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PLAYWRIGHTS FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES LINE-UP FOR  
*The 2018 Bay Area Playwrights Festival*  
*July 20-29, 2018*  
*Six Dazzling Plays. Two Transformative Weekends.*

**SAN FRANCISCO** - Playwrights Foundation, the West Coast's premiere launchpad for exceptional plays and playwrights, is thrilled to announce the lineup for the **2018 Bay Area Playwrights Festival** (BAPF), featuring playwrights *Jon Bernson*, *Dustin Chinn*, *Kristiana Rae Colón*, *Patricia Cotter*, *T.D. Mitchell*, and *Madhuri Shekar*. The **2018 Bay Area Playwrights Festival** runs **July 20-29, 2018** at **Potrero Stage, 1895 18th St** in San Francisco. In addition to twelve staged readings, the Festival will offer a Theater Professionals weekend 7/27-29, special events and a kick-off fundraiser on 7/15. [Tickets](#) on sale starting **June 1st**.

The six plays in [#BAPF2018](#) were selected from more than 700 submissions. This year's line-up includes a widely diverse and artistically challenging group of playwrights; all six are emerging talents. Echoing our turbulent times, all of the plays explore turning-points in past or future history and moments where worlds shift and the rules change. In *Madhuri Shekar's* play, set in the 17th century Mughal Empire, female bodyguards break the ancient code of the Imperial Harem to protect their queen. In *Kristiana Rae Colón's* piece, set in a not-so-distant dystopian future, a group of high school girls tap into the power of their black girl badassery to resist militarized discipline protocols. *Jon Bernson's* docudrama explores the explosive consequences of deregulation while *Patricia Cotter* traces the past and present and vanishing future of lesbian social spaces. *Dustin Chinn* takes us through turning points in colonial history by tracing a bowl of Vietnamese soup, while *T.D. Mitchell* explores the transformation of military practices with the advent of the pervasive use of technology in waging a modern war.

[#BAPF2018](#) includes: *When Lighting The Voids* by *Jon Bernson*, the story of a tragic explosion at a Gulf Coast shipyard commissioned by Storyworks and The Center for Investigative Reporting; *Colonialism is Terrible, But Pho is Delicious* by *Dustin Chinn*, an irreverent satire on colonialism as seen through the transformation of a bowl of noodle soup over two centuries; *suspension* by *Kristiana Rae Colón*, ancestral magic and black girl badassery combat a harrowing dystopian future; *The Daughters* by *Patricia Cotter*, a gutsy comedic lesbian romp set in the world's queer epi-center - San Francisco; *VRTU-L* by *T.D. Mitchell*, an exposé of the modern warrior's reliance on VR; *House of Joy* by *Madhuri Shekar*, seduction, skullduggery and swordplay in a mythic 17th Century rebellion by the female bodyguards of an Imperial Harem .

*“BAPF 2018 will be a super-charged ride into six completely different worlds,” says artistic director Amy Mueller. “The Festival includes everything that’s exciting about theater - stories that engage and enrage you, that allow you to imagine the power of the individual to fight back, that make you laugh, make you feel deeply, and take you on a journey to new places. More than that, being in the room when a play is raw and unfinished is an intimate invitation to your imagination. Every year Festival plays and playwrights go on to productions around the Bay Area and that nation. By coming to the Festival, you get to be there at the beginning.”*

All of the plays in the 2018 Festival are stylistically and formally playful, exploring the ways in which non-linear storytelling can carry a complex plot forward with humor and (in some cases) deep tragedy. For example, Madhuri’s play uses contemporary, anachronistic language even though set in 17th century. Jon’s play is a piece of documentary theater exploring ways to maintain the veracity of the interviews and actual events while creating the theatrical equivalent of a mystery. VRTU-L completely suspends time and space to explore the jump cut power driven world of VR and its impact on the human psyche; and suspension plays with AI technology, rhythm, beats and beat boxing to create an afro-futuristic dystopian world. The Daughters and Colonialism is Terrible, But Pho Is Delicious both make interesting use of their act breaks to jump a generation or two (or three) in which a set of prototypical characters reappear transformed in the next act as a future version of themselves. Together, these six plays paint a vivid landscape of a world in profound transition, and offer up some alternative realities -- depending upon the choices made -- that we’re just beginning to imagine (or fear).

