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MEDIA RELEASE

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ARENA STAGE PRESENTS MICHAEL FRAYN'S HILARIOUS FARCE COMEDY *NOISES OFF*

***** British Director Jonathan Munby returns to D.C. to direct an all-star cast including Bob Prosky, Helen Carey and Susan Lynskey *****

(Washington D.C.) Hilarity and chaos ensue in Arena Stage's production of Michael Frayn's (*Democracy, Copenhagen*) ingenious play-within-a-play *Noises Off*, about a third-rate British acting troupe desperately trying to stage and tour a third-rate farce called *Nothing On*. British Director Jonathan Munby orchestrates the mayhem and directs the cast, which includes Arena veteran Robert Prosky as Seldson Mowbray, Tony Award-nominee Helen Carey as Dotty Otley and Arena Affiliated Artist Susan Lynskey as Poppy Norton-Taylor. ***Noises Off* runs December 15 – January 28 in the Kreeger Theater. The press opening night performance is Thursday, December 21 at 8:00 p.m.**



"*Noises Off* is a hysterical story about a theater troupe's misadventures," said Arena Stage Artistic Director Molly Smith. "The underlying authenticity of an actor's reaction when thrust into the spotlight is one of the exhilarating joys of going to the theater for audiences. Directed by the talented Jonathan Munby, this exceptional cast shows us the complex, creative art of theater."

As actors in this play-within-a-play rehearse, forgotten lines, dropped trousers and lost plates of sardines create onstage pandemonium. Meanwhile, it is total chaos backstage as love triangles, petty bickering and ruined affairs lead to pratfalls, flying props and more than one bloody nose. In the end, at the frenetic final performance, everything merges into one perfectly ravaged and wholly uproarious theatrical nervous breakdown.

The havoc-ridden acting troupe is led by *Nothing On's* director, Lloyd Dallas, rightfully played by British director/actor James Gale. In addition to Prosky, Carey and Lynskey, other Arena alumni members of the troupe include Stephen Schnetzer (*The Goat or, Who is Sylvia*) as Garry Lejeune, Lynnda Ferguson (*Hot 'N' Throbbing*) as Belinda Blair and Helen Hayes Award winner Stephen F. Schmidt (*Damn Yankees, Camelot, Guys and Dolls*) as Frederick Fellowes. Making their Arena Stage debut are Jay Russell as Tim Allgood and Amelia McClain as Brooke Ashton.

Noises Off premiered in London in 1982 and won the London Evening Standard Award for Best Comedy. It opened on Broadway in 1983 and was nominated for four Tony Awards including the 1984 Award for Best Play. In 1992, Marty Kaplan wrote a screenplay for *Noises Off* and turned it into a successful film directed by Peter Bogdanovich. The play was revived on Broadway in 2001 and was nominated for the 2002 Tony for Best Revival of a Play and earned Katie Finneran the 2002 Tony for Best Featured Role in a play.

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Michael Frayn is a celebrated playwright, novelist and translator. Early in his career he worked as a reporter and columnist for *The Guardian* and *The Observer*. He has published several novels including *The Tin Men* (1965), winner of a Somerset Maugham Award; *The Russian Interpreter* (1966), which won the Hawthornden Prize; *Towards the End of the Morning* (1967); *A Landing on the Sun* (1991), which won the *Sunday Express* Book of the Year; and *Spies* (2002), which won the 2002 Whitbread Novel Award and the 2003 Commonwealth Writers Prize. He is also the recipient of the 2002 Heywood Hill Literary Prize. His latest book is a work of non-fiction, *The Human Touch: Our Part in the Creation of the Universe* (2006). His plays include *Alphabetical Order* (1975); *Clouds* (1976); *Donkeys' Years* (1977); *Make or Break* (1980); *Noises Off* (1982); *Benefactors* (1984); *Copenhagen* (1998), which won the 1998 *Evening Standard* Award for Best Play of the Year and the 2000 Tony Award for Best Play; and *Democracy* (2003), which won the 2005 Tony Award for Best Play. He has also translated a number of works from Russian, including plays by Chekhov and Tolstoy. His films for television include *First and Last* (1989), for which he won an Emmy, and an adaptation of his 1991 novel *A Landing on the Sun*. He also wrote the screenplay for the film *Clockwise* (1986), a comedy starring John Cleese.

