

IN THE ROUND

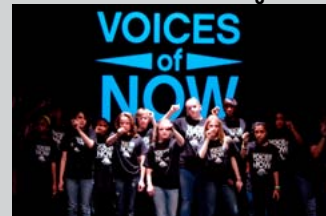
A VIEW OF ARENA STAGE FROM ALL SIDES

Arena Stage Inaugural Donor Newsletter | **SPRING 2012**

No.1



VOICES OF NOW FESTIVAL May 2011



MILITARY THANKSGIVING Nov. 2011



GOLDEN GALA CELEBRATION Mar. 2012





the mead center
for american theater

1101 Sixth Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

www.arenastage.org

Molly Smith, Artistic Director | Edgar Dobie, Executive Producer

EXCITING EVENTS YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS!

WEDNESDAY, MAY 23, 2012:

Opening Night of *The Music Man*

THURSDAY, JUNE 14, 2012:

Opening Night of *The Normal Heart*

MONDAY, JULY 23, 2012:

The Normal Heart Benefit

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2012:

First Rehearsal for *My Fair Lady*

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2012:

Season Opening Celebration for
One Night with Janis Joplin

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2012:

Opening Night of *My Fair Lady*

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2012:

2nd Annual Military Thanksgiving

(Invitations to above events vary by Membership level)

GIVE THE GIFT OF GAB!

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A theater is only as strong as the community it serves, and at Arena, we are honored to serve a dedicated community of donors like yourself.

Together, we are able to bring the power of art to all corners of the Washington community and beyond, touching the lives of hundreds of thousands each year.

I hope that this inaugural newsletter serves as a testament to the impact that you, our wonderful collaborators, have in making sure that Arena Stage maintains its status as an outstanding institution of excellence, education, and enrichment. You are one of the most valuable assets to the success of our artistic and educational endeavors. We thank you, appreciate you, and look forward to deepening our friendship in the seasons ahead.

It's going to be a terrific ride.

All best,
Molly

Artistic Director



Last season, we celebrated the grand opening of the Mead Center for American Theater with a revitalized mission and programming that showcased the breadth and beauty of

American theater. We have continued that ambitious undertaking with our robust 2011/12 season, offering a diverse collection of distinctly American voices. In October, after two successful runs on the Fichandler Stage, we closed *Oklahoma!*, the highest-grossing production in Arena history. Last month, we closed *Red*, Arena's bestselling non-musical. It truly has been a season of great achievement which would not have been possible without the sustained support of our generous contributors and the Washington community.

We express our sincere gratitude for your partnership in this inspiring enterprise and hope to see you as we embark on our 2012/13 season this fall.

Cheers,
Edgar

Executive Producer

Arena Stage is a national center for the production, presentation, development and study of American theater.

Arena is committed to

- **producing** huge plays of all that is passionate, exuberant, profound, deep and dangerous in the American spirit.
- **presenting** the best in American work from around the country.
- **developing** new plays, in addition to the creation and testing of best practices for new play development.
- **studying** the field of American theater.

Recent Highest-Grossing Shows



Show Attendance



Kate Baldwin enchants audiences during the Golden Gala Celebration



Cast of Karen Zacarias' *The Book Club Play*



Students get creative for the noon show at Camp Arena Stage



Voices of Now students showcase their final work



Major General Michael Linnington and wife Brenda with Major Damien Pickart and wife Vanessa, Military Thanksgiving



E. Faye Butler as Willetta Mayer in *Trouble in Mind*



Crowd gathers at opening night of *Ah, Wilderness!*

76 Trombones and THREE Shining Stars!

“Springing up like weeds, the CE Department produces stars of ev’ry shape and kind!”



June Schreiner as Ado Annie in *Oklahoma!*

Many know her best as the capricious object of Will Parker’s affections in *Oklahoma!*, but **June Schreiner** was sashaying her way into the hearts of Arena audiences long before last season’s box office sensation *Oklahoma!*. Schreiner made her first Arena appearance in 2009 at the Arena Stage Academy’s Musical Theater Training Program. In 2010, she auditioned and

received the coveted role of lovable gal pal Ado Annie, securing her place as a Washington-area celebrity. However, Schreiner is not alone in her ascent to stardom post-Academy. **Adhana Reid** recently made her groovy debut as Little Inez in *Hairspray* at Signature Theatre. Right on, Adhana!



Colin Cech auditions for *The Music Man*

This season, **Colin Cech**, a former participant in Arena’s Voices of Now Mead Ensemble, will join the Academy alums in fame as a River City kid in Meredith Willson’s *The Music Man*. The award-winning musical drew 120 young auditionees from all over the DC metropolitan area and beyond. Of this exceptionally talented bunch, a mere five local youth were selected, including Cech, who made his theatrical debut at Misi Theater Company in Bogotá, Colombia.

