



the mead center
for american theater

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

August 13, 2012

SAMUEL D. HUNTER JOINS ARENA STAGE AS NEW RESIDENT PLAYWRIGHT IN 2013

ARENA STAGE LAUNCHES NEW PLAYWRIGHTS' ARENA PROGRAM FOR LOCAL PLAYWRIGHTS

(Washington, D.C.) **Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater** announces that Obie Award-winning playwright **Samuel D. Hunter will join the American Voices New Play Institute (AVNPI) as a yearlong resident playwright in 2013.** Known for his recent play *A Bright New Boise*, Hunter's work has been produced at theaters across the United States and internationally. Also implemented as part of the AVNPI this year is the launch of the **Playwrights' Arena**, a new program for six local playwrights to engage with the artistic life of Arena Stage.

"Samuel Hunter is a superb playwright and a natural fit for our resident playwright program," says **Arena Stage Artistic Director Molly Smith**. "When I saw his recent play *A Bright New Boise*, I was struck by his distinctive voice. Our playwright program will continue to evolve under the guidance of our new Director of Artistic Programming David Snider, and the launch of the Playwrights' Arena will be an important new program."

"One of the biggest challenges for me – and I think I speak for most playwrights when I say this – is the lack of stability in this profession," says **Hunter**. "A residency like this provides me with the stability to focus all of my energy on writing plays, and I intend to spend the year building my body of work. It's incredibly humbling and overwhelming to be on the same list as these other resident playwrights; it's an amazing group to be part of."

Hunter continues, "I'm also very excited about meeting other playwrights in the D.C. community." As part of his residency, he hopes to host nights dubbed the **Playwrights' Salon**, where select playwrights who are active in the D.C. theater scene will be invited to gather, network and learn from one another in an informal setting. Given the often solitary nature of playwriting, this will offer playwrights an opportunity to enrich themselves and each other professionally.

Hunter joins current resident playwrights Amy Freed, Katori Hall, Lisa Kron, Charles Randolph-Wright and Karen Zacarías. Launched in 2010 as part of the American Voices New Play Institute, the residency program is to help playwrights write and develop new work. The residencies provide an annual stipend, health benefits, local housing and a development budget to be used at the playwrights' discretion to cover collaborator fees, workshop costs and research expenses that support the creation of their plays. For more information regarding the playwright residencies, visit arenastage.org/new-play-institute/playwright-residencies/.

Samuel Hunter and all of the resident writers will receive support from **Jocelyn Clarke**, the literary advisor for the Institute. Clarke is an acclaimed dramaturg and writer, currently a theater advisor to the Arts Council of Ireland and an associate artist with The Civilians. Clarke was previously the Commissioning and Literary Manager of the Abbey Theatre.

—continued—

Arena Stage announces new resident playwright, new local playwrights program—Page 2

Also through the American Voices New Play Institute, **Director of Artistic Programming David Snider** will be launching the **Playwrights' Arena** in 2013 specifically for local playwrights. Six local playwrights will be selected to participate in a year of personal and professional growth at Arena Stage, giving them the opportunity to investigate and to develop their writing with support from the resident playwrights, Arena Stage staff and others. The aim of this program is to provide a collaborative and collegial working laboratory environment for the playwrights, without the pressure of a public sharing of their work. Selected playwrights and additional information will come at a later date.

"I'm very excited about creating the Playwrights' Arena to give local playwrights an opportunity to engage deeply with each other and with Arena Stage," says **Snider**. "The emphasis will be on process and will give local playwrights a chance to further develop their craft. It's a great way to expand the current offerings of the Institute to serve our local talent pool and help develop another level of great American playwrights."

Samuel D. Hunter's plays include *A Bright New Boise* (2011 OBIE award for playwriting, 2011 Drama Desk Nomination for Best Play; original production by Partial Comfort Productions in NYC, recent production at Woolly Mammoth Theater Company), *The Whale* (upcoming productions at Playwrights Horizons, Victory Gardens Theater and South Coast Repertory, original production at the Denver Center), *Jack's Precious Moment* (Page 73 Productions at 59E59), *Five Genocides* (Clubbed Thumb at the Ohio Theater), *A Permanent Image* (commissioned and produced by Boise Contemporary Theater). His newest play, *The Few*, was recently workshopped at South Coast Rep and JAW West. He has active commissions from MTC/Sloan, Seattle Rep, South Coast Rep and LCT3. His plays have been developed at the O'Neill Playwrights Conference, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, PlayPenn, Ojai Playwrights Conference, the Lark Playwrights Workshop, Juilliard, LAByrinth, Rattlestick, Seven Devils Playwrights Conference, 24Seven Lab and elsewhere.

Internationally, his work has been translated into Spanish and presented in Mexico City and Monterrey, and he has worked in the West Bank with Ashtar Theatre of Ramallah and Ayyam al-Masrah of Hebron. At Ashtar, he co-wrote *The Era of Whales* which was performed in Ramallah and Istanbul. Awards: 2011 Sky Cooper Prize, 2008-2009 PONY Fellowship from the Lark, two Lincoln Center LeCompte du Nuoy Awards, among others. He is an ensemble playwright at Victory Gardens Theater, a core member of the Playwrights Center, a member of Partial Comfort Productions and an alum of Ars Nova's Playgroup. A native of northern Idaho, Sam lives in New York City. He holds degrees in playwriting from NYU, The Iowa Playwrights Workshop and Juilliard.

The American Voices New Play Institute is made possible through generous support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

For more information, please contact press@arenastage.org.

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 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. arenastage.org

Follow Arena Stage on **Twitter** @arenastage or twitter.com/arenastage and on **Facebook** at facebook.com/arenastage.

###