

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Kirstin M. Franko/Julia Suszynski
press@arenastage.org, 202-600-4056

October 18, 2010

ARENA STAGE AT THE MEAD CENTER FOR AMERICAN THEATER
PRODUCES THE WORLD PREMIERE OF
MARCUS GARDLEY'S *every tongue confess*
DIRECTED BY KENNY LEON
FEATURING PHYLICIA RASHAD

*** Inaugural production in the 200-seat Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle
in the Mead Center for American Theater ***

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater presents the world premiere of **Marcus Gardley's *every tongue confess***, which opens the new **Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle**, the third theater space in the Mead Center. **Director Kenny Leon** (Broadway's *Fences* and last season's *Stick Fly* at Arena Stage) leads an ensemble cast featuring talent from across the country, including Tony Award-winner **Phylicia Rashad** teamed up with Jason Dirden, Crystal Fox, Autumn Hurlbert, Jim Ireland, Leslie Kritzer, Eugene Lee, E. Roger Mitchell and Jonathan Earl Peck. ***every tongue confess* runs November 9, 2010-January 2, 2011 in the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle.**

"The birth of a new theater space is cause for major celebration," says **Artistic Director Molly Smith**. "The inauguration of the Kogod Cradle, as a theater created for new works, needed to be a premiere. Marcus Gardley is a young writer who is a theater poet, who writes plays that are epic and intimate at the same time. The first project that is created in a new theater will be always remembered, and *every tongue confess* is that play."

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. Gardley blends ancient myth with magical realism, Biblical allegory with the local TV news to create a fiery theatrical furnace in which some will be saved, some will be purged and the truth cannot escape.

Growing up in a family of ministers, **Playwright Marcus Gardley** always felt at home when he was at church. "Theater is church for me because it's the place where souls are moved," says Gardley, whose play is based on the church burnings that happened in 1996 Alabama. "My characters make a home in my mind and speak to me until I put them onstage, and now, these characters get to speak to D.C. in a new home. This is the story I want to share with the world."

-continued-

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater Produces the World Premiere of Marcus Gardley's *every tongue confess* Page 2

Director Kenny Leon returns to Arena Stage for his fourth production with *every tongue confess*. "I knew I had to do *every tongue confess*," says Leon. "It's earthy, epic, contains rich poetry and song with intriguing characters. This play is the perfect play to open the Kogod Cradle and this incredible cast will make Marcus' words really speak to people."

Marcus Gardley (Playwright) is a multiple award-winning poet-playwright who won the prestigious 2008 Helen Merrill Award and a Kesselring honor. His most recent play *On the Levee* was produced at Lincoln Center Theater and has been nominated for seven AUDELCO awards including outstanding playwright 2010. His most produced work, *And Jesus Moonwalks the Mississippi*, was performed at the Cutting Ball Theater and received both critical acclaim and two sold-out extensions. His Bay Area plays *This World in a Woman's Hands* (October 2009) and *Love is a Dream House in Lorin* (March 2007) have been hailed as the best in Bay Area theater. The latter was nominated for the National Critics Steinberg New Play Award. He has had six plays produced including: *dance of the holy ghosts* at Yale Repertory Theatre (now under a commercial Broadway option). He is the recipient of the SF Bay Area's Gerbode Emerging Playwright Award, the National Alliance for Musical Theatre Award, the Eugene O'Neill Memorial Scholarship and the ASCAP Cole Porter Prize. He holds an MFA in Playwriting from the Yale Drama School and is a member of New Dramatists, The Dramatists Guild and the Lark Play Development Center. Gardley, a native of West Oakland, teaches Playwriting and African-American studies at Umass Amherst.

