

Playwrights' Center announces 2017-18 McKnight Fellows, new Core Writers

MINNEAPOLIS (June 1, 2017) — The Playwrights' Center is excited to announce the 2017-18 McKnight National Residency and Commission recipient, 2017-18 McKnight Fellows in Playwriting, 2017-18 McKnight Theater Artist Fellows, 2017-2020 Core Writers and 2017-18 Core Apprentices.

"The five panels have selected an incredible cohort of visionary playwrights and theatermakers," says Jeremy B. Cohen, Producing Artistic Director of the Playwrights' Center. "I'm proud we can offer ongoing support to some artists who have been in the Playwrights' Center fold for a while, as well as welcome many writers to the Center for the first time. It's also significant that 78% of our incoming roster for next year are female artists, including all seven incoming Core Writers."

2017-18 MCKNIGHT NATIONAL RESIDENCY AND COMMISSION RECIPIENT

Mfoniso Udofia

The McKnight National Residency and Commission funds the creation and development of new works and comes with a \$15,000 commission, \$5,750 in workshop funds, and travel and housing stipends. Past recipients include Kia Corthron, Erik Ehn, Kate Fodor, Karen Hartman, Daniel Alexander Jones, Sibyl Kempson, Craig Lucas, Taylor Mac, Ruth Margraff, Dan O'Brien, Betty Shamieh and Mac Wellman.

The 2017-18 recipient is **Mfoniso Udofia**, who is writing a nine-play Ufot Family play cycle, of which "Sojourners" and "Her Portmanteau" are running in repertory now at New York Theatre Workshop. Udofia's commissioned play for the McKnight National Residency and Commission is a new play in the Ufot cycle. She is also translating Shakespeare's "Othello" for Oregon Shakespeare Festival's Play on! Project.

2017-18 MCKNIGHT FELLOWS IN PLAYWRITING

Benjamin Benne, Rachel Jendrzewski

The McKnight Fellowship in Playwriting awards two Minnesota-based playwrights a \$25,000 stipend, \$2,500 to support play development and other professional expenses, and \$1,400 in travel funds. Past recipients include Carlyle Brown, Lisa D'Amour, Barbara Field, Keli Garrett, Jeffrey Hatcher, Christina Ham, Cory Hinkle, Carson Kreitzer, Melanie Marnich, Greg Moss, Kira Obolensky and Dominic Orlando.

The 2017-18 McKnight Fellows in Playwriting are:

- **Benjamin Benne**, a 2016-17 Many Voices Fellow at the Playwrights' Center whose plays include "Terra Incognita," "at the very bottom of a body of water," and "q u e r e n c i a: an imagined autobiography about forbidden fruits."
- **Rachel Jendrzejewski**, a previous Jerome Fellow and Core Writer with the Playwrights' Center whose plays and performance texts have been produced by the Walker Art Center, Red Eye Theater, Public Functionary and others.

2017-18 MCKNIGHT THEATER ARTIST FELLOWS

Bart Buch, Katharine Horowitz, Regina Marie Williams

The McKnight Theater Artist Fellowships at the Playwrights' Center recognize Minnesota theater artists other than playwrights whose work demonstrates exceptional artistic merit. The fellowship provides a \$25,000 award as well as access to \$7,000 in development funds to launch a new collaborative theatrical work. Past recipients include Sarah Agnew, Ansa Akyea, Barry Browning, Shá Cage, Sun Mee Chomet, James Craven, Marcus Dilliard, Masanari Kawahara, Christopher Lutter-Gardella, Greta Oglesby, Sonja Parks, Denise Prosek, Joel Sass, Michael Wangen, James A. Williams, Stephen Yoakam, Mathew LeFebvre, Austene Van, and Sally Wingert.

The 2017-18 McKnight Theater Artist Fellows are:

- **Bart Buch**, a puppet director and designer who focuses on interpreting poetry into puppet performances that he calls puppet poems. Buch has worked at In the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre for 20 years.
- **Katharine Horowitz**, a sound designer known for layered effects and soundscapes who has designed for the Guthrie Theater, Mixed Blood Theatre, Pillsbury House Theatre, History Theatre, Mu Performing Arts, Park Square Theatre and many others.
- **Regina Marie Williams**, an actor seen recently in "The Bluest Eye" at the Guthrie Theater. Williams is a Penumbra Theatre company member and a Ten Thousand Things core member, and she originated the role of Nina in Christina Ham's "Nina Simone: Four Women" at Park Square Theatre.

