

MEDIA RELEASE

MOLLY SMITH ARTISTIC DIRECTOR EDGAR DOBIE EXECUTIVE PRODUCER ZELDA FICHANDLER FOUNDING DIRECTOR



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 21, 2023

CONTACT:

Ryan Impagliazzo

rimpagliazzo@arenastage.org

202-600-4051

Anastasia St. Hilaire

asthilaire@arenastage.org

ARENA STAGE TO HONOR MOLLY SMITH WITH THE BETH NEWBURGER SCHWARTZ AWARD

*** Arena Stage Outgoing Artistic Director will be celebrated at its Annual Gala on May 23, 2023 ***

(Washington D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater today announced that the recipient of the **2023 Beth Newburger Schwartz Award** will be its outgoing Artistic Director **Molly Smith**, who will retire in June 2023 after 25 years' stellar service to the company. This signature honor will be bestowed on **Smith** at the Arena Stage Annual Gala, a one-night-only celebration to be held at the Mead Center for American Theater on Tuesday, May 23, 2023. **For more information or to purchase tickets, please visit arenastage.org/gala.**

The Beth Newburger Schwartz Award celebrates a female leader who betters the community in which she lives and works through her own unique strengths and talents. The award was first presented in 2016 to Arena Stage Board Chair Beth Newburger Schwartz, followed by Arlene Kogod in 2017, D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser in 2018, Nina Totenberg in 2019, and Ambassador Melanne Vermeer in 2022.

"Molly's expansion of Arena Stage over the past quarter century not only provided the impetus for the new Southwest Wharf waterfront, but changed the face of regional theater in America," said **Beth Newburger Schwartz**, longtime Arena Stage Trustee and award namesake. "She exemplifies a Washington woman who has made outstanding contributions to the Arts, and I cannot think of a recipient who more thoroughly embodies the leadership and service qualities we look for in Awardees."

Rather than a traditional seated dinner, the Gala will feature a pre-show reception with refreshments at multiple locations within the Mead Center, which was designed by **Bing Thom Architects** to bring the company's three stages under one roof; its construction was one of **Smith's** signature achievements. Following the reception, Arena Stage will present a one-night-only performance on its iconic **Fichandler Stage** that is a lookback at Smith's 25-year-long career at Arena, showcasing artists with whom she worked during her tenure.

The star-studded tribute performance will reunite many of Smith's longtime artistic collaborators, including Co-Director and Choreographer **Parker Esse** (Arena's *Catch Me If You Can*, *Newsies*; Broadway's *Fosse*), Co-Director **Charles Randolph-Wright** (Arena's *American Prophet*, *Born For This: The BeBe Winans Story*; Broadway's *Trouble in Mind*), and Music Director **William Yanesh** (Arena's *Catch Me If You Can*, *Dave*), as well as featured guests Tony Award® nominee **Kate Baldwin** (Arena's *The Music Man*, *South Pacific*; Broadway's *Hello, Dolly!*), **Kurt Boehm** (Arena's *American Prophet*, *Carousel*), **Will**

Burton (Arena's *My Fair Lady*, *The Music Man*; Broadway's *Kiss Me, Kate*), **E. Faye Butler** (Arena's *Carousel*, *Oklahoma!*), **Edward Gero** (Arena's *Angels in America*, *The Originalist*), **Meg Gillentine** (Arena's *Cabaret*, *Damn Yankees*; Broadway's *Fosse*), **Nehal Joshi** (Arena's *Catch Me If You Can*, *The Music Man*; Broadway's *The Phantom of the Opera*) Tony Award® nominee **Brad Oscar** (Arena's *Cabaret*, *Damn Yankees*; Broadway's *The Producers*), **Kristyn Pope** (Arena's *Anything Goes*, *Oklahoma!*; Broadway's *Irving Berlin's White Christmas*), **Maria Rizzo** (Arena's *Anything Goes*, *Fiddler on the Roof*), **Nicholas Rodriguez** (Arena's *Carousel*, *Oklahoma!*; Broadway's *Company*), and Tony Award® nominee **Kathleen Turner** (Arena's *The Year of Magical Thinking*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*; Broadway's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*).

"I am honored to receive the Beth Newburger Schwartz Award, joining a legacy of celebrated female leaders whom I admire," said **Smith**. "And I cannot think of a better finale for my 25 years with Arena than this special Gala. It will be a celebration of all we have accomplished together as a community, filled with memories and achievements—and, of course, performances!—from the past two-and-a-half decades."

