

Playwrights' Center announces 2017-18 season

MINNEAPOLIS (September 7, 2017) — Of the 70+ new plays developed at the Playwrights' Center each year, eight are selected to be part of the public season, giving playwrights expanded workshop time with collaborators and the chance to see their new work on its feet in front of two different audiences. These readings are free to attend and take place at the Playwrights' Center, located at 2301 E Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis.

The 2017-18 season:

PLAYLABS (October 23-29):

- "A Humbling in St. Paul" by Alice Tuan
- "Take Care" by Jason Gray Platt
- "In the Time of the Volcano" by Jen Silverman

RUTH EASTON NEW PLAY SERIES:

- "The Overcoat: a musical for non musical people" by Kira Obolensky (December 4 & 5)
- "How The Ghost Of You Clings, The Anna May Wong Story" by John Olive (January 8 & 9)
- "Three Quarter Inches of Sky" by Sherry Kramer (February 5 & 6)
- "Tiny Houses" by Stefanie Zdravec (March 5 & 6)
- "the bandaged place" by Harrison David Rivers (April 9 & 10)

Readings in PlayLabs and the Ruth Easton New Play Series feature top local and national actors and incorporate design elements, giving audience members a unique way to experience new work and a chance to be part of the creative process.

"We are living in a time when we need our vital storytellers more than ever," says Playwrights' Center Producing Artistic Director Jeremy B. Cohen. "What is happening in our country currently —the barrage of hatred, systemic racism, misogyny, classism, homophobia and transphobia—insists that our country's artists and storytellers receive deep support. Being a playwright requires sustained attention in a culture of distraction, and seeking out complexity when so many put on blinders. The playwrights in our 2017-18 cohort, including those whose plays are part of the public season, have taken up this call. They are enriching the way communities and individuals talk to each other and, more importantly, hear each other."

PLAYLABS, October 23-29, 2017

For more than 30 years, the Playwrights' Center's PlayLabs festival has been one of the nation's most comprehensive play development programs. Playwrights receive 30 hours of workshop time with a team of collaborators (including designers) and two public readings with time for rewrites in between. Over 65% of the plays featured in PlayLabs over the past decade have gone on to production, and the

festival has become a must-attend event for theater leaders and fans both locally and from around the country.

PlayLabs 2017 will feature:

“A Humbling in St. Paul” by Alice Tuan

Directed by Laurie Woolery

Monday, October 23 at 7 p.m. & Friday, October 27 at 7 p.m.

Olive Chung comes to the Twin Cities to work on a new play and reconnects with her grad school friend Liz Manuel after being out of touch for a decade. While staying with Liz and her wife, Sharine Hopewell, and their pups, Bell and Musco, Olive gets what she thinks is food poisoning. It turns out to be much more mysterious and severe than anyone imagined. A play about the guest/host space, infection, the performance of normalcy, unseen presence, the body rebelling against the mind, optimism, gratitude, and, yes, friendship.

“Take Care” by Jason Gray Platt

Directed by Tracy Brigden

Tuesday, October 24 at 7 p.m. & Saturday, October 28 at 1 p.m.

Ella gathers her family together for the holidays to have the delicate conversation surrounding her end-of-life plans. But the emotionally strenuous conversation does not go as she had hoped. So the discussion happens again. And again. But each time another family member is missing, and the conversation goes slightly differently, until it becomes apparent that the end of Ella’s life isn’t the only approaching tragedy for which a plan needs to be made. Because time is running out.

“In the Time of the Volcano” by Jen Silverman

Directed by Jeremy B. Cohen

Wednesday, October 25 at 7 p.m. & Saturday, October 28 at 7 p.m.

Henry has become the janitor at his kids’ high school after losing his job, while his wife Luce struggles to hold onto her own. Meanwhile, their two sons are struggling to understand their own potential as they become ever more aware of their parents’ failures. When strange news from the past reaches Henry, it explodes into all of their lives, changing how they see Henry—and ultimately themselves. A play about what happens when we’re offered a chance at dreams we didn’t even know we had...

