

# MEDIA RELEASE

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



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM FOR THE GREAT  
AMERICAN EPIC

## **ANGELS IN AMERICA, PART ONE: MILLENNIUM APPROACHES**

By TONY KUSHNER  
Directed by JÁNOS SZÁSZ

(Washington D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater announced today the cast and creative team of its upcoming production of *Angels in America, Part One: Millennium Approaches*, which will run **March 24 – April 23, 2023**, in the iconic in-the-round **Fichandler Stage**. Written by one of the country's most celebrated playwrights, **Tony Kushner**, and directed by internationally acclaimed Hungarian-American film and theater director **János Szász**, Arena Stage's production will reimagine this great American epic through innovative in-the-round staging, making it a "must-see" theater event. Press Night will be held on **Thursday, March 30 at 7:00 p.m.** For information and tickets, please visit [arenastage.org/angels](http://arenastage.org/angels).

*Angels in America, Part One: Millennium Approaches*, won both the 1993 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and four 1993 Tony Awards®, including Best Play (it was nominated for nine Tony Awards®). The gripping story follows how the lives of six New Yorkers intersect at a time when society and politics are rapidly changing, including a gay man abandoned by his lover when he contracts HIV, and a closeted Mormon lawyer's stalling marriage to his pill-popping wife. This spring marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its Broadway premiere.

"János Szász is a superbly talented Hungarian director in both theater and film," said Arena Stage Artistic Director **Molly Smith**. "He brings a unique vision to each project. His film director's eye enhances his ability to create a wild and unbridled world on stage visually, as well as draws deep relationships from the actors. We met on an international exchange through Philip Arnault and the Center for International Theatre Development many years ago and was knocked out by his work. I immediately invited him to Arena to direct *A Streetcar Named Desire* in 2001. I always love it when someone from another part of the world directs an American classic."

"I have always worked with classic material," shared **Szász**. "*Angels in America* is, for me, a classic. It is classical in a way that the most modern dramas are. For me this play is very poetic. A story of loyalty vs. abandonment, suffering and pleasure, fear of death and sensuality. And a celebration of love! Yes, sometimes hopeless, but beautifully funny."

In addition to staging Tennessee Williams' landmark work—also in Arena's in-the-round Fichandler Stage—Szász has an extensive history directing bold adaptations of classics, such as his groundbreaking productions of *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *Uncle Vanya*, *The Seagull*, and more at the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

“It has been 22 years since I was at Arena with *Streetcar*,” reflected **Szász**. “I was honored when Molly invited me back after so many years to stage *Angels in America*. I can hardly find the words to express my appreciation. My family left our country. But I am finding a new home here. I am finding a new stage. I am grateful forever.”

*Angels in America*'s prominent themes—including antisemitism, prejudice, and creating one's own community—have particular resonance for Szász. “János has directed plays throughout Hungary, Norway, and the United States, and has a big film career in Europe,” said **Smith**. “Sadly, the rise in antisemitism in Europe put him and his family at risk. Their home was raided, and their lives threatened. My partner Suzanne and a member of our Board along with staff worked with János to help him and his family come to the U.S. I am so pleased that he is here at Arena. It would have been heartbreaking to lose his artistry.”

“It doesn't look like a 30-year-old drama. It's contemporary. It's timeless,” explained **Szász**, drawing comparisons between AIDS and COVID-19. “We just experienced our own epidemic. We faced a crisis wondering if we are going to die, if our children are going to die. I want this production to speak to today, reflecting the reality of relationships today, politics today.”

“*Angels in America* is an epic play. And it is being staged by an epic director,” **Smith** summarized. “This is going to be combustible.”

In addition to its fully staged production of *Angels in America, Part One: Millennium Approaches*, Arena Stage will also host a one-night only reading of *Angels in America, Part Two: Perestroika*, on **Monday, April 17, at 7:00 p.m.** in its **Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle**, that will be free and open to the public. More information, including how to RSVP, will be shared at a later date.

Returning to Arena Stage are cast members **John Austin** (*Holiday*), **Frank Britton** (*Orpheus Descending*), **Edward Gero** (*The Originalist*), **Susan Rome** (*Indecent*), and **Justin Weaks** (*The 51st State*).

