

PRESS RELEASE

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MARYLAND ENSEMBLE THEATRE PRESENTS *THE SANTALAND DIARIES*

Press Night: Sunday, December 8 @ 7pm (Reception @ 6pm)
RSVP to dbrick@marylandensemble.org or 301.694.4744

FREDERICK, MD (November 5, 2013) - Maryland Ensemble Theatre (MET) is proud to present the cult holiday classic, *The Santaland Diaries*, adapted by Joe Mantello from the essay by humorist and best selling author David Sedaris. Sedaris' hilarious account of his time as an elf in Macy's Santaland display will run every Thursday through Sunday at Maryland Ensemble Theatre from December 6 through 29.

Based on Sedaris' real life experience, *The Santaland Diaries*, tells the tale of a struggling actor in New York City who out of necessity takes seasonal work as Crumpet the Elf in Macy's Department Store's Santaland Village. The comic holiday adventure chronicles Sedaris' humiliation, frustrations and ultimately his hopefulness all told through his masterful sardonic wit.

David Sedaris made his National Public Radio debut on December 23, 1992 when he read his essay titled *Santaland Diaries*, on the show **Morning Edition**. Since his successful debut Sedaris has gone on to publish multiple bestselling books including *Barrel Fever*, *Me Talk Pretty One Day* and most recently, in April of this year, *Let's Talk Diabetes With Owls*. He has also famously been a frequent contributor on NPR's popular radio show **This American Life** all of which has contributed to his reputation as one of America's preeminent humorists. Sedaris' story was adapted for the stage by veteran actor, writer, and director Joe Mantello and premiered on November 7, 1996 at the **Atlantic Theatre Company** in New York City.

Maryland Ensemble Theatre has produced *The Santaland Diaries* twice previously. In 2004 Kevin Corbett portrayed the irritable elf and then in 2008 actress and MET Ensemble Member Rona Mensah stepped into the role. MET's 2013 production reunites Mensah and the director of the 2008 production, Suzanne Beal. "I had a wonderful time directing Rona in *Santaland* the first time. She is such a talented and responsive actor. And lots of fun to work with. The piece itself is very funny - a bit irreverent but it has a generous spirit. It is a antidote to the overly sentimentalized Christmas stories without being mean-spirited. And, of course, Rona is just terrific!" said Beal who was recently named the **co-Artistic Director of REP Stage**. Mensah's portrayal also presents a few unique wrinkles, "There is one section where race is brought up and it's interesting how different the meaning is as an African American woman playing the role as opposed to a white male." said Mensah. "Also, any section that addresses women and their bodies gets a whole new meaning being played by a woman." The success of the show with MET audiences has warranted a third production and Mensah thinks she knows why, "because it's a VERY FUNNY SHOW. If you want your holidays served up with a side of sarcasm, then this is the play to see."

Beal and Mensah will be ably assisted by a design team including, Julie Herber (costumes), Joann Lee (set), Doug Grove (lights), Lia Seltzer (properties) and Ken Poisson (sound). *The Santaland Diaries* will run from December 6 through 29 every Thursday through Sunday at the MET, located in the historic **FSK**

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Hotel at 31 W Patrick Street. Thursday, December 5 there will be preview performances at 8pm and tickets to that show are \$5 (cash only at door/no reservations). The opening weekend will also include a meet and greet with the cast following Saturdays' performance and the first Sunday performance will be preceded with a reception hosted by MET Board Members **Jack Topchik** and **Judy Rice** and sponsored by **Beans & Bagels**.

Tickets to *The Santaland Diaries* 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 show 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 Frederick News Post** and both the **Frederick** and **Maryland Arts Councils**.

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

TICKETS/LOCATION/DATES INFORMATION

The Santaland Diaries

By David Sedaris **Adapted by** Joe Mantello

Directed by Suzanne Beal

Cast: Rona Mensah

Production Team: Doug Grove (Lighting Design), Julie Herber (Costume Design), Courtney McLaughlin (Stage Manager), Joann Lee (Scenic Design), Ken Poisson (Sound Design), Lia Seltzer (Properties), Meg Hughes (Assistant Stage Manager)

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

Dates: December 6 - 29, 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 ticketing fee)

\$5 Preview tickets - No Reservations/Cash Only - Thursday 12/5/13.

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 Photos & Press Releases:

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