THE CAST OF *NOISES OFF*

Helen Carey (Dotty Otley)'s former productions at Arena include *The Revengers' Comedies*, *The Odyssey* and *Crime and Punishment*. At the Shakespeare Theatre Company, she appeared in *The Persians*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *Macbeth*, *Henry VI* and *Volpone* (for which she received a Helen Hayes Award). For Signature Theatre, she played Phyllis in *Follies*. On Broadway, she received a Tony nomination and a Theatre World Award for Lady Gay Spanker in *London Assurance*. Other New York credits include works of Shaw, Brian Friel and Neil Simon. She has been a long standing artist at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, spanning the tenures of Founding Director Sir Tyrone Guthrie (*Uncle Vanya*) and current Artistic Director Joe Dowling (*Cherry Orchard*, *Death of a Salesman*). At the Festival Theatre, Stratford, Ontario, she played in *School for Scandal*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Merchant of Venice* and *Arms and the Man*. In Ireland, she received an ESB/Irish Times nomination for her work in *All My Sons* at Dublin's Abbey Theatre. Film/TV credits include *Little Children*, *Emperor's Club*, *Black Knights*, "House," "Seinfeld," "Law & Order" and "The Brotherhood."

Lynnda Ferguson (Belinda Blair)'s D.C.-area appearances include *Hot 'N' Throbbing* (Arena); *Blithe Spirit*, *The Misanthrope* and *Midsummer Night's Dream* (CenterStage, Baltimore); *Richard III* (Shakespeare Theatre) and *Rumors* (National Tour). She appeared in *Bring Back Birdie* and *Rumors* on Broadway, as well as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Mrs. Feuerstein* Off-Broadway. Other favorite productions at such theaters as Berkeley Repertory Theatre, South Coast Repertory, ACT (San Francisco), the Old Globe (San Diego), Alaska Repertory Theatre and The Denver Center include *Private Lives* (Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Actress), *The Homecoming* (Matrix Theatre Company, LADCC Award), *The Philadelphia Story*, *The Misanthrope*, *South Pacific*, *Bus Stop* (directed by Molly Smith) and *The Lady from Maxim's*. TV work includes "Law & Order," "Judging Amy," "Frasier," "News Radio" and "Deep Space Nine." Ms. Ferguson is Executive Producer for the feature film *Making Contact* directed by Molly Smith.

James Gale (Lloyd Dallas)'s New York credits include *The Skin Game* (Mint Theatre), *Playboy of the Western World* (Irish Rep.), *Major Barbara* (Roundabout), *Engaged* (Theatre for a New Audience) and *The Beard of Avon* (New York Theatre Workshop). His regional credits include *Mauritius*, *Raw Boys*, *Cloud 9*, *Camille*, *Blue/Orange*, *The Lion in Winter*, *Two Small Bodies*, *Twelfth Night*, *33 Variations*, *The Magic Fire*, *Ghosts*, *Night Sky*, *The Greeks*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Betrayal*, *Macbeth*, *Educating Rita*, *King Lear*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, *Richard III*, *As You Like It*, *Equus* and *The Merchant of Venice* at theaters in Boston, Louisville, Washington, D.C., Hartford, Indianapolis, Stamford,

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Philadelphia, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, Santa Cruz, Bard on Avon and Rochester. His regional work in the UK includes *Romeo and Juliet*, *Arms and the Man*, *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *Richard III*. He has appeared at the London Fringe Festival in *The Paddy Factor*, *Blood Wedding* and *The Dumb Waiter*.

Susan Lynskey (Poppy Norton-Taylor) marks *Noises Off* as her sixth production at Arena Stage. Previous productions include *Born Yesterday*, *Intimations for Saxophone*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Book of Days* and *Proof*. Other recent Washington performances include Miss Kroll in *Citizen 13559* (Kennedy Center), Helen in *The Cripple of Inishmaan* (Studio Theater) and Iris in the U.S. premiere of *Girl in the Goldfish Bowl* (MetroStage). TV/Film appearances include *Contact*, *Random Hearts*, *Crazy Like a Fox*, NBC's "Homicide," HBO's "The Wire" and *The Visiting* (release 2007). Her radio/voice work includes narration and radio plays for NPR, CBC, PBS and 'SOUNDINCENTIVE' D.C.'s new ensemble of Radio Theatre artists. Her work has been recognized with a Helen Hayes nomination and the D.C. Commission on the Arts' Artist Fellow Award. Ms. Lynskey is one of Arena's Affiliated Artists.

Amelia McClain (Brooke Ashton) recently graduated with an M.F.A. from New York University's Graduate Acting Program where her favorite roles included Callie Pax in *Stop Kiss*, Helen McCormick in *The Cripple of Inishmaan* and Mia Panzoroff in *Le Bourgeois Avant-Garde*. Ms. McClain also played four different characters in *The Horton Foote Project*, an adaptation she co-created based on Horton Foote's nine-play cycle. She is a 1999 NFAA award winner.

