



Contact: Becky Biegelsen
(858) 228-3092; bbiegelsen@ljp.org

LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCES PROJECTS FOR SIXTH DNA NEW WORK SERIES

FOUR BRAND NEW PROJECTS TO RECEIVE READINGS DURING FOUR-DAY PLAY DEVELOPMENT SERIES

La Jolla, CA – La Jolla Playhouse is pleased to bring back for a sixth year its acclaimed new play development initiative, the **DNA New Work Series**, a weekend of readings of new works, taking place **March 22 – 25, 2018** in the Playhouse's Rao and Padma Makeneni Play Development Center. Tickets for the DNA New Work Series are **free** but reservations are required by calling **(858) 550-1010** or visiting LaJollaPlayhouse.org.

The DNA New Work Series offers playwrights and directors the opportunity to develop a script by providing rehearsal time, space and resources, culminating in a public presentation. This process gives audiences a closer look at the play development process, while allowing the Playhouse to develop new work and foster relationships with established and up-and-coming playwrights.

"DNA has become one of the Playhouse's most highly-anticipated and successful pathways for developing new work, with several projects going on to receive full, world-premiere productions on our mainstage, including this past season's *Kill Local*. Patrons have the opportunity to take part in the birth of these new works while giving playwrights invaluable support and feedback in the early stages of their piece's development," said **Playhouse Artistic Director Christopher Ashley**.

The DNA Series has been a launching pad for numerous shows that have gone on to productions in future Playhouse subscription seasons, including *Chasing the Song*, by Joe DiPietro (book and lyrics) and David Bryan (music and lyrics), creators of the Tony Award-winning musical *Memphis* and the Playhouse's upcoming musical *Diana*; Pulitzer Prize winner Ayad Akhtar's *The Who & The What*, Michael Benjamin Washington's *Blueprints to Freedom*; UCSD MFA graduate Jeff Augustin's *The Last Tiger in Haiti*; *Miss You Like Hell*, by Pulitzer Prize winner Quiara Alegria Hudes (book and lyrics) and Erin McKeown (music and lyrics); and *Kill Local*, by UCSD MFA graduate Mat Smart.

The DNA New Work Series is one of many play development initiatives at the Playhouse, including the Page To Stage Play Development Program, as well as artist residencies and commissions. All projects in the DNA New Work Series take place with no scenic, costume or staging elements, and actors will have scripts in hand. The various creative teams will be available for interviews for feature coverage; however, in order to preserve the developmental nature of the program, **DNA Series presentations are not open to review**.

-- more --



2018 DNA Projects

Weatherman

Lyrics by David Clement
Music by David Clement with Rob Bailey
Book by Kate Moira Ryan and Doug Wright
Directed by Christopher Ashley
Thursday, March 22 at 7:30pm

Diana went to Bryn Mawr and grew up with all the trappings of a privileged life. But in 1968, war is raging and sides must be taken. Seduced by a charismatic revolutionary, Diana gets sucked into the life and ideology of the Weathermen, her commitment growing even as peaceful protests give way to days of rage and deadly violence. Inspired by the true story of the Weather Underground and featuring a dynamic original score, *Weatherman* re-examines a moment of radical political extremism that feels unmistakably and urgently contemporary.

3 Farids

By Ramiz Monsef
Directed by Pirronne Yousefzadeh
Friday, March 23 at 7:30pm

Three actors — Farid, Fareed and Faread — audition for the role of a Middle Eastern terrorist (named “Farid”) in a schlocky action movie. But even before the cameras start rolling, the three Farids find themselves plunged into a dystopian Hollywood machine that threatens to subsume their identities entirely. Ramiz Monsef’s new play is a wildly theatrical and savagely satirical comedy about the roles we’re forced to play, and the twisted way we create — and consume — popular culture in America.

The Luckiest

By Melissa Ross
Directed by Jaime Castañeda
Saturday, March 24 at 7:30pm

Peter is Lissette's chosen family. Cheryl is Lissette's mom. They both have very strong and conflicting opinions about how she should get her life together. But when an out-of-nowhere shock of tragic news explodes her world into pieces, Lissette is forced to figure out how to listen to both and neither as she fights for agency over her future. Funny, moving and keenly-observed, *The Luckiest* interrogates our need for ownership over the way we want to live – and die.

