

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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October 10, 2012

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MOLLY SMITH REINVENTS
MY FAIR LADY AT ARENA STAGE
NOVEMBER 2, 2012-JANUARY 6, 2013

**** Corresponding events include Opening Night Celebration, Military Thanksgiving, floral arrangement contest and Parent Child Tea, among others ****

(Washington, D.C.) Based on George Bernard Shaw's classic play *Pygmalion*, Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe's musical *My Fair Lady* follows the transformation of Cockney flower girl Eliza Doolittle into an aristocratic lady through lessons in manners, language and dress. After directing the production at the 2011 Shaw Festival, **Arena Stage Artistic Director Molly Smith** reunites with members of her original design team, along with noted Canadian actor **Benedict Campbell** who reprises his role as Henry Higgins, to bring a completely fresh interpretation to audiences in D.C. As previously announced, **Manna Nichols** makes her Arena debut as Eliza Doolittle, and **Nicholas Rodriguez** returns as Freddy Eynsford-Hill, leading a cast that features many D.C.-area actors. *My Fair Lady* became the best-selling production in the Shaw Festival's 50-year history and runs at Arena Stage **November 2, 2012-January 6, 2013 in the Fichandler Stage.**

"Great musicals, like great plays, demand to be reinterpreted for each generation," says **Smith**. "*My Fair Lady* is a potent story about class, and in a world increasingly blown apart by the dynamics of the very rich and the very poor, this musical hits the sweet spot of our current awareness of class. I'm eager to tackle this mountain of a musical again with my designers because the ideas are so universal, the story lands in a completely contemporary way and we know that audiences in D.C. will be excited to experience it with their families."

Choreographer **Daniel Pelzig**, Music Director **Paul Sportelli**, Costume Designer **Judith Bowden** and Lighting Designer **Jock Munro** will rejoin Smith to create an original look for *My Fair Lady* at Arena Stage, along with Set Designer **Donald Eastman** and Sound Designer **Carl Casella**. The lower, middle and upper classes clash and interact onstage, and each class is further expressed through couture-level costumes designed by Bowden. Influenced by the steampunk movement that blends steam-engine technology with Victorian-era fashion, Bowden creates layered looks for the lower class that refer to the mechanism of today mixed with a classic Victorian style, while the upper class is clothed in Alexander McQueen-inspired gowns.

This range of designs continues through the choreography of Pelzig, who makes his Arena Stage debut. Sportelli (*A Light in the Piazza*) rejoins Smith to lead the 11-piece orchestra, which will emphasize the city street sounds from beneath the stage. Eastman (*M. Butterfly*) creates the world of 1912 London in the round, with floral patterns influenced by William Morris designs covering the floor and enormous crystal chandeliers illuminating the Fichandler Stage.

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In conjunction with *My Fair Lady*, Arena Stage is hosting a number of special events related to the production. The **Opening Night Celebration** will be held Thursday, November 15 and includes a VIP reception, cocktails and buffet dinner, along with that evening's performance. Arena Stage invites members of the armed forces and their families to the second annual **Military Thanksgiving** Friday, November 23, 2012, with a meal and performance of *My Fair Lady*. The following week, Arena Stage will host ***Isn't She Lovely: Design in Bloom***, a costume-inspired floral arrangement contest Friday, November 30, where local florists will create and display their floral interpretations of 25 iconic leading lady costumes from Arena Stage's past productions. On Sunday, December 16, families are invited to the **Parent Child Tea**, complete with a full British tea following the 2:00 p.m. performance that day.

See below for additional events.

