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# 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 ANNOUNCES AMBITIOUS POWER PLAYS INITIATIVE COMMISSIONING AND DEVELOPING 25 NEW PLAYS OVER 10 YEARS

**\*\*\* Twenty-five commissioned playwrights, including Nathan Alan Davis, Eve Ensler, Rajiv Joseph, Jacqueline Lawton, Mary Kathryn Nagle, Aaron Posner, Sarah Ruhl and John Strand, explore stories of politics and power from 1776 through today \*\*\***

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater launches **Power Plays**, an ambitious initiative commissioning and developing 25 new plays and musicals from 25 writers over the course of the next 10 years. With Power Plays, Arena Stage focuses Washington, D.C.'s unique theatrical voice on politics and power, amplifying the theater's role as a national center dedicated to American voices and artists, located in the heart of the nation's capital.

The massive undertaking features American stories of politics and power, exploring the people, events and ideas that have helped shape our country's narrative and identity, with one story per decade, beginning with 1776 through today. Power Plays features work by both well-established writers as well as those who are in the beginning stages of their careers in theater, embracing the diversity of our country to understand who we are as Americans.

"Power and politics are the red meat of Washington, D.C.," shares Artistic Director **Molly Smith**. "We eat, sleep and drink politics here from early morning coffee to late night conversations. Every city has its own language, its own nuances, its own history, and our language is politics. D.C. audiences are hungry for these stories, and there is no other place in the country where these plays could have such an impact. There is no better time to launch this massive commissioning cycle, the largest in Arena's history. The more we understand our American stories of politics and power, the more informed we become as a democracy."

"Our Power Plays initiative ties directly into Arena Stage's mission of nurturing new plays and presenting work that reflects America's diversity and challenges, and honors the founding principles of our organization, set down over six decades ago," says Executive Director **Edgar Dobie**. "We have test driven the idea with several stakeholders and already received meaningful support. As a manager, I love the 10-year arc, which allows us to plan with confidence and set audacious goals for the organization."

Seven commissioned projects are currently in development, with playwrights **Nathan Alan Davis, Eve Ensler, Rajiv Joseph, Mary Kathryn Nagle, Aaron Posner, Sarah Ruhl and John Strand**, focused on topics including Oklahoma's "Black Wall Street," the inherent sovereignty of Cherokee Nation, John Quincy Adams and Theodore Roosevelt. Inspired by true events, **Jacqueline Lawton's** *Intelligence*, a political thriller that explores the cost of deception and the consequences of speaking truth to power, debuts as part of the Power Plays cycle and runs February 24-April 2, 2017 at Arena Stage.

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Power Plays builds on the tremendous success of previous Arena Stage commissions focused on both political figures and historic events, including **John Strand**'s *The Originalist*, which offered a rare portrayal of the late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, and **Lawrence Wright**'s *Camp David*, which explored the pivotal 1978 Camp David Accords between President Jimmy Carter, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat.

**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 groundbreaking 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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