

# STEP AFRIKA!'S MAGICAL MUSICAL HOLIDAY STEP SHOW



2023/24 SEASON

# NEXT AT ARENA STAGE

## SWEPT AWAY

BOOK BY **JOHN LOGAN**  
MUSIC AND LYRICS BY **THE AVETT BROTHERS**  
CHOREOGRAPHED BY **DAVID NEUMANN**  
DIRECTED BY **MICHAEL MAYER**  
BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH **MATTHEW MASTEN,**  
**SEAN HUDOCK,** AND **MADISON WELLS LIVE**  
**NOW – DECEMBER 30**

## MINDPLAY

CREATED AND PERFORMED BY **VINNY DePONTO**  
WRITTEN BY **VINNY DePONTO** AND **JOSH KOENIGSBERG**  
DIRECTED BY **ANDREW NEISLER**  
PRODUCED BY **EVA PRICE**  
**JANUARY 19 – MARCH 3**

## TEMPESTUOUS ELEMENTS

BY **KIA CORTHON**  
DIRECTED BY **PSALMAYENE 24**  
**FEBRUARY 16 – MARCH 17**

## UNKNOWN SOLDIER

BOOK BY **DANIEL GOLDSTEIN**  
MUSIC BY **MICHAEL FRIEDMAN**  
LYRICS BY **MICHAEL FRIEDMAN** AND **DANIEL GOLDSTEIN**  
DIRECTED BY **TRIP CULLMAN**  
BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH **HUNTER ARNOLD**  
**MARCH 29 – MAY 5**

**THE MIGRATION:**  
**REFLECTIONS ON JACOB LAWRENCE**  
BY **STEP AFRIKA!**  
**JUNE 6 – JULY 14**



# BIGGER BOLDER — & — BETTER THAN EVER!



Swept Away artwork by Ken Taylor. Mindplay photo of Vinny DePonto by Jeff Lorch. Tempestuous Elements and Unknown Soldier illustrations by Loveis Wise. The Migration photo by William Perrigen.

# STEP AFRIKA!'S MAGICAL MUSICAL HOLIDAY STEP SHOW

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Holiday Step Show* program book  
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## ARENA STAGE MISSION

Arena Stage is the voice of American theater resident in our nation's capital. Focused on American artists, our productions are innovative and representative of stories from across the country. We nurture new plays and reimagine classics. We celebrate our democracy and diversity through a multitude of voices in our productions and community engagement programs to inspire people to action. We produce all that is passionate, exuberant, profound, entertaining, deep and dangerous in the American spirit.



Photo by Nic Lehoux courtesy of Bing Thom Architects.



Arena Stage is built on the land of the Piscataway people of the Algonquin-speaking tribes, as well as the lands of the Native American people of the greater Anacostia, Potomac, and Tidewater regions.

## ARENA STAGE LEADERSHIP NOTE

### Season's Greetings!



Whether you're reveling in the magic of Christmas, honoring the sacred traditions of Hanukkah, or embracing the rich heritage of Kwanzaa, I hope this note finds you warmed by the joy the holiday season brings. I'm particularly delighted you've chosen to infuse an extra dose of merriment into your holiday festivities by joining Step Afrika! and Arena Stage for the energetic and enchanting Step Afrika!'s *Magical Musical Holiday Step Show*.

This vibrant holiday tradition, now in its second year at Arena Stage (and its second decade of delighting audiences with its trademark combination whimsy and virtuosity), is a true gift to D.C. that connects audiences across generations in collective delight as they marvel at Step Afrika!'s singular skill. I eagerly anticipate sitting down in the Fichandler, flanked by my parents and my children to experience this incredible show for the very first time.

I envision the festive atmosphere, the rhythmic beats reverberating through the theater, and the toes tapping in sync with the mesmerizing performances unfolding before our eyes. This is so much more than just a show; it's a jubilant celebration of culture, talent, and the unifying spirit that invigorates us each and every holiday season.

As you laugh, dance, and sing, I have no doubt the magic of Step Afrika! will add an extra sparkle to your holiday celebrations and ignite lasting memories to be cherished for years to come.

Once again, thank you for choosing to join us for this extra-special experience. May all your holidays overflow with laughter, love, and the unparalleled joy of sharing moments with those you love.

