

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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arenastage.org/press-room/press-kits/2122-press-kits/celia-and-fidel-press-kit

ORIGINAL CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM RETURN FOR EDUARDO MACHADO'S *CELIA AND FIDEL* AT ARENA STAGE OCTOBER 8 – NOVEMBER 21, 2021

*** Molly Smith directs this compelling Power Play centered around Fidel Castro and his most trusted confidant, Celia Sánchez, during the 1980s in Cuba ***

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater announces the full company of **Eduardo Machado's** (*Havana Is Waiting*, *The Cook*) ***Celia and Fidel***. It's 1980 and Cuba is dealing with a failing economy. As Fidel Castro ponders on how to move his country forward, his political partner, Celia Sánchez, is never far from his side. Imbued with magical realism, *Celia and Fidel* is the dynamic story of radical change in Cuba featuring the country's most notorious political figure and Cuba's most influential female revolutionary.

Before suspending performances for the remainder of the 2019/20 season, *Celia and Fidel* premiered for 11 previews and its opening night but was forced to cancel performances due to the pandemic. Directed by **Molly Smith**, ***Celia and Fidel*** runs **October 8 through November 21, 2021, in the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle**. Press night for *Celia and Fidel* will be held on **Thursday, October 14, 2021**.

"When we opened and closed on March 13, 2020, I could not imagine that a year and a half later we would be back in rehearsal," shares **Machado**. "In that year and a half, I was able to think about the play, and with the support of Arena Stage, Molly Smith, Jocelyn Clarke, the generosity of Drs. Elliot and Lily Gardner Feldman who commissioned the play and of course our wonderful cast, I have been able to fine tune the play. I am now confident that the play is expressing exactly what I intended to say. I am thrilled that in less than a month we will be sharing it with a live audience. I can't wait to hear their laughter and tears."

The cast of *Celia and Fidel* includes **Marian Licha** (Arena's *Anna in the Tropics*, *Destiny of Desire*) as Celia Sánchez, **Andhy Mendez** (Folger's *Davenant's Macbeth*, *Timon of Athens*) as Fidel Castro, **Liam Torres** (INTAR's *Locusts Have No King*) as Manolo Ruiz and **Heather Velazquez** (Lincoln Center's *Pipeline*) as Consuelo.

"The story of Cuba is a story of power, and recently the Cuban people have again taken to the streets to protect their freedoms. Eduardo Machado's passionate *Celia and Fidel* is a story of influence and passion," explains Artistic Director **Molly Smith**. "As America saw a shift in power earlier this year, this is a fascinating time to observe dictators and reflect on their impact on modern society, particularly from a Cuban perspective. Celia Sánchez was the Mother of the Revolution. This play speaks to the current moment now as Cuba wrestles with freedom and authoritarianism, possibly loosening the grip that the Castro family and others have held with the Cuban people."

—continued—

Celia and Fidel is the seventh commissioned production to debut as part of Arena Stage's **Power Plays**, an ambitious initiative commissioning and developing 25 new plays and musicals from 25 writers over the course of 10 years. With Power Plays, Arena Stage focuses Washington, D.C.'s unique theatrical voice on politics, power and ideas of America, amplifying the theater's role as a national center dedicated to American voices and artists, located in the heart of the nation's capital. The massive undertaking features one story per decade, beginning with 1776 through present day, and builds on the tremendous success of previous Arena Stage commissions and Power Plays, including Aaron Posner's *JQA*, Lawrence Wright's *Camp David*, John Strand's *The Originalist* and Mary Kathryn Nagle's *Sovereignty*.

In addition to Smith, the creative team includes Set Designer **Riccardo Hernández**, Costume Designer **Alejo Vietti**, Lighting Designer **Nicole Pearce**, Original Music and Sound Design by **Roc Lee**, Hair and Wig Designer **Charles G. LaPointe**, Fight and Intimacy Consultant **Jenny Male**, Dialect and Vocal Coach **Lisa Nathans**, Casting Director **Victor Vazquez, CSA**, Dramaturg **Jocelyn Clarke**, Dramaturg **Soyica Diggs Colbert**, Assistant Set Designer **Riw Rakkulchon**, Assistant Director **Gregory Keng Strasser**, Stage Manager **Susan R. White**, Assistant Stage Manager **Ricky Ramón** and Production Assistant **Niew Bharyaguntra**.

