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**Press Contact:**

Kevin Kopjak, Prismatic Communications

[kevin@prismaticcommunications.com](mailto:kevin@prismaticcommunications.com)

## **BERKELEY REPERTORY THEATRE'S THE GROUND FLOOR CELEBRATES ITS 10TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Nationally recognized research and development laboratory for theatre to incubate 20  
innovative theatrical projects from over 80 local and national artists**

**Since its inception, The Ground Floor has been instrumental in the creation of dozens of new  
works for the American theatre, including *Hadestown* by Anaïs Mitchell, *Is This a Room* by  
Tina Satter, *Cambodian Rock Band* by Lauren Yee (coming to Berkeley Rep in February 2023),  
and *the ripple, the wave that carried me home* by Christina Anderson  
(now playing at Berkeley Rep)**

**OCTOBER 18–NOVEMBER 13, 2022**

BERKELEY, CA (October 4, 2022)—Today, Berkeley Repertory Theatre's Artistic Director **Johanna Pfaelzer** and Director of the Ground Floor **Madeleine Oldham** announced the Residency Lab participants and the return to full capacity of the Residency Lab portion of **The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep's Center for the Creation and Development of New Work**. Celebrating its 10th anniversary, this nationally recognized program has become a much-anticipated laboratory for collaboration and creation. This year, over 80 local and national artists representing 20 projects will unite at Berkeley Rep's Harrison Street campus for an intensive four-week period to exchange ideas, incubate new theatrical work, and build artistic community. Normally held in the summer, this year's Residency Lab will take place **October 18–November 13, 2022**.

"After a pandemic-induced hiatus, it is particularly joyful to celebrate the return of The Ground Floor at full capacity," said **Pfaelzer**. "The broad range of artists who will participate, the variety of projects they're working on, and the diverse processes they will employ during their time here are indicative of the artist-centered nimbleness that is a hallmark of The Ground Floor. I am deeply grateful to Madeleine for her vision in leading The Ground Floor over the last 10 years, and for the foundation she has created for Berkeley Rep's continued support of new work and new voices for the American theatre. It feels so appropriate to get to share the slate for the coming Residency Lab while Christina Anderson's exquisite

*the ripple, the wave that carried me home*, commissioned by Berkeley Rep and developed in prior Labs, is currently having its world premiere production in our Peet's Theatre!"

"The Ground Floor has given Berkeley Rep the opportunity to expand and enhance the way the institution creates new work," adds **Oldham**. "It is bittersweet that the 10th anniversary of The Ground Floor is also my final year at the helm. I am beyond proud of the evolution of the program over the past 10 years, overjoyed by what it has contributed to the field and culture, and am confident that the future holds so much more where that came from!"

The Residency Lab brings artists to Berkeley to work on projects in one- to four-week residencies. Artists have been selected based on a combination of existing relationships with Berkeley Rep and an application process. Interaction with other artists, staff, board and, when appropriate, the public are highly encouraged. There is no final presentation required at the end of the lab. If a project is in a stage where a reading or an audience would be useful, then that will be arranged. But there is no expectation of any kind of public showing. The purpose is to identify where the project is in its development path, and to move it to the next stage, whatever that stage may be.

**Artists and projects selected for the 10th anniversary of The Ground Floor's Residency Lab include:**

- **Monica Bill Barnes and Robbie Saenz de Viteri — *Many Happy Returns***

A physical version of a memory play, combining stories and dances that celebrate the disappointment inherent in returning, year after year. From the start, there's little distinction between audience and performer as both navigate who is ultimately leading the show. Now that we are all here, who is it exactly that we want to be? Audience members will hear stories, set to the sounds of Perry Como, Bach's *Partitas*, and Blondie. There are flowers, an attempted sing-along, and someone will give a toast. By the end, the stage is no longer empty, but ridden with mementos and dancing bodies, leaving the audience feeling fuller than when they arrived as if they, like the performers, finally found what they've been missing.

- **Julia Cho — *Untitled***

Julia will work on a new project.

- **Maya De La Rosa-Cohen — *Untitled***

Maya's project is a semi-autobiographical play about her family. It's a story about love, perseverance, and the legal battle to build a family.

- **Minita Gandhi — *Nerve***

Jyoti's facile hands that raised four children and six grandkids, creating every meal from scratch, now feel like they have knives running through them...all the time. At 75 years old she has discovered that she has a severe case of peripheral neuropathy. The nerve damage is so severe that even if the pain becomes manageable, she will not be able to care for anyone, let alone herself. After years of caretaking, Jyoti finds herself questioning what her legacy will be. Determined to leave something behind and everyone too busy to listen, she finds herself in the kitchen with her youngest daughter, Meera. At 42, Meera begrudgingly attempts to create and document her mother's home-cooked recipes. As their culinary journey commences, Meera begins to document not only the recipes, but the stories of her mother's life in India and her journey to the U.S. to raise the family. Between the heat of the tawa and the healing of the spices, these two begin to hear each other for what is probably the first time. *Nerve* is a two-hander that explores identity and legacy through a cross-generational and multicultural lens. What is it that we truly leave behind? And what is our value in

the world when we are no longer of service to people? It is meant to be an aromatic, and interactive production with the recipes being shared and cooked on stage, as well as served to the audience.

