

molly smith
artistic director

stephen richard
executive director

zelda fichandler
founding director



MEDIA RELEASE

Contact: Kirstin Lunke, Media Relations Manager
press@arenastage.org; (202) 554-9066 ext. 715

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 21, 2006

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MOLLY SMITH ANNOUNCES ARENA STAGE'S 2007/2008 SEASON

New season includes three world premieres, two musicals and comedies, an Arthur Miller Festival and adds two additional productions to the regular 8-play season

(Washington, D.C.) For her 10th season as Arena Stage Artistic Director, Molly Smith announces an extraordinary lineup for the theater's 57th season, continuing Arena's focus on American voices and emerging talent. The 2007/2008 season includes three world premieres from award-winning American writers, two regional premieres, a celebration of the American playwright Arthur Miller, and is flanked by musicals and comedies featuring beloved D.C. artists. The season also expands Arena's traditional 8-play schedule, with two additional limited-run presentations completing the lineup.

"There is a powerful thematic resonance in this expansive season," said Smith. "As Arena reaches out to our own future, as expressed in our plans for a new building, it is appropriate that next season's productions contain elaborate explorations of aspirations and dreams. I am thrilled to be producing three world premieres, The Arthur Miller Festival and our new Arena Presents – this season is a theater lover's dream come true."

The season kicks off in the Kreeger with a world premiere by Moisés Kaufman. The co-production with Tectonic Theater Project, known by its working title *33 Variations*, shares one woman's artistic exploration into Beethoven's inexplicable obsession with Anton Diabelli's simple waltz. The Fichandler lineup begins with *Well* by Lisa Kron. This 2006 Tony-nominated, form-bending "solo play with other actors" is a hilarious attempt to tell the truth – and nothing but the truth – about a mother and a daughter.

The second production in the Kreeger is the season's second world premiere and first musical, *The Women of Brewster Place*. Based on Gloria Naylor's critically acclaimed novel, Tim Acito's musical adaptation delves into the personal relationships, hopes and desires of a group of African-American women who persevere in the face of life's disappointments. Molly Smith directs this soaring musical, developed at Arena and co-produced with Atlanta's Alliance Theater, with a cast that includes E. Faye Butler, Harriett D. Foy and Marva Hicks. The third world premiere follows in the Fichandler: *Christmas Carol 1941*, a fresh take on Dickens' classic tale by James Magruder that transposes the story from Victorian London to Washington D.C. on the heels of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Tina Fabrique (seen at Arena in *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* and *Crowns*) heats up the Kreeger stage next in *Ella*, a musical about the life, times and music of the First Lady of Song, Ella Fitzgerald. For the season's final two Fichandler productions, Arena Stage celebrates an American master with a tribute to Arthur Miller. Anchoring this salute are productions of two of his most acclaimed plays, running in true repertory and featuring the same acting company – *A View from the Bridge* and *Death of a Salesman*. Daniel Aukin directs *A View from the Bridge*, while *Death of a Salesman* is directed by Timothy Bond. In addition, the Festival will feature Monday evening readings, screenings and lectures exploring Miller's other work. The 2007/2008 season ends in the Kreeger with the high-camp hijinks of Charles Ludlam's outrageous gothic comedy *The Mystery of Irma Vep*, co-starring Brad Oscar and J. Fred Shiffman and directed by Rebecca Bayla Taichman.

1101 Sixth Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024
T: 202 554 9066
F: 202 488 4056
www.arenastage.org

– continued –

Arena Stage Announces 2007/2008 Season

Page 2

Arena adds two special attractions to its 8-play season. The first production, Daniel Beaty's one-man show *Emergence-SEE!*, returns this summer for an encore presentation, having captivated Arena audiences with three sold-out performances in February 2007. By special arrangement, Beaty's July 9 performance kicks off the return of The Hip Hop Theater Festival in D.C. In the spring of 2008, the outrageous musical revue *Kiki & Herb: Alive on Broadway*, co-created and performed by Justin Bond and Kenny Mellman, makes its D.C. debut in the Kreeger Theater.

Preview the 2007/08 season Monday, May 7 at 7:00 p.m. Join Smith as she presents an evening of scenes from Arena's new season. These staged readings will be performed by Arena's Affiliated Artists and local actors. This event is free to the general public; however, reservations are requested. General public may reserve seats by calling the Arena Stage Sales Office at (202) 488-3300. For press reservations please e-mail press@arenastage.org or call (202) 554-9066 ext. 715.

