

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 CELEBRATES 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ALLEN LEE HUGHES FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM MARCH 31-APRIL 1, 2016

*** Lineup of speakers for anniversary event includes the program's namesake, Tony Award-nominated lighting designer Allen Lee Hughes; Executive Director of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities Megan Beyer; and Tony Award-winning costume designer Susan Hilferty ***

(Washington, D.C.) More than 100 former fellows and interns will gather at Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater **Thursday, March 31 and Friday, April 1, 2016 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Allen Lee Hughes Fellowship Program.**

Named after renowned lighting designer and Tony Award nominee Allen Lee Hughes, who began his career at Arena Stage in 1969, the fellowship program was founded in 1990 with a specific focus to cultivate the next generation of theater professionals of color, thus increasing diversity within the field. The first of its kind, the program expanded in 2009 to include young theater professionals of all backgrounds. The Allen Lee Hughes Fellowship Program has trained close to 700 young theater professionals, the majority of whom have gone on to pursue careers in theater—79% work in the theater industry and of those not in theater, 71% are employed in the arts.

"In my first year at Arena, I made a solemn promise to Zelda that the Allen Lee Hughes Fellowship Program would always be part of Arena. I have never forgotten my promise," says Artistic Director **Molly Smith**. "Our work demands artists and audiences who are diverse in terms of ethnicity, socioeconomic background, age and gender, and this program is crucial for one of the most robust theaters in the country. I cannot wait to have our alumni under our roof to be given the recognition they so deserve."

At an Arena Stage staff event congratulating the class of fellows in 1991, Founding Artistic Director **Zelda Fichandler** shared, "We must have designers, directors, dramaturgs, playwrights, fundraisers, business managers, subscription managers, costumers, scene painters and actors from all cultures. We must have people of color represented throughout our own theater before we can truly be leaders in our field; it isn't enough to just talk and write about it—the reality must be concrete."

The two-day celebration will begin Thursday with a networking reception in the Molly Smith Study, followed by the invited dress rehearsal of the Tony Award-winning political thriller *All the Way*, which makes its D.C. debut at Arena Stage and stars stage veteran Jack Willis as President Lyndon Baines Johnson. In addition to Arena Stage alumni, young professionals involved in similar programs across the D.C. metro area have been invited to attend.

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The reunion will culminate Friday with a special program in the Kreeger Theater to recognize and celebrate the work of fellows over the past 25 years. Speakers at the event will include **Allen Lee Hughes**, associate arts professor at New York University Tisch School of the Arts; **Megan Beyer**, executive director of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities; and Tony Award-winning costume designer **Susan Hilferty**, chair of the department of design for stage and film at New York University Tisch School of the Arts.

The event will also include remarks from Smith, Executive Producer Edgar Dobie and Director of Community Engagement Anita Maynard-Losh. This will be followed by lunch in the Catwalk Café and optional tours of the Mead Center for American Theater.

Schedule of Events:

Thursday March 31, 2016

6:00pm – Networking reception in the Molly Smith Study

7:30pm – Invited dress rehearsal of *All the Way* in the Fichandler Stage

Friday, April 1, 2016

11:00am – Celebration in the Kreeger Theater

12:00pm – Lunch in the Catwalk Café

1:30pm – Optional building tours of the Mead Center for American Theater

Former fellows or interns interested in attending the event should contact **Tara Moses at 202-554-9066 ext. 5064** or tmoses@arenastage.org.

Including the Allen Lee Hughes Fellowship Program, Arena Stage has trained a total of approximately 1,100 young theater professionals since 1962.

The Allen Lee Hughes Fellowship Program offers personalized training and in-depth, hands-on experience with seasoned professionals in artistic and technical production, arts administration, arts education and community outreach. All programs are also supplemented with mentorship from a senior staff member, professional development workshops and monthly meetings with directors, designers and senior staff administrators who provide insight into the overall management of the theater.

Arena Stage currently offers 30-44 week season-long fellowships and 8-12 week summer internships. **For additional information on fellowships and internships at Arena Stage, please visit arenastage.org/education/education-programs/internships-fellowships.**

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 over 10,000 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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