

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**LAVERN CHATMAN AND ANNIE SIMONIAN TOTAH TO LEAD
ARENA STAGE GALA HONORING NPR'S NINA TOTENBERG
TUESDAY, MAY 21, 2019**

***** Kathleen Turner headlines annual gala benefiting Arena's artistic and educational programs *****

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage Artistic Director Molly Smith and Executive Producer Edgar Dobie are pleased to announce **Lavern Chatman**, vice president of business development at EDJ Associates and Arena Board of Trustees member as the chairwoman, and **Annie Simonian Totah**, Armenian Assembly of America's Board of Trustees member and recipient of their 2018 Distinguished Humanitarian Award, as the honorary chairwoman of the **2019 Arena Stage Annual Gala**. The Gala will be held on **Tuesday, May 21, 2019** at the Mead Center for American Theater (1101 Sixth Street, SW), and will include the presentation of the fourth annual Beth Newburger Schwartz Award to National Public Radio's **Nina Totenberg**. Actor and performer **Kathleen Turner** will headline the Gala, as well as host an intimate reception the evening before for select event sponsors.

"As a trustee of Arena Stage, I am pleased once again to chair this season's Gala," says **Chatman**. "The evening has garnered a reputation for honoring influential women and we are thrilled to continue this tradition, along with our Honorary Chair Annie Simonian Totah, to recognize the extraordinary journalist Nina Totenberg. Gala guests will also have the opportunity to experience the iconic Kathleen Turner in a special one-night only performance at this year's event."

The evening kicks off with a cocktail reception, followed by a performance and a three-course seated dinner. The performance will feature the presentation of the Beth Newburger Schwartz Award to Nina Totenberg, in recognition of her ground-breaking reporting in the broadcast world and her continuous support of the arts. Totenberg was the first radio journalist to receive the 1998 Sol Taishoff Award for Excellence in Broadcasting from the National Press Foundation. The award was first presented to Arena Stage board chair Beth Newburger Schwartz in 2016, Arlene Kogod in 2017 and D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser in 2018, and celebrates a female leader who strives to better the community in which she lives through her own unique strengths and talents.

Kathleen Turner is a Golden Globe Award-winning, Academy Award-nominated and Tony Award-nominated actress who has made her mark on both the film and stage scenes. She has appeared at Arena Stage in *The Year of Magical Thinking* (2016), *Mother Courage and Her Children* (2014), *Red Hot Patriot* (2012) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1989). She debuted her first cabaret performance, *Finding My Voice*, last year, and her new book, *Kathleen Turner on Acting* was recently published.

All proceeds will benefit all Arena Stage artistic and educational programs.

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Event Schedule

Tuesday, May 21, 2019

5:30 p.m. Cocktail reception

6:30 p.m. Award presentation and one night only performance

8:00 p.m. Seated dinner

Event sponsors of \$15,000 or more are invited to attend an intimate reception with Kathleen Turner on Monday, May 20.

For additional event details visit arenastage.org/gala.

For information on individual ticket or table purchases please contact Maria Corso at 202-600-4025 or email RSVP@arenastage.org.

For information on corporate sponsorship packages, please contact Char Manlove-Laws at 202-600-4030 or email cmanlove-laws@arenastage.org.

