

# ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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February 27, 2018

## ARENA STAGE AT THE MEAD CENTER FOR AMERICAN THEATER ANNOUNCES COMPANY'S 69TH SEASON

**\*\*\* 2018/19 season features four world premieres and a politically-charged, music-infused line-up from diverse playwrights including Paula Vogel, Ayad Akhtar, Kenneth Lin and Tazewell Thompson\*\*\***

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage Artistic Director Molly Smith and Executive Director Edgar Dobie announce the 2018/19 season lineup for the company's 69th season. The season reflects Arena Stage's commitment to championing diverse voices and producing work that is politically and socially relevant.

"This season is an intoxicating mix of power, politics and pleasure," shares **Smith**. "The time period ranges from the 1790s to the present day, covering the span of the American experience. In sum, yes, it is a dynamic series about HISTORY. In this volatile time, our season takes a deep dive into America's past and present and sees how the lessons of the past drive us forward to revelations about the future."

In July, the season kicks off with the previously announced world-premiere musical comedy **Dave**, by three-time Tony Award winner **Thomas Meehan** (*Annie*, *Hairspray*, *The Producers*), Tony Award nominee **Nell Benjamin** (*Mean Girls*, *Legally Blonde*) and Pulitzer Prize and two-time Tony Award winner **Tom Kitt** (*Next to Normal*, *If/Then*). Tina Landau directs this White House comedy, based on the Oscar-nominated film. The season's other powerhouse musical is **Cole Porter's Anything Goes** with a classic score of jazz hits from the high seas. Directed by Molly Smith and featuring choreography by **Parker Esse** and music direction by **Paul Sportelli**, this beloved musical features the hit songs "Anything Goes" and "I Get a Kick Out of You." Then, inspired by the courageous story of an all African-American a capella ensemble is **Jubilee**, a world-premiere musical written and directed by **Tazewell Thompson**.

Works from Broadway's latest voices are featured in the season. **Paula Vogel's** Tony Award-winning drama filled with music and dance, **Indecent** (directed by **Eric Rosen**), is inspired by the true events surrounding the divisive 1923 Broadway debut of Sholem Asch's Yiddish drama *God of Vengeance*. In addition, from the mind of *Disgraced* playwright **Ayad Akhtar** comes **Junk**, a hard-hitting Wall Street drama about junk bonds and the darker side of the American Dream (directed by **Jackie Maxwell**).

The season also features Arena Stage's sixth Power Play in the ambitious initiative to commission and develop 25 new plays and musicals over 10 years, focused on stories of politics and power from 1776 through present day: **Aaron Posner's** world-premiere drama **JQA** about the presidency of John Quincy Adams and America's relationship with its government. The second political drama in the line-up is the world-premiere of **Kenneth Lin's Kleptocracy**, which explores the power of corruption through Russian Oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky and the rise of Vladimir Putin.

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A classic American drama takes center stage in **Ruth Goetz and Augustus Goetz's *The Heiress***, about crushed desires and unrequited love, directed by Arena Stage Deputy Artistic Director **Seema Sueko**. The lineup also includes the D.C.-area debut of ***Turn Me Loose***, a powerful, political and highly-acclaimed play by **Gretchen Law** about comedian-activist Dick Gregory.

### **Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater 2018/19 Schedule\***

#### ***Dave***

**Based on the Warner Bros. motion picture written by Gary Ross**

**By special arrangement with Warner Bros. Theatre Ventures, Doshudo Productions and Larger Than Life**

**Book by Thomas Meehan and Nell Benjamin, Music by Tom Kitt and Lyrics by Nell Benjamin**

**Directed by Tina Landau**

**In the Kreeger Theater | July 13 – August 19, 2018**

From a Tony and Pulitzer Prize award-winning creative team comes the world-premiere musical comedy *Dave*, adapted from the Oscar-nominated film. *Dave* tells the story of high school teacher (and presidential lookalike) Dave Kovic, who is hired by the Secret Service as a stand-in for the Commander-in-Chief. When the President falls ill under less than “presidential” circumstances, Dave is thrust into the Oval Office to avoid a national scandal and must find a way to gain the trust and love of the American people...and the First Lady.

#### ***Turn Me Loose***

**In association with John Legend, Get Lifted Film Company, Mike Jackson, The Will and Jada Smith Family Foundation, Beth Hubbard, The Private Theatre, Eric Falkenstein, SimonSays Entertainment, Jamie Cesa and Jana Babatunde-Bey**

**By Gretchen Law**

**In the Kreeger Theater | September 6 – October 14, 2018**

This intimate and no-holds-barred drama chronicles Dick Gregory’s rise as the first Black comedian to expose audiences to racial comedy. His comedy spared no one including politicians, celebrities and the white supremacists who were part of his regular audience. In confronting bigotry head-on with biting humor and charm, Gregory turned his activism into an art form, risking his own safety at each performance. “Scorchingly funny and brilliant” (*New York Times*), *Turn Me Loose* is an exuberant and raw tribute to Gregory’s life as a civil rights activist, comic genius and unapologetic provocateur.

