

Playwrights' Center developing new play by St. Paul playwright Harrison David Rivers

(Minneapolis, MN—February 15, 2017)—The 2016-17 Ruth Easton New Play Series at the Playwrights' Center continues **March 6 and 7 at 7 p.m.** with public readings of “**The Sea & The Stars**” by **Harrison David Rivers**. The readings will take place at the Playwrights’ Center, 2301 E. Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis. The events are free, but reservations are recommended and can be made at pwcenter.org.

Playwright Harrison David Rivers moved to the Twin Cities in 2014 for a Many Voices Fellowship at the Playwrights’ Center, and in 2015 he was selected as a McKnight Fellow in Playwriting. He is now a Core Writer, a three-year program supporting professional playwrights through play development workshops and connections to theaters.

Rivers describes “The Sea & The Stars” as “a play about love, karaoke and the sea.” In the play, Simon, who is a lifeguard, meets Finn, who is terrified of water. Both are adrift, with broken hearts, returning to the tiny beach town of Jupiter and to families who need them.

David Mendizábal will direct, and the cast includes Jon-Michael Reese*, Eric Sharp*, Jasmine Hughes*, Christina Baldwin*, Austene Van* and Sasha Andreev* (**Member of Actors’ Equity Association*).

“Plays come from different places,” says Rivers. “Some come from joy, others from history or from research of a specific topic. This particular play was born of heartbreak—prompted by the kind of breakup that leaves you bereft, struggling for air, wearing the same outfit for days at a time and bursting into tears in random places—the supermarket, for example. I felt, at the time, like the only thing I could do to combat my grief—because nothing else was working—was to write a play. And to write a funny play, at that. Writing ‘The Sea & The Stars’ was therapeutic. It wasn’t therapy! But it was therapeutic.”

“This was one of the first plays I read by this gorgeous writer,” says Playwrights’ Center Producing Artistic Director Jeremy B. Cohen. “As with other plays within Harrison’s body of work, this piece warms his audiences into a pliable state of compassion and understanding, so that, by the time the crises arrive, he’s found a way to more freely invite our individual experiences to sit alongside the larger universal ones he poses.”

Harrison David Rivers is the winner of a GLAAD Media Award, a McKnight Fellowship in Playwriting, a Many Voices Fellowship, a Van Lier Fellowship, an Emerging Artist of Color Fellowship and the New York Stage & Film’s Founders Award. He was the 2016 Playwright-in-Residence at the Williamstown Theatre Festival. His plays include “Sweet” (National Black Theatre), “And She Would Stand Like This” (The Movement Theatre Company), “Where Storms are Born” (Williamstown) and “When Last We

Flew" (Sundance). Harrison is an alumnus of the Emerging Writers' Group at the Public Theater.
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The Ruth Easton New Play Series at the Playwrights' Center, now in its 12th year, provides selected Core Writers with 20 hours of workshop time to develop a new play in collaboration with top-notch actors and other theater artists. Plays receive two public readings, giving audience members a unique and immediate way to experience new work and a chance to be part of the creative process. Plays recently seen in the Ruth Easton New Play Series that had full productions this theater season include George Brant's "Marie and Rosetta" Off-Broadway at Atlantic Theater and Carlyle Brown's "Finding Fish" at the Illusion Theater in Minneapolis.

The 2016-17 Ruth Easton New Play Series will conclude with "*Minneapolis/St. Paul*" by Lee Blessing on April 3 and 4. Details at pwcenter.org/ruth-easton-series.

All events in the Ruth Easton New Play Series are free and open to the public. Reservations are recommended; reserve your spots at pwcenter.org or by contacting the Playwrights' Center at (612) 332-7481 or info@pwcenter.org.

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Photos of the playwright and previous Ruth Easton New Play Series readings are available at pwcenter.org/media-room or by contacting Jessica Franken at jessicaf@pwcenter.org.

THE 2016-17 RUTH EASTON NEW PLAY SERIES

December 5 & 6 at 7 p.m.	“Wink” by Jen Silverman
January 9 & 10 at 7 p.m.	“queens” by Martyna Majok
February 6 & 7 at 7 p.m.	“Eden Prairie, 1971” by Mat Smart
March 6 & 7 at 7 p.m.	“The Sea & The Stars” by Harrison David Rivers
April 3 & 4 at 7 p.m.	“Minneapolis/St. Paul” by Lee Blessing

“Wink” by Jen Silverman

Sofie is an unhappy housewife. Gregor is her bread-winning husband. Dr. Frans is their psychiatrist. Wink is the cat. And Gregor has just skinned the cat. A dark comedy about the complicated and dangerous territory of the human heart.

“queens” by Martyna Majok

The lives of two generations of immigrant women in Queens collide in a series of small apartments. When you are working so hard to move forward in America, what cannot—and should not—be left behind?

“Eden Prairie, 1971” by Mat Smart

On the night *Apollo 15* lands on the moon, a draft dodger steals home to Eden Prairie, Minnesota from Canada. He risks arrest to deliver a message to a young woman from his high school class. This beautifully etched play challenges notions of our own bravery and the true cost of freedom.

“The Sea & The Stars” by Harrison David Rivers

Simon is a lifeguard. Finn is terrified of water. Both are adrift, with broken hearts, returning to the tiny beach town of Jupiter and to families who need them. A play about love, karaoke, and the sea.

“Minneapolis/St. Paul” by Lee Blessing

A celebrated crime novelist leads two different lives, one as Randall, the middle-aged husband and father, and the other as Mandy, the newly-wedded wife and stepmother. In a play that is both poignant and bitingly funny, Mandy/Randall struggles with the complexities and repercussions of an identity too vast to fit within binaries.

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 an impressive 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 1,700 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.