

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 25, 2022

Contact:

Anastasia St. Hilaire
press@arenastage.org

ARENA STAGE NAMES DIRECTOR LEAR deBESSONET 2022 RECIPIENT OF ANDREW R. AMMERMAN DIRECTING AWARD

****Lear deBessonnet's directing work can currently be seen on Broadway in an acclaimed revival of Stephen Sondheim's *Into the Woods* ****

(Washington D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater has named Obie Award-winning director **Lear deBessonnet** the recipient of the **2022 Andrew R. Ammerman Directing Award**. Arena Stage Artistic Director **Molly Smith** presented the award to deBessonnet on **Thursday, October 13, 2022**, as part of the Opening Night for Arena's production of Philip Barry's *Holiday*, now playing at the Mead Center for American Theater in the iconic in-the-round Fichandler Stage.

Though unable to attend in person, **deBessonnet** graciously accepted the award via video.

"The field has been quite narrow in the past, who got to tell stories was narrow, who got lead rooms was narrow, and with this award you are in a concrete real way widening the road," shares **deBessonnet**. "This award is completely unique within landscape of the American theater, and it doesn't surprise me that Molly Smith is behind it. Molly has given countless opportunities to women, people of color and other historically underrepresented groups, and in doing so she held open the door for me and all of us coming behind her."

The Ammerman Award was created to highlight mid-career female theater directors who have distinguished themselves through their artistry and vision. Previous honorees include May Adrales and Nataki Garrett.

"Lear's body of work demonstrates exactly what the Award is intended for. I've been following her work for 20 years since I saw her wild production of *Man of La Mancha* in a church in Philadelphia 20 years ago," said **Smith**. "She has produced pageant-style adaptations and large-scale community projects that combine epic theater directly with the community as participants. And now this beautifully fresh version of *Into The Woods* which is rocking Broadway right now. I am thrilled that she is the recipient of the 2022 Ammerman Directing Award."

This award is made possible by **Andrew R. Ammerman**, a longtime member of Arena Stage's Board of Trustees. The Ammerman family has made many generous contributions to Arena Stage, including the support of unique partnership programs with Mercersburg Academy in Pennsylvania and Georgetown

University. These contributions have supported the development of new works; mentorship of new artists and administrators; community engagement; and a deepening of dialogue on important issues in the field.

Lear deBessonet is currently directing *Into the Woods* on Broadway, and most recently directed *ANNIE LIVE!* for NBC. She is the Artistic Director of Encores! at New York City Center, and previously served as resident director at the Public Theater from 2012-2020, where she founded the Public Works program. At the Public, she directed Disney's *Hercules*, *Miss You Like Hell*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and the Public Works' productions of *The Tempest*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Odyssey* at the Delacorte. Other directing credits include *Good Person of Szechwan* starring Taylor Mac and Lisa Kron (The Foundry Theater/The Public), Suzan-Lori Parks' *Venus* (Signature Theatre), *Pump Boys and Dinettes* (Encores! Off-Center), and *Big River* (Encores!). Her directing work has received an Obie Award, Lortel Award, Lilly Award, and multiple Drama Desk nominations. She is also the Co-Artistic Director of One Nation/One Project, a national arts and wellness initiative.

About *Holiday*

Holiday follows Johnny Case, an up-and-coming Wall Street lawyer from a working-class family who aspires to quit work and enjoy life once he's made enough money to do so. This prospect doesn't thrill his wealthy, well-born fiancée Julia, but excites her more unconventional sister Linda. Can his dreams survive his soon-to-be bride's narrow view of affluence? Written by **Philip Barry** (*The Joyous Season*, *The Philadelphia Story*) and directed by Arena's own Director of Community Engagement / Senior Artistic Advisor **Anita Maynard-Losh** (*Catch Me If You Can*, *Disney's Newsies*), *Holiday* runs from **October 7 – November 6, 2022**, in the iconic in-the-round **Fichandler Stage**.

Support for *Holiday* is provided by **Daniel Korengold**, **Martha Dippell**, and **Ourisman Automotive of Virginia**; **Clark Construction**; and **GEICO**.

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 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. arenastage.org

###

Connect with us:

facebook.com/arenastage

twitter.com/arenastage

instagram.com/arenastage

youtube.com/user/arenastage1

arenastage.org