

# SUNDANCE INSTITUTE

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## SUNDANCE INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES PROJECTS FOR 2008 SUMMER THEATRE LAB

A Dramatized Graphic Novel, the Prejudices of Liberal Americans, a Lottery Scam and a Lighthouse Mystery, Some of the Themes Explored at this Season's Lab

**Los Angeles, CA** – Seven projects from emerging and established theatre artists have been selected from nearly 600 submissions to participate in the **2008 Sundance Institute Theatre Lab** to be held July 7-27, 2008 at the Sundance Resort in Utah. Under the stewardship of Sundance Institute Theatre Program Artistic Director Philip Himberg, the seven playwrights selected for this year's residency are **Annie Baker, Kirsten Greenidge, Lisa Kron, Dan LeFranc, Darci Picoult, Cori Thomas** and **Sarah Treem**. The Sundance Institute Theatre Lab offers writers and directors three full weeks in a creative environment in which to develop new work in a rehearsal setting with actors and support from a staff of dramaturgs.

"This Lab, a centerpiece of the Theatre Program's developmental programming, represents Sundance's commitment to supporting theatre artists by offering them an environment to explore new work," said Himberg. "The genres of writing at this year's Lab range from psychologically based naturalism, to mystery, to a comic romance involving a transgender East Indian and an exploration of the graphic novel onstage. It's an impressive array of originality and exciting new work surely headed to production."

The writers and directors will work with a respected staff of dramaturgs and creative advisors. Dramaturgs include Mame Hunt, Sundance Theatre Associate Artist; Morgan Jenness, dramaturg; and Janice Paran, Sundance Theatre Associate Artist. Creative Advisors include James Bundy, Artistic Director of Yale Repertory Theatre & Dean of Yale School of Drama; Moisés Kaufman, playwright and director (33 VARIATIONS and THE LARAMIE PROJECT); and Lynn Nottage, playwright (INTIMATE APPAREL and FABULATION). Meg Simon and Findley Davidson are the casting directors for the 2008 Theatre Lab.

The projects selected for development at the Lab join a growing list of recent work supported by the Institute's Theatre Program including: *PASSING STRANGE* by Stew and Heidi Rodewald, currently playing on Broadway at the Belasco Theater, *SPRING AWAKENING* by Duncan Sheik and Steven Sater, *THIS BEAUTIFUL CITY* by The Civilians, *BLUE DOOR* by Tanya Barfield, *I AM MY OWN WIFE* by Doug Wright and *CURRENT NOBODY* by Melissa James Gibson.

As part of the Theatre Program's ongoing commitment to international collaboration, the Lab is hosting two East African theatre artists – Singer-songwriter Eric Wainaina of Kenya and writer-producer Odile Gakire of Rwanda – to participate in the Lab.

### 2008 SUNDANCE INSTITUTE THEATRE LABORATORY FELLOWS AND PROJECTS:

#### **CIRCLE MIRROR TRANSFORMATION by Annie Baker** **Sam Gold, director**

*CIRCLE MIRROR TRANSFORMATION* follows five adults in an amateur acting class in a small Vermont town. The play is constructed as a series of scenes that combine actual acting exercises and interactions among the students and teacher. Baker was a 2008 Sundance Institute Ucross Fellow and her play *BODY AWARENESS* debuts at the Atlantic Theatre Company in New York this May. Gold recently helmed Noah Haidle's *RAG & BONE* at the Rattlestick Playwrights Theater in New York.

The continued development of *CIRCLE MIRROR TRANSFORMATION*, from its earlier support at the Program's Playwrights Retreat at Ucross, toward the 2008 Theatre Lab was made possible, in part, by direct artist support through the Sundance Institute's TIME WARNER STORYTELLING ADVANCEMENT INITIATIVE.

**BOSSA NOVA by Kirsten Greenidge**

**Director TBD**

BOSSA NOVA tells the story of Dee Paradis, the daughter of a Black bourgeois family, whose sense of self begins to erode at the predominantly white girls college she attends. Raised to be an achiever, she unwittingly begins an affair with an eccentric white professor who wants to get closer to "authentic" black experience. The play presents a poignant and fractured universe from the viewpoint of Dee's spiraling mind. Playwright Kirsten Greenidge was a 2002 Sundance Institute Ucross Fellow. BOSSA NOVA is a commission of South Coast Repertory Theatre.

