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MEDIA RELEASE

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ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES PROGRAMMING FOR MOMENTOUS TWO-YEAR FESTIVAL, *ARENA RESTAGED*

***** An unrivaled preview of what's to come at the Mead Center for American Theater; includes New York musical sensation *Next to Normal*, works by Tennessee Williams and Edward Albee and features celebrated artists Carrie Fisher, Jayne Houdyshell and Maureen McGovern *****



(Washington, D.C.) With temporary theater operations running smoothly in Arlington, VA and construction well underway on the 47-year-old Southwest, D.C theater-campus, Arena Stage announces plans for a two-year festival throughout the entire time it takes to finish the expansion of its new complex, Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater. Building on 57 years as a pioneer in the American theater, Arena Stage will once again make history with ***ARENA RESTAGED***, a massive, two-year festival celebrating the rich mosaic of our nation's voices. Undoubtedly, a significant time in the theater's history, *ARENA RESTAGED* lays the foundation for a new home for theater artists and audiences. Arena Stage—Where American Theater Lives.

"With *ARENA RESTAGED* we have re-envisioned the structure of programming to be year-round during this time leading up to the 2010 opening of the Mead Center," said Arena Stage Artistic Director Molly Smith. "We've selected productions that preview the breadth of work to come in our new space, and we know our loyal audiences will join us for this adventure as we expand our theater operations and the variety of productions through this celebration of the American voice. Arena also makes a return into the District during this time with productions at the historic Lincoln Theatre."



ARENA RESTAGED begins this August and concludes in July 2010. It will be announced in two parts with the second announcement to be held in the fall of 2008. Productions will be staged at **Arena Stage in Crystal City** and at **The Lincoln Theatre** in Washington, D.C. Part one of the festival kicks off with a remarkable exploration of American work featuring American Giants (**Edward Albee** and **Tennessee Williams**), exciting contemporary voices (**Daniel Beaty** and **Karen Zacharias**) and the quintessential American art form—the musical (Off-Broadway hit *Next to Normal*, Irvin Berlin's *I Love a Piano* and the return of *Crowns*).

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The first part also includes such actors as **Carrie Fisher** (*Star Wars*' Princess Leia) and three leading ladies of the theater: **Jayne Houdyshell** (Broadway's *Wicked* and *Well*), **Kathleen Chalfant** (Obie Award Winner for *Wit*) and **Ellen McLaughlin** (originated the role of the Angel in Broadway's *Angels in America*). The productions will be led by some of today's finest directors including **Michael Greif** (Broadway's *Rent*), **Oz Scott** (Broadway's *For Colored Girls...*), **Pam MacKinnon** (Albee's recent New York premiere *Peter and Jerry*) and the return of **Tazewell Thompson** (Arena's *M. Butterfly*). Part one of the festival also continues the Arena Presents series with Josh Kornbluth's *Citizen Josh* and Maureen McGovern's *A Long and Winding Road*.

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Arena furthers its position as supporter of new American theater through the New Play Development Project: a partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts. Arena will act as the administrator of the program, which will support seven selected new play projects across the country. The program aims to enhance the ability for the nation's non-profit theaters to bring new work to full production.

ARENA RESTAGED, Part One:

Resurrection – world premiere drama

By Daniel Beaty / Music by Daniel Bernard Roumain

Directed by Oz Scott / Co-production with Hartford Stage

August 29 – October 5, 2008 in Crystal City

In a unique blend of music, poetry and dance, Daniel Beaty brings us six show-stopping characters—from Eric, a budding child scientist, to The Bishop, the leader of a mega church, to his son Isaac, a corporate executive. The stories of these African-American men collide one evening in an unforgettable look at identity, relationships and, above all, our human connections. The author of *Emergence-SEE!*, Daniel Beaty won the 2007 OBIE Award for Outstanding Writing and Performance and dazzled Arena audiences last summer with a sold-out run of the show. He returns to Arena with a talented cast of six actors, as well as Oz Scott, who originally directed *For Colored Girls...* on Broadway, and Daniel Bernard Roumain, a Haitian-American composer who fuses classical violin with a variety of unlikely soundscapes. Don't miss this chance to be exhilarated by a new voice in the American Theater—one whose writing is extolled by *The New York Times* as "compassionate and precise."

