

McKnight Theater Artist Fellows Aimee K. Bryant and James A. Williams present Works in Progress June 28

(Minneapolis, MN—June 13, 2016)— 2015-16 McKnight Theater Artist Fellows Aimee K. Bryant and James A. Williams will present selections from theatrical works in progress on June 28 at 7 p.m. at the Southern Theater. Advance reservations for this free event are strongly recommended and can be made at pwcenter.org, info@pwcenter.org or 612-332-7481. The Southern Theater is located at 1420 South Washington Avenue in Minneapolis.

The McKnight Theater Artist Fellowships at the Playwrights' Center recognize Minnesota theater artists other than playwrights whose work demonstrates exceptional artistic merit. Along with actors Bryant and Williams, lighting designer Barry Browning is also a 2015-16 McKnight Theater Artist Fellow.

In addition to the \$25,000 fellowship, the McKnight Foundation provides up to \$7,000 in development funds to McKnight Theater Artist Fellows, allowing them to build new theatrical works with collaborators they choose. The showing on June 28 will share the following works in progress:

Aimee K. Bryant will share an untitled work in progress, directed by Derrick Sanders. Bryant will perform this one person show with music, which features Real Life Superheroes and explores the themes of relationships, identity and loss.

James A. Williams will present "Kenya Karibou," which recounts his first visit to Kenya in 2004. Though the land and language are new, he finds that family secrets, memories and promises stay with him even halfway around the world. The piece will be directed by Marion McClinton, with sound design by Katharine Horowitz and featuring actors Traci Allen Shannon* and Antonio Duke (*Member of Actors' Equity).

About the artists:

Aimee K. Bryant was named Best Actress of 2015 by *City Pages*. Her most recent theater credits include the roles of Venus in "A Night in Olympus" at Illusion Theater; Martha, Officer Pilate, Miriam, Ida B. Wells, and Mrs. Thomas in "The Gospel of Lovingkindness" at Pillsbury House Theatre; Sara in "Nina Simone: Four Women" at Park Square Theatre; Mother Earth in "The Nature Crown" with Theatre Forever; Celie in "The Color Purple" at Park Square Theatre; understudy of all the characters in "Seedfolks" at Children's Theatre Company; Shun in "Marcus; or the Secret of Sweet" with Pillsbury House Theatre; ensemble member in "My Fair Lady" at the Guthrie Theater and Marian the Librarian in "The Music Man" with Ten Thousand Things. Aimee is a Core Artist with Ten Thousand Things and a Founding Ensemble Member of Congo Square Theatre Company in Chicago. She moved to the Twin

Cities after completing her B.F.A. at Howard University. 2015 marks Aimee's 20th year performing in the Twin Cities.

James A. Williams has been a mainstay of the Twin Cities theater scene since 1976. He is a founding member of Penumbra Theatre and former Director of Teen Programming at Pillsbury House + Theatre. Recent performances include "Scapegoat" (Pillsbury House); "George Bonga: Black Voyageur" (History Theatre); Akeelah and The Bee (CTC); "The Other Place" (Park Square); "Habibi" (MN Fringe); "Abe Lincoln and Uncle Tom in the White House" (Carlyle Brown & Company); "The Brother/Sister Plays" (Pillsbury House); "Othello" (Park Square); "Bulrusher" (Pillsbury House) and "Fences" (Penumbra), for which he received an Ivey Award and was named 2008 Artist of the Year by the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*. He's been named best actor twice by *City Pages* and received Macalester College's 2012 Distinguished Global Citizen Award.

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Photos of the artists are available at pwcenter.org/media-room or by contacting Jessica Franken at jessicaf@pwcenter.org

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 \$315,000 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 a 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.