

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ARENA STAGE AT THE MEAD CENTER FOR AMERICAN THEATER ANNOUNCES COMPANY'S HISTORIC 70TH SEASON

***** 2019/20 season features politically-charged work, world premieres, a high-energy musical and classic dramas celebrated through an August Wilson Festival and a diverse group of voices including Holland Taylor, Lydia R. Diamond, Octavio Solis and Eduardo Machado *****

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage Artistic Director Molly Smith and Executive Producer Edgar Dobie announce the 2019/20 lineup for the company's 70th season. The season reflects Arena Stage's commitment to championing diverse voices. Arena is committed to leading the way in gender equity and racial diversity by reflecting those values both on and off the stage. This season over half of our playwrights and directors are represented as women and people of color. The 70th anniversary also celebrates Arena's vision to produce new work with three world premieres, including the seventh Power Play, a decade-long initiative focused on stories of politics and power from 1776 to present day. As part of Arena's mission to serve artists on a national, regional and local scale, three exciting collaborations will take place with the Dallas Theater Center, Oregon Shakespeare Festival and American Conservatory Theater.

"If I were to think of two words for Arena in her 70th season it would be resiliency and fighting spirit," shares **Smith**. "It's a season of revolution and uprisings of leaders, laborers, of battles in the courts, on the street, on a road, in a field. A season of people fighting for what matters to them."

The season kicks off with **Ann**, based on the life of legendary Texas Governor, Ann Richards. Written by Emmy Award-winning actress, **Holland Taylor** (*The Practice, Two and a Half Men*), this one-woman portrait chronicles an intimate look into Richards' colorful and complex life. **Jayne Atkinson** (*House of Cards, Criminal Minds*) reprises her role as the woman who changed the face of Texas politics.

The season continues with Arena Stage's August Wilson Festival, celebrating the Pulitzer Prize-winning giant, **August Wilson**, with the time-honored American classic, **Jitney**. Ruben Santiago-Hudson directs the 2017 Broadway production – recipient of the 2017 Tony Award for Best Play Revival. This kicks off the national tour of one of Wilson's great masterpieces. The heartfelt classic, **Seven Guitars**, is the second production in the festival, which focuses around seven lives who reconnect because of the untimely death of a gifted blues guitarist. In conjunction with the Festival, several events centering around the life and legacy of Wilson are planned, including a Women of Wilson panel featuring actresses who have played Wilson's pivotal female characters.

Sharyn Rothstein's (*By The Water, USA Network's Suits*), world-premiere drama, **Right to be Forgotten**, shines a light on social media, big business and one man's attempt to remove his past indiscretion from the Internet forever. Directed by Arena Stage Deputy Artistic Director **Seema Sueko**, this daring new play explores the drastic effects of social media and how one mistake can haunt your life decades later.

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The high-flying musical sensation, Disney's *Newsies*, hits the stage this holiday season. **Molly Smith** directs this tap-dancing, beloved story about the rousing tale of newsboys who fight for what is right at the turn of the century. Also during the holidays, it was a romance that all started with a letter during World War II in Tony Award-winning playwright **Ken Ludwig's** *Dear Jack, Dear Louise*. **Jackie Maxwell** directs this delightful love story based on Ludwig's own parents' tale with a looming war as the backdrop.

Also in the lineup, based on the internationally best-selling novel, is *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Adapted by **Ursula Rani Sarma** and directed by **Carey Perloff**, the story focuses on an unlikely connection between two Afghan women in war-torn Kabul. With heart-wrenching power and suspense, this epic drama follows a rare course of friendship and uncovers the true cost of sacrifice. Next, playwright **Octavio Solis** teams up with director **Bill Rauch** for a powerful new play imagined as a sequel to the Steinbeck classic *The Grapes of Wrath*. *Mother Road* is an epic journey about family, survival and the American dream.

