

# ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

**\*\*\*PLEASE NOTE:** This release has been amended as of 4/25/14 to reflect that Rick Fox has replaced Victor Simonson as musical director.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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March 12, 2014

**SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ—THE SONGS OF LEIBER AND STOLLER  
CELEBRATES THE MUSIC OF LEGENDARY SONGWRITING TEAM  
AT ARENA STAGE AT THE MEAD CENTER FOR AMERICAN THEATER  
DIRECTED BY RANDY JOHNSON  
APRIL 25-JUNE 8, 2014**

**\*\*\* Full company announced for hit musical revue featuring Tony Award winner Levi Kreis and Helen Hayes Award winners E. Faye Butler and Nova Y. Payton \*\*\***

(Washington, D.C.) *Smokey Joe's Café—The Songs of Leiber and Stoller* transports audiences to the golden age of rock, rhythm and blues this spring at Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater. Director **Randy Johnson** returns to Arena Stage following the success of *A Night with Janis Joplin* (which enjoyed two runs at Arena Stage followed by a subsequent run on Broadway) to helm this Grammy Award-winning tribute to legendary songwriting duo Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, which originally opened on Broadway in 1995 and became the longest running musical revue, topping 2,000 performances. Bursting with hit tunes including "Hound Dog," "Jailhouse Rock," "Stand by Me," "Love Potion #9" and "On Broadway," *Smokey Joe's Café* showcases choreography by **Parker Esse** (Arena Stage's *The Music Man, Oklahoma!*) and music direction by **Rick Fox** (former director of music at the Stratford Festival) and runs **April 25-June 8, 2014 in the Fichandler Stage**.

The production features the previously announced Tony Award winner **Levi Kreis** (Broadway's *Million Dollar Quartet*) and Helen Hayes Award winners **E. Faye Butler** (Arena Stage's *Pullman Porter Blues, Oklahoma!*) and **Nova Y. Payton** (Signature Theatre's *Dreamgirls, Hairspray*). They are joined by D.C.-area performers **Jay Adriel, Austin Colby, Ashley Blair Fitzgerald, Michael J. Mainwaring, Stephawn P. Stephens** and **Kara-Tameika Watkins**.

"*Smokey Joe's Café* is a foot-stomping celebration of Leiber and Stoller's treasured songbook," shares Artistic Director **Molly Smith**. "I'm thrilled to welcome back our dear friend Randy Johnson and also the marvelously versatile cast he has assembled. I'm sure they will raise the roof in bringing these timeless tunes to life."

"When Molly called and asked me to direct *Smokey Joe's Café*, I didn't even let her finish the sentence—it was going to be a 'yes!,'" says **Johnson**. "I am so happy to be directing my friend Mike Stoller's classic musical, and it's very fitting that my next theatrical venture—after my recent Broadway debut as a director and playwright with *A Night with Janis Joplin*—is at Arena Stage. It's wonderful to be back in D.C. at my theatrical 'home,' where I've felt incredibly supported and nurtured."

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## Full company announced for *Smokey Joe's Café—The Songs of Leiber and Stoller* at Arena Stage—Page 2

**Jerry Leiber** and **Mike Stoller** (*Words and Music*) began their songwriting partnership in 1950 upon discovering that they had the same passion for Boogie Woogie and the Blues. If they had written no other song but *Hound Dog*, the names of Leiber and Stoller would still have been indelibly written in the history of popular music. However, as *Smokey Joe's Café* makes abundantly clear, they didn't start or stop there. In fact, Leiber and Stoller's contributions as songwriters and record producers have been so monumental that it is impossible to envision what American popular music would be like today without them. Their songs have been recorded by the likes of Elvis Presley, The Coasters, Jimmy Witherspoon, Little Esther, Amos Milburn, Charles Brown, Little Willie Littlefield, Bull Moose Jackson, Linda Hopkins, Ray Charles, Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Beach Boys, James Brown, Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis, Buddy Holly, Fats Domino, The Everly Brothers, Bill Haley and the Comets, Barbra Streisand, Jimi Hendrix, Muddy Waters, Johnny Mathis, Count Basie, John Mellencamp, Lou Rawls, Tom Jones, Edith Piaf, Bobby Darin, Peggy Lee, Chet Atkins, Aretha Franklin, Luther Vandross, B.B. King, Otis Redding and literally hundreds more.

