

## THE PUBLIC THEATER ANNOUNCES SELECTION OF 2016-17 EMERGING WRITERS GROUP TEN PLAYWRIGHTS CHOSEN FROM MORE THAN 440 APPLICANTS

### Time Warner is the Founding Sponsor of The Public's Emerging Writers Group

January 25, 2016 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) announced the 10 new playwrights today for the **2016-17 Emerging Writers Group**. Now in its sixth cycle, the **Emerging Writers Group** is an ongoing initiative that targets playwrights at the earliest stages in their career, creating an artistic home, and offering support and resources for a diverse group of up-and-coming playwrights.

Selected from more than 440 applicants, the 2016-17 Emerging Writers are **Liza Birkenmeier, Hammaad Chaudry, Phillip Howze, Monet Hurst-Mendoza, Geraldine Inoa, Jeremy J. Kamps, MJ Kaufman, Christopher Gabriel Núñez, Stav Palti-Negev, and Celine Song**. Past EWG writers have included Raúl Castillo, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, Ethan Lipton, Mona Mansour, and Dominique Morisseau.

The **Emerging Writers Group** is a component of **The Public Writers Initiative**, a long-term program that provides key support and resources for writers at every stage of their careers. It creates a fertile community and fosters a web of supportive artistic relationships across generations. Time Warner is the Founding Sponsor of the **Emerging Writers Group**, and provides continued program support through the Time Warner Foundation.

Writers are selected bi-annually and receive a two-year fellowship at The Public which includes a stipend. Staged readings of works by **Emerging Writers Group** members are presented in the Spotlight Series at The Public. The playwrights also participate in a bi-weekly writers group led by The Public's literary department and master classes led by established playwrights. Additionally, they have a chance to observe rehearsals for productions at The Public, receive career development advice from mid-career and established writers, and receive artistic and professional support from the literary department and Public artistic staff. Members of the group also receive complimentary tickets to Public Theater shows, invited dress rehearsals, and other special events, as well as a supplemental stipend for tickets to productions at other theaters.

"We are so happy to welcome our sixth class of the Emerging Writers Group to The Public Theater," said Associate Artistic Director **Mandy Hackett**. "It's been thrilling to watch this program grow over the years and we are excited to get to know this very talented group of writers hailing from all over the world."

"At the core of our company is our dedication to serving as a home to the world's best storytellers and sharing their work with global audiences," said **Lisa Garcia Quiroz**, SVP Cultural Investments & Chief

Diversity Officer, Time Warner Inc., and President, Time Warner Foundation. "We formed the Time Warner Foundation to help us discover, nurture, and celebrate the next generation of remarkable voices and to shine the spotlight on the work of diverse artists from all backgrounds. The Emerging Writers Group at The Public is an incredible fit with that mission, which is why we are very proud to once again support this exceptional initiative."

### **About The Public Writers Initiative**

In just seven years, The Public's **Emerging Writers Group** has nurtured numerous playwrights who have gone on to have their plays staged at The Public and elsewhere around the country. The Public recently presented EWG alumni Mary Kathryn Nagle's *Manahatta* and Christina Gorman's *Fidelis* as part of the Public Studio series. Previous Public productions by EWG playwrights include *Detroit '67* written by Dominique Morisseau; the Obie Award-winning *No Place To Go*, written by Ethan Lipton and presented at Joe's Pub at The Public in March 2012; Mona Mansour's *Urge For Going* presented in The Public Lab in March 2011; as well as Branden Jacobs-Jenkins' *Neighbors* in February 2010; and Raúl Castillo's *Knives and Other Sharp Objects* in March 2009.

In addition to supporting up-and-coming playwrights in the **Emerging Writers Group**, **Mid-Career Writers** continues to be supported via readings, workshops and commissions. Since Time Warner began funding The Public Writers Initiative, The Public has produced 50-70 readings and workshops per season. Artistic development of this nature is at the core of The Public's mission and is critical to helping the institution and writers develop new work for the theater.

