

Playwrights' Center announces 2019-20 McKnight National Residency and Commission recipient, McKnight Fellows in Playwriting and new Core Writers

MINNEAPOLIS (May 24, 2019) —The Playwrights' Center today announced the recipients of the 2019-20 McKnight National Residency and Commission, 2019-20 McKnight Fellowships in Playwriting and new Playwrights' Center Core Writers.

These writers are 12 of the 35-40 playwrights who find an artistic home at the Playwrights' Center each year. The Center also supports 2,100 member playwrights living all over the world, develops over 75 new plays each year and helps move plays from page to stage through a robust partnership program with producing theaters. All Playwrights' Center fellows and Core Writers are selected by diverse national panels of artists and theater leaders.

Jeremy B. Cohen, producing artistic director of the Playwrights' Center, says of our McKnight recipients, "This year's two McKnight Playwriting Fellows represent our longtime history with brilliant writer W. David Hancock and the past few years of supporting the incredible Stacey Rose, whose work is now being seen on stages across the country. Joining them is the visionary Heather Raffo, who will be spending a great deal of time in the Twin Cities this year on this fellowship, as well as for the production of her play 'Noura' at the Guthrie."

2019-20 MCKNIGHT NATIONAL RESIDENCY AND COMMISSION RECIPIENT

Heather Raffo

The McKnight National Residency and Commission funds the creation and development of new works and comes with a \$15,000 commission, \$12,250 in workshop funds including travel and housing. Past recipients include Kia Corthron, Erik Ehn, Kate Fodor, Karen Hartman, Daniel Alexander Jones, Sibyl Kempson, Craig Lucas, Taylor Mac, Ruth Margraff, Dan O'Brien, Betty Shamieh, Kathleen Tolan, Mfoniso Udofia, Francine Volpe and Mac Wellman.

The 2019-20 recipient is **Heather Raffo**, an award-winning playwright and actress whose work has been seen Off-Broadway, Off-West End and in regional theater and in film. Her plays have been hailed by The New Yorker as "an example of how art can remake the world." An American with Iraqi roots, Raffo's work bridges national main-stages with cultural centers, urban with rural communities and has been performed across America and internationally for almost two decades, taking her to the Kennedy Center, The Aspen Ideas Festival, London's House of Commons, the U.S. Islamic World Forum and into hundreds of classrooms across the nation and internationally.

2019-20 MCKNIGHT FELLOWS IN PLAYWRITING

W. David Hancock, Stacey Rose

The McKnight Fellowship in Playwriting awards two Minnesota-based playwrights a \$25,000 stipend, \$2,500 to support play development and other professional expenses and \$1,400 in travel funds. Past recipients include Carlyle Brown, Ping Chong, Migdalia Cruz, Lisa D'Amour, Steven Dietz, Barbara Field, Jeffrey Hatcher, Christina Ham, Carson Kreitzer, Melanie Marnich, Marion McClinton, Kira Obolensky, Harrison David Rivers, Paula Vogel, Mac Wellman and August Wilson.

The 2019-20 McKnight Fellows in Playwriting are **W. David Hancock** and **Stacey Rose**.

W. David Hancock is a two-time Obie Award-winning playwright. His plays include "The Convention of Cartography," "The Race of the Ark Tattoo," "Deviant Craft" and "Master." Hancock's work has been produced by numerous theaters around the country and abroad, including the Foundry, Clubbed Thumb, Rude Mechs, the Abbey Theatre (Dublin) and Théâtre des Carmes (Avignon). "The Race of the Ark Tattoo" was recently installed at the Christian Bernst Gallery (Paris). Hancock's fiction has appeared in The Massachusetts Review, Hunger Mountain Review and Chicago Quarterly Review. His awards include a Whiting Writers' Award and the Cal Arts/Alpert Award in Theatre.

Stacey Rose hails from Elizabeth, N.J. and Charlotte, N.C., respectively. She earned a B.A. from UNC Charlotte and is an alum of the M.F.A. program in Dramatic Writing at NYU Tisch School of the Arts. While at Tisch, she was the recipient of an AAUW Career Development Grant, was a Future Screenwriting Fellow and was honored with The Goldberg Prize for her play "The Danger: A Homage to Strange Fruit." Stacey's work celebrates and explores Blackness, Black identity, Black history, body politics and the dilemma of life as the "other."

NEW CORE WRITERS

Gina Femia, Emily Feldman, Sofya Levitsky-Weitz, Marvin González De León, Rachel Jendrzewski, Jake Jeppson, Daaimah Mubashshir, James Anthony Tyler, and new Lifetime Core Writer, Carlyle Brown

The Core Writer Program at the Playwrights' Center provides play development workshops and professional support over a three-year term. Work by Core Writers composes the Center's public season (the PlayLabs new play festival in October and the Ruth Easton New Play Series, which runs December through April). Playwrights who have benefited from the Core Writer program include Christina Anderson, Trista Baldwin, Lee Blessing, George Brant, Carlyle Brown, Connie Congdon, Marcus Gardley, Jeffrey Hatcher, Sherry Kramer, Carson Kreitzer, Martyna Majok, Melanie Marnich, Winter Miller, Greg Moss, Qui Nguyen, Kira Obolensky and Alice Tuan.

