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ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES CAST AND CREATIVE FOR KAREN ZACARÍAS'S GLITTERING ADAPTION OF

THE AGE OF INNOCENCE

By EDITH WHARTON Adapted for the Stage by KAREN ZACARÍAS Directed by HANA S. SHARIF

(Washington, DC) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater announced today the cast and creative team for *The Age of Innocence*. A searing critique of high society's suffocating norms, Karen Zacarías (*Native Gardens, Destiny of Desire*) brings Edith Wharton's timeless masterpiece to the stage. Coming to the theater's iconic in-the-round Fichandler Stage, *The Age of Innocence* will run February 28 – March 30, 2025, directed by Arena Stage Artistic Director Hana S. Sharif. Press Night will be held on March 6. For more information and tickets, visit <u>arenastage.org/innocence</u>.

"I am delighted to bring to life Edith Wharton's bitingly funny and haunting love story to my home theater of Arena Stage," said **Zacarías**. "Now is the perfect time to engage in a tale of romantic ideals overrun by the machinations of society, wealth, and power. Hana Sharif's gorgeously lavish production cuts to the quick of Wharton's wit. The Gilded Age was then...and is now."

Against the lush backdrop of 1870s New York, where hypocrisy thrives and forbidden romances simmer, *The Age of Innocence* follows Newland Archer as he grapples with the rigid constraints of privilege and Countess Ellen Olenska as she battles the suffocating cage of entitlement, desire, and tradition in pursuit of her own destiny. Surrounded by an ocean of societal conformity where love clashes with duty and innocence is sacrificed, this entrancing adaptation unveils the tear between tradition and the allure of hidden passions, presenting a riveting tale of prohibited desires.

"I am ecstatic to be directing Karen Zacarias' glittering adaptation of *The Age of Innocence* as my debut on one of the most iconic in-the-round stages in the American theater," said **Sharif**. "Karen has tackled Edith Wharton's magnus opus with immense grace, poetically capturing the passion and intrigue of relationships simmering under the surface in a time of strict societal rules."

January 30, 2025



Reprising their roles from the 2024 world-premiere production at San Diego's The Old Globe are cast members **Shereen Ahmed** (Broadway's *My Fair Lady*) as Ellen and **Delphi Borich** (Broadway's *Into the Woods*) as May.

Returning to Arena Stage are **Regina Aquino** (*Holiday*), **Lise Bruneau** (*Watch on the Rhine*), **Felicia Curry** (*Death on the Nile*), **Natalya Lynette Rathnam** (*POTUS*), **Jacob Yeh** (*The 51st State* docudrama), **Kim Bey** (*The Little Foxes*), **Peter Boyer** (*Holiday*), and **Lilli Hokama** (*Death on the Nile*).

Making their Arena Stage debuts in *The Age of Innocence* are **Anna Theoni DiGiovanni** (STC's *Leopoldstadt*), **Paolo Montalban** (Walt Disney Television's *Rodgers & Hammerstein's Cinderella*), **Anthony Newfield** (Broadway's *1984*), **Noah Mutterperl** (Kennedy Center's National Tour of *Look Both Ways*), and Tony nominee **A.J. Shively** (Broadway's *Paradise Square*) as Newland Archer.

