

Playwrights' Center announces 2018-19 Jerome and Many Voices Fellows

MINNEAPOLIS (May 16, 2018) — Each year, the Playwrights' Center serves as an artistic home for nearly 40 fellows and Core Writers, in addition to supporting 2,000+ member playwrights across the globe and partnering with producing theaters to move work from page to stage. The Center today announced the 2018-19 Jerome Fellows **Sofya Levitsky-Weitz, Casey Llewellyn and Philana Imade Omorotionmwan**; Many Voices Fellows **Marvin González De León and Haygen-Brice Walker**; and Many Voices Mentee **Antonio Duke**.

Jerome and Many Voices Fellows spend a year in residency in the Twin Cities, working in an individualized and hands-on way with the Playwrights' Center artistic staff—some of the most experienced and connected theater professionals in the country. In addition to an \$18,000 stipend, fellows receive \$2,000 in play development funds to workshop new plays with professional directors, dramaturgs and actors. The Center also builds connections between the playwrights and producers of new work. This holistic and customized combination of financial support, workshops with collaborators and professional connections is career-changing for most playwrights.

"The Playwrights' Center is like Hogwarts for playwrights," says incoming Many Voices Fellow Haygen-Brice Walker. "I'm honored to be immersed in a community of writers that I've been admiring from afar for so long."

"Our world needs brave and powerful new voices like these brilliant storytellers to help us see our way forward right now," says Jeremy B. Cohen, the Playwrights' Center's producing artistic director. "These fellowships provide playwrights with sustainability, development of their craft and long-term relationships that will hopefully ensure their voices are heard across stages for many years to come."

2018-19 JEROME FELLOWS

Sofya Levitsky-Weitz, Casey Llewellyn, Philana Imade Omorotionmwan

Jerome Fellowships are awarded annually to emerging playwrights. The Playwrights' Center's 2018-19 Jerome Fellows are:

- **Sofya Levitsky-Weitz**, a theater and film artist originally from Los Angeles whose plays include "this party sucks" and "Intuitive Men," and who is part of Ensemble Studio Theatre's Youngblood playwrights collective
- **Casey Llewellyn**, whose works include "O, Earth," "I Am Bleeding All Over the Place: A Living History Tour" (co-written with Brooke O'Harra); "Existing Conditions" (co-written with Claudia Rankine) and "I Love Dick," an adaptation for theater of the book by Chris Kraus
- **Philana Imade Omorotionmwan**, originally from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, whose plays include "Before Evening Comes," "Strong Face," "Fireflies" and "The Defiance of Dandelions"

Previous recipients of the Jerome Fellowship include Lee Blessing, Lisa D'Amour, Kristoffer Diaz, Dan Dietz, Sarah Gubbins, Naomi Iizuka, Melanie Marnich, Anna Moench, Tori Sampson, Joe Waechter, Rhiana Yazzie, Martín Zimmerman and August Wilson.

2018-19 MANY VOICES FELLOWS

Marvin González De León, Haygen-Brice Walker

Many Voices Fellowships are awarded annually to early-career writers of color. The Playwrights' Center's 2018-19 Many Voices Fellows are:

- **Marvin González De León**, a Reno- and Phoenix-based playwright who has worked with Good Luck Macbeth Theatre Company, Reno Little Theater and Teatro Bravo, and who received an MFA in Dramatic Writing from Arizona State University in 2017
- **Haygen-Brice Walker**, a queer Puerto Rican-American playwright-producer born and raised in the American South who co-founded ON THE ROCKS production company in Philadelphia with Elaina Di Monaco

Previous recipients of the Many Voices Fellowship include Sharif Abu-Hamdeh, Benjamin Benne, Marisa Carr, Cristina Florencia Castro, Janaki Ranpura, Harrison David Rivers, Stacey Rose, James Anthony Tyler, Saymoukda Duangphouxay Vongsay and Josh Wilder.

2018-19 MANY VOICES MENTEE

Antonio Duke

The Many Voices Mentorship awards a Minnesota-based beginning playwright of color with individually-curated writing and play development services and a \$2,000 stipend. The 2018-19 Many Voices Mentee is **Antonio Duke**, a Twin Cities actor and playwright who will use his mentorship to explore his ancestral odyssey, using mythology to create stories that embody the black diaspora. He has performed his solo pieces at Pillsbury House Theatre as part of the Naked Stages Fellowship and at the Guthrie Theater's Solo Emerging Artist Celebration.

Previous recipients of the Many Voices Mentorship include Ansa Akyea, ShaVunda Brown, Oya Mae Duchess-Davis, Max Delgado, Julia Gay, brianne a. hill, Jamil Jude and Junauda Petrus.

Fellowships at the Playwrights' Center, made possible in part by the McKnight and Jerome foundations, provide more than \$300,000 each year to artists. The 2018-19 McKnight National Residency and Commission recipient (Idris Goodwin) and 2018-19 McKnight Fellows in Playwriting (May Lee-Yang and Tori Sampson) were announced previously. New Core Writers and McKnight Theater Artist Fellows will be announced soon. Learn more about these writers at pwcenter.org.

All Playwrights' Center fellows and Core Writers are selected by diverse national panels of artists and theater leaders.

