



MEDIA CONTACTS:

Mike Fila, (202) 636-3503, mike@bucklesweetmedia.com

Amanda Sweet, (202) 636-3507, amanda@bucklesweetmedia.com

**WOMEN'S VOICES THEATER FESTIVAL
JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2018**

**PARTICIPATING THEATERS ANNOUNCE PRODUCTIONS, PLAYWRIGHTS;
SET A NATIONAL EXAMPLE FOR GENDER PARITY ON STAGES OF THE NATION'S CAPITAL**

**FROM IMMIGRATION TO GENDER EQUALITY TO RACE RELATIONS,
2018 FESTIVAL HAS TOUCHPOINTS RELEVANT TO CURRENT EVENTS**

Washington, D.C. – In their landmark effort to stage a paradigm shift in American theater, the **Women's Voices Theater Festival** announces 25 productions, penned by women playwrights and women-led collectives, for the Festival's second iteration, **January 15-February 15, 2018 in Washington, D.C.** The country's largest festival dedicated to women in theater includes 13 World Premieres, as well as 10 American or Regional Premieres, with the playwright participating in the rehearsal and production process.

Festival organizers made the artistic choice to broaden the scope of works presented at the 2018 Festival to include new plays receiving their second or third productions, providing a platform to ensure that plays are produced beyond their World Premieres, which is crucial for playwrights and new play development.

For the latest information about Festival events, visit WomensVoicesTheaterFestival.org. A full list of productions and descriptions is below, accurate at time of distribution.

The inaugural Festival in 2015 was heralded by *The Washington Post* as "inspired" and "an

unprecedented wave of world premiere plays by women” across the city’s stages, while *The New York Times* praised it as “an energizing showcase.”

The first Festival was an important forum for female playwrights whose World Premieres went on to be produced in other markets. Yael Farber’s *Salome* [Shakespeare Theatre Company] received a second run at London’s prominent National Theatre. Since its Festival premiere Martyna Majok’s *Ironbound* [Round House Theatre] has been performed at four theaters, including an international production. Two plays that premiered at Arena Stage, *Destiny of Desire* by Karen Zacarias and *Erma Bombeck: At Wit’s End* by Margaret and Allison Engel, have been performed by numerous other theater companies across the country. In total, 13 productions by 17 playwrights went on to enjoy subsequent performances after the Festival.

“The groundbreaking inaugural Women’s Voices Theater Festival was an important gesture by D.C. theater leaders to shed important light on the lack of parity on our stages and in the points of view we present for our audiences. The work is far from done and we still have a long way to go to achieve gender parity in American theater. We need to explore every option, including festivals like this, in order to ensure the world hears more women’s voices,” said Meghan Pressman, Managing Director of Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company. She added, “Bringing back the Festival is an important way for us to keep this issue on the forefront.”

This sentiment was echoed by Molly Smith, Artistic Director of Arena Stage: “After the success of the first Women’s Voices Theater Festival, our gang of artistic directors got together and talked about the next move. True change does not happen with one step, one play or one festival. Our diverse Washington theater community has so much more to show the nation. Bringing women playwrights into balance with male playwrights will take time. I’m proud that our Washington theater community is leading the way.”

Productions in the 2018 Women’s Voices Theater Festival swing from the imaginative to resonant commentary on topical issues. Playwrights translate the immigrant experience of Iraqis, Zimbabweans, and Romanians as they embrace and grapple with life in America [*Noura, Familiar, Waxing West*]. Characters navigate uncomfortable dualities in searing works that explore the intersection of police work and the Black Lives Matter movement [*Freedom for Superman*]. They examine the life of an active duty Marine nearing her wedding day [*Veils*], a queer Muslim wrestling to find balance between her religion and her sexuality [*No Word in Guyanese for Me*], and a recent college graduate striving for independence as family turmoil pulls her home [*This is All Just Temporary*]. Others bridge current and historical struggles, exploring the complexities of American ideals from the perspectives of a Cherokee lawyer fighting for the autonomy of her Nation [*Sovereignty*], revolutionaries that call into question the principles of America’s Founding Fathers and the nature of freedom [*Jefferson’s Garden*], and a man imprisoned for more than a decade at the Guantanamo Bay Detention Center [*4,380 Nights*].

