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Photo of Anthony Fleming III, Christopher Donahue and Emma Cadd in *Moby Dick* by Liz Lauren.

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# KATHLEEN TURNER IN THE YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING

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***“Once, in a dry season, I wrote in large letters across two pages of a notebook that innocence ends when one is stripped of the delusion that one likes oneself. Although now, some years later, I marvel that a mind on the outs with itself should have nonetheless made painstaking record of its every tremor. I recall with embarrassing clarity the flavor of those particular ashes.”***

- Joan Didion, from *Self-Respect*  
(first published in *Vogue* August 1, 1961)

Joan Didion is a powerful, honest and fearless writer. Her essays are insightful comments on our American society, whether they are about morals or cultural values — ideas are seen through her piercing lens in a very personal way.

I will never forget the first time that I read *The Year of Magical Thinking*. I read the entire book in one sitting, mesmerized by her truth telling about grief and loss.

We all experience grief and loss, even when we want to run away from it, and pretend that no one ever dies. Joan Didion ran for a while in the face of immeasurable loss, but then came back to herself and her grief.

When I spoke to Kathleen Turner about what project she would like to do next, she immediately mentioned this play. When I asked why she said, “because the play is about grace, and I want to bring that to the audience.” I cannot think of anyone better than Kathleen with her resonant voice and deep inner life to take us gently, gently by the hand exploring Didion’s passage. Partnered with Gaye Taylor Upchurch, we have two insightful and passionate artists. It is a pleasure to showcase both of these artists at Arena this fall.

We have continued the initiative of last year’s Women’s Voices Theater Festival this season. Seven out of 10 of our plays are written by women, and six out of 10 directors are women.

This truly is the Year of the Woman.

Best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Molly".

Molly Smith, Artistic Director



## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



While death is among the most natural life processes, it continues to be a difficult subject matter. Joan Didion gracefully and triumphantly tackles the humanity of the topic by intimately sharing with us in her personal story of loss and the transitional period that follows. This is a very human story of a phase in life everyone must tackle. As doors close, others open.

Early in the season is always a new beginning for the staff at Arena. It's a time when everything is starting fresh and we welcome our 2016/17 class of Allen Lee Hughes Fellows. The Allen Lee Hughes Fellowship Program directly aligns with Arena's core values of diversity and inclusion. For 25 years, our fellows have been a crucial part of our organization. With fellowships in the areas of artistic and technical development, arts administration, marketing, fundraising, communications, community engagement and community outreach, this program successfully nurtures and develops the next generation of theater leaders. In addition to being prized members of Arena Stage staff, fellows receive one-on-one mentorship from a senior staff member, access to regular, professional development workshops, and monthly meetings with different directors, designers and theater professionals.

The goal of the program is to cultivate new theater professionals by committing them to a heightened standard of training. Fellows are encouraged to take the lead on established and new projects for the duration of their tenure, and with each of our ten scheduled productions for the season. Those one-on-one relationships, and this extensive hands-on training, makes the program unique. Many previous fellows have moved on to leadership positions with other theaters or founded their own arts organizations, and everything in between. In fact, many current staff members began their time with us as interns or Allen Lee Hughes Fellows. I am proud to say that 28% of current full-time Arena Stage staff members began their career with Arena as part of the Fellows and Interns Program. After 25 years of the Fellows program, 79% still work in theater and of those not working in theater, 71% continue to work in the arts.

Each Fellowship is a distinguished opportunity for individuals of color and young professionals looking to expand their careers in the arts. We are grateful for the opportunity to host a cohort of exemplary young theater artists and we look forward to seeing how they will continue to strengthen our organization and solidify our commitment to inclusion and parity within arts organizations.

The cycle continues and renewal is embraced in the life of Arena Stage.

All best,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Edgar'.

Edgar Dobie, Executive Director



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Photo of Gaye Taylor Upchurch by Chad Batka

### Director Gaye Taylor Upchurch shares her thoughts on *The Year of Magical Thinking*

Joan Didion has always been a writer of great reckoning. She does not shy away from subjects that are brutal or sad or uncomfortable or not-to-be-talked-about. In fact, she traffics in these topics.

She is at it again in *The Year of Magical Thinking*, urging us to confront our ideas of death and grief.

With disarming honesty, she unearths and confesses her own faulty thinking as she grapples with staggering personal loss. After her husband's cremation, she lives in such a way so that he might come back to her. Before we can think her irrational, Didion beats us there with bracing self-awareness. She is saying simply: this is the truth of how it was for her, of how it is, of how it might be for us.

