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## **PLAYWRIGHTS FOUNDATION**

### **Announces the Winning Plays and Playwrights for the Annual Bay Area Playwrights Festival**

**August 3 – 12, 2007, at The Magic Theatre, San Francisco**

*Featuring 10 new plays in development by local and national playwrights*

### **CELEBRATING OUR 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY YEAR With Robert Woodruff, BAPF Founder**

1 June 2007 – SAN FRANCISCO, CA: -- Playwrights Foundation announces the winners of the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Bay Area Playwrights Festival, an annual event that brings new voices to the American stage by focusing on the inception and development of new plays by selected emerging and established national playwrights. Established 30 years ago by Robert Woodruff, the Bay Area Playwrights Festival offers audiences the opportunity to engage with exciting contemporary theater works as they are created. Widely recognized as one of the most significant festivals of new works in the nation, the Bay Area Playwrights Festival brings contemporary playwrights together with collaborating directors, dramaturgs and actors for two-weekends of high velocity staged readings at San Francisco's Magic Theatre from August 3<sup>rd</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup>, 2007. BAPF Founding Artistic Director Robert Woodruff joins current Artistic Director Amy Mueller on August 3<sup>rd</sup> for an Opening Night 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration.

Winners of the 2007 BAPF include local playwrights **Julie Hébert** (multiple BAPF alumna and noted national playwright) and **Christopher Chen** (recent MFA graduate from SF State University); and national playwrights **Annie Baker** (New York), **Samuel D. Hunter** (Iowa), **Zakiyyah Alexander** (NY), and **Kevin Oakes** (NY), who received a festival commission in collaboration with San Francisco's

Cutting Ball Theater. The Festival also features four one-act plays by Bay Area playwrights as part of its BASH! (Bay Area Shorts) program. Winning BASH! writers include short plays by **Aaron Loeb**, **Scott McMorrow**, **Denize Springer**, and BAPF alumna **Marisela Traviño Orta**. In addition to developing 10 new plays, the festival hosts post-show audience discussions, panel discussions for playwrights, a half-day symposium on issues in new play development with preeminent directors and playwrights, and receptions for audiences to mingle and meet festival artists. “Playwrights Foundation has established a 30-year history and an astonishing track-record identifying some of the most gifted and diverse new voices in American Theater early in their careers, helping them to develop new plays and advance those works to bold world premiere productions in the Bay Area and across the country.” notes Amy Mueller, Artistic Director of Playwrights Foundation, “The Festival has been a creative home for nearly 300 playwrights over three decades, developing new works by playwrights such as Pulitzer Prize winners Sam Shepard (Festival 1) and Nilo Cruz (Festivals 15,16 & 17); as well as award-winners Liz Duffy Adams (*Dog Act*, Festival 25) and Peter Nachtrieb (*Hunter Gatherers*, Festival 28), among many others, all of whom credit the Bay Area Playwrights Festival as critical to their subsequent success.”

The 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary continues its three decade tradition of introducing new voices to the American theater, and will also honor it’s founding artists Robert Woodruff, who will preside over the Opening Night Anniversary Celebration and lead the annual Symposium on New Plays, and Julie Hébert who will showcase her newest dramatic piece, *Tree*. Ms. Hébert has a long-standing history in the Bay Area as a playwright and director who, early in her career, coincidentally produced the first Bay Area Playwrights Festival 30 years ago. Currently an Associate Producer, writer and director for the NBC show *Num3ers*, and a member of New Dramatists, her newest play explores the racial divide within one family from her native New Orleans. The Festival’s newest voices are playwrights who are just graduating from graduate writing programs: local writer Christopher Chen from San Francisco State

University will showcase *Into The Numbers*, a meditation on the last days of writer Iris Chang, the much acclaimed writer of *The Rape of Nanking*; and Samuel D. Hunter from the Iowa Writers Workshop at University of Iowa will workshop his MFA Thesis play *I Am Montana*, a darkly comic road-trip through the ValueMart-dotted-hills of Montana. Similarly, the annual BAPF offers the Bay Area an introduction to stellar emerging playwrights from other regions. “We fully expect this year’s plays by playwrights largely unknown by Bay Area producers and audiences, will premiere on stages throughout the Bay Area in the coming years,” says Jonathan Spector, Festival Producer. “The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary introduced Liz Duffy Adams to the Bay Area for example, and subsequent festivals introduced such writers as Christine Evans (*Slow Falling Bird*) and Dominic Orlando (*Juan Gelion Dances for the Sun*) helping them to establish their careers here and throughout the country.”

