

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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<https://www.arenastage.org/press-room/press-kits/press-kits-landing/turn-me-loose-press-kit/>

GRETCHEN LAW'S *TURN ME LOOSE*
TO MAKE D.C. PREMIERE AT ARENA STAGE
SEPTEMBER 6 – OCTOBER 14, 2018

*** As previously announced, Obie Award-winner Edwin Lee Gibson
portrays comedian-activist Dick Gregory; John Carlin joins cast ***

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater announces the D.C.-area premiere of ***Turn Me Loose***, Gretchen Law's intimate, no-holds-barred drama about the extraordinary and explosive life of Dick Gregory, who spent his later years in the nation's capital. *Turn Me Loose* chronicles Gregory's rise as the first Black comedian to expose audiences to racial comedy; in confronting bigotry head-on with biting humor and charm, Gregory turned activism into an art form. "Scorchingly funny and brilliant" (*The New York Times*), *Turn Me Loose*, directed by John Gould Rubin, runs **September 6-October 14, 2018 in the Kreeger Theater**.

As previously announced, Obie Award-winner and former stand-up comedian **Edwin Lee Gibson** will portray comedian-activist Dick Gregory. Gibson's 90-plus professional theater credits include Off-Broadway's *Battlefield* by Peter Brook, *Love and Information* by Caryl Churchill and *The Seven*. Making his Arena debut, **John Carlin** joins the cast as Stand-up Comic/Emcee/Interviewer/Heckler/Cabbie, reprising the roles he originated.

"Dick Gregory's impact is more than being a socially conscious comedian," says **Molly Smith**. "He put his heart where his mouth was and used a talent for comedy as a platform for action – and change. He lived in our town and it's a joy to present a play about him."

"Dick Gregory – uniquely – sacrificed an extremely successful and lucrative career for activism," shares **Rubin**. "There are any number of prominent figures who use their celebrity in favor of a cause, but very few who relinquish fame and money for their beliefs. For this alone, he was a hero. I created this show when he was still alive to re-discover a hero living among us. Now, of course, to re-discover a hero. And he pursued injustice wherever his experience and imagination led him, so that, ultimately, he wielded his activism on behalf of a wide array of progressive issues, especially racial injustice. He was deeply intelligent, acutely attuned to the truth, unbendingly faithful to his beliefs and ridiculously funny. A hero by any standard."

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Gretchen Law (*Playwright*) is the author of five full-length plays: *The Adventures of A Black Girl In Search Of Her God* was adapted from a Bernard Shaw story of the same title and has been approved for production by The Society of Authors; *Al Sharpton for President* was a semi-finalist in the Eugene O'Neill National Playwright's Conference 2006; *Turn Me Loose* was workshopped by Atlantic Theater Company, New York Stage and Film and at New York Theatre Workshop; additionally, *History Lessons* and *Loving Charley Pride* have been read at the National Black Theater Festival, The Players, The National Arts Club, the Harlem Theater Company, the LAByrinth Theater Company and The Dramatist Guild, of which she is a member. She is a longtime member of the Frank Silvera Writers Workshop. Gretchen is a practicing psychotherapist with degrees from Yale Divinity School and the Columbia University School of Social Work. In 1991, she founded the Parents' Foundation, 100 Broadway, in New Haven, CT, a residential community for adults with psychiatric illnesses. She resides in Guilford, CT.

John Gould Rubin (*Director*) is the Artistic Director of The Private Theater and former co-Artistic/Executive Director (with Phillip Seymour Hoffman and John Ortiz) of LAByrinth Theater for which he directed seven plays including premieres by John Patrick Shanley and Erin Cressida Wilson. He originally created *Turn Me Loose* at LAByrinth as part of collection of writings entitled '68, and then directed the show Off-Broadway at The Westside Theatre (nominated for the Joe Calloway Award, Best Director) and at The Wallis Annenberg Center in L.A. He directed *American Buffalo* with Treat Williams and Stephen Adly Guirgis at The Dorset Theatre Festival, where he also directed *Outside Mullingar* two seasons prior; and a multi-media production of *Double Indemnity* at The Old Globe, with Michael Hayden. He's directed at Rattlestick, Ma-Yi, The Public, and the Soho Theatre in London among others, notably *Peer Gynt* at The International Ibsen Festival in Oslo; *Playing With Fire* (a deconstruction of Strindberg's one-act play about voyeurism, exhibitionism and wife-swapping at The Box, the notorious sex cabaret); a site-specific *Hedda Gabler* in a townhouse for twenty five people per performance; *Queen For A Day* with David Proval and Vincent Pastore Off-Broadway and *The Cherry Orchard* with Ellen Burstyn at The Actors Studio. Current projects: a radical, new adaptation of *A Doll House* (just recently developed through a Collaboration Residency at The Marble House Project), *Rocco*, *Chelsea*, *Adriana Sean*, *Claudia*, *Gianna*, *Alex* (a devised project about the consciousness of conflict and the American Political Divide which will be produced by The Private Theatre in February, 2019), and an all Afro-German production of *Hedda Gabler* in Berlin. Next year, Mr. Rubin will direct a multi-media stage adaptation of *Revolutionary Road*, in Mandarin, for the 1,000-seat stage theater in the National Centre of Performing Arts of China in Beijing, which will then tour throughout the Mainland.

