

PlayLabs 2017 runs October 23–29 at the Playwrights' Center

MINNEAPOLIS (October 10, 2017) — The Playwrights' Center's annual PlayLabs new play festival runs Monday, October 23, through Sunday, October 29, 2017. The featured playwrights are **Jason Gray Platt** (“**Take Care**”), **Jen Silverman** (“**In the Time of the Volcano**”) and **Alice Tuan** (“**A Humbling in St. Paul**”), all Core Writers at the Center. The festival also includes a **Playwriting Fellows Showcase**. Tickets are free and can be reserved at pwcenter.org/playlabs.

For more than 30 years, the Playwrights' Center's PlayLabs festival has been one of the nation's most comprehensive play development programs. Playwrights receive 30 hours of workshop time with a team of collaborators (including designers) and two public readings—with time for rewrites in between. More than 65% of the plays featured in PlayLabs over the past decade have gone on to production, and the festival has become a must-attend event for theater leaders and fans both locally and from around the country.

“These long workshops, especially when paired with two readings, open up space for playwrights to do real, extensive work and experimentation with their scripts,” says Jeremy B. Cohen, producing artistic director of the Playwrights' Center. “PlayLabs provides a fertile environment for ambitious plays doing new things with form or content—the types of plays that are hard to move forward during one- or two-day workshops. Jason, Jen and Alice are coming to the festival with big plays and the courage to challenge themselves. I'm thrilled to support them and excited to share their work with Twin Cities audiences.”

All PlayLabs events are free and open to the public, and take place at the Playwrights' Center, 2301 E. Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis. For tickets, see pwcenter.org/playlabs or contact the Playwrights' Center at (612) 332-7481 or info@pwcenter.org. Here's the schedule for PlayLabs 2017:

“A Humbling in St. Paul” by Alice Tuan

Monday, October 23, and Friday, October 27, at 7 p.m.

Olive Chung comes to the Twin Cities to work on a new play and reconnects with her grad school friend Liz Manuel after being out of touch for a decade. While staying with Liz and her wife, Sharine Hopewell, and their pups, Bell and Musco, Olive gets what she thinks is food poisoning. It turns out to be much more mysterious and severe than anyone imagined. A play about the guest/host space, infection, the performance of normalcy, unseen presence, the body rebelling against the mind, optimism, gratitude, and, yes, friendship.

Director: Laurie Woolery**

Lighting design consultant: Karin Olson

Cast: Sophia Kim*, Marlina Gonzalez, Larissa Kiel*

“Take Care” by Jason Gray Platt

Tuesday, October 24, at 7 p.m. and Saturday, October 28, at 1 p.m.

Ella gathers her family together for the holidays to have the delicate conversation surrounding her end-of-life plans. But the emotionally strenuous conversation does not go as she had hoped. So the discussion happens again. And again. But each time another family member is missing, and the conversation goes slightly differently, until it becomes apparent that the end of Ella’s life isn’t the only approaching tragedy for which a plan needs to be made. Because time is running out.

Director: Tracy Brigden**

Dramaturg: Rachel Jendrzewski

Set design consultant: Kate Sutton-Johnson

Cast: Linda Kelsey*, Maggie Bearmon Pistner*, Tracey Maloney*, Kimberly Richardson*, Meredith Casey, Clarence Wethern*

“In the Time of the Volcano” by Jen Silverman

Wednesday, October 25, and Saturday, October 28, at 7 p.m.

Henry has become the janitor at his kids’ high school after losing his job, while his wife Luce struggles to hold onto her own. Meanwhile, their two sons are struggling to understand their own potential as they become ever more aware of their parents’ failures. When strange news from the past reaches Henry, it explodes into all of their lives, changing how they see Henry—and ultimately themselves. A play about what happens when we’re offered a chance at dreams we didn’t even know we had....

Director: Jeremy B. Cohen**

Dramaturg: Kimberly Colburn

Cast: Stephen Yoakam*, Angela Timberman*, Bowen Cochran, Justin Mark*, Stephanie Bertumen, Shelby Richardson

PlayLabs Party

Saturday, October 28, following the 7 p.m. reading of “In the Time of the Volcano”

A party to celebrate the PlayLabs artists and the local theater community.

Playwriting Fellows Showcase

Sunday, October 29, at noon

Scenes from new work by Jerome Fellows **Mia Chung, Jessica Huang, Tim J. Lord, and Tori Sampson**; Many Voices Fellows **Stacey Rose** and **Saymoukda Duangphouxay Vongsay**; McKnight

Fellows in Playwriting **Benjamin Benne** and **Rachel Jendrzejewski**; and McKnight National Residency and Commission Recipient **Mfoniso Udofia**.