Playwriting Fellows Showcase

Directed by Nicole A. Watson

Sunday, October 29 at noon

Scenes from 2017-18 playwriting fellows **Benjamin Benne, Mia Chung, Jessica Huang, Rachel Jendrzewski, Tim J. Lord, Stacey Rose, Tori Sampson, Mfoniso Udofia and Saymoukda Duangphouxay Vongsay.**

Details at pwcenter.org/playlabs.

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RUTH EASTON NEW PLAY SERIES, December 2017 – April 2018

The Ruth Easton New Play Series provides selected Core Writers with 20 hours of workshop time to develop a new play with collaborators of their choice: top local and national actors, directors, designers, and dramaturgs. Each play has two public readings, allowing the playwright to experiment and see the play on its feet in front of two different audiences. The Center brings in visiting artistic leaders to see the readings and connect with the playwrights, and more than half of the plays developed in the series over the past decade have gone on to production.

The 2017-18 Ruth Easton New Play Series will feature three Twin Cities playwrights (Kira Obolensky, John Olive, and Harrison David Rivers). The line-up:

“The Overcoat: a musical for non musical people” by Kira Obolensky

Monday, December 4 & Tuesday, December 5, 2017 at 7 p.m.

In this musical re-imagining of Gogol’s short story “The Overcoat,” poor beleaguered Charlie Shoe needs a new coat to keep Winter away—she’s there, on the bridge, on the stair, waiting for his body and soul. Funny and tragic, this short musical wonders if empathy and love are really enough to save us from the clutches of coldness.

“How The Ghost Of You Clings, The Anna May Wong Story” by John Olive

Monday, January 8 & Tuesday, January 9, 2018 at 7 p.m.

A “bioplay” about the great Chinese-American actor Anna May Wong (Huang Liu Tsong, 1905-1961). The beautiful Anna lived large, appearing in silents, talkies, in the earliest days of television, in vaudeville shows, on Broadway, on the West End. Anna remains, to this day, the most prolific Asian actor, ever.

“Three Quarter Inches of Sky” by Sherry Kramer

Monday, February 5 & Tuesday, February 6, 2018 at 7 p.m.

“David Copperfield” begins, “Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life...these pages must show.” Dickens’ novel is the story of a young boy at the beginning of his life. “Three Quarter Inches of Sky” is the story of Trula, a woman of a certain age, near the end of her life. How will she answer that question, in the time allotted? How will she measure what being the hero of her story is, as she cares for her fading father, whose memory is going, and searches through her own memories for a way to understand her life? A play filled with a childhood that may or may not be true, a lot of movie references, and 7 chicken pot pies.

“Tiny Houses” by Stefanie Zdravec

Monday, March 5 & Tuesday, March 6, 2018 at 7 p.m.

On July 17, 2014, Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17 rained down upon a tiny, war-torn village in Eastern Ukraine, shot down by a surface-to-air missile launched by pro-Russian separatists. Bodies and objects alike become fodder for those trying to escape the circumstances in which they were born. “Tiny Houses” is a comic riff on Pandora’s Box that explores the ripple effect on several women who suddenly realize they can disrupt the status quo.

“the bandaged place” by Harrison David Rivers

Monday, April 9 & Tuesday, April 10, 2018 at 7 p.m.

When a former lover resurfaces, re-opening a painful wound, Jonah Irby is forced to turn to his precocious daughter and his tough love grandmother for support. A brutal and lyrical play about the things we hang on to and the price of moving forward.

Details at pwcenter.org/ruth-easton-series.

The Playwrights' Center serves playwrights by sustaining careers, developing new work, and connecting playwrights to theaters. Each year at the Center, fellows and Core Writers receive more than \$315,000 in direct support, 70+ new plays are workshopped, playwrights connect with 100 producing theaters through partnership programs, and 2,000 member playwrights from around the world find resources to achieve their artistic vision. Learn more at pwcenter.org.

