

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

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ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES CASTING FOR WORLD-PREMIERE MUSICAL
SNOW CHILD
UNDER THE DIRECTION OF ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MOLLY SMITH

*** Matt Bogart, Christiane Noll, Fina Strazza and Natalie Toro
among cast in the world-premiere Power Plays musical based on the novel by Eowyn Ivey ***

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater announces the full cast and creative team for the world-premiere musical *Snow Child*, based on Eowyn Ivey's Pulitzer Prize-nominated novel. Infused with a score that combines Alaskan string band-traditions with contemporary musical theater, *Snow Child* follows a couple rebuilding their lives in the Alaskan wilderness when they meet a magical and mysterious snow child who transforms them. Concluding her 20th anniversary season at Arena Stage, Artistic Director Molly Smith directs this world-premiere musical, featuring a book by John Strand, music by Bob Banghart and Georgia Stitt and lyrics by Stitt. *Snow Child* is a co-production with Perseverance Theatre and runs April 13-May 20, 2018 in the Kreeger Theater, and May 25-27, 2018 in Anchorage, and June 9-10, 2018 in Juneau.

The cast includes Matt Bogart (Arena's *Camelot*, Broadway's *Jersey Boys*) as Jack, Christiane Noll (Broadway's *Ragtime*) as Mabel, Fina Strazza (Broadway's *Matilda the Musical*) as the snow child Faina and Natalie Toro (Broadway's *A Tale of Two Cities*) as Esther. D.C.-based actors Alex Alferov (Arena's *Fiddler on the Roof*) and Dan Manning (Broadway's *Ragtime*) will play Garrett and George, respectively. Rounding out the company are ensemble members Dorothy James (59E59's *Made in China*), and D.C.-based David Landstrom (Signature's *Jesus Christ Superstar*) and Calvin McCullough (Olney Theatre Center's *Carmen*).

Snow Child is the fifth commission, and first musical, to debut as part of Arena Stage's Power Plays, an ambitious initiative commissioning and developing 25 new plays and musicals from 25 writers over the course of 10 years. With Power Plays, Arena Stage focuses Washington, D.C.'s unique theatrical voice on politics, ideas of America and power, amplifying the theater's role as a national center dedicated to American voices and artists, located in the heart of the nation's capital. The massive undertaking features one story per decade, beginning with 1776 through present day, and builds on the tremendous success of previous Arena Stage commissions and Power Plays—Lawrence Wright's *Camp David*, John Strand's *The Originalist*, Jacqueline E. Lawton's *Intelligence* and Mary Kathryn Nagle's *Sovereignty*.

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For additional details on Power Plays visit arenastage.org/american-voices/power-plays/.

Smith spent more than 25 years in Alaska, including nearly two decades at Perseverance Theatre in Juneau, which she founded and ran for 19 years. *Snow Child* taps into her passion for shedding light on the history and character of Alaska.

“The unimaginable expanse of Alaska was my home for almost half my life, and our cabin in Southeast Alaska remains a retreat for me from the heady politics of Washington, D.C.,” shares **Smith**. “When I first read the novel, I was struck by Eowyn Ivey’s ability to capture the wildness of Alaska; something I know our audiences will be eager to experience. This is a classic fairytale with a deeply human story—perfect for the stage. Bringing to life this world, from the Alaskan forests to the snow to the enchanted nature of the child, with remarkable collaborators like John, Georgia and Bob, and with a superb company of actors and designers is a particular thrill for me. A Power Play, *Snow Child* tackles the politics of Alaska at the turn of the century and the relationship of human beings to the environment.”

“Molly sent me Eowyn Ivey’s novel back in the fall of 2014, and before I even finished reading it I wrote her to say ‘Yes, count me in. I love this book,’” says **Stitt**. “The story was so evocative, so theatrical, and the humanity of the main character, Mabel, was palpable. I’ve been most excited to write such a complex female character, to explore the relationships between what we own and what we only inhabit, and to write American theater music that lives fully and dramatically on the five most traditional bluegrass instruments (fiddle, guitar, mandolin, banjo and upright bass).”

