

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

Contact: Kirstin M. Franko/Director of Media Relations
kfranko@arenastage.org; (202) 554-9066, ext. 715

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ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES
KATORI HALL, LISA KRON, AMY FREED AND CHARLES RANDOLPH-WRIGHT
JOIN KAREN ZACARÍAS AS THE FIRST RESIDENT PLAYWRIGHTS OF
THE AMERICAN VOICES NEW PLAY INSTITUTE AT ARENA STAGE
RECEIVING THREE YEARS OF BENEFITS AND RESOURCES TO DEVELOP NEW WORK

LYNN NOTTAGE AND DAVID HENRY HWANG ALSO BECOME
PROJECT RESIDENTS THROUGH COMMISSIONS FROM THE INSTITUTE

(Washington, D.C.) In August 2009, Arena Stage announced the formation of a new groundbreaking initiative created for the advancement of America's new play development sector—**The American Voices New Play Institute**. The Institute—integral to Arena's mission as a leading center for the production, presentation, development and study of American theater—is designed as a center for research and development of effective practices, programs and processes for new play development in the American Theater.

The Institute will host five playwrights over three years and will provide resources and benefits to write and develop new or unfinished plays. D.C. native **Karen Zacarías** was announced as the first Resident Playwright in August 2009 and began her residency with the Institute in January 2010. She is now joined by **Lisa Kron** and **Amy Freed**, who will each start their three-year residencies in July 2010, and **Katori Hall** and **Charles Randolph-Wright**, who will begin in January 2011.

In addition to the first round of Resident Playwrights, the Institute will also host **Project Residents Lynn Nottage** and **David Henry Hwang**, who will be commissioned through the Institute to write a play that Arena Stage will produce.

In addition to the residencies, the American Voices New Play Institute operates with 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 and arts administrators around issues facing the new play sector.

Under the leadership of Arena Stage Artistic Director Molly Smith, the Institute is guided by Arena Stage Associate Artistic Director David Dower and works in partnership with Georgetown University's Theater Department, led by Dr. Derek Goldman. The American Voices New Play Institute is made possible through the keystone gift of \$1.1 million in support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

"With the launching of the residencies for the American Voices New Play Institute under the visionary funding of the Mellon Foundation, we at Arena Stage are eager to support and help transform play development around the country," said Smith. "These writers are so different; my mouth is literally watering at the thought of what each may write. From major dramas to musicals, comedies, one-person plays and interview-based stories, the range is exhilarating. Now the writers will have the time, support and finances to be able to do their best work. Each writer is splendid and has the talent and insight to surprise us all."

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The primary purpose of the residency is to write plays and to advance professional outcomes for the participating writers, as well as to help Arena Stage test and develop best practices for such residencies in theaters around the country. The playwrights will determine their individual involvement in the life of the theater company. Ultimately, Arena Stage hopes the Institute will make the case for the power, practicality and impact of resident playwrights in regional theaters nationwide.

"This first cohort of playwrights is going to really advance the inquiry here at Arena Stage," shared Dower. "They come at it from so many different perspectives on form, process and story, and they have all grabbed hold of the opportunity to help develop the role of the playwright in the institutions of the regional theater. So I expect we'll not only see work they write popping up on stages around the country, but I hope through their leadership we'll see increased opportunities for playwrights' residencies around the field."

Playwright Residencies Details

- Three-year terms for five playwrights (one local, four non-locals) to write and develop new plays.
- Each playwright will receive a living wage salary, health benefits and housing (for non-locals), as well as an annual budget of \$15,000 to cover collaborating artist fees and development expenses to be managed by the playwright.
- Arena Stage will commit to producing at least one play by each writer during the time of their residency period, and the work they develop during the residency will be unencumbered by Arena.
- The Resident Playwrights will work with New Play Producing Fellows, who will produce all new play development activities during their residency.
- The Resident Playwrights may attend Arena artistic staff meetings and participate in Institute convenings, Theater 101 program, Georgetown University partnership activities, and any other Arena Stage activities that draw their interest.
- Playwrights will have access to workspace at Arena Stage.

Project Residency Details

- Commissions for two playwrights to develop a specific project, beginning July 1, 2010.
- Each playwright will receive a budget to cover research, collaborating artist fees and development expenses to be managed by the playwright.
- Arena Stage will assist in development of the project through hosting readings, workshops and other development activities as needed and determined by the playwright.
- Arena Stage is committed to producing each project at the end of its development.
- The Resident Playwrights will work with New Play Producing Fellows, who will assist in producing all new play development activities during their residencies as needed.

