

September 29, 2026

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ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES COMPANY FOR

ARE YOU NOW OR HAVE YOU EVER BEEN?

By ERIC BENTLEY

Directed by ANNA D. SHAPIRO

Running OCTOBER 17 – DECEMBER 6, 2026

(Washington, DC) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater today announced the company for ***Are You Now or Have You Ever Been?***. Following its Off-Broadway staging at New York City Center, **Eric Bentley's** critically acclaimed political docudrama will run **October 17 – December 6, 2026**, in Arena's **Kreeger Theater**, directed by Tony Award winner **Anna D. Shapiro** (*August: Osage County*), who helmed this summer's *New York Times* Critic's Pick revival. Using only the original transcripts from the 1940s House Un-American Activities Committee's hearings that targeted the country's leading artists, *Are You Now or Have You Ever Been?* reveals the defiance, humor, fear, resentment, and self-preservation inside one of the darkest chapters of American cultural history. Press night will be held on Thursday, October 22. For tickets and information, visit arenastage.org/areyounow.

"Edgar Dobie asked me to see the production and I immediately reported back that Arena absolutely **MUST** produce this play!" shared Arena Stage Artistic Advisor **Tazewell Thompson**. "It's brilliant, compelling, frighteningly relevant, and echoes today's indictment of American citizens. I am eager to see it again with the Arena Stage audiences."

Featuring the testimonies of artists like Arthur Miller, Jerome Robbins, Paul Robeson, Elia Kazan, Lillian Hellman, Abe Burrows, and Lionel Stander, *Are You Now or Have You Ever Been?* follows a group of entertainers as they confront life's toughest choices: protect reputations, preserve careers, or betray peers. Revealing a climate of intimidation and moral conflict that resonates far beyond its time, this electrifying docudrama plunges audiences into an intense deposition of the 1940s House Committee on Un-American Activities hearings, where fame offered no protection and political pressure threatened livelihoods.

Jason Babinsky (Broadway's *Network*) reprises his role from the New York City Center production. He is joined by **Edward L. Simon** (Arena's *A Wrinkle in Time*), **Greg Stuhr** (Broadway's *Good Night, and Good Luck*), **Stephen Cefalu Jr.** (*To Kill a Mockingbird* National Tour, Arena's *Data*), **John Leslie Wolfe** (Broadway's *Parade*, Arena's *Mother Courage*), **Philip Earl Johnson** (*Angels in America: Millennium Approaches* National Tour), **Aaron Bliden** (Arena's *CrazySexyCool – The TLC Musical*), **Peter Jacobson** (Fox's *House*), **Rivka Borek** (American Conservatory Theater's *Hamlet*), **Jeff Still** (Broadway's *Dog Day Afternoon*), and **Kevin Mambo** (Broadway's *The Color Purple*, Arena's *We Are Gathered*). **Coleman Pedigo** (Studio Theatre's *Jonah*), **Joey Collins** (*To Kill a Mockingbird* National Tour), **David Bryan Jackson** (Studio Theatre's *People, Places & Things*), and **Eli El** (Arena's *Fremont Ave.*) serve as understudies.

Shapiro will be joined by the New York City Center creative team, including set designer **Andrew Boyce** (*Dana H.*), costume designer **Johanna Pan** (*Floyd Collins*), two-time Tony Award-winning lighting

designer **Donald Holder** (*South Pacific*), sound designers Rob Milburn and Michael Bodeen for **Milbo Music** (*Purpose*), projection designer **Brittany Bland** (*CATS: The Jellicle Ball*, *Arena's Death on the Nile*), and hair and wig designer **Brittany Hartman** (*The Thanksgiving Play*). **Zoë Adams** serves as associate director. Casting is by **Raiyon Hunter, CSA**. The stage manager is **Morgan R. Holbrook** and the assistant stage manager is **Dayne Sundman**.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Edward L. Simon (*Man 1*) is thrilled to be back at Arena Stage and returning home to the DC area! Born and raised in the land of Old Bay, he is also a graduate of The Boston Conservatory's Musical Theatre BFA program. Recent credits include the world premiere of *A Wrinkle in Time* (Arena Stage), *Ragtime* (Signature Theatre), *Into the Woods* (American Stage), *Hair* (New Rep Theatre), *Cinderella* (Virginia Rep), and the world premiere of *Vatican Falls* off-Broadway. You can follow his blog writing on arts and politics on Substack: [@edwardsimon23](https://edwardsimon23.substack.com). All his gratitude to his agents at ATB, the whole creative team, Sally, Ben, and the CKs. Instagram: [@edwardsimon23](https://www.instagram.com/edwardsimon23). Go Ravens!