Alan Jay Lerner & Frederick Loewe (*Book, Lyrics & Music*). Alan Jay Lerner was one of the most knowledgeable practitioners of Broadway musical theater. He studied piano as a child. Later he studied at the Juilliard School of Music and earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Harvard University. His career as a lyricist and librettist didn't ignite until he met composer Frederick Loewe in 1942. Mr. Loewe was born in Berlin to musician parents who traveled extensively. Though his parents were from Vienna, Loewe grew up in Berlin and eventually, he attended a famous conservatory in Berlin. Their first collaborations—*What's Up?* and *The Day Before Spring*—were not especially successful. In 1947, however, they hit pay-dirt with *Brigadoon*. *Paint Your Wagon* hit Broadway in 1952, followed by the blockbuster *My Fair Lady* in 1956—the longest-running musical until the record was broken by *Cats*. After 2,717 performances on Broadway and 2,281 in London, *My Fair Lady* was filmed in 1964; Audrey Hepburn replaced Julie Andrews (though her songs were dubbed by Marni Nixon). The original Broadway cast album sped to number one on the U.S. charts, selling over five million copies, and it stayed in the Top 40 for 311 weeks. In 1958, Lerner and Loewe were back in Hollywood collaborating on one of their last original screen musicals, *Gigi*. Loewe's score was delightful, and Lerner won an Oscar for the screenplay (they won nine in all), and another, with Loewe, for the title song. The two collaborators returned to Broadway in 1960 with *Camelot*, which was another major success for the duo. Not long after their *Camelot* success, however, Lerner and Loewe ended their partnership due, in part, to the composer's ill health. They renewed their collaboration briefly in 1973 to write new songs for a stage version of *Gigi*, and, later, for the score to the film *The Little Prince*. Lerner was juggling various projects when he died of lung cancer in June 1986. Loewe died in 1988.

Molly Smith (*Director*) has been instrumental in leading the reinvention of Arena Stage, focusing on the creation of the new Mead Center for American Theater as well as major artistic changes. Arena Stage is a center for the production, presentation, development and study of American theater. Ms. Smith has been a leader in new play development for 30 years while at Arena Stage for the past 14 years and at Perseverance Theatre in Alaska, the theater she founded and led for 19 years. She is a great believer in first, second and third productions of new work and has championed projects like *Next to Normal*, *How I Learned to Drive* and *Passion Play*, a cycle. Ms. Smith has directed for Arena Stage *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *How I Learned to Drive*, *Hot 'N' Throbbing*, *All My Sons*, *The Great White Hope*, *Coyote Builds North America*, *Agamemnon and His Daughters*, *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, *South Pacific*, *An American Daughter*, *Camelot*, *Orpheus Descending*, *Anna Christie*, *Passion Play*, a cycle, *Damn Yankees*, *Cabaret*, *The Women of Brewster Place*, *Christmas Carol 1941*, *Legacy of Light*, *The Light in the Piazza*, *Oklahoma!*, *The Book Club Play* and *The Music Man*. She has worked alongside playwrights Sarah Ruhl, Paula Vogel, Tim Acito, Karen Zacarias, John Murrell, James Magruder, Barry Lopez and many others. Ms. Smith's directorial work has also been seen at the Shaw Festival in Canada, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Trinity Repertory Company, Tarragon Theatre in Toronto and Centaur Theatre in Montreal.

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The Cast of *My Fair Lady* (in alphabetical order)

Benedict Campbell (*Henry Higgins*) From 1991 to 2001, Campbell performed with the Stratford Festival, most recently in *Dracula*, *The Three Musketeers* and *Tempest-Tost*. He has also performed at Canadian Stage (*A Little Night Music*, among others), Factory Theatre (*Love and Anger*) and at the Grand Theatre, London (*Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*, among others). For the past 10 years, he has acted in the Shaw Festival, appearing as Henry Higgins in *My Fair Lady* and as Boss Mangan in Bernard Shaw's *Heartbreak House*. He has also performed the roles of Lopakhin in Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* and Broadbent in Bernard Shaw's *John Bull's Other Island*. His other Shaw credits include *The Entertainer*, *In Good King Charles's Golden Days*, *An Inspector Calls*, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Mack and Mabel*, *Hotel Peccadillo*, *The Crucible*, *Too True To Be Good*, *Happy End*, *Major Barbara*, *Man and Superman*, *Nothing Sacred* and *The Plough and the Stars*.

Sherri L. Edelen (*Mrs. Pearce, Queen of Transylvania*) returns to Arena Stage after performing as Fr. Kost in *Cabaret* in 2006. She recently appeared as Miss Mona in *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* at Signature Theatre where she also received two Helen Hayes Awards for *Side Show* and *Les Misérables*. She earned a Barrymore Award for her performance as Margaret Johnson in *The Light in the Piazza* at the Philadelphia Theatre Company. Regionally, she appeared in *Design for Living* (Shakespeare Theatre Company), *Annie Get Your Gun* (Stages St. Louis Theatre Company), *Caroline or Change* (Arden Theatre Company) and *Sunday in the Park with George*, *Merrily We Roll Along* (Kennedy Center).