Sharif will lead a brilliant team of creatives that include set designer Timothy Mackabee (Broadway's *Frozen*), costume designer Fabio Toblini (Broadway's *Romeo and Juliet*), lighting designer Xavier Pierce (Broadway's *Clybourne Park*), original music and sound designers Charles Coes (Broadway's *To Kill a Mockingbird*) & Nathan A. Roberts (Off-Broadway's *Golden Shield*), wig, hair, and makeup designer Tommy Kurzman (Broadway's *Uncle Vanya*), and dialect and vocal coach Lisa Nathans (Arena's *Death on the Nile*). Dramaturgy is by Otis Ramsey-Zöe, New York casting is by Stephanie Klapper Casting / Stephanie Klapper, CSA, and DC casting is by Raiyon Hunter. The stage manager is Christi B. Spann and assistant stage manager is Stefania Giron Zuluaga.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Shereen Ahmed (*Ellen*) was most recently seen starring as Claudia in the Broadway Center Stage revival of *Nine* at the Kennedy Center. Broadway: *My Fair Lady*. National Tour: Eliza in *My Fair Lady* (LA Drama Critics Nomination). Off Broadway: Franca in *The Light in the Piazza* (Encores!), Adele in *A Man of No Importance* (Classic Stage Company). Regional: Ellen in *The Age of Innocence* (Old Globe World Premiere). Shereen has performed at the White House for President Biden, filmed a PBS live telecast performance with the Boston Pops, and starred as Joan in *Strike Up the Band* and Iolanthe in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe* at Carnegie Hall. TV/Film: *New Amsterdam, Beltline to Broadway, The Broadway Show with Tamsen Fadel*. Shereen has been featured in Vogue Arabia and has been recognized as one of '40 Under 40' accomplished Arab Americans in the U.S for her work in the theatre. She was a guest speaker for the United Nations 14th Conference of States Parties and is a global ambassador for Education for Employment (EFE). Shereen holds a BS in Criminal Justice from Towson University. Instagram: @shereen_ahmed

Regina Aquino *she/her/siya* (*Mrs. Archer*) is a proud DC area native who grew up between DC and Manila. She has performed on most of DC's stages, the Kennedy Center, and at Lincoln Center in NYC. She is delighted to return to Arena Stage, previously appearing in *Holiday*. Nominated for multiple Helen Hayes Awards, in 2019 she earned Outstanding Lead Performer in a Play for her work in *The Events*. She is the first Filipino to receive the distinction, one of *Washingtonian Magazine*'s "10 Biggest Theater Stars of DC." She founded Origin Stories Productions to create Filipino forward art with multiple film/TV projects in development. Her first feature documentary, *Faith Healers*, which she wrote, directed, and

produced, will World Premiere at the Manila International Film Festival at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Hollywood this year. For her children, R and M, always.

Delphi Borich (*May*) is thrilled to make her Arena Stage debut in *The Age of Innocence* after originating the role of May Welland at The Old Globe. She recently appeared on Broadway in the revivals of *Into the Woods* and *Camelot*. Her regional credits include Viola in *Twelfth Night* (Dallas Theatre Center), Emily Webb in *Our Town* (Lyceum Theatre), Kendra/Jenna in *Gloria* (Asolo Rep), Belle in *Beauty and the Beast*, Ariel in *The Little Mermaid* (Theatre Under the Stars), and more. Television credits include *FBI: Most Wanted* and *WeCrashed*. Delphi is passionate about the development of new works like *The Age of Innocence* and has had the privilege of working with other talented emerging writers such as Isabella Dawis and Tidtaya Sunotoke, Imri Leshed and Candice Hatakeyama, and Nikki Massoud. Proud graduate of Syracuse University. Instagram: @delphiborich

Lise Bruneau (*Mrs. van der Luyden / Understudy Granny Mingott*) is thrilled to return to Arena where she's appeared in *Watch on the Rhine, Junk,* Karen Zacarias' beautiful *Legacy of Light*, and others. Other DC performances include *Othello* (Emilia), *Hamlet*, and *The Winter's Tale* at Shakespeare Theatre; productions at Studio and Theatre J; and she recently received a Helen Hayes award for *The Honey Trap* at Solas Nua. In New York, she has appeared at the Park Avenue Armory and the Roundabout. She has played in numerous regional theatres across the country, such as Denver Center (*Hesione in Heartbreak House*, Henry Award), ACT San Francisco (*Sweat*), and Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park (*The Revolutionists*). She is an accomplished director, having helmed numerous productions across the DMV and beyond. Lise trained at RADA and is a Taffety Punk.

