

# ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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November 15, 2017

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ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES CASTING FOR WORLD PREMIERE OF  
MARY KATHRYN NAGLE'S *SOVEREIGNTY*  
UNDER THE DIRECTION OF ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MOLLY SMITH

\*\*\* *Sovereignty* debuts as fourth production in Arena Stage's ambitious Power Plays initiative, commissioning and developing 25 new plays over 10 years to explore stories of politics & power \*\*\*

(Washington, D.C.) **Mary Kathryn Nagle's** daring new work ***Sovereignty*** makes its world premiere at Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater. Under the direction of **Artistic Director Molly Smith**, *Sovereignty* travels the intersections of personal and political truths, and historic and present struggles, in the fight to save the sovereignty of Cherokee Nation both past and present. A gripping political exploration, ***Sovereignty* will run January 12-February 18, 2018 in the Kreeger Theater.**

*Sovereignty*, based on the stories of Nagle's Cherokee grandfathers, spans 1830s Cherokee Nation (now present-day Georgia) and Andrew Jackson's presidency to the Cherokee Nation in present-day Oklahoma. *Sovereignty* follows Sarah Ridge Polson, a young Cherokee lawyer fighting to restore her Nation's jurisdiction and defend the constitutionality of the 2013 Violence Against Women Act in the United States Supreme Court.

Joining the previously announced **Kalani Queypo** as John Ridge, the cast includes **Joseph Carlson** (Round House's *The Night Alive*) as Andrew Jackson/Ben, **Kyla García** (Netflix's *Cable Girls*) as Sarah Polson, **Michael Glenn** (Arena Stage's *Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery*) as Samuel Worcester/Mitch, **Jake Hart** as Elias Boudinot/Watie, **Andrew Roa** (Denver Center Theatre's *Black Elk Speaks*) as Major Ridge/Roger Ridge, **Dorea Schmidt** (Arena Stage's *Fiddler on the Roof*) as Sarah Bird Northrup/Flora, **Todd Scofield** (Arena Stage's *The City of Conversation*) as White Chorus Man and **Jake Waid** (Perseverance Theatre's *Macbeth*) as John Ross/Jim Ross.

"185 years ago, the federal government sitting in Washington, D.C. sought to eradicate the sovereignty of Cherokee Nation," shares **Nagle**. "It is an honor to return to D.C. today and share the story of why, and how, those efforts were not successful. At a time when many in the United States have been hurt and threatened by polarization and prejudice, I believe we can all find healing in understanding how my grandfathers, and all of our Cherokee relations, survived one of the most polarizing episodes in American history."

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## Page 2 — Casting announced for world premiere of *Sovereignty* by Mary Kathryn Nagle

*Sovereignty* is the fourth commission 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 the next 10 years. With **Power Plays**, Arena Stage focuses Washington, D.C.'s unique theatrical voice on politics 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 today, and builds on the tremendous success of previous Arena Stage commissions and **Power Plays**—Lawrence Wright's *Camp David*, John Strand's *The Originalist* and Jacqueline E. Lawton's *Intelligence*.

For additional details on **Power Plays** visit [arenastage.org/artistic-development/new-play-institute/powerplays/](http://arenastage.org/artistic-development/new-play-institute/powerplays/).

"I wake up every morning to a brown face. My partner Suzanne Blue Star Boy is out of the great Sioux nation," shares **Smith**. "I created and ran a theater in Alaska for almost 20 years that focused on the voices of Alaska, including Native American artists. These stories are powerful. In this moment of Standing Rock and a new Native American movement, our D.C. audiences are primed to experience this provocative, deep and funny new **Power Play**. For many, Native American ideas, values and stories are invisible to our audiences. With Mary Kathryn's daring new play, we aim to make the Cherokee Nation very visible."

Arena Stage is one of the seven originating theaters of the **Women's Voices Theater Festival**, which launched in 2015. *Sovereignty* is produced as a part of the citywide Festival, which will feature over 25 productions in the festival's second iteration in the nation's capital region, January through February 2018. For additional information on the Festival, please visit [womensvoicestheaterfestival.org](http://womensvoicestheaterfestival.org).

