



THE HIGH GROUND

2022/23 SEASON

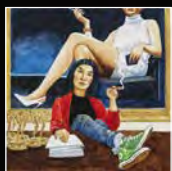


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DIRECTED BY **JÁNOS SZÁSZ**
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BY **KENNETH LIN**
DIRECTED BY **TRIP CULLMAN**
MAY 5–JUNE 25



Photo of Kristolyn Lloyd in *American Prophet* by Margot Schulman.

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THE HIGH GROUND

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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.



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.

ARTISTICALLY SPEAKING

Welcome to the long-awaited premiere of *The High Ground* by Nathan Alan Davis and directed by Megan Sandberg-Zakian.



This premiere is the result of many years of research, writing, and workshoping, as Arena commissioned Nathan back in 2016 as part of the inaugural group of playwrights in the Power Plays cycle. This is the largest commissioning project in Arena Stage's history: an ambitious initiative that births 25 new plays and musicals from a diverse mix of writers, composers, and lyricists over the course of 10 years. With one story per decade beginning with 1776 through the present, *The High Ground* is part of the African-American Voices cycle and represents the 1910s. Seven years later—with a pandemic in between—we will finally experience and enjoy the fruit of Nathan's many years of work with Arena's support.

Nathan knew from the start that he wanted to dig into the then-hidden story of the Race Riots of Tulsa, Oklahoma—a horrific event in 1921 where an upper-class Black neighborhood (nicknamed “Black Wall Street”) was massacred. It was one of those events that had been left out of history books, with most Americans never having heard of it. Part of the Power Plays' mission is to include undiscovered, important stories like this one, and Arena's support of Nathan's research led him to be an expert on the topic. He wrote several major and very different drafts of this play, leading to a television short series on this subject as well.

In the time since Nathan began his commission, the world changed and woke up to hidden histories like the Tulsa Race Massacre. When the 100th anniversary of the event was commemorated in 2021, Nathan was at the forefront of scholars quoted on the topic. I am proud that Arena Stage had a small part to play in bringing this lost history to the public. The play we have today is a beautiful and lyrical story of the massacre—a complex portrait brought to life with one of his favorite collaborators, Megan Sandberg-Zakian.

Nathan and Megan's collaboration has been fabulous. Megan serves as the Artistic Director of Boston Playwrights' Theatre, a home for new works for the stage located on the campus of Boston University, where Nathan currently serves as Director of the MFA Playwriting Program. So, their collaboration is both on and off the stage, and they are helping other artists bring their new work forward!

Many of you may have experienced other Power Plays over the last few years. So far, Arena has produced eight with two more this season. After *The High Ground*, we will premiere *Exclusion* by Kenneth Lin in May. Last season, Arena produced Craig Lucas' *Change Agent* and Eduardo Machado's *Celia and Fidel*. There are currently 10 projects in development with three decades yet to be confirmed. A lot of important stories to be told.

Thank you for being with Arena on this amazing journey through the web of American history and ideas that are part of the past and present.

Molly Smith
Artistic Director

Friendships keep Arena Stage strong.



Today we gather together for the long-anticipated world premiere of Nathan Alan Davis' *The High Ground*, a Power Play commission, in the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle. The theater was named the "cradle" because the artistic vision for the space, beautifully designed by Bing Thom under Molly Smith's watchful eye, is to nurture new works. Commissioning and growing new plays is one way that Arena strives to keep our theater field resilient, relying as we do on the support of friends to keep our enterprise running.

Arlene and Robert Kogod understood how creating a space to cradle new work would be essential, and so Arena's deep appreciation for their extremely significant generosity is forever emblazoned by the Kogod name on our theater. The Kogod Cradle name sings as it brings audiences these important new voices.

Additionally, newer friends like Tiffeny Sanchez and Reg Brown have stepped up in a major way to support stories like the one being told by becoming lead sponsors for this production. Show sponsors provide critical resources to sustain our capacity to bring audiences top-notch theater. By sponsoring a brand-new work like *The High Ground*, Tiffeny—who joined Arena's Board of Trustees just in 2021—and Reg demonstrate their appreciation for, and leadership in, cradling new work that speaks to a contemporary audience in real time voices, building on the legacy now shared with the Kogods.

Tiffeny and Reg are not alone in supporting this production. They are generously joined by JMA Solutions, AT&T, Sandy Bieber and Linda Rosenzweig, and PNC. *The High Ground* is also a recipient of the Edgerton Foundation New Play Award, a prestigious award whose support for new plays is critical. Arena is fortunate to have show sponsors throughout our season, and we deeply appreciate the impact of this support on Arena's ability to commission, produce, and present on all our stages.