Cohen says of the new Playwrights' Center Core Writers, "The amazing cohort of new Core Writers is filled with many artists who have been on fellowships with us over the past decade—Emily Feldman, Marvin González De León, Jake Jeppson, Rachel Jendrzewski, Sofya Levitsky-Weitz and James Anthony Tyler, as well as welcoming Gina Femia and Daaimah Mubashshir...all of whose work I have

deeply admired for a long time. In addition, I have chosen to endow Carlyle Brown with a Lifetime Core Writer tenure, only the seventh in the 47-year history of the PWC. Carlyle has created one of the most vital bodies of work here in the Twin Cities, nationally and internationally—the Center has long been his home, and this appointment ensures he will always have us to continue the development of his indelible work."

Joining the 20 continuing Core Writers are these nine playwrights, whose Core Writer terms will run through June 2022 (except Carlyle Brown):

Carlyle Brown (Minneapolis, Minn.), who is a writer/performer and artistic director of Carlyle Brown & Company. His plays have been produced at theaters across the country and internationally.

Gina Femia (Brooklyn, N.Y.), whose plays include "ALLOND(R)A," "We Are a Masterpiece," "The Mermaids' Parade," "Annie and the Fat Man," "For The Love Of" and "The Violet Sisters."

Emily Feldman (New York, N.Y.), who is an alumna of The Working Farm at SPACE on Ryder Farm, I-73 at Page 73, and the Jerome Fellowship/Core Apprenticeship at the Playwrights' Center.

Marvin González De León (Minneapolis, Minn.), whose work has been produced and developed throughout the country. He is a 2018-19 Many Voices Fellow at the Playwrights' Center.

Sofya Levitsky-Weitz (Brooklyn, N.Y.), who is a graduate of Loyola Marymount, and Northwestern Universities, is a current Jerome Fellow at the Playwrights' Center and whose plays include "Gehinnom" and "This Party Sucks."

Rachel Jendrzejewski (Minneapolis, Minn.) whose work has been presented by the Walker Art Center, Red Eye Theater, ICA/Boston, Tricklock Company and Joe's Pub at The Public Theater, among others. Rachel is a former Jerome and McKnight fellow at the Playwrights' Center.

Jake Jeppson (Brooklyn, N.Y.), whose work has been supported by the National Theatre, Soho Theatre, National Theatre of Scotland, Ars Nova, Asolo Rep and Fault Line. He is a former Jerome Fellow at the Playwrights' Center.

Daaimah Mubashshir (New York, N.Y.), whose awards include a 2018 Audrey Residency, a MacDowell Colony Fellowship and a Foundation of Contemporary Arts Emergency Grant.

James Anthony Tyler (New York, N.Y.), who is the recipient of the 3rd Annual Horton Foote Playwriting Award, an inaugural playwright to receive a commission from Audible, and a former Many Voices Fellow at the Playwrights' Center.

BIOS

Photos of the artists are available at pwcenter.org/media-room.

Carlyle Brown is a writer/performer and artistic director of Carlyle Brown & Company based in Minneapolis. His plays have been produced at theaters across the country and internationally. He has received numerous commissions, fellowships and awards, including a 2006 Black Theatre Network's Winona Lee Fletcher Award for outstanding achievement and artistic excellence, a 2009 Guggenheim Fellowship, a 2010 Otto Rene Castillo Award for Political Theatre, a 2010 United States Artist Fellowship and a 2018 William Inge Award for Distinguished Achievement in the American Theater. A scholar and historian, Mr. Brown has been an artist in residence or visiting professor at several colleges and universities and has worked as a museum exhibit writer and story consultant.

Gina Femia has written 32 full-length plays which include "ALLOND(R)A" (Winner: Leah Ryan Prize, Runner-up: Yale Drama Prize), "We Are a Masterpiece" (Winner: The Doric Wilson Award), "The Mermaids' Parade" (Semifinalist: Relentless Award), "Annie and the Fat Man" (Honorable Mention: Kilroys), "For The Love Of" (CTG/Theatre of NOTE) and "The Violet Sisters" (Great Plains Theatre Conference). She's a current member of Page 73's Interstate 73, the 2019 Writer-in-Residence with Spicy Witch Productions, and an Alum of EST Youngblood, Pipeline Theatre's PlayLab and New Georges' Audrey Residency. Gina has received residencies with Page 73, Powerhouse, SPACE on Ryder Farm and Fresh Ground Pepper.

