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**ARENA STAGE WELCOMES DARREN JOHNSTON  
AS ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR**

*The seasoned theater producer will oversee commercial strategy and partnership within the artistic division.*

(Washington, DC) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater today announced [Darren Edward Johnston](#) as **Associate Artistic Director of Commercial Strategy and Partnership**. Following a decade of leadership at the Tony Award-winning theatrical production company [No Guarantees Productions](#), most recently as Senior Vice President, Artistic, **Johnston** will join the Tony-winning regional theater this spring to help shape the next chapter of its artistic and institutional evolution.

“I believe deeply that the American theater must be both a home for artists and a launchpad for work that resonates far beyond our wall. Darren embodies that possibility,” said Arena Stage Artistic Director **Hana S. Sharif**. “His extraordinary fluency across the nonprofit and commercial landscapes, paired with his unwavering commitment to artistic rigor and bold imagination, makes him uniquely suited for this moment at Arena Stage. Darren intimately understands how to shepherd ambitious new American work from first spark to its fullest life, building pathways that allow stories nurtured here in Washington, DC, to reach audiences nationally and beyond. I am thrilled to welcome him into our artistic family—his strategic insight, collaborative spirit, and expansive vision will be instrumental as we shape Arena’s next chapter and strengthen our role as a vital force in the American theater ecosystem.”

A pioneer of the regional theater movement, Arena Stage has enjoyed a long relationship with commercial theater. The company has the distinction of being the first theater to transfer a show to Broadway. Howard Sackler’s drama *The Great White Hope* had its world premiere at the DC theater in 1967—in a production starring James Earl Jones and Jane Alexander—before transferring to Broadway in 1968 and winning three Tony Awards, as well as the 1969 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Over Arena’s 75-year history, it has nurtured and produced 23 productions that have had a life on Broadway, including Pulitzer recipients *Next to Normal* and *Sweat*, Tony winner *Dear Evan Hansen*, and, most recently in 2024, The Avett Brothers-scored *Swept Away*.

“One of the things I love most about the American theater is the collaboration between the not-for-profit and commercial theater,” said **Johnston**. “We are one ecosystem, and we need each other to support the artists we believe in and empower them to reach the widest audience possible.”

“As Associate Artistic Director of Commercial Strategy and Partnership, driven by the visionary leadership of Hana S. Sharif, I am delighted to serve as Arena’s primary bridge to the commercial theater, as well as collaborate with theaters across the country, identifying projects with national and commercial potential, and leading the producing strategy for commercially enhanced productions at Arena, performing first and foremost for the diverse audiences of our nation’s capital.”

“For the last 9 years, I’ve had the great privilege of working with Christine Schwarzman, Megan O’Keefe, the entire team at No Guarantees Productions, and our many collaborators to produce artist-driven theatrical productions on Broadway, around the world, and with not-for-profit and regional theaters,” continued **Johnston**. “I leave with deep gratitude for all we’ve built together and great excitement for the collaborations still to come.”

Johnston assumes his new role at Arena beginning April 13, reporting to Sharif.

### **Darren Edward Johnston**

Prior to joining Arena Stage, Darren Edward Johnston spent the previous decade building the Tony Award-winning theatrical production company No Guarantees Productions alongside founder and CEO Christine Schwarzman and, later, President and COO Megan O'Keefe. On Broadway and in the West End, he lead produced James Ijames' Pulitzer Prize-winning and Tony-nominated play *Fat Ham*, directed by Saheem Ali; *Player Kings*, adapted and directed by Robert Icke from Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Parts 1 & 2* starring Sir Ian McKellen and Toheeb Jimoh; Jez Butterworth's Tony and Olivier-nominated play *The Hills of California*, directed by Sam Mendes; and Andrew Lloyd Webber, Emerald Fennell, David Zippel, and Alexis Scheer's musical *Bad Cinderella*, directed by Laurence Connor. He led co-production and theatrical investment strategy for No Guarantees, with co-productions including *Sunset Blvd.* (2025 Tony Award, Best Revival of a Musical), *Stereophonic* (2024 Tony Award, Best Play), *Merrily We Roll Along* (2024 Tony Award, Best Revival of a Musical), *Leopoldstadt* (2023 Tony Award, Best Play), *The Lehman Trilogy* (2022 Tony Award, Best Play), *Company* (2022 Tony Award, Best Revival of a Musical), and *Hadestown* (2019 Tony Award, Best Musical).

Off-Broadway and regionally, Johnston also produced and developed work from artists such as David Henry Hwang, Jeanine Tesori, Leigh Silverman, Sam Pinkleton, Celine Song, Sammi Cannold, Whitney White, Jocelyn Bioh, Michael Thurber, and Darrell Grand Moultrie. Alongside Christine Schwarzman, he executive-produced the National Theatre's film adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* (PBS/Sky), starring Josh O'Connor and Jessie Buckley, directed by Simon Godwin. Their second stage-on-film collaboration, *Death of England: Face to Face* by Clint Dyer and Roy Williams, was broadcast on Sky Arts and nominated for the 2022 BAFTA TV award for Single Drama.

Prior to No Guarantees, Johnston worked on a variety of plays and musicals with artists such as Tina Landau, Tarell Alvin McCraney, Phylicia Rashad, Michael Mayer, and Mike Bartlett. He served on the staff of both Tectonic Theater Project and the Public Theater, working closely with Artistic Directors Moisés Kaufman and Oskar Eustis. Outside of theater, he worked as a campaign manager, organizer, and fundraiser in Democratic politics. He chaired the Consistory of Middle Collegiate Church and served on the Collegiate Church of New York's Consistory and Executive Committee.

### **Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater**

The first racially integrated theater in our nation's capital and a pioneer of the regional theater movement, Arena Stage was founded in 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 AssAmerican 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](http://arenastage.org)

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