

Playwrights' Center announces 45th anniversary season

(Minneapolis, MN—September 7, 2016)—Since its founding in 1971, the Playwrights' Center has been imagining theater forward. For decades it has been one of the nation's most important organizations for developing new plays and launching the careers of playwrights. The Center will celebrate its 45th year all season long, including with a conversation series called #Theater2060 discussing how theater will change over the next 45 years.

The following plays by Playwrights' Center Core Writers will be featured in the 2016-17 season of staged readings:

PLAYLABS (October 17-23):

- "The Remains" by Ken Urban
- "West of Central" by Christina Ham
- "we, the invisibles" by Susan Soon He Stanton

RUTH EASTON NEW PLAY SERIES:

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

These readings are the most public components of the play development work at the Playwrights' Center, where more than 70 plays are workshopped each year. PlayLabs and the Ruth Easton New Play Series give Core Writers intensive workshop time with collaborators to hone their scripts and see the work on its feet in front of two different audiences. The readings feature top local and national actors and incorporate design elements, giving audience members a unique and immediate way to experience new work and a chance to be part of the creative process.

"This season's playwrights provoke a wide range of questions through a series of very diverse storytelling lenses. They are all asking vital questions about our past and future," says Playwrights' Center Producing Artistic Director Jeremy B. Cohen. "To support their artistic visions, we're gathering incredible collaborators for these workshops. For example, PlayLabs will bring in actor Maulik Pancholy from '30 Rock' and 'Weeds' to star in Ken Urban's play. I can't wait to share these great new works with Twin Cities audiences."

All season events are free and take place at the Playwrights' Center, located at 2301 E Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis' Seward neighborhood.

PLAYLABS, October 17-23, 2016

The PlayLabs new play festival is now in its 33rd year, and is increasingly becoming a must-attend event for theater leaders and fans both locally and from around the country. In addition to the three plays by Core Writers featured in the festival, audiences are invited to a showcase of scenes by the 2016-17 playwriting fellows, a #Theater2060 conversation with manifestos from socially-engaged playwrights, and a party celebrating the theater community.

PlayLabs 2016 will feature:

“The Remains” by Ken Urban

Monday, October 17 and Saturday, October 22 at 7 p.m.

Director: Jeremy B. Cohen

Cast includes: Maulik Pancholy*, Sue Scott*, Bob Rosen*, Mo Perry*

“West of Central” by local playwright Christina Ham

Tuesday, October 18 and Friday, October 21 at 7 p.m.

Director: Hayley Finn

Dramaturg: Michael Kinghorn

Design consultant: Dan Dukich

Cast includes: Juanita Jennings*, Shawn Hamilton*, James A. Williams*, Thomasina Petrus*, Mark Benninghofen*

“we, the invisibles” by Susan Soon He Stanton

Wednesday, October 19 at 7 p.m. and Saturday, October 22 at 1 p.m.

Director: Dámaso Rodriguez

Dramaturg: Wendy Weckwerth

Design consultant: Joel Sass

Cast includes: Kurt Kwan*, Sara Ochs, Nathan Keepers*, H. Adam Harris*, Adia Morris*, Angela Lin*
**Member of Actors' Equity*

On Sunday, October 23, the Playwriting Fellows Showcase is at noon and the #Theater2060 conversation is at 2:30 p.m.

“we, the invisibles’ is much larger in scope and more deeply personal than anything else I have written,” says Core Writer Susan Soon He Stanton. “PlayLabs is providing the first opportunity to explore this play with an audience. I am particularly excited to share the true-life stories of immigrants in Minneapolis, a city where so many people share a similar experience.”

PlayLabs tickets are available. Details and reservations at pwcenter.org/playlabs.

RUTH EASTON NEW PLAY SERIES, December 2016 – April 2017

The Ruth Easton New Play Series is entering its 12th year. Plays recently seen in the Ruth Easton New Play Series that have full productions this theater season include George Brant's "Marie and Rosetta," running Off-Broadway now at Atlantic Theater, and Carlyle Brown's "Finding Fish," which opens October 8 at the Illusion Theater in Minneapolis.