Wishing you a season filled with warmth, happiness, and delight,

**Hana S. Sharif**  
Artistic Director, Arena Stage





## STEP AFRIKA! FOUNDER'S NOTE

Dear Friends,



### Welcome to Step Afrika!'s *Magical Musical Holiday Step Show*!

After a year filled with incredible performances and meaningful arts education programming, we are thrilled to bring this joyous annual tradition to our home in Washington, D.C., at the enchanting Arena Stage. The Fichandler is truly a magical place, providing the perfect backdrop for our highly interactive production. **Step Afrika! crafted**

**this performance for both the young and the young at heart, creating a space where everyone can play, sing along, make music, and dance!** This time of year is extra special for me, and after months of energetic touring across the USA, I can't wait for you to welcome home the celebrated artists of Step Afrika!. Trust me, the more noise you make, the more fun we'll have! Who wants to stay still and quiet during the holidays, *right*?

Be sure to stop by our marketing table in the lobby to learn more about **Step Afrika!'s 30th anniversary season**, including upcoming performances of *The Migration: Reflections on Jacob Lawrence* in June, and registration for our amazing summer camp, **Summer Steps with Step Afrika!**, both happening at Arena Stage in 2024!

Step Afrika! never tires of serving the community, and we're thrilled to have you with us. Visit [stepafrika.org](http://stepafrika.org) to explore our work on stages and in schools, and join our newsletter for updates from D.C. and beyond. Thank you for choosing to spend your holidays with us! **Wishing you a season filled with joy and all your favorite things.**

Best wishes,

**C. Brian Williams**

Founder & Executive Producer, Step Afrika!



## STEP AFRIKA!

### ABOUT

Founded in 1994 by C. Brian Williams, Step Afrika! is the first professional company dedicated to the tradition of stepping. Under Mr. Williams' leadership, stepping has evolved into one of America's cultural exports, touring more than 60 countries across the globe and ranking as one of the top 10 African American Dance Companies in the US.

Step Afrika! blends percussive dance styles practiced by historically African American fraternities and sororities; traditional African dances; and an array of contemporary dance and art forms into a cohesive, compelling artistic experience. Performances are much more than dance shows; they integrate songs, storytelling, humor, and audience participation. The blend of technique, agility, and pure energy makes each performance unique and leaves the audience with their hearts pounding.

Step Afrika! promotes stepping as an educational tool for young people, focusing on teamwork, academic achievement, and cross-cultural understanding. The Company reaches tens of thousands of Americans each year through a 50-city tour of colleges and theaters and performs globally as Washington, DC's one and only Cultural Ambassador.

Step Afrika! has earned Mayor's Arts Awards for Outstanding Contribution to Arts Education, Innovation in the Arts, Excellence in an Artistic Discipline, and Excellence in the Performing Arts, and was inducted into the National Association of Campus Activities (NACA) Hall of Fame, the first Dance Company to earn this honor. Step Afrika! headlined President Barack Obama's Black History Month Reception and performed at the first ever Juneteenth Celebration at the White House. The Company is featured prominently at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History & Culture with the world's first stepping interactive exhibit.

### ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

C. Brian Williams, *Founder & Executive Producer*

Lamar Lovelace, *Executive Director*

Mfoniso Akpan, *Artistic Director*

Conrad R. Kelly II, *Assistant Artistic Director*

Stacy Burwell, *Director, Administration and Special Projects*

Artis Olds, *Director, Arts Education and Community Programs*

Margo Cunningham, *Marketing Manager*

Dana Weinstein, *Manager, Institutional Relations and Research*

Vanessa Hall, *Company Manager*

### LEARN MORE



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ARENA STAGE  
HANA S. SHARIF, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | EDGAR DOBIE, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

PRESENTS

# STEP AFRIKA!'S MAGICAL MUSICAL HOLIDAY STEP SHOW

DIRECTED BY  
**MFONISO AKPAN**

FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, STEP AFRIKA!  
**C. BRIAN WILLIAMS**

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, STEP AFRIKA!  
**MFONISO AKPAN**

ASSISTANT ARTISTIC DIRECTOR  
**CONRAD R. KELLY II**

LIGHTING DESIGNER &  
PRODUCTION MANAGER  
**MARIANNE MEADOWS\***

ASSOCIATE LIGHTING DESIGNER  
**YANNICK GODTS**

Step Afrika!'s *Magical Musical Holiday Step Show*  
is made possible through generous funding from



This production was also made possible by the  
DC Commission on Arts and Humanities.

We are grateful to Destination DC for their promotional support of this production.

\*Member of the United Scenic Artists Local USA 829

The videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited.  
Please turn off all electronic devices. Eating and drinking are not permitted inside the theater.





Photos of Step Afrika's Magical Musical Holiday Step Show 2022 at Arena Stage by Jati Lindsay.

## PROGRAM / COMPANY / FOR THIS PRODUCTION

### PROGRAM

1. Jabulani!
2. March of the Nutcrackers
3. The Arctic Step Challenge
4. DJ Nutcracker's Yuletide Step Workshop
5. We Stroll, We Step
6. Snow Day
7. Home for the Holidays.