Felicia Curry (*Granny Mingott*) last appeared at Arena Stage in Ken Ludwig's *Death on the Nile*. Most recently, she was in the one-woman thriller, *Sandra*, at TheaterWorks Hartford, and performed her solo cabaret at Everyman Theatre. Felicia received a Helen Hayes Award for *Lela* & *Co.* at Factory 449 where she is a company member. She is also a Resident Company Member at Everyman Theatre and an Artistic Associate at Ford's Theatre. Felicia made her Broadway debut in the Tony-nominated revival of *Into the Woods*, and then toured with the show around the country, including at The Kennedy Center. She has a Berkshire Theatre Critics Award, a RTCC Award, an Anderson-Hopkins Award, and is a two-time AUDELCO nominee for *Queens Girl in the World* at Abingdon Theatre and *Fabulation* at The Billie Holiday Theatre, both off-Broadway. Felicia has been named one of "12 DC Stage Dynamos" by *The Washington Post* and one of "DC's Biggest Theater Stars" by *Washingtonian* magazine. She is on the WAPAVA Board of Directors and the Emmy-nominated host of *WETA Arts* on PBS. Instagram: @thefeliciacurry

Anna Theoni DiGiovanni (Janey Archer / Understudy Ellen, May) is over the moon to be making her Arena Stage debut with this classic story. She was recently seen in the Shakespeare Theatre Company's production of *Leopoldstadt* and also appeared at The Kennedy Center in the premiere of *Through the Sunken Lands* and Mosaic Theatre Company's *The Till Trilogy*. Other favorite DC credits include *Twelfth Night* (Her Majesty & Sons, Founding Producer), *Cry It Out* (Studio Theatre), *She Kills Monsters* (Rorschach Theatre), *Venus in Fur* (4615 Theatre), *The Revolutionists, Bike America, The Explorers Club* (Prologue Theatre Company), *Pericles* (Shakespeare Theatre Company's Academy for Classical Acting). Anna is a proud graduate of The Shakespeare Theatre Company's Academy at George Washington University. www.annadigiovanni.com **Paolo Montalban** (*Beaufort*) is making his Arena Stage debut! He returns to the area where he played the King in *The King & I* at Olney Theatre. He's appeared on Broadway in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *Pacific Overtures*, *The King & I*, and most recently in *Funny Girl* as Florenz Ziegfeld. Off-Broadway, he originated the roles of Kurt Huber in *White Rose: The Musical* and Tommy Haw in *Bella: An American Tall Tale* at Playwrights Horizons. Mr. Montalban is best known for his television roles of Prince Christopher in Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella* and Kung Lao on *Mortal Kombat: Conquest*. He most recently appeared as King Charming in *Descendants: The Rise of Red*, now on Disney+. He is a Lunt-Fontanne Fellowship recipient and a Lucille Lortel nominee. Instagram: @itspaolomontalban

Anthony Newfield (*Sillerton Jackson*)'s Washington, D.C. credits include Orson's Shadow (Laurence Olivier) at Round House Theatre and *Love's Labour's Lost* (Boyet) for Shakespeare Theatre Company. Broadway credits include 1984, The Father, The Winslow Boy, The Columnist, The Royal Family, Waiting for Godot, Tartuffe; and Off-Broadway credits include Ivanov with Ethan Hawke (Classic Stage), Susan and God (Mint), etc. Irish credits include Ned Weeks in The Normal Heart (The Project, Dublin, and National Tour), T.S. Eliot in Tom and Viv (Rough Magic), and Peer Gynt (Gate Theatre). US regional theatre credits include Mr. Bennet in Pride and Prejudice at Baltimore's Center Stage directed by Hana S. Sharif; Arcadia at Boston's Huntington; Atticus Finch in To Kill a Mockingbird at California's TheatreWorks. TV/Film work includes I Melt With You, All My Children, Diagnosis: Murder, etc. www.anthonynewfield.com