**Mary Kathryn Nagle** (*Playwright*) is an enrolled citizen of the Cherokee Nation. She currently serves as the executive director of the Yale Indigenous Performing Arts Program. She is also a partner at Pipestem Law, P.C., where she works to protect tribal sovereignty and the inherent right of Indian Nations to protect their women and children from domestic violence and sexual assault. She has authored numerous briefs in federal appellate courts, including the United States Supreme Court. She has received commissions from Arena Stage; The Rose Theater in Omaha, Nebraska; Portland Center Stage; Denver Center; and Yale Repertory. Her other plays include *Manhatta*, *Return to Niobrara*, *Mnisose*, *Diamonds*, *Waaxe's Law*, *Sliver of a Full Moon*, *My Father's Bones*, *Miss Lead* and *Fairly Traceable*.

**Molly Smith** (*Director*) has served as Artistic Director since 1998. Her more than 30 directing credits at Arena Stage include *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.

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**Cast Biographies (in alphabetical order)**

**Joseph Carlson** (*Andrew Jackson/Ben*) makes his Arena Stage debut. D.C. credits include *Colossal* (Olney Theater Center, Helen Hayes nomination), *The Night Alive* (Round House) and *Macbeth* in *Voodoo Macbeth* (American Century Theater). Regional credits include Stanley in *Streetcar Named Desire* (The Firehouse Theater, RTCC Award nomination); Tom Joad in *Grapes of Wrath* (Virginia Repertory Theater); *Dancing at Lughnasa* (Tantrum Theater); and most recently the East Coast premiere of Karen Rizzo's *Mutual Philanthropy* (New Jersey Repertory). TV credits include *Turn* (AMC), Frank James in *American West* (AMC) produced by Robert Redford, and *Frontiersmen* (History Channel) produced by Leonardo DiCaprio, where he stars as legendary explorer Cpt. William Clark. As a citizen artist, Joseph is an Artistic Associate with The Conciliation Project, and holds an M.F.A. in Ritual Poetic Drama within the African Continuum. [www.theconciliationproject.org](http://www.theconciliationproject.org)

**Kyla García** (*Sarah Polson*) is a B.F.A. graduate of Rutgers University. TV/Film credits include *Cable Girls* (Netflix), *Marvel Agents of SHIELD* (ABC) and *Shotgun Wedding* (Netflix). Select stage credits include the world premiere of *Fairly Traceable* (Native Voices at the Autry), *Alice Chan* (La Jolla Playhouse Pop Tour), *Antigone* (A Noise Within) and *Se Llama Cristina* (The Theatre @ Boston Court). Favorite storytelling moments include narrating over 80 audiobooks and creating the critically acclaimed one-woman show *The Mermaid Who Learned How to Fly*.

**Michael Glenn** (*Samuel Worcester/Mitch*) returns to Arena Stage, having appeared in *Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery* and *Good People*. Michael is a D.C.-based actor who has performed on dozens of stages in the area. Favorite past productions include *School for Lies* (Shakespeare Theatre Company); *Jumpers for Goalposts* (Studio Theatre); *Brighton Beach Memoirs* (Theater J); *Cat's Cradle* and *The Hothouse* (Longacre Lea); *Clybourne Park* (Woolly Mammoth); *Stage Kiss* and *THIS* (Round House); *Sense & Sensibility*, *Henry VII*, *Arcadia* (Folger Theatre); *Scapin* (Constellation Theater); and *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* (Signature Theatre). Michael does voice over work for Graphic Audio, where he has performed as The Flash, Sinestro and Star Lord, as well as a host of cowboys, outlaws, mutants and magicians. He can be seen next as the Sheriff of Nottingham in *Robin Hood* (Imagination Stage).

**Jake Hart** (*Elias Boudinot/Watie*) makes his Arena Stage debut. Recent TV credits include *The Blacklist* (NBC), *The Deuce* (HBO), *Shades of Blue* (NBC) and others. Coming up this season, you can catch him on *Sneaky Pete* (Amazon). Select New York theater credits include *Jesus Hopped the A Train* (Atlantic), *Smoke* (Signature Theater), *Winter's Tale* (HERE Arts Center), The Public Theater Shakespeare Lab and others. Jake has spent years traveling across the country, even making a stop at Round House Theatre while on tour with *Grandchildren of The Buffalo Soldiers*. As a video game and voice actor, Jake can be heard as Thanos in *Guardians of the Galaxy: The Telltale Series*, and will soon be heard as a certain giant robot that transforms into a large truck. Please protect indigenous America W'anishi, Wado, thank you.

