



# 43RD

HUMANA FESTIVAL

OF NEW

MARCH 1 -  
APRIL 7, 2019

AMERICAN PLAYS

LIMELIGHT: A GUIDE TO THE FESTIVAL

ACTORS  
THEATRE



The 43<sup>rd</sup> Humana Festival playwrights (left to right by row): Kara Lee Corthron, Emily Feldman, Dave Harris, Lucas Hnath, Ismail Khalidi, Matthew Paul Olmos, Lily Padilla and Naomi Wallace.

# FROM THE THEATRE

On behalf of our board, staff, artists and volunteers, welcome to the 43<sup>rd</sup> Humana Festival of New American Plays!

This time of year is always exciting as we welcome the most innovative playwrights, as well as their remarkably talented on- and offstage collaborators, to Louisville and Actors Theatre. The rehearsal rooms, offices, lobbies and theatres are filled with energy as we come together to produce the country's preeminent new works festival. Our commitment to full production—the most vital component of new play development—continues to make the Humana Festival a leading platform for the writer's imagination and a destination for artists and arts lovers alike.

And, as the audience, you're an essential part of the Festival equation! Every season, I hear our national colleagues marvel at how engaged and passionate our audiences are. Your spirit and support bring the Festival to life. We are so very thankful to our community for its enthusiasm for new work and unwavering belief in the importance of the Festival.

Whether this year marks your first Humana Festival or attending is part of your annual tradition, we encourage you to join us in championing these new plays by spreading the word to your friends, family, colleagues and neighbors. New work development is a conversation, and we invite your feedback and response throughout the six weeks of the Festival. Stop and say hello to staff and artists in the building. Join the digital community and use #HF43 online. With your advocacy, we can ensure that groundbreaking new theatre continues to thrive.

The Humana Festival provides an extraordinary opportunity for this city to experience new plays before they travel to stages across the nation and around the world. We are incredibly grateful for our longstanding partnership with the Humana Foundation, whose generosity has created a legacy of support for the vitality of the American theatre here in Louisville.

We look forward to hosting you as we celebrate these talented playwrights and all of their wonderful collaborators.

Enjoy the Festival!



**Kevin E. Moore**  
*Managing Director*

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## FROM THE UNDERWRITER

“Our stories come from our lives and from the playwright’s pen, the mind of the actor, the roles we create, the artistry of life itself and the quest for peace.” //

—Maya Angelou

The appreciation of art is universal across cultures and communities, and at the same time is very personal. The arts have given us a magnificent opportunity to express our shared humanity, teach us about ourselves and shape the world in which we live. For the last 55 years, our community has been honored to host one of the nation’s most distinguished theatre companies—the Tony Award-winning Actors Theatre of Louisville, a place the American theatre looks to for inspiration.

As we enter the 43<sup>rd</sup> year of the Humana Festival of New American Plays, we look forward to another round of freshly conceived productions, and to the rich cultural engagement that comes with them. One could say that theatre helps our overall well-being by brightening our lives and enriching our emotional world.

Undeniably, none of this would be possible without the remarkable leadership at Actors Theatre. Actors has honed in on its uncanny ability to recognize innovative drama—much of which has contributed to the organization’s longevity, enviable industry reputation and award-winning history. We thank the entire Artistic team for their commitment to Actors Theatre and to our community as whole.

Additionally, we recognize the dedication of Managing Director Kevin E. Moore, and appreciate the effort he and the theatre’s talented teams have put into carefully nurturing these young plays and bringing them from the page to the stage with each passing season. Without such leaders—along with the playwrights, actors, directors and audiences—we would be unable to support and sustain this enduring art form.

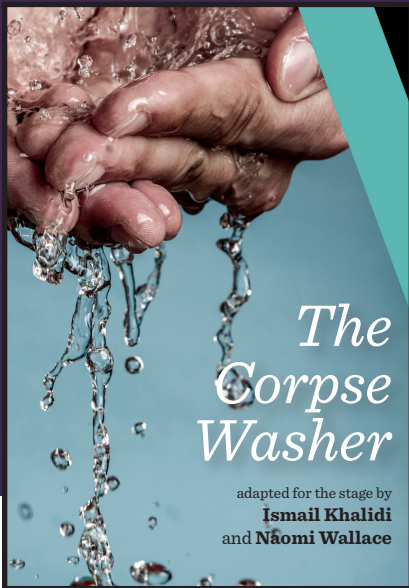
As always, the Humana Foundation is honored to support this unique partnership—the longest-running collaboration between a corporation and a performing arts organization in the country. We sincerely hope everyone enjoys this year’s creative contribution to the artistry of life.

Sincerely,



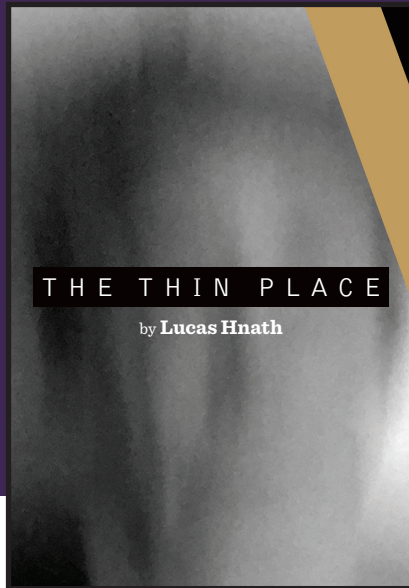
**Bruce D. Broussard**

*President and Chief Executive Officer, Humana Inc.  
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6

BROWN-FORMAN



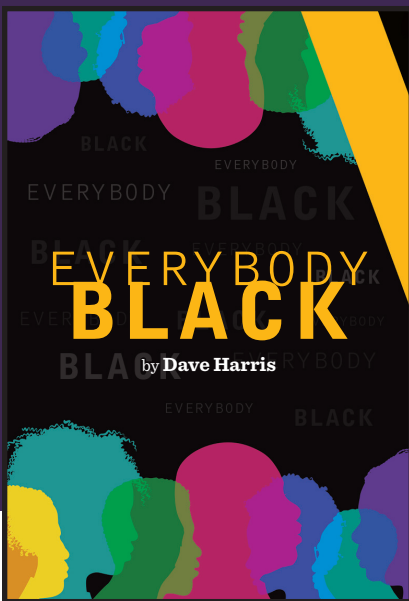
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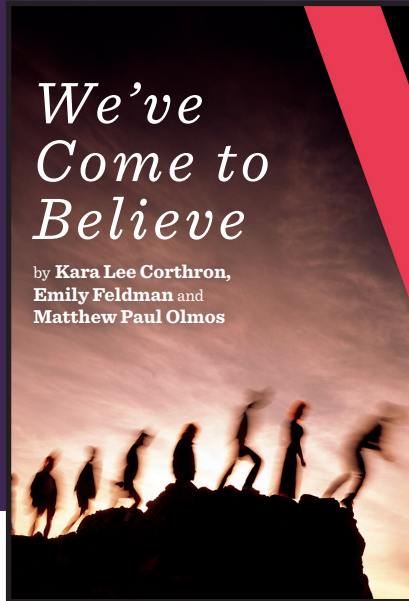
16

BROWN-FORMAN



20

BROWN-FORMAN



24

THE ROY COCKRUM FOUNDATION



**28**  
**CONVERSATIONS AND EVENTS**

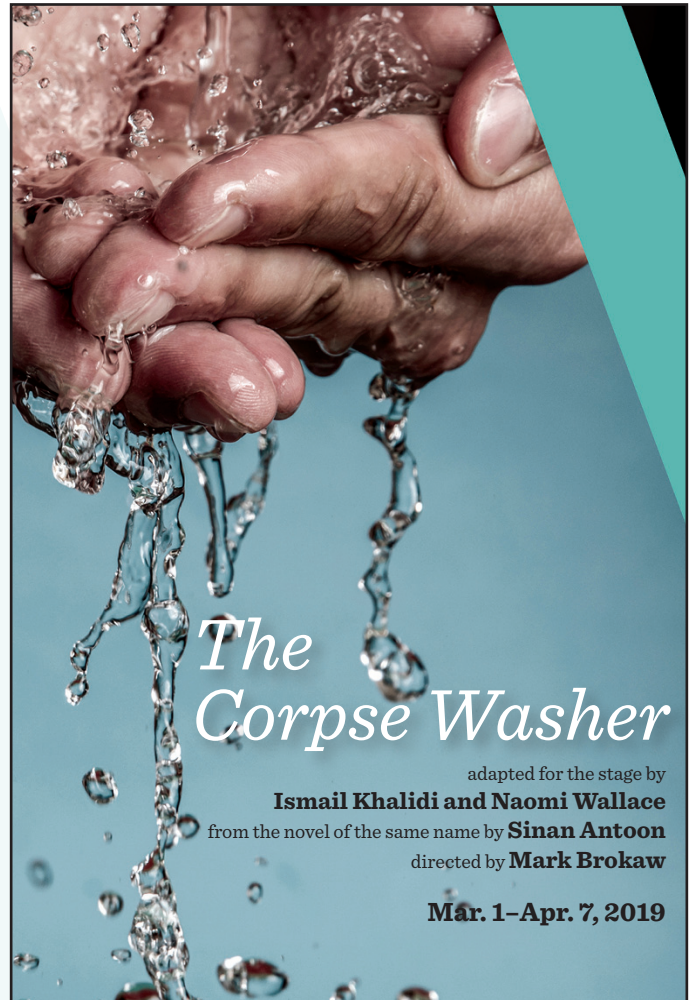
A complete guide to Humana Festival events

**31**  
**FESTIVAL PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE**

# THE CORPSE WASHER

Jawad, a young man coming of age in Baghdad, has spent his entire existence under the shadow of death. His father runs a Shi'ite Muslim *mghaysil* (or “wash house”), in which he cleans the bodies of the deceased to prepare them for burial. (It's believed in Islamic culture that this ritual helps departed souls enter the afterlife.) While the men in Jawad's family have carried on this honored profession for six generations, Jawad has other aspirations: he wants to be an artist. But in an Iraq beset by thirty years of military violence, dreams aren't achieved without cost. In *The Corpse Washer*, their adaptation of Sinan Antoon's award-winning novel of the same name, playwrights Ismail Khalidi and Naomi Wallace bring Jawad's story to the stage—creating a haunting portrait of a nation in which the borders between life and death grow increasingly blurred.