Greg Stuhr (*Man 2*) previously worked in D.C. at the Studio Theatre in *Three Sisters*. His Broadway credits include *Good Night, And Good Luck* with George Clooney directed by David Cromer, Tracy Letts' *The Minutes*, and Larry David's *Fish in the Dark*, both directed by Anna Shapiro, and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. Other notable theater includes world premieres by Ethan Coen, Rolin Jones, Keith Reddin, and Bruce Norris for the Atlantic Theater Company, Yale Rep, South Coast Rep, and Steppenwolf, respectively. He frequently collaborates with co-writer/director Jenna Ricker on projects like the acclaimed indie film *The American Side*, and the award-winning ESPN 30 for 30 documentary, *Qualified*, which premiered at SXSW. Greg also co-created and wrote the pilot for the comedy series *Luba's Lot* for Fox Television.

Stephen Cefalu Jr. (*Man 3*) is thrilled to be returning to Arena after originating the role of Jonah in the World Premiere of *Data*. Broadway Tour: Aaron Sorkin's *To Kill a Mockingbird*; Selected Regional: *The Cherry Orchard* (Goodman Theatre), *Death of a Salesman* (Hartford Stage), World Premiere of *Mary Page Marlowe* (Steppenwolf), World Premiere of *The Gradient* (St. Louis Rep.) TV: *Cupertino*, *Evil*, *Shameless*, *Law and Order: SVU*. MFA Acting: Yale Drama. Instagram: [@stephencefalujr](https://www.instagram.com/stephencefalujr)

Jason Babinsky (*Committeeman 2*) is happy to return to "AYNOHYEB" after performing it Off-Broadway under the tutelage of Anna Shapiro. Broadway: *Network*, *Billy Elliot* (also first national tour), and *Ghost*. Off Broadway: *Anatomy of a Suicide* (Atlantic Theater), *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (Classic Stage Company), and *A Man's a Man* (Classic Stage Company). Regional: Williamstown Theatre Festival, McCarter Theatre, Contemporary American Theater Festival, George Street Playhouse, Pittsburgh Civic Light and Opera, Huntington Theatre, Alley Theatre, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, Paper Mill Playhouse, City Theatre Company, Utah Shakespeare Festival and others. Film: *Contagion*, *You Were Never Really Here*, *Sweethearts* (HBO), *She Said*, *A Cure for Wellness*, *The Wizard of Lies* (HBO), *You Don't Know Jack* (HBO), and *Law Abiding Citizen*. TV: "Your Friends and Neighbors," "Elsbeth," "The Good Wife," "Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt," "Billions," "Succession," "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel," "The Equalizer," "The Blacklist," "FBI," "FBI: Most Wanted," "Bull," "Run the World," "New Amsterdam," "Elementary," "Law and Order," "Law and Order: SVU," "Madam Secretary," "Blue Bloods," "House of Cards," and others.

John Leslie Wolfe (*Chairman*) last appeared at Arena Stage in *Mother Courage* starring Kathleen Turner, and in 2005's *Damn Yankees*. Also in DC, he appeared at Signature Theater (*Titanic*, *Passion*, *Threepenny Opera*, *Diner*, *Sweeney Todd*), Ford's Theater (*Ragtime*, *1776*, and others), and in pre-Broadway companies of *Martin Guerre* and *Golden Child* at Kennedy Center. On Broadway, John was in the original company of Hal Prince's *Evita*, and toured nationally/internationally with the show as Juan Peron, playing DC several times. Other Broadway shows include *Sarava*, *Passion*, and *Parade*. For six years,

John played Andre in *The Phantom of the Opera*, in Las Vegas. TV/film includes *House of Cards*, *The West Wing*, *The Wire*, *Homicide*, *The Invasion*, *Step Up*, *Invincible*, and HBO's *Something the Lord Made*. His photography is at www.jlwfaces.com.

Philip Earl Johnson (*Committeeman 1*) was last seen in DC, and around the country, in the National Tour of *Angels in America* as Joe Pitt at The Kennedy Center. At The Laguna Playhouse in California, he was seen as Jamie in *A Moon For The Misbegotten*. Chicago area credits include: The Goodman Theater as Stockton in Robert Falls' *An Enemy of the People* and Autolycus in *The Winters Tale*, Kurt in Conor MacPherson's American premiere of *The Dance of Death* at Writers Theater, Tartuffe in *Tartuffe* at The Court Theater, Rafe in *The Herbal Bed* at Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, and Doc in *Come Back, Little Sheba* at American Blues Theater (Company Member). TV credits include *Chicago Fire*, *Empire*, and *Will and Grace*.

