

**Artists in Conversation: For Love of Theater**

**Thursday, March 30, 2023**

**Featuring: Idris Goodwin and Lynde Rosario**

**Julia Brown:** There we go, and now I'm happy to hand it over to Lynde Rosario. Thanks, Lynde!

**Lynde Rosario:** Thank you, Julia. Hi, everybody welcome. We begin, as always, by acknowledging that the Playwrights' Center is on the traditional land of the Dakota people, and the Anishinaabe people. We offer our gratitude for the work of Native and Indigenous activists, past, present, and future, who steward the land and challenge us to be partners rather than owners of it.

Thank you all for being with us here today. My name is Lynde Rosario. I use she/her/hers pronouns, and I am the director of fellowship programs at the Playwrights' Center and a dramaturg. With me today is Idris Goodwin. Idris, if you would come on camera and unmute to introduce yourself to our audience.

**Idris Goodwin:** Hello, audience and hello, Lynde. How are you? Hello, Julia B. I'm Idris Goodwin, he/him/his, and I am beaming in today from Colorado Springs, Colorado, the unceded territory of the Ute and Cheyenne peoples, alive and still very much flourishing in Colorado Springs.

**Lynde Rosario:** Thank you, Idris. Well, we're so excited.

**Idris Goodwin:** And I'm oh, did I tell my zodiac sign?

**Lynde Rosario:** Anything else you want to share.

**Idris Goodwin:** Libra.

**Lynde Rosario:** Me, too, two Libra's here with you today. Y'all, that's right.

**Idris Goodwin:** Leave him out. Leave him out. It's gonna be very balanced conversation.

**Lynde Rosario:** Let's hope, let's hope we find balance in our conversation today.

A quick reminder for all of you PWC fans out there that next month is our PlayLabs Festival featuring new work from Franky Gonzalez, AriDy Nox, Andrew Rosendorf and this year's cohort of brilliant playwriting fellows. Tickets are free and available on our website now, and they're already going fast, so get yours today.

But enough of what's coming up. What is here in front of us today? The event itself, For Love of Theater, and this event is hosted in partnership with the Dramatists Guild Foundation as part of the Roe Green Visiting Voices program. We are so grateful for this partnership with Dramatists Guild Foundation and you can find more information about them at [Dgf.org](http://Dgf.org). Definitely check out Dramatists Guild for all of you. They have great resources.

**Idris Goodwin:** Shout out to Dramatists Guild.

**Lynde Rosario:** Thank you. All right. Here we are, with our positivity, with our love of theater. Idris Goodwin came to me and said, I want to talk about things I love about theater and making theater in the world today. And so we each brought to the conversation today our top 5 things that we love about theater. I'm going to start us off with our number, my number 5, and we'll go back and forth, so we end with you, Idris, with your number one thing you love about theater.

After our conversation. We'll leave some time at the end for questions, but let's launch right in. I'm so excited to talk about what I love about theater.

**Idris Goodwin:** Beautiful, me too!

**Lynde Rosario:** My number 5 thing that I love about theater I have playfully titled "New Day, new work," and that to me signifies no two days are identical in theater. No show that you see on any given day in the run will ever be the same as the show it was the night before. I mean, you can try to build routine in theater, but for me, as someone who's worked in it most of my life, it never ever felt like a rut. There's something about dipping into other people's imaginations every single day when I open new plays and new work to read for me as a dramaturg, that I can never actually predict how any one day or any one piece of work, or anything I do, will affect the rest of my day or anyone around me, and that's exciting. I never have to worry about a boring life in theater. So that's my Number 5. What, Idris, what's your number 5 thing you love about theater?

**Idris Goodwin:** What? Yeah, well, here's how I'm gonna do mine. Actually, because these are not in any order of rank. But what I'm gonna do is I'm gonna pick mine based on things you said and like piggyback, because, like what you just got at is one of mine as well, which is that like a play, I mean so, and it's funny, because, as I was putting this together, like obviously as a playwright, and someone who, you know reps playwright mob pretty pretty hardcore there's things I love about plays, and then there's things I love about theater and I'm like, are they the same thing? Like meaning and but that sort of unanswerable question, is it a theater venue, or is it a practice? Is it a ritual, or is it you know? What is it? It's like yes, to all of it. It's just remind me like theater is a really, it's a living thing, you know, and I think you know all art is exist to reflect, but also to human beings apply meaning to it. Right like so like a novel, is useless unless someone's reading it, right? But I think more than any other art form, going on the record here, I think theater in and of itself, excuse me, is the most reliant on multiple people to engage with it. One could read a play alone, but it's a completely different experience when a group of people get together and read it at the same time versus if a group of people got together to

read a novel and passed off paragraphs, meaning that they're not in. It's like they're trading off. But like a play in and of itself can be read by group of friends at a table, or someone can dump \$300,000-500,000 into it and produce it, right? Or a community group can put it together for \$500. You know, and it's all the production values might be better in one place, but the text is the text, meaning like the play is still gonna say what it's saying, you know. And I like that about theater/plays in and of themselves. Now I understand –

Anyway. I'll stop there.

**Lynde Rosario:** Oh, no, please don't feel any urgency to stop. We love hearing you in conversation, but actually, everything you said just leads into my number 4. I will stick with my structure. I love structure.

