

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES VIRTUAL FALL/WINTER SEASON

*****The *Looking Forward* Season features Arena's third world-premiere film, a socially distanced cabaret series, virtual season preview, masterclasses and more*****

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater announces its Fall/Winter *Looking Forward* Season featuring more than 70 virtual events and programs to engage with and respond to audiences in Washington, D.C.-metropolitan region and nationally. The recently concluded Spring/Summer Season featured 1,000+ virtual classes and events reaching audiences locally and worldwide including Bogota, Colombia. The upcoming season will expand even further with dynamic new programming including the world-premiere film, ***The 51st State***, a **Fall classes series** and partnerships with **Georgetown University** and **the Forum for Cultural Engagement**. Additionally, Arena's annual and much-anticipated **season preview** – a sneak peek of the upcoming season will move online showcasing performances and interviews with the cast and creatives.

"Every moment in history is a transition and this has been monumental. Our world has already seen major changes in 2020 — and when we find ourselves on the other end, we will be surprised at who we are," states **Artistic Director Molly Smith**. "It's been challenging and energizing to transform our thinking online since we can't gather in the traditional ways, but pioneering too as we innovate. We have a hyper-local film with *The 51st State*; a fantastic international exchange project with FLASH ACTS in partnership with the Forum for Cultural Engagement and Georgetown University; and more terrific master classes in many theatrical subjects. We are energized about being back together physically in the theaters in January, but for the Fall, we can't wait for you to join us online!"

Premiering on September 16, Arena Stage's third film in four months, ***The 51st State***, is inspired by the protests and the drive for the creation of a movement after the murder of George Floyd and the quest for the creation of the 51st state and sovereignty in Washington, D.C. The world-premiere will feature 10 stories written by 10 area playwrights based upon interviews with those impacted by the protests and DC's journey to historic statehood. Featured playwrights include **Caleen Sinnette Jennings, Gregory Keng Strasser, Lady Dane Figueroa, Mary Hall Surface, Aria Velz, Farah Lawal Harris, Teshonne Powell, Otis Ramsey-Zoe, Deb Sivigny** and **Karen Zacarias**. *The 51st State* cast includes **Sherri L. Edelen, Michael Glenn, James J. Johnson, Joy Jones, Jason B. McIntosh, Gary L. Perkins III, Todd Scofield, Thomas Adrian Simpson, Dani Stoller, Justin Weaks** and **Jacob Yeh**.

Arena's artistic leader and the film's director **Molly Smith** along with Deputy Artistic Director **Seema Sueko**, Director of Community Engagement/Senior Artistic Advisor **Anita Maynard-Losh**, Everyman Theatre's Artistic Associate and artist **Paige Hernandez** and Arena's Master Teaching Artist **Psalmayene 24** will direct the monologues. Original music will be composed by DJ and sound designer **Nick "tha 1da" Hernandez**.

The premiere will also launch the third outing of **Arena's Supper Club**. Patrons will be able to dine on delicious fare delivered to their door from area restaurants while watching the live premiere. Cuisine options include **Ben's Chili Bowl** and **Hank's Oyster Bar** at the Wharf. To reserve a supper club meal, visit arenastage.org/The51stState.

Arena will welcome some of its favorite performers back to the theater for socially distanced **Cabaret Nights**. Beginning in the fall and on select Fridays, patrons will enjoy Broadway to Jazz to the American Songbook from artists **Victor Simonson, Sherri L. Edelen, Nova Y. Payton, Maria Rizzo** and **Felicia Curry**.

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On November 10, Molly Smith will host a virtual **2020/21 Season Preview**. Playwrights, directors and performers will give audiences a peek into the upcoming season. The evening will celebrate the resiliency of American theater as well as powerful stories and electrifying new musicals in the season.

The Forum for Cultural Engagement created and led by singer and international exchange producer **Mary McBride**, in partnership with Arena Stage, Georgetown University Laboratory for Global Performance and Politics and Theater and Performance Studies Program have joined forces with the Lubimovka Young Playwrights Festival, the Center for Modern Drama in Yekaterinburg and the United States Embassy in Moscow to present **FLASH ACTS**, a 6-day online festival featuring newly commissioned short plays by twenty pre-eminent American and Russian playwrights. The **FLASH ACTS** festival will premiere on October 8, 2020 and will feature Zoom productions in Russian and English.

Arena's **Fall class series** continues with new masterclass sessions as well as newly created classes for preschoolers to adults. Masterclasses include hip-hop theater with **Psalmayene 24** and **DJ Nick tha 1da**, choreography with **Parker Esse**, playwriting with **Aaron Posner**, **Timothy Douglas** and costume design with **Ivania Stack**; bilingual moving stories, musical theater dance, acting and more will be led by Arena's Community Engagement team.