The Playwrights Foundation (PF), founded in 1976, initiated the Bay Area Playwrights Festival (BAPF) to create a venue for vanguard playwrights to experiment with new ideas, to develop and nurture creative collaborative relationships, and push the boundaries of the form. As one of the first new play festivals in the US, sustained for 30 years by passionate members of the Bay Area theater community, the BAPF is a hothouse of new work, with creative development opportunities offered to nearly 300 contemporary playwrights to date. Our award-winning alumni include Sam Shepard, David Henry Hwang, Paula Vogel, Maria Irene Fornes, Brighde Mullins, Liz Duffy Adams, Peter Nachtrieb, Abi Basch, and Pulitzer Prize winner Nilo Cruz, among many others. Since 2004 PF has offered year-round programs for playwrights that include a seasonal new play reading series In The Rough, classes in the New Play Institute, and the Producing Partnership Initiative/Commissioning Program with local and national theaters. In 2004 PF won the Will Glickman Award for its co-production of *DOG ACT* by Liz Duffy Adams with Shotgun Players.

### **Festival Plays and Playwrights**

**SWEET MALADIES by Zakiyyah Alexander**

**Directed by Adriana Baer, Dramaturg: Laura Brueckner**

It's been only two years since slavery was abolished and for three recently freed slave girls that means being home alone in the big house, free to play a game of dress-up in their former mistress' closet and relish in her imminent demise. But what happens when the game turns sticky sweet and deadly? Inspired by Genet's absurdist classic, *The Maids*.

**Zakiyyah Alexander** is a writer and performer whose plays include SICK? (Summer Play Festival), THE ETYMOLOGY OF BIRD (Hip Hop Theater Festival), BLURRING SHINE (Market Theater, Johannesburg), SWEET MALADIES (Rucker Theatre), AFTER THE SHOW: A PLAY IN MASK, PRALYA, ELECTED, ghost, and (900). She has received developmental support from The Rattlestick Theater, Hartford Stage, The Providence Black Repertory Company, 24/7 Theater Company, the Hip Hop Theater Festival, Vineyard Theater, the Women's Project, GALE GATES et. al, La Mama Theatre, Greenwich Street Theater, etc. Awards include: the Theodore Ward Prize, Jackson Phelan Award, Drama League New Directors/New Works, New Professional Theatre Playwriting Award, Young Playwrights Inc., etc. Her work is included in the current New Monologues for Women by Women and in the upcoming book of essays, Girls who like Boys who like Boys. She is a resident member of New Dramatists and the Dramatists Guild. Past residencies and fellowships include: EST's Youngblood, the Women's Project Writer's Lab, the Women's Work Project, the Drama League, and New Dramatists. Current commissions include: The Philadelphia Theater Company, Second Stage Theater Time Warner grant, a Playground commission from the Children's Theater Company, and the University of Wisconsin. A graduate of the Yale School of Drama (MFA in playwriting) Zakiyyah is a native New Yorker and was raised in Brooklyn.

**BODY AWARENESS WEEK by Annie Baker**

**Directed by Rebecca Novick, Dramaturg: Duca Knezevic**

It's Body Awareness Week in rural Shirley, Vermont, and the supremely well-planned event is about to kick off when a stranger comes to town and starts taking

pictures of naked women. Phyllis, an old-school psychology professor, is incensed, but things only get worse when the guy sets up shop at the house she shares with Joyce and starts insinuating himself into their family.

**Annie Baker's** plays have been developed and performed at the Soho Repertory, Atlantic Stage 2, the Ontological-Hysteric, Ensemble Studio Theater, the Kraine, and the Brick Theater in Williamsburg. She is the recipient of a Sloan Foundation Grant for Screenwriting and a Michener Playwriting Fellowship. She has a B.F.A. from the Department of Dramatic Writing at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, and is a member of EST's Youngblood Playwrights Group and the 06/07 Soho Rep Writer/Director Lab.

### **INTO THE NUMBERS by Christopher Chen**

**Directed by Mei Ann Teo, Dramaturg: Jayne Wenger**

For Iris Chang, famed author of *The Rape of Nanking*, 'media saturation' is a thoroughly personal experience: the celebrity spotlight becomes a recurring disintegrating nightmare of the brutal events and horrifying stats in her book. An imagined psychological journey of Ms. Chang's actual precipitous fall into the darkest heart of humanity.

**Christopher Chen** was born and raised in San Francisco. His first full-length play, *Maya*, was developed at the Asian American Theater Company's New Works Incubator program, mentored by Philip Kan Gotanda. Additionally, many of his shorter works and one-acts have been produced at venues such as the Jon Sims Center, S.F. Fringe Festival, Theatre Rice, Brown Bag Theater, S.F. State One-Act Fringe, and Brooklyn College/Harrogate Theater Company. He was a member of Playground's 2005-2006 Writer's Pool. Chris is also a director and actor, and at U.C. Berkeley, from which he graduated in 2004, he led Theatre Rice's playwriting workshop for one year. He is currently pursuing an M.F.A. in playwriting at S.F. State.

### **TREE by Julie Hébert**

**Directed by Amy Mueller, Dramaturg: Edris Cooper-Anifowoshe**

A trove of letters left by her White Southern father sends Dodie Marcantel in search of a Black half brother she never knew. The reunion is shattered when the two half-

siblings fall into a quintessentially American race war. Will they part as angry strangers or invent a common language that binds them to a shared future?

