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23 Top Journalists Chosen for Fellowships to USC Annenberg's NEA Arts Institute

March 3, 2009 – Twenty-three arts journalists have been chosen from 16 states to participate as fellows in the fifth **National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Arts Journalism Institute in Theater and Musical Theater** at USC Annenberg. Through the generous support of the NEA, the Institute will be conducted by USC Annenberg's School of Journalism in Los Angeles from April 14 –24, 2009.

Participants in USC Annenberg's 2009 NEA Arts Journalism Institute in Theater and Musical Theater include theater critics, reporters and editors, as well as general arts & entertainment journalists. Most of them have shifted from print to online or are in the process of finding the balance between. Some also work in radio. The 23 NEA Fellows are:

- **Teresa Annas**, arts writer, *The Virginian-Pilot*, Norfolk, Va.
- **Marilyn Bauer**, entertainment editor, *Scripps Treasure Coast Newspapers*, Stuart, Fla.
- **Marcos Cabrera**, features reporter, *Monterey County Herald*, Calif.
- **Colin Dabkowski**, arts writer, *The Buffalo News*, N.Y.
- **Keli Dailey**, content producer, *San Diego Union-Tribune & SignOnSanDiego.com*, Calif.
- **Kathi Scrizzi Driscoll**, feature writer/editor, *Cape Cod Times*, Hyannis, Mass.
- **Alicia Grega**, current events editor, *electric city/diamond city & the 570.com* published by *The Times-Tribune*, Scranton, Pa.
- **Rebecca Haithcoat**, affiliated freelancer, *Leo Weekly*, Louisville, Ky.
- **Bob Hoover**, book editor and theater critic, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Pa.
- **Daphne Howland**, freelancer and contributing editor, *Port City Life*, Portland, Maine.
- **MiChelle Jones**, freelance visual arts writer, *The Tennessean*, Nashville, Tenn.
- **Chris Klimek**, affiliated freelancer, *The Washington Post* and *DCist.com*, D.C.
- **John Kuebler**, affiliated freelancer, *Cairn Magazine*, Denver, Colo.
- **David Lefkowitz**, publisher and editor-in-chief, *TotalTheater.com*, Hewlett, N.Y.
- **Evelyn McDonnell**, freelance writer/editor, Miami Beach, Fla.
- **Manny Mendoza**, affiliated freelancer, *KERA Art&Seek*, Dallas, Texas.
- **Michael Merschel**, assistant arts editor, *Dallas Morning News*, Texas.
- **Roxana Orellana**, theater writer, *Salt Lake Tribune*, Utah.
- **Laura Pieper**, affiliated freelancer, *The Tribune*, Ames, Iowa.
- **Steve Rowland**, independent documentary radio producer, Seattle, Wash.
- **Jim Rutter**, freelance arts critic, *The Broad Street Review*, Philadelphia, Pa.
- **Alan Scherstuhl**, freelance columnist, *The Pitch*, Kansas City, Mo.
- **Glen Weldon**, affiliated freelancer, *Washington City Paper*, D.C.

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“This exceptional group of journalists possesses the qualities we at Annenberg are dedicated to developing: innovation, engagement and leadership,” said **Ernest J. Wilson III**, dean of the USC Annenberg School for Communication. “Despite challenging times, these arts journalists will be ready for the new transformations in journalism. We are pleased to offer them the opportunity to build their skills and create new ideas that will be to the ultimate benefit for all of us in the future.”

The groundbreaking program is part of a \$1 million NEA initiative to offer intensive training for theater critics and their editors, especially those who work outside the country's major media markets.

“The NEA is pleased to welcome its fifth class of theater journalism fellows,” NEA acting chairman **Patrice Walker Powell** said. “As arts coverage continues to shrink on paper and expand online, USC Annenberg School for Communication has retooled its already exemplary program to help media professionals keep pace with current changes in their field. No matter what their medium, these arts journalists will return home ready to craft quality arts critical commentaries, reports and reviews for their communities.”

The 23 NEA Fellows will participate in a rigorous 10-day program that includes writing workshops and one-on-one master classes. Among the guest faculty are **Mark Briggs**, chief executive of *Serra Media* and author of *Journalism 2.0: Survive and Thrive in the Digital Age*; former *Village Voice* music critic, **Robert Christgau**, who now writes monthly for msn.com and *The Barnes & Noble Review*; **Mary Lou Fulton**, vice president of audience development, *The Bakersfield Californian*; **Steven Leigh Morris**, playwright and critic-at-large for *L.A. Weekly*; **Dominic Papatola**, theater critic, *St. Paul Pioneer Press*; and **Jack Viertel**, artistic director, *New York City Center Encores!*, and creative director, *Jujamcyn Theaters*. Entrepreneurship journalism training is emphasized, as well as multimedia and digital skill-building with **Douglas McLennan**, editor and founder of ArtsJournal.com. Nine performances will be attended, including Theresa Rebeck’s “**Mauritius**” directed by Jessica Kubzansky at the Pasadena Playhouse and “**Louis & Keely: Live at the Sahara**” directed by Taylor Hackford at the Geffen Playhouse.

Sasha Anawalt, director of USC Annenberg School for Communication’s M.A. in Specialized Journalism (The Arts) program, directs the NEA Institute in Theater and Musical Theater.

“Traditional journalism is floundering, so it can’t be business as usual,” Anawalt said. “The Institute is focusing on giving journalists real tools and skills – the tools to help them develop and implement revenue and advertising strategies, for example. Our responsibility is to help arts journalists stabilize and think wisely about how theater can continue to be covered.”

The Theater and Musical Theater Institute at USC Annenberg is one of three NEA Arts Journalism Institutes, along with the Institute for Music and Opera at Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in New York and the Institute for Dance at the American Dance Festival in Durham, North Carolina.

Nearly 50 applications were received from theater writers, editors and critics from 19 states and from a variety of media. Each newspaper, radio and television station represented in the 2009 fellowship is new to the NEA Arts Journalism Institute in Theater and Musical Theater.

For more information about the NEA Arts Journalism Institute in Theater and Musical Theater, visit <http://annenberg.usc.edu/nea>.

About the National Endowment for the Arts

The National Endowment for the Arts is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts – both new and established – bringing the arts to all Americans, and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Arts Endowment is the largest national funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases. For more information, please visit www.arts.gov.

About the USC Annenberg School for Communication

Located in Los Angeles at the University of Southern California, the USC Annenberg School for Communication is among the nation’s leading institutions devoted to the study of arts journalism and criticism. It offers an innovative, nine-month graduate degree program focusing on arts journalism in partnership with USC’s five arts schools. Its midcareer education programs include the USC Annenberg/Getty Arts Journalism Program, the Knight Digital Media Center, the California Endowment Health Journalism Fellowships, and the Institute for Justice and Journalism. In addition to its programs for working journalists, USC Annenberg enrolls more than 1,900 students earning undergraduate and graduate students pursuing degrees in journalism, communication, public diplomacy, and public relations. For more information, visit <http://annenberg.usc.edu>.

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