The Coast Starlight

By Keith Bunin – La Jolla Playhouse Commission
Directed by Christopher Ashley
Sunday, March 25 at 2:00pm

California is a state of new beginnings. It’s also the place where people running from something finally run out of land. For six strangers aboard *The Coast Starlight* from Los Angeles to Seattle, California is 1,000 miles of train tracks on which they’ll be forced to reckon with the choices they’ve made and try to chart a possible path forward. Keith Bunin’s new commission for La Jolla Playhouse is a smart, comic and compassionate play about our capacity for invention (and re-invention) when life goes off the rails.



Artist Biographies

Christopher Ashley (director, *Weatherman* and *The Coast Starlight*) has served as La Jolla Playhouse's Artistic Director since October, 2007. During his tenure, he has helmed the Playhouse's productions of *Hollywood*, *The Darrell Hammond Project*, *Chasing the Song*, *His Girl Friday*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *A Dram of Drummhicit*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Restoration* and the musicals *Escape to Margaritaville*, *Xanadu*, *Memphis*, which won four 2010 Tony Awards including Best Musical, and *Come From Away*, for which he won the 2017 Tony Award for Best Director of a Musical. He also spearheaded the Playhouse's Without Walls (WOW) series, the DNA New Work Series and the Resident Theatre program. Prior to joining the Playhouse, he directed the Broadway productions of *Xanadu* (Drama Desk nomination), *All Shook Up* and *The Rocky Horror Show* (Tony, Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Award nominations), as well as the Kennedy Center Sondheim Celebration productions of *Sweeney Todd* and *Merrily We Roll Along*. Other New York credits include: *Blown Sideways Through Life*, *Jeffrey* (Lucille Lortel and Obie Awards), *The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told*, *Valhalla*, *Regrets Only*, *Wonder of the World*, *Communicating Doors*, *Bunny Bunny*, *The Night Hank Williams Died* and *Fires in the Mirror* (Lucille Lortel Award), among others. Mr. Ashley also directed the feature films *Jeffrey* and *Lucky Stiff*, as well as the American Playhouse production of *Blown Sideways Through Life* for PBS. Mr. Ashley is the recipient of the Princess Grace Award, the Drama League Director Fellowship and an NEA/TCG Director Fellowship.

Rob Bailey (music, *Weatherman*) is a Manhattan-based guitarist, producer and composer, and founding member of the New York City rock bands Mule Kick and SlickTires with Guns N' Roses drummer Frank Ferrer. Career highlights include studio, TV and live concert work with pop artists Enrique Iglesias, Mandy Moore and Delta Goodrem (*The Voice*, Australia), Broadway and off-Broadway appearances (guitar work on Billy Joel's *Movin' Out* and David Bowie's *Lazarus*), and work on hundreds of commercials and various soundtracks including campaigns for CK, Kenneth Cole and John Varvatos. A longtime collaborator with David Clement, Rob's guitar and production work can be found on the albums "Your Free Gift," "Fi" and "pre-fi," and he is thrilled to continue their collaboration here at the DNA Series with *Weatherman*.

Keith Bunin (playwright, *The Coast Starlight*) is very happy to return to La Jolla Playhouse, where his play *Sam Bendrix at the Bon Soir* was produced in 2012. His plays *The Busy World Is Hushed*, *The Credeaux Canvas* and *The World Over* were all originally produced Off Broadway at Playwrights Horizons. Other plays include *The Unbuilt City* (New York Stage & Film), *10 Million Miles* (Atlantic Theater Company) and *The Principality of Sorrows* (Pure Orange Productions). He wrote the screenplay for the film *Horns* and was a writer for the HBO TV series *In Treatment*.

