

## **Playwrights' Center's 2015-16 public season concludes with Ken Urban's "A Guide for the Homesick"**

(Minneapolis, MN—March 16, 2016)—On **Monday, April 4 and Tuesday, April 5 at 7 p.m.** the Playwrights' Center will present readings of Core Writer **Ken Urban's** new play "A Guide for the Homesick," the final play of the 2015-16 Ruth Easton New Play Series. The readings are at the Playwrights' Center, 2301 E. Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis, and are free, but reservations are encouraged. Reserve tickets at [pwcenter.org](http://pwcenter.org), [info@pwcenter.org](mailto:info@pwcenter.org) or (612) 332-7481.

In "A Guide for the Homesick," a young aid worker on his way home after a year in East Africa goes back to a shabby Amsterdam hotel room with a fellow American. The two strangers replay their pasts and confess their shared fear that they betrayed the people who needed them most.

Two actors play four roles: **Nate Cheeseman** and **Owiso Odera\*** (*\*Member of Actors' Equity*). Odera was seen recently in "The Piano Lesson" at McCarter Theatre Center and Twin Cities audiences will know him from Mixed Blood Theatre's "Stepping Out of the River at Dawn"; his television credits include "The Originals" and "Madam Secretary." **Dan Dukich** will join the workshop as sound design consultant, and **Jeremy B. Cohen** will direct.

Playwright Ken Urban says, "I decided to focus on the theme of homecoming because when I was interviewing the Doctors Without Borders volunteers, they all spoke about how they got so much training for going overseas, but they were not prepared for what happened when they returned home to New York—they felt ostracized and couldn't get back into their normal lives. Even small things, like friends complaining about going to the grocery store or problems with the subway, would make them very angry because they didn't have a place to vent and process what they had experienced. At the same time that I was doing those interviews, I started watching a number of documentaries about the rise of anti-gay and lesbian violence in Uganda and other countries in East Africa. Those two interests dovetailed together to become that first draft of 'A Guide for the Homesick.'"

"This is Ken's next play examining relationships between East Africans and Americans, following his beautiful 'Sense of an Ending,'" says Playwrights' Center Producing Artistic Director Jeremy B. Cohen. "His writing explores a range of experiences across the African diaspora, and leans into the thorny places inside and outside of this diaspora where sexual orientation, class, and gender intersect."

**Ken Urban** is a playwright and screenwriter based in New York. His plays have been produced Off-Broadway at Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, 59E59 Theatres, The Summer Play Festival at The Public, and Studio 42. He has developed new work at Playwrights Horizons, The Huntington, Williamstown Theatre Festival, and Donmar Warehouse (London). Recent productions include "A

Future Perfect” at SpeakEasy Stage Company in Boston, “Sense of an Ending” at Theatre503 in London and 59E59 Theatres in New York, and “The Awake” at Chicago’s First Floor Theatre. Awards include the Weissberger Playwriting Award, Huntington Theater Playwriting Fellowship, Headlands Artist Residency, Djerassi Artist Residency, Dramatist Guild Fellowship, and MacDowell Colony Fellowships. He is a Core Writer at the Playwrights’ Center. He wrote the screenplay for “The Happy Sad,” which screened internationally at over 25 film festivals, and is now available on iTunes and Amazon. His plays are published by Dramatists Play Service and Methuen. He plays in the band Occurrence and they will release their new album “The Past Will Last Forever” this fall.

**The Ruth Easton New Play Series** provides Playwrights’ Center Core Writers with 20 hours of workshop time to develop a new play in collaboration with top-notch actors and other theater artists, as well as two public readings, giving audience members a unique and immediate way to experience new work and a chance to be part of the creative process. Plays recently seen in the Ruth Easton New Play Series that have productions this theater season include Gabriel Jason Dean’s “Terminus” (The Vortex), Mona Mansour’s “The Way West” (Labyrinth Theater Company), Samuel D. Hunter’s “The Few” (Boulder Ensemble Theatre Company, CoHo Productions, Steep Theatre), and Idris Goodwin’s “The REALNESS: A Break Beat Play” (Merrimack Repertory Theatre).

All events in the Ruth Easton New Play Series are free and open to the public. Reservations are recommended; reserve your spots at [pwcenter.org](http://pwcenter.org) or by contacting the Playwrights’ Center at (612) 332-7481 or [info@pwcenter.org](mailto:info@pwcenter.org).