Eduardo Machado (*Playwright*) was born in Cuba and came to the United States when he was nine. He is the author of over 40 plays, including *The Cook*, *Havana is Waiting*, *The Modern Ladies of Guanabacoa*, *Fabiola*, *Broken Eggs* and *Stevie Wants to Play the Blues*. His plays have been produced at Seattle Repertory, The Goodman, Hartford Stage, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Mark Taper Forum, Long Wharf, Hampstead Theatre in London, The Cherry Lane Theatre, Theater for the New City and Repertorio Español, among many others. He was formerly artistic director of INTAR Theatre in NY and has been a professor of playwriting at NYU Tisch and Columbia. He is the co-author of *Tastes Like Cuba: An Exile's Hunger for Home* and his plays are published by Samuel French and TCG.

Molly Smith (*Director*) has served as artistic director since 1998. Her more than 30 directing credits at Arena Stage include large-scale musicals, like *Anything Goes*, Disney's *Newsies*, *Carousel*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Oklahoma!*, *My Fair Lady*, *The Music Man*, *Cabaret*, *South Pacific*; new plays, like *Sovereignty*, *The Originalist*, *Camp David*, *Legacy of Light*, *The Women of Brewster 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. Molly 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 workshopped 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, Molly made her Broadway debut directing *The Velocity of Autumn*, following its critically acclaimed run at Arena Stage. She was 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. She also spearheaded a variety of other new online content, including a weekly talk show Molly's Salon, during the live performance hiatus.

Cast Biographies (in alphabetical order)

Marian Licha (*Celia Sánchez*) is excited about the *Celia and Fidel* comeback. She was last seen at Arena Stage as Sister Sonia in *Destiny of Desire* and as Ofelia in *Anna in the Tropics*. Other favorite roles include, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* (Round House Theatre), *Ana en el Tropico* and *The House of Spirits* (Gala Theatre). Select Regional and Off-Broadway credits include The Kennedy Center, Provincetown Playhouse, TOMI Theatre, Repertorio Espanol in NYC and The Capital Fringe Festival. She continues to tour with *Frida Vice-Versa*, a one-woman show. Some TV and film credits are *Homicide*, *Step Up 2*, *Americanish* and Comedy Central's *Lost in Pronunciation*. She's a proud member of EQUITY and AFTRA/SAG and the mother of two beautiful children. marianlichacom. Instagram: @Marianlich11.

Andhy Mendez (*Fidel Castro*) most recently appeared on stage as Ramoncito in the world premiere of *The Cubans* at the Miami New Drama/Colony Theatre in Miami, FL. Other theater credits include *Davenant's Macbeth* and *Timon of Athens* at the Folger Theatre in Washington, D.C.; the world premiere of *Confessions of a Cocaine Cowboy* at Miami New Drama/Colony Theatre; *Shakespeare in Love* at Cleveland Playhouse; and *Hamlet: Prince of Cuba* at Asolo Rep, with full performances in English and Spanish. Select NY credits include *Daughter of the Waves*, *Sotto Voce* and the world premiere of *Strawberry and Chocolate*. On film and television, Andhy will be in the upcoming feature film, *Scrapper*, and has appeared on many television shows including *Bull*, *Chicago PD*, *Blacklist* and *Orange Is the New Black*.

Liam Torres (*Manolo Ruiz*) is an actor, activist and teaching artist for Manhattan Theatre Club in New York. He is excited to be working with Molly Smith and Arena Stage. Liam has appeared in several Eduardo Machado plays, including: *Mariquitas*, *Paula* and *Havana Journal* at Theatre for the New City. His New York credits include: Tom in Intar's *Locusts Have No King*, *Lobster Face*, *Fit*, *The Hologram Theory*, *The Last Castrato* and *The Marital Bliss of Francis & Maxine*. Regional credits include: *Anna in the Tropics* at SpeakEasy in Boston; *Sleepwalkers* at Alliance Theatre in Atlanta; and *Better* at Pinter Studios in London. Film credits include: Lauren Fritz's film *Kabul*, *The Wounded and the Slain* and *Zoo* with Jermaine Hopkins.

Heather Velazquez (*Consuelo*)'s theater credits include: *Pipeline* (Lincoln Center); *American Mariachi* (Denver Center and The Old Globe); *Another Word for Beauty* (Goodman Theatre); *So Go the Ghosts of Mexico* (Sundance theatre Lab); *Rosario and the Gypsies* (Theatre for the New City); *Pinkolandia* (Intar); *Nobody Rides a Locomotive No Mo'* (Rising Circle Theatre). Television credits include: *Blue Bloods* and *Live from Lincoln Center (Pipeline)*.

For full company biographies, please visit arenastage.org/tickets/2021-22-season/celia-and-fidel.

Celia and Fidel is generously commissioned by **Drs. Elliot and Lily Gardner Feldman** and **BakerHostetler LLP** as part of Arena Stage's Insider Voices Power Play Cycle. Additional support provided by the **National Endowment for the Arts**.