- **Franky D. Gonzalez — *Heart Stop, or The Obesity Play***

Catalyzed by two health crises that occurred close to each other, *Heart Stop, or The Obesity Play* is a solo show following the current, real-time journey of playwright Franky D. Gonzalez as he tries to find a way toward a healthier life while battling against depression, self-loathing, and his constant struggle with obesity.

- **Kathryn Grody — *Untitled***

Kathryn Grody's new work is a radical rumination on the optimism of staying alive. Deep into her third and final act of being a person, Grody investigates an eclectic, devastating, and hilarious potpourri of shocking discoveries as she finds herself at 75 becoming... not quite old, but elder. "Old starts at 95!" she declares. "I've just completed my late youth." Another boomer who didn't think the aging process would apply to them, Grody enters elderhood with equal parts empowerment and utter bewilderment. Marching onward through crumbling democracy, a boiling planet, and an increasingly dead roster of friends and colleagues, she is buoyed by discovering parts of herself she didn't know were in hiding. Perhaps these parts were waiting for *this* period to bloom. Mother, artist, wife, grandmother, friend, and accidental influencer, Kathryn Grody is astonished with her life, your life, and the stunning, deeply funny, heartbreaking impermanence of it all.

- **Dave Harris — *Untitled***

Could we lie if we didn't have language? Is language always a lie? My mother hasn't talked in a year, but she reads my press releases. My father was bad, but now he's real. This has nothing to do with the play. Are people hornier these days?

- **Beth Henley — *Down Stair's Neighbor***

A waning playwright, Old Low, is trying to write a play in seven days because her time is limited. The play is set in 1970s Tarson Mississippi. Sharon Bunn, a pornographic puppeteer, moves into the downstairs apartment below Wayne Purvis and Young Low. An escalating feud ensues, leading Wayne to kidnap Sharon with plans to murder her. Tilting between the struggle to write a play and the struggle within the play, a chaotic, horrific, and effervescent vision of creation is revealed.

- **Hanna Kime — *Dogs***

It is the Fourth of July sometime in the future, and history is about to be made. We are about to witness the annual Hot Dog Eating Contest. The five women invited to this stage have set out to conquer nature, destroy their own limits, and shatter our perception of what the human body is or isn't capable of. *Dogs* is a dizzying, anti-plot, high-intensity exploration of capitalism, competition, and consumption that poses the question: how long can we keep all this up?

- **Kitka Women's Vocal Ensemble — *BABA***

*BABA* is inspired by real and imagined stories of Balkan sworn virgins (women who become men after taking vows of chastity and celibacy). The tradition of sworn virgins is rooted in a centuries-old social code of law present in remote rural regions of Albania, Bosnia/Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Serbia. Born as women, life circumstances — including the loss of male relatives in blood feuds or a desire to escape an oppressive arranged marriage — led these female-born individuals to become men to gain the honors, rights, privileges, and freedoms of revered community patriarchs. An innovative, non-narrative take on Balkan epic story-singing traditions, *BABA* explores themes of gender, otherness,

choice, virginity, sexual identity, and the complexities of interpreting these Balkan gender-transformation stories through a contemporary, liberal, Western lens.

- **Ethan Lipton — *What You've Done Is Moral and Bad for Me and Our Friendship***  
*What You've Done Is Moral and Bad for Me and Our Friendship* is a play about a 9th-grader in a love triangle at debate camp.
- **Jess McLeod — *The Deciders***  
A theatrically insane joyride from the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 to the Immigration & Nationality Act of 1965, featuring the white guys who decide all the things and the Asian & AAPI lives and futures they shape(d).
- **Mara Nelson-Greenberg — *The Haunting at Camp Winona***  
*The Haunting at Camp Winona* is a dark comedy about a group of campers trying to get to the truth at the center of an old scary campfire story.
- **Lila Neugebauer and David Adjmi — *Untitled***  
Lila Neugebauer and David Adjmi will work on a new project.
- **Joél Pérez and Benjamin Velez — *Lost City Radio***  
After a failed political revolution, Norma is the on-air voice of hope to a country plagued by fascism and forced disappearances. When an orphan from the jungle, Victor, arrives at her radio station with a clue about her missing husband, they embark on a journey that weaves in and out of their memories to piece together two psyches torn apart by war.
- **Michael Phillis — *Eat Pray Patty***  
Everyone's favorite HR manager is back and zen-er than ever with a brand-new mandatory comic training. After years of getting fired and flipping tables, Patty From HR is ready to find inner peace at a silent yoga retreat. But when her sexual harassment prevention training reveals uncomfortable truths about the ashram, Patty has to choose between keeping the peace or blowing it all up in a spectacularly NSFW fashion. You'll never guess which one she chooses! Content warning: sexual harassment, white lady cultural appropriation, Comic Sans. Don't forget to sign in!
- **Nia Akilah Robinson — *Deadass (Pt.2)***  
A college prep classroom. Five Black youths navigating the hierarchy of pursuing higher education. And a rumor that a Black parent goes to great lengths to end.
- **Melisa Tien — *Untitled***  
Melisa Tien is assembling text for a theatre-work about long-haul truck drivers and the moment their vocations become obsolete as a result of driverless trucks taking over as the predominant means of cross-country shipping. The text is based in part on interviews with truck drivers she made during a cross-country drive from San Francisco, CA to Teaneck, NJ along Interstate 80.
- **Minghao Tu — *Factory 812***  
It's 1999, after the Cold War and before the "Rise of China." At the state-owned Factory 812 in Wuhan, a group of workers faces layoffs as China accelerates its economic reform — the ruthless