American Voices New Play Institute Resident Playwrights

Amy Freed is the author of *Restoration Comedy*, *The Beard of Avon*, *Freedomland*, *Safe in Hell*, *The Psychic Life of Savages* and other plays. Her work has been produced at South Coast Repertory Theater, New York Theater Workshop, Seattle Repertory, American Conservatory Theater, Yale Rep, California Shakespeare Theater, Berkeley Rep, Goodman, Playwright's Horizons, Woolly Mammoth and other theaters around the country. Her recent play *You, Nero* debuted at South Coast Rep in January 2009 and was produced at Berkeley Rep in June of that year. Her latest play, *Right to the Top*, will have its first reading at the Pacific Playwright's Festival in April 2010. Freed received the Joseph Kesselring Award, Charles MacArthur Playwriting Award, several L.A. Drama Critics Circle Awards and was a Pulitzer Prize finalist for *Freedomland*. She is an artist-in-residence in the drama department of Stanford University. She has been playwright-in-residence for South Coast Rep and recently served as playwright-in-residence for San Diego's Old Globe Theater.

Katori Hall is a playwright-performer hailing from Memphis, Tennessee. Her plays include *Hoodoo Love*, *Remembrance*, *Hurt Village*, *Saturday Night/Sunday Morning*, *The Mountaintop* (2010 Olivier Winner for Best New Play), *WHADDABLOODCLOT!?!?*, *The Hope Well* and *Pussy Valley*. Other awards include 2009/10 Lark Play

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Development Center Playwrights of New York (PONY) Fellowship, Kate Neal Kinley Fellowship, two Lecomte du Noüy Prizes from Lincoln Center, Fellowship of Southern Writers Bryan Family Award in Drama, Van Lier Fellowship from the Public Theater, NYFA Fellowship and Lorraine Hansberry Playwriting Award. Recently, she was short-listed for the *London Evening Standard* Most Promising Playwright Award and received the Otis Guernsey New Voices Playwriting Award from the William Inge Theatre Festival. Hall has been commissioned by the National Theatre in London, Public Theater and Women's Project. She is a graduate of Columbia, Harvard and the Juilliard School. www.katorihall.com

Lisa Kron has been writing and performing theater since moving to New York from Michigan in 1984. Her work has been widely produced at theaters such as the Public Theater, New York Theater Workshop, Arena Stage, A.R.T., Huntington, A.C.T., Actors Theatre of Louisville, Tokyo's Rinkogun, Barbican and on London's West End. Her plays include: *In the Wake* (co-premiering currently at CTG in L.A. and at Berkeley Rep, scheduled NY premiere at Public Theater, Fall 2010); *Well* (premiere at Public Theater, 2004; named one of the year's 10 best plays by *The New York Times*, *Associated Press*, *The Newark Star-Ledger* and *Back Stage*; Broadway premiere March 2006, two Tony nominations); and *2.5 Minute Ride* (NY premiere at Public Theater, 1999; OBIE, L.A. Dramalogue and GLAAD Media Awards, Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle nominations). Kron is also a founding member of the beloved Obie- and Bessie-Award-winning collaborative theater company The Five Lesbian Brothers, whose plays include *Brave Smiles*, *The Secretaries* and *Oedipus at Palm Springs* (New York Theater Workshop). Lisa has received playwriting fellowships from the Lortel and Guggenheim foundations, Sundance Theater Lab and Lark Play Development Center; an NEA/TCG Theatre Residency Fellowship; the CalArts Alpert Award; and grants from the Creative Capital Foundation and New York Foundation for the Arts. Projects in development include a musical collaboration with composer Jeanine Tesori, a new play for Drew University, and another for the Sloan Foundation through Playwrights Horizons. Lisa teaches playwriting at the Yale School of Drama.

Charles Randolph-Wright's plays include *Blue* and *Cuttin' Up* (which have had sold-out runs at Arena Stage and been produced around the country), and most recently *The Night Is a Child* (starring Jo Beth Williams at Pasadena Playhouse). His directing credits with Arena Stage include *Duke Ellington's Sophisticated Ladies* and *Guys and Dolls* (both starring Maurice Hines), *Oak & Ivy*, *Anthems*, *Señor Discretion Himself* and *Cuttin' Up*. His directing credits include the 75th anniversary international tour of *Porgy and Bess*, Daniel Beaty in *Through the Night* (Geffen Playhouse), *They're Playing Our Song* in Brazil (in Portuguese), Brian Stokes Mitchell in *Love/Life* (Lincoln Center), *Tough Titty* (Williamstown), *Blood Knot* (with music by Tracy Chapman at ACT), among other productions at Roundabout, NY Shakespeare Festival, NY Theatre Workshop, Manhattan Theatre Club, Mark Taper and Carnegie Hall. Randolph-Wright wrote and directed the upcoming film *Mama, I Want to Sing!* and directed the award-winning film *Preaching to the Choir*. TV directing credits include *Lincoln Heights*, *South of Nowhere* and the Nike Freestyle Soccer campaign starring Ronaldinho. He also produced and wrote Showtime's critically acclaimed series *Linc's*.