*The Corpse Washer* moves back and forth in time through Jawad's dreams and recollections, pulling us into his experience with a fluidity that mimics the flow of memory. We encounter him as an eager-to-please boy learning his father's trade, a rebellious adolescent discovering his passion for art, and a man struggling to channel his feelings of anger and loss into sculpture as his country crumbles around him. All the while, the harsh reality of war remains a constant. When teenaged Jawad recruits his brother, Ammoury, to convince their father to let him attend the Academy of Fine Arts, Ammoury's enlisted in another conflict, too—the Iran-Iraq War that spanned the 1980s. Jawad makes a new friend, Basim, at the Academy, and the two become close not only on campus, but also in an army bunker as soldiers during the Gulf War's aftermath. Jawad's relationship with his fiancée, Reem, unfolds amid the U.S.-imposed trade sanctions that crippled Iraqis' standard of living throughout the 1990s.



And, in the wake of 2003's American invasion and subsequent occupation, Jawad faces an impossible choice. Will he leave his devastated homeland to pursue his creative ambitions abroad? Or, as the body count rises, is it his duty to take over the *mghaysil*?

For Khalidi and Wallace, retelling a story that chronicles the wars in Iraq from a civilian point of view felt like a rare and valuable opportunity. Although author Sinan Antoon emigrated from Iraq in 1991, he's written about his native land to critical acclaim throughout his career. Published in Arabic in 2010 and later translated into English by Antoon, the novel of *The Corpse Washer*

**// *The Corpse Washer* is about finding ways to maintain your dignity, your passion, and your humanity, even in the most inhumane of circumstances. //**

became a *New York Times* bestseller and has been lauded for its humanizing portrayal of ordinary Iraqis' lives. "Iraq is a complex, sophisticated country with a rich history," says Khalidi. "In the book, Sinan captures over three decades of that history, but in a very personal and poignant way. There's not enough work in the American theatre about Iraq, especially not based in the perspectives of actual Iraqis. This story helps to fill that vacuum, and we wanted to honor that by building a bridge to the stage."

According to Wallace, delving into the world of *The Corpse Washer* was also an investigation of the U.S.'s complicated legacy in the Middle East. "There's an intimate connection between the people of Iraq and who we are as Americans," she reflects. "When you invade a country and destroy its civilian infrastructure, you exert tremendous force over that country's history and future. We talk a lot about 'American values.' As a writer, I'm interested in how those 'American values' unfold abroad." In addition, the viscerally poetic aspects of Jawad's journey spoke to Wallace as a theatre artist. As the years pass, Jawad's consciousness is increasingly inhabited by the ghosts of loved ones lost to the ongoing violence. For Wallace, this overlap between past and present, the realms of the living and the dead, seemed ripe for dramatic exploration. She explains: "The stage is a place where the past can be embodied; the dead can live, resurrected through the bodies of actors. On stage we can even put the living and the dead side by side, making it hard to tell sometimes who's alive and who isn't. Sinan does that

beautifully in his book and this story really wants to be on the stage."

While the action of *The Corpse Washer* is grounded in Islamic custom and the landscape of war-torn Baghdad, Khalidi and Wallace emphasize that their adaptation can resonate with audiences of many backgrounds—and that fostering empathy for underrepresented narratives is a vital part of what theatre can accomplish. "Imagine what it's like to have conflict with your father, because he wants you to do something other than what's in your heart," says Wallace. "Or what it's like to not get to do what you want creatively because of war. Those are things a lot of us can connect to." Khalidi declares: "*The Corpse Washer* is about finding ways to maintain your dignity, your passion, and your humanity, even in the most inhumane of circumstances. Arabs and Muslims are human beings. Sadly we live in a country where that basic truth still needs to be pointed out (as does the fact that black, brown, native, and immigrant lives matter). Theatre is a great vehicle for exploring the depth of the underlying humanity of those folks whose histories (and futures) are systematically erased, ignored, or simply misunderstood."

—Hannah Rae Montgomery

**Commissioned by Actors Theatre of Louisville**

# ISMAIL KHALIDI AND NAOMI WALLACE



When Ismail Khalidi and Naomi Wallace teamed up to turn Sinan Antoon’s acclaimed novel, *The Corpse Washer*, into a play, they were no strangers to working together. Wallace was already collaborating with Khalidi on another project when she encountered Antoon’s book. “When I read *The Corpse Washer*, I thought: this would be beautiful as a play,” she recalls. “We were working on an adaptation of Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanafani’s *Returning to Haifa*, and I said, ‘Do you want to read this novel? We should try to adapt it.’” Khalidi shared Wallace’s enthusiasm. “I’ve long been an admirer of Sinan Antoon’s work,” he says. “We both thought *The Corpse Washer* conjured this deeply authentic and unique world, an important

but non-stereotypical story that had potential for the stage. Historically, politically, and visually, it felt theatrical to us, and it spoke to our aesthetic vocabularies as writers.”

Both Wallace and Khalidi incisively tackle political and social issues—“questions of history, power, and privilege,” as Khalidi puts it—in their individual work. The daughter of a photojournalist and a human rights worker, passion for social justice runs in Wallace’s blood. Raised on a farm just outside Louisville, she’s known for bringing a socially conscious sensibility to plays that reflect her roots. *The Trestle at Pope Lick Creek* (1998 Humana Festival), which centers on two Kentucky



teenagers coming of age during the Great Depression, takes its title from a countryside location near where Wallace grew up. 1996's *Slaughter City*, which premiered at American Repertory Theater and focuses on slaughterhouse employees struggling against deteriorating workplace conditions, was partially inspired by a strike at a Louisville meatpacking plant. *The Hard Weather Boating Party* (2009 Humana Festival) unfolds in a Louisville hotel room, as three men plot to murder the CEO of a chemical company that's polluted the historic neighborhood of Rubbertown.

But Wallace isn't afraid to move beyond familiar settings, either. For example, in *One Flea Spare* (1996 Humana Festival), she transports audiences to 17<sup>th</sup>-century London, following a wealthy couple quarantined alongside two scrappy strangers as Plague ravages the land. Nor is *The Corpse Washer* her first play to focus on the Middle East. 1995's *In the Heart of America* depicts the relationship between two gay Marines—one Appalachian-born, one of Palestinian descent—during the Gulf War. 2008's triptych of one-acts, *The Fever Chart: Three Visions of the Middle East*, offers a dreamlike look at ordinary people's lives in the region, implicitly critiquing American and Israeli imperialism. Of her work on the Middle East, Wallace states: "I'm very aware that I'm a white woman from Kentucky, writing about a culture beyond my own. If we each only wrote about

our own gender, class, and race, we'd have a very limited and exclusive theatre. That said, it's important to do one's homework. When I'm writing about a culture that I'm outside of, I do as much research as I can."

A Palestinian-American playwright born in Beirut, Khalidi shares this interest in showcasing underrepresented Middle Eastern perspectives. "Being Palestinian in America forces you to combat racism, stereotypes, and historical erasure," he says. "I see my work as a form of cultural resistance; a reclamation of memory and a counter to the falsehoods of mainstream

discourse." His protagonists frequently grapple with the complicated politics of existing in a culture besieged by outside forces. *Truth Serum Blues*, which premiered at Minneapolis's Pangea

World Theater in 2005, follows Kareem, a young Arab-American man stripped of his freedom and tortured in 9/11's aftermath. Using mixed media and a pastiche of genres to tell Kareem's story, the one-man show is a searing examination of the horrors of Guantánamo Bay. In Khalidi's "tragipoliticomedy" *Tennis in Nablus* (which premiered at the Alliance Theatre in 2010), a family struggles for survival in the wake of 1939's failed Palestinian revolt against British occupation. *Sabra Falling* (Pangea World Theater, 2017), takes place just outside war-torn Beirut in 1982, in a refugee camp where an infamous massacre looms on the horizon. Meanwhile, *Returning*

**// We both thought *The Corpse Washer* conjured this deeply authentic and unique world, an important but non-stereotypical story that had potential for the stage. //**

to *Haifa* (another co-adaptation with Wallace, which premiered at London's Finborough Theatre in 2018) chronicles a Palestinian couple's 1967 search for the home and son they lost 20 years ago, after Israeli forces evicted them from their city. Khalidi's latest work, *Dead Are My People* (a Noor Theatre commission produced at New York Theatre Workshop's Next Door this past fall), explores the experience of Syrian immigrants coming to the American South during the Jim Crow era.

