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PLAYPENN PRESENTS FIFTH NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

Conference Culminates in Free Staged Readings on July 23, 24, 25, and 26

PlayPenn, Philadelphia's professional new play development organization, will hold its fifth annual New Play Development Conference on July 10-July 26 at the Adrienne Theater (2030 Sansom Street) in Philadelphia. The Conference will feature two weeks of intensive work on six works-in-progress by **Frances Ya-Chu Cowhig** (*410 [Gone]*); **Mary Hamilton** (*We Three*); **Michael Hollinger** (*Ghost-Writer*); **Arden Kass** (*Appetite*); **John Orlock** (*The Specificity of Paradise*); and **J.T. Rogers** (*Blood and Gifts*).

The Conference will culminate in staged readings of the plays on July 23, 24, 25 and 26, which are free and open to the public. Reservations are recommended and can be made by calling 215-568-1434 beginning July 10th.

"The goal of the conference is the development of plays, through a process of collaboration, experimentation, rehearsal and rewriting, rather than offering fully realized productions of finished works. We focus on playwrights' needs by providing a laboratory environment and the necessary tools for playwrights, making the fundamental work of the theatre possible without the constraints and pressures of production, promotion and commercial consideration," said **Paul Meshejian**, Artistic Director of PlayPenn.

There will also be readings of three plays which need to be heard by an audience, but whose writers may not need or benefit from the intensive writing support from the rest of the Conference. There will be a reading of *The Morini Strad* by **Willy Holtzman** on **July 20 at 7:00 PM**; *Two Jews Walk Into A War* by **Seth Rozin** on **July 21 at 7:00 PM**; and a third play, to be decided, on **July 22 at 7:00 PM**.

"By offering readings by writers who simply want to take advantage of the feedback of hearing their work aloud the Conference is able to accommodate a larger pool of writers at different stages of their careers and to adapt to writers whose plays are in varying stages in their evolution," explained Meshejian.

The plays that will be developed during two-week workshops during the Conference are as follows:

In *410 [GONE]* by **Francis Ya-Chu Cowhig**, a sister searches for her brother in the Chinese Land of the Dead, encountering a frenetic landscape where the Goddess of Mercy and the Monkey King reign, and Dance Dance Revolution summons the Soup of Forgetting. Juxtaposing the closet where the teen killed himself with his ancestral home beneath of mountain in Shandong Province, the play follows the siblings as the sister searches for meaning inside suicide, and her brother tries to remember who he was whilst navigating the hijinks of the mythical beings. *410[GONE]*, directed by **Ken Prestininzi** and dramaturged by Carrie Kaplan, will be read on **Saturday, July 25 at 4:00 PM**.

In a rural American town, a young girl is reported to have fallen under the ice of a frozen creek, but no body can be found to verify the report. Suspicion soon lands on one man, an outsider to the town, who lives near the creek and must fight to secure his innocence. *We Three* by **Mary Hamilton** follows the lives of three characters in the aftermath of this event as their own stories intertwine around the mystery of the missing girl, looking at the beliefs people create to fill absences in their lives. *We Three*, directed by **Hal Brooks** and dramaturged by Elizabeth Pool, will be read on **Sunday, July 26 at 5:00 PM**.

Ghost-Writer by **Michael Hollinger** is a tale of inspiration, expiration, and vicarious love. Novelist Franklin Woolsey has died, dictating his latest novel to his devoted secretary, Myra. But she continues to type anyway, claiming she's still receiving dictation, and dutifully sends each chapter to the publisher under her late employer's name. (Woolsey's widow – who hasn't heard a word from her husband – is understandably vexed.) Is Myra channeling the dead author? Is she merely an artful forger? Where did the words used to come from, and where do they come from now? *Ghost-Writer*, directed by **Harriet Power** and dramaturged by Larry Loebell, will be read on **Thursday, July 23 at 8:00 PM**.