The 2016-17 Ruth Easton New Play Series will feature **"Wink" by Jen Silverman**, **"queens" by Martyna Majok**, **"Eden Prairie, 1971" by Mat Smart**, **"The Sea & The Stars" by local playwright Harrison David Rivers**, and **"Minneapolis/St. Paul" by Lee Blessing**.

"The inspiration for 'Eden Prairie, 1971' is rooted in the three years I spent living in Minneapolis—from reading old war letters at the Minnesota Historical Society to kayaking at Tofte Lake Center to shopping at Lunds," says Core Writer Mat Smart. "It will be a joy to workshop this play in the place that sparked it."

Details at pwcenter.org/ruth-easton-series.

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

THE 2016 PLAYLABS FESTIVAL

Monday, Oct. 17 at 7 p.m.	“The Remains” by Ken Urban
Tuesday, Oct. 18 at 7 p.m.	“West of Central” by Christina Ham
Wednesday, Oct. 19 at 7 p.m.	“we, the invisibles” by Susan Soon He Stanton
Friday, Oct. 21 at 7 p.m.	“West of Central” by Christina Ham
Saturday, Oct. 22 at 1 p.m.	“we, the invisibles” by Susan Soon He Stanton
Saturday, Oct. 22 at 7 p.m.	“The Remains” by Ken Urban
Saturday, Oct. 22, around 9 p.m.	Party
Sunday, Oct. 23 at 12 p.m.	Playwriting Fellows Showcase
Sunday, Oct. 23 at 2:30 p.m.	Critical Conversation: Theater in 2060

“The Remains” by Ken Urban

Married for a decade, Kevin and Theo are the ideal couple in the eyes of their families. But at dinner this Sunday, Kevin and Theo have big news. A comedy about the tragedy of loving.

“West of Central” by Christina Ham

The year is 1966 and the remnants of the Watts Riots are still smoldering against the backdrop of South Central Los Angeles. When a mysterious man stumbles into the office of private eye Thelma Higgins looking to warn her husband that his life might be in danger, she soon discovers that the man she’s been married to for ten years is not who he claims to be. As her investigation leads her on a tangled trail of deceit, corruption, and treacherous backroom deals, she and her husband must learn to trust one another again to find out who’s trying to kill him and why.

“we, the invisibles” by Susan Soon He Stanton

In 2011, the director of the International Monetary Fund was accused of sexual assault by a hotel maid, Nafissatou Diallo, but all charges were dismissed. “we, the invisibles” shares the rarely-heard stories of people like Diallo, people from all over the globe working at New York’s luxury hotels. Funny, poignant, and brutally honest by turns, the play is an investigation of the complicated relationship between movers and shakers and the people who change their sheets.

Party

Join us for our annual bash in the Playwrights’ Center theater space to celebrate the PlayLabs artists and local theater community.

Playwriting Fellows Showcase

Scenes from plays by Jerome Fellows **Katie Bender**, **Emily Feldman**, **Jessica Huang**, and **Kristin Idaszak**; Many Voices Fellows **Benjamin Benne** and **Marisa Carr**; McKnight Fellows in Playwriting **Andrew Rosendorf** and **Rhiana Yazzie**; and McKnight National Residency and Commission Recipient **Francine Volpe**.

Critical Conversation: Theater in 2060

Manifestos from socially-engaged playwrights imagining theater forward.

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. Franz 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

"Minneapolis/St. Paul" is the story of a bigamist. In Minneapolis he's a man married to a woman. In St. Paul he's a woman married to a man. In one city he has a daughter, in the other a stepson. In both cities he is deeply in love.

QUOTES FROM THE PLAYWRIGHTS ABOUT THEIR PLAYS

Ken Urban on “The Remains”:

“In June 2015, as the United States had finally legalized gay marriage nationally, I filed for divorce from the man who had been my partner for 18 years. The end of our marriage felt truly tragic, not because it was the wrong choice, but because it was the right one, despite the fact that we genuinely still cared for each other. For Hegel, a ‘genuine’ tragedy is not a conflict between right and wrong, but instead a conflict between two rights. This play is my exploration of the tragedy of gay divorce.”