**Idris Goodwin:** Like it. Let's go.

**Lynde Rosario:** Which I have titled “Introductions and Reintroductions,” and something you just said really sparked for me about meeting new people and having theater itself being this living thing, and we are all living things while creating theater, and so I don't think we can ever take our own humanity or human-centeredness out of the way we work. But I have found myself constantly introducing and reintroducing myself to people in new ways. For example, I work with a lot of what I consider multi-hyphenate artists, artists who are producers and directors and actors and playwrights, and all of those things do not come to us as compartmentalized human beings but as full human beings. And so it's exciting for me to think about the different ways we reintroduce ourselves to each other in different mediums. I've worked with one person as a playwright, and then again as an actor, and it was just such an incredibly different experience to see them embody totally different disciplines and roles, and I have found a lot of permission from the world of theater to reinvent self and to consider artists as a regeneration of self. And what does each new collaboration show me about myself and about the artists I work with, and something, yeah, something about this, like living thing, and how we apply meaning really struck me when you were talking. But yeah, introductions. And reintroductions.

**Idris Goodwin:** Hmm, hmm, yeah. Allow us to reintroduce ourselves.

Well, since you're talking about multi-hyphenate artists, that brings me to my number 4, which is one of the things I love about theater is the artist Brian Quijada, Brian Quijada. He is someone who theater sort of produced in a way that, you know, he's the youngest of 4 brothers. His older brother, Marvin, shout out Marvin Quijada is a really great theater artist, and Brian being the youngest, really looked up to his older brother and started, you know, just at a very young age, was like in shows, and you know, doing musical theater, and was going to school to become a teacher, and he and I met at the University of Iowa, and I heard him beatboxing, and I was like, Oh, I'm writing this play right now, and I need a character who could beatbox. So got him in this, in this play was my show *How We Got On*. Flash forward. It was in the Humana Festival in 2012.

Brian was in it. The industry came in and saw Brian, and now Brian, has, like 5, you know, bunch of seasons got announced today, and like Brian's in like a bunch of them. And so it's just been a thrill to kind of have a front seat to his sort of genesis. But yeah, to me, he just kind of represents all the things that I guess, I guess what I like about theater what I love about theater is that there's room in it for all different kinds of artistic expressions, you know, and Brian plays music, and he loops and he's funny and can sing. And I was and it's like he can be all those things. You know, he's writing and you know he can be all those things. And so, yeah, I love Brian Quijada.

**Lynde Rosario:** Yes, shout out all the artists you love here anytime you feel a desire. That's such a beautiful gift to the world, and if any of you out there don't know Brian Quijada, please look that person up, you're gonna wanna know them.

Great! I'll move along to my number 3 thing I love about theater, which is all about perspective. For me, theater has always found a way of reframing what I thought I knew, and the things that I came in thinking would be one way have always been shown to me to be another way, and to me, that's sort of that eye-opener that Aha! moment that's shows you something new, something you hadn't considered before, and great pieces of theater not necessarily even ones I've worked on, but ones that I've observed, and I've been witnessed to have all sort of shared knowledge and information with me in a way that creates learning and understanding of something that even if it challenges something, a notion I walked in with, feels like I can't shake that. There are moments in my career, in my life, where a piece of theater has drastically shifted my perspective in a way that no other real thing ever has. And not only did I sense it in myself, but as an audience member I sensed it was shared; we had a shared experience of shifted perspective in a way that felt so powerful. I have never had another entity, elements of this world other than theater do something and mass in that way in my presence.

**Idris Goodwin:** Yeah, yeah, real spill. Yeah, that to be flipped inside out by a night in the theater. It's kind of a, it's a pretty remarkable experience, and there's few things kind of like that.

And so with that, I'm gonna, my number 3, I'm gonna toss out, I love the staged reading, and most, many of my, you know, experiences where I was turned inside out as a professor, as a theater-goer, and has been just you know, hearing people just grab this text and a music stand and you know, saying, just like, let's go! Theater, despite certain efforts, sometimes by certain places and folks – it's a humble form, and it should remain a humble form, and a lot of times when you see Hollywood actors who want to like go do some theater, you know it's because it's a measure of you can't fake it. You know, like, it's like sports. It's like, the whistle blows, like the game is on. The shot goes in, or doesn't you know? And it's a humble form, and it, I think, at its best, it reminds us of that. And at this moment, in time where we find ourselves as an industry, I think we're definitely being humbled, and I think a lot of us that are sticking through it, and weathering the slings and arrows are continuously humbled, but we remain because I think there's a sense in our understanding that, you know it's a humble form. It's an ancient, humble necessity of human experience.

**Lynde Rosario:** Completely agree.

**Idris Goodwin:** I've deviated from staged reading, I think. Maybe no, no, it's the same thing. I'm saying part of what I love about the stage reading is that it's a humble, it's a humble way of presenting work and a reminder.

Boom, done, definitely.

**Lynde Rosario:** Well, if you like the staged reading I have a Playwrights' Center just for you, like literally our bread and butter right?

