

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 RELEASES THE FIRST AMERICAN VOICES NEW PLAY INSTITUTE MONOGRAPH

***** Monograph features three Institute convening reports, interviews with the Institute Resident Playwrights and Project Residents and reports on major events since its inception in July 2009 *****

(Washington, D.C.) **Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater** announces that the **American Voices New Play Institute** has released its first monograph, which is available to the public for download online at www.arenastage.org/new-play-institute.

The monograph is a multimedia document with embedded links and video that functions as an annual report. It details the proceedings of the three convenings that the Institute held in its inaugural year as well as articles from new play sector leaders and the first class of New Play Producing Fellows. The monograph also features interviews with Arena Stage Artistic Director **Molly Smith**; the five Institute Resident Playwrights **Amy Freed, Katori Hall, Lisa Kron, Charles Randolph-Wright** and **Karen Zacarías**, as well as Institute Project Residents **David Henry Hwang** and **Lynn Nottage**. This monograph serves to document and disseminate major findings of the Institute throughout its first year.

The Institute 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 operates under the leadership of Smith, driven by Dower. The Institute includes a suite of interrelated programs, all of which are built upon innovative models currently operating in the field that demonstrate potential for replication in other communities.

In its first year the Institute held three convenings—**Defining Diversity** (December 4-5, 2009), **Black Playwrights** (January 16-17, 2010) and **Devised Work** (February 19-20, 2010)—that gathered leaders in the field for roundtable discussions about pressing issues facing the new play sector. The convening participants focused on contributing to the ongoing dialogue about how to best advance the new play infrastructure nationwide. Each gathering brought more than 30 playwrights, generative artists, producers, presenters and development labs from across the country to Washington, D.C. Each convening concluded with an event that was free and open to the public. The first round of convenings was hosted on the campus of Georgetown University as part of Arena's continuing partnership with their Theater & Performance Studies Program. Each convening was thoroughly documented through video recording, blogging, social media and commissioned white papers all of which have now been collected and edited into this monograph.

"For more than two years David Dower and I laid the groundwork for the Institute, and last year was about reaching out into the field, engaging and elevating the discussions around what's working and what's challenging for writers and contemporary playwright theater makers," shares Smith. "The conversations that were started through the Institute's convenings are powerful, and we're thrilled to share the dialogue. Part of

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Arena Stage's expanded mission within the new Mead Center for American Theater is development and study, and through the Institute these vital steps towards strengthening the future of theater are being realized."

The second round of Institute convenings will be held in the new Mead Center for American Theater beginning in January 2011, and will be announced at a later date.

"This first year of the Institute has been a whirlwind. I'm proud of how much we've put in motion, and look forward to seeing how it develops," contributes Dower. "Looking deeply at this monograph, I'm struck by the broad buy-in and participation across the new work sector that has characterized this launch. We are excited to build this community of collaborators as we go."

The American Voices New Play Institute was made possible through the keystone gift of \$1.1 million in support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. For more information visit www.arenastage.org/new-play-institute.

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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