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25 THEATER JOURNALISTS CHOSEN FOR THE SECOND ANNUAL NEA ARTS JOURNALISM INSTITUTE IN THEATER AND MUSICAL THEATER AT USC ANNENBERG SCHOOL FOR COMMUNICATION

December 7, 2005 -- USC Annenberg School for Communication announces that 25 arts journalists have been chosen from 20 states to participate as fellows in the second National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Journalism Institute in Theater and Musical Theater. Through the generous support of the NEA, the Institute will be overseen by USC Annenberg’s School of Journalism in Los Angeles from January 9 to January 20, 2006.

The groundbreaking program is part of a $1 million NEA initiative to offer intensive training for theater critics and their editors who work outside the country's top three major theater centers.

“The vitality of the arts depends more than most people think on lively and informed criticism, especially local reviews and coverage from their own communities. Outside our major cities, journalists who cover the arts often are overextended with multiple beats and assignments that allow few opportunities to concentrate on various artistic disciplines,” said NEA Chairman Dana Gioia. “USC Annenberg has created an exemplary program of professional development for arts journalists.”

Sasha Anawalt, author, critic and founding director of the USC Annenberg/Getty Arts Journalism Program, will again direct the NEA Institute in Theater and Musical Theater. “An editor recently wrote to tell us his paper’s theater coverage had increased exponentially as a ‘direct result’ of his critic attending the NEA Institute,” she said. “He reported that -- incredibly -- their theater community saw a 50 percent increase in attendance this past summer, and that, though uncertain if his paper had much to do with it, the number of letters and calls he had received from readers praising their newly invigorated attention to theater had also noticeably increased. His anecdote is just one of many that has shown us the NEA Institute makes a positive impact.”

Participants in USC Annenberg’s 2006 NEA Arts Journalism Institute in Theater and Musical Theater include theater critics and editors, features writers and arts & entertainment editors from newspapers, radio and/or television stations. The 25 NEA Fellows are:

- Kathleen Allen, arts reporter and editor, Arizona Daily Star, Tucson
• Jennifer Brummett, arts & entertainment editor and columnist, *The Advocate-Messenger*, Danville, KY

• Kristina Church, producer/host, KSKA Public Radio; affiliated freelance theater critic, *Anchorage Daily News*, AK

• Jackie Demaline, theater & art critic, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, OH

• Miriam Durkin, arts editor, *The Charlotte Observer*, NC

• Evans Donnell, affiliated freelance theater critic, *The Tennessean*; editor/writer, StageCritic.com, Nashville

• Sharon Eberson, entertainment editor, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, PA

• Jay Handelman, theater & television critic, *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, FL

• Sarah Henning, arts & entertainment reporter, *Duluth News Tribune*, MN

• Richard O Jones, arts & entertainment writer, *Journal News*, Hamilton, OH

• Bob Keefer, arts & features writer, *The Register-Guard*, Eugene, OR

• Roger McBain, theater critic and cultural affairs reporter, *Evansville Courier & Press*, IN

• Donald Munro, critic-at-large, *The Fresno Bee*, CA

• Dori O’Neal, arts & entertainment reporter, *Tri-City Herald*, Kennewick, WA

• Rick Rogers, critic-at-large, *The Oklahoman*, Oklahoma City

• Joseph T. Rozmiarek, affiliated freelance theater critic, *The Honolulu Advertiser*, HI

• Karen Shade, theater & features writer, *Tulsa World*, OK

• Howard Shapiro, theater reviewer/staff writer, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, PA

• Nancy Stetson, theater critic and entertainment reporter, *Naples Daily News*, FL

• Lori Solinger, affiliated freelance arts & entertainment reporter/producer for Cox Communications; writer/editor, WJAR-TV; Providence, RI

• David Templeton, affiliated freelance theater critic, *North Bay Bohemian*, Santa Rosa, CA
These 25 fellows will be immersed in a rigorous 10-day program that aims to improve the quality of theater coverage through writing workshops, history lectures, acting and directing classes, observation of rehearsals, encounters with theater professionals, and performances of plays and musicals by Thomas Gibbons, Henrik Ibsen, Heiner Muller, Robert Schenkkan, John Steppling, Michael Stewart & Mark Bramble, and Jeff Whitty.

Among the guest faculty is master teacher Robert Brustein, founding director and creative consultant of American Repertory Theater and, since 1959, theater critic for The New Republic. Other nationally respected instructors include Misha Berson, chief theater critic for the Seattle Times; Jason Robert Brown, Broadway musical theater composer; Ben Cameron, executive director of Theatre Communications Group; Dr. Sharon Carnicke, author and expert in Stanislavsky; Gil Cates, producing director, the Geffen Playhouse; Debbie Devine, producer and co-founder, 24th Street Theatre; Ben Donenberg, founder and producing artistic director of the Shakespeare Festival/LA; Sylvie Drake, former theater critic of the Los Angeles Times; Thomas Leabhart, theater professor at Pomona College; Judith Lewis, features editor of the L.A. Weekly; Steven Leigh Morris, theater editor of the L.A. Weekly; Dominic Papatola, theater critic, St. Paul Pioneer Press; Michael Phillips, theater critic, Chicago Tribune; Dr. Leonard Pronko, author and theater professor of non-Western traditions; and Jack Viertel, creative director of Broadway’s Jujamcyn Theaters and former dramaturge at the Mark Taper Forum.

Seminars, classes, lectures and performances will be held mainly downtown at such prestigious theaters and art institutions as The Colburn School, Mark Taper Forum; REDCAT (Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater) and USC Annenberg at California Plaza.

The Theater and Musical Theater Institute at USC Annenberg is one of three NEA Journalism Institutes, along with the Institute for Music and Opera at Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in New York City, 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 38 states and from a variety of media. Each newspaper, radio and television station represented in the 2006 fellowship is new to the NEA Institute in Theater and Musical Theater.

"Journalists around the country have made it clear that they crave mid-career training courses to help them improve their knowledge and their craft," said Geoffrey Cowan, Dean of the USC Annenberg School for Communication. "By providing an intensive course in theater and theater criticism, the NEA Arts Journalism Institute will perform an important service to arts in America by enriching the work of theater critics and deepening the appreciation of their readers."

For more information about the NEA Arts Journalism Institute in Theater and Musical Theater, visit [http://annenberg.usc.edu/nea](http://annenberg.usc.edu/nea). The USC Annenberg School for Communication is one of the
nation’s leading institutions devoted to the study of journalism and communication, and their impact on politics, culture and society. With an enrollment of more than 1,500 graduate and undergraduate students, USC Annenberg prepares students for academic and professional success in these fields.

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