

PlayLabs festival runs October 12–18 at the Playwrights' Center

(Minneapolis, MN—September 29, 2015)—The Twin Cities area is well known as a great theater town, so it is a fitting home to one of the nation's most celebrated new play festivals. The 32nd annual PlayLabs festival runs October 12-18 at the Playwrights' Center, a 44-year-old organization that is one of just a handful of play development centers in the country.

During PlayLabs, Playwrights' Center Core Writers Joe Waechter, Kathryn Walat, and Ken Weitzman will spend 30 hours each workshopping a new piece with a team of collaborators: top actors, directors, designers, and dramaturgs from the Twin Cities and around the country. Each play has two public readings, giving the playwrights time to rewrite and experiment.

PlayLabs also features a showcase of work by 2015-16 Playwrights' Center Jerome and McKnight fellows, a panel discussion about collaboration in theater, and a party celebrating the theater community. All PlayLabs events are free and open to the public.

"Joe, Kathryn, and Ken are crafting brave, complex stories," says Playwrights' Center Producing Artistic Director Jeremy B. Cohen. "I'm proud that we can support them by bringing together amazing artistic teams—drawing from the deep pool of local talent, as well as bringing in non-local collaborators like actor Brian Anthony Wilson and directors Adrienne Campbell-Holt and Kip Fagan."

Plays developed during recent PlayLabs festivals that will be seen on stages around the country this season include Christine Evans' "Can't Complain," Philip Dawkins' "Le Switch," Mat Smart's "Tinker to Evers to Chance," and Sarah Gubbins' "Cocked."

The 2015 PlayLabs festival is produced by Playwrights' Center Associate Artistic Director Hayley Finn. Lineup is as follows:

"Small Town Values" by Kathryn Walat

Monday, October 12 at 7 p.m.

Friday, October 16 at 7 p.m.

John and Jane were high school sweethearts. Jane and Maryjane are best friends. Emma is back in the town where she grew up, where nothing ever changes—until suddenly nothing will ever be the same. An unexpected love story about the strange passage of time and what happens when you let go of all the old rules.

Director: Adrienne Campbell-Holt
Dramaturg: Wendy Weckwerth
Set design consultant: Joel Sass
Cast: Emily Grodzik, Larissa Kiel*, Matt Guidry*, Sara Marsh*
** Member of Actors' Equity Association*

“Halftime With Don” by Ken Weitzman

Tuesday, October 13 at 7 p.m.
Saturday, October 17 at 1 p.m.

Retired NFL player Don Devers has had over 30 surgeries, experiences violent outbursts, and relies on a blizzard of yellow Post-It notes to offset his ravaged memory. When a longtime fan appears at his doorstep, Don seeks to salvage his life with a single act of heroic self-sacrifice.

Director: Jeremy B. Cohen
Movement coach: Carl Flink
Cast: Brian Anthony Wilson*, Lauren Davis, Kris Nelson*, Emily Gunyou Halaas*
** Member of Actors' Equity Association*

“The Hidden People” by Joe Waechter

Wednesday, October 14 at 7 p.m.
Saturday, October 17 at 7 p.m.

Life isn't easy for the world's first family and their 47 children. When eldest twins Fred and Frieda run away in search of “a more super awesome life,” all hell breaks loose. In this dark, hysterical, and magical saga, Waechter mashes-up creation myths to forge a new story about family, the origin of the world, and the darkness that lurks within us all.

Director: Kip Fagan
Puppet design consultant: Alison Heimstead
Cast: Sun Mee Chomet*, Jim Lichtscheidl*, Tracey Maloney*, Michael Wieser*, Elise Langer, Miriam Schwartz, Sean Dillon*, Cristina Castro
** Member of Actors' Equity Association*

PlayLabs Party

Saturday, October 17 following 7 p.m. reading of “The Hidden People”
A party to celebrate the PlayLabs artists and the local theater community.

Playwriting Fellows Showcase

Sunday, October 18 at 12 p.m.
Scenes from new work by Jerome Fellows Ryan Campbell, Kristin Idaszak, Andrew Rosendorf, and Keliher Walsh; Many Voices Fellows Cristina Castro and James Anthony Tyler; McKnight Fellows in Playwriting Carson Kreitzer and Harrison David Rivers; and McKnight National Residency and Commission Recipient Erik Ehn.

