

Playwrights Foundation

Bay Area Playwrights Festival

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**Playwrights Foundation Presents Spoken Word Artist Bamuthi,
C.I.R. Emmy Award-winning Journalist Jennifer Gollan And
Virtual Reality Specialist Nathan Brown, and Others,
In A Series Of Talkbacks & Panels as Part of
2018 Bay Area Playwrights Festival (#bapf2018)
suspension talkback with **BAMUTHI**
(Saturday 7/28 - following the 8pm reading)**

**July 20-29, 2018
Potrero Stage, 1695 18th St, San Francisco**

2018 Bay Area Playwrights Festival (#BAPF2018) runs July 20-29, 2018 at Potrero Stage, 1695 18th St in San Francisco. This year's festival features BAMUTHI, Jennifer Gollan and Nathan Brown as special guests leading the discussions following readings of 3 out of the 6 new plays that have been selected.

Resistance and revolution are in the air this year and the BAPF playwrights are delving into the most pressing issues of our times in a fantastic array of styles. The six plays in #BAPF2018 are by playwrights Jon Bernson, Dustin Chinn, Kristiana Rae Colón, Patricia Cotter, T.D. Mitchell, and Madhuri Shekar. 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, moments where worlds shift and the rules change.

The 2018 Bay Area Playwrights Festival runs July 20-29, 2018 at Potrero Stage, 1695 18th St in San Francisco. In addition to twelve staged readings, the Festival will offer a Theater Professionals weekend 7/27-29, special events schedule listed below.

Tickets at www.playwrightsfoundation.org

Arts activist and spoken word artist MARC BAMUTHI JOSEPH joins #BAPF2018 playwright Kristiana Rae Colón for a talkback following the staged reading of *suspension*, taking place at Potrero Stage in San Francisco. Together, they will be discussing the themes of the play and intersections between activism, education and the arts, as well as responding to audience questions.

Kristiana Rae Colón is an artist whose goal is to stimulate critical thought on difficult issues through art and live performance, she explores the intersection of hashtag blackgirlmagic and the oxymoronic disposability of Black girlhood in her new afro-futurist dystopian play *suspension*. Four teen girls stage a coup against the authoritarian regime of Climb & Succeed Academy where campus security patrols the halls in riot gear and a new disciplinary code takes in-school suspension to a haunting extreme. The teens of the powercheer squad, guided by a mystic teaching artist, learn to wield their ancestral magic and blackgirl badassery to combat the harrowing militarization of public education.

Social issues and discussions on cultural identity are everyone's concern in times like these. This new play challenges audiences to reflect on the state of our current public education system and its wider implications. In a similar way to Kristiana, Bamuthi, a theater artist and cultural strategist who currently serves as Chief of Program and Pedagogy at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, seeks to investigate the value of education, communities and art through poetically-charged works.

"I've long admired Bamuthi as a performer and educator; in a lot of ways, his work has paved the way for me as a multidisciplinary playwright and I'm excited for him to hear *suspension* and bring critical lens to the play." says Kristiana.

Please join [BAMUTHI](#), [Kristiana](#) & the PF on Saturday, July 28 for this special event. [The reading starts at 8pm](#). The talk will begin immediately after. Tickets & more information here: <http://playwrightsfoundation.org/bapf2018>

Panel: "Uses (& Abuses) of Virtual Reality" (Sunday 7/29 - following the 2pm reading of *VRTU-L*, written by T.D. Mitchell)

Moderator: [Nathan Brown](#)

Among guests: [Dr. Elizabeth McMahon](#), [Saschka Unseld](#)

What is Virtual Reality? How does it work? How is it being used in the arts, in entertainment, and in the wider culture? Local tech exec Nathan Brown and a panel of experts will discuss various topics relating to VR and the themes of the play. Panelists include Dr. Elizabeth McMahon, who specializes in the use of VR in psychotherapy, and Saschka Unseld, who co-founded Oculus Story Studio, where he explored the future of VR storytelling.

[VRTU-L](#) is an absurdist full-spectrum militainment videogameplay.

[T.D. Mitchell](#) was part of BAPF 2014 with her play *Queens for a Year*, which later premiered at Hartford Stage, was named "One of the 50 Notable Productions of 2016" (The Stage Review) and was nominated for the Pulitzer. Read her latest interview [here](#).

[Nathan Brown](#) is a media executive, production veteran and entrepreneur with over 20 years of experience dedicated to the development, convergence and disruption of emerging platforms, content, technology, advertising and media.

