

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
HOSTS THE #NEWPLAY FESTIVAL
A CULMINATION OF THE
NATIONAL ENDOWMENT OF THE ARTS NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
RUNNING JANUARY 19-30, 2011

*** Festival includes full-length presentations and readings of the seven inaugural NEA-NPDP selections as well as scenes from the documentary film of the program ***

(Washington, D.C.) The discourse surrounding new play development continues within the **American Voices New Play Institute at Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater**, as the company presents the **#NewPlay Festival**. The festival, which is a culmination of the National Endowment for the Arts New Play Development Program (NEA-NPDP), will feature full-length performances and readings of six plays at the Mead Center (1101 6th St., SW), concurrently with one play in full-production at The Studio Theatre (1501 14th St., NW). The Festival also includes a presentation featuring scenes from Robert Levi's forthcoming documentary that follows the development of selected projects, which will be followed by a panel of featured artists speaking about their process. **The #NewPlay Festival runs at the Mead Center January 19-30, 2011.** Festival casting and performance schedule below.

"The #NewPlay Festival will be an explosion of theatrical energy," says Arena Stage Artistic Director Molly Smith. "The Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle was created as a safe haven for new works, which is why it is an ideal venue to host such a range of interesting new projects from around America. This festival was always envisioned as the culminating event of the first round of the NEA New Play Development Program, planned to help christen the Kogod Cradle in our inaugural season, and we're delighted to see this vision come to fruition."

In June 2007, Arena Stage was selected by a diverse panel of experts from the field to be the administrator of a new initiative for new play development. The goal of this first round of the NEA-NPDP was to advance the American nonprofit theater's ability to provide meaningful support for new work. This program provided financial support to theater institutions and playwrights for the development of new plays of substantial merit. The initiative aimed to identify, organize and disseminate information on effective collaborative models for the sustained development of outstanding new American plays.

In October 2008, Arena Stage and the NEA announced the selected projects. The two NEA Outstanding New American Play selections included the **Center Theatre Group** (Los Angeles, CA) production of ***Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* by Rajiv Joseph** and the **McCarter Theatre** (Princeton, NJ) productions of **Tarell Alvin McCraney's trilogy *The Brother/Sister Plays***. Each project received a total of \$90,000 to support advanced development activities, culminating in a full production of each play. In Spring 2009, both productions received their world premieres. *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* directed by Moisés Kaufman was such a success in Center Theater Group's Kirk Douglas Theatre that the company produced it again in its larger Mark Taper Forum in the following year. A Spring 2011 production has been announced for Broadway starring

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Robin Williams and directed by Kaufman. Following the McCarter Theatre premiere, *The Brother/Sister Plays* established similar acclaim with the trilogy receiving productions at prominent theaters across the country, in addition to earning McCraney both a 2010 Steinberg Playwright Award and the first *New York Times* Outstanding Playwright Award in 2010.

Five NEA Distinguished New Play Development Projects received \$20,000 each to support early development activities for a new play. The selected projects included *Pastures of Heaven* by Octavio Solis with the **California Shakespeare Theater** (Berkeley, CA); *Happy End of the World* by Lloyd Suh with **The Children's Theatre Company** (Minneapolis, MN); *The Provenance of Beauty* by Claudia Rankine with **The Foundry Theatre** (New York, NY); *Agnes Under the Big Top* by Aditi Brennan Kapil with the **Lark Play Development Center** (New York, NY) and *I've Never Been So Happy* by Kirk Lynn with the **Rude Mechs** (Austin, TX). Each participating theater collaborated closely with the playwright on development activities, such as workshops and staged readings.

The American Voices New Play Institute #NewPlay Festival:

OUTSTANDING NEW AMERICAN PLAY SELECTIONS:

Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo

By Rajiv Joseph / Directed by Shirley Serotzky

This remarkable play throws two homesick soldiers, a tormented Iraqi and a brooding tiger together into a revelatory situation that is hysterical and macabre, soul-wrenching and lyrical.