Christina Ham on “West of Central”:

“The two genres that I love the most are noir and horror. I’ve already had the privilege of working on my supernatural play ‘The Hollow’ in the Ruth Easton New Play Series a few years ago. This time I’m looking forward to exploring noir with ‘West of Central.’ Typically, most noir features male protagonists, and I wanted to turn that on its head by utilizing a strong, black, female protagonist who has to navigate the cutthroat world of an explosively changing South Central Los Angeles. For me this workshop will provide the opportunity to revisit noir standards and to also create new ones.”

Susan Soon He Stanton on “we, the invisibles”:

“This play is much larger in scope and more deeply personal than anything else I have written. PlayLabs is providing the first opportunity to explore this play with an audience. I am particularly excited to share the true-life stories of immigrants in Minneapolis, a city where so many people share a similar experience.”

Jen Silverman on “Wink”:

“I’m fascinated by human relationships, and I’m always trying to find new lenses to see us through, new ways of understanding our complexities. We are strange and mercurial; we live under shifting weather-systems of love and regret and jealousy and hope. ‘Wink’ is a dark comedy with absurdist tendencies, but it seeks to cut to the heart of something authentic and true in how we long for and lose each other, how we recover and rebuild.”

Martyna Majok on “queens”:

“I’m grateful for the opportunity to work on ‘queens’ at the Playwrights’ Center. I’m passionate about all the characters, which are composites of people I know and grew up with, and I’m hoping to use my time in Minneapolis to discover and score the central story in this sea of varied voices and perspectives on this country and the female immigrant experience.”

Mat Smart on “Eden Prairie, 1971”:

“The inspiration for ‘Eden Prairie, 1971’ is rooted in the three years I spent living in Minneapolis—from reading old war letters at the Minnesota Historical Society to kayaking at Tofte Lake Center to shopping at Lunds. It will be a joy to workshop this play in the place that sparked it.”

Harrison David Rivers on “The Sea & The Stars”:

“‘The Sea & The Stars’ was born of a break-up. What better way to combat misery than by writing a romantic comedy?”

Lee Blessing on “Minneapolis/St. Paul”:

“This is a play that explores our individual and collective notions of both gender and sexuality. It questions common assumptions about who we are within our sexual and romantic selves—taking into account the beautiful complexities and contradictions of our humanity—while examining how we’re both limited and freed by our attitudes. This area of contemporary thought is evolving so rapidly that every chance to engage with an audience has the potential to help the play tremendously. I look forward to the Ruth Easton Series experience for just this reason.”

PLAYWRIGHT BIOS

Ken Urban

Ken Urban is a playwright and screenwriter based in New York. His plays have been produced Off-Broadway at Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, 59E59 Theatres, The Summer Play Festival at The Public, and Studio 42. He has developed new work at Playwrights Horizons, The Huntington, Williamstown Theatre Festival, and Donmar Warehouse (London). Recent productions include "A Future Perfect" at SpeakEasy Stage Company in Boston, "Sense of an Ending" at Theatre503 in London and 59E59 Theatres in New York, and "The Awake" at Chicago's First Floor Theatre. His new play "A Guide for the Homesick," part of the Playwrights' Center's 2015-16 Ruth Easton New Play Series, will receive its world premiere at the Huntington Theater Company in Boston in 2017-18. He wrote the screenplay for "The Happy Sad," which screened internationally at over 25 film festivals, and is now available on iTunes and Amazon. His plays are published by Dramatists Play Service and Methuen. His band Occurrence's new album "The Past Will Last Forever" is released on vinyl and digital in October 2016.

Christina Ham

Christina Ham's plays have been presented at the Kennedy Center and the Guthrie Theater among others. She is the recipient of the Marianne Murphy Playwriting Award, two McKnight Fellowships for Playwrights, and a Jerome Fellowship from the Playwrights' Center. She has received commissions from the Guthrie Theater and Park Square Theatre among others. She is a graduate of the University of Southern California and holds an M.F.A. in Playwriting from the UCLA School of Theater, Film, and Television. She is a member playwright of the Workhaus Collective and the Dramatists Guild of America. www.christinaham.com

Susan Soon He Stanton

Susan Soon He Stanton is a playwright and screenwriter based in New York, originally from the consonant-free town of Aiea, Hawaii. Plays include "SEEK," "Takarazuka!!!," "cygnus," "Furball," "The Things Are Against Us," "The Underneath" and more. Her work has been produced or developed at Clubbed Thumb, Playwrights Horizons, Joe's Pub, the Lark, Kennedy Center, East West Players, Terra Nova, Flea, Kumu Kahua Theatre, and others. She is a member of Ma-Yi Writers Lab and was a member of the Public Emerging Writer's Group, SoHo Rep Writer-Director Lab, and the Van Lier fellowship at the Lark. M.F.A.: Yale Playwriting.

