COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF THE ARTS
THEATRE

THE OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN II
CENTER FOR THEATRE STUDIES

NEW PLAYS NOW

A FESTIVAL OF ORIGINAL WORK
BY THE MFA PLAYWRITING CLASS
OF 2014
Welcome to the 2014 New Plays Now Festival!

Here it is: the future.

This is the next generation of playwrights.

Here are ten strikingly different visions of the world and ten strikingly different ways of putting it on stage.

The world keeps changing—and so does the way we see it, feel it, know it, understand it, experience it—in the lives and the art we make for one another.

And yes, we saved a seat for you.

— Charles L. Mee
Head of Playwriting, Columbia University School of the Arts
Alexandra Bassett

MENTOR: ELIZABETH SWADOS

Alexandra Bassett is a Greek-American theatre artist and composer. Her work has been presented at 3LD, Galapagos Art Space, The Construction Company and The Flea among others in NYC and Brooklyn, and has been produced by NYMF, ITE, Communal Spaces, Dragon’s Egg Studio and FullStop Collective. Her latest plays include Colossus (Schapiro Theatre), The Italian Interludes (Foreplays), and Womanize: The Sex and the Drama (Chashama). Recently Alexandra composed music for Anne Carson’s Orestes at Miller Theatre, she worked with the Rude Mech’s on their LCT3 production Stop Hitting Yourself, and she continues to be a literary reader with The Play Company.

“My plays are built for the multidisciplinary performer, the semiotics enthusiast, and the polyglotic state of mind. They are intended to engage and delight.”

Hammaad Chaudry

MENTOR: TONY KUSHNER

Hammaad Chaudry has trained at the Royal Court Theatre in London and has had work staged on both sides of the Atlantic including Salaam, Mr. Bush (Royal Court Theatre) and God Willing (The Flea Theater, NY). He also holds a BA in International Politics from the University of Surrey.

“Since my young teens I have always been passionate about putting forth a narrative, even if I was not always able to articulate it that way, especially narratives that have been marginalized or purposefully misconstrued. By dramatizing underrepresented narratives on stage, one can enable a more just society. To pursue that in my work, with honesty and truth, and to express it in the most entertaining way for the audience, is my goal as a writer. At least, for now.”
Sander Gusinow

MENTOR: RICHARD GREENBERG

Sander’s plays have been read and performed on both coasts. In Oregon, he was published in Portland’s dramatic journal Pause and performed at the CoHo Theatre. Since coming to New York in 2011, his plays Batman, Hansen v Greta, Nerd Love, and Cinderella have received multiple readings and productions throughout the city. Cinderella was a winner of the Perchance to Dream Theatre’s one-act competition in 2013. Recently he was the recipient of the TENT DIY grant for Jewish artists.

“As you’re probably aware by now, our existence can be tumultuous, bleak, and depressing. I’m inspired by the things that keep us going; love, family, friendship and fantasy. In a world of darkness, I like to write about candles.”

Cinderella (2013), with Greg Nussen and Sophie Amoss. Photo by Thu Pham.

Mustafa Kaymak

MENTOR: DAVID HENRY HWANG

Mustafa Kaymak holds a BA in Journalism from Ankara University and an AAS in Playwriting from Prince William Sound Community College (PWSCC in Alaska).

“I write to create a spark in the mind. I hope this spark will light the road between the mind and the heart. Disparities, injustices, and tyrannies were in existence thousands of years ago, and so were love, conscience and compassion. Through it all, playwrights have always been there.”

Tears of Anatolia (2013), with Julia Peterson and Lunga Radebe. Photo by Kelly Stuart.
Claytie Mason is a playwright/director and co-founder of Seattle’s award-winning ensemble theatre company, Nebunele. She has twice headlined San Francisco’s DIVAfest as a writer/director, most recently in collaboration with concert violinist Rebecca Jackson on The Wind and Rain. Claytie is finishing her MFA in playwriting with a focus in Narrative Medicine, examining stories around aging, illness, and identity.