The cast for the reading of *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* includes Maboud Ebrahimzadeh, Rick Foucheux, Mark Hairston, Danny Gavigan, Zehra Fazal and Nayab Hussain.

The Studio Theatre is producing a full staging of **Tarell Alvin McCraney's *Marcus; or the Secret of Sweet***, the third and final of *The Brother/Sister Plays*. For more information visit www.studiotheatre.org.

DISTINGUISHED NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT SELECTIONS:

Agnes under the Big Top, a tall tale

By Aditi Brennan Kapil / Commissioned by Mixed Blood Theatre / Directed by Eric Ting

The circus comes to town in this funny and powerful adventure that imagines the intersecting lives of immigrants in a U.S. city. Against the subterranean rhythms of a subway train, an itinerant subway busker, a Liberian homecare worker, a former Bulgarian ringmaster and his wife, and an Indian call center escapee find and redefine themselves in today's America.

The cast for the reading of *Agnes under the Big Top, a tall tale* includes Nick Demeris, Ankit Dogra, Helen Hedman, Dan Manning, Dawn Ursula and Lilia Slavova. The creative team includes Sound Designer Katharine Horowitz.

Children's Theatre Company in partnership with Ma-Yi Theater Company present

Happy End of the World

By Lloyd Suh / Directed by Ralph B. Peña

This play for children and adults that takes place in outer space is an exploration and celebration of the ways in which we're all a little strange.

The cast for the reading of *Happy End of the World* includes Brad Bellamy, Geneva Carr, Jackie Chung, Peter Kim, Alfredo Narciso and Shawn Randall.

I've Never Been So Happy

A work-in-progress showing of the Rude Mechs' original western operetta

Book & lyrics by Kirk Lynn / Music & lyrics by Peter Stopschinski

Co-directed by Thomas Graves & Lana Lesley / Created by Rude Mechs

This new musical trans-media performance party is “a refreshingly queer interrogation of the West” and “a Brechtian extravaganza for art and theater geeks, evoking everything from WOW Café camp to Bruce Nauman’s post-minimal studio practice to Kara Walker’s silhouettes and shadow puppets” (Claire Ruud, *...might be good*).

The cast for *I've Never Been So Happy* includes Meg Sullivan, E. Jason Liebrecht, Jenny Larson, Paul Soileau, Cami Alys, Lowell Bartholomee, Kerri Atwood, Peter Stopschinski, Amy Hackerd, William Moses, Noel Gaulin, Thomas Graves, Hannah Kenah, Lana Lesley and Erin Meyer. The creative team includes Music Director/Keyboards Peter Stopschinski, Guitarist Eric Roach, Production Stage Manager Denise Martel, Choreographer Dayna Hanson, Animation Designer Miwa Matreyek, Lighting Designer Stephen Pruitt, Production Designer Brian H. Scott, Scenic Designer Leilah Stewart and Costume Consultants Jason Liebrecht and Paul Soileau.

California Shakespeare Theater presents

A staged reading of John Steinbeck's *The Pastures of Heaven*

Adapted by Octavio Solis/ Directed by Jonathan Moscone

Developed in collaboration with Word for Word Performing Arts Company

A new play adapted by one of our country's most talented and prolific playwrights, this richly theatrical work, commissioned for Cal Shakes, celebrates the art of storytelling as it depicts comic and heartbreaking characters in search of happiness in the seemingly idyllic landscape of Steinbeck's Salinas Valley.

The cast for the reading of *The Pastures of Heaven* includes Catherine Castellanos, Julie Eccles, Clifton Guterman, Amy Kossow, Lakisha May, Jarion Monroe, Andy Murray, Nicholas Pelczar, Charles Shaw Robinson and Joanne Winter. The creative team includes Set Designer Annie Smart, Costume Designer Meg Neville, Lighting Designer York Kennedy, Composer/Sound Designer Obadiah Eaves, Movement Coach Erika Chong Shuch, Music Director Julie Wolf, Dramaturg Laura Hope, Vocal/Text Coach Stephanie Hunt, Casting Director Jessica Richards, Stage Manager Briana J. Fahey, Assistant Stage manager Katherine Riemann, Production Assistant Christi Na Hogan and Assistant Director Kate Jopson.

