

# ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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December 11, 2018

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

ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES WORLD PREMIERE OF  
KENNETH LIN'S *KLEPTOCRACY*  
JANUARY 18 – FEBRUARY 24, 2019

\*\*\* Jackson Gay directs this exploration of the rise-to-power of Vladimir Putin  
after the collapse of the Soviet Union \*\*\*

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater announces the full company for the world premiere of **Kenneth Lin's** timely cautionary tale of capitalism run amok, *Kleptocracy*. Inspired by the power struggle between the richest of the Oligarchs and an ambitious Vladimir Putin after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Lin (*House of Cards*) explores U.S. – Russia relations then and now. Directed by **Jackson Gay**, and by special arrangement with **Robert Ahrens**, **Mickey Liddell**, **Michael Mills** and **Andrew Tobias**, *Kleptocracy* runs **January 18 – February 24, 2019** in the Kreeger Theater.

"*Kleptocracy* is the most dangerous play at Arena Stage this season," shares Artistic Director **Molly Smith**. "Dangerous because playwright Kenneth Lin has taken us right into the heart of greed, manipulation and the rise of the wealthy and Putin in Russia in the '90s and '00s. It's a fascinating prism through which to examine our relationship with Russia in the United States right now."

Making their Arena Stage debuts, **Max Woertendyke** (Broadway's *A View From the Bridge*, The Public Theatre's *Illyria*) portrays Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the leader of the Oligarchs, and **Christopher Geary** (Geffen Playhouse's *These Paper Bullets!*) plays a young, ladder-climbing Vladimir Putin.

Also making their Arena debuts are **John Austin** (Constellation Theatre's *Melancholy Play*) as Valentin/Ensemble, **Brontë England-Nelson** (Broadway's *Three Tall Women*) as Inna Khodorkovsky, **Tony Manna** (Atlantic Theater's *These Paper Bullets!*) as Boris Berezovsky/Yuri Schmidt/Ensemble and **Alex Piper** (Shakespeare Theatre Company's *Henry IV Part I* and *Part II*) as Platon Lebedev/Ensemble. Returning to Arena are **Elliott Bales** (Arena's *The Great Society*, Studio Theatre's *Kings*) as Petukhov/Ensemble, **Candy Buckley** (Arena's *All the King's Men*, Broadway's *Cabaret*) as White House Official and **Joseph Carlson** (Arena's *Sovereignty*, Off-Broadway's *uncle tom: deconstructed*) as Leonid Nevzlin/Kuchma/Ensemble/Fight Captain.

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## Page 2 — Casting and creative team announced for *Kleptocracy*

“As a child growing up during the last of the Cold War, Russia, ever-present in our national consciousness, was always the ultimate, dangerous other – the funhouse reflection of everything that happens if you don’t buy into standard Western mores of politics, economics and philosophy. But, what you see in the funhouse mirror is still your own reflection,” explains **Lin**. “A work of fiction inspired by actual events, *Kleptocracy* tells the tragedy of how the West and Eurasia were nearly reconciled in the 1990s and the early aughts, but ultimately failed. The wake of that tragedy is the world in which we currently reside.”

He continues, “I cannot think of a theater and a city that are better to receive the first incarnation of this play than Arena Stage and Washington, D.C. Politics has been a central character in so much of my creative life. I am thrilled that it’s all finally coming together in *Kleptocracy*.”

“Kenneth has written a thrilling and surprising new play inspired by real events that revisits this particular time in history with striking imagery and theatricality, but also vividly conjures our current times,” adds **Gay**. “These complicated and compelling characters are facing the largest possible stakes at a time when the direction our world would take was being decided in an epic power play on the global stage.”

In addition to Gay, the creative team includes Set Designer **Misha Kachman**; Costume Designer **Jessica Ford**; Lighting Designer **Masha Tsimring**; Projection Designer **Nicholas Hussong**; Original Music and Sound Design by **Broken Chord**; Hair, Wig and Makeup Designer **Dave Bova**; Fight Director **Lewis Shaw**; Voice and Dialect Coach **Zach Champion**; Casting Directors **Victor Vazquez** and **Geoff Josselson**; Stage Manager **Christi B Spann** and Assistant Stage Manager **Mimi Craig**.

