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.
**Room Enough (For Us All)**

by Daaimah Mubashshir

Monday, Oct. 19 at 7 p.m. & Friday, Oct. 23 at 8 p.m.

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.

**Mother of Exiles**

by Jessica Huang

Wednesday, Oct. 21 at 7 p.m. & Saturday, Oct. 24 at 8 p.m.

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.

**Begin, Begin, Begin Again**

by Erin Courtney

Thursday, Oct. 22 at 7 p.m. & Sunday, Oct. 25 at 1 p.m.

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.

**Playwriting Fellows Showcase**

Friday, Oct. 23 at 5 p.m.

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 theaternmakers 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
Managing Director
ROOM ENOUGH (FOR US ALL)

by Daaimah Mubashshir

"Room Enough is a semi-autobiographical ode to my progressive mother. I was interested in exploring how queerness and Islam could function amicably in the same space. Also, I am interested in ways that grief, a powerful equalizer, can either make space for reinvention, as with Fatimah, or crystallize one's beliefs almost into a weapon, in Abdullah."

—Daaimah Mubashshir

Director

Ebony Noelle Golden**

Dramaturg

Otis Cortez Ramsey-Zöe

Stage Manager

Salima Y. Seale*

Apprentice Stage Manager

Ashe Jaafaru

Festival Producer

Hayley Finn

Associate Producer

Julia Brown

Actors

Serena Brook* / Jessica Graton

AJ Friday / Stage Directions

Melissa Mickens* / Nedra Jackson-Rasheed

Cara Ricketts* / Jamillah Rasheed

Namir Smallwood* / Abdullah Rasheed

Regina Marie Williams* / Fatimah Rasheed

*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.

**Member, Stage Directors and Choreographers Society
Daaimah Mubashshir (playwright) is based in New York City. Awards include a 2020-2022 WP Theater Lab Fellowship, 2019-2022 Core Writer Fellowship (Playwrights’ Center, MN), a 2018 Audrey Residency (New Georges), a MacDowell Colony Fellowship, a Foundation of Contemporary Arts Emergency Grant, and she is a proud alumna of Fire This Time Festival. Selected full length plays include *The Immeasurable Want of Light* (3 Hole Press), *Room Enough* (Fire This Time Festival, the Playwrights’ Center), *The Chronicles of Cardigan and Khente* (Soho Rep), and *Emily Black is A Total Gift* (New Georges).

Ebony Noelle Golden** (director) is an artist, scholar, and culture strategist from Houston, TX and currently based in Harlem. She devises site-specific ceremonies, live art installations, creative collaborations, and arts experiments that explore and radically imagine viable strategies for collective black liberation. In 2020, Ebony launched Jupiter Performance Studio (JPS) which serves as a hub for the study of diasporic black performance traditions. JPS is integral to the development of a five-part theatrical ceremony that will be developed and produced over the next three years with partners in Harlem, Brooklyn, Durham, and Ashfield, MA. In 2009, Ebony founded Betty’s Daughter Arts Collaborative, a culture consultancy and arts accelerator, that devises systems, strategies, solutions for and with education, arts, culture, and community groups globally. You can learn more about Ebony and her work by visiting bettysdaughterarts.com.

Serena Brook* (Jessica Graton) is so grateful to be a part of PlayLabs this year. Serena was an actor/announcer for 3 seasons of Live from Here/A Prairie Home Companion on National Public Radio. Theater credits: Guthrie Theater, Chanhassen Dinner Theater, 24 Hour Play Festival, New London Barn Playhouse, Cape Rep Theater. Off-Broadway: Dear Edwina, National Tour: Dr. Seuss’ How the Grinch Stole Christmas. Serena is also an established voiceover artist whose voice can be heard in national commercials. www.serenanbrook.com

Edwina, National Tour: Dr. Seuss’ How the Grinch Stole Christmas.

AJ Friday (stage directions) is a recent transplant from Seattle, WA where he achieved a Master’s Degree in the Fine Arts at the University of Washington. AJ is also a Guthrie Experience Alumni (c/o 2016; Guthrie Theater) and was last in Penumbra Theater Company’s Pipeline (as Xavier) and Frank Theater’s The Convert (as Chancellor).

