

Playwrights' Center announces 2018-19 McKnight National Residency and Commission recipient, McKnight Fellows in Playwriting

MINNEAPOLIS (April 25, 2018) —The Playwrights' Center today announced the recipients of the 2018-19 McKnight National Residency and Commission and 2018-19 McKnight Fellowships in Playwriting.

These writers are three of the 35-40 fellows and Core Writers who find an artistic home at the Playwrights' Center each year. The Center also supports more than 2,000 member playwrights living all over the world, develops around 70 new plays each year, and helps move plays from page to stage through a robust partnership program with producing theaters.

"To have the longtime support of a visionary partner like the McKnight Foundation is both unique and extraordinary," says Jeremy B. Cohen, producing artistic director at the Playwrights' Center. "To have it align with nurturing three such brilliant playwrights reinforces the great new vision of theater in our country—a country that needs these voices now more than ever."

2018-19 MCKNIGHT NATIONAL RESIDENCY AND COMMISSION RECIPIENT

Idris Goodwin

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, Kathleen Tolan, Mfoniso Udofia, Francine Volpe and Mac Wellman.

The 2018-19 recipient is **Idris Goodwin**, an award-winning playwright, director, orator and educator who was a Playwrights' Center Core Writer from 2013 to 2016. Goodwin has long been at the forefront of hip-hop theater, with work such as his "break beat play" series. His play "The Way The Mountain Moved"—commissioned as part of Oregon Shakespeare Festival's American Revolutions Series and co-developed through the Playwrights' Center's partnership program—will receive its world premiere in the summer of 2018. Last month it was announced that Goodwin will become the producing artistic director of StageOne Family Theatre in Louisville, Kentucky.

Goodwin's commissioned play for his McKnight National Residency and Commission—"a play that's been whispering over my shoulder for a minute now," he says—is titled "Scarfoot Lives." It is a multigenerational play spanning 150 years, about an interconnected family of black creatives.

"I am honored. I am thrilled. And I am charged up!" Goodwin says about the residency and commission. "Ever since I first set foot into the Playwrights' Center over 15 years ago, I knew it's where I belonged. I

leap at all opportunities to be within the walls of that building. This is the right play and the right time and now I have the right circumstances to spark its creation.”

2018-19 MCKNIGHT FELLOWS IN PLAYWRITING

May Lee-Yang, Tori Sampson

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, Ping Chong, Migdalia Cruz, Lisa D’Amour, Steven Dietz, Barbara Field, Jeffrey Hatcher, Christina Ham, Carson Kreitzer, Melanie Marnich, Marion McClinton, Kira Obolensky, Harrison David Rivers, Paula Vogel, Mac Wellman and August Wilson.

The 2018-19 McKnight Fellows in Playwriting are **May Lee-Yang and Tori Sampson**.

May Lee-Yang is a writer, performance artist and teaching artist who was part of the Playwrights’ Center’s Many Voices program in 2002-03 and 2008-09. Her plays include “Hmong-Lao Friendship Play or Lao-Hmong Friendship Play,” “Confessions of a Lazy Hmong Woman” and “The Korean Drama Addict’s Guide to Losing Your Virginity,” which premieres July 27 at Theater Mu.

Lee-Yang says, “I’m excited about this fellowship because it will give me the luxury of time and resources to experiment, research and bring life to projects that don’t yet have a home.”

Tori Sampson is a 2017-18 Jerome Fellow at the Playwrights’ Center. She is currently working on commissions for Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Yale Repertory Theatre and Atlantic Theater Company. Her plays include “If Pretty Hurts Ugly Must be a Muhfucka” (Playwrights Horizons 2019), “This Land Was Made” (Vineyard Theater 2018) and “Cadillac Crew” (Yale Repertory 2019).

Sampson says, “This fellowship means that I have another year of being a full-time playwright ahead of me!”

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

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BIOS

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

Idris Goodwin is an award-winning playwright, director, orator and educator. This summer he will become the Producing Artistic Director of StageOne Family Theater in Louisville, KY. For StageOne he penned "American Tales" and the widely produced "And In This Corner: Cassius Clay." Other plays include: "How We Got On," "This Is Modern Art" co-written with Kevin Coval, "Bars and Measures," "The Raid," "Hype Man: a break beat play" and "Blackademics." "The Way The Mountain Moved," commissioned as part of Oregon Shakespeare Festival's American Revolutions Series, will world premiere in summer 2018. www.idrisgoodwin.com

May Lee-Yang is a writer, performance artist and teaching artist. Her work has been/will be presented at Theater Mu, Park Square Theatre, Steppingstone Theatre, Intermedia Arts, Illusion Theater, The Center for Hmong Arts and Talent (CHAT), Out North Theater and the National Asian American Theater Festival. She has received grants from Bush Leadership Fellowship, the Minnesota State Arts Board, the National Performance Network, the Midwestern Voices and Visions Residency Award, the Playwrights' Center, Intermedia Arts' Beyond the Pure Writing Fellowship and the Jerome Travel Grant. In 2016, she received an Ordway Sally Award for Arts Access. www.lazyhmongwoman.com

Tori Sampson hails from Boston, MA. Her plays include "If Pretty Hurts Ugly Must be a Muhfucka" (Playwrights Horizons 2019), "This Land Was Made" (Vineyard Theater 2018), "Cadillac Crew" (Yale Repertory 2019) and "Where Butterflies go in the Winter." Her plays have been developed at Great Plains Theatre Conference, Berkeley Repertory Theatre's The Ground Floor residency program, Victory Gardens Theater's IGNITION festival, Playwrights Foundation and Ubuntu Theater Project. Tori is a 2017-18 Playwrights' Center Jerome Fellow. Two of her plays appeared on the 2017 Kilroys List and she holds an Honorable Mention from the 2016 Relentless Award. She is the Kennedy Center's 2016 Paula Vogel Playwright and second-place Lorraine Hansberry recipient. She is a 2017 finalist for the Alliance Theatre's Kendeda Prize and a 2018 Susan Smith Blackburn Prize finalist. Tori is currently working on commissions from Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Yale Repertory Theatre and Atlantic Theater Company. She holds a BS in sociology from Ball State University and an MFA in playwriting from Yale School of Drama.

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.