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Sundance Institute’s 2020 Theatre Lab Fellows
15 Fellows & 7 Artists in Virtual Residence Develop New Work for the Stage

New York, NY -- Eight genre- and format-spanning pieces are among the works being developed by a diverse array of theatremakers at the 2020 Sundance Institute Theatre Lab, reimagined and expressed digitally this year on Sundance Co//ab. The Lab is the centerpiece of the Institute’s year-round work with the theatre community, and offers theatre makers from the US and Arab region/diaspora the opportunity to advance their work with the benefit of experienced dramaturgs and advisors, and within the context of an intimate artistic group centered around the values of dramaturgy, community and cultural exchange.

This year’s cohort was selected by the Theatre Program’s interim Director, Christopher Hibma, with support of a five-member curatorial team including Jesse Cameron Alick (U.S.A), Lisa Peterson (U.S.A), Hana Sharif (U.S.A), Junaid Sarieddeen (Lebanon) and Meiyin Wang (U.S.A) along with Theatre Program staff. For the 2020 Lab, Hibma will collaborate with Guest Artistic Director Leigh Silverman. Jesse Cameron Alick (U.S.A.), Abdullah Al-Kafri (Syria/Lebanon), Janice Paran (U.S.A.) and Leyla Rabih (Syria/France) join as dramaturgs, and additional Lab participants, including the acting company and creative advisors will be announced at a later date.

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, Perry and Martin Granoff, Luma Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, John and Marcia Price Family Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, Inc., The Carrie Louise Hamilton Foundation, and Francena T. Harrison Foundation.

The Fellows and projects selected for the 2020 Theatre Lab are:

**Cairo Critical Cabaret** (Egypt)
Conceived by Adham Hafez
Project by HaRaKa Platform: Mona Gamil, Lamia Gouda, Adam Kucharski

*Cairo Critical Cabaret* uses performance, song and choreography to stage political chronicles, collective conviviality, and politics of intimacy during crisis by looking at the history of Egyptian cabaret at the turn of the 20th century and its connections to Berlin, Paris and New York cabaret scenes. Through archival research, reenactments, guest experts, glitter, feather and leather, the project exists within the tension of experimental contemporary performance work and wanton entertainment.
Adham Hafez works with choreography, sound, text and performance creating work for theatres, galleries, screens and in print. For over fifteen years he has been working with HaRaKa Platform, addressing issues such as climate change, postcolonial theory, gender and performance, and radical urban change.

Evidence of Things Not Seen (Lebanon)
By Stephanie Kayal
Music by Abed Kobeissy

Phantom Limb Syndrome is a condition in which a person experiences sensations, whether painful or otherwise, in a limb that does not exist; a false consolation that an amputated limb is still attached. *Evidence of Things Not Seen* is a dance performance about home, and the sensation of its presence, and its loss. A performance gazing at the body, be it static or in movement, as the last remaining refuge of intimacy, and safety.

Stephanie Kayal is a dancer, actress, and physical movement instructor based in Beirut. Since 2015, she has been collaborating with different theater companies both nationally and internationally. In February 2020, she received a grant from Al-Mawred Al-Thaqafy to produce her debut dance project *Evidence of Things Not Seen* which was previously presented as a work in progress at Bipod Festival in Beirut and at Wonder-Women Festival at “Spam!” venue in Italy.

Abed Kobeissy is an electro-acoustic musician based in Beirut. He’s composed music for solo works, and soundtracks for films, theater, and contemporary dance, and co-founded the duo “Two or The Dragon” with percussionist Ali Hout. He received 2 Masters Degrees in semiotics of Arabic music, and taught as a lecturer at the Lebanese American University. His work tackles the family-related, intimate, and the political-historical, with a focus on the urban aspect as the main generator of language.

The Gift (U.S.A.)
Co-created by Janani Balasubramanian and Dr. Natalie Gosnell
Produced by Andrew Kircher, Production Dramaturg
Composed by Tina-Hanaé Miller
Illustrated by Amy Myers

‘The universe is a place of many stories. To you, a library; to me, a galaxy.’ *The Gift* is an immersive new media performance experience that merges the private pleasures of reading and listening with shared moments of generosity to explore companionship, care, life, death, renewal, loss, and what we can learn by observing the stars. This accessible theatrical installation playfully animates the research of observational astrophysicist Dr. Natalie Gosnell, and re-inscribes outer space as feminist space. The project team will be investigating strategies (digital and live) for sharing this piece across various modes of social distance--so the storytelling design can be resilient and responsive in meeting the audiences’ changing access needs.
Janani Balasubramanian is an artist and creative researcher whose practice centers deep collaborations with astrophysicists, formal experimentation, accessibility, and play. Balasubramanian is currently a 2020 Hemispheric Institute fellow at NYU; a 2019-2020 Jerome Hill Artist Fellow; artist-in-residence in the brown dwarf astrophysics group at the American Museum of Natural History; a 2020 visiting artist at Stanford University; a 2020 Pioneer Works Narrative Arts Fellow; and a member of the Guild of Future Architects.

