

molly smith
artistic director

stephen richard
executive director

zelda fichandler
founding director

MEDIA RELEASE

Contact: Kirstin Lunke, Sarah Anne Austin
press@arenastage.org; (202) 554-9066 ext. 715

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 1, 2007

WORLD PREMIERE *33 VARIATIONS* STARTS OFF THE ARENA STAGE 2007/08 SEASON

*****Award-winning playwright and director Moisés Kaufman
makes his D.C. directorial debut*****



(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage opens its 57th season with the world premiere of *33 Variations*, a compelling new drama written and directed by one of the leading voices in the contemporary American theater, **Moisés Kaufman**. A co-production between Tectonic Theater Project and Arena Stage, the play examines Beethoven's life and creative process as he obsessively composes 33 variations known as the "Diabelli Variations," late in his life. Struggling to uncover the source of his fixation is Katherine, a modern-day musicologist. Kaufman's D.C. directorial debut weaves performances of Beethoven's compositions, played live by acclaimed pianist Diane Walsh, and original projection design by Jeffrey Sugg into the action of the play. *33 Variations* runs **August 24 – September 30 in the Kreeger. The press opening performance is Thursday, August 30 at 8:00 pm.**

"I don't think it is very often that a playwright takes on the inner fire of the creative process, as Moisés does here with Beethoven," said Arena Stage Artistic Director **Molly Smith**. "He is one of the true iconic stage directors working in America today and both Arena Stage and D.C. audiences are fortunate to be part of the premiere of this significant theater project."

The journey to this premiere began four years ago when Kaufman learned of Anton Diabelli from a clerk at the now-defunct Tower Records in New York City. A 19th century music publisher who composed a waltz and commissioned 50 of Vienna's greatest composers to write a variation on it, Diabelli's intention was to publish the 50 variations in one book that was sure to bring great wealth to his publishing company. Beethoven was one of the composers commissioned, but he declared the waltz "insignificant" and rejected the commission. Later, for reasons that remain a mystery, Beethoven became fixated on the waltz and created not one but 33 different variations on it, eventually composing what many pianists consider to be the most important work in the history of the variation form.

The story stayed with Kaufman. "It immediately captured my imagination," he said. "Why would someone of Beethoven's stature choose such a trivial melody and spend four years on it? Although this play is based on the birth of the 'Diabelli Variations,' I have chosen to explore the story from a fictional perspective through a contemporary and historical lens. Thus, this play is not a reconstruction of a historical event; rather, it's a series of variations on a moment in one life, and its implications for the past and future."

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

Kaufman explores the creation of the Diabelli Variations" through the character of Katherine Brandt, a respected modern-day Beethoven scholar. Against her daughter Clara's objections, Katherine travels to Beethoven's archives in Bonn, Germany in order to gain access to his creative process, humor and profound humanity. As Kaufman's play begins to decipher the clues Beethoven left behind, Katherine discovers a greater revelation not only about herself but also about his enduring, transformative work.

– continued –

The Process

Molly Smith first encountered *33 Variations* at the Sundance Theatre Lab in Provo, Utah. Tectonic Theater Project, with the collaboration of Arena Stage and Arena's Senior Dramaturg **Mark Bly**, held workshops around the country to further develop the play with companies including Arena Stage, Georgetown University, University of Illinois at Champaign Urbana and the Orchard Project in the Catskill Mountains. Bly credits Kaufman's curiosity as the catalyst for his writing. "Moisés is one of those artists who has a great questioning spirit. He never stops questioning – as a playwright and as a director."

"I started the process of writing this play with a hunch," said Kaufman. "It changed many times. The one thing that has remained constant is the main character's desire to understand Beethoven. The workshops have allowed us to flesh that out, through incomparable opportunities of experimentation with each possible character, scenic and aural element of design we needed."

In the last four years, Kaufman's research has also been guided by **Dr. William A. Kinderman**, Professor of Musicology at the University of Illinois, himself a pianist and award-winning, leading scholar of Beethoven's life and interpreter of his works. Kinderman has written numerous books as well as articles for scholarly publications on the subject of 18th- to early 20th-century music, several books of relevant note include *Beethoven's "Diabelli" Variations* (1987), ed., *Beethoven's Compositional Process* (1991), *Beethoven* (1995) and the *Beethoven Sketchbook Project*.

