

Playwrights' Center announces 2018-19 McKnight Theater Artist Fellows

MINNEAPOLIS (June 6, 2018) — 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 access to \$7,000 in development funds. Selection is based on a commitment to theater arts, evidence of professional achievement and a sustained level of excellence in the applicant's work.

The 2018-19 McKnight Theater Artist Fellows are:

Scott W. Edwards, a sound designer who was the Children's Theatre Company's resident sound designer for 8 years and the Guthrie Theater's resident sound designer for 21 years. His talents will next be heard in "The Legend of Georgia McBride" at the Guthrie Theater in July. "To be part of a group of amazing artists that I admire and have worked with over the years is a great honor," says Edwards. During his fellowship year he'll be working on what he calls "a mysterious production" with Mark Rylance and Claire Van Kampen.

Masanari Kawahara, a puppeteer and puppet designer who also received the McKnight Theater Artist Fellowship in 2010-11. Kawahara has worked with companies including In the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre, Jungle Theater and Pangea World Theater, and is currently in "Speechless" by The Moving Company. He says the fellowship is "humbling to accept while working among many amazing theater artists in these beautiful towns. It makes me very happy especially to mark the fiftieth year of my life and 25 years working in theater." This year, Kawahara will begin work on a show about the aftermath of the Japan earthquakes and tsunami of 2011.

Elise Langer, an actor who co-created and performed in the Ivey Award-winning "Milly and Tillie" at Open Eye Figure Theatre. Langer is a core artist with Ten Thousand Things Theater and has also performed with Children's Theatre Company, History Theatre, Theatre de la Jeune Lune and many others. She just closed "The Good Person of Szechwan" with Ten Thousand Things and will be seen next in their fall production of "Scapin." Langer, who is originally from Paris, France, and has lived in many U.S. cities, says, "I chose to live in this theater community because it just felt right. It is incredible to be recognized in this way by the community that I love so much!"

The McKnight Theater Artist Fellows are chosen by a panel of local and national theater artists. Past recipients include Sarah Agnew, Ansa Akyea, Barry Browning, Bart Buch, Shá Cage, Sun Mee Chomet, James Craven, Marcus Dilliard, Katharine Horowitz, Mathew LeFebvre, Christopher Lutter-Gardella, Greta Oglesby, Sonja Parks, Denise Prosek, Joel Sass, Austene Van, Michael Wangen, James A. Williams, Regina Marie Williams, Sally Wingert and Stephen Yoakam.

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. Learn more at pwcenter.org.

#

BIOS

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

Sound designer **Scott W. Edwards** grew up in the Minneapolis theater scene. He was Children's Theatre Company's resident sound designer for 8 years and The Guthrie Theater's resident sound designer for 21 years, designing 140 productions and working with artists from all over the world. He has worked with many theaters in the Twin Cities and around the country including being a founding member of Myron Johnson's "Ballet of the Dolls" and the live sound engineer and production manager for Garrison Keillor's "A Prairie Home Companion." Recently his work on Mark Rylance's and Louis Jenkins' "Nice Fish" premiered in London's West End.

Masanari Kawahara is a performer, educator, and Butoh practitioner who incorporates puppetry, mask, and movement into his work. Recent theater works include "Speechless" by The Moving Company as an actor; "Immigrant Journey Project" with Theater Mu as the lead artist; and "The Oldest Boy" by Jungle Theater as a puppeteer/actor/designer/builder. Also with In the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre, he collaborated on "Make Believe Neighborhood," "The Story of Crow Boy," and "Queen." Other notable work includes the solo show "Little Boy" commissioned by Pangea World Theater's Alternate Vision series. welovemasa.com

Originally from Paris, France, **Elise Langer** has lived and performed in San Francisco, San Diego, New York, Paris, Boise and is now happily based in Minneapolis. Locally, she has performed with Ten Thousand Things (Artist Core), The Children's Theatre Company, Sod House Theater, Open Eye Figure Theatre, Four Humors Theater, The History Theatre, Jon Ferguson Theatre, TigerLion Arts, Theatre de la Jeune Lune, 3 Sticks, MN Orchestra and Bedlam Theatre. Elise co-created and performed in "Milly and Tillie" at Open Eye Figure Theatre which won Ivey recognition for Overall Excellence. Elise studied at the École Jacques Lecoq in Paris.

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.