

Sundance Institute Announces Artists Selected for 2011 Playwrights Retreat at Ucross

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11/02/10 — Emerging and Award-Winning Writers Embark on 18-Day Artists' Journey

Lemon Andersen, Eugenie Chan, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, Theresa Rebeck, Tanya Saracho and composer/lyricist team Justin Paul and Benj Pasek

Pasek join Sundance Institute Family

– Sundance Institute today announced the seven artists selected for The 2011 Sundance Institute's Playwrights' Retreat at Ucross to take place February 7 through February 25, 2011 in Ucross, Wyoming. This unique residency program offers playwrights and theatre composers -- both emerging and established artists -- peer mentorship, professional growth, and a chance to explore unpressured creativity at an idyllic 20,000 acre cattle ranch in northeastern Wyoming. The Playwrights Retreat, supported by the Sundance Institute Theatre Program, is made possible through the generosity of Ucross Foundation.

Unlike other Labs offered through Sundance Institute's artist development programs, there are no actors at the Playwrights Retreat. Instead the emphasis is on writing and musical composition. The *Light in the Piazza*, *I*

Am My Own Wife, *Circle Mirror Transformation* and *The Good Negro* all received initial support from the Institute through the Playwrights Retreat at Ucross.

The artists selected for the 18-day residency are

playwrights **Lemon**

Andersen, Eugenie Chan,

Branden Jacobs-Jenkins,

Theresa Rebeck, Tanya

Saracho and

composer/lyricist team

Justin Paul and **Benj**

Pasek. The participating

artists were selected and

invited by **Philip Himberg,**

Sundance Institute Theatre Program Producing Artistic Director. **Roberta**

Levitow, Sundance Institute Artistic Associate for the Theatre Program's

East Africa initiative, will also be in attendance. **Mame Hunt,** Sundance

Institute Artistic Associate, Ucross, will serve as Dramaturg for the residents.

"The range of talent in this year's slate of artists reflects the dynamic diversity of theatre in America today, as well as the Sundance Institute's intention to support voices that will inform and influence our culture," said Philip Himberg, Producing Artistic Director. "The unique landscape that is Ucross has nurtured Sundance Institute Theatre Program artists for twelve years, and this partnership continues to be one of our most meaningful and productive."

Sharon Dynak, Ucross Foundation President, said, "Ucross is deeply honored to collaborate with Sundance through this retreat. We look forward each year to supporting the exceptional writers and composers who join us in this inspiring landscape to create new work."

The 2011 Sundance Institute Theatre Program Playwrights Retreat at Ucross

Fellows are:

Lemon Andersen

Lemon is a critically acclaimed artist who has been a pioneer in the spoken-word and theater scene for the past decade. He has the greatest number of appearances on HBO's *Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry*, with eight performances in six seasons. Lemon is an original cast member of *Russell Simmons' Def Poetry Jam on Broadway*; the show took home the Tony Award for Special Theatrical Event in 2003 and the Drama Desk nomination for Unique Theatrical Experience. He is currently touring *County of Kings*, his staged memoir, which was produced by Spike Lee and the Culture Project and premiered at the Public Theater.

Eugenie Chan

Eugenie Chan is a fifth generation San Franciscan. Her work includes *Kitchen Table*; *Bone to Pick*; *Diadem*; *Daphne Does Dim Sum*; *Rancho Grande*; *Emil, A Chinese Play*; *Novell-aah!*; *Pilgrim*; *Consent*; *Circus*, and opera libretto for *Snakewoman*. Theatres that have produced or developed her plays include, The Public, Playwrights Horizons, Ma-Yi, Centenary Stage, Pan Asian Rep, and Perishable Theatre; on the West Coast: Cutting Ball Theater, Thick Description, Magic Theatre, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, Northwest Asian American Theatre, Group Theatre, East West Players, and the Asian American Theater Company. She is a proud Resident Playwright at New Dramatists, the Playwrights Foundation and Cutting Ball Theater. Eugenie has also written political satire for the San Francisco Mime Troupe and screenplays which have been semifinalists for Nicholl and Cinestory Fellowships. She holds a BA in Literature from Yale and an MFA from NYU.

