

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

Molly Smith Artistic Director Edgar Dobie Managing Director Zelda Fichandler Founding Director

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ARENA STAGE AT THE MEAD CENTER FOR AMERICAN THEATER ANNOUNCES THE 2010/11 INAUGURAL SEASON FOR NEW THREE-THEATER CAMPUS

With more than 45 projects in homecoming season, Arena Stage returns to campus as a national center for the production, presentation, development and study of American theater

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage Artistic Director Molly Smith announces the D.C.-based pioneering theater company's 60th season filled with award-winning artists and projects to celebrate the grand opening of **Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater**. The 2010/11 inaugural season includes eight full productions, seven presentations from the National Endowment for the Arts New Play Development Program and public readings from all 30 of Edward Albee's works, totaling at least **45 projects produced and presented by Arena Stage in the inaugural year at the Mead Center**. With the opening next fall, Arena Stage will fully become a national center for production, presentation, development and study of American theater.

"The moment we have been waiting for has arrived—we are heading home," shares Artistic Director **Molly Smith**. "After 11 years of planning and two and a half years of construction, the beautiful new Mead Center for American Theater will be ready to welcome audiences and artists this fall."

The new campus includes the renovation of the two existing performance spaces, the **Fichandler Stage** and the **Kreeger Theater**, and the creation of the 200-seat **Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle**—a venue dedicated to cradling risk surrounding new or radically re-envisioned productions of American theater. The three theaters are supported by a centralized lobby and box office, state-of-the-art technical and costume shops, light and airy rehearsal halls, open education spaces, increased concessions and a café, a terrace overlooking the Potomac River and for the first time in Arena Stage's history **all artistic, educational and administrative departments are united under one roof**.

Smith continues, "Throughout the last two years, thousands of audience members have been part of the *ARENA RESTAGED* festival of American voices while we've been away from our Southwest, D.C. campus. Many shared in our tremendous artistic successes along the way, including three productions developed at Arena Stage moving to Broadway. I am deeply grateful for everyone's loyalty and am eager to share what is next—a season of ambitious shows and esteemed artists to celebrate our 60th anniversary in our breathtaking new center for American theater."

From the grand opening musical of Rodgers & Hammerstein's ***Oklahoma!*** starring **E. Faye Butler** (national tour of *Mamma Mia!*), **Eleasha Gamble** (Signature Theatre's recent *Chess*) and **Nicholas Rodriguez** (Broadway's *Tarzan*), to the world premiere of the Arena Stage commission of Marcus Gardley's ***every tongue confess*** starring **Phylicia Rashad** (*The Cosby Show*) and directed by **Kenny Leon**, to the winner of the 2009 Pulitzer Prize for Drama ***Ruined*** by **Lynn Nottage**, the season showcases the depth and breadth of American theater. The 60th anniversary season also includes ***Let Me Down Easy***, conceived, written and performed by **Anna Deavere Smith**; Tony Award-winner **Mary Zimmerman** (Broadway's *Metamorphoses*) helming and

– continued –

Arena Stage announces 2010/11 season

Page 2

Enchanting production of *The Arabian Nights*; and concluding the season will be the pre-Broadway world premiere of *A Time to Kill*, an adaptation by **Rupert Holmes** of the acclaimed **John Grisham** novel presented by special arrangement with **Daryl Roth**.

Additionally, the season will include an unparalleled tribute to the nation's greatest living playwright, **Edward Albee**. Arena Stage will feature the Steppenwolf Theatre Company's production of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* directed by **Pam MacKinnon** (Arena's *A Delicate Balance*) and starring Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award winner **Tracy Letts** and Tony Award nominee **Amy Morton**, and simultaneously, Arena will present the riveting drama *At Home at the Zoo*. These productions are but a part of Arena Stage's Edward Albee Festival, a three-month celebration of this American giant's contribution to the world stage. During the festival, all 30 Albee works will receive public readings, utilizing every performance space within the Mead Center.

Arena Stage will also continue to operate the **American Voices New Play Institute**, which is designed as a center for research and development of effective new play development practices around the country, with the intention of developing the infrastructure for new plays and new voices nationwide. The Institute will host five resident playwrights—**Amy Freed**, **Katori Hall**, **Lisa Kron**, **Charles Randolph-Wright** and **Karen Zacarias**—over three years and will provide them resources and benefits to write and develop new or unfinished plays. The Institute will also host Project Residents **Lynn Nottage** and **David Henry Hwang**, who will be commissioned to write a play that Arena Stage will produce.