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Photos of the playwrights are available at pwcenter.org/media-room or by contacting Jessica Franken at jessicaf@pwcenter.org

PLAYWRIGHT QUOTES AND BIOS →

QUOTES FROM THE PLAYWRIGHTS ABOUT THEIR PLAYS

Alice Tuan on “A Humbling in St. Paul”:

“Writing this play saved me. Based on the freak infection I got a week after working on my play at the Playwrights’ Center’s Ruth Easton New Play Series in March 2016, it helped me process a near-death space and understand the windfalls and psychic strength culled from committing to a playwright life.”

Jason Gray Platt on “Take Care”:

“When the child informs us that there is a monster under the bed, we tell her that there is no such monster so that she may sleep soundly. On the first few occasions, we make a spectacle of lifting the covers and looking underneath, so that the child may rest easy. Eventually we stop looking, confident in our knowledge that because there has never been a monster in the past, there can never be a monster in the future. The child is not prey to such logical fallacies. One day, there will be a monster. And we will not be looking.”

Jen Silverman on “In the Time of the Volcano”:

“The play is inspired by research I’ve done about a ‘cargo cult’ on Vanuatu (a Pacific Island nation) that worships a mysterious man named John Frum. The cult is thought to have been formed around an American soldier stationed briefly overseas; even the name John Frum is thought to be short for ‘John from America.’ In thinking about what it means to worship a man who might, essentially, be utterly ordinary, I also began to think about what it means for an ordinary man to be worshipped—especially in this current cultural moment, where our country is embroiled in a volatile conversation about white male power, privilege, and entitlement. I’m excited to spend my time at the Playwrights’ Center digging into the first draft, and asking both big-picture questions about how the play fits into our national conversation and small-picture questions about character arcs and play structure.”

Kira Obolensky on “The Overcoat: A musical for non musical people”:

“This musical was originally conceived by composer Brian Harnetty and me as something simple and stripped down—for untrained (or trained) voices and a piano. The music is seemingly simple and so is the story—but in the lightness we hope to approximate what Gogol’s short story does, which is to contemplate the great divide between poor and rich and the ways in which empathy can be born in even the most barren of hearts.”

John Olive on “How The Ghost Of You Clings, The Anna May Wong Story”:

“As I worked on ‘How The Ghost Of You Clings’ I discovered, to my chagrin, that many—most—people have never heard of Ms. Wong. I had, being a devotee of old movies, but this lack of familiarity with a great American is something I hope to rectify with this play.”

Sherry Kramer on “Three Quarter Inches of Sky”:

“One of the mysteries I’ve been trying to understand my whole life is how the small is so big in our lives. Folded into that mystery is my longing to sing about the mythic ways compassion and care make heroes of a hundred million people every day. Add in my fascination with our new primal—and often

primary—relationship with the vivid lives we co-inhabit when we turn our gaze to our screens? That’s this play.”

Stephanie Zadavec on “Tiny Houses”:

“Many of my plays touch on a theme of hope in a time of chaos, and the question I began with for this play was how individuals cope or activate in an increasingly chaotic political world. The play weaves a thread of incidental connections that crisscross as they trickle across the globe. Getting the balance right between storylines, magic and realism, humor and pathos—well, it takes time and that’s what I’ll be focusing on.”

Harrison David Rivers on “the bandaged place”:

“‘the bandaged place’ is the play I said I would never write. Swore, really. Admittedly, my plays tend to borrow from real life, from my real life, but more than any of my other writings, the events of this play... well, suffice it to say that they hit incredibly close to home... definitely too close for any kind of comfort. This ‘closeness’ is probably why it had to be written. I don’t remember who it was that said to me, ‘Write what scares you most, what keeps you up at night, what haunts you.’ ‘the bandaged place’ is that for me—the thing that continues to haunt.”

