

# ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For high-resolution production images, visit the online press room:  
[arenastage.org/news-press/press-room/press-kits-photos/productions/akeelah-and-the-bee](http://arenastage.org/news-press/press-room/press-kits-photos/productions/akeelah-and-the-bee)  
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ARENA STAGE PRESENTS CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY'S  
WORLD PREMIERE OF *AKEELAH AND THE BEE*  
ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE BY CHERYL L. WEST  
NOVEMBER 13-DECEMBER 27, 2015

\*\*\* Charles Randolph-Wright directs tale of 11-year-old spelling prodigy  
starring Johannah Easley and James A. Williams and based on the family film \*\*\*

(Washington, D.C.) Fresh off its world-premiere run in Minneapolis, where *Star Tribune* declared "*Akeelah and the Bee* triumphs," Children's Theatre Company's new production about an 11-year-old spelling prodigy comes to Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater. The show is adapted for the stage by veteran playwright Cheryl L. West (Arena's *Pullman Porter Blues*, *Jar the Floor*), who partners with celebrated director Charles Randolph-Wright (director of Broadway's *Motown* and an inaugural resident playwright with Arena Stage, where he premiered his play *Love in Afghanistan*). *Akeelah and the Bee* runs **November 13-December 27, 2015 in the Kreeger Theater.**

Based on Doug Atchison's 2006 inspirational family film, the heartwarming drama tells the story of Akeelah, a determined young girl who overcomes numerous challenges to compete at the Scripps National Spelling Bee. Leading the cast as Akeelah is **Johannah Easley**, who made a splash originating the role in Minneapolis, where her performance was hailed as "delightful and thoroughly engaging" (*City Pages*) and possessing "effortless naturalism and poetic economy" (*Star Tribune*). She stars opposite Broadway veteran **James A. Williams** (originated the role of Roosevelt Hicks in August Wilson's *Radio Golf*), who continues in his role as her exacting coach Dr. Larabee.

Also reprising their roles from Minneapolis are **Aimee K. Bryant** as Gail (Akeelah's mom), **Nathan Barlow** as Reggie (Akeelah's brother), **Zaria Graham** as Georgia (Akeelah's best friend) and **Greta Oglseby** as Batty Ruth (a neighbor), along with young actors **Leo James** as Javier/Chucky, **Sean Phinney** as Dylan and **Molly Yeselson** as Izzy/Snorting Girl/Air-Speller Girl. The company also includes **Darius Dotch** as JT/Judge/TV Announcer, **Ana Christine Evans** as Trish/Horse Girl/Mohawk Girl and **Shavunda Horsley** as Rhonda/Fay-Fay Foxy/Pronouncer. **Tony Nam** (Dylan's Dad/Pronouncer) and **Milton Craig Nealy** (Drunk Willie/Principal) join the company for the D.C. run.

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## ***Akeelah and the Bee* comes to Arena Stage – Page 2**

“How could I not be excited by this project?” asks Artistic Director **Molly Smith**. “When Charles Randolph-Wright told me he was working with Cheryl L. West on an adaptation of the beautiful film *Akeelah and the Bee*, I knew it was too good to pass up. Cheryl is one of Arena’s most produced playwrights, and it’s easy to see why. In Charles and Cheryl’s hands, *Akeelah*’s story will inspire a whole new audience.”

“I am thrilled to return home to Arena Stage with *Akeelah and the Bee*,” says **Randolph-Wright**. “I am from a family of educators, and to be able to tell this compelling and important story in a theater and city that I love is most important to me. To watch these young characters—black, Asian, Latino and white—come together in this journey gives me hope. At such a depressing time in our country where no one seems to be listening to each other, *Akeelah* steps up to the microphone and through spelling forces us to realize that we have far more in common than we have that is dissimilar. It gives me tremendous pride to direct such an essential story.”

“My children and I saw the *Akeelah and the Bee* movie almost a decade ago,” shares **West**. “Weeks later, my daughters were still repeating *Akeelah*’s spelling vocabulary, especially the word ‘prestidigitation.’ Personally, the supporting community was the most memorable aspect of the movie and one that is heightened in my stage adaptation. I am grateful that Arena Stage and its wonderful audiences will journey with the resurgent 11-year old *Akeelah* and her Chicago neighborhood of unsung heroes in the stage show so beautifully directed by Charles Randolph-Wright. And for 25+ years of support, thank you, Arena!”