Cast includes: Christian Bardin, Aimee Bryant*, Ryan Colbert, Shawn Hamilton*, JuCoby Johnson, James Rodriguez

** Member of Actors' Equity Association*

Panel Discussion: Collaboration & Interpretation

Sunday, October 18 at 2:30 p.m.

A discussion with theater artists focusing on the relationship between writers and their collaborators. Panelists: Kip Fagan, Alison Heimstead, and Joe Waechter (collaborating on "The Hidden People" at PlayLabs); Carlyle Brown and Noël Raymond (co-artistic directors, Carlyle Brown and Company); and e.g. bailey and Shá Cage (frequent collaborators).

All PlayLabs events are free. For tickets, see pwcenter.org/playlabs or contact the Playwrights' Center at (612) 332-7481 or info@pwcenter.org.

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

PLAYWRIGHT BIOS

JOE WAECHTER

Joe Waechter's plays include "Good Ol' Boys," "PROFILES," "Lake Untersee," and "The Hidden People," as well as the "headphone operas" "The Hoot Owl" and "Howard Gap Road." His work has been seen at Playwrights Horizons, Guthrie Theater, Ars Nova, American Repertory Theater, McCarter Theatre, Trinity Rep, The Kennedy Center, PlayPenn, Workhaus Collective, Red Eye Theater, and the O'Neill National Playwrights Conference, among others. Some of his awards include the AracaWorks Graduate Playwriting Prize, a Lucille Lortel Playwriting Fellowship, and the McKnight Fellowship and two Jerome Fellowships at the Playwrights' Center, where he is currently a Core Writer. Joe has been a resident writer at the Hangar Theatre, Tofte Lake Center, SPACE on Ryder Farm, and, in summer 2014, developed a new play aboard an ice-class sailing vessel in the Arctic Circle. He received his M.F.A. in Playwriting from Brown University, and is currently under commission by Berkeley Repertory Theatre to write a play about fantasy, masculinity, and hockey in Minnesota. www.joewaechter.com

KATHRYN WALAT

Kathryn Walat's plays include "Creation" (Theatre @ Boston Court, LA Ovation Award for Playwriting nomination), "This Is Not Antigone" (New George's Germ Project), "Bleeding Kansas" (Hangar Theatre, Francesca Primus Citation), "Victoria Martin: Math Team Queen" (Women's Project, published in "The Best Plays of 1997"), "Know Dog" (Salvage Vanguard Theater) and "Johnny Hong Kong" (Perishable Theatre). She has received commissions from MCC Theater, Yale Rep, La Jolla Playhouse ("Miss Electricity"), and Actors' Theatre of Louisville ("On the Road Anthology"). She is a member of MCC's Playwrights' Coalition, and is a New Georges Affiliated Playwright. Walat's play "Romeo & Naomi Ramirez," part of the Playwrights' Center's 2014-15 Ruth Easton New Play Series, recently made the 2015 Kilroys list of most-recommended new plays by female and trans* authors. B.A. Brown University, M.F.A. Yale School of Drama. www.kathrynwalat.com

KEN WEITZMAN

Ken Weitzman's plays include "The Catch" (Denver Center), "Fire in the Garden" (Indiana Repertory Theatre), "The As If Body Loop" (Humana Festival), "Arrangements" (Atlantic Theater Company, Pavement Group) and "Spin Moves" (Summer Play Festival). Devised work includes "Memorabilia" (Alliance Theatre), and "Hominid" and "Stadium 360" (Out Of Hand Theater). Awards: Weissberger Award, TCG/Edgerton New Play Award, Fratti/Newman Political Play Award, Elizabeth George Commission for an Outstanding Emerging Playwright. Commissions: Arena Stage, the Alliance Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, South Coast Repertory. Weitzman received his M.F.A. from UCSD and has taught at Indiana University, UCSD, Emory and Stony Brook University. kenweitzman.weebly.com

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.