Full bios below.

"StoryWorks: The Intersection of Theater and Journalism" (Friday 7/27 - following the 8pm reading of *When Lighting The Voids*, written by Jon Bernson)

Playwright [Jon Bernson](#) and journalist [Jennifer Gollan](#) discuss the origins of [When Lighting The Voids](#) and the process of adapting a true story for the stage.

[When Lighting The Voids](#) is the story of a tragic explosion at a Gulf Coast shipyard commissioned by the [Center for Investigative Reporting](#).

[Jon Bernson](#) is a playwright, musician and interdisciplinary artist from San Francisco. He is part of the Playwrights Foundation Residency Program, [RPI](#). Follow the [link](#) to read his latest [interview](#).

[Jennifer Gollan](#) is an Emmy Award winning reporter for Reveal, where she covers labor issues and corporate malfeasance.

Full bios below.

ALL SPECIAL EVENTS BY DATE

Friday, 7/20/18

5.30pm: Opening Night Party @ 111 Minna Gallery (111 Minna Street)

8pm Reading: [VRTU-L by T.D. Mitchell](#)

Talkback

Saturday, 7/21/18

12pm Reading: [The Daughters by Patricia Cotter](#)

Talkback: SPECIAL GUEST - Gayle Pitman

4pm Reading: [suspension by Kristiana Rae Colón](#)

Talkback: SPECIAL GUEST - Talia Taylor

8pm Reading: [House of Joy by Madhuri Shekar](#)

Talkback: SPECIAL GUESTS - Sukanya Chakrabarti and Rann Shinar

10.30pm: Women Warriors Cocktail Party

Sunday, 7/22/18

2pm Reading: [When Lighting The Voids - by Jon Bernson](#)

Talkback

6pm Reading: [Colonialism is Terrible, But Pho is Delicious - by Dustin Chinn](#)

8.30pm: "What the Pho? Vietnamese History, Culture, & Cuisine"

GUESTS: [Natalia Duong](#) (PHD candidate at UC Berkeley and Assistant Dramaturg for [Colonialism is Terrible, But Pho is Delicious - by Dustin Chinn](#)), [Erica J. Peters](#) (Food Historian)

Natalia Duong and Erica J. Peters will lead a discussion of the historical and cultural background behind [Dustin Chinn](#)'s play.

Wednesday, 7/25/18

7pm: [KINDA HOME](#)

An early reading of Act I of a new musical

Book and Lyrics by Brad Erickson

Music and Lyrics by [Playwrights Foundation Resident Playwright Min Kahng](#)

Directed by Leslie Martinson

Milt and Alice like to think of themselves as a spry, independent couple living the good life in Charleston, SC, but their adult children Brent and Julie are starting to see their parents' increasing need for assistance. With a country-music-infused score, Kinda Home explores how the pressures of elder care simultaneously draw the disparate family together and threaten to upturn their lives and tear them apart.

Thursday, 7/26/18

7pm: [Young Professionals Night - HAPPENING](#)

The Bay Area Playwrights Festival Young Professional Cohort is proud to present HAPPENING. Half participatory theater, half staged readings; HAPPENING is a creative outlet for your fears and rage surrounding imminent, pressing issues from the 2018 American zeitgeist. HAPPENING will include several prompts for collaborative playmaking alongside a reading of new scripted works. Audiences will

have the opportunity to create work alongside the cohort at their desired level of participation – you can be on stage or surrounding.

Friday, 7/27/18

4pm: Film screening - “[The Rest I Make Up](#)” (Maria Irene Fornes documentary)

In the presence of Director [Michelle Memran](#).

6pm: [Theater Pros welcome event](#)

8pm [Reading: *When Lighting The Voids*](#)

10pm: “[StoryWorks: The Intersection of Theater and Journalism](#)”

Playwright [Jon Bernson](#) and journalist [Jennifer Gollan](#) discuss the origins of [When Lighting The Voids](#) and the process of adapting a true story for the stage.

