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## Playwrights' Center announces expanded season for 2014-15

(Minneapolis, MN—September 9, 2014)—The Playwrights' Center has announced the plays and playwrights to be featured in its 2014 PlayLabs festival and 2014-15 Ruth Easton New Play Series. This year, the Ruth Easton New Play Series will grow from one reading of each play to two.

These events are the public components of the development work at the 43-year-old Playwrights' Center, where around 60 plays are workshopped each year. PlayLabs and the Ruth Easton New Play Series represent the Center's most intensive play development opportunities for playwrights, allowing Core Writers time to hone their scripts and get audience feedback. The readings feature top local and national actors and incorporate design elements, elevating the staged reading to an intimate art form all its own.

"The 2014-15 season has something for everyone, with genres from hip hop to historical and topics from gun control to gospel music," said Producing Artistic Director Jeremy B. Cohen. "I'm so inspired by this season's brilliant slate of diverse playwrights from around the country, and excited to share their work with our standing-room-only audiences. To see the demand grow so intensely for a chance to see this new work—such that we've added a second performance to each of the Ruth Easton readings—is a real testament to the level of excellence of our writers, and the hunger of Twin Cities audiences for new American plays."

All events in the Playwrights' Center season are free.

### **PLAYLABS, October 20-26**

For more than 30 years, the PlayLabs festival has been energizing playwrights and wowing audiences. Over 75% of the plays featured in PlayLabs over the past decade have gone on to production, such as Dan O'Brien's "The Body of an American" (Portland Center Stage), Allison Moore's "Slasher" (Humana Festival), and Mat Smart's "The Royal Society of Antarctica," which was developed at PlayLabs 2013 and will premiere at Chicago's Gift Theatre in March 2015.

PlayLabs is one of the nation's most intensive play development programs, giving playwrights 30 hours of vital workshop time with a team of collaborators, and two public readings with time for rewrites in between.

PlayLabs 2014 runs October 20-26 at the Playwrights' Center. In addition to the three featured plays, audiences are invited to a showcase of work by the Center's playwrighting fellows and a Saturday night party. All events are free and open to the public.

**The 2014 PlayLabs festival will feature "Cocked" by Sarah Gubbins, "The Absence of Weather" by Ken Urban, and "Le Switch" by Philip Dawkins, all Core Writers at the Playwrights' Center.**

### **RUTH EASTON NEW PLAY SERIES, December–April**

This season, the Ruth Easton New Play Series is expanding from one reading of each play to two. Five new plays by Core Writers will be featured between December and April. Participating playwrights receive 20 hours with collaborators to workshop their script—to write, rewrite, experiment, and shape their work.

Plays recently seen in the Ruth Easton New Play Series that have gone on to production include “The Way West” by Mona Mansour (Steppenwolf), “The Few” by Samuel D. Hunter (Old Globe Theatre), and “Brahmani: A One-Hijra Stand-up Comedy Show” by Aditi Brennan Kapil (Mixed Blood Theatre).

**The 2014-15 Ruth Easton New Play Series will feature “Forget Me Not When Far Away” by Kira Obolensky (local writer), “Dust” by Qui Nguyen, “Marie and Rosetta” by George Brant, “The REALNESS: the second break beat play” by Idris Goodwin, and “Romeo & Naomi Ramirez” by Kathryn Walat.**

For ticket information, see [www.pwcenter.org](http://www.pwcenter.org) or contact the Playwrights’ Center at (612) 332-7481 or [info@pwcenter.org](mailto:info@pwcenter.org).