The broader Arena Stage family lost a dear friend recently, Helga Tarver. Helga, along with her husband Paul, sponsored more than 20 productions during a relationship with Arena that lasted over 60 years. She attended Arena's very first production in 1950, *She Stoops to Conquer*. Helga was a very loyal fan and continued attending Arena productions every year, experiencing new spaces, leadership transitions, and countless shows. She was a member of the Board of Trustees from 1989 to 2008 (when she moved to California to be closer to family). Helga's name is not in the Mead Center by her choice, but her long-time support and love continues to be felt under our roof and beyond.

Whether since 1950 or 2022, it is friendships like these that keep Arena Stage strong and thriving. And whether this is your first or 50th performance with Arena, thank you for being here.

Best,

Edgar Dobie
Executive Producer
President of the Corporation

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MAKING PLAYS AT ARENA

by Jocelyn Clarke

Molly Smith and I first met in 2002 on a mountainside in Utah, beginning a now two-decade conversation about making new plays. We were both at the Sundance Institute's annual summer Theatre Lab, which offered space and resources to playwrights, directors, and actors to develop new plays and musicals in the middle of artfully curated nature, where the only distractions were a small bar on Robert Redford's resort (the only bar in Provo!), moonlight rides on the ski lift, and the occasional sighting of black bears or an elk.

Whenever Molly and I met over the next few years at Sundance, we discussed new and better ways to support playwrights and develop their plays. She wanted her theater to enable playwrights to make plays in the ways they wanted, with the full resources of the theater available to them—and with the focus on the playwright rather than the play, and on their artistic practice rather than on the production process.

This may not seem like a big deal, until you realize that American theater is run by directors and producers—virtually no theaters are led by playwrights, designers, actors, or dramaturgs. With funding from

the Mellon Foundation, Arena Stage piloted a series of initiatives in 2010, including the Resident Playwrights program, which still enhances the work and livelihoods of playwrights at different theaters around the country, and HowlRound, the free and open online platform for theater artists.

Ten years after our first conversation, Molly asked me to support her Resident Playwrights, and later to expand the way the theater developed its new plays. I invited the commissioned playwrights to lead their own workshops with actors, and to engage fully with their artistic process wherever it might lead them. The Barbara Walton Playwrights' Arena, a year-long program which supports local playwrights and theater makers to create original work and to advance their practice, offered access to the theater's resources as well as to all its productions and

events throughout the year. Last month, a cohort of brand-new playwrights from Howard and Georgetown Universities started its eighth cycle.

In 2016 Molly initiated the largest commissioning cycle in the history of Arena Stage. Twenty-five “Power Plays” will be commissioned to explore historical figures and events from every decade since the founding of the United States. Eight have already received their world premieres. The ninth and tenth, *The High Ground* by Nathan Alan Davis and *Exclusion* by Kenneth Lin, respectively, will close out Molly's 25th, and final, season at Arena Stage—marking a significant milestone of Molly's unprecedented initiative. Arena Stage's commitment to supporting playwrights and to producing new plays continues to evolve and thrive, a living legacy for audiences and artists alike.

HERE. HERE, AGAIN. HERE, AGAIN.

By Otis Ramsey-Zöe, Dramaturg

“Recognition or reknowing or unforgetting is, rather, a particular kind of perception; it is a sensation of seeing for the first time what one has seen many times before. One function of any art is to bring about that moment of unforgetting, when the familiar world suddenly seems strange and new or impossible.”

— Alice Rayner, *Ghosts: Death's Double and the Phenomena of Theatre*

We have been here before. Soldier has been here before. We are here now—here in this theater, yes, but also in the reoccurrence of routinized violence against Black people.

The High Ground, a play by Nathan Alan Davis, in conversation with the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921, concerns events that are not firmly and solely in the past, events that won't stay decidedly in any rearview mirror, events that resist redaction, and lamentably, events that seem to repeat and to return. The events of the play depict a type of strange loop, one in which violence against Black people is as common in this country as having a U.S. President named James, John, William, or George.

“And living in this order, black people are still doing the work in those innocent scenes. They're doing the work of dying; [...] That's really important work that we're called upon to do and still live under the specter of despotism.”

