

**JANE KACZMAREK SHARES**  
**IN MOTHER WORDS WITH MARY BIRDSONG,**  
**SAIDAH ARRIKA EKULONA AND JAMES LECESNE**

*West Coast Premiere of Theatrical Anthology Opens in the  
Audrey Skirball Kenis Theater at the Geffen Playhouse on February 23, 2011*

*Pieces Written by Leslie Ayvazian, David Cale, Jessica Goldberg, Beth Henley,  
Lameece Issaq, Lisa Loomer, Michele Lowe, Marco Pennette, Lisa Ramirez,  
Theresa Rebeck, Luanne Rice, Annie Weisman and Cheryl L. West*

LOS ANGELES, January 24, 2011 — *In Mother Words*, an audacious collection of stories by some of theater's most talented contemporary playwrights, makes its West Coast debut with award-winning actors **Jane Kaczmarek**, **Mary Birdsong**, **Saidah Arrika Ekulona** and **James Lecesne**. Conceived by **Susan Rose** and **Joan Stein** and helmed by acclaimed director **Lisa Peterson**, this hilarious night of theater includes works by Pulitzer Prize winner **Beth Henley**, Pulitzer Prize nominee **Lisa Loomer**, two-time Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award finalist **Michele Lowe**, Peabody Award winner **Theresa Rebeck**, best-selling author **Luanne Rice**, as well as **Leslie Ayvazian**, **David Cale**, **Jessica Goldberg**, **Lameece Issaq**, **Marco Pennette**, **Lisa Ramirez**, **Annie Weisman** and **Cheryl L. West**. These playwrights' combined stories give voice to mothers and children of all ages, races and even sexes – resulting in an eye-opening, poignant and irresistible evening, which opens in the Audrey Skirball Kenis Theater at the Geffen Playhouse on **February 23, 2011**.

With an emphasis on storytelling, *In Mother Words* comes alive with a rotating cast of four actors, script in hands, who guide the audience through an evening enhanced by multi-media and movement. Actors **Saidah Arrika Ekulona**, who was critically acclaimed for originating the role of Mama Nadi in *Ruined* in Chicago and off-Broadway, and **James Lecesne**, who created the award-winning one man show *Word of Mouth* as well as the Academy Award winning short *Trevor*, will star in the entire three month run of *In Mother Words* through May 1, 2011. The other two actors will perform in four-week rotations; cast changes will be on March 16 and April 30. Broadway actress and Emmy Award nominee **Jane Kaczmarek**, best known for her seven-year stint on the television show *Malcolm in the Middle*, and **Mary Birdsong**, best known for her role on Comedy Central's *Reno 911!* will appear in the first cast of *In Mother Words* through March 15. Opening night festivities will be celebrated at Napa Valley Grille with Chef Joseph Gillard's seasonal specialties, complete with wine by Malibu Family Wines and a specialty drink courtesy of Krol Vodka.

*In Mother Words* had two workshops in the Audrey Skirball Kenis Theater in 2008, before it opened with the title *Motherhood Out Loud* at Bay Street Theatre in the Hamptons in the summer of 2009; last fall the play had its official world premiere at Hartford Stage. The Geffen Playhouse production, which is the West Coast premiere of the project, has been reworked slightly and will be the first version opening with the title *In Mother Words*.

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**IN MOTHER WORDS**

Conceived by Susan Rose & Joan Stein

Written by Leslie Ayvazian, David Cale, Jessica Goldberg, Beth Henley, Lameece Issaq, Lisa Loomer, Michele Lowe, Marco Pennette, Lisa Ramirez, Theresa Rebeck, Luanne Rice, Annie Weisman & Cheryl L. West

Directed by Lisa Peterson

Previews: February 15 – February 22, 2011

Opening: **February 23, 2011**

Cast Change: March 16, 2011

Cast Change: April 13, 2011

Closing: **May 1, 2011**

**Ticket Info**

Ticket prices for preview performances are \$57 and range from \$67 to \$77 for the regular run. Tickets are on sale now on [www.geffenplayhouse.com](http://www.geffenplayhouse.com), by calling (310) 208-5454 or in-person at the Geffen Playhouse box office.

**Production Credits**

Set Designer	Rachel Hauck
Costume Designer	David Woolard
Lighting Designer	Christopher Kuhl
Sound Designer	Jill DuBoff
Projection Designer	Jan Hartley
Animations	Emily Hubbley
Production Stage Manager	Young Ji

**Cast (Feb 15 – March 15)**

Mary Birdsong  
Saidah Arrika Ekulona  
Jane Kaczmarek  
James Lecesne

**Biographies****MARY BIRDSONG**

Mary Birdsong will be playing "Mona Ramsey" in A.C.T.'s new rock musical *Tales of the City* this Spring (based on Armisted Maupin's beloved books). On the big screen, Mary appeared opposite George Clooney in Alexander Payne's new film *The Descendants*. Other films include *Killers*, *Adventureland* and *Made of Honor*. On the small screen Mary is best known for her work on the Comedy Central shows *Reno 911* & *The Daily Show w/Jon Stewart*. More recent tv roles include "Louise" in HBO's *Suburban Shootout* (directed by Barry Sonnenfeld), "Kelly" on CBS' new comedy series *Mad Love*, Squitza Hessianhoffer on The Disney Channel's *Shake It Up*, and "Madeleine" in *Svetlana*. Many theater fans may remember Mary's work opposite Martin Short in the Broadway musical *Martin Short: Fame Becomes Me!* for which she won a Theatre World Award. And Off-Broadway, Mary appeared w/Jane Lynch in *Love, Loss and What I Wore*, (by Nora & Delia Ephron). Other favorite Off-Broadway roles include Judy Garland in *Judy Speaks*, (which Birdsong wrote), and porn star Vixen Fox in *Adult Entertainment* (which Elaine May wrote). Mary is currently developing her latest one-woman show/rock concert about her own mother, *3 Days In the Tub: A Mama Drama*, with Eric Gilliland, which just had it's premiere at Joe's Pub in NYC.