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Given their overlapping interests, it's no surprise that Wallace and Khalidi's collaboration on *The Corpse Washer* has proved smooth and eminently rewarding. "We're on the same page politically, in the deepest sense, and that goes a long way when you're writing," says Khalidi. He also cites their nearly 15-year friendship as an asset, naming Wallace as a seminal influence on his career. "Naomi's work is one of the reasons I got into theatre," he reflects. "I first collaborated with Naomi as an actor. But as early as 2005, she was also reading my writing, and she became a mentor and advocate for my work. After I finished my M.F.A. in Dramatic Writing at New York University, we began working together. It has felt like a very natural progression." Wallace agrees. Of their process in bringing *The Corpse Washer* to life, as well as co-adapting *Returning to Haifa* and co-editing the 2015 collection *Inside/Outside: Six Plays from Palestine and the Diaspora*, she says:

"It's pretty seamless between us. There's a cliché that you have to fight with your co-writer for things to turn out well, but I don't think so. You have to do your best work, but respect that the other playwright might have a vision that goes beyond yours. They might do something to the script that you didn't anticipate and that's better than what you could've imagined." Both authors joke that when they look at scripts they've created together, they can't distinguish between one another's writing. "It all kind of blends," explains Khalidi. "That's something we're proud of. Neither of us has much ego. We trust each other."

Both Humana Festival alumni (Khalidi served as co-dramaturg on Mona Mansour's *The Hour of Feeling* in the 2012 Festival), Wallace and Khalidi are thrilled to return with *The Corpse Washer*, especially with director Mark Brokaw at the helm. "I've always wanted to work with Mark," Wallace says. "With a script adapted from a novel, you have the challenge of making the story feel active on its feet. Mark has been crucial to the play's development, helping to infuse the narrative with fresh agency." The playwrights emphasize, too, that a story like *The Corpse Washer* transcends cultural differences, even as it reflects them. Wallace asserts: "We're all the same family. Those are our brothers and sisters—in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria—and the U.S. is still bombing them on a daily basis. Storytelling isn't just about imagining ourselves anew, it's about imagining other worlds, people who may be far from us geographically, but with whom we have so much in common. We all love, hope, and dream. When we allow these brutal wars to continue, we're damaging our capacity to be human."

—Hannah Rae Montgomery

# NOVELIST SINAN ANTOON

**S**inan Antoon is an Iraqi-born novelist, poet, and literary translator who's been lauded internationally for crafting visceral stories that haunt and inspire. The Argentinian writer Alberto Manguel called him "one of the great fiction writers of our time," and *Al-Ahram Weekly* described him as "one of the most acclaimed authors of the Arab world." His works, translated into fourteen languages, provide an insightful glimpse into the perspectives of his home country's often-overlooked civilians—revealing the devastating effects of life amid thirty years of ongoing violence.

Antoon is best known for 2010's *The Corpse Washer*, which earned him accolades across the world and topped *The Guardian*'s list for best books on the Iraq War. In an interview about the novel with NPR, Antoon stated, "We live in such a militarized society now that valorizes the violence carried out by armies; we never see the world from the point of view of the civilians who are on the receiving end of tanks and drones." *The Corpse Washer* isn't Antoon's only work depicting the suffering and resilience of ordinary citizens trying to survive oppressive regimes. In his 2007 novel, *I'jaam: An Iraqi Rhapsody*, he chronicles the horrors of life under Saddam Hussein's reign through a fictional memoir, written by a student placed in solitary confinement for ridiculing the dictator. *The Baghdad Eucharist* (2012) follows a Christian family attempting to survive the sectarian violence unleashed in the aftermath of the 2003 U.S. invasion. Set during a single day, it captures the contrasting perspectives of an old man who dreams of the peaceful Iraq he knew in his childhood, and his niece—who's only ever known war. In addition to his written work, in 2003 Antoon returned to Iraq after over a decade in the U.S. to co-direct and co-produce a documentary, *About Baghdad*. The film daringly showcases



Iraqi citizens sharing their experiences of life under Saddam and expressing their views on the recent American occupation.

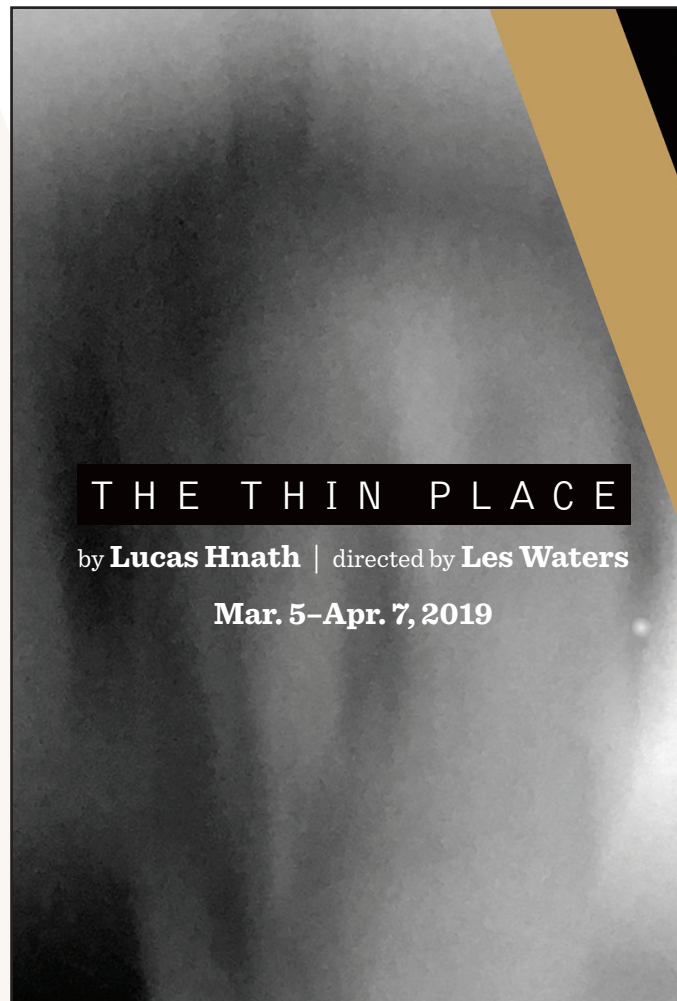
Currently, Antoon teaches classes on Arabic culture, literature, and politics at New York University, where he's an associate professor. His fourth novel, *The Book of Collateral Damage*, will be published in its English translation in 2019, and his academic writing and opinion pieces can be found in major journals throughout the Arab world and publications like *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*. Across this diverse body of work, Antoon never fails to plunge deeply into the grit of the human experience, telling stories that boldly confront the darker sides of life, while illustrating the vivacity of the human spirit.

—Alonna Ray

# THE THIN PLACE

Everyone who ever died is here, just in a different part of here. And if you listen, *really listen*, you can hear them—in the thin places—the places where the line between our world and some other world is very, very thin. “It’s sort of like if you were to imagine an octopus in an aquarium, pressed up against glass...except that there’s no glass, and no octopus,” explains Hilda, the woman who begins to reveal her story in Lucas Hnath’s eerie new play. What is it that Hilda might have felt on the back of her neck, alone in dark rooms with candles burning low? If she were to open her eyes, tightly closed in terror, would someone be there? When Hilda meets Linda, a professional psychic, *The Thin Place* ventures into the sphere of séances and mediums who channel ghostly visitations.

While writing a play that ponders such supernatural experiences, time to investigate with collaborators has been central to Hnath’s process. “This is how I often build plays,” he observes. “There’s a subject that I want to explore, and I’ll get actors together in a room. I’ll have written scraps of moments, exchanges, bits of dialogue—but I won’t have the whole play yet, not by a long shot.” His initial opportunity to work on *The Thin Place* was a Creativity Fund workshop at New Dramatists, where Hnath is a resident playwright. “I gathered four actors, including Emily Cass McDonnell, who plays Hilda,” he recalls. “I asked them to describe their experiences with psychics and the paranormal, and did a lot of listening at first, as people talked and shared stories.” And when Actors Theatre partnered with the Colorado New Play Festival for another workshop, Hnath asked the cast to tell him scary tales. “Actors throw me off in a useful way, bringing voices into the room that I can’t control, that aren’t from my own head,” notes the playwright.



Another key resource during the play’s evolution has been director Les Waters, who reunites with Hnath for this Humana Festival premiere. “We’re so familiar that we just give each other a look and we know what it means,” says Hnath of the trust with which he and Waters negotiate their roles in a rehearsal room. “I’m very rigorous and careful about the logic of the play, and the structure of it, and Les is very comfortable with the stuff that’s nebulous and murkier—he gets the weird logic of emotion. So I can lean into my efforts to figure out the rational logic, and part of his job is to throw a wrench into that, to pull me in the other direction.” Commissioned by Actors Theatre during Waters’s tenure as artistic

director, *The Thin Place* was imagined specifically for the intimate Victor Jory Theatre. “I wrote it in conversation with that space,” Hnath remarks. “This is a play that wants to feel like we’re sitting around a character who’s telling a story.”

When it comes to divulging what happens as *The Thin Place* unfolds, though, the playwright is cautious not to reveal too much, preferring that the audience embark with few expectations. “With material that gets into the uncanny, in order to really enter that space, you can’t have a life raft to take you back to shore. I have to be able to put you out to sea,” Hnath asserts. He likens

this reticence to the way he approached discussing his 2014 play *The Christians*. “I refused to answer questions about my own beliefs, because *The Christians* wants to throw you into

the middle of an unresolvable argument. This play is not dissimilar; if you go into it thinking about the context in which it was written, it gives you an easy ‘out,’ rather than the more unsettling space that I want to get to with it.” So in *The Thin Place*, even characters and relationships are hovering in the in-between, difficult to pin down. The kind of experience Hnath is aiming for requires maintaining, in his words, “a delicate state where nothing can be too concrete.”

