

# ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Lauren McMillen/Skye Lindberg  
[press@arenastage.org](mailto:press@arenastage.org), 202-600-4055

April 24, 2019

### ARENA STAGE HOLDS FOUR-DAY VOICES OF NOW FESTIVAL MAY 15-18, 2019 AT THE MEAD CENTER FOR AMERICAN THEATER

**\*\*\*Festival showcases original plays written and performed by nearly  
100 young artists from the D.C.-area\*\*\***

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater will host the **Voices of Now Festival**, a four-day event featuring original works of theater written and performed by ten different youth ensembles. The Festival will bring together nearly 100 artists, ages 11-20 from D.C., Maryland and Virginia who have been working with professional theater artists from Arena Stage to devise original one-act plays. **The 2019 ensembles will come together May 15-18, 2019 to perform and discuss their work in the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle at Arena Stage the Mead Center for American Theater.** Please see below for the full event schedule.

Celebrating its 16th anniversary, [Voices of Now](#) (VON) is an internationally renowned, season-long drama program that works with ensembles of middle, high school and adult artists to devise autobiographical theater pieces. Each ensemble's play poses challenging social questions relevant to the artists' communities and investigates those questions by recounting the artists' personal stories. This year's plays examine topics including issues of multi-cultural experiences, self-image, social-media and the experience of grief from losing a loved one. All performances will be followed by a talkback led by an Arena Stage staff member.

"We need to hear from our young people. Voices of Now is a program that gives voice to those who may not otherwise be heard, and heard loudly in a theater setting," shares Artistic Director **Molly Smith**. "It shows them and our audiences that young voices matter. Voices of Now is an important part of Arena's mission to produce and present all that is passionate, exuberant, profound, deep and dangerous in the American spirit."

VON formed its first partnership 16 years ago with **Jefferson Middle School Academy** in Southwest D.C. In addition to Jefferson, several Fairfax County Public Schools will again take part in the festival, including **Glasgow Middle School, Holmes Middle School, Key Middle School, Robinson Secondary School and Thoreau Middle School**. Returning for its eighth year is an ensemble in partnership with the **Wendt Center for Loss and Healing**, which is made up of young artists who have experienced the death of a loved one.

This year's program features the return of the **Key and Glasgow World Ensemble** at Key and Glasgow Middle School, which were formed to explore the experience of ELL (English Language Learner) students in Fairfax. This will be Key's ninth year at the festival and Glasgow's sixth year.

Additional ensembles include the **Mead Ensemble**, a program located at the Mead Center designed for students in grades 7-11, the **Mentor Ensemble**, which is made up of alumni from previous ensembles whose role is to mentor the younger artists in the program, and the **Advocacy Ensemble**, which features pre-professional artists/activists from throughout the D.C.-metro area Universities and beyond who are interested in using theater as a tool for social advocacy.

—continued—

## Page 2—Voices of Now Festival showcases young artists May 15-18, 2019

### 2019 Voices of Now Festival Schedule

All performances take place in the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle in the Mead Center, 1101 Sixth St., S.W.

#### **Wednesday, May 15 — 7:30 p.m.**

“Body Language” by the Mentor Ensemble  
“Stronghold” by the Jefferson Ensemble  
“Breaking News” by the Advocacy Ensemble

#### **Thursday, May 16 — 7:30 p.m.**

“World Class” by the Holmes Ensemble  
“Picture Perfect” by the Key World Ensemble  
“Missing Link” by the Wendt Center Ensemble

#### **Friday, May 17 — 7:30 p.m.**

“Crowd Control” by the Thoreau Ensemble  
“Roll Call” by the Glasgow World Ensemble  
“Breaking News” by the Advocacy Ensemble

#### **Saturday, May 18 — 7:30 p.m.**

“Body Language” by the Mentor Ensemble  
“Treasure Hunt” by the Robinson Ensemble  
“Spectator Sport” by the Mead Ensemble

Voices of Now was designed by Arena Stage’s Director of Education Ashley Forman. In addition to performing at Arena Stage, ensembles perform throughout their own communities. Past ensembles have performed at Atlas Performing Arts Center’s Intersections Festival, Imagination Stage, American Alliance for Theatre and Education’s National Conference, Association of Theatre in Higher Education Conference, 2013 International AIDS Conference and the Kennedy Center’s Millennium Stage.

**Voices of Now International:** Arena Stage has partnered with the U.S. Department of State and foreign embassies to coordinate five Voices of Now international trips. Following an initial trip to India in 2012, the program has continued its international expansion by sending staff members to Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, New Delhi and Patna, India; Zagreb, Croatia; Lima, Peru; and Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina to work with a variety of communities, including local participants, artists, educators, leaders, college-age youth from vulnerable communities and young adults with physical disabilities. This past January and February, Voices of Now International traveled to Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina to create and perform three original plays with three different ensembles.

**For more information on Voices of Now, visit [arenastage.org/education/voices-of-now](http://arenastage.org/education/voices-of-now).**

Voices of Now is made possible by support from the Hattie M. Strong Foundation, Rockwell Collins, Friends of Southwest D.C., Washington Nationals Dream Foundation, Raytheon, GEICO, the Weissberg Foundation and Wells Fargo & Company.

Arena Stage’s community engagement efforts are generously sponsored by AT&T; Exelon; Denie and Frank Weil; the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation; Joanne Barker; the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities; The Coca-Cola Foundation; Arthur and Barbara Bushkin; Robert and Natalie Mandel Family Foundation; Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation, Inc.; JBG Smith; Alice Shaver Foundation; Hattie M. Strong Foundation; The Bay & Paul Foundations; Friends of Southwest D.C.; Exelon Corporation; Venable Foundation; Washington Nationals Dream Foundation; Weissberg Foundation; The Albert & Lillian Small Foundation; Eileen Fisher; Raytheon; GEICO; Wells Fargo & Company; Rockwell Collins; Edington, Peel & Associates; Foley & Lardner LLP; Jean Schiro-Zavela and Vance Zavela; Actors’ Equity Foundation; Theatre Forward; and Youth Activities Task Force (YATF) of the Southwest Neighborhood Assembly, Inc..)

—continued—

**Page 3—Voices of Now Festival showcases young artists May 15-18, 2019**

*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](http://arenastage.org)

###