SPECIAL NOTE: Audience participation has been a part of the step tradition since its inception in the 1900s. Members of the audience are invited to clap, stomp, cheer and participate in call and response with the Company.

### COMPANY *(in alphabetical order)*

Kenneth L. Alexander    Nya Christian    Jerod Coleman  
 Ariel Dykes    Keomi Givens Jr.    Kamala Hargrove    Nepri James  
 Terrence Johnson    Conrad R. Kelly II    Isaiah O'Connor    Na'imah Ray  
 Valencia Odeyka Emonni Springer    Ericka Still    Brie Turner  
 Joseph Vasquez    Pelham Warner Jr.    Robert Warnsley  
 with special guest: Jeeda Barrington

### FOR THIS PRODUCTION

Show Caller..... CHRISTI B. SPANN  
 Scenic and Lighting Designer ..... MARIANNE MEADOWS  
 Associate Designer..... YANNICK GODTS  
 Production Assistant..... HOWARD BOLDEN, TREVION WALKER  
 Props Technician ..... ABBY FRY  
 Light Board Operator ..... SCOTT FOLSOM  
 Audio Engineer ..... ALEX CLOUD  
 Wardrobe Supervisors..... ADELLE GRESOCK, TYQURIA FOUNTAIN

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and we'll 👍 you back! 😊

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#StepAfrika #DCTheatre #ACreativeDC #MyDCCool  
#ExperienceDC #VisitDC #Only1DC

## WHO'S WHO

### COMPANY



**KENNETH L. ALEXANDER** is a native of Savannah, GA, with a BFA in Interior Design from Valdosta State University. First introduced to stepping through the Sigma Beta Club, Kenneth went on to become a proud member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Inc. He has taught and performed in and around Tampa Bay, FL, and most recently had the honor of performing at the Super Bowl LV Halftime Show. This is Kenneth's first season with the Company.



**NYA CHRISTIAN** is a native of Cleveland, OH, with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, Sociology and Dance Arts from Howard University. A member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, she has served as the Alpha Chapter Parliamentarian, Step Mistress, and Stroll Captain. Nya has choreographed works for Taste of Howard, the White House Initiative on HBCU Step performance, Howard University's 2022 Homecoming Step Show performance, DC- based Black History Month performances, and the 2023 North Atlantic Regional Step Show's winning number. She has also represented the Howard University National Panhellenic Council and her Sorority on *Good Morning America* for "The story of 9 historically Black fraternities and sororities" segment during Black History Month. This is Nya's first season with the Company.



**JEROD COLEMAN** is a native of Columbus, GA, with a BA in History from the University of South Alabama. A member of the Theta Delta chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., he has served as both step and stroll master. Jerod has performed with the Atlanta Braves, Atlanta Falcons, Redbull Dance Your Style, and DreamHack ATL entertainment teams. He taught at Thomas H. Brewer Elementary School in Columbus, Georgia, where he also ran an all-boys step team called the B.L.U.E. Steppers. This is Jerod's first season with the Company.



**ARIEL DYKES** is a native of Gainesville, FL, with an Associate of Arts Degree in Musical Theatre from Santa Fe College and a BFA in Dance from the University of Florida. Ariel was introduced to stepping and strolling as a member of the Iota Lambda Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., where she choreographed step routines for the chapter and UF's National Panhellenic Council. She has trained in traditional and post-modern dance, jazz, voice, and acting, and has worked with such artists as Ailey Dancers' Nathaniel Hunt and Saman tha Barriento, Tony Award winner Scott Coulter, and Galen Hooks. This is Ariel's second season with the Company.



**KEOMI GIVENS JR.** is a native of Miami, FL, where he trained with Ricardo Dume, Traci Young-Byron, Jakari Sherman, Conrad Kelly II, Tanisha Cide I, Maribel Trujillo, and Robert Battle. He has studied at the New World School of the Arts and the Mahogany Dance Theatre, where he served as a Rehearsal Director and choreographer. Keomi has danced with Gravity Dance Troupe and Young Contemporary Dance





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## WHO'S WHO

Theatre (YCDT) and has previously toured nationally with Step Afrika! as a guest artist. In addition to his exceptional work as a dancer, Keomi has choreographed for the legendary 100 Of Florida A&M University, RickyDanco, and Booker T Washington Lady Twisters. This is Keomi's first season with the Company as a full-time artist.



**KAMALA HARGROVE** is a native of the Bronx, NY, with a BA in Mathematics, Theater, and Dance from Trinity College. Kamala studied with the Alvin Ailey School and Dance Theater of Harlem, has appeared in various music videos and live performances. She has performed with artists including Estelle, Mr. Vegas, Wizkid, and French Montana. Kamala has also worked as a Teaching Artist in New York City, teaching elementary, middle, and high school students. This is Kamala's second season with the Company.



