ARENA STAGE’S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DEPARTMENT PRESENTS

THE 2022 VOICES OF NOW FESTIVAL

WELCOME

Thank you for joining us for three nights of multimedia plays and short films written and created by nine Voices of Now ensembles from the D.C. Metro area. This Voices of Now Festival is unlike any other. For the past two seasons Voices of Now artists worked at a distance to create films that documented their experiences of life, school, work and family in the midst of a pandemic. This season, artists have emerged from isolation to create and rehearse in the same physical space. The result is a series of short film pieces that feature the skills honed by the artists over the past two years combined with the first in-person Voices of Now performances since 2019, ushering in Voices of Now’s return to live theater. More than 60 artists ages 11 to 38 have come together to share their stories and start conversations in their communities.

We start with a title. We then explore the title through writing, movement and discussion. Slowly a script is compiled with the words, ideas, and personal stories of the artists. What started with one small ensemble with Jefferson Junior High School students, nearly two decades ago has become a program that works in D.C., Virginia and Maryland, as well as internationally.

Voices of Now encourages artists to be thoughtful, generous and brave. In addition to training young and emerging artists, Voices of Now instills an excitement for exploration and dialogue. When creating their plays, artists use stories pulled directly from their lives to explore questions around topics such as loss, identity, change and personal responsibility. This results in dynamic and highly personal theater and film, intended to spark a productive dialogue among themselves, their audience, and their communities.

While VON started almost 20 years ago, the first Voices of Now Festival occurred in the Kogod Cradle in the 2010-2011 season when the Mead Center for American Theater opened. Festivals occurred every year until the pandemic, and VON films were released in 2020 and 2021. It is my pleasure to welcome you to the return of the annual, in-person Voices of Now Festival at the Mead Center for American Theater!

Enjoy the festival,
Ashley Forman
Artistic Director of Voices of Now
Director of Education

2022 VOICES OF NOW
ENSEMBLES AND PERFORMANCES

WEDNESDAY, MAY 18 AT 7:30 P.M.
LIFE CYCLE Robinson Secondary School Ensemble
SAFEGUARD Jefferson Middle School Academy Ensemble
FACE-OFF Pre-Professional Ensemble
HEADSPACE Mentor Ensemble

THURSDAY, MAY 19 AT 7:30 P.M.
FACE VALUE Mead Ensemble
GROUND CONTROL Holmes Middle School Ensemble
MOVING PICTURE Key Middle School Ensemble
TIME STAMP Wendt Center for Loss and Healing Ensemble

FRIDAY, MAY 20 AT 7:30 P.M.
FACE VALUE Mead Ensemble
SHAPESHIFTER Kilmer Middle School Ensemble
FACE-OFF Pre-Professional Ensemble
HEADSPACE Mentor Ensemble
**HEADSPACE**

Mentor Ensemble  
D.C. Metro Area  
May 18 and May 20 at 7:30 p.m.  

Directors and Devisers  
Ashley Forman and Mauricio Pita  

Film Editor  
Mauricio Pita  
Music and Sound Master  
Roc Lee

**CAST:**  
Reyna Berry  
Winta Habtemichael  
Chloe Lanyi Lari  
Jasper Lavan  
Zoey Miller  
Jada Millhouse  
Patrick Payne  
Reed Roddy-Johnson  
Christina Springer  
Jasmine Sklarew  
Samara Storvick

What happens when we get stuck in our heads?  
What memories do we need to let go of?  
When did I become so terrified of loss?  

**SAFEGUARD**

Jefferson Middle School Academy Ensemble  
Washington, D.C.  
May 18 at 7:30 p.m.  

Directors and Devisers  
Jenni Murphy and Mauricio Pita  

Faculty Partners  
Greg Bohmmann and Christina Lee  

Film Editor  
Brandon Johnson  
Motion Graphics  
Eric Swiz  
Sound Master  
Roc Lee

**CAST:**  
Makayla Butler  
Mya Jefferson  
Lucy Matuszeski  
Harriet Stone  
Ersina Weber

How do you decide what risks are worth taking?  
How do you follow rules when they don’t make sense to you?

