

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

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Contact: Greta Hays/Kirstin Franko
press@arenastage.org, 202-600-4056

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FULL COMPANY ANNOUNCED FOR
AYAD AKHTAR'S PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING DRAMA *DISGRACED*
UNDER DIRECTION OF TIMOTHY DOUGLAS

AT ARENA STAGE AT THE MEAD CENTER FOR AMERICAN THEATER
APRIL 22-MAY 29, 2016

*** Arena Stage favorite Nehal Joshi returns as part of an ensemble
featuring Joe Isenberg and the Arena Stage debuts of Felicia Curry, Ivy Vahanian and Samip Raval ***

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage announces casting for the final production of the 2015/16 season, Ayad Akhtar's Pulitzer Prize-winning drama *Disgraced*. Director **Timothy Douglas** (Arena's *King Hedley II*) tackles this emotionally-charged play by Akhtar, author of the novel "American Dervish" and currently the most produced playwright in the United States. Hailed as "emotionally shattering, a smart and provocative work of unusual daring that should be seen by anyone who cares about serious theater" by *Newsday*, *Disgraced* runs **April 22-May 29, 2016 in the Kreeger Theater**.

Disgraced introduces Amir, a Pakistani-American lawyer living the American dream—an Upper East Side apartment, Italian suits, a beautiful wife and the promise of becoming partner at the law firm. When a friendly dinner party conversation rockets out of control, the internal battle between culture and identity threatens to raze all that he's worked so hard to achieve.

Arena Stage favorite and D.C.-area native **Nehal Joshi**, who won audiences over for his performances in *Oklahoma!*, *The Music Man* and *Mother Courage and Her Children*, tackles the role of Amir. **Joe Isenberg** (Woolly Mammoth's *We Are Proud to Present...*, Arena's *A Time to Kill*) returns to Arena Stage as Isaac. Making their Arena Stage debuts are D.C. powerhouse performer **Felicia Curry**, seen in numerous productions across the region, as Jory; California-based actress **Ivy Vahanian** (Broadway's *Coram Boy*) as Emily; and **Samip Raval** as Abe, reprising a role he played at PlayMakers Repertory Company this past fall.

"Ayad Akhtar is a dream of a person—smart, kind, quick, humble and driven," says Artistic Director **Molly Smith**. "*Disgraced* tackles current issues around cultural identity head-on. It's an intelligent play that challenges the audience. No one will feel comfortable in this play, and ideally that is what spurs us to deeper understanding. Having Timothy Douglas as director ensures this will be a thought-provoking and superb production."

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“Ayad Akhtar has composed an exacting tale for our turbulent times,” shares Director **Timothy Douglas**. “His script demands that I bring forth the lyricism of a clarifying order from the chaos of cultural misunderstanding that is the woven fabric of this remarkable play, while being ever vigilant in spotlighting genuine insight into the complexity of perception in what it is to be Muslim and American. With Arena Stage favorite Nehal Joshi in the role of Amir and the formidable Ivy Vahanian as his fiercely committed and compelled wife Emily, along with a cast of some of D.C.’s finest talent, Arena’s *Disgraced* will propel the unbridled power of truth and the incendiary nature of misperception toward an explosive reckoning.”

Ayad Akhtar (*Playwright*) was born in New York City and raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He is a novelist and author of “American Dervish,” published in over 20 languages worldwide and named a 2012 Best Book of the Year by *Kirkus Reviews*, Toronto’s *Globe and Mail*, *Shelf Awareness* and *O, The Oprah Magazine*. His play *Disgraced* won the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, ran on Broadway at the Lyceum Theatre and is currently the most produced play in the country. In addition to *Disgraced*, his plays *The Who & The What* and *The Invisible Hand* received Off-Broadway runs and are currently being produced at theaters across the country. Ayad was listed as the most produced playwright for the 2015/16 season by *American Theatre*. As a screenwriter, he was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award for Best Screenplay for *The War Within*. He has been the recipient of fellowships from MacDowell, Djerassi, the Sundance Institute, Ucross and Yaddo, where he currently serves as a board director. He is also a board trustee at PEN/America.