**Kenneth Lin** (*Playwright*) is an award-winning playwright whose plays *Warrior Class*; *Pancakes, Pancakes!*; *Po Boy Tango*; *said Said*; *Agency\**; *Genius in Love* and *The Lynching of a White Man In Rural, CA* have been performed throughout the world. He is a member of the theater/music/film collective New Neighborhood. Upcoming theatrical works include *Farewell My Concubine* with composer Jason Robert Brown (Cinematic Productions), *Life On Paper* (Jackalope Theatre Company) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* with music by Stew and the Negro Problem. Television credits include *The First* (Hulu), *House of Cards* (Netflix, Emmy nomination, Best Dramatic Series), *Warrior* (HBO/Cinemax), and *Sweetbitter* (Starz). Feature film credits include *Abacus* (dir. Justin Lin). Awards/honors include winner of the Keneda Graduate Playwriting Competition, Princess Grace Award, L. Arnold Weissberger Award, Cole Porter Prize, Edgerton New Play Prize and Fulbright Scholarship. Education: Yale School of Drama

**Jackson Gay** (*Director*)’s recent productions include *Make Believe* by Bess Wohl (Hartford Stage); *Woman in Mind* by Alan Ayckbourn; *Transfers* by Lucy Thurber (New York Stage & Film and MCC, Off-Broadway Alliance Best New Play Award 2018); Christina Anderson’s *the ripple, the wave that carried me home* (Ground Floor Berkeley Rep); *Invictus Mingus* by Frank Harts (New Neighborhood/Dorset Theatre); *The Cake* by Bekah Brunstetter and *Lover Beloved* by Suzanne Vega and Duncan Sheik (Alley Theatre); Lisa Lampanelli’s *Stuffed* (Westside Theatre); Mat Smart’s *Kill Local* (La Jolla Playhouse); Chekhov’s *Three Sisters* (Studio Theatre/New Neighborhood); Shakespeare’s *Much Ado* adapted with Ken Lin (Cal Shakes); *These Paper Bullets!* by Rolin Jones with music by Billie Joe Armstrong (New Neighborhood, Atlantic, Geffen, Yale Rep - Critics Pick *Time Out NY*, Best Production and Adaptation LA Sage Awards, Best of 2015 *Time Out Los Angeles*, Connecticut Critics Circle Award Best Production and Best Director); Silverman’s *The Moors* and *Elevada* by Sheila Callaghan (Yale Rep); Thurber’s *The Insurgents* (Labyrinth Theatre Company); *3C* by David Adjmi and Thurber’s *Where We’re Born* (Rattlestick); Thurber’s *Scarcity* and Jones’ *The Jammer* (Atlantic); Jones’ *The Intelligent Design of Jenny Chow* (Atlantic and Yale Rep, Connecticut Critics Circle Award Outstanding Production of a Play); *A Little Journey* (Mint Theater, Drama Desk nomination Outstanding Revival of a Play). MFA: Yale School of Drama.

**Cast Biographies (in alphabetical order)**

**John Austin** (*Valentin/Ensemble*) is thrilled to make his Arena Stage debut. D.C. credits include Frank in *Melancholy Play* (Constellation Theatre) and Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Prince George's Shakespeare). With National Players (Olney Theatre Center), John toured America as Montano in *Othello*, the Mad Hatter in *Alice in Wonderland* and Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby*. In Austin, Texas, John originated the role of Young Zeus in *Zeus in Therapy* (Tutto Theatre Company), for which he won the B. Iden Payne Award for Outstanding Young Performer. Training includes a BFA in Acting, Summa Cum Laude, from Boston University, and a Certificate in Classical Acting from L.A.M.D.A. The Bette Davis Foundation awarded John the Bette Davis Prize for excellence in the acting profession. Upcoming productions include *Oslo* (Round House Theatre). Instagram: @johnaustintx <http://www.johnaustinactor.com/>

**Elliott Bales** (*Petukhov/Ensemble*) returns to Arena Stage, having appeared previously in *The Great Society*. Elliott works as a theater and film actor based out of Arlington, VA. Theater credits include *Kings* (Studio Theater), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Folger Theatre), *Occupied Territories* and *The Wonderful World of Dissocia* (Theater Alliance), *Harvey* (1st Stage), *Not Enuf Lifetimes* (The Welders), *Romeo and Juliet* (Unexpected Stage) and *White Christmas* (Little Theater on the Square). Elliott's film credits include *Wireless*, *The Sultan and the Saint* and *The Coming Storm*, and TV credits include *Legends and Lies: Patriots*, *The Sultan and the Saint* and *House of Horrors: Kidnapped*. He is a graduate of Abilene Christian University and the National War College. Elliott retired from the U.S. Army after 26 years of service.

