

# ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Renée Littleton  
[press@arenastage.org](mailto:press@arenastage.org), 202-600-4052

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## ARENA STAGE'S LOOKING FORWARD SEASON CONTINUES WITH ITS SECOND WORLD PREMIERE FILM

**\*\*\* *Inside Voices: A film by Arena Stage's Voices of Now ensembles*  
will be available to view on June 20\*\*\***

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater's second world premiere film of the spring/summer season, ***Inside Voices: A film by Arena Stage's Voices of Now Ensembles***, will be available online on **Saturday, June 20**. ***Inside Voices***, which will receive its world premiere on June 19 through Arena Stage's Supper Club, is a breathtaking film chronicling the personal experiences of more than 130 emerging artists whose lives have been forever changed by COVID-19.

For more than 17 seasons, Arena Stage's Voices of Now ensembles have provided a vital theatrical platform for young artists to use their personal experiences to investigate the world around them and pose questions vital to their communities.

Recognizing the impact of the pandemic on today's youth, the ensembles quickly transitioned rehearsals online, reimagining their annual theater festival to an innovative film. In addition to traditional ingredients of film storytelling, ***Inside Voices*** includes dynamic illustrations, animation, original songs, and a score from Helen Hayes award-winning composer and sound designer **Roc Lee**.

"Voices of Now artists are uniquely trained and inspired to create theater that provokes thoughtful inquiry while also representing their authentic point of view," states Voices of Now Artistic Director and Arena Stage's Director of Education **Ashley Forman**. "Access to more than 130 Voices of Now artists during this historic time, has presented a singular opportunity for us, as art makers, to catalogue the experiences of young people in a way that will speak to future generations."

Directed by **Ashley Forman** and **Mauricio Pita**, ***Inside Voices: a film by Arena Stage's Voices of Now ensembles*** is an unforgettable film and visual time capsule.

"Creating an original film gave us the opportunity to explore different ways to tell the artists' stories, while relying exclusively on the artist's personal devices and creativity. Through cell phones, webcams, photographs, and imagination we investigated life during quarantine as it unfolded," states the film's Co-Director **Mauricio Pita**.

As of June 20<sup>th</sup>, ***Inside Voices*** can be viewed here: <https://www.arenastage.org/insidevoices>

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## Ensembles and Artists

### Advocacy Ensemble

Alexandra Berrios, Iesha M. Daniels, Gabriella Giegerich, Margaret Gleason, Alana Lyons, Kevin Jose, Orellana, Natalie Parks, Patrick Payne, Erin Pugh, Camryn Sherer, Carolyn Tachoir

### Glasgow Ensemble

Marley Canes, Brooke Ehmann-Jones, Nora Kenzi, Rachel Marsh, Leila Meeks, Anjali Murthy, Chloé Bernasconi Niño, Diya Sharma

### Holmes Ensemble

Sophia Beltran, Harper Chapman, Grace Cho, Mehek Elahi, Anna Fitzgerald, Louise Fitzgerald, Cecilia Marigliano, Harley McAndrew, Jamison McAndrew, Hang Minh Nguyen

### Jefferson Ensemble

Tayen Broemser, Autumn Drake, Mekala Fricson, Neveah Greenfield, Julia Gorman, Seven Jefferson, Emilia Lancaster, Makayla Napper, Rayanna Smith, Nealia Williams, Dena Zakim

### Key Ensemble

Erin Curley, Cat Fauls, Caylee Gross, Gerardo Hernandez, Krista Marcellus, Mackenzie Nelson, Eve Roberts, Jeffrey Waddington, Jay Woodhall

### Mead Ensemble

Edith Carey, Helene Hendrix, Danielle Kelly, Lyra Kois, Emmett Lee, Alexandra Mazur, Nora Shafer, Morgan Thomas

### Mentor Ensemble

Grace Baker, Reyna Berry, LaNiya Bullock, Winta Habtemichael, Katie Hindin, Zarah King, Chloe Lanyi-Lari, Michael McCabe, Imani Njau, Reed Roddy-Johnson, Olivia Rosen, Elle Souders, Rebecca Spring, Christina Springer, Sierra Sterns, Mari Storvick

### Robinson Ensemble

Annie Anderson, Chloe Broekhuizen, Alyssa Brooks, Grace Bruggeman, Lilah Cohen, Benjamin Fredericks, Ayla Hanson, Emerson Hersey, Sophie Hitchcock, Tristan Kiser, Chase Lindenberg, Arwyn Oshry, Jasmine Sklarew, Gabby Smith-Stutzer, Michelle Stein, Anja Trimmer, Dominic Vila, Sammy Walker, Hannah Weinraub, Allison Withee, Jordan Worth

### Thoreau Ensemble

Thomas Brune, Cole Sullivan-Fielding, Emi Harrison, Jenna Jumaili, Nathan Kim, Juliette Kopp, Jaeyoung Lee, Sean Lyons, Harrison Miller, Zoey Miller, Isa Murphy, Fiona Neff, Jia Patil, Leslie Payne, Nathaniel Pearson, Naomi Sandrowitz, Allison Schumer, Victoria Spafford  
Ella Tysse, Mary Ulses, Reena Zecharia

### Wendt Center For Loss and Healing Ensemble

Deshawn Brooks, Joshua Glover, Monique Johnson, Jazmen McBride, Destiny Rhodes, Elijah Vicks, Alan Wilson, Alex Wong-Simpson

### Voices Of Now, Alumni Artists

Isaiah Brooks, Monique Garey

### Voices of Now, International Artists

**India:** Sulagna Dasgupta, Dipabali Dey, Biprajit Dutta, Annesha Ghosh, Niklesh Kamelekar, Shuktara Lal, Natasha Marikar, Mayurakshi Sen

**Croatia:** Filip Ivančić

**Bosnia and Herzegovina:** Mitar Milicevic, Harun Zaklan

**Slovenia:** Manca Mohar, Kaja Cigan Nováček,

### **Page 3 — World-Premiere Film, *Inside Voices*, available on June 20**

Arena Stage would like to acknowledge Voices of Now Partners including Fairfax County Public Schools, Glasgow Middle School, Holmes Middle School, Key Middle School, Robinson Secondary School, Thoreau Middle School, Jefferson Middle School Academy, The Wendt Center for Loss and Healing, Catholic University of America, Georgetown University, Howard University, George Mason University and George Washington University.

