



PLAYWRIGHTS FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES COHORT AND FINALISTS FOR RESIDENT PLAYWRIGHTS PROGRAM

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (February 15, 2024) —**Playwrights Foundation**, the West Coast’s premier launchpad for exceptional new plays and playwrights, has announced the cohort and finalists for the **2024–2025 Resident Playwrights Program**, a two-year residency which offers up and coming Bay Area playwrights an artistic home to personally grow and advance their career within a nurturing community. The Resident Playwrights Program (formerly known as Resident Playwrights Initiative) holistically supports a cohort of 4 Bay Area resident playwrights over a 2-year period offering financial investment, community with other playwrights, tailored career support from Playwrights Foundation staff, retreats, internal and public workshops, as well as local and national networking opportunities.

Playwrights Foundation’s 2024–2025 Resident Playwrights are **Cat Brooks**, **Ruben Grijalva**, **Sloka Krishnan**, and **Leigh M. Marshall**. These writers were selected from over 50+ local applicants in an open application process via a committee of eight readers– including Playwrights Foundation staff and Bay Area artists Patricia Cotter, Star Finch, Mina Morita, Katja Rivera, and Dan Wolf.

Cat Brooks is a Bay Area award-winning actress, playwright, and organizer known for her award-winning one woman show *Tasha*, based on the 2015 in-custody murder of Natasha McKenna, and her central role in the justice movement, co-founding the Anti Police-Terror Project and serving as the Executive Director of the Justice Teams Network. **Ruben Grijalva** is a Bay Area playwright who uses comedy to explore moral ambiguity and is recognized for works such as Edgerton New Play Award winning *Value Over Replacement* and *Shoot Me When...* which was the winner of the 2022 Will Glickman Award for Best New Play in the Bay Area. **Sloka Krishnan**, a recent transplant to San Francisco from Atlanta, is a playwright-lyricist known for his multilayered and subversive writing and has been recognized as a Lambda Literary Fellow and an Artist Project Grantee of the City of Atlanta Mayor’s Office of Cultural Affairs. **Leigh M. Marshall**, a multidisciplinary writer/performer born and raised in San Francisco, strives to create a broad range of work that incites change; her plays have been selected for the Ground Floor Residency at Berkeley Repertory Theater, the Lanford



Wilson New American Play Festival, and the Examined Life Conference.

“When working alongside the brilliant minds of our committee, what continued to strike us was the bounty and depth of each storyteller,” says **Artistic Producer AeJay Mitchell**. “I was delighted by form smashing, risk-taking, and genre bending explorations, experiencing deep belly laughs and geysers of tears as I engaged with each of these artists' stories. I am proud to be an advocate for their voices both locally and nationally, and look forward to seeing this cohort’s work deepen as they grow alongside each other.”

With the majority of opportunities for American playwrights restricted to well-established or newly emerging writers, there’s little opportunity for playwrights who are on-their-way—yet still under-recognized nationally—to accelerate their careers. Since its founding, Playwrights Foundation has supported 36 playwrights through its **Resident Playwrights Program**, many of whom now have robust careers in the theater throughout the country with some recognized among the most produced playwrights in the U.S. Many have won awards including the Guggenheim Fellowship, Steinberg Award, and Obie. Notable alumni include Lauren Gunderson, Christopher Chen, Jonathan Spector, Betty Shamieh, and Micheal Gene Sullivan, to name a few.

As previously announced, Playwrights Foundation reimagined the Resident Playwrights Program, adjusting the residency length and adding public presentations of new work alternating years with the Bay Area Playwrights Festival, Playwrights Foundation’s longest standing program of 46 years.

“Playwrights Foundation’s Resident Playwright program is perhaps the most impactful program that we offer, providing rare and critical career support, but it’s still relatively unknown to the wider theatre community,” says **Executive Artistic Director Jessica Bird Beza**. “Our recent programming changes aim to enhance the visibility of our resident playwrights and enable us to be more responsive to their specific needs by devoting more staff time, financial resources, and intentional care into the residency.”

In addition to the cohort, Playwrights Foundation has selected eight finalists from the 50+ pool of applicants: **linda maria girón, Jamie Greenblatt, Maria Jenson, Aurora Real de Asua, Joel Ulloa, Christian Wilburn, Torange Yeghiazarian, and Livian Yeh.**



“Our open application process offered an opportunity to discover local writers not on our radar yet. It was important that our evaluation process was built with care for the writer, expressing our values and evaluating writers’ applications holistically,” says **Literary Manager Heather Helinsky**. “The new cohort and finalists are bold, unapologetic, distinctive voices, with a commitment to the Bay Area theatre community that our selection committee advocated passionately for both their work and what they would bring to the cohort.”