In *Appetite*, by **Arden J. Kass**, a cookbook written by Hana's mother during the Holocaust miraculously finds its way into the hands of a successful middle-aged architect, forcing her to re-examine her relationship to her mother, her daughter, her past and her present. *Appetite* is Hana's poignant struggle with herself to re-open a book she has kept closed for half her lifetime. *Appetite*, directed by **Ed Sobel** and dramaturged by Rebecca Wright, will be read on **Saturday, July 25 at 8:00 PM**.

In *The Specificity of Paradise* by **John Orlock**, Adrienne, a late-career diplomatic officer returns to the house of her father, to find herself captive and interrogated by an anti-terrorist security team. A drama of torture, lingering passion, and unfulfilled dreams, *The Specificity of Paradise* explores coming to terms with inevitable loss under otherwise unbearable conditions. *The Specificity of Paradise*, directed by **Jackson Gay** and dramaturged by Rick DesRochers, will

be read on **Sunday, July 26 at 2:00 PM.**

Blood and Gifts by **J.T. Rogers** is set in the Frontier Province of Afghanistan in 1981 after the Soviet Union has invaded. One American agent and one Afghan warlord meet in a secret safe house in the mountains. Amid questions of trust and betrayal, what starts in this room soon can't be stopped. *Blood and Gifts*, directed by **Lucie Tiberghien** and dramaturged by Michele Volansky, will be read on **Friday, July 24 at 8:00 PM.**

Sandwiched into the middle of the Conference on **Friday, July 24 at 6:00 PM** will be a Symposium titled “**Are We Talking to Anyone but Ourselves,**” bringing together three artists and thinkers whose work has persistently crossed boundaries, taken risks, and sought new audiences and forms. Moderated by writer and interactive artist, **Michael Joyce**, a Vassar College professor, the conversation will also feature playwright, producer, impresario, sound artist, and teacher **Dan Rothenberg** and Los Angeles visual artist **Alexandra Grant**.

PlayPenn is committed to the development of new plays, the advancement of new voices in the theatre both locally and nationally, and the cross-fertilization of writers, directors, dramaturgs, and actors. PlayPenn is made possible through the generous support of the Phoebe W. Haas Charitable Trusts A and B and major grants from, among others, the Charlotte Cushman Foundation, the Dramatists Guild Fund, the Samuel S. Fels Fund, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, the Philadelphia Cultural Fund, The Philadelphia Cultural Management Initiative, and The Pew Center for Arts and Heritage through the Philadelphia Theatre Initiative.

For further information, please call 215.242.2813.

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2009 NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Monday, July 20

7:00 PM THE MORINI STRAD by Willy Holtzman

Tuesday, July 21

7:00 PM TWO JEWS WALK INTO A WAR by Seth Rozin

Wednesday, July 22

7:00 PM Play to be announced

Thursday, July 23

8:00 PM GHOST-WRITER by Michael Hollinger
Directed by Harriet Power, Larry Loebell, dramaturg

Friday, July 24

6:00 PM Symposium: Are We Talking to Anyone But Ourselves
Moderated by Michael Joyce with Alexandra Grant and Dan Rothenberg

8:00 PM BLOOD AND GIFTS by J.T. Rogers
Directed by Lucie Tiberghien, Michele Volansky, dramaturg

Saturday, July 25

2:00 PM Staged Reading of original works from Philadelphia Young Playwrights

4:00 PM 410[GONE] by Francis Ya-Chui Cowhig
Directed by Ken Prestininzi, Carrie Kaplan, dramaturg

8:00 PM APPETITE by Arden J. Kass
Directed by Ed Sobel, Rebecca Wright, dramaturg

Sunday, July 26

2:00 PM THE SPECIFICITY OF PARADISE by John Orlock
Directed by Jackson Gay, Rick DesRochers, dramaturg

5:00 PM WE THREE by Mary Hamilton
Directed by Hal Brooks, Elizabeth Pool, dramaturg

All performances are free and will take place at the Adrienne Theatre at 2030 Sansom Street.

For reservations call 215-568-1434 beginning July 10th.

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