The creative team for *Akeelah and the Bee* includes Scenic Designer **Alexander V. Nichols**, Costume Designer **Jessica Jahn**, Lighting Designer **Michael Gilliam**, Sound Designer **Sten Severson**, Composer **Victor Zupanc**, Dramaturg **Elissa Adams**, Assistant Costume Designer **Sarah Bahr**, Stage Manager **Chris Schweiger** and Assistant Stage Manager **Jenny Brass**.

**Cheryl L. West** (*Playwright*)’s plays include *Pullman Porter Blues*, which premiered at Seattle Repertory Theatre and Arena Stage and also played at Goodman Theatre. Her plays have been seen in England, on Broadway (*Play On!*), Off-Broadway and in numerous regional theaters around the country. She has written television and film projects for Disney, Paramount, MTV Films, Showtime, TNT, HBO and CBS and is the Webby-nominated writer for the original web series *Diary of a Single Mom*. Cheryl is the recipient of the 2013 American Alliance for Theatre & Education Distinguished Play Award, Helen Hayes/Charles McArthur Award for Outstanding New Play, Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, an international playwriting award for distinguished new plays, National Endowment Playwriting Award and Beverly Hills/Hollywood NAACP Best Playwright Award.

**Charles Randolph-Wright** (*Director*) is an inaugural resident playwright at Arena Stage where he premiered his plays *Love in Afghanistan*, *Blue* and *Cuttin’ Up* and directed *Sophisticated Ladies*, *Guys and Dolls* (both starring Maurice Hines), *Oak and Ivy*, *Anthems*, *Señor Discretion Himself* and *Ruined*. He directed *Motown the Musical* on Broadway, the national tour and in London (upcoming). Additional directing credits include the opera *Porgy and Bess*, *Love/Life* (starring Brian Stokes Mitchell), *Through the Night* and *They’re Playing Our Song* (in Portuguese in Brazil). Charles also co-wrote *Bea Arthur on Broadway: Just Between Friends*. He directed the award-winning film *Preaching to the Choir* and has written screenplays for HBO, Showtime, Disney and FOX. Television credits include directing *Lincoln Heights*, *South of Nowhere*, the “Freestyle” soccer campaign for Nike and Bebe Winans’ special *America America*. He produced and wrote the Showtime series *Linc’s*. [Randolph-Wright.com](http://Randolph-Wright.com)

### **Principal Cast Biographies (in alphabetical order)**

**Nathan Barlow** (*Reggie*) most recently performed in *Choir Boy* at Guthrie Theater. He has performed in over 13 productions at Children’s Theatre Company, beginning when he was eight years old, including *Cinderella*; *Bud, Not Buddy*; *Dr. Seuss’ How the Grinch Stole Christmas*; *The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963*; and *Hansel and Gretel*. He is two years out of the University of Minnesota/Guthrie Theater BFA Actor Training Program and has performed at various theaters in the Twin Cities including Theater Latté Da, Ten Thousand Things and Mixed Blood Theatre.

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### **Akeelah and the Bee comes to Arena Stage – Page 3**

**Aimee K. Bryant** (*Gail*)'s most recent theater credits include *The Gospel of Lovingkindness* (Pillsbury House Theatre), *The Nature Crown* (Theatre Forever), *The Color Purple* (Park Square Theatre) and *My Fair Lady* (Guthrie Theater). With Children's Theatre Company, her credits include *Seedfolks*; *Stamping, Shouting, Singing Home*; *Splash Hatch on the E Going Down*; *A Year with Frog and Toad*; and *Seussical*. Aimee is a 2015 McKnight Fellow at the Playwrights' Center. She was also named Best Actress of 2015 by *City Pages*.

**Darius Dotch** (*JT/Judge/TV Announcer*) was recently seen as Lank in *Detroit '67* at Penumbra Theatre. Additional credits include Harpo in *The Color Purple the Musical* and Flip in *Stick Fly* (Park Square Theatre); Marcus in *Colossal* (Mixed Blood Theatre); *A Civil War Christmas* and *The Lombardi* (History Theatre); *Marcus; or the Secret of Sweet* (Guthrie Theater); and *The Road Weeps*, *The Well Runs Dry* and *Broke-ology* (Pillsbury House Theatre).

**Johannah Easley** (*Akeelah*) is extremely honored to work with this extraordinary cast. She is a core dancer with Journey Productions, which has allowed her to perform at Minneapolis/St. Paul theaters including the Ritz Theater, Pillsbury House Theatre, Walker Art Center and Penumbra Theatre. Other theater credits include *The Buddy Holly Story* (History Theatre), *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is Enuf* (Mixed Blood Theatre), *Hairspray* (History Theatre) and *Henry's Freedom Box* and *Almost to Freedom* (SteppingStone Theatre). She would like to give shout outs to her mother, the entire *Akeelah and the Bee* creative team, her family and teachers/mentors for their support.