In addition to the residencies, the Institute operates a suite of interrelated programs, including the New Play Producing Fellowships, Theater 101 Audience Enrichment Seminar, administration of Round One of the NEA New Play Development Program and major convenings of American artists around issues facing the new play sector.

For the first time in Arena Stage's history all community engagement education programs will also take place and be produced in the Southwest, D.C. campus, and will no longer operate out of the company's second location at 14th and T Streets in Northwest. Programs including the annual **Student Playwright's Project** and **Voices of Now** will have featured performances in the Kogod Cradle.

The official opening celebrations will begin with a **Homecoming Celebration October 23, 2010**. This will be a free open house for the public to explore the brand new Mead Center. There will be complimentary tours of the facility and performances happening throughout the day. The following night, **Monday, October 25, 2010**, **Arena Stage will hold the official opening gala celebration**. More details on both events will be shared at a later date.

*Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater 2010/11 Play Descriptions:

Oklahoma!

Music by Richard Rodgers / Book and Lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II

Directed by Molly Smith

October 22 – December 26, 2010 / in the Fichandler

This is not your mother's *Oklahoma!*. Inspired by the toughness of the prairie, Artistic Director Molly Smith sets her production in the robust world of territory life filled with a dynamic cast as rich and complex as the great tapestry of America itself. With Rodgers and Hammerstein's timeless music, *Oklahoma!* celebrates the vigor of America's pioneering spirit with athletic dance and boot-stomping energy. Chock full of classic tunes such as "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," and "People will Say We're in Love," this muscular production will thrill audiences young and old.

Arena Stage announces 2010/11 season

Page 3

every tongue confess

Arena Stage commission and world premiere

By Marcus Gardley

Directed by Kenny Leon

November 9, 2010 – January 2, 2011 / in the Kogod Cradle

In the backwater town of Boligee, Alabama, the summer heat is rising higher, driving the townsfolk to distraction and conjuring the spirits of the past to walk the earth. Wrapped in the combustible music of a Deep South juke joint and the sweat-soaked gospel of a revivalist church tent, intergenerational stories of loss and redemption collide. Playwright Gardley blends ancient myth with magical realism, Biblical allegory with the local T.V. news to create a fiery theatrical furnace in which some will be saved, some will be purged and the truth cannot escape.

Second Stage Theatre's production of

Let Me Down Easy

Conceived, written and performed by Anna Deavere Smith

Directed by Leonard Foglia

December 31, 2010 - February 13, 2011 / in the Kreeger

Called "the most exciting individual in American theatre" by *Newsweek* magazine, Anna Deavere Smith (*Twilight: Los Angeles*; *The West Wing*; *Nurse Jackie*) explores the power of the body, the price of health and the resilience of the spirit. Based on interviews with people such as a heavyweight boxer, a rodeo rider and even Lauren Hutton and Lance Armstrong, this "continually engaging and engrossing collection of testimonials" (*The New York Times*) was recently named by *Entertainment Weekly* as one of the top 10 productions of 2009. As a quick-witted, philosophical and compassionate look at current affairs, *Let Me Down Easy* "is a totally vital piece of theater, mixing a standup comic's instincts with a great reporter's keen eye...that is all Anna Deavere Smith's own" (*Variety*).

The NEA New Play Development Program Festival

January 17 – 30, 2011 / in the Kogod Cradle

Outstanding New American Play Selections:

The Brother/Sister Plays by Tarell McCraney

World Premiere: April 24 – June 21, 2009, McCarter Theatre

Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo by Rajiv Joseph

World Premiere: May 10 – June 7, 2009, Center Theatre Group

Distinguished Development Project Selections:

I've Never Been So Happy by Rude Mechanicals

Agnes Under the Big Top by Aditi Kapil, Lark Play Development Center

Happy End to Everything by Lloyd Suh, The Children's Theatre Company

Detour/South Bronx by Claudia Rankine, The Foundry Theatre

Steinbeck's The Pastures of Heaven by Octavio Solis, California Shakespeare Theater

