

# 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/the-heiress-press-kit/>

ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES FULL CASTING FOR *THE HEIRESS*  
BY RUTH AND AUGUSTUS GOETZ  
FEBRUARY 8 – MARCH 10, 2019

\*\*\* Seema Sueko directs this classic thriller of a young woman's  
journey to find her voice \*\*\*

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater announces the full company for **Ruth and Augustus Goetz's** melodrama, *The Heiress*, suggested by the Henry James novel, *Washington Square*. After growing up subjected to her father's disinterest and strong resentment, a young woman in the 1850s discovers what love is in her journey towards independence, growth and strength, without an impactful female role model in her life. Directed by Deputy Artistic Director **Seema Sueko**, *The Heiress* runs **February 8 – March 10, 2019 in the Fichandler Stage**.

"*The Heiress* is going to be something that our classic Arena Stage audiences will love," shares Artistic Director **Molly Smith**. "It's the story of a plain looking, exceedingly wealthy woman in New York City in the 1850s, and the journey she takes to become a full human being. It is a real potboiler of a play – and a mystery play – especially exciting because it's going to be created in the round, directed by Arena's Deputy Artistic Director Seema Sueko."

"What does it mean to become your own person? Today, as we grapple with the minefields of love, abuse and power, this story about a young woman in 1850, learning the dicey game of love and money and making her own choice, is the empowerment that we all need," proclaims **Sueko**. "I am excited to dive into this thriller of the heart and to collaborate with our brilliant all-female, multi-racial design team and exquisite cast."

Making their Arena Stage debuts, **Laura C. Harris** (Studio Theatre's *Kings*, Signature Theatre's *The Flick*) portrays the quiet and private Catherine Sloper and **Jonathan David Martin** (Broadway's *War Horse*, 59E59 Theaters' *Ndebele Funeral*) takes on the young and daring Morris Townsend, who may or may not win her heart.

Also making their Arena debuts are **Janet Hayatshahi** (Tentacular Performance Group's *Launching Ships*, Sledgehammer Theatre's *A Dream Play*) as Elizabeth Almond and **Nathan Whitmer** (The Old Globe's *Measure for Measure* and *Love Labors Lost*) as Arthur Townsend/The de Rhams' Coachman.

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## Page 2— Casting announced for *The Heiress*

Making their return to Arena Stage are **Lise Bruneau** (Arena's *Watch on the Rhine* and *Legacy of Light*) as Mrs. Montgomery, **Lorene Chesley** (Arena's *Smart People*, Merrimack Repertory Theatre's *The Villains' Supper Club*) as Marian Almond, **Nancy Robinette** (Arena's *Ah, Wilderness!*, Broadway's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*) as Lavinia Penniman, **Kimberly Schraf** (Arena's *Ah, Wilderness!*, Ford's Theatre's *Death of a Salesman*) as Maria and **James Whalen** (Arena's *The Little Foxes*, Round House Theatre's *Small Mouth Sounds*) as Dr. Austin Sloper.

In addition to Sueko, the creative team includes Set Designer **Mikiko Suzuki MacAdams**, Costume Designer **Ivania Stack**, Lighting Designer **Sherrice Mojgani**, Original Music and Sound Design by **Emma M. Wilk**, Wig Designer **Anne Nesmith**, Voice and Text Coach **Jan Gist**, Casting Director **Victor Vazquez**, Stage Manager **Susan R. White**, Replacement Stage Manager **Joseph Smelser**, Assistant Stage Manager **Marne Anderson** and Production Assistant **Dayne Sundman**.

**Seema Sueko** (Director) joined the Arena Stage staff in July 2016 as deputy artistic director and has since directed *The Price* and *Smart People* at Arena. She previously served as associate artistic director at The Pasadena Playhouse and executive artistic director of Mo'olelo Performing Arts Company. Her directing and acting credits include Denver Center, The Pasadena Playhouse, People's Light, The Old Globe, San Diego Repertory, Yale Repertory, 5th Avenue Theatre and Native Voices, among others. As a playwright, she received commissions from Mixed Blood Theatre and Center Stage. Her work has been recognized by the California State Assembly, NAACP San Diego, Chicago Jeff Awards, American Theatre Wing and *American Theatre* magazine. Seema developed the Consensus Organizing for Theater methodology, has done research on the neuroscience of acting, and serves on the Diversity Committee of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society.