Making their Arena Stage debuts with *Angels in America* are cast members **Michael Kevin Darnall** (Studio Theatre's *The Hot Wing King*), **Veronica del Cerro** (Ford's Theatre's *Trip to Bountiful*), **Brandon Haagenson** (Shakespeare Theatre's *Our Town*), **Billie Krishawn** (Mosaic Theater's *The Till Trilogy*), **Nick Westrate** (Broadway's *Casa Valentina*), and **Deborah Ann Woll** (HBO's *True Blood*).

In addition to director **János Szász**, the creative team includes Set Designer **Maruti Evans**, Costume Designer **Oana Botez**, Lighting Designer **Christopher Akerlind**, Original Music and Sound Designer **Fabian Obispo**, Wig and Makeup Designer **The Wig Associates**, Dramaturg **Otis Ramsey-Zöe**, Casting Director **Joseph Pinzon**, New York Casting **JZ Casting/Geoff Josselson, C.S.A. and Katja Zarolinski, C.S.A.**, Stage Manager **Chris De Camillis**, and Assistant Stage Managers **Dayne Sundman** and **Leigh Robinette**.

#### **CAST BIOGRAPHIES (In alphabetical order)**

**John Austin** (*Joe Pitt/Prior I/Eskimo*) appeared at Arena earlier this season as Ned Seton in *Holiday*. Previous Arena credits are Derril Lark in *Right to Be Forgotten* and Valentin in *Kleptocracy*. Other D.C. area credits include *Oslo* (Round House), *Easy Women Smoking Loose Cigarettes* (Signature), and *Melancholy Play* (Constellation, Helen Award, Outstanding Production). John toured the U.S. with *Me*,

*Myself, & Shirley* starring the late Cindy Williams of the hit television show *Laverne & Shirley*. In his hometown of Austin, Texas, John won a B. Iden Payne Award for his portrayal of Young Zeus in *Zeus in Therapy*. He holds a BFA from Boston University (summa cum laude, Dean's Award, Bette Davis Prize) as well as a Certificate in Classical Acting from LAMDA. Thank you for everything you have given to American theater, Molly Smith! [johnaustinactor.com](http://johnaustinactor.com)

**Frank Britton** (*u/s Belize, Roy Cohn*) last appeared at Arena Stage nineteen years ago as a performing understudy in *Orpheus Descending*, directed by Molly Smith. Most recent credits include *Our Town* (Baltimore Center Stage), *Major Barbara* (Washington Stage Guild), and *P.Nokio: A Hip-Hop Musical* (Imagination Stage). Other D.C. area appearances include productions at Studio Theatre, Round House Theatre, Avant Bard Theatre, Adventure Theatre, 1st Stage, Theater Alliance, among many others. Regionally, Mr. Britton has appeared with Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, and La MaMa ETC. In 2018, he earned the Helen Hayes Award (Robert Prosky Award for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Play—Helen). [www.frankbrittonactor.com](http://www.frankbrittonactor.com) Instagram: @frankbrittonactor

**Michael Kevin Darnall** (*Louis Ironson*) is making his Arena Stage debut. Local credits include *Much Ado About Nothing* at Shakespeare Theatre Company; *Animal, Wig Out!*, and *The Hot Wing King* at Studio Theatre; *Jefferson's Garden* and *A Christmas Carol* at Ford's Theatre; *Father Comes Home From the Wars* at Round House Theatre; *Ulysses on Bottles* at Mosaic Theater Company; and *Yentl* at Theater J. Michael has performed at Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Chautauqua Theater Company, and RhinoLeap Productions. He frequently collaborates with MetroStage and Constellation Theatre Company, and is a company member at The Hub Theatre, and Spooky Action Theater. On television, he recurred in HBO's *The Wire*. Michael is a seven-time Helen Hayes Award nominee and received his BFA in Acting at SUNY Purchase Conservatory of Theatre Arts.