The Arabian Nights

Written and directed by Mary Zimmerman

Adapted from *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night*

In association with Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Kansas City Repertory Theatre and Lookingglass Theatre Company

January 14 – February 20, 2011 / in the Fichandler

In ancient Baghdad, a courageous young girl postpones her execution by weaving magical tales for the troubled king. Genies and jesters, lovers and thieves spring to life from Scheherazade's imagination—allowing her to win the king's heart even as she secures her freedom. Tony Award-winning director and playwright Mary Zimmerman (*Metamorphoses*) celebrates the wonder of storytelling and the redemptive

– continued –

Arena Stage announces 2010/11 season

Page 4

power of love in this “exhilarating, imaginative theatrical escape” (*Variety*) that *Chicago* magazine calls a “feast for the eyes and ears.”

The Edward Albee Festival—Winner of three Pulitzer Prizes and three Tony Awards, including the 2005 Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement, Edward Albee is our nation’s greatest living playwright. In a never-before salute to this American giant, all 30 of Albee’s works will either receive a full production or a public reading, utilizing every performance space within the Mead Center.

Steppenwolf Theatre Company’s production of

Edward Albee’s Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

Directed by Pam MacKinnon

Starring Tony Award winner Tracy Letts and Tony Award nominee Amy Morton

February 25 – April 10, 2011 / in the Kreeger

You’re invited for drinks with George and Martha. As wickedly hilarious today as when it first shocked audiences, *Virginia Woolf?* is an ingeniously funny play that packs a helluva wallop. What starts as verbal sparring at an impromptu cocktail party, devolves into a no-holds-barred battle of wits and wills. With brilliant writing and some of the greatest characters ever created for the stage, Albee set a new standard for American theater with this sharp, vicious Molotov cocktail of a play.

Edward Albee’s At Home at the Zoo

February 25 – April 24, 2011 / in the Kogod Cradle

American master Edward Albee has outdone himself once again with a riveting new drama that expands on the one-act that launched his career 50 years ago, *The Zoo Story*. In this meticulous and nuanced look at the lives of three New Yorkers, an everyday conversation between a husband and wife takes an unexpected turn into dangerously personal territory. The revelations and confrontations catapult them from their delicately balanced world onto life-changing paths. With the intensity and honesty for which Albee is known, *At Home at the Zoo* reveals the cutting truth about the razor’s edge of our humanity.

Ruined

By Lynn Nottage

Directed by Charles Randolph-Wright

April 22 – June 5, 2011 / in the Fichandler

In war-torn Congo, Mama Nadi keeps the peace between customers on both sides of the civil war by serving everything from cold beers to warm beds. Inspired by interviews conducted in Africa, *Ruined* was the most honored play in 2009, winning the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, as well as Best Play awards from the Drama Desk, Lucille Lortel, Obie, New York Drama Critics’ Circle and Outer Critics Circle. This searing play is an engrossing and uncommonly human story told with humor and song, revealing the immeasurable loss and hopelessness of war, yet finding affirmation in life and hope.

John Grisham’s A Time to Kill

A World Premiere Pre-Broadway Production

Adapted by Rupert Holmes / Based upon the novel by John Grisham

By special arrangement with Daryl Roth

May 6–June 19, 2011 / in the Kreeger

John Grisham’s stunning first novel comes to the stage in this world premiere adaptation by Tony Award-winner Rupert Holmes. After an unspeakable crime is committed against his daughter, Carl Lee Hailey takes the law into his own hands. Now on trial for murder, Carl Lee’s only hope lies with two young, idealistic lawyers who are outmatched by a formidable district attorney and under attack from both sides of a racially divided city. *A Time to Kill* asks audiences to consider the true meaning of justice.

Arena Stage announces 2010/11 season

Page 5

Subscription packages 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 at the Mead Center for American Theater

Just as the founding of Arena Stage 60 years ago changed American theater, the new center will secure the future of Arena Stage as both a national leader and a dynamic local treasure. The center features state-of-the-art technology and modern amenities; a centralized lobby with a vastly increased number of restrooms; readily available concessions and an onsite café; a reading area dedicated to students of American theater; easy access to all areas of the building for people with disabilities; and a beautiful outdoor terrace overlooking the Potomac with the Washington Monument in the background.

