

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Media contact: Darren DeLuca  
[darren.deluca@gmail.com](mailto:darren.deluca@gmail.com)  
603-489-7624



**EXPOSING MASS INCARCERATION IN  
*THE PECULIAR PATRIOT*  
FEATURED AT ARTSEMERSON  
BY NATIONAL BLACK THEATRE AND Hi-ARTS  
WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY LIZA JESSIE PETERSON**

-----  
**OCTOBER 17 – 28, 2018  
EMERSON PARAMOUNT CENTER  
JACKIE LIEBERGOTT BLACK BOX  
TICKETS ON SALE NOW**  
-----

***The Press Performance is Thursday, October 18, 2018 at 7:30pm***

**[Boston, MA – August 30, 2018]** – ArtsEmerson, Boston’s leading presenter of contemporary world theatre, is thrilled to welcome the first U.S. tour of National Black Theatre and Hi-ARTS’s timely and urgent production, **The Peculiar Patriot**. Inspired by her decades-long work with prison populations, including on the notorious Riker’s Island, Liza Jessie Peterson’s one-woman show unpacks the human impact of mass incarceration in America. The production runs two weeks at the Emerson Paramount Center’s Jackie Liebergott Black Box, located at 559 Washington Street in downtown Boston. Tickets can be purchased for \$60 online at [www.ArtsEmerson.org](http://www.ArtsEmerson.org), by phone at 617.824.8400, or in person at the box office. Student, senior and group discounts are available.

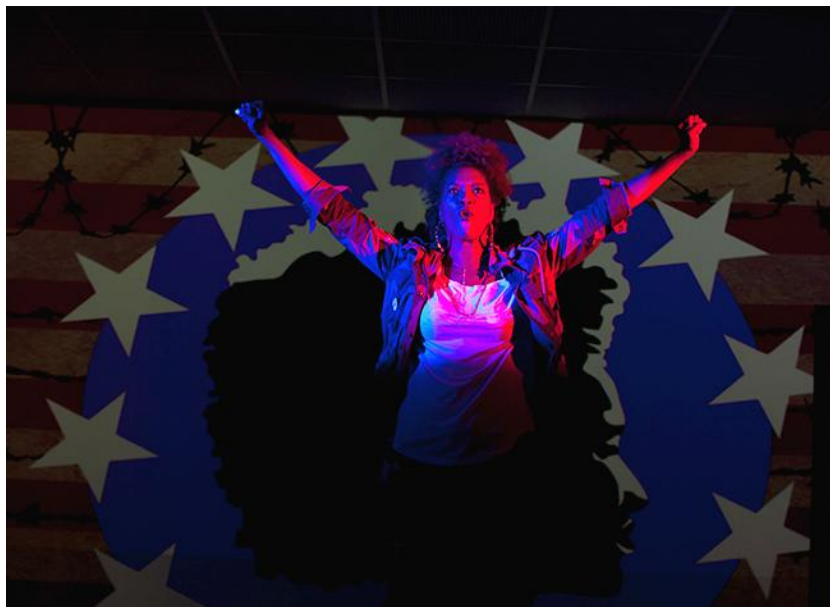


Photo credit: Christine Jean Chambers

Fearlessly funny, smart and provocative, **The Peculiar Patriot** traces the migration of systemic injustice from the plantation to the prison yard. Director Talvin Wilks examines a racially skewed justice system through the lens and narration of Liza Jessie Peterson who according to *The New York Times* “as both a writer and a performer...knows how to wield tenderness to leaven despair.” As this love story unfolds, **The Peculiar Patriot** captivates audiences with humor and humanity.



Photo credit: Christine Jean Chambers

"In the heat of an election to choose the next District Attorney of Suffolk County, this piece throws a bright light on what is at stake," says Artistic Director David Dower. "It makes the headlines come alive in a disarming way. Liza Jessie Peterson has approached the topic from the perspective of a love story — love of the friends and families for the people caught up in an inhumane system — and unlocks the humor and the heartache inside the statistics. And the statistics are worse than we think. Massachusetts alone has a higher rate of incarceration than nearly every developed nation on the planet. How do we feel that horror as a community, as a nation? ArtsEmerson is grateful for Liza's voice and passion on this catastrophe, and honored to connect her art and activism with our audiences and our city."