**Ana Christine Evans** (*Trish/Horse Girl/Mohawk Girl*) is thrilled to make her debut at Arena Stage in *Akeelah and the Bee*. She has performed in *Alice in Wonderland*, *Dr. Seuss' The Cat in the Hat* and *Madeline and the Gypsies* with Children's Theatre Company. She has also performed with Stages Theatre Company, History Theatre, Bloomington Theatre, Illusion Theater and her high school in Minneapolis. Some of her favorite roles include Alice (*Alice in Wonderland*), Coco (*Coco's Diary*) and Louise (*Sunday in the Park with George*). She thanks her family for their unconditional love and support.

**Zaria Graham** (*Georgia*)'s theater credits include *Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy* (Children's Theatre Company); *Into the Mirror*, *B is for Bully*, *B Literal Less*, *Nambi* and *The Courage of Nine* (Capri Theater); and *Broadway Bus Stop Production* (Intermedia Arts). She appeared on the Disney network and in *Star Search*. Zaria has performed gospel, pop, theater, musical theater, concert theater and recital repertoire with several Twin Cities artists, working with T. Mychael Rambo, Greta Oglesby, Dennis Spears, Peter C. Brosius and Chico Chavez.

**Shavunda Horsley** (*Rhonda/Fay-Fay Foxy/Pronouncer*) has performed at several Twin Cities theaters and arts organizations and will next be seen performing in *Six Characters in Search of an Author* at Park Square Theatre. Her training includes the University of Minnesota/Guthrie Theater BFA Actor Training Program and Globe Education (London), and her awards and honors include the 2015 Verve Grant for Spoken Word. Shavunda is the winner of the 2010 Farrago Fresher's Slam (London) and 2010 What it Do? Peace Fest and Hip-Hop Competition.

**Leo James** (*Javier/Chucky*) is proud and grateful to be making his Arena Stage and D.C.-area debut. Regional credits include *Urinetown* (Bobby Strong), *Brigadoon* (Charlie Dalrymple), Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap* (Mr. Paravicini), *The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (Chip Tolentino) and Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* (Chip). Television credits include national commercial work for Yoplait and Best Buy. He was the first place winner of the 2015 NATS National Singing Conference in Greensboro, NC and recipient of two 2015 Spotlight Awards for Outstanding Performance in a Leading Role (Bobby Strong) and Outstanding Performance in a Supporting Role (Charlie Dalrymple). LJ would like to acknowledge and thank the creative team, Trent and Mr. Randolph-Wright. He dedicates his performance to LP, AJ and JM. Instagram: @TheRealLeoJames.

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#### **Akeelah and the Bee comes to Arena Stage – Page 4**

**Tony Nam** (*Dylan's Dad/Pronouncer*) is pleased to be making his first appearance at Arena Stage. He previously performed in the D.C. area at Ford's Theatre (*Our Town*), the Kennedy Center's Theater for Young Audiences (*The Cricket in Times Square*, *American Scrapbook*, *Unleashed*, *Kite on the Wind*), Folger Theatre (*Much Ado About Nothing*, *Measure for Measure*), Shakespeare Theatre Company (*Othello*, *Pericles*), Woolly Mammoth (*Martha*, *Josie and the Chinese Elvis*) and Round House Theatre (*Treasure Island*). Regional theater credits include Theatre Works (*Pacific Overtures*, Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award), Seattle Children's Theatre (*The Red Badge of Courage*) and Island Stage Left (*Much Ado About Nothing*). He holds a BA from St. Mary's College of Maryland and an MFA from the University of Washington.

**Milton Craig Nealy** (*Drunk Willie/Principal*)'s Broadway credits include Pop Gordy in *Motown The Musical*, *Caroline or Change*, John in *Miss Saigon* (also London and Australian productions), Four-Eyed Moe in *Five Guys Named Moe*, *Ain't Misbehavin'* (revival cast), Agwe in *Once on This Island* and *Dreamgirls* (original and revival casts). National tour credits include Horse in *The Full Monty* (also Australian production), Marty in the 2010 tour of *Dreamgirls* and Judas in the 20th anniversary tour of *Jesus Christ Superstar* at The Muny. He returned to The Muny in 2012 for *Dreamgirls*, where he played the role of Jimmy Early with Jennifer Holiday. TV and film credits include *Person of Interest* and *The Blues Brothers*.

