FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, March 22nd, 2019

MARIN THEATRE COMPANY
PRODUCES THE WEST COAST PREMIERE
OF NAMBI E. KELLEY’S NEW ADAPTATION
BASED ON THE NOVEL BY TONI MORRISON

MILL VALLEY, CA—Marin Theatre Company (MTC) welcomes back playwright Nambi E. Kelley—whose previous adaptation, Native Son, featured on MTC’s stage in 2017—for the West Coast Premiere and second production of her daring, lyrical new play, Jazz.

Adapted for the stage from Toni Morrison’s stunning novel and musically underscored by Bay Area jazz great Marcus Shelby—Jazz is a theatrical composition, transporting us to Harlem, 1926. Here, the city overflows with jazz. Characters move with musicality, and speak in rhythm, and at the heart of it all is Violet. Her husband’s affair with a beautiful young woman has set off a series of violent events and unforgivable acts, and Violet seeks out answers. As layered, dream-like perspectives unfold, Jazz exposes a host of deeply complex individuals, who—like the growing New York neighborhood and the ancestral, winding woods of Violet’s southern youth—reveal their own distinct rhythms.

New York-based director Awoye Timpo helms this dynamic West Coast Premiere, featuring new musical compositions by SFJAZZ Resident Artistic Director, Marcus Shelby. Rounding out an all-star cast will be C. Kelly Wright (Native Son) as Violet and Michael Gene Sullivan (It’s A Wonderful Life) as Joe Trace, with Dezi Solèy, Margo Hall (Gem of the Ocean, Skeleton Crew), Tiffany Tenille, Lisa Lacy, Dane Troy (Native Son) and Paige Mayes in various roles; forming an orchestral ensemble.

Nambi E. Kelley’s prismatic, attentive adaptation lifts up Toni Morrison’s powerful voice, in a year when the author quietly graced us with a new collection of her own. Kelley’s Jazz, like Morrison’s, pays homage to the musical genre in all its beautifully divergent forms—from moments of bluesy, tender sensuality to punctuated, violent riffs of spontaneity.

Awoye Timpo directs the West Coast Premiere of Jazz

Awoye Timpo’s credits include: The Homecoming Queen (Atlantic Theater), Skeleton Crew (Chester Theater), Sister Son/ji (Billie Holiday Theater), Carnaval (National Black Theatre), Ndebele Funeral (59E59, South African tour, Edinburgh Festival); The Libation Bearers
More About Playwright, Nambi E. Kelley

Award winning actress/playwright, Nambi E. Kelley has performed across the country, including many shows at the Goodman Theatre & Steppenwolf Theatre, has been seen on several television shows, including Elementary, Person of Interest, Madam Secretary, Chicago PD, Chicago Justice, and has toured internationally. Most recently she appeared in MacArthur Genius Awardee Dominique Morisseau’s Pipeline in the lead role (City Theatre), the critically acclaimed Off Broadway two-hander production of Kunstler (59 E. 59) and Two Trains Running (Goodman Theatre). Kelley just made her directorial debut at TheatreWorks Colorado Springs, the first African-American female to helm a production in their over 40 year history. Also an accomplished playwright, Nambi is currently serving in residence at New Victory Theatre and The Dramatists Guild Foundation in New York City. Kelley recently served as playwright in residence at the National Black Theatre in New York, and The Playwrights Unit at the Goodman Theatre. Awards include: The Prince Prize 2019, Writers Alliance Grant (Dramatists Guild Foundation) the Francesca Primus Award (finalist) and The Kevin Spacey Foundation Award (finalist). Her adaptation of Native Son (Sam French) was the highest grossing production in Court Theatre’s 60 year history, has enjoyed productions across the country, most notably, at Marin Theatre Company and Yale Repertory Theatre, and will premiere in NYC in 2019. Nambi is working on several commissions, including commissions from Marin Theatre Company, Court Theatre, North Carolina Rep, American Blues Theater, Syracuse Stage, and is also in development with several television and film projects.