Smith came to Arena Stage from Perseverance Theater in Juneau, Alaska, which she founded and ran from 1979 to 1998. Under her leadership, Arena has brought more than 200 productions to life, championing the work of countless emerging and established playwrights. Her directorial work has also been seen Off-Broadway at 59E59 in New York, Portland Center Stage, Canada's Shaw Festival, The Court Theatre, The Old Globe, Asolo Repertory, Berkeley Repertory, Trinity Repertory, Toronto's Tarragon Theatre, and Montreal's Centaur Theatre.

The one-night-only celebration honoring **Smith's** indelible contributions to Arena Stage, the greater Washington, D.C., theater community, and American regional theater is led by Gala Chairs **Jan Adams**, President and CEO of JMA Solutions and Arena Stage Trustee; **Martha Dippell**, immediate past President of the National Museum of Women in the Arts; and **Danny Korengold**, Chairman of Ourisman Automotive of Virginia and Arena Stage Trustee.

Lead Benefactors for the 2023 Arena Stage Annual Gala are **Anonymous Artistic Director Fund**, **Decker Anstrom and Sherry Hiemstra**, **Danny Korengold and Martha Dippell**, and **Ourisman Automotive of Virginia**.

Proceeds from the Gala will support Arena Stage's efforts to commission and develop new work, a pillar of **Smith's** legacy.

Location

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater

1101 6th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Event Schedule

Tuesday, May 23, 2023

5:00 p.m. Private Sponsor Cocktail Reception

6:00 p.m. Pre-Show Reception

8:00 p.m. Award Presentation and One-Night-Only Performance

An after-party with dessert and dancing will take place following the award presentation and performance.

Ticket Information

Single Patron Ticket: \$1,200

- Access for one (1) to the pre-show reception
- One (1) seat at the award presentation and performance
- After-party invitation for one (1)
- Complimentary valet parking for one (1)

Sponsorship Opportunities

Diamond Sponsor: \$50,000

Executive Sponsor: \$30,000

Gold Sponsor: \$12,000

For more information on ticket or table purchases, please contact Maria Corso at 202-600-4025 or rsvp@arenastage.org.

For more information on sponsorship opportunities or corporate sponsorship packages, please contact Shayla Hines at 202-600-4030 or shines@arenastage.org.

For media inquiries, please email press@arenastage.org.

Molly Smith has served as Arena Stage Artistic Director since 1998. Her 40 directing credits at Arena Stage include large-scale musicals, like *Catch Me If You Can*, *Anything Goes*, Disney's *Newsies*, *Carousel*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Oklahoma!*, *My Fair Lady*, *The Music Man*, *Cabaret*, *South Pacific*; new plays, like *Celia and Fidel*, *Sovereignty*, *The Originalist*, *Camp David*, *Legacy of Light*, *The Women of Brewster Place*, *Place*, *How I Learned to Drive*; and classics like *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, *The Great White Hope*, and *All My Sons*. Her directorial work has also been seen Off-Broadway at 59E59 in New York, Portland Center Stage, Canada's Shaw Festival, The Court Theatre, The Old Globe, Asolo Repertory, Berkeley Repertory, Trinity Repertory, Toronto's Tarragon Theatre, Montreal's Centaur Theatre, and Perseverance Theater in Juneau, Alaska, which she founded and ran from 1979-1998. Smith has been a leader in new play development for over 40 years. She is a great believer in first, second, and third productions of new work and has championed projects, including *Dear Evan Hansen*; *Next to Normal*; *Passion Play, a cycle*; and *How I Learned to Drive*. She led the re-invention of Arena Stage, focusing on the architecture and creation of the Mead Center for American Theater and positioning Arena Stage as a national center for American artists through its artistic programming. During her time with the company, Arena Stage has workshoped more than 100 productions, produced 39 world premieres, staged numerous second and third productions, and been an important part of nurturing nine projects that went on to have a life on Broadway. In 2014, Smith made her Broadway debut, directing *The Velocity of Autumn* following its critically acclaimed run at Arena Stage. She has been awarded honorary doctorates from American University and Towson University. In 2018, she was honored as Person of the Year by the National Theatre Conference and inducted into the Washington DC Hall of Fame. In 2020, she was awarded the Director of Distinction in Cairo, Egypt, from the Academy of Arts. During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, she developed the concept for two online films, *May 22, 2020* and *The 51st State*, overseeing the production direction as well as directing pieces within the films. Following the U.S. Supreme Court overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, in fall 2022 Smith conceived and directed *My Body No Choice*—a rallying cry in the form of eight monologues examining bodily autonomy from America's most exciting female playwrights and a fitting capstone to a 25-year tenure at the intersection of theater and politics.

