

## MEDIA RELEASE

**PCS's JAW New Play Festival is Back July 22-24!**

**Featuring Readings of New Scripts by Tyler Andrew Jones, Larry Owens,  
Anya Pearson, Leah Nanako Winkler, and the JAW Teen Playwrights**



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**June 16, 2022 — PORTLAND, OR.** Portland Center Stage's annual JAW New Play Festival returns July 22-24. JAW is PCS's week-long assembling of artists and audiences to create new plays. Each July, artistic teams, including playwrights, directors, and actors, come together to rehearse — and a lot of times rewrite! — a new play. The final piece of the process happens during the weekend, when “music stand readings” are shared with audiences so the playwrights can hear their work, often for the very first time.

This year's JAW featured plays include *Even Faster Than a Blink* by Tyler Andrew Jones, an untitled solo musical by Larry Owens, *Without A Formal Declaration of War* by Anya Pearson, *The Brightest Thing in the World* by Leah Nanako Winkler, and a selection of short plays written by teens from local high schools commissioned specifically for JAW.

"There are few things more electric than new play festivals! All of our favorite classics were once new plays and we are so excited to bring this special group of artists to PCS," said Kamilah Bush, Portland Center Stage's Literary Manager. "From a local voice like Tyler Andrew Jones, a national voice like Larry Owens, new collaborators like Leah Nanako Winkler, to the unique pleasure of developing our commission with Anya Pearson — this year's JAW brings together powerhouse creators! It will be a weekend you won't want to miss!"

To add to the excitement of the play readings, special JAW Press Play performances will be held surrounding the readings. The popular WWJP Street Dance Showcase presented by Jesus Rodales and the JAW Theater Maker Fair, featuring crafts made by local theater artists, will return once again. New offerings include Espacio Flamenco's Tablao Flamenco PCS, live music from Machado Mijiga Trio, labs led by featured JAW artists, and more.

All JAW events are free. Tickets for the staged readings can be reserved in advance at [pcs.org/jaw](https://pcs.org/jaw), but walk-ups are always welcome. Press Play events do not require a ticket. Lab admission is by lottery. This year, the play readings will all be held in the Ellyn Bye Studio, due to construction scheduled in the U.S. Bank Main Stage. Simulcasts of the play readings will also be presented in the Mezzanine Lobby in case capacity is reached in the studio. The Armory Bar will be open throughout the festival, with snacks and beverages available for purchase.

## **JAW PLAYWRIGHTS & PLAYS**

***Without a Formal Declaration of War* by Anya Pearson**

**Directed by Nicole Watson**

**Friday, July 22 · 7:30 p.m. · Ellyn Bye Studio**

**A PCS Commission!**

The War in Vietnam rages, a revolution brews, and the FBI targets a community while Clytemnestra finds herself, and the world, on the brink of great change. Set in the section of East Oakland that will come to be known as The Killing Fields, PCS-commissioned writer Anya Pearson places characters from Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* in 1969.



**Anya Pearson** is an award-winning playwright, poet, screenwriter, producer, actress, and activist. On staff at Corporeal Writing, she is a current Hodder Fellow at Princeton University. She is also currently finishing her debut collection of poetry, *This is the After*, writing three pilots, four plays, and a novel, and constantly plotting, planning, devising, creating, imagining, and revising visions of a better, more just world. Her plays include *The Measure of Innocence* (The Kilroys List,

Drammy Award for Best Original Script, finalist for the Oregon Book Award in Drama), *Made to Dance in Burning Buildings* (Showcase: Joe's Pub, NYC; Shaking the Tree, Portland, OR), *The Killing Fields* (2018 Orphic Commission; Last Frontier Theatre Conference; Seven Devils New Play Foundry; Great Plains Theatre Conference), *Three Love Songs* (Play at Home Initiative, PCS), *Butterflies Eat Decay* (Go Play Outside). Memberships: LineStorm Playwrights, Dramatists Guild, Actors' Equity Association. Her best production is her 9-year-old daughter, Aidee, who can be seen most nights, trying to circumvent bedtime by asking deep philosophical questions like: "When are we going to see the world? When is my life going to truly begin?"

***Even Faster Than a Blink* by Tyler Andrew Jones**

**Directed by Chalia La Tour**

**Saturday, July 23 · 4 p.m. · Ellyn Bye Studio**

When the pandemic hit, Taaliba Campbell gave up her life as an artist and moved back home to Richmond to help her mother run their family business, Campbell's. A year after insurmountable grief and loss, and as the prospect of a loan begins to slip through their fingers, the whole family gathers to decide what is to become of Campbell's and, unknowingly, each of their lives.