**Candy Buckley** (*White House Official*) last appeared at Arena Stage as Sadie in *All the King's Men* for which she received a Helen Hayes nomination. Her Broadway credits include Sam Mendes-directed *Cabaret*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, *After the Fall*, *Scandalous* and *Ring Round the Moon*. Off-Broadway, Candy again worked with Mendes in *Wise Guys*; with Hal Prince in *Petrified Prince* (Drama Desk nom.); with Phyllida Lloyd in an all-female *Taming of the Shrew*; with daughter/writer Erin Buckley in *Older Lady*; and with playwright Max Baker in *Hal + Bee*. She recently premiered regionally in Rob Askins' *The Squirrels* and Mat Smart's *Kill Local*. On TV she can be seen in *The Americans*, *Treme*, *Blue Bloods*, *Gossip Girl* and *Criminal Intent*, and in the film *Bachelorette*. She holds the Princess Grace Statuette for Outstanding Achievement in Theater.

**Joseph Carlson** (*Leonid Nevzlin/Kuchma/Ensemble/Fight Captain*) returns to Arena Stage after appearing in *Sovereignty* as President Andrew Jackson. Off-Broadway credits include *uncle tom: de-constructed* with The Conciliation Project, a social justice theater company where he has been an ensemble member, director, and facilitator for over 10 years, helping to develop plays for the purpose of opening dialogue about racism and intersectional oppression in America in order to repair its damaging legacy. Selected D.C. credits include *Nat Turner in Jerusalem* (Forum Theatre), *Iokanaan in Salome* (Scena Theatre), *The Night Alive* (Round House Theatre), *Macbeth* in *Voodoo Macbeth* (American Century Theater), *Antony* in *Antony and Cleopatra* (Brave Spirits Theatre), and *Colossal* (HH nominations, Outstanding Lead Actor and Ensemble) at Olney Theater. Select regional credits include Stanley Kowalski in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Richmond Theater Critics Award nomination, Best Actor in a Play) at Firehouse Theater, Tom Joad in *The Grapes of Wrath* (VA Rep.), *Mutual Philanthropy* (New Jersey Rep.) and *Dancing at Lughnasa* (Tantrum Theatre). Joe has been seen on television in *Turn*, *The American West*, and *Frontiersmen*, and on screen in Spielberg's *Lincoln*. Joe holds a BFA in Performance and an MFA in Acting Directing Pedagogy specializing in the application of Ritual Poetic Drama within the African Continuum from Virginia Commonwealth University, where he is the 2018 recipient of the 10 Under 10 Alumni Award.

**Brontë England-Nelson** (*Inna Khodorkovsky*)'s Broadway credits include *Three Tall Women* (The Golden). Other New York credits include *Acolyte* (59E59), *Workshops of Martyrs* (La MaMa) and *Rocket Park* (The Public, Emerging Writers Group Spotlight Series). She's worked regionally at Shakespeare Santa Cruz, Hudson Shakespeare Co. and the Yale Repertory Theater. BA UC Santa Cruz; MFA Yale School of Drama.

## Page 4 — Casting and creative team announced for *Kleptocracy*

**Christopher Geary** (*Vladimir Putin*) has been seen in *These Paper Bullets!* (Yale Rep, Geffen Playhouse, Atlantic Theater); *Cymbeline*, *Imogen Says Nothing* (Yale Rep); *Buyer and Cellar* (Triad Stage); *Design For Living*, *The Cat and the Canary* (Berkshire Theater Group); and *Losing Tom Pecinka* (Ice Factory). Christopher is a member of New Neighborhood, a theater, TV and music company. BA: Fordham. MFA: Yale School of Drama. Many thanks to Bret Adams Ltd. and my family. Instagram: @christopheregeary

**Tony Manna** (*Boris Berezovsky/Yuri Schmidt/Ensemble*) is making his Arena Stage debut. His New York credits include *These Paper Bullets!* (Atlantic Theater), *Timon of Athens* (Public Theater) and *The Hasty Heart* (Keen Company) among others. Regionally, he's appeared at Yale Repertory Theatre, the Geffen Playhouse, and, most recently, the Westport Country Playhouse in *Man of La Mancha*. Television credits include *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* (Amazon), *Maniac* (Netflix), *Z: The Beginning of Everything* (Amazon), *Elementary* (CBS) and *The Exorcist* (FOX). He is a member of New Neighborhood and a graduate of the Yale School of Drama. [tonymanna.com](http://tonymanna.com)

