

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SMASH-HIT POLITICAL DRAMA *THE ORIGINALIST*
RETURNS FOR SPECIAL LIMITED ENGAGEMENT
JULY 7-AUGUST 6, 2017 AT ARENA STAGE

SINGLE TICKETS NOW ON SALE

*** Edward Gero reprises his role as Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia
in production hailed as “timely, almost revolutionary” by *The Economist* ***

(Washington, D.C.) Fresh off a cross-country tour, John Strand’s critically-acclaimed political drama *The Originalist*, based on the late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, returns to Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater under the direction of Artistic Director Molly Smith. *The Originalist* is a co-production with Asolo Repertory Theatre and Pasadena Playhouse, where it ran earlier in 2017, and following the D.C. run will move to Chicago’s Court Theatre. This special limited engagement runs July 7-August 6, 2017 in the Kreeger Theater, and single tickets are now on sale at arenastage.org/shows-tickets/the-season/productions/the-originalist/.

Four-time Helen Hayes Award winner and distinguished D.C. actor Edward Gero reprises his role as Justice Scalia, in a “lively performance” that “lands the laughs, delivers the gravitas and at every turn makes you believe this tantalizing man” (*Washington Post*). He is joined by former D.C. resident Jade Wheeler as Cat, the young, liberal law clerk who becomes a sparring partner for the conservative Justice, and Brett Mack as Brad, an eager Scalia devotee.

“*The Originalist* is just flat out great provocative theater,” says Smith. “If you saw it before, don’t hesitate to see it again. The play has become more meaningful over the past year since Justice Scalia’s passing, with the new administration, strong rewrites by John Strand and productions in Florida and California that have deepened the performances. Striving for a middle ground feels like an epic struggle these days. Edward Gero’s performance as Justice Scalia is more monumental and nuanced, and two new wonderful actors are playing the roles of Cat and Brad. It’s funny, it’s moving and packs some big punches.”

The Originalist received its world premiere at Arena Stage in 2015, where it was extended twice and broke box office records as the highest selling production in the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle. The production was subsequently produced for the screen by Stage17, broadcast on PBS and recorded by L.A. Theatre Works as a radio play. *The Originalist* was commissioned as part of Power Plays, an ambitious initiative from Arena Stage commissioning and developing 25 new plays over the course of the next 10 years, focused on stories of politics and power. For additional details on Power Plays visit arenastage.org/american-voices/power-plays/.

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“As *The Originalist*, in Molly Smith's smart and insightful staging, plays in cities around the country, we've learned a lot, especially about our audiences,” adds **Strand**. “When I wrote the play in 2015, I wanted to explore why as a country we had become so divided politically, and so unable to compromise or even hear one another. Since then, it has only gotten worse. But in talking with our audiences, we see that people on all sides are hungry for what can bring us together, not drive us further apart. To me, this play has always been about hope and the courage it takes not to see your political opponent as a monster, but to listen and think. I am excited to bring these issues, and Edward Gero's stunning portrayal of Justice Scalia, back to Arena Stage and our audiences in D.C., here on the front lines of the battle for an American democracy.”

Critical acclaim for *The Originalist*:

- “The country's most famous legal showman has gotten his show...Scalia, portrayed with terrific verve and snappy humor by Edward Gero.” —**New York Times**
- “Entertaining...Edward Gero, who looks remarkably like Justice Scalia, offered an eerily convincing physical impersonation of the justice—down to his Jackie Gleason slow burn, his operatic facial expressions and hand gestures, and his belly laugh.” —**The Atlantic**
- “Taut, punchy, often humorous repartee...Since Scalia's death in 2016, the script has grown more relevant...In the atmosphere of hysterically partisan politics, it feels wholesome and encouraging to hear the two positions summed up clearly and persuasively.” —**Los Angeles Times**

John Strand (*Playwright*)'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*.

Molly Smith (*Director*) has served as Artistic Director since 1998. Her more than 30 directing credits at Arena Stage include *Carousel*, *Oliver!*, *The Originalist*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Camp David*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *Oklahoma!*, *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, *My Fair Lady*, *The Great White Hope*, *The Music Man*, *Orpheus Descending*, *Legacy of Light*, *The Women of Brewster Place*, *Cabaret*, *South Pacific*, *Agamemnon and His Daughters*, *All My Sons* and *How I Learned to Drive*. She most recently directed *Our Town* at Canada's Shaw Festival. Her directorial work has also been seen at 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 *How I Learned to Drive*; *Passion Play*, a cycle; *Next to Normal*; and *Dear Evan Hansen*. 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.

