

Playwrights Foundation

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Playwrights Foundation Announces New Executive Artistic Director Jessica Bird Beza Jessica Bird Beza Will Lead The Bay Area Playwrights Festival Known for Her Years of Development and Direction of New Plays

[San Francisco- September 25, 2019 Playwrights Foundation announces the appointment of Jessica Bird Beza as Executive Artistic Director for the 43 year-old San Francisco Bay Area arts organization. She brings a range of executive and artistic experience to the position, including serving in leadership roles with The Old Globe, La Jolla Playhouse and Mo`olelo Performing Arts Company, producing three different new play festivals and directing at San Diego REP, La Jolla Playhouse and Theatreworks Silicon Valley. Bird Beza was the Associate Director on the Tony Award-winning Broadway musical COME FROM AWAY.

“We were pleased to have so many substantial candidates and thrilled to select Jessica as Playwright Foundation’s new leader,” stated Markham Miller, President of the Board of Directors. *“Jessica is a talented and thoughtful community-builder who is demonstrably committed to fostering artists and advancing the new play field. She has excelled in a variety of interim leadership positions with organizations at multiple levels of scale. Jessica is primed to lead Playwrights into our next decade of local and national impacts.”*

Bird Beza was selected following a national search and she succeeds outgoing Artistic Director Amy Mueller. Among her immediate responsibilities, Bird Beza will lead the selection of plays for the acclaimed Bay Area Playwrights Festival, oversee the 13th annual *Rough Reading Series* partnership with the National Center for New Plays at Stanford University, and take the helm of the Resident Playwrights Initiative, a four year artistic residency program with 10 rising Bay Area playwrights.

“I am honored to be selected as Playwrights Foundation’s new Executive Artistic Director and look forward to building upon its rich legacy of championing diverse contemporary playwrights,” states Bird Beza. *“In partnership with Playwrights Foundation’s strong network of artists, board members, and supporters, we will continue to innovate the way we develop new work, deepen our engagement with community, and develop an authentic culture of inclusion. I believe the work of Playwrights Foundation serves an important need in the theatrical community, and I aim to increase our footprint in sustaining theatre as a vital and dynamic art form through supporting emerging playwrights locally and nationally.”*

Bird Beza will begin her duties on October 1, 2019.

JESSICA BIRD BEZA is a San Francisco Bay Area based director and producer. She has served in executive roles at multiple organizations, including Interim Associate Artistic Director and Interim Associate Producer at The Old Globe, Interim Associate Producer at La Jolla Playhouse, Interim General Producing Manager at Mo`olelo Performing Arts Company, and National New Play Network Producer in Residence at San Diego Repertory Theatre. Among her artistic roles, Jessica was the Associate Director on the current Tony award winning Broadway musical COME FROM AWAY from its world premiere at La Jolla Playhouse in 2015 to Broadway in 2017, and she has directed at San Diego REP, La Jolla Playhouse, Theatreworks Silicon Valley, American Conservatory Theatre, New Village Arts, and Playwrights Foundation among others.

Throughout her career, Jessica has had a special focus on developing new work. She produced three different new play festivals and had the opportunity to work as a director or producer with contemporary playwrights such as Lindsey Joelle, Kait Kerrigan, JC Lee, BD Wong, PigPen Theatre Co., Laurel Ollstein, Thomas Gibbons, Herbert Siguenza, Inda Craig Galvan, Tom Salamon, and many more. She holds a B.A. in Music & Theatre from Point Loma Nazarene University and a Master of Arts in Nonprofit Leadership and Management from the University of San Diego.

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 diverse contemporary playwrights. Serving emerging and mid-career playwrights, from the Bay Area and around the country, PF has identified over 500 exceptional writers early in their careers and given them space, time and professional artistic collaborators to explore new theatrical ideas free from the pressures of the marketplace. Playwrights it has worked with have won every award in the theater including the Pulitzer, the Obie, the National Critics Circle Award, and many more. In 2017, on its 40th Anniversary, Playwrights Foundation was recognized with a Legacy Award for its substantial impact on the field. PF has received two Glickman Awards for best new play to premiere in the Bay Area through its Producing Partnership Initiative. Among the many PF-developed works that have premiered across the country, are Katori Hall's *The Mountaintop*, Rajiv Joseph's *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*, Jihae Park's *Hannah and the Dread Gazebo*, Lauren Gunderson's *The Revolutionists*, Lauren Yee's *King of the Yees*, Bennett Fisher's *Damascus*, Mike Lew's *Teenage Dick*, and Mona Mansour's *We Swim, We Talk, We Go To War*, to name only a few.

www.playwrightsfoundation.org

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