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MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 7, 2006

ARENA STAGE FINDS SUMMER HOME FOR NEW PLAY WORKSHOPS AT VIRGINIA TECH



Washington, D.C. – Arena Stage Artistic Director Molly Smith announces a new partnership with the Virginia Tech Department of Theatre Arts in the form of summer workshops on the university's campus to develop upcoming Arena Stage productions. Both parties will benefit from this new relationship: Virginia Tech will become a new haven for Arena Stage artists to immerse themselves in the development of their new work, and students of Virginia Tech's Department of Theatre Arts will collaborate with one of the most prestigious theaters in the country. Arena Stage and Virginia Tech anticipate this summer's inaugural workshop will be the beginning of a flourishing artistic relationship that stands to strengthen the future of American theater.

Starting Monday, July 10 Arena Stage arrives in Blacksburg, VA for the two-week intensive workshop led by Smith. 10 Equity actors, a stage manager and playwright Tim Acito will work with 10 student-interns from the Department of Theatre Arts to develop Acito's musical *The Women of Brewster Place*, an adaptation of Gloria Naylor's popular novel.

"Nothing could be finer than being in the midst of the New River Valley working on this great new musical," said Smith. "The assembled cast contains some of the best musical theater performers in the country, and we are pleased to begin this association with Virginia Tech to nurture new plays and the next generation of American theater."

Virginia Tech's Department of Theatre Arts shares Arena Stage's commitment to developing and producing new work, and the relationship between the organizations is not entirely new. Over the years Arena Stage has employed several students, alumni and faculty from Virginia Tech as interns, fellows, designers and actors. Virginia Tech serving as Arena's summer home will strengthen this relationship. The idyllic location away from the distractions of a larger city will also be conducive to the development of new work. In addition to housing, artists from Arena Stage will have access to rehearsal and performance space and limited access to costume and technical shops.

"The driving philosophy behind each organization is its commitment to new plays and the process of bringing new work to public consciousness," said

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Patty Raun, chair of Virginia Tech's Department of Theatre Arts and the workshop coordinator. "This mission helps to assure that the future of theater is healthy. Arena Stage's reputation for extraordinary theater-making combined with the high-level artists they are bringing in to this workshop will provide an invaluable learning experience for our students and help them grow in ways we could not otherwise achieve."

With the summer initiative, Arena Stage plans to enhance the educational opportunities for the undergraduate and graduate students involved by providing opportunities to assist the director, stage manager and dramaturg as well as give lectures, classes and workshops conducted by artists from Arena Stage's artistic departments. In return, faculty members of the Virginia Tech Department of Theatre Arts will also contribute their input to the development of the new plays during workshops.

The workshop process will be shared with the Virginia Tech and Southwest Virginia community at a staged reading on July 20.

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