



American Repertory Theater

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**American Repertory Theater Announces Complete Casting for
HEAR WORD! Naija Woman Talk True
Directed by Ifeoma Fafunwa
January 26 – February 11, 2018**

CAMBRIDGE, MA—The **American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.)** at Harvard University, under the leadership of Artistic Director Diane Paulus and Executive Producer Diane Borger, is pleased to present **HEAR WORD! Naija Women Talk True**, a celebration of Nigerian women who have broken the culture of silence and challenged the status quo. Written and directed by **Ifeoma Fafunwa** and featuring a cast of leading actresses from the Nigerian stage and screen, the production will begin performances on Friday, January 26, and continue through Sunday, February 11, 2018 at the Loeb Drama Center, 64 Brattle Street, in Cambridge.

Images available for download at from **MEDIA** tab at americanrepertorytheater.org/hearword.

Performance dates and times (Tuesdays - Sundays):

January 26 – 28, 30 – 31, February 1 – 4, 6 – 10 at 7:30PM

February 3, 4, 10, 11 at 2PM

February 7 at 11AM (student matinee, open to the public)

Press/Opening performance: Wednesday, January 31 at 7:30PM – invitation to follow

Open Captioned performances: Thursday, February 8 at 7:30PM and Sunday, February 11 at 2PM

Audio Described performances: Friday, February 9 at 7:30PM and Sunday, February 11 at 2PM

Tickets from \$25 are on sale by phone at 617.547.8300, in person at the Loeb Drama Center Ticket Services Office (64 Brattle Street, Cambridge), and online at americanrepertorytheater.org/hearword. Discounts are available for A.R.T. Subscribers and Donors, students, seniors, Blue Star families, EBT card holders, and others.

Returning to the A.R.T. following a limited sold-out run at the Harvard Dance Center in 2016, **HEAR WORD! Naija Woman Talk True** is inspired by multi-generational stories of inequality and transformation. The piece is directed by **Ifeoma Fafunwa**, the founder and director of iOpenEye, a Nigerian production company driving social change through performance art.

Combining song and dance with intimate portraits of resilience and resistance, **HEAR WORD!** grapples with the issues that affect the lives of women across Nigeria—the factors that limit their potential for independence, leadership, and meaningful contribution in society, and the ways they have moved beyond established barriers to achieve meaningful solutions. **HEAR WORD!** is recommended for audiences aged fourteen and up due to its themes and content.

“‘Hear word’ is Nigerian Pidgin for ‘listen and comply,’” explains Fafunwa. “Nigerians use it as a warning or threat to women or children. With this show, I want to flip the script to say, ‘Listen and learn from what women have to say,’ because if we continue with the way things are going, we will surely never progress.”

The **HEAR WORD!** cast features acclaimed international actors and stars of Nollywood (one of the top three film industries in the world): **Taiwo Ajai-Lycett, Joke Silva, Bimbo Akintola, Ufuoma McDermott, Elvina Ibru, Omonor, Zara Udofia-Ejoh, Rita Edward, Debbie Ohiri, and Odenike**, as well as drummers **Emeka Christian Anokwuru, Frank Ebisidor Asiyai, and Blessing Akpofure Idireri**.

“**HEAR WORD!** celebrates the powerful voices of Nigerian women,” says A.R.T. Artistic Director **Diane Paulus**. “At a time when we in the US must turn our attention with new urgency with the work of combating sexual and gender violence, **HEAR WORD!** is a rousing global call to rise up, stand together, and speak out.”

A 2017/18 Radcliffe Institute Fellow, Fafunwa will deliver a talk entitled “Who Would Choose to be Gay and Nigerian!?” on Wednesday, February 7 at 4PM at Radcliffe’s Knafel Center.

Act II conversations will follow a number of **HEAR WORD!** performances, including:

- **Friday, February 9, 7:30PM:** A conversation with Director **Ifeoma Fafunwa** and **Timothy Patrick McCarthy**, Director of Culture Change & Social Justice Initiatives at the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, Harvard Kennedy School
- **Saturday, February 10, 2PM:** A conversation with **Daniel Jordan Smith**, Royce Family Professor of Teaching Excellence; Professor and Chair of Anthropology, Brown University

Additional post-show conversations will be listed at americanrepertorytheater.org/hearword.

ABOUT THE AMERICAN REPERTORY THEATER

The **American Repertory Theater** (A.R.T.) at Harvard University is a leading force in the American theater, producing groundbreaking work in Cambridge and beyond. The A.R.T. was founded in 1980 by Robert Brustein, who served as Artistic Director until 2002, when he was succeeded by Robert Woodruff. Diane Paulus began her tenure as Artistic Director in 2008. Under the leadership of Paulus and Executive Producer Diane Borger, the A.R.T. seeks to expand the boundaries of theater by programming events that immerse audiences in transformative theatrical experiences.

Throughout its history, the A.R.T. has been honored with many distinguished awards, including the Tony Award for Best New Play for **All the Way** (2014); consecutive Tony Awards for Best Revival of a Musical for **Pippin** (2013) and **The Gershwins’ Porgy and Bess** (2012), both of which Paulus

directed; a Pulitzer Prize; a Jujamcyn Prize for outstanding contribution to the development of creative talent; the Tony Award for Best Regional Theater; and numerous Elliot Norton and IRNE Awards.

The A.R.T. collaborates with artists around the world to develop and create work in new ways. It is currently engaged in a number of multi-year projects, including a collaboration with Harvard's Center for the Environment that will result in the development of new work over several years. Under Paulus' leadership, the A.R.T.'s club theater, OBERON, has been an incubator for local and emerging artists and has attracted national attention for its innovative programming and business models.

As the professional theater on the campus of Harvard University, the A.R.T. catalyzes discourse, interdisciplinary collaboration, and creative exchange among a wide range of academic departments, institutions, students, and faculty members, acting as a conduit between its community of artists and the university. The A.R.T. Institute for Advanced Theater Training at Harvard University, run in association with the Moscow Art Theatre School and the Harvard Extension School, offers graduate training in acting, dramaturgy, and voice. A.R.T. also plays a central role in Harvard's newly launched undergraduate Theater, Dance, and Media concentration, teaching courses in directing, dramatic literature, acting, voice, design, and dramaturgy.

Dedicated to making great theater accessible, the A.R.T. actively engages more than 5,000 community members and local students annually in project-based partnerships, workshops, conversations with artists, and other enrichment activities both at the theater and across the Greater Boston area. Through all of these initiatives, the A.R.T. is dedicated to producing world-class performances in which the audience is central to the theatrical experience.

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