**NEPRI JAMES** is a native of Atlanta, GA, with a BA from North Carolina A&T State University. Step Master for her Alpha Phi Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., she is known for bringing her step team to victory at the 2018 Homecoming Step Show. Nepri has worked for the Thurgood Marshall College Fund Rise and Contra Tiempo and has previously toured nationally with Step Afrika! as a guest artist. This is Nepri's first season with the Company as a full-time artist.



**TERRENCE JOHNSON** is a native of Broward County, FL, with a BA in General Studies from the University of Central Florida. Terrence has previously stepped with the ADIMU: Men of Excellence Step Team, and served as a

co-founder, president, and performer with the Hazard Step Team. He is also a 2015 inductee of the UCF Chapter of Progressive Black Men, Inc. This is Terrence's first season with the company as a full-time artist.



**CONRAD R. KELLY II** is a native of Fort Lauderdale, FL, who studied Criminal Justice at Florida A&M University. Following his time with A&M's Marching 100 and The Strikers, Conrad became a soloist for The Rolle Project in Las Vegas and a dance instructor with Studio 305, where he regularly taught classes in hip-hop, contemporary, and jazz. Conrad has won numerous awards as a choreographer and dancer, and is a two-time recipient of the DC Commission on Arts and Humanities' prestigious Arts and Humanities Fellowship Program. A longstanding member of the Company, Conrad serves as Step Afrika!'s Assistant Artistic Director and most recently choreographed The Movement, an epic tribute to Black Lives Matter and the domino effect of activism experienced in 2020. This is Conrad's seventh season with the Company.



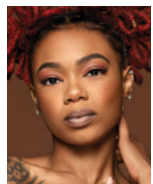
**ISAIAH O'CONNOR** is a native of Miami, FL, with a BS in Biology from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University. A student of hip-hop, modern, and urban soul, Isaiah has previously stepped with the Strikers Dance Troupe under the direction of Shepiro Hardemon. This is Isaiah's second season with the Company.



**NA'IMAH RAY** is a native of New York, NY, with a BFA in Dance from Montclair State University. Na'imah performed as a Centennial Stepper with her sorority, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority

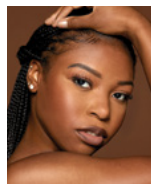


Incorporated, at the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. She has trained with Dwana Smallwood, Earl Mosley, Christian Von Howard, and Beatrice Capote, and participated in dance programs at The Ailey School and Earl Mosley Institute of the Arts. This is her second season with the Company.



**VALENCIA ODEYKA EMMONNI SPRINGER** is a native of Brooklyn, NY, with a BA in Elementary Education from Virginia Union University. Valencia is a proud member of

the Nu Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc. and the Eta Psi Chapter of Tau Beta Sigma National Honorary band sorority and served as the first "Stand Queen" (captain) with the Ambassadors of Sound Marching Band. Previously a student of Restoration Youth Arts Academy, Valencia has performed with Forces of Nature, Dance Africa (Brooklyn), and as part of a live installation entitled "A Primordial Place." She has also worked as a social studies and science teacher, dance teacher/coach, guest choreographer for local New York/Virginia majorette teams, and as a model for New York and Richmond, Virginia, fashion weeks. This is Valencia's fifth season with the Company.



**ERICKA STILL** is a native of St. Petersburg, FL, with a BA in Health Science, Pre-Occupational Therapy, and Rehabilitation Management from Florida A&M University. Ericka

previously stepped with AKAdemy Exquisite Gems and studied under the direction of Paulette W. Johnson and Shepiro Hardemon as a member and Co-Assistant Artistic Director of Mahogany Dance Theatre. This is Ericka's second season with the Company.



**BRIE TURNER** is a native of Lithonia, GA, with a BA in Strategic, Legal, and Management Communications from Howard University. Magna cum laude graduate, Brie

was a member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Incorporated's Quintessential Alpha chapter where she served as the Chapter President and stroll mistress, in addition to serving as the co-captain and captain of the Howard University Bisonettes Dance Ensemble. This is Brie's second season with the Company.



**JOSEPH VASQUEZ** is a native of Guttenberg, NJ, with a BS in Exercise Science from Rutgers University in New Brunswick where he served as a member of

Lambda Sigma Upsilon Latino Fraternity Incorporated. Joseph has led and choreographed for the Bachata Performance Team, and previously performed with The Revels, a stroll team led by Francisco Pozo and Carlos Zapata. This is Joseph's second season with the Company.



