



For Immediate Release
Thursday, March 14th, 2019
Press Contact: Mikala Stubley
Marketing & Communications Manager
202-349-9803
mikala.stubley@woollymammoth.net

THE PECULIAR PATRIOT OPENS AT WOOLLY MAMMOTH ON APRIL 1ST

(Washington, DC) **Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company** is delighted to announce that **Liza Jessie Peterson's** *The Peculiar Patriot* has been added to the 2018-19 season this April. This production will be directed by **Talvin Wilks** and presented in association with **National Black Theatre** and **Hi-ARTS**, who produced the World Premiere production in New York City in September 2017. Peterson's "visceral" (*New York Times*) new play has replaced Heidi Schreck's *What the Constitution Means to Me*, which has transferred to Broadway this spring.

"*The Peculiar Patriot* offers a richly layered perspective on the impact of mass incarceration in the African-American community. The brilliant Liza Jesse Peterson specifically asks us to spend time with those loved ones on the outside - the families disrupted, the lives derailed, and the love that is stronger than ever," says **Woolly Mammoth Artistic Director Maria Manuela Goyanes**. "With authenticity and humor, *The Peculiar Patriot* spotlights both the systemic and the individual, humanizing the crushing statistics by igniting empathy in all of us."

Betsy LaQuanda Ross is a self-proclaimed "Peculiar Patriot," who makes regular visits to penitentiaries in order to boost the morale of her loved ones. When she is not sharing neighborhood updates and gossip, Betsy illuminates our country's cruel and unjust criminal justice system and its impact not only on the 2.3 million people behind bars, but also their family and friends.

Written and performed by the inimitable Liza Jessie Peterson and inspired by her decades-long work with prison populations including on the notorious Riker's Island, *The Peculiar Patriot* is a fierce, funny, and shrewd indictment of the systemic inequity within America's fastest growing industry, tracing its roots from the plantation to the prison yard.

Liza Jessie Peterson is an actress, playwright, poet, author and youth advocate who has been steadfast in her commitment to incarcerated populations both professionally and artistically for over two decades. Her critically acclaimed one woman show, *The Peculiar Patriot*, premiered at The National Black Theater in Harlem for two separate runs, was nominated for three Audeco Awards (Best solo performance, light design and sound design) and had a successful sold out run at Arts Emerson in Boston garnering rave reviews from both the *New York Times* and *The*

Boston Globe, and a five star review in *Time Out NY*. In June of 2018, *The Peculiar Patriot* was awarded a generous grant from Agnes Gund's prestigious Art for Justice Fund and as a result of that funding is set to embark on a national tour. During the early years of the play's uncanny trajectory and true to her activist nature, Liza performed *The Peculiar Patriot* in over 35 penitentiaries across the country in a self-funded prison tour spanning the course of four years. Liza is author of *ALL DAY; A Year of Love and Survival Teaching Incarcerated Kids at Rikers Island* (Hachette). She was featured in Ava DuVernay's Emmy award winning documentary *13th* (Netflix) and was a consultant on Bill Moyers documentary *RIKERS* (PBS).

Also known for her exceptional poetic skills, Liza began her poetry career at the Nuyorican Poets Café and was a vital member of the enclave of notable poets who were part of the "underground slam poetry" movement. It was this electric group of artists that inspired Russell Simmons to bring "spoken word" to HBO where Liza appeared on two episodes of *Def Poetry*. In addition to *The Peculiar Patriot*, Liza has written several plays which received development support from The Lark, Syracuse Stage, The McCarter Theater, Manhattan Theater Club and The Flynn Theater. *Down the Rabbit Hole* is currently in residency at The Flynn Theater in Vermont followed by *SistahGurls and the Squirrel* in development at both The Lark and Manhattan Theater Club in NY. Visit her website at: www.lizajessiep.com

Talvin Wilks is a playwright, director and dramaturg based in New York City and Minneapolis. His plays include *Tod, the boy, Tod, The Trial of Uncle S&M, Jimmy and Lorraine, and As I Remember It* with Carmen de Lavallade. Acclaimed directorial projects include the world and regional premiere productions of *UDU* by Sekou Sundiata, *The Love Space Demands* by Ntozake Shange, *The Shannequa Chronicles* by Stephanie Berry, *The Ballad of Emmett Till and benevolence* by Ifa Bayeza, *This Bitter Earth* by Harrison David Rivers, *The Peculiar Patriot* by Liza Jessie Peterson and ongoing collaborations with Ping Chong's series *Undesirable Elements* and *Collidescope: Adventures in Pre- and Post-Racial America*. Dramaturgical collaborations include major works with Bebe Miller Company, Camille A. Brown and Dancers, Urban Bush Women, Ain Gordon, MIA/Jon Boogz/ Lil Buck, and Baba Israel. He is currently an Assistant Professor of Theatre Arts and Dance at the University of Minnesota/Twin Cities.

