



THE RUTH EASTON LAB

The Ruth Easton Lab has grown into one of the largest new play development programs in the country. In the Lab, we develop new plays in workshops with teams of professional playwrights, dramaturgs, directors, actors, and designers, bringing our expertise and resources to prepare new plays for production, fueling the American theater.

In 2008-09, we hosted a total of 52 new play development workshops in the Lab. 27 of these were provided for our Core Writers, a group of 25-35 of the most exciting playwrights in the country, chosen by a national panel to spend a three-year term developing their work at the Playwrights' Center.

"The Playwrights' Center never ceases to amaze me. They always put their money where their collective mouths are in terms of serving the playwright and the development of the script. I would call the Playwrights' Center my oasis if it weren't so cold there every time I visit." —**Dan O'Brien, Core Writer, 2009-10 McKnight National Residency and Commission recipient**

In the fall of 2008, we received major support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Theatre Communications Group/MetLife Aha! Program to deepen our efforts to bring plays closer to production and develop new ways to promote new plays to theaters. This resulted in increased resources for playwrights and new plays across the board, including longer workshops, increased pay for artists, being able to provide designers for workshops, and creating online video Play Trailers for select new plays that provide a preview of the script via video for producers (at www.pwcenter.org/trailers). We are also able to fly in and host artistic directors and literary managers from across the country to make connections between them, our playwrights, and their work.

We measure the success of our Lab with stories like these that show our ability to impact the American theater.

- Deborah Stein's *God Save Gertrude* was developed in PlayLabs 2006, produced by the Workhaus Collective (our resident company) in our own Waring Jones Theater in January 2008, and received its regional premiere in October 2009 at the Theatre @ Boston Court (Los Angeles).
- Allison Moore's *Slasher* was developed in PlayLabs 2008 and was the hit of the Humana Festival at the Actors Theatre of Louisville in March 2009. As a result, it will see eight productions between now and fall 2010 in Dallas, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Atlanta, San Antonio, St. Louis, and Seattle.
- Kira Obolensky's *Raskol*, developed in our Lab in November 2008, premiered with Ten Thousand Things Theatre in spring 2009.
- Lee Blessing's *When We Go Upon the Sea*, developed in the Lab in 2008, will premiere at InterAct Theatre Company in Philadelphia in April of 2010.
- Karen Zacarias' *Legacy of Light*, developed in our Lab in January 2009, was produced by Arena Stage in Washington, D.C. in April 2009.
- Aditi Brennan Kapil's *Agnes Under the Big Top* was selected for an NEA/Arena Stage Distinguished New Play Development Award and following its February 2009 workshop in our Lab, was workshopped at Interact Theatre (Philadelphia), Fourth World Theatre Lab (Bulgaria), and the Lark Play Development Center (New York), ahead of a planned rolling world premiere in 2010 at Mixed Blood Theatre and other venues.

Following are the activities that also fall within the Ruth Easton Lab.

THE RUTH EASTON NEW PLAY SERIES • Two years ago we created our first "season" of public activities, the Ruth Easton New Play Series. In 2008-09, the Series included ten free staged readings of our Core Writers' new work at our theater and at the Guthrie Theater. We are thrilled that this program has been successful as we often had full houses and have begun to develop an audience interested in seeing risky and untested work for the first time.

"The Ruth Easton New Play Series at the Playwrights' Center may well be the best kept secret of the Twin Cities arts and entertainment scene."—**City Pages**

PLAYLABS • Our annual PlayLabs festival brought five exciting new plays to an enthusiastic audience of local theater-goers and national artistic leaders. All five plays grew tremendously over the ten-day development process. Each writer was able to approach their play from the direction he or she desired, and we assembled first-rate artistic teams to enable the writer's specific goals to be met. In addition, we convened a panel discussion on the future of the American theater with some of the

most significant voices in the field including Bill Rauch, Artistic Director of Oregon Shakespeare Festival; Diane Ragsdale, Associate Program Officer of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; David Dower, Artistic Associate Director of Arena Stage; Chris Jones, theater critic of the [Chicago Tribune](#); and playwright Daniel Alexander Jones. The festival was successful in the opportunities it afforded playwrights and in its service as a launching pad for new work—four of the plays developed at PlayLabs 2008 have gone on to receive readings and/or productions across the country.

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMING • Our unparalleled translation project with Japanese playwrights has been acknowledged nationwide. 2008-09 was the final year of a three-year effort; five plays have been translated from Japanese to English and nine from English to Japanese. All five Japanese plays have been presented to Minnesota audiences, two in collaboration with the Guthrie Theater, and one, *Vengeance Can Wait*, received a full production at PS122 (New York) in 2008.