**// With material that gets into the uncanny, in order to really enter that space, you can’t have a life raft to take you back to shore. //**

Hnath’s extraordinary ability to put an audience out to sea stems from a creative process that involves asking himself questions from every conceivable angle—a practice reflected in the dialectical richness of his plays. While writing *The Thin Place*, one of the questions he’s been mulling relates to rational thought itself, and why we’re compelled to depart from it. Sometimes there’s a short distance between being a flexible thinker and one too open to influence. For example, Hnath cites his reading about the Spiritualist movement in late 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century America; this popular fascination with communicating

with the dead attracted both abolitionists and advocates for women’s suffrage—people whose political leanings were as adventurous as their metaphysical ones.

But although a certain susceptibility of the imagination can have benefits, “there’s a real

vulnerability there,” Hnath reflects. “Can you have such an open mind that your brain falls out? Where’s the line between staying receptive to what you don’t know, and keeping the critical faculties you need to see the world clearly?” This tension between the value of being persuadable and the necessity of shrewd perception is just one of the puzzles in Hnath’s riveting new play.

—Amy Wegener

Commissioned by Actors Theatre of Louisville

# LUCAS HNATH



When wrestling with the questions that fuel his writing process, Lucas Hnath is never content to simply advance one opinion and stick to it. “My standard mode is to try and argue multiple sides of everything,” he explains. “I think it’s a way to get a clearer vision of what you’re talking about.” For instance, in his award-winning play *The Christians*, which premiered in the 2014 Humana Festival and has since been produced Off-Broadway and all over the country, the pastor of a megachurch astounds his congregation when he announces a seismic doctrinal shift. His sermon is compelling and delivered with deep conviction, but when members of the church begin to interrogate his true

reasons for making this change—and how he can know what he claims to know—his world begins to crumble in the collision with beliefs that challenge his own.

The vacillation between certainty and doubt is an animating struggle in several of Hnath’s plays. *Death Tax*, first seen in the 2012 Humana Festival, is about an elderly woman who, under the impression that her daughter has paid a nurse to kill her, offers the nurse a large sum of money to keep her alive. What unfolds is a taut thriller in which ordinary people face increasingly murky ethical dilemmas—and the more each character’s motivations are revealed, the more the line is blurred between what is right and wrong, just and self-serving. In the 2013 Humana Festival, Hnath took his knack for building equivocal suspense into outer space with *nightnight*, his contribution to the triptych *Sleep Rock Thy Brain*. In this one-act, three astronauts vying for the glory of a spacewalk are caught in a triangle of deceit and ambition when a case of insomnia threatens the success of their mission.

Also exploring the tension between the search for glory and the search for truth is *Isaac’s Eye*, which premiered at Ensemble Studio Theatre. The play imagines an early-career Isaac Newton, and combines invented and true details to paint a portrait of a scientist desperate to do whatever it takes to achieve immortality. *Isaac’s Eye* is one of several Hnath plays that riff on the lives of famous people, creating a thought-provoking space between the cultural baggage they carry and his fictionalized portrayals. “If there’s a figure or a subject that I suspect that the majority of the audience has a reference point for, it gives me something to upend,” says the playwright. His first play produced at Actors Theatre, a ten-

minute piece called *The Courtship of Anna Nicole Smith*, conjures the life-altering moment when Smith, then a young stripper, met elderly Texas billionaire J. Howard Marshall. Other works featuring well-known figures include *A Public Reading of an Unproduced Screenplay about the Death of Walt Disney*, which had an acclaimed run at Soho Rep in 2013, and *Hillary and Clinton*, which opens on Broadway in April. In imagining iconic strivers as they try to define their moment in history, he invites the audience to delve into the ideas these familiar images stir up, and to recognize ourselves in unexpected places.

## \\ My standard mode is to try and argue multiple sides of everything. //

Hnath has also put his own spin on a famous fictional character. *A Doll's House, Part 2*, which was nominated for eight Tony Awards (including Best Play) in 2017, is Hnath's "sequel" to Henrik Ibsen's classic drama, which ends with housewife Nora Helmer walking out on her husband Torvald and their three children. Picking up Nora's story fifteen years later, Hnath sought out as many opportunities as he could to find out what people assumed about Ibsen's ending, mining their often contradictory impressions. "It was important for me to know what they thought was the reason Nora left, and what happened to her after," he recalls. "I found that, a lot of times, people misremembered why she left. But then that gave me the thought: what if Torvald has misremembered it? What if characters in the play have got

it wrong?" Rather than ironing out all the speculation, Hnath puts Nora's experience and opinions in conversation with those of the family she left behind, orchestrating a dazzlingly complex 21<sup>st</sup>-century debate about marriage, divorce, and what a woman owes her family and herself.

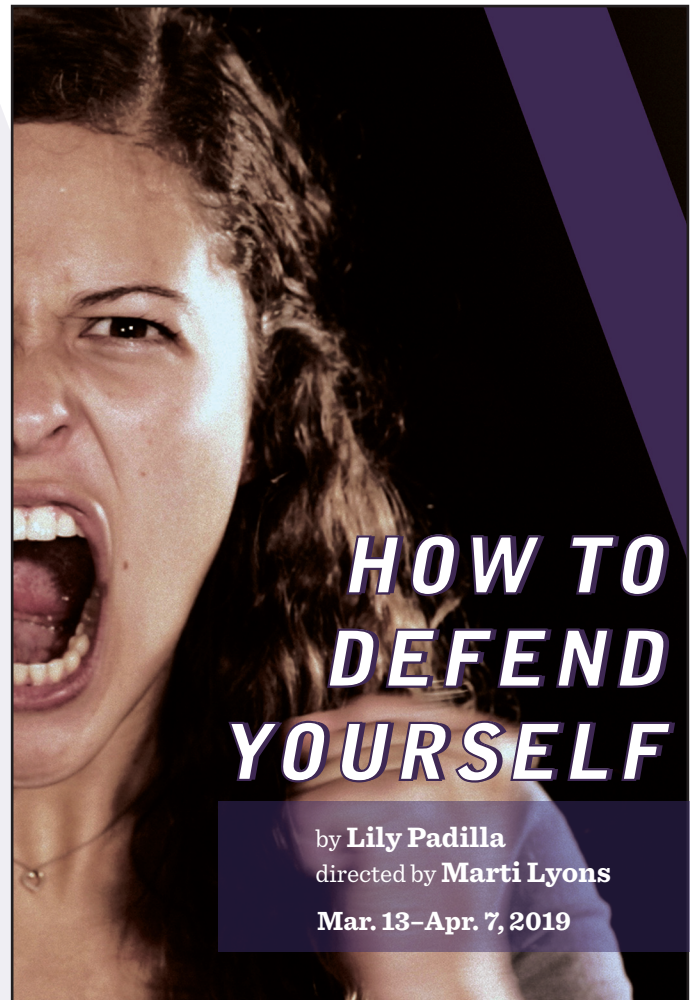
With his new play, *The Thin Place*, Hnath returns to Actors Theatre for his fourth Humana Festival premiere. In the years since *Death Tax* marked his debut in the 2012 Festival, Hnath has been extraordinarily prolific. His work has won numerous honors, from the Steinberg Playwright Award to the Obie Award to the Windham-Campbell Prize. He has another new piece, *Dana H.*, coming up at Chicago's Goodman Theatre and Center Theatre Group in Los Angeles, and this past year, he topped *American Theatre's* list of the most-produced playwrights of the 2018-2019 season. In these busiest of times, coming back to Louisville offers him an opportunity to focus on the work at hand. "There's nothing to reacclimate to. I'm able to hit the ground running," he says. "I can just get straight to work. That's really nice."

—Susan Yassky

# HOW TO DEFEND YOURSELF

In your daily life, how often do you think about your personal safety? Maybe it's not something you've ever been that concerned about, compared to other people you know. Or it is, and so you've developed a set of habits that are supposed to keep you from being mugged, or followed, or sexually assaulted. *Don't carry cash. Take a different route home from work every day. Never leave a drink unattended.* Maybe you used to worry sometimes, and now you don't. You're not going to live in fear, you've decided. Or you simply feel too exhausted, even powerless. In the back of your mind, though, do you ever think about fighting back? What if you could learn how? A group of female college students attempts to do just that in Lily Padilla's daring, visceral play *How to Defend Yourself*. In an empty campus gym, they gather for a series of self-defense workshops only a few days after two fraternity brothers rape a classmate named Susannah. But as they memorize attackers' weak spots, practice wrist escapes, and throw punches, they wonder: will any of it keep them safe?

Self-defense, according to workshop co-organizer Brandi, is about more than physical training. A senior with a black belt in karate, Brandi tries to instill in her peers a shift in mindset as well—they should think like fighters, not victims-in-waiting. First-year student Diana is all in, amped to discover how to neutralize threats. But for her, and for the rest of the class, self-defense techniques don't instantly lead to empowerment. Fellow first-year Mojdeh freezes up during the first exercise, and wallflower Nikki balks at one of the class's core tenets: *Your body is a weapon*. "Maybe your body," she jokingly tells Brandi. Meanwhile, the workshop's other facilitator, Kara, is struggling to process what happened; Susannah is Kara's best friend and one of her and Brandi's sorority sisters. With grit and surprising humor, Padilla (who uses they/them and she/her pronouns) traces how these five women all contend with the same question:



“What does it mean to carry around a lifetime of feeling like you need to defend yourself?”

During the second workshop session, two upperclassmen in the same fraternity as Susannah's attackers show up. Asked by Brandi to participate, Eggo and Andy are eager to stand against rape and be good male allies, but they aren't always sure what that means. They're not alone in their confusion: in the midst of the class's exercises and training drills, women and men alike are wrestling with gender roles, consent, and the fundamental messiness of sex and desire. And although Eggo and Andy's presence initially sparks conflict, guys aren't the enemy here; for Padilla, vilifying individuals or certain groups



is beside the point. “So much of my own journey,” they reflect, “is not about pointing to capital-V villains, but working through internalized oppression, which is systemic.” Throughout *How to Defend Yourself*, Padilla explores how everyone is both complicit in and hurt by rape culture—a social environment that normalizes sexual assault and is rooted in, in their words, “the belief that you have to dominate another person in order to have power.”

