

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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June 3, 2011

**RODGERS AND HAMMERSTEIN'S OKLAHOMA!
RETURNS TO ARENA STAGE AT THE MEAD CENTER FOR AMERICAN THEATER
AFTER BREAKING BOX OFFICE RECORDS DURING SOLD-OUT RUN
AND WINNING HELEN HAYES AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING RESIDENT MUSICAL**

***** Featuring Helen Hayes Award winner Nicholas Rodriguez and nominees Eleasha Gamble,
E. Faye Butler, Cody Williams and the acclaimed ensemble *****

(Washington, D.C.) After kicking off the inaugural season of **Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater**, shattering all box office records from Arena Stage's 60-year history, and rounding up four Helen Hayes Awards including Outstanding Resident Musical among 10 nominations, **Rodgers and Hammerstein's Oklahoma!** returns for a summer run under the direction of **Artistic Director Molly Smith**. The production was hailed by *The Washington Post* as "an enchantment," by *Bloomberg News* as a "turbo-charged, romantic revival" and by *New Yorker* as one of the Top 10 Performances of 2010. *Oklahoma!*, featuring the entire original principal cast and most of the ensemble, has already broken more company records by selling the highest number of single tickets for a production in 24 hours when tickets went on sale March 3, 2011. **Rodgers and Hammerstein's Oklahoma! runs July 8–October 2, 2011 in the Fichandler Stage.**

"The optimism and drive of the characters exploring a new frontier matched the ambition Arena Stage staff felt as we opened our new theater complex," said **Smith**. "It was thrilling that audiences shared that enthusiasm and supported our inaugural production in our new home."

"When we first opened *Oklahoma!* last fall, audiences couldn't get enough of it, and it was difficult to have to turn people away at the box office," shares Managing Director **Edgar Dobie**. "Even though it was playing to an average of 99% capacity each performance, we couldn't extend to meet demand this winter due to the next incoming show in the Fichandler. However, we're so pleased to bring it back again this summer."

Inspired by the toughness of the prairie, Smith sets her production in the robust world of territory life filled with a dynamic cast as rich and complex as the tapestry of America itself. Musical Director **George Fulginiti-Shakar** received a Helen Hayes Award for his 13-piece orchestration of Rodgers and Hammerstein's timeless score, along with Choreographer **Parker Esse**, who won a Helen Hayes Award for showing the vigor of the American pioneering spirit through athletic dance and boot-stomping energy. Tony Award-winning designers **Eugene Lee** and **Martin Pakledinaz** round out the dynamic sets and costumes respectively.

"I had no idea what to expect from Molly's production—'not your mother's *Oklahoma!*?' What did that mean?—and I was quite blown away when I saw it," contributes **Ted Chapin**, president and executive director of Rodgers & Hammerstein: An Imagem Company. "She makes the show contemporary by honoring what

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Rodgers and Hammerstein wrote while providing a modern look at the casting and direction. I am thrilled that more people will be able to see it.”

In Arena Stage’s 2010/11 Season, *Oklahoma!* set the following records:

- **Highest single-ticket sales for a production by opening night.** By opening night, Arena Stage had 54% more in advanced single-ticket revenue than the previous record holder, the 2010 production of *Duke Ellington’s Sophisticated Ladies*.
- **Highest single-ticket sales for a single production in a 24-hour period,** surpassing Molly Smith’s 2002 production of *South Pacific* by a 50% increase in revenue.
- **Highest-grossing, non-extension production in Arena Stage history.** Previously held by the 2010 production of *Duke Ellington’s Sophisticated Ladies*, the record for the highest single-ticket sales for a non-extension run was exceeded by more than \$100,000 by opening night.
- **Highest single-ticket sales for a single production in one week.** *Oklahoma!* broke this record twice; first during the week of November 1-7, 2010, when Arena Stage surpassed the previous record set by *Duke Ellington’s Sophisticated Ladies* by selling more than 4,000 tickets, and then again the following week, when Arena Stage sold nearly 6,000 tickets.

***Oklahoma!* received the following 2010 Helen Hayes Awards and nominations:**

- **Outstanding Resident Musical – *Oklahoma!* (winner)**
- **Outstanding Director, Resident Musical – Molly Smith**
- **Outstanding Choreography, Resident Production – Parker Esse (winner)**
- **Outstanding Musical Direction, Resident Production – George Fulginiti-Shakar (winner)**
- **Outstanding Set Design, Resident Production – Eugene Lee**
- **Outstanding Ensemble, Resident Musical**
- **Outstanding Lead Actor, Resident Musical – Nicholas Rodriguez (winner)**
- **Outstanding Lead Actor, Resident Musical – Cody Williams**
- **Outstanding Lead Actress, Resident Musical – E. Faye Butler**
- **Outstanding Lead Actress, Resident Musical – Eleasha Gamble**

Nicholas Rodriguez (Broadway’s *Tarzan*, Arena Stage’s *The Light in the Piazza*) returns as **Curly** along with **Eleasha Gamble** (Arena Stage’s *The Women of Brewster Place*, Signature’s *Chess*) as **Laurey**. D.C. area favorite **E. Faye Butler** (Arena Stage’s *Crowns*, *Ain’t Misbehavin’*) stars as **Aunt Eller** and **Aaron Ramey** (Broadway’s *Curtains*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*) as **Jud Fry**. Dynamic duo **Cody Williams** alongside **June Schreiner** also return in their breakout roles as **Will Parker** and **Ado Annie Carnes**, with **Nehal Joshi** (Broadway’s *Les Misérables*) as the suave peddler **Ali Hakim**. With Rodgers and Hammerstein’s timeless music, the summer revival of Smith’s *Oklahoma!* guarantees the same hearty laughs, robust singing and boot-stomping energy of Arena Stage’s all-time, best-selling show.

