

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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<https://www.arenastage.org/press-room/press-kits/press-kits-landing/indecent-press-kit/>

ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES WASHINGTON-AREA PREMIERE OF PAULA VOGEL'S TONY AWARD-WINNING *INDECENT* NOVEMBER 23 – DECEMBER 30, 2018

*** Eric Rosen makes his Arena Stage directorial debut;
Alexander Sovronsky provides original music ***

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater announces the full company for Pulitzer Prize winner **Paula Vogel**'s thought-provoking play *Indecent*. Inspired by the 1923 Broadway debut of Sholem Asch's Yiddish drama *The God of Vengeance*, and the controversy that surrounded its themes of censorship, immigration and anti-Semitism, Vogel explores the behind-the-scenes story of the courageous artists who risked their careers and lives to perform this piece of theater under the most challenging circumstances. Infused with music that combines standards from Yiddish theater with folk traditions of the early to mid-20th century, *Indecent*, a co-production with Baltimore Center Stage and Kansas City Repertory, is directed by **Eric Rosen**, with choreography by **Erika Chong Shuch** and music direction and original music by **Alexander Sovronsky**. The production runs **November 23 – December 30, 2018 in the Kreeger Theater**.

Making his Arena Stage debut, **Ben Cherry** (Broadway's *Indecent* and *Fiddler on the Roof*) portrays the stage manager Lemml, the role he held in The Guthrie production as well. Returning to Arena are **Susan Lynskey** (*Roe, Noises Off*) as The Middle: Halina/Ensemble and **Susan Rome** (*The Great Society, All the Way*) as The Elder: Vera/Ensemble. Also making their Arena debuts are **Victor Raider-Wexler** (Broadway's *Gypsy, Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*) as The Elder: Otto/Ensemble, **Emily Shackelford** (Off-Broadway's *Lucky Duck*) as The Ingenue: Chana/Ensemble, **Ethan Watermeier** (*Les Misérables* National Tour) as The Middle: Mendel/Ensemble and **Max Wolkowitz** (Long Wharf's *The Chosen*) as The Ingenue: Avram/Ensemble. The three actor/musicians are **John Milosich** (*War Horse* National Tour, Synetic Theater's *Host and Guest*) as Moriz Godowsky/Musician/Ensemble, **Maryn Shaw** (Studio Theatre's *The Wolves*) as Nelly Friedman/Musician/Ensemble and **Alexander Sovronsky** (Broadway's *Cyrano de Bergerac*) as Mayer Balsam/Musician/Ensemble.

"Paula Vogel is one of America's best living playwrights," says **Molly Smith**. "She tackles difficult subjects, challenging her audiences to question, confront and learn. I have said at Arena Stage that politics is our voice – in our bones and in our blood. *Indecent* is the kind of story that demonstrates what an impact theater can have. A great team has been built around this production, with our colleagues from Kansas City Rep and Baltimore CenterStage – which is further evidence of the power of theater."

—continued—

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“Over 20 years ago I encountered and became fascinated by the masterpiece of Yiddish drama *God of Vengeance* and its extraordinary place in the history of both Jewish and LGBT theatre history,” adds **Rosen**. “I remember with perfect clarity the first time I read the scene between two women, in love, kissing in the rain — a scene that is at the heart of Paula Vogel’s masterpiece *Indecent*. That one scene reminds me how theater can change history and can endure long after any single production. Now, two decades later, I’m thrilled to have the chance to direct that scene in this brilliant love letter to the power and importance of theater, then and now.”

Joining Rosen are Choreographer **Erika Chong Shuch** (Oregon Shakespeare Festival’s *Julius Caesar* and *Beauty and the Beast*) and Music Director **Alexander Sovronsky**.

In addition to Rosen, Shuch and Sovronsky, the creative team also includes Set Designer **Jack Magaw**, Costume Designer **Linda Roethke**, Lighting Designer **Josh Epstein**, Sound Designer **Andre Pluess**, Production Designer **Jeffrey Cady**, Wig Designer **Anne Nesmith**, Voice and Dialect Coach **Zach Champion**, Casting Directors **Victor Vazquez** and **Geoff Josselson**, Stage Manager **Kurt Hall**, Assistant Stage Manager **Marne Anderson** and Production Assistant **Emily Ann Mellon**.

