

## LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCES PROJECTS FOR 2023 DNA NEW WORK SERIES

### Popular Play Development Series Returns for 10th Year

La Jolla, CA – La Jolla Playhouse is pleased to announce the dates and projects for its 2023 [DNA New Work Series](#), running **November 30 – December 10** in the Playhouse's Rao and Padma Makineni Play Development Center (PDC) and Seuss 1 rehearsal spaces.

This year's readings include **McNeal**, written and directed by Pulitzer Prize winner **Ayad Akhtar** (Playhouse's *Junk, The Who & The What*); **Human Museum**, by **Miyoko Conley**, directed by **Jesca Prudencio** (WOW Festival's *PDA*); **To Red Tendons**, by Peter Kim George, directed by Playhouse Directing Fellow Kat Yen; and **Suburban Black Girl**, by **Zakiya Young**, directed by Playhouse's Director of Arts Engagement and In-House Casting **Jacole Kitchen** (Playhouse's *Pick Me Last*), along with two Without Walls (WOW) works-in-progress: **59 Acres**, created by **Marike Splint** (WOW Festival's *Among Us*), and **Sound Place Love**, created by **Braden Abraham** and **Gordon Hempton**.

The Playhouse's **DNA New Work Series** offers playwrights and directors the opportunity to develop a script by providing rehearsal time, space and resources, culminating in public readings. This process gives audiences a closer look at the play development process, while allowing the Playhouse to develop work and foster relationships with both established and up-and-coming playwrights.

"The DNA New Works Series serves as a vital pipeline for new work – on our stages and beyond. Over the last decade, DNA has become one of the Playhouse's most popular programs. Patrons relish the opportunity to take part in the birth of a new play, while giving playwrights invaluable support and feedback in the earliest stages of development," said **Christopher Ashley**, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse.

Tickets to the DNA New Work Series readings are free; reservations are required. For more information, please visit [LaJollaPlayhouse.org](http://LaJollaPlayhouse.org).

The DNA New Work Series has been a launching pad for numerous projects that have gone on to full productions in future Playhouse seasons, including Pulitzer Prize winner Ayad Akhtar's *The Who & The What*; *Chasing the Song*, by the Tony Award-winning team of Joe DiPietro and David Bryan (*Memphis, Diana*); Michael Benjamin Washington's *Blueprints to Freedom*; UC San Diego MFA graduate Jeff Augustin's *The Last Tiger in Haiti*; *Miss You Like Hell*, by Pulitzer Prize winner Quiara Alegría Hudes and Erin McKeown; *Kill Local*, by UC San Diego MFA graduate Mat Smart; *What Happens Next*, by UC San Diego MFA graduate and faculty member Naomi Iizuka; *The Luckiest* by Melissa Ross; *The Coast Starlight* by Keith Bunin; *SUMO* by Lisa Sanaye Dring; and the upcoming *Derecho* by Noelle Viñas.

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All DNA New Work Series projects take place with no scenic, costume or staging elements, and actors will have scripts in hand. The creative teams will be available for interviews for feature coverage; however, in order to preserve the developmental nature of the program, DNA Series presentations are not open to review.

### DNA New Work Series Projects

#### ***Suburban Black Girl***

By Zakiya Young

Directed by Jacole Kitchen

Performances Thursday 11/30 at 7:00pm and Saturday 12/2 at 7:00pm

Zakiya Young is the poster child for racial reconciliation. She code switches with lightning speed. White sorority? Like, no prob. A Black and Latino church with a white pastor? She'll praise God in Spanish! Broadway? Is it color blind casting or an all-Black show? Doesn't matter because this suburban Black girl has mastered the art of being 'non-threatening.' But when COVID lockdowns put a spotlight on police killing unarmed Black people, everything she suppressed begins seeping out like an infected wound.

#### ***Human Museum***

By Miyoko Conley

Directed by Jesca Prudencio

Friday 12/1 at 7:00pm and Sunday 12/3 at 3:00pm

Set in a future where humans have gone extinct, *Human Museum* follows a group of robots on Earth that run a museum dedicated to organizing the physical and digital artifacts of human life. On the centenary of human extinction, a sudden radio call upends everything the robots thought they knew about the last days of humanity. *Human Museum* explores what we will leave behind when we're gone, and who will carry on our legacy.