Arena Stage's seventh Power Play is the world-premiere of *Celia and Fidel*, written by **Eduardo Machado** and directed by **Molly Smith**. This captivating story explores Fidel Castro's rise to power and how his political partner and closest confidant, Celia Sánchez, inspired a revolution.

The season culminates with *Toni Stone*, based on the real-life woman who became the first female athlete to play in a professional men's baseball league. Award-winning playwright **Lydia R. Diamond** and director **Pam MacKinnon** tell the vibrant story of Stone's life as she throws curveballs both on and off the field.

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater 2019/20 Schedule*

Ann

By Holland Taylor

Directed by Kristen van Ginhoven

In Association with Dallas Theater Center

In the Kreeger Theater | July 11 – August 11, 2019

Punchline-packed speeches reveal the feisty and unadulterated life of legendary Texas governor, Ann Richards. Written by Emmy Award-winning actress and writer, Holland Taylor (*The Practice, Two and a Half Men*), *Ann* is a comical and inspiring production based on the colorful and complex woman whose sense of humor was bigger than the state from which she represented. Jayne Atkinson (*House of Cards, Criminal Minds*) reprises her well-received performance in this intimate no-holds-barred comedy chronicling Richards' legacy and how she was determined to make her mark on the world. "Frank, funny and warm" (*New York Times*), *Ann* is a captivating tribute to Richards life as an activist, politician, and feminist champion.

August Wilson's Jitney

By August Wilson

Directed by Ruben Santiago-Hudson

In the Kreeger Theater | September 13 – October 20, 2019

August Wilson's *Jitney* opens Arena Stage's season-long Festival celebrating the Pulitzer Prize-winning giant with Ruben Santiago-Hudson directing his 2017 Broadway production – recipient of the 2017 Tony® Award for Best Play Revival. The dramatic story of a Pittsburgh jitney station, a symbol of stability, struggling against an oppressive lack of opportunity and unnerving neighborhood gentrification that threaten the way they live and work. The drivers resist powerful forces while coming to grips with their pasts to fulfill their own hopes and dreams for the future. Arena Stage's presentation kicks off the National Tour of one of this great master's masterpieces.

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Right to be Forgotten

By Sharyn Rothstein

Directed by Seema Sueko

In the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle | October 11 – November 10, 2019

The internet never forgets. A young man's mistake at 17 haunts him online a decade later. Desperate for a normal life, he goes to extraordinary lengths to erase his indiscretion. But freedom of information is big business, and the tech companies aren't going down without a fight. Secrets, lies, and political backstabbing abound in this riveting new drama about one man's fierce battle to reclaim his right to privacy. Playwright Sharyn Rothstein (*By The Water*, *USA Network's Suits*), winner of the prestigious 2015 Primus Prize and whose work has been called "touching & affecting" (*New York Times*) has written a striking allegory about privacy, social media and human forgiveness in the age of the internet.

Disney's Newsies

A musical based on the Disney Film written by Bob Tzudiker and Noni White

Music by Alan Menken, Lyrics by Jack Feldman, Book by Harvey Fierstein

Originally produced on Broadway by Disney Theatrical Productions

Directed by Molly Smith

In the Fichandler Stage | November 1 – December 22, 2019

In the summer of 1899, the newsboys of New York City took on two of the most powerful men in the country — Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst — and won. Inspired by true events, the Broadway smash hit is a testament to the power of standing up and speaking out. The Tony Award-winning musical features fan-favorites like "Carrying the Banner," "King of New York," and "Seize the Day." *Newsies* is "a winning, high-energy musical" (*Entertainment Weekly*) just in time for the holidays and perfect for the whole family.

Ken Ludwig's Dear Jack, Dear Louise

By Ken Ludwig

Directed by Jackie Maxwell

In the Kreeger Theater | November 21 – December 29, 2019

When two strangers meet by letter during World War II, a love story begins. U.S. Army Captain Jack Ludwig, a military doctor stationed in Oregon, begins writing to Louise Rabiner, an aspiring actress and dancer in New York City, hoping to meet her someday if the war will allow. But as the war continues, it threatens to end their relationship before it even starts. Tony Award-winning playwright Ken Ludwig (*Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery*, *Lend Me a Tenor*) tells the joyous, heart-warming story of his parents' courtship during World War II and the results are anything but expected.

