

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES PHYLCIA RASHAD AS HONORARY CHAIR
OF *THE BLOOD QUILT* WORLD PREMIERE CELEBRATION
THURSDAY, MAY 7, 2015

BENEFIT EVENING MARKS OFFICIAL OPENING OF KATORI HALL'S NEW PLAY
WITH EXCLUSIVE PRE-SHOW DINNER AND RECEPTIONS

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater announces Tony Award winner **Phylicia Rashad** will join Event Chair and Arena Stage Board member **Shawna Watley** (Senior Policy Advisor with Holland & Knight) as the Honorary Chair for ***The Blood Quilt* World Premiere Celebration** on **Thursday, May 7, 2015**. The new play by **Katori Hall** (*The Mountaintop, Our Lady of Kibeho*) is directed by **Kamilah Forbes** and runs April 24-June 7, 2015 in the Kreeger Theater.

The evening includes a pre-show cocktail reception, three-course seated dinner and the official opening night performance of *The Blood Quilt*, followed by a wine and dessert reception with the production's cast and artistic team.

About *The Blood Quilt*: Inaugural resident playwright Katori Hall is once again “fearlessly redefining theater” (*Washington Post*) with this funny and fierce world premiere. Welcome to the Jernigan Gals' Quilting Corner. Gathering at their childhood island home off the coast of Georgia, four disconnected sisters meet to create a family quilt to honor their recently deceased mother. When their reunion turns into a reading of their mother's will, everyone must grapple with a troubling inheritance. Stitched with history and ritual, laughter and tears, will their “blood quilt” bind the family together or tear them apart forever?

[The Blood Quilt World Premiere Celebration](#)

Thursday, May 7, 2015

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater (1101 Sixth St., SW)

*5:30 p.m. Cocktail reception

6:30 p.m. Seated dinner, including remarks

8:00 p.m. World-premiere opening performance of *The Blood Quilt*

*Post-show dessert reception and cast party

*Denotes an event that is open to photography

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Complimentary valet parking will be available

Cocktail Attire

Tickets: Individual tickets and corporate sponsorship opportunities for *The Blood Quilt* World Premiere Celebration range from \$150 to \$50,000. For further information and to secure tickets, contact Maria Corso at 202-600-4176 or email rsvp@arenastage.org. For additional details, you may visit arenastage.org/donate/special-events/blood-quilt-opening-night/index.shtml.

For media inquiries and access please e-mail press@arenastage.org.

All proceeds support all aspects of Arena Stage, including artistic productions and initiatives as well as community engagement programs, which educate students in the classroom, bring cutting-edge workshops to community organizations and train future artists and educators. Arena Stage is committed to sharing the riches of theater with the surrounding community and inviting younger, more diverse audiences to the theater. For more information, visit arenastage.org/education/education-programs.

The Honorary Committee for *The Blood Quilt* World Premiere Celebration includes Joanne Barker, Judith N. Batty, Michele G. Berman, Lavern Chatman, Sela Thompson Collins, Congressman Elijah Cummings, Marc Duber, Congresswoman Donna F. Edwards, Dr. Wayne Fredrick, Deborah Kennedy Kennard, Congressman John Lewis, Congresswoman Gwen Moore, Joyce Moorehead, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, Lauri Fitz-Pegado, Robert Raben, R. Lucia Riddle, Susan Ross, Beth Newburger Schwartz, Sandra E. Taylor and Congressman Chris Van Hollen.

Phylicia Rashad has appeared in every *tongue confess* and *Blue* at Arena Stage. A native of Houston, Ms. Rashad graduated magna cum laude with a B.F.A. in theater from Howard University. Broadway credits include *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (also West End), *August: Osage County*, *Gem of the Ocean*, *A Raisin in the Sun* (2004 Tony Award for Best Actress in a Play, Drama Desk Award), *Blue*, *Jelly's Last Jam*, *Into the Woods*, *Dreamgirls*, *The Wiz* and *Ain't Supposed to Die a Natural Death*. Off-Broadway credits include *Cymbeline*, *Bernarda Alba* and Ed Bullins' *The Duplex* (Lincoln Center); *Helen*, *The Story* and *Everybody's Ruby* (NYSF Public Theater); *Puppet Play*, *Zooman and the Sign*, *Sons and Fathers of Sons*, *In an Upstate Motel*, *Weep Not for Me* and *The Great Mac Daddy* (Negro Ensemble Company); and *The Sirens* (Manhattan Theatre Club). Other regional theater credits include Mrs. Prentice in *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, Euripides' *Medea* and *Blues for an Alabama Sky* at Alliance Theatre in Atlanta. She has added directing to her acclaimed career mounting productions of *Gem of the Ocean*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *Fences*, *Immediate Family* and *Blueprints to Freedom: An Ode to Bayard Rustin*. Known to TV audiences for her role as Clair Huxtable on *The Cosby Show* and as Ruth Lucas on the CBS sitcom *Cosby*, she received the NAACP Image Award for Best Actress in a Comedy Series for both of these roles. She's also been nominated for two Emmy Awards and has received two People's Choice Awards. Feature film credits include *Once Upon a Time When We Were Colored*, directed by Tim Reid; *Free of Eden*, opposite Sidney Poitier; *Loving Jezebel*, directed by Kwyn Bader; *The Visit*, directed by Jordan Walker Pearlman; and Tyler Perry's *Good Deeds*. She starred in Perry's film version of Ntozake Shange's *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When The Rainbow Is Euf*. TV film credits include *A Raisin in the Sun* (2008 Emmy nom); *The Old Settler* (AFI nom), directed by Debbie Allen; *David's Mother*; *False Witness*; *Jailbirds*; *Polly*; and *Polly Comin' Home*. Other television appearances include *Touched by an Angel*, *Blossom* and *A Different World*.

Respected in the academic world, Rashad is the first recipient of the Denzel Washington Chair in Theatre at Fordham University. She received an Honorary Doctorate from Spelman College where First Lady Michelle Obama delivered the 2011 commencement address. Rashad also holds Honorary Doctorates from Fordham University, Carnegie Mellon University, Howard University, Providence College, Morris Brown College, Clark Atlanta University, Barber Scotia College, St. Augustine College and Brown University. Rashad is the recipient

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of the 2015 BET Honors Theatrical Arts Award. Additional awards include the Texas Medal of Arts, the National Council of Negro Women's Dorothy L. Height Dreammaker Award, AFTRA's AMEE Award for Excellence in Entertainment, the Board of Directors of New York Women In Film and Television's Muse Award for Outstanding Vision and Achievement, Dallas Women In Film Topaz Award, Peoples' Choice Awards, several NAACP Image Awards and the Pan African Film Festival's Lifetime Achievement Award. Rashad serves on the Advisory Board of the PRASAD Project and the Board of Directors of True Colors Theatre, the Broadway Inspirational Voices, The Actors Center, the Center for African American Studies at Princeton University and the ADEPT Center which is steering the restoration of the historic Brainerd Institute.

The Blood Quilt World Premiere Celebration is sponsored in part by Shawna Watley, Joanne Barker, Bernstein Companies, Clark Construction and GEICO.

The Blood Quilt is generously sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts' Art Works and is the recipient of an Edgerton Foundation New American Plays Award. Additional support is provided by the David Bruce Smith Foundation.

The Blood Quilt World Premiere Celebration is designed by Events by André Wells.

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater, under the leadership of Artistic Director Molly Smith and Executive Producer 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 thousands of 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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