Branden Jacobs-Jenkins

Branden is a Brooklyn-based playwright, dramaturg, and performer currently living in Berlin. His work has been seen at The Public Theatre, New York Theatre Workshop, PS122, Soho Rep, New Dramatists, The Matrix Theatre, Theater Bielefeld in Bielefeld, Germany and the National Theatre in London and he is working on commissions from Lincoln Center Theater/LCT3 and Yale Repertory Theater. He is a former New York Theatre Workshop Playwriting fellow, an alum of the Soho Rep Writers/Directors Lab and Public Theater Emerging Writers Group, and a member of the Ars Nova Playgroup. His honors include a Princess Grace Award, the Dorothy Strelsin Playwriting Fellowship, and a fellowship in playwriting from the New York Foundation for the Arts. He also holds an M.A. in Performance Studies from NYU.

Benj Pasek and Justin Paul

Their current projects include *A Christmas Story* at Seattle's 5th Avenue Theatre, the musical adaptation of Roald Dahl's *James and the Giant Peach* with dance troupe Pilobolus and director Graciela Daniele, and *Dogfight*, a new musical commissioned by Lincoln Center Theater. Their first show, *Edges*, has been produced throughout the United States, Canada, Australia, Asia and Europe and is licensed by Music Theatre International. Benj and Justin were 2007 winners of the Jonathan Larson Songwriting Award (the youngest winners in the foundation's history) and served as series songwriters for Disney Channel's four-time Emmy nominated series *Johnny and the Sprites*. They co-wrote *If You Give a Pig a Pancake* and *Duck for President* for Theatreworks USA, were listed as part of the "50 to Watch" up-and-coming writers by The Dramatist Magazine, and selected as 2007-2008 Dramatist Guild Fellows. The duo has played sold-out concerts at venues including The Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., Joe's Pub in New York City, and Australia's Adelaide Cabaret Festival. They are proud graduates of The University of Michigan.

Theresa Rebeck

Theresa is a widely produced playwright. Past New York productions of her work include *Mauritius* at the Biltmore Theatre; *The Understudy* at the Laura Pels Theatre (Roundabout); *The Scene*, *The Water's Edge*, *Loose Knit*, *The Family of Mann* and *Spike Heels* at Second Stage; *Bad Dates*, *The Butterfly Collection* and *Our House* at Playwrights Horizons, and *View of the Dome* at New York Theatre Workshop. *Omnium Gatherum* (co-written, finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 2003) was featured at the Humana Festival, and had a commercial run at the Variety Arts Theatre. Ms. Rebeck's other publications are *Free Fire Zone*, a book of comedic essays about writing and show business, and two novels, *Three Girls and Their Brother* and *Twelve Rooms with a View*, both published by Random House/Shaye Areheart Books. In television, Ms. Rebeck has written and produced for many shows including *NYPD Blue* and *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*. Her produced feature films include *Harriet the Spy*, *Gossip*, and the independent features *Sunday on the Rocks* and *Seducing Charlie Barker* (adapted from her play *The Scene*). She is a proud board member of the Dramatists Guild, a Contributing Editor to the Harvard Review, an Associate Artist of the Roundabout Theatre Company and has taught at Brandeis University and Columbia University. She lives in Brooklyn with her husband and two children.

Tanya Saracho

Tanya was born in Sinaloa, México and is a resident playwright at Chicago Dramatists and Teatro Vista, a Goodman Theater Fellow at the Institute for the Study of Women and Gender, an Artistic Associate with About Face Theater, the founder of The Ñ Project and Founder and former Artistic Director of Teatro Luna. Her plays include: *El Nogalar* inspired by *The Cherry Orchard* opening in the Spring of 2011 at The Goodman Theater, and commissioned by Teatro Vista; an adaptation of *The House on Mango Street* for Steppenwolf Theater SYA (2009); *Our Lady of The Underpass* with Teatro Vista (2009); *Surface Day* with Steppenwolf/CCHF (2008);

Jarred (A Hoodoo Comedy) with Teatro Luna (2008); *Kita y Fernanda* at 16th Street Theatre (2008) and *Quita Mitos* with Teatro Luna (2006). Saracho is a recipient of an NEA Distinguished New Play Development Project Grant and winner of the Ofner Prize given by the Goodman Theatre as well as a 3Arts Artists Award. Coming up: A historical fiction titled *The Good Private for About Face Theater* about a transgendered civil war soldier, and two Mellon Foundation commissions for Steppenwolf Theatre. Tanya is a proud Chicago actor and her voice can be heard in radio and television commercials.

