

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ARENA STAGE TO HONOR NATAKI GARRETT
WITH THE INAUGURAL ANDREW R. AMMERMAN DIRECTING AWARD
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2019

*** Nataki Garrett serves as Artistic Director of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival***

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater will present the inaugural Andrew R. Ammerman Directing Award to Oregon Shakespeare Festival's newly named Artistic Director, **Nataki Garrett**, on **Thursday, September 19, 2019**. This distinguished award for excellence in the field of theater will be given out at the opening night dinner of August Wilson's *Jitney* in the Molly Smith Study. In celebration of Arena Stage's 70th Anniversary Season, this award was created to highlight a female director who has distinguished herself through her artistry and vision in directing.

"There are many awards for writers, but very few awards for American directors that highlight their importance to the artform. For our 70th Anniversary, we wanted to change that story," shares Artistic Director **Molly Smith**. "Arena Stage's focus is on American artists. We created this award to highlight a mid-career, woman director whose artistic work is passionate, exuberant, profound, deep and dangerous. Nataki Garrett exemplifies each of these qualities and we are pleased she is the first honoree."

Garrett was chosen by panelists including Arena Stage Artistic Director Molly Smith, Director Timothy Douglas and Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company Artistic Director Maria Manuela Goyanes. In addition to sustaining a robust freelance directing career around the country, Garrett served most recently as interim artistic director at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts. She is known for her passion for new work and for seeing classics from a fresh perspective.

"I am thrilled to receive the Andrew R. Ammerman Award for directing. This country has a wide and prestigious field of directors and it is exciting and humbling to be the first woman recognized by Arena Stage for this work that I so deeply love," explains **Garrett**. "It is also important to recognize that the establishment of this award is singular and revolutionary on the part of Arena Stage as there are few awards that focus on the work of directing, much less the work of women directors."

Garrett will receive \$15,000, plus up to one week in a rehearsal room at Arena Stage with up to five U.S.-based collaborators to work on any project of her choice.

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Page 2 — Nataki Garrett honored with Andrew R. Ammerman Directing Award

This award is made possible by **Andrew R. Ammerman**, a longtime member of Arena Stage's Board of Trustees. The Ammerman family has made many generous and supportive contributions to Arena Stage, including the unique partnership with Georgetown University. The partnership has helped the development of new works; mentorship of new artists and administrators; community engagement; and a deepening of dialogue on important issues in the field.

Nataki Garrett (*Director*) is Oregon Shakespeare Festival's sixth artistic director. Garrett most recently served as acting artistic director for Denver Center for the Performing Arts (DCPA) during the organization's 18-month leadership transition. While at the California Institute of Arts, Garrett oversaw all operations of conservatory training and produced mainstage, black box, developmental projects, plays, co-productions and touring productions. Garrett's forté and passion are fostering and developing new work. She is responsible for producing the world premieres of *The Book of Will* by Lauren Gunderson, *Two Degrees* by Tira Palmquist, *Zoey's Perfect Wedding* by Matthew Lopez, *The Great Leap* by Lauren Yee and *American Mariachi* by José Cruz González. She also directed the world premieres of *BLKS* by Aziza Barnes and *Pussy Valley* by Katori Hall, the U.S. premiere of *Jefferson's Garden* by Timberlake Wertenbaker and the first professional production of *Neighbors* by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, at the Matrix Theatre Company in Los Angeles. Garrett is a member of the board of directors for Theatre Communications Group, a company member at Woolly Mammoth and an advisory board member for Mixed Blood Theatre. Garrett is a graduate of California Institute of the Arts with an MFA in directing.

For media inquiries, please email press@arenastage.org.

Jitney is generously sponsored by **Dr. Donald Wallace Jones, Dr. Betty Jean Tolbert Jones and Tracey Tolbert Jones**.

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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