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***Writing is Live* showcases third year thesis productions**

Brown University Theatre presents two productions of new writing for performance this May, *There Is No One Between You And Me* by Dalia Taha '16 MFA and *Play: The Game –OR– Game: The Play* by Rick Burkhardt '16 MFA. The productions are written by final year students in the MFA Playwriting program in the Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies at Brown University as part of the year-round *Writing is Live* festival.

Providence, RI – Brown University Theatre presents two pieces of full-developed new writing for performance this May, as part of the year-round *Writing is Live* festival. Both shows are free and open to the public, although booking is recommended. The shows are performed by students from the Brown/Trinity MFA Acting program, as well as local actors. *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.

There Is No One Between You And Me by Dalia Taha '16 MFA is a meditation on memory and place. Mariam returns with her son Jawwad to the town where she grew up. But, once there, she is faced with the bizarre changes that have occurred and those that are yet to come. A story about the erasure of memory and landscape, *There Is No One Between You And Me* reminds us of the ways in which the buried past always manages to seep through, out, and up into the present. Directed by Caitlin Ryan O'Connell '16 MFA, with mentoring from José Rivera.

Play: The Game –OR– Game: The Play by Rick Burkhardt '16 MFA is an experiment in bringing the board game to the stage. Four friends gather in a nicely furnished North American den to play a

board game. The board game takes place during the London Blitz where four strangers, seeking shelter, invent games to help them endure the blackout. How the war ends is a well-known story—how the game ends is not. Directed by Shira Milikowsky, with mentoring from Madeleine George.

The year-round *Writing is Live* festival showcases writing in development by Brown University graduate students in the MFA Playwriting program. So far this year, the festival has produced *Spirit Trust* by final year student Katie Ka Vang '16 MFA and highlighted new work by Carlos Sirah '17 MFA, Diane Exavier '17 MFA, Beth Nixon '18 MFA, and Maurice Decaul '18 MFA.

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.

There Is No One Between You And Me is written Dalia Taha '16 MFA and directed by Caitlin Ryan O'Connell '16 MFA, with mentorship from José Rivera. Performances run Thursday, May 12 through Saturday, May 14 in Leeds Theatre (83 Waterman Street, Providence RI, 02912) at 7:30pm.

Play: The Game –OR– Game: The Play is written by Rick Burkhardt '16 MFA and directed by Shira Milikowsky, with mentorship from Madeleine George. Performances run Thursday, May 19 through Saturday, May 21 in Leeds Theatre at 7:30pm.

More information and biographies of the writers are available at www.writingislive.com.

Tickets for all performances are free and available online at 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.

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Dalia Taha '16 MFA is a Palestinian poet and playwright. She was born in Berlin in 1986 but grew up in Ramallah-Palestine. Her first play *Keffiyeh/Made in China* was produced by the Flemish Royal Theater and A.M. Qattan Foundation. The play was premiered in Brussels in 2012, then brought to Palestine where it toured seven Palestinian cities across the west bank. The play was given a staged reading in July 2013 at the Mosaic room in London, as part of the *Shubbak Festival: a window on contemporary Arab Culture*. In addition, two scenes of the play were staged at the Mohamed V theatre in Rabat-Morocco. The play was published in four languages, Arabic, English, French and Flemish. In 2013, Dalia was awarded the Young Artist grant to travel to Kinshasa and Hanover to attend theatre festivals in the two cities. In addition to plays, Taha writes poetry and fiction. She has published two collections of poetry, and one novel. Her poems have been translated into English, French, German, and Swedish. Her new play was just produced at the Royal Court in London. Taha graduated from Birzeit University in 2009 with a degree in Architecture.

Rick Burkhardt '16 MFA has created original music, theatre, and text pieces that have been performed in over 40 US cities, as well as in Europe, Canada, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, and Taiwan. Burkhardt's work has been supported by grants from ICElab, New Music USA, Meet the Composer, Jerome Foundation, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, the Millay Colony, Thomas Nee Commissioning Grant, Boswil Foundation, DAAD, and the US-Mexico Fund for Culture, as well as private and festival commissions. He has received Best Play awards at the San Francisco Fringe Festival and the New York Fringe Festival, and an Obie Special Citation Award for the music-theater work *Three Pianos*, created with Alec Duffy, Dave Malloy, and Rachel Chavkin. Burkhardt has collaborated with a wide variety of theater makers and ensembles including Lisa D'Amour, Erin Courtney, Kristen Kosmas, Sylvan Oswald, Anne Washburn, Hoi Polloi, Two-Headed Calf, and Banana Bag and Bodice. As a songwriter, he has shared stages with artists such as Pete Seeger, the Indigo Girls, Utah Phillips, Holly Near, and Peter Yarrow, and his original songs have received national radio play, including on NPR's *Morning Edition*.