NEW CORE WRITERS

Kim Euell, Allison Gregory, Dipika Guha, C. A. Johnson, Carson Kreitzer, Andrea Stolowitz, Stefanie Zdravec

The Core Writer Program at the Playwrights' Center provides play development workshops and professional support to 25 to 30 playwrights from across the country over a three-year term. Work by Core Writers composes the Center's public season (the PlayLabs new play festival in October and the Ruth Easton New Play Series December through April). Past recipients include Christina Anderson, Trista Baldwin, George Brant, Carlyle Brown, Connie Congdon, Marcus Gardley, Sarah Gubbins, Melanie Marnich, Winter Miller, Greg Moss and Qui Nguyen. Joining the 19 continuing Core Writers are these seven playwrights, whose Core Writer terms will run through June 2020:

- **Kim Euell** (Amherst, Mass.), current Playwright in Residence at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and Penumbra Theatre company member, whose work has been

developed and performed at Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Center Theater Group's Mark Taper Forum, Hartford Stage Company and others.

- **Allison Gregory** (Austin, Texas and Seattle, Wash.), whose play "Not Medea" received a 2016 National New Play Network (NNPN) Rolling World Premiere, and whose "Wild Horses" will receive an NNPN Rolling World Premiere in 2017-18.
- **Dipika Guha** (Berkeley, Calif.), whose plays include "Yoga Play," "The Art of Gaman," "Mechanics of Love," "I Enter the Valley" and "Blown Youth." Guha is currently translating Shakespeare's "The Merry Wives of Windsor" for Oregon Shakespeare Festival's Play on! project.
- **C. A. Johnson** (New York, N.Y.), a Louisiana native whose plays include "Mother Tongue," "The Climb" and "Waitin' on the Moon." In addition to her Core Writer workshop, Johnson will develop "Mother Tongue" at the Playwrights' Center in August as part of a partnership with the Dramatists Guild, where she is a fellow.
- **Carson Kreitzer** (Minneapolis, Minn.), a previous Playwrights' Center Core Writer, Jerome Fellow and McKnight Fellow in Playwriting. Kreitzer is a 2017 Guggenheim Fellow and MacDowell Fellow, and she received a 2016 Jonathan Larson Grant for "Lempicka," a new musical about art deco artist Tamara de Lempicka, written with composer Matt Gould.
- **Andrea Stolowitz** (Portland, Ore.), who is the Lacroute Playwright-in-Residence at Artists Repertory Theater. Stolowitz's "Berlin Diary" was presented recently at both English Theater Berlin and Portland's Coho Theatre, and she is a collaborating writer with devised theater company Hand2Mouth Theater.
- **Stefanie Zdravec** (Brooklyn, N.Y.), whose plays include "Colony Collapse" (Kilroys list, Theatre@Boston Court), "The Electric Baby" (Two River Theater, Quantum Theatre), "Honey Brown Eyes" (Theater J, Working Theater) and "The Boat" (The Working Theater Commission).

These seven new Core Writers join the current cohort: Lee Blessing, Carlyle Brown, Larissa FastHorse, Barbara Field, Christina Ham, Jeffrey Hatcher, Sherry Kramer, Martyna Majok, Marion McClinton, Meg Miroshnik, Kira Obolensky, John Olive, Jason Gray Platt, Gabrielle Reisman, Harrison David Rivers, Jen Silverman, Mat Smart, Kate Tarker and Alice Tuan.

2017-18 CORE APPRENTICES

Kirk Boettcher, Dionna Michelle Daniel, Carlos Sirah

The Core Apprentice program at the Playwrights' Center pairs student playwrights with professional mentors and offers full play development workshops at the Center. Past recipients include George Brant, Ike Holter, Hansol Jung, Kimber Lee, Andrew Saito, Jen Silverman, Lauren Yee and Martín Zimmerman. The 2017-18 Core Apprentices are **Kirk Boettcher** (Augsburg College), **Dionna Michelle Daniel** (California Institute of the Arts) and **Carlos Sirah** (Brown University).