Director: Kate Powers**

***Member of Stage Directors and Choreographers Society*

**Member of Actors' Equity Association*

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Photos of the playwrights and previous PlayLabs festivals are available at pwcenter.org/media-room or by contacting Jessica Franken at jessicaf@pwcenter.org

PLAYWRIGHT QUOTES AND BIOS →

QUOTES FROM THE PLAYWRIGHTS ABOUT THEIR PLAYS

Jason Gray Platt on “Take Care”:

“When the child informs us that there is a monster under the bed, we tell her that there is no such monster so that she may sleep soundly. On the first few occasions, we make a spectacle of lifting the covers and looking underneath, so that the child may rest easy. Eventually we stop looking, confident in our knowledge that because there has never been a monster in the past, there can never be a monster in the future. The child is not prey to such logical fallacies. One day, there will be a monster. And we will not be looking.”

Jen Silverman on “In the Time of the Volcano”:

“The play is inspired by research I’ve done about a ‘cargo cult’ on Vanuatu (a Pacific Island nation) that worships a mysterious man named John Frum. The cult is thought to have been formed around an American soldier stationed briefly overseas; even the name John Frum is thought to be short for ‘John from America.’ In thinking about what it means to worship a man who might, essentially, be utterly ordinary, I also began to think about what it means for an ordinary man to be worshipped—especially in this current cultural moment, where our country is embroiled in a volatile conversation about white male power, privilege, and entitlement. I’m excited to spend my time at the Playwrights’ Center digging into the first draft, and asking both big-picture questions about how the play fits into our national conversation and small-picture questions about character arcs and play structure.”

Alice Tuan on “A Humbling in St. Paul”:

“Writing this play saved me. Based on the freak infection I got a week after working on my play at the Playwrights’ Center’s Ruth Easton New Play Series in March 2016, it helped me process a near-death space and understand the windfalls and psychic strength culled from committing to a playwright life.”

PLAYWRIGHT BIOS

Jason Gray Platt

Jason Gray Platt’s work has been produced and developed around the country by the American Repertory Theater, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Denver Center Theatre Company, The Flea, Round House Theatre, TheatreWorks, The Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, The Playwrights Realm, Prelude NYC, Page 73, and Red Bull Theater, and through residencies at MacDowell and Yaddo. He received a Helen Hayes Nomination for The Charles MacArthur Award for Outstanding New Play in 2013. Originally from Arizona, Jason now lives in New York. Member of Woodshed Collective. B.A.: Vassar; M.F.A.: Columbia. jasonplatt.com

Jen Silverman

Jen Silverman’s work includes “The Moors” (Yale Repertory Theatre premiere, off-Broadway with The Playwrights Realm, Susan Smith Blackburn finalist); “The Roommate” (Actor’s Theatre of Louisville world premiere, produced widely across the U.S. including South Coast Rep, SF Playhouse, Williamstown Theatre Festival and upcoming at Steppenwolf); “Phoebe in Winter” (Off-off Broadway

with Clubbed Thumb); “The Dangerous House of Pretty Mbane” (InterAct Theatre: Barrymore Award, Steinberg Award citation); “Collective Rage: A Play in 5 Betties” (Woolly Mammoth premiere, The Theater @ Boston Court); and “All the Roads Home” (Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park). She was the 2016-2017 Playwrights of New York (PoNY) Fellow at the Lark. She has a two-book deal with Random House for a collection of stories (“The Island Dwellers”) and a novel. Education: Brown, Iowa Playwrights Workshop, Juilliard. *jensilverman.com*

Alice Tuan

Alice Tuan’s “Hit” premiered May 2014 at Los Angeles Theatre Center. “Private Rivals,” an updated extension of Coward, is a commission of Yale Rep/Binger Center for New Theatre. Tuan is best known for “Ajax (por nobody),” written about in “The Shelf Life of Shock” (Drama Review, F’13). Other plays include “Batch” (Humana Festival), “Last of the Suns” (Berkeley Rep, Ma-Yi Theater), “Roaring Girle” (Foundry), “Ikebana” (East West/Taper, Too, Dramalogue Award), and “Coastline” (Serious Play!, Edinburgh Fringe). Her blog “Alice in Shanghailand” is featured in “Love of Sun,” an online installation where four Chinese artists look at California and four California artists look at China (www.loveofsun.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.