



PRESS RELEASE

October 13, 2022

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New plays and a series of panel discussions highlight Syracuse Stage's Cold Read Festival



From left: Draft/Pages Featured Playwright Rogelio Martinez, Solo Act Writer/Performer Jessica Bashline, In Process Playwright Ty Defoe and Write Here Playwright Craig Thornton

SYRACUSE, NY - Plays by Rogelio Martinez, Ty Defoe, Jessica Bashline and Craig Thornton highlight Syracuse Stage's 2022/2023 Cold Read Festival of New Plays, Oct. 18 - 23.

Curated by Stage's associate artistic director Melissa Crespo, the Festival features four readings performed live in the Archbold Theatre, and for the first time, a series of panel discussions streamed live online and addressing various topics related to the creation of new work for the stage.

Started in 2017 by Kyle Bass, who at the time was associate artistic director, the Festival saw in person events until it was canceled or moved online due to Covid. This year's Festival marks the first return to in person readings since 2019.

"Playwrights need a launchpad to create new work and I'm proud to continue what Kyle started," said Crespo.

The four readings are "The High Cost of Heating" by Thornton (Oct. 21, 7:30 pm), "Our Words Are Seeds" by Defoe (Oct. 22, 2:00 pm), "Untitled" by Bashline (Oct. 22, 7:30 pm), and "The National Pastime" by Martinez (Oct. 23, 3:00 pm). Tickets are \$5 for each reading and available at www.SyracuseStage.org or at the Box Office (315-443-3275). Readings are free for Syracuse Stage subscribers.

Pulitzer Prize winning playwright Paula Vogel ("How I Learned to Drive") and playwright Sarah Mantell ("Everything that Never Happened") joins Crespo and Stage's resident playwright Kyle Bass for the first panel discussion "On the Future of New Plays," Oct. 18. On Oct. 19, lyricist and bookwriter Maggie-Kate Coleman and composer and actor Robi Hager discuss "Creating New Musicals" with producers Ben

Holtzman and Sammy Lopez (“How to Dance in Ohio”) and Syracuse University Department of Drama faculty member Kathleen Wrinn. A discussion of “New Work for Young Audiences” brings Defoe and Stage’s associate director of education Kate Laissle together with playwrights Dwayne Hartford (“The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane”) and Karen Zacarías (“Native Gardens”) on Oct. 20. On Oct. 21, Eric Grode, the director of the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communication’s Goldring Arts Journalism and Communications Program, joins dramaturg Sarah Rose Leonard and writer Britanni Samuel, and co-editors of 3Views, for a panel “On Theatre & Criticism.” All discussions stream live online from noon to 1 p.m. (EST). Access is free of charge, advance registration required at www.syracusestage.org or through the Box Office.

The Festival closes with a new event, an evening of free prose and poetry readings by writers from YMCA’s Downtown Writers Center at The Fitz on Salina St. (Oct. 23, 7:30 pm).

The start of the Cold Read Festival of New Plays at Syracuse Stage signaled a heightened commitment to supporting and developing new work at Syracuse Stage. Since then, that commitment has led to five world premiere productions: “Possessing Harriet,” “Thoughts of a Colored Man” (moved to Broadway in October 2021), “Somewhere Over the Border,” “salt/city/blues” and this season’s acclaimed “How to Dance in Ohio.” Later this season, Bass’ drama “Tender Rain” will add a sixth world premiere.

The Cold Read Festival gives audiences the opportunity to experience the playwright at the beginning of their creative journey,” said Bob Hupp, Syracuse Stage artistic director. “This year’s expanded discussion series gives us a rare and exciting opportunity to hear from leading playwrights and artists from across the country. Together, the readings and conversations are a perfect way to experience the playwright’s craft.”

FESTIVAL EVENTS SCHEDULE

TUESDAY, OCT. 18, 12 P.M.

Live Streamed Panel Discussion: On the Future of New Plays

This live conversation offers a rare opportunity to witness how creative artists envision a future and develop new work. How do these writers generate new ideas? What will playwriting look like in a post-COVID-19 America? How will their work impact the future of playwriting?

Panelists:

Kyle Bass, Resident Playwright, Syracuse Stage (“Tender Rain,” “Possessing Harriet”)
Melissa Crespo, Associate Artistic Director, Syracuse Stage
Sarah Mantell, Playwright (“Everything That Never Happened,” “The Good Guys”)
Paula Vogel, Playwright (“Indecent,” “How I Learned to Drive,” Pulitzer Prize Winner)

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 19, 12 P.M.

