

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CASTING AND CREATIVE UPDATES ANNOUNCED FOR DISNEY'S *NEWSIES*, AUGUST WILSON'S *SEVEN GUITARS* AND MORE AS PART OF ARENA STAGE'S 2019/20 SEASON

Single tickets for 10-show season on sale July 30, 2019

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater announces select cast members for upcoming productions as part of the company's 2019/20 Season in advance of single tickets going on sale July 30, 2019.

Acclaimed D.C. actress and seven-time Helen Hayes Award-winner **Erin Weaver** (*Mother Courage and Her Children*) returns to Arena Stage as Katherine Plumber in the high-flying musical sensation, Disney's *Newsies*. Four-time Helen Hayes Award-winner **Edward Gero** (*Junk, The Originalist*) will join the company as Joseph Pulitzer. Gero has also been seen at Arena in *The Pajama Game, The Little Foxes* and *Red*. Molly Smith directs this tap-dancing, beloved story about the rousing tale of newsboys and newsgirls who fight for what is right at the turn of the century. Disney's *Newsies* will run November 1 – December 22, 2019 in the Fichandler Stage.

Tazewell Thompson (*Mary T. & Lizzy K.*) returns to Arena Stage to direct August Wilson's heartfelt classic, *Seven Guitars*, which focuses on seven people who reconnect because of the untimely death of an old friend, a gifted blues guitarist. Thompson returns to Arena after directing over two dozen productions, including most recently the world-premiere production of *Jubilee*, which he also wrote. August Wilson's *Seven Guitars* will run from April 3 – May 3, 2020 in the Fichandler Stage. This production is part of Arena Stage's August Wilson Festival celebrating the Pulitzer Prize-winning giant.

John Austin, who in 2019 originated the role of Valentin in *Kleptocracy*, returns to Arena Stage in the world-premiere drama, *Right to be Forgotten*, in the role of Derril Lark. This daring new play shines a light on social media, big business and one man's attempt to remove his past indiscretion from the Internet forever. Written by Sharyn Rothstein and directed by Arena Stage's Deputy Artistic Director Seema Sueko, *Right to be Forgotten* will run from October 11 – November 10, 2019 in the Kogod Cradle.

The seventh production in Arena Stage's Power Plays initiative will feature D.C.-area's **Marian Licha** (*Destiny of Desire*) as revolutionary Celia Sánchez, trusted confidant of Fidel Castro, in the world-premiere drama, *Celia and Fidel*. Written by Eduardo Machado and directed by Molly Smith, *Celia and Fidel* runs from February 28 – April 12, 2020 in the Kogod Cradle.

Additional casting will be announced at a later date.

To purchase subscriptions for Arena Stage's 2019/20 productions, visit arenastage.org or call 202-488-3300. Single tickets go on sale July 30, 2019.

Biographies

John Austin (*Derril Lark*) last appeared at Arena Stage as Valentin in *Kleptocracy*. Other D.C. credits include Trond/German Husband in *Oslo* (Round House Theatre) and Frank in *Melancholy Play* (Helen Award, Outstanding Production; Constellation Theatre). 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* (B. Iden Payne Award, Outstanding Young Performer; Tutto Theatre Company). Training: BFA in Acting, Summa Cum Laude, from Boston University; 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: *Easy Women Smoking Loose Cigarettes* (Signature Theatre). Instagram: @johnaustinactor. www.johnaustinactor.com

Edward Gero (*Joseph Pulitzer*)'s Arena Stage credits include Thomas Everson, Jr. in *Junk*, Antonin Scalia in *The Originalist*, Benjamin Hubbard in *The Little Foxes* and Mark Rothko in *Red*. He is a four-time Helen Hayes Award winner and 16-time nominee. New York credits include *The Originalist* (59E59). Regional credits include *The Originalist* (Asolo Repertory, Pasadena Playhouse and Court Theatre, Joseph Jefferson Award nomination); *Red* and Gloucester in *King Lear* (Goodman); *Nixon's Nixon* and *Night Alive* (Round House); *Sweeney Todd* (Signature Theatre); Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* (Ford's Theatre); and *American Buffalo*, *Shining City* and *Skylight* (Studio Theatre). In 32 seasons with Shakespeare Theatre Company, his over 70 roles include Helen Hayes turns in *Henry IV*, *Richard II* and *Macbeth*. Film/TV credits include *House of Cards*, *TURN: Washington's Spies*, *Die Hard 2*, *Striking Distance* and narrations for Discovery Channel and PBS. He is a Ten Chimneys 2015 Lunt-Fontanne Fellow and associate professor of theater at George Mason University.

