

## LYNN NOTTAGE'S PULITZER PRIZE WINNER *RUINED* BRINGS THE SPIRIT OF THE CONGO TO THE GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE

*Original Cast Members Directed by Kate Whoriskey Open at the Geffen Playhouse on September 15*

*Innovative Partnerships with International Medical Corps and Jewish World Watch  
Engage the Community and Spark International Conversation*

LOS ANGELES, Sept 2, 2010 — **Lynn Nottage's** Pulitzer Prize winning play *Ruined*, a powerful portrayal of the triumph of the human spirit in the war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo, opens at the **Geffen Playhouse** on **September 15**. *Ruined*, a co-production with Seattle's **Intiman Theatre**, is the most acclaimed play of 2009 garnering best play honors with a Lucille Lortel Award, Obie Award, New York Drama Critics' Circle Award, Drama Desk Award, Outer Critics Circle Awards, and the inaugural Horton Foote Prize for Outstanding New American Play, in addition to the Pulitzer Prize for drama. Directed by Intiman Theatre Artistic Director Kate Whoriskey, who helmed the acclaimed original production, the company includes **Quincy Tyler Bernstine** (Salima), **Cherise Boothe** (Josephine), **Russell G. Jones** (Christian) and **Condola Rashad** (Sophie), all of whom originated their roles in the Goodman Theatre/Manhattan Theatre Club world-premiere production, and **Portia**, who took over the leading role of Mama Nadi during the extended run in New York.

"Both Lynn and I were thrilled to go back into the rehearsal room with *Ruined* for this co-production between Intiman and the Geffen," says Whoriskey, who collaborated on the development of the play with Nottage for five years. "*Ruined* was a truly momentous experience for all of us who worked on it, and we are excited to bring back so many of our close collaborators—and artists who are joining us for the first time—to make new explorations into the heart and complexities of the play and the stories that inspired our work."

The Geffen Playhouse opening night festivities, which will take place on Wednesday, September 15, will continue the spirit of the production with entertainment by KCRW deejay **Jeremy Sole**. Sole, who is also the co-founder and DJ of Afro Funké at The Zanzibar, will be spinning a set of Congolese music throughout the post-show party. Guests will also be treated to food by Ronan Levy catering and a themed cake especially created by Montage Pastry Chef Richard Ruskell.

### PRODUCTION HISTORY

*Ruined*, the third collaboration between playwright Lynn Nottage and director Kate Whoriskey, began with an idea that they might work together on a new adaptation of Brecht's anti-war drama *Mother Courage and Her Children* that would be set in Congo, where a war over natural resources had been raging for years without attracting significant mainstream media attention—despite being the world's deadliest conflict since World War II, with more than 5.4 million people dead. The violence of the war in Congo is targeted against women and girls, perpetuated through the use of rape as a weapon.

In 2004, Nottage and Whoriskey traveled together to the bordering country of Uganda, where they spent two weeks

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interviewing Congolese women who had fled their country and found refuge. Inspired by these women, they abandoned the idea of adapting *Mother Courage* in order to tell a story that had not yet been heard—a story that would be specific to the complexity of what is happening now. The next year, Nottage returned and interviewed refugees fleeing armed conflicts in Congo, Uganda, Sudan and Somalia. Together with Whoriskey and their collaborators, she developed the play over five years.

Originally commissioned by the Goodman Theatre, *Ruined* had its world premiere in Chicago in late 2008. A co-production with the Manhattan Theatre Club, it moved to off-Broadway in January 2009, extending eight times during its acclaimed run. While *Ruined* is one of the most regionally produced plays in the 2010-2011 season, the Intiman Theatre / Geffen Playhouse co-production is the only one featuring members of the original creative team.

#### COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

To further engage the community to spark subsequent conversation and action surrounding the international issues addressed in *Ruined*, the Geffen Playhouse is hosting a number of events and partnering with experts in the field. Every Tuesday, the Geffen Playhouse hosts a post-show Talk Back giving patrons the opportunity to delve deeper into the subject matter with the cast and creative team.

On **September 28, International Medical Corps** will participate in a special Talk Back Tuesday with the cast of *Ruined* and Geffen Playhouse Director of Education Debra Pasquerette. An education sponsor for *Ruined*, International Medical Corps' humanitarian programs focus on delivering community-based primary health care with an emphasis on training and education. Since the 1990's International Medical Corps has been providing relief in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where two decades of bloody civil war have cost more than five million lives, and where sexual violence is used as a weapon against women and children. This special Talk Back will feature International Medical Corps President and CEO Nancy A. Aosse and focus on first-hand experiences on the ground in Congo and how they relate to the themes discussed in *Ruined*.