#

BIOS

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

Antonio Duke is a Twin Cities based actor and playwright. His artistic aim is to create stories that embody the black diaspora. In his writing he focuses on mythology. Within mythos lies intimate and epic circumstances that he's driven to explore. He conjures most of his muse from black spiritualities. He's an alumnus of the University of Minnesota/Guthrie BFA Actor Training Program. He has two solo performance pieces: "Ashes of Moons" which debuted at Pillsbury House Theatre as part of the Naked Stages Fellowship, and "Tears of Moons" which debuted as part of the Guthrie Theater's Solo Emerging Artist Celebration.

Marvin González De León is a Reno and Phoenix based playwright. He has worked with Good Luck Macbeth Theatre Company, Reno Little Theater, Teatro Bravo and Arizona State University. He was a national finalist for the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival's 10-minute play category, as well as their National Partners of the American Theatre Playwriting Award. He was a finalist for the Latinx Theatre Commons Carnival of New Latinx Work, and twice participated in the Theater Masters National MFA Playwrights Festival. Two of his short plays are published through Samuel French. González De León received his MFA in Dramatic Writing from Arizona State University in 2017.

Sofya Levitsky-Weitz is a member of EST/Youngblood and has developed work with EST, the Brick, Williamstown, the cell, JACK, BAC, Barn Arts Collective, The Hearth, the Araca Group, the Tank, Hearth Gods, Dixon Place, the Flea, Steep Theatre, Chicago Dramatists, Hearth Gods and more. Commissions from Steep Theatre and Chinatown Soup. Semi-finalist for The Playwrights Realm Writing Fellowship and Princess Grace Award. Finalist for Actors Theatre of Louisville's Heideman Award and published (twice) in "The Dionysian." She was chosen for the University of Central Florida's inaugural Pegasus PlayLab this spring and serves as the official annual judge for Hendrix College's playwriting competition. She got her MFA in Writing for the Screen & Stage at Northwestern University and teaches writing at St. John's University. sofyaweitz.com

Casey Llewellyn is a playwright whose work interrogates identity, collectivity and form. Works include "O, Earth" (commissioned and produced by The Foundry Theatre, 2016); "I Am Bleeding All Over the Place: A Living History Tour" (conceived by Brooke O'Harra, co-written with her, La Mama, 2016); "The Body which is the Town;" "Come in. Be with me. Don't touch me.;" "Obsession Piece;" "The Quiet Way;" "Existing Conditions" (co-written with Claudia Rankine) and "I Love Dick," an adaptation for theater of the book by Chris Kraus. Casey is a member of the curatorial team of The Racial Imaginary Institute. www.caseyllewellyn.com

Philana Imade Omorotionmwan (o-more-o-tune-wha) is originally from Baton Rouge, LA. Her writing frequently considers how the processes by which we are "othered" can often lead to our bodies feeling like prisons. Her plays include "Before Evening Comes," "Strong Face," "Fireflies" and "The Defiance of Dandelions." Her work has been developed and/or recognized by the American Playwriting Foundation, BAPF, Br!nk, La MaMa and Athena Project. A two-time finalist for the Heideman Award, she holds a BA in English from Stanford University and recently completed and MFA in Playwriting. philanaplays.weebly.com

Haygen-Brice Walker is a queer Puerto Rican-American playwright-producer born and raised in the American South. His playscapes are often populated by gay werewolves, drag queens, white buffalos, Jennifer Lopez, cocaine, dreamers, John Wayne Gacy and lots of fonts. Haygen-Brice is a third-year member of The Foundry at PlayPenn and a 2018/20 Core Playwright at Interact Theatre Company. In 2015, with director-producer Elaina Di Monaco, Haygen-Brice co-founded ON THE ROCKS, a production company for their frequent late-night, BYOB, deep-fried, theatrical dumpster-fires. Their work has been seen in unconventional venues throughout Philadelphia. *haygenbricewalker.com*

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHTS' CENTER

The Playwrights' Center champions playwrights and new plays to build upon a living theater that demands new and innovative works.

The 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 2,000 member playwrights from around the world find resources to achieve their artistic vision.

Since its founding in 1971, the Playwrights' Center has become one of the nation's most generous and well-respected theater organizations, helping launch the careers of numerous nationally recognized artists such as 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. Beyond the financial stipend, the value of fellowships is more than doubled with the year-long support the Playwrights' Center adds through workshops with professional collaborators and through the connections the Center makes between playwrights and producers of new work. This holistic and customized combination of financial support, access to talent, and professional connections is career-changing for most playwrights. Fellowship programs: Jerome Fellows, Many Voices Fellows, McKnight Fellows in Playwriting, McKnight National Residency and Commission, McKnight Theater Artist Fellows.

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. Through the Regulars partnership program, the Playwrights' Center partners with 100 theaters around the country to bring their artistic staff to the Center in order to spend time with playwrights and to co-develop new plays with a keen eye towards production. In fact, 60% of these plays have gone on to full production within two years (rather than the average seven-year timeframe for most plays to see production). Recent and upcoming productions resulting from Playwrights' Center co-development workshops include "The Great Leap" by Lauren Yee at Denver Center Theatre, "Dancing on the Edge" by Adam Kraar at Theatre Novi Most, "The Gentleman Caller" by Philip Dawkins at Raven Theater, "Duet" by Daniel Alexander Jones at Soho Rep, "Early Morning Song" by Rachel Jendrzejewski at Red Eye Theater, "Fickle: A Fancy French Farce" by Meg Miroshnik at Olney Theatre Center, and "The Happiest Place on Earth" by Philip Dawkins at Greenhouse Theater Center/Sideshow Theatre Company.