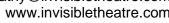
INVISIBLE THEATRE - PRESS RELEASE

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Box Office: (520) 882-9721 1400 N. First Ave, Tucson, AZ 85719 cathy@invisibletheatre.com www.invisibletheatre.com





FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

IT continues its 46th Anniversary Season with

FREDERICK DOUGLASS: In the Shadow of Slavery

A one-man performance about the most important activist in United States history

> Starring Mel Johnson Jr.

TWO PERFORMANCES ONLY!

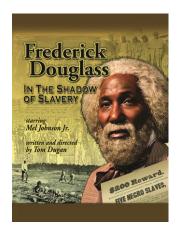
Saturday, March 4, 2017 at 7:30 PM Sunday, March 5, 2017 at 3:00 PM

The Berger Performing Arts Center 1200 W. Speedway Blvd

(February 17, 2017, Tucson, Arizona); The Invisible Theatre continues its 46th season with FREDERICK DOUGLASS: IN THE SHADOW OF SLAVERY, a one-man theatrical journey that chronicles Douglass' remarkable life, from his childhood in slavery to his perilous escape to freedom, from his intense friendships with Susan B. Anthony, John Brown and Abraham Lincoln, to his crucial work on behalf of former slaves following the Civil War. The story of Frederick Douglass' struggle for African American freedom, as performed by Mel Johnson Jr., star of Broadway and film, is a fascinating evening of theatre that will inspire, educate and entertain.

> This production is made possible in part through the generous support of **Sonora Investment Management**

"... the most gripping history lesson I have ever experienced." -The Peninsula News



Starring – Mel Johnson Jr. Written and Directed by Tom Dugan

FREDERICK DOUGLASS: In the Shadow of Slavery will play March 4 and 5, 2017 at the Berger Performing Arts Center, located at 1200 W. Speedway Blvd, Tucson, AZ.

The single show ticket price is \$42. All seats are reserved. Additional discounts are available for groups, seniors, active military and students. Rush tickets are available for purchase at half-price one half hour prior to performance time and are subject to availability.

Tickets are available for purchase by calling the Invisible Theatre Box Office at (520) 882-9721 and are also available 24/7 on-line through OvationTix at www.invisibletheatre.com.

The running time is two hours with an intermission.

THE INVISIBLE THEATRE

The Invisible Theatre (IT) of Tucson, a 501(c)(3) organization, is dedicated to producing quality theatre and arts education experiences for all facets of the community in an intimate setting that showcases local professional talent and guest artists. IT takes its name from the invisible energy that flows between a performer and audience, creating the magic of theatre. Started in 1971 as an arena for local playwrights, the theatre has expanded its programs to include adaptations of classics and recent Off-Broadway plays and musicals, while continuing to encourage new playwrights through both full productions and staged readings.

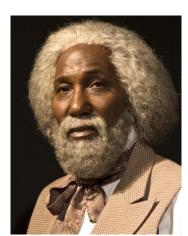
Under the leadership of Managing Artistic Director Susan Claassen, Associate Artistic Director James Blair, and PR Director Cathy Johnson, IT is strongly committed to community service and outreach programs. The company's current season includes a six play Main Stage season, many special events, a world class cabaret series, organizational collaborations, educational tours, seminars that encourage community dialogue and Project Pastime – an educational theatre program for mentally challenged youth.

The Invisible Theatre, the recipient of the first Arizona Theatre Association Award for Best Producing Theatre Company, is a member of the Theatre Communications Group and has long enjoyed both local and national recognition for its strong leadership role in the arts community. Productions take place in an intimate 80-seat converted laundry building. IT celebrates its 46th season with an even greater commitment to professionalism, artistic excellence, accessibility, freedom of expression, diverse programming and creative challenge – thus making the Invisible Theatre a very visible force in Tucson's cultural community.

ABOUT MEL JOHNSON JR.

Mel Johnson Jr. (Douglass) most recently starred in the critically acclaimed, 20th anniversary production of DRIVING MISS DAISY at Hartford Theatre Works. On Broadway he starred in Maurice Hines' production of HOT FEET, Mufasa in THE LION KING, Bob Fosse's BIG DEAL, THE RINK with Liza Minnelli and Chita Rivera, EUBIE! and ON THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. His national tours/Off-Broadway credits include ROAD SHOW (Public Theater), JELLY'S LAST JAM, THE BOYS FROM SYRACUSE (Encores!), VENUS AND SPELL #7 (Public Theatre), HAMLET (Roundabout Theatre), RAP MASTER RONNIE, SHAKESPEARE'S CABARET, LOVE LOVE AND DO LORD REMEMBER ME (American Place Theatre). His extensive regional theatre work includes RAISIN (Crossroads Theatre), OLDTIMERS GAME (Actors Theatre of Louisville), HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN FILM (Hartford Stage Co.), SIZWE BANZI IS DEAD (ACT Seattle) and TAMING OF THE SHREW (Virginia Museum Theatre). Among his notable film work was co-starring with Arnold Schwarzenegger as Benny in Total Recall, American Blue Note, Intimate Strangers and In the Shadow of the Cobra. On Television Mr. Johnson was a series regular on David Lynch's On the Air and guest starred on a variety of shows, among them Star Trek: Deep Space Nine, The Practice, Fresh Prince of Bel Air, and the miniseries Liberty. While in Los Angeles, Mr. Johnson was the artistic Director of the award winning arts organization The Imagination Workshop. His other directing credits include the Los Angeles production of GIVE 'EM HELL HARRY Starring Jason Alexander and the national tour of ROBERT E. LEE - SHADES OF GRAY starring Tom Dugan.





