

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

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**ARENA STAGE OPENS THE MEAD CENTER FOR AMERICAN THEATER
WITH A HOMECOMING GRAND OPENING CELEBRATION
FEATURING FREE PERFORMANCES, ARTIST DISCUSSIONS AND ACTIVITIES
THROUGHOUT THE CENTER**

**Participants include Alice Ripley, Kate Baldwin, Anna Deavere Smith, E. Faye Butler,
the Manzari Brothers, Brad Oscar and the cast and musicians of
Arena Stage's Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!***

Opening Gala also scheduled to commemorate Arena Stage's return to Southwest D.C.

(Washington, D.C.) After more than a decade of planning and two and a half years of construction, **Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater** in Southwest D.C. returns to the neighborhood with a ribbon cutting ceremony and **Homecoming Grand Opening Celebration on Saturday, October 23, 2010**. From 11:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. the festivities will include performances and activities in seven venues including the Fichandler Stage, Kreeger Theater and Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle, as well as an outdoor stage. Various theatrical performances and children's activities will occupy one of the rehearsal halls, the lobbies and the classroom.

"It's good to be home in Southwest D.C.," says Artistic Director Molly Smith. "The Homecoming Celebration is the first opportunity our community will have to fully experience the Mead Center for American Theater. As people walk through the glorious new center and experience and explore these spaces for the first time, I hope that all will feel they've found their artistic home with Arena Stage."

The cafe in the Mead Center, operated by José Andrés Catering with Ridgewells, will be open all day. José Andrés Catering with Ridgewells offers creative cuisines, similar to those found in Andrés' restaurants Jaleo, Zaytinya, Oyamel, Café Atlántico and the critically acclaimed Minibar by José Andrés. In addition Design Cuisine and Salamander Hospitality, along with José Andrés Catering with Ridgewells, will set up various outdoor food vending locations during the celebration. The Washington Nationals "NatsMobile" will also be outside, spreading the excitement of Nationals Stadium to Arena's homecoming celebration.

The Mead Center for American Theater, designed by architect Bing Thom, has been under construction for the past two and a half years, during which Arena Stage presented season productions in temporary locations in Crystal City and at the Lincoln Theatre on U St., NW. The planning and building of this theater complex has been a catalyst for community-wide revitalization in Southwest D.C. New restaurants and commercial retailers have already moved into the Southwest neighborhood. This homecoming celebration will mark the beginning of a new era for Arena Stage, further establishing itself as a national center for the production, presentation, development and study of American theater.

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General admission tickets are free but required for events in the Fichandler Stage, Kreeger Theater, Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle, and for backstage tours. Tickets will be available exclusively online beginning October 8, 2010 at www.arenastage.org. Limited tickets will be available for day-of release outside the Mead Center at the Arena Stage visitor's center beginning at 10:00 a.m.

Homecoming Grand Opening Celebration

October 23, 2010

11:30 AM – 6:00 PM

Schedule of Events:

Outdoor Stage (no tickets necessary)

11:30 a.m. Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

12:30 p.m. Universes, spoken word/slam poetry ensemble

1:30 p.m. Show Choir Spectacular featuring Chantilly High School and Churchill High School

2:30 p.m. The Manzari Brothers

3:30 p.m. Feels So Good

4:30 p.m. Elk Soldiers

5:45 p.m. Grand Finale with the cast of *Oklahoma!* and special guests

Fichandler Stage - A First Look at Arena Stage's Inaugural Production at the Mead Center for American Theater

1:00 p.m. Sneak Preview of *Rodgers and Hammerstein's Oklahoma!*

2:00 p.m. Sneak Preview of *Rodgers and Hammerstein's Oklahoma!*

3:00 p.m. Sneak Preview of *Rodgers and Hammerstein's Oklahoma!*

4:00 p.m. Sneak Preview of *Rodgers and Hammerstein's Oklahoma!*

5:00 p.m. Sneak Preview of *Rodgers and Hammerstein's Oklahoma!*

Kreeger Theater - Concert Performances

12:15 p.m. E. Faye Butler (*Arena's Crowns, The Women of Brewster Place*)

