

# ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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September 6, 2018

ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES CASTING FOR  
*ANYTHING GOES* DIRECTED BY MOLLY SMITH  
AT THE MEAD CENTER FOR AMERICAN THEATER  
NOVEMBER 2 – DECEMBER 23, 2018

\*\*\* Stephen DeRosa and Jimmy Ray Bennett among cast joining previously announced Corbin Bleu and Soara-Joye Ross in Cole Porter's madcap seafaring musical \*\*\*

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater announces casting for Cole Porter's madcap seafaring musical, *Anything Goes*, with music and lyrics by Porter; original book by P.G. Wodehouse and Guy Bolton, with co-authors Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse; and new book by Timothy Crouse and John Weidman. Featuring some of musical theater's most memorable standards such as "I Get a Kick Out of You," "You're the Top" and the title song, *Anything Goes* is directed by **Molly Smith**, with choreography by **Parker Esse** and music direction by **Paul Sportelli**, and will run **November 2-December 23, 2018 in the iconic in-the-round Fichandler Stage**.

"I'm excited to be tackling this musical today," shares **Molly Smith**. "America is in an 'anything goes' moment. You can be whatever you want to be – and fool most of the people most of the time. Although this musical was written in the 1930s, the cast is representative of America right now. Expect to experience the best and wildest tap dancing you've ever seen in the Fichandler and a string of brilliant comics singing their hearts out in classic Cole Porter style. Joined by a wonderful creative team who are taking this on with all the glamour and verve of the '30s, we will bring this classic musical into the current moment."

Joining previously announced **Corbin Bleu** (Broadway's *Holiday Inn*, *The New Irving Berlin Musical*; Disney Channel's *High School Musical*) as Billy and **Soara-Joye Ross** (Off-Broadway's *Carmen Jones*) as Reno Sweeney are **Stephen DeRosa** (Broadway's *On the Town*, HBO's *Boardwalk Empire*) as Moonface Martin, **Jimmy Ray Bennett** (Amazon Studio's *Hand of God*) as Lord Evelyn Oakleigh and D.C.-area native **Lisa Helmi Johanson** (Off-Broadway's *Avenue Q*) as Hope Harcourt. **Jonathan Holmes** (Netflix's *Anne With an E*) makes his Arena debut as Captain, while **Thomas Adrian Simpson** (Arena's *Dave*, *A Raisin in the Sun*) and **Maria Rizzo** (Arena's *Fiddler on the Roof*) return to the stage here as Elisha Whitney and Erma, respectively.

**Lisa Tejero** (Broadway's *Metamorphoses*) also returns to Arena as Evangeline Harcourt, along with **Ben Gunderson** (*Purser/Ensemble/Lady Fair Quartet*) and ensemble members **DeMoya Watson Brown** and **Nicholas Yenson**. **Julio Catano-Yee** and **Christopher Shin** makes their Arena debuts as John and Luke, respectively.

Rounding out the *Anything Goes* company are **Brent McBeth**, **Mickey Orange**, **Lizz Picini**, **Kristyn Pope**, and **Andrea Weinzeirl**, with swings **Allie O'Donnell** and **Brett Uram**.

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In addition, two dogs will be cast as Cheeky, the wayward pup of Evangeline Harcourt. A Canine Casting Call will take place at Arena Stage on Saturday, September 22 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. For more information, visit <https://www.arenastage.org/caninecasting>. Advance registration is required.

Smith's creative collaborators for *Anything Goes* include Choreographer **Parker Esse** who returns for his 16<sup>th</sup> Arena Stage production, Music Director **Paul Sportelli**, Set Designer **Ken MacDonald**, Costume Designer **Alejo Vietti**, Lighting Designer **Kimberly Purtell** and Sound Designer **Daniel Erdberg**.

The creative team for *Anything Goes* also includes Associate Music Director **William Yanesh**, Assistant Choreographer **Lizz Picini**, Dialect and Vocal Coach **Lisa Nathans**, Associate Director/Text Director **Anita Maynard-Losh**, Casting Directors **Victor Vazquez** and **Geoff Josselson**, Stage Manager **Susan White**, Assistant Stage Manager **Trevor Riley** and Production Assistant **Dayne Sundman**.

