

## LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCES FIVE NEW DIGITAL WITHOUT WALLS (WOW) PROJECTS

**NEW WORKS TO FEATURE WORLD-PREMIERE PLAYHOUSE COMMISSIONS BY LOCAL ARTISTS:  
DANCE/POETRY FILM BY ANJANETTE MARAYA-RAMEY AND KHALIL BLEUX;  
SPOKEN WORD PIECE BY ALYCE SMITH-COOPER AND SHAMMY DEE;  
AND RADIO HORROR SERIES FROM SO SAY WE ALL**

**PLAYHOUSE WILL ALSO MOUNT INTERACTIVE WORKS BY ACCLAIMED  
NEW YORK-BASED COMPANIES 600 HIGHWAYMEN AND OYE GROUP**

La Jolla, CA – La Jolla Playhouse is pleased to announce five more projects for its [Digital Without Walls \(WOW\) series](#), including three world-premiere Playhouse commissions by local artists: *Towards Belonging*, a dance and spoken-word poetry film by **Anjanette Maraya-Ramey** of Maraya Performing Arts, with **Khalil Bleux**, produced in association with the Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation's Arts Park @ Chollas Creek; *Light Leaping: Spittin' Truth to Power for the People*, a spoken word piece set to music by poet and Playhouse Leadership Council (PLC) member **Alyce Smith-Cooper** and musician/DJ **Shammy Dee**; and *Listen With The Lights Off*, a collection of haunting radio horror plays, produced by **So Say We All** (2017 WOW Festival's *Incoming: Sex, Drugs, and Copenhagen*).

The Playhouse also announces two acclaimed productions by New York-based companies: *A Thousand Ways*, by **600 Highwaymen**, a three-part piece that brings audiences back together in touching moments of connection over time; and *Taxilandia*, by **Oye Group**, that explores the gentrification process of local neighborhoods.

"The appetite for our Digital WOW work keeps growing, and we're pleased to add five more extraordinary pieces to the roster. This new cohort of productions once again demonstrates how artists are harnessing new platforms while responding to current events with a deep passion, a hunger for connection, and a clarion call for social justice," noted **Christopher Ashley**, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse.

*Towards Belonging* is a powerful dance film with original spoken-word poetry and music. Choreographer Anjanette Maraya-Ramey and her company Maraya Performing Arts, in collaboration with local artist and activist Khalil Bleux, create a deeply moving piece that unapologetically acknowledges systemic racism, with an urgent call to act and create change. Filmed at the Arts Park @ Chollas Creek, home to Writerz Blok, this love letter to Southeastern San Diego shares the joys and challenges of the neighborhood through evocative narrative, graffiti art and movement, while shattering biases and celebrating the deep pride, culture and history of the region.

*Light Leaping: Spittin' Truth to Power for the People* is an intergenerational piece using images, music and storytelling styles reminiscent of the griot. Between fire and brimstone preaching, the intimate vulnerability of prayer, and the invitation to fellowship, renowned poet and PLC member Alyce Smith-Cooper and acclaimed DJ and musician Shammy Dee are reaching to penetrate the hearts of the people. This three-part spoken verse will encompass the juxtaposition of past/present, yin/yang, male/female with the dream of transformations hoped for and imagined. It is both a personal moment and a collective piece – a springing forward into a leap of light.

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***Listen With The Lights Off*** is a series of frightening, October-appropriate radio plays created in collaboration with San Diego-based literary and performing arts nonprofit organization [So Say We All](#). Intelligent, original and unsettling, this new take on the radio drama features stories from diverse writers who will have listeners on the edge of their seats. Twisted up in paranoia, magical realism, ghosts, monsters, sibling rivalry, and even earth death, *Listen With The Lights Off* takes patrons to wholly unexpected worlds – sometimes funny, sometimes disturbing, but always memorable, and eerily plausible. These fictional short plays, adapted from So Say We All's literary horror anthologies *Black Candies*, will be brought to audio reality to make sure Halloween thrives, even during quarantine.

***A Thousand Ways*** is a three-part work of theater from 600 Highwaymen that brings audiences back together in poetic and revelatory ways. In Act I, over a simple phone call, two strangers take an hour-long journey together, where they are transported to a shared fiction they create, guided by a set of automated directives, before returning to their own daily existences. In Act II, taking place several months later, two audience members encounter one another across a table in a socially-distanced format. With just a stack of cards and a few objects, what begins as a simple exercise of working together becomes an experience of profound connection with another person across a small distance. In Act III, when it is deemed safe, all the participants gather for the first time all together in one space for a collective, celebratory, communal event – with the knowledge that someone in that space is the person with whom they shared a very singular phone call and/or connected with across a table. This stirring reintroduction into a world where people bear witness to, and hold space for, one another both accentuates and transcends the collective isolation of our moment and asks how to rebuild our vocabulary for communing with strangers in all their complexity – something that had become endangered well before COVID-19.