1:15 p.m. Brad Oscar (Tony Award nominee for *The Producers, Arena's Cabaret*)

2:15 p.m. Kate Baldwin (Tony Award nominee for *Finian's Rainbow, Arena's South Pacific*)

3:15 p.m. Matt Bogart (Broadway's *Jersey Boys, Arena's Damn Yankees*)

4:15 p.m. Alice Ripley (Tony Award winner for *Next to Normal*)

Kogod Cradle - Exploring America's Newest Theatrical Works

12:30 p.m. Resident Playwrights Karen Zacarías and Katori Hall read from their new projects

1:30 p.m. Anna Deavere Smith discusses her new piece, *Let Me Down Easy*

2:30 p.m. Resident Playwright Amy Freed in conversation with *The Washington Post's* Peter Marks

3:30 p.m. Playwright Marcus Gardley and members of the company of *every tongue confess* discuss the new play

4:30 p.m. Resident Playwright and *Duke Ellington's Sophisticated Ladies* director Charles Randolph-Wright reads from his new work

Rehearsal Hall B - Arena Stage's Community Engagement Department and Local Performing Arts Groups (no tickets necessary)

12:15 p.m. Washington Improv Theater

1:15 p.m. Arena Stage's Voices of Now

2:15 p.m. Synetic Theater

3:15 p.m. Liz Lerman Dance Exchange

4:15 p.m. Arena Stage's Student Playwrights Project

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The Study - Cabaret with Arena Stage Favorites (no tickets necessary)

12:15 p.m. Diego Prieto and Eleasha Gamble
1:15 p.m. Nina Negri and Bayla Whitten
2:15 p.m. Tina Fabrique and Marva Hicks
3:15 p.m. Nina Negri and Bayla Whitten
4:15 p.m. Stephen Wade

The Terrace (no tickets necessary)

1:00 p.m. Blue Sky Puppets
2:00 p.m. Community Engagement Workshop
3:00 p.m. Community Engagement Workshop
4:00 p.m. Community Engagement Workshop

Classroom (no tickets necessary)

12:30–5:30 p.m. Children’s Crafts and Activities

Homecoming Celebration schedule and performers are subject to change.

Current promotional partners and sponsors include *The Washington Post*, WTOP 103.5 FM, WJLA ABC 7, Mix 107.3 FM, the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority, the Washington Nationals and Sharp Electronics Corporation.

The **Opening Gala Celebration on Monday, October 25**, is distinguished by Honorary Chairs President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama, as well as Honorary Co-Chairs D.C. Mayor Adrian Fenty and Michelle Fenty. The Opening Gala is a black-tie event commemorating the inaugural season at the Mead Center featuring cocktails, dinner and an exclusive one-night-only performance by Tony Award-winner Brian Stokes Mitchell and emceed by award-winning ABC7/WJLA-TV lead anchor Leon Harris.

The 2010-2011 inaugural season headlines with Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Oklahoma!*, directed by Arena Stage Artistic Director Molly Smith. The season also includes *every tongue confess*, Second Stage Theatre’s production of *Let Me Down Easy*, *The Arabian Nights*, Steppenwolf Theatre Company’s production of *Edward Albee’s Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Edward Albee’s At Home at the Zoo*, *Ruined* and a special pre-Broadway world premiere of *John Grisham’s A Time to Kill*. In addition, Arena Stage will present staged readings of the remaining 28 works by Edward Albee during The Edward Albee Festival, and will produce the #Newplay Festival, a national new play festival featuring the selections for the first round of the NEA New Play Development Program hosted by Arena Stage.

For more information on Arena Stage’s 2010-2011 season and the most current Homecoming Grand Opening Celebration schedule, visit www.arenastage.org.

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater is a national center dedicated to the production, presentation, development and study of American theater. Arena Stage produces huge plays of all that is passionate, exuberant, 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. Now in its sixth decade, Arena Stage serves a diverse annual audience of more than 200,000. www.arenastage.org.

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