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ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

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December 19, 2011

ARENA STAGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES ANNOUNCES CONTRACT RENEWAL OF ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MOLLY SMITH AND MANAGING DIRECTOR EDGAR DOBIE FOR FIVE-YEAR TERMS

*** Dobie accepts new title as Executive Producer ***

(Washington, D.C.) The Arena Stage Board of Trustees is pleased to announce that it has renewed the contracts of Artistic Director Molly Smith and Managing Director Edgar Dobie for five additional years with the theater. Smith joined Arena Stage in 1998 as artistic director and will continue in that role, while Dobie accepts a new title as executive producer to better reflect the role he plays at Arena Stage, which he joined as managing director in 2009.

"It is clear to all of us on the Board that in the partnership of Molly and Edgar, we have the best leadership team possible to guide the theater and assure the long-term health and success of Arena Stage," shares Board Chair **David E. Shiffrin**. "Their successful completion and opening of the Mead Center for American Theater was a resounding artistic and financial success. It has propelled Arena Stage forward and positioned it as a national center for the production, presentation, development and study of American theater."

"Arena Stage has had a wonderful rebirth in the past few years," says **Smith**. "The artists, the staff, the audiences and the board have challenged us to create more exciting work for our community. Moving into the Mead Center and beginning to explore its potential has been a particular thrill. I am inspired by the talent and support in the theater community, and I look forward to exploring the next five years with my smart and savvy leadership partner Edgar."

"Molly and I have built a great working relationship over the past seasons," adds **Dobie**. "Our partnership is fueled by her prodigious artistic ambition that informs our exciting plans for the seasons to come here at Arena. I am thrilled to have built a trust and confidence with both Molly and our Trustees and will do my best to build upon the Arena legacy that has already been so lovingly established here in Greater Washington."

Over the past 13 seasons, **Molly Smith** has been instrumental in leading the re-invention of Arena Stage. From the programming for the architecture to the envisioning of the Kogod Cradle, Smith has focused her creative life on the building of this new center for American theater. This re-invention has been part of a major artistic change as well, into the production, presentation, development and study of American Theater which leads Arena into the 21st Century.

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Smith has been a passionate leader in new play development for the past 30 years while at Arena Stage as well as at Perseverance Theatre in Alaska, the theater she founded and led for 19 years. She has commissioned or championed numerous world premieres, including Paula Vogel's Pulitzer Prize-winning *How I Learned to Drive* and *Mineola Twins*; Tim Acito's *The Women of Brewster Place*; Moisés Kaufman's *33 Variations*; Karen Zacarías' *Legacy of Light*; Marcus Gardley's *every tongue confess*; *Passion Play*, a cycle by Sarah Ruhl; Charles Randolph-Wright's *Blue*; and Zora Neale Hurston's lost American play, *Polk County*; some of which she has directed. She founded Arena's downstairs series, which has read or workshopped some 60 plays, half of which have gone on to full productions. In 2009, two shows nurtured at Arena Stage (*33 Variations* and *Next to Normal*) moved to Broadway. Smith's directorial work has also been seen at the Shaw Festival in Canada, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Trinity Repertory Company, Tarragon Theatre in Toronto, and Centaur Theatre in Montreal and includes classics such as *South Pacific*, *Mack and Mabel*, *Anna Christie* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Smith has served as literary advisor to Sundance Theatre Lab and formed the Arena Stage Writers Council, composed of leading American playwrights.

An avid traveler, Smith brings artists of international renown to work at Arena Stage and has served as a member of the board of the Theatre Communications Group as well as the Center for International Theatre Development. She directed two feature films, *Raven's Blood* and *Making Contact*, and received honorary doctorates from both Towson and American Universities.

Edgar Dobie has enjoyed a career in public theater as executive director of Trinity Repertory Company in Providence, founding managing director of Toronto's Canadian Stage Company, managing director at National Arts Centre in Ottawa and Vancouver's New Play Centre. For six years he was president of Andrew Lloyd Webber's Really Useful Company, and for the past three years the North American Executive Producer of *Riverdream*.

His Broadway producing credits include: *Sunset Boulevard* (Tony Award for Best Musical), *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*, Paul Simon's *The Capeman*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Boubilil and Schonberg's *The Pirate Queen* and the musical *9 to 5*. He serves as a Tony Award voter for this season on Broadway.

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 Executive Producer 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

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