### **About The Peculiar Patriot**

Written and performed by Liza Jessie Peterson, **The Peculiar Patriot** is a one-woman show that examines imprisonment in America. Betsy LaQuanda Ross, Liza's narrator, a self-proclaimed "peculiar patriot," who makes regular visits to penitentiaries to boost the morale of her incarcerated friends and family. Betsy is both victim and victor of this country's prison system and her story turns statistics into achingly relatable stories, drawn from the experience of more than 2.5 million people behind bars.

### **About the Artist**

**Liza Jessie Peterson (Betsy Laquanda Ross, Playwright)** is author of *ALL DAY; A Year of Love and Survival Teaching Incarcerated Kids at Rikers Island*, which is available on-line and in bookstores now. She is a renowned actress, poet, playwright, author, educator and youth advocate who has been steadfast in her commitment to incarcerated populations both professionally and artistically for over two decades. She was recently featured in Ava DuVernay's Emmy award winning documentary *The 13th* (Netflix) and was a consultant on Bill Moyers documentary *RIKERS* (PBS). Liza has written several plays, including her one woman show-tour de force, *The Peculiar Patriot*, where she performed excerpts of it in over 35

penitentiaries across the country. The play was recently awarded a generous grant from Agnes Gund's Art for Justice Fund and she will be touring it nationally 2018-2019. Liza is currently developing several other TV and theater projects including a play based on her book *ALL DAY*.

### **About National Black Theatre**

Founded by visionary Dr. Barbara Ann Teer in 1968, **National Black Theatre** (NBT) is a nationally recognized cultural and educational institution. Dr. Teer pioneered "the healing art of Black theatre as an instrument for wholeness in urban communities where entrepreneurial artists of African descent live and work." In 1983, Dr. Teer expanded the vision of NBT by purchasing a 64,000-square-foot building on 125th Street and Fifth Avenue (renamed "National Black Theatre Way" by local law in 1994). This was the first revenue-generating Black arts complex in the country, an innovative arrangement through which for-profit businesses who shared NBT's spiritual and aesthetic values rented retail space to subsidize the arts. Out of her vision, NBT houses the largest collection of Nigerian new sacred art in the Western hemisphere and is considered the authentic representation of a model whose time has come. NBT is partially supported by grants from the City Council of New York, City of New York Department of Cultural Affairs, Ford Foundation, Columbia Service Society and private donations. Visit [www.nationalblacktheatre.org](http://www.nationalblacktheatre.org) or follow NBT on Facebook (@NationalBlackTheatre) and Twitter/Instagram (@NatBlackTheatre).

### **About Hi-ARTS**

Located at the center of creative and community practice in El Barrio's Artspace PS109, **Hi-ARTS** is dedicated to advancing urban art by empowering artists to develop bold new works while creating a lasting and positive impact on communities. For over 17 years, the organization has consistently broken new ground by presenting the work of artists from historically marginalized groups and finding creative and artistic ways to address issues related to equity and social justice. Hi-ARTS presents and produces art that truly reflects the diversity of New York City, giving voice to and celebrating traditionally underrepresented narratives and populations. Serving as a development space, Hi-ARTS works with artists to innovate and incubate theater and performance work along with visual arts and youth education. The commitment to this work has developed programming and an audience that is unique within the arts and culture landscape. Hi-ARTS is supported by the following: Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation, New York Community Trust, Humanities New York, Lucille Lortel Foundation, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in Partnership with the City Council, DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, and individual donors. Visit [www.hi-artsnyc.org](http://www.hi-artsnyc.org) or follow Hi-ARTS on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (@hiartsnyc).

### **The Peculiar Patriot Performance Schedule**

Wednesday, October 17, 2018	7:30pm	
Thursday, October 18, 2018	7:30pm	<b>Press Performance</b>
Friday, October 19, 2018	8:00pm	
Saturday, October 20, 2018	2:00pm	
Saturday, October 20, 2018	8:00pm	
Sunday, October 21, 2018	2:00pm	
Wednesday, October 24, 2018	7:30pm	
Thursday, October 25, 2018	7:30pm	
Friday, October 26, 2018	8:00pm	
Saturday, October 27, 2018	2:00pm	
Saturday, October 27, 2018	8:00pm	
Sunday, October 28, 2018	2:00pm	

For production stills and other media kit assets, click [here](#).