***Taxilandia***, created and written by Oye Group's Modesto Flako Jimenez, is a site-specific play-within-a-tour of a city. The piece immerses its audience in the flavors, sounds, sights and dynamic history of a neighborhood confronting social stigmas and the realities of gentrification. Weaving a dramatic, performative 'tapestry' that interconnects generations, social classes, races and cultures, *Taxilandia* complicates our notion of what it means to be a native, an immigrant or a resident of a place, challenging us to answer: "What is my personal roadmap of home?" piece Originally developed in Jimenez's own neighborhood of Bushwick, Brooklyn, the piece was inspired and drawn from his nine years driving a taxicab and his documentation of conversations with passengers, residents, natives, and immigrants to the neighborhood. The Oye Group now works with companies all over the country to develop local versions of the piece specific to each city. The piece is devised in three phases, beginning with a series of virtual salons with local artists whose work intersects with gentrification. Phase two involves a creative collaboration with one of the salons, where Jimenez works with the Playhouse and the local artist to identify a tour route, conduct interviews, write a script and photograph portraits of community members. Once public gathering is allowed, phase three will include live presentations and an interactive gallery.

These projects join the previously-announced Digital WOW productions of ***Ancient***, by San Diego-based artists Mike Sears and Lisa Berger (2019 WOW Festival's *How High the Moon*); ***Binge***, by UK-based artist Brian Lobel (2013 WOW Festival's *Carpe Minuta Prima*), ***Portaleza***, by internationally-renowned immersive designer David Israel Reynoso (*Sleep No More*, WOW Festival productions of *Las Quinceañeras* and *Waking La Llorona*); ***Show Me A Good Time***, by the Berlin-based Gob Squad (2017 WOW Festival's *Super Night Shot*); ***The Society of Wonder***, by San Diego-based Animal Cracker Conspiracy (2015 WOW Festival's *Gnomesense*), ***The Totally Fake Latino News with Culture Clash***, by Culture Clash (*American Night*, *Zorro in Hell*); ***Walks of Life***, by the San Diego-based Blindspot Collective (2019 WOW Festival's *Hall Pass*); ***The Wizards of Oakwood Drive***, by New York-based artist Tom Salamon (*Accomplice: San Diego*, *The Grift at the Lafayette Hotel*); and ***You Are Here***, by Los Angeles-based artist Marike Splint (2017 WOW Festival's *Among Us*).

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Since its inception in 2011, **Without Walls (WOW)** has become one of San Diego's most popular and acclaimed performance programs. This signature Playhouse initiative is designed to break the barriers of traditional theatre, offering immersive, site-inspired and digital works that venture beyond the physical confines of the Playhouse facilities. Over the last decade, the Playhouse has commissioned and presented a series of immersive and site-based productions at locations throughout the San Diego community, including *Susurrus* (2011), *The Car Plays: San Diego* (2012), *Sam Bendrix at the Bon Soir* (2012), *Accomplice: San Diego* (2013), *El Henry* (2014), *The Grift at the Lafayette Hotel* (2015), *The Bitter Game* (2016), *What Happens Next* (2018), and four biennial WOW Festivals in 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2019.

**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. Founded in 1947 by Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire and Mel Ferrer, the Playhouse is currently led by Tony Award winner Christopher Ashley, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse, and Managing Director Debby Buchholz. The Playhouse is internationally renowned for the development of new plays and musicals, including mounting 105 world premieres, commissioning 52 new works, and sending 33 productions to Broadway – including the hit musical *Come From Away* – garnering a total of 38 Tony Awards, as well as the 1993 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre.

#### About the Artists

**600 Highwaymen** (Abigail Browde and Michael Silverstone) are a theatermaking duo who are aiming at a radical approach to making live art by creating intimacy amongst strangers and illuminating the inherent poignancy of people coming together. Their work, which they've been making since 2009, exists at the intersection of theater, dance, contemporary performance, and civic encounter.