About Moisés Kaufman

Moisés Kaufman (Playwright and Director) recently directed the Pulitzer and Tony Award-winning play *I Am My Own Wife* by Doug Wright on Broadway. The play garnered Mr. Kaufman an Obie Award for his direction, as well as Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle and Lucille Lortel nominations. Recent work includes directing *Macbeth* with Liev Schreiber (Public Theater), *Lady Windermere's Fan* (Williamstown Theater Festival), *This Is How It Goes* (Donmar Warehouse), *One Arm* by Tennessee Williams (Steppenwolf Theater Company) and *Master Class* with Rita Moreno (Berkeley Repertory Theater). As a writer/director, his work includes *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde* (Lucille Lortel Award, Outer Critics Circle Award, Joe Callaway Award, GLAAD Media Award) and *The Laramie Project* (Lucille Lortel, Drama Desk nominations, GLAAD Media Award). *The Laramie Project* has become one of the most produced plays in the country. In London's West End, Mr. Kaufman directed *Gross Indecency* and *I Am My Own Wife*. He also directed the film adaptation of *The Laramie Project* for HBO. The film was the opening night selection at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival and won the National Board of Review Award, the Humanitas Prize and a Special Mention for Best First Film at the Berlin Film Festival. The film also garnered Mr. Kaufman two Emmy Award nominations for Best Director and Best Writer. He is the Artistic Director of Tectonic Theater Project and a Guggenheim Fellow in Playwriting.

The Cast

Eight talented actors bring the premiere of *33 Variations* to life on the Kreeger Stage, and all but one make their Arena Stage debut. **Mary Beth Peil**, who plays contemporary musicologist Katherine Brandt, was last seen at Arena in the 1995 production of *A Month in the Country*. Also onstage, performing selections from the "Diabelli Variations," is acclaimed concert pianist **Diane Walsh**.

Don Amendolia (Anton Diabelli) has appeared on Broadway in *Stepping Out* and *My One and Only*, as well as Off Broadway in Terrence McNally's plays *Some Men* and *Dedication*; *Cloud Nine* (original cast); and *The Firebugs*. He has acted in over 50 productions at regional theaters across the country, including the Guthrie Theater, Cricket Theatre, Chanhassen Theatres, Pasadena Playhouse, LA Stage Company, Houston Grand Opera and Philadelphia Theatre Company (premiere production of *Some Men*). His directing credits include work at Steppenwolf Theatre, Seven Angels Theatre, Seacoast Repertory, Reprise LA, Dallas Summer Music Hall, Helen Hayes Repertory Theatre, as well as for television (*Harry*

and the Hendersons and *Growing Pains*). Film credits include *Skeletons in the Closet*; *The Secret of My Success*; *Fearless*; *Ed Wood*; *Bounce*; *Wayne's World*; *12:01 PM* (Oscar nomination – Best Short Film); *Boogie Nights*; *A Walk in the Clouds*; and *Fearless*. Mr. Amendolia has played over 30 guest starring roles on television, including "Seinfeld," "Frasier," "Ellen," "LA Law," "Fresh Prince of Bel Air," "Perfect Strangers," "Twin Peaks," "Law & Order" and "Precious Victims." He received the LA Drama Critics Circle Award for *Cloud Nine*, as well as Dramalogue Awards for *Stepping Out* and *Four Fathers*.

Greg Keller (Mike Clark) has appeared on Broadway in *Uncle Vanya* and *The Rainmaker*. Off Broadway credits include *Dying City* (Lincoln Center) and *You Never Can Tell* (Roundabout). Regionally, Mr. Keller has performed in *The Glass Menagerie*, *This Is Our Youth*, *Coyote on a Fence*, *The Einstein Project*, *A Dream Play* (Berkshire Theater Festival), *Seasons' Greetings* (Denver Center) and *The Last Schwartz* (Florida Stage). Other New York credits include: *Millicent Scowlworthy* (SPF/ The Beckett), *The Bigger Man* (Center Stage), *Ponies* (NY Fringe), *Open House* (The Lion) and *Craft* (The Flea). Mr. Keller is a member of Partial Comfort, a theater company currently in residence at Theater Row in Manhattan.

Susan Kellermann (Gertie Ladenburger)'s first acting job was in the Washington Theater Club's *Matty, the Moron and the Madonna*. Fifteen years later, she returned to D.C. and the Kennedy Center to perform in Mike Nichol's *Lunch Hour* en route to Broadway. Other Broadway appearances include *Last Licks* (Theater World Award), *Who's Life is it Anyway* and *Judgment at Nuremberg*. Off Broadway shows include John Guare's *Moon over Miami* and *Ivanov* (with the director of Moscow Art Theater), as well as recent work on Lanford Wilson's *Book of Days* and Arthur Laurents' *2 Lives*. She has guest starred on "Law & Order: SVU," "Monk," "Murder She Wrote," "LA Law" and "Murphy Brown." Her role as Latka's mother on "Taxi" brought her to Broadway. Her film credits include *Beatlejuice*, *Devil's Advocate*, *Death Becomes Her*, *Couch Trip* and most recently with Queen Latifah in *Last Holiday*. Ms. Kellermann studied with Sandy Meisner.