**Veronica del Cerro** (*u/s Hannah Pitt, Harper Pitt, The Angel*) D.C. Theater: Ford's Theatre: *Trip to Bountiful* (*u/s*); Shakespeare Theatre: *Othello*; Constellation Theatre: *Arabian Nights*; GALA Theatre: *El Paso Blue, Ana en el Trópico*; Everyman Theatre: *August: Osage County*; Kennedy Center: *Adventures of Homer*; MetroStage: *Savage in Limbo*; Theater J: *Andy and the Shadows, The Seagull on 16th Street*; Studio Theatre: *My Children! My Africa!*; *Rock 'n' Roll*; Round House Theatre: *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*. Veronica has been working internationally with groups such as Café de las Artes, Movimiento en Red (Spain), Proyecto Bicéfalo, Teatro del Mundo (Mexico). Training: BS from Virginia Tech (Psychology and Theatre Arts), Graduate of Studio Theatre Conservatory, MA in Theatre from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in London. Upcoming Film: *See You on Venus* (SUR FILMS) (2023) Instagram: @mia.moca

**Edward Gero** (*Roy Cohn/Prior II*)'s Arena Stage credits include Thomas Everson, Jr. in *Junk*, Antonin Scalia in *The Originalist*, Benjamin Hubbard in *The Little Foxes*, and Mark Rothko in *Red*. He is a four-time Helen Hayes Award-winner and 16-time nominee. New York credits include *The Originalist* (59E59). Regional credits include *The Originalist* (Asolo Repertory, Pasadena Playhouse, and Court Theatre, Joseph Jefferson Award nomination); *Red* and Gloucester in *King Lear* (Goodman); *Nixon's Nixon* and *Night Alive* (Round House); *Sweeney Todd* (Signature Theatre); *Scrooge* in *A Christmas Carol* (Ford's Theatre); and *American Buffalo, Shining City* and *Skylight* (Studio Theatre). In 32 seasons with Shakespeare Theatre Company, his over 70 roles include Helen Hayes turns in *Henry IV, Richard II, and Macbeth*. Film/TV credits include *House of Cards, TURN: Washington's Spies, Die Hard 2, Striking Distance*, and narrations for Discovery Channel and PBS. He is a Ten Chimneys 2015 Lunt-Fontanne Fellow and associate professor of theater at George Mason University.

**Brandon Haagenson** (*u/s Louis Ironson, Prior Walter, Joe Pitt*) is ecstatic to be making his Arena Stage debut! Last season, he appeared in Shakespeare Theatre Company's *Our Town* and *The Merchant of Venice*. He has performed off-Broadway in *Afterglow* (original cast) and *My Big Gay Italian Wedding*. National tours include *Beauty and the Beast* (Lumière) and *A Christmas Carol*. Regional credits include Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Stages St. Louis, Riverside Theatre, North Carolina Theatre, and North

Shore Music Theatre. Television appearances include *The Other Two* (HBO Max) and *The Food That Built America* (History Channel). He earned his M.F.A. in Classical Acting at STC's Academy at The George Washington University, and has a B.F.A. in Musical Theater from Millikin University. Love to his family and friends for their unending support. [www.brandonhaagenson.com](http://www.brandonhaagenson.com). Instagram: @brandonhaagenson

**Billie Krishawn** (*The Angel/Emily/Sister Ella/Homeless Woman*) is making her Arena Stage debut. Regional theater credits included *Jump* (Everyman Theatre); *Ballad of Emmett Till* (Helen Hayes Award nomination for Outstanding Supporting Performer in a Play), *That Summer in Sumner*, *Benevolence* as part of the Till Trilogy (Mosaic Theater Company); *The Joy That Carries You* (Olney Theatre Center); *Until the Flood* (Studio Theatre); *HERStory* (The Kennedy Center); *The Ohio State Murders* (Round House Theatre); *Airness* (Keegan Theatre); *Airness, Civil War Christmas* (1st Stage); *Blood at the Root* (Helen Hayes Award recipient for Outstanding Lead Performer, Outstanding Ensemble, and Outstanding Production) (Theater Alliance); *Melancholy Play* (Helen Hayes Award nomination for Best Lead Actress, Helen Hayes Award recipient for Outstanding Production), *Caucasian Chalk Circle* (Constellation Theatre Company); *Treasure Island* (Synetic Theater); *Emilie* (Avant Bard); *Greensboro Sit-ins* (Smithsonian NMAH); *How Old is a Hero* (Discovery Theater); *Winnie the Pooh, Jumanji* (Helen Hayes Award recipient for Outstanding Production) (Adventure Theatre MTC). Film: *Water in a Broken Glass* (Tonya Mimms). Education: Drew University, Duke Ellington School of the Arts.