“The snow child is the magic and mystery at the heart of our story,” recounts **Strand**. “Like the land she embodies, she transforms everyone around her. To Mabel and Jack, the struggling couple newly arrived in 1920s Alaska as homesteaders, the child is part desire, part redemption, or possibly madness—but surely, she is a reflection of the glorious and unforgiving wilderness that surrounds them all. It has been a privilege and a joy to work with the richly drawn characters from Eowyn Ivey’s novel.”

“The journey for me, as part of the creative team bringing this story to the stage, has been outstanding,” explains **Banghart**. “Molly’s vision of telling an Alaskan story with theater that leans on the musical traditions of both has created an engaging new sound. The music is a northern hybrid, what I call back-porch Broadway – think Mabel Carter meets Leonard Bernstein at Jack London’s house.”

John Strand (Book)’s Arena Stage commissions include *Snow Child*, *The Originalist*, *The Miser*, *Lovers and Executioners* (MacArthur Award) and *Tom Walker*. Recent works include the book and lyrics for *Hat! A Vaudeville* (South Coast Repertory); *Lincolnesque* (Old Globe); and *Lorenzaccio* (Shakespeare Theatre Company), and the book for the musical *The Highest Yellow* (Signature Theatre). Additional plays are *The Diaries* (Signature Theatre, MacArthur nomination); *Otabenga* (Signature Theatre, MacArthur nomination); *Three Nights in Tehran* (Signature Theatre); and *The Cockburn Rituals* (Woolly Mammoth). Strand spent 10 years in Paris, where he worked as a journalist and drama critic, and directed NYU’s Experimental Theater Wing in Paris. His novel *Commieland* was published by Kiwai Media, Paris in 2013. He is currently at work on a new play about President Teddy Roosevelt for Arena Stage and on the film adaptation of *The Originalist*.

Bob Banghart (Composer) has been performing throughout Alaska, Canada and the Pacific Northwest since the mid-70s. He co-founded the Alaska Folk Festival and Juneau Jazz and Classics, which are annual weeklong festivals in their 43rd and 30th years, respectively. He began composition work with the 1991 Perseverance Theatre production *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, directed by Molly Smith, and has since scored over a dozen theater productions, an opera and numerous independent TV shows and films. Recent works include *The Little Prince* directed by Katie Jensen, *Metamorphoses* directed by Dave Hunsaker and the opera *Hansel and Gretel* directed by Henning Hegland. Bob lives in Juneau, Alaska with his wife Laura Lucas and dog Jasmine.

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Georgia Stitt (*Composer/Lyricist*) is currently writing the musicals *Blue Ridge Sky*, *Juliette et Romeo* and a large-form choral oratorio. Other shows include *The Danger Year*, *Big Red Sun* (Arlen Award), *Samantha Spade: Ace Detective* (National Youth Theater Award), *Mosaic* and *The Water*. Albums include *This Ordinary Thursday*, *Alphabet City Cycle* (featuring Kate Baldwin) and *My Lifelong Love*. Her choral piece *with hope and virtue* (using text from President Obama's 2009 inauguration speech) was featured on NPR and her orchestral piece, *Waiting for Wings*, co-written with husband Jason Robert Brown, was recorded by the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra. Other credits include music director for 2016's *Sweet Charity* (Off-Broadway), *The Last Five Years* (film) and *The Sound Of Music Live!* (NBC). She is on the Board of Directors for The Lilly Awards Foundation. www.georgiastitt.com

Molly Smith (*Director*) has served as Artistic Director since 1998. Her more than 30 directing credits at Arena Stage include *Sovereignty*, *The Originalist*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Camp David*, *Carousel*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *Oklahoma!*, *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, *My Fair Lady*, *The Great White Hope*, *The Music Man*, *Legacy of Light*, *The Women of Brewster Place*, *Cabaret*, *South Pacific*, *All My Sons* and *How I Learned to Drive*. Her directorial work has also been seen at Canada's Shaw Festival, Pasadena Playhouse, The Old Globe, Asolo Repertory, Berkeley Repertory, Trinity Repertory, Toronto's Tarragon Theatre, Montreal's Centaur Theatre and Perseverance Theater in Juneau, Alaska, which she founded and ran from 1979-1998. Molly has been a leader in new play development for over 30 years. She is a great believer in first, second and third productions of new work and has championed projects including *Dear Evan Hansen*; *Next to Normal*; *Passion Play*, a cycle; and *How I Learned to Drive*. She has worked alongside playwrights Sarah Ruhl, Paula Vogel, Wendy Wasserstein, Lawrence Wright, Karen Zacarias, John Murrell, Eric Coble, Charles Randolph-Wright and many others. She led the re-invention of Arena Stage, focusing on the architecture and creation of the Mead Center for American Theater and positioning Arena Stage as a national center for American artists. During her time with the company, Arena Stage has workshopped more than 100 productions, produced 39 world premieres, staged numerous second and third productions and been an important part of nurturing nine projects that went on to have a life on Broadway. In 2014, Molly made her Broadway debut directing *The Velocity of Autumn*, following its critically acclaimed run at Arena Stage. She was awarded honorary doctorates from American University and Towson University. This summer, she will direct *The Originalist* Off-Broadway at 59E59 Theaters.

