

# ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES FULL COMPANY  
AND OVER 30 PROMINENT WASHINGTONIANS  
TO TAKE PART IN WORLD-PREMIERE THEATRICAL EVENT  
**OUR WAR**

A COLLECTION OF MONOLOGUES WRITTEN IN REACTION TO THE U.S. CIVIL WAR BY  
25 AWARD-WINNING AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHTS

OCTOBER 21 – NOVEMBER 9, 2014  
AT ARENA STAGE AT THE MEAD CENTER FOR AMERICAN THEATER

(Washington, D.C.) In a bold undertaking as part of the company's involvement with the multi-year, multi-city National Civil War Project, Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater has commissioned *Our War*, a dynamic new theatrical event and collection of short stories that explores—through diverse perspectives—the historical memory and present-day reverberations of the U.S. Civil War. Director **Anita Maynard-Losh** weaves the vignettes by **25 esteemed playwrights**—including winners of the Pulitzer Prize, Tony Award, Olivier Award and Helen Hayes Award—together through performances by an ensemble of local actors including **Kelly Renee Armstrong, Ricardo Frederick Evans, John Lescault, Tuyet Pham, Lynette Rathnam** and **Sara Waisanen**. Joining the ensemble throughout the run are over 30 notable leaders from the D.C. community, including **Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, MSNBC's Chris Matthews** and **Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-D.C.)**, among others listed below.

In regards to the inspiration for the project, Arena Stage Artistic Director **Molly Smith** shares, “Around the time of the development of The National Civil War Project I became aware of Kwame Kwei-Armah and CenterStage's *My America* project, which asked 50 renowned playwrights the simple question, ‘What is my America?’ As one of our partners of The National Civil War Project, I discussed with him my desire to take their brilliant idea and apply it specifically to the American Civil War and his encouragement and excitement helped drive forward this premiere event and collaboration with such distinguished playwrights, Washingtonians and artists. Together through *Our War* we explore the impact of a young country at war with itself.”

The playwrights represented in *Our War* include **Maria Agui Carter, Lydia Diamond, Amy Freed, Diane Glancy, Joy Harjo, Samuel D. Hunter, Naomi Iizuka, Aditi Kapil, Dan LeFranc, David Lindsay-Abaire, Ken Ludwig, Taylor Mac, Ken Narasaki, Lynn Nottage, Robert O'Hara, Heather Raffo, Charles Randolph-Wright, Tanya Saracho, Betty Shamieh, John Strand, Tazewell Thompson, William S. Yellow Robe, Jr., Karen Zacarias** as well as two students participating through Arena Stage's National Civil War Project partnership with George Washington University: **Zinhle Essamuah** and **Nicholas Ong**. To view playwright biographies, visit [arenastage.org/shows-tickets/the-season/productions/our-war/](http://arenastage.org/shows-tickets/the-season/productions/our-war/).

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“*Our War* gives us a chance to investigate the question of who controls our accepted version of a historical narrative,” shares **Maynard-Losh**. “Through this project—and its multitude of voices and expressed points of view that are not traditionally heard—we have an opportunity to see how the U.S. Civil War impacts our collective society still today.

***Our War* guest performers** include **Yvette Alexander** (Councilmember, D.C.); **Deborah Amos** (International Correspondent, NPR); **Tamara Christian** (COO, International Spy Museum); **The Rev. Canon Jan Naylor Cope** (Washington National Cathedral); **Dr. John J. DeGioia** (President, Georgetown University); **Anita Dunn** (Managing Director, SKDKnickerbocker); **Mark Ein** (Founder and CEO, Venturehouse Group, LLC); **Jack Evans** (Councilmember, D.C.); **Dr. Natwar Gandhi** (former Chief Financial Officer, D.C.); **Ruth Bader Ginsburg** (Associate Justice, Supreme Court of the United States); **Vincent Gray** (Mayor, D.C.); **David Grosso** (Councilmember, D.C.); **The Very Rev. Gary Hall** (Dean, Washington National Cathedral); **Kaya Henderson** (Chancellor, D.C. Public Schools); **The Rev. Dr. H. Beecher Hicks, Jr.** (Senior Servant, Metropolitan Baptist Church); **Hari Jones** (Assistant Director and Curator, African American Civil War Museum); **Dr. Cornelius M. Kerwin** (President, American University); **Dr. Steven Knapp** (President, George Washington University); **Chris Matthews** (*Hardball*, MSNBC); **Anita McBride** (Executive in Residence, School of Public Affairs, American University and former Chief of Staff to First Lady Laura Bush); **James P. Moran** (Congressman, D-VA); **Eleanor Holmes Norton** (Congresswoman, D-D.C.); **Vincent Orange** (Councilmember, D.C.); **Archbishop Alfred A. Owens, Jr.** (D. Min., Pastor, Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church); **Diane Rehm** (*The Diane Rehm Show*, WAMU); **Markham Rich** (Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy); **Andy Shallal** (entrepreneur and owner of Busboys and Poets); **Tom Sherwood** (reporter, NBC); **Rabbi Gil Steinlauf** (Senior Rabbi, Adas Israel Congregation); **Constantine Stavropoulos** (owner of Tryst, The Diner, Open City, The Coupe and Tryst at The Phillips); **Joan Wages** (President & CEO, National Women's History Museum); **Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley** (Senior Pastor, Alfred Street Baptist Church), **Judy Woodruff** (Co-Anchor and Managing Editor, PBS *NewsHour*) and **Matt Zeller** (Veteran, U.S. Army).