swing from the Soviet model to global capitalism. Soon the workers will learn that there is no such thing as a “job for life.”

- **Bassem Youssef – The Untitled Bassem Youssef Project**

When the Arab Spring came to Egypt, Bassem Youssef was a heart surgeon, a respected doctor living with his parents. He was ready to live a quiet, normal life. After seeing a bootleg copy of *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, he was inspired to start his own YouTube show satirizing hypocrisy in his country, including religious fundamentalism and the military dictatorship. His show became a hit in the Arab world, and he was offered a TV show, which was regularly watched by 40 million people a week. Hated by the Muslim Brotherhood and the military equally, it didn't matter who was in charge, he took aim at hypocrisy, turned friends and family against him, and was ultimately forced to escape Egypt with his family. Bassem was a regular nobody who transformed into one of the most influential somebodies in the world, who then was forced to leave it all behind. Now he turns the power of satire on himself, exposing the hypocrisy of his own faith, belief, and truth. It is about the personal cost of disappearance and how to rebuild yourself with the pieces that remain after you have ceased to exist. It's also about America, his home now, and the terrifying similarities to the country he lost.

**The Ground Floor productions that have been presented on the Berkeley Rep mainstage include:**

- ***Troublemaker, or The Freakin Kick-A Adventures of Bradley Boatright* by Dan LeFranc (2012/13 season)**
- ***The House that will not Stand* by Marcus Gardley (2013/14 season)**
- ***X'S and O'S (A Football Love Story)* by KJ Sanchez with Jenny Mercein (2014/15 season)**
- ***Notes From the Field: Doing Time In Education, The California Chapter* by Anna Deavere Smith (2014/15 season)**
- ***Aubergine* by Julia Cho (2015/16 season)**
- ***John Leguizamo: Latin History for Morons* by John Leguizamo (2015/16 season)**
- ***The Last Tiger in Haiti* by Jeff Augustin (2016/17 season)**
- ***Imaginary Comforts, or The Story of the Ghost of the Dead Rabbit* by Daniel Handler (2017/18 season)**
- ***Fairview* by Jackie Sibblies Drury (2018/19 season)**
- ***Becky Nurse of Salem* by Sarah Ruhl (2019/20 season)**
- ***the ripple, the wave that carried me home* by Christina Anderson (now playing, 2021/22 season)**
- ***Cambodian Rock Band* by Lauren Yee (2022/23 season)**

Projects developed at The Ground Floor that have gone on to notable productions elsewhere include ***Hadestown*** by Anaïs Mitchell, ***Flex*** by Candrice Jones, ***Ghost Quartet*** by Dave Malloy, ***Is This a Room*** by Tina Satter, ***Untitled F\*\*k M\*ss S\*\*gon Play*** by Kimber Lee, ***The (curious case of the) Watson Intelligence*** by Madeleine George, among many others.

The Ground Floor is supported by **Louise Gund** and **Frances Hellman & Warren Breslau**, with additional funding provided by the **National Endowment for the Arts**, the **Tournesol Project**, and **Bank of America**.

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## **ABOUT BERKELEY REP**

Berkeley Repertory Theatre has grown from a storefront stage to an international leader in innovative theatre. Known for its ambition, relevance, and excellence, as well as its adventurous audience, the nonprofit has provided a welcoming home for emerging and established artists since 1968. Over 5.5 million people have enjoyed nearly 500 shows at Berkeley Rep, which have gone on to win six Tony Awards, seven Obie Awards, nine Drama Desk Awards, one Grammy Award, one Pulitzer Prize, and many other honors. Berkeley Rep received the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in 1997. To formalize, enhance, and expand the processes by which Berkeley Rep makes theatre, The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep's Center for the Creation and Development of New Work was launched in 2012. The Berkeley Rep School of Theatre engages and educates some 20,000 people a year and helps build the audiences of tomorrow with its nationally recognized teen programs. Berkeley Rep's bustling facilities — which also include the 400-seat Peet's Theatre, the 600-seat Roda Theatre, and a spacious campus in West Berkeley — are helping revitalize a renowned city. Learn more at [berkeleyrep.org](http://berkeleyrep.org).

