

molly smith  
artistic director

For Immediate Release  
December 6, 2006

Contact: Brian Wesolowski  
202-457-8100

stephen richard  
executive director

zelda fichandler  
founding director

\*\*\***MEDIA RELEASE**\*\*\*

**Arena Stage Raises More Than \$100 Million for New Theater Campus**

***Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater to be World Class Facility Devoted to Development, Production of American Theater***



**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Arena Stage announced today donations totaling more than \$100 million for the renovation of its facilities and the creation of a state-of-the-art theater campus. This historic milestone was made possible by local philanthropists Gilbert and Jaylee Mead, who donated close to \$35 million toward the project, prompting Arena to honor their exceptional generosity by naming the new complex **Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater**. The Meads' gift is the largest ever made to an American regional theater and one of the top ten largest gifts to a non-profit arts organization in the U.S. The gifts support The Next Stage Campaign, a \$120 million fundraising project launched in 2002.

"The Next Stage Campaign will create and showcase a new building and more," said John M. Derrick, Jr., President of the Arena Stage Board of Trustees. "It also moves Arena Stage one step closer to becoming the national center for the development of new American work."

Arena Stage's Artistic Director Molly Smith and Executive Director Stephen Richard announced the milestone and unveiled Arena's new name at a press conference at the theater today. Smith, who directed her first musical at Arena with the Meads' support, was especially proud to announce this significant honor.

"Infinitely passionate about the American musical and exceptionally generous, the Meads are true visionaries," Smith said. "Because they are dedicated to sustaining and encouraging the development of American theater, their gift will be a legacy not only for our theater alone, but to this city and the nation."

The Meads played a pivotal role in the overall fundraising effort by issuing a challenge to Arena in September 2005: if the theater could raise \$20 million in the following year, the Meads would match those funds dollar for dollar. The combination of donations Arena received over the year allowed the theater to meet that challenge and ultimately put its fundraising over the \$100 million mark.

"We are so pleased to be able to play a part in bringing this incredible building to Washington," said Gilbert Mead. "We look forward to many wonderful performances at Arena Stage for years to come and to seeing the impact Arena will continue to have on the American theater."

1101 Sixth Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20024  
T: 202 554 9066  
F: 202 488 4056  
[www.arenastage.org](http://www.arenastage.org)

— more —

“Gilbert and Jaylee Mead have a long history with Arena Stage, going back as far as 1977 when they first became subscribers. They’ve been board members since 1991 and are newly appointed Life Trustees,” said Executive Director Stephen Richard. “Their generosity will not only make Arena’s art better for its artists and patrons, but also further American theater as an art form by building a home for American playwrights.”

To date, Arena Stage has raised 85 percent of the funds needed for the \$120 million project. Arena’s own Board of Trustees donated more than \$23 million, and the theater has also received private contributions at the \$1 million level or more from Mrs. Josephine Ammerman, Diane and Norman Bernstein, Donald and Nancy de Laski, Fannie Mae Foundation, Freddie Mac Foundation, Joan and David Maxwell, Wendy and Franklin Raines, The Wallace Foundation and two additional anonymous donors.

Arena’s redevelopment is in line with the District of Columbia’s pledge to improve the entire Southwest Waterfront. Arena Stage is poised to be the first major redevelopment in this dynamic area, a comprehensive effort which will include a new ballpark for the Nationals, D.C.’s Major League Baseball team, in addition to serving as a magnet for other arts, entertainment and retail endeavors.

Executive Director Stephen Richard also noted, “Of course, we must also acknowledge the overwhelming and generous support of the District, without which this project simply would not be possible. The District made the construction of our new theater a priority of the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative in Southwest, and has understood from the outset that the arts can be a powerful engine for economic development and neighborhood revitalization.”

Ward 6 Councilmember Sharon Ambrose remarked, “Arena Stage continues to be the indispensable anchor of the District’s efforts to redevelop the Southwest Waterfront. Once completed, Arena’s new theater complex will immediately become a signature piece of waterfront architecture—another landmark building for Washington, D.C. that will attract tourists and architecture enthusiasts, as well as theater patrons.”

The new, expansive complex of three theaters, multiple workspaces and artist apartments will function as a 24-hour theater campus designed to enable artists to live, work and perform in the space while also serving the needs of diverse audiences, including community groups and students from around the region.

**About Arena Stage ([www.arenastage.org](http://www.arenastage.org))**

Arena Stage is one of the first not-for-profit theaters in the U.S. and a pioneer of the regional theater movement. The first regional theater to send a production to Broadway and the first to receive the Tony Award, Arena Stage has rich history and traditions. In 2002, Arena Stage announced The Next Stage Campaign, a \$120 million fundraising project to enhance and upgrade Arena Stage’s facilities, located in the heart of the Washington, D.C.’s Southwest Waterfront community. In addition to three extraordinary theater spaces, the new facility will include classrooms, rehearsal halls, on-site artist housing and meeting spaces to enhance Arena Stage’s education and community outreach programs. With this transformational effort, Arena Stage stands poised once again to lead American regional theater into an exciting new future.

###