Cast Biographies (in alphabetical order)

Alex Alferov (*Garrett*) returns to Arena Stage after appearing as the Fiddler in *Fiddler on the Roof*. D.C.-area credits include *Everything Is Illuminated* (Theater J, East Coast premiere); *Secret Garden* (Shakespeare Theatre Company); *110 in the Shade* (Ford's Theatre); *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *Complete Works of Shakespeare [abridged]* (Olney Theatre Center); *Cerulean Time Capsule* (Kennedy Center Theatre for Young Audiences); *Avenue Q* (Constellation Theatre Company); *Lyle the Crocodile* (Imagination Stage); and others. Regional credits include *Secret Garden* (TUTS Houston). TV credits include *Difficult People* (with Victor Garber), *Bride Killa* and *I Was Possessed*. Alex received a B.M. from Catholic University. www.alexalferov.com. Instagram: @alfalferov.

Matt Bogart (*Jack*) is pleased to be back at Arena Stage with Molly Smith and company, having previously performed Val in *Orpheus Descending*, Lancelot in *Camelot* (Helen Hayes nomination) and Joe in *Damn Yankees*. Also in D.C., *Side Show* and *110 in the Shade* (Signature Theatre) and Paul in *Company* (Kennedy Center's Sondheim Celebration). On Broadway, Matt starred in *Jersey Boys*, *Aida*, *Miss Saigon*, *The Civil War* and *Smokey Joe's Café* (also filmed for TV/film). National tour credits include *Camelot* and Off-Broadway credits include *Himself and Nora*. He has performed across the U.S. in venues including Lincoln Center, Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall. TV credits include Robert Goulet in *Vinyl*, JFK in *Smash* and *Law & Order: SVU*. B.F.A. from Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. Recordings on iTunes and www.MattBogart.com. Love to his wife, Jessica, and boys.

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Dorothy James (*Ensemble/Fox*) is thrilled to be making her Arena Stage debut! A Brooklyn-based puppeteer, Dorothy has performed Off-Broadway in the *New York Times* Critics' Pick *Made In China* (Wakka Wakka, 59E59) and at Radio City Music Hall in *The NY Spectacular Starring the Radio City Rockettes* (dir. Mia Michaels). She has also appeared around New York in Kate Brehm's interactive installation *The Poofs*. Specializing in devised puppet theater, Dorothy has developed work at St. Ann's Warehouse, The Eugene O'Neill Theater Center and FigurTeateret in Norway. She is currently devising her new project, *teacups*, as part of the Object Movement Festival in New York this Spring. www.dorothy-james.com

David Landstrom (*Ensemble/Plow Horse/Swan*) is honored to be making his Arena Stage debut with *Snow Child*. He was last seen at Signature Theatre, rocking out with *Jesus Christ Superstar* in all his bearded glory. Some of his favorite roles include Sparky in *Forever Plaid* and a Bad Idea Bear in *Avenue Q* (Olney Theatre Center). Other favorites are Nate in *Big Nate* (Adventure Theatre tour) and LeFou in *Beauty and the Beast* (Imagination Stage). He is the proud recipient of the 2017 Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Musical for his portrayal of Gabe in *Next to Normal* at Keegan Theatre. He wants to thank his family because he loves them. Remember: don't joke on the ice, it might just crack up.

