

Playwrights' Center presents "SEEK," a play about Agatha Christie by Susan Soon He Stanton

(Minneapolis, MN—January 13, 2016)— The Playwrights' Center presents two free public readings of Core Writer Susan Soon He Stanton's new play "SEEK" as part of the 2015-16 Ruth Easton New Play Series. The readings are **Monday, February 1 and Tuesday, February 2 at 7 p.m.** at the Playwrights' Center, 2301 E. Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis. Reserve tickets at pwcenter.org or 612-332-7481.

"SEEK" is a fictional retelling of a real life event, when British mystery writer Agatha Christie disappeared in 1926, returning 11 days later and claiming amnesia. In Stanton's play, she imagines Christie as the uninvited houseguest of Bulli, a single dad in a tiny house on the Big Island of Hawaii. Burdened by a secret and chased halfway around the world, Christie's life begins to resemble the dark stories she imagined.

The cast includes **Moses Goods, Bobby Kai Foley*, Remy Auberjonois*, Terry Hempleman*, and Michael Wieser*** (**Member of Actors' Equity Association*). **Patricia McGregor** will direct.

"Susan has been working on this script with a particular actor in mind to play Bulli, Moses Goods," says Playwrights' Center Producing Artistic Director Jeremy B. Cohen. "But because Moses lives in Hawaii and Susan lives in New York, they haven't been able to work on the play together in person. We're so excited to be flying him in for this workshop and welcoming this vital collaborator to the Center."

"It was one of the largest manhunts of all time," playwright Susan Soon He Stanton says about the search for Agatha Christie in 1926. "Over a thousand police officers were assigned to the case and hundreds of civilian volunteers. At the place where they found her car, people were selling fake locks of her hair." Stanton says she wants audiences to see Christie not as the "older, best-selling authoress" many think of when they hear Christie's name, but as "a vibrant, confused woman. At the time of her disappearance, she was in the middle of her life, the middle of her career, and the love of her life had just betrayed her. She didn't know what to do next."

Susan Soon He Stanton, a Core Writer with the Playwrights' Center, 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.

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 "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.

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 or by contacting the Playwrights' Center at (612) 332-7481 or info@pwcenter.org.

###

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

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.