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The Playwrights' Center announces 2013-14 McKnight Theater Artists

(Minneapolis, MN—May 31, 2013)—The Playwrights' Center is pleased to announce the 2013-14 recipients of its McKnight Theater Artist fellowships: actor **Sun Mee Chomet**, music director **Denise Prosek** and actor **Stephen Yoakam**.

The McKnight Theater Artist Fellowships at the Playwrights' Center recognize Minnesota theater artists other than playwrights whose work demonstrates exceptional artistic merit and potential. The grant provides \$25,000 as well as additional funds for career or artistic development. This year the available project development funds for each artist have increased from \$1,000 to \$7,000, opening up new possibilities for artistic collaborations and the birth of new theatrical work.

"As always, I'm thrilled that the McKnight Foundation and the Playwrights' Center can collaborate to celebrate the excellence of three such incredible theater artists here in Minnesota," says Producing Artistic Director Jeremy B. Cohen. "Both Steve and Sun Mee have been developing work by playwrights here at the Center for years, and we're excited to have them even more deeply involved next season. And to have Denise (who I had the privilege of collaborating with on *Beautiful Thing* last season at Theater Latté Da) as the first music director to win this fellowship is sensational!"

Sun Mee Chomet will perform her award-winning one-woman show *How to Be a Korean Woman* this September as part of the Guthrie's 2013-14 season, after performing the show in South Korea this summer. In addition, Sun Mee was chosen as one of 10 North Americans to participate in the 2013 Korean Education and Exposure Program, a peace delegation trip to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. This fall, she will play Oberon/Hippolyta in Ten Thousand Things' production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Sun Mee has worked with the Guthrie Theater (*The Burial at Thebes*, *Macbeth*, *The Intelligent Homosexual...*); Mu Performing Arts (*WTF*, *Cowboy vs. Samurai*, *Asiamnesia* [playwright and actor]); History Theatre (*100 Men's Wife*); Penumbra Theatre (*for colored girls...*); Mixed Blood Theatre (*Elemeno Pea*) and many other theaters locally and nationally.

Denise Prosek has worked extensively as a music director, pianist and arranger in the Twin Cities for the past 20 years. As resident music director of Theater Latté Da, she has music directed 40 mainstage productions and numerous cabarets, including *Spelling Bee*, *Evita*, *The Full Monty* and the Ivey award-winning *Spring Awakening*. Other credits include Children's Theatre Company (*How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, *Mr. McGee and the Biting Flea*), Ordway (*Broadway Songbook*), Guthrie Theater (*She Stoops to Conquer* – workshop), Park Square Theatre (*Ragtime*, *Johnny Baseball*) and Mu Performing Arts (*Into the Woods*, *Little Shop of Horrors*). She was named Outstanding Musical Director by the *Star Tribune* in 2006 and 2008, Best Music Director by *Lavender* in 2010, and was honored as *Lavender's* 2012 Theater Artist of the Year.

Stephen Yoakam has appeared in more than 75 Guthrie Theater productions, including the recent critically-lauded one-person show *An Iliad*, as well as *The Burial at Thebes*, *Oedipus*, *Three Sisters*, *Hedda Gabler* and *Black No More*. Other notable Twin Cities productions include *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *The Seafarer* and *A Delicate Balance* (Jungle Theater); *Blackbird* and *Bug* (Pillsbury House Theatre); and *Peer Gynt* (Minnesota Orchestra). He is a founding member of Mixed Blood Theatre, and was named Best Actor of 2011 by *City Pages*.

The Playwrights' Center has partnered with the McKnight Artist Fellowship program since its inception in 1982 to administer more than 150 fellowships, arranging independent selection panels and providing artistic support to fellows.

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Contact Jessica Franken at 612-332-7481 x118 or jessicaf@pwcenter.org with questions or to request photos of the fellows. Photos are also available at pwcenter.org/news.php.

The logo for The Playwrights' Center, featuring the text "THE PLAYWRIGHTS' CENTER" in a serif font, with "THE" in a smaller size above "PLAYWRIGHTS'". The text is white and set against a dark, textured background that resembles a torn piece of paper or a rough-edged square.

THE PLAYWRIGHTS' CENTER

The Playwrights' Center champions playwrights and plays to build upon a living theater that demands new and innovative works.

One of the nation's most generous and well-respected theater organizations, the Playwrights' Center focuses on both supporting playwrights and promoting new plays to production at theaters across the country. The Center has helped launch the careers of numerous nationally recognized artists, notably August Wilson, Lee Blessing, Suzan-Lori Parks, Jordan Harrison, Carlyle Brown, Craig Lucas, Jeffrey Hatcher, Melanie Marnich, and Kira Obolensky. Work developed through Center programs has been seen nationwide on such stages as the Yale Rep, Woolly Mammoth, Guthrie, Goodman, and many others.

Programs and services

The Ruth Easton Lab brings the Playwrights' Center Core Writers—25-30 of the most exciting playwrights from across the country—and their collaborators to Minneapolis for play development workshops and a formal season of public readings with prominent directors, actors, dramaturgs, and designers. Core Writers are promoted by the Center and provided opportunities through an extensive network of colleges and universities, cultural institutions, and producing theaters.

Local and national partnerships elevate the role of living playwrights. The Center works with several theaters each year to develop work for their stages. Recent partners have included Tectonic Theater Project, Mixed Blood Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, The Public Theater (NY), Goodman Theatre (Chicago, IL), Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Guthrie Theater, Ten Thousand Things Theater Company, Berkeley Rep, Marin Theatre Company, Seattle Repertory Theatre, and others. The Center also collaborates with local cultural institutions as the Walker Art Center and Minnesota History Center to develop theater that deepens their programming.

Fellowships, made possible by the McKnight and Jerome foundations, provide more than \$200,000 each year for residencies, commissions, and development funds. Through these fellowships, the Playwrights' Center functions as a home for:

- Jerome Fellows (three to five emerging American playwrights);
- Many Voices Fellows (two early-career and two beginning playwrights of color);
- McKnight Advancement Grants (two Minnesota-based playwrights whose work demonstrates exceptional artistic merit and potential);
- McKnight National Residency and Commission (one playwright selected annually from an impressive national pool); and
- McKnight Theater Artist Fellows (three Minnesota-based professional theater artists recognized for their outstanding skill and talent).

Membership is open to all for just \$50 per year and provides access to an online hub of information about the field including articles by theater luminaries, a database of playwriting opportunities, and access to dramaturgical services, readings with professional actors, discounted classes, and free seminars. In addition, the Playwrights' Center's New Plays on Campus program serves dozens of colleges and universities nationwide, providing script-matching services, arranging playwright residencies, and offering immersive apprenticeships to student playwrights and dramaturgs.