Arena Stage extends special thanks to the Voices of Now families, DCPS, FCPS, Mary Aunon, Brian Beirne, Annika-Winter Boulden, Penelope Boulden, Azaria Davis, Greg Dohmann, Dr. Mark Emery, Ben Gunderson, Stephanie Handel, Amy Hard, Stephanie Lang, Christina Lee, Pam Lieber, Kim Mann, Mitch Mattson, Leslie Merriman, Jason Merriman, Joey Merriman, Cyrus Merriman, Elizabeth Murphy, Ashley Promisel, Nicole Schuman, Kenisha Spencer, Denise Taylor, Colleen Taylor, Dr. Beverly Vick, Ariel Warmflash, Gregory Williams, The North Early Street Cul-de-Sac, Periwinkle Forman-Boulden, Rambo Pita-Gunderson

### **Schedule**

June 20

The film is 45 minutes.

***Inside Voices: a film by Arena Stage's Voices of Now ensembles***

**Voices of Now (VON)** is a season-long drama program that devises autobiographical plays with ensembles of middle-school, high-school and adult artists locally and internationally. Voices of Now plays are fast paced, collaboratively written physical theater pieces that pose challenging social questions relevant to the ensemble of artists and their communities. The plays investigate those questions through the recounting of the artists' personal stories. One of the primary goals of the Voices of Now program is to create positive change by engaging in dialogue centered on the artists' experiences in their worlds.

Voices of Now was designed by Arena Stage's Director of Education Ashley Forman. In addition to performing at Arena Stage, ensembles perform throughout their own communities. Past ensembles have performed at Atlas Performing Arts Center's Intersections Festival, Imagination Stage, American Alliance for Theatre and Education's National Conference, Association of Theatre in Higher Education Conference, The International AIDS Conference and the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage.

**Ashley Forman** is the Director of Education at Arena Stage as well as the Artistic Director of Voices of Now and entering her 19th season at Arena Stage. She is responsible for the design and development of Voices of Now, Arena Stage's devised theater program. Through a partnership with the U.S. Department of State, Ashley has implemented Voices of Now in India twice (2012 and 2014), Peru (2014), Croatia three times (2013, 2015 and 2019) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (2019). She has presented on her devised theater process at numerous conferences, including the American Alliance for Theater and Education; the Association for Theater in Higher Education Conference; the National Bereavement Camp Conference; and the International AIDS Conference. Ashley has trained university professors and students, cultural attaches, pre-K through high-school public school teachers, teaching artists, professional artists, and young artists.

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**Page 4 — World-Premiere Film, Inside Voices, available on June 20**

For the past six years, Ashley has served as a visiting artist at Utah State University, where she has devised and directed plays every other year as well as serving as a guest lecturer. She is also on the Board of Directors for American Alliance for Theater and Education where she serves as the National Programming Director. Ashley oversees all lesson planning and curriculum for Arena Stage's education programs. She graduated from Syracuse University with a B.S. in theater, concentration in directing, and a minor in child development.

**Mauricio Pita** was born in Caracas, Venezuela and is currently Arena Stage's Community Programs Manager. Previously he was GALA Hispanic Theater's Director of Education where he led the Paso Nuevo Youth Performance Group. Most recently, Mauricio directed Ana and her Shadow for InSeries Opera. He has worked extensively as a performer in several television commercials and films. On stage Mauricio has performed for Spanish Repertory Theatre, INTAR, Astoria Performing Arts Center (APAC), The Kennedy Center, The Director's Company, and Studio Theatre. He was part of the artistic team for multiple devised theater productions at Columbia University and is a graduate of the Acting Program at Marymount Manhattan College and the Shakespeare Conservatory for Actors at Yale University.

*Voices of Now is made possible by support from AT&T, Exelon, Wells Fargo & Company, the Hattie M. Strong Foundation, JBG Smith, Collins Aerospace, Friends of Southwest D.C., GEICO and the Weissberg Foundation in memory of Wally Babington.*

*Arena Stage's community engagement efforts are generously sponsored by The Estate of Ms. Toni A. Ritzenberg; Denie and Frank Weil; AT&T; the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation; Joanne Barker; the deLaski Family Foundation; Exelon Corporation; the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities; Hattie M. Strong Foundation; Robert and Natalie Mandel Family Foundation; Floyd E. Davis Family Foundation; Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation, Inc.; Alice Shaver Foundation; Theatre Forward; Collins Aerospace; England Family Foundation; Friends of Southwest D.C.; GEICO; JBG Smith; Wayne and Susan Jonas; Wells Fargo & Company; Foley & Lardner LLP; Weissberg Foundation; Jean Schiro-Zavela and Vance Zavela; Actors' Equity Foundation; and Youth Activities Task Force (YATF) of the Southwest Neighborhood Assembly, Inc.*

**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 and impacting the lives of over 10,000 students annually through its work in community engagement. Now in its eighth decade, Arena Stage serves a diverse annual audience of more than 300,000. [arenastage.org](http://arenastage.org)

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