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# THE 31<sup>st</sup> ANNUAL PLAYLABS FESTIVAL

Monday, October 20 at 7 p.m. ....	<i>Cocked</i> by Sarah Gubbins
Tuesday, October 21 at 7 p.m. ....	<i>The Absence of Weather</i> by Ken Urban
Wednesday, October 22 at 7 p.m. ....	<i>Le Switch</i> by Philip Dawkins
Friday, October 24 at 7 p.m. ....	<i>Cocked</i> by Sarah Gubbins
Saturday, October 25 at 1 p.m. ....	<i>The Absence of Weather</i> by Ken Urban
Saturday, October 25 at 7 p.m. ....	<i>Le Switch</i> by Philip Dawkins
Saturday, October 25, following 7 p.m. reading.....	Festival Celebration
Sunday, October 26 at 12 p.m. ....	Playwriting Fellow Showcase

## **COCKED by Sarah Gubbins**

*Director: Jeremy B. Cohen*

Taylor and her girlfriend, Izzie, have always been staunchly opposed to gun ownership, especially as they see the effects of gun violence on their city. When Taylor's brother, Frank, comes crashing into their lives unannounced, he disrupts their well-ordered home and exposes their unspoken anxieties and betrayals. An existing conflict escalates to dangerous heights, and the three find themselves testing the definition of self-defense.

## **THE ABSENCE OF WEATHER by Ken Urban**

*Director: Lee Sunday Evans; dramaturg: Jill Rafson*

United States Secretary of Defense James Forrestal enjoyed a meteoric rise to power during World War II. By 1949, he has been forced out of office and committed to Bethesda Naval Hospital, convinced that Soviets are infiltrating the U.S. government. As the hospital staff struggle both to treat and protect their patient, Forrestal worries that he has betrayed those he loves in pursuit of ghosts. An American tragedy about the wages of fear.

## **LE SWITCH by Philip Dawkins**

*Director: Stephen Brackett*

Marriage equality finally reaches New York, and commitment-shy David finds himself unsure how to react. Nervous in the face of "wedding fever," he retreats to his home full of unopened books and his grieving activist roommate. When his best friend's bachelor party takes him to Montreal, he is unexpectedly swept off his feet by a beautiful young florist. In the months that follow, David and his non-traditional family have to decide for themselves what it really means to be committed, what it means to be married, and what it means to be queer.

## **PLAYWRITING FELLOW SHOWCASE**

The perfect way to get a taste of the work of 2014-15 Playwrights' Center Jerome and McKnight playwriting fellows: staged readings of scenes from a new play by each writer.

## **FESTIVAL CELEBRATION**

Join us for a huge party to celebrate the artists and local theater community, featuring pop-up playwright appearances.

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# THE 2014-15 RUTH EASTON NEW PLAY SERIES

December 8 and 9 at 7 p.m. .... *Forget Me Not When Far Away* by Kira Obolensky  
January 12 and 13 at 7 p.m. .... *Dust* by Qui Nguyen  
February 2 and 3 at 7 p.m. .... *Marie and Rosetta* by George Brant  
March 2 and 3 at 7 p.m. .... *The REALNESS: the second break beat play* by Idris Goodwin  
April 6 and 7 at 7 p.m. .... *Romeo & Naomi Ramirez* by Kathryn Walat

## **FORGET ME NOT WHEN FAR AWAY by Kira Obolensky**

John Ploughman returns from war to find his hometown very much changed. After ten years thriving without men, the town has little place for an aging Don Juan—much less one who has been counted on the list of the dead. In order to regain his place among the living and find his lost love, he is forced to confront both the mistakes of his past and the unromantic reality of his present. A tragic comedy about shifting gender politics and the ways we learn to adapt.

## **DUST by Qui Nguyen**

Sixteen-year-old Thuy dreams of joining her GI father's American family and escaping her life in post-war Vietnam. The problem is, most of her new family doesn't know she exists. Her arrival in their small Arkansas town causes a rift in the household and brings up years of buried secrets. Always in search of a place to belong, Thuy discovers that she isn't the only one searching.

## **MARIE AND ROSETTA by George Brant**

Bringing fierce guitar playing and swing to gospel music, Sister Rosetta Tharpe was a legend in her time and a huge influence on Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, and Ray Charles. *Marie and Rosetta* chronicles her first rehearsal with a young protégée, Marie Knight, as they prepare to embark on a tour that would establish them as one of the great duos in musical history.

