

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

October 7, 2015

**ARENA STAGE TO HONOR CONGRESSMAN CHRIS VAN HOLLEN (D-MD)
AT OPENING NIGHT CELEBRATION FOR *OLIVER!*
NOVEMBER 12, 2015**

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater will present the American Voice Award to **Congressman Chris Van Hollen (D-MD)** on **Thursday, November 12, 2015** as part of the opening night celebration for the Tony Award-winning musical *Oliver!*. Beginning at 5:30 p.m., the evening will include a cocktail reception in the Bank of America Lower Lobby, seated dinner in the Molly Smith Study, the 8:00 p.m. opening night performance of *Oliver!* in the Fichandler Stage and post-show dessert reception in the Grand Lobby. The seated dinner will feature the presentation of the American Voice Award to Congressman Van Hollen.

The **American Voice Award** honors elected officials recognized for their extraordinary support of and advocacy for American arts and arts education. Past recipients include Congresswoman Marcia L. Fudge (D-Ohio), Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS), Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Representative Norman D. Dicks (D-WA), former Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts Dana Gioia, Representative Bob Matsui (D-CA), Senator Daniel Inouye (D-HI), Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), Representative Tom Davis (R-VA), Representative Jim Moran (D-VA) and Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA).

Artistic Director Molly Smith directs a gritty and relevant take on *Oliver!*, blending 19th-century Victorian London with 2015 London and infusing a modern edge to the classic musical about an innocent orphan thrown into the dark world of double-dealing thieves and conmen. The 25-member cast features Broadway veterans Jeff McCarthy (*Urinetown*) as Fagin, Kyle Coffman (*Newsies*) as Artful Dodger, Ian Lassiter (*War Horse*) as Bill Sykes and Paul Vogt (three seasons on *MADtv*) as Mr. Bumble, along with Eleasha Gamble (Arena Stage's *Oklahoma!*) as Nancy and nine-year-old Jake Heston Miller as Oliver. The production runs October 30, 2015-January 3, 2016.

For media inquiries, please e-mail press@arenastage.org.

Oliver! is generously sponsored by AT&T and GEICO. Additional support is provided by Karen and Edward Burka and the Harry and Fay Burka Foundation, Sylvia Kay Greenberg and Charlotte and Hubert (Hank) Schlosberg.

In addition to the *Oliver!* production sponsors, the opening night celebration is generously sponsored by CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield and Clark Construction.

For table purchase (tables begin at \$5,000 for a half-table), please contact Maria Corso at 202-600-4025 or email mcorso@arenastage.org. Table sponsorships benefit Arena Stage's artistic and educational programs.

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Arena Stage to honor Congressman Chris Van Hollen at *Oliver!* opening – Page 2

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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