I can think of no better actress to meet the clarion call of Joan Didion's truth telling than the extraordinary Kathleen Turner. Kathleen is formidable; she is full of depth and humor and pathos; she is not a person, we might imagine, who would suffer fools gladly. Which is why she is the perfect person to play a woman experiencing, out of character, a year of magical thinking.

Both she and Joan are iconic in their fields, masters of their chosen professions. Both of these women are tough-minded but tenderly nuanced when it comes to the human condition.

I'm thrilled to invite you into this apartment, into the presence of Kathleen Turner and the words of Joan Didion, as we all have the opportunity to contemplate and plumb the great depths of what it is to be human.

Thank you for being here.

Gaye Taylor Upchurch

### CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

Join us for a post-show conversation with the artists on:

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Arena Stage  
Molly Smith, Artistic Director | Edgar Dobie, Executive Director

PRESENTS

# KATHLEEN TURNER IN THE YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING

BY  
JOAN DIDION  
BASED ON HER MEMOIR

DIRECTED BY  
GAYE TAYLOR UPCHURCH

---

SET DESIGNER  
DANIEL ZIMMERMAN

COSTUME DESIGNER  
KATHLEEN GELDARD

LIGHTING DESIGNER  
JESSE BELSKY

ORIGINAL MUSIC AND SOUND DESIGNER  
ROC LEE

STAGE MANAGER  
KURT HALL

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# CAST LIST, FOR THIS PRODUCTION

## CAST

Joan Didion .....KATHLEEN TURNER

## FOR THIS PRODUCTION

Technical Director.....SCOTT SCHRECK  
Properties Director .....MONIQUE WALKER  
Costume Director .....JOSEPH P. SALASOVICH  
Master Electrician .....CHRISTOPHER V. LEWTON  
Sound Director .....TIMOTHY M. THOMPSON  
Stage Management Assistant.....EMILY ANN MELLON  
Directing Assistant.....ANNA LATHROP  
Show Carpenter .....JOHN WALTERS  
Wardrobe Supervisors.....ALICE HAWFIELD, KELLY MARSHALL HOWLAND  
Light Board Operator.....JOHN ROSE-CARON  
Sound Engineer .....WILLIAM WACKER

*The Year of Magical Thinking* runs with no intermission.  
The video and/or audio recording of this performance by any means whatsoever is strictly prohibited.  
Please turn off all electronic devices.



## CAST



**KATHLEEN TURNER** (*Joan Didion*) returns to Arena Stage following *Mother Courage and Her Children* and *Red Hot Patriot: The Kick-Ass Wit of Molly Ivins*. Her Broadway credits include *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (Tony nomination), *Indiscretions*, *The Graduate*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Tony nomination) and *High* (also national tour). As a screen icon, Kathleen has garnered critical acclaim for her performances in films including *Body Heat* (Golden Globe nomination), *Romancing the Stone* and *Prizzi's Honor* (Golden Globe Award for each), *Peggy Sue Got Married* (Academy and Golden Globe nominations) and *The War of the Roses* (Golden Globe nomination). Additional film credits include *The Man with Two Brains*, *The Jewel of the Nile*, *The Accidental Tourist*, *V.I. Warshawski*, *Serial Mom*, *Naked in New York*, *Moonlight and Valentino*, *The Real Blonde* and *The Virgin Suicides*. She had a starring role in the 2011 film *The Perfect Family* and a recurring role on Showtime's *Californication*. Kathleen's 2008 autobiography *Send Yourself Roses: Thoughts on My Life, Love, and Leading Roles* secured a position on the *New York Times* best seller list.

## CREATIVE TEAM

**JOAN DIDION** (*Playwright*) won the 2005 National Book Award for *The Year of Magical Thinking*, one of 13 books she has written. Her other books include *Play It as It Lays*, *Democracy*, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, *The White Album*, *Salvador*, *Miami* and *Political Fictions*. With her husband, John Gregory Dunne, she wrote the screenplays for *The Panic in Needle Park* with Al Pacino, *True Confessions* with Robert De Niro and Robert Duvall, *A Star Is Born* with Barbra Streisand and *Up Close & Personal* with Michelle Pfeiffer and Robert Redford. She received the 2005 Gold Medal in Nonfiction from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, 1996 Edward MacDowell Medal, 1999 Columbia Journalism Award and 2002 George Polk Book Award. She contributes to various periodicals, most frequently *The New York Review of Books*.