Catherine Flye (*Mrs. Higgins*) graduated from London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and has worked extensively as a writer, director and actor. In Washington she has played many principal roles at the Shakespeare Theatre, Folger, MetroStage, Studio, Round House, Ford's Theatre and the Kennedy Center. As Artistic Director of Interact Theatre Company, she has written over 50 commissioned plays and entertainments, several of which have been seen at Arena's Old Vat, including *Shirley Valentine*, *Christmas at the Old Bull and Bush*, and her critically acclaimed tribute to Joyce Grenfell in *George Don't Do That!* She has been nominated for 13 Helen Hayes Awards for acting and directing and received the award for her production of *The Pirates of Penzance*. Following Mrs. Higgins, she will be playing Mistress Quickly in *Henry V* at the Folger.

Benjamin L. Horen (*Zoltan Karpathy*) makes his first appearance at Arena Stage. He has performed in other Washington theaters in roles such as James Monroe in *Bloody, Bloody Andrew Jackson* at Studio Theatre 2nd Stage, ensemble in *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* at Signature Theatre, Johnny Domingo in *Cool Papa's Party*, Ben in *The Stephen Schwartz Project* at Metro Stage, and ensemble in *The Boys From Syracuse* and *Cymbeline* at Shakespeare Theatre Company.

Manna Nichols (*Eliza Doolittle*) makes her Arena debut. Manna was last seen in D.C. as Mulan in Disney's *Mulan* at Imagination Stage. She has performed in both Off-Broadway and The Actors Studio readings of *Tokio Confidential* (Sachiko). In NYC she has also performed at NYMF as Hortense in *Frog Kiss*, with NAAP as Laurie in *Oklahoma!* and with the USO Liberty Bells. Regionally, she has performed at Walnut Street Theatre as Tuptim in *The King and I* (Barrymore Award—Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Musical), North Shore Music Theatre as Tuptim in *The King and I*, The Fulton Theatre as Kim in *Miss Saigon*, and Light Opera of Oklahoma as Cinderella in *Into the Woods*.

Nicholas Rodriguez (*Freddy Eynsford-Hill*) was last seen at Arena Stage as Curly in *Oklahoma!* (2010 Helen Hayes Award, Outstanding Lead Actor in a Musical). He also appeared at Arena as Fabrizio Nacarelli in *Light in the Piazza*. On Broadway, he performed the title role in *Tarzan*. Off-Broadway, he has appeared in *The Toxic Avenger*, *Almost Heaven*, *Bajour and Collete Collage*. Tours include *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Jesus), *Evita* (Che) and *Hair* (Claude). Regional credits include *The Ten Commandments* (Kodak Theatre), *JCS* (Jesus), *Beauty and the Beast* (Gaston), *Damn Yankees* (Joe), *Cinderella* (Prince), *South Pacific* (Cable), *Master Class* (Tony), *Love, Valour, Compassion!* (Ramon) and *The King and I* (Lun Tha). He was in the film *Sex and the City 2*, and featured

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on the film's soundtrack. He is perhaps best known for his portrayal of Nick Chavez on ABC's *One Life to Live* for which he received a GLAAD Media Award. Nicholas is the Artistic Director of The Broadway Dreams Foundation (www.mybroadwaydreams.org).

James Saito (*Alfred P. Doolittle*) returns to Arena Stage after appearing in Lisa Loomer's *The Waiting Room* 16 years ago. On Broadway he was in *The King and I* and David Henry Hwang's *Golden Child*, which he also played at the Kennedy Center. James played Wang Chi-yang/Sammy Fong in the National Tour of *Flower Drum Song* and The Reciter in *Pacific Overtures* at Cincinnati Playhouse and Atlanta's Alliance Theater. James received an Obie for his performance in *Durango* at The Public Theater, which he also played at The Long Wharf Theater. His film and TV work includes Ang Lee's current film *The Life of Pi*, a series regular on ABC's *Eli Stone* and The Shredder in *The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*.

