



BROWN

Theatre Arts and Performance Studies  
Box 1897  
83 Waterman Street  
Providence, RI 02912  
401-863-3283  
Fax 401-863-7529

## PRESS RELEASE

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Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies (TAPS), Brown University  
83 Waterman Street, Providence, RI 02912

Contact: Paul Margrave, Marketing Coordinator  
(401) 863-2730 / [paul\\_margrave@brown.edu](mailto:paul_margrave@brown.edu) / [writingislive.com](http://writingislive.com) / [brown.edu/theatre](http://brown.edu/theatre)

Monday, January 23, 2017

### ***Writing is Live* Returns To Showcase New Writing for Performance**

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

*Writing is Live 2017* runs February 9th through 12th at Leeds Theatre on the main 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.

Maurice Decaul '18 MFA presents a workshop performance of *Honour*, while Beth Nixon '18 MFA presents *The Ferry to the Isle of Wight*. Meanwhile, first year students Kyla Searle '19 MFA and Julia Izumi '19 MFA present rehearsed readings of their work, *Residue* and *Sometime the Rain, Sometime the Sea*, respectively.

Each performance is repeated a number of times over the festival weekend, giving audiences plenty of opportunities to catch each piece. The plays are performed and directed by students in the Brown/Trinity MFA programs and Brown University's undergraduate programs.

The February festival weekend focuses on the first and second year students' work in development. This year for the first time, the third year MFA Playwriting students, Diane Exavier '17 MFA and Carlos Sirah '17 MFA, will host *Writing is REALLY Live*, an experimental programming series in

connection with the *Writing Is Live* festival. Between readings and workshops by the first and second year students, audiences will be invited into spaces of encounter: moments where people and new writing meet each other. Over refreshments, under floral canopies, and aboard ships, hosts Exavier and Sirah invite you to join them and dive into the questions: What are we writing? How are we living? How live is writing, really?

Workshop productions of work by third year MFA Playwriting students, Diane Exavier '17 MFA and Carlos Sirah '17 MFA, will be performed at The Flea Theater in New York on April 22 and 24, 2017. More details to follow soon.

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 9th through 12th 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 follows 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 12–4pm, or email [boxoffice@brown.edu](mailto:boxoffice@brown.edu).

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## Honour

**Written by Maurice Decaul '18 MFA**

**Directed by Ken-Matt Martin '19 MFA**

*Nadia, a self-styled internet celebrity shows up at the American Embassy in Quetta, seeking asylum after she is told about a plot to kill her to restore her family's honour, after semi-nude pictures of her appear on the internet. She is met by Karen, an American consul officer, sympathetic to her cause, but sensitive to the potentially explosive climate of the Quetta street. Nadia's fate hangs in the balance as does the already fractured American/Pakistani relationship... all decisions made or not made lead to potential catastrophe.*

**Thursday, February 9 at 8pm**  
**Saturday, February 11 at 5pm**  
**Sunday, February 12 at 8:30pm**

**Maurice 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).

### **The Ferry to the Isle of Wight**

**Written by Beth Nixon '18 MFA**

**Directed by Addie Gorlin '19 MFA**

*Get your tickets to The Ferry to the Isle of Wight and climb aboard with a friend, you might need them. The tour guides are lively. The Captain has been trained. The snack bar is stocked. There are exactly the right number of personal flotation devices... just in case we go off course... and encounter festering caves, slippery cliffs, toxic vapors, and a quivering mountain of scar tissue. Who will save us from ourselves?*

**Friday, February 10 at 8pm**

**Saturday, February 11 at 8:30pm**

**Sunday, February 12 at 5pm**

**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 *spectaculah* 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).

### **Residue**

**Written by Kyla Searle '19 MFA**

**Directed by Mauricio Salgado '18 MFA**

*In 1820 South Carolina, a Senator's wife contemplates the auction block. In 1930s California, a labor secretary confronts a cotton strike. In 1950s Bay Area, real estate developers configure segregated housing. All three moments converge through stories of ghosts, land, and erasure as the past shapes the present during a midnight bus ride.*

**Saturday, February 11 at 11am**

**Sunday, February 12 at 2pm**

**Kyla Searle '19 MFA** is a Bay Area-born writer, curator, and dramaturg. Her work in theatre has led her to the Institute for Arts and Civic Dialogue, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, La Mama ETC, Soho Rep, and New Dramatists as well as Germany, England, Brazil, and the Czech Republic. She regularly collaborates with theater artists Sharon Bridgforth and Daniel Alexander Jones. Kyla holds degrees from UCLA and NYU.

**Sometimes the Rain, Sometimes the Sea**

**Written by Julia Izumi '19 MFA**

**Directed by Kate Bergstrom '18 MFA**

*The Little Mermaid is Hans Christian Andersen's most beloved and well-known fairy tale, which is why that is not the story our friend, Dolan, is going to tell you today. No, he's going to tell you the story of a Little Rain Cloud who falls in love with a human. They are not the same story at all, he swears. And both stories have nothing to do with the storyteller either. Nope, nothing at all.*

**Saturday, February 11 at 2pm**

**Sunday, February 12 at 11am**

**Julia Izumi '19 MFA** is a playwright, performer, and aspiring penguin. Her plays have been developed with and produced by the WOW Café Theatre, New Ohio Theater, Dixon Place, Martin E. Segal Center, the New York Society Library, Williamstown Theatre Festival, A-Squared Theatre Workshop, Ugly Rhino Productions, and The Habitat Theatre Company. She was granted a First Floor Studio Residency at HB Studio and the Fresh Ground Pepper Playground PlayGroup Residency. She is a proud member of the BMI Librettists Workshop, the Beehive Collective, and the Artistic Committee of The Brewing Dept. Her play *Meet Murasaki Shikibu Followed by Book-Signing, and Other Things* was presented at the 2016 Great Plains Theatre Conference and in the NY International Fringe Festival. Her play *A Girl's Gotta Do, etc.* has been selected as a winner of the Theater Masters' National MFA Playwrights Festival 2017. As a performer, she has also collaborated with HERE, Incubator Arts, Mabou Mines, Lust & Liberty, Communal Spaces with The Motor Company, and Williamstown Theatre Festival. [www.juliaizumi.com](http://www.juliaizumi.com).

**THIRD YEAR MFA STUDENT CONTRIBUTORS:**

**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.

**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.