Arena Stage's 2007/2008 Season*

33 Variations (working title) – world premiere

Co-production with Tectonic Theater Project / Written and directed by **Moisés Kaufman**

August 24 through September 30, 2007 in the Kreeger

The season kicks off with a **compelling** new play by one of the leading voices of the contemporary American theater – **Moisés Kaufman**, creator of *The Laramie Project* and *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde* and director of the Pulitzer and Tony-winning *I Am My Own Wife*. In 1819, fledgling publisher Anton Diabelli commissioned 50 composers to write a variation on a waltz he had created. Beethoven rejected the invitation, dismissing Diabelli's waltz as ordinary. He then obsessively created 33 variations on Diabelli's theme. Why? Kaufman's play weaves Beethoven's artistic journey with that of Katherine, a contemporary musicologist wrestling to pin down the source of his inexplicable fascination with a seemingly insignificant piece of music. Deciphering clues left behind in Beethoven's notebooks and letters, Katherine delves into his compositional process and daily life – and finds even greater insight into her own obsession with genius.

Well – contemporary comedy/regional premiere

By **Lisa Kron**

September 14 through October 14, 2007 in the Fichandler

Mother knows best in this **hilarious** and **moving Tony Award-nominated comedy**. As she talks about growing up in a household full of allergies and mysterious illnesses, Lisa, our heroine, loses control of her own autobiography. Things spin into **riotously comic** territory as her mom continually interrupts the proceedings to set the record straight. Other actors, employed by Lisa to help tell her tale, stage a comedic coup d'état, ultimately siding with her mom's version of events. Even a bully from Lisa's elementary school days barges into the narrative. Playwright **Lisa Kron** is the author of *2.5 Minute Ride* and *101 Humiliating Stories*. *The New York Times* called *Well* "**something magical**" and a "**deeply affecting** play that has a warmth and accessibility that makes you want to recommend it to everyone."

The Women of Brewster Place – world premiere musical

Co-production with Alliance Theater

Music, lyrics and book by **Tim Acito** / Based on the novel by **Gloria Naylor** / Directed by **Molly Smith**

October 19 through December 9, 2007 in the Kreeger

Based on **Gloria Naylor's** best selling novel, this **soaring** musical adaptation of *The Women of Brewster Place* chronicles the dreams and realities of ten diverse African-American women who live in a decaying housing project on a dead-end street. Haunted by pasts full of mistakes and tragedies, and threatened by an environment full of poverty and prejudice, will the women overcome their differences and come together as a community before it's too late? This **powerful, humorous** and **uplifting** musical from three-time Drama Desk Award-nominee **Tim Acito** features **28 new pieces of music**, ranging from Rhythm and Blues to Funk to Gospel. **Molly Smith** (*Cabaret*, *Damn Yankees*) directs a cast that includes Arena favorites **E. Faye Butler**, **Harriett D. Foy** and **Marva Hicks**. This world premiere is sure to be **one of the most anticipated events** of the D.C. theater season.

Christmas Carol 1941 – world premiere holiday event

Adapted from Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* / By James Magruder / Directed by Molly Smith
November 16 through December 30, 2007 in the Fichandler

December 24, 1941. In the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, Washington, D.C. prepares for war – and for celebrating an uncertain Christmas. The Schroen family of Southeast D.C. keeps the holiday spirit alive while facing food shortages, a housing crunch and a son who wants to enlist despite his mother's fears. Meanwhile, ensconced in his G Street office, Elijah Strube doesn't care about the imminent holiday or battling tyranny. He is consumed by the money to be made in war profiteering. After three local spirits take him on an incredible journey, a reformed Strube is committed to serving his community, country and fellow man. Featuring period songs and traditional carols, this **fresh take on Dickens' classic tale** by James Magruder (Broadway's *Triumph of Love*) breathes new life into a beloved story. This **holiday event is magical family entertainment.**

Ella – sizzling musical/regional premiere

Book by Jeffery Hatcher / Conceived by Rob Ruggiero & Dyke Garrison

Based on an original play by Dyke Garrison / Musical arrangements by Danny Holgate

Directed by Rob Ruggiero

December 28, 2007 – February 24, 2008 in the Kreeger

Tina Fabrique (acclaimed by audiences and critics alike in Arena Stage's *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* and *Crowns*) heats up the winter in this **swinging new musical** about the life, times and music of the First Lady of Song – Ella Fitzgerald. It's 1966 and Ella has invited a combo of her favorite musicians to jam with her as she prepares for one of the most challenging concerts of her long and celebrated career. As the session unfolds, Ella looks back at her extraordinary life – revealing insights into her loves, losses and triumphs. In an **unforgettable** performance as the legendary Ella, Tina sings such hits as "That Old Black Magic," "A-Tisket, A-Tasket," "How High the Moon" and "They Can't Take That Away From Me."