#### ***Anything Goes***

**Music and Lyrics by Cole Porter**

**Original book by Guy Bolton & P.G. Wodehouse and Howard Lindsay & Russel Crouse**

**New book by Timothy Crouse & John Weidman**

**Directed by Molly Smith**

**Choreographed by Parker Esse**

**Music Direction by Paul Sportelli**

**In the Fichandler Stage | November 2 – December 23, 2018**

The SS American has set sail from NY to London. Aboard, the lovelorn Billy has stowed away on a mission to stop the marriage of his mystery muse, countess Hope Harcourt, to the millionaire Lord Evelyn Oakleigh. Now, it is up to Billy, with the help of showgirls, sailors, and public enemy #13, to find, woo and win back his true love. Unlikely alliances arise as mischief and mayhem ensue in this madcap musical by beloved composer and Tony Award winner Cole Porter. It’s the perfect night out at the theater — contagiously fun and pure “musical comedy joy!” (*New York Times*)

***Indecent***

**By Paula Vogel**

**Directed by Eric Rosen**

**Co-production with Baltimore Center Stage and Kansas City Repertory**

**In the Kreeger Theater | November 23 – December 30, 2018**

In 1923, the Broadway debut of Sholem Asch's Yiddish drama *God of Vengeance* set the stage for an explosive moment in theatrical history. The evocative work of Jewish culture was praised and criticized for its taboo themes of censorship, immigration and anti-Semitism. Inspired by these true events and the controversy, Pulitzer Prize winner Paula Vogel tells the behind-the-scenes story of the courageous artists who risked their careers and lives to perform a work deemed "indecent." "Brimming with good faith" (*New York Times*), this Tony Award-winning intimate and enchanting play filled with music and dance is a testament to the transformative power of art that is timelier than ever before.

***Kleptocracy***

**By special arrangement with Robert Ahrens**

**By Kenneth Lin**

**In the Kreeger Theater | January 18 – February 24, 2019**

It is one of the most pivotal moments in history — the Soviet Union has collapsed. In the ensuing rampage of hyper-capitalism, the Oligarchs, a new class of robber barons, plunge Russia into a terrifying dark age of chaos and corruption. When the richest and most ruthless Oligarch attempts to reform and open Russian markets to the world, he's confronted by a young Vladimir Putin who is charting his own path to power. This world-premiere drama by Kenneth Lin (*House of Cards*) turns the spotlight on U.S. — Russia relations when crude oil is the language of diplomacy and events that dominate today's headlines are first set in motion.

***The Heiress***

**By Ruth Goetz and Augustus Goetz**

**Adapted from the 1880 Henry James novel *Washington Square***

**Directed by Seema Sueko**

**In the Fichandler Stage | February 8 – March 10, 2019**

Finding one's voice is never easy. Socially awkward and plain, Catherine Sloper has struggled her entire life under the disapproving and resentful gaze of her father. It is the unexpected visit from a suitor full of sincerity and instantaneous devotion that awakens Catherine's long abandoned hopes of true love and the opportunity for a fresh start. A devastating betrayal forces the scorned Catherine to learn how to roar, realize her truth and take control of her destiny.

***JQA***

**Written and directed by Aaron Posner**

**In the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle | March 1 – April 14, 2019**

Complicated, passionate and difficult, John Quincy Adams was a brilliant diplomat, ineffectual one-term president and congressman known for his eloquence, arrogance and integrity. This unique, highly-theatrical play by award-winning playwright Aaron Posner (*Stupid F\*\*king Bird*) imagines key confrontations between JQA and some of America's most dynamic figures: George Washington, Andrew Jackson, Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, John Adams (his own father) and more. At once provocative, haunting and hilarious, this Power Play challenges the way we think of our country, our government and ourselves.

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### ***Junk***

**By Ayad Akhtar**

**Directed by Jackie Maxwell**

**In the Fichandler Stage | April 5 – May 5, 2019**

As the brilliant and calculating Robert Merkin prepares a hostile takeover of a family-owned manufacturing company, he is not concerned about crossing the line to get what he wants in the name of “saving America.” Inspired by the volatile and cut-throat financial world and the junk bond giants of the 1980s, “this epic piece of work” (*Chicago Tribune*) is an enticing look at the money makers, their hubris and those who tried to hold them accountable. Pulitzer Prize winner Ayad Akhtar’s (*Disgraced*) latest work asks if redemption is truly possible or if there is always a new scheme waiting in the wings.

### ***Jubilee***

**Written and directed by Tazewell Thompson**

**In the Kreeger Theater | April 26 – June 2, 2019**

The world-renowned Fisk Jubilee Singers shattered racial barriers in the U.S. and abroad, entertaining kings and queens. For centuries, the bold a capella African American ensemble born on the campus of Fisk University has blended their rich voices together sharing a heritage of suffering, strength and endurance. “A known showman” with a “gift for stirring theatricality” (*Washington Post*), playwright and director Tazewell Thompson brings an innovative and heart-stirring score to life in this world premiere. With uplifting spirituals and hymns including “Wade in the Water,” “Ain’t That Good News,” “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” and “Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen,” this a capella musical with more than three dozen songs is sure to ignite audiences.

*\*Plays, artists and dates are subject to change.*

**Subscription packages are now on sale and may be purchased by calling the Arena Stage Sales Office at 202-488-3300 or by visiting [arenastage.org](http://arenastage.org).**

***Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater***, under the leadership of Artistic Director Molly Smith and Executive Director 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 and 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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