###

*Photos of the playwright and previous Ruth Easton New Play Series readings are available at [pwcenter.org/media-room](http://pwcenter.org/media-room) or by contacting Jessica Franken at [jessicaf@pwcenter.org](mailto:jessicaf@pwcenter.org)*

## THE 2015-16 RUTH EASTON NEW PLAY SERIES

December 7 and 8 at 7 p.m. .... *Scientific Method* by Jenny Connell Davis  
January 11 and 12 at 7 p.m. .... *ENCYCLOPEDIA* by Rachel Jendrzejewski  
February 1 and 2 at 7 p.m. .... *SEEK* by Susan Soon He Stanton  
March 7 and 8 at 7 p.m. .... *California Love* by Alice Tuan  
April 4 and 5 at 7 p.m. .... *A Guide for the Homesick* by Ken Urban

### **SCIENTIFIC METHOD by Jenny Connell Davis**

Amy's a cutting-edge cancer researcher on the edge of a breakthrough...and the edge of a nervous breakdown. When her big project gets "scooped," and a handsome new colleague starts asking questions, Amy discovers that she's the one under the microscope. A serio-comedy about sex, science, and survival of the fittest.

### **ENCYCLOPEDIA by Rachel Jendrzejewski**

A new moon rises over a remote farm. Dal spirals, mourns, and plants words like seeds while Lua cooks, cleans, and attempts to categorize her world. Dream logic and live music fuel this investigation of grief and the limits of language.

### **SEEK by Susan Soon He Stanton**

In 1926, British mystery writer Agatha Christie disappeared in England, returning 11 days later and claiming amnesia. In a fictional retelling of this real life disappearance, *SEEK* imagines Agatha in the rough and unforgiving landscape of Puna on the Big Island of Hawaii. Burdened by a secret and chased halfway around the world, Agatha's life begins to resemble the dark stories she imagined.

### **CALIFORNIA LOVE by Alice Tuan**

The ocean, its rhythm, its sound and light, a refuge away from land and its chatter. Cali, a mature surfer lady who is super-attached to her beige Toyota Corolla, encounters a cool but mysterious surfer fellow. Theirs is an elliptical pleasure as they commune in waters, tread tides, dodge pollution, and catch organic contradictions. Enter Nio, a land creature who hates to be wet, resists stick-shift, and faces his fears as he follows Cali into the ocean. A meditation on surfing existence and living from one's center.

### **A GUIDE FOR THE HOMESICK by Ken Urban**

On his way home after a year in East Africa, a young aid worker goes back to a shabby Amsterdam hotel room with a fellow American. The two strangers replay their pasts and confess their shared fear that they betrayed the people who needed them most.

## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHTS' CENTER

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

One of the nation's most generous and well-respected theater organizations, the Playwrights' Center focuses on both supporting playwrights and moving new plays toward production at theaters across the country. The Center has helped launch the careers of numerous nationally recognized artists, notably August Wilson, Lee Blessing, Suzan-Lori Parks, Jordan Harrison, Carlyle Brown, Craig Lucas, Jeffrey Hatcher, Melanie Marnich, and Kira Obolensky. Work developed through Center programs has been seen nationwide on such stages as Yale Rep, Woolly Mammoth, the Guthrie, Goodman, and many others.

### Programs and services

**The Core Writer program** gives 25-30 of the most exciting playwrights from across the country the time and tools to develop new work for the stage. All Core Writers receive play development workshops at the Center, in collaboration with prominent directors, actors, dramaturgs, and designers. Selected work by Core Writers makes up the Center's formal season of public readings: the PlayLabs festival and the Ruth Easton New Play Series. Core Writers are also promoted by the Center and provided opportunities through an extensive network of colleges and universities, cultural institutions, and producing theaters.

**Fellowships**, made possible by the McKnight and Jerome foundations, provide more than \$225,000 each year for residencies, commissions, and development funds. Through these fellowships, the Playwrights' Center functions as a home for:

- Jerome Fellows (four emerging American playwrights);
- Many Voices Fellows (two early-career playwrights of color, one Minnesota-based) and Many Voices Mentees (two Minnesota-based beginning playwrights of color);
- McKnight Fellows in Playwriting (two accomplished Minnesota-based playwrights);
- McKnight National Residency and Commission (one playwright selected annually from an impressive national pool); and
- McKnight Theater Artist Fellows (three exceptional Minnesota-based theater artists, other than playwrights).

**Membership** is open to all and provides more than 1,500 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. The Center works with several theaters each year to develop work for their stages. Recent collaborations include partnerships with Denver Center on Idris Goodwin's *Victory Jones and the Incredible One Woman Band*, Marin Theatre Company on Carson Kreitzer's *Lasso of Truth*, Mixed Blood on Aditi Kapil's *Brahman(i)* and *Shiv*, Pillsbury House Theatre on Tracey Scott Wilson's *Buzzer*, and The Walker Art Center and Elevator Repair Service on Sibyl Kempson's *Fondly, Collette Richland*. The Center also flies in 10-15 artistic leaders each year to meet writers and hear their work. The newly-launched Regulars program brings together a group of nearly 100 producing theaters in the United States who seek the support of the Center in order to meet new writers, develop their work, and move them into production.