

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 2022/23 SEASON

The seven-play season of “surviving and thriving” kicks off July 1, 2022

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage Artistic Director **Molly Smith** and Executive Producer **Edgar Dobie** today announced the company’s 73rd season, which is also Smith’s 25th as Artistic Director. Beginning with a much-anticipated—and timely—world-premiere musical in Summer 2022, the upcoming season features two new Power Plays, a classic romantic comedy, a timely new drama, a quirky cult musical and a landmark work of the American theater. Subscriptions are now available for purchase at arenastage.org/subscribe.

“Reflective of our shared experience, our 2022/23 Season is one of surviving and thriving,” said **Smith**. “It’s an affirmation of community bonds and identities, which keep us going, not just every day, but during the most complex of times. The work you will see on our stages are a mix of classic and modern, comedy and drama, musicals and music-filled, and *all* the absolute best in their classes.”

The season will kick off in July with the groundbreaking world-premiere musical ***American Prophet***. Created by Arena favorite Charles Randolph-Wright (Arena’s *Born for This: The BeBe Winans Story*, Broadway’s *Motown the Musical*) and Grammy Award winner Marcus Hummon (“Bless the Broken Road”), *American Prophet* is powered by Douglass’ own speeches and writings and filled with soaring new melodies. Cornelius Smith Jr. (ABC’s *Scandal*, *All My Children*) will star as the fierce abolitionist.

“Arena Stage has been my artistic home for over 20 years,” said **Randolph-Wright**, when he accepted the American Artist Award from Arena Stage earlier this year. “I am proud to be part of a theatre that has been diverse and inclusive since its inception; it’s a place that has emboldened me to try any and everything.”

Once ***American Prophet*** closes, Arena’s subscription season continues with:

- First, Philip Barry’s sparkling romantic comedy ***Holiday*** about haves, have-nots and pursuing a life worth living. This elegant production, famously a beloved film starring Katharine Hepburn and Cary Grant, will be directed by Arena’s own Anita Maynard-Losh in the Fichandler Stage.
- The season continues with a presentation of ***Sanctuary City***, a new play from 2018 Pulitzer Prize winner Martyna Majok about two immigrants who will do whatever it takes to establish a place for themselves and each other in America. “What are we willing to sacrifice for someone we love? That’s the quintessential question at the heart of this moving story,” noted **Smith**.
- Kicking off 2023 is ***Ride the Cyclone***, Brooke Maxwell and Jacob Richmond’s quirky musical about six teenagers who, after dying in a freak amusement park accident, vie for the chance to sing their way back to life. Part comedy, part tragedy and wholly unexpected, this wild musical reveals the resilience of the human spirit despite senseless tragedy.

- Arena's first Power Play of the season, ***The High Ground***, takes us back to the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, when Tulsa's Greenwood District was almost destroyed over just 24 hours. "We have seen time and time again that decades of repercussions follow after violence is perpetrated on a community," said **Smith**. "Playwright Nathan Alan Davis' elegant and moving writing reminds us viscerally of this."
- Next up is Tony Kushner's Pulitzer Prize- and Tony Award-winning drama ***Angels in America, Part One: Millennium Approaches***, staged in-the-round in the Fichandler, by the brilliant Hungarian director and filmmaker János Szász. Thirty years after its Broadway premiere, this landmark of American theater continues to speak to our nation's views on sexuality, religion and politics.
- Closing the 2022/23 Season is ***Exclusion***, an unexpectedly funny story about a female scholar who is overwhelmed defending the authenticity of her best-selling book on the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 after it is optioned for, and becomes, a hit TV show. The season's second Power Play by writer Kenneth Lin focuses on truth, fiction and who gets to tell the story. With wry insights into the world of filmmaking and Hollywood, it will immediately strike a chord with anyone who has ever worked in an office.

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater 2022/23 Schedule

American Prophet

By Frederick Douglass, Charles Randolph-Wright & Marcus Hummon

Music & Lyrics by Marcus Hummon

Directed by Charles Randolph-Wright

In the Kreeger Theater | July 15 – August 28, 2022

Charles Randolph-Wright (Arena's *Born for This: The BeBe Winans Story*, Broadway's *Motown the Musical*) returns to Arena Stage with a groundbreaking musical powered by Frederick Douglass' own speeches and writings. Coupled with soaring new melodies and an original script from Grammy Award-winning songwriter Marcus Hummon and Randolph-Wright, Douglass rises as a fierce abolitionist and distinguished orator. Filled with an electrifying new score, this world premiere celebrates the revolutionary legacy of one of history's first freedom fighters, whose fire is needed now more than ever.

