

Playwrights Foundation

Bay Area Playwrights Festival 43 2020

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**Playwrights Foundation Announces Online Annual
2020 Bay Area Playwrights Festival (BAPF) Featuring Playwrights
Tyler English-Beckwith, Stefani Kuo (郭佳怡), Jordan Ramirez Puckett,
Deneen Reynolds-Knott, and Noelle Viñas**

**2020 Bay Area Playwrights Festival
July 17-26, 2020
Online & Worldwide
Encourage, Inspire, & Challenge**

SAN FRANCISCO - Playwrights Foundation, the West Coast's premiere launchpad for exceptional plays and playwrights announces the lineup for the 2020 Bay Area Playwrights Festival (BAPF), featuring playwrights *Tyler English-Beckwith, Stefani Kuo (郭佳怡), Jordan Ramirez Puckett, Deneen Reynolds-Knott, and Noelle Viñas*. The 2020 Bay Area Playwrights Festival runs July 17-26, 2020 *in an online format worldwide*. The Festival offers public readings in addition to panel discussions and surrounding online events on Facebook Live. Pay What You Can tickets will go on sale starting **June 1st**.

The 43rd Annual festival is Playwrights Foundation's Executive Artistic Director Jessica Bird Beza's first. "The move to an all online experience for both artists and audience is in a way a paradigm shift," says Bird Beza, "I am excited for the opportunities this moment presents to create a wider access and platform for these much needed stories of love, perseverance, and self discovery to be heard." As the nature of theater and theatricality changes, Playwrights Foundation continues to be dedicated to emerging playwrights and the development of new work. Selected out of 735 submissions, this year's lineup consists of an all female group of playwrights whose voices have a platform.

Bird Beza states, "We are excited to innovate and develop an online community around the development of these five plays despite our separation during this time and encourage everyone to be a part of the story for BAPF2020."

#BAPF2020 Bay Area Playwrights Festival 2020

Mingus by Tyler English-Beckwith, an exploration of mentorship within the college system for first generation students and the struggle for one black woman to find her voice.

Final Boarding Call by Stefani Kuo 郭佳怡, an interconnected personal drama on the Hong Kong protests, the fight for freedom, and our need for hope.

To Saints and Stars by Jordan Ramirez Puckett, an exploration of the intersection of science and faith and the power of a lifelong friendship.

***Babes in Ho-lland* by Deneen Reynolds-Knott**, a play about discovering black identity and female connection amidst a world that threatens to destroy it.

***Derecho* by Noelle Viñas**, a magical realism play that explores how fragmented identity can tear you apart.

Playwrights Foundation Literary Manager Heather Helinsky trained as a dramaturg under BAPF founder Robert Woodruff and led the 2020 seasons selection process, remarks **“What's compelling about these five plays is that they have characters who all aspire to something extraordinary, whether it's a moonshot to Mars or a desire for peace in their homeland or an unforgettable romantic love. However, the playwrights all found non-typical ways that surprised us at every turn.”**

In ***To Saints and Stars* by Jordan Ramirez Puckett**, two women struggle to break the glass ceiling in science and religion, yet the play time travels through the drama of female friendship. In ***Mingus* by Tyler English-Beckwith**, two characters of color in academia fight for success, experience the trauma of failure, and every reveal feels like good jazz. In ***Derecho* by Noelle Viñas**, two first generation Latinx sisters struggle in the world of DC politics and fight against stereotypes and self-doubt as one aspires to run for office. ***Babes in Ho-lland* by Deneen Reynolds-Knott**, stylistically and musically captures the spirit of falling in love in the 1990s, as two women of color are tested by class, privilege, and living with white gaze in an iconically Pittsburgh campus community.

***Final Boarding Call* by Stefani Kuo 郭佳怡** fantastically captures the disruption of everyday lives through a series of relatable characters fighting for their personal aspirations during the recent Hong Kong protests and asks challenging questions of accountability.