Emily Feldman's work has been developed by Roundabout Theatre Company, The Playwrights Realm, Alliance Theatre, Second Stage Theater, Page 73, Portland Center Stage, La Jolla Playhouse and Actors Theatre of Louisville, among others. Her play "THE BEST WE COULD (a family tragedy)" will premiere at Manhattan Theatre Club. Feldman is an alumna of The Working Farm at SPACE on Ryder Farm, I-73 at Page 73 and the Jerome Fellowship/Core Apprenticeship at the Playwrights' Center. She is currently working on commissions from Manhattan Theatre Club, Playwrights Horizons and Arena Stage. M.F.A.: University of California, San Diego. B.A.: Middlebury College.

Marvin González De León is a playwright and educator whose work has been produced and developed at Good Luck Macbeth Theatre, Reno Little Theater, Teatro Bravo, Arizona State University, Pillsbury House + Theater, Teatro del Pueblo and the Playwrights' Center. He is currently a 2018-19 Many Voices Fellow at the Playwrights' Center. A section of his play "Haboob" appears in Scenes for Latinx Actors: Voices for the New American Theater, and his short plays, "Prostheses Bound" and "Sink.Row.Nice!," are published through Samuel French. González De León teaches at Arizona State University and Augsburg University. He received his M.F.A. in Dramatic writing from Arizona State University in 2017.

Rachel Jendrzewski is an experimental playwright who frequently collaborates with choreographers, musicians and visual artists to explore new performative vocabularies. Her work has been presented by the Walker Art Center, Red Eye Theater, ICA/Boston, Tricklock Company and Joe's Pub at The Public Theater, among others. Honors include Playwrights' Center McKnight and Jerome Fellowships; residencies at MASS MoCA and Weisman Art Museum; and project support from the Adam Mickiewicz

Institute, Network of Ensemble Theaters and Foundation for Contemporary Arts. Rachel is a Core Writer at the Playwrights' Center and one of seven artistic directors at Red Eye Theater. M.F.A. Playwriting, Brown.

Jake Jeppson's work has been supported by the National Theatre, Soho Theatre, National Theatre of Scotland, Ars Nova, Asolo Rep and Fault Line. He is a former Jerome Fellow at the Playwrights' Center and an alum of Ars Nova's Play Group. Upcoming projects include: "The Afflicted" at Edinburgh Fringe and "The Eaves", a scripted podcast. Jake has an M.F.A. in playwriting from Yale School of Drama. He grew up in Washington, D.C., once called London home and currently lives in Brooklyn, N.Y. with his wife, their son and a lovable weirdo of a dog.

Sofya Levitsky-Weitz is a current Jerome Fellow at the Playwrights' Center and a member of EST/Youngblood. Plays developed with NYTW, UCF's Pegasus PlayLab, Williamstown, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Steep Theatre, the Sam French OOB Festival, the Flea, Chicago Dramatists, and more. Finalist for the Heideman Award, semi-finalist for the O'Neill Playwrights' Conference, the Playwrights Realm Fellowship, the Princess Grace Award and Premiere Stages. Published in The Kenyon Review, the 53rd State Press and twice in The Dionysian. She's the official annual playwriting judge for Hendrix College's playwriting competition and received her M.F.A. in Writing for the Screen & Stage at Northwestern University.

Daaimah Mubashshir is based in New York City. Her published works include "The Zero Loop" (No Tokens Journal), "Come with Me - Solve for X in The Occasional 2," edited by Will Arbery (53rd State Press), and "The Immeasurable Want of Light" (3 Hole Press). Awards include a 2018 Audrey Residency (New Georges), a MacDowell Colony Fellowship and a Foundation of Contemporary Arts Emergency Grant. Full length plays include "Room Enough" (Fire This Time Festival, Clubbed Thumb, Pride Plays), "There is Something About a Clock Face" (The Kilroys, JACK and Fire This Time Festival) and "Rum for Sale."

Heather Raffo is an award-winning playwright and actress whose work has been seen Off-Broadway, Off-West End, in regional theater and in film. Her plays have been hailed by The New Yorker as "an example of how art can remake the world". An American with Iraqi roots, Raffo's work bridges national main-stages with cultural centers, urban with rural communities and has been performed across America and internationally for almost two decades taking her to the Kennedy Center, The Aspen Ideas Festival, London's House of Commons, the U.S. Islamic World Forum and into hundreds of classrooms across the nation and internationally.

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James Anthony Tyler is the recipient of the 3rd Annual Horton Foote Playwriting Award and an inaugural playwright to receive a commission from Audible. His plays include “Artney Jackson” (World Premiere at Williamstown Theatre Festival, 2018 Edgerton Foundation New Play Award), “Some Old Black Man” (Berkshire Playwrights Lab at St. James Place and 59E59 Theaters) and “Dolphins and Sharks” (LAByrinth Theater Company and Finborough Theatre in London). He has an M.F.A. in Film from Howard University and an M.F.A. in Dramatic Writing from NYU. He is also a graduate of The Juilliard School's Lila Acheson Wallace American Playwrights Program.

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 2,100 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, 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 Mentee, McKnight Fellows in Playwriting, McKnight National Residency and Commission, McKnight Theater Artist Fellows.

Membership is open to all and provides 2,100 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, "Duat" 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.