Through the **Master Writer Chair** program, The Public provides an artistic home and support for established playwrights whose work has set the standard for the highest level of achievement in theater. Master Writers receive full artistic and administrative support, the chance to develop their work with the full resources of The Public Theater and participate in the artistic life of the theater. Inspired by the university model, the full-salaried position as a Visiting Arts Professor at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, Rita and Burton Goldberg Department of Dramatic Writing, affords writers the flexibility and freedom to pursue their artistic goals and endeavors. The current recipient of the Master Writer Chair is **Suzan-Lori Parks**.

### **BIOS OF 2016-17 EMERGING WRITERS GROUP:**

**LIZA BIRKENMEIER** is currently collaborating with Sheila Callaghan and Daniella Topol on an interactive piece about water that will premiere in 2017 with New Georges and 3LD. She is a recent member of Ars Nova's Play Group and was a finalist for the Relentless Award.

**HAMMAAD CHAUDRY** is a playwright from Edinburgh, Scotland, currently based in New York. His work has been staged both in London and New York, including the Royal Court Theatre in London, the New York Theatre Workshop, The Pershing Square Signature Center and The Flea Theatre. His plays include *Salaam, Mr Bush*, *Tokens*, *Kismat*, *God Willing*, *Never Again* and his most recent play *An Ordinary Muslim*, which has been developed under the close mentorship of Tony Kushner. He is a graduate of the Royal Court Theatre's Young Writers Programme, where his work was selected for the theatre's Young Writers Festival and Unheard Voices competition. He holds an MFA from Columbia University.

**PHILLIP HOWZE** is a playwright whose work has been developed at Bay Area Playwrights Festival, BRIC, Bushwick Starr, Theater Masters, PRELUDE 2015, SPACE at Ryder Farm and Yale Cabaret. A recent graduate of Yale School of Drama, he is a 2015 Fellow of the Sundance Institute Theater Lab, the 2015-16 Artist Fellow at Lincoln Center Education and a member of Clubbed Thumb's Early Career Writers Group. Prior to attending graduate school, he worked in advocacy at the Open Society Foundations. He was an educator at the US Embassy's cultural center in Rangoon, Burma from 2005–2007.

**MONET HURST-MENDOZA** is an NYC-based playwright from Los Angeles, CA. Her plays have been developed with Rising Circle Theater Collective, [the claque], Lookingglass Theatre, The Oneness Project, The Other Mirror, The Kupferberg Center, #serials@The Flea, Amios' *Shotz!*, and Playwright's Playground at Classical Theatre of Harlem. She is the current Playwright in Residence for The Other Mirror (*Blind Crest*), and is a member of [the claque]'s Octo-Group, the 2016 MITTEN Lab in Detroit, MI, and the 2014-2016 Women's Project Theater Lab. Proud member: Rising Circle Theater Collective, and [the claque]. She holds a B.A. in Theatre Arts from Marymount Manhattan College.

**GERALDINE INOA** is a playwright and activist. Her play, *Fragments*, was a finalist for The Lark's 2015 Playwrights' Week and has been previously produced at NYU's Gallatin Arts Festival and developed at HUB-BUB in South Carolina. Her plays *Fragments*, *Scraps*, and *Bold As Love* are part of her three-play cycle, *The Good Kids of New York City*, which explores the young black experience in New York City during the last years of the Obama administration. She volunteers with Drama Club, bringing theater programming to incarcerated youths. She received a B.A. from NYU's Gallatin School of Individualized Study with a concentration in playwriting and psychoanalysis in 2013.

**JEREMY J. KAMPS'** full-length productions include *Gutting* (Company Cypher at the National Black Theatre of Harlem, Fall '15) and *What It Means To Disappear Here* (Ugly Rhino, '13.) Productions/workshops include: Brave New Works, Hudson Valley Shakespeare, Axial, Amoralists and Fresh Produce'd. Awards: The Ruby Lloyd Apsey Award, The Goldberg Prize, Woodward International Playwriting, Hudson Valley Writers Center, and TCG "On the Road" recipient. Also an educator/activist, Kamps has worked abroad focusing on issues for displaced peoples and he was also a middle school teacher for eight years. He holds an MFA from NYU Tisch School of the Arts in Dramatic Writing.

