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Sundance Institute Announces Nine Projects Selected for 2015 Theatre Lab at Sundance Resort in Utah, July 6-26

Fellows Include Rachel Chavkin, Taylor Mac, Len Jenkin and Sarah Jones

Recent Theatre Lab Alumni Projects Include

Last Year's Tony Award Winner *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*, *Fun Home*, *low@* and *ToasT*

New York, NY — Sundance Institute today announced the nine projects selected from 827 submissions for its **2015 Theatre Lab** at Sundance Resort in Utah, July 6-26. Under the supervision of Artistic Director Philip Himberg and Producing Director Christopher Hibma, the Lab is the centerpiece of the Institute's year-round work with the theatre community and is one of 24 residency Labs the Institute hosts each year for independent artists in theatre, film, new media and episodic content.

The Theatre Lab supports both emerging and established theatre-makers developing new work for the stage, with a focus on assuring that the playwright's deepest impulses and visions can be realized. For the three-week Lab, the Institute provides rehearsal space, dramaturgical support, and an acting company, creating an immersive environment where artists can experiment, see their work take shape and collaborate with creative advisors, dramaturgs and actors. The Lab culminates in a closed presentation of each project for Lab participants, followed by a collaborative feedback session.

More than 85% of Sundance-supported plays and musicals find production, including last year's Tony Award winner for Best Musical, Robert L. Freedman & Steven Lutvak's *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*, as well as Lisa Kron and Jeanine Tesori's *Fun Home*, Lemon Andersen's *ToasT*, Jenny Schwartz and Todd Almond's *low@*, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins' *Appropriate*, Annie Baker's *Circle Mirror Transformation*, Denis O'Hare & Lisa Peterson's *An Iliad*, Taylor Mac's *The Lily's Revenge*, Tracey Scott Wilson's *The Good Negro*, Adam Guettel & Craig Lucas' *The Light in the Piazza*, Stewart's *Passing Strange*, Byron Au Yong & Aaron Jafferis' *Stuck Elevator*, Steven Sater & Duncan Sheik's *Spring Awakening*, Moisés Kaufman's *The Laramie Project* and Doug Wright's *I Am My Own Wife*.

Keri Putnam, Executive Director of Sundance Institute, said, "In just the last two years, more than 30 projects supported by our Theatre Program have taken to stages nationwide. As *Fun Home*, *low@* and *ToasT* open in New York this spring, we are proud to have played a role in supporting some of the most adventurous and interesting theatre work to hit the stage in recent years."

Himberg said, "The joy of curating our 2015 Theatre Lab uncovered nine eclectic and dynamic new plays representing both emerging voices and those of established Sundance Institute alumni. Interestingly, many of this year's artists write with a bold fantastical vision inhabited by ghosts, Martians, time travel and wild physicality. What is as vital as the work itself is the artistic community that will gather this July in Utah to discover what connects and distinguishes theatrical storytelling. I am especially excited by the inclusion of artists from Morocco, Egypt as well as Palestinian theatre makers."



Layering in the Theatre Program's international work, which for 14 years was focused in East Africa, two artists are joining the Lab from the Middle East & North Africa (MENA) as Observers as part of the Theatre Program's new initiative in the region: Sondos Shabayek (based in Cairo, Egypt) & Jaouad Essounani (based in Rabat, Morocco).

The Advisory Committee for the Lab, which met on March 27, included: Janice Paran, Labs Senior Program Associate, Mame Hunt, Program Associate, Liesl Tommy, Program Associate, Ralph Pena, Clint Ramos and Stephen Wadsworth. Literary Manager, Ignacia Delgado, oversaw the submission and evaluation process this year with support from Kailee Ayyar.

The projects selected for the 2015 Sundance Institute Theatre Lab are:

abominable

By **Phillip Howze**

Director TBA

Memory and myth collide in this tragicomic story of a family who embark on an affordable vacation days before the Husband must depart to war. Their good-natured adventure soon descends and as the countdown to deployment tests their principles and allegiances, who and what will get tossed into the void?

Annie Salem: An American Tale

Adapted from the novel by Mac Wellman

Written & directed by **Rachel Chavkin**

Composer and co-lyricist **Heather Christian**

Performer/Designer/Co-creator **Andrew Schneider**

Set in both the ruined rustbelt and ancient Martian plains, *Annie Salem* is part social commentary, part love story, part sci-fi yarn. A howling, surreal new musical adapted from experimental granddaddy Mac Wellman's novel, it tells the story of teenage misfit Jack who loves a girl named Annie. *Annie Salem* is also being developed at the Royal Court and Ars Nova's Uncharted Program.

awe/struck

by **christopher oscar peña**

Director TBA

Denia arrives in Chicago, looking to create a place for herself in this unfamiliar land. Monique's never left Chicago but feels more and more like a stranger in her own home. A chance encounter between them transforms their lives forever in this new play about identity and perception. *awe/struck* is a commission of the Goodman Theatre.