**Greta Oglesby** (*Batty Ruth*) made a big splash in the theater community when she played the lead in Tony Kushner's *Caroline or Change* at Guthrie Theater, for which she received an Ivey Award. Greta's resume includes five seasons at Oregon Shakespeare Festival; *Crowns*, *Burial at Thebes*, *Sunshine Boys* and *Appomattox* (Guthrie Theater); and *Gem of the Ocean* and *Amen Corner* (Goodman Theatre). Greta recently published a book entitled "Mama 'n Nem: Handprints on My Life" (Kirk House Publishers).

**Sean Phinney** (*Dylan*) has played parts in three pieces directed by the Saint Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists (SPCPA)—*New Play Festival* (Penumbra Theatre), *Boys from Syracuse* (Lehr Theater) and *Almost, Maine* (Pillsbury House Theatre). He has also been in *Junie B. Jones*, *Dog Sees God* and *Good 'N' Plenty* (Youth Performance Company) and *Bully* (SteppingStone Theatre). Sean participates in the TruArtSpeaks annual poetry slam competition and had a solo performance at The Garage for his music/spoken word.

**James A. Williams** (*Dr. Larabee*) originated the role of Roosevelt Hicks on Broadway in August Wilson's *Radio Golf*. He appeared Off-Broadway in Wilson's *The Piano Lesson* and *My Children! My Africa!*. A founding member of Penumbra Theatre, James has been a regular on Twin Cities stages for over three decades. He has also performed at Center Stage, Goodman Theatre, Huntington Theatre Company, the Kennedy Center, Mark Taper Forum, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Syracuse Stage and Yale Repertory Theatre. He was nominated for an NAACP Image Award in 2007, received an Ivey Award for Performance Excellence in 2008 for his portrayal of Troy Maxson in *Fences* and was also named 2008 Artist of the Year by Minneapolis' *Star Tribune*. He was a TCG New Generations Fellow and currently is a 2015 McKnight Theater Fellow at the Playwrights' Center.

**Molly Yeselson** (*Izzy/Snorting Girl/Air-Speller Girl*) is thrilled to be making her Arena Stage debut! She attended Camp Arena Stage and was also a member of the Voices of Now Mead Ensemble. Some of her favorite roles have included Betty Parris (*The Crucible*), Leopold T. Bosco (*Stefanie Hero*) and the Lord High Underling (*The Wiz*). She originated the role of Molly in *Sparta! The Musical* and was also featured in the documentary *This is Sparta*. She studies private voice with Marilyn Moore and oboe with Kenny Stilwell at the Levine School of Music. Special thanks to Laura Rosberg, Sandra Blakeslee, Sean-Maurice Lynch, Fareed Mostoufi and Ariel Warmflash. Love to Mom, Dad and Maddie. Her favorite word in both English and Latin is "ergo."

The understudy team for *Akeelah and the Bee* includes **Bru Ajueytsi** (for Reggie/JT/TV Announcer), **Karim Angulo** (for Javier/Chucky), **Taylor Chunn** (for Georgia/Rhonda/Fay-Fay Foxy), **Lauren Davis** (for Gail/Batty Ruth), **Bus Howard** (for Dr. Larabee/Drunk Willie/Principal), **Emma Sophie Moore** (for Trish/Horse Girl/Mohawk Girl), **Vivienne Rioux-Bailey** (for Izzy/Snorting Girl/Air-Speller Girl), **Michael Rosegrant** (for Dylan), **Rafael Untalan** (for Dylan's Dad/Pronouncer/Judge) and **Nicole Wildy** (for Akeelah).

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For understudy and creative team bios please visit [arenastage.org/shows-tickets/the-season/productions/akeelah-and-the-bee](http://arenastage.org/shows-tickets/the-season/productions/akeelah-and-the-bee).

### ***Akeelah and the Bee* Special Events**

#### **Book Drive *Martha's Table Feeds the Mind***

*Martha's Table Feeds the Mind* is a book drive and innovative collaboration between Arena Stage and Martha's Table to bring the love of language and joy of reading to District families facing economic challenges. Arena Stage seeks to collect at least 2,400 books to build home libraries for about 200 children served through Martha's Table's Healthy Start program and will have a book collection receptacle located inside the main entrance at Visitor Services at the Mead Center for American Theater (1101 Sixth St., SW, D.C.) for the entire season. The theater will accept donations and will also have a selection of early childhood through elementary school-aged books for sale at Visitor Services, in the event patrons would like to purchase one to donate onsite for \$5-\$13.