— Frank B Wilderson,
“The Position of the Unthought”

No one stands on any ground for the first time; rather, it may be the first time for a given individual but not for the ground. Someone, something has been here

before. Perhaps, too, the spirit of what once occurred or what previously stood still lingers. Standpipe Hill, with views to the east towards Tulsa's Greenwood District, provided a gathering post for Black residents to witness the razing of Black Wall Street. *The High Ground* is set atop Standpipe Hill in a present wherein figures and narratives inhabit and slip between time and modes of reality.

“An experience termed past may actually return if the influences have the same balances or proportions as before. Details may vary, but the essence does not change. The day would have the same feeling, the same character, as that day has been described as having before. The image of a memory exists in the present moment.”

— Leslie Marmon Silko, *Almanac of the Dead*

We have been here before. On May 31-June 1, 1921, unabashed White violence razed the Black community of Tulsa. To this day, murky narratives describe the inciting events for the massacre. What we know—if indeed we can say that we know anything—is that on May 30, 1921, a Black teenager named Dick Rowland used the colored-only restroom on the top floor of the Drexel Building in downtown Tulsa.

Sarah Page was the White seventeen-year-old elevator operator in the building. Reports are that Sarah screamed, Dick ran, and a building clerk called the police and claimed that Rowland assaulted Page. For over a century, people have speculated about what happened. Might Dick have tripped and touched Sarah by accident? Was there any encounter at all? Did Sarah actually scream, and who heard it? Again, details are murky. The following day, the *Tulsa Tribune* printed incendiary articles titled “Nab Negro for Attacking Girl in Elevator” and “To Lynch Negro Tonight.” A White mob gathered outside the courthouse, seeking to lynch Rowland. Their fury spread, and after eighteen hours of terror, as many as 300 people were killed and roughly 1,100 residences and dozens of businesses and churches were destroyed.

An extraordinary fact of these events is not that they happened, but that they were omitted from history texts in a pattern, which is the idea that the history of Black people in this country often jumps from Emancipation to Civil Rights. When we meet Soldier in the play, he is steadfast, determined, and vigilant in his determination to remember. Indeed, memory and recollection operate as resistance strategies for him.

“Memory and amnesia always exist side by side and remain part of a political struggle.”

— Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*

Yet, Nathan's play does not simply chronicle history. The play's structure announces its rejection of the idea that we live apart from history. Nathan has crafted a world in which his meditations, research, history, and the present all

collide in an intimate and theatrical inquiry around the phenomena of Black people in America living in such intimate proximity to death, and in being towards death, and existing in what has been termed “social death.” We need only recall that Tyre Nichols was brutally beaten by Memphis police officers on January 7, 2023 and died three days later on January 10, which also was our first day of rehearsal for *The High Ground*. **We have been here before.**

“The quality of light by which we scrutinize our lives has direct bearing upon the product which we live, and upon the changes which we hope to bring about through those lives. It is within this light that we form those ideas by which we pursue our magic and make it realized.”

— Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*

Given the play's topic, an interlocutor asked a question in the form of a statement, “So it's another Black trauma play?” There is a lot to unpack in this question, and I certainly do not wish to disparage any form of storytelling, but *The High Ground* does not focus on the terror and violence inflicted on Black people. Instead, the play acknowledges the antiblack violence that looms large and engages in worldmaking outside of those conditions. Returning to the idea of a loop and being caught in a loop, the play proposes at least two practices as remedy. Recognition—seeing, *really* seeing one another, even if that person appears to be a homeless veteran—is one of the play's suggestions. Another is a four-letter word¹, often uttered but seemingly harder to practice towards others.

¹ Love



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Arena Stage
Molly Smith, Artistic Director | Edgar Dobie, Executive Producer

PRESENTS

THE HIGH GROUND

BY **NATHAN ALAN DAVIS**

DIRECTED BY **MEGAN SANDBERG-ZAKIAN**

SET DESIGNER
PAIGE HATHAWAY

COSTUME DESIGNER
SARITA FELLOWS

LIGHTING DESIGNER
SHERRICE MOJGANI

ORIGINAL MUSIC AND SOUND DESIGN
NATHAN LEIGH

HAIR AND WIG DESIGNER
TOMMY KURZMAN

DRAMATURG
OTIS RAMSEY-ZÖE

DRAMATURG
JOCELYN CLARKE


CASTING DIRECTOR
JOSEPH PINZON

STAGE MANAGER
CHRISTI B. SPANN*

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER
JALON PAYTON*

The High Ground is made possible through generous funding from **Tiffany Sanchez and Reg Brown**.

