

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Lauren Alexander
press@arenastage.org, 202-600-4055

February 1, 2018

ARENA STAGE TO HONOR SENATOR LISA MURKOWSKI (R-AK) AT OPENING NIGHT CELEBRATION FOR *THE GREAT SOCIETY* THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2018

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater will present the American Voice Award to **Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)** on **Thursday, February 8, 2018** as part of the opening night celebration for Robert Schenkkan's political drama *The Great Society*. Beginning at 6:00 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 *The Great Society* 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 Senator Lisa Murkowski.

The **American Voice Award** honors elected officials recognized for their extraordinary support of and advocacy for American arts and arts education. Senator Murkowski has pledged her support for the arts by leading efforts for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, which support afterschool, out-of-school and expanded learning time in schools, and she supported an increase in the 2017 funding level for the National Endowment for the Arts. Senator Murkowski also supports ongoing Healing Arts Partnership work to provide access to proven creative arts therapies, as part of the health and recovery of veterans, U.S. servicemembers and their families.

"The story of *The Great Society* showcases President Johnson's fight to provide support to the disadvantaged and elderly, to cement civil rights of all Americans, to protect our nations' greatest asset in the environment through national parks and to ensure that the arts will always have a prominent place," shares Artistic Director **Molly Smith**. "Senator Murkowski has shown that she believes in the "great society" through her support of the National Endowment for the Arts, Healing Arts Partnership and afterschool programs. It is an honor to present her with the American Voice Award, representing leaders who listen to all Americans."

Past recipients of the Award include Senators Thad Cochran (R-MS), Daniel Inouye (D-HI), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Chris Van Hollen (D-MD); Representatives Tom Davis (R-VA), Norman D. Dicks (D-WA), Bob Matsui (D-CA) and Jim Moran (D-VA); Congresswoman Marcia L. Fudge (D-Ohio); former Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts Dana Gioia; Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC); and Congressmen G.K. Butterfield (D-NC).

Director Kyle Donnelly returns to Arena Stage to helm *The Great Society*, a political thriller which chronicles President Lyndon Baines Johnson's second term as he seeks to maintain his relationship with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and complete a raft of impossibly ambitious social policy projects. The cast features Jack Willis as President Lyndon Baines Johnson and Bowman Wright as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The production runs February 2-March 11, 2018.

—continued—

Page 2— Senator Lisa Murkowski to be honored at *The Great Society* opening night

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

The Great Society is generously sponsored by Altria. Additional support is provided by Decker Anstrom and Sherry Hiemstra and the David Bruce Smith Foundation.

In addition to *The Great Society* production sponsors, the Opening Night Celebration is generously sponsored by BP America and Arent Fox, LLP.

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.

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

###