#### **Post-Show Conversations**

Connect with our shows beyond the performance at a post-show conversation with artists and staff—December 1, 2, 9 & 16 following the noon performance; December 3, 10 & 17 following the 11:00 a.m. performance; December 10 following the 8:00 p.m. performance; and December 15 following the 7:30 p.m. performance.

#### **Production Information**

##### ***Akeelah and the Bee***

**Adapted for the stage by Cheryl L. West**

**Based on the original screenplay by Doug Atchison**

**Directed by Charles Randolph-Wright**

**In the Kreeger Theater / November 13-December 27, 2015**

**ABOUT:** Based on the beloved film, *Akeelah and the Bee* tells the story of an independent 11-year-old from the Chicago projects whose razor-sharp mind keeps her one step ahead of the game in the neighborhood...but is it enough to get her to the top? Akeelah must turn to family, friends and a few unlikely mentors if she's going to survive the final round of the Scripps National Spelling Bee. Playwright Cheryl L. West (*Pullman Porter Blues*) and director Charles Randolph-Wright (*Ruined*) bring this spirited adaptation to life this holiday season.

#### **CAST:**

Reggie: Nathan Barlow

Gail: Aimee K. Bryant

J.T./DJ Rule/Judge/TV Announcer: Darius Dotch

Akeelah: Johannah Easley

Trish/Horse Girl/Mohawk Girl: Ana Christine Evans

Georgia: Zaria Graham

Ratchet Rhonda/Foxy Fay: Shavunda Horsley

Javier/Chucky: Leo James

Dylan's Dad/Pronouncer: Tony Nam

Drunk Willie/Principal: Milton Craig Nealy

Batty Ruth: Greta Oglesby

Dylan: Sean Phinney

Dr. Larabee: James A. Williams

Izzy/Snorthing Girl/Crying Girl: Molly Yeselson

#### **UNDERSTUDIES:**

For Reggie/J.T.: Bru Ajueyitsi

For Javier/Chucky: Karim Angulo

For Georgia/Ratchet Rhonda: Taylor Chunn

For Gail/Batty Ruth: Lauren Davis

For Trish/Horse Girl/Mohawk Girl: Emma Sophie Moore

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## ***Akeelah and the Bee* comes to Arena Stage – Page 6**

For Izzy/Snorthing Girl/Crying Girl: Vivienne Rioux-Bailey  
For Dylan: Michael Rosegrant  
For Dylan's Dad: Rafael Untalan  
For Akeelah: Nicole Wildy  
For Dr. Larabee/Drunk Willie/Principal: Casting to be announced

### **CREATIVE TEAM:**

Director: Charles Randolph-Wright  
Scenic Designer: Alexander V. Nichols  
Costume Designer: Jessica Jahn  
Lighting Designer: Michael Gilliam  
Sound Designer: Sten Severson  
Composer: Victor Zupanc  
Dramaturg: Elissa Adams  
Assistant Costume Designer: Sarah Bahr  
Stage Manager: Chris Schweiger  
Assistant Stage Manager: Jenny Brass

### **Plan Your Visit**

**TICKETS:** Tickets for *Akeelah and the Bee* are \$40-\$90, subject to change and based on availability, plus applicable fees. For information on savings programs such as pay-your-age tickets, student discounts, family fun packs, Southwest Nights 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.  
Weekday matinees at 11:00 a.m. on Thursday, 12/3; Thursday, 12/10; and Thursday, 12/17  
Weekday matinees at noon on Tuesday, 12/1; Wednesday, 12/2; Wednesday 12/9; and Wednesday, 12/16  
Full calendar: [tickets.arenastage.org/single/PSDetail.aspx?psn=20604](http://tickets.arenastage.org/single/PSDetail.aspx?psn=20604)

**Open-captioned performances:** 12/3 at 8:00 p.m. & 12/23 at 7:30 p.m.

**Audio-described performances:** 12/5 & 12/13 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 \$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-café/](http://arenastage.org/plan-your-visit/the-café/). 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).

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## **Akeelah and the Bee comes to Arena Stage – Page 7**

**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 \$19 or on the day of the performance for \$22 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.

**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 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](http://arenastage.org)*

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**Twitter:** @arenastage, mention *Akeelah and the Bee* with #Akeelah

**YouTube:** [youtube.com/arenastage1](https://youtube.com/arenastage1)

**Pinterest:** [pinterest.com/arenastage](https://pinterest.com/arenastage)

**Blog:** [blog.arenastage.org](https://blog.arenastage.org)