

# ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

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HIT POLITICAL DRAMA *THE ORIGINALIST*  
WILL PLAY AT 59E59 THEATERS IN NEW YORK  
JULY 14-AUGUST 19, 2018

**\*\*\* Edward Gero reprises his role as Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia,  
with direction by Molly Smith, at 59E59 Theaters\*\*\***

(Washington, D.C.) Continuing its cross-country tour, **John Strand's** critically-acclaimed political drama *The Originalist*, based on the late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, will play at 59E59 Theaters under the direction of Artistic Director **Molly Smith**. Following its productions at Arena Stage, Asolo Repertory Theatre and Pasadena Playhouse, where it ran earlier in 2017, and following its run at Chicago's Court Theatre this spring, *The Originalist* will move to New York at 59E59 Theaters, where it will run July 14-August 19, 2018.

Four-time Helen Hayes Award winner and distinguished D.C. actor **Edward Gero** reprises his role as Justice Scalia, in a "lively performance" that "lands the laughs, delivers the gravitas and at every turn makes you believe this tantalizing man" (*Washington Post*).

"What a triumph for this play," says **Smith**. "John Strand truly captured this moment in America—searching for commonality amidst the chaos. This is just flat out great theater. Edward Gero is masterful as Justice Antonin Scalia, and having performed around the country, his portrayal is deep and provocative."

"We are taking this production to 59E59 so that New York audiences can continue to enjoy *The Originalist* and the transformative power of seeing Justice Scalia on stage," shares **Arena Stage Trustee Beth Newburger Schwartz**, who has formed a production company, Middle Finger Productions, for this commercial transfer. "This is the quintessential story of Washington in today's world as we see the extremes of both parties, and while they don't change their political opinions, they find the humor and empathy that makes friends of opposing forces."

*The Originalist* received its world premiere at Arena Stage in 2015, where it was extended twice and broke box office records as the highest selling production in the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle. The production was subsequently produced for the screen by Stage17, broadcast on PBS and recorded by L.A. Theatre Works as a radio play. *The Originalist* returned to Arena this summer. *The Originalist* was commissioned as part of **Power Plays**, an ambitious initiative from Arena Stage commissioning and developing 25 new plays and musicals over the course of the next 10 years, focused on stories of politics and power. For additional details on Power Plays visit [arenastage.org/american-voices/power-plays/](http://arenastage.org/american-voices/power-plays/).

#### Critical acclaim for *The Originalist*:

- "Timely, almost revolutionary." —*The Economist*
- "The country's most famous legal showman has gotten his show...Scalia, portrayed with terrific verve and snappy humor by Edward Gero." —*New York Times*

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## Page 2— *The Originalist* will play at 59E59 Theaters in New York

- “Entertaining...Edward Gero, who looks remarkably like Justice Scalia, offered an eerily convincing physical impersonation of the justice—down to his Jackie Gleason slow burn, his operatic facial expressions and hand gestures, and his belly laugh.” —*The Atlantic*
- “Taut, punchy, often humorous repartee...Since Scalia’s death in 2016, the script has grown more relevant...In the atmosphere of hysterically partisan politics, it feels wholesome and encouraging to hear the two positions summed up clearly and persuasively.” —*Los Angeles Times*

**John Strand** (*Playwright*)’s Arena Stage commissions include *Snow Child*, *The Originalist*, *The Miser*, *Lovers and Executioners* (MacArthur Award) and *Tom Walker*. Recent works include the book and lyrics for *Hat! A Vaudeville* (South Coast Repertory); *Lincolnesque* (Old Globe); and *Lorenzaccio* (Shakespeare Theatre Company), and the book for the musical *The Highest Yellow* (Signature Theatre). Additional plays are *The Diaries* (Signature Theatre, MacArthur nomination); *Otabenga* (Signature Theatre, MacArthur nomination); *Three Nights in Tehran* (Signature Theatre); and *The Cockburn Rituals* (Woolly Mammoth). Strand spent 10 years in Paris, where he worked as a journalist and drama critic, and directed NYU’s Experimental Theater Wing in Paris. His novel *Commieland* was published by Kiwai Media, Paris in 2013. He is currently at work on a new play about President Teddy Roosevelt for Arena Stage and on the film adaptation of *The Originalist*.

**Molly Smith** (*Director*) has served as Artistic Director since 1998. Her more than 30 directing credits at Arena Stage include *Carousel*, *Oliver!*, *The Originalist*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Camp David*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *Oklahoma!*, *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, *My Fair Lady*, *The Great White Hope*, *The Music Man*, *Orpheus Descending*, *Legacy of Light*, *The Women of Brewster Place*, *Cabaret*, *South Pacific*, *Agamemnon and His Daughters*, *All My Sons* and *How I Learned to Drive*. She most recently directed *Our Town* at Canada’s Shaw Festival. Her directorial work has also been seen at The Old Globe, Asolo Repertory, Berkeley Repertory, Trinity Repertory, Toronto’s Tarragon Theatre, Montreal’s Centaur Theatre and Perseverance Theater in Juneau, Alaska, which she founded and ran from 1979-1998. Molly has been a leader in new play development for over 30 years. She is a great believer in first, second and third productions of new work and has championed projects including *How I Learned to Drive*; *Passion Play*, a cycle; *Next to Normal*; and *Dear Evan Hansen*. She has worked alongside playwrights Sarah Ruhl, Paula Vogel, Wendy Wasserstein, Lawrence Wright, Karen Zacarias, John Murrell, Eric Coble, Charles Randolph-Wright and many others. She led the re-invention of Arena Stage, focusing on the architecture and creation of the Mead Center for American Theater and positioning Arena Stage as a national center for American artists. During her time with the company, Arena Stage has workshopped more than 100 productions, produced 39 world premieres, staged numerous second and third productions and been an important part of nurturing nine projects that went on to have a life on Broadway. In 2014, Molly made her Broadway debut directing *The Velocity of Autumn*, following its critically acclaimed run at Arena Stage. She was awarded honorary doctorates from American University and Towson University.

**Edward Gero** (*Antonin Scalia*)’s Arena Stage credits include Benjamin Hubbard in *The Little Foxes* and Mark Rothko in *Red*. He is a four-time Helen Hayes Award winner and 15-time nominee. Regional credits include *The Originalist* (Asolo Repertory, Pasadena Playhouse); *Red* and Gloucester in *King Lear* (Goodman); *Nixon’s Nixon* and *Night Alive* (Round House); *Sweeney Todd* (Signature Theatre); Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* (Ford’s Theatre); and *American Buffalo*, *Shining City* and *Skylight* (Studio Theatre). In 32 seasons with Shakespeare Theatre Company, his over 70 roles include Helen Hayes turns in *Henry IV*, *Richard II* and *Macbeth*. Film/TV credits include *House of Cards*, *TURN: Washington’s Spies*, *Die Hard 2*, *Striking Distance* and narrations for Discovery Channel and PBS. He is a Ten Chimneys 2015 Lunt-Fontanne Fellow and associate professor of theater at George Mason University.

**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 groundbreaking 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.  
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