#### ***59 Acres***

Created by Marike Splint

A Without Walls work-in-progress

Friday 12/1 at 3:00pm, 3:15pm, 3:30pm, 3:45pm, 4:00pm, 4:15pm

Sunday 12/3 at 12:00pm, 12:15pm, 12:30pm, 12:45pm, 1:00pm, 1:15pm, 1:30pm

Marike Splint's new piece is a site-specific, immersive soundwalk that uses the environment around La Jolla Playhouse as its canvas. Layered with disarming metaphors, historical details, and personal musings, *59 Acres* takes you on a meditation through the physical, cultural and geographical landscapes we inhabit, while searching for the extraordinary in the mundane.

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**McNeal**

Written and directed by Ayad Akhtar

Thursday, 12/7 at 7:00pm and Saturday, 12/9 at 7:00pm

Good writers borrow, great writers steal. Jacob McNeal is one of the greatest writers, a perpetual candidate for the Nobel Prize in Literature. McNeal also has an estranged son, a new novel, plenty of old axes to grind, stage 2 liver failure and an unhealthy fascination with Artificial Intelligence. Pulitzer Prize winner Ayad Akhtar's new play is a keenly-observed and wickedly smart examination of the inescapable humanity – and increasing inhumanity – of our stories.

**To Red Tendons**

By Peter Kim George

Directed by Kat Yen

Friday 12/8 at 7:00pm and Sunday, 12/10 at 3:00pm

We still don't know how to talk about what happened in Los Angeles on April 29, 1992, and it's a problem. A group of young actors come together to re-enact a "primal scene" from the Los Angeles unrest in 1992 using elements of group psychotherapy. Why don't liberals acknowledge American empire? How do the unseen parts of empire structure what is visible? We're just trying to live. *To Red Tendons* deals with seething anger turned inward, and a desire for reconciliation.

**Sound Place Love**

A Without Walls work-in-progress

Created by Braden Abraham and Gordon Hempton

Based on recordings by Gordon Hempton, The Sound Tracker

Directed by Braden Abraham

Tuesday 12/5 at 5:00pm & 7:00pm; Wednesday 12/6 at 5:00pm & 7:00pm (Seuss 1)

*Sound Place Love* is a captivating, immersive audio installation about celebrated sound artist Gordon Hempton, known as The Sound Tracker. Gordon spent decades capturing disappearing natural environments across the Earth, using a specialized microphone that emulates human hearing. Distilled from hundreds of hours of personal recordings and interviews, this project shares some of his most beautiful and engaging recordings around the globe and his personal struggle with hearing loss. Be the first audience to experience this moving auditory voyage, exploring how we perceive and appreciate the art of listening.

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## Artist Biographies

**Braden Abraham** (co-creator/director, *Sound Place Love*) is a director based in Chicago, where he serves as artistic director of Writers Theatre. He spent two decades at Seattle Rep, where he directed more than twenty productions, and commissioned, developed and produced many new plays. Around the country, Braden has developed new work at Ojai, O'Neill, Denver Center and Perseverance Theatre, among others. Most recently, he initiated 20x30: Reimagine the Anthropocene, to commission twenty new plays by the year 2030 against the backdrop of climate change.

**Ayad Akhtar** (Playwright/Director, *McNeal*) is a novelist and playwright whose work has been published and performed in over two dozen languages. He is the winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, the Edith Wharton Citation of Merit for Fiction, and an Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. As a playwright, he has written *Junk* (world premiere at La Jolla Playhouse; Lincoln Center, Broadway; Kennedy Prize for American Drama, Tony nomination); *Disgraced* (Lincoln Center, Broadway; Pulitzer Prize for Drama, Tony nomination); *The Who & The What* (world premiere at La Jolla Playhouse; Lincoln Center); and *The Invisible Hand* (NYTW; Obie Award, Outer Critics Circle John Gassner Award, Olivier, and Evening Standard nominations). Akhtar is the author of the celebrated novels *Homeland Elegies* and *American Dervish*. He is a Board Trustee at New York Theatre Workshop, and PEN America, where he serves as President. In 2021, Akhtar was named the New York State Author, succeeding Colson Whitehead, by the New York State Writers Institute.