Lavern Chatman (Gala Chair) A tireless advocate, staunch supporter, dedicated community leader, and firm believer in giving back to others, Ms. Chatman has been involved with philanthropic efforts in the Washington, D.C. region for more than two decades. Ms. Chatman is currently vice president of business development at EDJ, a leading national professional and technical services consulting firm, responsible for guiding EDJ across all markets, further strengthening their growing portfolio of Federal, private, and nonprofit clients. Prior to joining EDJ, Ms. Chatman served in senior leadership positions in marketing and business/fund development for non-profit and community organizations. She worked for decades as an advocate and promoter for minority and small businesses, developing strategic partnerships, fostering community engagement and advancing diversity and inclusionary initiatives. Ms. Chatman was also a former candidate for the United States Congress 8th District of Virginia. Ms. Chatman served as the pulse of the Northern Virginia Urban League (NOVAUL) for almost a decade, first as a volunteer, then as a member of the board of directors, serving as the president and CEO of NOVAUL from 2003 to 2011, leaving a legacy of excellence and empowerment for generations to come. Under Ms. Chatman's leadership, NOVAUL became one of the preeminent organizations in Northern Virginia, addressing issues of youth empowerment, financial literacy, affordable housing, closing the education achievement gap, and social justice. While there are myriad highlights from her tenure at the NOVAUL, one of her lasting contributions was her steadfast development of the Freedom House Museum. Out of commitment to her community and a dedication to its history, Ms. Chatman spearheaded a development campaign for this two-year project, raising over \$400,000 to build, design and create a permanent memorial that tells the story of the domestic slave trade in Alexandria, VA. Today, this historic memorial is the headquarters of NOVAUL. Her efforts have been recognized on the local and national level with a series of awards, including the 2009 National Urban League Woman of Power Award for distinguished leadership. Ms. Chatman has served on the board of directors for Archbishop Carroll High School, Washington, D.C.; The Campagna Center, Alexandria, VA; Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce; INOVA Alexandria Hospital; The Community Foundation of Northern Virginia; and WETA Public Broadcasting; and chaired the Diversity Council for AARP Virginia. In 2008 Ms. Chatman convened over thirty-two grass roots organizations to form the Nova Coalition to lead voter education and empowerment efforts throughout Northern Virginia and promote civic engagement on nonpartisan issues in the community. Ms. Chatman served on The National League of Cities, Council on Youth, Education & Families, the World Bank's D.C. Community Outreach Grants Committee, and the Cardinals Circle for the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C, and is the immediate past president of the Arlington chapter of Links, Incorporated and an active member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

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Annie Simonian Totah (Honorary Gala Chair) For more than 40 years, Annie Simonian Totah has been recognized for her effective leadership, philanthropy and untiring commitment on behalf of many important political, cultural, and academic, health, women- and children- related and religious causes. Her many contributions and accomplishments have helped organizations and communities on the local, national, and international level. Ms. Totah is often spotted at the District's many charitable functions, likely because she is involved in so many of them. She and her late husband Sami have been instrumental in donating and expanding the Magen David Sephardic Congregation. Ms. Totah is a major donor, mover and shaker in the nationwide Armenian Community. Through her fundraising and advocacy efforts, she has helped raise, in the last two decades, more than \$3 billion in foreign aid for Armenia, her ancestral homeland. She is a breast cancer survivor and a supporter of Sibley Hospital. Through the Totahs' generosity of \$1.0 million, the Sibley Hospital has dedicated the Executive Wing of the Hospital in the name of the Sami & Annie Totah Family Foundation. A major donor and supporter of the Democratic Party, Ms. Totah has hosted in her beautiful home several fundraisers for Democratic candidates on the county, state, gubernatorial, federal and presidential levels. Ms. Totah's fame and success have not been only in her charitable giving but in her ability to mastermind and produce spectacular and unique events for dozens and dozens of charitable causes. She donates, networks, elevates the cause of the organization and raises millions of dollars for organizations and events such as Israel Bonds Ambassadors' Gala, Sibley Hospital Gala, Susan G. Komen Honoring the Promise Gala, Best Buddies with Anthony Kennedy Shriver, Washington Performing Arts Society, and the list goes on. Ms. Totah serves on the boards of many non-profit organizations including the Armenian Assembly of American, the Armenian General Benevolent Union, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, the Marshall Legacy Institute, Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, Magen David Sephardic Congregation, Washington Performing Arts Society, Washington Ballet, National Rehabilitation Hospital, Sibley Hospital, CARE Humanitarian Organization, Young Concert Artists, Youth Orchestra of the Americas, Heifitz International Music Institute, Post Classical Ensemble, Hope of Light Foundation, Phillips Collection, Strathmore Hall Foundation, and more. She is the recipient of many honors and awards, including the Medal of Appreciation from the President of the Republic of Armenia, the Armenian Assembly of America's Distinguished Humanitarian Award, the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, Sibley Memorial Hospital's Shining Star Award, and the Medal of Appreciation from the President of Nagorno Karabagh Republic, among others.

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