Paula Vogel (*Playwright*)’s play, *How I Learned to Drive*, received the Pulitzer Prize, Lucille Lortel, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle and New York Drama Critics Awards for Best Play, as well as her second Obie Award. Other plays include *The Long Christmas Ride Home*, *The Mineola Twins*, *The Baltimore Waltz*, *Hot 'N' Throbbing*, *Desdemona*, *And Baby Makes Seven*, *The Oldest Profession*, *A Civil War Christmas* and *Don Juan Comes Home from Iraq*. Her play *Indecent* opened at The Cort Theatre in New York in April 2017. It is available on Broadway HD. TCG has published four books of her work. She teaches playwriting workshops throughout the United States and abroad.

Eric Rosen (*Director*) recently concluded his decade long tenure as artistic director of Kansas City Repertory Theatre and previously was co-founder and artistic director of Chicago’s About Face Theatre for thirteen seasons. World premieres under his direction include *Venice* (named “Best Musical of 2010” by *TIME*), *Clay*, *Roof of the World*, *A Christmas Story: The Musical*, *M. Proust* and *Theater District*. Other directing credits include Goodman, Hartford Stage, Baltimore Center Stage, Chicago Shakespeare, Melbourne Theatre Company, the O’Neill and Sundance. Highlights of his tenure at KCREP include reimagined productions of classic musicals including *Evita*, *Sunday in the Park with George*, *Hair: Retrospection* and a punk rock *Pippin*, along with classics from *Romeo to Death of a Salesman*. Rosen helped develop and produced the original production of the Pulitzer and Tony Award-winning play *I Am My Own Wife*. As a playwright, his work includes *Lot’s Wife*, *Dream Boy*, *Winesburg, Ohio* and *Venice*. Rosen served on the Board of Theatre Communications Group, was inducted into Chicago’s Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame and was a finalist for the Zelda Fichandler Award. He holds a doctorate in performance studies from Northwestern University and a B.A. in performance studies from UNC.

Erika Chong Shuch (*Choreographer*) is a performance maker, choreographer and director whose topic-driven ruminations coalesce into imagistic assemblages of music, movement, text, and design. Interested in expanding ideas around how performance is created and shared, her recent work *For You* (a Creative Capital Project, commissioned by Yerba Buena Center for the Arts) is a series of intimate performances for audiences of 12. Recent projects also include *Iron Shoes*, a new neo-feminist folk opera created with Kitka Women’s Vocal Ensemble (supported by Creative Work Fund, NEA) and *TheaterTheater*, a participatory morality play exploring the hidden forces underlying everyday ethical choices. Her original work has also been commissioned and supported by Gerbode Foundation, Daejeon Metropolitan Dance Theater (Korea) and Berkeley Repertory Theater’s Groundfloor Program. Erika choreographs for theater companies such as Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Folger Theater, Hudson Valley Shakespeare, Kennedy Center, American Conservatory Theater, Pittsburgh Public, Playmakers Rep, California Shakespeare Festival, and Magic Theatre.

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Alexander Sovronsky (*Music Direction and Original Music*) Arena Stage debut. As a composer/performer, NYC credits include Broadway: *Cyrano de Bergerac* (starring Kevin Kline). Off-Broadway: *Mother of the Maid, Romeo & Juliet* (The Public); *Othello* (TFANA); *Bottom of the World* (Atlantic Theater Co); *Volpone, Women Beware Women* (Red Bull); *King Lear, Marat/Sade, Romeo & Juliet, Macbeth, Three Sisters* (Classical Theater of Harlem); *The Little Prince* (Hang A Tale). Regional: Hartford Stage, Walnut Street Theater, Shakespeare & Co, Shakespeare Theater Company, Ford's Theatre, Barrington Stage Co, Berkshire Theater Group, Arizona Theatre Co, American Shakespeare Center, Connecticut Rep, Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, Wharton Salon, WAM Theater, Actors Shakespeare Project. International: title role in *Hamlet* (Milan & NYC). Instagram: @AlexanderSovronsky For a good time, check out www.AlexanderSovronsky.com.