#### **ABOUT THE PLAYS**

**When Lighting The Voids by Jon Bernson:** The dangers of working The Voids on massive ships are well known but often ignored by the workers, the government, and titans of industry. An investigation into the causes of a tragic explosion at a Gulf Coast shipyard in 2009 revealed how blatant and systematic the disregard for human life can be. Constructed as a mystery and culled from interviews with OSHA investigators, shipyard workers and family members of the deceased, the play unravels the story of what happened and reveals the human trauma inflicted by the accident. It also underscores the determination of those still seeking justice to this day. When Lighting The Voids is a commission by StoryWorks, a documentary theater project from the Center for Investigative Reporting which experiments with new approaches to the portrayal of factual events.

**Colonialism is Terrible, But Pho is Delicious by Dustin Chinn:** Your starter takes place in 19<sup>th</sup>-century French Indochina, where a native finds herself in the kitchen of a colonial aristocrat. The second serving finds us in 1990’s Ho Chi Minh city as two Americans make first contact with the local breakfast. For dessert, the charms of gentrifying modern-day Brooklyn and its artisanal offerings. It is a three-course irreverent tasting menu of the tension that simmers between authorship and ownership and across food culture, told through the history of Vietnamese noodle soup.

**suspension by Kristiana Rae Colón:** For the students of Climb & Succeed Charter Academy, a high school in a dystopian near future, the slightest defiance is met with riot-gear-clad security who patrol the halls informed by an AI bot. Armed and ready with each student's protocols, she deploys harrowing new disciplinary codes that take 'in-school suspension' (ISS) to a haunting extreme. In search of their mysteriously missing sister, and guided by a mystic teaching artist, Voltaire & Yansa learn to wield their ancestral magic and black girl badassery to combat the harrowing militarization of public education.

**The Daughters by Patricia Cotter:** A ballsy comedic romp over 60 years: from the first secret meeting of the first lesbian social club in San Francisco to closing night of the last lesbian bar. As women loving women gather in defiance of convention (and the law), they drink, debate, politicize, flirt, drink more, dance hard, makeout, fall in love, break up—and though they are entirely unaware—make history and change the world. A play about the transformation of identity, gender, and sexuality across generations in the queer epi-center of the universe.

**VRTU-L by T.D. Mitchell:** For the modern warrior it can be hard to distinguish between a video game, an AI weapon, a VR training camp populated with real Hollywood actors, a therapeutic reenactment and reality itself; it's harder still to recover. Set during his intensive period of deprogramming, Joe toggles between quixotic and disorienting memory flashes of his training and deployment, which are prone to shifting rules, pixelation and buffering. As he criss-crosses the strange, confusing and at times absurd terrain of 'militainment' (the pervasive use of gaming and psychology to recruit, reprogram, train and deprogram contemporary military personnel), his grasp on what is real and what is virtual skews just beyond reach.

**House of Joy by Madhuri Shekar:** In an Imperial Harem, in a place like India, in a time like 1666, Hamida, a bodyguard, wakes to the oppression in her midst and decides to do something about it. Seduction, skullduggery and swordplay in a mythic, swashbuckling action-romance for the ages!

## **ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHTS**

**JON BERNSON** is a playwright, musician and interdisciplinary artist from San Francisco. He is a former artist-in-residence at the de Young Museum and a current member of the [RPI program](#) at Playwrights Foundation. Bernson's prolific and varied works tend to be site-specific and exploratory. In *Distant Future Symposium*, he fuses science fiction, live music and repurposed YouTube footage. *PDX to OAK* is an interactive play, written for six actors and fourteen passengers on an overnight train trip from Portland to Oakland. Bernson's StoryWorks play, *Overnighters is Over* re-imagines Jesse Moss's Sundance award-winning film as an immersive multimedia experience. *Logbook* is an audiobook which is comprised of twelve pirate broadcasts that interrupted the programming of international television stations between 1986 and 2009. As a musician, Bernson has released more than twenty albums under several names, including Exray's, whose music was featured in David Fincher's Academy-Award

winning film, *The Social Network*. Recent installations include *Sound Affects*, a large-scale multimedia collaboration at the Sonos Studio in Los Angeles and *Beautification Machine*, his sound-sculpture with Andy Diaz Hope, which opened at Catherine Clark Gallery before it was collected by the Nevada Museum of Art. *god(s)(dess)(es)*—another collaboration with Hope—was voted Best-in-Show at Richmond Virginia's 2016 InLight Festival. In addition to his participation in BAPF, Bernson will be in residence this summer at The Growlery in San Francisco working on *Third Eye Moonwalk*, a large-scale performance and sound installation to be exhibited and staged at Minnesota Street Project in October 2018.

**DUSTIN CHINN** is a Seattle native whose plays include *Snowflakes, Or Rare White People, I Am Nakamura*, The Ensemble Studio Theatre/Sloan Commission *Herschel: Portrait Of A Killer* and *Let's Ninja Science Ranger Team Get!* He's developed work at the Ground Floor at Berkeley Rep Summer Residency Lab, A.C.T.'s New Strands Festival, the University of Washington via a Mellon Creative Fellowship, SPACE on Ryder Farm, UMass at Amherst New Play Lab and Vampire Cowboys. He's also written for the 52nd Street Project. Dustin is a member of the Ars Nova Play Group and Ma-Yi Writers Lab. BA: Cornell University.

**KRISTIANA RAE COLÓN** is a poet, playwright, actor, educator, Cave Canem Fellow, creator of #BlackSexMatters and co-director of the #LetUsBreathe Collective. She was awarded 2017 Best Black Playwright by The Black Mall. In 2016, her plays *good friday* had its world premiere at Oracle Productions, *Octagon* its American premiere at Jackalope Theater in Chicago, and *but i cd only whisper* had its American premiere at The Flea in New York. *Octagon* was the winner of Arizona Theater Company's 2014 National Latino Playwriting Award and Polarity Ensemble Theater's Dionysus Festival of New Work and had its 2015 world premiere at the Arcola Theater in London. In 2013, she toured the UK for two months with her collection of poems *promised instruments*, winner of the inaugural Drinking Gourd Poetry Prize and published by Northwestern University Press. Kristiana is an alum of the Goodman Theater's Playwrights Unit where she developed *florissant & canfield*, an epic reimagining of the Ferguson protests, which was featured in the 2016 Hedgebrook Women Playwrights Festival. She is a resident playwright at Chicago Dramatists and one half of the brother/sister hip-hop duo April Fools. She appeared on the fifth season of HBO's Def Poetry Jam. Kristiana's writing, producing and organizing work to radically reimagine power structures, our complicity in them and visions for liberation.

**PATRICIA COTTER** is a Resident Playwright at Playwrights Foundation, class of 2019. Awards include American Academy of Arts Letters, Richard Rodgers Award, three-time Heideman Award Finalist and an Emmy Award. Plays include *Drinking on A Plane* performed as part of Actors Theatre of Louisville's *The Tens* in 2018, *Rules of Comedy* which was produced in 2015 Humana Festival Ten-Minute Plays and *The Anthropology Section*, previously performed as part of Actors Theatre of Louisville's *The Tens* in 2015. Other plays include *1980 (Or Why I'm Voting For John Anderson)* Chicago's Jackalope Theatre 2017, *The Surrogate*, production Centenary Stage Company, NJ, 2017 and *The Break Up Notebook* (a

GLAAD Award nominee). Musicals (librettist/ adaptations) include *Rocket Science: A Musical*, received readings at Playwrights' Horizons in New York (directed by Kathleen Marshall) and was produced at The Village Theatre, Seattle; *The Break Up Notebook: A Musical* (based on her play), at The Vineyard Theatre in New York and produced at Hudson Theatre, Los Angeles, and *Mulan, Jr.*, based on the Disney film *Mulan*. She has written for Twentieth Century Fox Television, Disney Theatrical and Comedy Central. .

**T.D. MITCHELL's** previous plays include *A Gray Matter*, *In Dog Years*, *Madame Red*, *The Crowd*, *Beyond the 17th Parallel* and *Queens For A Year*. Her work has appeared at the Ojai Playwrights Conference, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, Wet Ink Festival, Pacific Rep, EST's Octoberfest, and Estrogenius, among others. Seattle ACT received an NEA Artistic Excellent Grant for *Beyond the 17th Parallel*, which is also being adapted for film. *Queens For A Year*, which premiered at Hartford Stage, was named "One of the 50 Notable Productions of 2016" (The Stage Review) and was nominated for the Pulitzer. In TV, she is a writer for ABC's "Army Wives" and won a 2010 Norman Lear Sentinel Award for Primetime Drama. Other honors include: 2015-16 Women in Arts and Media Collaboration, Nathan Miller History, and Reverie Next Generation Playwriting awards. Semi-finalist or runner-up: Princess Grace, New Dramatists, Blue Ink, Jane Chambers, Nicholl Screenwriting and others. Mitchell recently completed artist residencies at both Yaddo and Marble House Project, where she started a new play, *The Double*. She also contributed a short play to *Imagine: Yemen*, which premiered at Signature Theatre in New York in June. Her essays for Verbal Supply Company, speechwriting for international philanthropic organizations and magazine articles exemplify her multi-format, cross-genre work.

**MADHURI SHEKAR** is a playwright based in New York City and a current fellow of the Lila Acheson Wallace American Playwrights Program at Juilliard. She is currently developing *Evil Eye* (a commission from Audible), *Hockey Play* (a commission from South Coast Rep) and *Miriam For President*, which will be produced at Victory Gardens in 2019, directed by Chay Yew. Her play *Queen* had its World Premiere in April 2017 at Victory Gardens Theatre in Chicago, was nominated for a Jeff Award for Best New Play and made the 2017 Kilroy's List. She is the 2013/14 winner of the Kendeda Graduate Playwriting contest held by the Alliance Theatre for her play *In Love and Warcraft*, for which they did the world premiere production. It is published by Samuel French and is now being produced around the country and abroad. The Alliance Theatre then commissioned and produced two further plays: *Bucket Of Blessings* and *Antigone, presented by the girls of St. Catherine's*. Her play *A Nice Indian Boy* had its world premiere at East West Players and has been produced in Chicago by the Rasaka Theatre Company and EnActe Arts in San Francisco. Her plays have also been developed or showcased at Center Theatre Group, the Old Globe, the Kennedy Center, the Hedgebrook Playwrights Festival (in conjunction with Seattle Rep) and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. She has an MFA in Dramatic Writing from USC and a dual Master's degree in Global Media and Communications from the London School of Economics and USC. She is a member of the Ma-Yi writers lab and the Ars Nova Play Group in New York and a co-creator of the Shakespearean web series *Titus And Dronicus*.

## **ABOUT THE BAY AREA PLAYWRIGHTS FESTIVAL**

The BAPF is one of the oldest and most successful new play festival for new works in their developmental stages in the US. Established in 1976 by Robert Woodruff, the festival has continuously discovered original and distinctive new voices in the theater, invested in the development of their work and launched their careers. Among the first crop of writers at the inaugural BAPF was the young Sam Shepard. Little did Woodruff know at that time how Shepard's work would shape the landscape of American theatre. Since then, over 500 prize winning, nationally significant playwrights got their first professional experiences at the BAPF. Examples include Pulitzer Prize winners Nilo Cruz and Annie Baker, MacArthur Award winners Anna Deavere Smith and Sam Hunter, recent Glickman award winners Peter Nachtrieb, Liz Duffy Adams, Aaron Loeb, Chris Chen, Lauren Yee, and Marcus Gardley, as well as the early development of works by David Henry Hwang, Paula Vogel, Claire Chafee and Anne Washburn. Additional playwrights include Katori Hall and Rajiv Joseph prior to their Broadway debuts and many others. The BAPF's ongoing success in discovering and supporting exceptional, newly emerging writers and launching their ground-breaking new work is its enduring legacy.

## **ABOUT PLAYWRIGHTS FOUNDATION**

Founded in 1976, Playwrights Foundation is today widely recognized as one of the top new play incubators in the U.S., dedicated to the creative development and career acceleration of contemporary playwrights. We serve emerging and mid-career playwrights, from the Bay Area and around the country. We seek to identify exceptional writers and give them space, time and professional artistic collaborators to explore new theatrical ideas, allowing them to experiment and take risks with structure, form and/or content in an environment that is free from the pressures of the marketplace. Playwrights we have worked with have won every award in the theater including the Pulitzer, the Obie, the National Critics Circle Award and many more.

### **FESTIVAL AT A GLANCE**

**WHAT:** 2018 BAY AREA PLAYWRIGHTS FESTIVAL

**WHEN:** Friday, July 20 – Sunday, July 22 - Six play readings and special events  
Friday, July 27 – Sunday, July 29 - Six play readings and special events

**WHERE:** Potrero Stage, 1695 18th St., San Francisco, CA 94107

**TICKETS:** Single tickets, 4-Play FlexPasses, and VIP All Access Passes go on sale JUNE 1<sup>st</sup>.

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