FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 4, 2015

MARIN THEATRE COMPANY PRODUCES
August Wilson’s Gem of the Ocean

Production Dates: January 14 – February 14, 2016
Opening Night: January 19, 2016

August Wilson Classic Returns to the Bay Area
In a Reimagined, Jazz-Inspired Staging

MILL VALLEY, CA—Marin Theatre Company continues its 49th Season with August Wilson’s Gem of the Ocean. Set in 1904 Pittsburgh, Gem marks the beginning of Wilson’s ten-play century cycle dramatizing the African American experience during the 20th century; an unprecedented series that includes the Pulitzer Prize winning Fences and The Piano Lesson. Artistic Director Jasson Minadakis has committed to producing all ten century-cycle plays on the MTC Mainstage, with Gem following MTC’s award-winning productions of Fences (2014) and Seven Guitars (2011).

Wilson’s critically acclaimed Gem, though chronologically the first in his century-cycle series, was the second-to-last play he penned (2003), set in the Hill District neighborhood that Wilson himself called home for much of his early life. The most mystical of all of Wilson’s plays, Gem also features Wilson’s ubiquitous matriarch character, the 285 year old “Aunt Ester”, referenced in his other 9 plays but seen only in this 1904 story; MTC is excited to announce that Bay Area favorite Margo Hall will be taking on this role, originated by Phylicia Rashad on Broadway.

Taking the reins in his directorial debut at MTC is Daniel Alexander Jones, a New York based director and performer, who specializes in the Theatrical Jazz Aesthetic technique for artistic creation. Jones was recently featured in a book on the subject—Theatrical Jazz: Performance, Êse, and the Power of the Present Moment by Dr. Omi Osun Joni L. Jones—for his dedicated exploration of and commitment to working in this artform. He will be using this technique in his work on Gem, with Dr. Omi Jones collaborating as the production dramaturg for the show.

American Masters on PBS
August Wilson: The Ground on Which I Stand

PBS’s American Masters episode on August Wilson, August Wilson: The Ground on Which I Stand, premiered on February 20, 2015, the 70th anniversary of Wilson’s birth and 10th anniversary of his death. It will air again in February 2016 in celebration of Black History Month, underwritten by MTC in conjunction with this production of Gem of the Ocean.

Partnership with UrbanSitter helps moms attend plays at Marin Theatre Company

MTC is pleased to continue to partner with UrbanSitter, a website and app that helps busy parents find trusted babysitters and nannies, to enable the numerous young families in the Bay Area to attend live theater more easily. In addition to offering a special discount for Marin Theatre Company patrons, for the second time this season UrbanSitter will provide babysitters for MTC’s Moms Matinee on Saturday, January 23, at 2:00 pm.

More about August Wilson
AUGUST WILSON authored *Gem of the Ocean*, *Joe Turner’s Come and Gone* (New York Drama Critics Circle Award), *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom* (NYDCC Award), *The Piano Lesson* (Pulitzer Prize and NYDCC Award), *Seven Guitars* (NYDCC Award), *Fences* (Pulitzer Prize, Tony and NYDCC Awards), *Two Trains Running* (NYDCC Award), *Jitney* (Olivier and NYDCC Awards), *King Hedley II* and *Radio Golf*. These works explore the heritage and experience of African Americans, decade by decade, over the course of the 20th century. His plays have been produced at regional theaters across the country and all over the world, as well as on Broadway. In 2003, Wilson made his professional stage debut in his one-man show, *How I Learned What I Learned*. He received an Emmy Award nomination for his screenplay adaptation of *The Piano Lesson*. His early works included the one-act plays *The Janitor*, *Recycle*, *The Coldest Day of the Year*, *Malcolm X*, *The Homecoming* and the musical satire *Black Bart and the Sacred Hills*. Wilson received many fellowships and awards, including Rockefeller and Guggenheim Fellowships in Playwriting, the Whiting Writers Award, Heinz Award and the National Humanities Medal. Following his death in October 2005, the Broadway theater located at 245 West 52nd Street was renamed the August Wilson Theatre.