Cast Biographies (in alphabetical order)

Ben Cherry (*Lemml*) appeared on Broadway in *Indecent* and *Fiddler on the Roof*, Off-Broadway in *Goldstein* and in the National Tour of *Mary Poppins*. Most recently, Ben played in the regional premiers of *Oslo* at the Pioneer Theatre Company and *Indecent* at the Guthrie. Other regional highlights include *Mothers and Sons* at Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, and *Henry V, The Secret Garden, The Tempest* and *Merry Wives of Windsor*, all during his four seasons at the Utah Shakespeare Festival. He originated roles in Milwaukee Repertory Theatre's *Route 66, Life Could Be a Dream*, and *The Andrews Brothers*, and in Delaware Theatre Company's *10 Months*. Ben has been seen on TV in *The Following, Smash* and *I Love You...But I Lied*. Ben trained at the University of Michigan and North Carolina School of the Arts. www.BenCherry.com

Susan Lynskey (*The Middle: Halina/Ensemble*) is thrilled to return to the D.C. stage with this beautiful production. Arena audiences know Susan well from *Roe* (Helen Hayes nomination; also at Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Berkeley Rep), *Noises Off* (opposite Robert Prosky), *Proof*, Anne Bogart's *Intimations for Saxophone, Book of Days* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Earlier this year, she starred as young Margaret Thatcher in the U.S. premiere of the U.K.'s *Handbagged* (Round House Theatre), a role she will take Off-Broadway (59E59) in June 2019. Other recent work includes *Sweat* (ACT, San Francisco), *Imaginary Comforts* (Berkeley Rep), *The Sisters Rosensweig* (Theatre J), *Richard II* (OSF), and directing Barbara Hammond's *Enter the Roar* at The Kennedy Center. Susan contributes nationally to the development of new plays. She is a usual suspect at The Kennedy Center, Mosaic, and Metro Stage, and is co-artistic director of Washington Women in Theatre. On the left coast: OSF's Black Swan Lab; Z Space; Magic Theatre's Virgin Play Festival (in English and ASL); and as a Berkeley Rep Ground Floor returning artist working with playwrights Lemony Snicket, Ryan Haddad, Dustin Chinn, and Sarah Ruhl on her newest play (a response to *The Crucible*; name to be announced). Susan has been named by *The Washington Post* as one of the "top ten actors to watch" and featured in *American Theatre Magazine, Washington Theatre Review*, and *Broadway World*. She is the recipient of numerous Helen Hayes nominations, the DCTS's Audience Choice Award and high honors from the D.C. Commission on Arts and Humanities. Susan holds degrees from the University of Iowa (MFA), McGill University (BA Honours) and The National Theatre School of Canada. She deeply thanks her parents, Walker, Susie, David, Victor Vasquez, and (always) The Egg.

John Milosich (*Moriz Godowsky/Musician/Ensemble*) is grateful for the opportunity to debut at Arena Stage. D.C. credits include *Kafka's Metamorphosis, Master and Margarita, Frankenstein, Salomé, Crackpots, Hamlet*, as well as *Host and Guest* (Synetic Theater). He served as composer and music director for *Courage* (dog & pony dc), co-director for *Annabel Lee* and *The Fiddler Ghost* (Old Lore Theater – Cap Fringe), and solo writer/composer/performer for *The Race* (Arts Alive/Montgomery College). John played the role of Songman in the U.S. national tour of *War Horse*, and recently released the album *One Precious Life* with his PA-based theatrical rock band *Featherburn*.

