

# ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

**\*\*\*PLEASE NOTE:** This release has been amended to reflect that *Trouble in Mind* and *Like Water for Chocolate* have switched positions in the season.

Contact: Kirstin M. Franko/Julia Suszynski  
[press@arenastage.org](mailto:press@arenastage.org), 202-600-4055

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## ARENA STAGE AT THE MEAD CENTER FOR AMERICAN THEATER ANNOUNCES 11 SHOWS FOR A YEAR LONG 2011-12 SEASON

**\*\*\* Second season in the Mead Center for American Theater continues ambitious two-year plan to become a national center for the production, presentation, development and study of American Theater \*\*\***

(Washington, D.C.) In the midst of a record-breaking 60th Anniversary season and inaugural year in the Mead Center for American Theater, Arena Stage Artistic Director Molly Smith announces 11 selections for the second year in the new venue. Furthering the Mead Center as a national center for the production, presentation, development and study of American theater, year two continues the dynamic, diverse and impressive work from our country's theater artists.

"We're focusing on a two-year launch for the Mead Center, so planning the follow-up season began long before we opened," shares Smith. "This is a robust, full-bodied season in our new home for American artists, which spans 12 months of programming. We are now a year-round theater. This season features two world premieres, two musicals, four comedies, two projects by Arena Stage resident playwrights Amy Freed and Karen Zacarías, presentations from the Goodman Theatre and Oregon Shakespeare Festival and a tribute to the first American Giant in theater, Eugene O'Neill. There are 11 productions that are as ambitious and inspiring as opening this center has been for Arena Stage staff, artists and audiences."

These productions represent eight shows on subscription in the Fichandler and the Kreeger with the add-on option of the three shows in the Kogod Cradle.

Additional productions in the 2011-12 season to be announced at a later date.

### **\*Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater 2011-12 Schedule:**

#### ***Trouble in Mind***

By Alice Childress

September 9 – October 23, 2011 in the Kreeger Theater

Written on the cusp of the Civil Rights Movement, *Trouble in Mind* explores the strained relationships of a newly integrated cast rehearsing a bold anti-lynching drama. As the actors' prejudices collide, lead actress Willetta Mayer must decide how much she will compromise her beliefs, her integrity and her sense of identity for a Broadway role. With themes still hauntingly relevant today, Alice Childress's potent and poignant play-within-a-play "still has the power to make one feel its anger and humor" (*New York Times*).

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#### ***The Book Club Play***

**By resident playwright Karen Zacarías / Directed by Molly Smith**

**October 7 – November 6, 2011 in the Kogod Cradle**

Ana is a Type A personality living in a letter-perfect world: a husband who adores her, the perfect job and her greatest passion, Book Club. But when bizarre circumstances put her ideal book club under a magnifying glass, things begin to heat up and more truths are told than anyone bargained for. Resident playwright Karen Zacarías (*Legacy of Light*) brings Arena Stage the latest chapter of her “delightful, fresh comedy” (TalkinBroadway.com) about life, love, literature and the side-splitting results when friends start reading between the lines.

#### **Oregon Shakespeare Festival’s production of *Equivocation***

**By Bill Cain / Directed by Bill Rauch**

**November 18, 2011 – January 1, 2012 in the Kreeger Theater**

In dark times, the most treacherous weapon is the truth. London, 1605: The worlds of King James and the Gunpowder Plot collide with William Shakespeare and his renowned theatrical troupe in a startling cat-and-mouse game of politics and art. Commissioned by the throne to create a calculated piece of propaganda, The Bard and his actors must find a way to please the king while avoiding both the gallows and eternal damnation. Bill Cain’s high-stakes political thriller reveals the complexities of the truth, the perils of compromise and the terrible consequences of equivocation in “one of the most bracingly intelligent, sizzling theatrical American plays in a decade” (*Variety*).

#### ***You, Nero***

**By resident playwright Amy Freed**

**November 25, 2011 – January 1, 2012 in the Fichandler**

As Rome collapses beneath Nero’s outrageous narcissism, a forgotten playwright tries to restore order through the art of theater in this “gloriously funny” (*New York Times*) farce. Amidst the chaos of crime, lust and politics, convincing the world’s most famous debaucher to choose virtue over vice proves to be a Herculean task. Pulitzer Prize Finalist Amy Freed’s wild romp questions whether well-crafted drama and intellect are any match for decadence and good old-fashioned bloodshed.

#### ***Elephant Room***

**Directed by Paul Lazar**

**By Steve Cuiffo, Trey Lyford and Geoff Sobelle/ A co-production with Center Theatre Group**

**January 20 – February 26, 2012 in the Kogod Cradle**

From the uninhibited minds of the “engaging” (*The Washington Post*) absurdist performance duo Rainpan 43 (*all wear bowlers*) and actor/magician Steve Cuiffo comes a new theatrical experience. Three semi-pro magicians—a divorced shaman, a mentalist with a penchant for warlock acts and a ladies’ man card master—join to piece their own lives together. An evening of magic born from the harsh lies we tell ourselves, *Elephant Room* reveals that the more we hide behind our self-made smoke and mirrors, the further we expose our own vulnerabilities.