**SAIDAH ARRIKA EKULONA**

Saidah Arrika Ekulona originated the role of Mama Nadi in *Ruined* at the Goodman Theatre and Manhattan Theatre Club (OBIE Award, Lucille Lortel Award, JEFF Award, Drama Desk Citation). BROADWAY: *Well*. OFF-BROADWAY: *Ruined* (MTC); *Othello*; *Unconditional*; *365 Days, 365 Plays*; *Well*; *The Square*; *Romeo and Juliet* (Public Theatre/NYSF); *Anon* (Atlantic Theater Company); *The Thugs* (Soho Rep); *Fabulation* (Playwrights Horizons); *A Streetcar Named Desire* (NYTW) FILM: *That's What She Said*; *Righteous Kill*; *The Taking of Pelham 123*; *Two Lovers*; *The Rebound*; *Uncertainty*; *The Royal Tenenbaums*; *Happy Accidents*. TV: *Law and Order SVU*; *Royal Pains*; *Mercy*; *The Sopranos*; *Queens Supreme*; *Sex & The City*; *Hope & Faith*; *Law & Order*. Training: MFA –University of Minnesota/Guthrie Theatre.

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**JANE KACZMAREK**

Kaczmarek has appeared on Broadway in *Lost in Yonkers* and in plays at the Manhattan Theatre Club, The Public, Second Stage, Long Wharf, New York Stage and Film, and the Berkshire and Williamstown Theatre Festivals. In LA, she recently appeared in *Autumn Garden* at Antaeus Theatre, and has appeared in *Kindertransport* (Ovation Award – Best Actress), *Dinner With Friends*, and *Raised in Captivity* (LA Drama Critics Award – Featured Performance) at South Coast Repertory. Kaczmarek starred for seven years in the Emmy Award winning TV series *Malcolm in the Middle* (Emmy Award nominations, Golden Globe Award nominations, SAG Award nominations, American Comedy Award – Funniest Female Performer – TV Series, TCA Award – Individual Achievement in Comedy, AFI Actor of the Year Award – Female – Series). Other TV credits include: *Raising the Bar*, *The Simpsons*, *Felicity*, *Party of Five* and *Frasier*. Her film credits include: *Pleasantville*, *Vice Versa*, *DOA*, *Falling in Love*, and *Uncommon Valor*.

**JAMES LECESNE**

Theater: His one-man play *Word of Mouth* was presented Off-Broadway by Mike Nichols & Elaine May and directed by Eve Ensler (NY Drama Desk Award and the Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Solo Performance). *Word of Mouth* went on to be performed in Los Angeles (LA Weekly Theater Award), at the HBO Comedy Festival in Aspen, and in many cities throughout the U.S. Other theater credits include: *One Man Band*, directed by Jack Hofsiss; *Cloud 9*, directed by Tommy Tune; *Extraordinary Measures*, written & directed by Eve Ensler; and the 30th anniversary production of *Boys in the Band*, directed by Ken Elliot; *I Am My Own Wife*, *The Mystery of Irma Vep* (Hartford Stage Co). Film & Television: *Sex & The City*, *Home for the Holidays*, *Broadway Damage and Motherhood*. Other: He wrote the short film *Trevor*, which received an Academy Award for Best Live Action Short and he is co-founder of The Trevor Project, a non-profit organization dedicated to ending suicide among LGBT & Questioning youth. James has published two young adult novels, *Absolute Brightness* and *Virgin Territory*; and he wrote *The Road Home*; *Stories of Children of War*, which was presented at the International Peace Initiative at The Hague, adapted *Armistead Maupin's Further Tales of the City* for Showtime (Emmy Nomination) and wrote one of the final episodes of *Will & Grace*.

**LISA PETERSON** (Director)

New York: *The Model Apartment* by Donald Margulies (Primary Stages); *Slavs!* by Tony Kushner, *Traps and Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* by Caryl Churchill (Obie Award for Direction), *The Waves* adapt. from Virginia Woolf (two Drama Desk nominations), all at New York Theatre Workshop; *The Scarlet Letter* adapt. by Phylis Nagy (CSC, world premiere). Regional: *Collected Stories* by Donald Margulies (South Coast Rep, world premiere, DramaLogue Award); *Ikebana* by Alice Tuan (East West Players, world premiere, DramaLogue Award); *The Batting Cage* by Joan Ackermann, July 7, 1994 by Donald Margulies, *Tough Choices for the New Century* by Jane Anderson, *Slavs!* by Tony Kushner, *Trip's Cinch* by Phylis Nagy (Actors Theatre of Louisville Humana Festival, world premieres); *Good Person of Setzuan* adapt. by Tony Kushner, *Triumph of Love* adapt. by James Magruder, *Arms and the Man* by G.B. Shaw, *The Swan* by Elizabeth Egloff (La Jolla Playhouse); *A Moon for the Misbegotten* by O'Neill, *My Children! My Africa!* by Athol Fugard, *Slavs!* by Kushner (Baltimore Center Stage); *Fefu and Her Friends* by Irene Fornes (Yale Rep); *Reckless* by Craig Lucas (Hartford Stage). New Play Development: Sundance, The Playwrights' Center, New Dramatists, Young Playwrights' Festival, Taper New Works Festival, Audrey SkirballKenis, New York Stage and Film, Royal Court London.

**ABOUT THE GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE**

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 (Gil) 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).

**LISTING EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:**

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