**PELHAM WARNER JR.** is a native of The Bronx, NY, and has a BA from Dutchess Community College. Pelham is a member of The Order of the Feather Fraternity

where he served as the team's Step Master and captain for five years, and has previously danced with The Players Club Steppers. Pelham has worked as a dance instructor in the greater New York City area, and recently performed in the a capella musical The Movement by Kathy D. Harrison at The National Black Theater Festival. This is Pelham's fifth year with the Company.



**ROBERT WARNSLEY** is a native of Chicago, IL, with a BS in Information Technology from Illinois State University. A member of the Eta Tau chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity,

Inc., Robert served as the step and stroll master and has organized, competed in, and placed first in numerous step shows. He has taught stepping to the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, and actively participates in community service projects in the city of Chicago, teaching dancehall and various Afro styles in the DMV and NYC areas. This is Robert's fifth season with the Company.

## SPECIAL GUEST

**JEEDA BARRINGTON** is a native of Glenarden, MD, and a graduate of Bowie State University where he earned his Bachelor's in Music Technology and Master's Degree in Human Resources. A member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., Jeeda has served as the choreographer for various traveling step and "partywalk" teams. He continues his love for rhythms through disc jockeying at events across the United States.

## CREATIVE



**C. BRIAN WILLIAMS** (Founder and Executive Producer) is a native of Houston, Texas, and a graduate of Howard University. Brian first learned to step as a

member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. – Beta Chapter, in the Spring of 1989. While living in Southern Africa, he began

to research the percussive dance tradition of stepping, exploring the many sides of this exciting, yet under-recognized American art form, and founded Step Afrika! in 1994. Williams has performed, lectured, and taught in Europe, Central and South America, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Caribbean, and throughout the United States. Through Williams' leadership, stepping has evolved into one of America's newest cultural exports and inspired the designation of Step Afrika! as Washington, DC's official "Cultural Ambassador." In 2022, the National Endowment of the Arts designated Williams as a National Heritage Fellow, the nation's highest honor in folk and traditional arts. He is the recipient of numerous Artist Fellowships; the World Alive! Distinguished Artist Award by ArtsEmerson; the Mayor's Arts Award for Visionary Leadership from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities; Distinguished Arts Award from the Coalition for African Americans in the Performing Arts; and the Pola Nirenska Award for Contemporary Achievement in Dance. He is also featured in *Soulstepping*, the first book to document the history of stepping. He also earned the Mayor's Art Award for Innovation in the Arts and has led the company to multiple Metro DC Dance Awards for "Outstanding New Work," "Excellence in Stage Design/Multimedia," and "Outstanding Group Performance." Williams has been cited as a "civic/community visionary" by *NV Magazine*, a "nation builder" by the National Black Caucus of State Legislators and a "minority business leader" by the *Washington Business Journal*. His work is featured prominently at the Smithsonian Museum of African-American History and Culture in Washington, DC.





**LAMAR LOVELACE** (*Executive Director*) As Executive Director for Step Afrika!, Lamar Lovelace is responsible for the organization's strategy and operations, leading its staff,

programs, and the execution of its mission. Working closely with Step Afrika!'s board of directors, he spearheads fundraising, marketing, operations, and long-range planning for the organization. He brings deep expertise from academia and has managed the organization's humanities-based partnerships. In July 2017, Lamar joined Step Afrika! as Deputy Executive Director, where he oversaw the dance company's communications and marketing strategy, fundraising efforts, and financial operations. Previously, Lamar spent 8 years at Columbia University as Assistant Director in the Office of Community Outreach and Education and Director of Public Programs and Events. At the New York City-based campus, he managed community-based partnerships and special events and produced large-scale, humanities-based programming opportunities to engage students, faculty, and staff. At Broward College in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Lamar was Director of Cultural Affairs and Student Engagement, where he created arts-based social justice programs and exhibitions. He holds Master's degrees in Arts Management and Oral History from Carnegie Mellon and Columbia, respectively, and a BA in Speech and Hearing Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Lovelace is a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.



**MFONISO AKPAN** (*Artistic Director*) has trained extensively in tap, ballet, jazz, modern, African dance, and step. While attending the State University of New York at

Stony Brook, she majored in biochemistry and cultivated her stepping skills as a

member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Mfon began her training at the Bernice Johnson Cultural Arts Center and has performed at Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, the Apollo Theater, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and Lincoln Center. Mfon toured with the off-Broadway show *Hoofin' 2 Hittin'*, where she was a featured stepper and dancer.

**MARIANNE MEADOWS** (*Lighting Designer/Production Manager*) is a member of United Scenic Artists local 829 with a BA from Sarah Lawrence College, MFA from the University of Washington with additional training at Lester Polakov's Studio and Forum of Stage Design, NYC.