Victor Raider-Wexler (*The Elder: Otto/Ensemble*) returns to Washington after a 53-year absence, last seen here in *Merry Wives of Windsor*. On Broadway he has appeared in *Best Friend, Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* and *Gypsy*. Off-Broadway credits include *The Passion of Dracula, The Boys Next Door* and *Give the Bishop My Faint Regards*. National tours include *Grand Hotel* and *Six Degrees of Separation*. (cont.)

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His recurring roles on television include *Seinfeld*, *The King of Queens* and *Everybody Loves Raymond*. Movie appearances include *Dr. Doolittle 2*, *Minority Report*, and *The Pursuit of Happyness*. Regional appearances include Milwaukee Rep, Denver Center Theatre, Pittsburgh Public, KC Rep, Syracuse Stage and Springfield Rep. He won the best actor award at the Brussels International Film Festival. Most recently in *A Moon for the Misbegotten*.

Susan Rome (*The Elder: Vera/Ensemble*) returns to Arena Stage after appearing in *The Great Society* and *All the Way*. D.C.-area credits include *If I Forget* and *Hand to God* (HH nomination, Ensemble) at Studio Theatre; *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Olney Theatre Center); *After the Revolution*, *Vanya and Sonia...*, *An Enemy of the People* and *Mud Blue Sky* (Baltimore Center Stage); *Roz and Ray*, *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*, *Brighton Beach Memoirs* (Helen Hayes Award), *The Sisters Rosensweig*, *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife*, *The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide...*, *The Argument* and *After the Revolution* (HH nomination) at Theater J, where she is an associate artist-in-residence; *The Whale*, *Las Meninas* and *A Shayna Maidel* (Rep Stage); and *Richard III*, *Macbeth* and *All's Well That Ends Well* (Baltimore Shakespeare Festival). Regional credits include *The Substance of Fire* (Mark Taper Forum) and *The Legacy* (Seattle's Centerstage). TV credits include *House of Cards*, *NYPD Blue* and four seasons as DA Ilene Nathan on *The Wire*. Film credits include *A Dirty Shame* and *My One and Only*. www.susanrome.com

Emily Shackelford (*The Ingenue: Chana/Ensemble*) is making her Arena Stage debut. She appeared Off-Broadway in *Lucky Duck* at The New Victory Theatre. Regional theatre credits with The Kansas City Repertory Theatre include Johanna in *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, Luisa in *The Fantasticks*, The Mistress in *Evita*, and several world premieres such as *Between The Lines*, *Last Days of Summer*, *Man In Love*, *Hair: Retrospection* and *Stillwater*. Instagram: @emilyareti. www.emilyshackelford.com

Maryn Shaw (*Nelly Friedman/Musician/Ensemble*) is thrilled to return to D.C. after last being seen in *The Wolves* (Studio Theatre). Her Off-Broadway credits include *The Skin of Our Teeth* (Theater for a New Audience). Regionally, her credits include *Twelfth Night*, *The Book of Will*, Kate Hamill's *Pride and Prejudice* (Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival), *Love's Labour's Lost* (The Acting Company/HVSF), and *Clybourne Park* and *Pinkalicious: The Musical* (The Hangar Theatre). Maryn can be seen in the upcoming season of Netflix's *Friends from College*. Maryn is a classically trained violinist and opera singer, and is a graduate of the Fordham University Theatre Program and Interlochen Arts Academy. www.marynshaw.com @marynstagram

Alexander Sovronsky (*Mayer Balsam/Musician/Ensemble*) – See Music Director biography above

Ethan Watermeier (*The Middle: Mendel/Ensemble*) has performed a broad range of leading roles in musical theater, theater and opera throughout the United States. Performance highlights include: Broadway National Tour of *Les Misérables* (Javert and Factory Foreman/Combeferre), Shakespeare Theatre Company, Folger Theatre, Houston Grand Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, Aspen Music Festival and Olney Theatre Center. A keen advocate for new works, Ethan has premiered compositions by Ricky Ian Gordon, Jake Heggie, Martin Hennessy, John Musto and Rachel Portman. He was educated at Northwestern University (BM), The Manhattan School of Music (MM), and the University of Maryland (Doctoral Studies), and is a Designated Linklater Teacher trainee. Ethan is a winner of the Lotte Lenya International Competition and currently serves on the faculty at American University. He is a proud member of the National Association of Teachers of Singing, VASTA, Musical Theatre Educators' Alliance and the artist roster of Sing For Hope.