The interpersonal relationships of women, from the extraordinary to the familiar, are explored as playwrights dissect the locker room gossip of a youth soccer team [*The Wolves*], the

complicated relationship between the Queen of England and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher [*Handbagged*], and Baltimore bon vivants and art collectors, Claribel and Etta Cone [*All She Must Possess*].

These broad offerings will build on the success of the first Festival, which saw an unparalleled rise in the representation of women in Washington, D.C. theater. The Festival's inaugural season, 2015-2016, saw a marked increase in gender diversity, with 38.54% of plays written by women—an increase from 28.71% the previous year, per Gwydion Suilebhan and Olivia Haller, the D.C.-based playwrights who have been analyzing production gender parity data in the region since the 2012-2013 season. That increase represents the single largest jump in the history of their analysis. The gender parity gap in American theater is well documented by leading industry sources—*American Theatre Magazine* found that 26% of plays across the country were written by women (2016); 22% according to The Lilly Awards and Dramatists Guild (2015).

“I’m thrilled that the Festival is seeing another iteration. The 2015 event ignited the conversation in American theater regarding the lack of gender parity for produced playwrights in America, and its impact has been felt across the country,” said Nan Barnett, the Festival’s Coordinating Producer. “The 2018 Festival will amplify that by bringing attention to yet another group of women writers and their plays, and to the commitment of theaters in and around the nation’s capital to lead the charge towards more equitable programming.”

Building on this momentum and recognizing the acute and ongoing need to continue to advocate for gender parity, the Festival’s originating theaters—Arena Stage, Ford’s Theatre, Round House Theatre, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Signature Theatre, Studio Theatre, and Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company—have once again chosen to encourage regional presenters in Washington, D.C. to highlight the scope of new plays written by women and the range of professional theater being produced in and around the nation’s capital. The 2018 Women’s Voices Theater Festival features 18 participating theaters and is produced by Nan Barnett of Flanagan Theater Projects, with support from theatreWashington, led by President Amy Austin.

The Women’s Voices Theater Festival is grateful for the renewed support of lead donors Heidi and Mitch Dupler, and hope that their generosity spurs new and renewed support of individuals and foundations across the national capital region. Additional funding for the Festival comes from Share Fund, Andrew Rodger Ammerman in tribute to Josephine Friedman Ammerman, and The Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation.

TodayTix is the official ticketing partner of the 2018 Women’s Voices Theater Festival.

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Women’s Voices Theater Festival 2018 Productions—Originating Theaters

Arena Stage

Sovereignty by Mary Kathryn Nagle

January 12—February 18, 2018

World Premiere

Some wounds refuse to heal. Mary Kathryn Nagle's daring new work travels the intersections of personal and political truths, historic and present struggles. Sarah Ridge Polson, a young Cherokee lawyer fighting to restore her Nation's jurisdiction, must confront the ever-present ghosts of her grandfathers. With shadows stretching from 1830s Cherokee Nation (now present-day Georgia) through Andrew Jackson's Oval Office to the Cherokee Nation in present-day Oklahoma, *Sovereignty* asks how high the flames of anger can rise before they ultimately consume the truth.

Ford's Theatre

Jefferson's Garden by Timberlake Wertenbaker

January 19—February 11, 2018

American Premiere

In this sweeping drama, playwright Timberlake Wertenbaker explores the contradictions between our Founding Fathers' ideals and the realities of freedom in America. Christian, a Quaker pacifist, defies his family to fight in the American Revolution. Susannah, an enslaved woman, is tempted to fight for the British when they promise liberation. The two meet and cross paths with Thomas Jefferson, George Mason, and Sally Hemings. These encounters force them to confront the compromises America makes after the promise of equality. Wertenbaker creates a dazzling world, taking us from Revolutionary battlefields to Paris to Monticello. Nataki Garrett (Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company's *An Octoroon*) directs.

Round House Theatre

Handbagged by Moira Buffini

January 31—February 25, 2018

American Premiere

The Iron Lady. The Queen. Born six months apart, each woman had a destiny that would change the world. But when the stiff upper lip softened and the gloves came off, which one had the upper hand? The American premiere of the Olivier Award-winning comedy is helmed by Indhu Rubasingham, Artistic Director of the original Tricycle Theatre and West End productions in London, *Handbagged* is the wickedly funny new comedy that imagines what the world's most powerful women talk about behind closed palace doors.