Arena Stage's Theater Artists Marketplace, launched in June, now features the work of more than 30 artists and artisans who have graced Arena's stages. Patrons have responded enthusiastically, commissioning or purchasing more than 100 gifts – generating much-needed financial support for artists during the pandemic. New artists will be added on September 23 to the marketplace.

The Fall/Winter Season will also include another season of weekly **Molly's Salons** and monthly **Civil Dialogues**. Additional information and registration details on these programs can be found here: arenastage.org/lookingforward.

Upcoming Schedule

Masterclasses

Arena Stage's popular masterclass series returns with eight virtual offerings for pre-professional and early-career adults in the fall. **Each class will meet twice a week on Wednesdays and Fridays via Zoom. Each class is \$70. To register and learn more, visit arenastage.org/fallmasterclasses.**

September 30 and October 2 from 5 – 7 p.m.

Dramaturgy with Naysan Mojgani

"What the heck is a dramaturg, anyway?"

Arena Stage Literary Manager Naysan Mojgani will introduce students to the many tasks and skills that go into the least-understood job in theater, and help students gain a deeper understanding of the art and importance of dramaturgy with case studies from recent Arena productions, and a hands-on project or two!

Naysan Mojgani is a freelance dramaturg and the Literary Manager for Arena Stage, where he is a key member of the new play development program and serves as in-house production dramaturg. As a theatre scholar, director, and dramaturg, Naysan has worked on new and classic work with theatres around the country, including MOXIE, Theatre de la Jeune Lune, Theatre Squared, and Malashock Dance, and has taught at UC San Diego and George Mason University. Naysan holds a PhD in Theatre & Drama from UC San Diego, and a BA from Carleton College.

October 7 and 9 from 5 – 7 p.m.

Choreography with Parker Esse

Have you ever wondered what it takes to choreograph a musical? How do they do it? Where do they get their ideas? Where do they start in creating choreography? From Agnes DeMille to Andy Blankenbuehler, this behind-the-scenes look will explore the process and styles of choreography and what it means to be a choreographer.

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Parker Esse is a multi-award-winning and story-driven director/choreographer. After performing regionally, in national tours, and as a featured performer on Broadway in the Tony Award-winning *Fosse*, he began collaborating exclusively on multiple regional and Broadway shows as associate director/choreographer, including Broadway's Tony, Drama Desk, and Outer Critics Award nominated *Finian's Rainbow* and *A Tale of Two Cities*, as well as five-star studded NY City Center Encores! productions. Parker has directed/choreographed for numerous NYC, regional and international theatres and is an eight-time Helen Hayes Nominee for Best Choreography, winning for Arena Stage's *Oklahoma!*, *The Pajama Game* starring Donna McKechnie, and *Anything Goes* starring Corbin Bleu. Most recently, last fall DC saw Parker's Helen Hayes nominated choreography for the record-breaking hit show Disney's *Newsies* (Arena Stage).

October 14 and 16 from 5 – 7 p.m.

Hip Hop Theater with Psalmayene 24 and DJ Nick tha 1da

Taught by hip-hop theater pioneer Psalmayene 24 and DJ Nick tha 1da, participants in this class will create and perform original pieces that blend the aesthetics of hip-hop with theater. Participants will also learn about the history of hip-hop theater and explore the use of rap as a storytelling device. Recommended for writers, performers, and those who have an interest in hip-hop culture.

Psalmayene 24 is an award-winning playwright, director, and actor. Psalm—as his colleagues call him—is currently the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Playwright in Residence at Mosaic Theater and the Doris Duke Artist in Residence at Studio Theatre. Directing credits include *Pass Over* by Antoinette Nwandu at Studio Theatre, *Native Son* by Nambi E. Kelley at Mosaic Theater Company, *Word Becomes Flesh* (recipient of five 2017 Helen Hayes Awards, including Outstanding Direction of a Play) by Marc Bamuthi Joseph at Theater Alliance, and *The Shipment* by Young Jean Lee at Forum Theater. Psalm is one of the writers of Arena Stage's coronavirus pandemic film, *May 22, 2020*, and he wrote "Double Entendre," the fifth episode of Roundhouse Theatre's ten-part pandemic influenced web series Homebound. His one man play, *Free Jujube Brown!*, is recognized as a seminal work in Hip-Hop Theatre and is published in the anthology, *Plays from the Boom-Box Galaxy: Theater from the Hip-Hop Generation* (TCG).

