

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 9, 2022

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“WHEN LIFE GOES OFF THE RAILS, WHAT REALLY MATTERS?”

IN ASSOCIATION WITH MCCARTER THEATRE CENTER,
ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES CAST FOR BELOVED CULT MUSICAL

RIDE THE CYCLONE

Book, Music & Lyrics by JACOB RICHMOND and BROOKE MAXWELL

Directed by SARAH RASMUSSEN

Original Choreography by JIM LICHTSCHEIDL

Additional Choreography by TIGER BROWN

(Washington D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater announced today the cast for the D.C. premiere of ***Ride the Cyclone***, a “delightfully weird and just plain delightful show” (*The New York Times*) that literally takes its characters—and audience—on the ride of their lives. Arena Stage’s **Kreeger Theater** will be transformed into somewhere between earth and—well, *not* earth—when *Ride the Cyclone* plays from **January 13 – February 19, 2023**. Press Night will be held on **Thursday, January 19 at 8 p.m.** For information and tickets, please visit arenastage.org/cyclone

This quirky, edgy cult musical by **Jacob Richmond** and **Brooke Maxwell** delivers surprises at every turn as it follows six teen chamber choir singers, whose lives are cut short in a freak roller coaster accident. Stuck in the afterlife, a mechanical fortuneteller gives them a chance to sing their way back to earth. Part comedy, part tragedy, and wholly enchanting, *Ride the Cyclone* shines a light on the resilience of the human spirit, and reminds us of how great it is to be alive.

The Arena Stage production is in partnership with Princeton University’s **McCarter Theatre Center**, where it played to critical and audience acclaim in spring 2022. *Ride the Cyclone* had its world premiere in Victoria, B.C. in 2008, followed by its U.S. premiere at Chicago Shakespeare Theater in 2015 and a hit Off-Broadway production by MCC Theatre in 2016. The Washington, D.C., premiere will see several of the McCarter run’s cast and creative team return, including McCarter’s artistic director, **Sarah Rasmussen**, who will reprise her role as director.

“I am extremely excited to collaborate with Arena on *Ride the Cyclone*,” said **Rasmussen**. “As with any piece of theater, the team continues to make new discoveries, and I can’t wait to see them brought to life for Arena Stage patrons by this wildly imaginative creative team.”

"*Ride the Cyclone* starts with tragic loss but ends with the audience feeling alive," said **Smith**. "Already a cult hit, people are addicted to the music and originality of the story. The piece has continued to grow over the years, and with every production, something new has been learned. We look forward to bringing the most current iteration to Arena, and I know Sarah's direction will keep us glued to the roller coaster as we sing along."

This will be **Rasmussen's** second time in Arena's Kreeger Theater, having served as associate director on the pre-Broadway world premiere of *A Time to Kill* during Arena's 2010/2011 Season—the first after the opening of the Mead Center for American Theater.

"*Ride the Cyclone* feels really relevant in this time," said **Rasmussen**. "At its heart it asks: 'When life goes off the rails, what really matters?' The last few years have been very difficult, and our collective grief and loss is real. I hope this project honors our own agency in *also* seeing the good around us, what we might be grateful for, and how that might shift how we see ourselves and each other."

"This was written in 2008 and we are thrilled that in 2023 a younger generation is attracted to this musical," said playwright **Jacob Richmond**. "We have been interested in exploring changes that continue its journey as a theatre piece, and look forward to the production."

"In some ways, *Ride the Cyclone* reminds me of my favorite play *Our Town*," mused **Rasmussen**, "asking if we really realize life while we are living it. Musicals invite us to feel more alive, giving us a little more energy and magic to take back into the world. This is a full circle moment for me; to not just return as director to a place that inspired me so much, but to bring my own kids there as well!"

Joining from the McCarter staging and making their Arena Stage debuts are **Ashlyn Maddox** (New York City Center's *Parade*), **Nick Martinez** (Kennedy Center's *The Who's Tommy*), **Eli Mayer** (The Muny's *Footloose*), and **Matthew Boyd Snyder** (*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* National Tour). Also making their Arena Stage debuts are **Gabrielle Dominique** (Jungle Theater's *Ride the Cyclone*), **Marc Geller** (Hanover Theatre's *A Christmas Carol*), **Shinah Hey** (Guthrie's *The Music Man*), **Ashley D. Nguyen** (Olney Theatre's *Dance Nation*), and **Wood Van Meter** (Shakespeare Theatre's *Kiss Me, Kate*).