Thomas Adrian Simpson (*Col. Pickering*) returns to Arena Stage, where he was last seen as Roy in *The Light in the Piazza*. Other Arena appearances include: *The Fantasticks*, *The Great White Hope*, *Seagull*, *Antigone in New York* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. Tom's recent D.C.-area performances include: Ed Earl in *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* and Von Golum in *The Boy Detective Fails* (Signature Theatre); Witherspoon in *1776* and King Louis XVI in *Liberty Smith* (Ford's Theatre); and *Candide* and *The Boys from Syracuse* (Shakespeare Theatre Company). Regional credits include: *Candide* (The Goodman Theatre); Papa Charlie in *Shenandoah* and Quixote in *The Man of La Mancha* (Wayside Theatre).

Additional cast members of *My Fair Lady* include D.C.-area residents **Rayanne Gonzales** as Mrs. Eynsford-Hill and **Kurt Boehm** as Jamie, with ensemble members **Bev Appleton**, **Erin Driscoll**, **Jennifer Irons**, **Robert Mintz**, **Jesse Palmer**, **Jobari Parker-Namdar**, **Joe Peck**, **Kim Willes**, **Hannah Willman** and female swing **Jessica Hartman**. Rounding out the cast are **Ronald Duncan** as Harry, with ensemble members **Will Burton**, **Dean Andre de Luna**, **Afra Hines**, **Sade Simmons** and male swing **Victor J. Wisehart**.

Director **Molly Smith** reunites with her original Shaw Festival creative team members Choreographer **Daniel Pelzig**, Music Director **Paul Sportelli**, Costume Designer **Judith Bowden** and Lighting Designer **Jock Munro**. The Creative Team for *My Fair Lady* also features Set Designer **Donald Eastman**, Sound Designer **Carl Casella**, Wig Designer **Anne Nesmith**, Dialect Coach **Kim James Bey**, Assistant Choreographer **Melanie Phillipson**, Assistant Music Director **Jose C. Simbulan**, Stage Manager **Susan R. White** and Assistant Stage Manager **Christi B. Spann**, with New York casting by **Stuart Howard & Paul Hardt**.

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

My Fair Lady is sponsored by Edward Burka and his "Fair Lady" Karen Burka. Additional support is provided by the Margaret Abell Powell Fund. The 2012/13 Fichandler Stage season is sponsored by Life Trustee Dr. Jaylee Montague Mead, and the entire 2012/13 season is dedicated to her memory.

***My Fair Lady* Special Events, Ticket Information and Performance Calendar**

Opening Night Celebration—November 15, 2012

In conjunction with opening night for *My Fair Lady*, Arena Stage is hosting an Opening Night Celebration, which will include a VIP reception, cocktails and buffet dinner, and the 8:00 p.m. performance of *My Fair Lady* that evening. All proceeds from the evening will benefit Arena Stage's award-winning Community Engagement Programs. To reserve tickets or inquire about event sponsorship, visit arenastage.org/support/special-events/opening-night-my-fair-lady.

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Military Thanksgiving—November 23, 2012

Every year, hundreds of D.C.-area military families are forced to spend the Thanksgiving holiday away from loved ones. In gratitude for their service, Arena Stage is inviting wounded warriors, their families and military families with deployed service members to an elegant Thanksgiving dinner and a performance of the classic musical *My Fair Lady* at Arena Stage Friday, November 23. Arena Stage has set aside tickets for each guest who attends to enjoy a performance of *My Fair Lady* and is working closely with the Office of the Secretary of Defense to distribute these tickets to our military families. For more information about the Military Thanksgiving event and how you can get involved, please contact Laura Haynes at 202-600-4030 or lhaynes@arenastage.org.

***Isn't She Lovely: Design in Bloom* flower arrangement contest—November 30-December 2, 2012**

Arena Stage hosts *Isn't She Lovely: Design in Bloom*, a costume-inspired floral arrangement contest in celebration of *My Fair Lady*. Twenty-five local florists are invited to create floral arrangements inspired by signature dresses from past Arena Stage productions. The final floral arrangements will be displayed at the Mead Center from November 30-December 2, 2012. For florists interested in participating or for more information, please e-mail Amrita Ramanan at aramanan@arenastage.org.