**FACE-OFF** *(SHORT FILM)*

Pre-Professional Ensemble  
D.C. Metro Area  
May 18 and 20 at 7:30 p.m.  

Directors and Devisers  
Mauricio Pita and Lauren Miller  

Film Editor  
Mauricio Pita  
Sound Master  
Brian Jacobs Rivera

**CAST:**  
Dupre Carter  
Ty’Ree Davis  
Kahlii Hicks-Jumper  
Hownisha Reed  
Brandee Simmons  
Allie Swanson

What is the impact of not showing your emotions?”  
What happens when we open up to others?  
How about when we create a persona that’s not authentic to who we really are?

**GROUND CONTROL**

Holmes Middle School Ensemble  
Alexandria, VA  
May 19 at 7:30 p.m.  

Directors and Devisers  
Mauricio Pita and Michael E. Smith  

Faculty Partner  
Elizabeth Murphy  

Film Editor  
Mauricio Pita  
Sound Master  
Roc Lee

**CAST:**  
Lucy Baboyian  
Mia Diaz  
Kaleigh Rosania  
Janiyah Strickland  
Kiah Van Heerden  
Mya Van Heerden

How can our actions change how others perceive us?  
How does our community influence how we see ourselves?  
Is it possible to create rules that are fair and also keep the school safe?
**MOVING PICTURE**

Key Middle School Ensemble
Springfield, VA
May 19 at 7:30 p.m.
Directors and Devisers
Kerry McCleve and Winta Habtemichael
Faculty Partners
Kanishea Spencer and Ashley Promise
Film Editor
Antonio Hernandez
Animations
Chloe Lanyi Lari
Sound Master
Brian Jacobs Rivera
Additional Performers
Naiel Habtemichael and Winta Habtemichael

**CAST:**
Kristina Garcia
Gloria Lam
Mal Mezry

**TIME STAMP**

Wendt Center for Loss and Healing Ensemble
D.C. Metro Area
May 19 at 7:30 p.m.
Directors and Devisers
Rebecca Campana and Ky Lend J. Adams
Grief Counselors
Pam Lieber and Emily Smith
Film Editor
Ben Gunderson
Sound Master
Roc Lee

**CAST:**
Frances Cox
Janiya Drayton
Kennedi Miller
Lucinda Schaible

**SHAPESHIFTER**

Kilmer Middle School Ensemble
Vienna, VA
May 19 at 7:30 p.m.
Directors and Devisers
Ashley Youman, Michael E. Smith and Christina Springer
Faculty Partner
Kimberly Kardelis
Film Editor
Brandon Johnson
Sound Master
Brian Jacobs Rivera

**CAST:**
Kayla Bartley
Julia Friefeld
Ava Krasner
Kaylina Mckeeever
Levi Milligan
Gabriela Monroy
George Owino
Maya Pedan
Kai Perley
Dani Rothman
Elizabeth “Libby” Schoepf

**LIFE CYCLE**

Robinson Secondary School Ensemble
Fairfax, VA
May 20 at 7:30 p.m.
Directors and Devisers
Rebecca Campana and Rachel Dixon
Faculty Partners
Mary Aaron and Amy Hard
Film Editor
Antonio Hernandez
Illustrations
Barnon Boulden
Sound Master
Brian Jacobs Rivera

**CAST:**
Beatrice Couchman
Gabrielle “Bree” Drake
Kira Gilligan
Kyleigh Gilson
Caitlin Henry
Alison Ho
Cecilia Lucero
Emma Mathias
Annika “Alabaster” McMillen
Lillian Scherrer

"What happens when you’re grieving during times of change or uncertainty? How much information do adults share with young people when someone is dying?”

