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Guest Artist Confirmations for Summer 2008

Guest Artists who visit campus during our summer session are one of the most important advantages the playwriting program at Hollins has to offer.

Our playwrights have the unique opportunity to meet and work with some of the most important people in new play development today. Our students interact with top notch professionals as colleagues and mentors in an environment more like that encountered in a theatre than in a classroom.

With the summer session less than a month away, we are able to confirm an impressive slate of guests for 2008. There isn’t room here to list all of their impressive accomplishments and credentials, however if you follow the URL at the bottom, you will be able to get their full bios and the most current information on both faculty and visiting speakers. The MySpace page will provide up-to-the-minute information on topics and events.

Our guests for this summer, in order of their arrival on campus, are:

Toby Huss, film and stage actor  
Jeff Goode, playwright, actor, director, producer  
Cheryl Snodgrass, director  
Randy Rollison, actor, director, artistic director, producer  
Paul Meshejian, artistic director of PlayPenn in Philadelphia  
Lucy Thurber, playwright  

Don LaPlant, playwright  
Bonnie Metzgar, playwright director, producer, dramaturg, artistic director of AboutFace Theatre in Chicago  
Celise Kalke, artistic associate and dramaturg for the Alliance Theatre in Atlanta  
Michael Kerry Williams, artistic director of Young Audiences of Virginia  
Cindy Petersen, Roanoke regional director of Young Audiences of Virginia

In addition to speaking in the Lab, guests will also give a variety of workshops and participate side by side with our students in various events including Overnight Sensations and No Shame theatre.

We're confident that not only will our guests help encourage for years to come. We're very pleased to welcome Tim to the Playwright’s Lab.

We’re also committed to helping him—and each of our other MFA candidates—achieve their personal, professional, artistic, and academic goals.

We’re confident that not only will his voice benefit from our program, but so too will his own students and the artists that his work will help encourage for years to come.

http://www.myspace.com/timcochran

Student Spotlight: Timothy Cochran

“Toby Huss is currently an Assistant Professor of Theatre at Holyoke Community College and has a diverse educational and professional background in theatre and communication. Tim is dedicated to the idea that a playwright must have experiential learning in every aspect of the medium for which he writes. Tim said, “I hadn’t had any luck in finding a playwriting program that matched my rigid schedule. The six-week intensive structure is a perfect fit for me because of my desire to develop my writing and achieve my ultimate goal to create a theatre that produces new work in Western Massachusetts.”

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2008 Norfolk Southern Festival of New Works Features *Dreamtime*, by Maura Campbell

The innovative set design, which accentuated the expressionistic elements of the text, was created by Mill Mountain Theatre’s resident designer, Jimmy Ray Ward. Sound design was provided by Tim Stanley.

There is no substitute for what a playwright can learn about their work in a full production with professional actors. Maura told us, “Just having the actors read through the play and listening to them talk about it among themselves, and asking me questions allows me to do the more refined work on my play. There really is no other way for me to do that. There is nothing like having committed actors...it is as much an exploration of what makes life precious and worth living, no matter what happens.”

The riveting script is inspired by the real life murders of two married Dartmouth professors by a pair of teen-aged boys.

The production was directed by Todd Ristau, who is both the director of the Playwright’s Lab and Literary Associate for Mill Mountain Theatre. *Dreamtime* was performed in repertory fashion, alternating performances with a second new script, *Splitting Heirs*, written by Freyda Thomas and directed by Mill Mountain Theatre’s Artistic Director Patrick Benton.

Both productions were performed on the Waldron Stage, and used many of the same cast members.

“...structurally complex and full of arresting ideas...” —Roanoke Times review by Jeff DeBell

http://www.roanoke.com/extra/wb/161369
Announcing the NEW WORKS INITIATIVE

The New Works Initiative is a restricted fund for offsetting costs related to productions of work by students, faculty and guest artists affiliated with the Playwright’s Lab at Hollins University. These productions might be on campus or in any of the various organizations in our growing network of affiliated theatres.

A drawback of a low residency playwriting program conducted in short summer sessions is limited opportunities for the kind of experiential learning only a real production can afford.

We plan to use contributions made to this fund to bring one student playwright and one guest professional director together each month for three weeks to rehearse and mount a week-long run of a minimally produced showcase of a new play.

These productions would use Hollins theatre students and local actors, creating synergies between the undergraduate and graduate programs as well as exciting community outreach opportunities.

This novel program has the potential to make Roanoke a vibrant and nationally recognized incubator for new works development with the Playwright’s Lab at its center.