Graeme Malcolm (Ludwig Van Beethoven) has appeared on Broadway in *Translations*; *Aida*; *The King and I*; *Macbeth* (Public Theater in Central Park); *Waste* (Theater for a New Audience); *Hapgood* and *Death and the King's Horseman* (Lincoln Center); and in the national tour of *M. Butterfly*. Regionally, he has appeared in *Aristocrats* and *Prin* (Manhattan Theatre Club); *Pentecost* and *Safe in Hell* (Yale Rep); *Y2K* (Actors Theatre of Louisville); *Under Milk Wood* (Hartford Stage); *Betrayal* (McCarterTheatre); *The Real Thing* (Portland Stage); and *Dancing at Lughnasa* (Westport Playhouse). His television credits include "Law & Order" and "Follow the River," as well as "Mr. Halpern and Mr. Johnson" with Laurence Olivier and "The Mabinogi" for Channel 4 (UK). His film credits include *National Treasure*, *Everything's Jake*, *A Further Gesture*, *The Adventures of Sebastian Cole*, *Reunion* and *The Reality Trap*. Mr. Malcolm is the narrator for *20 Years*, Talking Books for the Blind.

Laura Odeh (Clara Brandt) has appeared on Broadway in *The Rivals* (Lincoln Center Theatre, director Mark Lamos). Her Off Broadway credits include *Gasligh'* (The Irish Repertory Theatre, director Charlotte Moore), *King Lear* (The Public Theatre, director James Lapine) and *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (The Irish Repertory Theatre, director Charlotte Moore). Her regional credits include *King Lear* (Goodman Theatre, director Robert Falls) and *The Cherry Orchard* (Yale Repertory Theatre, director Bill Rauch). She is currently filming a role in the next Charlie Kaufman film, *Scynedoche*, and her television credits include a role on *The Guiding Light*.

Mary Beth Peil (Katherine Brandt) was last seen at Arena Stage in *A Month in the Country*. Other D.C. appearances include *Sweeney Todd* at the Kennedy Center's Sondheim Celebration. On Broadway, she received a Tony nomination for *The King and I* (Mrs. Anna opposite Yul Brynner) and an Outer Critics nomination for the recent revival of *Nine*. Her many Off Broadway credits include *Missing Persons*, *File 312* and *The Room* (Atlantic Theater Company); *Hedda Gabler* (New York Theatre Workshop); *AS 1000S Cheer* (Drama Dept.); *Cheever Evening* and *Later Life* (Playwrights Horizons); *Sylvia* (MTC); and *Finding the Sun* (Signature). Regionally, she was seen in *The Cocktail Hour* (Longwharf); *Things You Least Expect* (George Street Playhouse); *M. Proust* (Steppenwolf – Helen Hayes nomination); *Madagascar* and *Wit*

World Premiere *33 Variations* starts off the Arena Stage 2007/08 Season

Page 4

(Adirondack Theater); *Lucky Duck* (Old Globe); *Hayfever* and *Triumph of Love* (Yale Rep); *The Naked Eye* (A.R.T.), among many others. Ms. Peil played Grams on "Dawson's Creek," and her other television credits include "The Reagans," "Law & Order" and "Law & Order: SVU." On film, she can be seen in *Flags of Our Fathers*, *Stepford Wives*, *Odd Couple 2* and *Reckless*. She is a member of the Atlantic Theater Company and Drama Dept.

Erik Steele (Anton Schindler)'s prior D.C. credits are *Loves Labour's Lost* (featured at the RSC Complete Works Festival, Stratford-Upon-Avon), *Othello*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Pericles* for the Shakespeare Theatre. In New York, Mr. Steele has been seen on Broadway in *Inherit the Wind* (2007 Tony nominee, Best Revival) with Christopher Plummer and Brian Dennehy and in *Tartuffe* with Brian Bedford and Henry Goodman, as well as in several Off- and Off-Off-Broadway shows. Regional theaters where he has worked include Goodman, the Guthrie, Berkeley Rep, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Pioneer, Olney, Virginia Stage, Hangar, Two River and the Cape Playhouse.

Diane Walsh (Pianist) was born in Washington, D.C., and her recitals here include the Smithsonian Institution (with violinist Eugene Drucker), the Kennedy Center, the National Gallery and the Phillips Collection. Recent concerto appearances have been with the Austin Symphony (Bartok 3rd), the American Symphony (Berg *Kammerkonzert*), Skaneateles Festival Orchestra (Mozart K. 491) and the Delaware and Syracuse symphonies (Strauss *Burleske*). Last summer, she performed Brahms *Paganini Variations* at the Bard Festival; other festival appearances include Marlboro, Santa Fe, Eastern Shore and Skaneateles, where she was artistic director from 1999 to 2004. She won the top prizes at the Salzburg Mozart and Munich competitions, and has made twelve recordings for Bridge, Newport, Sony, Koch and others. Her CD of Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* is available from Jonathan Digital Recordings. www.dianewalsh.com.