Robert Prosky (Selsdon Mowbray) has appeared in more than 200 plays both on Broadway and in regional theater. He has been in 38 films and numerous television shows. He has been given or nominated for two Tony Awards, two Helen Hayes Awards, an Emmy, the Drama Desk Award and the American Express Tribute to an American Actor. He has appeared on Broadway in *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *A Walk in the Woods* and *A View from the Bridge*, among others. Highlights from regional theater include *Death of a Salesman*, *Twelfth Night* and *You Can't Take It With You*. He has also performed at the Moscow Art Theater in Russia and the Gate Theater in Dublin, Ireland. His films include *Mrs. Doubtfire*, *The Natural* and *Dead Man Walking*. TV credits include three years on "Hill Street Blues" and many TV films and guest shots. He has recently finished a long run on Broadway in Michael Frayn's play *Democracy*, last season's production of *Awake and Sing!* at Arena Stage, and Arthur Miller's *The Price* with two of his sons, John and Andrew.

Jay Russell (Tim Allgood) appeared on Broadway in *The Play What I Wrote* directed by Kenneth Branagh. Off-Broadway work includes *The Normal Heart* (Public Theatre), *The Green Heart* (Manhattan Theatre Club), *Private Jokes*, *Public Places* and *An evening with Burton & Russell* (co-author/co-star). His regional work includes *Natural Selection* and *Listeners* (2006 Humana Festival/Actors Theatre of Louisville); *Gross Indecency* and *An Ideal Husband* (Repertory Theatre of St. Louis); *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *The Mystery of Irma Vep* (Cincinnati Playhouse); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Lion in Winter* (Utah Shakespearean Festival); *Anything Goes* opposite Sandy Duncan (Ordway Theatre); and *Design for Living* (Olney Theatre). National tours include *Beauty & the Beast* (Lumiere) and *Applause*. Last year, Mr. Russell starred in the one man show *Fully Committed* at Vienna's English Theatre in Vienna, Austria. His television credits include roles on "The Sopranos," "Law & Order," "Law & Order: Criminal Intent," "Spin City" and "The Jamie Kennedy Experiment."

Stephen F. Schmidt (Frederick Fellowes) returns to Arena where he appeared in *Damn Yankees*, *Camelot* and *Guys and Dolls*. Mr. Schmidt recently appeared in *A Prayer for Owen Meany* at Round House, where he has also appeared in *One Shoe Off*, *Chemistry of Change* and *The Fantasticks*. Mr.

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Schmidt is the recipient of the 2006 Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Supporting Actor, Resident Musical for Lockstock in *Urinetown* at Signature Theatre. Previous Helen Hayes nominations include *Roald Dahl's Willy Wonka* (Wonka) at The Kennedy Center, *It's A Wonderful Life* (George) at Toby's and *The Rocky Horror Show* (Brad) at Woolly Mammoth. At CenterStage in Baltimore, Mr. Schmidt has appeared in *Sweeney Todd*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Investigation*, *As You Like It*, *H.M.S. Pinafore* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Stephen Schnetzer (Garry Lejeune) appeared at Arena Stage as Martin in *The Goat or, Who is Sylvia?*. He has appeared on Broadway in *A Talent for Murder* with Claudette Colbert, *Filumena* directed by Laurence Olivier and *The Goat or, Who is Sylvia?*. His Off-Broadway credits include *Romeo and Juliet*, *Miss Julie* (Roundabout), the original cast of Terrence McNally's *Lisbon Traviata* and *Timon of Athens* (Delacorte). Regionally, he has worked at The American Shakespeare Theatre for Michael Kahn, as well as appeared in *Saint Joan* at the McCarter, *Shakespeare's People* with Michael Redgrave, *The Tempest* with Anthony Hopkins, and developed new plays at Florida Stage and O'Neill's National Playwrights Conference. He was featured in 20 productions at the American Conservatory Theatre, including *The Taming of the Shrew*, which was televised for PBS' "Theatre in America" series. His film/TV credits include *Brooklyn Lobster*, *Ben's Plan*, "Law & Order," "Law & Order: SVU," "Prince Street," "Cosby Murder Mysteries," and 17 years as Cass Winthrop on "Another World." He has won three MVP Awards, a Best Comic Performance Award and a Best Actor Daytime Emmy nomination.