Jaime Castañeda (director, *The Luckiest*) joined the Playhouse in 2014 as Associate Artistic Director, where he has directed Rachel Bonds' *At the Old Place* Mike Lew's *Tiger Style!* and Rajiv Joseph's *Guards at the Taj*. Other productions include: *The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity* by Kristoffer Diaz (Dallas Theater Center), *Chimichangas and Zoloff* by Fernanda Coppel (Atlantic Theater Company), *How We Got On* by Idris Goodwin (Cleveland Playhouse), *The Royale* by Marco Ramirez (American Theater Company), *Welcome to Arroyo's* by Kristoffer Diaz (The Old Globe) and *Red Light Winter* by Adam Rapp (Perseverance Theatre). He has also developed new plays with the O'Neill, Rattlestick Theater, Portland Center Stage, Denver Center Theater, The Kennedy Center and the Atlantic Theater Company, where he spent five seasons as Artistic Associate. He is a Drama League fellow and has received the Princess Grace Award and the TCG New Generations Grant. M.F.A. in Directing from The University of Texas at Austin.



NYC-based singer/songwriter **David Clement**'s (music and lyrics, *Weatherman*) self-produced, first album was featured as an Editor's Pick in *Billboard* and got him signed to Polygram records. The subsequent rocky ride through the major labels, from Polygram to Universal, included memorable collaborations with many of NYC's seminal post-punk rockers; though never officially released, most of those songs found their way to TV soundtracks, from the CW all the way back to the WB. He's written for some of his favorite vocalists including Marylouise Burke, Martha Plimpton, and most recently Adam Enright for his show *Good Bitch Goes Down*, and he's always happy to contribute music to the indie of indie film projects (recents include *Purple State* and *Kick Me I'm Christian*). For the last 15 years, he's been performing with guitarist Rob Bailey and cellist Erin Hall in clubs and theaters around the U.S.; a couple of European solo tours led to the release of an album of remixes of his song *Follow Me Home* by a Berlin-based EDM label, Amsel.

Ramiz Monsef (playwright, *3 Farids*) is a writer and performer. His short play *The Many Deaths of Nathan Stubblefield* was featured in the Humana Festival. He is the co-author of the musical *The Unfortunates*, which was produced at The Oregon Shakespeare Festival and American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco. His newest full length play, *3 Farids*, was part of The Bushwick Starr Reading Series and TheatreWorks' 2017 New Work Festival in Palo Alto. Monsef is an actor as well, and has appeared at theatres across the country, including Actors Theatre of Louisville, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Yale Repertory Theatre, American Conservatory Theater, Seattle Repertory Theatre, and seven seasons at The Oregon Shakespeare Festival, as well as Geffen Playhouse, The Kirk Douglas Theatre, Second Stage, Culture Project, and New York Theatre Workshop. He has appeared on television in *Law & Order*, *Training Day*, and *The Watchlist* on Comedy Central.

Melissa Ross's (playwright, *The Luckiest*) plays include *Thinner Than Water*, *A Life Extra Ordinary*, *Nice Girl*, *An Entomologist's Love Story* and *Of Good Stock*. *Thinner Than Water* and *Nice Girl* were both originally produced by LAByrinth Theater Company. *Thinner Than Water* is included in the anthology "New Playwrights: Best Plays of 2011" by Smith and Kraus. *Nice Girl* was a finalist for the Francesca Primus Prize and is in Applause's "Best Plays of 2015." *Of Good Stock* received its world premiere at South Coast Repertory as a part of the Pacific Playwrights Festival, followed by a subsequent production at Manhattan Theater Club. *A Life Extra Ordinary* premiered with The Gift Theatre in the fall of 2016. *An Entomologist's Love Story* is an Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Commission and an Edgerton New Play Award recipient, and will premiere at The San Francisco Playhouse in Spring, 2018. Her short play *Jack* was a part of Summer Shorts 2017 and will be published by Dramatists Play Service. Melissa's plays have been developed with The Amoralists, The Cherry Lane Theater, Colt Coeur, Dorset Theater Festival, The Gift Theatre, Iama Theatre Company, The Juilliard School, Labyrinth Theater Company, LCT3, Manhattan Theater Club, Montana Rep, New York Stage and Film, The New Group, South Coast Repertory, Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, and the TheatreWorks Palo Alto New Works Festival. She is twice commissioned by both South Coast Repertory and Manhattan Theater Club. Melissa is a graduate of Bennington College and the Lila Acheson Wallace Playwriting Program at The Juilliard School, a two-time winner of the Le Comte de Nouy Prize, and a proud member of LAByrinth Theater Company.