Dr. Natalie Gosnell is an observational astrophysicist and Assistant Professor of Physics at Colorado College. Dr. Gosnell received her M.A. and Ph.D. in Astronomy from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and was a McDonald Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Gosnell’s research explores the stories of binary star systems. In her role as a teacher-scholar, Dr. Gosnell combines creative and scientific research practices in the classroom and beyond.

Andrew Kircher is an independent producer, dramaturg, curator, and scholar. He has collaborated creatively with artists including 600 Highwaymen, Pig Iron, Nikki Appino & Philip Glass, and Guillermo Calderón, and was Director of the Public Theater's Devised Theater Initiative, Associate Director of the Under the Radar Festival, and GM of Ars Nova. He is a PhD candidate at CUNY, a member of the Guild of Future Architects, and teaches performance theory at Brooklyn College.

Tina-Hanaé Miller is a musician, producer, and composer, creating music for experimental theater, TV, and AR/VR. She wrote the soundtrack for the Augmented Reality piece, 'Heisenberg,' which premiered on the High Line. She was the touring keyboardist for Cruel Youth on their international tour supporting Atlantic Records’ artist Kiiara. Most recently, she collaborated with Splice on a sample pack, as the artist, Hanaé, and released a music video for her debut single, 'All Of This.'

In October 2019, Amy Myers exhibited her paintings in Chelsea, New York with an outstanding review in ARTFORUM magazine by Jeff Gibson: “Amy Myers, Daughter Universe.” January 3, 2020. She has exhibited her work extensively in the United States including Mary Boone Gallery, NYC; Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago; Susanne Vielmetter Gallery, Los Angeles; Talley Dunn Gallery, Dallas; The American Academy in Rome; and many museums as well. She has work in the permanent collection of the Solomon R. Guggenheim, NYC; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art; Hudson Valley Museum of Contemporary Art; to name a few.

Jordans (U.S.A.)
by Ife Olujobi
directed by Whitney White
In a workplace where appearance is everything, a long-suffering receptionist finds herself in personal, professional, and psychic jeopardy when her ruthless boss hires a hip new employee in order to improve the company’s image and “culture.” Suddenly, the two young, black, ambitious social climbers are forced together and torn apart by their race, racism, and otherworldly circumstance. *Jordans* is a story of identity mistaken, power subverted, and rage unleashed.

Ife Olujobi is a Nigerian-American writer from Columbia, Maryland. She is a 2019-20 New Voices Fellow at The Lark, a 2020-21 Ars Nova Resident Artist, a member of Youngblood/EST, and an alumnus of the 2018-19 Emerging Writers Group at The Public Theater. Her work has been seen at The Public, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Bishop Arts Theater Center, and other places. She received her BFA in Dramatic Writing from NYU Tisch in 2016.

Whitney White is a director, writer, and musician originally from Chicago. She is a believer of alternative forms of performance, multi-disciplinary work, and collaborative processes. Last summer she participated in the Sundance Theatre Lab with her original musical *DEFINITION*. Directing: *Our Dear Dead Drug Lord* by Alexis Scheer (WP Theatre and Second Stage), *What To Send Up When it Goes Down* by Aleshea Harris (Woolly Mammoth, American Repertory Theatre, The Public) and *The Amen Corner* (Shakespeare Theatre DC).

**NANA (U.S.A.)**
by Aziza Barnes
directed by Machel Ross

*NANA* is a play based on my paternal lineage and their self-mythologies. Set in the Bronx in the late fifties, *NANA* takes place over the course of a few days in a particularly sweltering month of June in the apartment the majority of my great aunts, uncles, and grandmother lived. Exploring colorism within a family unit, dysfunctional logics of attempts at loving one’s blackness before it was a trend, the ease of whiteness, and substance abuse as self-medication, *NANA* lets all her brood spew together, never allowing them to leave where they come from.

