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USC Annenberg's NEA Arts Journalism Institute for Theater launches Engine28.com "pop-up" newsroom

LOS ANGELES, June 15, 2011 A "pop-up" newsroom called Engine28, designed to give extensive and thorough coverage of theater in Los Angeles, goes live online today at www.engine28.com. A reporting staff from 28 media outlets across America will produce reviews, analysis, forums, podcasts and videos. Material will include coverage of several coinciding theater festivals and conferences: the [RADAR L.A. Festival](#), the [2011 Theatre Communications Group \(TCG\) National Conference](#) and the [Hollywood Fringe Festival](#).

The period of "pop-up" operation will run from June 15 to June 20 as part of [USC Annenberg's](#) seventh [National Endowment for the Arts \(NEA\) Arts Journalism Institute in Theater and Musical Theater](#).

"Rather than simply talk about new models for arts journalism at this year's NEA Arts Journalism Institute, we decided to create some," said **Douglas McLennan**, digital editor and chief architect for Engine28.com. "*Engine28* is an exercise in 'what if' arts journalism. What if you could throw a large group of journalists at a subject and invent creative ways of covering it? *Engine28* will be a real-time laboratory for journalism about the arts."

Engine28 reporters and critics are the 21 NEA Arts Journalism Institute Fellows who will work closely alongside a select staff of top editors to cover the theater scene in Los Angeles. They are affiliated with *The New York Times*, NPR, *Chicago Tribune*, *New York Magazine*, *Los Angeles Times*, KCRW, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, *LA Weekly*, *St. Louis Beacon*, PRI and WNYC, among other publications and public radio stations (see complete list below).

"Think all-star team. That is *Engine28*. We figured that with two exciting theater festivals and two conferences happening in town, we could respond to them best by doing what journalists do, which is reporting," said **Sasha Anawalt**, director of the NEA Arts Journalism Institute. "Although *Engine28* will be public, we are still about arts journalism training. And to this end, we will still see many shows together and have joint sessions, but our main emphasis will be on individual attention given to the Fellows by our editorial staff, sitting shoulder to shoulder with them in the newsroom and working on stories together."

Engine28's editor-in-chief is **Jeff Weinstein**, former arts editor and columnist for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and *Village Voice*. The editorial staff includes **Susan Brenneman** of the *Los Angeles Times*,

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Rebecca Haitcoat of *LA Weekly*, **Edward Lifson**, formerly of NPR, **Steven Leigh Morris**, critic-at-large for the *LA Weekly*, **Laurie Ochoa**, co-founder of *Slake*, **Dominic Papatola**, lead theater critic for *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, **Michael Phillips**, film critic for the *Chicago Tribune*, **Howard Shapiro**, theater critic and editor for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, **Suzi Steffen** of Stage Directions and MyEugene.org, and independent PBS producer/director **Jennifer Maytorena Taylor**.

Engine28 reporters and critics include: **Christopher Arnott** with *The New Haven Advocate* and New Mass Media, Inc., **Martin Brady** with *Nashville Scene*, **Anthony Byrnes** with KCRW, **Linda Fowler** with nj.com and Advance Publications Inc., **Nancy Fowler** with *St. Louis Beacon*, **Ben Fulton** with *The Salt Lake Tribune*, **Rachel Lee Harris** with *The New York Times*, **Lou Harry** with *Indianapolis Business Journal*, **Gerry Christopher Johnson** with *Philadelphia Weekly* and *Philadelphia Tribune*, **Maura Judkis** with TBD.com, **Jenny Lawton** with PRI and WNYC, **Kerry Lengel** with *The Arizona Republic*, **Rebecca Milzoff** with *New York Magazine*, **Jesse North** with *Stage Rush*, **Kathryn Osenlund** with CurtainUp.com, **Julie Potter** with *San Francisco Bay Guardian* and *In Dance*, **Walter Ryce** with *Monterey County Weekly*, **Laura Spencer** with NPR and KCUR, **Grace Suh** with *The Pitch* and *The Flickcast*, **David Timberline** with *Style Weekly*, **Benjamin Waterhouse** with *Willamette Week*.

The period of "pop-up" operation (June 15-20) coincides with the [RADAR L.A. Festival](#), an international festival of contemporary theater produced by REDCAT (Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater) in collaboration with Center Theatre Group and The Public Theater's Under the Radar Festival (New York), the [2011 Theatre Communications Group \(TCG\) National Conference](#), hosted by the [LA STAGE Alliance](#), as well as the first days of the second annual [Hollywood Fringe Festival](#).

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

About the NEA Arts Journalism Institutes

The Theater and Musical Theater Institute at USC Annenberg is one of three NEA Arts Journalism Institutes, along with the [Institute in Classical Music and Opera](#) at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in New York and the [Institute for Dance Criticism](#) at the American Dance Festival in Durham, N.C. In 2009, an International Institute in the Visual Arts at American University in Washington, D.C., also was created. Funded by a multimillion-dollar NEA initiative, these institutes offer intensive training for arts reporters and their editors. The four Institutes also partnered in October 2009 to produce the first-ever [National Summit on Arts Journalism](#) held at USC Annenberg. The summit explored new ideas for arts coverage and journalism business models in front of a live and virtual audience of nearly 20,000 people. For more information, visit <http://annenberg.usc.edu/nea>.

About the National Endowment for the Arts

The National Endowment for the Arts was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government. To date, the NEA has awarded more than \$4 billion to support artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector. To join the discussion on how art works, visit the NEA at arts.gov.

About the USC Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism

Located in Los Angeles at the [University of Southern California](#), the [Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism](#) (annenberg.usc.edu) is a national leader in education and scholarship in the fields of communication, journalism, public diplomacy and public relations. With an enrollment of more than 2,200 students, USC Annenberg offers doctoral, master's and bachelor's degree programs, as well as continuing development programs for working professionals, across a broad scope of academic inquiry. The school's comprehensive curriculum emphasizes the core skills of leadership, innovation, service and entrepreneurship and draws upon the resources of a networked university located in the media capital of the world.

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