The Cast of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Oklahoma!* as of June 3, 2011 also includes **Lawrence Alexander** (Jess), **Emilee Dupre** (Vivian), **Lucas Fedele** (Ike Skidmore), **Andrew Hodge** (Slim), **Cara Massey** (Gertie Cummings), **Erin Moore** (Aggie), **Hugh Nees** (Andrew Carnes), **Cyana Paolantonio** (Ellen), **Annie Petersmeyer** (Virginia), **Shane Rhoades** (Fred), **Vincent Rodriguez III** (Sam), **Keith Lamelle Thomas** (Cord Elam), **Kyle Vaughn** (Mike/Dream Curly), **Hollie E. Wright** (Sylvie/Dream Laurey), **Jessica Wu** (Kate), **Jessica Hartman** (Female Swing) and **Clifton Samuels** (Male Swing).

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The Creative Team of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* as of June 3, 2011 includes Choreographer **Parker Esse**, Music Director **George Fulginiti-Shakar**, Set Designer **Eugene Lee**, Costume Designer **Martin Pakledinaz**, Lighting Designer **Michael Gilliam**, Sound Designer **Timothy M. Thompson**, Fight Choreographer **David Leong**, Dramaturg **Janine Sobeck**, Assistant Director **Anita Maynard-Losh**, Assistant Choreographer **Ashley Yeater**, Assistant Musical Director **José Simbulan**, Arena Stage Casting Director **Daniel Pruksarnukul**, Stage Managers **Susan R. White** and **Jenna Henderson**, Assistant Stage Manager **Taryn Friend**, and Production Assistants **Marne Anderson**, **Kristen Harris**, **Michael Ward** and **Alexandria Wood**.

Full bios and images available upon request. Please e-mail press@arenastage.org.

The Presenting Sponsor for the summer revival of *Oklahoma!* is Altria Group.

The 2011/12 Fichandler Stage season is sponsored by Life Trustee Dr. Jaylee Montague Mead.

Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* Special Events, Ticket Information and Performance Calendar

Free Family Events—every Saturday during the run

Every Saturday afternoon during the run of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!*, free family-friendly events will be held in and around the Mead Center from 12:30-1:30 p.m., prior to the 2:00 p.m. matinee. Come enjoy pony rides and a petting zoo on the 6th Street sidewalk with the return of Pony To Go, learn some of the award-winning dance moves from choreographer Parker Esse or share a box social lunch with your friends and family.

TICKETS: Tickets for Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* are \$61-\$106 subject to change and based on availability, plus applicable fees. Discount tickets are available for patrons purchasing tickets for multiple shows, students and groups. Beginning with the revival of *Oklahoma!* this summer, patrons ages 5 to 30 can purchase tickets through the new **Pay Your Age savings program**. (Patrons may purchase tickets by phone or in person, limit of four Pay Your Age tickets per household. All patrons must present valid ID.) Families can purchase **Family Fun Packs**, which include four tickets for \$153, all fees included. (Limit of two packs per household, at least two children ages 5 to 17. Proof of age required.) **HOTTIX**, a limited number of half-price, day-of-performance tickets, are available 30 minutes before curtain prior to every performance. With **Metro Mondays**, patrons who present a SmarTrip or Metro card can purchase half-price tickets for the week's performances after noon on Mondays while supplies last. All discounts subject to change, based on availability. **Tickets may be purchased online at www.arenastage.org, by phone at 202-488-3300 or at the Sales Office at 1101 6th St., SW, D.C.**

Sales Office/Subscriptions	202-488-3300
Group Sales Hotline for 10+ Tickets	202-488-4380
TTY for deaf patrons	202-484-0247
Info for patrons with disabilities	202-488-3300

Tuesday, Wednesday & Sunday at 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, Friday & Saturday at 8:00 p.m.

Saturday & Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m.

Weekday matinees at noon on 9/21 & 9/27.

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Sign-interpreted performances: 9/8 at 8:00 p.m.

Audio-described performances: 8/27 at 2:00 p.m.

Open-captioned performance: 9/7 at 7:30 p.m.

Post-show discussions: 9/21 & 9/27 after the noon matinees.

METRO: Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater is only one block from the Waterfront-SEU Metro station (Green Line). When exiting the station, walk west on M Street toward Sixth Street, and the main entrance to the Mead Center is on the right.

PARKING: Discounted parking in the Mead Center garage is available by reservation to full-season subscribers for \$15 per show. The entrance for the Mead Center garage is on Maine Ave., SW. Limited handicapped parking is available by reservation up to 24 hours prior to a performance. Remaining spaces are \$20 for nonsubscribers. Patrons can also park at either of Central Parking's garages on Fourth Street between I and M streets for \$10.

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater is a national center dedicated to the production, presentation, development and study of American theater. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Molly Smith and Managing Director Edgar Dobie, Arena Stage is the largest company in the country dedicated to American plays and playwrights. Arena Stage produces huge plays of all that is passionate, exuberant, profound, deep and dangerous in the American spirit, and presents diverse and ground-breaking work from some of the best artists around the country. Arena Stage is committed to commissioning and developing new plays through the American Voices New Play Institute. Now in its sixth decade, Arena Stage serves a diverse annual audience of more than 300,000. www.arenastage.org.

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