The devoted staff of Arena Stage’s Community Engagement Department labors tirelessly to bring programs such as the Arena Stage Academy and Voices of Now to fruition each year. We applaud the remarkable donors who support young learners who light up our classrooms, grace our stages, and touch our hearts. Like the possibilities for our shining stars, our gratitude is boundless! ●



*We are part of a tapestry
A long ancestral line
We are yarns in a tapestry
That is part of the grand design.*
– Siera,
Voices of Now
participant



ARENA SALUTES **the Polinger Foundation** for empowering the Voices of Now!

Arena salutes the Howard and Geraldine Polinger Family Foundation for their ongoing support of Voices of Now. Their admirable contribution enables students from the Wendt Center for Loss and Healing, Metro TeenAIDS and the DC Child and Family Services Agency to participate in a nationally recognized program that empowers middle and high school students to channel energy creatively

and constructively in a collaborative piece reflective of their life experiences.

The Polinger Family Foundation has been a dynamic force in the metropolitan area since 1968, dedicated to improving the quality of life for local communities by supporting innovative projects and successful ongoing programs that enrich the lives of Washington area residents.

The Foundation has supported hundreds of activities ranging from groundbreaking educational initiatives to classical performing arts ventures and projects that promote Jewish heritage. Grateful for the friendship and support of the Polinger family since 1981, Arena recognizes and honors their impassioned commitment to serving communities in need. ●

PLANNED GIVING AT ARENA

“We would rather contribute the majority of our estate to the arts than any other worthy cause, and no other institution in Washington has contributed more to the arts than Arena Stage.”



Dr. Robert and Mary Jo Brenner

Dr. Robert and Mary Jo Brenner explain their decision to join the Full Circle Society

#1 QUALITY ART

“From the days when Arena had its first resident company, they never ceased to amaze, tantalize, stimulate, educate, and raise our awareness with their great creativeness, variety, and spellbinding theater. They continue to produce a theater experience second to none.”

#2 MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

“My wife and I met in the theater, she being one of the most beautiful dancers I have ever seen. I came to Arena as a young actor and I look forward to *My Fair Lady* [as] I’ve had the pleasure of performing as [Alfred] Dolittle in three productions.”

#3 LASTING LEGACY

“If you enjoy theater as much as we do, then consider a gift to Arena Stage in your will. As President Kennedy stated (paraphrased): We have nothing more important to leave to mankind than our contribution to the arts. Nothing else endures with such truth and clarity.” ●

You do not have to be wealthy to leave a rich legacy! For more information on the Full Circle Society, please contact Kristen Mitchell, Asst. Director, Individual Giving at 202-600-4026, or kmitchell@arenastage.org.

Arena opened the 2011/12 season with Alice Childress' thought-provoking comedy drama *Trouble in Mind*. Directed by Irene Lewis and starring Arena veteran E. Faye Butler, the production was a riveting opening to the season!



Board Chair David Shiffrin and wife Peggy with Richard and Janice Newman



Invitation to the Season Opening celebration

AMERICAN ARTIST AWARD

The Season Opening included the eagerly anticipated presentation of the 2011 American Artist Award, created to honor artists who have left an indelible mark on American theater. Singer, actress, and television and Broadway star, Ms. Leslie Uggams has enchanted audiences on stage and on screen for nearly 60 years. ●



On September 15, 2011, Uggams joined the ranks of distinguished past recipients of the American Artist award, including Edward Albee, James Earl Jones, Robert "Bob" Alexander, August Wilson and Arena Stage co-founder, Zelda Fichandler.



Major General Michael Linnington addresses the evening's guests.

On Friday, November 25, 2011, Arena welcomed 260 current service members, veterans, and their families to the first annual *Military Thanksgiving*. "If anybody understands the power of homecoming, it's you," spoke Artistic Director Molly Smith, addressing the evening's guests. Each of five branches of the U.S. military — Army, Air Force, National Guard Bureau, Marines, and

Dinner with a side of laughs:
Arena brings Thanksgiving dinner and show to 260 soldiers and their Families

Office of the Secretary of Defense — were allocated 52 tickets, distributed irrespective of seniority and rank to service members in the Washington area and families of members deployed overseas. As a special surprise, 30 randomly selected guests received opening night packages for upcoming performances.