A Thousand Splendid Suns

Adapted by Ursula Rani Sarma

Based on the novel by Khaled Hosseini

Directed by Carey Perloff

In the Kreeger Theater | January 17 – February 23, 2020

Adapted from the *New York Times* bestselling novel by Khaled Hosseini (*Kite Runner*), the lives of two Afghan women are inextricably bound together. In the war-ravaged Kabul, Miriam and Laila become unlikely allies in the face of the insurmountable odds of a brutal and oppressive way of life. Hopes of a new life lead to an unselfish and shocking decision changing the course of their futures forever. Called "emotionally stirring" (*Los Angeles Times*), this gripping and heart-rending fight for survival will keep you on the edge of your seat from start to finish.

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The Oregon Shakespeare Festival Production of

Mother Road

By Octavio Solis

Directed by Bill Rauch

In the Fichandler Stage | February 7 – March 8, 2020

As the hardworking and terminally ill William Joad sets out on an epic journey to pass down his family farm, he is humiliated to find that the only surviving descendant of his family is a Mexican-American, Martín Jodes, an ex-migrant worker. Inspired by John Steinbeck's classic, *The Grapes of Wrath*, the two men take a ride through the Mother Road traveling from California back to Oklahoma, all while forging an unlikely bond and coming to terms with their brutal past. This powerful new play, written by playwright Octavio Solis (*El Paso Blue*, *Quixote*), examines the crossroads of family, immigration, and the American dream.

Celia and Fidel

By Eduardo Machado

Directed by Molly Smith

In the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle | February 28 – April 12, 2020

Can one woman change the mind of a man and the fate of a nation? Fidel Castro's most trusted confidant and political partner, Celia Sánchez is never far from his side as he grapples with how to move his country forward. It's 1980 and a failing economy has led 10,000 Cuban citizens to seek asylum at the Peruvian Embassy in Cuba. Castro must decide what kind of a leader he wants to be, merciful or mighty. Imbued with magical realism, Arena Stage's seventh Power Play imagines a conversation between Cuba's most influential female revolutionary and its most notorious political leader in a contest between morality and power.

August Wilson's *Seven Guitars*

By August Wilson

In the Fichandler Stage | April 3 – May 3, 2020

The 1940s Pittsburgh is the backdrop for August Wilson's fifth cycle play and the second production in the August Wilson Festival. Seven lives are interconnected when old friend and blues singer Floyd Barton vows to turn his life around after a surprise windfall leaves him hopeful for a second chance. Infused with rich and soaring blues rhythms, this "rich and exceptionally vivid" (*Variety*) play pits the desire for a better future against the harsh realities ultimately leading to heartbreaking and unescapable circumstances.

Toni Stone

By Lydia R. Diamond

Directed by Pam MacKinnon

In Association with American Conservatory Theater

In the Kreeger Theater | April 23 – May 31, 2020

Considered a pioneer, Toni Stone is the first woman to play baseball in the Negro Leagues, also making her the first woman to play professionally in a men's league in the 1950s. Against all odds, Stone blazes a path in the male-dominated sports world, shattering expectations and creating her own set of rules. Based on Martha Ackmann's book *Curveball, The Remarkable Story of Toni Stone*, the latest work from award-winning playwright Lydia R. Diamond (*Smart People*, *The Bluest Eye*) tells the dynamic and uplifting story of Stone's journey of perseverance and resilience just to do what she loved the most – play baseball.

**Plays, artists and dates are subject to change*

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Subscription packages are now on sale and may be purchased by calling the Arena Stage Sales Office at 202-488-3300 or by visiting arenastage.org.

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 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

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