**Susan Rome** (*Hannah Pitt/Rabbi/Henry/Ethel Rosenberg*) Baltimore/Washington: Arena Stage: *Indecent* (Helen Hayes ensemble nomination), *The Great Society*, *All the Way*; Baltimore Center Stage: *Our Town*, *Folks at Home*, *Indecent*, *After the Revolution*, *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, *Mud Blue Sky*, *An Enemy of the People*; Signature: *Easy Women Smoking Loose Cigarettes*; Folger: *Love's Labor's Lost*; Studio Theatre: *If I Forget* (Helen Hayes nominations), *Hand to God* (Helen Hayes ensemble nomination); Olney Theatre Center: *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *The Joy We Carry* (Helen Hayes ensemble nomination); Theater J: Edward Albee's *Occupant*, *Roz and Ray*, *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*, *Brighton Beach Memoirs* (Helen Hayes Award), *After the Revolution* (Helen Hayes nomination), and many other plays. Regional: Kansas City Repertory Theatre: *Indecent*; Mark Taper Forum: *The Substance of Fire*; many more. Film: *Fishbowl*, *My One and Only*, *A Dirty Shame*. Television: *The Wire*, *We Own This City* (HBO); *House of Cards* (Netflix). [www.susanrome.com](http://www.susanrome.com)

**Justin Weaks** (*Belize/Mr. Lies*) makes their in-person Arena Stage debut with *Angels in America, Part One: Millennium Approaches* after collaborating virtually with Arena on *The 51st State* and *The Freewheelin' Insurgents* during the COVID-19 pandemic. He is a company member at Woolly Mammoth Theatre, where he has appeared in *There's Always the Hudson*, *BLKS*, *Gloria*, and *Describe the Night*. D.C. area credits include: *Long Way Down* (Kennedy Center), *Fences* (Ford's Theatre), *Gem of the Ocean* (Round House Theatre), *Pipeline* (Studio Theatre), *Word Becomes Flesh* (Theater Alliance). Off-Broadway: *i need space* (The New Group). Regional credits include work with Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Shakespeare & Company and Barter Theatre. Justin holds two Helen Hayes Awards and five nominations for his work. Education: Greensboro College. #HIVIsNotACrime

**Nick Westrate** (*Prior Walter/Man in Park*) On Broadway, he originated roles in Harvey Fierstein's *Casa Valentina*, and Theresa Rebeck's *Bernhardt/Hamlet*. Other favorites include the National Tour of *The King's Speech* as Bertie for director Michael Wilson, *Tribes* directed by David Cromer, *The Little Foxes* for Ivo van Hove, *Merchant of Venice* and *Tartuffe* with Daniel Fish, *The Boys in the Band* for Jack Cummings III, and as Berowne in *Love's Labor's Lost* for NYC's Public Theater. Three seasons as Robert Townsend on AMC's *Turn: Washington's Spies*. On film, he starred in William Sullivan's *American Insurrection*, Jonathan Demme's *Ricki and the Flash*, and Todd Haynes' *Mildred Pierce*. Next, playing Edwin Booth in Apple TV+'s *Manhunt*. Nick received the Special Drama Desk Award for his versatility Off-Broadway. He's a Juilliard graduate.

**Deborah Ann Woll** (*Harper Pitt/Martin Heller*) will be making her debut at Arena Stage this season. Most recently she appeared as the titular shrew, Katherine, in *The Taming of the Shrew* (The Old Globe, San Diego), and as Amalia Balash in *Parfumerie* (Wallis Annenberg, Los Angeles). She is best known for her work on television and film as Jessica Hamby on HBO's *True Blood*, Karen Page on Marvel's *Daredevil*, and Amanda in Sony's *Escape Room*. She is the voice and performance capture for Faye in PlayStation's *God of War* franchise. And you can also catch her online, creating and performing in the TTRPG space, most notably as creator and game master for *Relics and Rarities* and *Children of Éarte*.

