



Photo: Allan Weeks

LIZA JESSIE PETERSON

THE PECULIAR PATRIOT

A MAPP project in development

Seeking project commissioners
and residency support



“Liza is connecting people inside and outside America’s prison system, and she’s doing it with humor, empathy and compassion.” – Minneapolis Star Tribune

The Peculiar Patriot is a solo stage play in development by poet-performer-playwright (and Def Poetry alum) Liza Jessie Peterson. It follows Betsy LaQuanda Ross, a self-proclaimed “peculiar patriot,” who makes regular visits to penitentiaries, boosting the morale of her incarcerated friends and family. Betsy is both victim and victor of this country’s prison system and represents the millions of men and women who sojourn to penitentiaries on a regular basis, subjecting themselves to long bus rides and humiliating security checks to visit incarcerated loved ones.

As this witty love story unfolds, *The Peculiar Patriot* gives voice to the voiceless and shines a glaring light on America’s fastest growing epidemic/industry while enchanting audiences with provocative thought, hilarious dialogue, and gripping pathos. “Honest inner voice of the peeps, ringing with truth, pain, rage and outrage... and humor, delicious humor.” – Activist Mumia Abu Jamal

Inspired by Liza’s decade-long work with prison populations, the play examines the human impact and inhuman machinery of mass incarceration. Betsy’s tale has become a powerful human story that impacts more than 2.5 million people behind bars, their loved ones and their communities. While *The Peculiar Patriot* has been performed informally, MAPP International is developing this timely project into a fully staged show that can be accessible to broader audiences nationwide.



Photo: Allan Weeks

The Peculiar Patriot will premiere in the 2016-17 season and tour in various iterations suitable for academic conferences, guest speaker series, special events focusing on mass incarceration, or regular performance seasons!



For more information: **MAPP International Productions**
Michelle Coe, Director of Booking
michelle@mappinternational.org | 646.602.9390

Running Time: 75-80 minutes (TBC)
Tour Availability: TBC in 16-17

produced by **mapp international** productions

artist biography



photo: Ani Barberi

LIZA JESSIE PETERSON is a renowned actress, poet, playwright, educator, and advocate. Liza has written several plays including her most recent one woman play *The Peculiar Patriot*, which embarked on a national prison tour where she performed in over 35 jails and penitentiaries across the country. She recently performed *The Peculiar Patriot*, opening for Angela Davis, at Columbia University's conference on mass incarceration. Her plays have been featured in notable theater festivals and performed in various theaters, nationally and internationally.

Also known for her exceptional poetic skills, Liza began her poetry career at the famed Nuyorican Poets Café in the mid-90's and was a vital member of the enclave of notable poets who were part of the "underground slam poetry/spoken word" movement before it attracted television cameras

and became a national obsession. It was this electric group of artists that inspired Russell Simmons to bring "spoken word/slam poetry" to HBO where Liza appeared on two episodes of *Def Poetry*. She has shared the stage with luminaries such as Nona Hendryx, Toshi Reagon, Amiri Baraka, The Last Poets, Craig Harris, Vernon Reid, Rakim, Carl Hancock Rux and Sandra St. Victor to name just a few.

As an actress Liza appeared in several feature films: *Love the Hard Way* (costarring with Pam Grier and Academy Award winner Adrien Brody), Spike Lee's, *Bamboozled*, K. Shalini's, *A Drop of Life*, (co-starring with Nandita Das which was filmed in Mumbai India), and Jamie Catto's, *One Giant Leap/What About Me*, where she was featured and interviewed along with Tim Robbins, Eckhart Tolle, Deepak Chopra, Noam Chomsky and others.

Liza has taught theater and poetry to urban and incarcerated youth for more than 15 years and counting. She created and developed The Urban Folktale Project, where her students created original plays based on their most pressing issues and performed it at several theaters around New York City. The project was so successful that it received a grant from Russell Simmons' Rush Philanthropic Arts Foundation. The Urban Folktale Project has successfully produced three plays. Liza remains steadfastly committed to this population of youth (both at Rikers Island and at community based programs) where she has discovered inspiration and light in a dark place.

Her book, *ALL DAY; A Memoir of Love and Survival Teaching Incarcerated Kids*, is scheduled to be released in 2016.

www.lizajessiepeterson.com



MAPP International Productions is a nonprofit producer of major performing arts projects that raise critical consciousness and spark social change. We support all phases of an artist's creative process, and we engage audiences in the issues behind the art. Through this heightened focus, MAPP supports an evolving cadre of creators whose work ignites communities worldwide. **Come With Us.**

140 Second Ave, Suite 502, New York, NY 10003 www.mappinternational.org

crossing borders / taking risks / creating dialogue / opening minds