Additional support is provided by   **AT&T**, **Sandy Bieber and Linda Rosenzweig**, and  **PNC**.

This project is supported in part by the  **NATIONAL ENDOWMENT for the ARTS**.

The High Ground is the recipient of an **Edgerton Foundation New Play Award**.

Arena Stage offers this production in memory of long-time friend and trustee **Helga Tarver**.



Nehassaiu deGannes and Phillip James Brannon for The High Ground. Photo by Tony Powell.

SOCIALLY SPEAKING

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TALK ABOUT US: #ArenaHighGround #HighGroundPlay #ArenaStage
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SETTING

Standpipe Hill, Tulsa, Oklahoma
The present.

CAST (in order of appearance)

SoldierPHILLIP JAMES BRANNON*
Victoria/Vicky/Vee/The Woman in BlackNEHASSAIU deGANNES*
Voice of DispatcherRACHEL FELSTEIN*
Voice of CopPETER BOYER*
Male UnderstudyDeJUAN CHRISTOPHER*
Female UnderstudyDeSHAWN WHITE*
Supplemental ExtraGRACE O. GYAMFI

FOR THIS PRODUCTION

Assistant DirectorSOLOMON HAILESELASSIE
Fight CoordinatorGERRAD ALEX TAYLOR
Intimacy ConsultantDANE FIGUEROA EDIDI
Voice and Dialect CoachCAROLINE CLAY
Lighting AssistantHAYLEY GARCIA PARNELL
Production AssistantKELSEY NICOLE JENKINS
Script Production AssistantLAUREN TAYLOR WINSTON
COVID-19 Compliance OfficerTREVOR COMEAU
Production CarpenterJESS RICH
Props TechnicianREGINA VITALE
Light Board OperatorSCOTT FOLSOM
Sound TechnicianALEX CLOUD
Wardrobe SupervisorADELLE GRESOCK
Consultant to the DirectorCANDICE A. CRAWFORD-ZAKIAN, PSY.D.

The company wishes to thank DeNeen L. Brown.

* Members of Actors' Equity Association



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WHO'S WHO

CAST



PHILLIP JAMES BRANNON

(*Soldier*) This is Phillip's Arena Stage debut. A South Carolina native, but raised in the DMV area, Phillip has looked forward to working at Arena since

he was in high school. He made his D.C. debut in 2011 at Woolly Mammoth in the world premiere of Robert O'Hara's *Bootycandy*. Phillip received his BFA in Acting from DePaul University in Chicago where he began his professional career, doing numerous productions at Steppenwolf, the Goodman, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, and more. He is now a New York resident, living in Harlem for the last 11 years, where has worked non-stop on Broadway and Off-Broadway. He was last seen as Ross, and one of the witches, in *Macbeth* on Broadway. Phillip also works in film and TV—you can currently see him recurring on Apple TV+'s *Servant*. He has also appeared on *The Sinner*, *The Good Fight*, *The Blacklist*, and more. This is his second world premiere with playwright Nathan Alan Davis, the first being another two-hander, *Nat Turner in Jerusalem*, which premiered at New York Theatre Workshop in 2016—one of Phillip's favorite artistic ventures he's ever been on.



NEHASSAIU deGANNES

(*Victoria/Vicky/Vee/The Woman in Black*)'s D.C. credits include *Much Ado* (STC), *Gorn Galaxy* (Arena Flash Acts Festival), and *Kings* (Studio Theatre). She

appeared Off-Broadway in the world premieres of *Is God Is* (Soho Rep) and *SEAGULLMACHINE* (La MaMa). Recent regional credits include *Three Musketeers* and *Sweat* (Cleveland Play House); *My Lord, What A Night* (Florida Studio Theatre's rolling world premiere); *Romeo & Juliet* / *Our Town* (Alabama Shakespeare

Festival); *Measure for Measure*, *Intimate Apparel*, and *Or*, (Shakespeare & Co.); *The Last Wife* (WAM); *Marisol* (Luna Stage); *The Convert* (Underground Railway); and *King Lear* (Chicago Shakes). Other highlights include the Canadian premiere of *Never Not Once* (Theatre Aquarius) and a principal season at Stratford Festival of Canada. Nehassaiu appears in the feature film *Equal Standard* and is a published poet. nehassaiu.com



