

## **Playwrights' Center announces 2016-17 Jerome and Many Voices Fellows**

(Minneapolis, MN—April 15, 2016)—The Playwrights' Center and Jerome Foundation are pleased to announce the 2016-17 Jerome Fellows, Many Voices Fellows and Many Voices Mentees. The Jerome Fellowship for emerging playwrights is the Jerome Foundation's longest-awarded program, entering its 40<sup>th</sup> year. The Many Voices Fellowship was created in 1994 in partnership with the Jerome Foundation and significantly expanded in 2013.

"The Playwrights' Center is entering its 45<sup>th</sup> year, and for the last 40 of those years we've had the great fortune of partnering with the Jerome Foundation to award fellowships to incredible emerging playwrights," says Jeremy B. Cohen, Producing Artistic Director of the Playwrights' Center. "This incoming roster of Jerome and Many Voices Fellows is already creating impressive, significant new theater and I'm thrilled we can support their work and help further their careers."

### **JEROME FELLOWS**

***Katie Bender, Emily Feldman, Jessica Huang, Kristin Idaszak***

Jerome Fellows receive \$18,000 (an increase of \$2,000 this year) and \$1,725 in play development funds. They spend a year-long residency in Minnesota. Past recipients of the Jerome Fellowship include Lee Blessing, Lisa D'Amour, Kristoffer Diaz, Naomi Iizuka, Melanie Marnich, Martín Zimmerman and August Wilson. The Playwrights' Center's 2016-17 Jerome Fellows are:

- **Katie Bender**, a University of Texas at Austin M.F.A. graduate whose work includes this season's world premiere of her immersive adaptation of "Alice in Wonderland" (ZACH Theatre) and who is a founding member of Underbelly theater collaborative
- **Emily Feldman**, a former Playwrights' Center Core Apprentice and recent University of California, San Diego M.F.A. graduate whose plays include "Three Women in Four Chairs"
- **Jessica Huang**, a Twin Cities-based playwright and former Many Voices Fellow whose play "Purple Cloud" premiered with Mu Performing Arts in December 2015
- **Kristin Idaszak**, a current Jerome Fellow whose play "Second Skin" received the Kennedy Center's Paula Vogel Playwriting Award and the Jean Kennedy Smith Playwriting Award, and who holds an M.F.A. from University of California, San Diego

### **MANY VOICES FELLOWS**

***Benjamin Benne, Marisa Carr***

The Many Voices Fellowship for early-career writers of color comes with a \$10,000 award, \$2,500 in living expenses and \$1,500 in development funds. One fellow each year must be Minnesota-based,

and both writers spend a year-long residency in Minnesota. Previous recipients include Sharif Abu-Hamdeh, Cristina Castro, Janaki Ranpura, Harrison David Rivers, James Anthony Tyler and Josh Wilder. The Playwrights' Center's 2016-17 Many Voices Fellows are:

- **Benjamin Benne**, a Seattle-based playwright whose work includes "at the very bottom of a body of water," "What \ Washed Ashore / Astray" and "Terra Incognita," which will receive its world premiere at Annex Theatre in the summer of 2016
- **Marisa Carr**, a Minneapolis-based playwright, actor and singer/composer who was a 2015 Naked Stages fellow at Pillsbury House + Theatre. Carr is a core artist at New Native Theatre, where she composed the original score for "2012: The Musical!"

### **MANY VOICES MENTEES**

***Drewcella Mae Davis, ShaVunda Horsley***

Many Voices Mentorships award Minnesota-based beginning playwrights of color with individually-curated writing and play development services and a \$1,000 stipend. The Playwrights' Center's 2016-17 Many Voices Mentees are:

- **Drewcella Mae Davis**, also known as Oya, who is currently a junior at Augsburg College majoring in sociology with a focus on playwriting
- **ShaVunda Horsley**, the recipient of a 2015 Verve Grant for Spoken Word, 2015 Finalist of the Beyond the Pure Writers' Fellowship, and Poetry Slam Winner of The Farrago Fresher Slam at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London

Fellowships at the Playwrights' Center, made possible by the McKnight and Jerome foundations, provide more than \$315,000 each year to support 14 fellows and mentees. In addition, the Center serves as an artistic home for 25-30 Core Writers on three-year terms. Fellows and Core Writers are selected by independent panels. The 2016-17 McKnight Fellows in Playwriting, McKnight National Residency and Commission recipient, McKnight Theater Artist Fellows and new Core Writers will be announced at a later date.

