

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT:

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asthilaire@arenastage.org[See photos from the evening's dinner and award presentation.](#)**ARENA STAGE HONORS CHAIRMAN PHIL MENDELSON
WITH THE AMERICAN VOICE AWARD**

(Washington, DC) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater presented the **American Voice Award to District of Columbia City Council Chairman Phil Mendelson on Friday, February 13**, as part of the Opening Night celebration for **Chez Joey**, a world-premiere reimagining of the beloved **Richard Rodgers** and **Lorenz Hart** musical *Pal Joey*, now with a new book by **Richard Lagravenese**.

Established in 2005, the American Voice Award honors public officials recognized for their extraordinary support of and advocacy for American arts and arts education. **Chairman Mendelson** comes from a family dedicated to public service and has been an active public servant since 1975. First elected as an At-Large Councilmember in 1998, Mendelson became Chairman by appointment in 2012 and has since been re-elected to the position four times. Chairman Mendelson has guided and authored hundreds of laws that have shaped Washington, DC, including establishing an elected attorney general and an independent Department of Forensic Science, authoring Budget Autonomy, securing marriage equality and Universal Paid Leave, and more. Among this legislation has been strong, consistent support for the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities (CAH), a critical support system for arts organizations and independent artists across the city. This dedication to supporting CAH has made DC a leader in per capita arts funding since 2016 and has generated more than \$13.8 billion for the DC economy annually. The award was presented by Arena Stage Executive Producer **Edgar Dobie** at the pre-performance dinner.

"The arts play a pivotal role in the vibrancy of the District. It is imperative to me that the District government support the arts, large and small," says **Mendelson**. "A diverse and thriving arts community is what makes our city flourish. I am honored to be recognized for efforts to support this vital community."

"I am honored to recognize the committed and consistent advocacy Chairman Mendelson, or Phil, as DC residents know him, has shown for the citizens, businesses, and organizations he represents," says **Dobie**. "Phil's care and attention to every aspect of life in the District over his storied career reflects the passions and aspirations of the characters of *Chez Joey*, and his work as a tireless champion for DC residents has helped to ensure we all can chase those dreams in our city."

American Voice Award recipients previously honored by Arena Stage include Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Supreme Court Associate Justice Kentanji Brown Jackson, Representative Judy Chu (D-CA), Senator Ben Ray Luján (D-NM), the late Representative John Lewis (D-GA), and Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), among others.

About *Chez Joey*

Set on the South Side of 1940s Chicago, the stakes are high, the music is hotter, and the game of romance and ambition never sounded so good. Enter Joey Evans. A silver-tongued nightclub performer

with dreams bigger than the bandstand. But in a city where the right connections mean everything, he finds himself caught between a bright-eyed chorus girl and the wealthy widow who can bankroll his big break—for a price. As the lights dim and the music swells, Joey's got a choice to make: play it straight or gamble it all for a shot at the spotlight. Co-directed by **Savion Glover** and **Tony Goldwyn** with choreography and orchestrology by **Glover**, *Chez Joey* runs through March 15, in Arena Stage's Kreeger Theater.

The *Chez Joey* Opening Night celebration included a reception in the Bank of America Lower Lobby, a seated dinner in the Molly Smith Study, the performance in the Kreeger Theater, and a post-show reception in the Margot Kelly Grand Lobby.

Support for *Chez Joey* is provided by **David and Patricia Fisher; Daniel Korengold, Martha Dippell, and Ourisman Automotive of Virginia; Bonnie Feld; and Catherine and Chris Guttman-McCabe.**

In addition to *Chez Joey* production sponsors, the Opening Night Celebration is supported by **Boston Consulting Group.**

Arena Stage offers this production in memory of long-time usher and patron, **Anne Buzalski**, in grateful recognition of her very generous bequest.

The first racially integrated theater in our nation's capital and a pioneer of the regional theater movement, Arena Stage was founded on August 16, 1950, in Washington, DC. Today, under the leadership of Artistic Director Hana S. Sharif and Executive Producer Edgar Dobie, Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater is a national center dedicated to American voices and artists. We produce plays of all that is passionate, profound, deep, and dangerous in the American spirit, and present diverse and groundbreaking work from some of the best artists around the country. Consistently contributing to the American theatrical lexicon by commissioning and developing new plays, Arena Stage impacts the lives of over 10,000 students annually through its work in community engagement and serves a diverse annual audience of more than 300,000. arenastage.org

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