Live Streamed Panel Discussion: Creating New Musicals

What goes into making a new musical? From the classroom to Broadway, musical theatre creators discuss the trials and triumphs of what it takes to make a musical.

Panelists:

Maggie-Kate Coleman, Artistic Director, Polyphone Festival; Playwright; Lyricist; Bookwriter (Jonathan Larson Award Recipient)

Robi Hager, Composer (“Little Duende”); Performer (Original Broadway cast of “Spring Awakening”)
Ben Holtzman, Producer, Co-Founder of P3 Productions
Sammy Lopez, Producer, Co-Founder of P3 Productions
Kathleen Wrinn, Assistant Professor of Musical Theater, Syracuse University Department of Drama

THURSDAY, OCT. 20, 12 P.M.

Live Streamed Panel Discussion: New Work for Young Audiences

What does it mean to create and present theatre for young audiences and families? Why is it important to engage young audiences at an early age? Join us for a live discussion about the creation and future of Theatre for Young Audiences.

Panelists:

Ty Defoe, Playwright (“Our Words Are Seeds”); Performer; Composer
Dwayne Hartford, Playwright (“The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane”); Artistic Director, Childsplay
Kate Laissle, Associate Director of Education, Syracuse Stage
Karen Zacarías, Playwright (“Native Gardens”); Founding Artistic Director, Young Playwrights Theater

FRIDAY, OCT. 21, 12 P.M.

Live Streamed Panel Discussion: On Theatre & Criticism

Theatre has managed to scrape by in our ongoing pandemic, but with all of the challenges facing live performance, where does criticism fit? Join our live discussion about the state of theatre and how critics navigate an ever-changing landscape.

Panelists:

Eric Grode, Director, Goldring Arts Journalism and Communications Program, Syracuse University’s S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications
Sarah Rose, Leonard Freelance Dramaturg and Co-Editor of 3Views
Brittani Samuel, Freelance Writer and Co-Editor of 3Views

FRIDAY, OCT. 21, 7:30 P.M.

In Person Reading: Write Here – A reading of a new play by a local playwright

“The High Cost of Heating”

By Craig Thornton

Directed by Melissa Crespo

In this hilarious and chilling absurdist play, “The High Cost of Heating,” a seemingly affluent couple is disturbed by their large heating bill but quickly grow terrified as it starts to physically grow and take over their home. Familiar class issues of work, marriage, and lifestyle are pushed aside as more primal needs—for heat, shelter and food—take over, in increasingly ridiculous and nightmarish ways. As a crypto-fascist army of marching salami sandwiches breaks into their home, the two are reduced to cawing like crows and feeding off croutons, with only their shared terror in the face of the unknown providing any sort of humanity... or hope.

Craig Thornton studied dramatic writing at New York University (BFA), The American Film Institute and Godard College (MFA). His first play “Yoo-Hoo Sheila” was produced in New York City shortly after his

graduation from Tisch School of the Arts. Other full productions include “Happy Birthday, Tina Marie” (LA and NYC), “The Sweet Life,” “We’re a Close Family,” “Life on the Lawn” (LA), “The Moment,” “In My Shoes,” productions or staged readings have occurred in Phoenix; Kenosha, Wisconsin; Bangor, Maine; and upstate New York: Watertown, Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse. His docudrama “In My Shoes” telling true stories of teenagers whose parents were actively deployed during conflict in the Middle East was featured in a national story on CNN and referenced in a congressional study on military communities. Several of his plays have been finalists in nationally recognized playwriting contests, most notably, “The High Cost of Heating;” The New Works Festival, The Northern Writes Festival, The Riva Shiner Award, Screencraft Stageplay and runner-up for the Yale Drama Series prize; considered one of the most competitive and prestigious international play competitions. “What We Hold Onto” which was developed at the HBO workspace was a finalist at The O’Neil National Playwrights Conference. His career in television has been recognized with two New York State Broadcasters Association Awards, an AP award and two Syracuse press Club Awards. Other awards include NYSTA and TANYS and a MacDowell Colony Fellowship. He is a former artist in residence at Empire State College where he taught in the wounded warrior unit at Fort Drum guiding soldiers through memoirs. Also a screenwriter with several features optioned, he currently teaches screenwriting at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University.

