

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ARENA STAGE AT THE MEAD CENTER FOR AMERICAN THEATER HOSTS INAUGURAL FIVE-DAY VOICES OF NOW FESTIVAL MAY 25-29, 2011

***** Ten youth ensembles from Arena Stage's Community Engagement program
to participate in public performances *****

(Washington, D.C.) **Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater** announces the performances of 10 youth ensembles from the **Voices of Now** Community Engagement program in the inaugural five-day **Voices of Now Festival**. The festival will bring together more than 100 local artists from ages 11 to 21 who live in D.C., Maryland and Virginia and have been participating in workshops and rehearsals focused on movement, vocal expression, creativity and team work for the past eight months. Over this time the 10 ensemble groups have created original plays to be performed in the **Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle May 25-29, 2011**.

"Voices of Now explores themes that are critical to its participants, and through transforming those issues into art they gain mastery over their experiences," says **Director of Community Engagement Anita Maynard-Losh**. "This is important for all young people but particularly with groups who are moving through life challenges. For example, in our partnership with CFSA [Child and Family Services Agency] we are working with youth who are aging out of foster care, and with Capital Caring our ensemble is comprised of young people who have recently experienced the loss of a parent."

Voices of Now (VON) is a yearlong, nationally recognized drama program designed by Arena Stage's Director of Education, Programming, Ashley Forman. Through creative writing, improvisation, play-building and acting, VON gives youths the opportunity to learn about theater and performance, with the ultimate goal of devising and performing a piece of theater based on their own writing. VON is tailored to middle and high school groups of eight or more, available to schools and various community groups throughout the D.C. metro area. In addition to performing within the community and at Arena Stage, past ensembles have performed at the Atlas Performing Arts Center's Intersections Festival, Imagination Stage and the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage.

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

In the Kogod Cradle

Wednesday, 5/25 @ 7:30 p.m.: Jefferson Ensemble & Mentor Ensemble

Thursday, 5/26 @ 7:30 p.m.: Burke Ensemble, Wright House Ensemble & Mentor Ensemble

Friday, 5/27 @ 7:30 p.m.: Jefferson Ensemble, Key Ensemble & Youth Empowerment Ensemble

Saturday, 5/28 @ 7:30 p.m.: Voices of Hope Ensemble, Mead Ensemble & Mentor Ensemble

Sunday, 5/29 @ 2:00 p.m.: Robinson Ensemble, Whitman Ensemble & Mentor Ensemble

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PARTNERING ORGANIZATIONS

- Burke School, Burke, VA
- Capital Caring, Washington, D.C.
- Child and Family Services Agency’s Office of Youth Empowerment, Washington, D.C.
- Jefferson Middle School, Washington, D.C.
- Key Middle School, Springfield, VA
- Pediatric AIDS/HIV Care Inc., Washington, D.C.
- Robinson Secondary School, Fairfax, VA
- Whitman Middle School, Alexandria VA

This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts. The Voices of Now program is supported by generous grants from the Fairfax County Public Schools, Capital Caring, Pediatric AIDS/HIV Care Inc., D.C. Child and Family Services Agency, the Howard & Geraldine Polinger Family Foundation, the HSC Foundation, Diane and Norman Bernstein Foundation, and Toni A. Ritzenberg.

Additional general operating support of Arena Stage's Community Engagement efforts are provided by The Weissberg Foundation, the Brock Foundation, Friends of Southwest D.C., Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation, Inc., the Anthony Lucas-Spindletop Foundation, Corina Higginson Trust, Mars Foundation, Mardi Gras Fund and Arena Stage.

Without the extraordinary support of all our supporters, VON and our other Community Engagement program offerings would not be possible.



TICKETS: Tickets for the Voices of Now Festival are **FREE**, though reservations are required through the Arena Stage Sales Office at 202-488-3300.

- 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**

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 \$18 per show. The entrance for the Mead Center garage is on Maine Ave., SW. Limited handicapped parking is available by reservation, and the proper sticker is required. 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.