On **October 5**, *Ruined* education partner **Jewish World Watch** will participate in a special Talk Back Tuesday with the cast of *Ruined* and playwright **Lynn Nottage**. Jewish World Watch, a hands-on leader in the fight against genocide and mass atrocities, provides opportunities for involvement in tangible local activities that make an immediate impact on the lives of women survivors of rape and brutality in Congo, empowering them to build a better future. Prior to the performance, Jewish World Watch will present its 2010 iWitness Award to Lynn Nottage for her outstanding work and activism related to the ongoing conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Following the performance, Jewish World Watch Co-Founder and President Janice Kamenir-Reznik and Executive Director Tzivia Schwartz-Getzug will join the cast on stage to discuss the organization's recent visits to and work in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In addition to the above partnerships, the Geffen Playhouse is providing patrons with information on various organizations that work directly with the Congolese most affected by the conflict to provide audience members with ways to take action after seeing the show. These include: **Eastern Congo Initiative**, an advocacy and grant-making initiative which works to foster sustainable change in eastern Congo ([www.easterncongo.org](http://www.easterncongo.org)); **Jhpiego**, an affiliate of Johns Hopkins University that works to prevent the needless death of women and their families in the Democratic

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Republic of the Congo ([www.jhpiego.net](http://www.jhpiego.net)); **Panzi Hospital of Bukavu**, a Congolese institution that treats survivors of sexual violence ([www.panzihospitalbukavu.org](http://www.panzihospitalbukavu.org)); **Program for Torture Victims**, the first human rights group of its kind in the United States that provides medical, legal and social services to international victims of torture now living in Los Angeles ([www.ptvla.org](http://www.ptvla.org)); **Run for Congo Women**, a grassroots advocacy group started by author/photographer **Lisa Shannon** which provides ways that people can get involved from across the globe to show support ([www.athousandsisters.com/act](http://www.athousandsisters.com/act)); and **Women for Women International**, which provides women survivors of conflicts the tools and resources to move from crisis to self-sufficiency.

The Geffen Playhouse is also underwriting tickets for nearly 200 students from **Title I Los Angeles public schools and community groups** such as Animo Locke II Charter High School, Communities in School and LA Mentoring to attend *Ruined*. In partnership with Jewish World Watch, these students are presented with a study guide outlining key issues of the play before attending the performance and then are invited to participate in post-show discussions with the cast and Geffen Playhouse's director of education, Debra Pasquerette.

#### RUINED

Written by Lynn Nottage

Directed by Kate Whoriskey

*Previews*: Tuesday, Sept 7 – Tuesday, Sept 14

*Opening Night*: Wednesday, Sept 15

*Closing Night*: Sunday, Oct 17

#### PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

Monday	No performances
Tuesday – Friday	8:00pm
Saturday	3:00pm; 8:00pm
Sunday	2:00pm; 7:00pm

#### TICKET INFO

Ticket prices range from \$35 - \$55 for preview performances and from \$65 - \$75 for the regular run. Tickets are on sale now at the Geffen Playhouse box office, online at [www.geffenplayhouse.com](http://www.geffenplayhouse.com) or via credit card phone order at (310) 208-5454.

Rush tickets are available half an hour before curtain and are \$20 for students and \$35 for the general public.

#### CAST

Salima	Quincy Tyler Bernstine
Josephine	Cherise Boothe
Jerome Kisémbé/Soldier	Tongayi Chirisa
Fortune/Soldier/Miner	Carl Cofield
Christian	Russell G. Jones
Guitarist	Simon Shabantu Kashama
Mr. Harari	Tom Mardirosian
Pascal, the Drummer/Soldier	Ron McBee
Mama Nadi	Portia
Sophie	Condola Rashad
Commander Osembenga/Soldier	David St. Louis
Simon/Soldier/Miner/Aid Worker	Stephen Tyrone Williams
Understudy	Victoire Charles
Understudy	Mustafa S. Shakir

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For full bios on all of the actors, please visit [www.geffenplayhouse.com/mediacenter](http://www.geffenplayhouse.com/mediacenter).

**PRODUCTION CREDITS**

Set Design	Derek McLane
Costume Design	Paul Tazewell
Lighting Design	Peter Kaczorowski
Sound Design and Musical Direction	Rob Milburn & Michael Bodeen
Original Music	Donimic Kanza
Lyrics	Lynn Nottage
Choreographer	Warren Adams
Production Stage Manager	Mary K Klinger

**ABOUT INTIMAN THEATRE AND GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE**

**Intiman Theatre's** core commitment is to make theatre that is relevant to our time. It is celebrated as an activist theatre that produces ambitious and exciting productions of classics and new plays. Through its work on stage, innovative community engagement programs and a statewide arts education program, Intiman fosters conversation and debate among its audiences, students and people with limited access to the arts. Guided by the vision of Artistic Director Kate Whoriskey and Managing Director Brian Colburn, Intiman supports the development of new works, interdisciplinary and international collaborations, and diverse voices. Founded in 1972, Intiman was awarded the 2006 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre. For more information, please visit [intiman.org](http://intiman.org).

The **Geffen Playhouse** has been a hub of the Los Angeles theater scene since opening its doors in 1995. Noted for its intimacy and celebrated for its world-renowned mix of classic and contemporary plays, provocative new works and musicals, the Geffen Playhouse continues to present a body of work that has garnered national recognition. Named in honor of entertainment mogul and philanthropist David Geffen, who made the initial donation to the theater, the company is helmed by Producing Director and President of the Board Gilbert Cates, Artistic Director Randall Arney, Managing Director Ken Novice and Chairman of the Board Frank Mancuso. Proudly associated with UCLA, the Geffen Playhouse welcomes an audience of more than 130,000 each year, and maintains an extensive education and outreach program, designed to engage young people and the community at large in the arts. For more information, please visit [geffenplayhouse.com](http://geffenplayhouse.com).

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