Aaron Bliden (*Larry Parks*) is returning to Arena after appearing as Danny in *Crazy Sexy Cool –The TLC Musical*. Other recent regional highlights include *The American Five* at Ford's Theatre, *An Enemy of the People* and *Tiny Lights* at Theater J, and *The Waverly Gallery* at 1st Stage. Aaron has worked for The Second City in several different productions, which played at Woolly Mammoth and The Kennedy Center. Additionally, he has appeared on stage at Center Stage Baltimore, Folger, Signature, Imagination Stage, Arts on the Horizon, Olney, and Forum. Aaron is a founding company member of Pointless Theatre along with some other graduates of his alma mater, University of Maryland College Park. He is one-third of the DC-based band The French Champagne. He is currently writing a rock opera.

Peter Jacobson (*Abe Burrows*) recently played Willy Loman in *Death Of A Salesman* at Hartford Stage. Off-Broadway credits include *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*, *Four Dogs and a Bone*, *Waiting For Lefty*, *June Moon*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Compleat Wrks of Wllm Shkspr (Abridged)*, *Comedy of Errors*, and *Taming of the Shrew* (Delacorte Theatre). TV work includes Dr. Taub on *House*, *Law & Order*, *Law & Order: SVU*, *The Americans*, *Colony*, *Ray Donovan*, *Fear the Walking Dead*, *NCIS: Los Angeles*, *High Potential*, *Ahsoka*, *WeCrashed*, *Always Sunny in Philadelphia*, *FBI*, *Girls on the Bus*, *The Good Wife*, *Billions*, *The Good Doctor*, *Will and Grace*, and *Oz*. Movies include *Smile 2*, *Good Night and Good Luck*, *Fly Me to the Moon*, *White House Down*, *Cars 2*, *Transformers*, *61**, *Paterno*, *Path to War*, *A Civil Action*, *As Good As It Gets*, *Deconstructing Harry*, and *Private Parts*.

Rivka Borek (*Lillian Hellman*) is honored to be at Arena Stage for the first time and working alongside the entire team! Her credit highlights include plays at American Conservatory Theater, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Ars Nova, Hudson Valley Shakespeare (tour), SF Playhouse, Detroit Public Theatre, and the Edinburgh Fringe. She has also participated in workshops and readings with The O'Neill, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Clubbed Thumb, Theatre for a New Audience, and New Georges. She received her M.F.A. in Acting from A.C.T.

Jeff Still (*Lionel Stander*) Broadway: *Dog Day Afternoon*, *The Minutes*, *Oslo*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *August: Osage County*, *Fish in the Dark*, *Therese Raquin*, *Lombardi*, *Bronx Bombers*, *Job*. National Tour: *Mockingbird*, *August*. Off-Broadway: *Tribes*, *Our Town*, *Orson's Shadow*, *Adding Machine*. Regional: Harry in *Born Yesterday* (Guthrie), Rothko in *Red* (Pittsburgh Public Theatre), Salieri in *Amadeus* (Cardinal), Dr. Sweet in Tracy Letts' *Bug* (Gate Theatre, London), Howard in *The Mystery of Love & Sex* (Signature). Chicago: Victor in *The Price* (Writers Theatre), Queeg in *The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial* (Red Orchid), Roma in *Glengarry Glen Ross* (Pointe), 13 shows with Steppenwolf Theatre and, back in 1990, Lionel Stander in Big Game Theatre's *Are You Now or Have You Ever Been* directed, like this production, by Anna Shapiro.

Kevin Mambo (*Paul Robeson*) Broadway, Off-Broadway, and tour credits include *Fela!*, *The Color Purple*, and *The Book of Mormon* National Tour (Helen Hayes nomination); *The History of Empires* at La MaMa;

Fortress of Solitude at Dallas Theater Center and The Public Theater (Lortel nomination); *Mlima's Tale* at The Public Theater; *Ruined* at Goodman Theatre and Manhattan Theatre Club; *The Convert* at Kirk Douglas Theatre, Goodman Theatre, and McCarter Theatre Center; *Venus and Painted Rocks* at Revolver Creek at Signature Theatre; *Seven Guitars* and *Pericles* at Two River Theater; *The Last Detail* at Lucille Lortel Theatre; *Once Around the Sun* at Zipper Factory Theater; *The Tempest* (Helen Hayes nomination) and *Radio Golf* (Helen Hayes win) at Roundhouse Theatre; and *We Are Gathered* at Arena Stage. Film credits include *Rustin*, *Nina*, *Cadillac Records*, *Rebel in the Rye*, *Payback*, *One of Us Tripped*, *Firing Squad*, *Selah and the Spades*, *The Southside*, *Henchman of Notre Dame* (Best Actor), *Trooper*, and *Man in the Mirror*. Television credits include *Guiding Light* (two Emmys, three nominations), *Hit & Run*, *Luke Cage*, *Saint X*, *High Maintenance*, *The Good Doctor*, *Blacklist*, *Happyish*, *Soul Food*, *One Life to Live*, *Law & Order* (Original/Deadline/SVU/Trial by Jury/Criminal Intent/Reboot), *Spin City*, *Elementary*, *Any Day Now*, *Mistresses*, *Family Matters*, *Freshman Dorm*, and *Great Performances*. Instagram: [@iammambo](#)