Kate Moira Ryan's (book, *Weatherman*) adaptations include *The Beebo Brinker Chronicles*, written with Linda S. Chapman and based on Ann Bannon's Lesbian Pulp novels from the 1950s, produced off-Broadway by Lily Tomlin and Jane Wagner (GLAAD Award; published by DPS) and *Cavedweller*, based on the bestselling novel by Dorothy Allison and directed by Michael Greif (New York Theatre Workshop). Other work includes *25 Questions for a Jewish Mother*, written with and for Judy Gold, which ran for a year and a half Off Broadway and had a three year national tour (GLAAD Award; a book based on the play was published by Hyperion and nominated for the Quill Award). *The Judy Show*, also written with and for Judy Gold, was produced at Theater J, Williamstown, DR2 (Union Square), and the Geffen Playhouse. Kate has received numerous fellowships, including Alfred P. Sloan, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Sundance Institute, Trust for Mutual Understanding (Russia), MacDowell, Yaddo, and the Center for International Theatre Development. An alumna of New Dramatists, she received her M.F.A. in Playwriting from Columbia University and started her career with the Young Playwright's Festival.

Doug Wright (book, *Weatherman*) was most recently represented on Broadway by the musical *War Paint*, starring Patti LuPone and Christine Ebersole, which played at the Nederlander Theater. His earlier plays include *I Am My Own Wife* (Tony Award, Pulitzer Prize), *Posterity* and *Quills* (Obie Award), as well as books for the musicals *Grey Gardens* (Tony nomination), *The Little Mermaid* and *Hands on a Hardbody*. (Drama Desk nomination). He adapted and directed August Strindberg's *Creditors* for La Jolla Playhouse in 2009. Films include the screen adaptation of *Quills* (Paul Selvin Award, WGA) and production rewrites for directors Rob Marshall, Steven Spielberg and others. Acting credits include two appearances on *Law and Order: Criminal Intent*, and the films *Little Manhattan* and *Two Lovers*. He is president of The Dramatists Guild and on the Board of New York Theater Workshop. He has received grants from United States Artists and the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and is a graduate of Yale University (B.A.) and New York University (M.F.A.). He has been a frequent guest at Yaddo and the MacDowell Art Colonies, and has taught or guest lectured at the Yale Drama School, Princeton University, Juilliard and NYU. He lives in New York with his husband, singer-songwriter David Clement, and cats Glynis and Murray.

Pirronne Yousefzadeh (director, *3 Farids*) is a Brooklyn-based director, writer and educator. She has directed and developed new work at The Public/Joe's Pub, New York Theatre Workshop, Atlantic Theater Company, Ars Nova, Soho Rep, New Georges, Partial Comfort Productions, Noor Theatre, Ma-Yi Theater Company, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Actors Theatre of Louisville, La Jolla Playhouse, Huntington Theatre Company, Cleveland Playhouse, Geva Theatre Center, InterAct Theatre Company, and Hangar Theatre, among others. She is a Usual Suspect at NYTW, New Georges Affiliated Artist, member of Ensemble Studio Theatre, Resident Director at Colt Coeur, a recipient of SDC's Denham Fellowship and Williamstown's Sagal Fellowship, and an alumna of the 2050 Fellowship at NYTW, Drama League Directors Project, Lincoln Center Directors Lab and Soho Rep Writer/Director Lab. She currently serves on the NYU faculty, and is a frequent guest director there, as well as Columbia, Juilliard, Fordham and Yale School of Drama. Pirronne is a founding member of Maia Directors, a consulting group for artists and organizations engaging with Middle Eastern stories. M.F.A., Columbia University. Member, SDC. www.pirronne.com; www.maiadirectors.com

La Jolla Playhouse is a place where artists and audiences come together to create what's new and next in the American theatre, from Tony Award-winning productions, to imaginative programs for young audiences, to interactive experiences outside our theatre walls. Currently led by 2017 Tony Award-winning Artistic Director Christopher Ashley and Managing Director Michael S. Rosenberg, the Playhouse was founded in 1947 by Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire and Mel Ferrer. Playhouse artists and audiences have taken part in the development of new plays and musicals, including mounting 95 world premieres, commissioning 50 new works, and sending 30



productions to Broadway – with two more set to open Spring 2018 – garnering a total of 38 Tony Awards, including the 1993 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre. LaJollaPlayhouse.org.