25 Chosen for NEA Arts Journalism Institute at USC Annenberg School for Communication

December 18, 2006 – Twenty-five arts journalists have been chosen from 21 states to participate as fellows in the third National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Journalism Institute in Theater and Musical Theater at the USC Annenberg School for Communication. Through the generous support of the NEA, the Institute will be conducted by USC Annenberg’s School of Journalism in Los Angeles from January 30 – February 9, 2007.

Participants in USC Annenberg’s 2007 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:

- David Burke, entertainment editor, Quad-City Times, Davenport, Iowa
- Sherry Deatrick, affiliated freelancer, Louisville Eccentric Observer, Ky.
- Darcie Flansburg, staff writer, Redlands Daily Facts, Calif.
- Barry Gaines, theater critic, Albuquerque Journal, N.M.
- Marty Hughley, theater and dance critic, The Oregonian, Ore.
- Mia Leonin, freelance writer, Miami Herald, Fla.
- Sherry Lucas, staff writer and columnist, The Clarion-Ledger, Jackson, Miss.
- Deborah Martin, assistant arts and entertainment editor, San Antonio Express-News, Texas
- Michael Maza, assistant arts editor, Dallas Morning News, Texas
- E. Kyle Minor, freelance writer, New Haven Register, Conn.
- Richard Moeschl, arts and entertainment editor, Mail Tribune, Medford, Ore.
- Michael Morain, arts reporter, Des Moines Register, Iowa
- Dana Oland, art and culture reporter, Idaho Statesman, Boise, Idaho
- Kati Schardl, arts writer, Tallahassee Democrat, Fla.
- Jennifer Smith, freelance writer, Isthmus, Madison, Wis.
- Whitney Smith, performing arts writer, The Indianapolis Star, Ind.
- Renée Valois, freelance theater critic, St. Paul Pioneer Press, Minn.
- Byron Woods, theater and dance critic, The Independent Weekly, Durham, N.C.

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.
“All the American arts depend on media coverage and intelligent criticism,” said NEA Chairman Dana Gioia. “The NEA Arts Journalism Institutes provide professional development to improve both the quantity and quality of this country's arts journalism, which benefits both the artists and the public. We’re extremely pleased to continue working with the USC Annenberg School for Communications in providing an outstanding professional development opportunity for these Fellows.”

"First-rate arts criticism helps strengthen cultural institutions and the communities they serve," said Geoffrey Cowan, dean of the USC Annenberg School for Communication and an award-winning playwright. "By providing an intensive program in arts reporting and theater criticism, the NEA Arts Journalism Institute at USC Annenberg continues to serve the arts in America by enriching the work of theater critics to deepen the knowledge and appreciation of their readers."

"Arts are the soul of America, and writing well about theater is a vital element of what good journalism does," said Michael Parks, Director of the USC Annenberg School of Journalism. "The opportunity to work at USC Annenberg with arts journalists from across the country and to improve their practices is important and exciting -- and has everything to do with who we are at the Journalism School."

Sasha Anawalt, author, critic and founding director of the USC Annenberg/Getty Arts Journalism Program, will again direct the USC Annenberg NEA Institute in Theater and Musical Theater.

“This year we will be working with the NEA Fellows closely on skill-building for the Internet, and helping their papers and media outlets set the highest standards for arts cover on the Web,” said Anawalt. “Most of our writing faculty are returning for a third year, and we have begun to see our mark on the nation’s journalists. For one thing, we hear from the theater communities and readers that their lives have improved because they feel their newspaper’s arts reporting is more attentive, more passionate and better informed since their critic came to the NEA Institute.”

The 25 fellows will participate in a rigorous 10-day program that includes writing workshops, history lectures, acting and directing classes, observation of rehearsals, encounters with theater professionals, and performances of plays and musicals, including those by David Mamet, August Strindberg, Jason Robert Brown, Mickey Birnbaum, John Patrick Shanley, Jessica Hagedorn and Nilo Cruz.

Among the guest faculty is master teacher John Lahr, senior drama critic, The New Yorker. Other instructors include Gordon Davidson, founder and former artistic director, Mark Taper Forum; Jason Robert Brown, Broadway musical theater composer; Ben Cameron, program director for the arts, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation; Gil Cates, producing director, Geffen Playhouse; Ben Donenberg, founder and producing artistic director, Shakespeare Festival/LA; Thomas Leabhart, theater professor, Pomona College; Steven Leigh Morris, theater editor, L.A. Weekly; Dominic Papatola, theater critic, St. Paul Pioneer Press; Misha Berson, chief theater critic, Seattle Times; Charles McNulty, chief theater critic, Los Angeles Times and Michael Ritchie, artistic director of Center Theatre Group.

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

About the USC Annenberg School for Communication
Located in Los Angeles at the University of Southern California, the USC Annenberg School for Communication (www.annenberg.usc.edu) is among the nation's leading institutions devoted to the study of arts journalism and criticism. Its midcareer education programs include the USC Annenberg/Getty Arts Journalism Program, the Western Knight Center for Specialized Journalism, 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, and public relations.

About the NEA
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 nation’s largest annual 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.