The event was coordinated in conjunction with the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense under the leadership of Major Damien Pickart with assistance from the United Service Organizations Inc., and included addresses from Major General Michael

Linnington, Commander of the Military District of Washington, and D.C. Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton. Arena was proud to celebrate this cherished American holiday with the inauguration of an Arena tradition that spreads the warmth of the season to the men and women who serve our country. "It is unbelievably important for the artistic community in Washington to bridge the gap between the arts and the military," said Chief Development Officer Danielle St.Germain-Gordon. Arena will continue the tradition next season with the second annual

Military Thanksgiving on Friday, November 23, 2012. ●



"We are living in a world where we all need to be thankful for those who volunteer to be in the armed forces."

— Executive Producer Edgar Dobie

extraordinary support from USAA Real Estate Company, The David Bruce Smith Family Foundation, Clark Construction Group Inc., Accenture Federal Services, The Ammerman Family in tribute to H. Max Ammerman, and Ridgewells Catering. Arena and our nation's service men and women are grateful to you all!

To learn more, visit www.remind.org



Louisa and Robert Duemling



Rynthia Rost, (VP, GEICO), with Sonia McCormick (VP of Corporate Communications, PNC)

Ushering in the New Year with a bang, Arena painted the town Red with John Logan's Tony Award-winning masterpiece, an evocative exposé on legendary painter Mark Rothko and the bestselling non-musical in Arena history!

As part of the citywide Eugene O'Neill festival, *Ah, Wilderness!*, O'Neill's only comedy, shines as a bright gem among treasured classics like *Long Day's Journey into Night* this spring in the Mead Center.



Ken and Dottie Woodcock



Board Secretary Hank Schlosberg with wife Charlotte

All that glitters is THE GOLDEN GALA!

Arena celebrates Washington performing arts with a glittering evening of American musical theater

On March 26, 2012, over 300 Washington-area luminaries gathered at the Mead Center for American Theater to celebrate performing arts in the Washington region and the exceptional achievements of Arena's Community Engagement Department. The evening was also a special occasion to honor distinguished senators Thad Cochran of Mississippi and Patrick Leahy of Vermont with Arena's American Voice Award, presented each year to elected officials who serve as advocates for the arts and representatives of all that is passionate and profound in the American spirit. The senators praised the arts for "lightening the burden of everyday life" (Sen. Cochran) and "bringing out the best in us all" (Sen. Leahy).

Accompanied by renowned composer Sheldon Harnick, Tony Award nominee Kate Baldwin dazzled dignitaries and Washington notables alike with special selections from her second album *She Loves Him*. Set to Harnick's Broadway hits from classics like *Fiddler on the Roof* and hidden gems from his Off-Broadway collection, Baldwin's songbird serenade

gave the night's attendees a sneak peek of what's in store for her featured role in next month's *The Music Man*.

Proceeds from this spectacular affair support programming in Arena's Community Engagement Department, recently lauded by the National Multicultural Institute for reaching diverse Washington communities. "Year after year, [CE] brings the power and pleasure of arts education to students who otherwise would not enjoy an art-filled life," commented JC Hayward, the evening's chair. Through programming focused on underserved student populations, Arena brings art into classrooms, students into theaters, and aspiring artists and arts administrators into the field, uniting Arena and the community at the intersection of art and education in the Washington area. Proud sponsors for the evening included Accenture Federal Services, Altria Group, Clark Construction LLC, American Airlines, Community Bridge Foundation, Inc., Dr. JC Hayward, Pepco, Andrew Ammerman, Arent Fox LLP, CGI, Arlene and Robert Kogod, and Mary Zients. ●



Corporate Chair Kay Kapoor awards Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS) and Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) with the American Voice Award



Artistic Director Molly Smith and Event Chair JC Hayward with Amnon and Sue Golan



Delicate golden buds adorn each table



Molly Smith with Bill Perkins and Evelyn Sandground



Tony Award nominee Kate Baldwin with legendary lyricist Sheldon Harnick



Jake and Hannah Brody, Accenture Federal Services



Guests marvel at the golden splendor over dinner



Judith Terra and Lionell Thomas of the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities present Proclamation on behalf of Mayor Vincent Gray

Photos by Eli Turner Studios.



Dan Pruksarnukul

THE MAN BEHIND THE CURTAIN: An Insider's Scoop From Artistic Associate and Casting Director Dan Pruksarnukul

"There's no such thing as a New York actor."

It's impossible to miss the massive floor-to-ceiling corkboard that dominates the south wall of Dan Pruksarnukul's office. Dotted with the faces of the season's casting choices, the towering display lends military-like precision to the process. "At first the cards start blank," he begins, gesturing to the orderly structure. "Then, slowly but surely it all comes together."



