

# ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

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## SHONALI BURKE NAMED CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER OF ARENA STAGE

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater Artistic Director Molly Smith and Executive Producer Edgar Dobie announce the appointment of **Shonali Burke** as Chief Marketing Officer. Burke is an award-winning public relations strategist and digital marketing pioneer who has been building innovative communication strategies and telling impactful stories through her work for decades.

"I am extremely excited to welcome Shonali Burke to Arena Stage," shares **Dobie**. "Shonali brings extensive marketing and communications experience and expertise. Furthermore, Shonali's focus is on team building. She has a history of recognizing talent, drive and ambition, and nurturing her staff. Her work philosophy is on measurable outcomes, and she is an experienced collaborator and communicator."

As Chief Marketing Officer, Burke will have direct reporting responsibilities to both Dobie and Smith. In this role, she will oversee all earned income activities and communications, and support all communications-related departments, as well as manage the strategic planning activities of the organization.

Burke has worked with some of the most forward thinking and innovative organizations in the world. She was the first Indian American woman to be named to *PRWeek's* "Top 40 Under 40," and received the prestigious 2015 Matrix Award for excellence in communication.

"As a brown woman and naturalized American, I remember feeling completely at home when I first visited Arena Stage ten years ago," explains **Burke**. "I felt acknowledged, accepted and represented by the diversity on stage. Now, as part of the team, I have literally come home. I am beyond excited and grateful to join Arena in the incredibly important, thought-provoking — and enjoyable! — work it does."

**About Shonali Burke:** Shonali has a unique ability to ethically and powerfully tell data-driven stories for social impact and equity. Over the years, her creative strategies have resulted in packed houses for Cirque du Soleil's *Varekai*, *Singalong Sound of Music*, and the world premiere of *Russell Simmons Def Poetry Jam*. Her expertise in building communities of influence to amplify brand storytelling has benefited among others, Oxfam America, the United Nations Foundation, and USA for UNHCR, for whom she designed its now-textbook digital "Blue Key" campaign. Shonali also led media and communications for the ASPCA at an extraordinary time in animal welfare: during the 2007 pet food recall and Michael Vick case. Her efforts, which included launching its pet insurance product and ASPCA® Mission: Orange™, a series of local-national coalitions aimed at creating a country of humane communities, one community at a time, were key to growing the ASPCA's visibility, trust and revenue. An early adopter of social media, Shonali's numerous awards and accolades include being the first Indian American woman to be named to *PRWeek's* "Top 40 Under 40." She teaches multiple courses for The Johns Hopkins University's M.A. in Communication program and is a 2021 graduate of the Harvard Business Analytics Program. Shonali's first book, *The Non-Obvious Guide to Public Relations & Communication*, will be available in 2022. Formerly a working actress/director, she cannot be more delighted to have joined the Arena Stage family as its chief marketing officer.

**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 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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