**Kalani Queypo** (*John Ridge*) makes his Arena Stage debut. He is a founding member of SAG-AFTRA's National Native American Committee and serves on the Advisory Council for Native Voices Theater at the Autry Museum of the American West. Before moving to L.A., Kalani trained in New York and was featured on stages all over the country including Goodspeed, Trinity Repertory, Mark Taper Forum, The Wilma Theater and The Ordway. Kalani has appeared in Terrence Malick's Oscar Award nominated *The New World* and Steven Spielberg's Emmy Award-winning *Into the West* and *Slow West* (Sundance Film Festival Grand Jury Prize). TV credits include *Mad Men*, *Nurse Jackie*, *Bones*, *Hawaii Five-0* and a critically-acclaimed performance as Squanto in *Saints & Strangers*. Kalani is currently shooting a second season of *Jamestown* with the producers of *Downton Abbey*.

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**Andrew Roa** (*Major Ridge/Roger Ridge*) makes his Arena Stage debut. An award-winning actor, director, and film maker, his stage credits include the premiere of *Black Elk Speaks* (Denver Center Theatre/Mark Taper Forum), *The Spirit of Pocahontas* (Disneyland Theater), *Equus* (Nevada Repertory) and *Happy* (Montana Repertory). Since 1999, he has been a founding Company Member of Native Voices at the Autry, playing roles in *Please Do Not Touch the Indians* (Outstanding Theatre Performance, First Americans in the Arts) and *Kino and Teresa*, among others, and directing and mentoring young playwrights. Film/TV credits include *Picking up the Pieces*, *Fame*, *Quantum Leap*, *The Ellen Burstyn Show* and *The Iceman Chronicles*. Andrew is also a film director and screenwriter with five features and several shorts to his credit.

**Dorea Schmidt** (*Sarah Bird Northrup/Flora*) is so glad to be returning to Arena Stage after performing as Mrs. Sowerberry/Mrs. Bedwin in *Oliver!* and Tzeitel in *Fiddler on the Roof*. Other D.C. credits include *School for Lies* (Shakespeare Theatre Company); *Caroline, or Change* (Round House); *Collective Rage* (Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Helen Hayes Award Outstanding Supporting Actress); *Carousel* and *Mary Poppins* (Olney Theatre Center); *The Love of the Nightingale* (Constellation Theatre Company); and *The Fantasticks*, *Black Comedy* and *The Last 5 Years* (No Rules Theatre Company). Regional credits include *My Fair Lady* (The Cape Playhouse) and *Crimes of the Heart* and *The Beaux' Stratagem* (Everyman Theatre). She attended The National Theatre Institute and the William Esper Studio. Dorea is a proud company member of Actors Arena and Only Make Believe. [www.doreaschmidt.com](http://www.doreaschmidt.com)

**Todd Scofield** (*White Chorus Man*) returns to Arena Stage after appearing in *The City of Conversation*. Over the past 13 years, he has worked with Shakespeare Theatre Company (*As You Like It*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Twelfth Night*), Folger Theatre (*The Tempest*, *Measure for Measure*, *Henry VIII*, *Mary Stuart*), Round House (*The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *NSFW*, *Stage Kiss*), Theater J (C.S. Lewis in *Freud's Last Session*, *Bal Masque*), Adventure Theatre (*Winnie the Pooh*), Studio Theatre, Everyman Theatre, Olney Theatre Center and Ford's Theatre. Outside of the D.C.-area, Todd worked at Arden Theatre Company and spent four seasons at the North Carolina Shakespeare Festival. On TV, he was seen in recurring roles on seasons three and five of *The Wire*.

**Jake Waid** (*John Ross/Jim Ross*) makes his Arena Stage debut. He was last seen in D.C. as the title role in *Macbeth* (Perseverance Theatre), which was translated into the language of his Tlingit tribe, and culminated with a run at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian. Other credits include *Twelfth Night* (Shakespeare and Company); *Cymbeline* (Notre Dame Shakespeare Festival); *Hamlet* (Fairbanks Shakespeare Theatre); *George Bonga: Black Voyageur* (History Theatre); *the road weeps, the well runs dry* (Pillsbury House); *Raven Odyssey*, *The Crucible*, *Moby Dick* and *Genesis* (Perseverance Theatre). He has also worked with La Jolla Playhouse, Native Voices at the Autry and Working Class Theatre. He studied at Cornish College and Freehold Actors Studio.