Lauren Whitehead: *What led you to casting?*

Dan Pruksarnukul: I fell into it. I was a bad actor who became a director and designer. I came to D.C. and eventually I was hired as a fellow at Arena. Then I stayed on and got promoted by marrying my boss off.

LW: *Ha! That's great. Do you remember your very first audition?*

DP: Zelda Fichandler's *Awake and Sing!* in 2006. Back then, I was blessed to be ignorant of the influential people I worked with like Zelda. I mean, she was

the pioneer of the regional theater movement!

LW: *She is pretty amazing, isn't she? Would you say you need an "in" to be cast in D.C.?*

DP: There's networking, but we do open calls at least once a year and I always attend [Camp Arena Stage] showcases. I saw over a hundred shows around town last year. I follow a set of strict rules though: don't miss a curtain; don't first-act it [leave at intermission]; don't break the three-block rule [discuss a show within three blocks of the venue]; and don't be negative. And I never tell people when I'm coming so whether it's a full house or there are three people in the audience, **perform at your best, always.**

LW: *Are there any quirks you*

look for?

DP: Spontaneity, interaction with the director, flexibility. You have to own the material without being encumbered by it.

LW: *What's the most common mistake you've encountered?*

DP: For young actors: under-preparation. They aren't always smart about audition choices. I mean, if we're auditioning for *Oklahoma!* or *The Music Man*, I'm not going to sing something from Sondheim or *Next to Normal*. It's like, you don't have *anything* from Rodgers and Hammerstein?!

LW: *Ha ha! Do older actors have the same problems?*

DP: With them it's a problem of playing into what they think you want. Don't play you playing Will Parker. Just

PLAY Will Parker! Treat [the characters] like real people. I remember seeing men audition for Jerry [in *At Home at the Zoo*]. At one point [playwright Edward Albee] did this. [Pantomimes running with two fingers.] The play doesn't work as a play if Peter runs away in the beginning! **Think about the character in that moment** and what the stakes of the scene are for the play. That's what we want.

LW: *So do you find a lot of talent in D.C. or is New York really the mecca for quality actors?*

DP: There's no such thing as a New York actor. People move to New York, audition, and get a gig they are flown to. They have apartments or mailboxes in the city, but really it's just a marketplace.

LW: *What about celebrities? How do you book stars?*

DP: Very badly! Well, who is a star and what constitutes being a star? Do Broadway credits and Tonys mean something or do you need to be on TV? You need a direct relationship. Kenny Leon knows Phylicia Rashad. They hang out. They text. I love the idea of Neil Patrick Harris on our stage, but it's like, are you and NPH tight? Does he owe you a favor? If not, then we're probably not getting him.

LW: *I wish I knew NPH! Now, as a casting director, what is your worst nightmare?*

DP: Losing an actor at any given point. **I've had an actor die in tech before.** She was in remission from cancer and had to be taken to the hospital. It was terrible. But, in

general, replacement casting is [my worst nightmare].

LW: *Wow. I'm so sorry. Well, what would you change about the casting field if you could?*

DP: More actors of color and more opportunities for them. When we auditioned for *Oklahoma!* I kept hearing "Wait, you do know I'm Asian, right? And this is *Oklahoma!*, isn't it?" It was unexpected, but that was the idea: not your Mama's *Oklahoma!*

DP: I'd also love to see more directors, designers, and artists scouting talent; not just [the] casting [team]. **It's the creative team that makes the final decision.** My job is facilitating the casting room. Kind of like playing matchmaker.

LW: *So, ultimately, how do you*

know what a director will want?

DP: It's like mind-reading at some point.

LW: *Do you have any closing words of wisdom for aspiring stars?*

DP: If you're an actor, find a way to make the audience believe you are who you say you are. Get into a show at a smaller house and invite people! And if you want to be a better director or playwright, you really need to get out there and see shows!

LW: *Thank you so much, Dan.*



“Our strongest writers keep falling away from the theater because they can’t make a living. And without writers, we can’t have a theater.” – Molly Smith, *New York Times*



WHAT IS A RESIDENT PLAYWRIGHT?

The Playwright Residencies Program is founded upon the belief that writers thrive in collaborative environments with other writers, respond best to a residency adaptive to their needs, and that writers need time to *write*. Each resident receives a three-year residency with an annual stipend, health benefits, local housing, a development budget, and at least one work produced at Arena Stage. Currently, Arena supports five resident playwrights (Lisa Kron, Amy Freed, Karen Zacarias, Charles Randolph-Wright, and Katori Hall) and two project residents (Lynn Nottage and David Henry Hwang) who are commissioned to produce a specific work. Next season will feature Katori Hall’s *The Mountaintop*.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION

“I hadn’t really seriously looked at a theater as a home before. Arena has put money behind its words.”
– Karen Zacarias, *New York Times*

Arena gratefully acknowledges The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for generously supporting our Residencies Program, and looks forward to welcoming additional residents in seasons to come.