## **ABOUT THE GROUND FLOOR: BERKELEY REP'S CENTER FOR THE CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF NEW WORK**

The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep's Center for the Creation and Development of New Work seeks to enhance and expand the processes by which Berkeley Rep makes theatre. We strive to offer the most flexible environment possible for artists to come together and share ideas in person, to receive customized support on each individual project, and to work together across disciplines. We will maintain an ongoing conversation with our audience and community about the work we are creating, and we will champion the spirit of innovation so inherent to Berkeley and the Bay Area. Learn more at [berkeleyrep.org/the-ground-floor](http://berkeleyrep.org/the-ground-floor).

## **ARTIST BIOS (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)**

**David Adjmi** was called “virtuosic” by *The New York Times* and he was named one of the Top Ten in Culture by *The New Yorker*. He is the recipient of a Guggenheim, the Steinberg Playwright Award, and the Whiting Writers Award. His plays have been produced at theatres such as Lincoln Center, the RSC, the Royal Court Theatre, Steppenwolf, and Soho Rep — where he was the Mellon Foundation playwright-in-residence. His writing has been featured in the *New York Review of Books*, *The New York Times*, *BOMB*, *The Guardian*, and *American Theatre*, among others. His new play, *The Stumble*, was excerpted in *The Paris Review*. *Stereophonic* (with music by Will Butler from Arcade Fire) is scheduled to premiere on Broadway next season. David's memoir *Lot Six* is published by HarperCollins, and his two play collections, *Stunning and Other Plays* and *1789/1978: Marie Antoinette and 3C*, are published by TCG.

**Monica Bill Barnes** is a dancer and choreographer. Since MBB&CO's founding in 1997, her choreography has been seen in many places, such as New York City's Bowling Green public fountain, on stage at Carnegie Hall, throughout the galleries of The Metropolitan Museum of Art and in Greta Gerwig's film *Little Women*. The company has been presented in over 50 cities and internationally in venues ranging from The Kennedy Center to the Sydney Opera House in a collaboration with Ira Glass in *Three Acts, Two Dancers, One Radio Host*. Barnes began collaborating with Robbie Saenz de Viteri in 2013 at which point the company adopted the motto of “bringing dance where it doesn't belong.” Recent collaborations include a national tour of *The Running Show; Days Go By*, a site specific show in a mall; and two online works created during the pandemic: *Keep Moving* and *It's 3:07 Again*.

**Julia Cho's** plays include *Office Hour*, *Aubergine*, *The Language Archive*, *Durango*, *BFE*, *The Architecture*

of *Loss*, and *99 Histories*. Honors include the Windham-Campbell Literature Prize and the Susan Smith Blackburn Award. She has also written for *Halt and Catch Fire* (AMC), *Big Love* (HBO), and *Fringe* (Fox), and was the writer for Pixar's *Turning Red*.

**Maya De La Rosa-Cohen** was born in San Francisco to three loving and very gay parents. She is a writer and artist who received her BA from Columbia University and her MA from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) and the University of Birkbeck London (UBL). Her play *How to be Human* is a commentary on the unique closeness of the mother-daughter relationship, inspired by her own relationship with her two mothers. Her dramatic series *The Illest* explores the challenges of living as an artist in San Francisco. Her directorial debut, *Erased: Babi Yar, the SS, and Me*, exposes the inherited trauma of the Jewish American community. Through her work Maya strives to create social reflections of our immediate world that provoke empathy and social consciousness.

**Minita Gandhi** (she/they) is a Los Angeles-based multi-hyphenate who was born in Mumbai, India. They are a 2022 NYSAF Pfaelzer Award finalist, and currently working on an opera commission through Minnesota Opera Company's New Works cohort. Minita is the director/producer for a five-episode documentary series *History is Now*, and the director/writer of *Hindsight is 2020 or how Raisin Rainbows survived a pandemic* starring Tony Award nominee Cora Vanderbroek. Other directing credits include readings at Creede Repertory Theatre, CAATA, Stage Left Theater, and upcoming at ANPF. Their critically acclaimed solo show, *Muthaland*, was Jeff Recommended for best new work and solo-performance. Gandhi's play *Daal and Duty* and *the sun and all its sighs* have been part of the Ripped Festival at American Blues Theater in 2022 and 2020. Their work has been featured by NBC News and *The Atlantic*. They are the Founder of IGNITE, a mentorship program for BIPOC women and non-binary theatre artists that connects emerging artists to national theatre leaders. Representation TV/Film Literary and Acting: Maritza Cabrera at Zero Gravity Management. Theatrical Acting Agent: Zach Gray at Gray Talent Group. [minitagandhi.com](http://minitagandhi.com)