**Cole Porter** (*Music & Lyrics*) was born in Peru, Indiana, in 1891. He graduated from Yale, where his football songs are still popular. After the failure of his first Broadway show, he lived in Europe, where he married legendary beauty Linda Lee Thomas. Returning to New York in the late 1920s, he gained renown for many great songs, including "Night and Day," "Begin the Beguine," "You're the Top" and "I Get a Kick Out of You." His 1930s were highlighted by such Broadway offerings as *Anything Goes*, *Gay Divorce* and *Jubilee*. A crippling riding accident in 1937 left him in constant pain, yet he continued to write memorable scores, among them *Can-Can*, *Silk Stockings* and his masterpiece, *Kiss Me, Kate*. He died in 1964.

**P.G. Wodehouse and Guy Bolton** (*Original Book*) were both born in England. They were introduced by Jerome Kern, and he suggested they all work together. They did, tirelessly, and in the beginning of their collaboration wrote nearly one show per month—the famed Princess Theatre musicals. Bolton and Wodehouse went on to write more than 20 musicals together. Usually, they collaborated on the book and Wodehouse wrote the lyrics. Both lived into their 90s, and both, together and individually, were astoundingly prolific. Bolton, with one collaborator or another, or on his own, had a hand in well over 100 musicals and straight plays as well as numerous film scripts and novels. Wodehouse wrote 97 books—more notably the "Jeeves" novels—and countless short stories, articles, essays and films, and in 1975 was knighted side by side with Charlie Chaplin. In addition to *Anything Goes*, their work together includes *Have a Heart*; *Oh! Boy*; *Leave It to Jane*; *Oh, Lady! Lady!!*; *Sitting Pretty*; *Oh, Kay!* and *Rosalie*. They remained friends and neighbors (in Remsenburg, NY) throughout their final days.

**Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse** (*Co-Authors of the Original Book*) The Lindsay and Crouse partnership stands today as the longest collaboration of any writers in theatrical history, lasting for more than 28 years. They first joined forces in 1934, when the producer Vinton Freedley brought them together to rewrite the libretto for *Anything Goes* (which Lindsay directed). Two years later, they wrote another Cole Porter show, *Red, Hot and Blue*. Their first straight play, *Life With Father*, opening in 1939 and holds the record for the longest running play on Broadway, at 3,224 performances. Lindsay and his wife Dorothy Stickney created the roles of Clarence and Vinnie Day, performing them for five years. Among other plays, Lindsay and Crouse also wrote *The Sound of Music* (score by Rodger and Hammerstein); the Pulitzer Prize-winning *State of the Union*; *Call Me Madame* and *Mr. President* (scores by Irving Berlin); *The Prescott Proposals* and *The Great Sebastians*. They produced *The Hasty Heart*, *Detective Story* and *Arsenic and Old Lace*. Howard Lindsay (1889-1968) was an actor, stage manager, director and playwright before teaming up with Crouse. Russel Crouse (1893-1966) was a newspaperman, a press agent for the Theatre Guild, the author of several books and a librettist before partnering with Lindsay. He later produced, in collaboration with his wife, Anna Erskine Crouse; a son, the writer Timothy Crouse; and a daughter, the actress Lindsay Crouse.

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**Timothy Crouse** (*Co-author of the New Book*) has been a contributing editor of *Rolling Stone* and *The Village Voice*, as well as the Washington columnist for *Esquire*, writing numerous articles for these and other publications, including *The New Yorker*. He is the author of *The Boys on the Bus*, a classic account of the role of the press in presidential campaigns. With Luc Brébion he translated Roger Martin du Gard's *Lieutenant-Colonel de Maumort* (Knopf, 2000). He is currently writing short stories, one of which, "Sphinxes," was included in the *O. Henry Prize Stories 2005*. He is the son of one of the original authors of *Anything Goes*, Russel Crouse.

**John Weidman** (*New Book*) has written the books for a wide variety of musicals, among them *Pacific Overtures*, *Assassins* and *Road Show*, all with scores by Stephen Sondheim; *Contact*, co-created with director/choreographer Susan Stroman; and *Take Flight* and *Big*, scores by Richard Maltby Jr. and David Shire. Since his children were pre-schoolers, Weidman has written for *Sesame Street*, receiving more than a dozen Emmy Awards for Outstanding Writing for a Children's Program. From 1999 to 2009, he served as president of the Dramatists Guild of America.

