

Portland Center Stage at

THE **ARMORY**

PRESS CONTACT:

Claudie Fisher

503.445.3765

claudief@pcs.org

M E D I A R E L E A S E

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT

Announcing the 2018 JAW: A Playwrights Festival Lineup

Featured plays include Meghan Brown's *The Tasters*, Clarence Coo's *The Birds of Empathy*, Emily Feldman's *Pick a Color* and Matthew Paul Olmos' *three girls never learnt the way home*

Free staged readings presented during the JAW Big Weekend, July 27-29

Toast JAW's Big 2-OH with cake, champagne and innovative theater!



May 4, 2018 — PORTLAND, OR. This summer, JAW: A Playwrights Festival celebrates its 20th anniversary by doing what it does best: selecting some of the most exciting new plays of our time and providing complete support to the playwrights to develop those scripts in whatever area is most beneficial to them. Two weeks of script workshopping will culminate in the JAW Big Weekend, July 27-29, where public staged readings of the scripts will be

presented along with performances from local artists and classes. Plenty of champagne and birthday cake will also be enjoyed, to celebrate all that JAW has accomplished since its brave and ambitious beginnings in 1999.

JAW's BIG 2-OH brings the work of four dynamic playwrights to Portland. Meghan Brown serves up power, complicity, pleasure, fear ... and food ... with her outrageously funny play *The Tasters*. Clarence Coo presents an unusual yet entirely understandable preference to jays, sparrows and warblers over

humans with *The Birds of Empathy*. Emily Feldman challenges the way we hear women's stories, using humor and arresting imagery in *Pick a Color*. Finally, Matthew Paul Olmos brings magical realism and visceral theatricality together to explore how children are impacted by complicated adult fears in *three girls never learnt the way home*. Developing short scripts alongside these seasoned playwrights are the JAW Promising Playwrights, local high school students whose scripts have been selected for JAW through Portland Center Stage at The Armory's Visions & Voices program.

The JAW Big Weekend is July 27-29. FREE public readings of scripts in development will be presented at 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, July 28 and 29. The JAW kickoff event will be held on at 8 p.m. on Friday, July 27, featuring the work of this year's Promising Playwrights. Surrounding the staged readings is JAW's Press Play series, offering a slew of events and performances from local artists, and JAW's Community Artist Labs, providing a chance to dig deeper with members of the JAW company. As always, JAW is FREE and open to the public. A full schedule will be released closer to the Big Weekend. For more information visit www.pcs.org/jaw.



THE TASTERS

BY MEGHAN BROWN

With a rebel army poisoning government leaders left and right, the women known as Tasters have an important political role: Every day, they eat delicious gourmet meals and wait to see if it kills them. When the rebellious Elyse starts a hunger strike, she kicks off a series of events that could change the course of history — but not before she puts all of the Tasters' lives in jeopardy. Meghan Brown's new play about power and complicity (and pleasure and fear and food!) is outrageously funny and undeniably timely.

MEGHAN BROWN is an Ovation Award-winning playwright based in Los Angeles. Her full-length plays include *The Pliant Girls*, *The Kill-or-Dies* and *Shine Darkly, Illyria*. She is a founding member of The Temblors. Meghan wrote the book and lyrics for a new musical adaptation of Jane Austen's *Emma* with composer Sarah Taylor Ellis. *Emma* has been workshopped throughout the U.S. and

in London, and was the pilot musical for Apples and Oranges Studios' THEater ACCELERATOR. Meghan wrote the lyrics for the song cycle *Untuned Ears Hear Nothing but Discord*, which premiered at Lincoln Center as part of *In Need of Music: The Songs of Ben Toth*. Current projects include the original musical *These Girls Have Demons* (music by Sarah Taylor Ellis, workshopped as part of Pittsburgh CLO's SPARK festival) and *Cowboy Elektra* (with Rogue Artists Ensemble, music by The Dustbowl Revival's Zach Lupetin). meghanbrown.net



THE BIRDS OF EMPATHY

BY CLARENCE COO

Nathan is alone. His ex-boyfriend has gotten engaged, his mom has retired to Costa Rica, and his social life has devolved into a parade of unsatisfying encounters. But Nathan loves birds — watching them, discovering them, identifying with them. So when an unexpected visit from an estranged

neighbor threatens to destroy his routine, Nathan has to confront a crucial question: Does he even need people when he's got jays, sparrows and warblers?

CLARENCE COO is the recipient of a 2017 Whiting Award and the winner of the 2012 Yale Drama Series competition. His plays include *Beautiful Province* (Belle Province), *People Sitting in Darkness* and *The God of Wine*. His work has been developed at Atlantic Theater Company, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, New York Theatre Workshop and Bay Area Playwrights Festival. He has received fellowships from The Dramatists Guild of America, Rita Goldberg Playwrights' Workshop at The Lark, New York Foundation for the Arts and Playwrights Realm. He received his M.F.A. in playwriting at Columbia University. Currently he is a resident playwright at New Dramatists, a member of the Ma-Yi Writers Lab and the manager of academic administration for Columbia University's M.F.A. Writing Program.



PICK A COLOR

BY EMILY FELDMAN

Pick a Color follows four women taking refuge in a local nail salon to momentarily escape the stresses, heartbreak — and joys — of the busy winter holiday season. Playwright Emily Feldman uses her consciously theatrical storytelling style to

present intimate portraits of women digging within themselves for the strength to fight off an army of reasons to despair. Shot through with humor and arresting imagery, the play celebrates the resilient emotional lives of women of middle age living in the American present.

