

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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March 1, 2013

OBIE AWARD WINNER ROBERT O'HARA DIRECTS
KATORI HALL'S *THE MOUNTAINTOP*
AT ARENA STAGE AT THE MEAD CENTER FOR AMERICAN THEATER
MARCH 29-MAY 12, 2013

*** Bowman Wright and Joaquina Kalukango reprise their praised performances from the recent Alley Theatre co-production ***

(Washington, D.C.) Katori Hall's Olivier Award-winning drama *The Mountaintop* comes to Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater following an acclaimed run at the Alley Theatre in Houston, where it was hailed by the *Houston Chronicle* as "fast and funny, profoundly poignant, remarkably real and shimmeringly surreal." Obie Award winner Robert O'Hara (Public Theater's *Wild with Happy*) makes his Arena Stage directorial debut with *The Mountaintop*, which is produced in association with the Alley Theatre and runs **March 29-May 12, 2013 in the Kreeger Theater.**

Returning to their roles from Houston are Bowman Wright (Marin Theatre Company's *Topdog/Underdog*) as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Drama Desk Award nominee Joaquina Kalukango (Hall's *Hurt Village* at Signature Theatre in New York) as Camae. The *Houston Chronicle* declared that Wright "beautifully inhabits Dr. King with a shining sense of humanity that serves as an example to us all," while Kalukango's performance was praised by *Broadway World* as "radiant and brilliant, showcasing a talent for striking and stunning performances that will be worth following."

"I loved this play from the first moment I read it," says Arena Stage Artistic Director Molly Smith. "It is a beautiful and emotional look at Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in a time when we tend to forget the humanity of people who have shaped America. Katori's play stunned me powerfully because her imagination takes us places we can only dream of. This play told me Katori would be a wonderful match for the Resident Playwrights program."

Hailed as "daring, rousing and provocative" by *Entertainment Weekly*, *The Mountaintop* is Hall's bold reimagining of the last night of the historic life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Exhausted from delivering a significant speech, Dr. King rests in his room at the Lorraine Motel when an unexpected visit from a feisty, young maid compels him to confront his own humanity and the fate of our nation. Winner of the Olivier Award for Best New Play, *The Mountaintop*'s "soul-stirring" (*Variety*) storytelling fuses theatricality with spirituality to reach a summit that will leave audiences breathless.

"Almost 50 years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. invigorated an entire nation, his "I Have a Dream Speech" changing the trajectory of American history," shares Hall. "On the Washington mall, he made the Promised

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Land a possibility for our country. Now, with a monument erected to celebrate his life and legacy near that same place, we as Americans are looking back. We see how far we've come, and how far we've still to go. To have *The Mountaintop* premiere only a stone's throw from this history in D.C., the nation's capital, is a great honor, and I hope the play inspires audience members to reconnect to the man who despite so many obstacles and challenges changed our world for the better. The play's message is simple—seeing the humanity in our heroes allows us to see the hero in ourselves.”

O'Hara, an accomplished playwright himself whose writing was most recently seen in D.C. at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, adds “One of the many reasons I'm so excited about this production of *The Mountaintop* coming to our nation's capital is the fact that the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is being brought to life with the second inauguration of the first black President. I think what audiences can expect with this show is a marrying of the brutal truth with fantastical fiction surrounding a legend making Dr. King wholly human. Katori Hall is a writer who makes me proud to call myself an artist and an American, and *The Mountaintop* gives to the audience what I love about the theater and what Dr. King gave to America in the form of a dream, a grand and mysterious ‘what if?’”

Hall is an inaugural resident playwright of Arena Stage's American Voices New Play Institute. Though she officially completed her residency in December 2012, she remains actively involved with Arena Stage, including a recent research and development trip to Africa supported by the Institute, as well as an upcoming workshop of her new plays in April at the Mead Center. Arena Stage sees the playwright residencies as ongoing, long-term relationships with writers, and even when a residency has been completed, the relationship and commitment to a writer's legacy and their body of work continues.

Katori Hall (*Playwright*) is a playwright/performer from Memphis, Tennessee. Hall's plays include *The Mountaintop* (2010 Olivier Award for Best New Play), which recently ran on Broadway at the Bernard Jacobs Theatre starring Angela Bassett and Samuel L. Jackson; *Hurt Village* (2011 Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, Signature Theatre); *Children of Killers* (National Theatre, UK and Castillo Theatre, NYC); *Hoodoo Love* (Cherry Lane Theatre); *Remembrance* (Women's Project); *Saturday Night/Sunday Morning* and *WHADDABLOODCLOT!!!* (Williamstown Theatre Festival); *Our Lady of Kibeho* and *Pussy Valley*. Her awards include the Lark Play Development Center Playwrights of New York (PONY) Fellowship, the Arena Stage American Voices New Play Residency, the Kate Neal Kinley Fellowship, two Lecomte du Nouy Prizes from Lincoln Center, the Fellowship of Southern Writers Bryan Family Award in Drama, a NYFA Fellowship, the Lorraine Hansberry Playwriting Award and the Otis Guernsey New Voices Playwriting Award. Hall's journalism has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, UK's *The Guardian*, *Essence* and *The Commercial Appeal*, including contributing reporting for *Newsweek*. *The Mountaintop* and *Katori Hall: Plays One* are published by Methuen Drama. Hall is an alumna of the Lark Playwrights' Workshop, where she developed *The Mountaintop*, and a graduate of Columbia University, the A.R.T. at Harvard University and the Juilliard School. She is a proud member of the Ron Brown Scholar Program, the Coca-Cola Scholar Program, the Dramatists Guild and the Fellowship of Southern Writers. She is currently a member of the Residency Five at Signature Theatre Company in New York City.