Dan Manning (*George*) is thrilled to make his Arena Stage debut. D.C.-area productions include *I'll Get You Back Again* and *Camille* (Round House); *Silver Belles*, *Road Show*, *The Fix*, *Beaches* and *Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* (Signature Theatre); *Ragtime* and *Golden Age* (Kennedy Center); *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (Studio Theatre); *1776* and *Big River* (Ford's Theatre); *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Maryland Stage Company); and *A Lie of the Mind* and *A Shayna Maidel* (Rep Stage). Dan appeared on Broadway in the 2009 revival of *Ragtime*, Off-Broadway in the original cast of *Smoke on the Mountain* and regionally at Center Stage, Court Theatre and Sacramento Music Theatre in California. Film credits include *Gods and Generals*, *State of Play*, *Renaissance Man* and *Pretty Molly* and TV credits include *Veep*, *House of Cards*, *The Wire*, *West Wing* and *X-Files*.

Calvin McCullough (*Ensemble/Plow Horse*) makes his Arena Stage debut. D.C.-area credits include *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Signature Theatre); *Godspell* and *Carmen* (Olney Theatre Center); *A Christmas Carol* (Ford's Theatre); *Shrek the Musical* and *In the Heights* (Toby's Dinner); *Miss Nelson is Missing*, *The Snowy Day*, *BIG* and *Mirandy* and *Brother Wind* (Adventure Theatre); *A Raisin in the Sun* (Everyman Theatre); and *Peter and the Wolf*, *Looking for Roberto Clemente*, *When She Had Wings* and *The Freshest Snow Whyte* (Imagination Stage).

Christiane Noll (*Mabel*) make her Arena Stage debut. She won a Helen Hayes Award, and received Tony Award and Drama Desk nominations for the Kennedy Center's revival of *Ragtime* on Broadway. She starred on Broadway in *Chaplin* (Drama Desk nomination), *...Nothin But the Blues* and *Jekyll & Hyde* and Off-Broadway in *Elf* (Madison Square Garden), *1776* and *New Moon* (Encores!) and *Closer than Ever*. D.C. appearances include *Kid Victory*, *Ace* and *Witches of Eastwick* (Signature Theatre), as well as National Opera (with Plácido Domingo) and multiple concerts with National Symphony. She has toured in *Urinetown*, *Mambo Kings*, *Grease*, *Miss Saigon* and *City of Angels* and won awards for *Next to Normal* and *Follies*. Film/TV credits include *Madam Secretary*, *Law & Order SVU*, *The Good Fight*, *Sound of Music Live* and *King & I*. She has five solo CDs. www.christianenoll.com

Fina Strazza (*Faina*) makes her Arena Stage debut. A native New Yorker, Fina made her Broadway debut as the youngest to perform the title role in *Matilda the Musical*. She was chosen by Mariah Carey to star in Hallmark Channel's *A Christmas Melody*, where she performed the hit *Oh Santa*. Off-Broadway/theater/workshop credits include *Animal* (Atlantic); *A Loss of Roses* (St Clements Theater); *Diana* (Powerhouse Theater); *Anastasia*; *Summer and Smoke* (Classic Stage); *Alice Bliss* (Playwrights Horizon). TV credits include *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*; *The Thing About Babies* (Nickelodeon); *Thanksgiving Day Parade*; *Mariah's Merriest Christmas*. Film credits include *A Little Game*, *Early Learnings*, *Fractured* and major roles in feature films, *Callahan*, *Tribe* and *Shadow Girl*, scheduled for 2018 release. To John Mara Jr, Rachel Altman and Ellen Gilbert at Paradigm, and her increasingly flexible and supportive family, Fina is preternaturally "GRATEFUL!"

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Natalie Toro (*Esther*) makes her Arena Stage debut. On Broadway, Natalie originated the role of Madame Defarge in *A Tale of Two Cities*, Sally in *A Christmas Carol* and was the first American to play Eponine in *Les Misérables*. National tour credits include Eva Peron in the 20th Anniversary Tour of *Evita*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *CATS* and *In the Heights*. Off- Broadway credits include *The Yellow Brick Road*, *Zombie Prom*, *The Audience* and *Magpie*. Regional credits include *Benny and Joon*, *The Bikinis*, *Zorba*, *Blood Brothers*, *Frances of Guernica*, *Everything's Ducky*, *Fame* and *The Fix*. TV credits include *Law and Order*, *SVU*, *Elementary*, *Person of Interest*, *Black Box* and *PBS*. She has performed as a soloist with symphony orchestras and at Carnegie Hall, National Concert Hall (Dublin) and major cruise lines. Solo CD's, *Natalie Toro* and *Just in Time for Christmas*. www.natalietoro.com

