

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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July 22, 2014

JOHN STRAND JOINS ARENA STAGE AT THE MEAD CENTER FOR AMERICAN THEATER AS AMERICAN VOICES NEW PLAY INSTITUTE RESIDENT PLAYWRIGHT THROUGH JUNE 2015

(Washington, D.C.) Artistic Director Molly Smith announces D.C.-area based playwright **John Strand** will join Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater for a yearlong playwright residency as part of the American Voices New Play Institute, effective this month through June 2015. Through the residency Strand will receive a salary; health benefits; a budget to be used at his discretion to cover collaborator fees, workshop costs and research expenses to support his new play development process; and a commitment from Arena Stage to produce a new work in a future season and to continue cultivating an ongoing, long-term relationship.

“Arena has had the great pleasure of working with John over the years and I’m so happy that he has joined the ranks of resident playwright,” comments Smith. “I know he’ll do the program proud. He is a talented writer with a sophisticated sense of Washington, D.C. and its multiple layers of politics and humanity.”

In response to being selected for this residency, Strand shares, “It is an honor and a joy to be named a resident playwright with Arena Stage. Arena is one of the truly great American theaters, with a tradition of risk-taking and artistic excellence that goes back six decades. To work closely with Molly Smith and the great team of talented artists at Arena is a blessing, and I plan to make the most of it.”

Strand has had three of his previous works produced by Arena Stage, including *Lovers and Executioners*, for which he received the Charles MacArthur Award for Outstanding New Play, and also makes his return to the company this season surrounding the spring 2015 world premiere of *The Originalist*, about Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, starring Edward Gero.

“In many ways Arena is where I started my professional career as a playwright, so this is like coming home again,” Strand adds. “I’m thrilled to be back, and eager to begin a new dialogue with Arena’s audiences—among the smartest and best-informed, anywhere.”

Along with residency guidance from Arena Stage Director of Artistic Programming **Robert Barry Fleming**, Strand 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.

Strand joins an acclaimed 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** and most recently **Lydia R. Diamond**, who completed her residency in June 2014.

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For biographies for all of the resident writers, visit: arenastage.org/artistic-development/new-play-institute/residencies.

Strand's previous work at Arena Stage includes *The Miser*, an adaptation of the Molière play set in Reagan-era America; *Lovers and Executioners*, winner of the Charles MacArthur Award for Outstanding New Play; and *Tom Walker*, also commissioned by Arena Stage. His recent work includes the book and lyrics for *Hat! A Vaudeville*, a new musical with a score by composer Dennis McCarthy (South Coast Repertory); *Lincolnesque*, a dark comedy about politics and madness in D.C. (The Old Globe, dir. by Joe Calarco); and *Lorenzaccio*, his adaptation of Alfred de Musset's 1834 French classic (The Shakespeare Theatre, dir. by Michael Kahn). Strand is the author of the book for the musical *The Highest Yellow*, with a score by Michael John LaChiusa, (Signature Theatre, dir. by Eric Schaeffer). Additional plays are *The Diaries* (commissioned by Signature Theatre, MacArthur nomination); *Otabenga*, (Signature Theatre, dir. by Michael Kahn, MacArthur nomination); *Three Nights in Tehran*, a comedy about the Iran-Contra affair (Signature Theatre); and *The Cockburn Rituals* (Woolly Mammoth Theatre). Strand spent 10 years in Paris, where he worked as a journalist and drama critic, writing in English and French, and directed New York University's Experimental Theater Wing in Paris. His novel *Commieland* was published by Kiwai Media, Paris (2013).

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater, under the leadership of Artistic Director Molly Smith and Executive Producer Edgar Dobie, is a national center dedicated to American voices and artists. Arena Stage produces plays of all that is passionate, 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. Arena Stage impacts the lives thousands of students annually through its work in community engagement. Now in its seventh decade, Arena Stage serves a diverse annual audience of more than 300,000. arenastage.org.

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