

PRESS RELEASE

CONTACT: Dan Brick
(301) 694-4744 ext. 303
dbrick@marylandensemble.org



31 W. Patrick Street
Frederick, MD 21701
301.694.4744
marylandensemble.org

MARYLAND ENSEMBLE THEATRE PRESENTS A HISTORY PLAY OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE FOR MET *FINALLY HEARD: FEMININE HEROES OF AN UNCIVIL WAR*

Press Night: Sunday, April 7 @ 7pm
Reception @ 6pm sponsored by Isabella's
RSVP to dbrick@marylandensemble.org or 301.694.4744

FREDERICK, MD (March 17, 2013) - In the summer of 1997 a show called *Finally Heard: Feminine Heroes of an Uncivil War* made its world premiere in **Frederick**. The show also marked the debut of the company producing the play, **Maryland Ensemble Theatre (MET)**. The show was produced at both **Frederick Community College** and **HOOD College**. "So that we could produce the show for one run in a proscenium theater and for one run in a thrust", said **MET Founding Artistic Director Tad Janes**. "We invited the audience to see the show in each venue so we could show them how a flexible space would be very exciting for Frederick." A flexible black box space was something the newly minted Maryland Ensemble Theatre was in search of in order to produce its first full season of plays. A year later, in the summer of 1998, *Finally Heard* would be the first show performed in the new **Cultural Arts Center** in the former **McCroly's** building that had sat vacant since May of 1996. MET was the driving force in the creation of the Arts Center, having invested numerous financial and human resources to transform the former 5 & 10 and the culmination of those efforts was MET's inaugural season in the new space which began with *Finally Heard*. Now celebrating its fifteenth season MET currently operates out of the lower level of the historic **FSK Hotel** in downtown Frederick, directly next to the former Cultural Arts Center, and is thrilled to bring *Finally Heard* back to Frederick this April.

Finally Heard: Feminine Heroes of an Uncivil War tells the little known true story of six remarkable women during the American Civil War era. They include a **Richmond** socialite who employs her former slave and childhood apprentice to spy on the **Jefferson Davis** household, an immigrant woman who dons the persona of a man to fight in the war, a small-time war merchant who travels the battlefield to supply soldiers and a slave woman who wins her freedom through her force of personality.

"The play was born out of passion for the subject matter", said **Gene' Fouche', Founding Associate Artistic Director of the MET**. "I had written a book review of the "**Women of Gettysburg**" and that had broadened my awareness of the roles that women played in the war as spies and even soldiers." Such was the case with **Jennie Hodgers** who served as a soldier in the war disguised as a man under the name **Albert Cashier**, just one of the remarkable stories that *Finally Heard* sheds a light on. The creation of the piece was quite unique and born out of the ensemble spirit of the new theater troupe. "We wanted to premiere an original, ensemble created piece and we figured something around the Civil War would pique the interest of local audiences", said Tad Janes. "We found six extraordinary stories from the era, then cast those women and had the actors research the roles and through character exercises, letters, diaries, and other accounts, we were able to bring these women to life", added Janes. The authors of the piece are the original cast of actresses **Angela D'Ambrosia, Sophie Arrick, Meg Coyle-Stanford, Gené Fouché, Rona Mensah and Wanda Schell**. MET company member Rona Mensah played the role of **Sylvia Dubois** (the slave who wins her own freedom) in the shows' 1997 and 1998 productions and she is the only original cast member returning to her role fifteen years later. "Putting the show together, the actual flow of the script, was done by Gene Fouche' and our director Angela D'Ambrosia. For our part, we researched our characters

---MORE---

then wrote several monologues about each of them”, said Rona Mensah. “This time around, I’ll be playing her closer to the age that she was during the Civil War than the first time around. We are all making changes and adapting the script a little. There are some things that have been added that I think really fill out the script well.”

