



PLAYWRIGHTS' CENTER
IMAGINING THEATER FORWARD SINCE 1971

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jessica Franken

(612) 332-7481 x118

jessicaf@pwcenter.org

Playwrights' Center welcomes Robert Chelimsky as managing director

(Minneapolis, MN—April 5, 2017) — The Playwrights' Center today announced that Robert Chelimsky will join the organization as managing director, effective May 1, 2017. Chelimsky most recently served as managing director of Epic Theatre Ensemble in New York.

Playwrights' Center board chair Stephen H. Strand says, "As the Playwrights' Center celebrates 45 years of championing playwrights and new plays, we enthusiastically welcome Robert Chelimsky as our new managing director. Mr. Chelimsky has over 20 years of executive leadership experience at regional and New York theaters, during which he demonstrated a passion for mission-focused work and artist advocacy. His arrival ensures that the Playwrights' Center's ongoing commitment to new and innovative theater-making that is diverse, inclusive and equitable is indeed in exceptional hands."

Much of Chelimsky's professional energies in the past decade have been focused on playwright support and the development and production of new work. He played a crucial role in world premiere productions and commissions of such playwrights such as Dominique Morisseau, Heather Raffo, Molly Smith Metzler, Anna Zeigler and Nilaja Sun. Chelimsky also helped create the Epic NEXT program, pairing young artists with artist-mentors to engage in theater-making and leadership development.

"I'm so excited to join Jeremy Cohen and the board to lead the Playwrights' Center into its next great act," says Chelimsky. "I've been fortunate to work with organizations supporting new and diverse voices in the American theater—from professional playwrights to students learning activism through theater. What could be better than using those lessons to help us grow more adaptable in what we offer playwrights and more robust in our ongoing efforts to strengthen the field? Actually, what could be better is getting to do that in a vibrant community like the Twin Cities, and with a fantastic staff like the one at the Playwrights' Center."

Robert Chelimsky comes to the Playwrights' Center from Epic Theatre Ensemble, where he served for six years as the company's first managing director. At Epic, he executive produced the world premieres of *Dispatches from (A)mended America* by Godfrey L. Simmons, Jr. and Brandt Adams, and Nilaja Sun's *Pike St.*, the NY premiere of Jeanne Sakata's *Hold These Truths*, and also commissions by Dominique Morriseau, Heather Raffo, Keith Josef Adkins and Ken Urban, among others. Most notably, during his tenure, Epic developed the groundbreaking Epic NEXT youth development program—a program focused on building a new generation of diverse theater and community leaders. Prior to joining Epic, Robert spent five years managing Chautauqua Theater Company, where working with Vivienne Benesch and Ethan McSweeney, he helped to create the Chautauqua New Play Commission. Prior, he co-founded Gryphon Productions in Knoxville with Charles R. Miller, serving as Executive Director for eight years, producing The Bard of Education Shakespeare-in-the-Schools Tour and the

Smoky Mt. Shakespeare Festival. He's spent seven years on regional boards for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

Now in its 45th season, **the Playwrights' Center** serves playwrights by sustaining careers, developing new work, and connecting playwrights to theaters. Each year at the Center, fellows and Core Writers receive more than \$315,000 in direct support, 70+ new plays are workshopped, playwrights connect with 100 producing theaters through partnership programs, and nearly 2,000 playwrights from around the world find resources to achieve their artistic visions.

#

A photo of Robert Chelimsky is 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 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.