**Miyoko Conley** (Playwright, *Human Museum*) is an Asian American playwright, games writer and scholar. Her plays have been presented in the Bay Area, New York City and Washington DC, including at Rorschach Theatre, Playwrights Foundation, UC Berkeley, UCLA, Second Generation (2g), The Tank, The Wild Project and New York University. Her play *Human Museum* was a winner of the 2021 Bay Area Playwrights Festival and a selected play for the Magic In Rough Spaces Play Lab with Rorschach Theatre. Other works include *Starship Dance Party* (developed with the New Play Reading series at UC Berkeley); *End of the World Place* (2015 semi-finalist, Bay Area Playwrights Festival); *Untitled Fantasy* (part of 2g's Jumpstart Commissions); and *Interchangeable Parts* (part of 2g's Free Range Commissions). She has also received two short film commissions from Oklahoma City University's M.F.A. Program in Screen Acting. Miyoko holds a B.F.A. in Theatre from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, an M.A. from NYU's Gallatin School of Individualized Study in Playwriting and Japanese Popular Culture, and a Ph.D. in Performance Studies and New Media from the University of California, Berkeley. [www.miyokoconley.com](http://www.miyokoconley.com)

California born and New York based, **Peter Kim George** (Playwright, *To Red Tendons*) is a Korean diaspora playwright. He holds a Ph.D. in English Language and Literatures from Brown University on the Victorian novel. Plays include *To Red Tendons* (Ojai Playwrights Conference 2022; Dr. Kerry English Artist Award) and *Men Accumulate* (Bay Area Playwrights Festival Finalist, Princess Grace Award Semi-Finalist). 2024 MacDowell Fellow, member of Circle X Theatre's Evolving Playwrights Group, alum of EST Youngblood.

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Acoustic ecologist **Gordon Hempton** (co-creator, *Sound Place Love*) has circled the globe three times in pursuit of the Earth's rarest sounds. His sound portraits which record quickly vanishing natural soundscapes have been featured in *People* magazine and a national PBS television documentary, *Vanishing Dawn Chorus*, which earned him an Emmy. Hempton provides professional audio services to media producers, including Microsoft, Smithsonian, National Geographic and Discovery Channel. The recipient of awards from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Rolex Awards for Enterprise, he is co-author of *One Square Inch of Silence: One Man's Quest to Preserve Quiet* (Free Press/Simon & Schuster, 2010) and Founding Partner of Quiet Parks International. Gordon Hempton speaks widely about the importance of listening.

**Jacole Kitchen** (Director, *Suburban Black Girl*) is Director of Arts Engagement and In-House Casting at La Jolla Playhouse, where she strives to expand and nurture community partnership, and fosters relationships between La Jolla Playhouse and our extensive local community of artists throughout greater San Diego. In addition to her position at the Playhouse, Jacole is a director, with productions including *Jin vs the Beach*, *Pick Me Last* and *Light Years Away* (La Jolla Playhouse POP Tour), *The Music Sounds Different to Me Now* (La Jolla Playhouse - WOW Festival), *Iron* (Roustabouts Theatre Co.), *Cardboard Piano* (Diversionary Theatre), *An Iliad* (New Village Arts) and more. Jacole is also a private acting coach, and serves as Executive Director for San Diego Performing Arts League (SDPAL).

**Jesca Prudencio** (Director, *Human Museum*) is a director, choreographer and community-based artist. She is dedicated to developing new theatrical works that humanize issues and explore the tension between cultures. Jesca has developed new work at The Kennedy Center, La Jolla Playhouse, East West Players, The Lark, NAMT, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Space on Ryder Farm, La MaMa, Clubbed Thumb, Joe's Pub and The Movement Theatre Company. She is the recipient of the TS Eliot US/UK Exchange at the Old Vic, The Drama League Fall Fellowship, and the 2018 Artist-In-Residency at the Performance Project at University Settlement in Manhattan. She was recently named a *2021 Woman To Watch on Broadway* by the Broadway Women's Fund. She founded her company [People Of Interest](#) in 2014 to focus on new theatrical events that address community specific issues. Most recently, they presented PDA as part of the 2019 La Jolla Playhouse WOW Festival. She was the former Education Director at [Ping Chong + Company](#), where she worked as a writer, director and associate on a dozen interdisciplinary and documentary theater projects across the U.S. Currently the Head of Directing at San Diego State University, she holds a BFA in Drama from NYU Tisch, and an MFA in Directing from UC San Diego.