The director of the new production of *Finally Heard* had actually attended both the 1997 and 1998 mountings. **Suzanne Beal** who received her Ph.D. in English from the **University of MD**, with a specialty in modern American drama and is currently a professor of English at FCC and teaches theater history at Hood College, is no stranger to bringing women’s stories to the stage. In addition to her numerous directing credits, she authored the play *I Am (NOT) My Mother*, based on story circles she conducted with local women of diverse ages, backgrounds and ethnicities. The play premiered at MET last summer. “For most of the 30 plus years that I have worked in theater, I have focused on plays about women. I wrote my dissertation on plays by American women playwrights, I have most often directed plays that highlight women’s lives and I have written a couple of pieces about women. Theater is still male dominated and yet these women’s stories are so engaging – full of adventure, courage, humor- just the stuff of wonderful theater”, said Beal. “I want audiences to get to know these women and appreciate what they did. I think audiences will be touched by their stories.”

The talented cast includes Rona Mensah returning to her role as Slyvia and **Amber Fullmer** will play the soldier Jenny Hodgers. **Laura Stark** will portray a Richmond woman named **Elizabeth Van Lew** whose diary informed the script not only about her own story but that of her former slave who was a Union spy and who is being played by the actress **Lynnette Franklin**. MET company member **Devin Gaither** will play **Euphemia Goldsborough**, a role originally played by co-author Gene Fouché. **Lia Seltzer** will portray **Mary Tepe** or “French Mary”, as she was known to many as at the battles of **Fredericksburg** and **Gettysburg**. **Meisha Krutar** is understudying the roles of Mary Tepe and Jenny Hodgers. The production will be fully realized with the assistance of the production designs of Tad Janes (Sound and Image), **Doug Grove** (Set), **Allison Duvall** (Costumes), **Carl Jouannet** (Lighting) and **Lorrie Lee** (Props).

The show will run from April 4 - 28 every Thursday through Sunday at the MET, located at **31 W Patrick Street**. The first Thursday performance will be a \$5 preview night (cash only at door) and the first Sunday performance will be a gala night with a reception preceding the performance sponsored by **Isabella’s** and hosted by MET Board chairs **Kathy Young** and **Dan Kuebbing**. Tickets are \$15 (Thursdays) through \$24 and can be purchased at 301.694.4744, **marylandensemble.org** or in person at the Maryland Ensemble Theatre box office.

This production is made possible in part through the support of MET’s season sponsors including **Comcast, The Frederick Gorilla, Key 103, Eagle 106.9, Ausherman Family Foundation, Mark A Pitts Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery, The Gazette** and both the **Frederick** and **Maryland Arts Councils**.

Now in it’s fifteenth season the Maryland Ensemble Theatre produces thought-provoking theatre, fun family entertainment, side-splitting comedy shows, artist residency programs for public schools, theatre camps, and challenging classes.

TICKETS/LOCATION/DATES & INFORMATION

Finally Heard: Feminine Heroes of an Uncivil War

By Angela D’Ambrosia, Sophie Arrick, Meg Coyle-Stanford, Gené Fouché, Rona Mensah and Wanda Schell
Directed by Suzanne Beal

Cast: Amber Fullmer (Jenny Hodgers/Albert Cashier), Lynnette Franklin (Mary Elizabeth Bowser), Devin Gaither (Euphemia Goldsborough), Rona Mensah (Sylvia Dubois), Lia Seltzer (Mary Tepe), Laura Stark (Elizabeth Van Lew), Meisha Krutar (understudy for Mary Tepe/Jenny Hodgers):

Production Team: Allison Duvall (Costume Design) Doug Grove (Set Design) Tad Janes (Sound and Image Design), Carl Jouannet (Lighting Design), Giovanni Kavota (Assistant Stage Manager), Lorrie Lee (Properties), Tim Seltzer (Stage Manager)

---MORE---

Where: Maryland Ensemble Theatre, 31 West Patrick Street, Frederick, Maryland 21701

Dates: April 4 - 28, Every Thursday through Sunday

Performances: Thursday - Saturday at 8pm, first and last Sundays at 7pm, middle two Sundays at 2pm

Ticket Prices: Adults \$25.50, Students/Seniors \$21.50, Thursdays \$16.50. (includes \$1.50 service fee)
\$5 Preview tickets - No Reservations/Cash Only - The first Thursday of each show.

Box Office: 301-694-4744 or marylandensemble.org or at the MET (Tuesday - Thursday 10am - 3pm, Friday 11am - 3pm and 1 hour before each show.)

PRESS INFORMATION

Press Photos & Press Releases: Dan Brick at dbrick@marylandensemble.org or 301-694-4744 x303