**Franky D. Gonzalez** is a Latino playwright based in Dallas. Appearances include The Lark, the Sundance Institute, Ojai Playwrights Conference, NNPN, Latinx Playwrights Circle, Great Plains Theatre Conference, Goodman Theatre, Launch Pad at UC Santa Barbara, The New Harmony Project, Repertorio Español, LAByrinth Theater Company, Ars Nova, Dallas Theater Center, William Inge Theatre Festival, Teatro Vivo, Stages Repertory Theatre, Latino Theatre Company, Latinx Theatre Commons, Seven Devils New Play Foundry, the HBMG Foundation, Tofte Lake Center, Ignition Arts, and Ammunition Theater Company. A 4 Seasons Resident Playwright, Core Writer with the Playwrights Center, and the Bishop Arts Theatre Center Playwright-in-Residence, Franky is also a recipient of the Charles Rowan Beye New Play Commission, an MTC/Sloan Commission, co-recipient of the MetLife Nuestras Voces Latino Playwriting Award, won the Crossroads Project Diverse Voices Playwriting Initiative Award, the Risk Theatre Modern Tragedy Competition Grand Prize, and the Judith Royer Award for Excellence in Playwriting.

**Kathryn Grody** was born in Los Angeles, which was a cosmic error that she corrected almost 50 years ago. She found a home at The Public Theatre, where her three-character solo show, *A Mom's Life*, was produced and nominated for a Drama Desk Award. Obie Awards for *Marriage of Bette and Boo* and *Top Girls* also at The Public. Most recently performed in *20th Century Blues* at the Signature, *The Great Moment* at Seattle Rep, and filmed a pilot for Showtime called *Seasoned*. Participated in numerous Zoom readings and live performances during the pandemic. Regional theatre: Actors Theatre of Louisville, Mark Taper Forum, Buffalo Rep, Seattle Rep, Cape Cod Theatre, and workshopped her devised play, *An Unlikely Bunch of Characters*, at Dartmouth with the New York Theatre Workshop, with co-creators Xolisa Kapakanti and Bulelani Mabutyana from Capetown, South Africa. Memorable off-

Broadway plays: *Fishing, Nasty Rumors and Final Remarks, Museum, 49 Years* (with Estelle Parsons), *Endgame* (with Alvin Epstein), *The Oak Tree, Seven Jewish Children, The Woman Who Lost Her Head, The Penetration Play, A Model Apartment, falling apart...together* (solo sequel to *A Mom's Life*). Broadway: *Scapino* (with Jim Dale). Film: *Harry and Walter Go to New York, My Bodyguard, The Lemmon Sisters, Another Woman, Reds, Men with Gu TV–The Sunset Gang* (with Uta Hagen), *Execution of Private Slovak* (with Martin Sheen). She is on the boards of Dances for A Variable Population and Downtown Women for Change, is a Usual Suspect with New York Theatre Workshop, and works with The International Rescue Committee and American Jewish World Service.

**Dave Harris** is a poet and playwright from West Philly. Selected plays include *Tambo & Bones* (Playwrights Horizons, Center Theatre Group, 2022), *Exception to the Rule* (Roundabout Theatre Company, 2022), and *Everybody Black* (Humana Festival 2019). His first feature film, *Summertime*, premiered at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival and was released in 2021. Selected honors include the 2019 Ollie Award, The Lorraine Hansberry Award and Mark Twain Award from The Kennedy Center, The International Commendation for The Bruntwood Prize, the Venturous Fellowship from The Lark, and a Cave Canem poetry fellowship, amongst others. Dave is currently writing the feature adaptation of *The Fortress of Solitude* amongst several other feature and television projects for AMC, FX, and Amazon. His first full-length collection of poetry, *Patricide*, was published by Button Poetry. Upcoming: *Incendiary* (Woolly Mammoth, 2023), *Tambo & Bones* (Royal Stratford East, London Premiere, 2023).

**Beth Henley** is an award-winning playwright, screenwriter, and professor. Her plays include *Crimes of the Heart* (Pulitzer Prize in Drama and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best American Play), *The Wake of Jamey Foster, The Miss Firecracker Contest, Am I Blue, The Lucky Spot, The Debutante Ball, Abundance, Control Freaks, Impossible Marriage, Family Week, Ridiculous Fraud, The Jacksonian, Laugh,* and *The Unbuttoning*. Her plays have been produced on Broadway and across the country as well as internationally and translated into 12 languages. Ms. Henley's screenplays include *Crimes of the Heart, Nobody's Fool, The Miss Firecracker Contest,* and David Byrne's *True Stories*. Ms. Henley is a recipient of The American Theatre Wing 1998 Award for Distinguished Achievement in Playwriting, Susan Smith Blackburn Finalist for *Crimes of the Heart* and *Ridiculous Fraud*, Richard Wright Literary Excellence Award 2000, New York Stage and Film Honoree 2007, ATHE Career Achievement Award, 2010, The Cleanth Brooks Medal 2013, and the American Theater Award at the William Inge Festival 2017. Originally from Mississippi, Ms. Henley now lives in Los Angeles and serves as the Presidential Professor at LMU/LA.