The Fichandler Stage

683 seats / 10,000 sq. ft

“The Fich” stands as an extraordinarily unique theater space.

Features:

- Epic, four-sided auditorium, steeply raked seating tiers and bold, earthy exterior design
- Ideally suited to large-scale classic dramas and musicals
- State-of-the-art technical equipment and elegant new décor
- Acoustical improvements eliminate ambient noise
- Audience members are never more than eight rows away from the action

The Kreeger Theater

514 seats / 4,400 sq. ft.

A fan-shaped space with a modified thrust stage.

Features:

- State-of-the-art technology and amenities including new furnishings in deep blue colors
- Qualities that make it one of the most artist- and audience-friendly spaces in the country: extraordinary flexibility, excellent acoustics and flawless sightlines
- Remarkably intimate interaction between actor and audience

The Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle

200 seats / 3,400 sq. ft.

A unique, oval-shaped intimate theater with flexible seating and the latest technical capabilities, built to support the birth and nurturing of new and developing plays.

Features:

- Technically sophisticated venue will enable Arena to continue building the canon of American work and cultivating the next generation of writers
- Beautiful acoustically sound, wooden basket-weaved walls in lush eggplant colors

VERBATIM:

“Our center will be a home for American Voices in the nation’s capital—a showcase of the broad range of work from the country’s leading and emerging artists; a birthplace for new American work; and a space to engage audiences in the history, breadth and legacy of the American theater.” – **Molly Smith**, Artistic Director, Arena Stage

“The building is absolutely stunning. It is a magnificent and important piece of architecture that contributes greatly to the cultural landscape of Washington. It is one the best designed buildings in D.C. in the last decade.” – **Zelda Fichandler**, Founding Director, Arena Stage

– continued –

Arena Stage announces 2010/11 season

Page 6

“The design of Arena Stage was inspired by Molly Smith's desire for ‘a theater for all that is passionate, exuberant, profound, deep and dangerous in the American spirit.’ Together we have created a home for American theater that will allow audiences to interact not just with the art, but also with each other. We are convinced that the positive energy that will come from this building will send ripples—not just throughout S.W. Washington but throughout the region and artistically even further.” – **Bing Thom**, Lead Architect, Bing Thom Architects

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater is “the largest performing arts complex to open since the Kennedy Center.” – **Jacqueline Trescott**, *The Washington Post*

Significant Facts about Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater:

- The **\$125 million multipurpose campaign** to build Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater is one of the largest in the United States for a regional theater. Philanthropists **Gilbert and Jaylee Mead gave the largest single gift ever to an American theater** with their naming gift of \$35 million.
- The Mead Center is **200,000 square feet in size**, making it the largest performing arts center to open in D.C. since the Kennedy Center, which opened in 1971.
- The cantilevered roof, tapered to a compass point and aligned with the Maine Avenue axis, salutes the Washington Monument. This heroic 90 ft. **cantilever is one of the largest in the U.S.**
- As general contractor for the Mead Center, **Clark Construction works on average 1,500 man hours per day** to stay on track for the fall 2010 opening.
- The foundation of the Mead Center contains **14,000 cubic yards of concrete**, enough to fill four-and-a-half Olympic-sized swimming pools.
- The design team drew inspiration from the jellyfish's transparency when designing the new complex's skin, which is fabricated with glass. There are approximately **370 panes, amounting to 35,000 square feet of glass** that creates the “curtain wall” surrounding the building.
- The parallam wood and insulated glass wall design on the exterior facade is **the first attempt at this type of application in the United States**. Each wood column that supports the building bears 400,000 pounds of load on average.
- The floor of the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle does not touch the adjacent walls. Instead, to ensure acoustic isolation, it sits on 20 separate isolation pads, each the size of a shoebox.
- Located at **1101 Sixth Street, S.W., Washington, D.C.**, the facility is only **one block from the Waterfront (SEU) green line Metro stop**.

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater is a national center dedicated to the production, presentation, development and study of American theater. Arena Stage produces huge plays of all that is passionate, exuberant, profound, deep and dangerous in the American spirit, and presents diverse and ground-breaking work from some of the best artists around the country. Arena Stage is committed to commissioning and developing new plays through the American Voices New Play Institute. Now in its sixth decade, Arena Stage serves a diverse annual audience of more than 200,000. www.arenastage.org.

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