Timothy Douglas (*Director*) previously directed *King Hedley II* at Arena Stage. D.C.-area credits include *Father Comes Home from the Wars* (Parts 1, 2 & 3), *Two Trains Running*, *The Trip to Bountiful*, *Permanent Collection* and *A Lesson Before Dying* (Round House Theatre); *Dontrell*, *Who Kissed the Sea* (2016 Helen Hayes Award nomination for Outstanding Director) and *Insurrection: Holding History* (Theater Alliance); *The Last Orbit of Billy Mars* (Woolly Mammoth); and *Much Ado About Nothing* (Folger Theatre). Additional credits include *The Lake Effect* (Silk Road Rising), Off-Broadway’s *Bronte: A Portrait of Charlotte* and the world premiere of August Wilson’s *Radio Golf* (Yale Repertory Theatre). Timothy is an associate artist at Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park and has directed more than 100 projects for American Conservatory Theater, Guthrie Theater, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Center Theatre Group, South Coast Repertory, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, PlayMakers Repertory Company, Berkshire Theatre Festival, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, New Zealand’s Downstage Theatre and Norway’s National Theatre. He has served on the faculties of the University of Southern California, University of North Carolina, Emerson College, ACT and New Zealand Drama School.

Cast Biographies (in alphabetical order)

Felicia Curry (*Jory*) makes her Arena Stage debut. Area credits include *OLIVÉRio*, *Chasing George Washington* and *Beehive* (Kennedy Center); *A Christmas Carol*, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* and *Civil War* (Ford’s Theatre); *This* (Round House Theatre); *Home* (Rep Stage); *Laugh and Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson* (Studio Theatre); *Les Misérables* (Signature Theatre); *Imagination Stage*; *Adventure Theatre MTC*; *MetroStage*; *Olney Theatre Center*; and *Toby’s Dinner Theatre*. Regional credits include *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* and *The Mountaintop* (Gulfshore Playhouse), *Sister Act* (Riverside Center) and *The Color Purple* (Virginia Repertory Theatre). New York credits include *We Three Lizas* (Joe’s Pub) and *The Brontes* (NYMF). Felicia has received four Helen Hayes Award nominations, most recently for playing Nancy in *Oliver!* (Adventure Theatre). She is a graduate of the University of Maryland, College Park.

Joe Isenberg (*Isaac*) returns to Arena Stage following his performance in *A Time to Kill*. Additional D.C. credits include *The Force of Destiny* and *Show Boat* (Washington National Opera); *Marie Antoinette* and *We Are Proud to Present...* (Woolly Mammoth); *Young Robin Hood* (Round House Theatre); *Suicide, Incorporated* (No Rules Theatre Company); *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* and *Crave* (Signature Theatre); and *Macbeth* (Folger Theatre). TV credits include Netflix’s *House of Cards* and PBS’s *Enemy of the Reich: The Noor Inayat Khan Story*. Joe’s choreography has been seen at numerous D.C. theaters, as well as at Florida Stage, Actors Theatre of Louisville and the Metropolitan Opera. He is the recipient of the 2013 Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Choreography and has received several award nominations.

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Nehal Joshi (*Amir*)’s Arena Stage credits include *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *The Music Man*, *Oklahoma!* and *Señor Discretion Himself*. D.C. credits include *Man of La Mancha* (Shakespeare Theatre Company), *Recent Tragic Events* (Woolly Mammoth), *Mister Roberts* (Kennedy Center) and *Venus* (Olney Theatre Center). Broadway credits include *Les Misérables* (original revival cast) and *The Threepenny Opera* (Roundabout Theatre Company). Off-Broadway credits include *Falling for Eve*, *Working* and *Who’s Your Baghdaddy?* Regional credits include *Les Misérables* and *Arsenic and Old Lace* (Dallas Theater Center), *Peter and the Starcatcher* (Actors Theatre of Louisville), *Working* (The Old Globe/Asolo Repertory Theatre) and Disney’s *The Jungle Book* (Goodman Theatre/Huntington Theatre Company). Film/TV credits include *The Wire*, *Blackout* and *Submissions Only*. Video game credits include “World of Warcraft: Cataclysm.” Nehal received a 2013 Drama Desk Award. Twitter: @nehalpjoshi.

Samip Raval (*Abe*) hails from Charlotte, North Carolina and makes his Arena Stage debut. Regional credits include Shakespeare Theatre Company, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, PlayMakers Repertory Company and Georgia Shakespeare Festival. Workshop/residency credits with the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center and Eugene O’Neill Theater Center. His short film *The Faucet*, which he wrote and directed, screened at the Oxford Film Festival and Toronto Short Film Festival. He has devised theater with artists in Kenya and India and works as a teaching artist with ASTEP in South Florida and New York. He is the recipient of the William R. Kenan Fellowship and attended the University of North Carolina School of the Arts.