The creative team for *Snow Child* includes Music Supervisor/Orchestrations **Lynne Shankel**, Music Director **William Yanesh**, Associate Music Director **Jose C. Simbulan**, Puppet Director **Eric Wright**, Set Designer **Todd Rosenthal**, Costume Designer **Joseph P. Salasovich**, Lighting Designer **Kimberly Purtell**, Sound Designer **Roc Lee**, Projection Designer **Shawn Duan**, Puppet Designer **Emily DeCola**, Dramaturg **Jocelyn Clarke**, Text Director **Anita Maynard-Losh**, Casting by **Victor Vazquez** and **Geoff Josselson, C.S.A.**, Stage Manager **Susan R. White** and Assistant Stage Manager **Trevor A. Riley**.

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

Snow Child is generously sponsored by Andrew R. Ammerman and the National Endowment for the Arts' Art Works, and is the recipient of an Edgerton Foundation New Play Award.

The Perseverance Theatre production is sponsored by the Rasmuson Foundation.

Post-Show Conversations

Connect with our shows beyond the performance at a post-show conversation with artists and staff— May 2, May 8 and May 9 following the noon performance; May 8 following the 7:30 p.m. performance; and May 3 following the 8:00 p.m. performance.

Production Information

Snow Child

Based on the novel by Eowyn Ivey

Book by John Strand

Music by Bob Banghart and Georgia Stitt

Lyrics by Georgia Stitt

Directed by Molly Smith

Music Supervision and Orchestrations by Lynne Shankel

Co-Production with Perseverance Theatre

In the Kreeger Theater | April 13-May 20, 2018

ABOUT: Eowyn Ivey's debut novel *The Snow Child*, a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, is reborn as a magical new musical featuring a score that combines Alaskan string-band traditions and contemporary musical theater. The 1920 Alaskan wilderness is a brutal place to try to save a marriage. Reeling from the loss of an unborn child, Mabel and Jack struggle to rebuild their lives even as the fissures between them continue to widen. But everything changes suddenly when they are visited by a wild, mysterious girl who embodies the dark woods that surround their cabin. In this beautiful and violent land, things are rarely as they appear, and what the snow child teaches them will ultimately transform them all.

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CAST:

Garrett: Alex Alferov
Jack: Matt Bogart
Ensemble/Fox: Dorothy James
Ensemble/Plow Horse/Swan: David Landstrom
George: Dan Manning
Ensemble/Plow Horse: Calvin McCullough
Mabel: Christiane Noll
Faina: Fina Strazza
Esther: Natalie Toro

CREATIVE TEAM:

Book: John Strand
Music: Bob Banghart and Georgia Stitt
Lyrics: Georgia Stitt
Director: Molly Smith
Music Supervisor/Orchestrations: Lynne Shankel
Music Director: William Yanesh
Associate Music Director: Jose C. Simbulan
Puppet Director: Eric Wright
Set Designer: Todd Rosenthal
Costume Designer: Joseph P. Salasovich
Lighting Designer: Kimberly Purtell
Sound Designer: Roc Lee
Projection Designer: Shawn Duan
Puppet Designer: Emily DeCola
Dramaturg: Jocelyn Clarke
Text Director: Anita Maynard-Losh
Casting Director: Victor Vazquez and Geoff Josselson, C.S.A.
Stage Manager: Susan R. White
Assistant Stage Manager: Trevor A. Riley

Plan Your Visit

TICKETS: Tickets for *Snow Child* 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, 5/2; Wednesday, 5/9; & Tuesday, 5/8

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Full calendar: tickets.arenastage.org/single/PSDetail.aspx?psn=24816

Open-captioned performances: 5/9 & 5/15 at 7:30 p.m.; 5/13 at 2:00 p.m.

Audio-described performances: 5/5 at 2:00 p.m.

ARENA STAGE CAFÉ: Prix fixe meals are available at Arena Stage's casual dining café, Richard's Place, 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 café opens two hours before the show, and reservations are recommended. To **pre-order drinks** 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 \$14. 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 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

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