Shakespeare Theatre Company

Noura by Heather Raffo

February 6—March 14, 2018

World Premiere

What does “home” mean and what will we do to protect it? *Noura* challenges notions of belonging, shame, and sacrifice through a portrait of Iraqi immigrants in New York. As Noura and her husband, Tariq, prepare to celebrate a traditional Christmas, she looks forward to welcoming a special guest—Maryam, a young Iraqi refugee. But the girl’s arrival opens wounds, forcing them to confront where they are, where they’ve been, and who they have become.

Award-winning playwright and performer Heather Raffo (*9 Parts of Desire*) draws on personal stories of Arab-American women responding to *A Doll’s House*, Henrik Ibsen’s classic drama of one mother’s struggle to balance duty with identity.

Signature Theatre

4,380 Nights by Annalisa Dias
January 16—February 18, 2018
World Premiere

4,380 Nights is a complex and intriguing look at an American worldview created in the wake of 9/11. Over the course of 12 years, or 4,380 days, Malik Djamal Ahmad Essaid has been held without charge by the United States government at the Guantanamo Bay Detention Center. As he languishes in his cell, his interactions with those on the outside juxtapose with historical events in a riveting exposé into the most dangerous prison of all—fear. With a graceful poetry and a fluidity that spans time and place, D.C. playwright Annalisa Dias delivers a searing and timely critique of power, humanity and what it means to be American.

Studio Theatre

The Wolves by Sarah DeLappe
January 17—March 4, 2018
Regional Premiere

Winter indoor soccer. Saturdays. Over quad stretches and squats, a team of young women prepares to defend the Wolves’ undefeated record, their banter spilling from tampons to genocide to the pressures of preparing for their adult lives. With an ear for the bravado and empathy of the teenage years, *The Wolves* explores the violence and teamwork of sports and adolescence, following a pack of 16-year-old girls who turn into warriors on the field. An acclaimed play from a new voice, Studio-commissioned writer Sarah DeLappe.

Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company

Familiar by Danai Gurira
February 5—March 4, 2018
Regional Premiere

It’s winter in Minnesota, and a Zimbabwean immigrant family is preparing for the wedding of their eldest daughter, a first-generation American. But when the bride insists on observing roora, a traditional bride-price ceremony, it opens a deep rift in the household. Rowdy and

affectionate, *Familiar* pitches tradition against assimilation among the members of one devoted family. Which will prove stronger: the customs they keep or the secrets they've kept buried? *Familiar* is the third Woolly production of Gurira's work, after successful runs of *Eclipsed* (2016 Tony nominee for Best Play) and *The Convert*.

Women's Voices Theater Festival 2018 Productions—Participating Theaters

4615 Theatre Company

Waxing West by Saviana Stanescu

January 19—February 10, 2018

Regional Premiere

Winner of the New York Innovative Theatre Award, Romanian-born playwright Saviana Stanescu's *Waxing West* turns an immigrant's pursuit of the American Dream into a darkly funny modern fable. Moving and absurd, Stanescu's play follows Romanian cosmetologist Daniela, who travels to New York to marry a lonely computer programmer she has never met. As she relives her memories both back home and in America, Daniela is haunted by the spirits of Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife, who have returned from the dead as vampires with a knack for cultural commentary.

Alliance for New Music-Theatre

Women of Troy/Voices from Afghanistan by Yalda Baktash and Susan Galbraith

January 24—February 11, 2018

World Premiere

Alliance for New Music-Theatre ventures on its most ambitious cross-cultural collaboration to date in a music-rich retelling of Euripides' most famous anti-war play, *Trojan Women*, set in modern day Afghanistan. As the women sing and share stories, they reach into Afghanistan's rich and multicultural past, stitching together stories and songs that present a deeper and more complex portrait of a place most only see through the lens of a war-torn country. This new music-theater adaptation is being developed as a cross-cultural collaboration between Afghan and American artists and will showcase the cooperative efforts of two playwright-poets, two co-composers, and 16 American and Afghan performers.