Karen Zacarias' plays include *Legacy of Light*, the adaptation of *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, *Mariela in the Desert*, *The Book Club Play* and *The Sins of Sor Juana*. Her children's musicals include *Looking for Roberto Clemente*, *Chasing George Washington*, *Ferdinand the Bull*, *Einstein Is a Dummy*, *Jane of the Jungle* and *Cinderella Eats Rice and Beans*. Her plays have been produced at Arena Stage, Kennedy Center, Goodman Theater, Denver Center, Round House Theater, Arden, Cleveland Playhouse, Alliance Theater and many more. Her awards include: 2010 finalist for the Steinberg Award for best New American Play (*Legacy of Light*), Francesca Primus Prize (*Mariela in the Desert*), National Latino Play Award, AT&T/TCG First Stages Award, Susan S. Blackburn Award finalist, New Voices Award and Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding New Play (*The Sins of Sor Juana*). Karen lives in D.C. with her husband and three young children. She is also a playwriting professor at Georgetown University and the founding artistic director of Young Playwrights' Theater in D.C.

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American Voices New Play Institute Project Residencies

David Henry Hwang's plays include *M. Butterfly* (1988 Tony Award for Best Play, 1989 Pulitzer Finalist), *Yellow Face* (2008 Obie Award for Playwriting, 2008 Pulitzer finalist), *Golden Child* (1997 Obie Award, 1998 Tony nomination for Best Play), *FOB* (1981 Obie Award) and *The Dance and the Railroad*. He wrote libretti for the Broadway musicals *Aida* (co-author, with music and lyrics by Elton John and Tim Rice), Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Flower Drum Song* (2002 revival, Tony nomination for Best Book of a Musical) and *Disney's Tarzan* (with songs by Phil Collins). His opera libretti include four collaborations with composer Philip Glass—*1000 Airplanes on the Roof*, *The Voyage* (Metropolitan Opera), *The Sound of a Voice* and the upcoming *Icarus at the Edge of Time*—as well as Bright Sheng's *The Silver River*, Osvaldo Golijov's *Ainadamar* (2007 Grammy awards for Best Opera and Best Classical Composition), Unsuk Chin's *Alice in Wonderland* (Opernwelt 2007 World Premiere of the Year) and Howard Shore's *The Fly*. Hwang penned the feature films *M. Butterfly*, *Golden Gate* and *Possession* (co-writer) and also co-wrote the song "Solo" with Prince. His newest play, *Chinglish*, will premiere in 2011 at Chicago's Goodman Theatre, co-produced with the Public Theater in New York. Hwang attended Stanford University and Yale School of Drama and served by appointment of President Clinton on the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.

Lynn Nottage is a playwright from Brooklyn. Her plays include *Intimate Apparel*; *Fabulation, or the Re-Education of Undine*; *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*; *Las Meninas* and *Ruined*. They have been produced and developed at theaters both nationally and internationally. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including the 2007 MacArthur Genius Award, Obie Award for playwriting, NY Drama Critics Circle Award, Best Play and John Gassner Outer Critics Circle awards, American Theatre Critics Steinberg 2004 New Play Award, 2004 Francesca Primus Award and two AUDELCO awards. Nottage's most recent publications include: *Intimate Apparel and Fabulation* (TCG) and an anthology of her plays, *Crumbs from the Table of Joy and Other Plays* (TCG), which includes *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*; *Las Meninas*; *Mud, River, Stone*; *Por'knockers* and *Poof!* She was awarded a 2007 Lucille Lortel Foundation Fellowship, 2005 Guggenheim Fellowship, National Black Theatre Festival's August Wilson Playwriting Award and 2004 PEN/Laura Pels Award for Drama. She is a graduate of Brown University and Yale School of Drama, where she is currently a visiting lecturer. Nottage is also a recent graduate of New Dramatists. <http://www.lynnnottage.net>

The Institute's programs address a significant gap in the national new play development infrastructure. While there are many promising and productive practices scattered across the field that could help strengthen the overall ecology for new plays and playwrights, there is no central focus for advancing the sector as a whole. Promising innovations remain locked inside their originating context, with no way to test their capacity for successful replication elsewhere. For more information regarding all of the American Voices New Play Institute programs please visit www.arenastage.org/institute.