Headshots of the Company by Keith Major.

## ARENA STAGE LEADERSHIP

**HANA S. SHARIF** (*Artistic Director*) has enjoyed a multi-faceted theater career, including roles as an artistic leader, director, playwright, and producer with a specialty in strategic and cross-functional leadership. Hana began her professional career as an undergraduate student at Spelman College. From 1997 to 2003, Hana served as the co-founder and Artistic Director of Nasir Productions, a theater dedicated to underrepresented voices challenging traditional structure. Hana joined the Tony® Award-winning regional theater, Hartford Stage, in 2003. During her decade-long tenure at Hartford Stage, Hana served as the Associate Artistic Director, Director of New Play Development, and Artistic Producer. Hana launched the new play development program, expanded the community engagement and civic discourse initiatives, and developed and produced Tony®, Grammy, Pulitzer, and Obie Award-winning shows. Starting in

2012, she served as Program Manager at ArtsEmerson, a leading world theater company based at Boston's Emerson College. During her tenure at ArtsEmerson, Hana launched an Artists in Residency program, led a research program assessing barriers to inclusion across the region, and leveraged her regional theater experience to freelance produce for smaller theater companies looking to expand and restructure their administrative teams. Hana was Baltimore Center Stage's Associate Artistic Director from 2014 to 2019 and was the architect of the innovative CS Digital program: a platform that pushes the boundaries of traditional theater and looks at the nexus point between art and technology. Her other achievements at Baltimore Center Stage included prototyping the Mobile Unit focused on historically underserved audiences, strengthening community engagement, producing multiple world and regional premieres, and helping to guide the theater through a multi-million dollar building renovation and rebranding effort. Hana became the first Black woman to lead a major regional theater in 2018 when she was named the Augustin Family Artistic Director of The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis. During her tenure at The Rep, Hana guided the organization through a strategic alignment, revolutionized the New Works program, expanding access to underserved communities, and centering equity and anti-racism as the organization's foundational values. Hana holds a BA from Spelman College and an MFA from the University of Houston. Hana is the recipient of USITT's 2023 Distinguished Achievement Award, Spelman's 2022 National Community Service Award, the 2009-10 Aetna New Voices Fellowship, EMC Arts Working Open Fellowship, and Theatre Communications Group (TCG) New Generations Fellowship. Hana is a founding member of The Black Theatre Commons (BTC). She serves on the board of directors for the TCG, BTC, and the Sprott Family Foundation.

**EDGAR DOBIE** (*Executive Producer*) Born in Vernon, British Columbia, a village next to the Rocky Mountains (three years after Arena had its first performance in 1950), I am one of five brothers raised by my Dad Edgar, a mechanic and small businessman, and Mom Connie, a telephone operator and union organizer. I am the only Dobie to make a career in theater. Luckily for me, drama was an arts elective I was offered at the tender age of 12 so I hung up my hockey skates and joined the drama class, led by teacher Paddy Malcolm and her fledgling Powerhouse Community Theater after school. By the time I graduated from high school, we volunteers had built ourselves a 200-seat, fully equipped theater on its own piece of land in the center of town and found a sold-out audience for the full season of plays we had on offer. That experience taught me so many lessons about the power of theater to foster collaboration and share meaningful stories, as well as the public values that attach themselves to building a safe place where everyone is welcome. All those lessons served me well as a managing leader and producer both sides of the border and both sides of the commercial and non-profit theater divide. Arriving here in Southwest with my good wife Tracy and our daughter Greta Lee in 2009 makes me feel like I am well-equipped to do a good job for you all. I am honored to have been recognized for my service to, and leadership of, the Washington, D.C.-area theater community as a recipient of Theatre Washington's inaugural Victor Shargai Leadership Award in 2022.



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The Arena Stage Young Patrons Board seeks to strengthen and support the future of American theater at Arena Stage. The Young Patrons Board supports the artistic mission of Arena Stage by being active ambassadors to the community and arranging opportunities for people under 40 years old to engage with the theater.

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### THE MOLLY SMITH FUND FOR NEW WORK

The Molly Smith Fund for New Work was created to honor the tremendous legacy of Molly Smith, Arena Stage's Artistic Director Emeritus, who retired at the end of the 2022/23 Season after 25 years of visionary leadership. The fund will support the artistic development of new work at Arena Stage, a pillar of Molly's vision.