**MJ KAUFMAN's** work has been seen at the Huntington Theatre, New York Theater Workshop, Yale School of Drama, Clubbed Thumb, New Georges, P73, Colt Coeur, Aurora Theater, Crowded Fire, New Harmony Project, Playwrights Foundation, Young Playwrights Inc. and performed in Russian in Moscow. Kaufman received the 2013 ASCAP Cole Porter Prize in Playwriting, the 2013 Global Age Project Prize, and the 2010 Jane Chambers Prize in Feminist Theatre. Kaufman is a Huntington Theater Playwriting Fellow, Colt Coeur member, InterAct Theatre Core Playwright, and a 2015 Resident Artist at the New Museum. MJ received an MFA from Yale School of Drama.

**CHRISTOPHER GABRIEL NÚÑEZ** is a writer, actor, and hip-hop artist. He double majored in Dramatic Writing and Drama at NYU Tisch School of the Arts and studied Meisner technique at Maggie Flanigan Studio. His play *The Surgeon and her Daughters* was workshopped at the 2015 Ojai Playwright's Conference and will be receiving a production as part of the Cherry Lane Mentor Project this February under the mentorship of Rajiv Joseph. He is a proud member of José Rivera's writing group.

**STAV PALTI-NEGEV** is an NYC based Israeli playwright and theater director. She earned her M.A. in Performance Studies at NYU Tisch School of the Arts. Palti-Negev wrote and broadcasted her own weekly radio program on the Israeli national radio station GLZ. Today her primary focus is writing plays and creating experimental theater. Her latest production is the play *Salim Salim*, which she wrote and directed at the Israel Fringe Theater Festival. The show won the prize for Best Play and Best Actor and is currently running in theaters throughout Israel. Palti-Negev is a recipient of the 2015 Pais fellowship.

**CELINE SONG** is a member of Ars Nova Play Group 2014-2015, an IATI Theater's 2015 Cimientos Playwright, a 2014 resident at Yaddo, a 2014 Great Plains Theatre Conference Playlab Playwright, and a 2012 Edward F. Albee Foundation Writing Fellow. Her plays include *The Feast* (MAP Theater in Seattle, New Court Theatre in LA, Shelterbelt Theater in Omaha); *Family* (Signature Theater, Potomac Theater); and *Tom & Eliza* (Ars Nova, JACK). She holds an M.F.A. from Columbia.

### **ABOUT THE PUBLIC THEATER:**

The Public Theater, under the leadership of Oskar Eustis and Executive Director Patrick Willingham, is the only theater in New York that produces Shakespeare, the classics, musicals, contemporary and

experimental pieces in equal measure. Celebrating his 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary season at The Public, Eustis has created new community-based initiatives designed to engage audiences like Public Lab, Public Studio, Public Forum, Public Works, and a remount of the Mobile Shakespeare Unit. The Public continues the work of its visionary founder, Joe Papp, by acting as an advocate for the theater as an essential cultural force, and leading and framing dialogue on some of the most important issues of our day. Creating theater for one of the largest and most diverse audience bases in New York City for nearly 60 years, today the Company engages audiences in a variety of venues—including its landmark downtown home at Astor Place, which houses five theaters and Joe’s Pub; the Delacorte Theater in Central Park, home to free Shakespeare in the Park; and the Mobile Shakespeare Unit, which tours Shakespearean productions for underserved audiences throughout New York City’s five boroughs. The Public’s wide range of programming includes free Shakespeare in the Park, the bedrock of the Company’s dedication to making theater accessible to all; Public Works, an expanding initiative that is designed to cultivate new connections and new models of engagement with artists, audiences and the community each year; and audience and artist development initiatives that range from Emerging Writers Group and to the Public Forum series. The Public is located on property owned by the City of New York and receives annual support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; and in October 2012 the landmark building downtown at Astor Place was revitalized to physically manifest the Company’s core mission of sparking new dialogues and increasing accessibility for artists and audiences, by dramatically opening up the building to the street and community, and transforming the lobby into a public piazza for artists, students, and audiences. The Public is currently represented on Broadway by the Tony Award-winning *Fun Home* and Lin-Manuel Miranda’s acclaimed American musical *Hamilton*. The Public has received 47 Tony Awards, 167 Obie Awards, 52 Drama Desk Awards, 48 Lortel Awards, 31 Outer Critics Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics Awards, and four Pulitzer Prizes. [www.publictheater.org](http://www.publictheater.org).

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