THE CREATIVE TEAM

Jonathan Munby (Director)'s recent works include *The Canterbury Tales* (Royal Shakespeare Company: Swan, International tour and currently at the Gielgud Theatre, West End, London). His other theater credits include *Madness In Valencia* (Royal Shakespeare Company: The Other Place); *Robin Hood* (Royal Shakespeare Company: Swan Theatre); *The Comedy of Errors* (Crucible); *Bird Calls* (Crucible Studio); *A Number* (Crucible and Minerva Theatre Chichester – starring Tim and Sam West); *Mirandolina* (Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester); *Sweetness and Badness* (Welsh National Opera); *Journeys Among the Dead* (Young Vic); *Firebird* (National Theatre Studio); *Bed Show* (Bristol Old Vic); *The Anniversary* (Garrick Theatre, West End, London – starring Sheila Hancock); *John Bull's Other Island* (Lyric Theatre, Belfast); *Numb* (Edinburgh Festival); *Tartuffe* (Watermill Theatre and national tour); as well as *The Gentleman from Olmedo*, *The Venetian Twins*, *The Triumph of Love* and *Dancing at Lughnasa* (all at the Watermill Theatre). Mr. Munby was an Assistant Director at the RSC from 1999-2001.

Alexander Dodge (Set Designer) worked on Arena's production of *On the Jump*. His Broadway credits include *Butley* with Nathan Lane and *Hedda Gabler* with Kate Burton. For Off-Broadway, Mr. Dodge has designed *The Water's Edge* (Second Stage); *Measure for Pleasure* (Public Theater); *Observe the Sons of Ulster...* (Lortel Award) and *Chaucer in Rome* (Lincoln Center); *The Downtown Plays* (Tribeca Theater Festival); and *Force Continuum* and *Sexual Perversity in Chicago* (Atlantic Theater Company). Recently, his regional credits include *The Cherry Orchard* with Annette Bening (Mark Taper Forum), *The Sisters Rosensweig* (Old Globe) and *Love's Labour's Lost* (Huntington). For opera, he designed all sets and costumes for *Il Trittico* (Berlin), *Der Waffenschmied* (Munich), *Der fliegende Holländer* (Würzburg) and *Lohengrin* (Budapest). His upcoming project is *American Buffalo* for The Gate Theatre, Dublin.

Linda Cho (Costume Designer)'s prior designs at Arena Stage include *Passion Play, a cycle; Awake and Sing!*; *The Piano Lesson*; *Anna Christie*; and *Orpheus Descending*. She has designed numerous operas, dance and theater Off-Broadway and at regional theaters across the country including

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works at New York Theatre Workshop, Manhattan Theatre Club, The Public Theatre (*Two Noble Kinsmen*, Lortel Award Nominee), Second Stage, The Vineyard Theatre, The Atlantic Theatre Company, The Old Globe (*Pericles*, Craig Noel Award), The Drama Dept., The Acting Company, Center Stage, Dallas Theatre Center, The Huntington Theatre Company, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, The Philadelphia Theatre Company, Pittsburgh Public Theatre, Westport Country Playhouse, Long Wharf Theatre, Goodspeed and Virginia Opera.

Lindsay Jones (Original Music and Sound Designer) has been seen by D.C. audiences in *In the Continuum* at Woolly Mammoth and *Member of the Wedding* at Ford's Theatre. Off-Broadway credits include *The God of Hell*, *Dedication or the Stuff of Dreams*, *In the Continuum*, *John Ferguson*, *Boy*, *String of Pearls*, *Treason*, *Luminescence Dating*, *O Jerusalem*, *Beautiful Thing* and *Closet Land*. His work has been heard in many regional theaters across the country including Center Stage, American Conservatory Theatre, Hartford Stage, South Coast Repertory, Alliance, Goodman, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Kansas City Repertory, The Old Globe, Chicago Shakespeare, Steppenwolf, Pasadena Playhouse, Milwaukee Repertory and Lookingglass. Internationally, he has had productions in Austria, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Scotland and The Royal Shakespeare Company of England. Mr. Jones has received four Joseph Jefferson Awards and eleven nominations, an Ovation Award, two ASCAP Plus Awards and was the first sound designer to win the Michael Maggio Emerging Designer Award. His most recent film score was for *A Note of Triumph: The Golden Age of Norman Corwin* (2006 Academy Award winner, Best Documentary, Short Subject) for HBO Films.