## **For the play’s richly imagined ensemble, a self-defense workshop becomes more than a chance for them to practice punches and kicks.**

In a refreshingly frank way, *How to Defend Yourself* depicts coming of age in a world where violence against women is so common that there are classes they can take to deal with it. To Padilla, the play also serves as a gift for her younger self, isolated in the aftermath of being sexually assaulted. “It’s just to keep company,” she says. “That’s it.” But the writing process has illuminated something else about how survival and art might connect. Padilla shares insight gleaned from Kim Rubinstein, a mentor and early influence on *How to Defend Yourself*: “As artists, we’re often channeling painful feelings in order to learn that we can stand them. And when people come to the theatre, they see that they can stand them too.” Similarly, for the play’s richly imagined ensemble, a self-defense workshop becomes more than a chance for them to practice punches and kicks; it’s also about bearing witness to each other’s

lives and metabolizing their own complex experiences, turning them into fuel to meet whatever might come next.

“How hard it is to be open with someone else—that was something I thought about a lot as I was working on *How to Defend Yourself*,” Padilla recalls. Despite its challenges, they firmly believe that vulnerability is an essential strength, not a weakness. But another word for *vulnerable* is *defenseless*, and Padilla pairs their conviction with a clear-eyed understanding of why closing ourselves off is often a safer choice. The result is a play that she aptly calls “fierce, chaotic, and sweaty,” in which being taught how to fight back leads to a broader reckoning with the necessity—and the limitations—of self-defense. Shouldn’t the responsibility of rape prevention fall on all of us, not just on potential victims? In the meantime, self-defense students in classes all over the country are trying to get stronger and hit harder. They’re carrying their keys between their fingers. They’re learning to use their bodies as weapons. It’s about muscle memory, as Brandi says. You have to practice every day.

—Jessica Reese

**Co-world premiere with Victory Gardens Theater**

# LILY PADILLA



**I**n a world wrestling with pain, prejudice and the revelations of the #MeToo movement, Lily Padilla writes plays about intimacy and belonging. An artist of synthesis, they unite cultural perspectives, creative disciplines and people of all backgrounds through their life and work. Padilla recalls growing up “mixed-race, mixed-faith and queer” and feeling out of place after their family moved from a diverse neighborhood to a predominantly white suburb of San Diego called Poway. As a refuge from the inevitable pressure to fit in, Padilla turned to reading novels and writing short stories, often hiding away from social interaction during her childhood. “I was like, forget all this, I’m going to

Narnia,” she laughs. “And then my mom put me in a play.” From then on, the arts became a way of life and a vehicle for expressing Padilla’s background, experiences and vision for the future.

Early in her career, Padilla found herself balancing the pursuit of formal education with the need to forge her own identity and path. After studying acting as a teenager at North Carolina School of the Arts, they went on to receive a B.F.A. from New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts, training with the Experimental Theatre Wing and Playwrights Horizons. Throughout their studies, Padilla’s impulse was to engage with a wide range of disciplines. “I love acting, but I want to create in so many different ways,” she says. “I want to create with my body, I want to direct, I want to write.” After college, Padilla pursued her multi-hyphenate artistic interests and passion for bringing people together by co-founding a series called American Nightcap at INTAR Theatre, where she acted as a matchmaker between artists from marginalized communities and produced short plays. Eventually, Padilla felt compelled to cultivate their voice as a writer, and they recently graduated from the University of California, San Diego with an M.F.A. in Playwriting. Since then, she’s continued to write and develop her work and has also facilitated playwriting workshops with the La Jolla Playhouse/TCG Veterans & Theatre Institute.

Padilla’s multidisciplinary approach to art deeply informs their work and the way they foster relationships between characters onstage. Sensitive to the inner desire for connection that we all carry, they seek to satisfy that hunger through their plays,

## \\ I dream of a future where people can really just be with each other and see each other. //

depicting groups of disparate characters who are striving to come together as one. “I dream of a future where people can really just be with each other and see each other,” she says. “And I think that for me, ensemble plays are a journey towards that.” In *(w)holeness*, one of Padilla’s first full-length plays, four sex addicts work their way through a twelve-week recovery program in hopes of breaking free from the cycle of addiction. They fight to find healing and acceptance for themselves, struggle to overcome their own judgment and try (often unsuccessfully) to go along with the unconventional but well-intentioned activities their intern group counselor leads.

From creative movement exercises in *(w)holeness* to self-defense drills in *How to Defend Yourself*, Padilla’s plays incorporate intensely physical choreography that she participates in during the writing and rehearsal stages. “I walk all the tracks and say all the lines—I get really physically worked up when I’m writing,” she explains. As a singer, dancer, actor, director and playwright, Padilla finds the voices of her characters by exploring the way they move and by being up on her feet with the performers. “I like to be highly, highly physically involved because that’s how I learn,” they say, recalling early workshops of *How to Defend Yourself* in particular. “But sometimes I jump out and watch, and just see what inspires me about what’s happening, how bodies are relating to each other.”

Padilla also often collaborates with their partner Dylan Key, a dramaturg

and director. “My partner is a vital and beautiful part of my creative process,” they remark. The pair co-created an immersive, site-specific piece called *And Then You Wait*, commissioned by La Jolla Playhouse for the WOW Festival. Set in a grain silo, the project follows a Mexican-American family, a white family and an African-American family living through the apocalypse together. Key and Padilla worked with a sound engineer and developed the text for the piece, which played in the silo while audience members moved through it at their own pace. “It doesn’t exist linearly in time; it exists spatially always,” she explains, discussing the challenges of crafting such a unique work. “It’s a text- and sound-based installation that doesn’t move forward in any way; it moves around you.”

Collaboration is an important part of almost any artistic endeavor, but for Padilla, human connection and listening are not just an element of a production, but its entire purpose. “I think of rehearsal as a laboratory for how we might be together,” they say, and for each project, they strive to create an inclusive environment in which “the process of *how* we make holds the DNA of *what* we’re making, and vice versa.” For Padilla, interdisciplinary art and intersectionality go hand in hand as she creates works that foster healing and community to combat our society’s pervasive violence and discrimination.

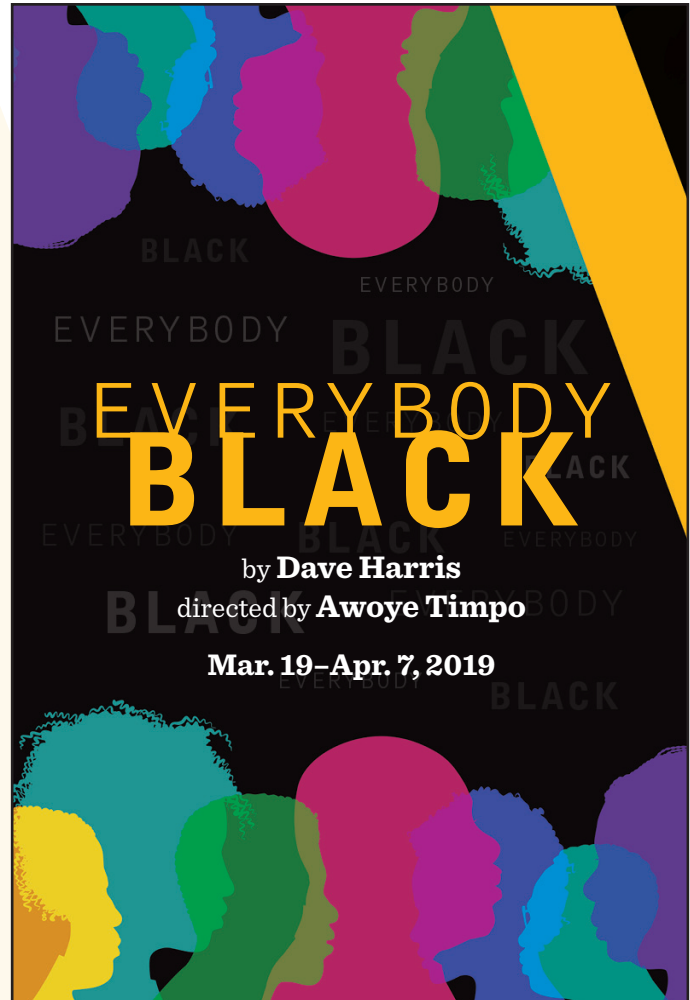
—Alonna Ray

# EVERYBODY BLACK

“Hi, I’m Black.” This cheerful introduction is the launching point of Dave Harris’s blisteringly funny satire *Everybody Black*. As the historian addressing the audience goes on to explain, being black has landed him in a surprisingly lucrative position: a group of white historians have offered him a big ol’ check to write the definitive version of The Black Experience™. These earnest white historians want an official record that captures the Truth of Blackness—and by that, they mean they want the boats, the chains, the Negro spirituals, the baby mama drama, the crack rocks and the police brutality. It’s a preposterous request. But then again, it’s a whole lotta money. So the black historian has gleefully agreed.

In Harris’s no-holds-barred comedy, the process of documenting Black History is a laughably compromised endeavor, distorted by the promise of profit and inherently biased towards a particular narrative. And the worldview of the black historian provides another challenge: despite his mandate, he feels no fidelity to “facts” or “truth.” (In fact, he confesses with a wicked laugh, he’s never even met another black person. Not one!) So from the outset, the project is fundamentally flawed. The play unfolds as a series of short scenes, orchestrated by a self-professed madman who shamelessly proclaims that he’s just “making shit up about black people.”