**GAYE TAYLOR UPCHURCH** (*Director*) is thrilled to be making her Arena Stage debut. She directed

the world premiere of Clare Lizzimore's *Animal* (Studio Theatre, Helen Hayes nomination). She directed the Off-Broadway productions of Nancy Harris' *Our New Girl* and Simon Stephens' *Harper Regan* and *Bluebird* with Simon Russell Beale (Atlantic Theater Company), *Bethany* with America Ferrera (Women's Project Theater) and Lucy Thurber's *Stay* (Rattlestick, Obie Award for play cycle *The Hill Town Plays*). Other regional highlights include the world premieres of Anna Ziegler's *The Last Match* (Old Globe), Melissa Ross' *Of Good Stock* (South Coast Repertory) and *An Iliad* (Hudson Valley Shakespeare and West Point Military Academy). Her production of *As You Like It* (Hudson Valley Shakespeare) will be reimaged for Folger Theatre this winter. Gaye Taylor is an alumna of The Drama League and University of NC School of the Arts.

**DANIEL ZIMMERMAN** (*Set Designer*)'s New York credits include *Fashions for Men* (The Mint, Drama Desk nomination), *Kill Floor* (LCT3), *Suicide, Incorporated* (Roundabout Theatre Company), *Friend Art* (Second Stage), *You Got Older* (Page 73 Productions) and *Be a Good Little Widow* (Ars Nova). Daniel has also worked with The Play Company, The Pearl, Cherry Lane, Coit Coeur and Lesser America. Regional credits include Dallas Theater Center, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Humana Festival, Center Stage, Trinity Repertory, Milwaukee Repertory, TheatreWorks Palo Alto, Portland Stage Company, People's Light and Pioneer Theater Company. Daniel is also an affiliated artist with Clubbed Thumb.

**KATHLEEN GELDARD** (*Costume Designer*)'s Arena Stage credits include *Love in Afghanistan*. Recent regional credits include *Peter and the Starcatcher* (Actors Theatre of Louisville); *Mad River Rising* (Cincinnati Playhouse); *Ironbound* (Round House); and *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Invisible Man* and *Ruined* (Huntington). Additional regional credits with Signature Theatre, Woolly Mammoth, La Jolla Playhouse, Berkeley Repertory, Center Stage, Kennedy Center, Studio Theatre, Imagination Stage, Flashpoint Theatre Company, Folger Theatre, Vineyard Playhouse, Studio Arena Theater, Children's Theatre of Charlotte and Liz Lerman Dance Exchange. Awards include 2012 Bay Area Critics Circle nomination for *Ruined* (Berkeley Repertory), 2012 IRNE nomination for *Ruined* (Huntington) and 2009 Helen Hayes nomination for *The Neverending Story* (Imagination Stage).

**JESSE BELSKY** (*Lighting Designer*) makes his Arena Stage debut. Recent D.C.-area productions include *The Mystery of Love and Sex* (Signature Theatre); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Folger Theater); *Animal* (Studio Theatre); and *Deathtrap*, *Blithe Spirit* and *Outside Mullingar* (Everyman Theatre). Regionally his work has been seen at Yale Repertory, Asolo Repertory, Playmakers Repertory and Triad Stage. New York designs include *The Body Politic* (59E59), puppet works *Lysistrata* and *Women of Troy* (La MaMa Annex) and *My Trip Down the Pink Carpet* starring Leslie Jordan. Additional credits include Lee Breuer's opera *Antigone* (Athens, Greece) and his new play *Glass Guignol* (Provincetown Theater Festival). Jesse taught lighting design at Connecticut College and UNC Greensboro, received his M.F.A. from Yale School of Drama and is a member of USA 829. [www.jessebelsky.com](http://www.jessebelsky.com)

**ROC LEE** (*Original Music and Sound Designer*) is a D.C.-based composer and sound designer. Arena Stage credits include *Mother Courage and Her Children* (Helen Hayes nomination). Additional credits include *Dial M for Murder* (Olney Theatre Center); *Our Town* (Faction of Fools); *The Revolutionists* (Catholic University); *Romeo and Juliet* (We