**Hanna Kime** is a Chicago-based playwright and screenwriter. Her plays include *Next Door* (Steep Theatre), *The Best Damn Thing* (2021 O'Neill Finalist, Selected for the UP: Renewal Series), *Now More Than Ever* (Winner of Oklahoma City Rep's Stage@Home New Voices Contest), and *The Targeted* (2020 O'Neill Finalist, 2021 BAPF Semifinalist). Her full-length work has been developed with Steep Theatre, Jackalope Theatre, the New Coordinates, Broken Nose Theatre, First Floor Theater (where she is a company member), and Sideshow Theatre (where she is an ensemble member). Kime is currently developing a feature-length screenplay *I Want to Scream* and participating in St. Louis Shakespeare Festival's 22/23 Confluence Writers Project. Outside of her own writing, Kime serves as a Scriptshare reader with Playwrights Realm, and she previously served as First Floor Theater's Literary Manager. For more, visit [hannakime.com](http://hannakime.com)

**Kitka** is a women's vocal arts ensemble inspired by traditional songs and vocal techniques from Eastern Europe. Kitka strives to expand the boundaries of Balkan, Slavic, and Caucasian folk song as a living and evolving expressive art form through the creation of new works that amplify women's voices. Kitka's



activities include performances and vocal workshops; leadership of community choruses; touring; school programs; recording, publication and broadcast projects; artist residencies; commissioning; and adventuresome collaborations with traditional song masters and contemporary performance makers. An important branch of Kitka's work is the commissioning and creation of collaborative vocal-theatre works that explore themes of womanhood and gender in Eastern European history, mythology, and folklore. Projects of note include *Hecuba* at A.C.T. in San Francisco and the Williamstown Theatre Festival (music: David Lang, direction: Carey Perloff); *The Rusalka Cycle* and *Singing Through Darkness* (music: Mariana Sadvoska, direction: Ellen Sebastian Chang and Andre Erlen) performed in California, New Mexico, Ukraine, Poland, and Germany; and the San Francisco Bay Area premieres of *I Will Remember Everything* (music/direction: Eric Banks), *Vocal Alchemy* (music/direction: Meredith Monk), and *Iron Shoes* (music: Janet Kutulas, book: Michelle Carter, direction: Erika Chong Shuch).

**Ethan Lipton** is a Brooklyn-based playwright and songwriter. Produced plays include *Tumacho*, *Red-Handed Otter*, *Luther*, *Goodbye April Hello May*, *100 Aspects of the Moon*, and *Meat*. His musicals, *No Place to Go* (Obie Award) and *The Outer Space* (Lortel nom.) were produced by The Public Theater in Joe's Pub and directed by Leigh Silverman. Ethan was a 2020 Guggenheim Fellow, a member of the Public's Emerging Writers Group, a Clubbed Thumb associate, a Working Farm Fellow at Space at Ryder Farm, and a Playwrights Realm Page One Fellow. Commissions include MTC, the Civilians, NYFA, Clubbed Thumb, Playwrights Horizons, True Love, Media Art Xploration, the NYPL, and the Onassis Foundation. Plays are published by Concord Theatricals. With his band Ethan Lipton and His Orchestra, he has released four studio albums and played venues including Celebrate Brooklyn, MASS MoCa, Theatre de la Ville, SF Jazz, and All Tomorrow's Parties. More at [ethanlipton.com](http://ethanlipton.com)

**Jess McLeod** is a director & social justice advocate specializing in risky new work about America. NYCLU Artist-In-Residence; Woolly Mammoth BOLD Resident Director; BFRJ Advisory Council Member. She has directed new plays & musicals at theatres & developmental labs across the country, operas with community groups at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, spent two years as the Resident Director of *Hamilton* Chicago, and recently co-curated Broadway Advocacy Coalition's first-ever Arts In Action Festival. View new work & old at [jess-mcleod.com](http://jess-mcleod.com).

**Timothy Near** is an award-winning freelance director, three-time artistic director, and Obie Award-winning actress. She has directed over 80 plays at theatres across the U.S., including La Jolla Playhouse, The Guthrie, Berkeley Rep, and the Mark Taper Forum. She was the first woman to direct at the Alliance Theatre and the Repertory Theatre of St Louis. In her 21-year tenure as artistic director of San Jose Rep, she produced over 120 plays and 20 world premieres. Twice as artistic director, she contributed to the campaign, design, and completion of two mid-sized theatres. In addition to an Obie Award for her performance in Emily Mann's *Still Life* at the American Place Theatre in New York, she was a regular guest on *Sesame Street*. *The Unexpected 3rd* is Near's third collaboration with playwright Kathryn Grody.

**Mara Nelson's** work has been developed at Playwrights Horizons, Clubbed Thumb, and Ensemble Studio Theatre, among others. Her play *Do You Feel Anger?* premiered at the 2018 Humana Festival at Actors Theatre of Louisville and was produced off-Broadway at the Vineyard Theatre in 2019. Her play *Hamlet by Mia Fefferman* was a finalist for the 2017 Relentless Award. She is an alum of Youngblood at Ensemble Studio Theatre and Clubbed Thumb's Early Career Writers Group. She received her MFA from UC-San Diego under Naomi Iizuka.