Ally Theatre Company

Freedom for Superman by Tracey Conyer Lee

January 11—28, 2018

World Premiere

Wilson sees nothing wrong with his life, his marriage to Ruby, or his job as a police officer in the midst of the Black Lives Matter movement. He smiles through pain Ruby wishes he would share. When family friend, Claire, loses her husband to the quick trigger of a white police officer, Wilson is forced to explore his manhood, guns, secrets not well kept, and what it means to "live your truth" in an America built on lies.

Baltimore Center Stage

Skeleton Crew by Dominique Morisseau

February 1—March 11, 2018

Maryland Premiere

Skeleton Crew, the third play in Dominique Morisseau's acclaimed *Detroit* trilogy, tells the story of four workers at the last exporting auto plant in Detroit struggling to survive as their way of life disappears. Set around 2008, this play vividly portrays the modern struggle in a changing America and reveals the real people on the factory line. This skeleton crew—the bare minimum number of staff needed to function—is made up of people who keep the vital operations of the plant running in the face of obstacles, rumors, and, eventually, the confirmation of their worst fears. Loyalties are tested and boundaries are crossed as this vibrant team of loyal and proud workers navigate an uncertain future.

Brave Spirits Theatre

The Trojan Women Project, devised by the cast

January 31—February 25, 2018

World Premiere

The Trojan Women Project looks at American women through the lens of Euripides's *The Trojan Women*. This intersectional look at American women tries to discover why being women isn't enough to unite us and whether or not we are the losers in the American Dream.

Convergence Theatre

This is All Just Temporary by Olivia Haller

January 19—February 10, 2018

Regional Premiere

Lauren, a recent college graduate, moves back in with her parents as she transitions into her adult world. She struggles between her desire to move away to build her own life and the urgent need to manage her family's crisis as the behavioral aggression of Noah, Lauren's autistic younger brother, severely increases.

dog & pony dc

Peepshow by dog & pony dc

February 7—25, 2018

World Premiere

Peepshow is a multi-media theatrical exhibition dissecting and subverting the female gender, objectification, and women in service. The audience will be complicit in constructing fanciful, heroic, absurd, and commonsensical stories. dog & pony dc will premiere their first new show in three years, created and performed entirely by a non-male-identifying ensemble and 100% accessible to Deaf and hearing audience members.

Folger Theatre

The Way of the World by Theresa Rebeck

January 9—February 11, 2018

Regional Premiere

Mae is a sweet-natured woman with just a little baggage—a \$600 million inheritance. When her womanizing boyfriend Henry dallies with her aunt, the world seems too much for her. Both women become the object of ridicule and scandal—but Henry has a plan to win the heiress back. In the Hampton's 1%, where money and status determine everything, can love conquer all? Freely adapted from William Congreve's classic play, *The Way of the World* is a sparklingly witty physical comedy illuminating the foibles of the upper-class.

Mosaic Theater Company

Queens Girl in Africa by Caleen Sinnette Jennings

January 4—February 4, 2018

World Premiere

Mosaic's first commission brings the World Premiere sequel to Caleen Sinnette Jennings' "sweet-spirited solo show" *Queens Girl in the World*, which *The New York Times* described as one of the breakout hits of the first Women's Voices Theater Festival. *Queens Girl in Africa* picks back up with Jacqueline Marie Butler as she and her family sail to Nigeria following the assassination of her father's close friend, Malcolm X. Performed by Helen Hayes Award-winner Erika Rose, this is a touching coming-of-age story of a woman finding her place in Civil War-torn Nigeria.

Nu Sass Productions

Veils by Hope Villanueva

February 15—March 4, 2018

World Premiere

Mel is happily engaged. She's also an active Marine Corp translator. While on deployment, Mel's father passes away, with her mother and sister left to pick up the pieces. When Mel finally returns home, she is haunted by nightmares, terrified not only by what she has seen and lost but by the prospect of going back to her family—particularly as her sister has commandeered wedding planning duties, with her first task being to find Mel's gown. *Veils* explores the experiences of a soldier coming to terms with being a part of two very different worlds and a woman who isn't sure who she is or what she wants.

