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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### NEW SCRIPT, NEW CAST & NEW DIRECTOR FOR DC PREMIERE OF *THE QUALITY OF LIFE* AT ARENA STAGE

**\*\*\* Under the direction of Lisa Peterson, with a star-studded cast, award-winning playwright Jane Anderson breathes new life into this compelling play \*\*\***

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage presents *The Quality of Life*, written by playwright and Emmy Award-winner **Jane Anderson** and directed by **Lisa Peterson** (Arena's *The Rainmaker*). In this "**magnetic work of theater**" (*San Francisco Chronicle*) filled with compassion, honesty and humor, we find two couples dealing very differently with devastation. Academy Award-nominated songwriter, TV and film actress **Annette O'Toole** is joined by **Johanna Day** (Broadway's *August: Osage County* and *Proof* and Helen Hayes Award-winner for *The Rainmaker* at Arena Stage), **Kevin O'Rourke** (Broadway's revival of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* with Kathleen Turner) and **Stephen Schnetzer** (Voltaire in Arena's *Legacy of Light* and Broadway and Arena's *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?*).

*The Quality of Life* runs September 11–October 18, 2009 at Arena Stage in Crystal City. The press opening performance is Thursday, September 17, at 8:00 p.m.

"One of the many reasons I am excited about bringing *The Quality of Life* to Arena audiences is just how much this play makes you feel and think," shares **Arena's Artistic Director Molly Smith**. "It makes you laugh and cry, and it draws you to deeply empathize with these richly crafted characters. With two previous productions on the West Coast, this play—with Jane's new revisions—needed a third production, and this powerful cast under Lisa's direction is ideal."

In *The Quality of Life*, Dinah and husband Bill, still reeling from the loss of their daughter, find comfort in spirituality. Good, Midwestern folks, they decide to meet one weekend with distant cousins, who are camped on the burn site of their home that was lost to a wild fire in Northern California. Cousins Jeannette and Neil—who are a wildly irreverent, left-leaning couple, still in love after all these years—and are also facing a devastating loss with healthy doses of red wine, alternative practices and fiercely defiant good cheer. With their widely differing political and religious backgrounds, the couples attempt to join together to confront their physical and emotional challenges as they both deal with grief and survival. This "**remarkable and completely engrossing new play**" (*TheaterMania*) harnesses spirit and fortitude while exploring the promise of love, the pride of endurance and the quality of life.

"Jane has a gift for looking at something dark and finding the light without losing the valuable meaning within," **remarks Peterson**. "This play is a love story, a radical one that wants to challenge the rule of 'til death do us part. It is striking how funny and uniquely beautiful it is, and though it challenges us with difficult questions, I believe that is the reason theater exists."

*The Quality of Life* received its world premiere at The Geffen Playhouse in fall 2007 under the pen and direction of Anderson, where it earned 10 regional theater awards. The following year Anderson directed the play again at American Conservatory Theater. Anderson's work has received acclaim across theater, television and film audiences including *The Baby Dance*, *Defying Gravity*, AMC's second season of *Mad Men* and HBO's *Normal* among many other titles. Now for Arena audiences, Peterson is the first director to take the script work Anderson has continued on *The Quality of Life* and stage it with a new cast and creative team.

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**Anderson adds**, "I knew after the last production this play was not finished, and I am so grateful to have another run with this team of artists at Arena. *The Quality of Life* leads audiences to think about their life and question their positions on morals, societal injustices and humanity. I hope audiences recognize that in the face of opposing ideals, there is always the possibility of finding a common human connection."

*The Quality of Life* is produced by Arena Stage in association with Jonathan Reinis Productions and Stephen Eich.

Images and further information are available upon request.

**Jane Anderson** (*Playwright*) is a multi-award-winning writer and director whose plays have been produced Off-Broadway and around the country, incl. Actors Theater of Louisville, Williamstown, McCarter, Long Wharf, and Pasadena Playhouse. Published plays: *Looking for Normal* (2001 Ovation), *The Baby Dance*, *Defying Gravity*, *Food & Shelter*, *Smart Choices for the New Century*, *Lynette at 3 a.m.* and *The Last Time We Saw Her*. Other works: *The Pink Studio*, *Hotel Oubliette*. Her most recent, *The Quality of Life* (2008 Ovation), premiered at Geffen Playhouse and later at ACT, both directed by Ms. Anderson. Film & TV: wrote/directed *The Prizewinner of Defiance, Ohio*; wrote/directed *Normal* for HBO (six Emmy, three Golden Globe, Directors Guild and Writers Guild noms); wrote HBO's groundbreaking *The Positively True Adventures of the Alleged Texas Cheerleader-Murdering Mom* (Emmy, PEN, and Writers Guild awards). Other TV films: *When Billie Beat Bobby* and *The Baby Dance* (Peabody Award; Golden Globe and three Emmy noms). She wrote/directed the first segment of *If These Walls Could Talk II*, which starred Vanessa Redgrave and earned Ms. Anderson an Emmy nom. Other screenwriting: *How to Make an American Quilt* and *It Could Happen to You*. Ms. Anderson resides in West Marin and L.A. with her spouse, Tess Ayers, and their son, Raphael.

