



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 / writingislive.com / brown.edu/tickets

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Brown Theatre Showcases New Writing for Performance

PROVIDENCE, RI - The Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies at Brown University proudly announces the sixth annual *Writing is Live* festival, a presentation of new writing for performance by writers in Brown's graduate Playwriting M.F.A. program. *Writing is Live 2015* runs February 6th through 8th at the Leeds Theatre on campus at Brown. *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 one workshop and three readings. Rick Burkhardt '16 MFA working with co-writer, Jermaine Golden, will workshop a new music-theater piece, *Above The Noise*. Readings of new plays by Diane Exavier '17 MFA, Carlos Sirah '17 MFA, and Sophie Netanel '15 MFA will also be presented. The plays are acted and directed by students in the Brown/Trinity M.F.A. programs, Brown University's undergraduate programs, and the community at large. This year the winter festival focuses exclusively on work-in-development. A fully realized production of work by graduating writer, Katie Pearl '15 MFA, will follow in the spring.

A central site in New England for the formation of new playwrights, Brown's graduate Playwriting M.F.A. program grants its students broad inventive license while offering close mentorship and profound resources in the department, the university, and the greater local to international communities. Run by playwright and department Chair, Erik Ehn, the program cultivates 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 Alegria 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 M.F.A. students and program head, Erik Ehn, please contact writingislive@gmail.com or call 401-863-2730.

Writing Is Live runs February 6th through 8th in Leeds Theatre, 83 Waterman Street, Providence, RI 02912. A full schedule and biographies of the writers are available at www.writingislive.com and also follow below. Tickets for all festival events are free and available online at <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.

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Above The Noise

**Written and Composed by Rick Burkhardt '16 MFA and Jermaine Golden
Directed by James Dean Palmer '16 MFA**

Above The Noise is an a cappella musical performed completely live by a cast of singer/actors who are also the orchestra, every note made with the human voice. Theatrical, ridiculous, and a bit melancholy, the show explores collegiality and friendship, the way the past sticks with us even as it vanishes, and the things we hang onto as memorabilia in a time when nearly everything is recorded and stored.

**Friday, February 6 at 8pm
Saturday, Feb 7 at 8pm
Sunday, Feb 8 at 2pm**

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. Presenters and commissioners include the Lucerne,

Donaueschingen, Wien Modern, and Darmstadt Festivals, LaMama NYC, American Repertory Theater, New York Theater Workshop, and musical ensembles such as ICE, Wet Ink, sfSound, Ensemble SurPlus, the La Jolla Symphony, the Olympia Chamber Orchestra, Ensemble XII, and Red Fish Blue Fish.

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 Frigid 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."

We Have Everything You Need for the Problems You Might Have

Written by Diane Exavier '17 MFA

Directed by Chao Bian '17 MFA

As a city falls again and again, a couple of born and bred river kids, a deep sea diving reality television star, a farmer, a nightclub owner, a strong man, and a woman with a giant fin all ask: How do you love when the world is ending? They journey from the bottom of the sea to a place beyond the shadows, eventually arriving at an even more important question: How do we love now?

Saturday, Feb 7 at 5pm

Sunday, Feb 8 at 8pm

Diane Exavier '17 MFA writes, makes, thinks a lot, and laughs even more. Hailing from Brooklyn, she uses the Caribbean space as inspiration for creating theatrical worlds that reflect her Haitian-American heritage. Her creative practice orbits around diaspora, abysses, and escapes from the traps of genre, form, language, and time. She has presented work at Bowery Poetry Club, the West Chicago City Museum, Dixon Place, Medialia Gallery, the Brick Theater, and Independent Curators International. Diane has studied theatre at Amherst and Smith Colleges. She is a three-time recipient of the Roland Wood Theater Studies Fellowship from Amherst College and a first-year playwright in Writing for Performance at Brown University.

Planets Measured by Parallax

Written by Carlos Sirah '17 MFA

Directed by Ashley Teague '17 MFA

Planets Measured by Parallax follows a group of soldiers on a deployment in Iraq, who, are rocked by a suicide while in theatre. Is a suicide legible event? What can the suicide tell them about who they are, who they have been, and who they may yet become: a story of wrestling when the reevaluation of a world is required.

Saturday, Feb 7 at 2pm
Sunday, Feb 8 at 5pm

Carlos Sirah '17 MFA is a poet, performer, playwright, activist, and veteran. His work encounters exile, rupture, displacement in relation to institutions, local and general, through a queer lens. His theater 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. In 2014, he performed on the main stage at the Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival. Carlos has developed work at Vermont Studio 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 write about the experiences of war, and sometimes peace; he has also worked as an organizer for Iraq Veterans Against the War.

Widdershins

Written by Sophie Netanel '15 MFA

Directed by Caitlin Ryan O'Connell '16 MFA

There lives a wife at Usher's Well and she has three bonny sons. A young girl loves the middle son, and he loves her. At the edges lurk an old woman and a mysterious traveller. This is a fairy story and all the old rules apply: turn your coat inside out, put rowan wood outside your door, do not mourn too long or the dead come back.

Saturday, Feb 7 at 11am
Sunday, Feb 8 at 11am

Sophie Netanel '15 MFA is a playwright and actor in the Brown/Trinity Rep M.F.A. program. Recent acting credits include: *In the Next Room* (Catherine Givings), *Twelfth Night* (Viola), and *Project Hedda* (Hedda Gabler). She has written a short play, *White Star*, produced in Brown/Trinity's First Look Festival. For her honors thesis in Literary Arts at Brown University she wrote a fantasy novel. She also wrote a solo show called *Flight* as a capstone project in theatre. This is her first full length play.