

## **Playwrights' Center kicks off Ruth Easton New Play Series with "Scientific Method" by Jenny Connell Davis**

(Minneapolis, MN—November 17, 2015)—The Ruth Easton New Play Series runs December through April and features free public readings of new plays by Playwrights' Center Core Writers. First up for the 2015-16 series is "Scientific Method" by Jenny Connell Davis, with readings **Monday, December 7 and Tuesday, December 8** at 7 p.m. at the Playwrights' Center, 2301 E. Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis. Reserve tickets at [pwcenter.org](http://pwcenter.org).

"Scientific Method" is about Amy, a cutting-edge cancer researcher who is on the edge of a breakthrough...and the edge of a nervous breakdown. When her big project gets "scooped," and a handsome new colleague starts asking questions, Amy discovers that she's the one under the microscope. The play is a resonant new serio-comedy about sex, science, and survival of the fittest.

The readings will feature actors **Ashley Rose Montondo\***, **Sathya Sridharan\***, **Peter Christian Hansen\***, **Cristina Castro**, and **Michelle Barber\***, with dramaturgy by **Wendy Weckwerth** and direction by **Hayley Finn**. (*\*Member of Actors' Equity Association.*)

"This play was inspired by a lot of friends of mine, but one in particular," says playwright Jenny Connell Davis. "If anybody is going to cure cancer, it's this woman. But part of the reason that it's taken so long is that she kept running into one obstacle after another. She thought it was par for the course. Then at some point one of her advisors pulled her aside and said, 'You're a poster child for sexism in the sciences.' And I think it hit her like a lightning bolt. She looked back at what her experience had been with some of the men in her field who were meant to be mentors, and some of the women, who were really failing her on several fronts. I saw her losing a lot of time to bullsh\*t that wasn't about her, and wasn't about the work."

"Unpacking microaggressions and institutional biases is thorny work," says Playwrights' Center Producing Artistic Director Jeremy B. Cohen, "which makes Jenny particularly suited for it. She's so good at writing the gray areas and forming characters with intricate motivations. Her plays aren't about villains and heroes, but about complicated people who have to make tough choices and live through the consequences. The experiences of the characters in 'Scientific Method' have great significance to our current culture, even beyond the scientific industries; people coming from any field grappling with gender disparity will find this a relevant, funny, evocative play."

**Jenny Connell Davis** is a Core Writer with the Playwrights' Center. Her plays include "Dragon Play," "Scientific Method," "Goddess of Mercy" and "End of Shift." Her stage plays been developed or produced with the O'Neill, Icicle Creek, ACT in Seattle, the Araca Group, The Gift Theatre, Stage Left

and ATC in Chicago, Ars Nova, Asolo Rep, NAATCO, Theater Mitu, New York Stage and Film, Shrewd Productions, Impact Theatre in Berkeley, Chance Theatre, SPACE at Ryder Farm, and Team Sunshine Performance Corporation. Her short films have screened at festivals worldwide, including SxSW and Toronto; she currently has full-length films in development with Maven Pictures and Co-opent Films. She has been a finalist or semi-finalist for Seven Devils, BAPF, the Nicholl (twice), and the Heideman Award, and has been an honorable mention on the Kilroys list (2014, 2015) and for the Jane Chambers Award (2014). Davis was the 2014-2015 Hot Seat Local Writer in Residence at Baltimore's Center Stage Theater, where she helped organize their new Playwrights Collective, and is the 2016 Resident Playwright at Chance Theatre in Anaheim, CA. She trained as an actor at Court and Steppenwolf theaters in Chicago, and in playwriting at University of Texas at Austin.

**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, as well as 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 have productions this theater season include Gabriel Jason Dean's "Terminus" (The Vortex), Mona Mansour's "The Way West" (Labyrinth Theater Company), Samuel D. Hunter's "The Few" (Boulder Ensemble Theatre Company, CoHo Productions, Steep Theatre), and Idris Goodwin's "The REALNESS: A Break Beat Play" (Merrimack Repertory Theatre).

The 2015-16 Ruth Easton New Play Series will also feature "ENCYCLOPEDIA" by Rachel Jendrzejewski (January 11–12), "Seek" by Susan Soon He Stanton (February 1–2), "California Love" by Alice Tuan (March 7–8), and "A Guide for the Homesick" by Ken Urban (April 4–5). Details at [pwcenter.org/ruth-easton-series](http://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](http://pwcenter.org) or by contacting the Playwrights' Center at (612) 332-7481 or [info@pwcenter.org](mailto: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](http://pwcenter.org/media-room) or by contacting Jessica Franken at [jessicaf@pwcenter.org](mailto:jessicaf@pwcenter.org)*

## THE 2015-16 RUTH EASTON NEW PLAY SERIES

December 7 and 8 at 7 p.m. .... *Scientific Method* by Jenny Connell Davis  
January 11 and 12 at 7 p.m. .... *ENCYCLOPEDIA* by Rachel Jendrzejewski  
February 1 and 2 at 7 p.m. .... *Seek* by Susan Soon He Stanton  
March 7 and 8 at 7 p.m. .... *California Love* by Alice Tuan  
April 4 and 5 at 7 p.m. .... *A Guide for the Homesick* by Ken Urban

### **SCIENTIFIC METHOD by Jenny Connell Davis**

Amy's a cutting-edge cancer researcher on the edge of a breakthrough...and the edge of a nervous breakdown. When her big project gets "scooped," and a handsome new colleague starts asking questions, Amy discovers that she's the one under the microscope. A serio-comedy about sex, science, and survival of the fittest.

### **ENCYCLOPEDIA by Rachel Jendrzejewski**

A new moon rises over a remote farm. Dal spirals, mourns, and plants words like seeds while Lua cooks, cleans, and attempts to categorize her world. Dream logic and live music fuel this investigation of grief and the limits of language.

### **SEEK by Susan Soon He Stanton**

In 1926, British mystery writer Agatha Christie disappeared in England, returning 11 days later and claiming amnesia. In a fictional retelling of this real life disappearance, *Seek* imagines Agatha in the rough and unforgiving landscape of Puna on the Big Island of Hawaii. Burdened by a secret and chased halfway around the world, Agatha's life begins to resemble the dark stories she imagined.

### **CALIFORNIA LOVE by Alice Tuan**

The ocean, its rhythm, its sound and light, a refuge away from land and its chatter. Cali, a mature surfer lady who is super-attached to her beige Toyota Corolla, encounters a cool but mysterious surfer fellow. Theirs is an elliptical pleasure as they commune in waters, tread tides, dodge pollution, and catch organic contradictions. Enter Nio, a land creature who hates to be wet, resists stick-shift, and faces his fears as he follows Cali into the ocean. A meditation on surfing existence and living from one's center.

### **A GUIDE FOR THE HOMESICK by Ken Urban**

On his way home after a year in East Africa, a young aid worker goes back to a shabby Amsterdam hotel room with a fellow American. The two strangers replay their pasts and confess their shared fear that they betrayed the people who needed them most.

## 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 \$225,000 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 1,500 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.