Nick "tha 1da" Hernandez's (DJ/Producer/Sound Design) recent work includes: *The Hip-Hop Children's Trilogy* with playwright Psalmayene 24 (Imagination Stage); *Fences* (Ford's Theater); *Native Son* and *Les Deux Noir* (Mosaic Theater); *Word Becomes Flesh* (Helen Hayes Award, Outstanding Production) at Theater Alliance; *Long Way Down* and *Darius & Twig* (The Kennedy Center); and *Havana Hop* and *All the Way Live* with sibling Paige Hernandez (Discovery Theater). Additionally, Nick has produced theme music & projects for Hot 97 FM, Red Bull Music, Netflix, DC Public Library, Smithsonian Associates, and Words, Beats & Life, Inc.

October 21 and 23 from 5 – 7 p.m.

Create and Collaborate: Devise a Performance in 4 Hours with Arena Stage's Community Engagement staff.

Some plays start with a script, devising starts with the people in the room. Based on Arena Stage's Voices of Now program, create a collaborative performance based on individual and shared experiences. Using conversations, poetry, personal writing, and creative movement. Experience the excitement and energy of creating thoughtful art with a group of people very quickly.

Ashley Forman is the director of education at Arena Stage in her 18th season. She is responsible for the design and development of Voices of Now, Arena Stage's devised theater program. Through a partnership with the U.S. Department of State, Ashley has implemented Voices of Now in India twice (2012 and 2014), Peru (2014), Croatia twice (2013 and 2019) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (2019). She has presented on devised theater at numerous conferences, including the American Alliance for Theater and Education; the Association for Theater in Higher Education Conference; the National Bereavement Camp Conference; and the International AIDS Conference. Through Voices of Now she has devised autobiographical plays with numerous populations. Ashley oversees all lesson planning and curriculum for Arena Stage's education programs.

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Rebecca Campana is in her 17th season in Arena Stage's Community Engagement Division, where she is the school programs manager, co-camp director and a teaching artist. She manages the D.C. Ticket Partnership, the theater's ticket program for D.C. public and public charter schools, teaching workshops in dozens of D.C. schools each season. Rebecca is an annual guest artist at the University of Notre Dame, specializing in teaching how to write 10-minute plays.

Mauricio Pita was born in Caracas, Venezuela and is currently Arena Stage's community programs manager. Previously he was GALA Hispanic Theater's director of education where he led the Paso Nuevo Youth Performance Group. In addition, Mauricio has worked as an educator for Young Playwrights Theatre, as a performer and educator for Superhero Clubhouse and The Society of Educational Arts (Teatro SEA) in New York City and has worked extensively as a performer with NYC Spanish Repertory Theatre, INTAR, Astoria Performing Arts Center (APAC), The Kennedy Center, The Director's Company and Studio Theatre.

October 28 and 30 from 5 – 7 p.m.

Sound Design with Roc Lee

Would you like to understand the dark art of sound design? How do you design for something you can't see? Learn how to appreciate sound as an art form, learn physical and abstract ways of creating sound, learn how to record and edit audio. In this masterclass we'll help you get your computer setup to record, edit, and create sound effects and apply these techniques to enhance the experience of the listener in a project.

Roc Lee is a Helen Hayes Award winning DC based Composer/Sound Designer. He holds a Master of Music in Stage Music Composition from CUA. His credits include *May 22, 2020*, *Voices of Now: Inside Voices*, *Snow Child*, *The Price*, *The Year of Magical Thinking*, *Mother Courage* at Arena Stage; *Crossing Mnissose* at Portland Centerstage; *Small Mouth Sounds*, *Doll House 2* at Roundhouse; *Kid Prince and Pablo*, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham 1963* at Kennedy Center TYA and more.

<https://roclee.net>

November 4 and 6 from 7 - 9 p.m.

Personal Playwriting: Writing from within with Aaron Posner

All creative writing is personal, but how can we all find new and helpful ways to bring our own best (and worst) idiosyncrasies into your plays? Everyone's path as a writer and creator is different. But in this interactive masterclass, we will explore ways to leverage YOU as your best guide to making your writing as radiantly personal (and powerful) as possible.

Aaron Posner is an award-winning director, playwright, teacher, former Artistic Director of two LORT theatres, and an Associate Professor of Theatre at American University. He has directed more than 150 productions at major regional theaters across the country including Arena Stage, American Repertory Theatre, American Players Theatre, Folger Theatre, Portland Center Stage, Ford's Theatre, Studio Theatre, Signature Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, Round House Theater, Seattle Rep, South Coast Rep, Imagination Stage, The Kennedy Center, and many more.