The set and lighting design for *The Peculiar Patriot* is by Andrew Cissna. The remaining members of the production team include Latoya Murray-Berry (costume design); Luqman Brown (sound design and composer); Katherine Freer (projection design); John Keith Hall (production stage manager).

SCHEDULE

The Peculiar Patriot runs April 1 to April 20, 2019, with performances: Wednesday-Friday at 8 pm; Saturday at 3 pm and 8 pm (except April 6, which features an 8 pm performance only); and Sunday at 7 pm (except April 14, which features an additional performance at 2pm); with two Pay What You Will performances on Monday, April 1 and Tuesday, April 2 at 8 pm.

April 1, 2019: Pay What You Will performance at 8 pm

April 2, 2019: Pay What You Will performance at 8 pm

April 3, 2019: Preview performance at 8 pm

April 4, 2019: Preview performance at 8 pm

April 5, 2019: Opening Night Performance at 8 pm

April 6, 2019: Performance at 8 pm

April 7, 2019: Performance at 7 pm

April 10, 2019: Performance at 8 pm

April 11, 2019: Performance at 8 pm

April 12, 2019: Performance at 8 pm

April 13, 2019: Performances at 3 pm and 8 pm

April 14, 2019: Performances at 2 pm and 7 pm

April 17, 2019: Performance at 8 pm

April 18, 2019: Performance at 8 pm

April 19, 2019: Performance at 8 pm

April 20, 2019: Performances at 3 pm and 8 pm

TICKETS

Tickets to *The Peculiar Patriot* start at \$46. Visit us online at woollymammoth.net, by phone at (202) 393-3939, via email at tickets@woollymammoth.net, or in person at the Box Office, located at 641 D Street NW.

Patrons who are 30-years-old and younger may, at any time, purchase Section C tickets for \$20 to any performance. There are also discounts available for educators, first responder men and women and active US military personnel, spouses, and veterans. More information is available at woollymammoth.net.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Facebook.com/WoollyMammothTC

Twitter: @WoollyMammothTC #PeculiarPatriot

ABOUT WOOLLY

Woolly Mammoth, a national innovator in the development and production of new plays, is one of the best known mid-sized theaters in the country and “the hottest theater company in town” (Washington Post). For almost four decades, Woolly has held a unique position at the leading edge of the American theater, earning a reputation for staying “uniquely plugged in to the mad temper of the times” (New York Times). We’ve garnered that reputation by holding fast to our unique mission: to create rousing, visceral, enlightening theater experiences that galvanize

diverse artists and audiences to engage with our world in unexpected and often challenging ways.

ABOUT NATIONAL BLACK THEATRE

Founded by visionary Dr. Barbara Ann Teer in 1968, **National Black Theatre (NBT)** is a nationally recognized cultural and educational institution. Dr. Teer pioneered “the healing art of black theatre as an instrument for wholeness in urban communities where entrepreneurial artists of African descent live and work.” In 1983, Dr. Teer expanded the vision of NBT by purchasing a 64,000-square-foot building on 125th Street and Fifth Avenue (renamed “National Black Theatre Way” by local law in 1994). This was the first revenue-generating Black arts complex in the country, an innovative arrangement through which for-profit businesses who shared NBT’s spiritual and aesthetic values rented retail space to subsidize the arts. Out of her vision, NBT houses the largest collection of Nigerian new sacred art in the Western hemisphere and is considered the authentic representation of a model whose time has come. NBT is partially supported by grants from the Ford Foundation, New York Community Trust, Time Warner Corporations. Howard Gilman Foundation, Jerome Foundation, Andrew Mellon Foundation, City Council of New York, City of New York Department of Cultural Affairs, Columbia Service Society and private donations. Visit www.nationalblacktheatre.org or follow NBT on Facebook (@NationalBlackTheatre) and Twitter/Instagram (@NatBlackTheatre).

ABOUT HI-ARTS

Hi-ARTS (formerly known as the Hip-Hop Theater Festival) is a leading organization within the urban arts movement. For over seventeen years, Hi-ARTS has consistently broken new ground, advancing urban art by empowering artists to develop bold new works, while creating a lasting and positive impact on urban communities. Hi-ARTS is adding to the legacy of the HHTF at an exciting stage of growth that engages Hip-Hop while creating the new urban arts. With the move to our permanent home at El Barrio’s Artspace PS 109, Hi-ARTS is poised to grow into new realms of artistry, advocacy, and service to the communities in which we live and create.