Jen Silverman

Jen Silverman's work has been produced in New York by Clubbed Thumb ("Phoebe in Winter") and the Playwrights Realm ("Crane Story"), and regionally at Actor's Theatre of Louisville ("The Roommate," Humana 2015; "Wondrous Strange," Humana 2016), Yale Rep ("The Moors"), InterAct Theatre in Philadelphia ("The Dangerous House of Pretty Mbane," Barrymore Award, Steinberg Award citation). She has productions upcoming at Woolly Mammoth (World Premiere of "Collective Rage: A Play in 5 Boops"), The Playwrights Realm @ The Duke (New York premiere of "The Moors"), South Coast Repertory Theatre, and Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park (World Premiere of "All the Roads Home"),

among others. She is the 2016-2017 Playwrights of New York (PoNY) Fellow at the Lark.
www.jensilverman.com

Martyna Majok

Martyna Majok was born in Bytom, Poland, and aged in Jersey and Chicago. She has worked with Actors Theatre of Louisville, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre/Women's Project Theatre, Williamstown Theatre Festival and Ensemble Studio Theatre, among others. Awards include David Calicchio Emerging American Playwright Prize, New York Theatre Workshop's 2050 Fellowship, the Kennedy Center's Jean Kennedy Smith Award, and NNPN/Smith Prize for Political Playwriting. Commissions from Marin Theatre Company, South Coast Rep, Manhattan Theatre Club and The Geffen Playhouse. B.A.: University of Chicago; M.F.A.: Yale School of Drama, Juilliard. Martyna was the 2015-2016 PoNY Fellow at the Lark Play Development Center.
www.martynamajok.com

Mat Smart

Mat Smart received the 2015 Equity Jeff Award for Best New Work in Chicago for "The Royal Society of Antarctica" (Gift Theatre), which was developed at the Playwrights' Center in PlayLabs 2013. Other plays include: "Naperville" (Slant Theatre Project, upcoming at Theatre Wit), "Tinker to Evers to Chance" (Geva, Merrimack Rep), "Samuel J. and K." (Williamstown Theatre Festival, Steppenwolf) and "The Hopper Collection" (Magic Theatre, Huntington). Mat is a former Jerome Fellow and McKnight Fellow in Playwriting. An avid baseball fan and traveler, he has been to all 30 of the current MLB stadiums, all 50 states and all of the continents.

Harrison David Rivers

Harrison David Rivers is the winner of a GLAAD Media Award, a McKnight Fellowship in Playwriting, a Many Voices Jerome Fellowship, a Van Lier Fellowship, an Emerging Artist of Color Fellowship and the New York Stage & Film's Founders Award. He is 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. M.F.A.: Columbia University. <http://harrisondavidrivers.com>

Lee Blessing

Lee Blessing's plays include: "A Walk in the Woods" (Broadway and London's West End—nominations for Tony and Olivier Awards and a Pulitzer finalist); "Going to St. Ives" (Outer Critic's Circle Award, Best Play, Obie for Ensemble Performance); "Thief River" (Drama Desk nomination, Best Play); "Cobb" (Drama Desk Award, Best Ensemble); "Chesapeake;" "Eleemosynary;" and "Down the Road." In the 1992-93 Signature Theatre Season: "Fortinbras," "Lake Street Extension," "Two Rooms," and the world premiere of "Patient A." The Guthrie Theater premiered both "Thief River" and "A Body of Water" (subsequently produced at Old Globe Theatre and Primary Stages). Recipient of the Steinberg/American Theater Critics Circle Award (twice), the L.A. Drama Critics Award, The Great American Play Award, The Humanitas Award, and the George and Elisabeth Marton Award. Blessing is professor emeritus at Rutgers University, where for a dozen years he headed the Graduate Playwriting Program of Mason Gross School of the Arts.

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 1,650 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.