Aziza Barnes is blk & alive. Z’s play *BLKS* has been produced at Steppenwolf Theater, Woolly Mammoth Theater and MCC. Z has participated with residencies such as Sundance, Ojai Playwrights Conference, Center Theater Group Playwriting Workshop, Callaloo and Cave Canem. Barnes’ play *NANA*, was commissioned by Williamstown Theater Festival. Z lives in LA.
Machel Ross is a Dominican American director and creative collaborator based in NYC, who specializes in the development of new work and aesthetic world building. This fall, she made her professional directorial debut with the world premiere of Jeremy O. Harris’ *Black Exhibition* at the Bushwick Starr. Machel is a 2019 grant recipient of the Women’s Fund for Film, TV and Theatre for her short film *Signs He Made at Home*. BFA-NYU Playwrights Horizons Theater School.

*Retreat* (Iraq/UK)  
by Hassan Abdulrazzak  
directed by Kate Whoriskey

Samir, a Muslim Arab and a failed inventor, is contemplating suicide. His Korean-American friend Sophie is egging him on to kill himself. But Ivan, a Cuban-American, is not so sure. Ivan is writing a musical about suicide and thinks there is value in Samir staying alive, at the very least as a source for inspiration. Over the course of the evening, Sophie and Ivan will help Samir to decide whether he should stay alive or end his life. And if he chooses the latter, they will help him with the execution. *Retreat* is a black comedy that asks: considering the prevailing logic of neoliberal capitalism, is it not right to allow those who fail the dignity of suicide?


Kate Whoriskey:  
Broadway: *Sweat*, *Miracle Worker*. Off Broadway: *All the Natalie Portmans* MCC; *Songs for a New World*, Encores! Off Center; *Cardinal*, *How I Learned to Drive*, Second Stage; *Ruined*, Manhattan Theatre Club; *Her Requiem*, Lincoln Center Theatre; *Aubergine*, *Fabulation*, and *Inked Baby*, Playwrights Horizons; *The Piano Teacher*, The Vineyard; among others. Regional credits include the Goodman, the Geffen, South Coast Rep, The Guthrie Sundance Theatre Lab, Shakespeare Theatre, American Repertory Theatre, the Huntington, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Baltimore Center Stage, Arena, among others. Her opera direction has been seen at the Chatelet in Paris and Teatro Municipal in Brazil.

*The Storyteller* (US)  
by K’naan Warsame

*The Storyteller* is a musical about a young storyteller in Somalia, who tells other people’s stories until his own becomes too large to ignore.
K’naan Warsame is a singer/songwriter as well as a writer/director for Film & TV. Originally from Somalia, K’naan migrated as a 12-year-old just as the country was descending into chaos. His music work has earned several major awards including a VMA, 4 Juno Awards (Canadian Grammys) as well as the number 1 spot in 19 counties—when his song *Wavin’ Flag* became a theme song for the 2010 World Cup. His essays have appeared in *The New York Times*. K’naan is collaborating with musician, Steve Mcewan, on *The Storyteller*.

**Thurayya (Lebanon)**

by Tamara Saade

directed by Myriam El Hajj

Lebanon 2012. This is the story of Thurayya, an 18-year-old woman who gets pregnant with her communist lover of the same age, Labib. She decides to undergo an abortion. We are in the presence of multiple voices trying to narrate her story by investigating a past she has tried to banish. The play is narrated in a reparative attempt to salvage lost memory fragments related to the abortion and its aftermath.

**Tamara Saade** is a Lebanese actress and writer. After a B.A in Literature from Saint-Joseph University of Beirut, she entered the ERAC-M acting school (2015). She directed her first production in 2018: 1001 Ventres with French Theater Company Nawma. She was cast in Wael Kador’s *Chronicles of a City We Never Knew*, in Eva Doumbia’s *Victoria K*, and in Delphine Seyrig et moi by Valérie Cachard. In cinema, she was in Sharon Hakim’s *La Grande Nuit* (2020).

**Myriam el Hajj** is a Lebanese filmmaker and actress. For 7 years, she was part of a Commedia dell’Arte Troupe in France. Her first documentary film, *Trêve*, was in many international festivals. Myriam is finishing a documentary, *Chronicle of Amnesia*. She is developing a feature narrative, *Commedia*, produced by Abbout Productions. She is a member of several film commissions such as the CNC (French National Center). Myriam is a fellow artist of the MacDowell Colony (USA).