**Idris Goodwin:** I know. Let's go. It's why I love it so much.

**Lynde Rosario:** Oh, that's wonderful! Great! Let's move along to our numbers here. We're creeping up to our Number One at a rapid pace

**Idris Goodwin:** Yeah, we are. I know

**Lynde Rosario:** So I'm gonna slow us down a bit with a story.

**Idris Goodwin:** Great. I love stories

**Lynde Rosario:** Don't we love a story? Well, my number 2 sort of plays into this story. Because my number 2 is the suspension of disbelief, and it's something, a phrase that I learned at a very early age that has fueled so much of my pedagogy and philosophy as not just a theater artist, but a human and it was about magic moments, and it was about understanding magic is real, and it was about understanding we can't always believe our lying eyes, and it was about recognizing that the things that we thought were impossible could be possible.

And I'll share a story. My first Broadway show. I was born in New York, so I would go to Broadway shows once a year, that was sort of our thing from a relative who cared. I was about 9 years old, and we saw *Peter Pan* on Broadway, not to date myself at all. Who knows when that show ran. We saw *Peter Pan* on Broadway, and when they lifted her up to fly across the audience. She spread fairy dust over that section of the audience. I, however, was not seated in that section. I was seated off to the side, which was still a fantastic seat, but my spoiled child self was destroyed, completely devastated, that I got no fairy dust that day.

And I went home, and the relative who had bought me this ticket found out that this was my experience, and later that week I received in the mail a letter from Peter Pan covered, filled to the brim with glitter and fairy dust, and that letter apologized to a young Lynde Rosario for missing her in that audience. After that no one could talk to me. I was completely insufferable. Peter Pan had wrote to me personally. I kept that fairy dust in a vile for years, and I was a theater kid for the rest of my life. There was that moment where I was like this fictional character wrote me a letter after I watched them fly. Impossible. How could it be? It was that

Aha! moment, that surprise, that oh my gosh! This is actually happening! It's real. It's not made up. It's real.

There have been so many plays as an adult that have still brought that up, that how? it's real! moment. And the suspension of disbelief, those 3 words just for me, they capture it, and they don't. They just can't. It's too big. That suspension of disbelief. And I remember those words – I heard them all through college, all through all my theatermaking education. And it's one of my favorite things about life is that people have the ability to suspend disbelief.

So that's my story.

**Idris Goodwin:** Yeah, yeah, that's a great story. Shout out Peter Pain. And it was Peter Pan. I mean, like there was nothing to, you know, like it really was Peter Pan who wrote you, like the real Peter Pan.

I love that story, and you got my mind going a bunch of different ways now. I think that that willingness to go on the, that willingness, it's like, people say, “paying attention.” It's the part about this that I'm like, this is a dialogue. There's this video clip kind of going around of somebody asking the musician Wynton Marcellus, for jazz musicians, do you care more about – is it about the player or the listener? And he says it's always about the listener, but the player is the first listener. And it just reminds me, though, that it is a dialogue, and, like the makers I think believe first, right, because I think what you got brought into was the world, right? And so like that actor as Peter Pan was writing you from that world as Peter Pan. How would this person in this world that I've been invited to and inhabit address this person who is also in this world, in the audience, and was engaging with you on that level, and that to me is like the beautiful thing that we're all going to agree to go together to this other world. And we're gonna do it at the same time.

You're also making me think of, and this is kind of one of my other loves. I'm gonna sneak in a sixth, just because I think that I'm special. So one of my love's obviously, in addition to being a Libra and beaming in from Colorado, I'm also the artistic director of Seattle Children's Theatre and TYA, theater for young audiences, has been something very important to me, and something I've been involved with as a playwright, as an artistic director at StageOne Family Theatre in Louisville for a couple of years, now StageOne, and I'm sorry now Seattle Children's Theatre. And what you remind me of in your story is, I think, the reason I love, and let me also say that I think TYA is actually multi-generational because kids don't go to theater by themselves. And like some adult, is taking them. But also there's plenty of like, you know, we get all sorts of people coming into the shows. You know what I mean, depending on the title right? So I think it's really, truly theater for everyone, right?

But the thing I love about young audiences in particular is, they are – trust like, if you do in your job right, like the level of belief that they will, they will willingly hand over, is so sort of unfiltered and uncut and honest, and they're just ready. Like they got their hand, they are ready. They got their hands on the railings, and they're like, let's go. Let's go on this roller coaster, and I

just think that is like just such a gift if you're a theatermaker, it's like something like they're honoring you by giving you that. And it's like a huge responsibility to, I don't know, to honor that, you know this, their attention they're giving you. But more than their attention, right, like their willingness to participate, right.

So, yeah, I share in that love, for sure.

**Lynde Rosario:** I find that young audiences tend to be the most honest audiences. (Laughs) they're the ones who are like, If I didn't buy it, I don't buy it.

**Idris Goodwin:** But here's what's beautiful about them, right? They come ready to buy it. There is no cynicism, maybe, like when you get in like 12 and up sometimes.

**Lynde Rosario:** Yeah.

**Idris Goodwin:** But you know it's babies, a play for babies. But you know when you're talking about like third, fourth, fifth grade, like they're like, let's go. What are we doing? Let's get it. And then, if it lets them down, then it's like, well, you messed up the dismount. Yeah, like, you got to start over, but they come ready to have a good time. They're ready. They come in the door ready, you know. No one, you know. That's that's a big responsibility. And it's a gift.

**Lynde Rosario:** It is. Yeah, 100%. The people who come ready, I mean, like, for me, I grew up to be one of those people you know. I started as a child, seeing theater with adults bringing me, and then, as an adult, decided to bring myself and find the other humans who decided to do the same thing.

And so I guess, yeah, I it was so easy for me to decide what my number one thing that I love about theater and making theater and being part of theater is, and that to me is always collaboration. I have always introduced myself as a professional collaborator, as someone who comes to all things, because to me collaboration is ephemeral. It's hyper specific. Only these humans in this room at this time could make this thing as it is, any other set of humans, you replace one element, it is drastically different. It is not the same thing, it is not going to look the same.

And just yesterday I believe, we had a conversation about a vibe, right? That vibe is so important. It is sacred. The vibe you create with your collaborators within the making of a collaboration for me, feels precious.

**Idris Goodwin:** Yeah.

**Lynde Rosario:** It is that thing to be protected, to be honored, and when you see it, when you feel it, you wanna hold onto it and take care of it. So it doesn't dissolve. So it doesn't go away.

But the nature of theater is that the next one will dissolve the current one, and so on, and so forth. And so again, like every time you see anything happening, it is only happening in that moment. Any other moment it would be a different thing.

**Idris Goodwin:** Yeah. Yeah, and that's like the thing about the humble piece for me. Right? It's like this run will end. You can only extend so many times like, and even when a show, you know, like a *Hamilton*, or something like that, you know, it's still not the same as the first, you know, as the one that started it all, right, like so all those other touring ones are they're all a little bit different, and the timing right like the moment of *Hamilton* versus the industry of *Hamilton*, you know, is, it's the same, but it's very it's very different. Yeah, that's like I was having a conversation with somebody recently about. They saw the *Death of a Black Salesman*. And he was just going on and on about it. He was just like he was like, because he's like a fan of the play right? And he was just like it, just, you know, just black people in it. Just made that play new for him again, and while I have my own opinions about that, I was like, that's dope, though, like, that's what's so cool about it is that, like these, the nature of the collaboration a time when it's done, what happened in the Zeitgeist, you know, last week, you know it affects the experience like, so the play is always – here it is. The play is always the same, but the people, we change, society change. Humans change. And so the play means something else. But the objects, still the same words, And that's what's so fly about it, and you know I tease, I talk about the glacial pace of theater all the time, but actually, the frequency at which all sorts of different kinds of plays are happening at multiple levels all the time across the country that you can go see a *Hamlet* or a *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, or a group of students doing *The Wolves*, or you know, church group doing *For Colored Girls*, or, you know, like it's all happening in the month of April, you know, and it's actually a lot more frequent than it may see, I think, for those in it. It seems like everything was so slow. But if you think about just the frequency at which, like, we can grab a play and say, we're doing this you know, and you know what, we're gonna do it again in five years. And but this time Lynde's gonna play Peter Pan, or you know, whoever.

Is that a thing? Do you act at all, Lynde? No aspirations?

**Lynde Rosario:** Oh, no! With all of those multi-hyphenate collaborators of mine, I live a very singular life in dramaturgy, but actually I find dramaturgy to be so expansive and fluid that it's never actually felt limiting in any way.

**Idris Goodwin:** Yeah, sure. Yeah, it's because I mean, would you say it's like, it's the process of ... for you, is it like the play itself? The text itself? Or is it the playwright? And what that, or director, and like what their particular take on the text is?

**Lynde Rosario:** Oh, I think it's all of those things. I actually very often will tell people I don't work with plays, I work with playwrights, and that's, you know, like they, one does not exist in my life without the other. And so because I very much only work with new work at this point. And so most of the plays have a living playwright attached to them. Someone, I can talk to someone who can talk to me, ask questions, have collaboration around a piece and because of my new work at the Playwrights' Center, the the sea of music stands that we live in here is just a



beautiful way again, to sort of live in that moment of collaboration and process without any pressure of products, without any sense of we must make our ticket sales or anything like that. You know, like, you know, you're an artistic leader who works in a producing house. So that's that's something that for me has always felt like a real gift to just live in process for however long it needs to. And for me, the development timeline is so individual to each artist that to put a schedule on it that seems all encompassing does not feel conducive to creating theater in my world.

**Idris Goodwin:** Wait. Am I supposed to be? Am I supposed to be tracking ticket sales?

**Lynde Rosario:** I hope not.

**Idris Goodwin:** Damn, maybe that's why everybody's mad at me.

**Lynde Rosario:** I hope that's not your role.

**Idris Goodwin:** (writing) Track ticket sales.

**Lynde Rosario:** I'm sorry to give you just another task on your endless to do list, Idris.

**Idris Goodwin:** Oh, my goodness! Well, so wait. You've exhausted your 5. You said your number one is collaboration.

**Lynde Rosario:** It sure is, that is my number one. If you did, I know you didn't put them any order, but if you hadn't!

**Idris Goodwin:** Okay. Well, I had too much cause I snuck a couple in. But I'm gonna go with what I'm going.

**Lynde Rosario:** Well, please, this is – what no, say them both! Do it!

**Idris Goodwin:** No, no, no, I'm good. No, no, no, we're good. We're caught up actually, because I this is my, this. Okay, yeah. So it's this one. And this is good. Because, like you deviated and told the whole story. So this, this is all tied together.

So I wanted to mix it up right. So I wanted to be like, oh, this is like, you know, the philosophical, but I also wanted, like some pronouns in there, too. I wanted to be like this particular play, or the stage reading right. So what I love about theater is the show *Passing Strange* and and it's for two reasons.

One is not necessarily personal, it's just sort of I love that that show exists in terms of how it's structured, in terms of how it sounds and the genesis of it. You know that it started as like a band with narrative songs, who was doing performances at Joe's Pub, and then a lot of smart dramaturgs like yourself got involved and helped, you know, turn that into a piece of theater, a

piece of musical theater. Whatever. But the band remains. It's still connected to its roots. They didn't sort of say, Okay, we're gonna like, adapt this. And it's gonna be like a living room. And you know what I mean. Like it's they maintain that. And because of that, it doesn't sound like other musicals. You know, there's like a you know, there's like a way musicals sound. Apparently there's like one college all the musical writers are going to. Respectfully, I'm just kidding. I'm joking.

Now on a personal level, why this show is important to me is because I had just left Chicago. I was in Chicago for 11 years, for 7 of those 11 years I was running a very small scrappy grassroots ensemble-based theater company called Hermit Arts that I found it with a group of friends of mine from from college, and just from the sort of scrappy Chicago art scene. And then I left Chicago and was trying to figure out, Okay, what kind of theatermaker am I gonna be now I don't have this group anymore? And you know, I was trying to like figure it out, and I got a little frustrated. And I quit. I was just like I'm done with plays, you know, because I'm a hyphenate person, too. So I was like, you know, have an interest in film and video, I was like way more into like making hip hop music at the time, you know, teaching and doing spoken word. So I was like, you know, I'm good on that, and then I saw *Passing Strange*, and it was I saw the video of it. It was the Spike Lee recording that he did when it was in its final weekend, or whatever. And I just like was just sort of arrested by like, oh, you can, it just showed me some other way like this is like another way. And then I wrote this play *How We Got On*, which sort of set off a whole different trajectory for my life, as like a theater maker, and where I started getting taken "seriously" as a playwright, and so I just love that show because it's a reminder, And I think this is the moment we're in right now, that like in a, you know, it's just like innovation. How necessary innovation is. You know I haven't had a chance to see *Strange Loop* yet, but I love that from what I hear about that show, like I just love that show like I love like, we just need these kinds of new things that are innovative and yet personal, and that are, of course, engaging with the past, and are sort of in a legacy, like nothing's truly new under the sun. But the way you put them together, like the intersections that you park at, you know. Like, okay, I'm gonna be at the intersection of this, you know, professional wrestling, and you know, identity politics and globalization. And we'll get chatting, right. And then it's like, Okay, I'm gonna do professional wrestling and you know Communism, and you know so I think I just love that preservation, innovation sort of nexus explosion that is always there's always potential for because of its collaborative nature, you know. I remember when I finally learned that a lot of those plays are read in "English" class that had stage directions in them where notes, we're like staging notes from the stage manager, so the stage manager would be like oh, this is what we did when we did *Our Town*, the *Our Town* premiere in 1930, whatever you know, and they just publish that. And so they're like put the glass over here, you know, and I was like, Oh, that's how you're supposed to do a play. It says right here in in the captions puts, in there's a list of all the props from the show, and it's like no, that was a manifest from one voyage. But you don't have to do it that way. You can feel free to ignore these things.

That's the other thing. I'll just throw this out. A little honorable mention. So the unsung hero of theater, which is the stage directions, Shout out, shout out stage directions!

So the humblest of humble forms. The easily ignored. Yet, you know there's so much possibility. Shout out Sarah Ruhl and Paula Vogel for encouraging a whole generation of playwrights to write tidal waves, washing casts off of sets and stuff like that.

**Lynde Rosario:** Yeah, with the most famous “Exit pursued by a bear,” “Enter Joshua, on the back of an eagle.”

**Idris Goodwin:** Let's go.

**Lynde Rosario:** Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Love a stage direction. Who doesn't?

**Idris Goodwin:** Well!

**Lynde Rosario:** That's great. It's a challenge. I also think, like there's those stage directions that feel like, Oh, this was someone's vision.

**Idris Goodwin:** Yeah.

**Lynde Rosario:** And then there are stage directions that feel like this was someone's challenge to the next artist.

**Idris Goodwin:** Yeah, it's a fine line, that's what I'm saying. They're misunderstood. But you know, who really doesn't love stage directions? It's like modernist directors didn't like them. All the modernists. All the people who got me in the game are like, just cut all this crap. Just all dialogue. And I was like, Okay, and then I once I got into the machinery, it was just like what's happening? Where are they? I don't know what's going on I'm like, but I – Sven told me not to put any extra! It's always a guy named Sven. So anyway.

**Lynde Rosario:** I mean, learning is unlearning. Right, learning is always unlearning.

**Idris Goodwin:** That's true. That's true. Learning is always unlearning. Real spill. Well, that's it. That's a great list, Lynde. That's a great list.

**Lynde Rosario:** That's a great list, Idris. Yeah, that's fantastic, and add as many more as you want as we go along. I will remind our attendees that we have a Q&A button, and so if you just click that button at the bottom of your Zoom window, the lovely Julia Brown will be able to share your questions directly with us. I will read aloud what she shares and we will just sort of address them together. How about that, Idris?

**Idris Goodwin:** Rock and roll. There's some questions in the chat here, though, too.

**Lynde Rosario:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, I'm gonna – the ones that Julia picked. I know it's – Julia does such a good job of streaming them for us so that we don't have to sort of scroll up and down.

**Idris Goodwin:** Oh, okay. Okay. I see nothing, I see nothing.

**Lynde Rosario:** I'm gonna say them. You don't have to see anything. I'm gonna say them out loud right now.

We already have one. Great! This one is, how do you connect with what inspires you? And how do you connect back to those things when you're stuck?

**Idris Goodwin:** Hm. How do you connect with those things that inspire you? And what do you, and how do you reconnect when you're stuck?

**Lynde Rosario:** Yeah.

**Idris Goodwin:** Hmm. I like this question a lot. I think, you know this, the – So there's this great. So Rick Rubin, the famous producer, brought us some great Johnny Cash albums, Run-DMC, the like, he wrote this book about creativity, and so I saw this clip of him talking about – you know that thing where, you're like, you have an idea, and then, like 6 weeks later, you find somebody else is doing it? You know, and you're like mad about it. Or you feel like they “stole” it, whatever, depending on your level of paranoia, right. But really, what that's about is like, a) you weren't the only person that that was shown, but someone was in a place where they could grab it and plant it; and sometimes we're shown these things, and we're just not ready for them yet, we're not ready to grab them yet. So in terms of how do I engage with things that inspire me, it's like I'm constantly inspired, or whatever the opposite of, or just discuss it to the point of action. Yeah, I take it. And I literally just write it out like, just that. That act of honoring that thing by writing it down it's a big deal. It's a big step.

And then your inspirations will usually mutate into a question and a pursuit, and then you start, and then you go on a journey, and it may become a play or a song, or it may be something you just let go of, and don't do anything with but yeah, I think it's to see it, to see that thing, and to bring it in your house, you know, to let it in out of the cold, and give it a seat by the fire, and ask it questions.

In terms of like being stuck, yeah, I don't know about that one. I'm at a place in my career, I'm like, really, on my like, I'm really on my like – it's all the flow. And so I don't really, I don't believe in Stuck. I just don't. I just think you're only stuck if you allow yourself to be stuck, you know what I'm saying?

**Lynde Rosario:** I do.

**Idris Goodwin:** Cause. Sometimes it's, sometimes it's exhaustion, or you're just hungry, or you're annoyed or you're wearing the wrong shoes, or whatever like. Or you're not sure and you're not confident or you just don't know what choice to make, but that doesn't mean you're necessarily stuck. It just means you're on a fork, you know? and you gotta make you gotta make a decision, you know, and that's the gig. That's the job. You gotta make a decision, and you

might not feel good about it. But you gotta make one. Or else nobody gets to have any birthday cake.

**Lynde Rosario:** Everyone wants birthday cake. No, I think that's great. Yeah. I really resonate with that sort of understanding of not a vision that is only held by one, but that may be part of a larger Zeitgeist, and you don't know how your idea got into someone else's head other than the universe is putting it into many heads, and who has yeah, to your point, the ability to grab it in that moment.

**Idris Goodwin:** I'll say this years ago this just happened years ago, and I have witnesses. I was gonna write this play of *Huck Finn* from Jim's perspective, and my wife was just on me constantly about it. But I had started reading *Huck Finn* again, and I was like I can't go here. It's like too many N words, flying around. I'm not feeling this right now. And flash forward. Maybe about a month or two ago, Percival Everett got this obscene amount of money (Shout out Percival Everett) to write a novel of *Huck Finn* from the Jim's perspective. And my wife was like, You could of! And I was like, I threw it back. You know, I caught this fish. I didn't want to scale it and gut it, and saute it in a pan with butter and lemons. I just threw it back and I'm second. I don't want to go through all that. No fish guts for me today. You know. I took a picture with it, but I, you know, I let Percival get that one, you know. And he's gonna do a better job probably.

**Lynde Rosario:** What a great story. Yeah, no, I love that story. That is wild.

**Idris Goodwin:** It's wild.

**Lynde Rosario:** And yeah, you sort of, you look back. And it's something – to me stuck is also about forgetting how you got there, right, like for me, moving stuck is really about figuring out what you're not, what's keeping you from moving forward. And so I think to your point, asking questions, or like recognizing that maybe I just don't want to – maybe that's a real good reason just to put that away and move forward. But yeah, that's great. Thank you for sharing that.

See, we have a couple more questions here from Asher. Asher asks, do either of you have any favorite recent theatrical suspension of disbelief experiences?

**Lynde Rosario:** Great question.

**Idris Goodwin:** It is a great question.

**Lynde Rosario:** Idris, can you think of anything recent? I mean, I had a childhood one. I can think more recently.

**Idris Goodwin:** This is not that recent, but it's one I come back to all the time, and also like, unfortunately, you know, it's like that movie *The Prestige* you know, where they're like watching each other's magic acts. Like it's harder for me, unfortunately, because I just know how it – like I

appreciate it, like I appreciate the craft and I'm a great, I am a great audience member. Especially for theater. I sit up close. I laugh, I give it up. I do my job.

But the example I talk about all time is, and this was actually a big teaching moment for me or a learning moment for me. It was when I saw Cirque du Soleil. I was down in Orlando, where my parents live. And they took me and my wife Felicia, to see Cirque du Soleil. And you know they got the trapeze artist. They got, you know all the stuff and the sort of "clown" element of it was this, like lunch lady, kind of character, and it was kind of like they were doing like kind of a Frog Prince kind of thing, and the frog was represented by just this little beam of light, and it would move, and it would, and they'd have rabbit sounds and there's this little pantomime. And she accidentally steps on the frog, and the whole audience gasps! They put so much into that little beam of light. It's just a woman stepping on a beam of light, but we were like, right? And that moment was just like, taught me a lot about humans, and like how we, what we project is, how we project and how this again, our willingness to go. Our willingness to put it together. Okay, that's supposed to be okay. Got it. Okay, I get it. I'm in on it, like they, you know, we wanna be in on it. It's like, Okay, got it? That's the frog. And you know I got it. That's my favorite yeah, has not been topped yet, has not been topped yet.

**Lynde Rosario:** Yeah, yeah, that sounds incredible. But even just that, right? Everyone knows what it is, but we have all collectively agreed. It is something else, and the moment you do something to that belief there's instant response.

I had a similar – I had worked on a devising piece, so I knew how it was built. You're right, like, you know, when you build it, what's going to happen. And there was one performance of it where this particular actress was so – It was like I was seeing her for the first time, and I had watched her rehearse it. I knew exactly what was happening, and she showed us a long piece of fabric that got constructed into a bundle that looked like a baby, and she dropped it.

**Idris Goodwin:** Hmm!

**Lynde Rosario:** Everyone, including myself, who knew that was just a bundle of fabrics.

**Idris Goodwin:** Yeah, but it's not just a bundle of fabric.

**Lynde Rosario:** We all like grabbed each other. It was just that moment we were like, No, not the baby!

**Idris Goodwin:** In the world, in the world that we've all agreed that we're gonna participate in, it's a baby.

**Lynde Rosario:** Yeah.

**Idris Goodwin:** And you were grieving the baby in the world that you signed on for, you know? It's like when you play video games. You know, it's like, I died! Yeah, yeah, I love that.

**Lynde Rosario:** That's cool.

**Idris Goodwin:** It's great!

**Lynde Rosario:** Totally. We have a question from Thomas. Thomas asks, The stage reading was mentioned. What happens when you can't find a group or a number of people who will participate and provide true feedback?

**Idris Goodwin:** I don't know that I understand what true feedback is.

**Lynde Rosario:** Well, let's start with the first part. What do you do when you can't find some group of people?

**Idris Goodwin:** Why can't you find a group of people?

**Lynde Rosario:** Maybe you don't live in a place that's very populated. I have to say that the folks that have shied away from sort of this technology, this, like, Hey, we don't need geography, like to live in the same place to do something together, have had less success in or or greater challenges I should say, in sort of the that, like connecting with folks who may be like minded, who might not be geographically located right by you. I understand how incredibly valuable it is to share space, especially after being denied the ability to share space for however many, however long it was for us who live alone in the pandemic to really feel comfortable doing that again. And I have to say that I found an incredible amount of connection by just reaching out and saying, Can we all just get in a Zoom room?

**Idris Goodwin:** Yeah, yeah.

**Lynde Rosario:** Hey? I'm doing this thing, and if everyone's around when I'm doing this thing and you are interested in these types of things, check it out. Come, join me, stay on camera like let's have a conversation, and and maybe it's not exactly as you want it to be, but I have often found extreme success in sort of taking out the way it "you think it's going to be" or like the "it should be" like this, or it "should" feel or look a certain way and open your mind a little more to how many different ways can this go? How wide can my net be thrown? You know, that sort of expansive thinking.

**Idris Goodwin:** Yeah. And my sort of responses to the pieces of the question. You know I wasn't trying to be flippant. I was really like asking in a way of like, I mean, you must, like it's a how bad do you want it thing. Like, you must make it so. You must go after it. You must find the writer's group. You must. We live in marvelous times. The internet. You know, you have to go after it. If you want to do this, if you want to write in this form, you gotta have folks show. You gotta have people, and you gotta Malcolm X it. It's like, by any means necessary, like you gotta do it. You gotta do it. Go to the community.

I often do this thing of, I do the like I think back to times where I was living in certain places where I didn't have a community right? And I was thinking about like what I would do now if I knew what I would do now if I knew what I knew then, and one of the things I would have done is I would have gone to every high school that had a drama club or a drama program, you know and been like, Hey, I'm a playwright in your community, and I wanna know, like, would you be interested in me working with your students? You know I have a play I wanna work. You know what I'm saying, like, you gotta humble yourself and just and go after it like I need this. And I need to hear my words said, and I need to know what you felt in order for me to know what I got, or you know, or it is the Zoom thing.

I mean, you know one of the things I actually like about Facebook is, there is an affinity group for everything. You know, my son, we discovered my youngest son is a sensory seeker. Yeah, sensory processing challenges; there's a sensory processing parents group on Facebook. You know, as I've been living in two places trying to do this Seattle-Colorado thing until we can fully move, and as a way to try to get to know the community more, I'm on like four different like Seattle theater artists like groups, you know. And so you just gotta go after it, you gotta go after it.