The Playwrights' Center also supports more than 1,550 member playwrights around the world and runs a robust series of partnership programs building relationships between playwrights and producing theaters.

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BIOS →

## PLAYWRIGHT BIOS

Photos of the playwrights are available at [pwcenter.org/media-room](http://pwcenter.org/media-room)

### 2016-17 Jerome Fellows

#### KATIE BENDER

Katie Bender is a playwright, performer and teacher. Her plays include "Still Now," "The Fault," "One Night Only" and an immersive adaption of "Alice in Wonderland" that she co-created with Underbelly. Her work has been developed with The New Harmony Project, Kitchen Dog, The Orchard Project, Shrewd Productions, and ZACH Theatre. She is a co-creator of Underbelly, with whom she's been a guest artist at New Victory Theatre. Nominated for The Kilroys List and a finalist for the inaugural Shakespeare's Sister Fellowship, she has her B.F.A. from New York University and her M.F.A. from The University of Texas.

#### EMILY FELDMAN

Emily Feldman's plays include "Three Women in Four Chairs," "The Mango Farmer of Vermont" and "Go. Please. Go." Her work has been developed or presented by the Playwrights' Center, Colt Coeur and Actors Theatre of Louisville. She's been an artist-in-residence at SPACE on Ryder Farm and The Atlantic Center for the Arts, a Tennessee Williams Scholar at the Sewanee Writers conference and a Core Apprentice at the Playwrights' Center. She recently completed her M.F.A. in playwriting at the University of California, San Diego. B.A.: Middlebury College.

#### JESSICA HUANG

Jessica Huang is a Twin Cities-based playwright, recipient of the 2014 Metropolitan Regional Arts Council's Next Step Grant and a 2012 Many Voices Fellowship, and co-founder of Other Tiger Productions. Her plays have been developed and/or produced in the Twin Cities at Mu Performing Arts, History Theatre, the Minnesota Museum of American Art and Pillsbury House Theatre; nationally at A-Squared Theatre Workshop (Chicago), 2nd Generation (NYC), the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts (D.C.) and the Source Festival (D.C.); and internationally at Yellow Earth's Typhoon Festival (London). In 2014, her play "Purple Cloud" was nominated to The Kilroys List. [www.jessica-huang.com](http://www.jessica-huang.com)

#### KRISTIN IDASZAK

Kristin Idaszak is a playwright and theater artist originally from Chicago. Her play "Second Skin" received the Kennedy Center's Paula Vogel Playwriting Award and the Jean Kennedy Smith Playwriting Award. She has been nominated for a Joseph Jefferson Award for Best New Work and received an honorable mention on The Kilroys List. She was the 2015 Kennedy Center Fellow at the Sundance Theatre Lab. She has received two Playwrights' Center Jerome Fellowships. Previously, Kristin served as Associate Artistic Director/Literary Manager of Caffeine Theatre and Associate Artistic Director of Collaboraction. M.F.A.: University of California, San Diego. <https://kristinidaszak.com/>

BIOS CONTINUE →

## **2016-17 Many Voices Fellows**

### **BENJAMIN BENNE**

Benjamin Benne is a Seattle-based playwright who was born and raised in Los Angeles County. He was a participant in New York Theatre Intensives 2011 summer conservatory (in association with Ensemble Studio Theatre) and the 2013 NoPassport Playwriting Intensive with OBIE Award-winning playwright Caridad Svich. His play “at the very bottom of a body of water” (2016 O’Neill Playwrights Conference semi-finalist; 2016 Bay Area Playwrights Festival finalist) is currently receiving development support by Umbrella Project, a Seattle-based new play advocacy group. “Terra Incognita” (2014 O’Neill Playwrights Conference semi-finalist) will receive its world premiere this summer at Annex Theatre. [www.benjaminbenne.com](http://www.benjaminbenne.com)

### **MARISA CARR**

Playwright, actor and singer/composer Marisa Carr was born and raised in Milwaukee but now lives in Minneapolis. In 2014 *Lavender Magazine* named her “Best New Political Playwright” for her play “Reconciliation,” which it described as “stunningly intelligent.” In 2015 she was a Naked Stages fellow at Pillsbury House + Theatre, where she wrote and performed her solo play “Static.” She is a member of the Unit Collective and a core artist at New Native Theatre, where she composed the original score for “2012: The Musical!” (book by Rhiana Yazzie). You can learn more about Marisa’s work at <https://marisacarr.wordpress.com>.

