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# 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 OUTSTANDING DIRECTOR AND ARTIST SEEMA SUEKO TO BECOME THEATER'S DEPUTY ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater Artistic Director Molly Smith and Executive Producer Edgar Dobie announce accomplished leader, director and artist **Seema Sueko** as the theater's new Deputy Artistic Director. Sueko joins Arena Stage from The Pasadena Playhouse, where she served as Associate Artistic Director since January 2014.

"We are lucky indeed to have Seema join us at Arena Stage," shares **Smith**. "Seema first came to Arena through the Leadership (U) program as part of the Theatre Communications Group in 2013, and it was a superb experience. She is driven about artists and communities, and is a wonderful artist and strategic leader. She made a major impact on the staff and community, making a point to meet everyone and participate in the life of Arena and D.C. Seema is a real leader in the American Theater, and I'm thrilled to have her work side by side with me on the artistic life of Arena Stage."

As deputy artistic director, Sueko reports directly to Smith and is responsible leading the efforts of Arena Stage's Artistic Development department, which includes the American Voices New Play Institute, dramaturgy, casting, consensus organizing and audience enrichment activities, as well as implementing of the artistic vision of the theater by assisting in the development of strategy and programming focuses on advancing the theater's position as a center for American theater. She is fulfilling a new position created following the departure of Robert Barry Fleming to Cleveland Playhouse.

"Throughout my career I have focused on two overarching goals: artistic excellence that creates space for all communities to engage with our art form and pioneering new methodologies and models of theater to build thriving organizations," comments **Sueko**. "So it is especially exciting to have the opportunity to work closely with the visionary, and trailblazing, Molly Smith and join the pre-eminent team at Arena Stage. I come ready to find ways to contribute to this outstanding organization's track record of advancing American artists and our field."

Prior to her role at Pasadena Playhouse, Sueko was the co-founder and executive artistic director of Mo`olelo Performing Arts Company in San Diego. Seema pioneered the consensus organizing for theater methodology, created the green theater choices toolkit, which has been used by theaters and universities on five continents, and is currently engaged in research on the neuroscience of theater. Her directing and acting credits include The Pasadena Playhouse, People's Light, The Old Globe, San Diego Repertory Theatre, Yale Repertory Theatre, The 5th Avenue Theatre, Native Voices, Mo`olelo, among others. Sueko makes her Arena Stage directing debut with Lydia Diamond's *Smart People* in April 2017.

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## Page 2—Seema Sueko named Deputy Artistic Director at Arena Stage

As a playwright, she received commissions from Mixed Blood Theatre Company and Center Stage. Her work has been recognized by the California State Assembly, NAACP San Diego Branch, San Diego Theater Critics Circle, Chicago Jeff Awards, and *American Theatre* magazine named her one of 25 artists from across the country “...who have demonstrated something special in their approach to the art and craft of theatremaking that convinced us they have not only vision and foresight about the field they've chosen, but the tenacity and commitment it will take to realize their aspirations over time. Our artistic future, we figure, belongs to people like these.” In 2013 Seema received the inaugural Theatre Communications Group/Andrew Mellon Foundation Leadership U[niversity] grant which brought her to Arena Stage as a Visiting Artistic Associate. She is honored to return.

***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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