Applications for the 2026–2027 cohort will be held in summer 2025 and open to Bay Area playwrights. More details can be found on Playwrights Foundation’s website.

ABOUT PLAYWRIGHTS FOUNDATION

Playwrights Foundation, led by Executive Artistic Director **Jessica Bird Beza**, was founded in 1978 and is widely recognized as one of the top playwright service organizations and new play incubators in the U.S., dedicated to supporting and championing playwrights’ artistic growth and careers while uplifting their voices on a national level. PF envisions a future where playwrights are radically centered as visionary leaders who transform the world through storytelling. 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 more than 45 years. Alumni have won every award in the theater including the Pulitzer, the Tony, the Obie, the National Critics Circle Award, the Susan Smith Blackburn Award, and many more. On its 40th Anniversary, **Playwrights Foundation** was recognized with a Theatre Bay Area 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*, Madhuri Shekar’s *House of Joy*, Mike Lew’s *Teenage Dick*, and Mona Mansour’s *We Swim, We Talk, We Go To War*, and many more.



ABOUT THE 2024–25 PLAYWRIGHTS FOUNDATION RESIDENT PLAYWRIGHT COHORT

Cat Brooks (she/her) is an award-winning actress and playwright. She has spent the last three years touring her award-winning one-woman show ‘*Tasha*, based on the 2015 in-custody murder of Natasha McKenna in the Fairfax County Jail. ‘*Tasha* won the Best of the SF Fringe Festival in 2017, 3 Girls Theater Salon Series Playwright Festival in 2018 and was featured in the 2019 BAMBD Festival in Oakland. In her role as an artist, she is also the host of “Law & Disorder” on KPFA and resident playwright and actress with The Lower Bottom Playaz in Oakland and 3Girls Theatre in San Francisco. As an organizer, she played a central role in the struggle for justice for Oscar Grant, and spent the last decade working with impacted communities and families to rapidly respond to police violence and radically transform the ways our communities are policed and incarcerated. She is the co-founder of the Anti Police-Terror Project (AFTP) and the Executive Director of the Justice Teams Network. Cat was also the runner-up in Oakland’s 2018 mayoral election, facing incumbent Libby Schaaf.

Ruben Grijalva (he/him) is a San Francisco Bay Area-based playwright exploring moral questions to which he has no good answer. This approach leads to plays that you might describe as comedies about tragedies, featuring protagonists that you might describe as seemingly good people doing seemingly bad things. His short plays include “Anna Considers a Cocktail” and the PianoFight ShortLived winning “All The Worlds Are Stages.” His full-length plays include “Anna Considers Mars,” the Edgerton New Play Award winning “Value Over Replacement,” and “Shoot Me When...,” winner of the 2022 Will Glickman Award for Best New Play in the Bay Area. He lives in San Rafael, California with his wife and daughter.

Sloka Krishnan (he/him) is a playwright-lyricist interested in magic, extravagance, ritual, camp, and the disavowal of moral purity and coherent identity. His writing has been described as subversive, multilayered, and eviscerating (by a boy he once slept with) and as darkly surreal comedy (by a legitimate online publication). Now based in San Francisco, he was previously a 2020 recipient of an Artist Project Grant from the City of Atlanta Mayor’s Office of Cultural Affairs, a 2017-2018 Horizon Theatre Playwright Apprentice (Atlanta, GA), and a 2017 Lambda Literary Fellow in Playwriting. His full-length plays (*THE BUGS*, *MAYBE POLITICS ARE OVER*, *THE GRAND TRANSSEXUAL DRAWETH NIGH*) and shorter work have been developed and



performed by Cutting Ball Theatre (San Francisco); Happy Accident Theatre, Horizon Theatre Company, Out Front Theatre, and Working Title Playwrights (Atlanta); Forum Theatre and the Rainbow Theatre Project (DC).

Leigh M. Marshall (she/her) is a multidisciplinary writer/performer and the Theater & Film Editor online for BOMB Magazine. Her plays have been selected for the Ground Floor Residency at Berkeley Rep, the Lanford Wilson New American Play Festival (FAME HEAUX), the Examined Life Conference (LATERALITY), the G&PS Government Research Award, the Prairie Lights/International Writing Program Reading Series (MARAT'S DEAD), the Jumpstarting Tomorrow Award, the Epic Mega Grant from Unreal Engine, Live Design International, and the Prague Quadrennial (MEDIA CLOWN). She trained in classical acting at American Conservatory Theater and has performed at Arena Stage in DC, the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, the Public Theater of New York, New Dramatists, New Conservatory Theatre Center, and elsewhere. Next up: SPELLS FOR GOING FORTH BY DAYLIGHT, Iowa New Play Festival 2024. BA: Stanford University. MFA: Iowa Playwrights Workshop.

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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available here:
<https://playwrightsfoundation.org/about/press-room/>

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