Due to the wealth of content provided by the 25 playwrights, two selections of 18 monologues have been created. These two selections are known as “Stars” and “Stripes.” For up-to-date information on the “Stars” and “Stripes” performance schedule and *Our War* guest artists, visit [arenastage.org/shows-tickets/the-season/productions/our-war/](http://arenastage.org/shows-tickets/the-season/productions/our-war/).

*Our War* is part of The National Civil War Project, a collaboration between four universities and five performing arts organizations to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the American Civil War. The National Civil War Project includes the commissioning of 12 original works for the stage as well as the creation of new arts-integrated academic programs. Locally, Arena Stage is in partnership with Liz Lerman and The George Washington University. The overarching goal of the project is to find ways to continually interweave performance and scholarship, crossing traditional boundaries by bringing together the perspectives and resources of the artistic and academic communities in a wide-ranging, humanities-based exploration of civil conflict. For more information visit [civilwarproject.org](http://civilwarproject.org).

**The creative team of *Our War* includes Dramaturg Jocelyn Clarke, Set Designer Robbie Hayes, Costume Designer T. Tyler Stumpf, Lighting Designer Catherine Girardi, Sound Designer Elisheba Itoop and Stage Manager Kurt Hall.**

### **The ensemble of *Our War*:**

**Kelly Renee Armstrong** makes her debut at Arena Stage. Other appearances include Monica in *The Elder Statesman* at Washington Stage Guild, Alma in *Yellowman* at Rep Stage and Ensemble in *Wit* at Bay Theatre Company. She has been nominated for numerous awards for her performance as Alma in *Yellowman*. She is a 2013 Individual Artist Award grantee for her solo performance work *Testify*. Kelly received her MFA in performance from Catholic University of America. She can be seen in Theater J's upcoming production of *The Call*.

## Full company announced for world-premiere theatrical event *Our War* at Arena Stage—Page 3

**Ricardo Frederick Evans** makes his Arena Stage debut with *Our War*. Other Washington area credits include Sterling in *Two Trains Running* at Round House Theatre, the Egungun in *In the Red and Brown Water* at Studio Theatre, Orsino in *Twelfth Night* with Taffety Punk, the titular character in Doorway Arts Ensemble's *Hercules in Russia* and multiple productions at Imagination Stage including *Disney's Mulan*, *Ferdinand the Bull*, *Rumpelstiltskin* and *Doctor Dolittle* (Helen Hayes nomination for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Resident Musical). Ricardo can be seen in the independent film *Of Dice and Men*, directed by Kelley Slagle, and the final film of John Putch's trilogy *Route 30, Three!*. TV credits include *House of Cards*.

**John Lescault** was last seen at Arena Stage in *The Music Man*. New York credits include *Le Deserteur* at Lincoln Center. John's D.C. credits include *Defiant Requiem*, *Sancho Panca*, *Le Deserteur* and *From the New World (as Dvorak)* at the Kennedy Center, *Brother Russia*, "Art," *Crave* and *Angels in America* at Signature Theatre; *From Prague* and *Yankee Tavern* at CATF; *A Christmas Carol* at Ford's Theatre; *The Lyons*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, *Our Town*, *Wintertime Shakespeare* and *Moses and Joe Papp* at Round House; *The School for Scandal*, *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, *Elizabeth the Queen* and *Macbeth* at Folger Theater; *Henry V*, *Richard II*, *Tamburlaine*, *Edward II*, *The Winter's Tale* and *Don Carlos* at Shakespeare Theatre; *The Disputation* and *Hannah and Martin* at Theatre J; and *Heaven* and *The Psychic Life of Savages* at Woolly Mammoth. International credits include Prague Spring Music Festival: *Defiant Requiem*. His film and TV credits include Joseph Graham's *Beautiful Something*, Spielberg's *Lincoln*, *The Day Lincoln Was Shot* and *Unsolved Mysteries*. John received a BFA from The Catholic University of America.