Happy Few); *In the Red and Brown Water*, *Insurrection*, *Begotten* and *Visible Impact* (Georgetown University); and *Sleeping Beauty* (Pointless Theatre). Upcoming credits include *Charm* (Mosaic Theater Company), *Fickle Fancy Farce* (Olney Theatre Center) and *In the Heights* (Gala Hispanic Theatre). He holds a Master of Music in stage music composition from CUA. [www.roclee.net](http://www.roclee.net)

**KURT HALL** (*Stage Manager*) is thrilled to be working with Kathleen again after doing *Mother Courage and Her Children* and *Red Hot Patriot: The Kick-Ass Wit of Molly Ivins*. Other Arena Stage credits include *Born for This: The BeBe Winans Story*, *All the Way, Sweat, Destiny of Desire*, *The Blood Quilt*, *Our War*, *The Shoplifters*, *Smokey Joe's Café*, *Maurice Hines is Tappin' Thru Life*, *Good People*, *The Normal Heart*, *Red, Ruined*, every tongue confess starring Phylicia Rashad, *Duke Ellington's Sophisticated Ladies*, *Looped* starring Valerie Harper, *Next to Normal* starring Alice Ripley, *Awake and Sing!* and *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia*. Additional regional credits at the Kennedy Center, Roundabout Theatre Company, McCarter Theatre Center, Shakespeare Theatre Company and Signature Theatre. Thanks to his family for all their support.

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**MOLLY SMITH** (Artistic Director) has served as Artistic Director of Arena Stage since 1998. Her directing credits include *Oliver!*, *The Originalist*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Camp David*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *Oklahoma!*, *A Moon for the*

*Misbegotten*, *My Fair Lady*, *The Great White Hope*, *The Music Man*, *Orpheus Descending*, *Legacy of Light*, *The Women of Brewster Place*, *Cabaret*, *An American Daughter*, *South Pacific*, *Agamemnon and His Daughters*, *Coyote Builds North America*, *All My Sons* and *How I Learned to Drive* at Arena Stage. Her directorial work has also been seen at The Old Globe, Asolo Repertory, Berkeley Repertory, Trinity Repertory, Canada's Shaw Festival, Toronto's Tarragon Theatre, Montreal's Centaur Theatre and Perseverance Theater in Juneau, Alaska, which she founded and ran from 1979-1998. Molly has been a leader in new play development for over 30 years. She is a great believer in first, second and third productions of new work and has championed projects including *How I Learned to Drive*; *Passion Play*, a cycle; and *Next to Normal*. She has worked alongside playwrights Sarah Ruhl, Paula Vogel, Wendy Wasserstein, Lawrence Wright, Karen Zacarias, John Murrell, Eric Coble, Charles Randolph-Wright and many others. She led the re-invention of Arena Stage, focusing on the architecture and creation of the Mead Center for American Theater and positioning Arena Stage as a national center for American artists. During her time with the company, Arena Stage has workshopped more than 100 productions, produced 37 world premieres, staged numerous second and third productions and been an important part of nurturing eight projects that went on to have a life on Broadway. In 2014, Molly made her Broadway debut directing *The Velocity of Autumn*, following its critically acclaimed run at Arena Stage. She was awarded honorary doctorates from American University and Towson University.



**EDGAR DOBIE** (Executive Director) continues to enjoy a career in public theater after nearly four decades. He has served as executive director of Trinity Repertory Company in Providence, founding managing director of Toronto's

Canadian Stage Company and managing director at National Arts Centre in Ottawa and Vancouver's New Play Centre. Based in New York City for six years, he was president of Andrew Lloyd Webber's Really Useful Company and the North American executive producer of *Riverdream*, as well as managing producer of the Tony Awards. His Broadway producing credits include *Sunset Boulevard* (Tony Award for Best Musical), *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, Paul Simon's *The Capeman*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Boubli and Schönberg's *The Pirate Queen* and Dolly Parton's *9 to 5*. He is a member of the Directors for theatreWashington and the Southwest Business Improvement District. He also serves as a Tony Award nominator for the 2017 season. Edgar, his good wife Tracy and their daughter Greta Lee are all proud residents of Southwest Washington, D.C.

This theater operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres and Actors' Equity Association.



The actors and stage managers are members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.



The scenic, costume, lighting and sound designers in LORT theaters are represented by United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829 of the IATSE.



The Director and Choreographer are members of the STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS SOCIETY, a national theatrical labor union.

Arena Stage is a constituent of the Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for the American theater.

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