In April, the Playwrights' Center announced the 2017-18 Jerome Fellows (Mia Chung, Jessica Huang, Tim J. Lord, Tori Sampson), 2017-18 Many Voices Fellows (Stacey Rose, Saymoukda Duangphouxay Vongsay) and 2017-18 Many Voices Mentee (Julia Gay). With today's news, all Core Writers and fellows for next season have been announced.

Fellowships at the Playwrights' Center, made possible by the McKnight and Jerome foundations, provide more than \$325,000 each year to support 13 to 14 fellows and mentees. In addition, the Center serves as an artistic home for 25 to 30 Core Writers on three-year terms. All fellows and Core Writers are selected by independent panels of theater professionals.

The Playwrights' Center also supports close to 2,000 member playwrights around the world and runs a robust series of partnership programs building relationships between playwrights and producing theaters.

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Photos of the artists are available at pwcenter.org/media-room

2017-18 McKnight National Residency and Commission recipient

MFONISO UDOFIA

Mfoniso Udofia, a first-generation Nigerian-American storyteller and educator, attended Wellesley College and obtained her M.F.A. in acting from the American Conservatory Theater. Mfoniso's currently working on completing her projected 9-play Ufot Family play cycle and completing Oregon Shakespeare Festival's Play on! commission translating Shakespeare's "Othello." She's also the Artistic Director of the NOW AFRICA: Playwrights Festival and a proud member of New Dramatists class of 2023. Mfoniso's plays have been produced by The New York Theatre Workshop, Playwrights Realm, Magic Theatre and Dr. Barbara Ann Teer's National Black Theatre.

www.mfonisoudofia.com

2017-18 McKnight Fellows in Playwriting

BENJAMIN BENNE

Benjamin Benne was previously a 2016-17 Playwrights' Center Many Voices Fellow. He has been a finalist for the Princess Grace Award, O'Neill National Playwrights Conference, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, Austin Playhouse's New Works Festival, and a semi-finalist for the Blue Ink Playwriting Award. His work has been produced and/or developed with The Lark Play Development Center, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Pillsbury House Theatre, Annex Theatre, Forward Flux Productions, Umbrella Project, and Parley, among others. His plays include "Terra Incognita," "at the very bottom of a body of water" and "q u e r e n c i a: an imagined autobiography about forbidden fruits."

www.benjaminbenne.com

RACHEL JENDRZEJEWSKI

Rachel Jendrzejewski moved to Minneapolis as a Playwrights' Center Jerome Fellow in 2011. She frequently works with choreographers, musicians, visual artists, fellow writers, and alleged non-artists to explore new collaborative vocabularies. Her plays and performance texts have been produced by the Walker Art Center, Red Eye Theater, Public Functionary, Padua Playwrights, Wild Project, and ICA/Boston, among others. In 2016, her play "encyclopedia" was published by Spout Press. Honors include a Playwrights' Center Core Writer Residency, a MASS MoCA Residency, and grants from the Minnesota State Arts Board, Network of Ensemble Theaters, and Foundation for Contemporary Arts. MFA Playwriting, Brown University.

rachelka.com

2017-18 McKnight Theater Artist Fellows

BART BUCH

Puppet director and designer Bart Buch has created several independent puppet performances presented locally and nationally. He has also worked at In the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre for 20 years as a puppeteer, designer, director, teacher and currently Director of Youth and Community Programs.

bartbuch.com

KATHARINE HOROWITZ

Katharine Horowitz is a theatrical sound designer based in the Twin Cities, MN. With a focus on layered effects and soundscapes, she has designed critically-acclaimed and award-winning shows for the Guthrie Theater, Second City Theatricals, Great River Shakespeare Festival, Mixed Blood Theatre, Pillsbury House Theatre, History Theatre, Mu Performing Arts, Park Square Theatre, Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theatre (Wellfleet, MA), Provincetown Tennessee Williams Festival (Provincetown, MA), and many others. A graduate of the University of Iowa, Katharine is a professional member of the Theatrical Sound Designers and Composers Association.