The creative team also includes Music Supervisor **Mark Christine**, Music Director **Nick Wilders**, Set Designer **Scott Davis**, Costume Designer **Trevor Bowen**, Lighting Designer **Jiyoun Chang**, Sound Designer **André Pluess**, Projection Designer **Katherine Freer**, Hair, Wig and Makeup Designer **J. Jared Janas**, Associate Director **Tiger Brown**, Casting Director **Stewart/Whitley**, Stage Manager **Rachael Danielle Albert**, and Assistant Stage Manager **Alison Cotes**.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES (In alphabetical order)

Gabrielle Dominique (*Constance Blackwood*) is thrilled to be making her Arena debut! A South Minneapolis native, Gabrielle graduated from St. Olaf College where she earned her B.A. in Dance & Theatre. She has worked with the Guthrie Theater, Ordway Center, the Chanhassen Dinner Theatre, and the Children's Theatre Company, among others. When she isn't kicking up her heels onstage, she enjoys choreographing and teaching dance.

Marc Geller (*The Amazing Karnak*) is very happy to be making his Arena Stage debut. He can currently be seen as Kier Eagan in the Apple TV+ series *Severance* and as Ragged Man in the upcoming A24 film *A Different Man* with Sebastian Stan. Stage credits include: Herr Schultz in *Cabaret*, The Ghost of Marley in *A Christmas Carol* (for seven years), 13 characters in *Baskerville*, Ned Weeks in *The Normal Heart*, Ira in *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife*, Joshua/Cathy in *Cloud 9*, Isaac in *Disgraced*, Nicodemus/Lady Enid in *The Mystery of Irma Vep*, Roberto Miranda in *Death and the Maiden*, and Doc in *West Side Story*. Other recent television appearances include: *Katy Keene*, *Russian Doll*, *The Onion*, *The Knick*, and *The Eric André Show*.

Shinah Hey (*Ocean O'Connell Rosenberg*) is making her Arena Stage debut. She was last seen as Ocean at the Jungle Theater. Some other credits include The Kennedy Center: *Me... Jane* national tour (Jane Goodall), *Elephant & Piggie's We Are in a Play* national tour (Piggie); Guthrie Theater: *The Music Man* (Zaneeta Shinn); Chanhassen Dinner Theater: *Footloose* (Rusty), *Grease* (Frenchy, Sandy u/s), *Holiday Inn* (Ensemble / Lila Dixon u/s); Theater Latté Da: *Assassins* (Squeaky Fromme), *Gypsy* (Dainty June and Agnes), *Into the Woods* (Little Red and Lucinda); *Artistry: Little Women* (Amy / Jo u/s). Sending all of her love to Andy and Jane. IG: @ShinahHey

Ashlyn Maddox (*Jane Doe*) is so thrilled to be riding *The Cyclone* again and making her Arena Stage debut. Most recently, she performed in New York City Center's *Parade* as a Factory Girl. Regional credits include *Ride the Cyclone* (McCarter) and *Jerome Robbins' Broadway* (Theatre Under the Stars). She would like to thank her family, friends, MT20, Kaitlin and Jim, Stewart/Whitley, and Rochel Saks for their unwavering love and support. Ashlyn received her BFA in Musical Theatre at TXST — eat 'em up! Proverbs 16:9. IG: @shlynmaddox

Nick Martinez (*Noel Gruber*) is so excited to be making his Arena debut as he returns to this production of *Ride the Cyclone*, seen at McCarter last spring. Past credits include *Anne of Green Gables* at Goodspeed Opera House (Moody Macpherson), *The Who's Tommy* at The Kennedy Center (Pinball Lad 1 / Ensemble), *Grease* at The REV (Doody), *Bat Out of Hell* at NY City Center (Swing, Tink u/s), *Newsies* at John W. Engeman Theater (Crutchie). Elon University BFA. Thank you to my incredible team at DGRW and all my love to my family: Mom, Dad, Sofia, Aamir, and baby Kiyana. Follow @neeneemartin!

Eli Mayer (*Mischa Bachinski / Dance Captain*) is so excited to be returning to *Ride the Cyclone*! His previous credits include Mischa in *Ride the Cyclone* (McCarter Theatre), *Footloose* (Muny), *Indian Summer* (Bay Street), and *The Royal Family of Broadway* (Barrington Stage). He is originally from Acton, MA. He would like to extend his affections to his family, friends, Stewart/Whitley, and his wonderful manager, Rochel Saks. He holds a BFA from CCM. IG: @elimayermaynot. Слава Україні. героям слава.

