

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

August 16, 2011

LESLIE UGGAMS TO BE HONORED WITH AMERICAN ARTIST AWARD
DURING 2011/12 SEASON OPENING CELEBRATION
AT ARENA STAGE AT THE MEAD CENTER FOR AMERICAN THEATER
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2011

*** Evening includes cocktails, dinner and special awards presentation followed by
the 2011/12 season opening performance of *Trouble in Mind* ***

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater kicks off the second year of programming in the company's new home with the **2011/12 Season Opening Celebration September 15, 2011**. The evening, which benefits Arena Stage's community engagement and educational programs, will include cocktails and dinner featuring the presentation of the American Artist Award to Tony and Emmy award-winning actress **Leslie Uggams**, followed by the highly anticipated season opening performance of *Trouble in Mind* by Alice Childress in the Kreeger Theater.

The American Artist Award honors an artist who has made a significant contribution to American theater and who represents all that is passionate, exuberant, deep and dangerous in the American spirit. Past awardees include Edward Albee, James Earl Jones, Robert "Bob" Alexander, August Wilson and Arena Stage co-founder Zelda Fichandler. This Fall Arena Stage celebrates **Leslie Uggams**, whose numerous Broadway and TV appearances include starring with previous American Artist Award recipient James Earl Jones in *On Golden Pond* and winning the 1968 Tony Award for Best Actress in a Musical for her Broadway debut as the lead in *Hallelujah, Baby!*

2011/12 Season Opening Celebration

Thursday, September 15, 2011

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater (1101 Sixth St., SW, Washington, DC)

5:00 p.m. VIP reception

5:30 p.m. Cocktails

6:15 p.m. Dinner and presentation of the American Artist Award

8:00 p.m. Opening performance of *Trouble in Mind*

Lavish dessert reception immediately following the performance

Festive attire

Complimentary Parking Available

Performance and Dessert Reception Ticket: \$250 (\$200 tax-deductible)

Dinner, Performance and Dessert Reception Ticket: \$500 (\$350 tax-deductible)

VIP All-Access Ticket: \$1,000 (\$820 tax-deductible)

- continued -

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater Holds 2011/12 Season Opening Celebration
Page 2

As of August 16, 2011 the 2011/12 Season Opening Celebration event sponsors include silver sponsor **BET Networks** and bronze sponsors **Abramson Family Foundation/The Tower Companies, Accenture PEPCO.**

For table purchases, tickets or further information contact Julie Lombard at 202-600-4176 or jlombard@arenastage.org.

For corporate sponsorship opportunities contact Bruce Leathwood at 202-600-4022 or bleathwood@arenastage.org.

Support from the evening helps provide the funds necessary to run Arena Stage's Community Engagement programs, which educate and enrich the lives of more than 20,000 students across the region. For more information visit [here](#).

In *Trouble in Mind*, battle lines are drawn within a newly integrated theater company preparing to open a misguided race play on the Great White Way in the 1950s. As personalities and prejudices collide, lead actress Wiletta Mayer has the chance to achieve her most glorious dream, but at what cost? **E. Faye Butler** (recently Aunt Eller in *Rodgers and Hammerstein's Oklahoma!* at Arena Stage) stars as Wiletta under the direction of **Irene Lewis**. The two collaborated on the production during CENTERSTAGE's 2006/07 season, along with actors **Starla Benford** (Millie Davis), Tony Award nominee **Thomas Jefferson Byrd** (Sheldon Forrester), **Daren Kelly** (Bill O'Wray), **Garrett Neergaard** (Eddie Fenton) and **Laurence O'Dwyer** (Henry). Arena Stage's production will also include **Brandon J. Dirden** (John Nevins), **Gretchen Hall** (Judy Sears) and **Marty Lodge** (Al Manners). *Trouble in Mind* runs **September 9 – October 23, 2011 in the Kreeger Theater.**

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 Managing Director 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.

Follow Arena Stage on **Twitter** @arenastage or <http://twitter.com/arenastage> or visit us on **Facebook** at <http://www.facebook.com/arenastage>

###