The Design

The creative team of *33 Variations* seamlessly interweaves 19th century Vienna with modern day America and Germany. **Derek McLane's** set design includes stacks of immense bookshelves holding manuscripts that frame the set, accompanied by moveable panels made of Beethoven's compositions. Projection Design by **Jeffrey Sugg** prominently features Beethoven's sketches onstage throughout the production, complemented by the Costume Design of **Janice Pytel**, Lighting Design by **David Lander**, Sound Design by **Andre Pluess**, Choreography by **Peter Anastos** and Wig Design by **Chuck LaPointe**. Production Dramaturg **Mark Bly** and Musicologist **Dr. William Kinderman** have both contributed research support on this production for the last several years.

Tectonic Theater Project (Moisés Kaufman, Artistic Director; Jeffrey LaHoste, Managing Director; Dominick Ballesta, General Manager) is an award-winning company whose plays have been performed around the world. Since 1992, TTP has produced innovative works that explore theatrical language and form, fostering an artistic dialogue with audiences on the social, political and human issues of the day. In service to this goal, TTP supports readings, workshops and full theatrical productions. The company has developed and produced works for theater and film, including the smash hit *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde*, *The Laramie Project* (one of the most produced plays in the country, as well as an HBO movie written and directed by Kaufman) and *I Am My Own Wife* (2004 Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award for best play). TTP has garnered numerous awards including the Humanitas Prize, the Obie, the Lucille Lortel Award, The Outer Critics Circle Award, the Artistic Integrity Award from the Human Rights Campaign and the GLAAD Media Award. The film of *The Laramie Project* was also honored with four Emmy nominations, The National Board of Review Award for Outstanding Made for Television Movie and a Golden Bear Award from the Berlin Film Festival. www.tectonictheaterproject.org.

The *33 Variations* Script Coordinator is **Colleen Mylott**, First Assistant Director is **Jessie Romasco Gallogly**, Second Assistant Director is **Michael Nickerson**, Stage Manager is **Meghan Gauger**, Assistant Stage Manager is **Kate Olden**, Stage Management Fellow is **Anna Johansson**, Directing Fellow is **Vijay Matthew**, Dramaturgy Intern is **Danielle Martin** and Board Intern is **Susan Clampitt**.

World Premiere *33 Variations* starts off the Arena Stage 2007/08 Season
Page 5

33 Variations is sponsored by Gina and John Despres, Rick Kasten, and Arlene and Robert Kogod.

The Arena Stage 2007/08 season is sponsored by Donald and Nancy de Laski.

Special events, Ticket Information and Performance Calendar:

The Salon – Monday, August 27 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 which make Arena Stage so 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, August 31 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 employment must be presented at the time of purchase. Tickets are limited to 4 per person and are based on availability. To purchase tickets, call (202) 488-3300 or stop by the Arena Stage Sales Office.

TICKETS: Tickets range from \$47-66, with discounts available for students, groups and patrons ages 30 and under. HOTTIX, a limited number of half-price, day-of-performance tickets, are available from 90-30 minutes before curtain prior to every performance. \$10 tickets for 30-and-under, a limited number of \$10 tickets for patrons 30 and under, go on sale beginning on Monday for the following week of performances (Tuesday through Sunday) until all available \$10 tickets sell out. Patrons may purchase \$10 tickets by phone, online or in person. (all patrons using \$10 must be 30 or younger). Patrons will be required to present valid ID for age verification. **Tickets are available for purchase online at www.arenastage.org.**

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

Performance Times:

Tues., Wed., and Sun. at 7:30 p.m. (Exception: 6:00 p.m. curtain 9/23)

Thurs., Fri., and Sat. at 8:00 p.m.

Sat. and Sun. matinees at 2:00 p.m.

Weekday matinees at 12:00 p.m. on 9/19, 9/25, and 9/26

Post show conversations: 9/11 at 7:30 p.m., 9/19 at 12:00 p.m, 9/20 at 8:00 p.m., 9/25 and 9/26 at 12:00 p.m.

Sign-interpreted performances: 9/27 at 8:00 p.m. and 9/30 at 7:30 p.m.

Audio described performances: 9/12 at 7:30 p.m. and 9/22 at 2:00 p.m.

Open-captioned performance: 9/26 at 7:30 p.m.

Out at Arena post show discussion (for GLBT patrons): 9/14 at 8:00 p.m.

###