Roberta Levitow

Levitow is currently the Artistic Associate with the Sundance Institute Theatre Program's *Sundance Institute East Africa* initiative. In 2004, she co-founded Theatre Without Borders, www.theatrewithoutborders.com. She co-initiated, with Cynthia Cohen of Peacebuilding and the Arts at Brandeis University, the TWB/Brandeis "Theatre & Peace Building Dialogue" and is a co-founder of The Acting Together Project. In September 2010 at La MaMa E.T.C., she co-produced *Acting Together on a World Stage: A Conference on Theatre and Peace-Building in Conflict Zones*. She is one of the Creative Team that created *Benedictus* by Motti Lerner - a collaboration of Iranian, Israeli and US artists. Other recent international work includes: Co-producer, "*Eti! East Africa Speaks!*", Dartmouth College/651 Arts/Martin E. Segal Theatre Center, Graduate Center CUNY, July 2008; Workshop leader, "*New Writing in East Africa*", TCG/ITI New Generations International Fellowship, Oct 2007; Project Director, "*After the Fall: Reality and the New Romanian Theatre*" NYC, July 2006; Co-coordinator of the first CalArts symposium *Arts in the One World*, Jan 2006; She has received Fulbright Specialist assignments at Makerere University (Kampala, Uganda 2007), the National University of Theatre & Film (Bucharest, Romania 2005), and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (2003) and she is currently a Fulbright Ambassador. A graduate of Stanford University, she has been on faculty at UCLA and Bennington College.

Ucross Foundation

Founded in 1981, Ucross Foundation is an internationally known retreat for visual artists, writers, composers and choreographers working in all creative disciplines. It provides living accommodations, studio space, uninterrupted time and the experience of the extraordinary High Plains landscape to competitively selected individuals. Ucross supports individuals whose work reflects innovative thinking, a depth of creative exploration, and the potential for significant future accomplishments. A number of residents have won recognition such as the Pulitzer Prize, the Tony Award, the National Book Award, the MacArthur Fellowship, the Guggenheim Fellowship and many other honors. Through its Residency Program, art gallery, and associated activities, Ucross actively seeks to support an appreciation for vibrant human creativity and aims to cast a reflection into the future from the cultural mirror of our lives and times. www.ucrossfoundation.org

Sundance Institute Theatre Program

Through its developmental activities at the Sundance Institute Playwright's Retreat at Ucross, the Sundance Institute Theatre Lab at White Oak, Sundance Institute East Africa, and recent pilot theatre programs at MASS MoCA and Governors Island, The Sundance Institute 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 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 include: *Passing Strange* by Stew and Heidi Rodewald, which won the 2008 Tony Award for Best Book of a Musical and *Grey Gardens* by Doug Wright, Scott Frankel and Michael Korie. The Sundance Institute Theatre Program is

a Constituent of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for the American theatre.

Sundance Institute

Founded by Robert Redford in 1981, Sundance Institute is a global nonprofit organization dedicated to the discovery and development of independent artists and audiences. Through its artistic development programs for directors, screenwriters, producers, composers and playwrights, the Institute seeks to discover, support, and inspire independent film and theatre artists from the United States and around the world, and to introduce audiences to their new work. The Institute promotes independent storytelling to inform, inspire, and unite diverse populations around the globe. Internationally recognized for its annual Sundance Film Festival, Sundance Institute has nurtured such projects as *Born into Brothels*, *Trouble the Water*, *Son of Babylon*, *Amreeka*, *An Inconvenient Truth*, *Spring Awakening*, *Light in the Piazza* and *Angels in America*. www.sundance.org

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About the author:

Sundance Institute

Founded by Robert Redford in 1981, Sundance Institute is a not-for-profit organization that fosters the development of original storytelling in film and theatre, and presents the annual Sundance Film Festival. Internationally recognized for its artistic development programs for directors, screenwriters, producers, film composers, playwrights and theatre artists, Sundance

Institute has nurtured such projects as Angels in America, Spring Awakening, Boys Don't Cry, Sin Nombre, Born into Brothels and Trouble the Water. www.sundance.org.

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