November 11 and 13 from 5 – 7 p.m.

Freeing the Intuitive Voice with Timothy Douglas

Actor, Director and [Linklater](#)-designated voice instructor Timothy Douglas will guide you within to assist you in accessing and unleashing your inner-intuitive sensibilities, and will also provide practical tools for you to be able to harness them. In this two-part workshop, we will also touch upon, and apply principles of the *ancient-brain theory*, and through the expression of spoken text we will more fully illuminate the actor's organic creative process, and how it flows into the *intimacy-of-process* between the director and the actor.

Timothy Douglas is an award-winning stage director, actor, and Designated Linklater Voice Instructor, who is represented at Arena Stage with his productions *King Hedley II*, *Disgraced*, and *Nina Simone: Four Women*, and currently serves as Distinguished Artist in Residence at Emerson College. timothydouglas.org

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November 18 and 20 from 5 – 7 p.m.

Costume Design Workshop: Character Costume Collage with Ivania Stack

This workshop will start out with a short visual presentation of the Costume Designer's process, quickly followed by a hands-on costume design activity. After a brief demonstration, everyone will be invited to create their own costume design collages. Throughout this activity, the costume design conversation can continue, with questions & answers, sharing of collages as they develop, and stories from the costume designer's perspective

Ivania Stack is delighted to be part of the Arena Stage artist community, where she designed costumes for *The Heiress*, *Right to be Forgotten*, *The Price*, *Two Trains Running*, and *Intelligence*. Her work has been seen at many theatres including: Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Ford's Theatre, Round House Theatre, The Kennedy Center, Signature Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Baltimore Center Stage, The McCarter Theatre, and more. She has an MFA in design from the University of Maryland, College Park.

Virtual Fall Classes at Arena Stage

Design a costume. Write a play. Get ready for your close-up. Start your weekend with a musical theater dance combination. Online classes at Arena Stage allow participants, from preschoolers through adults, to try something new or explore a favorite artform more deeply. No experience is required. **Classes are held weekly via Zoom and range from \$60 - \$240 Zoom links will be emailed to registered participants. To register and learn more, visit arenastage.org/fallclasses.**

PRE-SCHOOL CLASSES

Bilingual Moving Stories

Historias en movimiento

Tuesdays, September 29 – November 17 from 10:30 – 11:00 a.m.

Moving Stories (Historias en movimiento) is a vibrant and interactive online experience for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students and their caregivers that brings stories to life. Using song, video, movement, storytelling, and activities, Moving Stories explores beloved children's books through creative drama and play while promoting literacy skills in both English and Spanish.

Historias en movimiento es una experiencia vibrante e interactiva bilingüe que da vida a historias infantiles conocidas.

Historias en movimientos utiliza canciones, vídeos, movimientos, narraciones y actividades con la misión de promover la alfabetización tanto en inglés como en español.

Cost: \$60 for 8 weeks

Drop-In Fee: \$15 (On sale starting September 22)

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSES

Acting

Tuesdays, September 29 – November 17 from 3:30 - 4:30 p.m.

In this class, young actors will learn about teamwork and the three acting tools they will need to transform into different characters. Actors will learn to work with a script by rehearsing and sharing mini-monologues and performing fairy tale scenes with their fellow actors. Perfect for students in Grades 2 and 3.

Cost: \$120 for 8 weeks

Acting

Thursdays, October 1 – November 19 from 4 – 5 p.m.

In this class, young actors will learn about teamwork and the three acting tools they will need to transform into different characters. Actors will learn to work with a script by rehearsing and sharing monologues and performing fairy tale scenes with their fellow actors. Perfect for students in Grades 4 and 5.

Cost: \$120 for 8 weeks

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL CLASSES

Musical Theater Dance

Tuesdays, September 29 – November 17 from 4 – 5 p.m.

Musical Theater Dance is a space to stay creative and active. This class will lead students through a warm-up to help build a technical foundation. From there, students will work on combinations of various musical theater dance styles, encouraging individual expression and storytelling through movement. This class invites those with little formal dance experience or those who want to hone their skills. Perfect for students in Grades 5-8.

Cost: \$120 for 8 weeks

Voices of Now: Devising Film for Change

Tuesdays, September 29 – November 17 from 4 – 5:30 p.m.

Based on Arena Stage’s internationally renowned devised theater program Voices of Now, Devising Film for Change will give students an engaging environment in which to write, perform, capture and share stories that shape their lives. Students will train in the Voices of Now devising process with master teaching artists to create and perform an original, autobiographical film. They will also be introduced to the work and techniques of other notable companies that devise original theater and film. Perfect for students in Grades 7 - 11.