The Foundry Theatre presents

The Provenance of Beauty

Created by Melanie Joseph & Claudia Rankine / Written by Claudia Rankine

Filmmaker Marilys Ernst with Sarah Nina Hayon

And recorded performances by Raúl Castillo & Randy Danson / Directed by Melanie Joseph

Originally performed on a tour bus traveling through the South Bronx, this presentation simulates that poetic travelogue. Rankine's evocative text points out and reflects on views that may go unnoticed, complicated places that ask what creates a neighborhood—in a city, in a country, in the world—mapping a poetic cartography of a landscape in its eternal state of evolution.

The cast for *The Provenance of Beauty* includes Sarah Nina Hayon. The creative team includes Sound Designer Geoff Abbas, Video Designer Kell Condon, Production Stage Manager Casey Llewellyn, Director of Photography Martin Cole, Production Manager Anthony Cerrato and Producer James LL Morrison.

Casting for the #NewPlay Festival is subject to change. Additional casting will be updated at www.arenastage.org.

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The #NewPlay Festival Performance Schedule:

Wednesday, January 19	<i>The Provenance of Beauty</i> (The Foundry Theatre)	7:30 p.m.
Thursday, January 20	<i>Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo</i>	8:00 p.m.
Friday, January 21	<i>Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo</i>	8:00 p.m.
Saturday, January 22	<i>Happy End of the World</i> (Ma-Yi/Children's)	2:00 p.m.
	<i>Agnes Under the Big Top</i>	8:00 p.m.
Sunday, January 23	<i>Happy End of the World</i> (Ma-Yi/Children's)	2:00 p.m.
	<i>Agnes Under the Big Top</i>	7:30 p.m.
Wednesday, January 26 p.m.	<i>Scenes from NEA-NPDP Documentary & Panel Discussion</i>	8:00
	Narrated by filmmaker Robert Levi, followed by a panel featuring Aditi Brennan Kapil, Lloyd Suh, Lana Lesley, Claudia Rankine & Joanne Winter, Moderated by Polly Carl	
Thursday, January 27	<i>The Provenance of Beauty</i> (The Foundry Theatre)	6:00 p.m.
	<i>The Provenance of Beauty</i> (The Foundry Theatre)	8:00 p.m.
Friday, January 28	<i>I've Never Been So Happy</i> (Rude Mechanicals)	8:00 p.m.
Saturday, January 29	<i>The Pastures of Heaven</i> (California Shakespeare)	2:00 p.m.
	<i>I've Never Been So Happy</i> (Rude Mechanicals)	8:00 p.m.
Sunday, January 30	<i>The Pastures of Heaven</i> (California Shakespeare)	2:00 p.m.
	<i>The Provenance of Beauty</i> (The Foundry Theatre)	7:30 p.m.

Media are invited to attend the #NewPlay Festival readings and presentations. Presentations open to review include *The Provenance of Beauty*, the reading of *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* and the reading of *The Pastures of Heaven*. To reserve tickets e-mail press@arenastage.org. All ticket reservations are subject to availability.

WHERE: Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater

In the Kogod Cradle
1101 6th St., SW
Washington, DC 20024

TICKETS: Tickets for the #NewPlay Festival start at \$20, plus applicable fees, based on availability. 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.

METRO: Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater is only one block from the Waterfront-SEU Metro station (Green Line). 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, and the proper sticker is required. 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.

The National Endowment for the Arts was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government. To date, the NEA has awarded more than \$4 billion to support artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector. To join the discussion on how art works, visit the NEA at arts.gov.

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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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