

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 9, 2016

**MARIN THEATRE COMPANY TO PRODUCE
NAMBI E. KELLEY'S ACCLAIMED ADAPTATION OF
RICHARD WRIGHT'S CLASSIC NOVEL**

NATIVE SON

**Production Dates: January 19, 2017 - February 12, 2017
Opening Night: Tuesday, January 22, 2017**

MILL VALLEY, CA—[Marin Theatre Company](#) continues its 50th Anniversary Season with the West Coast Premiere of Nambi E. Kelley's adaptation of Richard Wright's *Native Son*. Kelley's intensely powerful adaptation, directed by Seret Scott, had its world premiere at Chicago's [Court Theatre](#) in a co-production with the [American Blues Theatre](#) in 2014. MTC's production—the first since its debut at the Court—will not only be directed by Ms. Scott again, but will also star Jerod Haynes as Bigger Thomas, who originated the role for the world premiere.

Published in 1940, many have argued that Richard Wright wrote *Native Son* as a “protest novel” to encourage white Americans to take political action against segregation and institutional racism, but also primarily to give white America a more detailed look at the life of African Americans living under the poverty line in countless communities across the nation. The novel gained widespread critical and popular success with black and white audiences and would become an American classic despite some black readers voicing frustration with the perpetuation of the “brute Negro” stereotype emblazoned in the novel's protagonist Bigger Thomas.

76 Years After its Publication, Native Son Remains Necessary, Urgent

We asked Ms. Kelley why this play is necessary right now, in 2017, 77 years after its publication. She revealed that she began working on the adaptation upon finding out that [George Zimmerman](#) had been acquitted of the murder of Trayvon Martin in 2013:

“I thought about how a group of people could listen to that testimony and say—and this was before **#BlackLivesMatter**—that this black life did not matter, that this was not someone's son. They put themselves in the mind of the person who pulled the trigger as opposed to the mind of the person who was killed. And that troubled me deeply.

If people are not inside Bigger's mind [they] do not understand why he made the choices he made; which is what Richard Wright wanted. Richard Wright wanted people to say “Look at this monster. YOU created him”. My task was to get inside [Bigger]. He is NOT a monster, he is a man. [Otherwise] how do you feel what he feels and understand the choices that he made?

Why [this play] now? Because there's a lack of empathy in this world and that is why racism persists. That's why sexism persists. [Even] my 10 year old niece knows how to articulate it... and she shouldn't.

I can't stress enough how important [empathy] is to me as an artist, as a human being. There's a desperate need for people to be inside other people and understand other people's experiences *from* the inside. And if we don't have the courage to do that as a world, things are going to continue to get worse and worse and worse. And I don't profess that this play will stop that, but that's my mission, and that's what I've been trying to do with my art."

More about Playwright Nambi E. Kelley

Nambi E. Kelly has penned plays for Steppenwolf, Goodman Theatre, and Court Theatre/American Blues Theater in Chicago, Lincoln Center and the National Black Theatre in New York, and internationally internationally with LATT Children's Theatre/ Unibooks Publishing Company (South Korea) Teatri Sbagliati (Italy), and The Finger Players (Singapore) where she also performed in the co-adapted production in Singapore of *The Book of Living and Dying*. Most recently, Kelley was named playwright in residence at the National Black Theatre in New York, was a finalist for the Francesca Primus Award, The Kevin Spacey Foundation Award, and is working on an adaptation of Toni Morrison's *Jazz* to be produced by Center Stage in their 2016-17 season. The world premiere of *Native Son* was presented to critical acclaim at Court Theatre with American Blues Theatre (co-production) was recently nominated for 5 Jeff Awards including best adaptation and production of the year, and was the highest grossing production in Court Theatre's 60 year history. *Native Son* is also on the Kilroy's List 2015, in the top 7 % of new plays by female and trans* authors nominated by literary managers, directors, and other artists polled across the country. Kelley's *Xtigone* celebrated production in Chicago (Chicago Danz Theatre Ensemble) and San Francisco (African American Shakespeare Company directed by Rhodessa Jones) with several high school and college productions across the country, and was just published by YouthPlays Publishing. Other writing credits include: Shortlisted professional writing affiliations include: National Black Theatre Playwright in Residence, Goodman Theatre Playwrights Unit, Steppenwolf Theatre Company New Plays Lab Playwright-In-Residence, Goodman Theatre/Ellen Stone Belic Institute/ Fellowship Recipient, Goodman Theatre Lila Wallace Fellowship, La MaMa Playwrights Symposium Playwright-In-Residence, Spoleto, Italy under the tutelage of Pulitzer prize winner Lynn Nottage, Ragdale Foundation Artist in Residence, HealthWorks Theatre Colonel Stanley McNeil Playwright-In-Residence, Chicago Dramatists Playwright Emeritus, Danny Glover's Robey Theatre Co. Playwriting Lab (Formerly The Blacksmys At The Mark Taper Forum), and MPAACT Playwright Emeritus, Chicago. Also an actress, Nambi has worked on stage and television in Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, and internationally, playing opposite such artists as Phylicia Rashad, Alfre Woodard, Blair Underwood, and Patrick Swayze. Ms. Kelley has a BFA from The Theatre School at De Paul University, formerly known as The Goodman School of Drama, and holds an MFA in interdisciplinary arts from Goddard College in Vermont. www.nambikelley.com

Marin Theatre Company Proudly Welcomes Seret Scott, Director

MTC is thrilled to have director Seret Scott on board for her second production of ***Native Son***. Ms. Scott has directed a dozen productions at the Old Globe Theatre as an Associate Artist. Off-Broadway she premiered *Mujeres Y Hombres* at New Victory Theatre, and directed *Birdie Blue and Zooman* and *The Sign* for Second Stage Theatre, *Yohen* for Pan Asian Rep. Her regional directing credits include: Arena Stage, Woolly Mammoth, Studio Theatre, Ford's Theatre, South Coast Rep, Tribute Productions, Court Theater, Studio Arena, ACT-SF, Long Wharf, Hartford Stage, Actor's Theatre- Louisville, Oregon Shakespeare, Denver Theatre

Center, PlayMakers Rep, Crossroads, Alliance, Indiana Rep, Alley, Philadelphia Theatre Co, National Black Theatre, New Mexico Rep, Tisch-NYU, Juilliard, among others. She directed workshops for Roundabout Theatre, Pacific Playwright's, O'Neill Theatre Center, NY Stage and Film, Sundance, New Harmony and is a former Director in Residence at New Dramatists. Seret authored *Second Line*, produced by NJ's Passage Theatre and DC's Atlas Theatre and is a Drama Desk Award winning actress.

Partnership with UrbanSitter Continues to Make Theatre Accessible for Parents

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. Jump starting our 50th Season, UrbanSitter will provide babysitters for MTC's **Sitter Saturday** event for *Native Son* on Saturday, January 28, at 2:00 pm. Read David Templeton's feature about this partnership in the North Bay Stage and Screen [here](#).

CALENDAR LISTING

Theatre/Performing Arts

WHAT

Native Son

WHO

By Nambi E. Kelley

Adapted from the novel by Richard Wright

Directed by Seret Scott

FEATURING

Jerod Haynes, Rosie Hallet, Adam Magill, C. Kelly Wright, Dane Troy, Ryan Nicole Austin, Courtney Walsh, and Patrick Kelly Jones

WHEN

January 19 - February 12, 2017

PERFORMANCES

OPENING NIGHT: Tuesday, January 24, 2017 at 7:30pm

Evenings

Tue - Sun 7:30pm

Matinees

Sun (Preview) January 22, 4:00pm

Thu (Perspectives) February 2, 2:00pm

Sat January 28 & February 11, 2:00pm

Sun January 29, February 5 & 12, 2:00pm

WHERE

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

ABOUT

Bigger Thomas dares to want more out of life. Things start looking up when he lands a plum job with the well-to-do Dalton family, but their daughter Mary proves to be as dangerous as she is alluring. A fateful decision sends Bigger down a violent and inescapable path. Misrepresented and underestimated by everyone around him, Bigger has no one to turn to except himself. Using W.E.B. DuBois' theory of double consciousness as a guiding principle, this fresh, 90-minute adaptation of Richard Wright's novel focuses on the landscape inside the mind of Bigger Thomas, bringing the power of the original story to life for a whole new generation. MTC is proud to bring Ms. Kelley's heart-stopping, urgent and expressionistic play to the West Coast, following its sold-out World Premiere at Chicago's Court Theatre in 2014.

TICKETS

\$22 - \$60

Discounts

Discounts for seniors, teens, military families, Bay Area teachers and groups of 7 or more are available. Contact the Box Office for more details.

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

MTC ENGAGED SPECIAL EVENTS

- **Pre-Show Discussions:** Join members of MTC's artistic staff and cast of the show 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.
- **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, Thursday January 12 at 7:30pm at the Mill Valley Public Library.
- **Sitter Saturday:** 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. We are beyond thrilled to continue our partnership with UrbanSitter this season, who will provide babysitters for the matinee performance of **Native Son** on Saturday, January 28 at 2:00pm.
- **Perspectives:** The third Thursday of each show is the Perspectives matinee performance which includes a pre-show topical lecture. For **Native Son**, the Perspectives matinee is scheduled for Thursday, February 2, with the pre-show lecture beginning at 12:30pm, and the performance beginning at 1:00pm.
- **MTC After Hours:** Following the Saturday, February 4, 7:30pm performance, join members of the audience and cast in the lobby to continue the conversation. Featuring music and drink specials.

ACCESS

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 **Native Son** will be Thursday, February 2, 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

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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 12,000+ 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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