

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

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ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES THREE WINNERS FROM MORE THAN 150 SUBMISSIONS FOR MONOLOGUE CONTEST HELD IN CONJUNCTION WITH WORLD-PREMIERE *OUR WAR*

(Washington, D.C.) In June, Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater announced a national call for three-minute monologues held in conjunction with the world premiere of *Our War*, a dynamic new theatrical event and collection of short stories by **25 esteemed playwrights** that explores—through diverse perspectives—the historical memory and present-day reverberations of the U.S. Civil War. The open monologue contest inspired by *Our War* brought in more than 150 entries from around the world, and the theater is pleased to announce the three winning monologues: *Tree* by Dave Lankford of New York, NY; *Mary/Marcus* by Sarah Pitard of London, UK; and *The Peacock's War* by Lisa Sillaway of Wichita, KS.

The monologues will be read at a public reading **November 6, 2014 following the 8:00 p.m. performance**. The writers will also receive a session with American Voices New Play Institute Dramaturg Jocelyn Clarke, a listing in the *Our War* program and an award certificate. The finished monologues along with video clips of the performed monologues will be posted on Arena Stage's website and shared via social media. **Directed by Anita Maynard-Losh, *Our War* runs October 21 – November 9, 2014 in the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle.**

"The idea for commissioning 25 playwrights to compose original monologues inspired by the Civil War was a result of the beauty of CenterStage's *My America* (led by Kwame Kwei-Armah)," shares Arena Stage Artistic Director **Molly Smith**. "One goal of The National Civil War Project is to similarly inspire artists everywhere to use the form to express and communicate. We wanted to start the ball rolling through this competition—open to amateurs and professionals—and we are likewise inspired by these winners."

Submissions were reviewed as anonymous work by Arena Stage staff and board members and were judged based on originality, character, storytelling, structure and theatricality. Submissions were asked to be original, three-minute pieces (approximately 600 words in length), could be fictitious or based on family history and were to be told from the point of view of a character associated with the American Civil War. Published and amateur writers, as well as students ages 18 and up, were encouraged to participate. No previous theater experience was required.

Dave Lankford is the Executive Director of The Shelter, an ensemble off-Broadway theater company dedicated to the development of emerging artists and new works, where he often contributes as a writer, actor and director. Dave's plays have been performed throughout New York, including Nuyorican Poets Cafe, Workshop Theatre Company Main Stage, Under St. Marks, Gene Frankel Theatre, Gloria Maddox Theater and the historic Cherry Lane Theatre. Dave is an alumnus of T. Schreiber Studio and The American University. He currently serves as VP of Product for Dr. Oz Digital, part of the Emmy Award-winning program *The Dr. Oz Show*.
davelankford.com

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Our War monologue competition winners announced — Page 2

Sarah Pitard is an actress and writer, originally from Champaign, IL, who holds an MA in Writing for Stage and Broadcast Media from The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in London, where she currently resides. Her radio play *Plus One* was the recent winner of The UK Actors' Guild's Write Bites competition and will be recorded in association with Wireless Theatre Company this fall. Her plays *The Inappropriateness of Love* and *Freedom, Books, Flowers, and the Moon* have been performed in London, and her short film *Not Love* goes into production in the New Year. sarahpitard.com

Lisa Sillaway is a new playwright from Kansas. She has been "a writer" since the second grade when she won her first essay contest. Lisa earned a Masters in Education and has worked as a journalist, PR exec, advertising creative, entertainment feature writer and college English instructor. It has only been within the past year that she has returned to her other love, theater, as a playwright. She has written four plays thus far and is preparing to workshop her script based on the life and music of the late Chris LeDoux in October.

ABOUT OUR WAR: An esteemed collection of American playwrights, including winners of the Pulitzer Prize, Tony Award and Olivier Award, creates a dynamic new theatrical event reflecting on the repercussions of the U.S. Civil War. Through a rich tapestry of short monologues, a core ensemble of gifted actors, accompanied by notable Washingtonians such as **Ruth Bader Ginsburg**, **Eleanor Holmes Norton** and **Chris Matthews**, explore—through diverse perspectives—the historical memory and present-day reverberations of the U.S. Civil War. *Our War*, commissioned by Arena Stage for The National Civil War Project, uses the power of live theater to bring new understanding to the shades of Blue and Gray that define one of the most significant periods of American history.

The playwrights represented in *Our War* include **Maria Agui Carter**, **Lydia Diamond**, **Amy Freed**, **Diane Glancy**, **Joy Harjo**, **Samuel D. Hunter**, **Naomi Iizuka**, **Aditi Kapil**, **Dan LeFranc**, **David Lindsay-Abaire**, **Ken Ludwig**, **Taylor Mac**, **Ken Narasaki**, **Lynn Nottage**, **Robert O'Hara**, **Heather Raffo**, **Charles Randolph-Wright**, **Tanya Saracho**, **Betty Shamieh**, **John Strand**, **Tazewell Thompson**, **William S. Yellow Robe, Jr.**, **Karen Zacarias** as well as two students participating through Arena Stage's National Civil War Project partnership with George Washington University: **Zinhle Essamuah** and **Nicholas Ong**.

For up-to-date information about *Our War* as well as the guest artists' performance dates and playwright biographies visit arenastage.org/shows-tickets/the-season/productions/our-war.

Our War is part of The National Civil War Project, a collaboration between four universities and five performing arts organizations to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the American Civil War. The National Civil War Project includes the commissioning of 12 original works for the stage as well as the creation of new arts-integrated academic programs. Locally, Arena Stage is in partnership with Liz Lerman and The George Washington University. The overarching goal of the project is to find ways to continually interweave performance and scholarship, crossing traditional boundaries by bringing together the perspectives and resources of the artistic and academic communities in a wide-ranging, humanities-based exploration of civil conflict. For more information visit civilwarproject.org.

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 of 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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