Please consider making a gift to this fund to bring one student playwright and one guest professional director together each month for three weeks to rehearse and mount a week-long run of a minimally produced showcase of a new play.

Please visit www.hollins.edu/giveonline and under “Gift and Pledge Information,” look for this option: “My gift is for ___” Simply indicate that your gift is for the New Works Initiative and your tax deductible contribution will be set aside in a restricted fund to be used only in support of productions of new student plays from the Playwright’s Lab at Hollins University.

New Play by Toby Thelin Featured in New York’s Paper Beats Rock Reading Series

MFA playwright Toby Thelin joined an impressive list of writers whose work has been read at PBR with a reading of The Car Boys on May 4th. His play follows the lives of three men who are coming of age in the wake of the Vietnam War, and trying to escape reality through loud music, fast women, and faster machines.

PBR is curated by Daniel Manley, Matthew Korahais, Andrea Stover, and Valerie Work. The innovative venue has presented work by writers as diverse as Katya Schapiro, Krista Knight, Normandy Sherwood, Karinne Keithley, Justin Maxwell, Matt Korahais, Trish Harnetiaux, Kalle Macrides, Chad Beckim, Misha Shulman, Dave Myers, Erin Courtney, Rei Vasques, Eric Wellman and many others.

Paper Beats Rock is a weekly reading series started to support the students of the playwriting program at Brooklyn College, and has grown into something really special. Free and open to the public, PBR meets at Club Rehab (formerly Club Midway) at 25 Avenue B in the Lower East Side of Manhattan.

Devil Sedan, by Kenley Smith, Featured in Great Plains Theatre Conference

Devil Sedan was written last summer as part of Stephen Sossaman’s Narrative Theory class, with some early scenes tested at No Shame Theatre.

Devil Sedan, by Kenley Smith, was invited to the Great Plains Theatre Conference in Omaha, Nebraska this summer where he had a professional reading of his new play Devil Sedan. He was also asked to serve as a panelist for the entire conference.

The annual week-long conference (hosted by the Metropolitan Community College) featured the work of eight emerging playwrights, workshops with established playwrights, participation of a large number of theatre companies and ensembles, panel discussions, and other readings.

The reading of Smith’s play was performed by Baby D Productions, directed by founder and Artistic Director, Lorie Obradovich.

Lorie said, “I loved it. I was lucky to get a great cast, everybody I called I told them this was a great script and they all agreed to do it. We had an amazing amount of rehearsals considering the size of the cast, but everybody loved the play, so they all made time.”

Baby D is considering the script for a full production in Omaha.

“I want to do this play,” Lorie told Ken, “I’m fascinated with those little bits of the world that we don’t live in but that exist. We get these little glimpses into these seemingly impossible characters that do exist in certain parts of the world.”

http://www.mccneb.edu/theatreconference/index.asp
Looking to match your script to the needs of that theatre, including their audience, their season, the kinds of plays they like to do, and what they are currently asking for in their submission guidelines.

Do not think you are going to save time or money by submitting multiple scripts in the same envelope. You aren’t doing yourself any favors that way.

People in the literary office do not look at multiple submissions from a single playwright in the same envelope as a time saver. They look at the package as significantly increasing the amount of time they are being asked to spend on a single writer.

Each of your plays was written as an independent story, and those stories should be submitted the same way—separately and not as part of a bulk offering.

Do not submit multiple scripts.

A lot of playwrights have a substantial body of work, and it can be difficult to decide which play to send out from everything you’ve written.

But you need to choose.

Take some time to pick your best play. As I’ve suggested before, try make your submission decision by considering things from the theatre’s point of view. You’re looking to match your script to the needs of that theatre, including their audience, their season, the kinds of plays they like to do, and what they are currently asking for in their submission guidelines.

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Also, wait until you have gotten a response from the first play you submitted before sending another play to the same theatre.

I have had playwrights send me as many as 8 plays in a single package. That package is routinely shifted to the back of the stack because just looking at it feels like too much work.

If the reader doesn’t like the first play in that package, reading each one after that will be even harder to start.

Consider this: if only for your own mental health, why risk having your entire body of work rejected all at once?

From the Director: Submission Tips #10 (Multiple Submissions)

In addition to my role as Program Director, I’m also the Literary Associate at a professional theatre. This means I read (and reject) a lot of plays. For the next few issues, I’ll be presenting tips to take some mystery and agony out of the submission process.

Just what you need.
More Drama.

Check out our MySpace page!
http://www.myspace.com/hollinsplaywrightslab