## **THE REALNESS: THE SECOND BREAK BEAT PLAY by Idris Goodwin**

Thomas has escaped the 'burbs and come to the city to savor authentic hip hop culture. He falls madly in love with Prima, a super-dope MC, and he is willing to lie, cheat, and scheme to win her well-guarded heart. But is he after real love or fulfilling a middle class rap fantasy? A meditation on authenticity and class collision, *The REALNESS* follows a young man's journey for his heart and true identity.

## **ROMEO & NAOMI RAMIREZ by Kathryn Walat**

She's a rookie cop on her first undercover narcotics assignment. He's an Honors English student trying to live up to his Shakespearean name. And this is Florida, with some of the toughest drug laws in the nation. So is it a love story...or a tragedy? Whose version are you going to believe?

# PLAYWRIGHT BIOS

## SARAH GUBBINS

Sarah Gubbins' plays include "Fair Use," "In Loco Parentis," "The Drinking Problem," "The Kid Thing" (Jeff Award and Edgerton Foundation New American Play Award), "fml: how Carson McCullers saved my life," "I am Bradley Manning," "A Sense of Things," and "Cocked." Her plays have been produced at the Steppenwolf Theatre, Actor's Express, Next Theatre, About Face Theatre, and Chicago Dramatists among others. Her plays have been developed at the Public Theater, New York Theatre Workshop, The Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre, the Playwrights' Center, Center Theatre Group, and the O'Neill Theater Center among others. She has been a Carl J. Djerassi Fellow and Jerome Fellow and was named Best Playwright of 2012 by *Chicago Magazine*. She is a member of the Center Theatre Group 2013-14 Writers' Workshop and the Playwrights' Union. M.F.A., Northwestern University.

## KEN URBAN

Ken Urban is a playwright and screenwriter. His plays have been produced and developed at Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, 59E59, SpeakEasy Stage Company, Summer Play Festival at The Public, Donmar Warehouse, Epic Theatre Ensemble, Studio 42, Theatre @ Boston Court, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Playwrights Horizons, Primary Stages, and Huntington Theatre Company. Awards include the Weissberger Playwriting Award, Huntington Playwriting Fellowship, Djerassi Artist Residency, Dramatist Guild Fellowship, and MacDowell Colony Fellowships. The feature film adaptation of his play "The Happy Sad," with a screenplay by the author, screened at over 25 film festivals both in the U.S. and internationally, with theatrical releases in New York and Los Angeles, and is available on Netflix and iTunes. He plays in the band Occurrence and their releases are available from Insound and Bandcamp.

## PHILIP DAWKINS

Philip Dawkins' work includes "Miss Marx: or the Involuntary Side Effect of Living," "The Homosexuals," and "Failure: A Love Story," all of which were nominated for Joseph Jefferson Awards after their world premieres with Strawdog Theatre Company (2014), About Face Theatre (2011), and Victory Gardens Theater (2012) respectively. His plays for young folks are published through Playscripts, Inc. Dawkins is an Artistic Associate of About Face Theatre, an Ensemble Playwright at Victory Gardens, and a founding member of Chicago Opera Vanguard. Dawkins teaches playwriting at Northwestern University, Loyola University Chicago, and through the Victory Gardens ACCESS Program.

## KIRA OBOLENSKY

Kira Obolensky's work includes "Force/Matter" (with Shawn McConneloug), "The Oldest Story in the World" (Theatre Novi Most), "Cabinet of Wonder: an impossible history" (Open Eye, Gas and Electric Arts, Barrymore nomination for best new play), "Raskol" (Ten Thousand Things), and "Modern House" (finalist, Susan Smith Blackburne Prize). She is a Guggenheim Fellow and has received fellowships and grants from the Henson Foundation, NEA and Irvine Foundations, Bush Foundation, McKnight Foundation, and Jerome Foundation. She is the author of three published books about architecture and design, and co-wrote the national bestseller "The Not So Big House." She teaches at Spalding University, Goddard College, and the University of Minnesota.

