

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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EARLY CASTING ANNOUNCED FOR ARENA STAGE 2017/18 SEASON

SINGLE TICKETS FOR 10-SHOW SEASON ON SALE NOW

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater announces select cast members for upcoming productions as part of the company's 2017/18 programming as single tickets for the full season go on sale.

The wildly fun musical *The Pajama Game* will feature **Britney Coleman**, fresh off her Broadway debut in *Sunset Boulevard*, as Babe and Tony Award winner **Donna McKechnie**, who originated the role of Cassie in the original Broadway production of *A Chorus Line*, as Mabel. They are joined by **Edward Gero**, currently reprising his role as Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia in *The Originalist* at Arena Stage through August 6, as Hasler. Director Alan Paul teams up with choreographer Parker Esse and music director James Cunningham to bring this comedic love story to life, running October 27-December 24, 2017.

Tackling the role of the velvet-throated songstress in *Nina Simone: Four Women* is **Harriett D. Foy**, seen on Broadway in *Amelie*, *Amazing Grace* and *Mama Mia!* and previously at Arena Stage in *The Women of Brewster Place*. Under the direction of Timothy Douglas, Christina Ham's music-infused drama reveals how Nina Simone helped define the sound of the Civil Rights Movement and runs November 10-December 24, 2017.

Stage and screen actor **Kalani Queypo**, whose screen credits include *Jamestown*, *Saints & Strangers*, *Slow West* and *The New World*, will play John Ridge in Mary Kathryn Nagle's world-premiere drama *Sovereignty*. Directed by Molly Smith, this daring new play tells the story of a young Cherokee lawyer fighting to restore her Nation's jurisdiction and runs January 12-February 18, 2018 as the fourth production in Arena Stage's Power Plays initiative.

Bowman Wright will return to the role of Martin Luther King, Jr. for the third time at Arena Stage in Robert Schenkkan's *The Great Society*, following his performances in *All the Way* and *The Mountaintop*. He joins the previously announced Jack Willis as President Lyndon Baines Johnson in the Washington, D.C. premiere of this political thrill ride, directed by Kyle Donnelly and running February 2-March 11, 2018.

Ryun Yu, who in 2007 originated the role of Gordon Hirabayashi in *Hold These Truths* and has since traveled across the country with the show, will reprise his "fine-grained tour de force" performance (*LA Times*). Jeanne Sakata's one-man drama tells the true story of Hirabayashi, the American son of Japanese immigrants who defied an unjust court order when America placed its own citizens in internment camps during World War II, and runs February 23-April 8, 2018 under the direction of Jessica Kubzansky.

To purchase tickets for Arena Stage's 2017/18 productions, visit arenastage.org or call 202-488-3300.

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Additional casting will be announced at a later date.

Biographies

BRITNEY COLEMAN (*Babe*) is thrilled to make her Arena Stage debut! She recently appeared on Broadway in the revival of *Sunset Boulevard* starring Glenn Close and performed with the first national tour of *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*. Regional credits include *Guenevere* in David Lee and Steve Orich's eight-person adaptation of *Camelot* (Two River Theater and Westport Country Playhouse) opposite Robert Sean Leonard and appearances at The Old Globe, Theater Under the Stars, Marriott Lincolnshire and North Shore Music Theater. She performed in *A Very Potter...Musical/Sequel/Senior Year* featuring Darren Criss and her fellow Starkids. Britney received her B.F.A. from University of Michigan. www.britneycoleman.com

HARRIETT D. FOY (*Nina Simone*) appeared at Arena Stage in *The Women of Brewster Place*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Polk County*, *From the Mississippi Delta* and *A Wonderful Life*. Broadway credits include *Amelie*, *Amazing Grace*, *The American Plan*, *Mamma Mia* and *Once on This Island*. Off-Broadway credits include *Rimbaud* (BAM); *On the Levee*; *Crowns* (AUDELCO Award winner); *Lone Star Love*; *Dinah Was*; and *Inside Out*. Regional credits include *Reunion* (Ford's Theatre); *The House That Will Not Stand* (Yale Repertory/Berkeley Repertory, TBA Award winner); *dance of the holy ghosts* (Yale Repertory); *Breath and Imagination* (ArtsEmerson); *LMNOP* (Goodspeed), *Ambassador Satch* (Dubai); and *Seven Guitars* (Center Stage). Film/TV credits include *Winter's Tale*, *Collateral Beauty*, *Welcome to the Wayne*, *Orange is the New Black*, *Rescue Me* and *Law & Order*. She received her B.F.A. from Howard University. "WGATAP!" Twitter: @divafoyh. www.harriettdfoy.com

EDWARD GERO (*Hasler*)'s Arena Stage credits include Justice 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 15-time nominee. Regional credits include *The Originalist* (Asolo Repertory, Pasadena Playhouse, Court Theatre); *Red* and *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 70+ roles include *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.