**Julie Hébert** is a writer/director working in theater, film and television. Her first play, TRUE BEAUTIES, premiered at the Magic Theater in San Francisco in 1987, winning the Critics Circle Best Play Award and going on to other productions in Los Angeles, Seattle, Dallas, Canada and several universities. Her other plays including *The Knee Desires The Dirt*, *Ruby's Bucket of Blood*, *St. Joan of the Dancing Sickness* and *Abe Lincoln's Dog* have been developed and produced at theaters around the country and won numerous awards.

Julie has directed new plays with Steppenwolf, Seven Stages, Provincetown Playhouse, LaMaMa, Eureka Theater, Magic Theater, Los Angeles Theater Center, San Diego Rep, and many others. In 2002, Julie received a George Foster Peabody Award for co-directing "In Their Own Words" a documentary of interviews with survivors of the 9/11 attacks in New York. She has received grants from the NEA, TCG, California Arts Council, Marin Arts Council and others for writing, directing, and inter-disciplinary arts.

In television, Julie has written and directed for THIRD WATCH and ER, directed multiple episodes of THE WEST WING, and currently works as Co-Executive Producer for NUMB3RS, serving as both writer and director. Julie is a member of New Dramatists as well as several Guilds-- Dramatists; Writers; Directors. She was an early member of the Bay Area Playwrights Festival and taught in the MFA Theater Program at UCLA.

### **I AM MONTANA by Sam Hunter**

**Directed by Jonathan Spector, Dramaturg: Maryanne Olson**

Deeply resentful about the cancerous growth of mega-retail stores in his home state, and haunted by dreams of the Valumart Pig as a suicide bomber, a former Israeli soldier-turned-Valumart-employee takes a cross-country trip to the national

headquarters, along with his childhood buddy and a meth-head coworker, each with a secret agenda of their own.

**Sam Hunter** is originally from Moscow, Idaho, Samuel D. Hunter received his BFA in Dramatic Writing from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts in 2004 where he was the recipient of a John Golden Playwriting Prize. In May 2007, he received his MFA from the Iowa Playwrights Workshop where he was the recipient of an Iowa Arts Fellowship and the 2007 Richard Maibaum Award. His plays include: NORMAN ROCKWELL KILLED MY FATHER at the 2005 O'Neill Playwrights Conference, ABRAHAM (A SHOT IN THE HEAD) at Richard Foreman's Ontological-Hysteric Theater, ABRAHAM (I AM AN ISLAND) in Studio 42's Scattered Festival at Collective: Unconscious, PIGHEART at the 2006 Iowa Playwrights' Workshop New Play Festival and a 2007 PlayLabs semi-finalist, and RADIOPLAY and AMERICAN TRIPTYCH at the HomoGenius Festival at Manhattan Theater Source. He has taught playwriting courses at the University of Iowa and, over the last two summers, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories at Ayyam al-Musrah in Hebron and Ashtar Theater in Ramallah. At Ashtar, he co-wrote THE ERA OF WHALES, which was produced in the West Bank and at the International Istanbul Theater Festival.

### **MR. FUJIYAMA'S ELECTRIC BEACH by Kevin Oakes**

In this futuristic mystery set in San Francisco, a detective follows a string of murders that lead him deep into the underground dens and sex clubs of a utopian counter-culture, in search of a missing girl. But has she disappeared into MindSet's virtual world, or been left for dead by the 'Children of Eden'?

This experimental piece is a project of PF's Producing Partnership Initiative/ Commissioning Program in partnership with The Cutting Ball Theater and the Z Space/Magic New Play Initiative.

**Kevin Oakes – Need bio**

**Kevin Oakes'** plays include The Vomit Talk of Ghosts, The High Priest of Bad Math, and All Spoken By A Shining Creature: a hypertext punk tragedy. The Vomit Talk of Ghosts was developed as part of Soho Rep's Writer/Director Lab (Soho Repertory Theatre, NYC) and was produced by The Cutting Ball Theater in San Francisco for a

successful six week run in the summer of 2003 and subsequently by the Flea Theater in New York City in June-July 2004. His play *The High Priest of Bad Math* was produced by Richard Foreman's *Ontological-Hysteric Theatre* and *All Spoken By A Shining Creature*: a hypertext punk tragedy, was produced by *The Perishable Theatre of Providence, RI* and by *Todo Con Nada* in New York City. Oakes' productions also include text for *The World part IV*: a game in 26 parts produced by *GAle GAtes et al.* at the *Whitney Museum of American Art* as well as text for *GAle GAtes' So Long Ago I Can't Remember*: a divine comedy, a thirteen scene performance installation based on *Dante's Inferno*. Oakes' text for *So Long Ago* was published in *TheatreForum Magazine Summer/Fall 2002* issue. *The Vomit Talk of Ghosts* is published in *Theater Magazine 35:2* and is included in an anthology of new plays, *New Downtown Now*, published by the *University of Minnesota Press* and edited by playwright *Mac Wellman*. His play *the evolutionist's club*, developed with support from *Soho Rep*, was recently in *Risk is This--The Cutting Ball New Plays Festival*.

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