

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CONTACT:**

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[asthilaire@arenastage.org](mailto:asthilaire@arenastage.org)**ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES  
2025 VOICES OF NOW FESTIVAL**

*\*\*\*The day-long festival on May 10 will feature performances, talkbacks, workshops, and panel discussions, plus all-day interactive activities amplifying the voices of youth and teens\*\*\**

(Washington, DC) Arena Stage's Community Engagement Department today announced the lineup for its annual **Voices of Now Festival**. Introducing a new one-day format, the Voices of Now Festival showcases new plays written and performed by youth and teen artists from the DC metropolitan area. Through self-expression and creative collaboration, seven ensembles of middle and high school artists will assemble at the Mead Center for American Theater on **May 10, 2025**, to explore the issues that matter most to them through theater, visual arts, and open dialogue. The Voices of Now Festival is free to attend, but seating for performances is limited. For more information and to reserve tickets, visit [arenastage.org/vonfestival2025](https://arenastage.org/vonfestival2025).

"The Voices of Now Festival has always been about amplifying teen voices, and this year, that commitment takes center stage in bold new ways," said Arena Stage Director of Community Engagement **Sean-Maurice Lynch**. "What began as a showcase of performances has grown into a full celebration of youth expression—powered by collaboration between young artists, cultural partners, and the community."

Instituted more than 20 years ago, Voices of Now (VON) is an internationally recognized drama program in which ensembles of middle and high school artists use devised theater to create autobiographical plays. These fast-paced, collaboratively written, physical pieces pose significant questions relevant to the artists and their communities by engaging in dialogue centered on each ensemble member's unique life experience. Through creative writing, poetry, movement, and acting, VON gives its ensembles an artistic experience that challenges them to recount the stories that have shaped their lives.

With over 50 young storytellers and art makers participating this season, this year's festival will be full of new perspectives and fresh experiences. From dynamic performances and post-show talkbacks that spark reflection, to expert-led panel discussions and a hands-on arts lab hosted by DC Zinefest, the Voices of Now Festival encourages its participants and attendees to reflect on their experiences, foster empathy, inspire change, and strengthen community connections through the transformative power of storytelling.

"DC Zinefest is thrilled to partner with Arena Stage to offer a Zine Lab at the Voices Of Now Festival this year," exclaimed **Eve Mefferd**, a DC Zinefest organizer. "Both organizations engage DC metro area community members as artists, makers, and storytellers in unique and exciting ways. DC Zinefest is particularly looking forward to the chance to share zine-making with young people at the festival as an accessible and hands-on method of creative self-expression they can use to make their voices heard."

The 2025 Voices of Now Festival features the return of the program's flagship and inaugural ensemble, the Jefferson Middle School Ensemble—now in its 20th season—as well as the Wendt Center Ensemble, now in its 12th season, and the Military Ensemble, now in its second season.

“VFW Post 9274 is proud to be the host site for the Voices of Now Military Ensemble,” said VFW Post 9274 Auxiliary President **Cathy Soltys**. “VFW Posts are dedicated to serving and supporting combat veterans and their families. It has been a great joy to provide a safe and welcoming space for the dependents from military families to share and explore their unique experience creatively.”

Celebrating a 15-year partnership with Fairfax County Public Schools, this year’s festival also includes plays devised by Holmes Middle School, Luther Jackson Middle School, and Robinson Secondary School. Kilmer Middle School will host an in-festival workshop where attendees can engage with VON’s signature devising techniques and experience original work created by Kilmer artists.

“Through theater, visual art, and open dialogue, teens are sharing their stories with honesty and purpose, inviting all of us to listen, reflect, and connect,” concluded **Lynch**. “It’s a space where youth voices are not only heard—but truly celebrated.”

### **2025 Voices of Now Festival Schedule**

Saturday, May 10

**11:30 – 11:45am**

Festival Launch

**12:00 – 1:00pm**

Performances: Robinson and Jefferson Ensembles

**1:15 – 1:45pm**

Panel Discussion: Turning Passion into Action

**2:00 – 2:45pm**

Workshop: The Art of Seeing - How Art Can Change the Way You Look at Life

**3:00 – 4:00pm**

Performances: Holmes and Luther Jackson Ensembles

**4:30 – 5:00pm**

Panel Discussion: Expert and Teen Perspectives on Wellness and Thriving

**5:30 – 6:15pm**

Workshop: VON Kilmer Ensemble Collaboration in Action

**6:30 – 7:30pm**

Performances: Military and Wendt Center Ensembles

**7:30 – 8:30pm**

Festival Closing Celebration

### **About Voices of Now**

Voices of Now is made possible through generous support from Boeing with additional support from Events DC, Hattie M. Strong Foundation, Enterprise Holdings Foundation, Friends of Southwest DC, and in-kind support by VFW Post 9274.

Voices of Now is funded in part by Creative Forces®. Creative Forces Community Engagement Grants are part of the National Endowment for the Arts’ Creative Forces® initiative, in partnership with Mid-America Arts Alliance.

Arena Stage's community engagement efforts are generously sponsored by Denie and Frank Weil; The Toni A. Ritzenberg Fund for Educational and Community Outreach Programs at Arena Stage; Joanne Barker; The Robert and Natalie Mandel Family Foundation; Rick and Carol Froehlich; The deLaski Family Foundation; Boeing; Events DC; Comcast; Alice Shaver Foundation; GEICO; Venable Foundation; Hattie M. Strong Foundation; Nora Roberts Foundation; Enterprise Holdings Foundation; Friends of Southwest D.C.; and Actors' Equity Foundation.

For more information on the Voices of Now program and festival, please visit [arenastage.org/voicesofnow](http://arenastage.org/voicesofnow).

*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, D.C. 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](http://arenastage.org)*

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