Kenny Leon (Director), named one of *Financial Times'* Top 20 Southerners to Watch, is one of the most exciting and acclaimed directors in American theater today. In July 2010, his hit Tony-winning Broadway show *Fences* garnered 10 Tony nominations, including Best Director. Past Tony nominations include his Broadway productions of *Radio Golf*, *Gem of the Ocean* and *A Raisin in the Sun*, starring Sean Combs, Phylicia Rashad and Audra McDonald. Mr. Leon was nominated for Best Director by the Directors Guild of America for the film version of *A Raisin in the Sun*, which received Emmy and Golden Globe nominations and won three NAACP Image Awards. Mr. Leon's awards include the Drama League Julia Hansen Award for lifetime of excellence in theater, MIT Eugene McDermott Humanitarian Award, as well as the ABBY and Christopher awards. He's been featured on *CBS Sunday Morning*, CNN, NBC, Charlie Rose and PBS and was featured as *People* magazine's 50 Most Beautiful and the Face of Martell's national and international advertising campaign. While directing *every tongue confess*, Mr. Leon crisscrosses the country directing *Private Practice* for ABC. Mr. Leon's upcoming Broadway work includes Katori Hall's *The Mountaintop*, winner of London's Olivier Award for Best New Play. Formerly Artistic Director of Atlanta's Alliance Theatre, Mr. Leon is presently Founding Artistic Director of Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre Company. His directorial credits include classic theater, drama, comedy, opera, musicals, musical revues and film. He's directed extensively around the country, including Chicago's Goodman Theater, Boston's Huntington Theater, Connecticut's Long Wharf Theater, Hartford Stage, Baltimore's Center Stage, Los Angeles' Center Theater Group, Milwaukee Repertory, New York's Public Theater, Atlanta's Fox Theater, Seattle Repertory, Georgia Shakespeare, San Jose Repertory, Dallas Theater Center and Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Mr. Leon was artistic director of the 10-play *August Wilson Century Cycle* at the Kennedy Center, marking the first time all 10 plays were produced in repertory under one roof. Other directorial credits include *Swimming Upstream*, *Breaking the Silence*, *Flashdance*, which toured the UK through May 2009, and was stage director on Alicia Keys' *As I Am* worldwide tour, which launched in the UK, toured Europe and finished in North America. He staged the world premiere of Toni Morrison's opera *Margaret Garner*, featuring mezzo soprano Denyce Graves, at Michigan Opera House and the Auditorium in Chicago. He's produced works including Disney and Elton John's *Elaborate Lives: The Legend of Aida*, Alfred Uhry's *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*, Pearl Cleage's *Flying West* and *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, among others. He produces the August Wilson Monologue Competition, and is currently producing a documentary film about the importance of the arts in our lives. With honorary doctorates from Roosevelt Univ., among others, Mr. Leon is a graduate of Clark Atlanta Univ.

-continued-

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater Produces the World Premiere of Marcus Gardley's every tongue confess Page 3

The Cast of every tongue confess

Jason Dirden (Shadrack)'s Broadway credits include *Fences*. Off-Broadway: *The First Breeze of Summer* (Signature). Regional: *Stick Fly* (Arena Stage, Huntington Theatre), *Fences* (Geva), *August Wilson's Century Cycle* (Kennedy Center), *Ceremonies in Dark Old Men* (True Colors). TV: *Tyler Perry's House of Payne*. Training: Morehouse Coll. And Univ. of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Crystal Fox (Missionary/Tender Meeks)'s other D.C. area appearances include *August Wilson's Century of Plays* (Kennedy Center); True Colors' *Flyin' West* (Lincoln Theatre); *Three Sistahs* (Metrostage); and *Home* (Roundhouse Theatre, Helen Hayes nomination). Other regional credits include *Black Pearl Sings* (Penumbra); *Gem of the Ocean* (Seattle Rep, directed by Ms. Rashad); *Seven Guitars* and *The Boys from Syracuse* (Alliance Theatre); *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Piano Lesson* and *A Raisin in the Sun* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival). Ms. Fox was a Best Actress Drammy winner for *For Colored Girls...* (Portland Center Stage). TV/Film credits include *In the Heat of the Night*, *The Sopranos*, *House of Payne*, *Old Settler*, *Mama Flora's Family* and *Driving Miss Daisy*.

