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For Immediate Release

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Stunt Girl, A New Musical
by Tony Nominee Peter Kellogg and Disney Composer David
Friedman, Receives Staged Reading by American Century Theater
June 27 and 29

Stunt Girl, a brand, spanking new musical comedy beginning its long and perilous road to Broadway, will be produced in a concert-style staging by the American Century Theater as this year's "Reflections" presentation. The show traces the sensational career of Nellie Bly (1864-1922), the trail-blazing female reporter, adventurer and feminist whose life was more eventful than most fictional characters.

Stunt Girl's book and lyrics are the creation of **Peter Kellogg**, who received two Tony nominations in 1993 for his musical *Anna Karenina*. [Kellogg also has served on the Board of Directors of the American Century Theater.] *Stunt Girl's* composer is **David Friedman**, who also collaborated with Kellogg on the musical *Chasing Nicolette*, professionally produced at the Westport Country Playhouse and at the Prince Theatre in Philadelphia. Friedman has composed hundreds of popular songs, notably for Diana Ross, and has been a frequent vocal arranger and conductor for Disney in the animated musicals *Beauty & The Beast*, *Aladdin*, *Pocahontas*, and *Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

"Each summer our 'Rescues' series presents a free staged reading or a concert version of a large 20th Century Broadway show that is seldom given full productions," says Jack Marshall, the theater company's artistic director. "But the chance to help develop Peter and David's new musical on its way to Broadway was too exciting to pass up, and since our "Reflections" productions are new works about important 20th Century figures and events, a Nellie Bly musical fits right in. We'll give 'Rescues' a rest until next season. But the performances of *Stunt Girl* will still be free to area audiences, as in all our "Rescues" staged readings."

Invited guests will be in attendance too, as well as some of the artistic team that hopes to give *Stunt Girl* its first full production in Seattle this fall. *Stunt Girl* traces the rise of reporter Nellie Bly through some of her most legendary exploits, including the "stunt" of getting herself committed to a New York City mental asylum in order to write an expose

of the deplorable conditions there, and her trip around the world in imitation of Jules Verne's "Around the World in 80 Days." The show also chronicles her antic personal life and relationships with colorful personalities like publisher Joseph Pulitzer.

Producer Ann Marie Plubell has a terrific artistic team in place, headed by first-time TACT director **Larry Kaye**, who directed the Helen Hayes-nominated *Musical of Musicals* for Metrostage last year. "Larry has been high on the list of directors TACT was eager to work with," says Marshall. "He knows how to tell a story with wit and pace; his skills are perfect for Peter's book." Doing double-duty as musical director and performance pianist is **Mary Sugar**. She has played keyboard or conducted on and off-Broadway, at Lincoln Center and with national tours of such shows *Beauty and the Beast*, *Hairspray*, *Mamma Mia*, *The King and I*, *The Producers*, *Spamalot*, *Elton John's Aida* and many more, as well as working with Barbara Cook, Clay Aiken, Connie Francis, Larry Gatlin, Charles Strouse, Kander & Fred, Sheldon Harnick, Schmidt & Jones, The Irish Tenors and many, many others.

The cast of *Stunt Girl* is stellar. Starring as Nellie is two-time Helen Hayes nominee **Peggy Yates**. **Andy Clemence** of the Capitol Steps is Joseph Pulitzer, with other key roles taken by **Patricia Hurley**, remembered by TACT audiences for her sensitive acting in *U.S.A* and her touching vocals in *If Only in My Dreams*; **Evan Hoffman**, who just finished a long run in Olney's *1776*; velvet-voiced tenor **Dan Herrel** (TACT's *One Touch of Venus*); **Mick Tinder** (recently enjoyed by TACT audiences in *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale*); and **Ron Sarro**, unforgettable as the "Little Blue Man" and others in *Hellzapoppin*. The ensemble plays more than forty small roles, and includes **Esther Covington**, **Mary Millben**, **Caroline Ashbaugh O'Neil**, **Gregory James Ford**, **Adam Juran**, **Larry Kolp**, **Lonny Smith**, **Ross Wohlfarth**, and **Glenn White**.

There will be only two performances of *Stunt Girl*, presented in the large, proscenium Theatre One at the Gunston Arts Center rather than TACT's usual venue, the black box Theatre Two. Because *Stunt Girl* is a work in progress, audience reactions and comments will be used by the directors, composer and playwright to retool and adjust the show between performances. **The first performance will be at 8 PM, Friday, June 27, and the second, after a day of rehearsals, will take place at 2 PM, Sunday, June 29. Admission is free of charge to all, with TACT subscribers receiving first consideration in the event of sell-outs. Reservations are strongly encouraged.**

The American Century Theater (TACT) performs in the Gunston Arts Center, 2700 S. Lang Street, Arlington, Virginia 22206. Call 703-998- 4555 for information and reservations, e-mail info@americancentury.org or visit www.americancentury.org. TACT is a 501(c) (3) professional nonprofit theater company dedicated to producing important 20th Century American plays and playwrights. It is funded in part by the Arlington County Cultural Affairs Division of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services, the Virginia Commission for the Arts, foundations and many generous donors.

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