So perhaps it is unsurprising that the characters who populate this “Black History” play are not the ones that you might find in a dusty public school textbook. There’s an argument between a slave and a black millennial about whose day was harder. There’s a talk show segment about black people who are addicted to dating white people. There’s even a visit with Every Black Father Ever—and later, Every Black Mother Ever.



Each new character we meet is simultaneously a provocative flirtation with stereotype and also a subversive resistance to it, challenging our implicit expectations about who might appear in a play called *Everybody Black*.

Explaining his impulse for writing the play, Harris says, “I’m interested in a wider idea of canonical blackness and black entertainment. I’m not really drawn to writing the ‘righteous black struggle play,’ about black people who are suffering or fighting oppression. We see a lot of the same tropes in black theatre: stories about the people who led the march, the people who were brave and went out and changed the world.” Almost in spite

of himself, he laughs: “But, like...that’s not fun! Also, I know a lot more people who missed the march instead of actually going. So I wanted to put *that* onstage. The characters in *Everybody Black* are both really wrong *and* really right, and they have no entitlement to righteousness or sincerity. That’s more interesting to me, and I think it’s an aspect of theatre we don’t see as much.”

**I’m interested in a wider idea of canonical blackness and black entertainment. I’m not really drawn to writing the ‘righteous black struggle play.’**

As Harris imagines him, the black historian—flawed as he is—has one key advantage. Just like he feels no responsibility to serve up the Truth of Blackness, he also feels no responsibility to frame The Black Experience as a noble struggle against injustice. As a result, his portrayals of blackness are strikingly less solemn. Instead, they’re full of joy and bombast, chipper defiance and unapologetic hyperbole—and the characters he envisions are hardly heroic. As it turns out, that becomes a sticking point for the actors enlisted to bring these people to life.

The actors argue that the historian is too careless with stereotypes—even worse, he’s made them look foolish. What they want sounds pretty simple: they just want the record to be historically accurate. And yet, the black historian argues, is anything

really “historically accurate”? “On some level,” muses Harris, “the difference between recording history and writing theatre is so, so flimsy. All we’re looking at when we read a play is the manipulation of words for a specific effect, and when we read a historical text it’s the same thing.”

“I think a driving question for me,” Harris goes on to say, “is what *is* the truth in this play?” *Everybody Black* ostensibly starts as a play about Black History—but it ultimately grapples with the notion that all writing about history fundamentally reveals more about the person shaping the story than it does the story itself. Why do we return to narratives that frame the black experience as a monolith? Is struggle against oppression really the defining characteristic of blackness?

According to Harris, the challenge of Black History—or really any history—is that it erases nuance. The richness and complexity of a first-hand experience can be diminished by time and distance. But for Harris, finding a personal way to look at the past is essential. “Whatever I think I know,” he says, “there were real people before me who were super complicated, and probably in a lot of pain but also had a lot of joy, and also were probably fucked up and did a lot of hurtful, terrible things... For me to give anyone the benefit of agency and the benefit of humanity in my writing, I have to see that they were just making choices, and they were complicated and selfish and great and horrible and hurtful—and I think that’s beautiful.”

—Jenni Page-White

# DAVE HARRIS



**W**hen Dave Harris was in fifth grade, he transferred from a diverse public elementary school to a private, all-boys school where he was one of the only black students. Looking back, Harris says navigating that predominantly white environment taught him a lot about performance. “I learned how to manipulate language to make it easier to move through the world,” he recalls. “For example, if I used racially coded language in one context, I would get demonized, but if I used it in another, I would be seen as special, or competitive. I turned it into a kind of game that started from a place of pain, but eventually became kind of fun—I became *good* at it.” He adds, wryly, “I’m probably going to have to unpack that for the rest of my

life.” Naturally, Harris’s talent for manipulating language led him to pursue writing. “I look at writing as a way to experiment, and through that experimentation find things out about myself,” he observes.

Harris’s interest in writing takes many forms; he is also an accomplished spoken word poet and the winner of multiple Grand Slam competitions around the country. However, over time Harris came to feel that his audiences were rewarding him for “performing” vulnerability—that they weren’t pushing him to grapple with complex questions in an authentic way. “It was easy to get on stage and say something simple and clichéd,” he explains. “There was less of an incentive to write personally and take risks artistically.” He’s recently turned his focus towards page poetry; in fact, his first book of poems, *Patricide*, is coming out in May.

This desire to take personal and artistic risks also motivates Harris’s playwriting. He credits one of his professors at Yale, playwright Deborah Margolin, with pushing him to put the personal on stage: “She kind of slapped me upside the head and said, ‘Dave, why are you scared of yourself?’ and just changed my life.” The product was his play *Exception to the Rule*, cheekily subtitled “The Black *Waiting for Godot*.” It revolves around a group of black students in an inner city high school, who are stuck in detention when their teacher doesn’t show up to supervise them. The students, who are used to being forgotten, resign themselves to their fate—all except the school’s star pupil, whom the others call “college-bound Erika.” Erika is determined to escape her surroundings, both literal and metaphorical. But where is she escaping to? Harris says the idea for the character came from a personal place. “I was questioning what it meant to be successful,

and what it meant to leave where I grew up in West Philly to come to Yale. Everyone I knew told me, ‘You’re going to go off and find something better,’ and then I got to Yale and realized that it had just as many problems as everywhere else.”

Since *Exception to the Rule*, Harris’s work has moved away from naturalism and shifted towards wildly inventive theatricality—and yet, he feels that his plays have become more personal. “The ills of the world just feel so known and so learnable. For me to reach into something personal, I feel like I also have to imagine beyond the constraints of what could happen in the world right now,” Harris contends. “I’m reaching for something beyond what is already known.”

In his play *Incendiary*, in which a black single mother named Tanya decides to break her son out of prison, Harris turns Tanya’s story into a video game-style quest, complete with training montages and a huge boss battle shoot-out. It’s a totally original theatrical world; Harris tells Tanya’s story so imaginatively and compellingly that we find ourselves rooting for her before we even consider whether she’s doing the right thing. As funny as it is tragic, the play illuminates the gendered expectations of emotional labor in black families, and the toll those expectations take on black mothers.

The tension between black stereotypes and individual characters is a recurring theme in Harris’s plays. In *Tambo & Bones*, the two main characters are horrified to discover that they are actually characters in a minstrel show. Deciding that they’re not going to take it anymore, they start a revolution—but are they really trying to make the world a

more equal place, or are they just out for themselves? This provocative satire, which includes lifelike cyborgs, a thirty-minute rap concert and a literal race war, offers a surprisingly theatrical commentary on the relationship between race and capitalism.

**// For me to reach into something personal, I feel like I also have to imagine beyond the constraints of what could happen in the world right now. //**

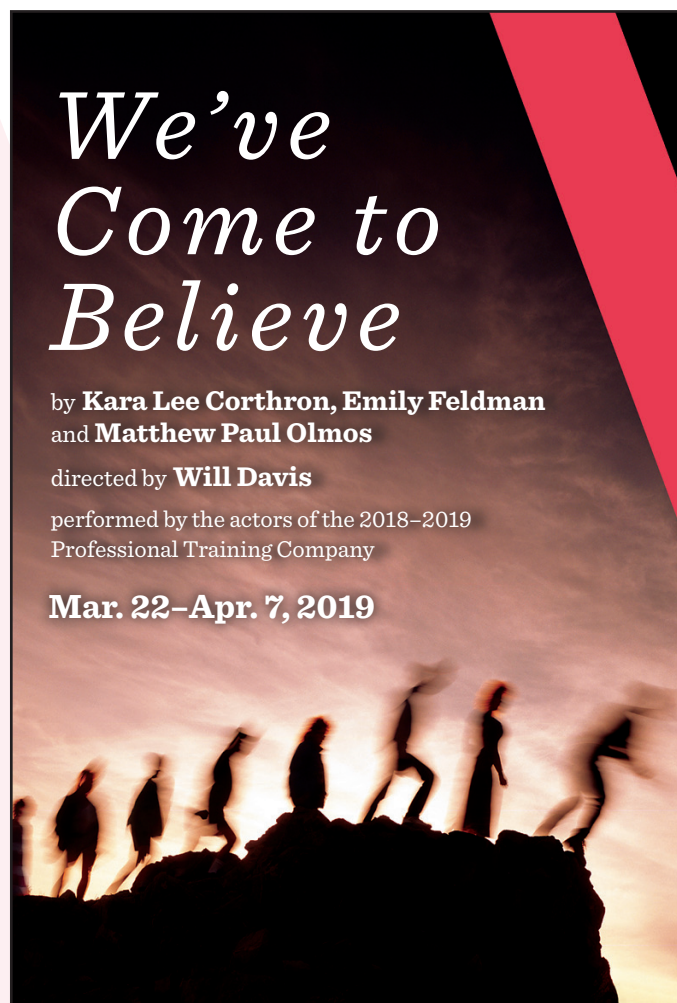
The last few years have been busy for Harris. He’s currently in the second year of the Playwriting M.F.A. program at the University of California, San Diego, and his work has been developed all over the country. As his writing continues to push the boundaries of what can be contained on stage, others are taking notice. In addition to having been a semifinalist for the Relentless Award, which honors challenging, fearless and “relentlessly truthful” plays, in December he was the recipient of The Lark’s Venturous Playwright Fellowship, which recognizes risk-taking and innovative playwriting and comes with a \$50,000 prize. He plans to keep challenging himself, both personally and professionally: “Ideally, my pursuit of growth, both as a person and as an artist, will lead me somewhere I’ve never been.”