***My Fair Lady* Parent Child Tea—December 16, 2012 at 2:00 p.m.**

Enjoy premium seats to the matinee performance of *My Fair Lady* followed by a traditional British Afternoon Tea. Tickets are \$250 for an Adult and Youth pair; additional tickets are \$125 each. To purchase tickets and for more information, please visit arenastage.org/support/special-events/mfl-tea/index.shtml or call 202-600-4025. All proceeds will benefit Arena Stage's award-winning Community Engagement Programs.

Piano Bars—November 21 & December 19, 2012

Following the success of last season's post-show piano bars, Arena Stage continues the popular piano bar tradition this season, with two events during the run of *My Fair Lady*. Grab a drink and gather 'round the piano for show tunes with host Joshua Morgan.

Theater 101—ongoing

Explore the unique challenges and discoveries of re-imagining a gold-standard American musical in Arena's signature Fichandler Stage! Sessions include conversations with stage management, marketing, dramaturgy and others; observation of dance rehearsal, music rehearsal, book rehearsal, wandelprobe, technical rehearsal and invited dress rehearsal; and a ticket to a performance of *My Fair Lady*. Registration for *My Fair Lady* Theater 101 is currently closed, but for more information about future Theater 101 sessions, e-mail arenastagetheater101@gmail.com or contact Amrita Ramanan at 202-554-9066 ext. 5071.

CATWALK CAFÉ: Prix fixe meals are now available at the Catwalk Café and include a choice of soup or salad, main entrée and dessert. Pre-ordered meals are only \$19 (\$29 if purchased that day). To pre-order and see the menu, call 202-488-3300 or visit arenastage.org/plan-your-visit/the-cafe/boxed-meals. The Catwalk Café opens two hours before the show, and reservations are recommended.

The Catwalk Café is also offering a special **holiday brunch buffet** December 2, 9 and 16, where audiences can enjoy a meal prior to the 2:00 p.m. matinee of *My Fair Lady* during the holiday season. The brunch buffet begins at 11:00 a.m. and is only \$39 per person (price includes up to two mimosas or Bloody Mary's per person). For a complete menu or to order in advance, visit arenastage.org/plan-your-visit/the-cafe/winter-buffet.

TICKETS: Tickets for *My Fair Lady* are \$45-\$94, subject to change and based on availability, plus applicable fees. For information on savings programs such as student discounts, Southwest Nights, Pay-Your-Page tickets, Family Fun Packs, HOTTIX and Hero's Discounts, visit arenastage.org/shows-tickets/single-tickets/savings-programs. Tickets may be purchased online at arenastage.org, by phone at 202-488-3300 or at the Sales Office at 1101 Sixth St., SW, D.C.

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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

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

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

Saturday & Sunday at 2:00 p.m.

Weekday matinees at noon on Tuesday, 11/13; Wednesday, 11/28; Tuesday, 12/4 & Wednesday, 12/26.

Full calendar: tickets.arenastage.org/single/psDetail.aspx?psn=14303.

Open-captioned performances: 11/21 at 7:30 p.m. & 12/13 at 8:00 p.m.

Audio-described performance: 12/1 at 2:00 p.m.

Post-show discussions: 11/13, 11/28 & 12/4 after the noon show; 11/20 & 12/6 after the evening show.

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: Parking is available in Arena Stage's on-site garage. Subscribers may purchase parking in advance for \$16. Single ticket buyers may purchase parking in advance for \$18 or on the day of the performance for \$20 on a first-come, first-served basis. Limited handicapped parking is available by reservation. Advanced parking must be reserved by calling 202-488-3300. The entrance to the Mead Center garage is on Maine Avenue between Sixth and Seventh streets, and the garage closes one hour after the day's last performance ends. Patrons can also park at the Public Parking Garage at 1101 Fourth Street, one block from the Mead Center, for \$11. Street parking is also available along Maine Avenue and Water Street.

VALET PARKING: Arena Stage offers valet service at no additional cost to patrons with accessibility needs who call 202-488-3300 in advance to request valet parking. On days when valet parking is being used for accessibility, it is also available to general patrons one hour prior to show time for \$25, based on availability. To use valet parking, pull up to the main entrance on Sixth Street.

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 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. arenastage.org.

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