



the mead center
for american theater

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Renée Littleton

press@arenastage.org, 202-600-4052

August 18, 2020

ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES PLAYWRIGHTS' ARENA PROGRAM FEATURING UNIQUE PARTNERSHIPS WITH GEORGETOWN AND HOWARD UNIVERSITIES

*** Three students and recent alumni from each University will participate in this year-long artistic initiative***

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater is pleased to announce that the 2020/21 Season of Playwrights' Arena will be in partnership with Georgetown and Howard Universities. Originally launched in 2013, Playwrights' Arena has empowered local professional playwrights to fully examine their artistic and dramaturgical practice. Seeking to build upon the program's foundation as well as Arena's continued commitment of supporting American artists, the 2020/21 Season of Playwrights' Arena has been reimaged to focus on six advanced students or recent alumni playwrights from Georgetown and Howard Universities. Participants will work one-on-one with Arena Stage Dramaturg and Program Facilitator Jocelyn Clarke in a rigorous exploration of their artistry, providing them crucial support and guidance as they prepare for careers in the field.

"The six students and alums from Howard and Georgetown Universities will explore their respective dramaturgical practice and processes with Jocelyn Clarke, who is one of the best in the world when it comes to dramaturgy and understanding the inner logic of a story," states **Arena Stage Deputy Artistic Director** Seema Sueko. "I hope the participants will find the program as rigorous as it is liberating, and as uncomfortable in the right ways as it is illuminating."

Beginning in September, the cohort of writers will hone their artistic voice in focused conversations with Clarke and gain unprecedented access to playwrights and directors from Arena productions. The partnership between Arena Stage, Georgetown University and Howard University will build upon and serve to strengthen a pipeline of diverse future theater makers and playwrights.

"We reimaged the Playwrights Arena program together for this moment, discovering how each institution can contribute and gain meaningfully from the generous mentoring of Arena's internationally recognized Dramaturg Jocelyn Clarke and the diversity of students we're bringing into creative community and mentored writing workshop, together," states **Georgetown University's Davis Performing Arts Center Artistic Director Dr. Maya E. Roth**. "It's a plum opportunity for our students, helping to shape what kind of theater, multiracial community, and writing for performance they—and we—want to seed for the future."

"Collaborations such as the Playwrights' Arena Artistic Initiative, which brings together an historic theatre with students from Howard and Georgetown Universities are edifying for all concerned, and a wonderful opportunity for talented and deserving students," shares **Howard University's Division of Fine Arts Associate Dean Dr. Lisa Farrington**. "Collective ventures of this kind are integral to a Howard Fine Arts education. Brava to all who have made this possible, in particular Howard's own Professor Denise Hart."

—continued—

Page 2—Arena Stage Announces Playwrights’ Arena Program

The 2020/21 Season cohort will include **Veronica Ray Carr, Rose Dallimore, Fatima Dyfan, Aiyaisha Peoples, Jade Scott** and **Timmy Sutton**. More information about Playwrights’ Arena can be found at arenastage.org/playwrightsarena.

Arena Stage Dramaturg **Jocelyn Clarke** was Theatre Adviser to the Arts Council of Ireland for ten years. He has taught dramaturgy at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Columbia University and Trinity College Dublin. He was the Commissioning and Literary Manager of the Abbey Theatre for four years and lead theater critic with *The Sunday Tribune* for nine years. He is an associate artist with The Civilians and Theatre Mitu in New York. He has written six plays for Anne Bogart and the SITI Company — *Bob, Alice’s Adventures Underground, Room, Score, Antigone, Trojan Women (After Euripides)*, and *Chess Game No. 5*. As a dramaturg, he has worked with writers such as Katori Hall, Lydia Diamond, Ayad Akhtar, Lynn Nottage, Taylor Mac, Lisa Kron, Kenneth Lin, Sarah Gancher, Amahl Khouri, Carl Hancock Rux, Aaron Posner, Abhishek Majumdar, Mary Kathryn Nagle, Craig Lucas, Rachel Chavkin, Qui Nguyen, Craig Lucas, Jacqueline Lawton, Samuel D. Hunter, Tanya Saracho, Karen Zacarias, and Marcus Gardley. He has just finished working on *The Young Offenders* television series for the BBC, and with Katori Hall on *P-Valley*, her new TV series for Starz.

The 2020/21 Season Cohort

Veronica Ray Carr is a junior at Howard University from Atlanta, Georgia. She is currently studying TV and Film production with a minor in playwriting. She hopes to write and direct her own films and plays in the future. In addition to this, Veronica enjoys reviewing films, reading, and listening to music in her free time.