RACHEL FELSTEIN

(*Voice of Dispatcher*) is delighted to be back at Arena Stage, following this season's *Holiday* as well as the world premiere of *Right to Be Forgotten*. DC credits

include *Mrs. Warren's Profession* and *Summerland* (Washington Stage Guild), *Pilgrims Musa and Sheri in the New World* (Mosaic Theater Company of DC), *Antigonick* (Taffety Punk), and two self produced pandemic projects, both DC Metro Theater Arts 2021 Staff Picks — *Twelfth Night* (Her Majesty & Sons) and *Night@Newcastle*. New York credits: *This American Life – As Seen on Radio* (BAM), productions with Ensemble Studio Theatre, and *wRETCH – the final concert* (Fresh Fruit Festival). Regional credits: *Fun Home* (Virginia Stage Company), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Shakespeare Theatre NJ), and *Man of La Mancha* (National Tour). Instagram: @rfelsiewww. rachelfelstein.com



PETER BOYER

(*Voice of Cop*) previously appeared at Arena Stage as Henry in *Holiday*. Notable roles include Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Broadway Christmas Carol* at MetroStage,

Groucho Marx in *Groucho: A Life in Revue* at Wayside Theatre, Dromio of Syracuse in *Comedy of Errors* at Baltimore Shakespeare Festival, Captain Hook in *Tinkerbelle* and Captain Braidbeard in *How*

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WHO'S WHO

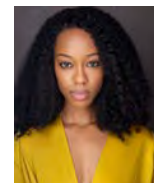
I Became a Pirate at Adventure Theatre, and Charles Dickens in *Discord* and Mr. Praed in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* at Washington Stage Guild. His one-person play *Captain Hook: My Story, or How I Clawed My Way to the Top* was recently produced at Spotlighters Theatre in collaboration with the Baltimore Playwrights Festival, and at Artistic Synergy in Baltimore. www.petersbrain.art



DeJUAN CHRISTOPHER

(*Male Understudy*) This is DeJuan's first appearance at Arena Stage. His most recent theater credits include *Radio Golf* (A Noise Within Theatre), *Seven*

Guitars (A Noise Within Theatre), and *Metamorphoses* (A Noise Within Theatre). DeJuan recently starred in the film *Malleable*, which made its debut at Tribeca Film Festival. Twitter: @dejuanchristoph, Instagram: @dejuanchristopher



DeSHAWN WHITE (*Female Understudy*) is a Prince George's County native and theater alumni of the University of Maryland Baltimore County who is thrilled to be a part of her

first show at Arena Stage. Her Off-Broadway credits include originating a lead role in *Gong Lum's Legacy* (New Federal Theatre) and the NAACP Award-winning play *The Girls of Summer* (Actors Temple Theatre). Select regional theater credits include *The Mountaintop* (The Hippodrome Theatre), *I Just Stopped by to See the Man* (New Stage Theatre), and *The Metromaniacs* (Shakespeare Theatre of NJ). DeShawn's select film & TV credits include guest-starring roles on *Wu-Tang: An American Saga* (Hulu), *The Deuce* (HBO), and alongside Edward Norton in *Motherless Brooklyn*.

Instagram: @deshawn.andrea.white
www.deshawnwhite.com



GRACE O. GYAMFI

(*Supplemental Extra*) is making her Arena Stage debut. She graduated from the University of Virginia in 2021 with a B.A. and a minor in Drama. This past

summer she studied at the American Academy of Dramatic Art in Manhattan. Her productions include: *Stickfly* (2019, UVA Drama, Cheryl) and *Flip the Script* (2021, Encore Stage, Red).

CREATIVE TEAM

NATHAN ALAN DAVIS (*Playwright*)'s play *Nat Turner in Jerusalem* received its world premiere at NYTW in the fall of 2016 and was a *New York Magazine* Critic's Pick. In 2015, his play *Dontrell, Who Kissed the Sea* received a Steinberg/ATCA New Play Citation and was produced in five cities in a NNPN Rolling World Premiere. His play *The Wind and the Breeze* received the 2016 Blue Ink Playwriting Award and was selected for Cygnet Theatre's inaugural Finish Line Commission. Nathan is a theater lecturer at Princeton University, a Usual Suspect at NYTW, and a 2016 graduate of Juilliard's Lila Acheson Wallace American Playwrights Program. He received his MFA from Indiana University and his BFA from the University of Illinois.