Wishful Drinking – outrageous memoir

Written & performed by Carrie Fisher / Directed by Tony Taccone

In association with Jonathan Reinis Productions

September 5 – 28, 2008 in The Lincoln Theatre

Carrie Fisher is the life of the party in this uproarious and sobering look at her Hollywood hangover. The daughter of Eddie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds, Carrie Fisher became a cultural icon when she starred as Princess Leia in the first *Star Wars* trilogy at 19 years old. Forever changed, Carrie's life did not stay picture-perfect. A demanding career and single motherhood followed, as well as her struggle with addiction. It's an incredible tale filled with self-deprecating humor about having Elizabeth Taylor as a stepmother, marrying (and divorcing) Paul Simon and losing her daughter's father to another man. Fisher tells a true and intoxicating story with the strong, wry wit that she poured into bestsellers like *Postcards from the Edge*. Get "Carried" away with this hilarious, insider's look at life in Hollywood.

Next to Normal – New York Musical Sensation

Music by Tom Kitt / Book & lyrics by Brian Yorkey / Directed by Michael Greif

November 21, 2008 – January 18, 2009 in Crystal City

How does an almost average family navigate today's over-stimulated and over-medicated world? In this darkly funny and haunting new musical, one suburban household confronts its past and its future. With provocative lyrics and an electrifying score, *Next to Normal* explores how far two parents will go to keep themselves sane and their world intact. Straight from its wildly successful run at New York's Second Stage Theatre, *Next to Normal* is directed by Michael Greif (Broadway's *Rent*, *Grey Gardens*). Ben Brantley of *The New York Times* said, "*Next To Normal* is of real value to anyone who cares about the direction and possibilities of the American musical. The show throbs with emotional intensity."

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Irving Berlin's *I Love a Piano* – toe-tapping musical

Music and lyrics by Irving Berlin / Conceived and written by Ray Roderick and Michael Berkeley
January 29 – February 15, 2009 in The Lincoln Theatre

I Love a Piano is an enchanting musical journey spanning seven decades of American history as seen through the perceptive and hopeful eyes of Irving Berlin. Using 64 of Berlin's enduring and popular favorites, *I Love a Piano* captures the spirit of America from the Ragtime rhythms of the early 20th century through the swinging sophistication of the 1920s and '30s, from the sentimental songs that inspired a nation during two World Wars to the optimism of the 1950s. Timeless classics such as "White Christmas," "God Bless America," "Puttin' on the Ritz" and "There's No Business like Show Business" do more than define the music of a generation: they define the music of our country.

A *Delicate Balance* – searing modern drama

By Edward Albee / Directed by Pam MacKinnon

February 6 – March 15, 2009 in Crystal City

Meet Agnes and Tobias, a retired married couple living in a suburban neighborhood with Claire, Agnes's alcoholic sister. When the couple's adult daughter comes home after her fourth failed marriage and two friends move in unexpectedly, the "delicate balance" of their family life begins to topple. As bitter family rivalries play out over two evenings' cocktails, Albee's sharp and witty dialogue cuts straight to the heart. Agnes and Tobias are challenged to the core in this moving, caustically funny masterpiece hailed as "an evening of theatrical fireworks" by *The New York Times*. Winner of the 1967 Pulitzer Prize, *A Delicate Balance* further established Albee as a giant of the American Theater. A trio of extraordinary actresses, Kathleen Chalfant (Broadway's *Wit*, *Angels in America*), Jayne Houdyshell (Broadway's *Well*, *The Receptionist*) and Ellen McLaughlin (Broadway's *Angels in America*), will star in this seminal work filled with intelligent social commentary from one of our greatest living playwrights.

