

ARENA STAGE FACT SHEET

Arena Stage was founded August 16, 1950 in Washington, D.C. by **Zelda Fichandler, Tom Fichandler** and **Edward Mangum**. Over 60 years later, Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater, under the leadership of **Artistic Director Molly Smith** and **Executive Director Edgar Dobie**, is a national center dedicated to American voices and artists. Arena Stage produces plays of all that is passionate, profound, deep and dangerous in the American spirit, and presents diverse and ground-breaking work from some of the best artists around the country. Arena Stage is committed to commissioning and developing new plays and impacts the lives of over 10,000 students annually through its work in community engagement. Now in its seventh decade, Arena Stage serves a diverse annual audience of more than 300,000.

With a reputation for artistic excellence, Arena Stage has a longstanding commitment to building an audience that mirrors the diverse communities of the Washington, D.C. region.

Arena Stage was the first:

- Regional theater to have a production go to Broadway, with *The Great White Hope* in 1968
- Theater to receive the coveted Regional Theatre Tony Award in 1976
- Racially integrated theater in Washington
- Theater with an integrated acting company
- American resident company to tour behind the Iron Curtain and at the Hong Kong Arts Festival
- Theater to establish a training program for individuals of color through the Allen Lee Hughes Fellowship program
- Theater to create audio-described performances for visually impaired patrons

The Future of Arena Stage

After completing six seasons in its new home, **Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater** has emerged as a national center focused on American theater. Designed by **Bing Thom Architects** (BTA), the Mead Center covers 200,000 square feet and features a dramatic and sweeping cantilevered roof that is an architectural landmark for Southwest D.C.'s revitalized waterfront.

The center exemplifies Arena Stage's commitment to theater: three venues serve as the architectural focal points, with a wide range of other activities swirling in constant motion around them under one magnificent, unifying roof. Arena Stage's two historic spaces, the iconic in-the-round **Fichandler Stage** (680 seats) and the proscenium **Kreeger Theater** (514 seats), are preserved and modernized with technical and aesthetic improvements. These two theaters are joined by the **Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle**—a versatile 200-seat theater designed to develop new American plays and cradle artistic risk. With the project cost totaling \$135 million, the Mead Center houses state-of-the-art technical and costume shops, light and airy rehearsal halls and open education spaces, and for the first time in Arena Stage history, all artistic and administrative departments are united under one roof. The Mead Center contains more spaces for artists, staff and members of the board of trustees to promote community, bolster bright ideas and encourage dialogue within the organization.

Central to the extraordinary design is a large, common lobby with an elegant staircase that links all three theater spaces both psychologically and spatially. The new facility features a vastly increased number of restrooms in several locations; a single, efficient Sales Office serving all audiences; readily available

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concessions and an onsite café; a reading area dedicated to the study of American theater; and easy access to all areas of the building for people with disabilities.

Arena Stage's new home is named for the late visionary benefactors and Life Trustees Dr. Jaylee Montague Mead and her husband Dr. Gilbert Mead, who pledged \$35 million toward the project's \$125 million multipurpose campaign goal. Their contribution is the largest gift from a single household toward a not-for-profit regional theater.

Arena Stage—Where American Theater Lives

With Artistic Director Molly Smith's arrival 18 years ago, Arena Stage refocused its mission to produce American Voices, past, present and future, an emphasis that belongs to no other major theater company. Today Smith places new-play development at Arena's artistic center by commissioning playwrights, holding readings and workshops and staging world premieres as well as second and third productions.

Arena has nurtured and produced 22 productions that have had a life on Broadway: ***Sweat***; ***Dear Evan Hansen***; ***The Velocity of Autumn*** (directed by Molly Smith); ***A Night with Janis Joplin***; ***A Time to Kill***; Steppenwolf Theatre Company's ***Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*** (a co-production with Arena Stage); ***Looped***; ***Next to Normal*** (winner of the 2010 Pulitzer Prize for Drama); ***33 Variations***; ***Execution of Justice***; ***Accidental Death of an Anarchist***; ***K2***; ***Tintypes***; ***The 1940's Radio Hour***; ***Loose Ends***; ***A History of the American Film***; ***Zalmen, or the Madness of God***; ***Boccaccio***; ***Moonchildren***; ***Raisin***; ***Indians***; and ***The Great White Hope***.

Arena Stage launched the **American Voices New Play Institute** in summer 2009 with a \$1.1 million grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, hosting five inaugural resident playwrights—**Amy Freed**, **Katori Hall**, **Lisa Kron**, **Charles Randolph-Wright** and **Karen Zacarias**—over several years and providing them with resources and benefits to write and develop new or unfinished plays. Yearlong resident playwrights include **Samuel D. Hunter**, who joined in summer 2012; **Lydia R. Diamond**, who joined in fall 2013; **John Strand**, who joined in summer 2014; and **Ayad Akhtar**, who joined in summer 2016. The Institute also hosts Project Residents **Lynn Nottage** and **David Henry Hwang**, who are commissioned to each write a play that Arena Stage will produce. Arena Stage sees all of the residencies as ongoing, long-term relationships with writers, and even when a residency has been completed, the relationship and commitment to a writer's body of work continues.

In fall 2012, Arena Stage initiated the **Kogod Cradle Series**, which supports the exploration and development of new and emerging work in the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle with visiting companies, artists and ensembles. Designed to cradle creative risk-taking for artists throughout the D.C. area and across the country, this series of readings and workshops invites artists and audiences to explore the development process of new and devised work. In winter 2013, Arena Stage launched the **Playwrights' Arena** specifically for local playwrights, aiming to provide a collaborative and collegial working laboratory environment for playwrights.

Arena Stage's Investment in the Next Generation of Artists

Arena Stage operates educational programs throughout the Washington metropolitan region that reach over 10,000 students each year, with much of the programming targeted specifically to the D.C. public school system. These educational experiences increase competencies in a variety of subjects, build basic skills of written and verbal communication, improve problem solving and critical thinking abilities and encourage teamwork. Arena Stage's community engagement department has also participated in five partnerships abroad, using the Voices of Now devised theater model to work with communities in Zagreb, Croatia; Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, New Delhi and Patna, India; Lima, Peru; and Ljubljana, Slovenia.

For more information, including current productions and programming, visit www.arenastage.org.

Media Contact: Greta Hays, press@arenastage.org, 202-600-4056

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