Coleman Pedigo (u/s *Man 1*, *Committeeman 2*, *Larry Parks*) marks his first collaboration with Arena Stage. Previously on stage: *Jonah* (U/S) at Studio Theatre, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (U/S) with Syntetic Theatre, *Barbecue Apocalypse* with Charlotte's Off-Broadway. Film: *Christy* (Toronto International Film Festival, 2025).

Joey Collins (u/s *Man 2*, *Man 3*, *Abe Burrows*) is thrilled to be working with Arena Stage for the first time on *Are You Now Or Have You Ever Been?*, as he is a new resident of SW DC. Locally, he has had the privilege to work at Studio Theatre, Theatre J, Shakespeare Theatre, CATF, and Folger. He was in the Broadway companies of *The Glass Menagerie* (with Jessica Lange and Sarah Paulson), *Rock 'n' Roll*, and *The Lonesome West*. He was Richard Thomas' foil in the National Tour of *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Favorite Off-Broadway shows are *Bug* (Barrow Street), *Vieux Carré* (Pearl), *Galileo*, and *1599* (Irondale Ensemble). He has enjoyed audiences at PlayMakers Rep, Yale Rep, A.C.T., Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, The Old Globe, Barrington Stage, Berkshire Theatre Festival (BTCA Award), and others. Favorite film and TV work include *There Is A Monster*, *Chest Candy*, *Bittersweet*, *Kidnapped*, *Law & Order*. joeycollins.net. Instagram: [@mrjoeycollins](#)

David Bryan Jackson (u/s *Chairman*, *Lionel Stander*) has acted at the Shakespeare, Folger, Mosaic, Woolly Mammoth, Studio, Scena, Spooky Action, and Signature theaters, as well as Washington Stage Guild, Washington Shakespeare Company, The Kennedy Center, and Olney Theatre Center (where he was literary manager for several years). He received a Theatre Lobby award for his performances in *Intimate Exchanges* at Source Theatre and *Via Dolorosa* at Theater J (the latter of which he reprised in Los Angeles and Boston). He recently appeared in *Breaking the Code* at Central Square Theater in Cambridge, MA, where he has also designed sound and composed music for several productions.) On-screen credits include the independent films *Dinner with the Alchemist* and *Her Tango*, and AMC's *Turn: Washington's Spies*.

Eli El (u/s *Committeeman 1*, *Paul Robeson*) is returning to Arena Stage after performing in *The Motion* (2026), *Fremont Ave.* (2025) *The Great Society* (2018). Other theater performances include *The Piano Lesson* (1st Stage), *Testosterone and Migraaaaants* (ExPats Theatre), *AJAX* (Scena Theatre), *Radio Golf* (Roundhouse Theatre), *FAT HAM* (Studio Theatre), *A Thirst for Freedom* (Live Garra), and many more. He has completed and is currently involved with several independent film projects (*Once Upon a Time in The District*, *Unarmed Man*, *Harriet*, *The Meek*, *Last Night*, *THICK*, etc. Eli has directed (*The Healing Floor*) award winner DCBTF. He also directed a feature film and two shorts (*The Cracked Mask* and *Lay Me Down*). His motto is "you can learn from anyone, if only you allow yourself to."

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

Are You Now or Have You Ever Been?
By Eric Bentley

Directed by **Anna D. Shapiro**
In the Kreeger Theater | October 17 – December 6, 2026

ABOUT:

Straight from Off-Broadway comes a timely and important play—Eric Bentley's *Are You Now or Have You Ever Been?*, directed by Tony Award winner Anna D. Shapiro. This electrifying docudrama drops you into the tense world of the 1940s House Committee on Un-American Activities hearings, where fame offered no protection and political pressure could end a career.

Using only the original transcripts, the play features the words of artists like Arthur Miller, Jerome Robbins, Paul Robeson, Elia Kazan, Lillian Hellman, Abe Burrows, and Lionel Stander as they faced impossible choices: defend their integrity, protect their careers, or betray their peers. And yet the probing, chilling questions posed by the committee are as powerful as the testimonies themselves, revealing a climate of intimidation and moral conflict that resonates far beyond its time.

