

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

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ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH U.S. EMBASSY IN LIMA, PERU
TO SEND VOICES OF NOW DEVISED THEATER PROGRAM
TO CONDUCT WORKSHOPS AND CREATE AN ORIGINAL AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PLAY
WITH LOCAL COMPANY ARENA Y ESTERAS IN JUNE 2014

*** Trip marks Arena Stage's fourth international Voices of Now partnership
following 2012 & 2014 trips to six cities in India and 2013 trip to Zagreb, Croatia ***

(Washington, D.C.) **Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater** has been selected by the **United States Embassy in Lima, Peru** to send two staff members from the theater's community engagement department to Lima **June 15-22, 2014** to partner with [Arena y Esteras](#), a local organization comprised of artists, educators and leaders committed to using art as a tool to contribute to human development and social transformation. Arena Stage Director of Education and Artistic Director of Voices of Now **Ashley Forman** and Community Programs Coordinator **Fareed Mostoufi** will work with participants ages 14 to 70 from Arena y Esteras to create a new play based on the lives of the participants. The week will culminate with a public performance of the original production that will kick off a citywide festival and multi-tiered arts initiative in Lima to bring arts into the city. Forman and Mostoufi will also conduct workshops for teachers, drama students, representatives from local theater companies, young adults with developmental disabilities and elderly community members using the Voices of Now devised theater model.

Now in its 11th year, Voices of Now equips participants to write and perform autobiographical, movement-based theater pieces that pose challenging questions relevant to their communities and investigate those questions by recounting personal stories. One of the primary goals of the Voices of Now program is to create positive change within the artists' community by giving voice to—and sparking dialogue about—issues of relevancy for the artists involved.

"The power of Voices of Now is unmistakable," remarks Arena Stage Artistic Director **Molly Smith**. "Hot on the heels of our annual Voices of Now Festival featuring ensembles from the Greater Washington area, we are proud to share this program internationally once again, with new artists in Peru. More than bringing art to the public, this is about showing people how to find their inner voices and celebrating their personal artistry."

"It is always a humbling and inspiring experience to be invited to make a play with a new community," adds **Forman**. "We are excited to collaborate with and learn from our Peruvian ensemble. Like Arena y Esteras, Voices of now is committed to creating positive change through art and performance. We hope to facilitate an artistic dialogue while celebrating the stories and expertise of the artists we are working with—all with the goal of creating theater that is dynamic and relevant."

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The upcoming Peru trip marks Arena Stage's fourth partnership abroad, following previous partnerships with the U.S. Department of State in October 2012, which sent four Arena Stage artists to Kolkata, Patna, New Delhi and Hyderabad, India to create original plays inspired by the cities in which they took place. In December 2013, four staff members traveled to Zagreb, Croatia to work with young adults with physical disabilities and, most recently in January 2014, all nine staff members from the theater's community engagement department traveled to Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai and Hyderabad, India.

For more information on Voices of Now's previous trips to India and Croatia, including photos and video, visit arenastage.org/education/voices-of-now/international/index.shtml.

Locally in the D.C. area, Arena Stage recently hosted the annual Voices of Now Festival in May 2014, which featured performances by nine ensembles and more than 100 artists ages 11-24, who came together for four days to perform and discuss their original, autobiographical one-act plays. Participating organizations included Burke School, Child and Family Services Agency's Office of Youth Empowerment, Children's National Medical Center: Teens Against the Spread of AIDS (TASA), D.C. Creative Writing Workshop, Glasgow Middle School, Jefferson Middle School, Key Middle School, Robinson Secondary School, St. Augustine's Episcopal Church, The Wendt Center for Loss and Healing, Promising Futures and The Next Step Public Charter School.

Voices of Now is made possible by support from AT&T, Friends of Southwest DC, GEICO, Prince Charitable Trusts, the Mark & Carol Hyman Fund and Toni A. Ritzenberg. Additional support for the program is provided by the U.S. Department of State.

Additional support of Arena Stage's Community Engagement efforts is provided by the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation; Max & Victoria Dreyfus Foundation, Inc.; Robert & Natalie Mandel Family Fund; Corina Higginson Trust; Alice Shaver Foundation; Hattie M. Strong Foundation; Toni A. Ritzenberg; Friends of Southwest DC; the Anthony Lucas-Spindletop Foundation; Edington, Peel & Associates; Mars Foundation; Jean Schiro-Zavela and Vance Zavela; and the Youth Activities Task Force (YATF) of the Southwest Neighborhood Assembly, Inc. Without the extraordinary support of all our supporters, VON and our other Community Engagement program offerings would not be possible.

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.

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