**Randy Johnson** (*Director*) recently made his Broadway debut as playwright and director for *A Night with Janis Joplin*, which previously ran at Arena Stage in 2012 and 2013. Randy is a graduate of the University of Southern California's School of Theatre in Los Angeles. For the past 25 years, he has written, directed and produced some of the most original, groundbreaking and landmark events in the business. Select theater credits include producer of the West Coast premiere of *The Normal Heart* starring Richard Dreyfuss and Kathy Bates; original producer of *Always Patsy Cline*; and writer and director of *The Wildest—The Music of Louis Prima and Keely Smith*, published by Samuel French Inc. As the writer and director of *Conway Twitty—the Man, the Music, the Legend*, Randy also co-conceived and directed *Elvis the Concert*, which premiered at Radio City Music Hall. *Elvis the Concert* is in the Guinness Book of World Records as "the most successful rock tour performed by a deceased artist." Randy has directed in regional theaters nationwide and in Canada and staged and directed Pope Benedict's most recent appearance in New York. Other work includes directing Katharine Hepburn in a PBS documentary on the life of Jimmy Stewart; *Mike Tyson: Undisputed Truth* (director/co-writer) and Carly Simon's concert *A Miracle on 125th Street* at The Apollo Theatre in 2007. For PBS and DVD: *Carly Simon—A Moonlight Serenade Aboard the Queen Mary*. He is a member of Dramatists Guild, Stage Directors and Choreographers Society and Canadian Actors Equity as a director. For his work with AIDS Project Los Angeles, he is a recipient of The Crystal Apple Award.

### The cast of *Smokey Joe's Café* (in alphabetical order)

**Jay Adriel's** theater credits include *Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* and *Dreamgirls* (Signature Theatre); *Guys and Dolls*, *Legally Blonde*, *Hairspray*, *Hello Dolly*, *The Producers*, *Crazy For You*, *42nd Street*, *Cats* and *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (Central Piedmont Community College); *Seussical*, *Aladdin*, *Peter Pan* and *Beauty and the Beast* (Children's Theatre of Charlotte) and *A Chorus Line* (Actors Theatre of Charlotte).

**E. Faye Butler's** previous Arena Stage productions include *Pullman Porter Blues*, *Trouble in Mind*, *Oklahoma!*, *Crowns*, *Ain't Misbehavin*, *Polk County* and *Dinah Was*. She performed with the Washington Ballet in *The Great Gatsby* and *Blues Until June* at the Kennedy Center. National and regional tours include *Mamma Mia*, *Dinah Was*, *Ain't Misbehavin*, *Nunsense* and *Don't Bother Me...* E. Faye has appeared at regional theaters including Signature Theatre, Center Stage, La Jolla Playhouse, Court Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, Lincolnshire Theatre, Dallas Theatre Company, Northlight Theatre, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Yale Repertory and Pasadena Playhouse. She is the recipient of six Jeff Awards, three Black Theatre Alliance Awards, an After Dark Award, John Barrymore Award, R.A.M.I. Award, two Helen Hayes Awards and seven nominations, an Excellence in the Arts Award, Ovation Award and the 2011 Sarah Siddons Society Leading Lady Award. In 2012 she was named a Lunt-Fontaine Fellow.

**Austin Colby** makes his Arena Stage debut. Washington D.C. credits include Signature Theatre (*Crossing and Spin*), Olney Theatre Center (*Cinderella*, *Spring Awakening* and *Forever Plaid*) and Toby's Dinner Theatre (*Hairspray* and *Legally Blonde*). Austin has performed regionally at Cortland Repertory Theatre (*Joseph and*

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### Full company announced for *Smokey Joe's Café—The Songs of Leiber and Stoller* at Arena Stage—Page 3

*the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*), White Plains Performing Arts Center (*Hair*) and Papermill Theatre (*On The Town*, *Smokey Joe's Café* and *Altar Boyz*). Austin is a proud graduate of James Madison University where he received a Bachelor of Music, Vocal Music Education Concentration. Upcoming: Signature Theatre (*Sunday in the Park with George*).