MEGAN SANDBERG-ZAKIAN (*Director*) is a theater director, author, and facilitator with a passion for the development of vital new American plays for the stage and the ear. She is currently the Artistic Director of Boston Playwrights Theatre, an award-winning professional theater dedicated to new work for the stage located on the campus of Boston University. *The High Ground* marks her third world premiere collaboration with Nathan Alan Davis, following *Dontrell, Who Kissed the Sea* (Cleveland Public Theatre)

WHO'S WHO

and *Nat Turner in Jerusalem* (New York Theatre Workshop). Megan is a graduate of Brown University, holds an MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts from Goddard College, and is a proud member of SDC, the union for professional stage directors and choreographers. Her book, *There Must Be Happy Endings: On a Theater of Optimism and Honesty*, is available from The 3rd Thing Press. She lives in Jamaica Plain, MA, with her wife Candice. This one is for Brenda. megansz.com

PAIGE HATHAWAY (Set Designer) is a freelance scenic designer based in the Washington, D.C. area. Previously at Arena, Paige designed the set for *Right to Be Forgotten*. In the D.C. area, Paige has recently designed at Signature Theatre, Round House Theatre, Olney Theatre Center, Theater J, Mosaic Theater, Woolly Mammoth, the Kennedy Center, Folger Theatre, Solas Nua, Imagination Stage, Everyman Theatre, and Studio Theatre. Regionally, Paige has recently designed at The Muny, Cleveland Play House, Arden Theatre, Pioneer Theatre, People's Light, Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, and Asolo Rep. Paige received her MFA in Scenic Design from the University of Maryland and her BFA in Scenic Design from the University of Oklahoma. She is a proud member of USA 829. Instagram: @paigehathawaydesign www.paigehathawaydesign.com

SARITA FELLOWS (Costume Designer), born in Freetown, Sierra Leone, her recent works include *Death of a Salesman*, Broadway; *Theater of the Mind*, Denver Center of Performing Arts; *Blues for an Alabama Sky* and *Sweat*, Guthrie Theater; *Seize the King*, Alliance Theatre; *A Bright Room Called Day*, Public Theater; and *Fefu and Her Friends*, American Conservatory Theater. In the dance world, Sarita has worked with choreographers such as Liz Lerman and Edisa Weeks. She received her MFA in Design from Tisch School of the Arts. She was the recipient of a 2020

Lilly Award and was recently awarded Outstanding Achievement in Costume Design at the 2022 National Black Theatre Festival.

SHERRICE MOJGANI (Lighting Designer) recently designed *The Heiress* and *Two Trains Running* (Arena Stage); *The Folks at Home* and *The Garden* (Baltimore Center Stage); *Spunk*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, and *The Scottsboro Boys* (Signature Theatre); *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Murder on the Orient Express*, *A Few Good Men*, and *Sweat* (Pittsburgh Public Theater); and *Trouble in Mind*, *What You Are*, and *Skeleton Crew* (The Old Globe). Sherrice is an Assistant Professor at George Mason University in Northern Virginia. She holds a BA in Theater Arts from UC Santa Cruz and an MFA in Lighting Design from UC San Diego. smojgani.com

NATHAN LEIGH (Original Music and Sound Design)'s NYC credits include *How To Melt ICE* (Boundless Theatre), *Space Dogs* (MCC), *Our Brother's Son* (Signature), *Original Sound* (Cherry Lane), *Nat Turner In Jerusalem* (New York Theatre Workshop), *The Duchess of Malfi* (Red Bull Theater). Regional credits include *Skeleton Crew* (Huntington Theatre), *Godspell* (Berkshire Theatre Group), *Strangers On A Train* (Stoneham Theatre, IRNE Best Sound Design 2009), *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (Central Square Theatre, IRNE Best Sound Design 2010), and many more. With Kyle Jarrow, Nathan co-created the musicals *Big Money* and *The Consequences*. With Jason Slavick and the Liars & Believers ensemble, Nathan Leigh composed scores for *Song of Songs*, *Icarus*, and *A Story Beyond*. Nathan's latest solo album is *House On Stilts*.