Ashley D. Nguyen (*Swing*) is ecstatic to be making her Arena Stage debut. Previous credits include: Olney Theatre Center: *Dance Nation* (Zuzu); The Kennedy Center TYA: *The Day You Begin* (Min, world premiere); Keegan Theatre: *Shakespeare in Love* (Viola de Lesseps); Creative Cauldron: *Into the Woods* (Little Red); Studio Theatre: *White Pearl* (Ruki Minami u/s – U.S. premiere); Catholic University: *A Little Night Music* (Fredrika Armfeldt), *The Wolves* (#8). EDUCATION: BM in Musical Theatre from Catholic University. IG: @ashley.d.nguyen

Matthew Boyd Snyder (*Ricky Potts*) is thrilled for his debut at Arena Stage for *Ride the Cyclone*. He most recently served as Understudy/Swing for the same title at Princeton University's McCarter Theatre. Earlier in 2022, he concluded his role as Mike Teavee (2019-2022) with the North American tour of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Regional credits include *Saturday Night Fever* (Bobby), *In the Heights* (Sonny), *Rock of Ages* (Franz), and *Sister Act* (Pablo). He is immensely grateful to the RTC creative team and Stewart/Whitley for this wonderful opportunity. Deep love to the audience as well as his family, friends, and mentors. IG: @matthewsnyder101

Wood Van Meter (*Swing*) is thrilled to be making his Arena Stage debut with *Cyclone*! D.C. credits include *West Side Story*, *Shear Madness* (Kennedy Center); *Kiss Me, Kate* (STC); *Silence! The Musical* (Studio); *Singin' in the Rain* (NextStop Theatre); *Joseph...Dreamcoat* (Helen Hayes nomination, Toby's Dinner Theatre); *The Whale* (Rep Stage); and other performances at Signature Theatre, MetroStage, Imagination Stage, Olney Theatre, and Washington Stage Guild. Regional favorites include *Forever Plaid* (Pittsburgh CLO), *Ragtime*, *Rent* (Nashville Rep), *Gypsy* (Hangar Theatre), and *Camelot* (TheatreZone). Thankful for his incredible support system—especially his fiancé Bruce. Enjoy the ride! @WoodVanMeter

For full company biographies, please visit arenastage.org/cyclone.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

In association with McCarter Theatre Center

RIDE THE CYCLONE

Book, Music & Lyrics by Jacob Richmond and Brooke Maxwell

Directed by Sarah Rasmussen

Original Choreography by Jim Lichtscheidl

Additional Choreography by Tiger Brown

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

ABOUT:

In *Ride the Cyclone*, the lives of six teen chamber choir singers are cut short in a freak roller coaster accident. Stuck in the afterlife, a mechanical fortuneteller gives them a chance to sing their way back to earth. This quirky, edgy cult musical is part comedy, part tragedy, wholly enchanting, and will make you feel great about being alive!

CAST:

Constance Blackwood: Gabrielle Dominique*

The Amazing Karnak: Marc Geller*

Ocean O'Connell Rosenberg: Shinah Hey*

Jane Doe: Ashlyn Maddox*

Noel Gruber: Nick Martinez*

Mischa Bachinski / Dance Captain: Eli Mayer*

Swing: Ashley D. Nguyen*

Ricky Potts: Matthew Boyd Snyder*

Swing: Wood Van Meter*

CREATIVE TEAM:

Book, Music & Lyrics: Jacob Richmond and Brooke Maxwell

Director: Sarah Rasmussen

Choreographer: Jim Lichtscheidl

Additional Choreography / Associate Director: Tiger Brown

Music Supervisor: Mark Christine

Music Director: Nick Wilders

Set Designer: Scott Davis

Costume Designer: Trevor Bowen

Lighting Designer: Jiyoun Chang

Sound Designer: André Pluess

Projection Designer: Katherine Freer

Hair, Wig & Makeup Designer: J. Jared Janas

Casting Director: Stewart/Whitley

Stage Manager: Rachael Danielle Albert*

Assistant Stage Manager: Alison Cotes*

*Members of Actors' Equity Association

Support for *Ride the Cyclone* is provided by **Ilene and Steven Rosenthal**.

PLAN YOUR VISIT

TICKETS: Tickets for *Ride the Cyclone* are \$66-105 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, please visit arenastage.org/savings-programs.

Tickets are available at 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, 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 January 26, February 1, and February 8

No performance on January 31

Early Curtain: Sunday, January 29 at 6 p.m.

Southwest Nights: Sunday, January 15 at 7:30 p.m. and Wednesday, January 25 at 7:30 p.m.

Audio-Described Performance: Saturday, January 28 at 2 p.m.

ASL-Interpreted Performance: Saturday, February 18 at 8 p.m.

Closed Captioning: GalaPro begins Friday, January 20

Post-Show Conversations

Connect with the show beyond the performance at a post-show conversation with artists and staff on January 26, February 1, and February 8 following the 12 p.m. matinees; on February 2 following the 8 p.m. performance; and on February 14 following the 7:30 p.m. performance.

Full Calendar: 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.

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 to and other parking options around the Mead Center, please visit arenastage.org/transportation.

For complete 2022/23 Season details, visit 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

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