

ENROLLED ORIGINAL

A CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION

25-57

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

April 4, 2023

To recognize and honor the career and achievements of Molly Smith on the occasion of her retirement from Arena Stage after 25 years of leadership and more than 40 years of service to the performing arts.

WHEREAS, Molly Smith earned a bachelor's degree from the Catholic University of America and a master's degree in theater from American University before launching a lifelong career in theatrical directing and production;

WHEREAS, Molly Smith is the recipient of honorary doctorates in the arts from Towson University and American University;

WHEREAS, Molly Smith began what would become an illustrious career in 1978, spending the next 18 years at the Perseverance Theatre, which she founded, in Juneau, Alaska;

WHEREAS, Molly Smith traversed across the wild countryside of Alaska to the District of Columbia on an artistic mission to create an Arena Stage for the future;

WHEREAS, in 1998, Molly Smith returned to the District to become Artistic Director of Arena Stage, leading a legendary lineup of new, world-class productions for the theater house at a time when few women were leading artistic direction of leading theaters;

WHEREAS, Molly Smith transitioned from leading performances in airplane bunkers and on barges to filling the enormous square round of the Fichandler Stage with robust musicals and classic plays, electrifying the Kreeger Theater with a great variety of new and established work, and birthing the Kogod Cradle, an incubator for new ideas and reimagining;

WHEREAS, Molly Smith has directed several international productions, including the Shaw Festival in Canada, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Trinity Repertory Company, Tarragon Theatre in Toronto, and Centaur Theatre in Montreal;

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WHEREAS, Molly Smith has a running competition for the highest ticket sales in Arena's history, consistently outdoing herself and her rivals with each passing season even though she doesn't read her own reviews;

WHEREAS, Molly Smith took on the establishment by elevating her voice with the March on Washington for Gun Control, the Mueller Report Reading, and elevating voices for discussion through through-provoking plays such as *The Originalist*, *Camp David*, and the Power Play Commission initiative that propelled Arena further into the forefront of the American regional theater movement;

WHEREAS, Molly Smith led the imagining of the Mead Center for American Theater with Bing Thom, creating swooping glass walls, bringing all aspects of the Arena Stage enterprise together under one unique soaring roof, with a corner office that embraces the cacophony of theater-making and the greetings from neighbors strolling along Maine Avenue;

WHEREAS, Molly Smith has spoken many truths – and also the occasional malapropism and encouraged everyone to lean into the culture of the rehearsal hall, testing ideas and building communities collaboratively, whether or not they had been in a rehearsal room before;

WHEREAS, Molly Smith has been active outside of the theater house, serving extensively on several governing boards, including the Steinberg Playwright Awards Advisory Committee from 2016 to 2019, the Theatre Communications Group from 2004 to 2010, and the International Theatre;

WHEREAS, Molly Smith also served as an ambassador of the performing arts, visiting Russia and Romania as part of the Trust for Mutual Understanding in 2004 and 2003, and she served as a literary advisor to the Banff Playwright's Colony in Canada;

WHEREAS, Molly Smith has won numerous accolades throughout her career, including Director of Distinction from The Academy of Arts in Cairo, Egypt; the John P. McGovern Award from the Cosmos Club; induction into the D.C. Hall of Fame Society in 2018; Person of the Year from the National Theatre Conference in 2017; Washingtonian of the Year in 2011, University Club Distinguished Washingtonian Award in 2009; and 100 Most Powerful Women in Washington from *Washingtonian Magazine* in 2001;

WHEREAS, Molly Smith entered every room with her own signature style of dark suits, flowing dresses, bright lipstick, and colorful glasses;

WHEREAS, Molly Smith will return to nature and encourage us to recall the beauty in bears, bees, salmon, pottery, jelly, mountains, and rivers and still enjoy the ridiculously expensive restaurants on the Wharf;

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WHEREAS, Molly Smith will be remembered, according to a longtime colleague and friend, as a “visionary, community builder, artist, provocative, influential, feminist, activist, and leader”; and

WHEREAS, Molly Smith blew the dust off Arena Stage and the regional theater movement and has earned a peaceful retirement.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the “Molly Smith Recognition Resolution of 2023”.

Sec. 2. The Council of the District of Columbia recognizes and honors the career and achievements of Molly Smith on the occasion of her retirement from Arena Stage after 25 years of leadership and more than 40 years of service to the performing arts.

Sec. 3. This resolution shall take effect immediately.