**Ruth and Augustus Goetz** (Playwrights) collaborated on many Broadway plays, such as *Franklin Street* (1940); *One Man Show* (1945); *The Heiress* (1947), which was loosely suggested by Henry James' novel *Washington Square*; *The Immoralist* (1954), an adaptation from the novel by Andre Gide; and *The Hidden River* (1957), an adaptation of a novel by Storm Jameson. The Goetzes also collaborated on the following films: *The Heiress* (Academy Award, 1949), *Sister Carrie* (1950), *Rhapsody*, *Trapeze* and *Stagestruck*. Mrs. Goetz is the sole author of two plays: *Sweet Love Remembered* (1959), written after her husband's death in 1957, and *Madly in Love* (1963). The Goetzes were active members of the Dramatists Guild. Their daughter, Judy Firth Sanger, is a poet and frequent reference source for productions of *The Heiress*. Their granddaughter, Katie Firth, is an actress working in New York.

### Cast Biographies (in alphabetical order)

**Lise Bruneau** (Mrs. Montgomery) is happy to return to Arena Stage after appearing in *Watch on the Rhine*, *Mother Courage* and Karen Zacarias' *Legacy of Light*. Recent credits include Broadway's *The Cherry Orchard* (Roundabout) and *Sweat* for A.C.T. San Francisco. D.C. appearances include *Hamlet* and *Othello* (Shakespeare Theatre Company), *Broken Glass* and *Brighton Beach Memoirs* (Theater J, Helen Hayes nomination) and *This* (Round House). For Denver Center, she was Hesione in *Heartbreak House* (Henry Award). As a director, she's helmed productions for MetroStage, Clarence Brown Theatre, the Riot Grrrls and Taffety Punk. Regionally, she has appeared at Cleveland Playhouse, The Globe, Seattle Repertory, The Wilma, Berkeley Repertory and many Shakespeare festivals. Lise trained at RADA and is proud to be a Taffety Punk.

**Lorene Chesley** (Marian Almond) is thrilled to be back at Arena Stage! A native of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, Lorene grew up studying ballet and tap, but quickly segued her love for performance into acting. Stage credits include Valerie Johnston in *Smart People* (Arena Stage), The Flame/Ms. Caliente in *The Villains' Supper Club* (Merrimack Repertory Theatre), Cassandra in *The American Woman* (Pasadena Playhouse) and Delilah in *Memphis* (La Jolla Playhouse). TV credits include *Perception* (TNT), *Shameless* (Showtime) and *The Fosters* (Freeform). This fall she released her first book *The Perfectly Imperfect Christian* (Amazon.com), praise! She studied theater at Temple University and earned an M.F.A. in acting at UCSD. Lorene would like to thank God for her many blessings, and her family and friends for their continual love and support!

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### Page 3— Casting announced for *The Heiress*

**Laura C. Harris** (*Catherine Sloper*) is making her Arena Stage debut. Previous Washington, D.C. credits include *Kings*, *Cloud 9*, *Time Stands Still*, *Bachelorette* and *Red Speedo* at Studio Theatre; *The Flick* and *Tender Napalm* at Signature Theatre; *NSFW*, *Seminar*, *Amadeus*, *Young Robin Hood* and *26 Miles* at Round House Theatre; *Vicuna* at Mosaic Theater; *Awake and Sing!* at Olney Theatre Center; *Love and Information*, *Passion Play*, *World Builders* and *Amazons and Their Men* with Forum Theatre; *Our Class* at Theatre J; *The Winter's Tale* and *The School for Scandal* at Folger Theatre; and *An Experiment with an Air Pump* with Potomac Theatre Project, along with extensive on-camera and voiceover work. Laura is a graduate of Middlebury College. [www.lauracharris.com](http://www.lauracharris.com)