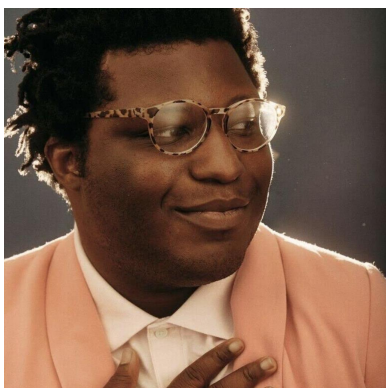
**Tyler Andrew Jones**, who hails from Portland, is a multidisciplinary theater artist, writer, and teacher. His works include *The Marks You Leave*, which was produced in part by Ronnie Lacroute and the WillaKenzie Estate at the 20th Annual International New York Fringe Festival, and has since received an Off-Broadway reading at The Cell Theatre, as well as *Sanctuary*, *Kief*, and *Little Dark Star*. He was a finalist for American Players Theatre's New Voices project and a semi-finalist for Artist

Repertory Theatre's Oregon Play Prize. As a performer, Tyler has worked on stage at Portland Center Stage, Portland Playhouse, in New York at Feinstein's/54 Below, The Cell Theatre, New World Stages, and in Egypt at the Cairo Opera House and the Alexandria Opera House as part of the CIFICET Festival. Tyler attended Marymount Manhattan College and is a proud member of AEA and The Dramatists Guild of America.

### **Untitled Project by Larry Owens**

**Saturday, July 23 · 7:30 p.m. · Ellyn Bye Studio**

Celebrated artist Larry Owens brings his unique energy to Portland in a one-person show penned and performed by him! With abundant humor, searing truth, and thrilling music, this one-of-a-kind piece comes alive with brilliant storytelling.



**Larry Owens** is a performer, writer, director, and comedian residing in New York City. Owens will star in the forthcoming Miramax feature film, *Silent Retreat*. He won a Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Actor and Lucille Lortel Award for

starring as the alter ego of writer/composer/lyricist Michael R. Jackson in the groundbreaking, Pulitzer Prize-winning musical *A Strange Loop* at Playwrights Horizons, directed by Stephen Brackett with choreography by Raja Feather Kelly. *A Strange Loop* was named the No. 1 theatrical production of 2019 by *New York Magazine*, *Time Out NY*, *TheaterMania*, and *The Wrap*. The cast album for *A Strange Loop* debuted at No. 2 on the iTunes Cast Album charts on the night of its release. Owens can also be seen on the season four premiere of HBO's *High Maintenance*, HBO's *Betty*, HBO Max's *Search Party*, Apple TV's *Helpsters*, Netflix's *Dash & Lily*, and the upcoming animated series *Fairfax* on Amazon. Owens studied drama and improvisation at the School at Steppenwolf and has headlined sold-out venues like Carolines on Broadway and The Bell House.

### **JAW Teen Playwrights Showcase**

**Directed by Lava Alapai**

**Sunday, July 24 · 1 p.m. · Ellyn Bye Studio**

Experience some of the newest voices in theater! Teen playwrights will be selected following their deep involvement in PCS's education programming, including in-school playwriting residencies, Teen Council membership, and Teen Academy classes. They will receive PCS commissions to write short scripts for JAW. The work they develop — dynamic 8-10 minute plays — will be performed by actors from the JAW company.

In association with Yale Repertory Theatre:

***The Brightest Thing in the World* by Leah Nanako Winkler**

**Directed by Margot Bordelon**

**Sunday, July 24 · 4 p.m. · Ellyn Bye Studio**

**Commissioned and developed by Yale Repertory Theatre, New Haven, CT, Artistic Director James Bundy, Managing Director Florie Seery.**

Revival Bakery is the backdrop for a meet-cute made for the movies — charming Lane bakes special homemade treats for Steph and the two begin a once-in-a-lifetime romance that ripples

through both their families. Even Lane's older sister Della, who hasn't been on a date in years, starts to open her heart up for romance. When the realness of life settles in, bringing in both the lightness and darkness of truth, each woman must grapple with their own limitations.



**Leah Nanako Winkler**, Leah is a Japanese-American playwright from Kamakura, Japan, and Lexington, Kentucky. Her plays include *Kentucky*, *God Said This*, *Two Mile Hollow*, *Hot Asian Doctor Husband*, and *Death for Sydney Black*. Her work has been performed Off-Broadway and around the country. Her audio play *Nevada-Tan* was an inaugural Audible Emerging Artist Commission and is now being adapted into a film with

LuckyChap. Awards/Fellowships: ATCA's Francesca Primus Prize, the inaugural Mark O'Donnell Prize from The Actors Fund and Playwrights Horizons, the Jerome New York Fellowship, A Peabody Award, and, most recently, the 2020 Steinberg Playwright Award. TV credits include *Love Life*, *New Amsterdam*, and *Ramy*. *The Brightest Thing in the World* is her newest play and it will premiere at Yale Rep in the fall of 2022.