Celia and Fidel is a fictional play inspired by historic events.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

Celia and Fidel

Written by Eduardo Machado

Directed by Molly Smith

In the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle | October 8 – November 21, 2021

ABOUT: It's 1980s Cuba and the revolution has reached a crazed tipping point. Fueled by a stagnant economy, 10,000 citizens have fled to the Peruvian Embassy in Cuba seeking asylum. As Fidel Castro grapples between his desire to maintain power and do what is best for his country, he turns to his closest confidant and political partner, Celia Sánchez for answers. What kind of a leader is he? Merciful or mighty? Imbued with magical realism, Eduardo Machado's *Celia and Fidel* — Arena Stage's seventh Power Play — imagines a fight between Cuba's most influential female revolutionary and its most notorious political leader.

CAST:

Celia Sánchez: Marian Licha

Fidel Castro: Andhy Mendez

Manolo Ruiz: Liam Torres

Consuelo: Heather Velazquez

CREATIVE TEAM:

Director: Molly Smith

Set Designer: Riccardo Hernández

Costume Designer: Alejo Vietti

Lighting Designer: Nicole Pearce

Original Music and Sound Design: Roc Lee

Hair and Wig Designer: Charles G. LaPointe

Fight and Intimacy Consultant: Jenny Male

Dialect and Vocal Coach: Lisa Nathans

Casting Director: Victor Vazquez, CSA

Dramaturgs: Jocelyn Clarke, Soyica Diggs Colbert

Assistant Set Designer: Riw Rakkulchon

Assistant Director: Gregory Keng Strasser

Stage Manager: Susan R. White
Assistant Stage Manager: Ricky Ramón
Production Assistant: Niew Bharyaguntra

PLAN YOUR VISIT

TICKETS: Tickets for *Celia and Fidel* are \$40-95, subject to change and based on availability, plus applicable fees. For information on savings programs such as pay-your-age tickets, student discounts, Southwest Nights and hero's discounts, visit arenastage.org/tickets/savings-programs.

Tickets may be purchased online at arenastage.org, by phone at 202-488-3300 or at the Sales Office at 1101 Sixth Street, SW, D.C. The Sales Office is open Tuesday – Sunday, 12:00-8:00 for phone purchases and beginning 90 minutes prior to each performance until curtain for in person purchases. **Please note that proof of vaccination against COVID-19 and photo identification must be shown to enter the building.**

Sales Office/Subscriptions: 202-488-3300
Group Sales Hotline for 10+ Tickets: 202-488-4380
TTY for deaf patrons: 202-484-0247
Info for patrons with disabilities: 202-488-3300

PERFORMANCE DATES:

Sunday, Tuesday & Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, Friday & Saturday at 8 p.m.

Saturday & Sunday at 2 p.m.

Weekday matinees at noon on Wednesday, October 27, Wednesday, November 3 and Tuesday, November 9.

Open-captioned performance: November 11 at 8 p.m. and November 17 at 7:30 p.m.

Audio-described performance: October 23 at 2 p.m.

Southwest Night: November 18, 2021 at 8 p.m.

Full Calendar: arenastage.org/tickets/calendar

STAY SAFE: Proof of vaccination against COVID-19 and photo identification must be shown to enter the building. Arena Stage is requiring that patrons, staff and volunteers wear facial masks inside the Mead Center regardless of vaccination status. Enhanced cleaning and sanitization will take place throughout the building. For superior air quality, we have upgraded our ventilation/filtration systems and have implemented a full digital ticketing system that will include contactless ticket scanning and digital programs. These conditions are subject to change. For the latest information, visit arenastage.org/staysafe.

METRO: Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater is only one block from the Waterfront-SEU Metro station (Green Line). When exiting the station, walk west on M Street toward Sixth Street, and the main entrance to the Mead Center is on the right.

PARKING: Parking is available in Arena Stage's on-site garage. Subscribers may purchase parking in advance for \$18. Single ticket buyers may purchase parking in advance for \$25 or on the day of the performance for \$27 on a first-come, first-served basis. Limited handicapped parking is available by reservation. Advanced parking must be reserved by calling 202-488-3300. The entrance to the Mead Center garage is on Maine Avenue between Sixth and Seventh streets, and the garage closes one hour after the day's last performance ends. Patrons can also park at the Public Parking Garage at 1101 Fourth Street, one block from the Mead Center, for \$18 when pre-purchased and \$22 on the day of the performance.

VALET PARKING: Arena Stage offers valet service at no additional cost to patrons with accessibility needs who call 202-488-3300 in advance to request valet parking. On days when valet parking is being used for accessibility, it is also available to general patrons one hour prior to show time for \$30, based on availability. To use valet parking, pull up to the main entrance on Sixth Street.

For complete 2021/22 Season details, visit: arenastage.org/tickets/2122-subscriptions.

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 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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