A few of the plays also explore electronic communication like texting and holographic calls that will be enhanced in the new format. As the Festival moves online, there are multiple ways to be a part of the story of these new works. The audience is an important part of the exploration, and PF will be engaging online in different ways to capture this in our new medium. These five plays encourage, inspire, and challenge during a historic festival that will develop a new theatrical process as well as the new stories themselves.

THE PLAYWRIGHTS

Tyler English-Beckwith is a recent graduate of the Dramatic Writing MFA program at NYU. She holds a B.A. in African and African Diaspora Studies as well as a B.A. in Theater and Dance from The University of Texas at Austin. Originally from Dallas, Texas, Tyler currently resides in Brooklyn, NY. Her plays include *Mingus* for which she received the 2018 KCACTF Paula Vogel Playwriting Award, was a 2019 O'Neill National Playwrights Conference finalist, and was a finalist for the 2018 Goldberg Playwriting Prize. Her play *TWENTYEIGHT* received a world premiere in 2017 at The Vortex in Austin, Texas where it received Honorable Mention on The Austin Chronicle's Top Ten Plays of 2017. She is currently a member of Page 73's 2020 Interstate 73 Writers Group. Tyler recently wrote, co-directed and starred in a series of afro-futurist short films for Meow Wolf's narrative chapter, "The Rift" which can be seen online at meowwolf.com and in their flagship exhibit House of Eternal Return in Santa Fe, NM. Tyler hopes to create worlds, in her writing, where black women live beyond the basic means of survival and have the audacity to be autonomous.

Stefani Kuo (郭佳怡) is a playwright/performer and native of Hong Kong and Taiwan. She received her B.A. from Yale and is an MFA Playwriting Candidate at the Yale School of Drama. She has been an awardee of the Jerome Fellowship at PWC, finalist for the National Playwrights Conference, Jerome fellowship at Lanesboro Arts Centre, Many Voices Fellowship at PWC, SPACE on Ryder Farm, Van Lier New Voices Fellowship, NAP Series, DVRP Playwrights' Program, semi-finalist for the Page 73 Playwriting Fellowship, Princess Grace

Fellowship, Ground Floor at Berkeley Rep. Her play, *Architecture of Rain*, premiered at the Iseman Theatre at Yale and received a reading in the DVRF Roundtable and Checkmark Theatre Company series. She was commissioned to write a play for the Rubin Museum's *Spiral Magazine*, and is currently commissioned to write a play for Roundhouse Theater Company. Her play *delicacy of a puffin heart* was produced with the 2018 Corkscrew Theatre Festival and The Parsnip Ship. As a performer, she was most recently seen in Bedlam's production of *King Lear*. She is represented as a playwright by Kevin Lin at CAA and Jacob Epstein at Lighthouse Management. (www.stefanikuo.com) (For more on Hong Kong www.parachutehongkonger.wordpress.com)

Jordan Ramirez Puckett is a Chicana playwright and lighting designer based in the San Francisco Bay Area. She often writes about being caught between two identities and our intrinsic desire for human connection, no matter how brief. She recently participated in the 2018-2019 Playwrights Realm Scratchpad Series. Her work has also been produced and/or developed by 2Cents Theatre Group (Los Angeles, CA), Abingdon Theatre Company (New York, NY), Custom Made Theatre Co. (San Francisco, CA), Goodman Theatre (Chicago, IL), Harold Clurman Laboratory Theatre Company (New York, NY), Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, National Winter Playwrights Retreat (Creede, CO), Playwrights Center of San Francisco, San Diego Repertory Theatre, San Francisco Playhouse, among others. Her plays include *En Las Sombras*, *To Saints and Stars*, *A Driving Beat*, *Las Pajaritas*, *Restore*, and *Inevitable*. She has designed lights for the world premiere productions of *Bauer* by Lauren Gunderson, *77%* by Rinne Groff, and *1 2 3* by Lila Rose Kaplan, among others. She is a graduate of Northwestern University and the former Associate Artistic Director at San Francisco Playhouse. She is currently pursuing her MFA in playwriting at Ohio University. Website: www.jordanramirezpuckett.com