**Ashley Blair Fitzgerald**, from Ellicott City, MD, makes her Arena Stage debut. She recently performed at the Kennedy Center with the first national tour of *Come Fly Away*, in which she starred as Kate and was nominated for a 2013 Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Lead Actress. Past performances in New York include *The Radio City Christmas Spectacular* and *Company* with the New York Philharmonic. Favorite national tour credits include *Dirty Dancing: The Classic Story on Stage*, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* and *Fosse* (Trumpet Soloist, *I Gotcha*). International credits include *Come Fly Away*, *Trip of Love* and *Fosse*. Television credits include *SMASH* (NBC Pilot) and special guest appearances on the Tony Awards. Over the past year Ashley has been reconstructing Bob Fosse's work for archival purposes with his daughter, Nicole Fosse, and The Verdon Fosse Estate.

**Levi Kreis** makes his Arena Stage debut with this production. Levi received the 2010 Tony Award for Best Featured Actor in a Musical for originating the role of Jerry Lee Lewis in *Million Dollar Quartet*. He is an Outer Critics Circle Award winner, a Drama League Award winner and a Jeff Award nominee. Levi starred as George in the musical *One Red Flower*, written and directed by Emmy Award winner Paris Barclay, played Roger in *Rent* (Benny Company) and starred in several films, most notably as Fentin Meeks in Bill Paxton's directorial debut *Frailty*. As a singer/songwriter, Levi's music has been featured on major TV shows including *The Vampire Diaries*, *Sons of Anarchy* and *The Apprentice*.

**Michael J. Mainwaring** makes his Arena Stage debut. Michael's Washington area credits include *Dreamgirls* at Signature Theatre (2012 Helen Hayes Award for Best Musical); *In Performance at the Kennedy Center*, *Shenandoah* and *Ford's Presidential Gala: An American Celebration* at Ford's Theatre; *Oliver!* at Olney Theatre Center; *Thunder Knocking at the Door* with Creative Cauldron; and the world premiere of *Three Little Birds* at Adventure Theatre.

**Nova Y. Payton** makes her Arena Stage debut. D.C.-area credits include *Crossing*, *The Lost Songs of Broadway: 1970s*, *Defying Gravity: Making of a SuperNOVA*, *Dreamgirls* (Effie White, 2013 Helen Hayes Award nomination), *Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, *Xanadu* and *Hairspray* (Motormouth Maybelle, 2012 Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Supporting Actress) at Signature Theatre; *Trav'lin* at 1st Stage; *Ain't Misbehavin'* at Washington Savoyards; *Black Nativity* at H Street Playhouse; *Happy Elf* at Adventure Theatre; and the Spring Gala Concert *My Fair Lady* at the Kennedy Center. Regional credits include *Dreamgirls* (Effie White, 2006 Barrymore Nominee for Best Lead Actress in a Musical) at Prince Music Theatre and *Smokey Joe's Café* at Flat Rock Playhouse. National tour credits include *3 Mo' Divas* (PBS Special, DVD and CD) and *Smokey Joe's Café* (BJ).

**Stephawn P. Stephens** returns to Arena Stage following his debut in *Crowns* (Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Resident Musical) as u/s for *Man*. Recent performances include Signature Theater's *Dreamgirls* and Olney Theater Center's *Little Shop of Horrors* as the voice of Audrey II. Stephawn made his D.C. directorial debut with Theater Alliance's holiday hit *Black Nativity*. Other regional credits include Round House Theatre's *Once On This Island*; The Kennedy Center's *Barrio Grrrl!*, *Carmen Jones* and Debbie Allen's *Soul Possessed* featuring Arturo Sandoval and Patty La Belle; and African Continuum Theater Company's *Amen Corner* and *Spunk*. He received formal training at Karamu House and Cleveland State University.