PARTNERSHIPS • In 2008-09, we partnered with eight other theaters from across the country who—due to the desire to use the expertise of the Center and often lack of resources to develop new work—used the Playwrights' Center to develop works for their stages, including the Guthrie Theater, Walker Arts Center, Alliance Theatre (Atlanta), Goodman Theater (Chicago), Clubbed Thumb (NY), Ensemble Theatre Company (Santa Barbara), Public Theater (NY), and Actors Theater of Louisville. The Playwrights' Center also sought out collaborations with mid-sized and smaller local theaters to help on the development of new plays with an eye towards production. In 2008-09, the History Theatre, Ten Thousand Things Theater, and Theater Latté Da premiered plays that were developed at The Playwrights' Center.

"The Playwrights' Center is a significant new play authority. We think of it as 'our' R&D Lab. The Guthrie is a better theater for its numerous partnerships with the Center." —**Joe Dowling, Artistic Director, Guthrie Theater**

We also actively pursue non-traditional presenting partners—some of whom have never worked with a playwright before—to commission and generate work for their communities. In 2008-09, we partnered with cultural institutions and social service organizations looking to use new plays as conduits to communicate with their constituencies, including the Minnesota History Center, the Walker Art Center, and the Center for Victims of Torture.

FELLOWSHIPS

"Nobody is serving playwrights as well as the Playwrights' Center... Nothing in New York compares."
—**Craig Lucas, former fellow**

In 2008-09, through the support of the McKnight and Jerome Foundations, the Playwrights' Center provided over \$200,000 to sixteen playwrights and theater artists from Minnesota and across the country. These Fellowships give artists the time and financial freedom to focus on their work and have made Minnesota a destination for playwrights, many of whom move to Minnesota for the year of their fellowship and stay because of the rich theater community of the Twin Cities. In the last year we have provided increased access to the Lab for fellows to develop their projects and participate in public events at the Center. The 2008-09 program included five Jerome Fellowships; five Jerome Many Voices fellowships for emerging playwrights of color, one of only a few programs of its kind left in the country; two McKnight Advancement Grants; one McKnight National Residency and Commission (which has counted Kia Corthron, Daniel Alexander Jones, and Craig Lucas among others as recipients); and three McKnight Theater Artist fellowships.

MEMBERSHIP

For the past 18 months, we have worked to increase access to career development opportunities for playwrights at all points in their careers. As a result, individual membership has grown from approximately 700 members to over 920 in FY09; members now hail from 45 states and five countries. In 2008-09 we improved membership by broadening our services with more online resources and fee-for-service opportunities. We facilitated twelve roundtable readings for members wanting to get their plays read, four of whom were from out-of-state and traveled to Minnesota to take advantage of the Center's services.

The Center's institutional membership program with colleges and universities, New Plays on Campus (NPOC), continued to grow. NPOC works directly with colleges and universities to allow students the opportunity to develop their plays and provides residencies and productions for our Core Writers. By the end of 2009, we had 24 NPOC members, up from 19 in 2008.

"If New Plays On Campus maintains its current level of energy and commitment, America could have dozens more incubators for exciting new work. A few seasons from now, we might even be celebrating the health of the new American play." —**Variety Magazine**

THE ORGANIZATION

The Board has been transformed under the leadership of its current President, dik Bolger. With assistance from the MAP for Nonprofits Board Recruitment Program, the Board's Governance Committee performed a careful analysis to assess the strengths and gaps in expertise on the Board. As a result, several new members joined the roster in 2008-09 to establish one of the strongest Boards of Directors in the history of the Playwrights' Center, now at eighteen members.

In August 2009, the Center's dynamic Producing Artistic Director Polly Carl took a new artistic position at Steppenwolf Theatre Company in Chicago. The Center is in the midst of a national search for her replacement (led by Management Consultant for the Arts), with the expectation that a new leader will be in place by early 2010. Although the Center and community will miss her passionate voice and presence, the Center is in a very strong place with a qualified and dedicated staff that is successfully carrying the organization through this transition.

BALANCE SHEET

Current Assets	FY08	FY09
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 611,865	\$ 1,013,129
Pledges and Prepaid Expenses	618,638	754,754
Property/Equipment	843,847	831,079
Total Assets	2,074,350	2,598,962
Current Liabilities	33,547	39,242
Long-Term Debt	6,577	2,061
Net Assets	2,034,226	2,557,659
Total Liabilities/Assets	2,074,350	2,598,962

STATEMENT of ACCOUNTS

Support	\$ 990,886	\$ 1,716,352
Revenue	104,062	129,930
Total Support/Revenue	1,094,948	1,846,282
Program Services		
Playwright Development Services*	248,477	537,393
PlayLabs	160,368	120,517
Fellowship Programs	518,321	466,066
Total Program Services	927,166	1,123,976
Supporting Activities		
Management/General	109,776	131,200
Fundraising	33,560	67,673
Total Supporting Activities	143,336	198,873
Total Expenses	1,070,502	1,322,849
Surplus/Deficit	24,446	523,433

*Includes Lab and Membership Services

Figures provided by the independent auditing firm of Olson Thielen & Co., Ltd.