

# ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES ADDITIONAL PLAYWRIGHTS TO JOIN AMBITIOUS POWER PLAYS INITIATIVE COMMISSIONING AND DEVELOPING 25 NEW PLAYS OVER 10 YEARS

**\*\*\* Playwrights Kia Corthron, Idris Goodwin and Octavio Solis join Power Plays initiative,  
exploring stories of politics and power from 1776 through today \*\*\***

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater announces three additional commissioned playwrights as a part of **Power Plays**, an ambitious initiative commissioning and developing 25 new plays and musicals from a diverse mix of writers, composers and lyricists over the course of 10 years. Playwrights **Kia Corthron, Idris Goodwin** and **Octavio Solis** join previously commissioned playwrights with projects underway, including **Aaron Posner**, whose Power Play *JQA*, an inquisitive and provocative look at America's sixth president, enjoys its world premiere in Arena's Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle March 1 through April 14, 2019.

"We're a theater that focuses on American plays, American stories, American ideas and American artists," shares Artistic Director **Molly Smith**. "What has been thrilling about the Power Plays cycle is that we're commissioning some of the strongest voices in American theater today. These three playwrights have a unique way of looking at the world politically and galvanizing it into a story for our times. From Kia's focus on the public school system, Idris' poetic way of looking at the complexity of race relations and Octavio's insight into Mexican-American politics, Power Plays will cover the breadth of the American political psyche."

She continues, "Power Play commissions include an expanse of writers such as Theresa Rebeck, Craig Lucas, Kenneth Lin and Nathan Alan Davis. The creative power and capacity in the writers have been thrilling. This fertile, fervent program is exploding at Arena Stage."

This massive initiative features American stories of politics and power, exploring the people, events and ideas that have helped shape our country's narrative and identity, with one story per decade, beginning with 1776 through the current decade. These works have the ability to show America at its best and at its worst, to bring people together who may not otherwise find themselves in the same room, and to introduce audiences to historical figures they may not know or understand. Power Plays features works by well-established writers as well as those who are in the beginning stages of their careers in theater, embracing the diversity of our country to understand who we are as Americans.

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Power Plays encompasses five unique voices cycles:

- Presidential Voices – plays about exceptional presidents and remarkable events in their lives
- African-American Voices – plays that herald African-American stories in our country's history and politics
- Insider Voices – plays that delve into an exclusive perspective on the complex workings of American institutions or cultures
- Musical Theater Voices – musicals that celebrate political ideas and events
- Women's Voices – plays that shine a spotlight on women in our country's political life

With this initiative, Arena Stage amplifies its role as a national center dedicated to American voices and artists, located in the heart of the nation's capital. Upcoming play and musical commissions are focused on such diverse topics as Theodore Roosevelt, Oklahoma's "Black Wall Street," Fidel Castro and witchcraft.

"Arena Stage has a bold artistic vision, clear mission and core values that our audience embraces and understands," shares Executive Producer **Edgar Dobie**. "As a producer and administrator, our Power Plays initiative is important to me because infusing the field with new work is a vital component of our purpose as a resident theater. These Power Plays will leave a legacy of discourse and storytelling, engaging new and established artists, and bringing to the forefront stories that have not been told before."

Power Plays builds on the tremendous success of previous Arena Stage commissions focused on both political figures and historic events including **John Strand's** *The Originalist* (2015), which offered a rare portrayal of the late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia; **Lawrence Wright's** *Camp David* (2014), which explored the pivotal 1978 Camp David Accords between President Jimmy Carter, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat; and **Mary Kathryn Nagle's** *Sovereignty* (2018), which shared the story of a young Cherokee lawyer fighting to restore her Nation's jurisdiction. Previously commissioned playwrights also include **Jacqueline E. Lawton** (*Intelligence* – 2017); **Bob Banghart, Georgia Stitt** and **John Strand** (*Snow Child* – 2018); **Aaron Posner** (*JQA* - 2019); **Nathan Alan Davis; Eve Ensler; Kenneth Lin; Craig Lucas; Eduardo Machado** and **Theresa Rebeck**.

Support for Power Plays has been generously provided by Elliot and Lily Feldman and BakerHostetler, David C. Frederick and Sophia Lynn, Rick and Carol Froehlich, Ann O. Hamilton, JMA Solutions, Robert Liberatore and Debra Kraft, and Vicki and Roger Sant. For information about sponsorship and branding opportunities associated with Power Plays, contact Ryan Merkel at [rmerkel@ArenaStage.org](mailto:rmerkel@ArenaStage.org) or 202-600-6042.