**Kara-Tameika Watkins** returns to Arena Stage after last appearing in *Crowns*. Additional credits include *Dreamgirls* (Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Resident Musical), *Hairspray* (Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Resident Musical and Ensemble) and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* at Signature Theatre; *Camelot* and *Peter Pan* at Olney Theatre Center; *Little Shop of Horrors* and *Children of Eden*

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## Full company announced for *Smokey Joe's Café—The Songs of Leiber and Stoller* at Arena Stage—Page 4

at Ford's Theatre; *Caroline or Change* at Studio Theatre; *Once on This Island* at Roundhouse Theatre; *Hairspray* at PCLO and North Shore Music Theatre; and the Nevada productions of *Hairspray* and *Smokey Joe's Café*.

Led by Fox on piano, the band for *Smokey Joe's Café* features **James Davis, Jr.** (keyboard, Assistant Music Director), **George Hummel** (tenor and baritone saxophone), **Steven Walker** (guitar), **Dan Hall** (bass), **Danny Villanueva** (percussion) and **Carroll Dashiell III** (drums).

The creative team for *Smokey Joe's Café* includes Set & Projection Designer **Caite Hevner Kemp**, Costume Designer **Ilona Somogyi**, Lighting Designer **Dan Ozminkowski**, Sound Designer **Carl Casella**, Wig Designer **Anne Nesmith**, Assistant Choreographer **Jessica Hartman**, Stage Manager **Kurt Hall**, Assistant Stage Manager **Christi B. Spann** and Musical Contractor **Rita Eggert**.

Full company bios and images available upon request, please e-mail [press@arenastage.org](mailto:press@arenastage.org).

*Smokey Joe's Café* is generously sponsored by Andrew Ammerman, the family of H. Max and Josephine F. Ammerman and GEICO.

### **Smokey Joe's Café Special Events**

#### **Smokey Joe's Café Kickoff Event: Meet the Cast—Wednesday, April 2**

**Bar opens at 8:30 p.m.**

Get a sneak-peek at Arena Stage's upcoming rock, rhythm and blues revue *Smokey Joe's Café* with performances from cast members E. Faye Butler, Levi Kreis and surprise guests, who will perform songs from the show at Arena Stage's open mic piano bar in the Grand Lobby. Tickets for the event are \$6, which includes one free drink, or free to patrons attending *Camp David* or *Loveland* that evening. To purchase tickets visit [arenastage.org/shows-tickets/the-season/productions/smokey-joes-cafe/events/](http://arenastage.org/shows-tickets/the-season/productions/smokey-joes-cafe/events/).

#### **Mother's Day Brunch & Matinee—Sunday, May 11**

**11:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.**

This Mother's Day treat your mom to brunch *and* a matinee of *Smokey Joe's Café*! Start off with a delicious spread of brunch favorites including golden brown Frittatas, savory Smoked Salmon and petite French Pastries; then, round out the afternoon by enjoying music from the golden age of rock 'n' roll at *Smokey Joe's Café*. The brunch is \$42 per person and includes unlimited buffet and two beverages. To make a brunch reservation visit [arenastage.org/shows-tickets/the-season/productions/smokey-joes-cafe/events/](http://arenastage.org/shows-tickets/the-season/productions/smokey-joes-cafe/events/).

#### **Piano Bar—Wednesday, May 21 following the 7:30 p.m. performance & Friday, June 6 following the 8:00 p.m. performance**

Arena Stage continues the popular piano bar tradition this season by hosting free events during the run of *Smokey Joe's Café*. Grab a drink and gather 'round the piano for show tunes hosted by Joshua Morgan with special guests in the Grand Lobby. No ticket necessary.

### **Post-Show Conversations**

Connect with our shows beyond the performance at a post-show conversation with artists and staff. May 7, 13 & 14 following the noon matinee; May 15 following the 8:00 p.m. performance and May 20 following the 7:30 p.m. performance.