Marian Licha (*Celia Sánchez*) Marian was last seen at Arena Stage as Sister Sonia in *Destiny of Desire* and as Ofelia in *Anna in the Tropics*. Other favorite roles include Mami/Tia at Round House Theatre in *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, Ofelia in *Ana en el Tropic* and Ferula/Count Satigny in *The House of Spirits* at Gala Theatre. Regionally and Off-Broadway, she has worked at The Kennedy Center, Provincetown Playhouse, TOMI Theatre, Repertorio Espanol in NYC, and The Capital Fringe Festival. Her original one-woman show *Frida Vice-Versa*, co-written with R. Dennis Green and directed by Jessica Lefkow, continues to tour the country. Marian starred as Imelda in NBC's *Homicide* and Mrs. Serrano in *Step Up 2*. She is a proud member of AFTRA/SAG and Actor's Equity and the mother of two beautiful children. www.marianliche.com

Tazewell Thompson (*Director*) is an international theater and opera director, award-winning playwright, teacher and actor. He has directing credits (more than 125, many world and American premieres) in major opera houses and theaters across Europe, Africa, Asia, Canada and the USA. He served as associate artistic director under Zelda Fichandler and has worked on over 20 productions at Arena Stage, the most recent being *Jubilee*. His award-winning play, *Constant Star* has had 16 productions in major theaters across the country and his play *Mary T. & Lizzy K.*, commissioned by and produced at Arena Stage, is the recipient of The Edgerton Foundation New American Play Award. His production of *Porgy and Bess*, broadcast live from Lincoln Center, received Emmy Award nominations for Best Director and Best Production. He holds the record of directing three productions: *Appomattox/ Philip Glass*, *Lost in the Stars/ Kurt Weill* and *Cato in Utica/ Vivaldi*, all in the same season in three different theaters at The Kennedy Center. Future: his opera *Blue*, with composer Jeanine Tesori, commissioned by Francesca Zambello, had its world premiere in July at Glimmerglass Festival, followed by productions at Lyric Opera of Chicago and Washington National Opera; world premiere of *Freedom Ride/ Dan Shore* for Chicago Opera Theatre.

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Erin Weaver (*Katherine Plumber*) is so excited to be back at Arena Stage where she was last seen as Katrin in *Mother Courage and Her Children* (Helen Hayes Award). A seven-time Helen Hayes Award-winner, some of Erin's favorite roles locally include Mona Juul in *Oslo*, Nell Gwynn in *Or* (Helen Hayes Award), and Deb in *Ordinary Days* (Helen Hayes Award) at Round House Theatre; Marianne in *Sense & Sensibility* (Helen Hayes Award, Best Ensemble) and Thomasina in *Arcadia* (Helen Hayes Award) at the Folger Theatre; Amy in *Company* (Helen Hayes Award), Kathy in *The Last Five Years*, and Kira in *Xanadu* at Signature Theatre; Jane in *Me...Jane: The Dreams & Adventures of Young Jane Goodall* at The Kennedy Center; and Sally in *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown* at Imagination Stage. Erin lives outside of D.C. with her husband, Aaron Posner, and daughter, Maisie.

Right to be Forgotten is generously sponsored by Joan and David Maxwell.

Newsies is generously sponsored by The Drutz Family Fund for Musical Theater, The Reef Team, Ilene and Steven Rosenthal and Sheila Stampfli.

Seven Guitars is generously sponsored by Margot Kelly.

For complete 2019/20 Season details, visit: arenastage.org/tickets/1920-season

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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