Mel Johnson Jr. as Frederick Douglass

ABOUT FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Frederick Douglass was one of the most famous abolitionists in American history. He was born near Hillsboro, Maryland in February of 1818. He was born into slavery and was separated from his mother when he was a baby. Douglass never knew his father and was moved to different residences throughout Maryland during his childhood. At the age of 12, Frederick began receiving reading lessons from the wife of his "master," even though it was illegal to teach slaves to read. Frederick proved to be a quick study and was soon reading newspapers, magazines, and books. Through his reading of political journals, Frederick realized the horrors of slavery. Indeed, many slaveholders endeavored to keep slaves illiterate, so that they would not question their position and desire a better life.

Douglass was soon sent away to another slave owner named Mr. Freeman. Mr. Freeman allowed Frederick to teach other slaves to read. Frederick taught over 40 slaves how to read passages from the New Testament. Other slave owners, however, became angry and destroyed the "congregation" in which Frederick taught. Four years later, in 1837, Frederick married a free Black woman named Anne Murray. They would have five children. He gained his own freedom by escaping from captivity by dressing as a sailor and boarding a train at Havre de Grace, Maryland near Baltimore. By the time he reached New York City he was a free man (though not officially a free man). The trip took less than a day. Douglass continued to Massachusetts and soon joined the abolitionist cause. Inspired by the famous abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, Douglass became an anti-slavery speaker and writer. At only 23 years of age, Douglass became a leading speaker for the cause and joined several movements including the American Anti-Slavery Society. He also supported the feminist cause and participated in the Seneca Falls Convention, a women's rights convention in 1848.

In 1845 Douglass authored *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, an autobiography. The book was a critical success and became an instant best-seller. The book was translated into three languages and Douglass was invited to tour Ireland and Great Britain. Douglass spent two years in Europe lecturing on the horrors of slavery. Douglass became a popular figure in Great Britain, where his lectures were "standing-room only." The people of Great Britain, roused by Douglass' speeches, raised money on his behalf to pay his "owner," Hugh Auld, for his official freedom. Auld was paid 700 pounds by the people of Great Britain and Douglass was officially a free man in America.

When he returned to America, Douglass published the *North Star* and four other abolitionist newspapers under the motto "Right is of no Sex — Truth is of no Color — God is the Father of us all, and we are all brethren." He advocated equal education for Black children, who received virtually no funding for education. As his reputation grew, Douglass became an advisor to Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson. Douglass led a growing movement that caused a split in the Abolitionist movement. Douglass and others believed the U.S. Constitution was an antislavery document, while William Lloyd Garrison believed it was a pro-slavery document. In addition, Garrison believed that The *North Star* was competing for readers with his own newspaper, the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*.

By the time of the start of the Civil War, Douglass was one of the nation's most prominent Black men. Later, the *North Star* was merged with other newspapers and was called the *Frederick Douglass Paper*. Douglass believed the primary cause of the Civil War was to liberate the slaves. After Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, Douglass continued in the fight for the rights of the freed slaves. After the assassination of President Lincoln, Douglass gave an impromptu speech at his memorial service. While Douglass' speech mentioned Lincoln's shortcomings in the fight against slavery, he gave Lincoln much credit for the liberation of the slaves, "Can any colored man, or any white man friendly to the freedom of all men, ever forget the night which followed the first day of January 1863, when the world was to see if Abraham Lincoln would prove to be as good as his word?" The speech was followed by a rousing standing ovation. It is said that Mary Lincoln was so moved by the speech that she gave Douglass Lincoln's favorite walking stick.

After the war, Douglass was made president of the Freedman's Bureau Savings Bank and several other diplomatic positions. During reconstruction, Douglass frequently gave speaking tours, particularly at colleges and universities in New England. In 1877, he purchased his final home, which he named Cedar Hill, in the Anacostia section of Washington D.C. Today, the estate is known as the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site. Frederick's wife Anne Murray died in 1881, but he remarried Helen Pitts, a white abolitionist in 1884. Despite the controversy that their marriage created (she was White and twenty years younger than he,) the pair toured Europe in 1886 and 1887. In 1895, Douglass died of a heart attack at his home in Washington.

TO PURCHASE TICKETS OR FOR INFORMATION

To charge tickets by phone, call our Box Office at (520) 882-9721. You may also visit the Box Office in the Invisible Theatre Lobby (1400 N First Avenue at Drachman). To buy tickets online 24/7, go to www.invisibletheatre.com and click on the Ovationtix logo. Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express are accepted.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS:

The Berger Performing Arts Center is fully accessible to patrons using wheelchairs or with other mobility challenges. Seating areas to accommodate persons using wheelchairs are located in the theatre. If patrons require special seating they should inform the Box Office at (520) 882-9721.

ABOUT THIS PRESS RELEASE:

This mailing list is for members of the professional media and allied organizations who have requested e-mail press releases from The Invisible Theatre. If you no longer wish to receive e-mail press releases or if there is someone else with your organization that should be added to our list, send a message to cathy@invisibletheatre.com or phone Alayna at (520) 884-0672 with your request.

ONLINE MEDIA MATERIALS:

Photos of Mel Johnson Jr. and Frederick Douglass are attached to this press release and are also available at www.invisibletheatre.com (press).

Invisible Theatre

1400 N. First Avenue at Drachman Tucson, AZ 85719 Box Office – (520) 882-9721 Administration – (520) 884-0672 Fax – (520) 884-5410 www.invisibletheatre.com