Janice "Jan" Adams held the rank of Chief Master Sergeant before retiring from the United States Air Force, after 24 years of outstanding service. She founded JMA Solutions in 2005 and has grown the company through hiring outstanding staff who assist the Federal Aviation Administration and other clients in the areas of acquisition planning, air traffic management, financial management, information technology, program and project management, professional and technical training, and software engineering. She currently has 140 full-time employees and over 40 percent of her workforce are prior military. Ms. Adams is very active in the community. She serves as a board member for Washington

Redskins Corner Back, Josh Norman's Starz24 charity organization. She is a member of the Air Traffic Control Association and a corporate partner of the D.C. Adopt-a-School program. Ms. Adams was appointed by the Mayor of D.C. to be a trustee on the District of Columbia's Retirement Board providing fiduciary responsibility toward the investment of retirement funds for D.C. teachers, firefighters, and police. She is a board member of the D.C. Chamber of Commerce and the Mamie Mallory Education and Scholarship Foundation. Under her leadership, JMA Solutions has won numerous awards that include ATCA's Small and Disadvantaged Business Award, INC. 5000's Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America, the DC Chamber of Commerce's Community Impact Award, The Washington Post's Top Workplaces for the D.C. area, Washington Business Journal's Minority Business Leader of the Year (2017), and the Disabled American Veterans' Small Employer of the Year Award. Ms. Adams was profiled in O, The Oprah Magazine (2018), Entrepreneur Magazine (2018), Forbes Magazine (2016) and is also an original corporate contributor to the National Museum of African-American History and Culture. In 2018, her philanthropic efforts included supporting over 50 charitable foundations including the National Down Syndrome Foundation, USO, the Air Force Association, the Arena Stage and the Disabled American Veterans of America. In April 2019, Ms. Adams was inducted into the Washington, DC Hall of Fame for her dedication and outstanding contributions to the D.C. business community. Ms. Adams is a graduate of the Community College of the Air Force. She is the mother of two, grandmother of seven.

Martha Dippell is a native Washingtonian, a graduate of Holton-Arms School, Smith College, and the mother of three daughters and a son. She is the immediate past President of the National Museum of Women in the Arts, and a former chair and Trustee Emerita of the board of Holton-Arms. She also currently serves on the Board of the Decorative Arts Trust and the Endowment for the Diplomatic Reception Rooms of the Department of State. She is a member of The Founders of Mount Vernon. Martha is an avid fan of the former Washington Redskins Football Team. She also loves traveling, antiques, reading, discussing political history, and bonding with her six young grandchildren.

Danny Korengold, a graduate of Trinity College in Connecticut currently serves as Chairman of Ourisman Automotive of Virginia, a family group of dealerships having celebrated their 100th anniversary in 2021. He has served on many non-profit institutions including past chairman of Norwood School, Washington Performing Arts and the Washington Automobile Dealers Association. Other board involvement over the years include Arena Stage, the Sconset Trust in Nantucket, Chevy Chase Club, Landon School, Boys and Girls Club, Trinity College, the National Rehabilitation Hospital and National Child Research Center. Danny enjoys golf, the decorative arts, travel, fitness, and spending time at their vacation home in Nantucket.

Beth Newburger Schwartz (is an entrepreneur who has started and sold several businesses. She is currently president and CEO, Epoch Communications, Richlynd Federal and Middle Finger Productions. Beth is known in preservation circles for her work as director of communications for the National Trust for Historic Preservation. She served as a senior political appointee in both Clinton administrations, first in the White House Women's Office and later as associate administrator, General Services Administration. In addition to her professional career, Beth is past chair of Arena Stage and currently vice president, past chair and trustee of the National Children's Museum, trustee of the Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park, President's Council of Cornell Women, the Boat Owners Association of the United States and chairman of the board of Apollo Enterprise Imaging. Beth shared her love of theater and the arts with her late husband, Richard Schwartz, founder and chairman of BoatUS and an extraordinary philanthropist.

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

###

Connect with us:

facebook.com/arenastage

twitter.com/arenastage

instagram.com/arenastage

youtube.com/user/arenastage1

arenastage.org