

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 HOSTS FOUR-DAY VOICES OF NOW FESTIVAL MAY 9-12, 2012

***** Eleven youth ensembles from Arena Stage's Community Engagement program
will participate in public performances *****

(Washington, D.C.) **Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater** announces a four-day festival featuring performances by 11 youth ensembles from the Community Engagement program **Voices of Now**. The festival will bring together more than 150 young artists, ages 11-23, from D.C., Maryland and Virginia who have been working with professional theater artists from Arena Stage for eight months to devise original one-act plays. **The ensembles will come together May 9-12, 2012 to perform and discuss their work in the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle.**

"We are so pleased that **Voices of Now** continues to vigorously grow, with a record of 11 ensembles participating this year," says **Director of Community Engagement Anita Maynard-Losh**. "**Voices of Now** strives to produce transformational art by exploring painful or negative experiences and turning them into something creative. I believe this function of art is one of the most important tools we can give the young people we work with."

Maynard-Losh continues, "For example, in our partnership with the Child and Family Services Agency, we are working with youth who are aging out of foster care, and with The Wendt Center for Loss and Healing, our ensemble is comprised of young people who have recently experienced the loss of a parent or loved one. Our partnership with Metro TeenAIDS has resulted in an ensemble where youth use autobiographical theater to tell stories about family, struggle and stigma. We're also glad to be working with the Fairfax County and District of Columbia Public Schools."

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

All performances take place in the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle

Wednesday, May 9 – 7:30 p.m.

Jefferson Ensemble, Mentor Ensemble and Wendt Center Ensemble

Thursday, May 10 – 7:30 p.m.

Burke Ensemble, Metro TeenAIDS Ensemble and Whitman Ensemble

Friday, May 11 – 7:30 p.m.

Mentor Ensemble, Key Ensemble and Robinson Ensemble

Saturday, May 12 – 7:30 p.m.

Mead Ensemble, Youth Empowerment Ensemble (Child and Family Services Agency) and Rachel Carson Ensemble

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PARTNERING ORGANIZATIONS

Burke School, Burke, VA (FCPS)

Child and Family Services Agency's Office of Youth Empowerment, Washington, D.C.

Jefferson Middle School, Washington, D.C. (DCPS)

Key Middle School, Springfield, VA (FCPS)

Metro TeenAIDS, Washington, D.C.

Rachel Carson Middle School, Herndon, VA (FCPS)

Robinson Secondary School, Fairfax, VA (FCPS)

The Wendt Center for Loss and Healing, Washington, D.C.

Whitman Middle School, Alexandria, VA (FCPS)



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, movement and acting, VON gives young artists 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 that poses difficult questions about social, cultural and emotional issues. VON is tailored to middle and high school groups and is available to schools and various community groups throughout the D.C. metro area. In addition to performing at Arena Stage, ensembles perform throughout their own communities. Past ensembles have performed at the Atlas Performing Arts Center's Intersections Festival, Imagination Stage and the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage.

The Voices of Now program is supported by generous grants from the Fairfax County Public Schools, The Wendt Center for Loss and Healing, Metro TeenAIDS, the D.C. Child and Family Services Agency, the District of Columbia Public Schools, the Howard & Geraldine Polinger Family Foundation, The Theodore H. Barth Foundation, Inc. and The Share Fund of The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region.

Additional support of Arena Stage's Community Engagement efforts is provided by the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation, The Weissberg Foundation, the DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities, the Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation, Inc., the Capital Group Companies Charitable Foundation, the Robert and Natalie Mandel Family Fund, the Corina Higginson Trust, Toni A. Ritzenberg, the Anthony Lucas-Spindletop Foundation, the Mars Foundation, Friends of Southwest DC, Jean Schiro-Zavela and Vance Zavela and the Brock Foundation.

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

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 Executive Producer 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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