**Molly Smith** (*Director*) has served as Artistic Director since 1998. Her more than 30 directing credits at Arena Stage include *Sovereignty*, *Carousel*, *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*, *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 Off-Broadway at 59E59 in New York, Canada's Shaw Festival, The Court Theatre, 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 40 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 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. In 2018, she was honored as Person of the Year by the National Theatre Conference and inducted into the Washington DC Hall of Fame.

#### **Select Cast Biographies (in alphabetical order)**

**Jimmy Ray Bennett** (*Lord Evelyn Oakleigh*) was last seen in Washington, D.C. at the Kennedy Center in *Broadway 3 Generations*. He played Nathan Brooks for two seasons on Amazon's *Hand of God*, is co-creator of the Off-Broadway "cult hit" the *Nuclear Family* and is the character of Floyd in Grand Theft Auto games. Past theaters include La Jolla, Barrow Street, NYTW, the McCarter, New World Stages, the Ogunquit Playhouse and NY City Center.

**Corbin Bleu** (*Billy Crocker*) comes from an extensive background in film, television and theatre. He is probably best known for playing Chad Danforth in Disney's Emmy Award-winning *High School Musical* franchise. Corbin was recently seen on Broadway as Ted Hanover in the Tony-nominated production of *Holiday Inn, The New Irving Berlin Musical*, winning the Chita Rivera Award for Outstanding Male Dancer in a Broadway Show. Additional Broadway credits include: *Godspell* (Jesus) and *In the Heights* (Usnavi). Other stage highlights include *Hairspray* (Seaweed) and *Mamma Mia!* (Sky), both at The Hollywood Bowl. Most recently Corbin starred as Don Lockwood, the role made famous by Gene Kelly in The Muny's centennial season production of *Singin' in the Rain*. Also in 2018, Corbin was honored as Entertainer of the Year from the Tremaine National Gala honoring his work in the dance industry. His film credits include: *To Write Love on Her Arms* (starring opposite Kat Dennings), *Nurse 3-D* and *The Monkey's Paw*, to name a few. Corbin's television credits include: *Franklin & Bash*, *Blue Bloods*, *Psych*, *Castle*, *The Fosters* and *Chicago Med*. In 2013, he partnered with Karina Smirnoff on the multi-Emmy Award-winning ABC hit *Dancing with the Stars*, placing a close second. A Brooklyn native, Corbin currently resides in Los Angeles with his wife, Sasha.

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**Stephen DeRosa** (*Moonface Martin*) is making his Arena Stage debut. He began his professional career as an apprentice with the Shakespeare Theater after graduating from Georgetown University. His most recent Broadway credits include *On the Town* directed by John Rando, *Betrayal* directed by Mike Nichols and standing by for Nathan Lane in *The Nance* directed by Jack O'Brien. Other notable Broadway credits include Wilbur Turnblad in *Hairspray* and the Baker in *Into the Woods*. Off-Broadway he appeared in Red Bull Theater's *The Government Inspector*, Atlantic Theater's *These Paper Bullets!*, *Love's Fire* for the Acting Company as well as the acclaimed revival of *The Mystery of Irma Vep*. Screen credits include *The Blacklist*, *Cafe Society* and as Eddie Cantor on HBO's *Boardwalk Empire*. Stephen received his MFA from Yale Drama School.

**Jonathan Holmes** (*Captain/Ensemble*) This is Jonathan's first show with Arena Stage. Recent theater includes *The Massive Tragedy of Madame Bovary* (Liverpool Everyman/Bristol Old Vic), *Crazy For You* and *The King and I* (Gateway Theatre, Richmond), *Brief Encounter* (Kneehigh/Vancouver Playhouse) and *The Thing About Men* (Arts Club, Vancouver). Jonathan's extensive film and television credits include *Anne With an E* (2 seasons), *The BFG*, *Rogue*, *Descendants*, *Nightwatching*, *Almost Human*, *4400* and *Stargate: Atlantis*. His voice can be heard on numerous animated series, most recently the Netflix Original series *The Dragon Prince*.