Saturday, 7/28/18

[12pm Reading: *House of Joy*](#)

Talkback: SPECIAL GUEST - Rann Shinar

2pm: Panel - “Decolonizing U.S. Theatre: A Community Practice”

Moderated by: Claudia Alick, Daniel Banks

With comments/provocations by: Eugenie Chan, [Dustin Chinn](#), [Kristiana Rae Colón](#), Jon Rossini, [Madhuri Shekar](#)

In May 2018, the online theatre commons [HowlRound.com](#) ran a series of articles about “decolonizing theatre practices.” At this community conversation, “Decolonizing U.S. Theatre: A Community Practice,” BAPF artists, invited guests, and audiences will discuss how together we can work to decolonize the creative process, organizational leadership, and community relationships. The process of decolonization differs from current notions of “diversity” and “inclusion.” Come participate in this dialogue about co-creating a theatre culture based in equity, cultural plurality, and shared leadership.

[4pm Reading: *Colonialism is Terrible, But Pho is Delicious*](#)

Talkback

[8pm Reading: *suspension*](#)

Talkback: SPECIAL GUEST - [BAMUTHI](#)

Arts activist and spoken word artist Marc Bamuthi Joseph will lead a talk with the playwright, discussing the themes of the play and intersections between activism, education and the arts, as well as responding to audience questions.

Sunday, 7/29/18

11am - 12:30pm: The Dramaturg: An Essential Ingredient for your New Play Lab

Moderator: [Maddie Gaw](#), PF literary manager

Panelists: Jayne Wagner, Nakissa Etemad, Dustin Chinn

The American theatre is trending more and more towards new play development as one of its core values. Each day it feels like there are countless opportunities for a playwright to dig in, dive deep and develop new work, usually with a director, and sometimes with a dramaturg. Not every new play lab provides its playwrights with dramaturgs, but by not doing so, they are missing out on an essential component of the development process. For playwrights, how is the process different when there is or isn't a dramaturg? Can embedding a dramaturg in a project from the beginning change the success and reach of the playwright's work? And what are best practices for dramaturgs and producers engaging with a playwright--who has maybe never worked with a dramaturg before--in a new play lab setting?

We'll address these questions and more through some specific case studies with playwrights and dramaturgs sharing their experiences.

[2pm Reading: VRTU-L](#)

4pm Panel: “Uses (& Abuses) of Virtual Reality”

Moderator: [Nathan Brown](#)

Guests: [Dr. Elizabeth McMahon](#), [Saschka Unseld](#)

What is Virtual Reality? How does it work? How is it being used in the arts, in entertainment, and in the wider culture? Local tech exec Nathan Brown and a panel of experts will discuss various topics relating to VR and the themes of the play. Panelists include Dr. Elizabeth McMahon, who specializes in the use of VR in psychotherapy, and Saschka Unseld, who co-founded Oculus Story Studio, where he explored the future of VR storytelling.

[6pm Reading: The Daughters](#)

Talkback: SPECIAL GUESTS - Diana Cage, Elana Dykewomon, Chana Wilson

****All events take place at [Potrero Stage](#), unless otherwise stated.****

****Starting times for the special events depend on each performance****

About BAMUTHI

[BAMUTHI](#) (Marc Bamuthi Joseph) is a curator of words, ideas and protagonists. His bold poetically-driven work investigates social issues and cultural identity. He is a steadfast believer in empathy as the most valuable currency in building community, and seeks to spark curiosity and dialogue about freedom, compassion, and fearlessness through pioneering arts stewardship and education. A 2017 TEDGlobal Fellow, Bamuthi graced the cover of *Smithsonian Magazine* as one of America's Top Young Innovators in the Arts and Sciences; artistically directed HBO's "Russell Simmons presents Brave New Voices" and is an inaugural recipient of the United States Artists Rockefeller Fellowship, which annually recognizes 50 of the country's greatest living artists. *Dance Magazine* named him a Top Influencer in 2017.

BAMUTHI's evening length work *red black and GREEN: a blues* was nominated for a 2013 Bessie Award for "Outstanding Production (of a work stretching the boundaries of a traditional form)" and he has won numerous grants including from the National Endowment for the Arts and Creative Capital Foundation. His latest touring work */peh-LO-tah/* is inspired by soccer and Bamuthi's first generation American experience, intersecting global economics, cross border fan culture, and the politics of joy. Recent commissions include the libretto for *Home in 7* for the Atlanta Ballet and theater work for South Coast Repertory Theater. He recently collaborated with composer Daniel Bernard Roumain on a new opera co-commissioned and produced by Opera Philadelphia, New York's Apollo Theater and London's Hackney Empire, which premiered under the direction of Bill T. Jones in October 2017.