Natalya Lynette Rathnam (*Mrs. Welland*) is so excited to be back at Arena! DC area productions: POTUS: Or, Behind Every Great Dumbass Are Seven Women Trying to Keep Him Alive (*Helen Hayes Nominee for Outstanding Ensemble), Our War (Arena Stage); Lend Me A Soprano, A Nice Indian Boy (Olney Theatre Center); A Midsummer Night's Dream (Everyman Theatre); The Last Match (*Helen Hayes Nominee for Outstanding Supporting Performer/Outstanding Ensemble), The Phlebotomist (1st Stage); A Wind In The Door, Kid Prince and Pablo, Mockingbird, The Wings of Ikarus Jackson (Kennedy Center); 4,380 Nights (Signature Theatre); Bars and Measures, Shame 2.0, When January Feels Like Summer (Mosaic Theater Company); Death of A Salesman (Ford's Theatre); The Trojan Women (Taffety Punk). Regional: Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Actors Theatre of Louisville, American Stage. Social: @natalyalynetterathnam

A.J. Shively (*Newland Archer*) Arena Stage debut. A.J. has worked extensively in regional theatre, including at The Kennedy Center (*Bright Star*), and Baltimore Center Stage (*Pride And Prejudice*). Broadway credits include *Paradise Square* (Tony, OCC, Chita Rivera Award nominations), *Bright Star* (Drama Desk nomination), and *La Cage Aux Folles*. Off-Broadway credits include *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* (Theatre World Awards' Dorothy Loudon Award; Drama Desk, Lortel nominations) at Irish Repertory Theatre, *A Man Of No Importance* (Lortel Award; OCC nomination) at Classic Stage Company, *Titanic* at Encores!, and *February House* at The Public. His film and television work includes leading roles in *Other People's Bodies* (upcoming), *Julia* (HBO Max), *Bull* (CBS), and *Hunters* (Amazon Prime). A.J. trained at The University of Michigan and The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.

Jacob Yeh (*Dallas / Understudy Newland Archer*) last appeared at Arena Stage in *The 51st State*. Other DC credits include *King of the Yees* (Signature Theatre, Helen Hayes Award nomination for Outstanding Supporting Actor), *Vietgone and Chimerica* (Studio Theatre), *Yellowface* (Theater J), *Julius Caesar* (Shakespeare Theatre Company), *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* (Folger Theatre), *How the Light Gets In* (Helen Hayes Award Nomination for Outstanding Supporting Actor), *The Farnsworth Invention*,

Take Me Out, Fuddy Meers, Trevor (1st Stage Tysons), East of Eden (NextStop Theatre, Helen Hayes Award Nomination for Outstanding Supporting Actor), The School for Lies (Constellation Theatre), The Horse and Carriage (Prologue Theatre), Dragon King's Daughter (The Kennedy Center), Anime Momotaro (Imagination Stage). Regional credits include The Chinese Lady (American Stage, FL). www.jacobyeh.com

Kim Bey (Understudy Mrs. Archer, Mrs. van der Luyden) was last seen at Arena Stage in The Little Foxes as Addie. Other D.C. credits include Maggie in the U.S. premiere of Nine Night and Suzanne in Sleep Deprivation Chamber at Round House Theatre, Citizen One in Something Moving at Ford's Theatre and as Mary Seacole in Marys Seacole at Mosaic Theatre. Additional regional credits are with Center Stage Theatre in Baltimore as Auntie Fola in Beneatha's Place, and as Lena Younger in A Raisin in the Sun at the Lyric Theater in Utah. Off-Broadway credits are at Second Stage as Grace in Zooman and the Sign, and as Grace in Salt at the Actor's Studio. Kim is a voice contributor on the African American History is American History podcast on YouTube.