### **Production Information**

#### ***Smokey Joe's Café—The Songs of Leiber and Stoller***

Words and music by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller

Directed by Randy Johnson

## Full company announced for *Smokey Joe's Café—The Songs of Leiber and Stoller* at Arena Stage—Page 5

Choreographed by Parker Esse  
April 25-June 8, 2014 in the Fichandler Stage

**ABOUT:** Let Broadway director Randy Johnson (*A Night with Janis Joplin*) transport you to the golden age of rock, rhythm and blues with the hits of Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame legends Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller. Featuring Tony Award winner Levi Kreis (*Million Dollar Quartet*), E. Faye Butler and Nova Y. Payton, *Smokey Joe's Café* is packed with memorable tunes including "Hound Dog," "Jailhouse Rock" and "Stand By Me." It's no wonder this electrifying show garnered seven Tony nominations and became the longest-running musical revue in Broadway history!

### **CAST:**

Jay Adriel  
E. Faye Butler  
Austin Colby  
Ashley Blair Fitzgerald  
Levi Kreis  
Michael J. Mainwaring  
Nova Y. Payton  
Stephawn P. Stephens  
Kara-Tameika Watkins

### **BAND:**

Rick Fox  
James Davis, Jr.  
George Hummel  
Steven Walker  
Dan Hall  
Danny Villanueva  
Carroll Dashiell III

### **CREATIVE TEAM:**

Director: Randy Johnson  
Choreographer: Parker Esse  
Assistant Choreographer: Jessica Hartman  
Musical Director: Rick Fox  
Assistant Music Director: James Davis, Jr.  
Set & Projection Designer: Caite Hevner Kemp  
Costume Designer: Ilona Somogyi  
Lighting Designer: Dan Ozminkowski  
Sound Designer: Carl Casella  
Wig Designer: Anne Nesmith  
Stage Manager: Kurt Hall  
Assistant Stage Manager: Christi B. Spann  
Musical Contractor: Rita Eggert

### **Plan Your Visit**

**TICKETS:** Tickets for *Smokey Joe's Café* are \$50-\$99, subject to change and based on availability, plus applicable fees. For information on savings programs such as student discounts, Southwest Nights, Pay-Your-Age tickets, Family Fun Packs and Hero's Discounts, visit [arenastage.org/shows-tickets/single-tickets/savings-programs/](http://arenastage.org/shows-tickets/single-tickets/savings-programs/). Tickets may be purchased online at [arenastage.org](http://arenastage.org), by phone at 202-488-3300 or at the Sales Office at 1101 Sixth St., SW, D.C.

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## Full company announced for *Smokey Joe's Café—The Songs of Leiber and Stoller* at Arena Stage—Page 6

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

### PERFORMANCE DATES:

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 Wednesday, 5/7; Tuesday, 5/13 & Wednesday, 5/14  
Full calendar: [tickets.arenastage.org/single/psDetail.aspx?psn=16331](https://tickets.arenastage.org/single/psDetail.aspx?psn=16331)

**Open-captioned performance:** 5/21 at 7:30 p.m. & 5/22 at 8:00 p.m.

**Audio-described performance:** 5/24 at 2:00 p.m.

**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 \$21 (\$23 if purchased that day). To pre-order and see the menu, call 202-488-3300 or visit [arenastage.org/plan-your-visit/the-cafe/](https://arenastage.org/plan-your-visit/the-cafe/). The Catwalk Café opens two hours before the show, and reservations are recommended.

To **pre-order drinks** from the Catwalk Café for up to 50% savings (\$6 house wine and beer), visit [tickets.arenastage.org/cart/precart.aspx?p=1007](https://tickets.arenastage.org/cart/precart.aspx?p=1007).

**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, under the leadership of Artistic Director Molly Smith and Executive Producer Edgar Dobie, is a national center dedicated to American voices and artists. Arena Stage produces plays of all that is passionate, 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. Arena Stage impacts the lives of more than 20,000 students annually through its work in community engagement. Now in its seventh decade, Arena Stage serves a diverse annual audience of more than 300,000. [arenastage.org](https://arenastage.org).*

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