More about Composer and SFJAZZ Resident Artistic Director, Marcus Shelby

Marcus Shelby is a bandleader, composer, arranger, bassist, educator, and activist who currently lives in San Francisco, California. Over the past 25 years he has built a diverse biography as a composer. His work and music has focused on sharing the history, present, and future of African American lives, on social movements in the United States of America, and on early childhood music education. In 1990, Marcus Shelby received the Charles Mingus Scholarship to attend Cal Arts and study composition with James Newton and bass with Charlie Haden. From 1990-1996, Shelby was bandleader of Columbia Records and GRP Impulse! Recording Artists Black/Note. Currently, Shelby is an artist in residence with the Yerba Buena Gardens Festival and the Artistic Director of the Marcus Shelby Orchestra. In 2013, Shelby received a MAP Fund Award and commission from the Yerba Buena Gardens Festival to compose “Beyond the Blues: A Prison Oratorio,” an original composition for big band orchestra about the “Prison Industrial Complex,” which premiered in September 2015. Shelby was
awarded a 2009 Black Metropolis Research Consortium Fellowship in Chicago for Summer 2009 to conduct research for his commission to compose “Soul of the Movement”—a musical suite on MLK and the Civil Rights Movement. Shelby was also a 2006 Fellow in the Resident Dialogues Program of the Committee for Black Performing Arts at Stanford University to conduct research for his commission to compose “Harriet Tubman”—a musical suite based on the life of freedom fighter, Harriet Tubman. Shelby has worked extensively with the Healdsburg Jazz Festival from 2011-2015 leading their Black History programs in the Healdsburg Middle Schools. He has also been the Artistic Director and conductor for the Healdsburg Jazz Festival Freedom Jazz Choir, which is a 100-person community choir created by the Healdsburg Jazz Festival and Shelby in 2012. Shelby has also worked extensively in Bay Area theatre, film, and dance on a range of productions, such as composing scores for Anna Deavere Smith’s new play “Notes from the Field: Doing Time in Education” (2014), choreographer Joanna Haigood’s dance theatre work “Dying While Black and Brown” (2014), Margo Hall’s plays “Bebop Baby” (2013) and “Sonny’s Blues” (2008), the Oakland Ballet’s “Ella” (2004), Robert Moses Kin’ Dance Company (2000), The Pacific Boy Choir (2009), The San Francisco Girls Choir (2013), The Oakland Youth Chorus (2014), and many other productions over the past 19 years in the San Francisco Bay Area. Since 2002, Shelby has worked with the Equal Justice Society and is currently commissioned to create a musical theatre work with choreographer Joanna Haigood and director Stephen Anthony Jones about the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Shelby also has arranged for, toured, and conducted the Count Basie Orchestra featuring Ledisi, performed and recorded with Tom Waits, and received the City Flight Magazine 2005 award as one of the “Top Ten Most Influential African Americans in the Bay Area”. Shelby is active in music education and currently teaches at The Community Music Center, Old Adobe Elementary School, St. Paul’s Middle School, and the Stanford Jazz Workshop. Shelby has also led many of the San Francisco Jazz Festival Family Matinee Concerts, often with children’s book author Daniel Handler (Lemony Snicket). In March 2013, San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee appointed Shelby to the San Francisco Arts Commission where he serves on the Community Arts Grants and Education Committee and the Street Artists Committee.