SATURDAY, OCT. 22, 2 P.M.

In Person Reading: In-Process – A new play in-process that will premiere later this season

“Our Words Are Seeds”

By Ty Defoe

Directed by Joann Yarrow

“Our Words Are Seeds” explores the past, present and future of Shenandoah, an Oneida Nation, non-binary and self-proclaimed Indigi-nerd teenager, and their great-great-grandmother, who started their family calling of writing letters to the United States Government demanding land back. Watch as Shenandoah’s and their ancestors’ struggles intersect, and as Shenandoah connects with the Water of Onondaga Lake to find their voice and create a call to action for their generation to protect, defend, and acknowledge the Haudenosaunee Nation, their traditions, and the land we all share.

Ty Defoe (Giizhig) is from the Oneida and Ojibwe Nations. He is a Grammy award-winning composer, a librettist, interdisciplinary artist, actor, Broadway choreographer, eagle dancer and hoop dancer. Ty interweaves artistic projects with social justice, indigeneity, trans rights, Indigi-Queering and environmentalism. Awards, residencies and fellowships: 2022 The Kennedy Center’s “Next 50,” 2021 Helen Merrill Award-winner, TransLab Fellow, Robert Rauschenberg Artist in Residence, Jonathan Larson Award, Cordillera International Film Festival Finalist, 2021 Cultural Capital Fellow, Eugene O’Neill Theater Center finalist and the ASCAP Musical Theater Workshop. Ty’s songs have been featured at: Lincoln Center, Joe’s Pub, Ars Nova, 54 Below, The Met, and The Kennedy Center. Ty’s theatrical work has been presented at: Guthrie Theater, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Yale Institute of Musical Theater, La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club, Native Voices at the Autry, The New Victory Theater, First Stage, The Millennium celebration in Cairo, Egypt; International Music Festival in Ankara, Turkey; and Festival of World Cultures in Dubai. Works: “TransWorld,” “Red Pine,” “The Way They Lived,” “Ajijaak on Turtle Island,” “Hear Me Say My Name,” “Hart Island Requiem,” “Clouds are Pillows for the Moon,” “Wind Changes Direction,” “Before the Land Eroded,” “BasketBall Is ‘War, Minus the Shooting’ In Sectarian Lebanon,” “River of Stone,” “Firebird Tattoo,” “Trial and Tears” (with Dawn Avery) and “The Lesson” (with Nolan Doran and Avi Amon). Ty is a core member of All My Relations Collective, recent piece: “GIZHIBAA GIIZHIG | Revolving Sky.”

SATURDAY, OCT. 22, 7:30 P.M.

In Person Reading: Solo Act- An intimate workshop production of a new piece

“Untitled”

Written and performed by Jessica Bashline

Directed by Margaret Ledford

Almost 10 years ago Jessica found herself on a journey, discovering the truth about the history of reproductive rights in Pre-Roe United States. Learning about the past allowed her to confront her own present, and ask questions about our future.

Jessica Bashline is an Assistant Professor of Theater at the University of Miami, where she teaches acting and theater creation. She was the Artistic Director and co-founder of [Strange Sun Theater](#), a theater company in New York City dedicated to creating magical new theater that ignites in audiences and artists, the power of possibility. In addition she was the Consulting Artistic Director of the [Sheen Center](#), when it opened in downtown Manhattan, curating a full season for 2 theaters. Before that she served as the Artistic Director of Wingspan Arts, an arts education company in New York City.

Bashline works primarily as a freelance theater director specializing in new play and musical development, her favorite credits include; “Loving Repeating” (NYC Premiere), “Life of the Party” (NYU-Premiere Production of Larry O’Keefe & Nell Benjamin’s new musical), at NYU Steinhardt “Gypsy,” “Midsummer Night’s Dream,” “Twelfth Night,” with Strange Sun “Closer Than You Think” (World Premiere), “The Drowning Girls” (NYC Premiere).

As a playwright Bashline has written two full length pieces. “Wickedest Woman,” The story of Ann Lohman, midwife and abortionist in the 1800’s in NYC. Finalist, Scrap Mettle Arts Playwrights Festival, Production January 2019 NYC, and slated for publication Spring 2021. “Garden of Memories” the story of siblings dealing with the loss of their mother and the acceptance of their past. Runner Up W. Keith Hedrick Award at HRC Showcase Theater and Semi-Finalist, Trustus New Playwrights Festival 2016.