**Khalil Bleux** is an artist, activist and educator from Southeast San Diego. He is the founder of The SOULcial Workers and producing artistic director for Agency 515; The Social Education Theatre, a local non-profit that focuses on mental health, social education and emotional development through the arts. Khalil is a sought after playwright, poet and performer. He has been featured on stages across the country, on television, and in publications and has credits in theatre and independent film. He is passionate about using the stage as a platform for education and healing. His work serves to amplify the stories and experiences of marginalized bodies, and to raise community consciousness around trauma and relationships. He has had a 13-year career in the social services field serving transition aged youth across the county. Khalil is member of the San Diego Suicide Prevention Council and serves as a QPR trainer for the County of San Diego. He serves on the Create CA statewide initiative for arts education and is also a consultant and director with the San Diego Creative Youth Development Network. He is also an organizer with Black Lives Matter and the co-founder of The Sit In San Diego: A Black Healing space.

**Shammy Dee** is known as the "secret weapon" to event planners and people who need a DJ that will bring the house down. He keeps dance floors filled and brings positive energy to every event he rocks. Primarily known as a DJ, he's played for some of the world's top brands such as Louis Vuitton, Jimmy Choo, Dior, Adidas, and Burberry, to name a few, as well as recognized celebrities such as Mary J. Blige, the Kardashians, and Michael Buble. On top of touring the nation multiple times as the tour DJ for internet sensation Destorm Power, Shammy has also shared the stage with Grammy Award-winning artists like Kendrick Lamar and Diplo. He is also an accomplished artist. His original music has created a buzz, charting three #1 singles off his debut album, *Transcribed Thoughts*, on national college charts and he's constantly working on new projects. You may have seen his face on television on the popular "Bad Game" Gamefly commercial or on television shows such as *How I Met Your Mother*. His background in music and acting has brought opportunities as a composer and music director for theatrical productions such as La Jolla Playhouse's *Tiger Style!*, South Coast Rep's *Poor Yella Rednecks*, ACT's *Vietgone* Cleveland Play House's *How We Got On* and The Old Globe's *Welcome To Arroyo's*.

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Founded in 1995, the **Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation** is focused on building communities and lifting lives. As a creative catalyst and incubator, the Jacobs Center works with the community to revitalize Southeastern San Diego's Diamond Neighborhoods. This means transforming nearly 60 acres into sustainable developments that provide residents with greater access to resources and amenities that improve their quality of life. Additionally, the Jacobs Center works with community organizations and partners to increase residents' economic opportunities, leadership skills and educational success.

**Anjanette Maraya-Ramey** is a choreographer, activist, educator, arts advocate, community organizer, and creative entrepreneur. Born and raised in San Diego, she is a proud, first-generation Filipina-American and Founder of [Maraya Performing Arts](#) (MPA). MPA is a new, socially-engaged performing arts collective based in South Bay San Diego. MPA is dedicated to celebrating the stories of diverse artists and educating allies of all backgrounds about communities of color. MPA's mission is to create and foster a welcoming safe space for creative expression and to uplift marginalized voices through the performing arts. An experienced arts administrator and former arts nonprofit Executive Director, Maraya-Ramey has been involved in the San Diego regional arts community for the past 20 years. Her choreography has been presented at TEDx San Diego, La Jolla Playhouse, Grossmont College and Diversionary Theater. She holds a BFA in Dance Performance and Choreography from CalArts and a Master's degree in Nonprofit Leadership and Management from the University of San Diego. She is also a Certified Nonprofit Trainer and facilitates professional development training workshops regionally and nationally to a variety of arts nonprofits, creative entrepreneurs, and small businesses that are led by and/or serve Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) and high-need populations.

**Oye Group** is a Brooklyn based Production Company that serves as an incubator for artists both native and immigrant to New York City. They present an eclectic mix of theater, dance, poetry, music, video installations and film, through festivals and productions. They curate work that sparks a dialogue over political and social issues critical to our community's growth. They work with emerging artists to create, play, and grow in an environment that challenges and supports them. They also provide quality arts education programming that gives their Brooklyn community the tools to generate forward-thinking art.

**Alyce Smith-Cooper** is a veteran storyteller and a poet at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C. and at universities, schools and libraries across the United States and the Grand Bahamas. Her acting credits include performances at The Old Globe, The Marquis, Public Theater, Common Ground Theater, The Lyceum Theatre and, most recently, La Jolla Playhouse, The World Beat Center, and the Veterans Museum in Balboa Park, where she serves as the Poet Laureate. She is also co-author of the book *The Gumbo Pot Poems*.

So Say We All is a 501c3 non-profit literary and performing arts organization whose mission is to help people tell their stories, and tell them better, through creating performance opportunities, educational offerings, and accessible media forums. To learn more, please visit [www.sosayweallonline.com](http://www.sosayweallonline.com).