Catch The Wall

By **Gabrielle Reisman**

Directed by **Colette Robert**

Choreography by **Ro Tyler**

After a New Orleans bounce MC dies, middle-schoolers Cleo and Justice plot a music video so their mentor's memory can live on. As the MC's ghost tangles with the girls' young teachers, students and educators push back against a button-down charter school climate, working to get their own stories heard.



Jonah

By **Len Jenkin**

Directed by **Katherine Owens**

Jonah is a contemporary re-telling of the story of the unfaithful servant. A bar band, a lounge singer, a biblical scholar, blind Mr. Bones, a storm at sea, three or four love stories, the evil city of Nineveh, a Dairy Queen, the reluctant prophet, and of course, the whale.

Sell/Buy/Date

By **Sarah Jones**

Director TBA

Sell/Buy/Date is a multi-character, one-person play inspired by stories of people, especially women and girls, directly impacted by sex-trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. Through monologues the piece explores the perspectives of diverse characters and illuminates the universal challenges of life in an increasingly complex global world.

TAHA

By **Amer Hlehel**

English translation by **Amir Nizar Zuabi**

Director TBA

TAHA is based on the story of the celebrated Palestinian poet Taha Muhammad Ali. His poetry tells of the experience of Palestinian refugees. His story parallels the story of a million and a half Palestinians who remained in their home land after 1948.

Taylor Mac's A 24-Decade History of Popular Music: Featuring TAYLOR MAC

Music Director/Arranger **Matt Ray**

Costume Design by Machine Dazzle

Co-Directed by **Niegel Smith**

Taylor Mac's A 24-Decade History of Popular Music is a unique durational music theatre project and a subjective history of the past 240 years in America. This highly anticipated project incorporates over 30 different performance art concerts and will culminate in a one-time only 24-hour event.

Today Is My Birthday

By **Susan Soon He Stanton**

Directed by **Kip Fagan**

After Emily's bubble life in NYC pops, she retreats home to Hawai'i, where she creates an alter ego on live radio. Told through a playful mixture of radio and phone calls, *Today is My Birthday* is a comedy about life with a thousand friends on Facebook and no one to have dinner with on Saturday night.

The Sundance Institute Theatre Program is supported by an endowment from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, with generous additional support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; Time Warner Foundation; Perry and Martin Granoff; LUMA Foundation; the John and Marcia Price Family Foundation; National



Endowment for the Arts; The Shubert Foundation, Inc.; The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust; Karen Lauder; and Joan and George Hornig.

Sundance Institute Theatre Program

The Theatre Program has been a core component of Sundance Institute since Robert Redford founded the Institute in 1981. The Theatre 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 Artistic Director Philip Himberg and Producing Director Christopher Hibma, the Theatre Program is one of the leading play development programs in the United States. Titles such as *Appropriate*, *Fun Home*, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*, *Circle Mirror Transformation*, *An Iliad*, *The Lily's Revenge*, *The Good Negro*, *The Light in the Piazza*, *Passing Strange*, *Stuck Elevator*, *Spring Awakening*, *The Laramie Project* and *I Am My Own Wife* have gone from Theatre Program Labs to production from coast to coast and internationally, garnering multiple Pulitzers, Tonys, OBIEs and other recognition. The Theatre Program's International Initiative currently offers Labs, cross-cultural exchange, mentorship and exposure to artists primarily in the Middle East & North Africa and continuing support for artists in six East African countries. The Theatre Program's newest initiatives are the Theatre Directors Retreat in France and the Playwrights Studio at Flying Point.

sundance.org/theatre

Sundance Institute

Founded in 1981 by Robert Redford, Sundance Institute is a nonprofit organization that provides and preserves the space for artists in film, theatre, and new media to create and thrive. The Institute's signature Labs, granting, and mentorship programs, dedicated to developing new work, take place throughout the year in the U.S. and internationally. The Sundance Film Festival and other public programs connect audiences to artists in igniting new ideas, discovering original voices, and building a community dedicated to independent storytelling. Sundance Institute has supported such projects as *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, *Fruitvale Station*, *Sin Nombre*, *The Invisible War*, *The Square*, *Dirty Wars*, *Spring Awakening*, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* and *Fun Home*. Join [Sundance Institute](http://SundanceInstitute) on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).

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