Autumn Hurlbert (Benny Pride) made her Broadway debut in *Legally Blonde*. Off-Broadway/Regional: Abigail Peck in *A Contemporary American's Guide to A Successful Marriage* (2009 Fringe Festival recipient for Outstanding Actor); Beth March in *Little Women* (first national Broadway tour); Wanda Clark in *Lucky Guy* (Goodspeed); Gwen Goralski in *Killing Women* (Beckett Theater, Theater Row); Eponine in *Les Misérables* (Pioneer Theater). TV/Film: Rachel Hughes in *Sudden Death!*; *Guiding Light* and MTV's *Legally Blonde: The Search for Elle Woods*. Ms. Hurlbert is also a singer/songwriter.

Jim Ireland (Stoker Pride), a native of Philadelphia, resides in New York where his Off-Broadway credits include *The Shawl*, directed by Sidney Lumet, *Motherbird* (original cast) by Craig Lucas and *Ephemeria*. In his hometown, Jim has performed at the Walnut Street Theatre (*Philadelphia, Here I Come!*), the Arden Theatre (*Man and Superman*), the Wilma Theatre (*Macbett*) and in *Twelfth Night*, directed by Greg Doran of the RSC. Jim is a member of Blue Roses Productions and Circle East, with whom he's directed and performed works of fellow members Lanford Wilson, Terrance McNally and Craig Lucas. Mr. Ireland last performed in D.C. in the 1987 toddler-acclaimed *Pinocchio, A Real Boy!* At the Kennedy Center. Television appearances this year include *Mercy* and *Law & Order*.

Leslie Kritzer (Bernadette)'s Broadway credits include a soloist in *Sondheim on Sondheim*; Janey in *A Catered Affair* (Drama Desk nom); Serena in *Legally Blonde* (Clarence Derwent Award) and *Hairspray*. Off-Broadway: Monica in *Rooms* (Outer Critics Circle nom) and Pickles in *Great American Trailer Park* (Drama Desk nom). Regional: Daughter in *Memory Show* (Barrington Stage); Valerie Solanas in *POP!* (Yale Rep); Sally Bowles in *Cabaret* at TUTS; and Little Becky in national tour of *Urinetown*. Concerts: Hildy in *On the Town* (Encores!); *Broadway Three Generations* (Kennedy Center); guest soloist honoring Alan Menken and Sir Tim Rice at London's Royal Albert Hall and several cast recordings. Time Out NY Award for her show *Leslie Kritzer is Patti LuPone at Les Mouches*. TV/Film: *17 Photos of Isabel*; *Law & Order: SVU*; *3 LBS* (CBS); and *Jason and Jessica* (HBO).

Eugene Lee (Elder/Jeremiah)'s New York credits include August Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean* (Broadway), Charles Fuller's Pulitzer-winning *A Soldier's Play* (Negro Ensemble Company) and WPA Theatre. Regional: Crossroads Theatre Company and Center Stage. L.A.: *Eyes of the American* (L.A. Theatre Center) and *Split Second* with Denzel Washington and Alfre Woodard (Mayfair Theatre). Samm Art Williams' *Woman from the Town* (Inner City Cultural Center, 1990 NAACP Theatre Award for Best Supporting Actor) and *Richard II* (Mark Taper Forum). TV: *The Women of Brewster Place*, *The District* as coroner Hud Sanders, *NYPD Blue*, *Without a Trace*, *The White Shadow*. Film: *Static*, *Coach Carter*, *Lackawanna Blues*, *Black Listed* and *Menace II Society*. Mr. Lee is also a playwright whose works include *Killingsworth*, the book for the musical *Twist* (Walnut St., George St.), *East Texas Hot Links* (Met Theatre, Arena Stage, Royal Court, Public) and *Fear Itself* (Crossroads, Ubu Rep).