**Janet Hayatshahi** (*Elizabeth Almond*) last appeared as Helen of Troy in *Launching Ships* with Tentacular Performance Group. She spent six seasons with San Diego's Sledgehammer Theatre, playing roles in *A Dream Play*, *Macbeth*, *nu*, *[sic]*, *Berzerkergång*, *Richard III*, *Furious Blood* and *Phenomenal Acceleration*. Other California theater credits include *Master Class* (Poway Center for Performing Arts); *Remains* (Mo'olelo Performing Arts Company); *Taming of the Shrew* and *Macbeth* (Central Coast Shakespeare); *Beyond Therapy*, *Marvin's Room* and *Rules of Love* (Centerpoint Theatre Group); and *Myth Project V: Cowboys: American Heroes* (Patricia Rincon Dance Collective). Chicago credits include *Agamemnon* (European Repertory Theatre) and *Infernal Machine* and *Knights of the Round Table* (Eclipse Theatre Company). BFA: Ithaca College; MFA: UC San Diego. Janet is currently an assistant professor of theater at Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, VA. [www.hayatshahi.com](http://www.hayatshahi.com)

**Jonathan David Martin** (*Morris Townsend*) Arena Stage debut! Other credits include *War Horse* at Lincoln Center Theater (original Broadway cast). Off-Broadway productions at the National Black Theatre, 59E59 Theaters and Bushwick Starr; regionally at Theater Alliance, Two River Theater, Portland Center Stage, Shakespeare Santa Monica, Seattle Children's Theatre, Empty Space Theatre, NMA Physical Theatre Ensemble and Washington Ensemble Theater, where he was a founding co-artistic director. He is also the co-artistic director of NYC-based Smoke & Mirrors Collaborative whose original works include *Olityelwe* (59E59 Theaters, UK and South Africa tours), *Point of Departure*, *Head in the Sand*, *The Alien Nation*, *#HashtagProject* and *Tangible Hope Project*, a documentary series highlighting community change-makers across America. TV credits include *Unforgettable* and *Believe*. Annenberg Fellow for the Arts. MFA: NYU Graduate Acting.

**Nancy Robinette** (*Lavinia Penniman*) has appeared at Arena Stage in *Ah Wilderness!*; *The Avenger's Comedie*; *Death of a Salesman*; *Well; You Nero*; *Blithe Spirit*; *The Women, Lovers and Executioners*; *For the Pleasure of Seeing Her Again*; and *Christmas Carol 1941*. Most recently in Washington she was in *Everything is Illuminated* at Theatre J, *John* at Signature Theatre and *Comedy of Errors* at the Shakespeare Theatre, where she is an affiliated artist. Regionally she has appeared at Old Globe, Paper Mill, Williamstown, New York Theatre Workshop, Roundabout, Key West Waterfront and McCarter theaters. She appeared on Broadway in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*. TV credits include *Louie* and *Homicide*. Films credits include *Serial Mom*, *Soldier Jack*, *Three Christs*, *The Hunley* and *The Day Lincoln Was Shot*. Last year she received The Helen Hayes Tribute.

**Kimberly Schraf** (*Maria*) is delighted to return to Arena Stage, where she also appeared in *Ah, Wilderness!* and *The Women*. Other D.C. appearances include *Death of a Salesman* and *The Laramie Project* at Ford's Theatre; *Vicuña and the American Epilogue* and *Oh, God* at Mosaic; *Measure for Pleasure* and *The Gigli Concert* at Woolly Mammoth; *Angels in America* and *Show Boat* at Signature; *Skylight*, *Frozen* and all four of *The Apple Family Plays* at Studio; and *Our Town* and *A Prayer for Owen Meany* at Round House. As co-director of the Honors Conservatory at the Theatre Lab, she prepares adult actors for professional theater work, and as a Steering Committee member of Actors Arena, she helps to program workshops and roundtable discussions to enrich and deepen the acting craft of seasoned professionals.

**James Whalen** (*Dr. Austin Sloper*) last appeared at Arena as William Marshall in *The Little Foxes*. His most recent D.C. area appearances include *Small Mouth Sounds* (Round House Theatre) and *True West* (Rep Stage). He has also performed locally with The Kennedy Center, Olney Theatre Center, Everyman Theatre, Mosaic Theatre, Shakespeare Theatre Company and Theatre J. Regionally he played *Dracula* at Actors Theatre of Louisville. Some of his favorite TV and film credits include *House of Cards*, *VEEP*, *I Love You But I Lied*, *Money Matters* and *A Beautiful Mind*.

