

Arena Stage Slates Women-Powered 2016–17 Season



WASHINGTON, D.C.: [Arena Stage](#) artistic director Molly Smith and executive producer Edgar Dobie have announced a 2016–17 season showcasing the theatre’s mission of American voices and artists. Inspired by its role as one of the seven originating theatres of D.C.’s [Women’s Voices Theater Festival](#), Arena Stage has embraced a commitment to inclusion with a season featuring seven titles by women, six playwrights of color, and five female directors.

“Arena has such a smart and diverse audience, so it is always a challenge to ensure everyone is energized,” said Smith in a statement. “This season we leaned into that challenge and are welcoming a host of extremely talented artists both returning and new. This season is a celebration of Arena’s broad shoulders, from our Lillian Hellman Festival, a Lorraine Hansberry classic and the gold-standard musical to world-premiere political dramas, a comedy and a new musical. The Mead Center was designed to have these different audiences unite in our flowing lobby, and I’m eager to experience this throughout our dynamic season.”

The season kicks off in July with the world-premiere musical *Born for This: The BeBe Winans Story* (July 1–Aug. 28), with original music by Winans and a book by Winans and Charles Randolph-Wright, who will also direct. It tells the story of gospel-singing siblings BeBe and CeCe Winans from their Detroit hometown to stardom on the Bakkers' "Praise the Lord" TV show, and beyond. Juan and Deborah Joy Winans will star in the lead roles.

Siblings are also at the center of the next offering, *The Little Foxes* (Sept. 23–Oct. 30), which kicks off a festival of works by Lillian Hellman. This play about a cutthroat cotton-mill family and its battle for wealth will be directed by Kyle Donnelly and will Marg Helgenberger.

Joan Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking* follows (Oct. 7–Nov. 20). This adaptation of Didion's memoir about grief and resilience will star [Kathleen Turner](#).

Next is Smith's staging of the Rodgers & Hammerstein classic *Carousel* (Oct. 28–Dec. 24), which will feature choreography by Parker Esse and music direction by Paul Sportelli.

[Lookingglass Theatre Company](#)'s production of *Moby Dick* will next pull into port (Nov. 18–Dec. 24). Adapted and directed by David Catlin from the classic Melville novel, it will be produced in association with the Actors Gymnasium.

The new year begins with *Roe* (Jan. 12–Feb. 19, 2017), Lisa Loomer's dramatization of the history-making relationship between Norma McCorvey, the original "Roe," and the lawyer, Sarah Weddington, whose case sealed a decisive victory for abortion rights in the U.S. This world-premiere coproduction with [Oregon Shakespeare Festival](#) and [Berkeley Repertory Theatre](#) will be directed by OSF's Bill Rauch.

Another world premiere based on historical events follows with Jacqueline E. Lawton's *Intelligence* (Feb. 24–April 2, 2017). Based on the story of CIA operative Valerie Plame and her husband Joe Wilson whose cover is blown in the runup to the Iraq War, it will be directed by Daniella Topol.

The Hellman festival continues with *Watch on the Rhine* (Feb. 3–March 5, 2017). This drama about pre-World War II tensions in a D.C. suburb stars Marsha Mason and will be directed by Jackie Maxwell.

Lorraine Hansberry's classic *A Raisin in the Sun* follows (March 31–April 30, 2017), to be directed by Tazewell Thompson.

The season closes with Lydia R. Diamond's *Smart People* (April 14–May 21, 2017), a romantic comedy about race, prejudice, and science. [Seema Sueko](#) directs.

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