-continued-

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater Produces the World Premiere of Marcus Gardley's every tongue confess Page 4

E. Roger Mitchell (Brother/Bobby) resides in Atlanta and was most recently seen in *A Confederacy of Dunces* at Theatrical Outfit. Other credits include: *Jitney*, *Radio Golf*, *Gem of the Ocean* and *Cuttin' Up* (Alliance Theatre); Cormac McCarthy's *The Sunset Limited* (Theatrical Outfit); *A Cool Drink of Water* (Horizon Theatre); *Miss Evers' Boys* and *Ceremonies in Dark Old Men* (Kenny Leon's True Colors). Film: *Blood Done Sign My Name*, *The Crazies*, *S.W.A.T.*, *Diary of a Mad Black Woman*, *The Legend of Bagger Vance*, *Daddy's Little Girls*, HBO's *Boycott* and *Warm Springs* (2005 Emmy Award Best Picture). Television: *Past Life*, *The Shield*, *Navy NCIS*, *One Tree Hill* and *House of Payne*.

Jonathan Earl Peck (Blacksmith) returns to Arena Stage after last appearing in *Blood Knot*, a show done in repertory with *The African Company Does Richard III*, for which he received a Helen Hayes nomination. Other Arena Stage credits include Tom in *The Glass Menagerie*. Mr. Peck also performed in *Tamburlaine* (Shakespeare Theatre Co.). On Broadway, Mr. Peck played Pasha Selim in Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio* (Lincoln Center) and performed as Lauren Fishbourne's replacement in *The Lion in Winter*. Recent film and TV credits include the pilot episode for AMC's *Rubicon*, *Cadillac Records* and *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*.

Phylicia Rashad (Mother Sister) returns to Arena Stage after last appearing in *Blue*. A native of Houston, Ms. Rashad graduated magna cum laude with a B.F.A. in theater from Howard Univ. She recently made her directorial debut at the helm of Seattle Rep's production of August Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean*. Broadway credits include *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (also West End), *Gem of the Ocean*, *A Raisin in the Sun* (2004 Tony Award for Best Actress in a Play, Drama Desk Award), *Blue*, *Jelly's Last Jam*, *Into the Woods*, *Dreamgirls*, *The Wiz* and *Ain't Supposed to Die a Natural Death*. Off-Broadway credits include *Cymbeline*, *Bernarda Alba* and Ed Bullins' *The Duplex* (Lincoln Center); *Helen*, *The Story* and *Everybody's Ruby* (NYSF Public Theater); *Puppet Play*, *Zooman and the Sign*, *Sons and Fathers of Sons*, *In an Upstate Motel*, *Weep Not for Me* and *The Great Mac Daddy* (Negro Ensemble Company); and *The Sirens* (Manhattan Theatre Club). In regional theater, she performed as Euripides' *Medea* and in *Blues for an Alabama Sky* at Alliance Theatre in Atlanta. Known to TV audiences for her role as Clair Huxtable on *The Cosby Show* and as Ruth Lucas on the CBS sitcom *Cosby*, she received the NAACP Image Award for Best Actress in a Comedy Series for both of these roles. She's also been nominated for two Emmy Awards and has received two People's Choice Awards. Feature film credits include: *Once Upon a Time When We Were Colored*, directed by Tim Reid; *Free of Eden*, opposite Sidney Poitier; *Loving Jezebel*, directed by Kwyn Bader; and *The Visit*, directed by Jordan Walker Pearlman. TV film credits include: *A Raisin in the Sun* (2008 Emmy nom); *The Old Settler* (AFI nom), directed by Debbie Allen; *David's Mother*; *False Witness*; *Jailbirds*; *Polly*; and *Polly Comin' Home*. Other television appearances include *Touched by an Angel*; *Blossom*; and *A Different World*. Ms. Rashad supports the work of the PRASAD Project, an international charitable organization, and is a member of the Broadway Inspirational Voices. Ms. Rashad has received honorary doctorates from Providence Coll., Morris Brown Coll., Clark Univ., and Barber-Scotia Coll. and the Harvard Univ. Foundation Award. In 1999 she received the Dorothy L. Height Dreammaker Award sponsored by the National Council of Negro Women Inc. in association with Aunt Jemima/Quaker Oats Co. In December 2001, Ms. Rashad was honored by the board of directors of New York Women in Film and Television with the Muse Award for Outstanding Vision and Achievement.