Death of a Salesman – The Arthur Miller Festival

By Arthur Miller / Directed by Timothy Bond / Running in repertory with *A View from the Bridge*

March 14 through May 18, 2008 in the Fichandler

Willy Loman has made his living riding on a smile and a shoeshine. While chasing that elusive American Dream, Willy has put unrelenting pressure on his sons to achieve at all costs, never realizing that neither he nor they can live up to the myths he has created. Faced with the end of his career, he's haunted by missed opportunities and a troubled past. As the truth unravels, his wife Linda (played by **Nancy Robinette**) struggles to help her increasingly desperate husband. **Timothy Bond** directs a work hailed by *The New York Times* as "**one of the finest dramas** in the whole range of the American theater." This gripping tragedy of the common man is as **powerful and relevant** today as when it premiered almost 60 years ago.

A View from the Bridge – The Arthur Miller Festival

By Arthur Miller / Directed by Daniel Aukin / Running in repertory with *Death of a Salesman*

March 14 through May 18, 2008 in the Fichandler

Like *Death of a Salesman*, this **searing drama** about Italian-American immigrant life in the 1950s examines the promise – and failure – of the American Dream. Brooklyn longshoreman Eddie Carbone lives in a tight-knit Italian neighborhood with his wife Beatrice and orphaned niece Catherine, whose emerging independence and womanhood annoy him. Underneath Eddie's blue collar exterior is a conflicted man whose affection for his adopted "daughter" may run deeper than just paternal. When two of Beatrice's impoverished cousins enter the country illegally, Catherine falls in love and agrees to marry. As he tries to keep his family from unraveling, Eddie's feelings turn into an **obsession** he can neither understand nor acknowledge. **Daniel Aukin** (former Artistic Director of Manhattan's Obie Award-winning Soho Rep.) directs a tale of **love, betrayal and revenge.**

The Mystery of Irma Vep – outrageous comedy

By Charles Ludlam / Directed by Rebecca Bayla Taichman

May 2 through June 8, 2008 in the Kreeger

Arena favorites **Brad Oscar** (*Damn Yankees, Cabaret*) and **J. Fred Shiffman** (*She Loves Me, Cabaret*) return in Charles Ludlam's riotously absurd gothic thriller. Gleefully ransacking literary, cinematic and pop culture, this **hilarious Obie Award-winner** spoofs everything from *Rebecca* to Victorian Melodrama to *The Mummy's Curse*. On the proverbial "dark and stormy night," Lady Enid (newly married to Egyptologist Lord Edgar) arrives at an estate under the spell of his deceased first wife and haunted by something that's prowling the moors. She quickly encounters a werewolf, a vampire, an Egyptian princess and the mystery of Irma Vep, whose portrait hangs over the fireplace. With dozens of lightning-fast transformations, Brad and Fred portray all the characters – men, women and monsters – in a gender-bending **tour-de-farce**.

In addition, Arena Presents...

Emergence-SEE! – back by popular demand

Written and performed by Daniel Beaty / Directed by Kenny Leon

July 5 through July 22, 2007 in the Kreeger

Following **sold out performances** and **standing ovations** during a one-weekend run in the Kreeger in February 2007, **Daniel Beaty** returns in his **electrifying** one-man show. In this **stirring** commentary on modern black life, a slave ship rises out of the Hudson River in 2006 in front of the Statue of Liberty, sending New York City into a whirlwind of emotion. Through vivid imagery, slam poetry and song, Daniel Beaty portrays a multitude of characters whose responses to the slave ship reflect on issues of identity and personal freedom. "Every now and then you see a performance that jolts the senses to attention, this is one of them. ... By the end, I was on my feet shouting like someone in church." – Ruby Dee

Kiki & Herb: Alive on Broadway – hilarious musical revue

Created and executed by Justin Bond and Kenny Mellman

March 6 through March 23, 2008 in the Kreeger

The *New York Times* named this **outrageous** musical revue one of the "**Top 10 Broadway Productions of 2006**." Kiki (**Justin Bond**) is a brash, boozy septuagenarian chanteuse who's seen it all and done it all – but can't necessarily remember it all. Onstage with her stalwart accompanist Herb (**Kenny Mellman**), Kiki lets rip with searing social commentary, political rants and confessions about highs and lows that would have sent most people into rehab or retirement. In a triumphant return to D.C., the **legendary** duo reinvent songs by such artists as The Cure, Dan Fogelberg, the Wu-Tang Clan, the Scissor Sisters, Radiohead and Bob Merrill. *The New Yorker* hailed *Kiki & Herb* as "**slashingly funny**" with Broadway.com saluting them as "**sidesplitting** and poignant."

Season subscription packages are now on sale and may be purchased by calling Arena Stage Subscriptions at (202) 488-4377, or by visiting www.arenastage.org.

The 2007/2008 season is sponsored by Donald and Nancy de Laski.

*Plays, artists and dates are subject to change.

###