***Crowns* – hit musical returns**

By Regina Taylor / Adapted from the book by Michael Cunningham and Craig Marberry

March 27 – April 26, 2009 in The Lincoln Theatre

Hold onto your hat—one of our most popular musicals returns with a new production of *Crowns*. Come see the crowns worn by the "hat queens" of the South—women whose storied lives are woven into the straw, silk, wool and lace that adorn their heads. With soulful, spiritual and joyful music, they celebrate family and faith, love and loss, seeking (and finding) one's true identity. Based on the acclaimed book by photographer Michael Cunningham and journalist Craig Marberry, *Crowns* captures the thrill of self-expression with an intimate look at six women's lives. Winner of four Helen Hayes Awards, including Best Resident Musical, *Crowns* is a series of musical portraits that delighted Washington audiences. See it again—or for the first time—but be prepared for the "hattitudes" that will make you laugh and the music that will let your spirit soar.

***Legacy of Light* – world premiere drama**

By Karen Zacarías / Directed by Molly Smith

May 8 – June 14, 2009 in Crystal City

Enter the world of Emilie du Châtelet, an 18th century physicist who falls in love with the renowned writer and philosopher Voltaire. Jump forward to the present day world of Olivia, also a physicist, in remission from cancer. What could these women's stories have in common? D.C. playwright Karen Zacarías (*The Book Club Play*, *Mariela in the Desert*) teams up with Arena's own Artistic Director Molly Smith to tell a time-traveling tale of discovery—both scientific and maternal. Facing motherhood with some trepidation, Emilie fears she will die in labor, leaving her work unfinished, and Olivia wonders how much she will have to sacrifice to be a mother. Both women worry it will cost them their dreams of scientific immortality. A riveting drama with unexpected twists, this Arena-commissioned play brings a new voice to our stages—one that speaks with great eloquence on two women's quest for knowledge and love.

Sweet Bird Of Youth – classic American drama

By Tennessee Williams / Directed by Tazewell Thompson

May 29 – June 28, 2009 in The Lincoln Theatre

You know Blanche and Stanley, Maggie and Brick, but have you met Alexandra del Lago and Chance Wayne? These indelible characters, from the mind of master playwright Tennessee Williams, take the stage in a steamy and suspenseful tale of lost youth and heartbreak. Chance brings the glamorous yet faded actress Alexandra to his Gulf Coast hometown, hoping that the power of her celebrity, however diminished, might ignite his failed acting career and reunite him with a wronged childhood flame. He has no idea of the dangers that lie in wait for him at the Royal Palms Hotel. Tazewell Thompson (Arena's *M. Butterfly*) directs this classic drama, infused with the haunting lyricism so distinctive to Williams and a character that the playwright based on his very own life. Explore the onstage world of Tennessee Williams and see how he changed the landscape of American Theater.

ARENA PRESENTS...

Citizen Josh – one-man sensation

Written & performed by Josh Kornbluth

In collaboration with director and Arena Stage Producing Artistic Associate David Dower

October 9 – 26, 2008 in Crystal City

Troubled by the election in 2004 and the health of American democracy, Josh Kornbluth (author of *Red Diaper Baby*) came to the conclusion that perhaps voting is just not enough. As a result of his distress, Kornbluth created this smart and funny exploration of active citizen participation. Just in time for election season, *Citizen Josh* weaves a web of entertaining and moving autobiographical tales into a personal quest to examine and engage the fundamentals of democracy. Kornbluth last produced *Love & Taxes* at Arena and continues his long-time association with our own Producing Artistic Associate, David Dower. So before you cast your ballot on November 4th, consider one last perspective from an irreverent, side-splitting and powerful citizen.