The Creative Team of every tongue confess includes Dramaturg **Nakissa Etemad**, Set Designer **Tom Lynch**, Costume Designer **Ilona Somogyi**, Lighting Designer **Allen Lee Hughes**, Composer **Dwight Andrews**, Sound Designer **Tim Thompson**, New York Casting Director **Alaine Alldaffer**, Arena Stage Casting Director **Daniel Pruksarnukul**, Stage Manager **Kurt Hall**, Assistant Stage Manager **Keri Schultz** and Assistant Director **Jamil Jude**.

Further information and images available upon request. Please e-mail press@arenastage.org.

every tongue confess is supported by The Edgerton Foundation.

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater Produces the World Premiere of Marcus Gardley's every tongue confess Page 5

every tongue confess Special Events, Ticket Information and Performance Calendar

Southwest Night—Friday, November 26, 2010 at noon

An invitation is extended to our Southwest D.C. neighbors to buy \$25 tickets, plus applicable fees, for one designated Friday evening performance of each production. Proof of Southwest D.C. residency—or continued employment—for each audience member of each party must be presented at the time of purchase. Tickets are limited to four per person and are based on availability. To purchase tickets, call 202-488-3300 or stop by the Arena Stage Sales Office. Plays and dates are subject to change.

TICKETS: Tickets for *every tongue confess* start at \$40, plus applicable fees, based on availability. Discount tickets are available for patrons purchasing tickets for multiple shows, students and groups. A limited number of **\$15 tickets for patrons age 30 and under** go on sale each Monday for performances that week. (All patrons must present valid ID.) **HOTTIX**, a limited number of half-price, day-of-performance tickets, are available 90 minutes before curtain prior to every performance. With **Metro Mondays**, patrons who present a SmarTrip or Metro card can purchase half-price tickets for the week's performances after noon on Mondays while supplies last. **Tickets may be purchased online at www.arenastage.org, by phone at 202-488-3300 or at the Sales Office at 1101 6th St., SW, D.C.**

Sales Office/Subscriptions	202-488-3300
TTY for deaf patrons	202-484-0247
Group Sales Hotline	202-488-4380
Info for patrons with disabilities	202-488-3300

Tuesday, Wednesday & Sunday at 7:30 p.m.
Thursday, Friday & Saturday at 8:00 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m.
Weekday matinees at noon 11/26, 12/1, 12/7, 12/8, 12/23 & 12/24.

Sign-interpreted performances: 12/16 at 8:00 p.m. & 12/19 at 7:30 p.m.
Audio-described performances: 12/15 at 7:30 p.m. & 12/18 at 2:00 p.m.
Open-captioned performance: 12/29 at 7:30 p.m.
Post-show discussions: 11/30 & 12/9 after the evening show; 12/1, 12/7 & 12/8 after the noon show.

METRO: The Waterfront-SEU station (Green Line) is the closest Metro station to Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater. When exiting the station, walk west on M Street toward 6th Street, and the main entrance to the Mead Center is on the right.

PARKING: Discounted parking in the Mead Center garage is available by reservation to full-season subscribers for \$18 per show. The entrance for the Mead Center garage is on Maine Ave. SW. Limited handicapped parking is available by reservation up to 24 hours prior to a performance. Remaining spaces are \$20 for non-subscribers. Patrons can also park at either of Central Parking's garages on 4th St. between I and M Streets for \$10.

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

###