Robert O'Hara (*Director*) recently released his film writing and directing debut, *The Inheritance*. He received the 2010 NAACP Best Director Award for his direction of *Eclipsed* by Danai Gurira. He received the 2010 Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding New Play for *Antebellum* and an Obie Award for his direction of the world premiere of the critically acclaimed *In the Continuum* at Primary Stages. He wrote and directed the world premiere of *Insurrection: Holding History* at the Public Theater, where it received the Oppenheimer Award for Best New American Play and was subsequently published by both TCG and Dramatists Play Service. He directed the world premiere of Tarell McCraney's *Brother/Sister Plays* (Part 2), a co-production at McCarter Theatre/New York Shakespeare Festival. His play *Bootycandy*, under his direction, was presented at Woolly

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Robert O'Hara directs Katori Hall's *The Mountaintop* at Arena Stage—Page 3

Mammoth Theatre. Recent and upcoming directing includes the world premiere of *Wild with Happy* at the Public Theater and *Bootycandy* at Wilma Theater. He is currently an adjunct professor at NYU/TISCH School of the Arts and has worked at Magic Theatre, CTG/Kirk Douglas Theatre, Alliance Theatre, City Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, American Conservatory Theater, Goodman Theatre, Guthrie Theater, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Edinburgh Festival Fringe, The Market Theatre in Johannesburg, Baxter Theatre Centre in Cape Town and Philadelphia Theatre Company.

The Cast of *The Mountaintop* (in alphabetical order)

Joaquina Kalukango (*Camae*) Broadway: *Godspell*. Off-Broadway: *Emotional Creature*, *Hurt Village* (Theatre World Award, Drama Desk Nomination) and *Rent*. Regional: *Emotional Creature* (Berkeley Rep); *Ragtime* (Hangar); *Once on this Island* (Hangar); *The Bluest Eye* (Horizon Theatre); and *The Wiz* (True Colors). Training: The Juilliard School.

Bowman Wright (*Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*) Theater credits include *Togdog/Underdog* (Lincoln) at Marin Theatre Company; *A Raisin in the Sun* (Walter Lee Younger) at Geva Theatre Center; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at La Jolla Playhouse; *The Dreamer Examines His Pillow* (Tommy) at Shakespeare & Company; *The Piano Lesson* (Lyman) at Virginia Stage; *Since Africa* (Ater Dhal) and *House With No Walls* (Jacob/Austin) at Interact Theatre; *Fences* (Cory) at Actors Theatre of Louisville; and *Death and the King's Horsemen* at Lantern Theatre. Films: *Sight* (Lionsgate Productions) and *Vinson* (Sainvil Productions). Training: University of California, San Diego.

The creative team for *The Mountaintop* includes Set & Costume Designer **Clint Ramos**, Lighting Designer **Japhy Weideman**, Sound Designer & Composer **Lindsay Jones**, Projection Designer **Jeff Sugg**, Stage Manager **William Cruttenden** and Assistant Stage Manager **Marne Anderson**.

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

***The Mountaintop* is supported by PEPCO and an award from the National Endowment for the Arts' Art Works.**

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.

TICKETS: Tickets for *The Mountaintop* 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

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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 4/10, 4/17 & 4/30

Full calendar: tickets.arenastage.org/single/psDetail.aspx?psn=14318

Open-captioned performances: 4/24 at 7:30 p.m. & 5/9 at 8:00 p.m.

Audio-described performance: 4/20 at 2:00 p.m.

Post-show discussions: 4/10, 4/17 & 4/30 after the noon matinee; 4/16 & 4/25 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.

The Alley Theatre is a nationally recognized theatre company based in Houston and one of the few American companies with a commitment to resident artists. Under the direction of Artistic Director Gregory Boyd and Managing Director Dean R. Gladden, the Alley creates a wide-ranging repertoire and innovative productions of classics, neglected modern plays and new plays. The Alley has brought its productions to Broadway, off-Broadway, London and major European festivals. As a recipient of the Special Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre, the Alley has premiered plays and created recent collaborations with Edward Albee, Rajiv Joseph, Kenneth Lin, Eve Ensler, Horton Foote, and Robert Wilson.

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