Peter Boyer (Understudy Beaufort, Sillerton Jackson) previously appeared at Arena Stage as Henry in Holiday and as Voice in The High Ground. Notable roles include Ebenezer Scrooge in A Broadway Christmas Carol and Whistle in Uprising at Metro Stage; Groucho Marx in Groucho: A Life in Revue at Wayside Theatre; Dromio of Syracuse in The Comedy of Errors at Baltimore Shakespeare Festival; Captain Hook in Tinkerbell and Captain Braidbeard in How I Became a Pirate at Adventure Theatre; and Charles Dickens in Discord and Mr. Praed in Mrs. Warren's Profession at Washington Stage Guild. His recent plays Captain Hook: My Story, Or How I Clawed My Way To The Top and Tofana Bobana have received multiple productions in the Washington-Baltimore area. www.petersbrain.art

Lilli Hokama (Understudy Janey Archer, Mrs. Welland) is thrilled to return to Arena for this production. DC credits include Death on the Nile (Understudy) at Arena Stage; A Midsummer Night's Dream and Amadeus at Folger Shakespeare Theater, where you can catch her as Viola in their upcoming production of Twelfth Night. As an actor, voice actor, and director, past highlights include: The Wolves (Understudy #25, #7, #13, #00) at Lincoln Center Theater; Little Women, co-produced by Dallas Theater Center and The Old Globe; Now Circa Then and I and You at Chester Theatre Company; Matt & Ben at Kitchen Theatre Company; Antigone at Baltimore Center Stage; Water By The Spoonful, Elf The Musical, and Guadalupe in the Guest Room at the Fine Arts Center in Colorado. She also presented an original story for We Hear You - A Climate Archive, presented at The Kennedy Center and Dramaten- The Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm. TV credits include Prodigal Son, and several short films including Jellybones, and Chip! Voice acting and motion capture for Khan Tran in The Expanse produced by Deck Nine and Telltale games. She also recently recorded the audio book for When Darcy Met Lizzy - A Queer Remix of Pride and Prejudice. Directing credits include Night of the Living Dead presented by Rorschach theater in DC. Other directing credits include Red by John Logan; a zoom play called Henry Makes a Bible by AJ Clauss presented by Ensemble Studio Theatre; and the world premiere of Rat Jaw by AJ Clauss, produced by their co-owned theater company Stomping Ground Theatre which focuses on bringing high fidelity art to rural America. It is an honor and privilege for Lilli to be here, eternal gratitude to her partner, family, and friends.

Noah Mutterperl *he/him* (*Understudy Dallas*) is thrilled to make his Arena debut! DC Area: Kennedy Center: *Look Both Ways* (National Tour); Keegan Theatre: *Woman In Black* (Kipps); Monumental Theatre

Company: American Psycho (Paul); Workhouse Performing Arts: The Hunchback of Notre Dame (Phoebus), Dracula: A Comedy of Terrors (Dracula), The Drowsy Chaperone (Robert), The Who's Tommy (Uncle Ernie). Upcoming: Olney Theatre Center: Senior Class. Much love to Alyssa, Cap, and the family. Web: <u>nmutterperl.com</u>; Instagram: <u>@noah_mutterperl</u>

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

THE AGE OF INNOCENCE By Edith Wharton Adapted for the Stage by Karen Zacarías Directed by Hana S. Sharif In the Fichandler Stage | February 28 – March 30, 2025

ABOUT: Against the lavish backdrop of 1870s New York, where hypocrisy thrives and hidden passions simmer, Karen Zacarías brings Edith Wharton's timeless masterpiece, *The Age of Innocence*, to the stage. This adaptation unveils a searing critique of high society's suffocating norms, presenting a riveting tale of forbidden desires. Surrounded on all sides by an ocean of societal conformity, love clashes with duty, and innocence is sacrificed. Follow the compelling journey of Newland Archer as he grapples with the rigid constraints of privilege, torn between tradition and the allure of forbidden passion.

CAST:

Ellen: Shereen Ahmed* Mrs. Archer: Regina Aquino* May: Delphi Borich* Mrs. van der Luyden / Understudy Granny Mingott: Lise Bruneau* Granny Mingott: Felicia Curry* Janey Archer / Understudy Ellen, May: Anna Theoni DiGiovanni* Beaufort: Paolo Montalban* Sillerton Jackson: Anthony Newfield* Mrs. Welland: Natalya Lynette Rathnam* Newland Archer: A.J. Shively* Dallas / Understudy Newland Archer: Jacob Yeh* Understudy Mrs. Archer, Mrs. van der Luyden: Kim Bey* Understudy Beaufort, Sillerton Jackson: Peter Boyer* Understudy Janey Archer, Mrs. Welland: Lilli Hokama* Understudy Dallas: Noah Mutterperl