**Lisa Peterson** (*Director*). Arena Stage: *The Rainmaker*. NY credits include: *Shipwrecked* and *The Model Apartment* (Primary Stages); *End Days* (EST); *The Poor Itch*, *The Square*, *Tongue of a Bird* (Public); *Trestle at Pope Lick Creek*, *Bexley Oh*, *Slavs*, *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*, *Traps*, *The Waves* (NYTW); *The Fourth Sister* and *The Batting Cage* (Vineyard); *Sueno* (MCC); *Birdy* and *The Chemistry of Change* (WPP); *Collected Stories* (MTC). Regionally, Ms. Peterson has worked at La Jolla (assoc. artistic dir., 1992-95), Mark Taper (resident dir., 1995-2005); Guthrie, McCarter, Huntington, Hartford, Yale, Baltimore Center Stage, Actors Theater of Louisville, Intiman, Berkeley, South Coast, California Shakespeare, Oregon Shakespeare, and Philadelphia Theater Company. She's received Obie and Drama-Logue awards, Drama Desk noms, and an NEA/TCG grant. A graduate of Yale College, Ms. Peterson is a member of EST and the executive board of SSDC.

### **The Quality of Life Cast:**

**Johanna Day** (*Jeannette*). Arena Stage: *Culture Clash in the District* (dir. Charles Randolph-Wright), *American Daughter* (dir. Molly Smith), *Rainmaker* (Helen Hayes Award, dir. Lisa Peterson). Other theater: *August: Osage County*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (dir. Lisa Peterson), Ethan Coen's *Almost an Evening* (dir. Neil Pepe), *The Evildoers* by David Adjmi (dir. Rebecca Taichman), Edward Albee's *Peter and Jerry* (Drama Desk nom, dir. Pam McKinnon), *Satellites* by Diana Son (dir. Michael Greif), David Auburn's *Proof* (Tony and Lortel noms), *Carol Mulroney* by Stephen Belber (dir. Lisa Peterson), Noah Haidle's *Vigils* (dir. Kate Whoriskey), Ellen McLaughlin's *Helen* (dir. Tony Kushner), *How I Learned to Drive* by Paula Vogel (orig. cast, dir. Mark Brokaw), Craig Lucas' *Three Postcards* and *Blue Window*. Film/TV: *Law & Order* (recurring), *Judging Amy* (recurring), *The Fringe*, *The Exonerated*, *The Making of...*, *Unbreakable*, *The Trap*.

**Annette O'Toole** (*Dinah*) has appeared Off-Broadway in *Kindness* (Playwrights Horizons) and *The Seagull* (CSC); *Magnolia* (Goodman); *Yankee Wives* and *Sun Bearing Down* (Old Globe); *Merton of the Movies* at Ahmanson, Los Angeles; *Vanities* at Westwood/HBO, Los Angeles; and *Love Letters* at Canon, Beverly Hills. Her film and TV credits include *48 HRS*, *Superman III*, *Cat People*, *Smile*, *One on One*, *Smallville*, *Law & Order*, *Nash Bridges*, *Stand by Your Man* and *The Kennedys of Massachusetts* (for which she received Emmy and Golden Globe nominations). Ms. O'Toole was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Song with her husband, Michael McKean, for "A Kiss at the End of the Rainbow."

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**Kevin O'Rourke** (*Bill*). Broadway: *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* with Kathleen Turner and Charles Durning, *Spoils of War*, *Alone Together*. Off-Broadway: *Stuff Happens* (Public); *The Radical Mystique*, *Joined at the Head* (MTC); *Hurrah at Last* (Roundabout); *Breaking Up* (Primary Stages). Regional: Baltimore Center Stage, Long Wharf, Yale Rep, Seattle Rep, Williamstown. Film: *The Aviator*, *Turbulence*, *Bedroom Window*, *Vice Versa*, *Tattoo*. TV: *Remember WENN* (SAG nom), *Law & Order*, *Cashmere Mafia*, *The Sopranos*, *NY Undercover*, *Damages*. Artistic director: Williams College Summer Theatre Lab.

**Stephen Schnetzer** (*Neil*) has appeared in Arena Stage's *Legacy of Light*, *Noises Off* and *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?* On Broadway, he was in *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?*; *A Talent for Murder* and *Filumena* (dir. Laurence Olivier). Off-Broadway credits include *Romeo and Juliet* (Playhouse 91); *Timon of Athens* and *Cymbeline* (New York Shakespeare Festival); *Miss Julie* (Roundabout) and the original production of *The Lisbon Traviata*. Other regional theaters include American Shakespeare Theatre, McCarter, Boston's Lyric Stage, PCPA, Mark Taper Forum in *The Tempest* with Anthony Hopkins and 20 productions over four seasons with American Conservatory Theater. He also toured with Sir Michael Redgrave in *Shakespeare's People*. TV: *Damages*, *The Wite*, all the *Law & Order's*, *New Amsterdam*, *Cosby Murder Mysteries*, *Days of Our Lives*, *One Life to Live* and *Another World*.

