

# ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

Molly Smith Artistic Director Edgar Dobie Executive Producer Zelda Fichandler Founding Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ARENA STAGE HOSTS MORE THAN 300 D.C.-AREA STUDENTS AGES 3-15  
TO CELEBRATE THE POWER OF WORDS, LITERATURE AND THEATER  
WITH SPELLING BEE AND STORYTELLING DAY**

**Arena Stage Spelling Bee November 20, 2015 from 10:00-11:30 a.m.**

**Read & Play Storytelling Day November 24, 2015 from 9:30-11:00 a.m.**

(Washington, D.C.) Inspired by the family-friendly productions of *Oliver!*, which runs through January 3, 2016, and *Akeelah and the Bee*, running November 13-December 27, 2015, Arena Stage will host two special educational events for D.C.-area students ages 3-15 in November. Both events take place onsite at the Mead Center for American Theater (1101 Sixth St., SW). Media interested in attending either event should contact [press@arenastage.org](mailto:press@arenastage.org).

### **Arena Stage Spelling Bee**

The new stage adaptation of *Akeelah and the Bee* follows the journey of an 11-year-old spelling prodigy who, with the help of her urban community, competes at the Scripps National Spelling Bee. Arena Stage will host its very own **Arena Stage Spelling Bee November 20, 2015 from 10:00-11:30 a.m.** for middle and high-school students. Participating D.C. Public and Charter Schools are asked to select their top two eighth or ninth-grade spellers to compete in the bee, which will take place on stage in Arena's Kreeger Theater and feature a special visit from teen actress Johannah Easley, who stars as Akeelah in *Akeelah and the Bee*.

The winner of the Arena Stage Spelling Bee will receive 100 free tickets for their school to attend the 11:00 a.m. performance of *Akeelah and the Bee* on December 17, 2015 at Arena Stage.

D.C. Public and Charter Schools interested in participating in the spelling bee should contact [nracioppo@ArenaStage.org](mailto:nracioppo@ArenaStage.org). Spelling bee competitors must currently be enrolled in eighth or ninth grade at a participating D.C. Public or Charter School.

### **Read & Play Storytelling Day**

To further the impact of Arena Stage's season-long partnership with *Martha's Table*, Arena Stage will host **Read & Play Storytelling Day on November 24, 2015 from 9:30-11:00 a.m.** for up to 320 students, ages three to seven, from the D.C. Public Schools and Martha's Table's Healthy Start program.

This unique field trip opportunity will feature an immersive storytelling session led by actors from *Akeelah and the Bee* and *Oliver!*, followed by a workshop with teaching artists from Arena Stage's literacy program *Moving Stories*, taking the story they heard to the next level and interactively bringing it to life using song, movement, imagination and teamwork. All classrooms will receive a copy of the story so they may continue to explore and enjoy it in their schools following the workshop.

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## Arena Stage hosts 300+ D.C.-area students for Spelling Bee and Storytelling Day—Page 2

Participants will then visit Arena Stage's iconic in-the-round theater, the Fichandler Stage, for a lesson from theater professionals about the direct connection between stories in a book and the experience of live theater. This will focus on how design elements, including sound, light, costume and set design, transform the words on a page into theatrical magic on stage. The event will conclude with performances from *Oliver!* cast members, including local nine-year-old **Jake Heston Miller** and **Kyle Coffman**, who portray Oliver and Artful Dodger, respectively.

### **More on Martha's Table Feeds The Mind**

For the 2015/16 season, Arena Stage is collaborating with Martha's Table to bring the love of language and reading to district families through a season-long book drive. The theater aims to collect at least 2,400 books to build home libraries for children served through Martha's Table's Healthy Start program.

Arena Stage has a book collection receptacle located just inside the main entrance at Visitor Services at the Mead Center. The theater will accept donations and will also have a selection of early childhood through elementary school-aged books for sale at Visitor Services, in the event patrons would like to purchase one to donate onsite for \$5-\$13.

### **More on Moving Stories**

Taught by highly-trained Arena Stage teaching artists, [Moving Stories](#) is a vibrant and interactive experience designed for preschool and early-elementary aged students that brings stories to life in the classroom. Using song, movement, sign language and storytelling, Moving Stories explores a beloved children's book through creative drama and promotes literacy skills, such as increased vocabulary and reading comprehension, while forming personal connections to stories and encouraging imagination, problem solving and teamwork. Moving Stories is generously sponsored by the Nora Roberts Foundation.

For more information on *Oliver!* and *Akeelah and the Bee* visit [arenastage.org](http://arenastage.org).

*Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater, under the leadership of Artistic Director Molly Smith and Executive Producer 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 through the American Voices New Play Institute. Arena Stage 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. [arenastage.org](http://arenastage.org)*

*For over 35 years, **Martha's Table** has worked to increase access to education, food and opportunity in Washington, D.C., with the goal of supporting stronger children, families and community. Martha's Table operates free, pop-up grocery stores throughout the District and McKenna's Wagon, a daily mobile food delivery program for the city's homeless. In addition, the organization runs two Martha's Outfitters clothing shops, where families and individuals in need can shop for free, and offers premier early-childhood and out-of-school time education programs to children three months to 13 years of age. Martha's Table provides supports that benefit thousands of District residents, and serves over one million meals annually. [marthastable.org](http://marthastable.org)*

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