**Alex Piper** (*Platon Lebedev/Ensemble*) is thrilled to be making his Arena Stage debut. D.C. theatre credits include *As You Like It* and *Sense & Sensibility* (Folger Theatre); *Henry IV Part I*, *Henry IV Part II* and *As You Like It* (Shakespeare Theatre Company); and acting fellow at Shakespeare Theatre Company for the 2013-2014 season. Awards include The Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival National Finalist. Education: MFA, The University of Southern Mississippi. He is also an affiliated teaching artist at Shakespeare Theatre Company. Website: <http://alexpiper59.wix.com/piper>

**Max Woertendyke** (*Mikhail Khodorkovsky*)'s New York credits include the Broadway production of Ivo van Hove's *A View From the Bridge*, the world premiere of Richard Nelson's *Illyria* and *Romeo & Juliet* (the latter two at The Public Theater). Regional credits include Nick in *The Invisible Hand* (Cleveland Play House), the regional premiere of *Oslo* (Pioneer) and *Frankenstein* (Denver Center for the Performing Arts). Max can be seen on screen in Netflix's *Longmire* and in the upcoming film *Down the Barrel*. He is in the process of producing his first feature film – an action thriller entitled *i-95*. Max is a graduate of McGill University and The Juilliard School of Drama.

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

***Kleptocracy* is generously sponsored by Decker Anstrom and Sherry Hiemstra.**

### Post-Show Conversations

Connect with our shows beyond the performance at a post-show conversation with artists and staff – January 30, February 5 and February 13 following the noon performance; January 29 following the 7:30 p.m. performance and February 21 following the 8:00 p.m. performance.

### PRODUCTION INFORMATION

*Kleptocracy*

By special arrangement with Robert Ahrens, Mickey Liddell, Michael Mills and Andrew Tobias

By Kenneth Lin

Directed by Jackson Gay

In the Kreeger Theater / January 18 – February 24, 2019

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## Page 5 — Casting and creative team announced for *Kleptocracy*

**ABOUT:** It is one of the most pivotal moments in history – the Soviet Union has collapsed. In the ensuing rampage of hyper-capitalism, the Oligarchs, a new class of robber barons, plunge Russia into a terrifying dark age of chaos and corruption. When the richest and most ruthless Oligarch attempts to reform and open Russian markets to the world, he's confronted by a young Vladimir Putin who is charting his own path to power. This world-premiere drama by Kenneth Lin (*House of Cards*) turns the spotlight on U.S. - Russia relations when crude oil is the language of diplomacy and events that dominate today's headlines are first set in motion.

### **CAST:**

Valentin/Ensemble: John Austin  
Petukhov/Ensemble: Elliott Bales  
White House Official: Candy Buckley  
Leonid Nevzlin/Kuchma/Ensemble/Fight Captain: Joseph Carlson  
Inna Khodorkovsky: Brontë England-Nelson  
Vladimir Putin: Christopher Geary  
Boris Berezovsky/Yuri Schmidt/Ensemble: Tony Manna  
Platon Lebedev/Ensemble: Alex Piper  
Mikhail Khodorkovsky: Max Woertendyke

### **CREATIVE TEAM:**

Director: Jackson Gay  
Set Designer: Misha Kachman  
Costume Designer: Jessica Ford  
Lighting Designer: Masha Tsimring  
Projection Designer: Nicholas Hussong  
Original Music and Sound Design: Broken Chord  
Hair, Wig and Makeup Designer: Dave Bova  
Fight Director: Lewis Shaw  
Voice and Dialect Coach: Zach Champion  
Casting Directors: Victor Vazquez, Geoff Josselson  
Stage Manager: Christi B Spann  
Assistant Stage Manager: Mimi Craig

### **PLAN YOUR VISIT**

**TICKETS:** Tickets for *Kleptocracy* 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 Street, 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

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**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 January 30, Tuesday February 5 and Wednesday February 13

**Open-captioned performances:** February 6 at 7:30 p.m., February 9 at 2:00 p.m., February 14 at 8:00 p.m.

**Audio-described performance:** February 2 at 2:00 p.m.

**Full Calendar:** <https://tickets.arenastage.org/single/PSDetail.aspx?psn=26558>

**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://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://arenastage.org)

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