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The Playwrights' Center presents reading of Barbara Field's new play *The Crackatook*

(Minneapolis, MN—December 16, 2013)—The Playwrights' Center presents a reading of local playwright Barbara Field's new play *The Crackatook* on Monday, January 6, at 7 p.m., as part of the Center's 2013-14 Ruth Easton New Play Series. The reading is free and open to the public. The Playwrights' Center is located at 2301 E. Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis.

Pulling familiar characters from *The Nutcracker* and other stories of E.T.A. Hoffmann, *The Crackatook* follows siblings Fritz and Marie as they journey with their godfather Drosselmeier to obtain the rare crackatook nut, which will reverse a spell made long ago. This "fairy tale for adults of all ages" (as Field calls it) explores themes of imagination, rationalism and the end of childhood.

Though many of the characters will be familiar to fans of the *Nutcracker* ballet, audience members can expect a much different tale, one that reinvigorates some of the darkness and creepiness of Hoffmann's original writing. Field envisioned the piece as a "Tchaikovsky-less, tutu-less *Nutcracker*," adding, "Hoffmann's real story is a fantastic, spooky, psychological nightmare story about coming of age. That's the story I'm interested in."

The reading will be directed by Playwrights' Center Producing Artistic Director Jeremy B. Cohen, who says, "I've been working with Barbara on this beautifully intricate script over the past year here at the Center. I'm excited to continue to delve in—there's so much muscle and grit to it. Barbara is an undisputed master of the craft of playwriting and each line she writes carries such depth of meaning. And when you add in the amazing cast and designer joining us for the workshop, it's definitely going to be a reading not to miss."

Joining Cohen on the creative team are sound designer C. Andrew Mayer and actors Raye Birk, Dustin Valenta, David Darrow, Pearce Bunting, Anna Reichert, Charity Jones and Adia Morris.

Barbara Field is a Core Writer with the Playwrights' Center (and also one of the Center's founders). She served as playwright-in-residence at the Guthrie Theater from 1974 to 1981. Her translations include *Marriage* (Gogol), *Monsieur de Moliere* (Bulgakov) and *Pantalgleize* (Ghelderode); adaptations include *Camille*, *Playing With Fire* (a response to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*), *Great Expectations*, *The Boxcar Children*, *I Was a Rat!*, *Dreams in the Golden Country*, *Scaramouche* and *A Christmas Carol*. Original work includes *Neutral Countries*, *Coming of Age*, *Quality Time*, *Boundary Waters* and *Off the Ice*.

The Ruth Easton New Play Series provides Playwrights' Center Core Writers with 20 hours of workshop time to develop a new play in collaboration with top-notch actors and other theater artists. The workshops culminate in a public reading, giving audience members a uniquely intimate and accessible way to experience the thrill of raw new work and be part of the creative process.

Seats for the reading of *The Crackatook* are free and going fast—reservations are recommended. Reserve your seats by visiting www.pwcenter.org, emailing info@pwcenter.org or calling (612) 332-7481 x110.

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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 Ruth Easton Lab brings the Playwrights' Center Core Writers—25-30 of the most exciting playwrights from across the country—and their collaborators to Minneapolis for play development workshops and a formal season of public readings with prominent directors, actors, dramaturgs, and designers. Core Writers are promoted by the Center and provided opportunities through an extensive network of colleges and universities, cultural institutions, and producing theaters.

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 partners have included Tectonic Theater Project, Mixed Blood Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, The Public Theater (NY), Goodman Theatre (Chicago, IL), Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Guthrie Theater, Ten Thousand Things Theater Company, Berkeley Rep, Marin Theatre Company, Seattle Repertory Theatre, and others. The Center also collaborates with local cultural institutions as the Walker Art Center and Minnesota History Center to develop theater that deepens their programming.

Fellowships, made possible by the McKnight and Jerome foundations, provide more than \$200,000 each year for residencies, commissions, and development funds. Through these fellowships, the Playwrights' Center functions as a home for:

- Jerome Fellows (three to five emerging American playwrights);
- Many Voices Fellows (two early-career and two beginning playwrights of color);
- McKnight Advancement Grants (two Minnesota-based playwrights whose work demonstrates exceptional artistic merit and potential);
- McKnight National Residency and Commission (one playwright selected annually from an impressive national pool); and
- McKnight Theater Artist Fellows (three Minnesota-based professional theater artists recognized for their outstanding skill and talent).

Membership is open to all for just \$50 per year and provides more than 1,300 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 and dramaturgs.