

# ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## LYDIA R. DIAMOND JOINS AMERICAN VOICES NEW PLAY INSTITUTE AT ARENA STAGE AS RESIDENT PLAYWRIGHT IN OCTOBER 2013

(Washington, D.C.) Artistic Director Molly Smith announced today, playwright **Lydia R. Diamond**, whose impressive body of work includes *Stick Fly*, *Voyeurs de Venus*, *The Bluest Eye* and *The Gift Horse*, among others, will become a resident playwright as part of the American Voices New Play Institute at Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater. Diamond's yearlong residency will begin Tuesday, October 1, 2013.

"Lydia is a perfect addition to our tribe of resident writers," remarks **Smith**. "Her plays are provocative, inspiring and relevant. I wanted an opportunity to work with Lydia in a deep and profound way. I know she will take full advantage of this opportunity and I look forward to the new works she'll create."

Speaking about the meaning of this residency to her, **Diamond**, who was previously a full-time professor at Boston University, reflects, "I love teaching, and will return to it, but have learned that there is great value in being able to step away from 'The Academy' for a while and concentrate solely on the art. I am so grateful to have had a career that has given me access to incredible artistic resources and brilliant people, still my financial reality required that I have a full-time day job in addition to my full-time writing career. Arena Stage has, through this residency, given me the gift of time."

Through the residency Diamond will receive a salary, health benefits, local housing, a development budget to be used at her discretion to cover collaborator fees, workshop costs and research expenses to support the creation of her plays and a commitment from Arena Stage to produce her work and cultivate an ongoing, long-term relationship. Along with Arena Stage Director of Artistic Programming **David Snider**, she will also receive support from Institute Dramaturg **Jocelyn Clarke**. 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.

Diamond adds, "I intend to work on several projects including both plays and musicals, and am excited to be already underway with scheduling development workshops at the Mead Center with the resources to include several of my project collaborators and directors. During my time in residency, I also look forward to finding ways to make myself accessible and contribute to the Arena Stage community."

Diamond joins a prestigious group of writers who have benefited through the Institute, including the original resident writers **Amy Freed**, **Katori Hall**, **Lisa Kron**, **Charles Randolph-Wright** and **Karen Zacarias**, as well as **Samuel D. Hunter**, who joined for a yearlong residency in December 2012.

The 2012/13 Institute schedule was continuously full of new work development and engagement with nine formal workshops and all of the writers working on a total of 15 plays and counting. Hunter has created four

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## Lydia R. Diamond announced as Resident Playwright at Arena Stage—Page 2

plays during his writing work at Arena Stage since last December, and will have a workshop leading up to his public presentation as part of the 2013/14 Kogod Cradle Series in February 2014. Following a research trip in Africa, Hall workshopped five plays in five days featuring 19 actors portraying 49 parts (*Our Lady of Kibeho*, *Pussy Valley, 2014*, *Blood Quilt* and *Saturday Night/Sunday Morning*) at the Mead Center in April; and Freed workshopped her play about the Oneida community in San Francisco as well as completed her play *The Monster Builder*, which will premiere at the Artists Repertory Theatre later this season. Next month, Arena Stage will premiere Randolph-Wright's *Love in Afghanistan* and both Kron's *Fun Home* and Zacarías' *Just Like Us*—projects they spent time and resources working on during their residencies—will have their official premieres at the Public Theatre and Denver Theatre Center, respectively. **For additional information and personal updates from each of the writers, visit: [arenastage.org/artistic-development/new-play-institute/residencies](http://arenastage.org/artistic-development/new-play-institute/residencies).**

Diamond's residency kicks off another promising season of process and discovery in the Institute, with ongoing support surrounding new work development for our resident playwrights, commissioned writers and evolving Arena Stage projects. The six D.C.-area based writers of the [Playwrights' Arena](http://arenastage.org/artistic-development/new-play-institute/residencies) (Norman Allen, Randy Baker, Jacqueline E. Lawton, Heather McDonald, Danielle Mohlman and Shawn Northrip) continue their weekly meetings at the Mead Center as they support one another in the development of their individual projects. Highlights of their work and an exploration of their collaborative process will be featured in March 2014 as part of the 2013/14 [Kogod Cradle Series](http://arenastage.org/artistic-development/new-play-institute/residencies)—a lineup of workshops, readings and performances from six different visiting companies, artists and ensembles throughout the year that invites artists and audiences to actively explore the development process.

For weekly updates surrounding new play development and ongoing activities within the Institute, featuring photos, videos and written updates, visit the **New Play Blog**: <http://newplay.arenastage.org>.

**Lydia R. Diamond's** plays include *Smart People*, *Stick Fly*, *Voyeurs de Venus*, *The Bluest Eye*, *The Gift Horse*, *Harriet Jacobs* and *Stage Black*. Producing theaters include Arena Stage, Cort Theatre (Broadway), Chicago Dramatists, Company One, Congo Square, Goodman Theatre, Hartford Stage, Huntington Theatre Company, Jubilee Theatre, Kansas City Rep, Long Wharf Theatre, Lorraine Hansberry Theatre, McCarter Theatre, Mo'Olelo, MPAACT, New Vic, Playmakers Rep, Plowshares, Steppenwolf Theatre Company and True Colors. Commissions include Steppenwolf (4), McCarter, Huntington, Victory Gardens and The Roundabout. Lydia was a 2005/06 W.E.B. Du Bois Institute Non-Resident Fellow, a 2007 TCG/NEA Playwright in Residence at Steppenwolf, a 2006/07 Huntington Playwright Fellow and a 2012 Sundance Institute Playwright Lab Creative Advisor. She is Co-Vice President of the TCG Board of Directors, a Resident Playwright at Chicago Dramatists, a 2012 Sallie B. Goodman McCarter Fellow and a 2012/2013 Radcliffe Institute Fellow. Lydia has an Honorary Doctorate of Arts from Pine Manor College.

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

**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. [arenastage.org](http://arenastage.org)

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