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La Jolla Playhouse Digital Without Walls (WOW) Projects

***A Thousand Ways***

By 600 Highwaymen

Dates TBD

Beginning with a sculpted, structured phone call between two strangers and continuing with one-on-one in-person encounters across a panel of glass, *A Thousand Ways* eventually culminates, when it's deemed safe, in a group gathering. This stirring reintroduction into a world where people bear witness to, and hold space for, one another both accentuates and transcends the collective isolation of our moment and asks how to rebuild our vocabulary for communing with strangers in all their complexity—something that had become endangered well before COVID-19.

***Ancient***

By Mike Sears and Lisa Berger

La Jolla Playhouse Commission

Launched on May 26

This Playhouse-commissioned video installation explores the relationship between repetition and meditation, the routine and the ancient. With an original score composed by Shawn Rohlf for cello, piano and guitar, text by Rainer Maria Rilke, and a company of nine actors, *Ancient* invites the audience to observe an unfolding of day-to-day tasks that have been in play for centuries. An opportunity to experience nothing happening -- and everything happening. A reminder that we have been here before and that somehow, we go on.

***BINGE***

By Brian Lobel & Friends

June 30 – July 12

This one-on-one performance piece takes the solitary experience of binge-watching television shows and transforms it into an opportunity to find comfort in the lives of fictional characters. Tailor-made to fit the life of each individual audience member, the performance offers a live Zoom session with a personal artist companion, resulting in the prescription of a classic television episode to provide a little bit of solace at home. Leave your own drama behind, and insert yourself into a world where whatever the drama, it'll probably be solved in under 30 minutes.

***Light Leaping: Spittin' Truth to Power for the People***

By Alyce Smith-Cooper and Shammy Dee

La Jolla Playhouse Commission

Dates TBD

*Light Leaping: Spittin' Truth to Power for the People* is an intergenerational piece using images, music and storytelling styles reminiscent of the griot. Between fire and brimstone preaching, the intimate vulnerability of prayer, and the invitation to fellowship, renowned San Diego poet and PLC member Alyce Smith-Cooper and acclaimed DJ and musician Shammy Dee are reaching to penetrate the hearts of the people. This three-part spoken verse will encompass the juxtaposition of past/present, yin/yang, male/female with the dream of transformations hoped for and imagined. It is both a personal moment and a collective piece – a springing forward into a leap of light.

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### ***Listen With The Lights Off***

Produced by So Say We All

La Jolla Playhouse Commission

October, 2020

This frightening series of October-appropriate radio plays has been created in collaboration with the San Diego-based literary and performing arts nonprofit organization [So Say We All](#). Intelligent, original and unsettling, this new take on the radio drama features stories from diverse writers who will have listeners on the edge of their seats. Twisted up in paranoia, magical realism, ghosts, monsters, sibling rivalry, and even earth death, *Listen With The Lights Off* takes patrons to wholly unexpected worlds – sometimes funny, sometimes disturbing, but always memorable, and eerily plausible. These fictional short plays, adapted from So Say We All's literary horror anthologies *Black Candies*, will be brought to audio reality to make sure Halloween thrives, even during quarantine.

### ***Portaleza***

By David Israel Reynoso/Optika Moderna

La Jolla Playhouse Commission

September 8 – October 31

Sponsor: Dowling and Yahnke

Much like the notion of sending a message in a bottle, *Portaleza* (derived from the words "portal" and "fortaleza," meaning strength/fortress) is a one-of-a-kind digital experience by David Israel Reynoso of Optika Moderna (WOW Festival productions of *Las Quinceañeras*, *Waking La Llorona*) that explores ideas of connection through desperate means of correspondence. After booking a visit with Optika Moderna's strange opticians, patrons will be mailed a mysterious package, which is to remain sealed until their appointed time. When the moment arrives, guests will discover that the humble contents of this parcel hold the key to unlocking a visual reality beyond their realm of imagination.

### ***Show Me A Good Time***

By Gob Squad

World premiere co-produced and co-commissioned with HAU Hebbel am Ufer (Berlin)

June 20, 2020; Free

*Show Me A Good Time* is a 12-hour, live-streamed international event that features nine performers streaming in all over Berlin – from inside an empty theatre, to private homes, to out on the city's streets– all combining into one live video. The show is set during the summer solstice at a moment when the pause button has been pressed on society, and everyone is stuck in a perpetual living selfie, staring at themselves on a filtered screen. Gob Squad artists reveal an alien world of habits, signs and symbols that once seemed to make sense but now only evokes a time already passed. Patrons can tune in for the full twelve hours or just check in periodically as Gob Squad marks each hour of the summer solstice in their signature improvisational style that blurs the boundaries of art, theatre and real life.

