

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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January 10, 2018

ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES ADDITIONAL PLAYWRIGHTS TO JOIN AMBITIOUS POWER PLAYS INITIATIVE COMMISSIONING AND DEVELOPING 25 NEW PLAYS OVER 10 YEARS

***** Playwrights Kenneth Lin, Craig Lucas, Eduardo Machado and Theresa Rebeck join Power Plays initiative, exploring stories of politics and power from 1776 through today *****

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater announces four additional commissioned playwrights as a part of **Power Plays**, an ambitious initiative commissioning and developing 25 new plays and musicals from 25 writers over the course of 10 years. Playwrights **Kenneth Lin, Craig Lucas, Eduardo Machado** and **Theresa Rebeck** join previously announced commissioned playwrights with projects underway, including **Nathan Alan Davis, Eve Ensler, Aaron Posner, Sarah Ruhl** and **John Strand**.

The massive initiative 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 this decade. 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.

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. Upcoming play and musical commissions are focused on diverse topics such as Theodore Roosevelt, Oklahoma's "Black Wall Street," John Quincy Adams, Fidel Castro and witches and witchcraft.

"The Power Play cycle has landed in the sweet spot of America's interest in the political," shares **Artistic Director Molly Smith**. "I can't remember a time in my life when the desire to understand our nation from its early bones has been more profound. We look at Power Plays broadly, and the ideas range from biographical like John Quincy Adams, to an underlying American drive like homesteading and the environment in Alaska, to witchcraft in the 1700s. Writers are energized, audiences are intrigued and our artists have a real sense of purpose—the perfect trifecta with which to make exciting theater."

Molly Smith celebrates her 20th anniversary season at Arena Stage by directing both Power Plays in the 2017/18 season. Based on the stories of **Mary Kathryn Nagle's** Cherokee grandfathers, Nagle's ***Sovereignty*** tells the story of a young Cherokee lawyer fighting to restore her Nation's jurisdiction and runs January 12-February 18, 2018. From April 13-May 20, 2018, the first Power Musical will debut. ***Snow Child***, a magical new musical set in the 1920s' Alaskan wilderness, based on Eowyn Ivey's novel, features a book by **John Strand**, with music by **Bob Banghart** and **Georgia Stitt**, and lyrics by Stitt. Smith spent more than 25 years in Alaska, including nearly two decades at Perseverance Theatre in Juneau, Alaska, which she founded and ran for 19 years, and these upcoming projects tap into her passion for Native American stories and shedding light on the history and character of Alaska.

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“Molly is celebrating her 20th anniversary with Arena, and Power Plays is a great example of her innovative thinking and ambitious plans for our resident theater,” says **Executive Director Edgar Dobie**. “These new plays will tackle issues from America’s past and present, discovering new stories to show our audiences. It gives us all great pride to be part of an organization that continues to push forward with such determination.”

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; **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; and **Jacqueline E. Lawton’s** *Intelligence*, which focused on the consequences of speaking truth to power.

For information about sponsorship and branding opportunities associated with Power Plays, contact Ryan Merkel at rmerkel@ArenaStage.org or 202-600-6042.

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

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