

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE MELLON FOUNDATION**

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater proudly announced today a transformative two-year grant of \$1,500,000 from the **Mellon Foundation**.

The substantial grant will assist Arena Stage in bringing to life Artistic Director **Hana S. Sharif**'s visionary plans for the Tony Award-winning theater's next chapter as a vanguard for new play development and solidifying the organization's values towards radical access through the transformational power of theater. In addition, the Mellon Foundation has committed its support to Arena Stage's upcoming milestone 75th Anniversary 2025/26 Season. Under the dynamic leadership of **Sharif** and Executive Producer **Edgar Dobie**, Arena Stage is poised to embark on a journey to revolutionize the theater experience for both artists and audiences.

"Hana Sharif's career is replete with artistic leadership decisions designed to build a more just and thriving theater ecosystem" said **Stephanie Ybarra**, program officer for Arts and Culture at the Mellon Foundation. "Hana has consistently shown up with joy, compassion, and uncompromising integrity, and we couldn't be prouder to continue supporting Hana's work in her new home at Arena Stage."

The Mellon Foundation is the nation's largest supporter of the arts and humanities. Through grants, they seek to build communities enriched by meaning and empowered by critical thinking, where ideas and imagination can thrive.

"It is an immense honor to begin my tenure at Arena Stage and this new chapter of our theater's history with the support of the Mellon Foundation," said **Sharif**. "This partnership will catalyze the transformation of Arena and the theater field at large as we seek to create and foster the work of leading artists and cultivate a home for audiences in every corner of our communities."

Arena Stage seeks to lead the next chapter of theater's re-emergence by transforming its art, culture, and relationships. Through generous funding from the Mellon Foundation, Arena Stage's plans include increasing each season's offerings of plays and musicals, growing the theater's new play development arm, and evolving the theater's Community Engagement work into three divisions focused on learning, professional development, and community partnerships to amplify the artistic work to local and national theater communities.

With a rich history dating back to its founding in 1950, Arena Stage has been a trailblazer in the theater world, known for its commitment to American voices, artists, and new work. As it enters its eighth decade, the theater is gearing up to take its mission to new heights. **Sharif** and the Arena Stage team

are diligently laying the groundwork to foster connections, bridge gaps, and promote healing through the transformative power of theater and radical accessibility.

The first racially integrated theater in our nation's capital and a pioneer of the regional theater movement, Arena Stage was founded in 1950 in Washington, D.C. Today, under the leadership of Artistic Director Hana S. Sharif and Executive Producer Edgar Dobie, Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater is a national center dedicated to American voices and artists. We produce plays of all that is passionate, profound, deep, and dangerous in the American spirit, and present diverse and groundbreaking work from some of the best artists around the country. Consistently contributing to the American theatrical lexicon by commissioning and developing new plays, Arena Stage impacts the lives of over 10,000 students annually through its work in community engagement and serves a diverse annual audience of more than 300,000. arenastage.org

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