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's Performing Arts Program currently provides multi-year grants on an invitation-only basis to leading orchestras, theater companies, opera companies, modern dance companies and dance-specific presenters based in the United States. Although the Foundation does not confine its support to large organizations with national visibility, it does seek to support institutions that contribute to the preservation and development of their art forms, provide creative leadership in solving problems or addressing issues unique to the field, and present the highest level of institutional performance. Grants are awarded on the basis of artistic merit and leadership in the field and concentrate on achieving long-term results. In conjunction with regular program grants, the Foundation also makes a limited number of grants to research and service organizations that are doing work closely related to program goals.

Under the leadership of Artistic Director Molly Smith and Managing Director Edgar Dobie, Washington, D.C.-based **Arena Stage** has become the largest theater in the country dedicated to American plays and playwrights. Founded in 1950 by Zelda Fichandler, Thomas Fichandler and Edward Mangum, Arena Stage was one of the nation's original resident theaters and has a distinguished record of leadership and innovation in the field. With the opening of the new Mead Center for American Theater in 2010, Arena Stage will be a leading center for the production, presentation, development and study of American theater. Now in its sixth decade, Arena Stage serves a diverse annual audience of more than 200,000. For more information please visit www.arenastage.org.

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Quotes from the Inaugural Residents of the American Voices New Play Institute

Amy Freed:

"It was a great day when I learned of my selection for the American Voices residency at the Arena Stage. The marginal and perilous state of playwriting in this country has been a growing source of sadness to everyone who loves the theater. I believe hugely in the vigor of American art and artists and think this program, which is trying something quite new, provides a really terrific opportunity to work in the company of strong talents, strongly and unequivocally supported. The residency fills me with excitement—it provides a situation crucial to the emergence of new plays—in which a play might grow according to its own nature, with the time and resources to find its best and truest expression."

Katori Hall:

"When I heard that I was chosen for the American Voices New Play Institute residency, my heart started playing double-dutch! I rejoice in the art of telling stories for the stage, and I was delighted at the opportunity to be embraced by a theater known for supporting the voices of tomorrow. This is a blessing that is not bestowed upon many playwrights, and I look forward to having the time, the space and the breath to dig deep down and continue writing for the theatre."

David Henry Hwang:

"The centrality of the playwright in the American theater has eroded over recent decades. Arena's AVNPI once again empowers writers to guide the development and production of their own work, placing the individual, idiosyncratic voice of the playwright at the heart of the artistic process. I am proud and excited to help forge a new model for American theater in our new century."

Lisa Kron:

"I feel enormously fortunate to be among the playwrights chosen for the residency program of the AVNPI. It's a generous and visionary initiative that is poised to change the landscape of play development across the country. For three years the resident playwrights will be able to focus on writing plays without worrying about how to meet our basic living expenses or maintaining our health insurance. I'm very hopeful that this program will pave the way for others like it and, in doing so, will help unleash the talent and productivity of playwrights across the country."

Lynn Nottage:

"I have long believed that the developmental process should begin from the inception of an idea, and as such, theaters should commit to writers, not just their individual plays. I believe it makes for a healthier, more committed relationship. I am drawn to this residency because it's offering a home with sustainable resources, the opportunity to be part of a larger conversation about play development, and a community of artists and administrators who hopefully appreciate the unusual and adventurous ways in which theater can be made."

Charles Randolph-Wright:

"I am thrilled to be a part of the American Voices residency. A dear friend of mine who is a retired General in D.C. said to me that art is the salve that heals our wounds. At a time when we are wounded in so many ways, how astounding to be a part of a community that provides support and a true commitment to art. With theaters closing and funding disappearing, it is imperative that artists are afforded opportunities to create and also be able to eat! I am honored and grateful to be selected to be in this extraordinary and necessary program."

Karen Zacarias:

"I feel lucky and amazed to have been selected as the inaugural Resident Playwright within the Institute; I've started working right away. This residency is crafted in a way that is sure to inspire artists to leap far, providing time and space to help us re-examine our body of work while also creating something new. I believe the creation of these residencies will result in work that makes a real mark on the American Stage. Already, the residency has been a great benefit for plays of mine that are premiering at other theaters around the country."