Max Wolkowitz (*The Ingenue: Avram/Ensemble*) is thrilled to be making his Arena Stage debut. He has appeared regionally in *The Chosen* (Long Wharf), *Assisted Loving* (Capital Rep), *My Name is Asher Lev* (Penguin Rep), *Ivanov* (Trinity Rep), and the first TheatreWorks tour of *The Velveteen Rabbit*. He received a BA from Bennington College and an MFA in Acting from Brown/Trinity where some highlights were playing Dr. Givings in *In the Next Room* (WISE Foundation Emerging Artist of the Year Award), Crow in *Tooth of Crime* and Sir Andrew in *Twelfth Night*. Max is a proud member of The Actor's Center.

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

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Anonymous support for *Indecent* has been provided by a life-long Washingtonian and friend of Arena Stage.

Post-Show Conversations

Connect with our shows beyond the performance at a post-show conversation with artists and staff – December 5, December 12 and December 18 following the noon performance; December 11 following the 7:30 p.m. performance and December 27 following the 8:00 p.m. performance.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

Indecent

By Paula Vogel

Directed by Eric Rosen

Choreography by Erika Chong Shuch

Music Direction and Original Music by Alexander Sovronsky

In the Kreeger Theater / November 23 – December 30, 2018

ABOUT: In 1923, the Broadway debut of Sholem Asch's Yiddish drama *God of Vengeance* set the stage for an explosive moment in theatrical history. The evocative work of Jewish culture was praised and criticized for its taboo themes of censorship, immigration and anti-Semitism. Inspired by these true events and the controversy, Pulitzer Prize winner Paula Vogel tells the behind-the-scenes story of the courageous artists who risked their careers and lives to perform a work deemed "indecent." "Brimming with good faith" (*The New York Times*), this Tony Award-winning intimate and enchanting play filled with music and dance is a testament to the transformative power of the art that is timelier than ever before.

CAST:

Lemml: Ben Cherry

The Middle (Halina)/Ensemble: Susan Lynskey

Moriz Godowsky/Musician/Ensemble: John Milosich

The Elder (Otto)/Ensemble: Victor Raider-Wexler

The Elder (Vera)/Ensemble: Susan Rome

The Ingenue (Chana)/Ensemble: Emily Shackelford

Nelly Friedman/Musician/Ensemble: Maryn Shaw

Mayer Balsam/Musician/Ensemble: Alexander Sovronsky

The Middle (Mendel)/Ensemble: Ethan Watermeier

The Ingenue (Avram)/Ensemble: Max Wolkowitz

CREATIVE TEAM:

Director: Eric Rosen

Choreographer: Erika Chong Shuch

Music Direction and Original Music: Alexander Sovronsky

Set Designer: Jack Magaw

Costume Designer: Linda Roethke

Lighting Designer: Josh Epstein

Sound Designer: Andre Pluess

Production Designer: Jeffrey Cady

Wig Designer: Anne Nesmith

Voice and Dialect Coach: Zach Champion

Casting Directors: Victor Vazquez, Geoff Josselson

Stage Manager: Kurt Hall

Assistant Stage Manager: Marne Anderson

Production Assistant: Emily Ann Mellon

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PLAN YOUR VISIT

TICKETS: Tickets for *Indecent* are \$41-95, 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 noon on Wednesday 12/5, Wednesday 12/12 and Tuesday 12/18.
Additional performance Monday 12/24.

Open-captioned performances: 12/20 at 8:00 p.m., 12/22 at 2:00 p.m., 12/26 at 7:30 p.m.

Audio-described performance: 12/15 at 2:00 p.m.

Full Calendar:

<https://tickets.arenastage.org/single/PSDetail.aspx?psn=26510>

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/).

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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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