**Lisa Helmi Johanson** (*Hope Harcourt*) is thrilled to be returning to her native D.C. area! NYC: *Avenue Q*, *Three Sisters*, *Women Beware Women*, *Rescue Rue*. Tours: *Into the Woods*, *Avenue Q*. Select Regional: *Vietgone* (Denver Center), *Priscilla...* (Ogunquit & Gateway Playhouses), *Waterfall* (5th Avenue Theatre & Pasadena Playhouse), *4,000 Miles* (St. Louis Rep.), *Taming of the Shrew* (VA Stage). Film/TV: *Law & Order: SVU*, *Z-Rock* (IFC), *The Onion News Network*. Deep gratitude to HCKR, Arena Stage and Geoff Josselson. Micah 6:8 [www.lisahelmijohanson.com](http://www.lisahelmijohanson.com) Insta: @hurricanehelmi

**Maria Rizzo** (*Erma/Ensemble*) is elated to be back at Arena Stage having last appeared as Chava in *Fiddler on the Roof*. Other regional credits include *Crazy For You*, *A Little Night Music*, *The Gulf*, *West Side Story*, *Cabaret*, *Gypsy* (Louise - Helen Hayes nomination), *Spin*, *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, *Xanadu* (Signature Theatre); *Evita*, *Grease!* (Olney Theatre Center); *Chicago*, *Cabaret* (Sally Bowles - Helen Hayes nomination), *The Sunshine Boys*, *Spring Awakening* (Keegan Theatre); *Carrie the Musical* (Studio Theatre); *Bat Boy* (1st Stage); and *Hairspray*, *Nunsense*, *Cinderella* (Toby's Dinner Theatre). Upcoming production is *Grand Hotel* at Signature Theatre. Instagram: @mariarizz90

**Soara-Joye Ross** (*Reno Sweeney*) After coming off the heels of John Doyle's New York revival of *Carmen Jones* as Frankie, the "Beat Out Dat Rhythm of the Drum" songstress Soara-Joye is thrilled to be making her Arena Stage debut as Reno! She was last in D.C. with the National Tour of *The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess* (The National Theatre). Broadway: *Les Misérables*, *Dance of the Vampires*. Off-Broadway: *Jerry Springer the Opera* (Carnegie Hall, dir. Jason Moore), *Dessa Rose* (Lincoln Center), *Tin Pan Alley Rag* (Roundabout Theatre Co.), *Single Black Female* (Playwrights Horizons & The Duke, dir. Colman Domingo), *The First Noel* (The Apollo, dir. Steven Broadnax), *Disenchanted* (Westside), *Cross That River* (Outstanding Individual Performance NYMF Award). Film: *Garden State*. TV: *Crashing* (HBO). Soara-Joye also has a solo show entitled *This Is My Life, Gotta Fly!* Training: The American Musical and Dramatic Academy. Performances dedicated in loving memory of her mom, Rita. [www.Soara-Joye.com](http://www.Soara-Joye.com)

**Thomas Adrian Simpson** (*Elisha Whitney*) returns to Arena Stage where he was most recently seen in *Dave*. Other Arena appearances include Karl Lindner in *A Raisin in the Sun*; Col. Pickering in *My Fair Lady*; Abraham Lincoln in *Mary T. & Lizzy K.*; and Roy in *A Light in the Piazza*, among others. Recent regional credits include: Frolo in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* at The Riverside Center; Caiaphas in *Jesus Christ Superstar* and Pete the cowboy in *Crazy For You* at Signature Theatre; and Judge Turpin in *Sweeney Todd* at The Olney Theatre Center. Tom can be seen in season four of Netflix's *House of Cards*. Tom is proud to be a graduate of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts.

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For company biographies, please visit <https://www.arenastage.org/tickets/season-landing/anything-goes/>.

***Anything Goes* is generously sponsored by George and Duffy Ftikas and Margot Kelly. Choreography is sponsored by Virginia McGehee Friend.**

### Post-Show Conversations

Connect with our shows beyond the performance at a post-show conversation with artists and staff – November 28, December 4 and December 19 following the noon performance; November 27 following the 7:30 p.m. performance and December 6 following the 8:00 p.m. performance.

### Pet Adoption

Arena Stage is partnering with the Humane Rescue Alliance to support the adoption of shelter animals. The Humane Rescue Alliance's mobile adoption vehicle will be on site at Arena Stage on November 3 and December 8 between performances. Additional on-site adoption dates to be announced.