**Lila Neugebauer** is a theatre, film, and television director from New York City. Her stage work includes the Tony-nominated Broadway revival of Kenneth Lonergan's *The Waverly Gallery*; new plays by Annie

Baker, Sarah DeLappe, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, Zoe Kazan, Tracy Letts, and Simon Stephens, among others, as well as various revivals. For television, she has directed episodes of *Maid* (Netflix), *The Sex Lives of College Girls* and *Room 104* (HBO Max), and *The Last Thing He Told Me* (Apple TV+). As co-artistic director of The Mad Ones, she co-authors and directs ensemble-driven work; with the company, she is currently developing their critically acclaimed play *Miles for Mary* and Josh Ferris' novel *Then We Came to the End* for television. Her first feature film, *Causeway*, will make its global debut in theaters and on Apple TV+ later this year. She is a recipient of the Obie, Drama Desk, and Princess Grace Awards.

**Joel Perez** (he/him) is an award-winning actor and writer living in NYC. His theatre work includes *Fun Home* (Broadway), *Kiss My Aztec!* (Berkeley Rep and Hartford Stage), *As You Like It* (The Public Theater), and *Sweet Charity* (New Group; Lortel Award). Film work includes *tick, tick... Boom!* (Netflix). TV work includes *Jesus Christ Superstar Live!* (NBC), *Person of Interest* (CBS), and *Odd Mom Out* (Bravo). He performed with the UCB Maude sketch team Peach and for the musical theatre sketch show *SHIZ*. His writing includes *The Black Beans Project* (The Huntington Theatre, Elliot Norton Award), *Playing with Myself* (Joe's Pub), *The Church of the Holy Glory* (Ars Nova ANTFest), *Lost City Radio* (Rhinebeck Writer's Retreat). His short film, *Beautiful, FL*, is a selection of Disney Launchpad and will premiere on Disney+ in 2023. He is a 2021 Warner Bros. Discovery 150 Artist Grant recipient for his original comedy pilot *You're Tired, You're Poor*. He is the winner of the 2021 Voces Latinx National Playwriting Competition for his play *From the Fountain*. He is a 2019 NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellow in Playwriting from NYFA. Follow him at @misterjoelperez and visit [misterjoelperez.com](http://misterjoelperez.com)

**Michael Phillis** is an award-winning writer, director, actor, educator, and drag artist. His written works include the solo plays *Finding Mrs. Miller*, *D\*Face*, *Dolls*, *Patty from HR Would Like a Word*, *Mo Patty Mo Problems*, and *Patty from HR: A Zoom with a View*. Full-length plays include *Wish We Were Here*; *The Bride of Death*; *Wunderworld*; *It's Christmas, Carole!*; *The Hand That Rocks the Crawford*; and *Scream*. He is the co-creator and director of *Baloney*, San Francisco's popular gay all-male revue, now in its seventh year in residence at SF Oasis. Michael's film directorial debut, *Mini Supreme*, was an Opening Night Selection at Palm Springs ShortFest and an Official Selection for Frameline, Outfest, and numerous LGBT film festivals worldwide.

**Nia Akilah Robinson** (she/her) is a playwright and actor who reps Harlem with all her might. Residencies & Fellowships: SPACE on Ryder Farm, Travis Bogard Artist-in-Residence at the Eugene O'Neill Foundation, MacDowell Fellowship, and Prospect Street Writer's House X Waterwell. Commissions & Workshops: Waterwell, Great Plains Theater Conference, EST/Alfred P. Sloan Foundation (short play), Charles Rowan Beye New Play Commission under Urbanite Theatre Company & PEN America. Readings: *Bloodworks @ EST*, co-writer on Clubbed Thumb Constitution Commission (Heidi Schreck, creator and star of *What the Constitution Means to Me*) awarded to Justice Hehir @ New Georges Dramatist Guild, 2021 End of Play in partnership with The 24 Hour Plays, Classical Theatre of Harlem's Playwrights Playground, and TBHTP collective readings at The Drama League. She is 2022 YoungArts Artist Fellow supported by Rockefeller Brothers Fund (Alumni Award), 2022 New York Theater Workshop 2050 Artistic Fellowship Finalist (Final Round), 2022 Finalist for The Blue Ink Playwriting Award, 2022 Semi-Finalist for the Blank Stage "Future of Playwriting Award," 2021 Winner "One of the Best of Fest" at Nuyorican's Theater Festival, and 2021 Finalist for the Eugene O'Neill (NPC). Member/ Alum: The Orchard Project NYC Greenhouse, EST's Youngblood, and TheBlackHERthePen. She co-managed, facilitated, and developed two programs at The 2021 Tony Award-winning organization The Broadway Advocacy Coalition. Education: Juilliard (2022-23). [niaakilahrobinson.com](http://niaakilahrobinson.com)

**Robbie Saenz de Viteri** writes, creates, produces, and performs live theatre. He has created

performances and toured productions throughout the world with the Obie Award-winning Nature Theater of Oklahoma and worked with genre redefining artists such as Anna Deavere Smith, Stew, and Ira Glass. He has collaborated with Monica Bill Barnes to create *Happy Hour*, *The Museum Workout*, *One Night Only* (Lilly Award), *Days Go By* (Bessie Honoree), *The Running Show*, *Keep Moving, It's 3:07 Again*, and *Many Happy Returns*. He grew up in New Jersey, holds a BA from Muhlenberg College, where he studied writing with David Rosenwasser, and lives in Greenpoint Brooklyn, which he believes is best reached by bicycle.