**Tuyet Thi Pham** returns to Arena Stage. She has been seen in over 25 local productions in the Baltimore-Washington, D.C. area that include roles at Centerstage, Everyman Theatre, Spooky Action Theatre, Constellation Theatre Company, Rep Stage, Roundhouse Theatre, Imagination Stage, Signature Theatre, The Kennedy Center for Performing Arts and Capital Fringe Festival. She has also worked with Perseverance Theatre in Alaska, The Nebraska Shakespeare Festival, The Brigit St. Brigit Theatre, The Shelterbelt Theater and was an Allen Lee Hughes Artistic Fellow and member of Arena Stage's Living Stage Theatre Company. She was last seen in Spooky Action Theatre's production of *Kwaidan*.

**Lynette Rathnam** makes her Arena Stage debut. Other Washington area appearances include The Mute in *The Fantasticks* at Rep Stage, various roles in *Slam Theatre 3.0* at the Atlas Intersections Festival, The Witch in *Glassheart* with Rorschach Theatre, Good Deeds in *The Summoning of Everyman* with Edge of the Universe Players and Cris in *The Wings of Ikarus Jackson* at The Kennedy Center. Lynette has performed in both the D.C. Source and Capital Fringe Festivals. She recently performed the role of Olivia in *Illyria* with the Virginia Shakespeare Festival and has appeared in several productions with the Maryland Shakespeare Festival including Olivia in *Twelfth Night*, Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Diana in *All's Well That Ends Well*.

**Sara Waisanen** makes her Arena Stage debut. Regionally she has worked at Dallas Theatre Center, California Shakespeare Theatre, Shakespeare Theatre Company and Perseverance Theatre, where she was a company member. Favorite roles include Ahab in *Moby Dick*; Catherine in *Proof*; Maria in *Up: The Man in the Flying Lawnchair*; and Yitzhak in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. Sara has an MFA in acting from Southern Methodist University.

### **Our War Special Events**

#### **Our War National Monologue Contest:**

In conjunction with *Our War*, Arena Stage held a national competition for character monologue submissions written about the American Civil War. Up to three winners will be announced to receive a performance of their monologue by members of the cast of *Our War* at a post-show public reading **November 6 following the 8:00 p.m. performance**. The selected writers will also receive a session with American Voices New Play Institute Dramaturg Jocelyn Clarke. For additional details visit: [arenastage.org/ourwar](http://arenastage.org/ourwar).

**Production Information**

***Our War***

Maria Agui Carter, Lydia Diamond, Amy Freed, Diane Glancy, Joy Harjo, Samuel D. Hunter, Naomi Iizuka, Aditi Kapil, Dan LeFranc, David Lindsay-Abaire, Ken Ludwig, Taylor Mac, Ken Narasaki, Lynn Nottage, Robert O'Hara, Heather Raffo, Charles Randolph-Wright, Tanya Saracho, Betty Shamieh, John Strand, Tazewell Thompson, William S. Yellow Robe, Jr., Karen Zacarías and two students from George Washington University: Zinhle Essamuah and Nicholas Ong

Directed by Anita Maynard-Losh

In the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle

October 21 – November 9, 2014

**ABOUT:** An esteemed collection of American playwrights, including winners of the Pulitzer Prize, Tony Award and Olivier Award, creates a dynamic new theatrical event reflecting on the repercussions of the U.S. Civil War. Through a rich tapestry of short monologues, a core ensemble of gifted actors, accompanied by notable Washingtonians such as Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Eleanor Holmes Norton and Chris Matthews, explore—through diverse perspectives—the historical memory and present-day reverberations of the U.S. Civil War. *Our War*, commissioned by Arena Stage for the National Civil War Project, uses the power of live theater to bring new understanding to the shades of Blue and Gray that define one of the most significant periods of American history.

**ENSEMBLE:**

Kelly Renee Armstrong

Ricardo Frederick Evans

John Lescault

Tuyet Pham

Lynette Rathnam

Sara Waisanen

**CREATIVE TEAM:**

Director: Anita Maynard-Losh

Dramaturg: Jocelyn Clarke

Set Designer: Robbie Hayes

Costume Designer: T. Tyler Stumpf

Lighting Designer: Catherine Girardi

Sound Designer: Elisheba Itoop

Stage Manager: Kurt Hall

**Plan Your Visit**

**TICKETS:** Tickets for *Our War* are \$40 to \$50, 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 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.**

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.

Full calendar: <http://tickets.arenastage.org/single/PSDetail.aspx?psn=18129>

## Full company announced for world-premiere theatrical event *Our War* at Arena Stage—Page 5

**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 \$22 (\$25 if purchased that day). To pre-order and see the menu, call 202-488-3300 or visit [arenastage.org/plan-your-visit/the-cafe/](http://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](http://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 thousands of 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](http://arenastage.org).*

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