



BROWN

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## PRESS RELEASE

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Wednesday, January 20, 2016

### ***Writing is Live* Festival Showcases New Writing for Performance**

**PROVIDENCE, RI** - The Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies at Brown University proudly announces the seventh annual *Writing is Live* festival, a presentation of new writing for performance by writers in Brown's Playwriting MFA program.

*Writing is Live 2016* runs February 4th through 7th at the Leeds Theatre on campus at Brown University. *Writing is Live* celebrates the diversity and strength of new theatrical voices while simultaneously exploring the meaning of text in performance. The festival emphasizes the idea of what it means for writing to be *Live*. It also provides space for the development and evolution of new work, putting writers in conversation with directors, actors, designers, and the audience.

This year's festival showcases four pieces of new writing in development; two as workshop performances and two as rehearsed readings. Carlos Sirah '17 MFA presents a workshop performance of *The Light Body*, while Diane Exavier '17 MFA presents a workshop performance of *A Big House*. Beth Nixon '18 MFA and Maurice DeCaul '18 MFA present readings of their new pieces, *Vector* and *The Magical Kingdom*, respectively. The plays are performed and directed by students in the Brown/Trinity MFA programs, Brown University's undergraduate programs, and the community at large.

The February weekend program focuses exclusively on students' work in development. Fully realized productions of work by graduating writers, Rick Burkhardt '16 MFA and Dalia Taha '16 MFA, will follow in the spring.

Brown University's graduate Playwriting MFA program is a central site in New England for the formation of new playwrights. The program grants its students broad inventive license while offering close mentorship and profound resources in the department, the university, and the greater local and

international communities. The program is run by Erik Ehn, a Professor in the Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies and a successful playwright in his own right. Ehn aim to cultivate writers dedicated to the development of their craft, the deep interrogation of the forms and purposes of their art (and of the place of art in the larger world), and a leaning into authentic transformation of society through theatrical action. Alumni of the program include Pulitzer Prize winner, Quiara Alegría Hudes '04 MFA (*In the Heights, Water by the Spoonful*); MacArthur Genius Grantee, Nilo Cruz '94 MFA (*Anna in the Tropics*); and Pulitzer Prize nominee, Sarah Ruhl '01 MFA (*The Clean House, In the Next Room*). The festival (formerly the *New Plays Festival*) is made possible through support from an endowed fund for the Adele Kellenberg Seaver '49 Professorship in Literary Arts.

If you have any questions or to schedule an interview with any of the festival's participants, including the Playwriting MFA students and program head, Erik Ehn, please contact [writingslive@gmail.com](mailto:writingslive@gmail.com) or call 401-863-2730.

*Writing Is Live* runs February 4th through 7th in Leeds Theatre, 83 Waterman Street, Providence, RI 02912. A full schedule and biographies of the writers are available at [www.writingslive.com](http://www.writingslive.com) and also follow below. Tickets for all festival events are free and available online at [www.brown.edu/tickets](http://www.brown.edu/tickets) or from the Brown Theatre Box Office. Call (401) 863-2838, or visit the Box Office in the Leeds Theatre Lobby (83 Waterman St, Providence), Tuesday - Friday from 12pm - 4pm, or email [boxoffice@brown.edu](mailto:boxoffice@brown.edu).

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### **The Light Body**

**Written by Carlos Sirah '17 MFA**

**Directed by Mauricio Salgado '18 MFA**

*Noah and Micah have left the city and returned home to the country in an effort to convalesce and begin anew. Is love and a lifetime of a knowledge enough to heal, or does an abundance of intimacy impede healing? What are the strategies for survival? What is the distance between survival and happiness? Temple is sought to help the couple work through. They recall and remember. Noah and Micah earnestly attempt to traverse. Shu appears, who has many names and who was called before: wise, rude, vain and indecent. Shu does what is least expected and forces all to re-examine their lives.*

**Thursday, February 4 at 8pm**

**Saturday, February 6 at 5pm**

**Sunday, February 7 at 8pm**

**Carlos Sirah '17 MFA** is a performer and writer. His work encounters exile, rupture, and migrations. His theatre pieces include: *Notes on a Second Saeta* and *The Red Book Sessions*. His work has been performed and shown at Poet's House, Nuyorican Café, KGB, The Wild Project, ICP, and the National Black Theatre Festival. Sirah has developed work at Vermont Studio Center, Haystack Mountain School, The Hambidge Center, and the William Joiner Center for the Study of War and Social Consequences. He is a facilitator and serves on the steering committee of *Warrior Writers*, a community of veterans who make art.