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### ***The Society of Wonder***

By Animal Cracker Conspiracy

La Jolla Playhouse Commission

Six Weekly Episodes – September/October

A group of visionaries once called The Society of Wonder discovered that every backyard contains a secret portal to an underground kingdom of inspiration and hope. But that was long ago, before the monolithic Xebos Corporation brought our natural world to the brink of collapse. When five seemingly unrelated characters begin to receive mysterious signs from an enigmatic Cyborg, it's up to them to decipher the clues before all is lost. Will the Society rise again? Award-winning San Diego-based puppetry company Animal Cracker Conspiracy presents a whimsical series of videos that will transport you to a unique world that looks uncannily like our own.

### ***Taxilandia***

By Oye Group

November, 2020

Created and written by Oye Group's Modesto 'Flako' Jimenez, *Taxilandia* is a site-specific play-within-a-tour of a city. The piece immerses its audience in the flavors, sounds, sights and dynamic history of a neighborhood confronting social stigmas and the realities of gentrification. Weaving a performative tapestry that interconnects generations, social classes, races and cultures, *Taxilandia* complicates our notion of what it means to be a native, an immigrant or a resident of a place, challenging us to answer: "What is my personal roadmap of home?" The piece was inspired and drawn from Jimenez's nine years driving a taxicab and his documentation of conversations with passengers, residents, natives, and immigrants to the neighborhood. Originally developed in his own neighborhood of Bushwick, Brooklyn, the piece is now being created with Oye Group at companies all over the country to develop local versions of the piece tailored to each city.

### ***The Totally Fake Latino News with Culture Clash***

By Culture Clash

La Jolla Playhouse Commission

Six Episodes: June – September

The iconic Culture Clash offers 10-minute doses of levity, poetics and payasadas (clowning) from their homes and streets of SoCal and beyond, courtesy of the Chicano/Latinx performance trio, Richard Montoya, Ric Salinas and Herbert Siguenza. Watch them chronicle the isolation, joys and gut-wrenching response to protests on the nation's streets against police brutality, as they stand in fierce support for Black Lives Matter.

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### ***Towards Belonging***

By Anjanette Maraya-Ramey/Maraya Performing Arts with Khalil Bleux

Produced in association with the Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation's Arts Park @ Chollas Creek

La Jolla Playhouse Commission

November, 2020

*Towards Belonging* is a powerful dance film with original spoken-word poetry and music. Choreographer Anjanette Maraya-Ramey and her company Maraya Performing Arts, in collaboration with local artist and activist Khalil Bleux, create a deeply moving piece that unapologetically acknowledges systemic racism, with an urgent call to act and create change. Filmed at the Arts Park @ Chollas Creek, home to Writerz Blok, this love letter to Southeastern San Diego shares the joys and challenges of the neighborhood through evocative narrative, graffiti art and movement, while shattering biases and celebrating the deep pride, culture and history of the region.

### ***Walks of Life***

By Blindspot Collective

La Jolla Playhouse Commission

Four Episodes: May – September

*Walks of Life* is an original, Playhouse-commissioned work of auditory theatre featuring short scenes by playwrights and composers from across the country. In the midst of a pandemic that fractures and isolates our communities, this aural experience offers the opportunity to safely and imaginatively reconnect with each other by bearing witness to life's intimate moments captured entirely in sound. Participants experience the piece while walking independently through their own neighborhoods, and over the course of three 30-minute parts, they are introduced to characters and stories that might be unfolding in the homes around them.

### ***The Wizards of Oakwood Drive***

By Tom Salamon

La Jolla Playhouse Commission

July 16 – September 27

This live, Zoom-connected performance for 10 kids at a time tells the story of two sibling wizards in an all-out, winner-take-all magic spell contest. With a little help from parents to set the stage, the wizards take participants on a treasure hunt around your own home, finding items in hidden locations in a one-of-a-kind interactive experience sure to delight your kids.

### ***You Are Here: A Homebound Travelogue***

By Marike Splint

Media Design by Hana S. Kim; Sound & Music by Jonathan Snipes

La Jolla Playhouse Commission

Dates TBD

*You Are Here: A Homebound Travelogue* takes audiences on a road trip around the world in Google Earth, offering a visual experience that leads audiences down the forgotten roads of our personal geographies, the back alleys of our memory, and the highways to places we long to be. Participants view the piece in a video format, created from a series of live captures led by Splint.

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