

# ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### VOICES OF NOW FESTIVAL MAKES IN-PERSON RETURN TO ARENA STAGE AT THE MEAD CENTER FOR AMERICAN THEATER, MAY 18–20

**\*\*\* 3-night festival showcases new plays and short films written and performed  
by nine ensembles from the D.C. Metro Area\*\*\***

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage today announced the in-person return of the **Voices of Now Festival (VON)**, a 3-night showcase of new multimedia plays and short films written and performed by nine multi-generational ensembles from the D.C. Metro area. Spearheaded by Arena Stage’s Community Engagement Department, **VON** will see more than 60 artists, ranging in age from 11 to 38, come together May 18–20, 2022 to showcase and discuss their work at **Arena Stage the Mead Center for American Theater**.

Launched nearly two decades ago, **Voices of Now (VON)** is a drama program that works with ensembles comprising middle-school, high-school and adult artists to devise creative autobiographical plays and films. VON plays are fast paced, collaboratively written physical theater pieces that pose challenging social questions relevant to the ensemble of artists who created them, as well as their communities.

“Voices of Now encourages artists to be thoughtful, generous and brave,” said **Ashley Forman**, Artistic Director of Voices of Now. “In addition to training young and emerging artists, the program instills an excitement for exploration and dialogue on stage, that the artists carry with them long after the festival has ended.”

“When creating their plays, artists use stories pulled directly from their lives to explore questions around topics such as loss, identity, change and personal responsibility. This results in dynamic and highly personal theater and film, intended to spark a productive dialogue among themselves, their audience, and their communities.”

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Voices of Now ensembles premiered their first film, **Inside Voices**, a moving time capsule that explored the lives of young artists as they navigated the immediate impact of the first few months of the global pandemic as our world began to shut down.

In 2021, **Waiting Room** explored how remote learning and social isolation has impacted students and young professionals, both physically and mentally, while also addressing the adjustment of resuming in-person activities and the anticipation of life after the pandemic.

Originally created to work with one local middle school, the program has since expanded to serve hundreds of students in the D.C. Metro Area and beyond. This year’s program features the return of the **Mead Ensemble**, a program located at the Mead Center designed for students in grades 7-11, and

the **Mentor Ensemble**, made up of alumni from previous ensembles whose role is to mentor the younger artists in the program.

### **2022 Voices of Now Festival Schedule**

#### **Wednesday, May 18 — 7:30 p.m.**

*Life Cycle* by the Robinson Ensemble  
*Safeguard* by the Jefferson Middle School Academy Ensemble  
*Face-Off* by the Pre-Professional Ensemble  
*Headspace* by the Mentor Ensemble

#### **Thursday, May 19 — 7:30 p.m.**

*Face Value* by the Mead Ensemble  
*Ground Control* by the Holmes Middle School Ensemble  
*Moving Picture* by the Key Ensemble  
*Time Stamp* by the Wendt Center for Loss and Healing Ensemble

#### **Friday, May 20 — 7:30 p.m.**

*Face Value* by the Mead Ensemble  
*Shapeshifter* by the Kilmer Middle School Ensemble  
*Face-Off* by the Pre-Professional Ensemble  
*Headspace* by the Mentor Ensemble

All performances will be held in the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle at Arena Stage the Mead Center for American Theater. Tickets are free, but reservations are required. Reserve your tickets [here](#). View the digital program book [here](#).

Arena Stage's Community Engagement Department would like to recognize the supporters and partners of the Voices of Now program. Without their extraordinary efforts and support, Voices of Now and our other Community Engagement program offerings would not be possible.

Voices of Now is made possible by support from the **Hattie M. Strong Foundation, Global Medical REIT, Weissberg Foundation, The Lois & Richard England Family Foundation** and **Friends of Southwest D.C.**

Arena Stage's community engagement efforts are generously sponsored by Denie and Frank Weil; The Estate of Ms. Toni A. Ritzenberg; Hearst Foundations; AT&T; Joanne Barker; Comcast; Catherine and Chris Guttman-McCabe; National Endowment for the Arts; Global Medical REIT; Venable Foundation; Hattie M. Strong Foundation; Robert and Natalie Mandel Family Foundation; Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation, Inc.; Alice Shaver Foundation; Theatre Forward; Lois & Richard England Family Foundation; Weissberg Foundation; Friends of Southwest D.C.; Wayne and Susan Jonas; Jean Shiro-Zavela and Vance Zavela; Actors' Equity Foundation; and Youth Activities Task Force (YATF) of the Southwest Neighborhood Assembly, Inc.

For more information on Arena Stage's Community Engagement programs, including Voices of Now, call 202-600-4065 or visit [arenastage.org/voicesofnow](http://arenastage.org/voicesofnow).

***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](http://arenastage.org)

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