### **A Big House**

**Written by Diane Exavier '17 MFA**

**Directed by Kate Bergstrom '18 MFA**

*How do you build a house? To answer this question one woman surrenders herself, fracturing in the process and sharing all of her parts. Dispatches from her exhausted and starving body multiply and transform into an unlikely family, a bunch of small plans, and, perhaps finally, a house big enough to hold us all.*

**Friday, February 5 at 8pm**  
**Saturday, February 6 at 8pm**  
**Sunday, February 7 at 5pm**

**Diane Exavier '17 MFA** writes, makes, thinks a lot, and laughs even more. She creates public programs, games, and experiments alongside her plays that challenge the traditional role of the audience. She invites viewers to participate in the active realization of a theater that rejects passive reception. Her work has been presented at New Urban Arts, Todo Bajo Control (Providence), West Chicago City Museum, and in New York: Bowery Poetry Club, Dixon Place, Independent Curators International, and more. Diane is a three-time recipient of the Roland Wood Fellowship for Theater Studies from Amherst College.

### **Vector**

**Written by Beth Nixon '18 MFA**

**Directed by Caitlin O'Connell '16 MFA**

*Noun*

1.

*a quantity having direction as well as magnitude, especially as determining the position of one point in space relative to another.*

2.

*an organism, typically a biting insect, that transmits a disease or parasite from one animal or plant to another, any agent that acts as a carrier or transporter*

*The band is always on their way to practice. Connie found a prosthetic foot at the ice rink. Interlibrary loan is only amazing if you use it. Sven's alarm triggers the flag dancing. Lift with your knees; I've got your back. Paulette, can you hear us? Who is that making out under the mosquito net? Let's take turns driving the bus.*

*Or is that a lifeboat?*

**Saturday, February 6 at 11am**  
**Sunday, February 7 at 2pm**

**Beth Nixon '18 MFA** builds portals and gives guided tours to places that don't yet exist. She creates plays, puppets, parades, pageants, clown acts, illustrated palindromes, suitcase theater, and cardboard spectacular on her own, and in collaboration with other humans of all ages, abilities and persuasions. Her performances and installations occur in galleries and garages, on street corners and stages. She's been an artist-in-residence at museums, schools, senior centers, and addiction recovery and mental health programs around the US, Canada, and one time in space. After a dozen years in Philadelphia and other haunts and jaunts, she and her family relocated (back) to Beth's Rhode Island homeland. She enjoyed an Arts Mentoring Fellowship at New Urban Arts from 2012-2014 and is a co-organizer of artist/activist partnerships for Providence's annual PRONK parade. Beth believes in the transformative power of libraries, tide pools, utopian performatives, and snacks. [www.ramshackleenterprises.net](http://www.ramshackleenterprises.net).

## **The Magical Kingdom**

**Written by Maurice De Caul '18 MFA**

**Directed by Ashley Teague '17 MFA**

*Jen is an American reporter new to Kabul. She has heard rumors of Kaftar, Afghanistan's only female warlord, training an all-female force to fight the Taliban. She decides to track Kaftar down to her fiefdom, high in the Hindu Kush. But as Jen and her team get closer, Kaftar's narrative, littered with untruths and misdirection, places Jennifer and her team in ambiguous, dangerous, and morally suspicious positions. The Magical Kingdom explores maternal grief through Kaftar's grief at the murder of her son by soviets, and how her grief has manifested as a thirty-year jihad.*

**Saturday, February 6 at 2pm**

**Sunday, February 7 at 11am**

**Maurice Emerson DeCaul '18 MFA**, a former Marine, is a poet, essayist, and playwright. His writing has been featured in the New York Times, The Daily Beast, Sierra Magazine, Epiphany, Callaloo, Narrative, The Common and others. His poems have been translated into French and Arabic and his theatre pieces have been produced at New York City's Harlem Stage; Poetic License Festival in New York City; Washington DC's Atlas INTERSECTIONS FESTIVAL in 2013 and 2014; l'Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe in Paris; The Paris Banlieues Bleues Festival; The Middelheim Jazz Festival, Antwerp; The Avignon Theatre Festival, France; Détours de Babel; and the Grenoble Festival, Grenoble, France. Forthcoming productions include: Arizona State University Gammage Memorial Auditorium; The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City; The David Rubenstein Atrium at Lincoln Center; The Mary L Welch Theatre at Lycoming College in Williamsport, Pennsylvania; and The Kimmel Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Maurice is a graduate of Columbia University (BA) and New York University (MFA).