#### **Goodman Theatre’s production of**

#### ***Red***

**By John Logan / Directed by Tony Award winner Robert Falls**

**January 20 – March 4, 2012 in the Kreeger Theater**

Winner of six Tony Awards, including Best Play, *Red* depicts one of the 20th century’s finest artists at his greatest moment of struggle with his painting and his mortality. The brilliant and passionate Mark Rothko has hired a new assistant to help him with his most perplexing challenge yet: to create a definitive group of

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murals for an exclusive restaurant. As they mix the paint, stretch the canvas, and prime the surface, Rothko must reconcile not only the mix of art and commerce he's creating but also his relationship with the new generation of artists who threaten his very legacy. Hailed as "smart and scintillating" by the *New Yorker*, *Red* is an "electrifying play of ideas" (*Variety*).

### ***Ah, Wilderness!***

**By Eugene O'Neill**

**March 9 – April 8, 2012 in the Fichandler**

**Part of the Eugene O'Neill Festival**

Return to an idyllic age of Americana in Eugene O'Neill's unabashedly romantic and sweetly funny *Ah, Wilderness!* As the Connecticut-based Miller clan plans their traditional Fourth of July festivities, their dreamy-eyed middle child Richard is wrestling with cultural conventions, political uncertainty, the power of literature and the exquisite pain of love. The memories of family life were never so delicately portrayed as in O'Neill's only comedy, his coming-of-age love letter to a simpler time, that finds the master playwright "at his most wistful and serene" (*New York Times*).

### ***Long Day's Journey into Night***

**By Eugene O'Neill / Directed by Robin Phillips**

**March 30 – May 13, 2012 in the Kreeger Theater**

**Part of the Eugene O'Neill Festival**

Delusion and disenchantment have pitted the Tyrone family members against one another for decades. One fateful day, as their increasingly drunken hours slip by, they must either confront their defeated dreams or else be forever doomed to a cycle of guilt and resentment. Eugene O'Neill's autobiographical masterwork exposes the lies we tell, the deceptions we craft and the undercurrent of compassion that, if uncovered, can redeem us in the end. This Pulitzer Prize-winning American treasure "restores the drama to literature and the theater to art" (*New York Times*).

### ***The Music Man***

**Book, music and lyrics by Meredith Willson**

**Story by Meredith Willson and Franklin Lacey / Directed by Molly Smith**

**May 11 – July 22, 2012 in the Fichandler**

Having exhausted all 102 counties in Illinois, "Professor" Harold Hill gives Iowa a try and soon enough convinces River City of its trouble with the "sin and corruption" of the pool hall, trouble that can only be stopped by forming a boys' band. Marian the librarian suspects he's a con-man, but she begins to trust him after seeing how he's given confidence to her shy younger brother. Soon, this "Music Man" has transformed the entire town, not only turning the bickering school board into a barbershop quartet, but himself into an honest man. When the stage erupts with "76 Trombones," you'll be cheering along with River City for Harold Hill!

### ***Mary T. & Lizzy K.***

**Arena Stage Commission and World Premiere**

**Written and directed by Tazewell Thompson**

**June 1 – July 22, 2012 in the Kogod Cradle**

Writer/director Tazewell Thompson (dir. *M. Butterfly*) stitches together an insider's look at the unlikely friendship between First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln and her talented seamstress, the successful freed slave Elizabeth Keckly. Old wounds and new recriminations explode in this riveting drama about loss, love and the importance of promises, both kept and broken.

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***Like Water for Chocolate***

**A World Premiere Pre-Broadway Musical**

**Book by Quiara Alegría Hudes / Music and lyrics by Lila Downs and Paul Cohen**

**Based on the book by Laura Esquivel / Co-directed by Ted Sperling and Jonathan Butterell**

**Featuring Academy Award nominee Lila Downs**

**By special arrangement with Margo Lion Ltd.**

**June 8 – July 29, 2012 in the Kreeger Theater**

Prep your palate for a world premiere musical steeped in rich history and the magical realism of Mexican folk tales. Based on the international best-selling novel, *Like Water for Chocolate* is a simmering, spicy tale, ripe with romance and recipes for love and life and longing. Young Tita, powerless to marry the man she loves as he is betrothed to her eldest sister, infuses all of the De La Garza family's traditional meals with her unexpressed passions. Award winning writer Quiara Alegría Hudes (*In the Heights*) joins Mexican singer-songwriter Lila Downs and Paul Cohen to create a romantic musical that boils over with passion.

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

**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](http://www.arenastage.org).**

*Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater is a national center dedicated to the production, presentation, development and study of American theater. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Molly Smith and Managing Director Edgar Dobie, Arena Stage is the largest company in the country dedicated to American plays and playwrights. 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 300,000. [www.arenastage.org](http://www.arenastage.org).*

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