BAMUTHI is the founding Program Director of the exemplary non-profit Youth Speaks, and is a co-founder of Life is Living, a national series of one-day festivals which activate under-resourced parks and affirm peaceful urban life. His essays have been published in Harvard Education Press; he has lectured at more than 200 colleges, has carried adjunct professorships at Stanford and Lehigh, among others, and currently serves as Chief of Program and Pedagogy at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco.

About [Kristiana Rae Colón](#)

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.

Her work has been produced in the US at Oracle Productions, Jackalope Theater, and The Flea, and in London at Arcola Theater. Awards include the Arizona Theatre Company's 2014 National Latino Playwriting Award. Polarity Ensemble Theater's Dionysos Festival of New Work. She toured the UK 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.

About [suspension](#)

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.

About Nathan Brown

Nathan Brown is a media executive, production veteran and entrepreneur with over 20 years of experience dedicated to the development, convergence and disruption of emerging platforms, content, technology, advertising and media. He is the Co-Founder and CEO of XR content, research and technology start-up, Tomorrow Never Knows. Prior to TNK, Nathan was the President of Seeker, where he oversaw strategy, revenue, operations and all P&L responsibilities for Group Nine Media's Exploration and VR brand (formerly Discovery Digital Networks). Group Nine Media is a merger between Discovery Digital Networks, Thrillist Media Group, The Dodo and Now This Media. With over 3.5 billion monthly video views and 100m social followers, Group Nine Media is one of the world's largest digital-first media companies. Previous to that, Nathan was the SVP Development and Operations at Discovery Digital Networks overseeing strategy, operations, development and monetization. Additionally he was the head of the Industry-leading Discovery VR platform and studio. As the previous GM and SVP of Video at The Huffington Post, Nathan oversaw all areas of global video, TV and film, including development, production, programming, distribution and monetization. Nathan joined The Huffington Post from Complex Media, where he was General Manager of video and TV, overseeing original and branded content for a millennial audience, on everything from news and pop culture to style and gaming. Before that, he co-founded and ran Rehab Media, an award-winning film production company in San Francisco. As a thought leader and someone very passionate about the current state and future of the industry, Brown often speaks at conferences such as MIPCOM, CES, Digital Hollywood, Media Summit, OMMA, Techweek, LDV Summit, Playlist Live and others.

About [T.D. Mitchell](#)

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 A.C.T. 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, 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, speech-writing for international philanthropic organizations, and magazine articles exemplify her multi-format, cross-genre work.

About [VRTU-L](#)

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 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.

About Jennifer Gollan

Jennifer Gollan is an Emmy Award-winning reporter for Reveal, where she covers labor issues and corporate malfeasance. She has written about everything from energy companies that dodge accountability for workers' deaths to lax safety practices that contributed to deadly tire blowouts. Her exposé on Navy shipbuilders that received billions in public money – even after their workers were killed or injured – prompted President Donald Trump to sign a new federal law requiring the Government Accountability Office to examine how the Pentagon monitors workplace safety violations among defense contractors. Gollan's

work has appeared in The New York Times, The Associated Press, The Guardian US, Politico Magazine and PBS NewsHour. She won a national Emmy Award for a PBS NewsHour piece and was the winner of the Society of American Business Editors and Writers' Best in Business Award, a National Headliner Award and a two-time Gerald Loeb Award finalist. Gollan's work has prompted new state laws to crack down on diploma mills and federal regulators to step up enforcement against dangerous companies. She received a master's degree in journalism from University of Southern California and began her reporting career at the Los Angeles Times. She is based in Reveal's Emeryville, California, office.

About [Jon Bernson](#) (PF [Resident Playwright](#))

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 Overnights is Over re-imagines Jesse Moss's Sundance award-winning film as an immersive multimedia experience. Exray's 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.

About [When Lighting The Voids](#)

The dangers of working in the voids on massive ships are well known but often ignored by the titans of industry, the government, and even the workers themselves. 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.

ABOUT THE BAY AREA PLAYWRIGHTS FESTIVAL

The BAPF is one of the oldest and most successful new play festivals 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, Anne Washburn, as well as Katori Hall and Rajiv Joseph prior to their Broadway debuts, as well as 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

Wednesday, July 25 – Sunday, July 29 - Six play readings and special events

Calendar: [Readings and special events dates](#)

Where: [Potrero Stage, 1695 18th St., San Francisco, CA 94107](#)

Tickets: Single tickets, 4-play Flex Package and VIP All Access Passes at playwrightsfoundation.org/passes-tickets/

Info: playwrightsfoundation.org/bapf2018/

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