**CALENDAR INFORMATION**

*Performing Arts | Theater*

**WHAT**

August Wilson’s *Gem of the Ocean*

**WHO**

Marin Theatre Company
Directed by Daniel Alexander Jones

Featuring Margo Hall, Omoze Idehenre, Brian Freeman, Namir Smallwood, Patrick Kelly Jones, Anthony Juney Smith, and Tyee J. Tilghman

**WHEN**

January 14 - February 14, 2016
Opening Night: Tuesday, January 19
Previews: Jan 14 - 17

**Performance Days**

*All Evening Shows at 7:30 pm*:
Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat & Sun

**Matinees:**
Sunday (Preview), Jan 17, 4:00pm
Thursday (Perspectives), Jan 28, 1:00pm
Saturday, Jan 23 & Feb 6, 2:00pm
Sunday, Jan 24 & 31, 2:00pm

**WHERE**

Marin Theatre Company | 397 Miller Avenue, Mill Valley, CA 94941

**ABOUT THE PLAY**

Set in 1904 Pittsburgh, *Gem of the Ocean* begins August Wilson’s ten-play century cycle dramatizing the African American experience during the 20th century - an unprecedented series that includes the Pulitzer Prize winning *Fences* and *The Piano Lesson*. 
Aunt Esther, a fiery 285-year-old matriarch, welcomes into her Hill District home Solly Two Kings, who was born into slavery and scouted for the Union Army, and Citizen Barlow, a young man from Alabama searching for a new life.

Bay Area sensation Margo Hall returns to August Wilson’s Century Cycle in the role of Aunt Esther following her TBA award-winning portrayal of Rose in MTC’s 2014’s *Fences* and 2011’s *Seven Guitars*.

Go to the beginning of August Wilson's epic Century Cycle: when slavery was still a recent memory and the notion of freedom precarious. Gem follows MTC's award-winning productions of Wilson's *Fences* (1950s) and *Seven Guitars* (1940s).

"A touchstone for everything else he has written" - *New York Times*

**Running Time:** 2 hours, 45 minutes

**TICKETS**

**Ticket Prices**

$10-$58

**Discounts**

Discounts for seniors, youth, groups, military families and Marin County teachers are available. Contact the Box Office for more details.

**MTC ENGAGED SPECIAL EVENTS**

- **Library Lectures:** Join members of MTC’s artistic staff and cast of the show to discuss the play, playwright and play’s themes on either Tuesday Dec. 15 at the Marin City Library or Thursday Dec. 17 at the Larkspur Public Library. Both events begin promptly at 7:30pm.
- **Window on the Work:** Join members of MTC’s artistic staff and cast of the show to discuss artistic and production elements of MTC’s production of the play, Tuesday Jan. 5 at 7:30pm.
- **After Words:** Join a member of MTC’s artistic staff (often with one or more members of the cast) for a Q&A talk back after every performance, except Saturday evenings and Opening and Closing Nights
- **Moms Matinee:** MTC is pleased to continue to partner with UrbanSitter, a website and app that helps busy parents find trusted babysitters and nannies, to enable the numerous young families in the Bay Area to attend live theater more easily. For the third time this season UrbanSitter will provide babysitters for the matinee performance of *Gem of the Ocean* on Saturday, January 23, at 2:00 pm.
- **Perspectives:** pre-show topical lecture: Thu, 1/28, 12:00pm, matinee performance will begin promptly at 1:00pm.
- **MTC After Hours:** Following the Saturday 1/30 at 7:30pm performance, join members of the audience and cast in the lobby to continue the conversation. Featuring a live jazz trio and drink specials.

**ACCESS**

New! Marin Theatre Company is proud to partner with the Theatre Development Fund's Open Captioning Initiative to provide open captioned performances of each of the plays in our mainstage series on the Thursday matinee. The open captioned performance for *Gem of the Ocean* will be Thursday, 1/28, at 1:00pm.
For visually impaired patrons, Large Print playbills are available with one week’s advance notice. To request a Large Print playbill, call MTC’s Box Office, (415) 388-5208, or use the California Telecommunications Relay Service by dialing “711.” For hearing impaired patrons, amplified sound Assistive Listening Devices are available.

CONTACT
marintheatre.org | (415) 388-5208 | boxoffice@marintheatre.org

ABOUT MTC
Marin Theatre Company is the Bay Area’s premier mid-sized theater and the leading professional theater in the North Bay. We produce a six-show season focused on new American plays, and a four-show Family Series. We are committed to the development and production of new plays, with a comprehensive New Play Program that includes productions of world premieres, two nationally recognized annual playwriting awards and readings and workshops by the nation’s best emerging and established playwrights. Our numerous education programs serve more than 8,500 students from over 40 Bay Area schools each year. MTC strives to create intimate, powerful and emotional experiences that engage audiences to discuss new ideas and adopt a broader point of view. We believe in taking risks and inspiring people to participate in live theater, regardless of personal means. MTC celebrates the intellectual curiosity of our community, and we believe that theater is an important tool to help build empathy. MTC was founded in 1966 and is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

PRESS CONTACT
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