

Anna May Wong bioplay by Core Writer John Olive next up at the Playwrights' Center

MINNEAPOLIS (December 20, 2017) — Actress Anna May Wong (1905-1961) was incredibly prolific, appearing in silent movies, “talkies,” television, plays and vaudeville. She was also stifled by a close-minded industry which largely limited the Chinese American actress to stereotyped roles, and the Hays code which kept her out of romantic leads. Playwright John Olive says this discrimination is a main reason that Anna May Wong is unknown to many modern film lovers, while names like Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich and Mae West live on. Olive is hoping to shine a spotlight on Wong with his new play “**How The Ghost Of You Clings, The Anna May Wong Story**,” which will be featured in the Playwrights' Center's Ruth Easton New Play Series on **January 8 and 9, 2018**. Readings will be at 7 p.m. at the Playwrights' Center, 2301 E. Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis. The readings are free, but reservations are recommended and can be made at pwcenter.org.

Olive will be collaborating with director Rick Shiomi; dramaturg Christina Ham; and actors Sun Mee Chomet* (as Anna), Katie Bradley*, Sherwin Resurreccion*, Daniel Sakamoto-Wengel, Daniel Coleman and Stephanie Bertumen (**Member of Actors' Equity Association*).

“As I wrote the play,” says **John Olive**, “my main thing is to educate people about who this woman was, because most people simply don't know. Plus, a lot of the challenges that she faced are still faced by Asian actors. They still have these limited roles that they're asked to play. It's no longer written down the way it was, but it still exists.”

“We're so looking forward to having one of the great founders of the Playwrights' Center and long-time Core Writer John Olive back in the theater, sharing this important new work,” says **Jeremy B. Cohen**, producing artistic director at the Playwrights' Center. “This piece launches 2018 with a renewed fervor for promoting greater awareness of our current artists, those whose future burns bright and who will move us all forward into a braver and deeper-spirited world.”

John Olive is a widely produced (Manhattan Theatre Club, Old Globe, ACT/Seattle, South Coast Rep, Steppenwolf, the Guthrie and many others) and award-winning (Bush and McKnight Foundations, National Endowment For The Arts, Kennedy Center Award For Drama, others) playwright. Plays include “Minnesota Moon,” “Standing On My Knees,” “The Voice Of The Prairie,” “God Fire,” “Singapore,” “Evelyn and The Polka King,” “Killers” and many others. John has also written extensively in the area of Theater for Young Audiences: Seattle Children's, the Arden, People's Light, First Stage Milwaukee, Oregon Children's, Nashville Children's and many others. John has written novels, screenplays, theater reviews and a book about the magic of bedtime stories, “Tell Me A Story In The Dark.”

The Ruth Easton New Play Series provides selected Playwrights' Center Core Writers with 20 hours of workshop time to develop a new play with collaborators of their choice: top local and national actors,

directors, designers and dramaturgs. Each play has two public readings, allowing the playwright to experiment and see the play on its feet in front of two different audiences. The Center brings in visiting artistic leaders to see the readings and connect with the playwrights, and more than half of the plays developed in the series over the past decade have gone on to production.

The 2017-18 Ruth Easton New Play Series kicked off in December with Kira Obolensky's "The Overcoat: A Low-Fi Musical," and will also feature "Three Quarter Inches of Sky" by Sherry Kramer on February 5 and 6, "Tiny Houses" by Stefanie Zdravec on March 5 and 6, and "the bandaged place" by Harrison David Rivers on April 9 and 10.

All events in the Ruth Easton New Play Series are free and open to the public. Reserve your spots at pwcenter.org/ruth-easton-series 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

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, "Duat" 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.