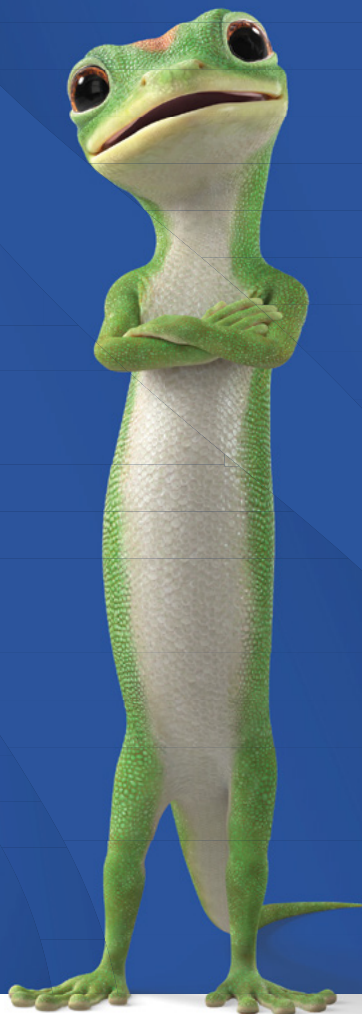
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Arena can help you accomplish your personal, family and philanthropic goals while benefiting the theater. Supporters who make planned gifts to Arena are invited to join the Full Circle Society and enjoy special benefits.

For more information about planned giving, please contact Maya Weil at 202-600-4158.

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Arena Stage gratefully acknowledges the many individuals and families who support the theater's work by contributing to the Annual Fund. These gifts make it possible for the theater to continue presenting high-quality productions and innovative education programs that strengthen the community in which we live.

For more information on the benefits of becoming an Annual Fund contributor, please call the Development Department at 202-600-4177.

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For more information, contact Maya Weil, CAP®,  
Arena's Gift Planning Specialist at 202-600-4158  
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The cast of *The Pajama Game*. Photo by Margot Schulman.





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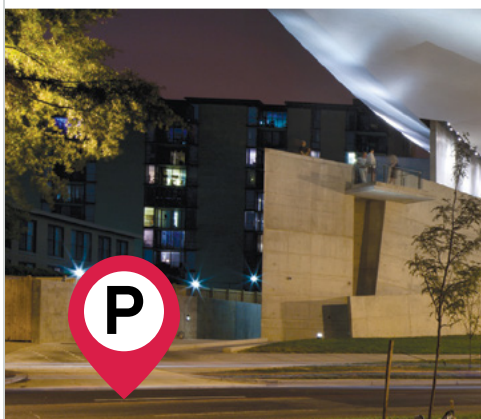
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# THEATER STAFF

Artistic Director .....Hana S. Sharif  
Executive Producer .....Edgar Dobie  
Founding Director .....Zelda Fichandler  
(1924-2016)

Founding Executive  
Director..... Thomas C. Fichandler  
(1915-1997)

Artistic Director  
Emeritus.....Molly Smith

## ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

Associate Artistic Director .....Teresa Sapien  
Senior Artistic Producer .....Reggie D. White  
Literary Manager.....Otis C. Ramsey-Zöe  
Artistic Associate, Casting .....Joseph Pinzon  
Artistic Development  
Coordinator .....Melissa Singson  
Dramaturg.....Jocelyn Clarke  
Artistic Development Fellow .....Vanessa Dalpiaz\*  
Current Commissioned Writers.....The Bengsons,  
Lee Cataluna, Kia Corthron,  
Lady Dane Figueroa Edidi,  
Emily Feldman, Idris Goodwin,  
Caleen Sinnette Jennings, Deepak Kumar,  
Octavio Solis, Vera Starbard, Cheryl West,  
Lauren Yee, Karen Zacarias, Zack Zadek

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Chief Financial Officer/  
Corporate Treasurer.....Joe Berardelli  
Chief of Staff.....Alison Irvin  
Controller.....John Monnett  
Staff Accountant .....Chris Murk  
Accounting Associate.....Mark Runion  
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Human Resources Assistant.....Tyra Picazo  
HR Consultant.....JobMorph  
Legal Counsel.....ArentFox Schiff LLP;  
Kramer Levin Robbins Russell  
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## BUILDING OPERATIONS

Interim Operations/  
Facilities Manager.....Keaun Windear  
Maintenance Assistant.....Tevin Smith

Porter .....Lawrence Wise  
Stage Door Attendant.....Kay Rogers

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Director of Community  
Engagement .....Sean-Maurice Lynch  
Director of Education .....Ashley Forman  
School Programs Manager .....Rebecca Campana  
Community Programs Manager .....Mauricio Pita  
Training Programs Manager.....Zoë Hall  
Community Engagement  
Programming Coordinator.....Kayla A. Warren  
School Programs  
Fellow .....Jazmyn Ja'Net Roberson\*

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Events Specialist.....Casey Radner  
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Assistant.....Kiana Livingston  
Membership Assistant .....Oscar León  
Development Fellow .....Mina Sollars\*