### **Creative Team**

**Talvin Wilks (Director)** is a playwright, director and dramaturg. His plays include *Tod, the boy*, *Tod, The Trial of Uncle S&M*, *Bread of Heaven*, *An American Triptych*, *Jimmy and Lorraine*, and

*As I Remember It* with Carmen de Lavallade. Directorial projects include the world and regional premiere productions of *UDU* by Sekou Sundiata, *The Love Space Demands* by Ntozake Shange, the Obie Award/AUDELCO Award winning *The Shannequa Chronicles* by Stephanie Berry, *The Ballad of Emmett Till* by Ifa Bayeza and most recently, *This Bitter Earth* by Harrison David Rivers. He has served as co-writer/co-director/dramaturg for Ping Chong's ongoing series of *Undesirable Elements* and *Collidescope: Adventures in Pre- and Post-Racial America*. He has also served as dramaturg for six collaborations with the Bebe Miller Company including *Landing/Place* for which he received a 2006 Bessie Award. Other dramaturgical collaborations include work with Camille A. Brown and Dancers (*Mr. TOL E. RANcE*, *BLACK GIRL: Linguistic Play*, and *ink*), Urban Bush Women (*Hep Hep Sweet Sweet*, *Walking with 'Trane*, and *SCAT!*), and the recent stage production of Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Between the World and Me* at the Apollo Theatre. He is currently an Assistant Professor in the Theatre Arts and Dance Department, University of Minnesota/Twin Cities.

**Maruti Evans (Set & Lighting Design)** *Real Enemies* (BAM), *Epiphany* (BAM), *Else Where* (BAM), *LEIDERABEND* (BAM), *Witness Uganda* (ART), *Big Apple Circus* (2015), *Big Apple Circus* (2016), *Cool Hand Luke* (59e59), *Deliverance* (59e59), *Alice vs Wonderland* (ART), *Mouth Wide Open* (ART), *Much Ado About Nothing* (ART and McCarter Theater), *Master and Margarita* (Summer Scape), *An Oresteia* (Classic Stage Co), *Crowns* (Goodman Theater), *Ballad of Emmett Till* (Penumbra Theater), *Owl Answers and the Dutchman* (Penumbra Theater), *Le Nozze Di Figaro* (L.I.O), *Ofero* (L.I.O), *Turn of the Screw* (L.I.O), and *Sweeny Todd* (V.O.C). He has received Drama Desk Awards for the designs of *Tiny Dynamite* and *Pilo Family Circus* and Drama Desk nominations for: *Deliverance*, *In the Heat of the Night*, *Slaughterhouse 5*, and *Blindness*.

**Latoya Murray-Berry (Costume Designer)** Designer, Celebrity Wardrobe Stylist and Fashion Extraordinaire, Latoya Murray-Berry has evolved from a personal designer into a key brand influencer, keeping her in high demand within the fashion scene. Ms. Berry has apprenticed under some of the industry's most influential stylists including Atiba Newsome, Eric Archibald, Jerod McClarin and Derek Roche. Ms. Berry's work has been spotted on countless news stands, runways and red carpets, garnering press and recognition for her work in publications such as ESSENCE, Ebony, XXL, "O" Magazine, and Seventeen. During her 12+ year career, Ms. Berry has curated signature looks for the world's most esteemed celebrities including Nicki Minaj, Sean "P.Diddy" Combs, Diggy Simmons, Rev Run and Family and Rick Ross. Ms. Berry often serves as an International Image Consultant for Def Jam France and has worked with several international brands including Amel Bent and Djany. In addition to clients who rely on her for editorial shoots and fashion shows, Ms. Berry's expertise extends to television as she is a member of TWU Local 764 IATSE and has worked on numerous award shows at TV Land, MTV Productions, and recently became the director of REVOLT TV's New York Wardrobe Department.

**Katherine Freer (Projections Design)** is a multimedia designer working in theater, installation, and film. Her work is driven by the love of storytelling and belief in its power to shift reality. Her background in narrative film, documentary, animation, and computer science combine to generate work that is not only aesthetically beautiful, but pushes convention boundaries. Frequent collaborators include Liz Lerman, Ping Chong, Kamilah Forbes, Tim Bond, Talvin Wilks, Suli Holum, Deborah Stein, and Tamilla Woodard. Her theatrical designs has been featured at venues across the United States including: Arena Stage, CenterStage Baltimore, Arts Emerson, La Jolla Playhouse, Center Theater Group, A.C.T. San Francisco, Indiana Repertory Theatre, New Jersey Performing Arts Center, The Apollo Theater, and BAM Harvey. She is a member of United Scenic Artists Local USA 829, Wingspace Theatrical Design, and a founding member of Imaginary Media.