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## Page 4— Casting announced for *The Heiress*

**Nathan Whitmer** (*Arthur Townsend/The de Rhams' Coachman*) is proud to be making his Arena Stage and Washington, D.C. debut! In New York he worked Off-Broadway with both Marvell Repertory Theatre and Titan Theatre Company. Regional credits include *Love's Labor's Lost*, *Macbeth* and *The Comedy of Errors* (The Old Globe Theatre); *A Christmas Carol*, *ACE* and *Reckless* (Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park); Robert in *Company* (Heritage Theatre Festival in Charlottesville, VA); Texas Shakespeare Festival; Fairbanks Shakespeare Festival; and over 20 productions with Barter Theatre in Abingdon, VA, where he was a resident company member. Nathan lives with his wife, actor Emelie Faith Thompson, and their young daughter, Violet, in northern Virginia. MFA: The Old Globe/USD; BFA: Ohio University. Instagram: @actornate [www.nathanwhitmer.com](http://www.nathanwhitmer.com)

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

***The Heiress* is generously sponsored by Barbara and Arthur Bushkin, Daniel Korengold and Martha Dippell and Ourisman Automotive of Virginia and Ilene and Steven Rosenthal.**

### Post-Show Conversations

Connect with our shows beyond the performance at a post-show conversation with artists and staff – February 20, February 26 and March 6 following the noon performance; March 5 following the 7:30 p.m. performance and March 7 following the 8:00 p.m. performance.

### PRODUCTION INFORMATION

#### ***The Heiress***

**By Ruth Goetz and Augustus Goetz**

**Suggested by the Henry James Novel *Washington Square***

**Directed by Seema Sueko**

**In the Fichandler Stage | February 8 – March 10, 2019**

**ABOUT:** Finding one's voice is never easy. Socially awkward and plain, Catherine Sloper has struggled her entire life under the disapproving and resentful gaze of her father. It is the unexpected visit from a suitor full of sincerity and instantaneous devotion that awakens Catherine's long abandoned hopes of true love and the opportunity for a fresh start. A devastating betrayal forces the scorned Catherine to learn how to roar, realize her truth and take control of her destiny.

### **CAST:**

Mrs. Montgomery: Lise Bruneau  
Marian Almond: Lorene Chesley  
Catherine Sloper: Laura C. Harris  
Elizabeth Almond: Janet Hayatshahi  
Morris Townsend: Jonathan David Martin  
Lavinia Penniman: Nancy Robinette  
Maria: Kimberly Schraf  
Dr. Austin Sloper: James Whalen  
Arthur Townsend/*The de Rhams' Coachman*: Nathan Whitmer

### **CREATIVE TEAM:**

Director: Seema Sueko  
Set Designer: Mikiko Suzuki MacAdams  
Costume Designer: Ivania Stack  
Lighting Designer: Sherrice Mojgani

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## Page 5— Casting announced for *The Heiress*

Original Music and Sound Design: Emma M. Wilk  
Wig Designer: Anne Nesmith  
Voice and Text Coach: Jan Gist  
Casting Director: Victor Vazquez  
Stage Manager: Susan R. White  
Replacement Stage Manager: Joseph Smelser  
Assistant Stage Manager: Marne Anderson  
Production Assistant: Dayne Sundman

### PLAN YOUR VISIT

**TICKETS:** Tickets for *The Heiress* are \$40-95, 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

### 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 February 20, Tuesday February 26 and Wednesday March 6  
Alternate time on Sunday, February 24 at 6:00 p.m.

**Open-captioned performances:** February 27 at 7:30 p.m., February 28 at 8:00 p.m.

**Audio-described performance:** February 23 at 2:00 p.m.

### Full Calendar:

[https://tickets.arenastage.org/events/26606?psn=26606&\\_ga=2.84916569.1910969396.1544474065-1110937979.1537127046](https://tickets.arenastage.org/events/26606?psn=26606&_ga=2.84916569.1910969396.1544474065-1110937979.1537127046)

**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.

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## Page 6— Casting announced for *The Heiress*

**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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