Ivy Vahanian (*Emily*) is ecstatic to make her Arena Stage debut working with Timothy Douglas on this particular play. Many years ago, Ivy worked in D.C. with PJ Paparelli at Washington Stage Guild. Broadway and Off-Broadway highlights include *Coram Boy*, directed by Melly Still; Sundance Institute Theatre Lab in Residence at the Public Theater with Robert O’Hara; and *Toys in the Attic*, directed by Austin Pendleton. Regionally, Ivy has worked with Timothy twice before in *All My Sons* (Actors Theatre of Louisville) and *A Line in the Sand* (Washington Stage Company). She is now based in Santa Barbara, where she runs an award-winning theater company, The Producing Unit, with Peter Frisch. Ivy is also a proud mother to three amazing boys.

The creative team for *Disgraced* includes Set Designer **Tony Cisek**, Costume Designer **Toni-Leslie James**, Lighting Designer **Michael Gilliam**, Original Music & Sound Designer **Fitz Patton**, Fight Director **Cliff Williams III**, Stage Manager **Amber Dickerson** and Assistant Stage Manager **Kristen Mary Harris**.

For full company bios please visit arenastage.org/shows-tickets/the-season/productions/disgraced.

***Disgraced* is generously sponsored by Joan and David Maxwell.**

Special Events

American Dream/American Identity

Arena Stage continues a three-part conversation around identity and the American Dream, as featured in Lynn Nottage’s *Sweat*, Anthony Giardina’s *The City of Conversation* and Ayad Akhtar’s *Disgraced*. Explore how these three unique voices are wrestling with what it means to be American in the 21st century. In Akhtar’s Pulitzer Prize-winning drama, a festive dinner party turns fierce and forever alters relationships. How does the culture of identity politics influence the major issues of our day—religion, race, sex and gender, class—in today’s polarized environment? And how can we balance our self-image with the identity imposed on us by others, based on appearances or cultural stereotypes? Dates and times will be announced on Arena Stage’s website.

Post-Show Conversations

Connect with our shows beyond the performance at a post-show conversation with artists and staff—May 4, 11 and 17 at noon; May 5 at 8:00 p.m.; and May 24 at 7:30 p.m.

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Production Information

[Disgraced](#)

By Ayad Akhtar

Directed by Timothy Douglas

In the Kreeger Theater/ April 22-May 29, 2016

ABOUT: From Ayad Akhtar comes the “breathtaking, raw and blistering” (*AP*), Pulitzer Prize-winning play about the clash between modern culture and ancient faiths. The son of South Asian immigrants, Amir has worked hard to achieve the American Dream—complete with a successful career, beautiful wife and \$600 custom-tailored shirts. But has he removed himself too far from his roots? And when a friendly dinner party conversation rockets out of control, will the internal battle between his culture and his identity raze all that he’s worked so hard to achieve? Hailed as “terrific, turbulent, with fresh currents of dramatic electricity” (*New York Times*), this incendiary examination of one’s self and one’s beliefs will leave you breathless.

CAST:

Jory: Felicia Curry

Issac: Joe Isenberg

Amir: Nehal Joshi

Abe: Samip Raval

Emily: Ivy Vahanian

CREATIVE TEAM:

Director: Timothy Douglas

Set Designer: Tony Cisek

Costume Designer: Toni-Leslie James

Lighting Designer: Michael Gilliam

Original Music & Sound Designer: Fitz Patton

Fight Director: Cliff Williams III

Stage Manager: Amber Dickerson

Assistant Stage Manager: Kristen Mary Harris

Plan Your Visit

TICKETS: Tickets for *Disgraced* 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, Southwest Nights and hero’s discounts, visit arenastage.org/shows-tickets/single-tickets/savings-programs.

Tickets may be purchased online at 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 noon on Wednesday, 5/4; Wednesday, 5/11; and Tuesday, 5/17

Full calendar: tickets.arenastage.org/single/PSDetail.aspx?psn=20871

Open-captioned performances: 5/18 at 7:30 p.m. & 5/26 at 8:00 p.m.

Audio-described performances: 5/14 at 2:00 p.m. & 5/22 at 6:00 p.m.

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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/. 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.

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

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