Holiday

By Philip Barry

Directed by Anita Maynard-Losh

In the Fichandler Stage | October 7 – November 6, 2022

An up-and-coming Wall Street lawyer from a working-class family aspires to quit and enjoy life once he's made enough money, a prospect that doesn't thrill his well-born fiancée but excites her more unconventional sister. Can his dreams survive his soon-to-be bride's narrow view of affluence? Opposing societal hierarchies and differing views of success confront each other in this timely commentary on how to pursue a life worth living. This classic romantic comedy set in the 1920s became a beloved 1938 film starring Cary Grant and Katharine Hepburn.

Sanctuary City

By Martyna Majok

In the Kreeger Theater | October 21 – November 27, 2022

Pulitzer Prize winner Martyna Majok brings us the powerful story of two young DREAMers who fight to establish a place for themselves in America, the only country they know as home. Poignant, timely and highly theatrical, *Sanctuary City* illuminates the triumphs and challenges these lifelong friends face, and how much they are willing to risk for each other when they have everything to lose.

Ride the Cyclone

Book, Music & Lyrics by Brooke Maxwell & Jacob Richmond

Directed by Sarah Rasmussen

Co-Production with McCarter Theatre Center

In the Kreeger Theater | January 13 – February 19, 2023

Part comedy, part tragedy and wholly unexpected, this wildly imaginative story delivers surprises at every turn and is destined to become a cult musical. The lives of six teenagers from a Canadian chamber choir are cut short in a freak accident aboard a roller coaster. A mechanical fortune-teller invites each to tell their story of a life interrupted, offering the chance to come to terms with their fates. At once quirky and smart, edgy and beautiful, *Ride the Cyclone* ultimately reveals the resilience of the human spirit in spite of senseless tragedy.

The High Ground

By Nathan Alan Davis

Directed by Megan Sandberg-Zakian

In the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle | February 10 – April 2, 2023

A Black man in an army uniform stands his ground atop Tulsa's Standpipe Hill, bearing witness to the destruction and desecration of Tulsa's Greenwood District — but other forces, both friendly and hostile, conspire to remove him. A play in conversation with Tulsa, Oklahoma's 1921 race massacre, *The High Ground* offers a complex portrait of what it means to bear witness, to resist and to move forward from devastation.

Angels in America, Part One: Millennium Approaches

By Tony Kushner

Directed by János Szász

In the Fichandler Stage | March 24 – April 23, 2023

Tony Kushner's Pulitzer Prize- and Tony Award-winning drama *Angels in America* is one of the great epic American plays of this past century. We meet Louis and Prior and Harper and Joe, two couples whose relationships are on the rocks; the former because of Prior's AIDS diagnosis and Louis' inability to cope with illness, and the latter because of Joe's closeted homosexuality and Harper's incessant fears and hallucinations. The brilliant Hungarian director and filmmaker János Szász will stage *Angels in America, Part One: Millennium Approaches* in-the-round 30 years after its Broadway premiere.

Exclusion

By Kenneth Lin

In the Kreeger Theater | May 5 – June 25, 2023

A reluctant historian is thrown out of her element when her acclaimed book about the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 is optioned by a larger-than-life Hollywood mogul with a track record for making smash-hit TV shows. The professional bleeds into the personal when she finds herself weighing the historical facts against her own awakening ambitions. In a hilarious workplace comedy with teeth, tensions rise and deals are made during an awards ceremony in a twist you won't see coming.

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

Presenting Sponsorship for American Prophet is generously provided by Exelon. Prime Sponsorship for American Prophet is generously provided by AARP, Dan and Gloria Logan and Tiffeny Sanchez and Reg Brown. Supporting Sponsorship for American Prophet is generously provided by Andrew R. Ammerman, Judith N. Batty, The Drutz Family Fund for Musical Theater, GEICO, Dr. Donald Wallace Jones, Dr. Betty Jean Tolbert Jones and Tracey Tolbert Jones, PNC, R. Lucia Riddle and David Bruce Smith and The Grateful American Foundation. Contributing Sponsorship is provided by Sandy and Jon Willen.

American Prophet is the recipient of an Edgerton Foundation New Play Award.

The High Ground is the recipient of an Edgerton Foundation New Play Award.

Subscription packages are now on sale and may be purchased by visiting arenastage.org/subscribe or by calling the Arena Stage Sales Office at 202-488-3300. Sales Office hours are Tuesday through Sunday from noon until 8 p.m.

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

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