Michael Gilliam (Lighting Designer)'s Broadway credits include *Brooklyn*, *Big River* and *Stand-Up Tragedy*. He worked on *The West End (Gershwin Alone)* and Off-Broadway (*Striking 12*, *Blue*, *End of the World Party*, *Zooman and the Sign* and *Menopause the Musical*). His national tours include *Guys and Dolls* and *Big River*. Mr. Gilliam has worked extensively at regional theaters across the country including Arena Stage, The Globe Theatres, Mark Taper Forum, Seattle Repertory, The Goodman Theatre, The Guthrie Theater, The Pasadena Playhouse, The Geffen Playhouse, The Kennedy Center, Ford's Theatre, Philadelphia Theatre Company, The Prince Music Theatre, Denver Center and Arizona Theatre Company. He is the recipient of Los Angeles Ovation Awards, Dramalogue Awards, Garland Awards and the 1999 Career Achievement Award from the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle.

Mark Bly (Production Dramaturg) is entering his third season as senior dramaturg. Earlier this season he dramaturged Molly Smith's *Cabaret* and Moisés Kaufman's workshop of *33 Variations*. Mr. Bly is the director of the Arena Stage **downstairs** New Play Reading Series.

Jon Aitchison (Hair and Makeup) is happy to be returning to Arena Stage. In recent months, he has designed for the Shakespeare Theatre Company, Goodman Theatre, Wolf Trap Opera Company and CenterStage.

The *Noises Off* fight choreographer is **Robb Hunter**, Line Producer is **David Dower**, Dialect Coach is **Deborah Cooney**, Stage Manager is **Amber Dickerson**, Assistant Stage Manager is **Susan Martin**, Production Assistant is **Angelita Thomas**, Stage Management Intern is **Victoria Murray**, Directing Fellow is **Dan Pruksarnukul** and dramaturgy fellow is **Clarence Coe**.

Noises Off is sponsored by Donald and Nancy de Laski and Gina and John Despres.

The 2006/07 season is sponsored by Joan and David Maxwell.

Special Events, Ticket Information, and Performance Calendar

The Salon

Monday, December 18 at 7:00 p.m.

Featuring special guests from *Noises Off*

In the spirit of artistic and literary salons of the past, The Salon features artistic leaders from Arena Stage in a series of lively, in-depth conversations with the playwrights, actors, directors, designers, dramaturgs and audiences who make Arena Stage so unique. The Salon is free to Arena Stage subscribers and donors (\$75+), and only \$3 for the general public. Reservations must be made through the Arena Stage Sales Office at (202) 488-3300.

Southwest Night

Friday, December 22 at 8:00 p.m.

A special invitation is extended to our Southwest D.C. neighbors to buy \$20 tickets for one specially designated Friday evening performance of each production. Proof of Southwest D.C. residency or employment must be presented at the time of purchase. Tickets are limited to 4 per person and are based on availability. To purchase tickets, call (202) 488-3300 or stop by the Arena Stage Sales Office.

Out At Arena

Friday, January 19 at 8:00 p.m.

For GLBT audiences on selected Friday evenings; a post-show discussion with cast members and a reception follow the performance. Reception FREE for subscribers.

TICKETS: Tickets range from \$55-74, with discounts available for students, groups, persons with disabilities and senior citizens. **HOTTIX**, a limited number of half-price, day-of-performance tickets, are available from 90-30 minutes before curtain prior to every performance. **FIVETWENTYFIVE TICKETS**, a limited number of \$10 tickets for patrons aged 5-25, are available for most performances and can be purchased on the day of the performance until 30 minutes prior to curtain. Patrons will be required to present valid ID for age verification.

Sales Office	(202) 488-3300
TTY for Deaf patrons	(202) 484-0247
Group Sales Hotline	(202) 488-4380
Subscriptions	(202) 488-4377
Info for patrons with disabilities	(202) 554-9066

Tickets are available for purchase online at www.arenastage.org.

PERFORMANCE TIMES:

Tues., Wed., and Sun. at 7:30 p.m. (Exception: 6:00 p.m. curtain 1/14)

Thurs., Fri., and Sat. at 8:00 p.m.

Sat. and Sun. matinees at 2:00 p.m. (Exception: None on 1/14 and 1/21)

Weekday matinees at 12:00 p.m. on 1/9, 1/10, and 1/17

Epilogues (post-show discussions): 1/11 at 8:00 p.m.; 1/23 at 7:30 p.m.

Sign-interpreted performances: 1/4 at 8:00 p.m.; 1/7 at 7:30 p.m.

Audio described performances: 1/17 at 7:30 p.m., 1/20 at 2:00 p.m.

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