www.katsound.com

REGINA MARIE WILLIAMS

Regina Marie Williams recently performed in “The Bluest Eye” at The Guthrie Theater. She is a Penumbra Theatre company member and a Ten Thousand Things core member. She originated the role of Nina in Christina Ham’s “Nina Simone: Four Women” commissioned by Park Square Theatre. Williams received an Ivey Award for the role of Mama Nadi in Mixed Blood Theatre’s production of “Ruined” and a Helen Hayes nomination for “Red Shirts” at Round House Theatre. Williams has produced three solo CDs and performs at the world-renowned Dakota Jazz Club. She lives in Minneapolis with her husband.

2017-20 Core Writers

KIM EUELL

Kim Euell’s plays have been developed and performed at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Center Theater Group’s Mark Taper Forum, Hartford Stage Company, Plowshares Theater Company, Manhattan’s New Perspectives Theater and Penumbra Theatre Company where she’s a Company Member. Euell has worked as a dramaturg at the Sundance Theater Lab and has headed play development programs at the Mark Taper Forum, Hartford Stage, San Jose Repertory Theatre and The Robey Theatre where she was the California Arts Council’s Playwright in Residence. Euell teaches playwriting for the VONA/Voices Workshop and at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, where she is currently the Playwright in Residence. She is an alumna of Stanford University and the University of Iowa’s Playwrights Workshop.

ALLISON GREGORY

Allison Gregory is an award-winning playwright and theater collaborator. Her plays have been produced all over the country and she has received commissions, grants, and development from Oregon Shakespeare Festival, South Coast Repertory, The Kennedy Center, Indiana Repertory Theatre, the Skirball-Kenis Foundation, ACT Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Orlando Shakespeare, The New Harmony Project, and Hedgebrook. She’s the recipient of the Julie Harris Award, South Coast Repertory’s Playwright’s Award, AATE Distinguished Play Award, and Garland & Dramalogue Awards. Her play “Not Medea” received a 2016 National New Play Network (NNPN) Rolling World Premiere, and “Wild Horses” will receive an NNPN Rolling World Premiere in 2017-18. Her plays are published by Playscripts, Smith & Krauss, Dramatic Publishing, and Rain City Press. She splits her time between Austin and Seattle.

allisongregoryplays.com

DIPIKA GUHA

Dipika Guha writes plays that are funny, lyrical and formally ambitious. Her plays include "Yoga Play," "The Art of Gaman," "Mechanics of Love," "I Enter the Valley" and "Blown Youth." She is currently translating Shakespeare's "The Merry Wives of Windsor" for OSF's Play on! project and is writing plays for Manhattan Theatre Club/Sloan, Barrington Stage, McCarter Theatre Center's Princeton and Slavery Project, Oregon Symphony, ACT & Z Space and Playwrights Horizons Theatre School. She was the inaugural recipient of the Shakespeare's Sister Fellowship from the Lark, AROHO and Hedgebrook and is a Hodder Fellow at Princeton's Lewis Center for the Arts for 2017-2018. Dipika received her M.F.A. in Playwriting from the Yale School of Drama under Paula Vogel.

www.dipikaguha.com

C. A. JOHNSON

C. A. Johnson is a Louisiana native currently living in NYC. Her plays include "Mother Tongue," "The Climb," "Waitin' on the Moon," "Elroy Learn his Name," and "Thirst." She is The Lark's 2016-17 Van Lier Playwriting Fellow, a 2016-2017 Dramatists Guild Fellow, and a member of the 2017 Working Farm Series. Her work has been developed with The Lark, Open Bar Theatricals, UC San Diego, The Civilians R & D Group, The Dennis and Victoria Ross Foundation, and The Fire This Time Festival. Most recently, Johnson's play "Thirst" was selected for the 2017 PlayPenn Conference. B.A.: Smith College; M.F.A.: NYU

www.cajohnson.info

CARSON KREITZER

Carson Kreitzer is a 2017 Guggenheim Fellow and MacDowell Fellow; she received a 2016 Jonathan Larson Grant for "Lempicka," a new musical about art deco artist Tamara de Lempicka, written with composer Matt Gould. Current projects include "Capital Crime!," a play with songs set in Gilded Age New York, and a new play about climate change for the American Repertory Theatre. She is a Core Writer with the Playwrights' Center, an alumna of New Dramatists, and was the first Playwrights of New York (PoNY) Fellow at the Lark. Her collection "SELF DEFENSE and other plays" is available from No Passport Press.