## **PRODUCTION INFORMATION**

### **ANGELS IN AMERICA, PART ONE: MILLENIUM APPROACHES**

**By Tony Kushner**

**Directed by János Szász**

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

**ABOUT:** Tony Kushner's Pulitzer Prize- and Tony Award-winning drama 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.

### **CAST:**

Joe Pitt/Prior I/Eskimo: John Austin  
u/s Belize, Roy Cohn: Frank Britton  
Louis Ironson: Michael Kevin Darnall  
u/s Hannah Pitt, Harper Pitt, The Angel: Veronica del Cerro  
Roy Cohn/Prior II: Edward Gero  
u/s Louis Ironson, Prior Walter, Joe Pitt: Brandon Haagenson  
The Angel/Emily/Sister Ella/Homeless Woman: Billie Krishawn  
Hannah Pitt/Rabbi/Henry/Ethel Rosenberg: Susan Rome  
Belize/Mr. Lies: Justin Weaks  
Prior Walter/Man in Park: Nick Westrate  
Harper Pitt/Martin Heller: Deborah Ann Woll

### **CREATIVE TEAM:**

Playwright: Tony Kushner  
Director: János Szász  
Set Designer: Maruti Evans  
Costume Designer: Oana Botez  
Lighting Designer: Christopher Akerlind  
Original Music and Sound Design: Fabian Obispo  
Wig and Makeup Designer: The Wig Associates  
Dramaturg: Otis Ramsey-Zöe  
Casting Director: Joseph Pinzon  
New York Casting: JZ Casting/Geoff Josselson, C.S.A and Katja Zarolinski, C.S.A.  
Stage Manager: Chris De Camillis  
Assistant Stage Managers: Dayne Sundman, Leigh Robinette

*Angels in America, Part One: Millennium Approaches* is sponsored by **AARP** with additional support by **Patricia and David Fisher** and **Andrew R. Ammerman**.

### **PLAN YOUR VISIT**

**TICKETS:** Tickets for *Angels in America, Part One: Millennium Approaches* are \$56-95 plus applicable fees. Ticket prices and availability are subject to change. Arena Stage's many savings programs include "pay your age" tickets for those aged 30 and under, student discounts, and "Southwest Nights" for those living and working in the District's Southwest neighborhood. To learn more, visit [arenastage.org/savings-programs](https://arenastage.org/savings-programs).

Tickets are available at [arenastage.org](https://arenastage.org). Tickets may also be purchased by phone at 202-488-3300, or in person at the Sales Office at 1101 Sixth Street, SW, D.C., Tuesday-Sunday, 12-8 p.m.

Sales Office/Subscriptions: 202-488-3300  
Group Sales Hotline for 10+ Tickets: 202-488-4380

### **PERFORMANCE DATES:**

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday at 7 p.m.  
Saturday and Sunday at 12 p.m.  
Weekday matinees at 12 p.m. on April 6, 12, and 19

**Early Curtains:** Sunday, April 16 at 6:00 p.m. and Sunday, April 23 at 1:00 p.m.

**Southwest Nights:** Tuesday, April 4 at 7:00 p.m. and Saturday, April 22 at 7:00 p.m.

**Audio-Described Performance:** Saturday, April 8 at 12:00 p.m.

**ASL-Interpreted Performance:** Saturday, April 22 at 7:00 p.m.

**Closed Captioning:** GalaPro begins Friday, March 31

**Full Calendar:** [arenastage.org/tickets/calendar](https://arenastage.org/tickets/calendar)

**SAFETY:** Arena Stage requires that patrons, staff, and volunteers wear facial masks inside the Mead Center, unless actively eating or drinking, regardless of vaccination status. These conditions are subject to change, and Arena continues to consult with medical professionals, monitor government best practice recommendations, and engage in industry trainings to ensure the health and safety of our patrons, artists, and staff. For up-to-date information, visit [arenastage.org/safety](https://arenastage.org/safety).

**TRAVEL:** Limited parking is available in Arena Stage's on-site garage for \$18 to \$30, 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 [arenastage.org/transportation](https://arenastage.org/transportation).

For complete 2022/23 Season details, visit [arenastage.org/season](https://arenastage.org/season).

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

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