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**Marike Splint** (Creator, *59 Acres*) is a Dutch French-Tunisian theatre maker based in Los Angeles on Tongva/Kizh land, specializing in creating work in public space that explores the relationship between people, places and identity. She has created performances in sites ranging from a bus driving through the streets of a city, to wide open meadows, taxicabs, train stations, beach piers, subways and the virtual map of Google Earth. Her performances *You Are Here* and *Among Us* have been presented as part of previous WOW programming. Other presenters and commissioners of her original work include Center Theater Group, UCLA Center for the Art of Performance, Center for the Performing Arts at Penn State, Skirball Cultural Center LA, Metro Art (USA); Oerol Festival, Theaterfestival Boulevard (The Netherlands); Festival Internacional de Buenos Aires (Argentina); GeoAIR (Tbilisi, Georgia); Anciens Abattoirs de Casablanca (Morocco). Marike received her M.F.A. in directing from Columbia University and currently serves as an Associate Professor in the Department of Theater at UCLA. [www.marikesplint.com](http://www.marikesplint.com)

**Kat Yen** (Director, *To Red Tendons*) is a Taiwanese-American theater director, born and raised in NYC. Recent productions include *Heart Strings* by Lee Cataluna, *Happy Life* by Kathy Ng, *Marisol* by José Rivera, and *The Juniors* by Noah Diaz. Recent associate directing credits include *The Comeuppance* by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, directed by Eric Ting, and *The Untitled Unauthorized Hunter S. Thompson Musical* by Joe Iconis, directed by Christopher Ashley. Kat is currently the inaugural Directing Fellow at La Jolla Playhouse, a former Resident Director at The Flea Theater, the 2016-2017 Van Lier Directing Fellow at Second Stage Theater and the co-founder and former Artistic Director of Spookfish Theatre Company. M.F.A. Directing: Yale School of Drama. [www.katyen.com](http://www.katyen.com) / @katkoral

**Zakiya Young** (Playwright, *Suburban Black Girl*) is an accomplished actress, singer and playwright. In August of 2022, she was honored to participate in the Ojai Playwrights Conference New Works Festival as both playwright and actress as she explored Black suburban life amid Black Lives Matter protests in her autobiographical solo show *Suburban Black Girl*. She is thrilled to continue working on this piece as part of the DNA New Work Series, having last graced the stage at La Jolla Playhouse as Miss California in the 2011 production of *Little Miss Sunshine*. Favorite acting credits: TV: *Pretty Little Liars: Original Sin* (MAX), *Iron Fist* (Netflix), *Orange Is the New Black* (Netflix). Broadway: *Stick Fly*, *The Little Mermaid* and *Radio City Christmas Spectacular*. Off Broadway: *Storyville* (Audelco Award nomination). Tours: *Disgraced* and *Good People*. Regional: *Familiar*, *Spamilton* and *It's a Bird...It's a Plane...It's Superman*. Zakiya was the vocalist for LA Philharmonic's Beverly Hills Songbook series, and can be heard in video games, commercials, audiobooks and as the voice of Ruby, the Kooky Mom on *Little Demon* (FX).

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**La Jolla Playhouse** is a place where artists and audiences come together to create what's new and next in the American theatre, from Tony Award-winning productions, to imaginative programs for young audiences, to interactive experiences outside our theatre walls. Founded in 1947 by Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire and Mel Ferrer, the Playhouse is currently led by Tony Award winner Christopher Ashley, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse, and Managing Director Debby Buchholz. The Playhouse is internationally renowned for the development of new works, including mounting 110 world premieres, commissioning 70 new works, and sending 35 productions to Broadway, garnering a total of 38 Tony Awards, as well as the 1993 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre.

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