EMILY FELDMAN'S work has been developed by The Playwrights' Center, Colt Coeur, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Magic Theatre, Alliance Theatre, Roundabout Theatre Company and Playwrights Realm. She has been an Alliance/Kendeda National Graduate Playwriting Competition finalist, an Ashland New Play Festival winner and a member of The Working Farm at SPACE on Ryder Farm. She's currently a member of Interstate 73 at Page73 and The Orchard Project NYC Greenhouse. Emily is a recent Jerome Fellow at the Playwrights' Center and is the 2017-2018 Shank Playwright in Residence at Playwrights Horizons. This summer, she'll be working on a new play at The New Harmony Project and Wild Wind Performance Lab. She holds an M.F.A. in playwriting from University of California San Diego and a B.A. from Middlebury College.



THREE GIRLS NEVER LEARNT THE WAY HOME

BY MATTHEW PAUL OLMOS

Matthew Paul Olmos' play focuses on the friendship of three minority girls, who find themselves straddling two different worlds after being bussed to a newly integrated school. Using elements of magical realism and visceral theatricality, *three girls never learnt the way home* explores the question of

what happens to children caught in the middle of complicated adult fears.

MATTHEW PAUL OLMOS is a three-time recipient of a Sundance Institute fellowship/residency; a resident playwright for New Dramatists, Center Theatre Group and Oregon Shakespeare Festival's Black Swan Lab; and has received a Princess Grace Award and La MaMa's Ellen Stewart Emerging Playwright Award, as selected by Sam Shepard. Mentored for two years by Ruth Maleczek (Mabou Mines/SUITE), he is a New York Theatre Workshop fellow, Baryshnikov Arts Center resident, Echo Theater resident, Ensemble Studio Theater lifetime member and proud Kilroys nominator. His work has been presented nationally and internationally, taught in university, and published by Samuel French and NoPassport

Press. Current works include *American Nationalism Project* (New York Theatre Workshop's Adelphi Residency); a play with music, *We Walk Along the Christmas Bridge* (Center Theatre Group's L.A. Writers' Workshop); a three-play cycle about questionable presidents; and his completed three-part cycle *So Go the Ghosts of Mexico, Part Three* (world premiere at Undermain Theatre in 2019).

matthewpaulolmos.com

ABOUT JAW: A PLAYWRIGHTS FESTIVAL

Since launching in 1999, JAW: A Playwrights Festival has created a space for playwrights to have complete creative control and the resources to work on whatever they want to develop in their scripts. Each year, playwrights are chosen from nearly 200 submissions nationwide to collaborate with directors, dramaturgs, actors and other theater professionals from across the United States. Since its inception, 82 scripts have been developed at JAW and 17 JAW plays have received fully staged productions at Portland Center Stage at The Armory, giving Portland a strong national reputation for not only incubating new work, but helping to see that work to successful fruition. JAW plays have also gone on to receive world premiere productions at professional theaters across the country and beyond, including New York Theater Workshop, Steppenwolf Theatre and Berkeley Repertory Theatre.

THE JAW COMPANY

Portland Center Stage at The Armory's Associate Artistic Director Rose Riordan is the JAW Festival Director. Joining her on the JAW team are JAW Festival Co-Producers Kelsey Tyler and Brandon Woolley; JAW Literary Manager Benjamin Fainstein; JAW Festival Company Manager Will Cotter; Education and Community Programs Associate Clara-Liis Hillier; Promising Playwrights Director Matthew B. Zrebski; a slew of guest artists, both local and from around the country, including directors, dramaturgs, actors and other theater professionals; and the hardworking staff and volunteers of Portland Center Stage at The Armory who bring their talents and energies to JAW each year.

LOCATION: All public JAW events happen at [The Armory](#), 128 NW Eleventh Ave., Portland, Ore., 97209

ACCESSIBILITY: Portland Center Stage at The Armory is committed to making its performances and facilities accessible to all patrons. Learn more at <http://www.pcs.org/access/>.

AGE RECOMMENDATION: Most JAW events are recommended for high school age and up.

PORTLAND CENTER STAGE AT THE ARMORY

[Portland Center Stage at The Armory](#) is the largest theater company in Portland and among the top 20 largest regional theaters in the country. Established in 1988 as a branch of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the company became independent in 1994. Around 150,000 visitors attend The Armory annually to enjoy a mix of classical, contemporary and world premiere productions, along with a variety of high quality education and community programs. Eleven productions are offered each season, in addition to roughly 400 community events created — in partnership with 170+ local organizations and individuals — to serve the diverse populations in the city. As part of its dedication to new play development, the company has produced 26 world premieres and presents an annual new works festival, JAW: A Playwrights Festival. Home to two theaters, The Armory, which was originally built in 1891, opened its doors in 2006 as the first building on the National Register of Historic Places, and the first performing arts venue in the country, to achieve a LEED Platinum rating.

JAW: A PLAYWRIGHTS FESTIVAL

[JAW: A Playwrights Festival](#) is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts; The Kinsman Foundation; and Don and Mary Blair. Portland Center Stage at The Armory's 2017-2018 season is funded in part by Season Superstars Tim and Mary Boyle and Lead Corporate Champion Umpqua Bank. Further support comes from Season Sponsors the Regional Arts and Culture Council, The Wallace Foundation and the Oregon Arts Commission, a state agency funded by the state of Oregon and the National Endowment for the Arts. Mark Spencer Hotel is the official hotel partner. Portland Center Stage at The Armory was selected as a participant of the Wallace Foundation's Building Audiences for Sustainability Initiative, a four-year effort with a nationwide cohort of 26 performing arts organizations.

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