PLAYLABS
FESTIVAL
THE 37TH ANNUAL

OCTOBER 19–25, 2020

Nora Montañez and the cast Pan Genesis by Marvin González De León in movement created by Pedro Pablo Lander, presented in PlayLabs 2019. Photo by Paula Keller.
Fatimah, a recently widowed matriarch, is determined to have it all. She wants the opportunity to set right a 10-year mistake by inviting Jamillah, her queer daughter, to return home after a long forced absence. Can she have it all when Abdullah, her son, is driven to fight against this decision even though he loves his mother deeply? *Room Enough (For Us All)* is centered on a contemporary African-American Muslim Family coming to terms with how to treat queerness up against long-standing ideals and faith.

When a son reveals that he is HIV positive, his mother must decide how far her unconditional love extends. In this tender autobiographical play, Harrison David Rivers explores how people can change and how love can evolve.

In 1898 California, a pregnant Eddie Loi faces deportation. In 1998 Miami, her grandson Braulio accidentally summons her spirit while patrolling the border. In 2063 somewhere on the ocean, their descendants try to survive the climate crisis. An epic multigenerational tale of sacrifice, love, and survival that spans 150 years in 90 minutes.

In a re-imagining of *The Oresteia* set in an art museum in the near future, an audio tour guide voice artist is haunted by the desire to kill her husband. Is it possible to seek justice instead of revenge? In this formally inventive work, Erin Courtney invites us to see the horror behind the brutality of our current justice system and to invite change through collective imagination.

Join us for an evening of scenes from plays in progress by our 2020-21 Playwrights’ Center fellows and mentees: Cristina Florencia Castro, Gracie Gardner, Marvin González De León, JuCoby Johnson, Candrice Jones, Shannon TL Kearns, Nora Montañez, Savannah Reich, Tylie Shider, and Katie Ka Vang.
We are embracing what it means to create theater during a pandemic and moving the entire process online. While we will miss those personal moments of connection by being in space together—from the warm greetings in the lobby to that collective gasp at a play’s surprise moment in the theater—we’re grateful that this year, geography will no longer limit who can experience the festival. Whether you’re joining us from across the country, around the world, or just down the street in the Twin Cities, we’re excited you’re here with us to celebrate these powerful new stories.

At Playwrights’ Center, we lead with our values, and this year we are creating even more paid artist jobs by expanding the festival. Four playwrights are currently developing their new work, partnering with the creative team of their choosing, receiving two full weeks of writing and rehearsal time, and—as always at Playwrights’ Center—being equitably compensated for their time and their artistry. Over the course of the festival, nearly 70 paid opportunities for theatermakers are being created.

At the heart of PlayLabs is the holistic incubation of new work, and this year is no exception. We are thrilled to bring you these incredible new plays by Erin Courtney, Jessica Huang, Daaimah Mubashshir, and Harrison David Rivers. Whether beautifully written family dramas or relevant reimaginings of classic tales, each story told is both unique and universal. You may see yourself in people you’ve never met or find new laughter and understanding in characters you’ve known.

These stunning plays accomplish what all good stories seek to do: bring us closer to our human connection with one another and guide our path to a more equitable, empathetic, and imaginative world.

So gather your friends or family (if you’re able to in a socially distanced way) around the Zoom screen. Sit back. Get comfortable. And experience these new plays along with the rest of the world for the very first time.

On behalf of the PlayLabs artists, the Playwrights’ Center staff and board, and the 2,200+ playwright members we serve each year, thank you and enjoy!

Jeremy B. Cohen
Producing Artistic Director

Robert Chelimsky
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Begin, Begin, Begin Again
by Erin Courtney

"I began this play with rage, and the question: 'When a system is broken and injustice is rampant, how can rage be channeled into creating systemic change?'”
— Erin Courtney

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Actors
Chloe Armao / Chorus A
Sun Mee Chomet* / Museum Guard
Carolina Đỗ* / Chorus B
Arcadia German / Stage Directions
Rachel Leslie* / Chorus Y
Tyler Michaels King* / Pre-Verbal Tour Guide
Miriam Schwartz / Sister
Sandra Struthers* / Audio Recording Voice Actor
Sally Wingert* / Chorus X

*Appearing through an Agreement between this theatre, the Playwrights’ Center, and Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

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Her BA and MA from Brown University and is a co-artistic director of and a Minnesota State Arts Board Artist Initiative Grant. She received TCG Future Leader Grant, National Endowment for the Arts support, Festival in Prague. Hayley is a recipient of the Ruth Easton Fellowship, Red Eye Theater, South Coast Repertory Theater, and the Nine Gates Pillsbury House, People’s Light, Public Theater, Playwrights’ Horizons, Theater Company, Marin Theater Company, Minnesota Jewish Center, History Theatre, Flea Theater, The Kitchen, Labyrinth Edinburgh Fringe, Ellis Island, Guthrie Theatre, HERE Arts

including at Cherry Lane Theatre, Curious Theatre Company, Edinburgh Fringe, Ellis Island, Guthrie Theatre, HERE Arts Center, History Theatre, Flea Theater, The Kitchen, Labyrinth Theater Company, Marin Theater Company, Minnesota Jewish Theater, People’s Light, New Dramatists, O’Neill Theater Center, Pillsbury House, People’s Light, Public Theater, Playwrights’ Horizons, Red Eye Theater, South Coast Repertory Theater, and the Nine Gates Festival in Prague. Hayley is a recipient of the Ruth Easton Fellowship, TCG Future Leader Grant, National Endowment for the Arts support, and a Minnesota State Arts Board Artist Initiative Grant. She received her BA and MA from Brown University and is a co-artistic director of Red Eye Theater.

Erin Courtney (playwright) is writing a musical, The Tattooed Lady, with Max Vernon. Her play Ann, Fran, Mary Ann is a commission from Playwrights Horizons. Her Obie award-winning play, A Map Of Virtue, produced by 13P and directed by Ken Rus Schmoll, was described by the New York Times as “one of the most terrifying plays of the past decade.” Her play I Will Be Gone, directed by

Hayley Finn** (director) is the Associate Artistic Director at the Playwrights’ Center, where she works with some of the nation’s leading and emerging playwrights and in her tenure has produced close to 1,000 workshops. Hayley is a director, writer, producer, and advocate for playwrights and new work. She has directed and developed work nationally and internationally including at Cherry Lane Theatre, Curious Theatre Company, Edinburgh Fringe, Ellis Island, Guthrie Theatre, HERE Arts Center, History Theatre, Flea Theater, The Kitchen, Labyrinth Theater Company, Marin Theater Company, Minnesota Jewish Theater, People’s Light, New Dramatists, O’Neill Theater Center, Pillsbury House, People’s Light, Public Theater, Playwrights’ Horizons, Red Eye Theater, South Coast Repertory Theater, and the Nine Gates Festival in Prague. Hayley is a recipient of the Ruth Easton Fellowship, TCG Future Leader Grant, National Endowment for the Arts support, and a Minnesota State Arts Board Artist Initiative Grant. She received her BA and MA from Brown University and is a co-artistic director of Red Eye Theater.

Chloe Armao (Chorus A) is a Minneapolis-based actor. Some of her credits include: Significant Other (Minnesota Jewish Theatre Company); Swede Hollow Ghost Sonata (Sod House Theater & Black Label Movement); The Wolves (Jungle Theater); Trouble in Mind, The Crucible (Guthrie Theater); While You Were Out (Red Eye Theater); Skin Deep Sea (Workhaus Collective); King Lear, Merry Wives of Windsor (Nebraska Shakespeare); Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, As You Like It, The Tempest (Nebraska Shakespeare – On Tour); Fully Committed (St. Croix Festival Theater); and Inconvenient Truths (Edinburgh Fringe Festival). Chloe is a graduate of the University of Minnesota/Guthrie Theater BFA Actor Training Program and a proud teaching artist.

Kaitlyn Boyer (apprentice stage manager) is a performer and teaching artist who was born and raised in the Twin Cities. She most recently performed in Actors Theatre of Louisville’s 44th Annual Humana Festival of New American Plays as a member of their Professional Training Company. She is currently a teaching artist with NorCal SOTA School of the Arts, a Sacramento-based theater company. Some of her credits include: Deux Femmes on the Edge de la Revolution at the Playwrights’ Center; Cyrano de Bergerac at the Guthrie Theater; FLEX, Are You There?, and A Christmas Carol at Actors Theatre of Louisville; Seven Guitars, Titus Andronicus, and In The Blood at the University of Minnesota/ Guthrie Theater BFA Actor Training Program. For more information, visit kaitlynboyer.com.

Sun Mee Chomet* (Museum Guard) is a Twin Cities-based actor. She is proud to call the Playwrights’ Center one of her artistic homes. Sun Mee has worked at Lincoln Center’s LCT3, Hartford Stage, Cincinnati Playhouse, Kansas City Repertory, Syracuse Stage, Guthrie Theater, Ten Thousand Things Theater, Penumbra Theatre, Jungle Theater, Theater Mu, Mixed Blood Theater, Pillsbury House Theatre, Park Square Theater, among others. Recognition includes 2019 McKnight Theater Artist Fellowship, 2019 Decades Awards (Star Tribune, City Pages), 2015 TCG Fox Fellowship, and 2015 Lucille Lortel nomination for Outstanding Featured Actress. Sun Mee is thrilled to be one of the many actors ushering new voices into the canon and sustaining the continued creation of theater during this challenging time.

Chloe Armao (Chorus A) is a Minneapolis-based actor. Some of her credits include: Significant Other (Minnesota Jewish Theatre Company); Swede Hollow Ghost Sonata (Sod House Theater & Black Label Movement); The Wolves (Jungle Theater); Trouble in Mind, The Crucible (Guthrie Theater); While You Were Out (Red Eye Theater); Skin Deep Sea (Workhaus Collective); King Lear, Merry Wives of Windsor (Nebraska Shakespeare); Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, As You Like It, The Tempest (Nebraska Shakespeare – On Tour); Fully Committed (St. Croix Festival Theater); and Inconvenient Truths (Edinburgh Fringe Festival). Chloe is a graduate of the University of Minnesota/Guthrie Theater BFA Actor Training Program and a proud teaching artist.

snem DeSellier (stage manager) is a multi-modal maker: deviser, designer, dramaturg, writer-poet, dancer, manager, and facilitator. They were born, raised, and graduated Hampshire College on Nipmuc and Pocumtuc land and are now based on the Dakota lands of Wahpekute and Anishinabewaki. snem has presented work in the Twin Cities with 20% Theatre Company, 9x22 Dance/Lab, Lightning Rod, Fresh Oysters Performance Research, Theatre Mu, Mixed Precipitation, as well as with the Playwrights’ Center where they served as an artistic and administrative apprentice 2019–20.
Carolina Đỗ* (Chorus B) is an actor, playwright, producer, and proud daughter of Vietnamese freedom fighters and refugees. She’s a community organizer and advocate for art that facilitates healing in marginalized communities. Her acting credits: Broadway: Linda Vista (u/s), Grand Horizons (u/s). NYC theater: Loading Dock, The Tank, New Dramatists, Naked Angels, The Flea. TV/Film: FBI: Most Wanted, Law & Order: SVU, Sideways Smile, Catfight, Queens The Series. Her play, My Mother’s Daughter, was a semifinalist for Space on Ryder Farm and a 2020 finalist for BRICLab. Co-founder of The Số Collective. BFA: Brooklyn College. Currently, she has projects screening at Austin Film Festival, Outfest, NewFest, and SXSW. @carolinakaydo; www.carolinado.com

Arcadia German (stage directions) is a California native and a recent graduate from the University of Minnesota/Guthrie BFA Actor Training program where some favorite roles include Masha (The Three Sisters), Clytemnestra (Electra), and Monica/Jesus (The Last Days of Judas Iscariot). Arcadia has also had the pleasure to be a Tap Dancing Bear/Ensemble (Cinderella-STC), Baby Blue (Marvelous Miss Marvel-Open Eye), Mary Bennet (Pride and Prejudice-STC), and many more. When not on the stage Arcadia loves photography, Dance, and writing plays of her own. She is ecstatic to join PlayLabs and continue to grow and learn about the magic world of playmaking.