A Long and Winding Road – a powerful musical evening

Co-conceived and written and performed by Maureen McGovern and Philip Himberg

Directed by Philip Himberg / Musical direction by Jeffrey D. Harris

A co-production with the Huntington Theatre Company

March 31 – April 12, 2009 in Crystal City

A Long and Winding Road is an entertaining and introspective look at the songs that inspired Maureen McGovern before her Academy Award-winning hit song "The Morning After." A nostalgic tribute to Maureen's roots as a folk singer, this show-stopping concert celebrates her love affair with the early works of Jimmy Webb, Carole King, Bob Dylan, Randy Newman and other groundbreaking singer-songwriters from her youth. The repertoire includes an eclectic selection of iconoclastic singer-songwriter material including "The Circle Game," "Will you still Love Me Tomorrow?," "The Moon's a Harsh Mistress," "Imagine," "Fire and Rain" and many others. These songs, as *The New York Times* noted, have become "the second half of the Great American Songbook." They're classic, timeless and evoke all kinds of memories.

Arena Stage in Crystal City

1800 S. Bell Street, Arlington, VA 22202

To allow for a timely and cost-effective renovation of our permanent home, Arena Stage moved its operations from Southwest D.C. to Crystal City in December 2007. While the new Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater is under construction, the company is performing in the former Crystal Forum, which underwent a substantial renovation in preparation for our audiences. A five-minute drive from Arena Stage's previous location at 6th and Maine in Southwest D.C., Arena Stage in Crystal City is close to Reagan National Airport and one block from the Crystal City Metro

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station, which is serviced by both the Blue and Yellow Metro lines. The Crystal City area boasts many well-known restaurants (Bebo Trattoria, Jaleo, McCormick and Schmick's) and has abundant free evening and weekend parking within walking distance to the theater. The theater is roughly the same size as the Kreeger, and is the host to four productions of the 2008 season: *Ella*, *Death of a Salesman*, *A View from the Bridge* and *The Mystery of Irma Vep*.

Arena Stage at The Lincoln Theatre 1215 U Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009

Located in the heart of the recently revitalized U Street Corridor, The Lincoln Theatre is arguably the most beautiful historic theater in the metropolitan area. Opened in 1922 as a first-run movie and vaudeville house, the Lincoln was the anchor of Washington's historic Black Broadway, featuring artists such as Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holiday. Elegantly restored to its original grandeur, the historic landmark echoes the spirit and life that pervaded the U Street Corridor in the first half of the 20th century. The 1920's jewel is the perfect marriage of old-world elegance and current-day comforts. With a metro station right across U Street, street and valet parking available for purchase, and some of the District's best eateries just steps away (Al Crostino, Busboys & Poets, Cakelove, Crème Cafe), Arena Stage at The Lincoln Theatre is the perfect complement to our intimate performance space in Crystal City.

Preview part one of *ARENA RESTAGED* Monday, May 30 at 7:30 p.m. at The Lincoln Theatre

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.

Open House at the Lincoln Theatre, Saturday May 3 from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Arena Stage will hold an open house at The Lincoln Theatre so that community and audience members may ask questions about the venue and see the space. To R.S.V.P your attendance, call (202) 488-3300 at least three days before the event. For media interested in attending please contact press@arenastage.org or (202) 554-9066 ext. 715.

Part one programming subscription packages for *ARENA RESTAGED* are now on sale and may be purchased by calling the Arena Stage Sales Office at (202) 488-3300, or by visiting www.arenastage.org.

***Plays, artists and dates are subject to change.**

*Arena Stage's core purpose is to produce huge plays of all that is passionate, exuberant, profound, deep and dangerous in the American spirit. Now in its sixth decade, Arena Stage has become renowned as one of the most robust not-for-profit theaters in the United States, attracting a diverse annual audience of more than 200,000. On January 30, 2008, Arena Stage broke ground on its 47-year-old Southwest, D.C. theater campus to commence 29 months of construction to make way for the new Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater. The Center, opening fall of 2010, will be a breathtaking expansion of the current campus, allowing Arena Stage to focus on the strengths of the two existing spaces—The Fichandler Stage and the Kreeger Theater—while reinventing the surrounding building and adding a 200-seat space dedicated to premiering American theater, *The Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle*.*

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