The creative team for *Sovereignty* includes Associate and Text Director **Anita Maynard-Losh**, Set Designer **Ken MacDonald**, Costume Designer **Linda Cho**, Lighting Designer **Robert Wierzel**, Sound Designer **Ed Littlefield**, Projection Designer **Mark Holthusen**, Fight Director **Lewis Shaw**, Dramaturg **Jocelyn Clarke**, Vocal Coach **Zach Champion**, Casting Director **Victor Vazquez**, Casting Consultants **Xemiyulu Manibusan Tapepechul** and **Jean Bruce Scott**, 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/sovereignty/](http://arenastage.org/shows-tickets/the-season/productions/sovereignty/).

Commissioning support for *Sovereignty* provided by Drs. Elliot and Lily Gardner Feldman and BakerHostetler as part of Arena Stage's Women's Voices Power Play Cycle.

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**Page 5 — Casting announced for world premiere of *Sovereignty* by Mary Kathryn Nagle**

**Additional Commissioning support provided by The Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation's Women Playwrights Commissioning Program.**

**Post-Show Conversations**

Connect with our shows beyond the performance at a post-show conversation with artists and staff— January 31, February 7 and February 13 following the noon performance; February 6 following the 7:30 p.m. performance; and February 15 following the 8:00 p.m. performance.

On December 12 at 7:00 p.m., Arena Stage will host a Community Conversation featuring Molly Smith, Mary Kathryn Nagle and the cast of *Sovereignty*. The event is free and open to the public, and the discussion will surround themes and topics in the play including history of Cherokee Nation, the 2013 Violence Against Women Act and sovereignty of tribal land.

**Production Information**

***Sovereignty***

**By Mary Kathryn Nagle**

**Directed by Molly Smith**

**In the Kreeger Theater | January 12-February 18, 2018**

**ABOUT:** Some wounds refuse to heal. Mary Kathryn Nagle's daring new work, which debuts as the fourth production in Arena Stage's Power Plays initiative, travels the intersections of personal and political truths, historic and present struggles. Sarah Ridge Polson, a young Cherokee lawyer fighting to restore her Nation's jurisdiction, must confront the ever-present ghosts of her grandfathers. With shadows stretching from 1830s Cherokee Nation (now present-day Georgia) and Andrew Jackson's presidency to the Cherokee Nation in present-day Oklahoma, *Sovereignty* asks how high the flames of anger can rise before they ultimately consume the truth.

**CAST:**

Andrew Jackson/Ben: Joseph Carlson

Sarah Polson: Kyla García

Samuel Worcester/Mitch: Michael Glenn

Elia Boudinot/Watie: Jake Hart

John Ridge: Kalani Queypo

Major Ridge/Roger Ridge: Andrew Roa

Sarah Bird Northrup/Flora: Dorea Schmidt

White Chorus Man: Todd Scofield

John Ross/Jim Ross: Jake Waid

**CREATIVE TEAM:**

Playwright: Mary Kathryn Nagle

Director: Molly Smith

Associate and Text Director: Anita Maynard-Losh

Set Designer: Ken MacDonald

Costume Designer: Linda Cho

Lighting Designer: Robert Wierzel

Sound Designer: Ed Littlefield

Projection Designer: Mark Holthusen

Fight Director: Lewis Shaw

Dramaturg: Jocelyn Clarke

Vocal Coach: Zach Champion

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Casting Director: Victor Vazquez

Casting Consultants: Xemiyulu Manibusan Tapepechul and Jean Bruce Scott

Stage Manager: Susan R. White

Assistant Stage Manager: Trevor A. Riley

### **Plan Your Visit**

**TICKETS:** Tickets for *Sovereignty* 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](http://arenastage.org/shows-tickets/single-tickets/savings-programs).

**Tickets may be purchased online at [arenastage.org](http://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, 1/31; Wednesday, 2/7; & Tuesday, 2/13

Full calendar: [tickets.arenastage.org/single/PSDetail.aspx?psn=24623](http://tickets.arenastage.org/single/PSDetail.aspx?psn=24623)

**Open-captioned performances:** 2/1 at 8:00 p.m.; 2/14 at 7:30 p.m. & 2/17 at 2:00 p.m.

**Audio-described performances:** 1/27 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/](http://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](http://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](http://arenastage.org)

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