ANDREA STOLOWITZ

Andrea Stolowitz is a playwright living and working in Portland, Oregon. Stolowitz's latest play "Berlin Diary" was presented at English Theater Berlin/International Performing Arts Center (Berlin, Germany) in October 2016 and Portland's Coho Theatre in April 2017. Stolowitz is a collaborating writer with the award-winning devised theater company Hand2Mouth Theater (www.H2M.org). Their current collaboration "Pep Talk" is touring nationally. The *San Francisco Chronicle* says "The genius of 'Pep Talk' is that it is at once a collective unburdening...while also being very funny and self-aware." Stolowitz is the Lacroute Playwright-in-Residence at Artists Repertory Theater. An M.F.A. playwriting alumna of UC-San Diego, Stolowitz has served on the faculties at Willamette University, The University of Portland, Duke University and UC-San Diego.

www.andreastolowitz.com

STEFANIE ZADRAVEC

Stefanie Zadravec is a New Dramatists resident and member of the Keen Company's Playwright's Lab. Her plays include: "Colony Collapse" (Kilroys list, Theatre@Boston Court); "The Electric Baby" (Two River Theater, Quantum Theatre); "Honey Brown Eyes" (Theater J, Working Theater); "The Boat" (The Working Theater Commission). Honors include the Helen Merrill Award, Francesca Primus Prize, Helen Hayes Award, Sustainable Arts Foundation Award; as well as fellowships from the The Lark, NYFA, Playwrights Realm, Edgerton Foundation, and Dramatists Guild. Development support from NYSCA, The Ford Foundation, Mellon Foundation, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, PlayPenn, The Women's Project, JAWfest, NY Stage & Film and Theatreworks.

www.szadravec.com

2017-18 Core Apprentices

KIRK BOETTCHER

Kirk Boettcher is playwright and proud stay-at-home dad of an incredible little boy. His plays include "Noted," "The People You Find," "The Greatest Show on Earth," "Variations on Grief," and "there are no protections against this." A recent graduate of Augsburg College in Minneapolis, where he received his M.F.A. in Creative Writing focusing on Playwriting, Kirk was a regional finalist in the American College Theatre Festival competition and has had his work performed in the Portland (Maine) area. Originally from Iowa, and after more than a decade in Minneapolis, he now resides in Portland, Maine.

DIONNA MICHELLE DANIEL

Dionna Michelle Daniel is a playwright, actress, and vocalist from Winston-Salem, North Carolina. She is a recent graduate of California Institute of the Arts with a B.F.A. in Acting and a minor in Creative Writing. Daniel's works address social and political issues surrounding the African-American experience. Her plays include "Gunshot Medley" (Edinburgh Fringe Festival) and "Rain, River, Ocean" (CalArts New Works Festival).

CARLOS SIRAH

Carlos Sirah is writer and performer. His work encounters: exile, rupture, displacement in relation to institutions, local and beyond. His most recent works of theater include: "The Utterances," "The Light Body," and "Planets Measured by Parallax." His work has been performed and/or shown at Poet's House, Nuyorican Café, KGB, The Granoff Centre, and the National Black Theatre Festival. Sirah has developed work with The Flea Theater, Vermont Studio Center, Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, Warrior Writers in collaboration with the William Joiner Center for the Study of War and Social Consequences, The Hambidge Center, The Virginia Center for Creative Arts, and The Blue Mountain Center. He is a facilitator and serves on the steering committee of Warrior Writers, a community of veterans who make art.

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 \$325,000 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 (one or 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 nearly 2,000 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.