Cost: \$240 for 8 weeks

Costume Design

Wednesdays, September 30 – November 18 from 3:30-4:30 p.m.

In Costume Design, students will explore how to tell a story through clothing and how to discover characters through their costumes. Participants will learn about fabrics; practice illustrating our own designs and even get to bring our ideas to life with some basic hand sewing. Designed for students in Grades 5 - 8.

Cost: \$145 for 8 weeks (includes a \$25 materials/USPS postage fee)

Acting for the Camera

Wednesdays, September 30 – November 18 from 4 – 5 p.m.

In this class young actors (Grades 7 - 9) will learn the fundamentals of performance like objectives, tactics, given circumstances and obstacles. Each week, they will explore a new technique for on-camera work, like developing a strong inner monologue, expressing thoughts through their eyes, improving listening skills, as well as using camera angles and lighting to enhance their performance.

Cost: \$120 for 8 weeks

10-Minute Plays

Thursdays, October 1 – November 19 from 3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Write an individual 10-minute play from start to finish. Writers will start with finding inspiration for their plays from their imaginations, observations or experiences. Then, through engaging group and partner activities, participants will learn skills to help plot a story, create compelling characters and write dynamic dialogue. The class concludes in a celebration of one another’s work, performing select scenes from each other’s plays. Perfect for students in Grades 7 - 9.

Cost: \$120 for 8 weeks

HIGH SCHOOL & ADULT CLASSES

Dancing through the Decades:

Musical Theater Dance

Fridays, October 2 – November 20 from 7 – 8 p.m.

Dancing through the Decades will explore movement as a means of expression and storytelling in the context of different time periods. This class will lead students through a dance warm-up to help students build and refine their technical foundation. From there, students will journey through the decades—from the 1920s to now—integrating popular dances of the time while building confidence performing various musical theater styles. This class is a great introduction to musical theater dance and a fun way to start your weekend. Perfect for students in Grades 10 to Adult.

Cost: \$120 for 8 weeks.

Ongoing Series

Molly's Salon

Arena Stage Artistic Director Molly Smith continues to interview a variety of artists and leaders to discuss new ideas they are excited about, life in the pandemic and glimmers of hope for the future. **Molly's Salons take place on Thursdays via Zoom from 7-7:30 p.m.**

August 27

Khaled Nobawy, actor, Arena's *Camp David*

Michael Edwards, Artistic Director, Asolo Repertory Theatre

Jackie Reyes-Yanes, Director of the Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs

September 3

Idris Goodwin, playwright and Power Play Commissioned Writer

Philippa P.B. Hughes, Social Sculptor and Cultural Strategist

Jocelyn Clarke, Arena Stage dramaturg

September 10

Psalmayene 24, playwright, director, actor and Arena Stage Master Teaching Artist

Deborah Brevort, playwright and musical theatre librettist/lyricist, *The Women of Lockerbie*

Lex Sant, President, The Sant Foundation

Civil Dialogues

Arena Stage hosts conversations for members of the community to engage in civil discourse about social and political issues so that people of diverse viewpoints can have fruitful dialogues with one another. **The Civil Dialogues take place on Mondays via Zoom from 4 – 5:30 p.m.**

September 21

Suffer the Children: Child Care and Schools if COVID-19 Persists

Featured Dialogue Starters include **Professor Elizabeth Cascio**, Associate Professor of Economics at Dartmouth University; **Professor Rachel A. Gordon**, Professor of Sociology at University of Illinois at Chicago; **Brigid Schulte**, Director, Better Life Lab, New America; Professor Sarah Dryden-Peterson, and **Dr. Lynette Fraga**, CEO of Child Care Aware of America

October 19

The First Hundred Days: Under Biden, Trump, or Biden and a GOP-controlled Senate

Dialogue Starters to be announced at a later date.

The 51st State is generously sponsored The Artistic Director Fund, the Eugene M. Lang Foundation, Joanne Barker, Jane Lang, and The Barbara R. Walton Endowment Fund for New Playwrights. Playwrights' Arena is supported by The Barbara R. Walton Endowment Fund for New Playwrights. Funding for the partnership with Georgetown University is provided by Andrew R. Ammerman. Supporting Sponsorship for Arena Stage Cabaret is generously provided by Sheila Stampfli.

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 impacting the lives of over 10,000 students annually through its work in community engagement. Now in its eighth decade, Arena Stage serves a diverse annual audience of more than 300,000. arenastage.org

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