CALENDAR LISTING
Theatre | Performing Arts

WHAT
Jazz

WHO
Adapted by Nambi E. Kelley
Based on the book by Toni Morrison
Directed by Awoye Timpo | Music by Marcus Shelby

FEATURING
*C. Kelly Wright: VIOLET / COUNTRY VIOLET
*Michael Gene Sullivan: JOE TRACE / COUNTRY JOE
Dezi Solèy: DORCAS / WILD
Tiffany Tenille: FELICE / CIGARETTE GIRL / WILD’S SHADOW
Paige Mayes: PARROT / GOLDEN GRAY
*Margo Hall: ALICE MANFRED / TRUE BELLE
*Lisa Lacy: MALVONE / COUNTRY GOSSIP
*Dane Troy: HENRY LEVOY / ACTON / COUNTRY DRUNK / NUMBERS RUNNER

* Denotes member of Actors’ Equity Association

WHEN
Thursday, April 25th - Sunday, May 19th

PERFORMANCES
OPENING NIGHT: Tuesday, April 30th, 2019

Evenings
Tuesday - Sunday, 7:30pm

Matinees
Sunday (Preview): April 28 at 4pm
Thursday (Perspectives): May 9 at 1pm
Saturdays: May 4, 11 & 18 at 2pm
Sundays: May 5, 12 & 19 at 2pm

WHERE
397 Miller Ave | Mill Valley, CA 94941

ABOUT
Harlem, 1926. The city overflows with Jazz. Folks move with musicality, and speak rhythms, and in the heart of it all is Violet. Her husband’s affair with a beautiful young woman sets off a series of violent events and unforgivable acts. Adapted from Toni Morrison’s stunning novel and musically underscored by Bay Area jazz musician Marcus Shelby—Jazz is a theatrical composition. Peeling back, layered accounts and alternating perspectives expose ultimately sympathetic characters, who—like the growing New York neighborhood and the winding woods of their youth—reveal their own rhythms.

Tickets $25 - $70

Discounts for seniors, under 30, teens, military families, and teachers are available.
**Group Discounts:** Purchase 8 or more tickets and receive a $7 discount off each ticket. MTC will also waive any applicable order fees. As the organizer of a group, your ticket is free! Contact the Box Office for more details.

**Press Photos** will be available for *Jazz* on Friday, April 26th.

**MTC ENGAGEMENT EVENTS**

- **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 *Jazz* at 7:00pm on Tuesday, April 16th, at the Mill Valley Public Library.

- **Young Professionals Night:** Starting this season, MTC will host a Young Professionals Night, complete with a pre-show reception, on the first Wednesday of each production. For *Jazz*, the YPN event will take place on Wednesday, May 1st with a reception starting at 7:00pm, followed by the 7:30pm performance. Interns, apprentices, students, and other young professionals in any field are encouraged to attend, and are eligible for discounted tickets. To book, use promo code PROFESH20 online, in person, or by calling MTC’s Box Office.

- **Perspectives:** The third Thursday of each show is the Perspectives matinee performance which includes a pre-show topical lecture. For *Jazz*, the Perspectives matinee is scheduled for Thursday, May 9th, with the pre-show lecture beginning at 12:30pm, and the performance beginning at 1:00pm.

- **Pre-Show Discussions:** Join members of MTC’s artistic staff to discuss the play, playwright and play’s themes on Wednesdays before the 7:30pm performances.

- **After Words:** Join a member of MTC’s artistic staff (often with one or more members of the cast) for a Q&A talkback after every performance, except Saturday evenings and Opening and Closing Nights.

**ACCESS**

Marin Theatre Company provides open captioned performances of each of the plays in our mainstage series on the Thursday matinee. The open captioned performance for *Jazz* will be Thursday, May 9th, 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. Our system will also work with personal assistive hearing devices equipped with a T-coil.

**BOX OFFICE CONTACT**

[marintheatre.org](http://marintheatre.org) | (415) 388-5208 | [boxoffice@marintheatre.org](mailto:boxoffice@marintheatre.org)

**ABOUT MTC**
Marin Theatre Company is the Bay Area’s premier mid-sized theatre and the leading professional theatre in the North Bay. We produce a six-show season focused on new American plays. 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 4,500 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 theatre, regardless of personal means. MTC celebrates the intellectual curiosity of our community, and we believe that theatre is an important tool to help build empathy. MTC was founded in 1966 and is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

PRESS CONTACT
Kate Robinson, Director of Ticketing and Communications Associate
(415) 322-6029 | kater@marintheatre.org

####