Cast Biographies

Edward Gero (*Antonin Scalia*)’s Arena Stage credits include Benjamin Hubbard in *The Little Foxes* and Mark Rothko in *Red*. He is a four-time Helen Hayes Award winner and 15-time nominee. Regional credits include *The Originalist* (Asolo Repertory, Pasadena Playhouse); *Red* and Gloucester in *King Lear* (Goodman); *Nixon’s Nixon* and *Night Alive* (Round House); *Sweeney Todd* (Signature Theatre); Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* (Ford’s Theatre); and *American Buffalo*, *Shining City* and *Skylight* (Studio Theatre). In 32 seasons with Shakespeare Theatre Company, his over 70 roles include Helen Hayes turns in *Henry IV*, *Richard II* and *Macbeth*. Film/TV credits include *House of Cards*, *TURN: Washington’s Spies*, *Die Hard 2*, *Striking Distance* and narrations for Discovery Channel and PBS. He is a Ten Chimneys 2015 Lunt-Fontanne Fellow and associate professor of theater at George Mason University.

Jade Wheeler (*Cat*) is ecstatic to return to the role following productions at Pasadena Playhouse and Asolo Repertory. Jade has performed extensively along the east coast from Massachusetts to Florida. Most recently she appeared in *The Legend of Georgia McBride* at GableStage. Her one-woman show *Who is Eartha Mae?* played Off-Broadway at the 2016 United Solo Fest and won for Best Cabaret. Local credits include Debbie Allen’s *Alex in Wonderland* and *Lost in the Stars* (the Kennedy Center); *An Octoroon* (Woolly Mammoth); *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Shakespeare Theatre Company); and *Ruined* (Everyman Theatre). Regional credits include GableStage, Central Square Theatre and Stoneham Theatre. She received her B.A. in theater and French from George Mason University and additional training from La Ferme de Trielle and The Actors Space.

Brett Mack (*Brad*) is honored to be making his debut at Arena Stage. Past regional theater credits include *The Great Society* (Asolo Repertory); *Mezzulah 1946* and *The Muckle Man* (Pittsburgh City Theatre); *Leveling Up* and *The Tempest* (The Hippodrome Theatre); *Twelfth Night* and *Julius Caesar* (Orlando Shakespeare Theatre); and *The Illusion* (Chautauqua Theatre). Brett is a recent M.F.A. graduate from Florida State University. He can be seen in season two of *Scandal* on ABC. Brett is grateful to be a part of the team behind *The Originalist* and would also like to thank his family for their constant support.

The creative team for *The Originalist* includes Set Designer **Misha Kachman**, Costume Designer **Joseph P. Salasovich**, Lighting Designer **Colin K. Bills** and Sound Designer **Eric Shimelonis**.

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

Post-Show Conversations

Arena Stage will host post-show conversations on Wednesday, July 19 following the 7:30 p.m. performance; Tuesday, July 25 following the 7:30 p.m. performance; and Thursday, July 27 following the 8:00 p.m. performance. Participants will include playwright John Strand, cast members and guests with expertise on the late Justice Scalia and the Supreme Court. Specific discussion topics and guest participants will be announced at a later date.

Production Information

The Originalist

By John Strand

Directed by Molly Smith

Co-production with Asolo Repertory Theatre and Pasadena Playhouse

In the Kreeger Theater | July 7-August 6, 2017

ABOUT: Four-time Helen Hayes Award winner Edward Gero returns as Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, offering audiences another opportunity to see his “lively performance” (*Washington Post*) in this special limited engagement. When a bright, liberal, Harvard Law School graduate embarks on a nerve-wracking clerkship with the conservative Justice, she discovers him to be both an infuriating sparring partner and an unexpected mentor.

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How will their relationship affect one of the most incendiary cases ever to reach the nation's highest court? Don't miss your opportunity to experience the show afresh with a brand-new staging for the Kreeger Theater.

CAST:

Antonin Scalia: Edward Gero

Cat: Jade Wheeler

Brad: Brett Mack

CREATIVE TEAM:

Playwright: John Strand

Director: Molly Smith

Set Designer: Misha Kachman

Costume Designer: Joseph P. Salasovich

Lighting Designer: Colin K. Bills

Sound Designer: Eric Shimelonis

Plan Your Visit

TICKETS: Tickets for *The Originalist* 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.

Full calendar: tickets.arenastage.org/single/PSDetail.aspx?psn=24491

Audio-described performance: 7/22 at 2:00 p.m.

Open-captioned performance: 7/20 at 8:00 p.m.

ARENA STAGE CAFÉ: Prix fixe meals are available at Richard's Place, Arena Stage's casual dining café, 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

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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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