—Susan Yassky

# WE'VE COME TO BELIEVE

**H**uman history is brimming with bizarre tales of sudden, collective hysteria and mass delusions. From the notorious 1692 witch trials in Salem, Massachusetts, to mysterious “dancing plagues” that swept across Europe between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, stories about communities gripped by irrational convictions can be found in virtually every century and on every continent. A brief survey of the last 100 years in America offers a plethora of colorful examples. Think of cult members willing to meet their untimely ends for a confounding ideology—remember the Branch Davidians, Heaven’s Gate, Jonestown? Or think of UFO enthusiasts who journey to Roswell, New Mexico for a glimpse of a real flying saucer. Or even sports fans who think their absurd superstitions will help their teams win.

The phenomenon of mass delusion—in equal parts hilarious and disturbing—provides the inspiration for *We’ve Come to Believe*, this season’s Humana Festival show written for the Professional Training Company (PTC). Now in its 47<sup>th</sup> year, the PTC is an immersive program designed to provide hands-on training for early-career theatre practitioners of every stripe. Members of the company work with Actors Theatre staff and guest artists throughout their time in Louisville, while producing their own full season focused on new work. Every year, Actors Theatre of Louisville commissions a group of playwrights to collaborate on a piece for the Festival—it’s performed by the PTC’s twenty acting apprentices, and supported in myriad ways by its production, administrative, and artistic apprentices. For the Professional Training Company, *We’ve Come to Believe* is a celebration of months of hard work and growth, and an opportunity to share their talent with a wider audience.



The process of building the show from the ground up is a massive undertaking that unfolds over the course of nine months. The project kicked off last summer, when three intrepid writers—Kara Lee Corthron, Emily Feldman and Matthew Paul Olmos—teamed up with director Will Davis and dramaturg Jenni Page-White to investigate why folks sometimes lose their ever-loving minds in unison. The creative team traded research via phone and email, and began to zero in on the ideas that would fuel the writing process: for example, how easy it is to be swept away by the seductive power of groupthink, or what it feels like to be the only person shouting “The emperor



## How do otherwise sensible people wind up holding utterly ludicrous beliefs, despite superior evidence to the contrary?

has no clothes!” After a handful of vigorous discussions, the playwrights went off on their own to each craft a series of short scenes riffing on the theme. From a piece that pokes fun at the ongoing saga of “witch hunts” in America, to one that depicts a fringe group preparing for the (nonexistent) genocide of the white race, to one that takes place aboard a boat that may or may not have transported its occupants to another dimension—the material these imaginative writers have generated offers a kaleidoscopic view of mass delusion, by turns meditative, eerie, and ridiculously funny.

With drafts in tow, the playwrights then travelled to Louisville in December to continue developing their pieces during a weeklong workshop with the director, dramaturg and members of the PTC. Bolstered by some ingenious ideas from the design team, the workshop provided the opportunity to begin weaving these short pieces into a singular theatrical experience—one that highlights both the distinctive voices of the writers and the cleverness of this season’s acting apprentices. All in all, it’s a highly collaborative process that harnesses the creative energies of a huge number of artists.

In fact, the sheer size of its cast is one of the most unique aspects of this annual project. Director Will Davis is eager for the rare chance to work with an ensemble of twenty performers, *especially* in a play that raises provocative questions about herd mentality. Known for physically adventurous work, Davis comes from a

background in dance. So in keeping with that sensibility, *We’ve Come to Believe* uses the spectacle of bodies onstage to explore pattern and uniformity, and to illuminate how an individual’s internal compass can stop working in the midst of an impassioned crowd.

What moves people to join a group that espouses a baffling or dangerous philosophy? How do otherwise sensible people wind up holding utterly ludicrous beliefs, despite superior evidence to the contrary? There’s no question that it happens; history has shown us that charismatic leaders are able to dupe hundreds of followers, and entire communities can become seized by irrational panic that ends almost as soon as it starts. The question, then, is how? How can something objectively false capture the imagination—nay, the unshakeable conviction—of so many? Depending on your outlook, that question can inspire bewildered laughter, or it could be deeply unsettling. But either way, at the core of this line of thinking is an epistemological concern: if *we* were the ones who were deluded, how would we know? *We’ve Come to Believe* invites you to wrestle with these questions, in a mind-bending journey through the world of collective delusion.

—Jenni Page-White

**Commissioned by Actors Theatre of Louisville**



# MEET THE *WE'VE COME TO BELIEVE* PLAYWRIGHTS



**Kara Lee Corthron's** plays include *Welcome to Fear City* (Contemporary American Theater Festival, Kansas City Repertory Theatre), *AliceGraceAnon* (New Georges), *Holly Down in Heaven* (Forum Theatre, Washington, D.C.) and *Listen for the Light* (Know Theatre of Cincinnati). She's the author of the young adult novel *The Truth of Right Now*, from Simon & Schuster. Awards include the Parents' Choice Gold Award for *The Truth of Right Now*, Vineyard Theatre's Paula Vogel Playwriting Award, the Princess Grace and Helen Merrill Playwriting Awards, four MacDowell Fellowships, and residencies at Bogliasco (Italy), Skriðuklaustur (Iceland), and Hawthornden (Scotland), and she's a proud member of New Dramatists. Her work has been developed at Ars Nova, Atlantic Theater Company, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, LAByrnth Theater Company, Page 73, PlayPenn, Seven Devils Playwrights Conference and South Coast Repertory, among others. Corthron is currently under commission from La Jolla Playhouse, and writes for the TV drama *You* on Lifetime. She is an alumna of The Juilliard School.



**Emily Feldman's** work has been developed by the Playwrights' Center, Colt Coeur, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Magic Theatre, Alliance Theatre, Roundabout Theatre Company, The Playwrights Realm, JAW at Portland Center Stage, Cape Cod Theatre Project, WildWind Performance Lab, The New Harmony Project and Second Stage Theater, among others. Feldman is an alumna of The Working Farm at SPACE on Ryder Farm and the Jerome Fellowship/Core Apprenticeship at the Playwrights' Center, was an Alliance/Keneda National Graduate Playwriting Competition finalist, and was a Shank Playwright in Residence at Playwrights Horizons. She's currently a member of Interstate 73 at Page 73, The Orchard Project NYC Greenhouse and Two River Theater's Emerging Playwrights Group, and is working on new commissions from Manhattan Theatre Club, Playwrights Horizons and Arena Stage. She received her M.F.A. from the University of California, San Diego and her B.A. from Middlebury College.



**Matthew Paul Olmos** is a three-time Sundance Institute Fellowship/Residency recipient, a New Dramatists Resident Playwright, and an alumnus of Center Theatre Group's L.A. Writers' Workshop, Oregon Shakespeare Festival's Black Swan Lab and Echo Theater Company's Playwrights Lab. He received a Princess Grace Award in Playwriting, was selected by Sam Shepard for La MaMa's Ellen Stewart Emerging Playwright Award, and was mentored by Ruth Maleczech through Mabou Mines/SUITE. **Other Residencies and Fellowships:** New York Theatre Workshop, Baryshnikov Arts Center, Dramatists Guild, Primary Stages and INTAR. He is an Ensemble Studio Theatre lifetime member and a proud Kilroys nominator. His work has been presented nationally and internationally, and is published and taught in universities. He is currently devising *American Nationalism Project*, developed through New York Theatre Workshop, and a play with music, *We Walk Along The Christmas Bridge*, developed through Center Theatre Group. **Upcoming:** *so go the ghosts of méxico, part three* at Undermain Theatre, Dallas.



# HUMANA FESTIVAL CONVERSATIONS & EVENTS

All conversations are FREE but ticketed unless otherwise noted. Call the Box Office at 502.584.1205 to reserve your ticket.

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## COLLEGE DAYS KEYNOTE ADDRESS: IDRIS GOODWIN

HUNGRY NEVER STARVING: STRATEGIES ON HOW TO MANEUVER AND SUSTAIN A LIFE IN THE PERFORMING ARTS

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**Saturday, March 23 at 10:30 A.M. | Pamela Brown Auditorium**

Join Playwright, Artistic Director, Break Beat Poet, Humana Festival Alum and Actors Theatre friend of the family Idris Goodwin for a series of anecdotes and lessons learned from his 20 years in the trenches of Theatre, Hip Hop, and everywhere in between.

## PANEL CONVERSATION: THE BOARD: SUPPORTING AND SHAPING AMERICAN THEATRE

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**Sunday, March 24 at 12 P.M. | Pamela Brown Auditorium**

Artistic and Managing Directors at non-profit theatres report to a Board of Directors. But who are these folks behind the curtain? And how do their decisions affect the theatre? Join us as members of Actors Theatre's staff and Board of Directors discuss the role of the Board in shaping the theatre.

## PANEL CONVERSATION: RISE UP: CREATING THEATRE FOR THE MOMENT

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**Saturday, March 30 at 10 A.M. | Pamela Brown Auditorium**

How do we use theatre to inspire, provoke, and contribute to a social or political cause? Hear from a panel of activist theatremakers as they offer insight into what it means to make brave art in tumultuous times.

## OVATION CELEBRATION

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**Saturday, March 30 at 10 P.M. | Actors Theatre Lobbies**

This post-show celebration is the perfect time to chat with friends and toast the exciting lineup of new plays.

## PANEL CONVERSATION: SHARE THE SPARK

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**Friday, April 5 at 1 P.M. | Pamela Brown Auditorium**

Join this thought-provoking new program where theatre professionals from around the country share their vision for American theatre through fast-paced TED-style talks and conversations.