Rose Dallimore is a member of the Georgetown School of Foreign Service’s Class of 2022, studying International Politics and Theology. Rose is originally from New York City, but she has since lived in North Georgia and Chattanooga, Tennessee. She is now happy to call Washington, D.C. home. She has worked as a teacher, researcher, and writer. In her free time, she is involved in satire, opinion, and poetry writing, campus international relations and pride organizations, and enjoying DC’s restaurant scene. Her love for the absurdity and joy of spaces of human convergence—like gas stations, dating apps, places of worship, and Waffle Houses— informs much of her work.

Fatima Dyfan is a Senior at Georgetown University majoring in Government and African American Studies with a minor in Theater & Performance Studies. A black radical feminist in the making, Fatima hopes to pursue mixed medium writing that illuminates the nuisance of the Black experience. She is the Executive Producer to GU’s Black Theatre Ensemble, for whom she directed *for coloured girls...* She is currently working on a senior thesis creative project for the TPST and BTE Home Seasons, tentatively titled *Sunbath*, that remixes memoir, prayer, music and community while engaging black girlhood. Fatima expands her notions of performance by being a cheerleader for Georgetown and resident of Black House.

Aiyaisha Peoples is a fourth-year biology major and a double minor in playwriting and chemistry minor at the illustrious Howard University. Born in Tallahassee, Florida and raised in Stone Mountain, Georgia; her passions stem from her southern roots to always portray the beauty of storytelling. Peoples received a regional award with Scholastic allowing her the opportunity to write, direct, and act in her own play. She plans to continue her talents in playwriting utilizing those skills to give back to her community.

Jade Scott is a senior Theatre Technology major, Playwriting minor from Tampa, Florida. She is a writer and producer who received her formal training at the illustrious Howard University (BFA '21). She is the founder of WGC Productions and she hosts the podcast *On Their Way*.

—continued—

Page 3 — Arena Stage Announces Playwrights' Arena Program

Timmy Sutton is a 2020 Georgetown graduate (Government & English) and writer of theatre and poetry. A three-time finalist in the Donn B. Murphy One Acts Festival, his work holds its center of gravity in youth, class, and place. You can find some of his pieces in The Voice, Taco Bell Quarterly, Bossier, and in video form on the Button Poetry YouTube channel. He founded a Spoken Word Group while at Georgetown which catalyzed cross-disciplinary community. You can find him in Mokena, Illinois with his parents and two brothers, whom he loves more than anyone on Earth, searching for the best gas station ICEE and sunsets behind old Taco Bells.

Playwrights' Arena is supported, in part, by The Barbara R. Walton Endowment Fund for New Playwrights. Funding for the partnership with Georgetown University is also provided by Andrew R. Ammerman.

Housed in the Davis Performing Arts Center, the **Georgetown University Theater & Performance Studies Program** features a nationally recognized faculty of leading scholar/artists and professional practitioners, with a dynamic interdisciplinary major that emphasizes the interaction of artistic and analytic inquiry. The Program's distinctive curriculum integrates the political and international character of Georgetown, a commitment to social justice, and high-quality, cutting-edge production seasons, including world premieres. In 2012, Backstage selected the Program as one of the top five college theater programs outside of New York. The Theater & Performance Studies Program provides unique focus on adapting, devising and developing new work, interdisciplinary research-to-performance projects such as senior theses, cross-cultural performance studies, and innovative approaches to design and multi-media, as well as playwriting, directing, dramaturgy, ensemble, and solo performance. The Program invests in a distinctive array of professional partnerships, and collaborations including the Laboratory of Global Performance and Politics, an initiative with the School of Foreign Service.

Howard University, a culturally diverse, comprehensive, research intensive and historically Black private university, provides an educational experience of exceptional quality at the undergraduate, graduate, and professional levels to students of high academic standing and potential, with particular emphasis upon educational opportunities for Black students. Moreover, the University is dedicated to attracting and sustaining a cadre of faculty who are, through their teaching, research and service, committed to the development of distinguished, historically aware, and compassionate graduates and to the discovery of solutions to human problems in the United States and throughout the world. With an abiding interest in both domestic and international affairs, the University is committed to continuing to produce leaders for America and the global community. Excellence, leadership, service, and truth are our core values. Howard's aim is to forward the development of scholars and professionals who drive change and engage in scholarship that provides solutions to contemporary global problems, particularly ones impacting the African Diaspora.

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater, under the leadership of Artistic Director Molly Smith and Executive Director 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.

####