Olney Theatre Center

Aubergine by Julia Cho

February 7—March 4, 2018

Regional Premiere

Ray leaves his job as a classically-trained French chef to take care of his dying father, a Korean immigrant, who never appreciated Ray's culinary accomplishments. Food, which normally unites people, painfully divides Ray from his father, even as it serves as the key to memory and identity for all the characters in this off-Broadway hit. If the language of food lets him down, he's even more vexed by the Korean language. Ray calls upon his estranged girlfriend Cornelia for translation services when his non-English speaking uncle arrives with a sack full of strange ingredients intended for a soup to nurse Ray's father back to health. This life-affirming and perceptive drama from one of the country's most important playwrights distills the flavors of rich characters and intense relationships.

Pointless Theatre Co.

Imogen, an original adaptation by Charlie Marie McGrath

Dates TBD

World Premiere

Pointless Theatre presents its interpretation of Shakespeare's romance, *Cymbeline*. Adapted and directed by local artist Charlie Marie McGrath, *Imogen* explores her expectations when the fairytale narrative doesn't go according to plan. In *Imogen*, Pointless reimagines Shakespeare's original adventure and the Bard's most classic plot twists—mis-identity, an estranged royal family, fantastical forests, and even a wicked stepmother—intertwined with their unique use of puppetry, music, and dance.

Rainbow Theatre Project

No Word in Guyanese for Me by Wendy Graf

February 8—March 4, 2018

Regional Premiere

No Word in Guyanese for Me is a poetic and lyrical exploration of religious and sexual identity. This is the journey of Hanna. From her childhood in Guyana to her adolescence in pre- and post-9/11 New York City, from a disastrous arranged marriage to her sexual awakening, Hanna struggles to come to terms with her sexual identity, her devotion to her faith, and the right to be accepted for who she is, a gay Muslim.

Rapid Lemon Productions

Love is a Blue Tick Hound by Audrey Cefaly

January 12—21, 2018

Regional Premiere

Love Is A Blue Tick Hound is a collection of four 20-minute, one-act plays, three of which have received New York premieres and all of which have won multiple festivals throughout the U.S. and Canada. There is a state of inertia—a kind of reckless apathy—that is soul-crushing, yet we stand back and allow it. A thankless job. A bad marriage. A dysfunctional family. Although we are not truly "stuck," we convince ourselves that we are. Getting out requires math (the hard kind): Why do we settle... and what is the full cost of leaving? These are the central questions in

Love is a Blue Tick Hound. Four intimate duets—*Fin & Euba*, *Clean*, *The Gulf*, and *Stuck*—that bear witness to all the many facets of love as the pairings form, flounder, and fall apart.

Rep Stage

All She Must Possess by Susan McCully

February 8—25, 2018

World Premiere

The Baltimore Cone sisters, Dr. Claribel and Miss Etta, daughters of German-Jewish immigrants, could have lived tranquil, appropriate lives as respected Victorian ladies. Instead, the iconic duo voraciously collected art and curios from around the world. The unassuming Etta, often overshadowed by her sister, sat demurely among art and literary geniuses of the early 20th century while slowly amassing one of world's greatest Modern art collections. *All She Must Possess* is a celebration of Etta's extraordinary life. Works of art come alive and her one-time lover, Gertrude Stein, sings her praises on Etta's journey to doyen of Modernity.

Spooky Action Theater

The Lathe of Heaven, adaptation by Natsu Onoda Power and Richard Henrich

January 25—March 11, 2018

World Premiere

Adapting from the book by Ursula LeGuin, Spooky Action Theater's *The Lathe of Heaven* follows George Orr, a man blessed—or cursed—with reality-altering dreams who comes under the hand of a doctor eager to remake the world. But dreams won't be trained, and the world itself slides into meltdown and chaos. Leaping in to save humanity, George is thrown into one more re-imagined world to restore balance.

Taffety Punk Theatre Company

Production and dates of run TBD

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

Digging Up Dessa by Laura Schellhardt

February 3—18, 2018

World Premiere

Dessa is a 21st-century girl with no shortage of struggles, secrets, and mysteries to solve. From dinosaur bones to hidden memories, the world is filled with buried treasures just waiting to be uncovered. Luckily, thanks to the mysterious appearance of a remarkable friend—the pioneering 19th-century English paleontologist Mary Anning—young Dessa knows just how to excavate them. After a field trip to a museum reveals that Anning's legacy has been buried, Dessa decides that she's going to fight to earn her friend the credit she deserves. With help from her once-rival, Nilo, Dessa sets to work unearthing the secrets hidden beneath the surface of the past and present—for Mary's history and her own future.