

## **Playwrights' Center announces 2016-17 McKnight Theater Artist Fellows**

(Minneapolis, MN—May 31, 2016)— The Playwrights' Center is pleased to announce the 2016-17 recipients of the McKnight Theater Artist Fellowships:

- Costume designer **Sonya Berlovitz**, who worked for decades with Theatre de la Jeune Lune and now designs for The Moving Company, Ten Thousand Things, Jungle Theater and others
- Actor **Thomasina Petrus**, a company member at Penumbra Theatre and Mixed Blood Theatre who was seen recently in Park Square's "Nina Simone: Four Women" and Pillsbury House Theatre's "The Gospel of Lovingkindness"
- Actor **Kimberly Richardson**, a Ten Thousand Things Artist Core member currently appearing in their production of "The Changelings" and seen recently in "My Life as a Fairytale" at Open Eye Figure Theatre, a show she co-created with Michael Sommers

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 \$7,000 in development funds to launch a new collaboration for the fellow towards building a new theatrical work. Fellows are selected by an independent panel.

"Not only are these artists demonstrating high levels of skill and innovation in their individual crafts," says Playwrights' Center Producing Artistic Director Jeremy B. Cohen, "but they are all deeply invested in the Minnesota theater community. These generous fellowships from the McKnight Foundation recognize the artists' impressive work and will give them time and resources to further develop their already exceptional talent."

Between 1980 and 2008 **Sonya Berlovitz** designed costumes for over 50 productions at Theatre de la Jeune Lune. Since then she has worked on numerous shows with The Moving Company, touring with them to South Coast Repertory, Playmakers Repertory Company, Berkeley Repertory Theatre and Actors Theatre of Louisville. Productions elsewhere have included Children's Theatre Company, the Guthrie Theater, American Repertory Theater, La Jolla Playhouse, The Jungle Theater, Theater Latté Da and Ten Thousand Things. Grants and awards have included The Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle ("The Green Bird," 2000), Bay Area Theatre Award ("Tartuffe," 2016), Minnesota State Arts Board Initiative Grant (2005, 2013) and a McKnight Theater Artist Fellowship (1998, 2016).

[www.sonyaberlovitz.com](http://www.sonyaberlovitz.com)

**Thomasina Petrus** is a 25-year equity actor and vocalist and company member at Penumbra Theatre and Mixed Blood Theatre. Her company, Thomasina Productions, has produced a number of works for music and theater including six separate stagings of "Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill" by Lanier

Robertson and original productions "Lady Days," "Etta James...Dreams to Remember," "Hot Chocolate" and her newest endeavor, "The Sound Effects." All of Thomasina's upcoming productions and performances can be found on her website, [thomasinaproductions.com](http://thomasinaproductions.com). A successful departure from performing, Thomasina has also created Thomasina's Cashew Brittle, available at a number of locations: [thomasinascashewbrittle.com](http://thomasinascashewbrittle.com)

**Kimberly Richardson** is a physical theater performer. A member of Ten Thousand Things Artist Core, Kimberly has appeared frequently with the company since 2008, in productions including "Othello," "Music Man," "As You Like It" and "Dirt Sticks." Also a regular at Open Eye Figure Theatre, Kimberly performed/co-created "My Life as a Fairytale" and "The Clumsy Man" with Michael Sommers and played Ed Norton in Sommers' "To the Moon." Other credits include: Workhaus Collective, Children's Theatre Company, Jungle Theater, TigerLion Arts, Interact Center and actor-driven collaborations with Sodhouse Theater, Live Action Set, Jon Ferguson and Sara Richardson. Kimberly was awarded a 2006 Sage Award for dance performance.

The public is invited to see works in progress by two of the current (2015-16) McKnight Theater Artist Fellows, Aimee K. Bryant and James A. Williams, on Tuesday, June 28 at 7 p.m. at the Southern Theater. See [pwcenter.org](http://pwcenter.org) for details and to RSVP.

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*Photos of the artists are available at [pwcenter.org/media-room](http://pwcenter.org/media-room) or by contacting Jessica Franken at [jessicaf@pwcenter.org](mailto: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 a 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.