**Lynde Rosario:** Thank you. I completely agree with that. And I think there is sort of that self motivation that really comes into play here. So I really appreciate you naming that.

We have a few more minutes left, and I see we have another question come up. This question, How do you approach writing about life experiences or cultural contexts that are different from your own in a responsible way? As the playwright in the room, Idris, I would love to hear your thoughts on writing responsibly.

**Idris Goodwin:** I don't know. There's no formula, you know, you'll know when, you'll know it when you know. I mean, I think characters – there's this thing around like character versus a characteristic, right? Or an attribute. And I think we've in our desire to increase representation, which is very necessary, we've sort of over-emphasized cultural identity as a characteristic or an attribute right, like, who your parents were and who their parents were, is not a – that's not a characteristic, you know. That's DNA stuff. Who you are is who you are, you know, and who you are is what you do or what you don't do, or you know, or what you want or what you don't want, you know like that's who you are.

And so for me I start with, Is this a character in pursuit or resistance? And all that other stuff kind of falls into place. I mean obviously, I think people should write from the well of what they know or what they're willing to learn. I think you have to kind of immerse yourself, but also, I think you gotta go for it and have a little courage and be willing to say, you know, I think I got that wrong.

I mean, I wrote a play, a really big big play that was about westward expansion, and I'm writing about people in the 1850s, different sort of Indigenous communities, Mexican expats, you know Black Mormons, you know, and I did a lot of research, and shout out the very wise dramaturg



Laura Brueckner, who helped me sift through all that material and shout out the wonderful director May Adrales who also helped me and everybody at Oregon Shakespeare during that time who helped me. But I gotta tell you like, I don't, I was uncomfortable. I'm still uncomfortable with what I tried to bite off in that, and I don't know that I would do something like that again. I just, I felt the responsibility was too big. It was too big, and I just know there's no way I'm going – And don't get me wrong, like, you know, it's – you know. I do this for real. But, so I just think it's a touch and go thing. It's a trial and error thing, you know.

Someone will always inevitably think you got it wrong, and sometimes you should honor that and make adjustments, and sometimes you gotta just stick to your guns and be like, I feel you, but that's not my experience of this. And you know other folks have had a different experience with it, and it just is what it is, you know. And listen. I've written. I'm not Muslim. I've written Muslim characters. I've written Black Muslim characters, so I know the Black part, and I've had to kinda learn the other part. But I've had to learn the experience of being a Black Muslim meaning like I'm not trying to speak for all you know, people of that enormous faith tradition of which there're millions of people.

So I think, but I think that's the gig. I mean, the gig is human experience, and no one wants – I mean, like if you're just writing this is another play about a bald-headed 45-year-old, who likes hip hop too much. Yet another one!

**Lynde Rosario:** That's so important. Yeah. And you talked earlier about the necessity of representation and I think that so many new plays create pathways for representation, and the even the act of creating something that is diverse or not part of your lived experience is always sort of an act of humility as well as to, and everything we talked about earlier around shared understanding, learning, perspective – these are all things that I think many artists sort of bring into their process in a way to create authenticity, but also understanding.

So thank you, Idris. I see we are just coming up at the end of our time. Are there sort of any final words for our attendees, Idris? Love of theater, anything you want to share before we say goodbye to our audience this evening?

**Idris Goodwin:** Is there anything I wanna share or is there anything they wanna share?

**Lynde Rosario:** Of course.

**Idris Goodwin:** No, no, I'm not. I thought I was just asking for clarity. Were you asking them if they had anything else to share?

**Lynde Rosario:** I am asking you if there is anything you want to leave these folks with as sort of parting words around the love of theater. How you love theater, your inspiration, anything at all!

**Idris Goodwin:** Just I wanna thank everybody for you know, choosing to gift us time on this, and I assume that everybody here has been reflecting in their own way about this this practice, and

you know we've lost a lot of people in the field, and we're losing theaters weekly, theater venues. But this thing is going to live if we continue to show up for it. I mean, that's like we are. We are theater.

So you know there's a lot of clickbait articles weekly about the death knell, and it's like I'm not dead, you're not dead, these 40 something people here are not dead, and all of us are theater. So it's like at the beginning of Mos Def's *Black on Both Sides* album, he's like, you know. He talks about like people, I say, what's up with hip hop, you know what's going on with hip hop, where's hip hop going and he goes, you know. Hip hop is is what, you know, it's us. It's like, if we, if we're thugged out, hip hop's gonna be thugged out. If we're smoked out, hip hop's gonna be smoked out, you know. So I take a lot of empowerment from that idea.

**Lynde Rosario:** Thank you. Thank you, Idris. Yes, thank you to everyone who attended. We all are theater. Thank you again. And, Julia, do we know if this will be transcribed? I believe it will be available later. Thank you.

**Julia Brown:** Yes, it will!

**Idris Goodwin:** I'm so glad to know that my bad Mos Def impression is going to be just transcribed for history and future generations to enjoy. That is one of the great thrills of my career.

**Lynde Rosario:** Thank you. Thank you, Idris. Thank you, everyone, for joining this Artists in Conversation, and we hope to see you again soon. Maybe next month at PlayLabs. Thanks, everybody. Have a good night.