The *Creative Team* for *The Quality of Life* includes Set Designer **Neil Patel**, Costume Designer **Iлона Somogyi**, Lighting Designer **Alexander V. Nichols**, Sound Designer **John Gromada**, Fight Choreographer **David Leong**, Stage Manager **Susan R. White**, Assistant Stage Managers **Amber Dickerson** and **Kurt Hall** and Production Dramaturg **Janine Sobeck**.

*The Quality of Life* is sponsored by Gina and John Depres and by Joan and David Maxwell.

### **Quality of Life Special Events, Ticket Information & Performance Calendar:**

#### **The Salon – Monday, October 7, 2009 at 7:00 p.m.**

In the spirit of artistic and literary salons of the past, The Salon features artistic leaders from Arena Stage in a series of lively, in-depth conversations with the playwrights, actors, directors, designers, dramaturgs and audiences that make Arena Stage unique. The Salon is free to Arena Stage subscribers and donors (\$75+) and only \$3 for the general public. Reservations must be made through the Arena Stage Sales Office at (202) 488-3300.

#### **Southwest Night – Friday, September 18, 2009 at 8:00 p.m.**

An invitation is extended to our Southwest D.C. neighbors to buy \$20 tickets, plus applicable fees, for one designated Friday evening performance of each production. Proof of Southwest D.C. residency—or continued employment—for each audience member of each party must be presented at the time of purchase. Tickets are limited to four per person and are based on availability. To purchase tickets, call (202) 488-3300 or stop by the Arena Stage Sales Office.

**TICKETS:** Tickets for *Quality of Life* are \$25–\$66 with applicable fees. Discount tickets are available for patrons purchasing tickets for multiple shows, students and groups. A limited number of \$10 tickets for patrons ages 30 and under go on sale beginning each Monday for performances that week. (All patrons must present valid ID.) HOTTIX, a limited number of half-price, day-of-performance tickets, are available 90 to 30 minutes before curtain prior to every performance. **Tickets may be purchased online at [www.arenastage.org](http://www.arenastage.org), by phone at (202) 488-3300 or at the Arena Stage Sales Office at 1800 S. Bell Street, Arlington, VA 22202.**

<b>Sales Office/Subscriptions</b>	<b>(202) 488-3300</b>
<b>TTY for deaf patrons</b>	<b>(202) 484-0247</b>
<b>Group Sales Hotline</b>	<b>(202) 488-4380</b>
<b>Info for patrons with disabilities</b>	<b>(202) 488-3300</b>

Tuesday, Wednesday & Sunday at 7:30 p.m. (6:00 p.m. curtain on 9/27)

Thursday, Friday & Saturday at 8:00 p.m.

Saturday & Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m. (no matinee 9/12)

Weekday matinees at noon on 10/7 & 10/13

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**Sign-interpreted performances:** 10/8 at 8:00p.m. & 10/11 at 7:30 p.m.

**Post-show discussions:** 9/29, 10/1, after the evening show; 10/13 after the noon show

**Audio described performances:** 10/10 at 2:00 p.m. & 10/14 at 7:30 p.m.

**Open captioned performance:** 10/14 at 7:30 p.m.

**ABOUT ARENA RESTAGED**

*With construction well underway on the 48-year-old Southwest D.C. theater campus, Arena Stage has launched **ARENA RESTAGED**, a two-year festival celebrating the rich mosaic of our nation's voices. **ARENA RESTAGED**, which will lay the foundation for a new home for theater artists and audiences, will take place throughout the time it takes to finish the expansion of the new theater complex, **Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater**. At the Center, the two existing performance spaces—the Fichandler Stage and the Kreeger Theater—will be fully renovated and a new 200-seat space dedicated to premiering American theater, *The Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle*, will be added. Arena Stage at the Mead Center is scheduled to open for the 2010/11 season.*

*Under the leadership of Artistic Director Molly Smith and Managing Director Edgar Dobie, Washington, D.C.-based **Arena Stage** is the largest theater in the country dedicated to American plays and playwrights. Founded in 1950 by Zelda Fichandler, Thomas Fichandler and Edward Mangum, Arena Stage was one of the nation's original resident theaters and has a distinguished record of leadership and innovation in the field. With the opening of the new Mead Center for American Theater in 2010, Arena Stage will be a leading center for the production, presentation, development and study of American theater. Now in its sixth decade, Arena Stage serves a diverse annual audience of more than 200,000. For more information please visit **[www.arenastage.org](http://www.arenastage.org)**.*

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