### Playwright Biographies

**Kia Corthron** was the 2017 resident playwright at Chicago's Eclipse Theatre, which produced three of her plays. In the summer of 2018 she co-produced and contributed to *Imagine: Yemen*, an evening of short plays addressing the crisis in Yemen. Awards for her body of work include the Windham Campbell Prize for Drama, the USArtists Jane Addams Fellowship, the Simon Great Plains Playwright Award, the McKnight National Residency, the Otto Award for Political Theatre and the League of Professional Theatre Women's Lee Reynolds Award. Her plays have been produced in New York by Playwrights Horizons, New York Theatre Workshop, Atlantic Theater Company, Manhattan Theatre Club, Ensemble Studio Theatre and Brooklyn Academy of Music; regionally by ATL Humana, Goodman Theatre, Mark Taper Forum, Minneapolis' Children's Theatre, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, NY Stage and Film, Baltimore's Center Stage, Yale Rep and Hartford Stage; and in London by the Royal Court Theatre and Donmar Warehouse. TV credits include *The Jury* and *The Wire*. Her debut novel *The Castle Cross the Magnet Carter* was the winner of the 2016 Center for Fiction First Novel Prize. She serves on the Council of the Dramatists Guild, is a New Dramatists alumnus and is a member of the Authors Guild.

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**Idris Goodwin** is a playwright, director, break beat poet and educator. He is the producing artistic director of Stage One Family Theater in Louisville, KY for which he penned the award-winning and widely produced *And In This Corner: Cassius Clay*. Other plays include *How We Got On*, *This Is Modern Art* co-written with Kevin Coval, *Bars and Measures* and *Hype Man: a break beat play*. Idris's play *The Way The Mountain Moved* was commissioned and produced as part of Oregon Shakespeare's groundbreaking American Revolutions series. His work has been produced Off-Broadway, as well as at The Humana Festival at Actor's Theater of Louisville, Steppenwolf Theater, The Kennedy Center, The Denver Center for The Performing Arts, Cleveland Playhouse and Company One. Idris is a highly sought-after writer for young audiences, produced and commissioned by children's theaters across the country. He has received awards and development support from the NEA; The Ford, Mellon and Edgerton Foundations; Berkeley Rep's Ground Floor Program; The Eugene O'Neill Center; The Lark Playwriting Center; and New Harmony Project. Idris is the 2018-2019 recipient of the Playwright Center's McKnight Fellowship. *These Are The Breaks* (Write Bloody, 2011), his debut collection of essays and poetry, was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. *Inauguration*, a chapbook co-written with Nico Wilkinson (Haymarket Books), won the 2017 Literary Arts Award from The Pikes Peak Arts Council. He's performed his poetry on HBO, The Discovery Channel, *Sesame Street* and National Public Radio. Idris is a member of The Dramatists Guild and serves on the boards of TYA/USA and The Children's Theatre Foundation of America.

**Octavio Solis** is a playwright and director whose works *Mother Road*, *Quixote Nuevo*, *Hole in the Sky*, *Alicia's Miracle*, *Se Llama Cristina*, *John Steinbeck's The Pastures of Heaven*, *Ghosts of the River*, *Quixote*, *Lydia*, *June in a Box*, *Lethe*, *Marfa Lights*, *Gibraltar*, *The Ballad of Pancho and Lucy*, *The 7 Visions of Encarnación*, *Bethlehem*, *Dreamlandia*, *El Otro*, *Man of the Flesh*, *Prospect*, *El Paso Blue*, *Santos & Santos* and *La Posada Mágica* have been mounted at the California Shakespeare Theatre, Mark Taper Forum, Yale Repertory Theatre, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Denver Center for the Performing Arts, the Dallas Theater Center, the Magic Theatre, Intersection for the Arts, South Coast Repertory Theatre, the San Diego Repertory Theatre, the San Jose Repertory Theatre, Shadowlight Productions, the Venture Theatre in Philadelphia, Latino Chicago Theatre Company, Boston Court and Kitchen Dog Theatre, the New York Summer Play Festival, Teatro Vista in Chicago, El Teatro Campesino, the Undermain Theatre in Dallas, Thick Description, Campo Santo, the Imua Theatre Company in New York and Cornerstone Theatre. His collaborative works include *Cloudlands*, with music by Adam Gwon; *Burning Dreams*, cowritten with Julie Hebert and Gina Leishman; and *Shiner*, written with Erik Ehn. Octavio has received an NEA 1995-97 Playwriting Fellowship, the Roger L. Stevens Award from the Kennedy Center, the Will Glickman Playwright Award, a production grant from the Kennedy Center Fund for New American Plays, the 1998 TCG/NEA Theatre Artists in Residence Grant, the 1998 McKnight Fellowship grant from the Playwrights Center in Minneapolis and the National Latino Playwriting Award for 2003. He is the recipient of the 2000-2001 National Theatre Artists Residency Grant from TCG and the Pew Charitable Trust, the United States Artists Fellowship for 2011 and the 2104 Pen Center USA Award for Drama. Octavio is a Thornton Wilder Fellow for the MacDowell Colony, a New Dramatists alum and a member of the Dramatists Guild. He is working on commissions for SF Playhouse and South Coast Repertory Theatre, in addition to Arena Stage.

**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 groundbreaking 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](http://arenastage.org)

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