Ashley Minihan’s work has been produced and developed at the New York International Fringe Festival, the Actors Studio, the Lark Play Development Center, Arizona Classical Theatre, and Columbia Stages. Ashley is a member of The Dramatists Guild of America, Inc.

“I struggled with a debilitating illness throughout my young adulthood and learned that while suffering may not ennoble, it can instigate profound change. This possibility is what I seek to explore as a writer, both in intimate chamber-piece plays and in more expansive projects.

“Enormous challenges lie ahead for our species—an increasingly destructive climate, technology that could evolve beyond our control, a social fabric that could fray beyond repair. It is a frightening time to be a person and a fascinating time to be an artist.”

The Assistant (2012), with Jamie Geiger and Gina Trebiani. Photo by Matthew Dunivan.
Rebecca Nichloson

Rebecca Nichloson is the author of over a dozen full-act, one-act and ten-minute dramatic works, including: Hello, I’m Eve (winner of the 2013 Jane Chambers Student Playwriting Award); Prodigal Children; Blackheart; Rose out the Pavement; Girl and Volcano and Collision with Cake. Her works have been developed at The Playwrights’ Center of Minneapolis (where she was a Many Voices Fellow for two residencies), Harlem Classical Theatre and Penumbra Theatre Company. She is a recipient of a Liberace Award, Howard Stein Fellowship and a Matthews Fellowship. She is currently the recipient of a 2014 America in Play Fellowship.

“I write the stories I feel compelled to write, the stories that haunt my dreams, boil my blood and call my name in the night.”

Bryan Quick

During his time at Columbia, Bryan was given the opportunity to travel to the Edmonton International Fringe Theatre Festival, the Norwegian Theatre Academy, Robert Wilson’s Watermill Center, and the Deutsches Literaturinstitut Leipzig. He translated German texts, studied world drama, wrote and directed. These were all profound experiences for him – in one way or another – and he is incredibly grateful to the School of the Arts. Most recently, he has become a chess teacher.

“Theatre can be indispensable to life, if one seeks a space where one does not lie to oneself. Where we do not conceal where we are, what we are, and where that which we do is what it is and we do not pretend it is anything else… and this, in time, will lead us out of the theatre.” — Jerzy Grotowski
Celine Song

Celine Song is a member of Ars Nova’s 2014 Play Group, a 2012 Edward F. Albee Foundation Writing Fellow, a 2014 resident at Yaddo, a 2014 Great Plains Theatre Conference Playlab Playwright, and a 2013 Sponsored Artist of Theatre That Transcends.

“Through storytelling, we actualize and understand ourselves and the world. We drift through time experiencing the events happening to us, but they are no more than random spurts of empty experience if not recounted and made sense of using language. Consequently, writing for me is as much an exercise in clarity as it is in creative expression. I care about art that does not run from the grave task of articulating what is difficult to articulate.

“In my plays, I try to articulate as clearly as I can the cruelties we inflict on each other, both personal and systematic.”

Michael Walek

Michael Walek is a graduate of NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts Department of Dramatic Writing. He is a member of Youngblood, Ensemble Studio Theatre’s emerging writers group.

“I want to ask men about love.

“In 385 BC, the playwright Agathon held a dinner party. Required from every guest was a speech about love. Plato recorded the evening. It was The Symposium. In 2014, I held a series of dinner parties. Every guest answered questions over food and wine about love in the modern age. Their responses were adapted into the second act of a new play. This is Men in Love.”
Festival Calendar

Yvette and the Wild Shame
by Alexandra Bassett
April 12th at 8:00pm
April 13th at 2:30pm
A summerhouse. A ceremony. A war.
Artwork by The Beets

An Ordinary Man
by Hammaad Chaudry
April 5th at 8:00pm
(staged reading)
How can we individually face up to our own egos and collectively break the violent cycles of the past?
Artwork by Mustafa Kaymak