## QUI NGUYEN

Qui Nguyen is the Co-Artistic Director of the OBIE Award-winning Vampire Cowboys of NYC. His plays include "She Kills Monsters," "Soul Samurai," "Alice in Slasherland," "The Inexplicable Redemption of Agent G," and the musicals "Krunk Fu Battle Battle," "War is F\*\*king Awesome," and "Samantha Rai and the Shogun of Fear." He is a proud member of the Playwrights' Center, New Dramatists, Ensemble Studio Theatre, The Ma-Yi Writers Lab, and a recent Sundance Institute Fellow. Nguyen also writes for the PBS Kids series *Peg + Cat*. His company, Vampire

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Cowboys, often considered the pioneers of “Geek Theater,” holds the unique distinction of being the first and only professional theater organization to be sponsored by NY Comic Con.

### **GEORGE BRANT**

George Brant's plays include "Grounded," "Elephants' Graveyard," "The Mourner's Bench," "Salvage," "Three Voyages of the Lobotomobile," and "Miracle: A Tragedy," among others. His work has been produced internationally by such companies as Trinity Repertory Company, Cleveland Play House, City Theatre, Gate Theatre of London, Page 73, Studio Theatre, Theatre Pro Rata, and Frank Theatre, among many others. His scripts have been awarded the David Mark Cohen National Playwriting Award, the Smith Prize, the Keene Prize for Literature, and NNPN Rolling World Premiere, an Austin Critic's Circle Best New Play Award, two Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Awards, and a Creative Workforce Fellowship. George holds an M.F.A from the University of Texas at Austin and is published by Samuel French, Oberon Books, and Smith & Kraus.

### **IDRIS GOODWIN**

Idris Goodwin is a playwright, spoken word performer, and essayist. His play "How We Got On" (Playscripts, 2013), was developed at The Eugene O'Neill Theater and premiered at the 2012 Humana Festival of New Plays. It is currently being remounted by theaters across the country and was nominated for an ATCA Steinberg New Play Award. He is currently developing work with Berkeley Rep, Denver Center Theater, Steppenwolf, StageOne, and the New Harmony Project. His debut collection of essays and poetry, "These are the Breaks" (Write Bloody, 2011), was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Idris has performed on HBO, The Discovery Channel, Sesame Street, and National Public Radio. He teaches performance writing and Hip Hop Aesthetics at Colorado College.

### **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), "Johnny Hong Kong" (Perishable Theatre), "See Bat Fly" (Orchard Project, Brown/Trinity Playwrights' Repertory Theatre), and the opera "Paul's Case" (PROTOTYPE Festival, Pittsburgh Opera). She has received commissions from MCC Theater, Yale Rep, La Jolla Playhouse, 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. B.A. Brown University, M.F.A. Yale School of Drama.



# 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 our 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 (three to five emerging American playwrights);
- Many Voices Fellows (two early-career and two beginning playwrights of color);
- McKnight Advancement Fellows (two Minnesota-based playwrights whose work demonstrates exceptional artistic merit and potential);
- McKnight National Residency and Commission (one playwright selected annually from an impressive national pool); and
- McKnight Theater Artist Fellows (three Minnesota-based professional theater artists recognized for their outstanding skill and talent).

**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 partners have included Tectonic Theater Project, Mixed Blood Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, The Public Theater (NY), Goodman Theatre (Chicago, IL), Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Guthrie Theater, Ten Thousand Things Theater Company, Berkeley Rep, Marin Theatre Company, Seattle Repertory Theatre, and others. The Center also collaborates with local community organizations such as Jazz88 KBEM and Veterans for the Arts to develop theater that enriches their programming.