## GENERAL MANAGEMENT

General Manager .....Alicia Sells  
Assistant General  
Manager .....Katharine Templeton  
Company Manager .....Trisha Hein  
General and Production  
Management Coordinator .....Jenna Murphy  
General and Company  
Management Fellow.....Alexandra Lopez\*

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Chief Marketing & Strategy Officer,  
Vice President.....Shonali Burke  
Administrative Coordinator &  
Executive Assistant.....Connor Muldowney

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Lead House Manager .....Daniel Ricci  
House Managers.....Ric Birch, Bruce Perry  
Parking.....SP Plus

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Director, Business Intelligence  
and Information Systems.....Rich Johnson  
System Administrator.....Brian Oh  
Business Intelligence and  
Tessitura Lead (consultancy) .....Sabrina Clark  
IS Help Desk .....Eddie Wieland

## EARNED REVENUE

Director, Earned Revenue.....Isaac Evans  
Earned Revenue Assistant.....Sabrina Zillinger  
Lead Manager, Sales.....Jessica Comstock  
Lead Group Sales Associate.....Donald Jolly  
Group Sales Associate.....Brandon Ferguson  
Managers, Sales.....Caroline Hunt,  
Marion Levy Qualls  
Sales Associates.....Keshawn Connor,  
Hannah Damanka, Kenyana Dean,  
Aaron Hutchens, Meg Karch,  
Kendra Luedke, Joy Mason

Manager,  
Events and Rentals.....Chrystal Vaughan  
Lead Events  
and Rentals Associate .....Trevor Haren  
Events and Rentals Associate .....Aisha Noma  
Lead Manager,  
Retail Operations.....Jody Barasch  
Lead Bartender.....Erika Wallace  
Bartenders.....Edwin Cortez, Greg Gonzales,  
Kaitlyn Sakry, Brad Teague

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& Communications .....Elizabeth Hawks  
Associate Director, Marketing  
and Communications .....Ryan Impagliazzo  
Manager, Digital and  
Social Media.....Juliana Avery  
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Digital Content.....Clare Lockhart  
Lead Associate,  
Public Relations.....Anastasia St. Hilaire  
Junior Multimedia Designer .....Kristopher Ingle  
Marketing and Media Fellow .....Destiny King\*  
Graphic Design Fellow .....Darien Mitchell\*

## PRODUCTION

Director of Production.....Robert Hand  
Production Manager .....Trevor A. Riley  
Assistant Production  
Manager .....Rachel Crawford

## STAGE MANAGEMENT

Resident Production  
Stage Manager .....Christi B. Spann

## SCENIC

Technical Director .....Chris Stoutjesdyk  
Associate Technical Director .....Clare Cawley  
Scene Shop Supervisor .....Travis Smith  
Charge Scenic Artist.....Li Qiang  
Carpenters.....Erick Boscana,  
Matthew Grisdela,  
Julia Junghans, Hannah Martin,  
Logan McDowell, Frank Miller,

## PROPERTIES

Properties Director .....Jennifer Sheetz  
Associate Properties Director .....Jonathan Borgia  
Head Props Artisan .....Niell DuVal  
Props Artisan .....Kyle Handziak  
Props Assistants .... Erica Feidelseit, Alekx Shines

## LIGHTS

Lighting Supervisor .....Paul Villalovoz  
Assistant Lighting Supervisor .....Olivia Rudd  
Electricians.....Scott Folsom, Kelsey Swanson  
Lighting Fellow.....Indigo Garcia\*

## SOUND

Sound and Video Supervisor .....Brian Burchett  
Master Sound and Video  
Technician .....Timothy M. Thompson  
Sound Technicians.....Lex Allenbaugh,  
Alex Cloud, Drew Moberley

## COSTUMES

Costume Director .....Joseph P. Salasovich  
Associate Costume Director .....Cierra Coan  
Drapers.....Erika Krause, Carol Ramsdell  
First Hands .....Michele Macadaeag,  
Elizabeth "Liz" Spilsbury  
Craftsperson.....Deborah Nash  
Wardrobe Supervisors .....Adelle Gresock,  
Alice Hawfield

Wigs, Hair, and  
Makeup Supervisor.....Jaime Bagley

\*2023/24 Class of the Allen Lee Hughes  
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# COMING UP NEXT



## MINDPLAY

CREATED AND PERFORMED BY **VINNY DePONTO**

WRITTEN BY **VINNY DePONTO** AND **JOSH KOENIGSBERG**

DIRECTED BY **ANDREW NEISLER**

PRODUCED BY **EVA PRICE**

### JANUARY 19 – MARCH 3

*Mindplay* photo of Vinny DePonto by Jeff Lorch.

