's post-show piano bars, Arena Stage continues the popular piano bar tradition this season by hosting a free event during the run of *Mary T. & Lizzy K.* Grab a drink and gather 'round the piano for show tunes hosted by Joshua Morgan with special guests in the Grand Lobby. No ticket necessary.

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 \$19 (\$21 if purchased that day). To pre-order and see the menu, call 202-488-3300 or visit arenastage.org/plan-your-visit/the-cafe/. The Catwalk Café opens two hours before the show, and reservations are recommended.

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Full company announced for *Mary T. & Lizzy K.* at Arena Stage—Page 4

TICKETS: Tickets for *Mary T. & Lizzy K.* are \$40-\$85, subject to change and based on availability, plus applicable fees. For information on savings programs such as student discounts, Southwest Nights, Pay-Your-Page tickets, HOTTIX 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

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, 4/3 & Tuesday, 4/16

Full calendar: tickets.arenastage.org/single/psDetail.aspx?psn=14315

Open-captioned performances: 4/10 at 7:30 p.m. & 4/18 at 8:00 p.m.

Audio-described performance: 4/6 at 2:00 p.m.

Post-show discussions: 4/3 & 4/16 after the noon matinee; 4/2 & 4/11 after the evening show.

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 \$18 or on the day of the performance for \$20 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 and Water Street.

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 is a national center dedicated to the production, presentation, development and study of American theater. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Molly Smith and Executive Director Edgar Dobie, Arena Stage is the largest company in the country dedicated to American plays and playwrights. 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 seventh decade, Arena Stage serves a diverse annual audience of more than 300,000. arenastage.org.

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