Rachel Leslie* (Chorus Y) is a New York City based actor. Most recently she was in Harry Potter and the Cursed Child and is hoping to return whenever we get back to live theater! Rachel has done numerous shows in New York City and regionally. Some of her film and television credits include Billions, Difficult People, Alpha House, The Ticket, and Unforgettable. Rachel is a member of Quick Silver Theater Company and The Actor’s Center.
Tyler Michaels King* (Pre-Verbal Tour Guide) is a Twin Cities-based theater artist and improviser and is the Founding Artistic Director of Trademark Theater. He has worked and played with the Guthrie Theater, The Ordway, Theater Latté Da, Children’s Theater Company, Hennepin Theater Trust, History Theatre, Chanhassen Dinner Theatres, Illusion Theater, Live Action Set, and Artistry, among many others. Tyler is also a founding member of The Bearded Company. He holds the 2014 Emerging Artist Ivey Award, the Mark Twain Prize for Comic Performance from the Kennedy Center National ACT Festival, and was named “Artist of the Year” by City Pages. Tylermichaels.com

Miriam Schwartz (Sister) is a Seattle native and graduate of the University of Minnesota /Guthrie Theatre BFA Actor Training Program. Although she now resides in Portland, Oregon, she has been seen on many Twin Cities stages including the Guthrie Theater, Mixed Blood Theater, Minnesota Jewish Theatre Company, Artistry MN, and The One-and-On-

Sandra Struthers* (Audio Recording Voice Actor) (she/her or they/them) has performed locally with The Guthrie, Ten Thousand Things, CTC, Frank, Mixed Blood, and Pillsbury House, and regionally at Mint Theater, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, and Actor’s Theater of Louisville. Sandra also works as playwright, director, and teacher and holds an MFA from ART/Harvard.

Sally Wingert* (Chorus X) is an actor home-based in the Twin Cities. Over her nearly 40 years in the profession she has worked at numerous theaters here and across the country, the Guthrie, Theater Latté Da, Mixed Blood, Ten Thousand Things, Broadway, Yale Rep, ART, Asolo Rep, among others. New play development is one of the most thrilling things an actor can be a part of. It has never seemed more vital than now. Thank you, Playwrights’ Center.

The Playwrights’ Center, in partnership with Augsburg University, is offering online, accredited playwriting courses taught by today’s leading writers in the field, creating unparalleled arts education access for aspiring writer! Learn more at pwcenter.org/university-programs

*径路 Fellow Tylie Shider teaches Playwriting II at Augsburg University. Photo Paula Keller
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Social justice is at the heart of the Playwrights’ Center’s work. We strive for it by actively supporting equitable theater-making practices that shift the paradigm, uplifting unheard stories and sharing them with the world. With your support, the Center can provide the greatest diversity of artists with the time, tools, and space to tell their truths and reshape audiences’ perspectives.

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We start with the storytellers. The playwrights. The artists.

As we continue to meet the challenges of these times, the Playwrights’ Center seeks to reimagine what is possible in theater; both in this moment and beyond. Throughout our 2020–21 Season we are intensifying our efforts, investing even more deeply in creative process, arts education, and access to opportunity. We are working to amplify unheard voices and promote equitable spaces, allowing for the greatest diversity of artists to make plays around the world. Through additional fellowships and increased public programming, we are creating new channels of support for thousands of writers—from paid opportunities that will sustain playwrights and theatermakers, to expanded educational resources that will enhance online learning tools and connect university students from around the world. We are inspiring a whole new generation of theater artists. It all begins here.

Join us!

ARTISTS IN CONVERSATION

Building on our sold-out Public Discussion series from past seasons, Artists in Conversation offers a uniquely intimate look at playwrights and their process. Unlike the Center’s many scripted events throughout the year, these conversations offer audiences a chance to connect directly with writers, hearing artists’ thoughts on craft, the field, and the world through their own unfiltered words. Past conversations have featured acclaimed theater artists, including Migdalia Cruz, Lisa D’Amour, Daniel Alexander Jones, José Rivera, and Paula Vogel, among others.

Specific participants, topics, and dates will be announced throughout the year. Stay tuned!

IN THE LAB

New worlds require new ways. And the Playwrights’ Center is stepping up our support to meet this moment, launching a brand new online development and performance project called In the Lab.

Through this innovative program, three writers will develop wildly experimental new works, pushing the boundaries of form and content, and revolutionizing the way we experience stories.

TOMORROW WILL BE SUNDAY by Heather Raffo
CELL SURFACE by Dominic Taylor
VAPOR TRAIL by Ken Urban

Dates and times to be announced soon. Visit pwcenter.org for more information.

Meiyin Wang, Producing Director at The Ronald O. Perelman Performing Arts Center joins Philip Bither, McGuire Director and Senior Curator, Performing Arts at Walker Art Center for a sold-out Public Discussion. Photo by Josh Olson