PLAYWRIGHT BIOS

Alice Tuan

Alice Tuan's "Hit" premiered May 2014 at Los Angeles Theatre Center. "Private Rivals," an updated extension of Coward, is a commission of Yale Rep/Binger Center for New Theatre. Tuan is best known for "Ajax (por nobody)," written about in "The Shelf Life of Shock" (Drama Review, F'13). Other plays include "Batch" (Humana Festival), "Last of the Suns" (Berkeley Rep, Ma-Yi Theater), "Roaring Girl" (Foundry), "Ikebana" (East West/Taper, Too, Dramalogue Award), and "Coastline" (Serious Play!, Edinburgh Fringe). Her blog "Alice in Shanghailand" is featured in "Love of Sun," an online installation where four Chinese artists look at California and four California artists look at China (www.loveofsun.org).

Jason Gray Platt

Jason Gray Platt's work has been produced and developed around the country by the American Repertory Theater, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Denver Center Theatre Company, The Flea, Round House Theatre, TheatreWorks, The Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, The Playwrights Realm, Prelude NYC, Page 73, and Red Bull Theater, and through residencies at MacDowell and Yaddo. He received a Helen Hayes Nomination for The Charles MacArthur Award for Outstanding New Play in 2013. Originally from Arizona, Jason now lives in New York. Member of Woodshed Collective. B.A.: Vassar; M.F.A.: Columbia. jasonplatt.com

Jen Silverman

Jen Silverman's work includes "The Moors" (Yale Repertory Theatre premiere, off-Broadway with The Playwrights Realm, Susan Smith Blackburn finalist); "The Roommate" (Actor's Theatre of Louisville world premiere, produced widely across the U.S. including South Coast Rep, SF Playhouse, Williamstown Theatre Festival and upcoming at Steppenwolf); "Phoebe in Winter" (Off-off Broadway with Clubbed Thumb); "The Dangerous House of Pretty Mbane" (InterAct Theatre: Barrymore Award, Steinberg Award citation); "Collective Rage: A Play in 5 Betties" (Woolly Mammoth premiere, The Theater @ Boston Court); and "All the Roads Home" (Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park). She was the 2016-2017 Playwrights of New York (PoNY) Fellow at the Lark. She has a two-book deal with Random House for a collection of stories ("The Island Dwellers") and a novel. Education: Brown, Iowa Playwrights Workshop, Juilliard. jensilverman.com

Kira Obolensky

Kira Obolensky is a Mellon Foundation Playwright in residence at Ten Thousand Things Theater. She has written several plays for that theater, most recently "The Changelings" which premiered in the spring of 2016. Her plays have been performed around the country and abroad. She has received many awards and fellowships including a Guggenheim fellowship, the Kesselring Prize and Le Comte de Nuys playwriting fellowship, as well as grants from the Bush, McKnight, and Jerome Foundations. Kira has written three books about architecture and design, including co-authoring the national best seller, "The Not So Big House." Her novella, "The Anarchists Float to St. Louis," won Quarterly West's novella prize. A graduate of Juilliard's playwriting program and Williams College, Kira teaches at the University of Minnesota and in Spalding University's low residency MFA program.

John Olive

John Olive is a widely produced (Manhattan Theatre Club, Old Globe, ACT/Seattle, South Coast Rep, Steppenwolf, the Guthrie, and many others) and award-winning (Bush and McKnight Foundations, National Endowment For The Arts, Kennedy Center Award For Drama, others) playwright. Plays include "Minnesota Moon," "Standing On My Knees," "The Voice Of The Prairie," "God Fire," "Singapore," "Evelyn and The Polka King," "Killers," and many others. John has also written extensively in the area of Theater For Young Audiences: Seattle Childrens, the Arden, Peoples Light, First Stage Milwaukee, Oregon Childrens, Nashville Childrens, and many others. John has written novels, screenplays, theater reviews, and a book about the magic of bedtime stories, "Tell Me A Story In The Dark." johnolive.net