Ashe Jaafaru (apprentice stage manager) is an actor, performer, writer, and creative idea-maker. She is involved in theater, film, and voiceover work in the Twin Cities and beyond. She creates art for liberation and continues to write imaginative stories.

Melissa Mickens* (Nedra Jackson-Rasheed) is an actress, writer, director, producer, and teaching artist based in Brooklyn happy to be making her PlayLabs debut. A proud member of Actors’ Equity Association, Melissa was last seen in the Private Theater’s production of Rocco, Chelsea... at HERE Arts. She has also appeared in productions at the Brick, JACK Arts, ARS Nova ANT Fest, Downtown Urban Theatre Festival, National Black Theatre, The Lark, Williamstown Theatre Festival, and the Hangar Theatre in Ithaca, NY. A NYU Tisch School of the arts graduate, Melissa is proud to be the program director of the Stella Adler Youth and Summer Shakespeare Programs as well as the Black Arts Institute Coordinator. Melissa is also the award-winning creator and producer of the web series, SHAMPAGNE, where she received the award for best web series at the Hip Hop Film Festival NY in 2016 and best original sitcom screenplay at the Miami Web Fest 2016. IG: @rocksolidmel

Otis Cortez Ramsey-Zöe (dramaturg) is a care worker, dramaturg, director, and theater arts educator. He is an Adjunct Instructor in Dramaturgy at Carnegie Mellon University and Lecturer in Women’s Studies at University of Maryland. He has developed new works at such institutions as Sundance Institute, Kennedy Center, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Playwrights’ Center, National New Play Network, Theater Alliance, The Classical Theatre of Harlem, and Arena Stage. He was a Lecturer of Theatre Arts at Howard University, Associate Artistic Director at banished? productions, Future Classics Program Coordinator at The Classical Theatre of Harlem, and Literary Manager at Center Stage.
Cara Ricketts* (Jamillah Rasheed) is an award-winning actress with a background in theater and has performed in Canada and the U.S. Theater credits include four seasons at the Stratford Festival, where she received the Best Actress award for her role in Pinter’s The Homecoming. On Broadway; Joan in Roundabout Theater’s Time and the Conways and Isabella in TFANA’s Measure for Measure. Her screen credits include Anne with an E, Orphan Black, and Titans. Video-games: Mickey in Far Cry New Dawn. Most recently, Cara received ACTRAs Outstanding Performance award for her portrayal of Mary LaCroix in Anne with an E.

Salima Y. Seale (stage manager) is a freelance stage manager based in the Twin Cities. Recent credits: neighbors (History Theatre), Nature (TigerLion Arts), How It’s Gon’ Be (Underdog Theater Company), benevolence (Penumbra Theatre), Hooded: or being black for dummies (Mixed Blood Theatre). She holds a BA from Macalester College.

Regina Marie Williams* (Fatimah Rasheed) is an actor/singer based in Minnesota. She received McKnight Theater Artist Fellowships at the Playwrights’ Center in both 2007 and 2017. Ms. Williams originated the role of Nina Simone in Christina Ham’s Nina Simone: Four Women and has performed it at The Kenny Leon True Colors Theatre, The People’s Light, and twice at Park Square Theatre in St Paul where the show was commissioned. She was last seen on stage as Mama in Chicago and as Bernarda Alba in The House of Bernarda Alba at Theatre Latté Da. Regina is a core member at Ten Thousand Things, a founding company member of New Dawn Theatre, and a proud Penumbra Theatre company member.

### THE RUTH EASTON NEW PLAY SERIES
December, 2020–April, 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 9, 2020</td>
<td>No Cure</td>
<td>Jake Jeppson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 13, 2021</td>
<td>Getting There</td>
<td>Dipika Guha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 3, 2021</td>
<td>This Much I Know</td>
<td>Jonathan Spector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 3, 2021</td>
<td>Pulp Vérité</td>
<td>Crystal Skillman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 7, 2021</td>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>Rhiana Yazzie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For Information And Tickets
pwcenter.org/ruth-easton-series

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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.

Make a gift and amplify vital storytellers today! pwcenter.org/donate
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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!

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