CREATIVE:

Author: Edith Wharton Playwright: Karen Zacarías Director: Hana S. Sharif Set Designer: Timothy Mackabee Costume Designer: Fabio Toblini Lighting Designer: Xavier Pierce Original Music and Sound Design: Charles Coes & Nathan A. Roberts Wig, Hair, and Makeup Designer: Tommy Kurzman Dialect and Vocal Coach: Lisa Nathans Dramaturg: Otis Ramsey-Zöe New York Casting: Stephanie Klapper Casting / Stephanie Klapper, CSA DC Casting: Raiyon Hunter Stage Manager: Christi B. Spann* Assistant Stage Manager: Stefania Giron Zuluaga*

*Members of Actors' Equity Association

Support for The Age of Innocence is provided by Sue Henry and Carter Phillips and PNC.

PLAN YOUR VISIT

TICKETS: Tickets start at \$59 plus applicable fees. Ticket prices and availability are subject to change.

Tickets are available at <u>arenastage.org</u>. Tickets may also be purchased through the Sales Office by phone at 202-488-3300, Tuesday-Sunday, 12-8 p.m., or in person at 1101 Sixth Street, SW, D.C., Tuesday-Sunday, 2 hours prior to a performance.

Groups of 10+ may purchase tickets by phone at 202-488-4380.

Arena Stage's many savings programs include "pay your age" tickets for those aged 35 and under; military, first responder, and educator discounts; student discounts; and "Southwest Nights" for those living and working in the District's Southwest neighborhood. To learn more, visit arenastage.org/savings-programs.

PERFORMANCE DATES:

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Sunday at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Friday, and Saturday at 8 p.m. Saturday and Sunday at 2 p.m. Weekday matinees at 12 p.m. on March 12, March 20, and March 26

Early Curtain: Sunday, March 23 at 6 p.m.
Southwest Nights: Sunday, March 9 at 2 p.m. and Friday, March 14 at 8 p.m.
Audio-Described Performance: Saturday, March 29 at 2 p.m.
ASL-Interpreted Performance: Saturday, March 29 at 2 p.m.
Mask-Required Performances: Saturday, March 8 at 2 p.m. and Tuesday, March 25 at 7:30 p.m.
Closed Captioning: GalaPro begins Friday, March 7

Industry Night: Sunday, March 2 at 7:30 p.m.Pride Night: Wednesday, March 5 at 7:30 p.m.HBCU/Divine Nine Night: Thursday, March 13 at 8 p.m.

Steeped in Success: A Tea Party Celebration of DC's Women Leaders: Saturday, March 15, 12 to 3 p.m. A *The Age of Innocence* inspired tea party celebrating female leaders in the DC community. More details to come.

Post-Show Conversations

Connect with the show beyond the performance at a post-show conversation on March 12, March 20, and March 26 following the 12 p.m. matinees, March 18 following the 7:30 p.m., and March 27 following the 8 p.m. performance.

TRAVEL: Limited parking is available in Arena Stage's on-site garage for \$18 to \$35, including drive-up valet parking for \$30. Call 202-488-3300 to purchase in advance. For more information on transportation and other parking options around the Mead Center, visit <u>arenastage.org/parking</u>.

DINING: Enjoy sumptuous Beijing-style cuisine at **Philippe Chow**, the official Restaurant Partner of Arena Stage, located directly across Maine Avenue from the theater. Whether it's a casual dinner or a special occasion, enjoy the Arena Stage dining experience that will get you to the show on time! Ask for one of the Arena Stage menus starting at \$59 per person. Duck Lovers are advised to pre-order the famous Peking Duck carved table-side. Learn more about Philippe Chow here.

Philippe by Philippe Chow is Arena Stage's Official Restaurant Partner.

For all upcoming Arena Stage programming, visit arenastage.org/season.

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. <u>arenastage.org</u>

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