## **JAW PRESS PLAY EVENTS (More events will be announced soon!)**

### **WWJP Street Dance Showcase**

**Friday, July 22 · 6:30 p.m. · Main Lobby**

Presented by Jesus Rodales of WWJP, this showcase will feature street, club, and urban dance styles, performed by artists from a variety of local dance crews.

### **Machado Mijiga Trio**

**Saturday, July 23 · 3 p.m. · Main Lobby**

Classically-trained, multi-instrumentalist Machado Mijiga will lead a trio of musicians that blend jazz, hip hop, R&B, and sounds that reflect his intercultural heritage as part of this intimate but energetic performance.

## **Tablao Flamenco PCS**

**Saturday, July 23 · 6:30 p.m. · Main Lobby**

Enjoy live flamenco dance and instrumentation during Espacio Flamenco's special Tablao Flamenco PCS, where improvisational performances will showcase the dynamic interplay between the music and dance of this multicultural art form. The event will feature special guest guitarist Berto Boyd and singer Randa BenAziz. They'll be joined by Nela McGuire and Lillie Last (dance), Brenna McDonald (guitar), and Yeshe Wingerd (vocals).

## **JAW Maker Fair**

**Sunday, July 24 · 12 p.m. · Main Lobby**

Shop locally and choose from handmade products created by Portland artisans. Enjoy a play reading, live music, and support local craft-makers all in one afternoon! The JAW Maker Fair will be open for business before both readings scheduled on Sunday.

## **JAW LABS**

*Lab space is limited, so admission is by lottery. To enter the lottery, email [education@pcs.org](mailto:education@pcs.org) with your choice of labs in order of preference.*

## **Dealing with the Hard Sh\*& in Our Writing Lives: Writing Around Trauma, Core Wounds, Violence, and Heartbreaks with JAW Playwright Anya Pearson**

**Saturday, July 23 · 12 p.m. to 3 p.m.**

Dive into the depths, explore the darkest parts of humanity, and emerge with/forge/create complex characters that feel authentic, alive, and vibrating with energy. How do you draw from or borrow or fictionalize personal experience in service of alchemy without retraumatizing or reopening your most deeply held wounds? What tools, tricks, safeguards, and ripcords can we put in place so that we can make the best possible art — art that changes the world — without costing ourselves too much.

## **The Subtext is the Text with JAW Actor Maiya Reaves**

**Sunday, July 24 · 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.**

In this workshop, Maiya will teach the fundamentals of psychological gestures (physical action that reveals intention) as we craft and refine the play within the play. Connecting our movement and intentions, Maiya will take us through exercises that help us get lost in the driving needs and desires of a character while we find a fuller, more activated performance.

## **ABOUT JAW**

Since 1999, JAW has created a space for 88 playwrights to develop 91 plays. Most have gone on to receive professional productions across the country, including many world premieres at PCS. This year's JAW New Play Festival is supported by the Kinsman Foundation and Oregon Cultural Trust. Support for the JAW Teen Playwrights comes from the PGE Foundation and Herbert A. Templeton Foundation.

## **PORTLAND CENTER STAGE**

[Portland Center Stage](#) was established in 1988 as a branch of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and became independent in 1994. The company produces a mix of classic, contemporary, and world premiere productions, along with a variety of high-quality education and community programs. As part of its dedication to new play development, the company has produced 28 world premieres, many of which were developed at its JAW New Play Festival. Portland Center Stage's home is The Armory, a historic building originally constructed in 1891. After a major renovation, The Armory opened in 2006 as the first building on the National Register of Historic Places, the first performing arts venue in the country, and the first building in Portland to achieve a LEED Platinum rating.

Portland Center Stage is committed to identifying and interrupting instances of racism and all forms of oppression, through the principles of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA). Learn more at [pcs.org/idea](https://pcs.org/idea).



[Portland Center Stage's 2022-2023 Season](#) is funded in part by Season Superstars the Regional Arts and Culture Council and the James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation; Season Supporting Sponsors the Oregon Arts Commission, a state agency funded by the state of Oregon and the National Endowment for the Arts, and US Bank; and Season Producing Sponsors Ellyn Bye, Ray and Bobbi Davis, Ronni Lacroute, Mark Spencer, Argyle Winery, and Deschutes Brewery.

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