

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ARENA STAGE CONTINUES 2013-14 KOGOD CRADLE SERIES
WITH FACTION OF FOOLS' ADAPTATION OF OUR TOWN,
RESIDENT PLAYWRIGHT SAMUEL D. HUNTER'S LEWISTON AND CLARKSTON
AND PLAYWRIGHTS' ARENA—A WEEKEND OF NEW WORK**

(Washington, D.C.) The 2013/14 Kogod Cradle Series continues in the new year with the Helen Hayes Award-winning Commedia dell'Arte troupe **Faction of Fools**, who are bringing their devilish sense of humor and trademark masked comedy style to Thornton Wilder's classic *Our Town*. The following month, award-winning Resident Playwright **Samuel D. Hunter** (*The Whale*) invites audiences to join him for open workshops for two of the new plays created during his residency, *Lewiston* and *Clarkston*. In March, the six members of the inaugural Playwrights' Arena (**Norman Allen, Randy Baker, Jacqueline E. Lawton, Heather McDonald, Danielle Mohlman** and **Shawn Northrip**) will introduce selections from the six plays they have each been working on independently as part of their yearlong collaborative program. ***Our Town* runs January 9-12, 2014, *Lewiston* and *Clarkston* run February 6-9, 2014 and *Playwrights' Arena—A Weekend of New Work* runs March 6-9, 2014 in the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle.**

Focused on the development of new and emerging work by artists from throughout Greater Washington and around the country, Arena Stage's Kogod Cradle Series invites artists and audiences to actively explore the development process. Artists benefit through a series of workshops, readings and performances in the Mead Center's intimate 200-seat Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle, a space specifically designed to support the development of new American theater. For more information on the 2013/14 Kogod Cradle Series visit arenastage.org/artistic-development/new-play-institute/the-cradle-series.

ABOUT OUR TOWN: Faction of Fools brings their devilish sense of humor to a new Commedia dell'Arte workshop staging of an American classic: Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*. Wilder's work was wildly inventive in its time, relying on pantomime, direct address and metatheatrical commentary, all of which are at home in a Commedia dell'Arte aesthetic. In anticipation of a full production of *Our Town* during their 2014/15 season, Faction of Fools presents four workshop performances featuring open rehearsals, Q&A sessions with the artists and staged scenes from Wilder's original text performed using Commedia masks. Aiming to identify an "American" Commedia within this American classic, Faction of Fools seeks to uncover the archetypes that we still recognize in *Our Town*.

"As we bring Commedia dell'Arte to Washington, D.C., Faction of Fools is always searching out what is 'cutting-edge' about this classical style, and what is 'familiar' in the foreign form," shares **Faction of Fools' Artistic Director Matthew R. Wilson**. "We are thrilled to partner with Arena now to tackle this American classic *Our Town* and explore how we as local artists find ourselves in an international tradition, and how the characters of Commedia relate to the people of our community."

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Arena Stage audiences may remember how Faction of Fools used masks and acrobatics to highlight the absurdity of *The Sandbox* during the 2011 Edward Albee Festival. Additionally, *The Washington Post* likened their take on *Hamlet* to a "Beckettian" black comedy with a "high concept spin". For more information on Faction of Fool's visit factionoffools.org.

ABOUT LEWISTON AND CLARKSTON: Resident Playwright Samuel D. Hunter will workshop two of the new plays he has written during his yearlong residency as part of the American Voices New Play Institute, *Lewiston* and *Clarkston*. Each evening, audiences will be invited to observe an open rehearsal led by Hunter and New Play Institute Dramaturg Jocelyn Clarke and featuring a company of actors, beginning with a selection of scenes from *Lewiston* and *Clarkston*, set in Lewiston, Idaho and Clarkston, Washington, and followed by brief discussion and further workshopping of the pieces. Through these open rehearsals, audiences will gain a greater understanding of how new work is developed by observing first-hand the collaborative process between the playwright, dramaturg and actors.

"What's most exciting about this for me is the opportunity to work on two plays at once," says **Hunter**. "I've never written two plays as companion pieces before, and the opportunity to workshop both these plays in tandem is at once exhilarating and nerve-wracking."

ABOUT PLAYWRIGHTS' ARENA—A WEEKEND OF NEW WORK: Norman Allen, Randy Baker, Jacqueline E. Lawton, Heather McDonald, Danielle Mohlman and Shawn Northrip—the six members of the inaugural Playwrights' Arena—will share excerpts from each of their plays and discuss their writing process as a conclusion to the yearlong program. Through a series of open rehearsals, the playwrights will share selections from their six plays developed over the past year. Each evening will feature three of the playwrights and their work as they explore a 20-minute excerpt from their piece, utilizing a cast of actors and dramaturg, followed by a group discussion with all six playwrights. Thursday and Friday evening will feature Allen, Baker and Lawton, and Saturday and Sunday will feature McDonald, Mohlman and Northrip.

Plays include Allen's *The House Halfway*, Baker's *The Burning Road*, Lawton's *Noms de Guerre*, McDonald's *Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*, Mohlman's *Nexus* and Northrip's *The Aristocrats*.

"These six playwrights have spent the past year working closely to develop their process and practice together, diving deep and taking huge risks together," comments **Director of Artistic Programming David Snider**. "I'm so excited to share their work as part of the Kogod Cradle Series."

For more information on the writers and Playwrights' Arena visit arenastage.org/artistic-development/new-play-institute/playwrights-arena/.

TICKETS: Tickets for upcoming Kogod Cradle Series events are \$10, plus applicable fees. **Tickets may be purchased online at arenastage.org, by phone at 202-488-3300 or at the Sales Office at 1101 Sixth St., SW, D.C.**

PERFORMANCE DATES:

Our Town: Thursday, Friday, Saturday at 8:00 p.m. & Sunday at 7:30 p.m.

Lewiston and Clarkston: Thursday, Friday, Saturday at 8:00 p.m. & Sunday at 7:30 p.m.

Playwrights' Arena—A Weekend of New Work: Thursday, Friday, Saturday at 8:00 p.m. & Sunday at 7:30 p.m.

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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. 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 seventh decade, Arena Stage serves a diverse annual audience of more than 300,000. arenastage.org

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