In addition to her work as a director and playwright, Bashline is an accomplished acting coach, focusing primarily on audition coaching and musical theater work. She also works with people in all professions to incorporate theater techniques into their daily lives, as a means of self-expression and empowerment.

Bashline has a BFA in Acting from Boston University and an MFA from Goddard College. Her practical focus has been on theater creation, primarily directing. Her research focuses on both feminist theater and progressive pedagogical approaches to teaching acting and directing, on both the university and high school levels.

SUNDAY, OCT. 23, 3 P.M.

In Person Reading: Draft/Pages- A first-ever reading of a Syracuse Stage commission

“The National Pastime”

By Rogelio Martinez

Directed by Margaret Perry

In 2017 the Houston Astros were stealing signs and banging on a garbage can. They would go on to win the World Series. In 2017, a mysterious illness that came to be known as Havana Syndrome started to attack embassy officials in Havana. Havana Syndrome would lead to the emptying of the American

embassy in Havana. In “The National Pastime,” baseball and espionage come together in an atmosphere of secrets and paranoia.

Rogelio Martinez is an award-winning playwright whose plays have been workshopped and produced in theaters across the country and abroad. His play, “Born In East Berlin,” was first performed at the Stasi Museum, Berlin in both English and German, and then premiered at San Francisco Playhouse in February 2020. More recently, Martinez worked on “The Seven Deadly Sins” project for Miami New Drama. It was the largest theatrical production allowed by equity during the pandemic. It won the Drama League Award - Outstanding Interactive or Socially-Distanced Theater. In 2021, Martinez worked on a new television project for Tom Fontana, based on the book, “Year of Dangerous Days.” His play, “Blind Date,” was produced at the Goodman Theatre under the direction of Tony nominee Robert Falls, with Tony Award winning actress Deanna Dunagan playing the role of Nancy Reagan, and was awarded an Edgerton Foundation New Play Award. Martinez is a recipient of a 2017 Guggenheim Fellowship, Princess Grace Award, and a Mid-Career Fellowship at the Lark Theater Company. His work has been workshopped and commissioned by various theaters across the country including the Public Theater, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Mark Taper Forum, South Coast Repertory, Atlantic Theater Company, Arden Theater, Asolo Repertory, and Ojai Theater Company, and many more. Martinez’s plays include “Illuminating Veronica,” “Arrivals and Departures,” “All Eyes and Ears,” “Blind Date” (all published by Broadway Play Publishing). This year Broadway Play Publishing will publish “Born in East Berlin,” and “I Regret She’s Made of Sugar” (Princess Grace Winner). He is an alumnus of New Dramatists. Martinez teaches undergraduate playwriting at NYU and has also written for children’s television. Martinez was born in Sancti-Spiritus, Cuba and came to this country on the Mariel boatlift.

SUNDAY, OCT. 23, 7:30 P.M.

In Person Event: Open Mic Night – Festival Closing Celebration

Celebrate the end of the Festival with Syracuse Stage partners at The Fitz in downtown Syracuse (321 S. Salina St.) for an evening of poetry and prose with students from the writing community at the YMCA's Downtown Writers Center.

ABOUT SYRACUSE STAGE

Founded in 1974, Syracuse Stage is the non-profit, professional theatre company in residence at Syracuse University. It is nationally recognized for creating stimulating theatrical work that engages Central New York and significantly contributes to the artistic life of Syracuse University, where it is a vital partner in achieving the educational mission of the University’s Department of Drama. Syracuse Stage’s mission is to tell stories that engage, entertain and inspire people to see life beyond their own experience. Each season 70,000 patrons enjoy an adventurous mix of new plays, and bold interpretations of classics and musicals, featuring the finest theatre artists. In addition, Stage maintains a vital educational outreach program that annually serves more than 21,000 students from 16 counties. Syracuse Stage is a constituent of the Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for the American theatre, and a member of the Arts and Cultural Leadership Alliance (ACLA), the University Hill Corporation and the East Genesee Regent Association. Syracuse Stage is a member of The League of Resident Theatres (LORT), the largest professional theatre association in the country.

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