**UNTITLED NEW PLAY by Lisa Kron**

**Leigh Silverman, director**

This new play by Lisa Kron takes a critical look at the sometimes presumptuous behaviors of liberal Americans, and the collective blind spots that define a culture. Ellen, a politically engaged woman who sees clearly the destructive course her country is on questions the deep-seated American assumption that even bad choices inevitably lead back to happiness and good. Kron came to the 2003 Sundance Institute Theatre Lab with WELL, a play subsequently produced on Broadway and at several regional theaters.

**ORIGIN STORY by Dan LeFranc**

**Hal Brooks, director**

Somewhere in the American Midwest, a mysterious comic book with supernatural powers has begun to threaten the livelihood of a small town called Nowheresville. The highways have become rivers, ordinary citizens have sprouted tentacles, and a bizarre double-murder has the whole community bewildered. What is the story behind this meddlesome comic book's devious author? The director is Hal Brooks, who helmed THOM PAINE off Broadway.

**LIL'S 90<sup>th</sup> by Darci Picoult**

**Jo Bonney, director**

Lil is fulfilling a life-long dream of doing a solo cabaret show in honor of her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Her husband, Charlie, who may be suffering from signs of senile dementia, is caught in a scam – handing over all of the couple's life savings to a fake lottery, and neither his wife, nor their daughter, can stop him. Playwright Darci Picoult was a 2005 Sundance Institute Screenwriting Fellow and currently teaches acting at NYU's Tisch School. She is best known for her one-woman show MY VIRGINIA. Director Jo Bonney attended the 2002 and 2003 Sundance Institute Theatre Labs as a director. She also has directed Alan Ball's ALL THAT I WILL EVER BE at New York Theatre Workshop and Eric Bogosian's SUBURBIA at Second Stage in New York.

**ORPHAN ISLAND by Sarah Treem**

**Director TBD**

Iyo and Maddie live quietly in a lighthouse on Orphan Island, a lobstering community miles off the coast of Maine. On the night before the island closes for the season, a woman shows up, drenched to the skin claiming to have no memory. But Maddie and Iyo remember her well and there's a long winter ahead of them. Sarah Treem had her major New York debut last season at Playwrights Horizons with A FEMININE ENDING. ORPHAN ISLAND is a commission from South Coast Repertory Theatre.

**WHEN JANUARY FEELS LIKE SUMMER by Cori Thomas**

**Chuck Patterson, director**

The threat of global warming, the dangers of sexual deviance and a quest for the healing power of true love bring together five people of diverse background and cultures one warm January. Their lives will never be the same. The playwright, Cori Thomas is a member in acting and playwriting at Ensemble Studio Theatre in NYC. Director Chuck Patterson has appeared on Broadway (THE GOSPEL AT COLONUS, TWO TRAINS RUNNING, ALL GOD'S CHILLUN GOT WINGS), and directed COLORED PEOPLE'S TIME (The Negro Ensemble) and PASSIN' (Medicine Show).

The **Sundance Institute Theatre Program**, a Constituent of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for the American theatre, is part of Sundance Institute. Through its developmental activities at the SUNDANCE INSTITUTE THEATRE LAB, the SUNDANCE INSTITUTE PLAYWRIGHTS RETREAT AT UCROSS and the SUNDANCE INSTITUTE THEATRE LAB AT WHITE OAK, the Program identifies and assists emerging theatre artists, contributes to the creative growth of established artists, and encourages and supports the development of new work for the stage. Under the guidance of Producing Artistic Director Philip Himberg, more than 85% of the work coming out of the Program's labs has found professional production at theatres across the United States, Mexico and Europe. Recent productions of Sundance-developed work includes: GREY GARDENS

by Doug Wright, Scott Frankel and Michael Korie, and SPRING AWAKENING by Duncan Sheik and Steven Sater, CURRENT NOBODY by Melissa James Gibson, BLUE DOOR by Tanya Barfield which has had multiple productions at regional theatres across the country and PASSING STRANGE by Stew and Heidi Rodewald.

The Program is made possible by endowment support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, and leadership commitments from the National Endowment for the Arts, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and Time Warner Inc. Additional major support is provided by the Shubert Foundation and the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation. Travel support for New York-based Fellows and Creative Advisors is made possible, in part, through the Baisley Powell Elebash Advancement Initiative.

### **Sundance Institute**

Dedicated year-round to the development of artists of independent vision and to the exhibition of their new work, Sundance Institute was founded by Robert Redford in 1981. The Institute has grown into an internationally recognized resource for thousands of independent artists through its Film Festival and artistic development programs for filmmakers, screenwriters, composers, playwrights and theatre artists. The original values of independence, creative risk-taking and discovery continue to define and guide the work of Sundance Institute, both with US artists and, increasingly, with artists from other regions of the world.

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