**Luqman Brown (Sound Design)** is an AUDELCO winning sound designer working out of his native Harlem, New York. Recent credits include Classical Theater of Harlem's production of "*The 3 Musketeers*", Asolo Repertory Theaters production of "*The Elaborate Entrance of Chad*

*Deity*”, Guthrie theater production of “*Parchman Hour*”, Fordham University theater production of “*White People*”, BRIC Fireworks residency production of “*Br’er Rabbit The Opera*”, Signature Theatre Company’s world-premiere production of Katori Hall’s “*Hurt Village*,” and Hip Hop Theater Festival’s Production of Radha Blank’s NEA award-winning play, “*SEED*”. Luqman is also a well-known musician on the international scene. Featured in the award-winning documentary, “*AfroPunk*”, He has produced for or performed with many talented artists across the globe, contributing his skills as a songwriter, guitarist, trombonist, vocalist, producer, and engineer. Owner of BUDDHABUG RECORDS INC he has released many albums and collaborated on several films, commercials, and radio spots.

**Belynda Hardin (Prop Master)** has been involved in a large amount of theatre productions serving as stage manager, wardrobe assistant as well as, location and production manager on shorts and feature film productions. As prop master she has worked on these select projects, CARNAVAL by Nikole Salter, HandsUp: 6Playwrights, 6Testaments by various playwrights curated by The New Black Fest, FriedChicken & Latkes by Rain Pryor, Dead & Breathing by Chisa Hutchinson, and The World Premiere of The Peculiar Patriot at the National Black Theatre.

**Mario Wolfe (Production Stage Manager)** is a writer, performance artist, and theatre manager from Central Florida. New York credits: *In the Red and Brown Water*, *Richard II*(Juilliard); *The Country Doctor* (Zoo City). Regional credits: *Born for This: a New Musical* (The Majestic Theatre); *Ah, Wilderness!*, *Objects in the Mirror*, *Gloria*, *Wonderful Town* (The Goodman Theatre); *Grand Concourse*, *The Qualms* (Steppenwolf Theatre). Mario is a graduate of The Theatre School at DePaul University and The Juilliard School.

**Brad Learmonth / Brad@Large (Show Manager)** is an award-winning arts professional whose distinguished career has spanned over three decades. For 28 years, Mr. Learmonth called Harlem Stage his professional home. While there, he was at the forefront of developing a multi-program platform of support and presentation for visionary artists of color of all disciplines and at all points in their careers. He initiated and oversaw the commissioning of over 150 artists and served as producer on major works since 2001. The artists he worked with created innovative and risk-taking work, unafraid to address the complexities of our humanity and the issues of our world through the transformative lens of arts and engagement with communities. Mr. Learmonth continues to walk that edge in his independent role as Brad@Large and works with artists and arts organizations as a creative advisor, executive producer and project manager. He serves on the New York City Arts Education Roundtable Diversity Task Force. In addition to his work in the arts, Brad is an ordained interfaith/interspiritual minister and serves as president of the board of One Spirit Learning Alliance in NYC.

### **About ArtsEmerson**

ArtsEmerson is Boston’s leading presenter of contemporary world theatre. We are dedicated to engaging all communities through stories that reveal and deepen our connection to each other. By cultivating diversity in the arts and in the audience, we ignite public conversation around our most vexing societal challenges as a catalyst for overcoming them. Founded in 2010 by Robert J. Orchard — the year the U.S. Census confirmed there was no single cultural majority in Boston — we committed to building a cultural institution that reflects the diversity of our city. We program a full season of performances, film and dialogue that invites each of us to engage in a more contemporary narrative of Boston as a truly global city. ArtsEmerson is led by Artistic Director, David Dower and Executive Director, David Howse. For more information, visit [ArtsEmerson.org](http://ArtsEmerson.org).

### **About Emerson College**

Based in Boston, Massachusetts, opposite the historic Boston Common and in the heart of the city’s Theatre District, Emerson College educates individuals who will solve problems and change the world through engaged leadership in communication and the arts, a mission informed by liberal learning. The College has 3,780 undergraduates and 670 graduate students

from across the United States and 50 countries. Supported by state-of-the-art facilities and a renowned faculty, students participate in more than 90 student organizations and performance groups. Emerson is known for its experiential learning programs in Los Angeles, Washington, DC, the Netherlands, London, China, and the Czech Republic. The College has an active network of 39,000 alumni who hold leadership positions in communication and the arts. For more information, visit [emerson.edu](http://emerson.edu).

**# # #**