

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

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Contact: Ryan Impagliazzo
press@arenastage.org, 202-600-4051

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THEATER, TELEVISION AND FILM ARTIST CHARLES RANDOLPH-WRIGHT NAMED 2022 RECIPIENT OF ARENA STAGE'S "AMERICAN ARTIST" AWARD

AWARD PRESENTATION ON MARCH 17, 2022, KICKED OFF OPENING NIGHT FOR
ARENA'S PRODUCTION OF "CATCH ME IF YOU CAN"

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater has named theater, television and film artist **Charles Randolph-Wright** the recipient of its 2022 "American Artist" award. **Molly Smith**, Arena Stage Artistic Director, presented the award to Randolph-Wright on **Thursday, March 17, 2022**, as part of the opening night celebration for *Catch Me If You Can*, now playing at the Mead Center for American Theater. Also directed by Smith, *Catch Me If You Can* runs through April 17, 2022 in the **Fichandler Stage**.

"Charles Randolph-Wright is one of my favorite artists, hands down," says **Smith**. "We met when I was wowed by his production of *Insurrection* at A.C.T. in San Francisco way back in 1998. We immediately connected on a personal and professional level. We trust each other and that's a rarity in this crazy business. For Arena he has been a playwright and director, and he has directed and produced on Broadway and on television, nationally and internationally. Plus, he's a terrific filmmaker."

The **American Artist Award** recognizes artists of the highest caliber, honoring their incredible work and significant contributions to American theater. Past awardees include Baayork Lee, Eve Ensler, Hal Linden, Moisés Kaufman, Sheldon Harnick, Kathleen Turner, Leslie Uggams, Edward Albee, James Earl Jones, Robert "Bob" Alexander, August Wilson and Arena Stage co-founder Zelda Fichandler.

"Arena Stage has been my artistic home for over 20 years," said Randolph-Wright, as he accepted the award. "I am proud to be part of a theatre that has been diverse and inclusive since its inception. This award always will remind me of the ultimate love and support I have received through my glorious time here, a place that has emboldened me to try any and everything. I will cherish this honor as much as I cherish this theatre and its extraordinary artistic director, my dear friend Molly Smith, a brilliant force of nature who is a supernova in the arts."

Charles Randolph-Wright's directing credits include *Trouble in Mind* (Broadway, starring LaChanze), *Motown the Musical* (Broadway, London and the National Tour), *Porgy and Bess* (75th anniversary tour), *Guys and Dolls* (50th anniversary tour), and the Broadway bound musical, *Born for This*, co-written with BeBe Winans. He also directed and co-wrote *The Diva is Dismissed* (starring Jenifer Lewis), *Just Between Friends* (Bea Arthur on Broadway) and wrote *Blue* (starring Phylicia Rashad).

His television directing credits include *Greenleaf*, *Delilah*, *The Big Leap*, *Katy Keene*, *Step Up: Highwater*, and *Lincoln Heights*. He directed the film *Preaching to the Choir* and is an Executive Producer of the

documentary *Maurice Hines: Bring Them Back*. Randolph-Wright is currently working on what will be his 12th production at Arena, co-writing and directing a groundbreaking musical, *American Prophet: Frederick Douglass in His Own Words*. This world premiere will run July 15 – August 28, 2022 in the Kreeger Theater.

“The American Artist Award celebrates an artist’s contribution and promise for American theater, and Charles excels at all of it,” explains **Smith**. “When Charles brings a project to Arena, I know we have high potential for a remarkable production. He is a true showman and a classic man of the theater.”

For more information on the American Artist Award, please visit arenastage.org/American-artist-award.

About *Catch Me If You Can*

Based on true events and the critically-acclaimed film, *Catch Me If You Can* follows the story of Frank Abagnale, Jr., a charming, young con man in the screaming '60s. Abagnale posed as an airline pilot, a doctor and a lawyer — and then escaped police custody, all before he turned 22. The cast of *Catch Me If You Can* includes Broadway vets **Nehal Joshi, Jeff McCarthy, Hayley Podschun, Stephanie Pope Lofgren** and **Christian Thompson**, straight from Broadway’s *Ain’t Too Proud*, making his Arena Stage debut as Frank, Jr. Based on the DreamWorks Motion Picture, the Tony-nominated musical comedy features a book by **Terrence McNally**, music by **Marc Shaiman** and lyrics by **Scott Wittman** and **Marc Shaiman**. Directed by **Molly Smith**, with choreography by **Parker Esse** and music direction by **Laura Bergquist**, *Catch Me If You Can* runs from **March 4 – April 17, 2022**, in the iconic in-the-round **Fichandler Stage**.

The music of *Catch Me If You Can* is generously sponsored by **Michele Toth and William Caldwell**. Supporting Sponsorship for *Catch Me If You Can* is generously provided by **Clark Construction, Catherine and Chris Guttman-McCabe** and **Sheila Stampfli**. Choreography is sponsored by **Virginia McGehee Friend**.

The *Catch Me if You Can* Opening Night Celebration was generously sponsored by **Arent Fox Schiff** and **Boston Consulting Group**.

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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