### PRODUCTION INFORMATION

#### *Anything Goes*

Music and Lyrics by Cole Porter

Original Book by P.G. Wodehouse and Guy Bolton  
and Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse

New Book by Timothy Crouse and John Weidman

Directed by Molly Smith

Choreographed by Parker Esse

Music Direction by Paul Sportelli

In the Fichandler Stage / November 2 – December 23, 2018

**ABOUT:** The SS American has set sail from NY to London. Aboard, the lovelorn Billy has stowed away on a mission to stop the marriage of his mystery muse, heiress Hope Harcourt, to the millionaire Lord Evelyn Oakleigh. Now, it is up to Billy, with the help of showgirls, sailors and public enemy #13, to find, woo and win back his true love. Unlikely alliances arise as mischief and mayhem ensue in this madcap musical by beloved composer and Tony Award winner Cole Porter. It's the perfect night out at the theater – contagiously fun and pure “musical comedy joy!” (*The New York Times*)

### CAST:

Lord Evelyn Oakleigh: Jimmy Ray Bennett

Billy Crocker: Corbin Bleu

Ensemble/Angel: DeMoya Watson Brown

John/Ensemble: Julio Catano-Yee

Moonface Martin: Stephen DeRosa

Purser/Ensemble/Lady Fair Quartet: Ben Gunderson

Captain/Ensemble: Jonathan Holmes

Hope Harcourt: Lisa Helmi Johanson

Ensemble/Lady Fair Quartet: Brent McBeth

Swing: Allie O'Donnell

Ensemble/Lady Fair Quartet: Mickey Orange

Ensemble/Angel/Dance Captain: Lizz Picini

Ensemble/Angel: Kristyn Pope

Erma/Ensemble: Maria Rizzo

Reno Sweeney: Soara-Joye Ross

Luke/Ensemble: Christopher Shin

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Elisha Whitney: Thomas Adrian Simpson  
Evangeline Harcourt: Lisa Tejero  
Swing: Brett Uram  
Ensemble/Angel: Andrea Weinzierl  
Ensemble/Lady Fair Quartet: Nicholas Yenson

### **CREATIVE TEAM:**

Director: Molly Smith  
Choreographer: Parker Esse  
Music Director: Paul Sportelli  
Set Designer: Ken MacDonald  
Costume Designer: Alejo Vietti  
Lighting Designer: Kimberly Purtell  
Sound Designer: Daniel Erdberg  
Associate Music Director: William Yanesh  
Assistant Choreographer: Lizz Picini  
Dialect and Vocal Coach: Lisa Nathans  
Associate Director/Text Director: Anita Maynard-Losh  
Casting Directors: Victor Vazquez, Geoff Josselson  
Stage Manager: Susan White  
Assistant Stage Manager: Trevor Riley  
Production Assistant: Dayne Sundman

### **PLAN YOUR VISIT**

**TICKETS:** Tickets for *Anything Goes* are \$51-105, 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 <https://www.arenastage.org/tickets/savings-programs/>.

Tickets may be purchased online at [arenastage.org](https://www.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 2:00 p.m. on Friday 11/23; at noon on Wednesday 11/28, Wednesday 12/4 and Wednesday 12/19  
Alternate times: Sunday, 11/18 at 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

**Open-captioned performances:** 11/15 at 8:00 p.m., 12/5 at 7:30 p.m., 12/15 at 2:00 p.m.

**Audio-described performance:** 12/1 at 2:00 p.m.

**Full Calendar:** <https://tickets.arenastage.org/single/PSDetail.aspx?psn=26446>

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**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 <https://www.arenastage.org/plan-your-visit/richards-place-cafe/prix-fixe/>. The café opens two hours before the show, and reservations are recommended. To **pre-order refreshments**, visit <https://www.arenastage.org/plan-your-visit/richards-place-cafe/concessions/>.

**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 \$17. Single ticket buyers may purchase parking in advance for \$20 or on the day of the performance for \$24 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 \$15.

**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.

For complete 2018/19 Season details, visit: [arenastage.org/tickets/season-landing/](https://www.arenastage.org/tickets/season-landing/).

*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](https://www.arenastage.org)

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