## **2016-17 Many Voices Mentees**

### **DREWCELLA MAE DAVIS**

Drewcella Mae Davis, also known as Oya, is a born and raised playwright from Minneapolis, Minn. She is currently a junior at Augsburg College majoring in sociology with a focus on playwriting. Her play “Waiting for Superman” was developed through a one on one independent study. The rhythms and cultures of North Minneapolis are infused in the worlds of her plays. Her work focuses on blackness and beauty in the context of America. Her plays aim to redefine blackness in terms of love, family, community and the magic that comes along with not knowing where one truly came from. Her plays hope to give life to stories that haven’t been told. One day she will use her experience as a playwright and sociologist to rehabilitate black youth in prison and give a voice to the voiceless.

### **SHAVUNDA HORSLEY**

ShaVunda Horsley is a Minneapolis based, internationally award winning spoken word artist, actress, hip hop artist and spirit guided writer. She uses her knowledge of African and African American spirituality, history and myths and the southern folklore of her upbringing and blends it with a sharp social consciousness to shed light on raw truths and weave stories of new visions and liberation. ShaVunda is the recipient of a 2015 Verve Grant for Spoken Word, 2015 Finalist of the Beyond the Pure Writers’ Fellowship, Poetry Slam Winner of The Farrago Fresher Slam at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London, one half of the duo that won the 2010 What it Do? Hip-Hop Competition and Peace-fest and has placed second in the Voices Merging Poetry Slam twice.

## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHTS' CENTER

The Playwrights' Center champions playwrights and new 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 moving new plays toward 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 Yale Rep, Woolly Mammoth, the Guthrie, Goodman, and many others.

### Programs and services

**The Core Writer program** gives 25-30 of the most exciting playwrights from across the country the time and tools to develop new work for the stage. All Core Writers receive play development workshops at the Center, in collaboration with prominent directors, actors, dramaturgs, and designers. Selected work by Core Writers makes up the Center's formal season of public readings: the PlayLabs festival and the Ruth Easton New Play Series. Core Writers are also promoted by the Center and provided opportunities through an extensive network of colleges and universities, cultural institutions, and producing theaters.

**Fellowships**, made possible by the McKnight and Jerome foundations, provide more than \$315,000 each year for residencies, commissions, and development funds. Through these fellowships, the Playwrights' Center functions as a home for:

- Jerome Fellows (four emerging American playwrights);
- Many Voices Fellows (two early-career playwrights of color, one Minnesota-based) and Many Voices Mentees (two Minnesota-based beginning playwrights of color);
- McKnight Fellows in Playwriting (two accomplished Minnesota-based playwrights);
- McKnight National Residency and Commission (one playwright selected annually from a national pool); and
- McKnight Theater Artist Fellows (three exceptional Minnesota-based theater artists, other than playwrights).

**Membership** is open to all and provides more than 1,500 playwrights worldwide with tools, resources, and support. Benefits include a database of playwriting opportunities, online and in-person seminars and classes, access to readings with professional actors, dramaturgical services, and more. 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.

**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 collaborations include partnerships with Denver Center on Idris Goodwin's *Victory Jones and the Incredible One Woman Band*, Marin Theatre Company on Carson Kreitzer's *Lasso of Truth*, Mixed Blood on Aditi Kapil's *Brahman(i)* and *Shiv*, Pillsbury House Theatre on Tracey Scott Wilson's *Buzzer*, and The Walker Art Center and Elevator Repair Service on Sibyl Kempson's *Fondly, Collette Richland*. The Center also flies in 10-15 artistic leaders each year to meet writers and hear their work. The newly-launched Regulars program brings together a group of nearly 100 producing theaters in the United States who seek the support of the Center in order to meet new writers, develop their work, and move them into production.