DONNA MCKECHNIE (*Mabel*) makes her Arena Stage debut. Broadway credits include *A Chorus Line* (original company, Tony Award for Best Actress in a Musical), *How To Succeed in Business...*, *The Education of Hyman Kaplan*, choreographer/actress in *Sondheim: A Musical Tribute*, *Promises-Promises*, *Company*, *On The Town*, *State Fair* (Fred Astaire Award) and *The Visit*. Donna co-starred in *The Wild Party* (West End), starred in and choreographed productions in London, Tokyo and Paris and was invited by Bob Fosse to lead the *Sweet Charity* national tour. Regional credits include *Follies*, *Mack and Mabel*, *Gypsy*, *The Glass Menagerie* and symphony orchestra appearances. Film/TV credits include *Fame*, *Cheers*, *Dark Shadows*, *Every Little Step* and *The Little Prince*. Donna released a memoir, *Time Steps: My Musical Comedy Life*, and is touring her one-woman show, *Same Place: Another Time*. www.donnamckechnie.com

KALANI QUEYPO (*John Ridge*) makes his Arena Stage debut. He is a founding member of SAG-AFTRA's National Native American Committee and serves on the Advisory Council for Native Voices Theater at the Autry Museum of the American West. Before moving to L.A., Kalani trained in New York and was featured on stages all over the country including Goodspeed, Trinity Repertory, Mark Taper Forum, The Wilma Theater and The Ordway. Kalani has appeared in Terrence Malick's Oscar Award nominated *The New World* and Steven Spielberg's Emmy Award-winning *Into the West* and *Slow West* (Sundance Film Festival Grand Jury Prize). TV credits include *Mad Men*, *Nurse Jackie*, *Bones*, *Hawaii Five-0* and a critically-acclaimed performance as Squanto in *Saints & Strangers*. Kalani is currently shooting a second season of *Jamestown* with the producers of *Downton Abbey*.

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BOWMAN WRIGHT (*Martin Luther King, Jr.*) was last seen at Arena Stage as Martin Luther King, Jr. in *All The Way* and *The Mountaintop* and King in *King Hedley II*. Theater credits include *Our Lady of Kibeho* (Signature Theatre Company); *TogDog/UnderDog* (Marin Theatre Company); *A Raisin in the Sun* (Geva Theatre Center); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (La Jolla Playhouse); *The Dreamer Examines His Pillow* (Shakespeare & Company); *The Piano Lesson* (Virginia Stage); *Since Africa* and *A House with No Walls* (Interact Theatre); *Fences* (Actors Theatre of Louisville); and *Death and the King's Horsemen* (Lantern Theatre). Films credits include *Sight* (Lionsgate Productions) and *Vinson* (Sainvil Productions). TV credits include *Person of Interest*, *Blue Bloods* and *Elementary*. Bowman is a graduate of the University of California, San Diego.

RYUN YU (*Gordon Hirabayashi*) makes his Arena Stage debut. He originated the role of Gordon Hirabayashi at East West Players in 2007, and has since performed it at ACT, Portland Center Stage and Pasadena Playhouse. Ryun collaborated with David Henry Hwang while starring in the play *Yellow Face* (the first adaptation of a major theatrical play for YouTube) and on the film adaptation of the play *Bondage*. Additional credits include Kimber Lee's *Tokyo Fish Story* (South Coast Repertory); Richard Greenberg's *Take Me Out* (Geffen Playhouse); the world premiere of Lloyd Suh's *American Hwangap* (Magic Theatre); and Art and Julia Cho's *The Language Archive* (East West Players). Ryun directed and will star in the upcoming feature film *The Last Tour*. TV appearances include *Fuller House*, *Castle* and the upcoming *Animal Kingdom*. He is the first theater major from MIT. Twitter/Instagram: @RealRyunYu.

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater, under the leadership of Artistic Director Molly Smith and Executive Director 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 impacts the lives of over 10,000 students annually through its work in community engagement. Now in its seventh decade, Arena Stage serves a diverse annual audience of more than 300,000. arenastage.org

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