



VOICES of NOW

FESTIVAL

2026

APRIL 25

VOICES of NOW

WELCOME!

Greetings—

Voices of Now is rooted in collaboration and community, and this festival is a reflection of what happens when young people are given the space to explore, question, and share their voice.

Over the past few months, these artists have worked together to create original pieces that speak to their lived experiences—their joys, their challenges, and the world as they see it today. What you'll experience is not just performance, but perspective—honest, immediate, and deeply human.

This work asks something of all of us: to listen, to reflect, and to connect. So thank you for being here—not just as an audience, but as part of this shared experience.

Cheers,



Sean-Maurice Lynch
Senior Director of Community Engagement
and Audience Experience

PERFORMANCES

Arena Stage's Voices of Now program partners youth and teen artists with professional theater makers to create original, autobiographical plays. These high-energy, physical performances explore issues that matter most to the student artists, using their personal experiences to ask questions, spark conversation, and connect with their communities.

Following the performances, audiences are invited to participate in a talkback session with the ensembles to gain a deeper understanding of the themes and experiences behind the work.

FESTIVAL EMCEE: SAMMIE MORGAN

JOHNSON MIDDLE SCHOOL

COACHING AND DIRECTION BY ESTEBAN MARMOLEJO-SUAREZ AND RAGHAD MAKHLOUF

ROBINSON MIDDLE SCHOOL ENSEMBLE

HURT BUT HEALING

DIRECTED BY ALEX MILLS AND DAVE JOHNSON

Josie Couchman
Aliyah Dashevsky
Paisley Fontenot
Louisa Gardner
Valeika Maislin-Rodriguez
Natalie McCaughey
Violet Oram
Holden Riley
Evie Scronce
Stella Thibodeau
Carolena Villanasco
Dahlia Weitz

JEFFERSON MIDDLE SCHOOL ENSEMBLE

A CHILD'S LIFE

DIRECTED BY WONNIE KIM AND RYAN NEELY

Release F. Gray
Jay Harris
Amen Larry
Kamari Morris
Lyric K. Sherman
Howie Stone
Cartier Williams

HOLMES MIDDLE SCHOOL ENSEMBLE

DEEP BENEATH THE PRESSURE: DANCING THROUGH THE DUST

DIRECTED BY ROSIE ALGER AND DAVE JOHNSON

Emily Condarco
Joseph D'Cruz
Ghita El Bahja
Adeliz Resendiz Trejo
Kelly Rivera
Chloe Rodriguez Betancourt
Lauren Talarico

WENDT CENTER ENSEMBLE

THE DOMINO EFFECT

DIRECTED BY ROSIE ALGER

London Dawson
TJ Garrison
Deja Polite

ALLEN LEE HUGHES FELLOWS FESTIVAL SUPPORT STAFF

Anita Emokpae	Madalyn Oliver
Byron Escobar	Emily Pan
Grace Guzman	Nakkia Smalls
Wonnie Kim	T'Niya Wilson

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STAFF

Sean-Maurice Lynch
Senior Director Of Community
Engagement and Audience Experience

Katie Campbell
Senior Manager of Learning Engagement

Tiffany Fulson
Community Engagement Producer

Zoë Hall
Training & Professional Development
Manager

Rachel Dixon
Kayla A. Warren
Learning Engagement Associates

Kim Scott
Assistant Community
Engagement Producer

Wonnie Kim
Learning Engagement Fellow

T'Niya Wilson
Community Partnership Fellow

SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks to our partner school drama teachers and afterschool coordinators—Elizabeth Murphy, Matthew Kruck, Katie Brunberg, and Courtney Mollé; Wendt Center staff—Stephanie Handle, Pam Lieber, and Lisa Bush; Mark Emery and FCPS; and Sharon Fitzgerald and DCPS.

Your care, dedication, and belief in young people make this work possible. Thank you for championing the arts in our community and for the countless ways you support and uplift these student artists every day.

Thank you to the Arena Stage production staff for your support of the festival—your work behind the scenes made the magic possible.

EXPLORE. CONNECT. BELONG.

THERE'S MORE TO EXPERIENCE AT ARENA STAGE!

KIDCHELLA

Saturday, June 6 | 10am–12pm

[ARENASTAGE.ORG/CLASSES](https://arenastage.org/classes)

Designed for our youngest audiences, Kidchella invites children ages 0–6 and their caregivers to move, play, and explore together in a joyful, creative space filled with music, movement, and imaginative fun.

CAMP ARENA STAGE

July 6–24, July 27–August 7 | Ages 8–15

[ARENASTAGE.ORG/CAMP](https://arenastage.org/camp)

A full-day, multi-arts camp where young people build their own creative experience. Campers choose from theater, dance, music, visual art, filmmaking, and writing while working with professional artists, with opportunities to create and share original work.

COMMUNITY DAY

Saturday, August 22 | 11am–6pm

[ARENASTAGE.ORG/COMMUNITYDAY26](https://arenastage.org/communityday26)

Bring the whole family for a day of creativity, connection, and hands-on arts experiences. Enjoy free activities, live performances, and opportunities to engage with artists and connect with your community in a welcoming, creative space.


AUDITION WORKSHOP FOR TEENS

Sunday, August 30 | Ages 13–18

[ARENASTAGE.ORG/CLASSES](https://arenastage.org/classes)

A supportive workshop to prepare for fall auditions. Teens will build confidence, practice audition skills, and receive guidance to help them feel ready for school and community theater productions in a focused, encouraging environment.

Voices of Now is made possible through generous support from **Hattie M. Strong Foundation, Enterprise Mobility Foundation, and Friends of Southwest DC.**

Arena Stage's community engagement efforts are generously sponsored by Denie and Frank Weil; The Toni A. Ritzberg Fund for Educational and Community Outreach Programs at Arena Stage; Joanne Barker; The Robert and Natalie Mandel Family Foundation; Rick and Carol Froehlich; **eventsDC**; Alice Shaver Foundation; Venable Foundation; Hattie M. Strong Foundation; Nora Roberts Foundation; Enterprise Mobility Foundation;  DC COMMISSION ON ARTS & HUMANITIES; Friends of Southwest DC; and Actors' Equity Foundation.