**Melisa Tien** is a playwright, lyricist, librettist, and producer. She is the author of the plays *Best Life*, *Yellow Card Red Card*, *The Boyd Show*, and *Familium Vulgare*; co-author of the operas *Song of the Nightingale*, *The Beehive*, and *The Big Swim*; co-author of the music-theatre works *Swell*, *Daylight Saving*, and *Mary*; co-creator of the podcast/auditory experience *Active Listening*; and creator of the ongoing theatrical experiences *Untitled Landscape* and *Community Forest*. She has been published in the anthology *Theater Artists Making Theatre with No Theater* (Tripwire Harlot Press, 2020) and the anthology *Modern Music for New Singers: 21st Century American Art Songs* (2021). A New Dramatists resident playwright, Melisa was a member of The Assembly Theater Project's 2021 Deceleration Lab, and a recipient of a 2020-2021 grant from the NYC Women's Fund for Media, Music, and Theatre. BA, UCLA; MFA, Columbia University. More at [melisatien.com](http://melisatien.com)

**Minghao Tu** is an immigrant playwright from Wuhan, China. He is currently a 2050 Artistic Fellow at New York Theatre Workshop, a Jerome Fellow at the Playwrights' Center, and a Van Lier Fellow at Rattlestick Theater. He has been a resident playwright of Pipeline Theatre Company's 2020/2021 PlayLab, and a 2021 Travis Bogard Artist-in-Residence at the Eugene O'Neill Foundation. His works have been presented/produced at Rattlestick Theater, Tofte Lake Center, Voyage Theater Company, New York Public Library, Yangtze Repertory Theatre, Ground Floor Theatre, and UT New Theatre; featured on The Steppenwolf Theatre's *The Mix*; finalists: the O'Neill National Playwrights Conference and the 2021 Woodward/Newman Award at the Bloomington Playwrights Project; semifinalists: PlayPenn and Shakespeare's New Contemporaries at American Shakespeare Center. He has been a James A. Michener fellow at UT Austin (MFA: 2020).

**Benjamin Velez** (he/him) is a composer/lyricist and Columbia graduate (114th Varsity Show), originally from Miami, FL. Proud member of the BMI workshop (2012 Harrington Award) and a Sundance Artist at Ucross. His musical, *Afterland*, was developed at the Yale Institute for Music Theater and the York Theater. He developed *Boomerangs* at Dixon Place (2018) and Manhattan School of Music ('20-'21). His musical, *Borderline*, won the 2018 Weston Playhouse New Musical Award and opened the 2019 O'Neill Musical Theater Conference. He was a 2018-2019 Dramatist Guild Foundation Fellow, the 2019 Fred Ebb Award Winner, a 2020 Thom Thomas Award winner, and a 2020 Jonathan Larson Grant recipient. His musical, *Kiss My Aztec*, written with John Leguizamo, Tony Taccone, and David Kamp, premiered at Berkeley Rep and the La Jolla Playhouse (2019), and most recently was at Hartford Stage (2022). Other upcoming projects include a Public Theater commission, a commission by La Jolla Playhouse for an original musical he's writing with Harrison David Rivers, and a Broadway-bound adaptation, directed by Sergio Trujillo. Follow him @BenjaminVelezMusic and visit [BenjaminVelez.com](http://BenjaminVelez.com)

**Bassem Youssef**, dubbed the Jon Stewart of the Arab World, was the host of popular TV show *AlBernameg*—which was the first of its kind political satire show in the Middle East. *AlBernameg* became the first online-to-TV conversion in the Middle East and the most watched show across the region with 30 million viewers every week. *AlBernameg* received wide acclaim around the world with coverage in some of the biggest media outlets, topping it off with Youssef's appearance on *The Daily Show with Jon*

Stewart, *The Colbert Report*, and Trevor Noah. Youssef's most recent projects include "Democracy Handbook," a 10-part series exploring topics of democracy on fusion.net, and the launch of a new book, *Revolution for Dummies: Laughing Through the Arab Spring* in the spring of 2017. Youssef has also been the subject of the critically acclaimed documentary movie *Tickling Giants*. In the process of promoting these projects, Youssef was hosted repeatedly by Jon Stewart, Trevor Noah, Stephen Colbert, Samantha Bee, Larry King, and many more television and radio appearances, plus being in numerous publications including *The New Yorker*. He has hosted the International Emmy Awards gala of 2015, as well as the 49th Carthage Film Festival in Tunis.