"What determines which form we take? How does our environment shape us? How do we discover where we belong when something ends, how do you start again?”
**FACE VALUE**

Mead Ensemble  
D.C. Metro Area  
May 19 and 20 at 7:30 p.m.  
Directors and Devisers: Josh Bickford and Rachel Dixon  
Film Editor: Eric Swiz  
Sound Master: Roc Lee

**CAST:**
Julia Gorman  
Niyea Pollard-Calliste  
Cecilia Shareno  
Sitina Tochterman

“People usually wait until they meet. They rely on first impressions. For many of us, before we know whether they actually are. But what happens when we go deeper? What might we do?”

“How can people with different core beliefs have meaningful and lasting relationships?”

“How can we be brave enough to be ourselves, even when it can cause conflict? Or when there is pressure to be something or someone else?”

**VOICES OF NOW ARTISTIC STAFF**

Ashley Forman, Artistic Director of Voices of Now  
Ky’Lend J. Adams  
Josh Bickford  
Rebecca Campana  
Rachel Dixon  
Winta Habtemichael  
Anita Maynard-Losh  
Kerry McGee  
Lauren V. Miller  
Jenna Murphy  
Mauricio Pita  
Michael E. Smith  
Christina Springer

**CAST:**
Julia Gorman  
Niyea Pollard-Calliste  
Cecilia Shareno  
Sitina Tochterman

**VOICES OF NOW POST-PRODUCTION STAFF**

Damion Boulden  
Ben Gunderson  
Antonio Hernandez  
Brandon Johnson  
Chloe Lanyi-Lari  
Roc Lee  
Mauricio Pita  
Brian Jacobs Rivera  
Eric Swiz

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PRODUCTION STAFF**

Director of Community Engagement: Anita Maynard-Losh  
Ashley Forman  
Director of Education: Rebecca Campana  
Mauricio Pita  
School Programs Manager: Mari Andrea Travis  
Community Programs Manager: Alan Gonzalez Bisnes  
Training Programs Manager: Trevor Riley  
Community Engagement Programming Coordinator: Claire Fogle  
Production Manager: Alex Cloud  
Festival Stage Manager: Scott Folsom  
Sound Engineer: Marsha Folsom  
Lighting Designer and Operation: Sash Folsom
Voices of Now (VON) is a program that utilizes creative writing, collaboration, movement and performance to devise autobiographical plays with ensembles made up of middle-school, high-school and adult artists. VON plays are fast-paced, collaboratively written, physical theater pieces that pose challenging social questions relevant to the artists and their communities. The plays investigate those questions through poetry, movement and the recounting of the artists’ personal stories.

Originally created to work with one local middle school, the program has expanded to serve hundreds of students in the D.C. Metro Area and beyond. One of the primary goals of the program is to create positive change within the artists’ communities by engaging in dialogue centered on the artists’ daily experiences of their world.

Voices of Now International:
Thanks to partnerships with the U.S. Department of State, Voices of Now has gone international, growing from a program devoted to D.C.-area residents to one that works with communities around the world. Voices of Now has worked with ensembles in Zagreb and Petrinjah, Croatia; Lima, Peru; Trebinje, Bosnia and Herzegovina; and six cities in India: Kolkata, Patna, New Delhi, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Chennai. Internationally Voices of Now has worked with professional theater artists and activists, high school students, university students and professors, survivors of human trafficking, young people with disabilities, and elderly community members. Through extended residences, ensembles created plays using writing, discussion and movement techniques. Voices of Now plays have been performed internationally in English, Croatian, Spanish, Serbian, Bosnian, Albanian, Macedonian, Slovenian, Urdu, Hindi, Telugu, Tamil and Bengali. In January-February 2019, Arena Stage artists worked with two ensembles of young adults from Croatia and an ensemble of young adults from Bosnia and Herzegovina to create plays that explore themes of change, compromise and making yourself heard during difficult times. Arena Stage is honored to represent the United States as it works with world organizations through the Voices of Now program.

About Voices of Now

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For more information on Arena Stage's Community Engagement programs, visit arenastage.org/voicesofnow or call 202-600-4065.
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