CAST (*in order of appearance*)

Man 1: Edward L. Simon
Man 2: Greg Stuhr
Man 3: Stephen Cefalu Jr.
Committeeman 2: Jason Babinsky
Chairman: John Leslie Wolfe
Committeeman 1: Philip Earl Johnson
Larry Parks: Aaron Bliden
Abe Burrows: Peter Jacobson
Lillian Hellman: Rivka Borek
Lionel Stander: Jeff Still
Paul Robeson: Kevin Mambo

u/s Man 1, Committeeman 2, Larry Parks: Coleman Pedigo
u/s Man 2, Man 3, Abe Burrows: Joey Collins
u/s Chairman, Lionel Stander: David Bryan Jackson
u/s Committeeman 1, Paul Robeson: Eli El

CREATIVE TEAM

Playwright: Eric Bentley
Director: Anna D. Shapiro
Set Designer: Andrew Boyce
Costume Designer: Johanna Pan
Lighting Designer: Donald Holder
Sound Designer: Milbo Music
Projection Designer: Brittany Bland
Hair and Wig Designer: Brittany Hartman
Associate Director: Zoë Adams
Casting: Raiyon Hunter, CSA
Stage Manager: Morgan R. Holbrook
Assistant Stage Manager: Dayne Sundman

Are You Now or Have You Ever Been? is sponsored by **Decker Anstrom and Sherry Hiemstra**.

Are You Now or Have You Ever Been? is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. www.concordtheatricals.com

PLAN YOUR VISIT

TICKETS

Tickets start at \$37. Ticket prices and availability are subject to change.

Tickets are available at arenastage.org. Tickets may also be purchased through the Sales Office by phone at 202-488-3300, Tuesday through Sunday, 12-6PM, or in person at 1101 Sixth Street, SW, Washington, DC, Tuesday through Sunday, 2 hours before the show begins on performance days.

Groups of 10 or more may book tickets at arenastage.org/groups or via email at groups@arenastage.org.

Arena Stage's many savings programs include discount tickets for those aged 35 and under; military, first responder, and educator discounts; and "Southwest Nights" for those living and working in the District's Southwest neighborhood. To learn more, visit arenastage.org/tickets/discounts.

PERFORMANCE DATES

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Sunday at 7:30PM

Thursday, Friday, and Saturday at 8PM

Saturday and Sunday at 2PM

Weekday matinees at 12PM on October 28; November 5, 19, and 25; and December 2 and 3

Southwest Night Performances: Saturday, October 17 through Wednesday, October 21

Early Curtain Performance: Sunday, November 22, at 6PM

Audio-Described Performance: Saturday, November 14, at 2PM

ASL-Interpreted Performance: Saturday, November 21, at 8PM

Closed Captioning: Globetitles will be available at performances starting October 22.

College Night: Saturday, October 17, at 8PM

Students, grab \$35 tickets using code COLLEGE, with valid student ID. The night is yours!

Pride Night: Wednesday, October 21, at 7:30PM

Celebrate with \$40 tickets using code PRIDE. Come for the show, stay for the vibes!

Arena is proud to partner with the DC LGBTQ+ Community Center and Impulse Group DC for a Pride Night centered on connection, service, and community.

Young Professionals Night: Saturday, October 24, at 8PM

Network over happy hour at 6:30PM, catch the show, and connect with fellow theater lovers! Use code YOUNGPRO (ages 21–45) for \$35 tickets.

HBCU & Friends Night: Wednesday, October 28, at 7:30PM

Rep your colors! Calling all HBCU students, staff, and alumni to come out to the show that will have everyone talking. Use code HBCU for \$40 tickets.

Childcare Matinee: Sunday, November 15, at 2:00PM

In partnership with National Children's Theatre, experienced teaching artists will guide children ages 3–5 and 6–12 through creative play exercises, a story drama activity, and an art project—all while their caregivers enjoy the performance. Visit arenastage.org/areyounow for more information.

Arena Conversations

Connect with the show beyond the performance at a post-show conversation on October 28 and November 5 following the 12PM matinees, and on November 17 following the 7:30PM performance.

TRAVEL: Limited parking is available in Arena Stage's on-site garage for \$22 to \$35; call 202-488-3300 to purchase in advance. Drive-up valet parking is available for those who require accessibility

accommodations, for \$35, cash only. For more information on transportation and other parking options around the Mead Center, visit arenastage.org/parking.

*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 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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