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Sundance Institute Selects Acting Company and Creative Advisors for 2015 Theatre Lab at Sundance Resort

***Ugly Betty's* America Ferrera and Tony Plana Among Actors**

**This Year's Tony Award Winner *Fun Home*, as well as *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*,
low@ and *ToasT* Are Among Recent Theatre Lab Alumni Projects**

New York, NY — Sundance Institute today announced the acting company and creative advisors that are participating in its 2015 Theatre Lab, which kicked off yesterday and runs through July 26 at the Sundance Resort in Utah. Under the supervision of Artistic Director Philip Humberg 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 this year's Tony Award Winner for Best Musical, Lisa Kron and Jeanine Tesori's *Fun Home*, and last year's winner, Robert L. Freedman & Steven Lutvak's *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*, as well as titles such as *ToasT*, *low@*, *Appropriate*, *Circle Mirror Transformation*, *An Iliad*, *The Lily's Revenge*, *The Good Negro*, *The Light in the Piazza*, *Passing Strange*, *Stuck Elevator*, *Spring Awakening*, *Laramie Project* and *I Am My Own Wife*.

This year's participants include:

Acting Company

David Abeles (*Once*, *Million Dollar Quartet*), Jonathan Brooks (*The Addict*, *Neil Young's Greendale*, *Once Around the Sun*), Cornelius Davidson, Tesiana Elie (*June Moon*, *Kinship*), America Ferrera (*Ugly Betty*, *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*), Alex Hurt (*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*), Tenaj Jackson (*American Horror Story: Coven*), Jenny Jules (*Father Comes Home From the Wars*), Emily Kuroda (*Gilmore Girls*, *Drop Dead Diva*), Crystal Lucas-Perry (*Little Children Dream of God*), Nadine Malouf (*May in the Summer*, *Shame*), Piter Marek (*Disgraced*, *Cyrano De Bergerac*), Forrest McClendon (*The Scottsboro Boys*), Tony Plana (*The Boys of Winter*, *Zoot Suit*), Will Pullen (*Punk Rock*, *The Wayside Motor Inn*), Andy Robinson (*Dirty Harry*, *Hellraiser*), Stacey Sargeant (*Big Love*, *Our Lady of Kibeho*), Andrew Schneider (*Youarenowhere*, *Field*), Margo Seibert (*Rocky*), Ching Valdes-Aran (*Across the Universe*, *Macbeth*)

Creative Advisors



Ayad Ahktar (Recipient of the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for Drama), Indhu Rubasingham (Artistic Director, Tricycle Theatre, London)

Dramaturgs

Janice Paran (Senior Program Advisor), Jocelyn Clarke, Christian Parker, Lisa Timmel

Kennedy Center Playwright Observer

Kristin Idaszak

Artists-In-Residence

Jaouad Essounani (Morocco), Sondos Shabayeh (Egypt)

Stage Management

Catherine Bloch, Amy Ehrenberg, Melanie Lisby, Nicole Marconi

Production Assistants

Estey DeMerchant, Sierra Ducharme-Hanson, Keri Hale, Toran Moore

Special Guests

Jumana Al-Yasiri (MENA Manager), Roberta Levitow (Senior Program Associate-International)

As previously announced, the projects selected for the Theatre Lab are:

abominable

By **Phillip Howze**

Directed by **Mark Brokaw**

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**

Directed by **Lileana Blain-Cruz**

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**

Directed by **Carolyn Cantor**

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**

Directed by **Chay Yew**

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**

Sound design by **Palmer Hefferan**



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.; Wendy vanden Heuvel; 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 Humberg 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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