Sherry Kramer

Sherry Kramer's recent work is about the American Dream and how we are failing it. She has written about our role in destabilizing the Middle East ("When Something Wonderful Ends"), anti-Semitism in the heartland ("Ivanhoe, America"), the power of the press to distort the shape of a nation's soul ("The Ruling Passion"), and two plays about America's relationship with money and philanthropy ("How Water Behaves" and "The Bay of Fundy, An Adaptation of One Line From the Mayor of Casterbridge"). These plays invite their audience to find new ways to understand who we are as a nation, and how we might find our way back to being the generous, fair, openhearted people we believe we are. sherrykramer.net

Stefanie Zadravec

Stefanie Zadravec is a New Dramatists resident and member of the Keen Company's Playwright's Lab. Her plays include: "Colony Collapse" (Kilroys list, Theatre@Boston Court); "The Electric Baby" (Two River Theater, Quantum Theatre); "Honey Brown Eyes" (Theater J, Working Theater); "The Boat" (The Working Theater Commission). Honors include the Helen Merrill Award, Francesca Primus Prize, Helen Hayes Award, Sustainable Arts Foundation Award; as well as fellowships from the The Lark, NYFA, Playwrights Realm, Edgerton Foundation, and Dramatists Guild. Development support from NYSCA, The Ford Foundation, Mellon Foundation, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, PlayPenn, The Women's Project, JAWfest, NY Stage & Film and Theatreworks. szadravec.com

Harrison David Rivers

Harrison David Rivers is the winner of a GLAAD Media Award, a McKnight Fellowship in Playwriting, a Many Voices Fellowship, a Van Lier Fellowship, an Emerging Artist of Color Fellowship and the New York Stage & Film's Founders Award. He was the 2016 Playwright-in-Residence at the Williamstown Theatre Festival. His plays include "Sweet" (National Black Theatre), "And She Would Stand Like This" (The Movement Theatre Company), "Where Storms are Born" (Williamstown) and "When Last Flew" (Sundance). Harrison is an alumnus of the Emerging Writers' Group at the Public Theater. M.F.A.: Columbia University. harrisondavidrivers.com

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHTS' CENTER

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

The Center serves playwrights by sustaining careers, developing new work, and connecting playwrights to theaters. Each year at the Center, fellows and Core Writers receive more than \$315,000 in direct support, 70+ new plays are workshopped, playwrights connect with 100 producing theaters through partnership programs, and 2,000 member playwrights from around the world find resources to achieve their artistic vision.

Since its founding in 1971, the Playwrights' Center has become one of the nation's most generous and well-respected theater organizations, helping launch the careers of numerous nationally recognized artists such as 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. Beyond the financial stipend, the value of fellowships is more than doubled with the year-long support the Playwrights' Center adds through workshops with professional collaborators and through the connections the Center makes between playwrights and producers of new work. This holistic and customized combination of financial support, access to talent, and professional connections is career-changing for most playwrights. Fellowship programs: Jerome Fellows, Many Voices Fellows, McKnight Fellows in Playwriting, McKnight National Residency and Commission, McKnight Theater Artist Fellows.

Membership is open to all and provides nearly 2,000 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. Through the Regulars partnership program, the Playwrights' Center partners with 100 theaters around the country to bring their artistic staff to the Center in order to spend time with playwrights and to co-develop new plays with a keen eye towards production. In fact, 60% of these plays have gone on to full production within two years (rather than the average seven-year timeframe for most plays to see production). Recent and upcoming productions resulting from Playwrights' Center co-development workshops include "The Great Leap" by Lauren Yee at Denver Center Theatre, "Dancing on the Edge" by Adam Kraar at Theatre Novi Most, "The Gentleman Caller" by Philip Dawkins at Raven Theater, "Duet" by Daniel Alexander Jones at Soho Rep, "Early Morning Song" by Rachel Jendrzejewski at Red Eye Theater, "Fickle: A Fancy French Farce" by Meg Miroshnik at Olney Theatre Center, and "The Happiest Place on Earth" by Philip Dawkins at Greenhouse Theater Center/Sideshow Theatre Company.