TOMMY KURZMAN (Hair and Wig Designer) Broadway: *Pictures From Home*, *The Collaboration*, *Macbeth*, *Mrs. Doubtfire*, *All My Sons*, *True West*, *Saint Joan*, *My Fair Lady*, *Little Foxes*, *Long Day's Journey*, *Bright Star*, *Fiddler on the Roof*. Off-Broadway: *Little Shop of*

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Horrors-Westside Theatre, MCC, Atlantic, The New Group, The Public, MTC, NWS. Regional: The Huntington, The Muny, Geva Theatre, Resident Ensemble Players, Cape Playhouse, Signature VA, MSM. Associate Hair Designer on over 15 Broadway productions. IG: @tommykurzmanwigs

OTIS RAMSEY-ZÖE (*Dramaturg*) is a care worker, dramaturg, director, theatre arts educator, Literary Manager at Arena Stage, and Lecturer in Dramaturgy at the David Geffen School of Drama at Yale. He has developed new works at such institutions as Sundance Institute, Kennedy Center, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Playwrights Center, and National New Play Network. He has held posts in Theatre at Northeastern University, Dramaturgy at Carnegie Mellon University, Women's Studies and Honors Humanities at University of Maryland, Performing Arts at American University, and Theatre Arts at Howard University. He was Associate Artistic Director at *banished?* productions, Future Classics Program Coordinator at The Classical Theatre of Harlem, Literary Manager at Center Stage, and an Allen Lee Hughes Senior Fellow at Arena Stage.

JOCELYN CLARKE (*Dramaturg*) is senior dramaturg at Arena Stage in Washington, D.C. He was Theatre Advisor to the Arts Council of Ireland for ten years. As a dramaturg, Clarke has worked with writers such as Katori Hall, Taylor Mac, Lydia Diamond, Abhishek Majumdar, Eduardo Machado, Charles Randolph-Wright, Lisa Kron, Craig Lucas, Carl Hancock Rux, Mary Kathryn Nagle, Tanya Saracho, and Karen Zacarías. He was a script editor on several Irish films, including *Young Offenders*, and was executive story editor on all three seasons of the BBC/RTE TV series *Young Offenders*. He is a writer on the second season of *P-Valley*, Katori Hall's acclaimed TV series for Starz. His new adaptation of Elizabeth Swados' musical *The Beautiful Lady*, will be directed by Anne Bogart at La MaMa

Theatre in New York in May 2023.

JOSEPH PINZON (*Casting Director*) is the founder and creative producer of the contemporary circus company Short Round Productions and its award-winning show *Filament*. With over 25 years of performing experience, he has worked internationally with renowned companies such as Cirque Éloize, Compagnia Finzi Pasca, Cirque du Soleil, and The 7 Fingers. He holds an MS in Arts Leadership from USC, a BA in Psychology from UCLA, and graduated from the National Circus School in Montreal with a specialization in aerial techniques. He was the casting and resident director for Chamäleon Productions (Berlin) and Constellation Immersive (CAA's experiential affiliate). He is also a member of the Creative & Independent Producer Alliance and a founding board member of the American Circus Alliance. You can see him causing chaos on season 6 of *Nailed It!* on Netflix, where (spoiler alert) he is a part of the series' first three-way tie.

CHRISTI B. SPANN (*Stage Manager*) has been working as a stage manager in D.C. since 2011. Favorite Arena Stage productions include *A Raisin in the Sun* and *Junk*. She previously spent 12 seasons on the stage management staff at the Denver Center Theatre Company and has also worked with The Great River Shakespeare Festival in Winona, MN and Virginia Repertory Theatre in Richmond, VA.

JALON PAYTON (*Assistant Stage Manager*) is excited to be making his Arena Stage debut with *The High Ground*. His recent credits in the Baltimore/D.C. area include *The Swindlers: A True-ish Tall Tale*, *The Folks at Home* (Baltimore Center Stage); Ken Ludwig's *Baskerville* (Everyman Theatre); *10 Seconds* (Imagination Stage); *Is Edward Snowden Single?* (Single Carrot Theatre). Other credits include *The Brothers Size* and *A Raisin in the Sun* (American Players Theatre). Jalon

has also stage-managed play readings/workshops with Arena Stage, Taffety Punk Theatre, and Round House Theatre. Jalon is a graduate of the University of Maryland Baltimore County.