WHY DO WE NEED A PLAYWRIGHT’S RESIDENCY?

“It allows more sustainable relationships between artists and theater institutions and gives them the resources to nurture their craft” – Amrita Ramanan, Literary Manager

Associate Artistic Director Emeritus David Dower traveled the country interviewing American playwrights. He found that most playwrights simply had little to no time to actually write as many spent the majority of their time performing supplementary activities for income. With the Playwright Residencies, Arena aims to provide both space and time, arguably a playwright’s most valuable instruments in creating new work.

A WARM WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS!

Thank you and welcome to new members who joined from April 1, 2011 to March 1, 2012. We gratefully acknowledge the many individuals and families who make it possible for Arena to continue presenting high-quality productions and innovative education programs. (*While we appreciate gifts of all sizes, space only permits us to list new members of \$300 and above.*)

Anonymous (2)
Thomas Ager
Mrs. Caroline Alper
Marilena Amoni & Don Ryan
Mary Barnes & Chris Vatis
Kyle Z Bell
Judy & George Bowns, in memory of their sons, Mark & Scott
Elisabeth Brocking
Clarissa Evans Brown
Sharie Brown
Maurice & Ruth Burg
Conrad Cafritz
Charitable Trust
Fred & Catherine Cecere
Ann Thompson Cook & David Cook
Myron & Mary Curzan
Keith & Cindy Davis
Philip Davis
Dr. Molly Donovan & Dr. Barry Wepman
Susan Duncan & Leo Fisher
Craig Dunkerley & Patricia Haigh
Anita Dunn

Tom & Elizabeth Dupree
Richard & Diana England
Dr. Oscar P. Fitzgerald
James & Loretta Fulton
Vanessa Northington
Gamble
Estate of Helen Winograd Geiger
Alejandro Gherardi
Angela & Dan Goelzer
Ms. Jennifer Gold
Jinny & Michael Goldstein
Rina Grafstein
Warren Gump
Merle Haberman
Lucia Hatch
Fred & Catherine Cecere
Ann Thompson Cook & David Cook
Myron & Mary Curzan
Keith & Cindy Davis
Philip Davis
Dr. Molly Donovan & Dr. Barry Wepman
Susan Duncan & Leo Fisher
Craig Dunkerley & Patricia Haigh
Anita Dunn

Molly Lester
Laura Liswood
Nicholas & Alyssa Lovegrove
Nancy & David Low*
Sophia Lynn
John & Denise MacGaffin
Robert & Natalie Mandel
Family Foundation
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Thomas McPherson
Nancy Mendez
Margaret E. Mohrmann
Ida Mori
Carole & John Nannes
Virginia Newmyer
Caren Novick
L. Erik Ohlsson
Stephen K. Orr
Thomas & Arlene Prendergast
Sandra Reed-Bryant
Catherine Remijan
Helen Richards
Linda Ricketts & James Teaford
Hal* & Marylouise Roach
Dermott Ryan
Sandra & Ivan Sabel

Thomas Sachs
Raymond Sczudlo* & Deborah Sams Sczudlo
Dana Shaffer
Sarah Sloan
David Bruce Smith*
Margo Smith & Gerald Levine
Mr. & Mrs. Peter J. Tanous
Tim & Grace Terpstra*
Elizabeth Thornhill
True Creek Inc.
Michael Waldman
Christopher, Colleen & Lindsey Wareing
Curtin & Debbie Winsor
Miriam Zimmerman

**denotes new members of the Arena Stage Board of Trustees*

TAKE YOUR SEAT

In 2010, Arena Stage made history with the momentous opening of the Mead Center for American Theater. Carve your place in Arena history with an engraved seat plaque:

Fichandler Stage \$15,000
Kreeger Theater (Orchestra) \$10,000
Kreeger Theater (Balcony) \$5,000
Your gift entitles you to a number of exclusive benefits!

Pledges can be made over a 3- to 5-year period.

For detailed gift information, contact Danielle St.Germain-Gordon, Chief Development Officer at 202-600-4029 or dgordon@arenastage.org.

With your donation you will ensure that Arena Stage continues as a leading center for the production, preservation, development, and study of American theater. Help us make our house your home by leaving your mark today!