Ruth and Naomi
by Sander Gusinow
April 18th at 2:30pm and 8:00pm
April 21st at 2:30pm
This play is about obligation and sacrifice, and the consequence of loving unconditionally.
Artwork by Taylor Goodell Benedum

The Wishing Tree
by Mustafa Kaymak
April 15th at 8:00pm
April 16th at 2:30pm
April 19th at 2:30pm
What does it take to break THE forbidden?
Artwork by Taylor Goodell Benedum

The Big White Door
by Claytie Mason
April 16th at 7:30pm
April 17th at 7:30pm
Through the lens of pediatric medicine, The Big White Door explores how we talk to kids about death.
Artwork by Emma Amalia Surd
Note: Performances of The Big White Door will be held at Riverside Church, 91 Claremont Avenue.

Performances are held at The Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 West 42nd Street, New York, NY, with the exception of The Big White Door, which will be performed at Riverside Church, Room 15T, 91 Claremont Ave., New York, NY. All are free and open to the public. To make a reservation for The Big White Door, email thebigwhitedoor@gmail.com. Reservations for all other events at www.columbiastages.org.
About the Festival

New Plays Now is the annual festival of new plays by emerging artists from the MFA Theatre Program at Columbia University School of the Arts. Taught by a faculty of internationally renowned creators, practitioners, producers and scholars, the Program provides students with the foundation for a career in professional theatre, with programs in Acting, Directing, Playwriting, Dramaturgy, Stage Management, and Theatre Management & Producing. Presented annually, these productions are a laboratory for students’ dramatic experimentation and a glimpse—for theatre-goers—of what’s next.

Remission
by Ashley Minihan
April 24th at 2:30pm and 8:00pm
April 26th at 8:00pm
What if the one you love hid a serious illness from you... until he relapsed?
Artwork by Serene Lim

Anatomy of Pie
by Rebecca Nicholson
April 11th at 2:30pm and 8:00pm
April 12th at 2:30pm
Anatomy of Pie is concerned with family, the silent energy between mothers, daughters and lovers.
Artwork by Rebecca Nicholson

Family
by Celine Song
April 17th at 2:30pm
April 19th at 8:00pm
April 21st at 7:30pm
Family is a play about being born into a violent planet.
Artwork by Winnie Song

FAUST (a tragedy)
by Bryan Quick
April 4th at 2:30pm and 8:00pm
April 5th at 2:30pm
(staged reading)
Drunk and raving, Faust sells his soul to get back the only thing he has ever cared about.
Artwork by Seth Hamlin

Men in Love
by Michael Walek
April 13th at 8:00pm
(staged reading)
What do men really think about love and sex in 2014?
Artwork by Hedi Slimane

Artwork by Serene Lim
Artwork by Winnie Song
Artwork by Rebecca Nicholson
Artwork by Hedi Slimane
Artwork by Seth Hamlin
The MFA Theatre Program at Columbia is international, collaborative and interdisciplinary. Named in honor of Oscar Hammerstein II, it is defined by its location in New York City, a global capital of theatre, and by the extensive network of Columbia alumni who run prestigious Broadway, Off-Broadway and regional theatres; direct and perform in Tony- and other award-winning productions; work in every level of the professional theatre world; and teach, mentor and engage with students on an ongoing basis. Columbia Stages is the producing arm of the Oscar Hammerstein II Center for Theatre Studies.

About the Program

Columbia University School of the Arts awards the Master of Fine Arts degree in Film, Theatre, Visual Arts and Writing and the Master of Arts degree in Film Studies, and offers an interdisciplinary program in Sound Arts. The School is a thriving, diverse community of artists from around the world with talent, vision and commitment. The faculty is composed of acclaimed and internationally renowned artists, film and theatre directors, writers of poetry, writers of fiction and nonfiction, playwrights, producers, critics and scholars. Every year the School of the Arts presents exciting and innovative programs for the public including performances, exhibitions, screenings, symposia, a film festival, and numerous lectures, readings, panel discussions and talks with artists, writers, critics and scholars. For more information, visit arts.columbia.edu.