**ARTISTS-IN-VIRTUAL-RESIDENCE**

**Mariam Bazeed (Egypt/US)**

Mariam Bazeed is a nonbinary Egyptian immigrant, writer, and performer living in a rent-stabilized apartment in Brooklyn. An alliteration-leaning writer of prose, poetry, plays, and personal essays, Mariam received an MFA in Fiction from Hunter College in 2018. To procrastinate from facing the blank page, Mariam curates and runs a monthly(ish) world-music salon and open mic in Brooklyn, and is a slow student of Arabic music.

**Waleed Elgadi (Sudan/U.K.)**
Waleed Elgadi is an actor/writer, born & raised in Khartoum, Sudan before moving to London as a child. Stage includes: RSC Rome Season, Shakespeare Globe’s *Voices in the Dark* (as writer & actor) and currently, Good Chance/National Theatre/Young Vic’s *The Jungle* for St. Ann’s Warehouse, NY. Other highlights include starring in BBC/HBO BAFTA-winning *Dirty War*, being directed by Chris Morris in cult classic *Four Lions*, & working alongside Tom Hanks & Tom Tykwer in *Hologram For The King*. Waleed is writing his first play.

**Franky Gonzalez (U.S.A.)**

Franky D. Gonzalez is a playwright and TV Writer (*13 Reasons Why*, Season 4) splitting time between Dallas and Los Angeles. His work has previously been seen at The Lark, Great Plains Theatre Conference, LAByrinth Theatre Company, Repertorio Español, Dallas Theater Center, HBMG Foundation, Antaeus Playwrights Lab, Bishop Arts Theatre Center, among others. He was a co-recipient of the 2018 MetLife Nuestras Voces Latino Playwriting Award and the Crossroads Project Diverse Voices Playwriting Initiative Award.

**Daniel Alexander Jones (U.S.A.)**

Daniel Alexander Jones exemplifies the artist as an energy worker. While his wildflower body of original work includes plays, performance pieces, recorded music, concerts, music theatre events, essays, and long-form improvisations, energy is his true medium. The Herb Alpert Foundation notes that he “creates multi-dimensional experiences where bodies, minds, emotions, voices, and spirits conjoin, shimmer, and heal.” Jones was a 2019 Guggenheim Fellow, and was a Doris Duke Artist Award recipient.

**Mwendie Mbugua (Kenya)**

Mwendie Mbugua is a communications practitioner with over 18 years’ experience developing effective marketing communication. She has always had a passion for theatre and been involved in staging several Easter and Christmas musicals in her hometown Nairobi, Kenya. In 2016 her dream of being an author was realised, and she launched her first children’s book *Don’t turn off the lights!* Outside of communications, she enjoys reading to children and having conversations with them.

**José Rivera (U.S.A.)**
José Rivera is the author of 27 full-length plays including Marisol and References to Salvador Dali Make Me Hot. The Motorcycle Diaries was nominated for 2005 Best Adapted Screenplay Oscar, BAFTA and WGA Awards. On the Road premiered at the 2012 Cannes Film Festival. Trade premiered at the United Nations. In 2019, Rivera was a staff writer on Penny Dreadful: City of Angels (Showtime). He is currently adapting One Hundred Years of Solitude for Netflix.

Mfoniso Udofia (U.S.A.)

Mfoniso Udofia, a first-generation Nigerian-American storyteller and educator. Productions of her plays Sojourners, runboyrun, Her Portmanteau and In Old Age have been seen at the American Conservatory Theater, New York Theatre Workshop, The Playwrights Realm, Magic Theater, National Black Theatre, Strand Theater Company, and Boston Court. She’s the recipient of the 2017 Helen Merrill Playwright Award, the 2017-18 McKnight National Residency and Commission at The Playwrights’ Center and is a member of New Dramatists. She’s worked as a TV writer on 13 Reasons Why, Little America and Pachinko.

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 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. Sundance Co//ab, a digital community platform, brings artists together to learn from each other and Sundance Advisors and connect in a creative space, developing and sharing works in progress. The Sundance Film Festival and other public programs connect audiences and artists to ignite new ideas, discover original voices, and build a community dedicated to independent storytelling. Sundance Institute has supported such projects as The Farewell, Late Night, The Souvenir, The Infiltrators, Sorry to Bother You, Eighth Grade, Won't You Be My Neighbor?, Hereditary, RBG, Call Me By Your Name, Get Out, The Big Sick, Top of the Lake, Winter's Bone, Dear White People, Little Miss Sunshine, Beasts of the Southern Wild, Fruitvale Station, State of the Union, Indecent, Spring Awakening, A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder and Fun Home. Join Sundance Institute on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube.