

# ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## ARENA STAGE AT THE MEAD CENTER FOR AMERICAN THEATER ANNOUNCES COMPANY'S 68TH SEASON

**\*\*\* 2017/18 season features politically-charged work, world premieres, musicals and classic dramas from a diverse group of voices including Mary Kathryn Nagle, Jeanne Sakata, Karen Zacarias, Christina Ham and August Wilson \*\*\***

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage Artistic Director Molly Smith and Executive Director Edgar Dobie announce the 2017/18 season lineup for the company's 68th season. The season reflects Arena Stage's commitment to championing diverse voices and producing work that is politically and socially-relevant.

"Our 2017/18 season celebrates a multiplicity of voices that will barnstorm America. We're combining artistry and activism, politics and entertainment to showcase a lineup that includes two world premieres, two musicals and one premiere as part of our Power Plays initiative," shares **Smith**. "From the Supreme Court to the Alaskan wilderness to Cherokee Nation to Japanese-American internment camps to President Lyndon Baines Johnson's White House, we're bringing stories to the stage that represent diverse voices and communities. Our commitment to parity continues—half of the projects in our season boast a female playwright or male playwright of color, and seven are helmed by female directors."

The season kicks off with the return of **John Strand's** 2015 smash-hit political drama *The Originalist*, featuring acclaimed D.C. actor **Edward Gero**, reprising his role as Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia. **Molly Smith** directs this special limited engagement, which gives audiences the opportunity to experience the show afresh with a new staging for the Kreeger Theater. Later in the season, **Jack Willis** reprises his performance as President Lyndon Baines Johnson and reunites with director **Kyle Donnelly** in the D.C. premiere of *The Great Society*, the sequel to **Robert Schenkkan's** Tony Award-winning play *All the Way*.

The season continues with newer work from contemporary female voices, including **Karen Zacarias'** hot-button comedy *Native Gardens*, about the clash of class and culture that pushes well-meaning neighbors over the edge in their fight for garden space (directed by **Blake Robison**); **Christina Ham's** *Nina Simone: Four Women*, a music-infused drama revealing how the velvet-throated songstress helped define the sound of the Civil Rights Movement (directed by **Timothy Douglas**); and **Jeanne Sakata's** *Hold These Truths*, which tells the true story of Gordon Hirabayashi, the son of Japanese immigrants who defied an unjust court order when America placed its own citizens in internment camps during World War II (directed by **Jessica Kubzansky**).

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Sparks fly this holiday season with the toe-tapping musical *The Pajama Game*. When a workers' strike pits management against labor, it ignites an outrageous battle of the sexes. Director **Alan Paul** teams up with choreographer **Parker Esse** and music director **James Cunningham** to bring this comedic love story to life, featuring seductive dance numbers, including "Steam Heat" and "Hernando's Hideaway," and a swinging score.

**Mary Kathryn Nagle's** world-premiere drama *Sovereignty* debuts as the fourth Power Play in Arena Stage's ambitious initiative to commission and develop 25 new plays and musicals over the next 10 years, focused on stories of politics and power. Directed by **Molly Smith**, this daring new play tells the story of a young Cherokee lawyer fighting to restore her Nation's jurisdiction, with shadows stretching from 1830s Cherokee Nation and Andrew Jackson's White House to present-day Oklahoma.

The season features two classic dramas—**Arthur Miller's *The Price***, one of the most personal plays by the American theater giant, directed by Arena Stage Deputy Artistic Director **Seema Sueko** and featuring **Hal Linden**; and **August Wilson's *Two Trains Running***, the seventh production to be produced by Arena Stage as part of the Pulitzer Prize winner's acclaimed Pittsburgh Cycle examining Black America, directed by **Juliette Carrillo**.

The season culminates with *Snow Child*, a magical new musical that dances on the edge of legend, based on Eowyn Ivey's novel. In the 1920 Alaskan wilderness, a couple struggles to rebuild their lives. Everything changes when they are visited by a wild and mysterious girl who embodies the dark woods that surround their cabin. Featuring a vibrant and haunting score, *Snow Child* is as evocative as the land it depicts. **Molly Smith** directs this world-premiere musical, featuring a book by **John Strand**, music by **Bob Banghart** and **Georgia Stitt** and lyrics by Stitt.

### Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater 2017/18 Schedule\*

#### ***The Originalist***

**By John Strand**

**Directed by Molly Smith**

**Co-production with Asolo Repertory Theatre and The Pasadena Playhouse**

**In the Kreeger Theater | July 7-30, 2017**

Four-time Helen Hayes Award winner Edward Gero returns as Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, offering audiences another opportunity to see his "lively performance" (*Washington Post*) in this special limited engagement. When a bright, liberal, Harvard Law School graduate embarks on a nerve-racking clerkship with the conservative Justice, she discovers him to be both an infuriating sparring partner and an unexpected mentor. How will their relationship affect one of the most incendiary cases ever to reach the nation's highest court? Don't miss your opportunity to experience the show afresh with a brand-new staging for the Kreeger Theater.

#### ***Native Gardens***

**By Karen Zacarías**

**Directed by Blake Robison**

**Co-production with Guthrie Theater**

**In the Kreeger Theater | September 15-October 22, 2017**

Good fences make good neighbors...right? From the outrageous mind of playwright Karen Zacarías (*Destiny of Desire*) comes this hot new comedy about the clash of class and culture that pushes well-meaning neighbors over the edge. Tania, a very pregnant Ph.D. candidate, and Pablo, her rising attorney husband, move next door to Virginia and Frank, a deep-rooted D.C. couple with an impeccably trimmed backyard. But when a questionable fence line puts a prize-worthy garden in jeopardy, neighborly rivalry escalates into an all-out border dispute, challenging everyone's notions of race, privilege and where to draw the line on good taste.

***The Price***

**By Arthur Miller**

**Directed by Seema Sueko**

**In the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle | October 6-November 5, 2017**

Everything has a price—even our dreams. Victor Franz has returned home to settle his late father’s estate. In an attic overflowing with memories and furniture he meets the enigmatic Gregory Solomon (Hal Linden), a professional appraiser committed to turning a profit off Victor’s past. But before a bargain can be struck, an estranged brother enters the scene to reframe Victor’s memories and force them both to reconsider the true cost of personal sacrifices. One of the most personal plays by an American theater giant, Arthur Miller’s *The Price* is “as relevant today as the day it was written.” (*The Hollywood Reporter*)

***The Pajama Game***

**Book by George Abbott and Richard Bissell**

**Music and lyrics by Richard Adler and Jerry Ross**

**Based on the novel *7 ½ Cents* by Richard Bissell**

**Directed by Alan Paul**

**Choreographed by Parker Esse**

**Music direction by James Cunningham**

**In the Fichandler Stage | October 27-December 24, 2017**

The Sleep-Tite Pajama Factory is a tiptop model of efficiency—so why are things getting so steamy? It could have something to do with how hard new superintendent Sid Sorokin has fallen for Babe Williams, the trouble-making head of the union grievance committee. Sparks really start to fly when a workers’ strike pits management against labor and ignites an outrageous battle of the sexes. Packed with seductive dance numbers like “Steam Heat” and “Hernando’s Hideaway,” the best way to ensure a good night’s rest during the hectic holiday season is to play *The Pajama Game*!

***Nina Simone: Four Women***

**By Christina Ham**

**Directed by Timothy Douglas**

**In the Kreeger Theater | November 10-December 24, 2017**

Velvet-throated songstress Nina Simone hypnotized audiences with her signature renditions of standards from the American songbook. But on September 15, 1963, a devastating explosion in Birmingham, Alabama rocked our entire nation to the core, and from the memory of the four little girls that were lost in this unimaginable tragedy, came “Four Women”—along with Simone’s other activist anthems like “Mississippi Goddam,” “Old Jim Crow” and “To Be Young, Gifted and Black.” Through storytelling and song, *Nina Simone: Four Women* reveals how this iconic chanteuse found her true voice—and how the “High Priestess of Soul” helped define the sound of the Civil Rights Movement.

***Sovereignty***

**By Mary Kathryn Nagle**

**Directed by Molly Smith**

**In the Kreeger Theater | January 12-February 18, 2018**

Some wounds refuse to heal. Mary Kathryn Nagle’s daring new work, which debuts as the fourth production in Arena Stage’s Power Plays initiative, travels the intersections of personal and political truths, historic and present struggles. Sarah Ridge Polson, a young Cherokee lawyer fighting to restore her Nation’s jurisdiction, must confront the ever-present ghosts of her grandfathers. With shadows stretching from 1830s Cherokee Nation (now present-day Georgia) and Andrew Jackson’s White House to the Cherokee Nation in present-day Oklahoma, *Sovereignty* asks how high the flames of anger can rise before they ultimately consume the truth.

***The Great Society***

**By Robert Schenkkan**

**Directed by Kyle Donnelly**

**In the Fichandler Stage | February 2-March 11, 2018**

Robert Schenkkan's Tony Award-winning play *All the Way* set the stage for President Lyndon Baines Johnson's sudden ascent to the White House. In its D.C. premiere, *The Great Society* brings the second half of Schenkkan's epic story to its harrowing conclusion. As America is divided by civil rights protests and the anguish of the Vietnam War, LBJ struggles to maintain his relationship with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., keep his political opponents in check and complete a raft of impossibly ambitious social policy projects. Jack Willis reprises his "stunning performance" (*Broadway World*) in this political thrill ride that explores the America of our past to better understand the America of today.

***Hold These Truths***

**By Jeanne Sakata**

**Directed by Jessica Kubzansky**

**In the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle | February 23-April 8, 2018**

Reeling from the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 and driven by fear and prejudice, America placed its own citizens of Japanese ancestry in internment camps. A play for our times, *Hold These Truths* tells the true story of Gordon Hirabayashi, the American son of Japanese immigrants who defied an unjust court order to uphold the values on which America was founded. Filled with hope and buoyed by unquenchable patriotism, Hirabayashi's unflinching defiance will leave you cheering the strength of the individual and his dedication to his own unalienable rights. "Surprisingly humorous and openhearted." (*Seattle Times*)

**August Wilson's**

***Two Trains Running***

**Directed by Juliette Carrillo**

**Co-production with Seattle Repertory Theatre**

**In the Fichandler Stage | March 30-April 29, 2018**

It's 1969 and the Civil Rights Movement is sending tremors through Pittsburgh's Hill District. At the center of the community is Memphis Lee's diner, slated to be demolished—a casualty of the city's renovation project. Confronted with a rapidly changing world, Memphis and his regular customers struggle to maintain their solidarity and sense of pride. From Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright August Wilson comes this masterpiece about everyday lives in the shadow of great events, and of unsung citizens who are anything but ordinary. "Perfection...a work by a writer at the peak of his powers." (*Variety*)

***Snow Child***

**Based on the novel by Eowyn Ivey**

**Book by John Strand**

**Music by Bob Banghart and Georgia Stitt**

**Lyrics by Georgia Stitt**

**Directed by Molly Smith**

**Co-production with Perseverance Theatre**

**In the Kreeger Theater | April 13-May 20, 2018**

Eowyn Ivey's debut novel *The Snow Child*, a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, is reborn as a magical new musical featuring a score that combines Alaskan backcountry string-band traditions and contemporary musical theater. The 1920 Alaskan wilderness is a brutal place to try to save a marriage. Reeling from the loss of an unborn child, Mabel and Jack struggle to rebuild their lives even as the fissures between them continue to widen. But everything changes suddenly when they are visited by a wild, mysterious girl who embodies the dark woods that surround their cabin. In this beautiful and violent land, things are rarely as they appear, and what the snow child teaches them will ultimately transform them all.

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*\*Plays, artists and dates are subject to change.*

**Subscription packages are now on sale and may be purchased by calling the Arena Stage Sales Office at 202-488-3300 or by visiting [arenastage.org](http://arenastage.org).**

***Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater**, under the leadership of Artistic Director Molly Smith and Executive Director 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 impacts the lives of over 10,000 students annually through its work in community engagement. Now in its seventh decade, Arena Stage serves a diverse annual audience of more than 300,000. [arenastage.org](http://arenastage.org)*

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