## STEINBERG/ATCA AWARDS AND CLOSING CELEBRATION

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**Saturday, April 6 at 9 P.M. | Pamela Brown Auditorium**

Celebrate outstanding new plays with the New Play Awards from the Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust and the American Theatre Critics Association (ATCA), recognizing new work that premiered professionally outside of New York City last year. The festivities continue with a lookback at this year's Humana Festival and a toast to new works across the country!

## ENCORE BASH

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**Saturday, April 6 at 10 P.M. | Actors Theatre Lobbies**

Join us in our lobby spaces for an evening of food and drink as we celebrate the closing of the Humana Festival and Actors Theatre's 55<sup>th</sup> Season. We are ecstatic to share this with our extended theatre family!

## MARCH—APRIL 2019

A COMPLETE GUIDE TO EVENTS AT ACTORS THEATRE

### **3/3** OPENING NIGHT RECEPTION: *THE CORPSE WASHER*

immediately following the 7:30 p.m. performance

### **3/7** OPENING NIGHT RECEPTION: *THE THIN PLACE*

immediately following the 7 p.m. performance

### **3/15** OPENING NIGHT RECEPTION: *HOW TO DEFEND YOURSELF*

immediately following the 7:30 p.m. performance

### **3/16** BEHIND-THE-SCENES TECH EVENT: *EVERYBODY BLACK*

at 7 p.m.

Season Ticket Holders: FREE

General Admission: \$15

After a light reception, you will have a chance to step into the theatre and get a glimpse of what goes on during a technical rehearsal. Please call the Box Office at 502.584.1205 to reserve.

### **3/21** OPENING NIGHT RECEPTION: *EVERYBODY BLACK*

immediately following the 7:30 p.m. performance

### **3/23** COLLEGE DAYS KEYNOTE ADDRESS: IDRIS GOODWIN

at 10:30 a.m.

*See page 28 for details.*

### **3/24** COLLEGE DAYS PANEL CONVERSATION

at 12 p.m.

*See page 28 for details.*

### **3/30** PANEL CONVERSATION

at 10 a.m.

*See page 28 for details.*

### **3/30** OVATION CELEBRATION

at 10 p.m.

*See page 29 for details.*

### **4/5** PANEL CONVERSATION

at 1 p.m.

*See page 29 for details.*

### **4/6** STEINBERG/ATCAWW AWARDS AND CLOSING CELEBRATION

at 9 p.m.

*See page 29 for details.*

### **4/6** ENCORE BASH

at 10 p.m.

*See page 29 for details.*

# FESTIVAL PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

A COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE SHOWS AT ACTORS THEATRE

## 43<sup>RD</sup> HUMANA FESTIVAL OF NEW AMERICAN PLAYS

MARCH 1 – APRIL 7, 2019

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
24 7:30 BELIEVE (B)	25	26	27	28	1 7:30 CORPSE (B)	2 7:30 CORPSE (B)
3 7:30 CORPSE (B)	4	5 7:00 THIN (V) 7:30 CORPSE (B)	6 1:30 CORPSE (B) 7:00 THIN (V)	7 7:00 THIN (V) 7:30 CORPSE (B)	8 7:00 THIN (V) 7:30 CORPSE (B)	9 2:00 THIN (V) 7:00 THIN (V)
10 2:00 THIN (V) 7:00 THIN (V)	11	12	13 7:30 DEFEND (B)	14 7:30 DEFEND (B)	15 7:00 THIN (V) 7:30 DEFEND (B)	16 2:00 THIN (V) 2:30 CORPSE (B) 7:00 THIN (V) 7:30 DEFEND (B)
17 2:00 THIN (V) 2:30 DEFEND (B) 7:00 THIN (V)	18	19 7:00 THIN (V) 7:30 BLACK (P) 7:30 CORPSE (B)	20 7:00 THIN (V) 7:30 BLACK (P) 7:30 CORPSE (B)	21 7:00 THIN (V) 7:30 BLACK (P) 7:30 DEFEND (B)	22 7:00 THIN (V) 7:30 CORPSE (B) 8:00 BLACK (P) 11:00 BELIEVE (B)	23 2:00 THIN (V) 2:30 BLACK (P) 2:30 DEFEND (B) 7:00 THIN (V) 7:30 CORPSE (B) 8:00 BLACK (P) 11:00 BELIEVE (B)
24 2:00 THIN (V) 2:30 BLACK (P) 2:30 DEFEND (B) 7:00 THIN (V) 7:30 BLACK (P)	25	26 7:00 THIN (V) 7:30 BLACK (P) 7:30 DEFEND (B)	27 1:30 BLACK (P) 7:00 THIN (V) 7:30 BLACK (P) 7:30 DEFEND (B)	28 7:00 THIN (V) 7:30 BLACK (P) 7:30 CORPSE (B)	29 3:00 CORPSE (B) 7:00 THIN (V) 7:30 DEFEND (B) 8:00 BLACK (P) 11:00 BELIEVE (B)	30 12:00 THIN (V) 2:30 DEFEND (B) 3:00 BLACK (P) 5:00 THIN (V) 8:00 BLACK (P) 8:00 CORPSE (B)
31 10:30 BELIEVE (B)* 2:00 THIN (V) 2:30 BLACK (P) 2:30 CORPSE (B) 7:00 THIN (V)	1	2 7:00 THIN (V) 7:30 BLACK (P) 7:30 DEFEND (B)	3 7:00 THIN (V) 7:30 BLACK (P) 7:30 DEFEND (B)	4 7:00 THIN (V) 7:30 BLACK (P) 7:30 CORPSE (B)	5 3:00 CORPSE (B) 3:00 THIN (V) 7:30 DEFEND (B) 8:00 BLACK (P) 8:00 THIN (V) 11:00 BELIEVE (B)	6 12:00 BLACK (P) 12:00 THIN (V) 2:30 DEFEND (B) 5:00 BLACK (P) 6:30 THIN (V) 7:00 CORPSE (B)

### SHOW CODES

*The Corpse Washer* = CORPSE  
*The Thin Place* = THIN

*How to Defend Yourself* = DEFEND  
*Everybody Black* = BLACK  
*We've Come to Believe* = BELIEVE

(P) = Pamela Brown Auditorium (B) = Bingham Theatre (V) = Victor Jory Theatre

Schedule subject to change. All times p.m. unless otherwise noted. \*Indicates a.m. performance.

Performances in **BOLD** =

- Preview Performance
- Opening Performance
- Audio Described
- Open Captioning

**FOR TICKETS:** Visit: [ActorsTheatre.org](http://ActorsTheatre.org) Call: 502.584.1205 In Person: 316 West Main Street

#HF43

# ACTORS THEATRE

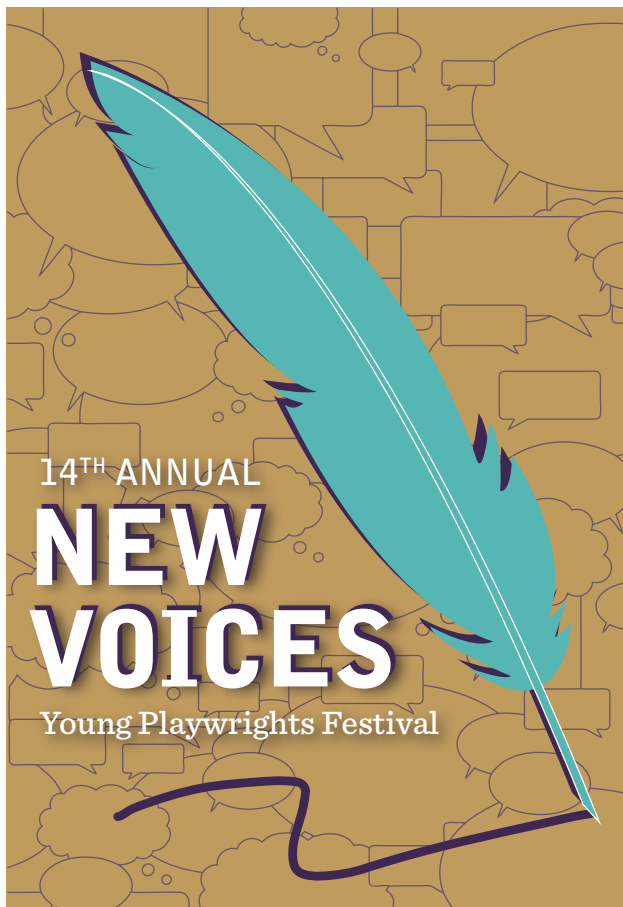
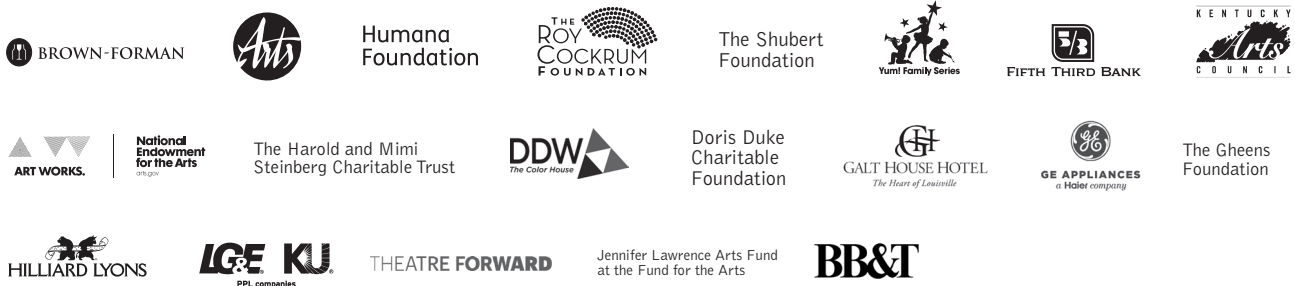
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