Deneen Reynolds-Knott is a member of Clubbed Thumb's 2019-2020 Early-Career Writers' Group and received a finalist grant from their 2018 Open-Application Commission. She is a New Georges affiliated artist and has developed work with Liberation Theatre Company's Writing Residency, Project Y's Playwrights Group, Rising Circle's INKtank Development Lab and Frank Silvera Workshop's 3in3 Playwright Residency. Her full-length play, *BATON*, was selected for the 2018 Premiere Play Festival and received a workshop reading at Premiere Stages, the 2017 Playfest at the Orlando Shakespeare Company, and was a finalist for the 2017 PlayPenn and Bay Area Playwrights conferences. Deneen's play, *ANTEPARTUM*, was presented at the 2020 Fire This Time Festival as part of their signature ten-minute play program. She received her MFA in film from Columbia University.

Noelle Viñas is a playwright, educator, and theater-artist from Springfield, Virginia and Montevideo, Uruguay. She is a resident playwright at Playwrights Foundation, was a 2019 Djerassi Resident Artist, and is an Emerson College alumna. Her play *Derecho* won the John Gassner Playwriting Award, was a 2019 Jane Chambers Award Honorable Mention, along with being a Semi-Finalist for both the Playwrights Realm Writing Fellowship and the 2019 Primary Stages Staged Reading Series. *La Profesora*, her one-woman show starring Virginia Blanco, was commissioned & produced by TheatreFirst and is currently in development for a podcast called *Abuelito* with We Rise Production. Past favorite jobs include being HowlRound's first student staff assistant at Emerson College, running Annandale High School's theater program alongside Theatre Without Borders in Virginia, and self-producing her play *Apocalypse, Please* in with Kevin Vincenti in San Francisco. She currently resides in Brooklyn, where she is an MFA Playwriting candidate at Brooklyn College under Erin Courtney and is a proud member of the NYC Latinx Playwrights Circle.

Jessica Bird Beza, Executive Artistic Director (she/her) is a Bay Area based director and producer. She has specialized in interim leadership positions including: Interim Associate Artistic Director & Interim Associate Producer at The Old Globe, Interim Associate Producer at La Jolla Playhouse, and Interim General and Producing Manager at Mo'olelo Performing Arts Company. Other select roles include National New Play Network Producer in Residence and Casting Director at San Diego Repertory Theatre as well as multiple consultant positions supporting casting, producing and fundraising.

Throughout her career, she has had a special focus on developing new work, producing multiple new play festivals, and had the opportunity to work, as a director or producer, with living playwrights such as Lindsay

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 also served as 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.

She has developed new work at Theatreworks Silicon Valley, American Conservatory Theatre, The Old Globe, La Jolla Playhouse, San Diego REP, Diversionary Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Ford's Theatre, NYU Musical Theatre Graduate Program, and Playwrights Foundation. Select directing projects include: a San Francisco based *Urinetown: the musical* in ACT's conservatory program, NNPN rolling world premiere of *Uncanny Valley* at San Diego REP, a surrealist interpretation of *God of Carnage* at New Village Arts, *Car Plays* (literally in a car) during La Jolla Playhouse's Without Walls Festival as well as co-writing and directing the BRAVO award winning one-woman show *Woman in the Mirror: A Dancer's Journey* starring Michael Jackson impersonator Devra Gregory. You can visit her directing website at www.jessicabird.net.

Jessica 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, 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 for over 40 years. 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 Yeas*, Bennett Fisher's *Damascus*, Mike Lew's *Teenage Dick*, and Mona Mansour's *We Swim, We Talk, We Go To War*, to name just a few.

THE BAY AREA PLAYWRIGHTS FESTIVAL 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 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.

FESTIVAL AT A GLANCE

WHAT: 2020 BAY AREA PLAYWRIGHTS FESTIVAL ([link](#))

WHEN: Friday, July 17 – Sunday, July 19 - Five play readings and special events
Friday, July 24 – Sunday, July 26 - Five play readings and special events

WHERE: Online

TICKETS: Pay What you Can tickets go on sale JUNE 1st.

INFO: playwrightsfoundation.org 415-626-2176 www.facebook.com/playwrightsfoundation/

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