Cast Biographies

Edwin Lee Gibson (*Dick Gregory*) recently returned from nine months working with famed director Peter Brook (National Theatre Studio, London and Theatre Des Bouffes du Nord, Paris). Off-Broadway credits include *Battlefield* by Peter Brook (2017/18 international tour); *Love and Information* by Caryl Churchill (U.S. premiere, Minetta Lane Theatre/NYTW); *The Seven* (NYTW); *The Diary of Black Men* (Fairfield Halls, London); *Five 'Til* (Dixon Place Theatre); *Beyond Caring* (U.S. premiere, Lookingglass Theatre); *The Death of Bessie Smith* (New Brooklyn Theatre); and *The Seven*. TV credits include *Law and Order: SVU* and *Shameless*. Film credits include *Marshall*, *Mom and Dad* and *Blood First*. Stage writing credits include *Five 'Til*, *Knucklehead* and *pla-ce-bo*; screen writing credits include *Nicodemus*, *Arrivée*, *Like Family*, and the feature film, *A New Normal*. He is an Obie Award winner for Outstanding Performance.

John Carlin (*Stand-up Comic/Emcee/Interviewer/Heckler/Cabbie*) is thrilled to reprise the role he originated in *Turn Me Loose*, for his Arena Stage debut. Recent Off-Broadway productions include *America Is Hard to See* (HERE Arts), *Turn Me Loose* (Westside Theatre) and *Uncle Vanya* (The Pearl). Regional credits include *Turn Me Loose* (Wallis Annenberg), *Dead Accounts* and *Time Stands Still* (Hampton Theatre Company), *Oklahoma!* (Bard Summerscape) and *Hadestown* (NYTW summer residency). Film/TV credits include *Roddy and Doddy*, *See You Around*, *The System* and *A Crime to Remember*. A former RCA recording artist and independent solo artist, John is a member of *Reverend Billy & The Stop Shopping Choir*, a radical NYC-based performance community that has toured Europe and the U.S., opened for Neil Young and travelled to Ferguson, MO, Standing Rock, ND, and the D.C. headquarters of the EPA and FERC. Love and gratitude to DG, Lillian and the entire Gregory family.

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The creative team for *Turn Me Loose* includes Scenic Designer **Christopher Barreca**; Costume Designer **Susan Hilferty**; Lighting Designer **Stephen Strawbridge**; Sound Designer **Leon Rothenberg**; Casting by **Jack Doulin** and **Victor Vazquez**; Stage Manager **Erin Cass** and Assistant Stage Manager **Christi B Spann**.

For full company bios, please visit <https://www.arenastage.org/press-room/press-kits/press-kits-landing/turn-me-loose-press-kit/>.

Turn Me Loose is presented in association with John Legend, Get Lifted Film Company, Mike Jackson, The Will and Jada Smith Family Foundation, Beth Hubbard, The Private Theatre, Eric Falkenstein, SimonSays Entertainment, Jamie Cesa and Jana Babatunde-Bey.

Turn Me Loose is sponsored by Beth Newburger Schwartz.

Post-Show Conversations

Connect with our shows beyond the performance at a post-show conversation with artists and staff—September 25, September 26 and October 3 following the noon performance; October 2 following the 7:30 p.m. performance; and October 11 following the 8:00 p.m. performance.

Production Information

Turn Me Loose

By **Gretchen Law**

Directed by **John Gould Rubin**

In the Kreeger Theater | **September 6-October 14, 2018**

ABOUT: This intimate and no-holds-barred drama chronicles Dick Gregory's rise as the first Black comedian to expose audiences to racial comedy. His comedy spared no one including politicians, celebrities and the white supremacists who were part of his regular audience. In confronting bigotry head-on with biting humor and charm, Gregory turned his activism into an art form, risking his own safety at each performance. "Scorchingly funny and brilliant" (*The New York Times*), *Turn Me Loose* is an exuberant and raw tribute to Gregory's life as a civil rights activist, comic genius and unapologetic provocateur.

CAST:

Dick Gregory: Edwin Lee Gibson

Stand-up Comic/Emcee/Interviewer/Heckler/Cabbie: John Carlin

CREATIVE TEAM:

Playwright: Gretchen Law

Director: John Gould Rubin

Scenic Designer: Christopher Barreca

Costume Designer: Susan Hilferty

Lighting Designer: Stephen Strawbridge

Sound Designer: Leon Rothenberg

Casting by Jack Doulin, Victor Vazquez

Stage Manager: Erin Cass

Assistant Stage Manager: Christi B Spann

Plan Your Visit

TICKETS: Tickets for *Turn Me Loose* are \$40-95, 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 <https://www.arenastage.org/tickets/savings-programs/>.

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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 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday at 2 p.m.
Weekday matinees at noon on Tuesday, 9/25; Wednesday, 9/26; and Wednesday, 10/3

Full calendar: http://tickets.arenastage.org/single/PSDetail.aspx?psn=26398&_ga=2.4761331.1507461872.1533045407-572965268.1533045407

Audio-described performances: 9/22 at 2 p.m.

Open-captioned performances: 10/4 at 8 p.m., 10/6 at 2 p.m. and 10/10 at 7:30 p.m.

ARENA STAGE CAFÉ: Prix fixe meals are available at Richard's Place, Arena Stage's casual dining 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 <https://www.arenastage.org/plan-your-visit/richards-place-cafe/prix-fixe/>. The café opens two hours before the show, and reservations are recommended. To **pre-order refreshments**, visit <https://www.arenastage.org/plan-your-visit/richards-place-cafe/concessions/>.

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 \$15.

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.

For complete 2018/19 season details, visit: <https://www.arenastage.org/tickets/season-landing/>

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 and 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.

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