ARENA STAGE LEADERSHIP

MOLLY SMITH (*Artistic Director*) has served as artistic director since 1998. Her 40 directing credits at Arena Stage include large-scale musicals, like *Catch Me If You Can*, *Anything Goes*, Disney's *Newsies*, *Carousel*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Oklahoma!*, *My Fair Lady*, *The Music Man*, *Cabaret*, *South Pacific*; new plays, like *Celia and Fidel*, *Sovereignty*, *The Originalist*, *Camp David*, *Legacy of Light*, *The Women of Brewster Place*, *How I Learned to Drive*; and classics like *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, *The Great White Hope*, and *All My Sons*. Her directorial work has also been seen Off-Broadway at 59E59 in New York, Portland Center Stage, Canada's Shaw Festival, The Court Theatre, The Old Globe, Asolo Repertory, Berkeley Repertory, Trinity Repertory, Toronto's Tarragon Theatre, Montreal's Centaur Theatre and Perseverance Theater in Juneau, Alaska, which she founded and ran from 1979-1998. Molly has been a leader in new play development for over 40 years. She is a great believer in first, second, and third productions of new work and has championed projects, including *Dear Evan Hansen*; *Next to Normal*; *Passion Play*, a cycle; and *How I Learned to Drive*. She led the re-invention of Arena Stage, focusing on the architecture and creation of the Mead Center for American Theater and positioning Arena Stage as a national center for American artists through its artistic programming. During her time with the company, Arena Stage has workshoped more than 100 productions, produced 39 world

premieres, staged numerous second and third productions, and been an important part of nurturing nine projects that went on to have a life on Broadway. In 2014, Molly made her Broadway debut directing *The Velocity of Autumn*, following its critically acclaimed run at Arena Stage. She was awarded honorary doctorates from American University and Towson University. In 2018, she was honored as Person of the Year by the National Theatre Conference and inducted into the Washington DC Hall of Fame. In 2020, she was awarded the Director of Distinction in Cairo, Egypt, from the Academy of Arts. During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, she developed the concept for two online films, *May 22, 2020* and *The 51st State*, overseeing the production direction as well as directing pieces within the films. She also spearheaded a variety of other new online content, including a weekly talk show *Molly's Salon*, during the live performance hiatus.

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 Malcolme 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 theatre community as a recipient of Theatre Washington's inaugural Victor Shargai Leadership Award in 2022.

This theater operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres and Actors' Equity Association.



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The cast of *The Pajama Game*. Photo by Margot Schulman.



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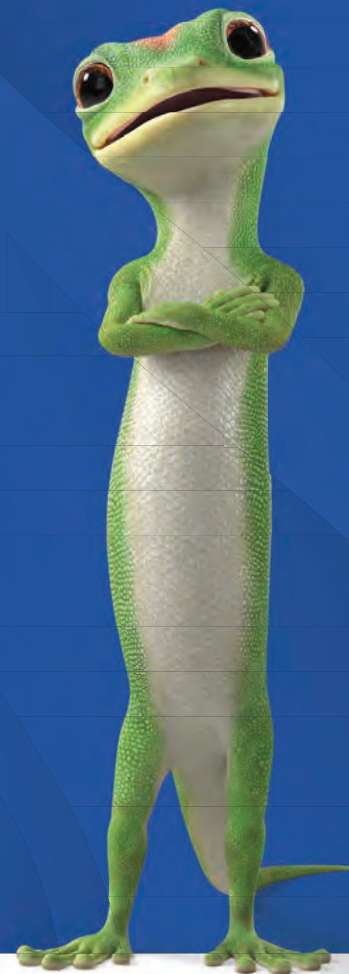
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Dramaturg..... Jocelyn Clarke
Literary Manager.....Otis C. Ramsey-Zoe
Artistic Associate, Casting Joseph Pinzon
Artistic Development
CoordinatorMelissa Singson
Artistic Development FellowZoe Lillis*
Current Commissioned WritersThe Bengsons,
Lee Cataluna, Kia Corthron,
Nathan Alan Davis, Emily Feldman,
Idris Goodwin, David Henry Hwang,
Caleen Sinnette Jennings, Kenneth Lin,
Octavio Solis, Vera Starbard, Lauren Yee,
Karen Zacarias, Zack Zadek

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Building Technician..... Larry Serious
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Stage Door Attendant.....Kay Rogers

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Production Manager Trevor A. Riley
Assistant Production
ManagerRachel Crawford

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Stage ManagerChristi B. Spann

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Associate Technical Director Zachary Fullenkamp
Scene Shop SupervisorTravis Smith
Charge Scenic Artist.....Li Qiang
Carpenters..... Erick Boscana,
Matthew Grisdela, Julia Junghans,
Hannah Martin, Logan McDowell
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Assistant Properties Director..... Jonathan Borgia
Head Props ArtisanNiell DuVal
Props ArtisanKyle Handziak
Props Assistants Alekx Shines,
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Lighting Fellow.....Hayley Garcia Parnell*

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Assistant Sound and
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Sound And Video
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Associate Costume DirectorCierra Coan
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First HandsMichele Macadaeg,
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BY TONY KUSHNER

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