

MEDIA RELEASE

PCS's JAW New Play Festival is Back July 28-30

Featuring Readings of New Scripts by Jonathan Spector, Bailey Williams, Dorcas Sowunmi, and the JAW Teen Playwrights, plus a live concert with Lo Steele



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July 5, 2023 — PORTLAND, OR. Portland Center Stage's annual JAW New Play Festival returns July 28-30, 2023. 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 *Best Available* by Jonathan Spector, *In the Basement* by Bailey Williams, *Safe Ride* by Dorcas Sowunmi, and a selection of short plays written by teens from local high schools, commissioned specifically for JAW. The final performance for JAW will feature a live concert with local artist Lauren "Lo" Steele, who audiences will recognize from this past season's *tick...tick...Boom!* and *the ripple, the wave that carried me home*, and whose talents will be seen in this season's opener, *HAIR*.

"JAW is a celebration of New Works, and this year's line up is a party!" said Kamilah Bush, Portland Center Stage's Literary Manager. "The plays in this summer's festival explore many themes that concern us all --the state of the theater industry to the fight for reproductive rights to the absolute absurdity of growing up. And to close out the weekend we are so excited to share Lo Steele in concert. Her new album *Happy Girl* is a beautiful feat of storytelling. I can't wait to share all this wonderful work with our community!"

To add to the excitement of the play readings, special JAW Press Play performances will be held surrounding the readings. This year's Press Play events include a return of the WWJP Street Dance Showcase, love songs and silly antics by Kimo Camat, Portland-based musician and vocalist Danielle Barker, and a set by DJ Perreo Princess.

All JAW events are free. Tickets for the staged readings can be reserved in advance at 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. 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

***Best Available* by Jonathan Spector**

Directed by Marissa Wolf

Friday, July 28 • 7:30 p.m. • Ellyn Bye Studio

After the sudden, and hushed, departure of the Artistic Director, the staff at a regional theater are ready for a change. Change that builds on the remarkable legacy of their institution and honors the community. Focusing on the future is the only way through. Jonathan Spector's *Best Available* takes you on the behind-the-scenes journey of theatermaking's adventure and absurdity. It's funny...because it's true!



Jonathan Spector is a playwright based in Oakland, California. His plays include EUREKA DAY (Glickman Award, Theater Bay Area Award, Bay Area Theater Critics Circle Award, WhatsOnStage Award Nomination, NY Times Critics Pick), THIS MUCH I KNOW (Glickman Award, BATCC Award, Edgerton Award), GOOD. BETTER. BEST. BESTED., and IN FROM THE COLD (Global Age Prize). His work has been produced with The Old

Vic, Aurora Theater, Colt Coeur, Mosaic Theater, Asolo Rep, Syracuse Stage, InterAct, Custom Made, The State Theater of South Australia and Just Theater, where he was long-time co-Artistic Director. Jonathan has been a Core Writer at Playwrights Center, a MacDowell Fellow, and a Playwrights Foundation Resident Playwright. He's held commissions with Roundabout Theater Company, Manhattan Theater Club, La Jolla Playhouse and South Coast Rep.

***In the Basement* by Bailey Williams**

Directed by Josiah Davis

Saturday, July 29 • 4 p.m. • Ellyn Bye Studio

12 year old Dingus is disgusting — especially compared to her big sister, Teenie, who is perfect, Teenie's boyfriend, Jard, who is a Christian and her best friend, Sal, who is developing way faster

than Dingus can keep track of. As for Mom and Dad? Well. They said don't go into the basement. *In the Basement* is a dark coming-of-age comedy that celebrates the joy and messiness of how our identities are formed, gender is performed and how adulthood might just be a figment of our imaginations.



Bailey Williams is a writer of plays and fiction. *In the Basement* was written with Clubbed Thumb's Early Career Writers Group (2021-2022) and received additional development at Macdowell and through Ars Nova's Play Group. It was featured at the Great Plains Theatre Conference 2023. Other plays include *Events* (The Hearth/The Brick, Dec. 2022), *Coach Coach* (Clubbed Thumb/Winterworks, Jan. 2023), *I thought I would die but I didn't* (The Tank, May 2019) and *Buffalo Bailey's Ranch for Gay Horses Troubled Teen Girls and Other: a 90 Minute Timeshare Presentation* (Exponential Festival, Jan. 2018). MFA: Brooklyn College. baileywilliams.live

***Safe Ride* by Dorcas Sowunmi**

Saturday, July 29 • 7:30 p.m. • Ellyn Bye Studio

Safe Ride focuses on the board members of an SGA (Student Government Association) in a high school in the south. These students, fiercely led by President Marshall and his twin sister Vice President Chisholm, strive to operate like an ideal democratic government where all of their voices are heard and valued. But in the midst of planning for their senior legacy project egos, attitudes, and beliefs systems come into play. And as more and more southern states begin to pass "Fetal Heartbeat" Laws, these students are pushed to their tipping point and go far beyond protesting in the streets to taking the law into their own hands.



Dorcas Sowunmi is a Playwright/Performing Artist/ Educator, based in New York, originally from Texas. Most recently, her play *Safe Ride* was workshopped at The Emerging Playwrights of Color Conference at Quick Silver Theater Company. Dorcas was also in the first cohort of

playwrights in The Echoes Writer's Group at Primary Stages in New York City. She has also studied at the Dramatis Guild and The Commercial Theatre Institute. As a performer, Dorcas has worked extensively in theatre, film, and television throughout North America. Dorcas holds an MFA in Acting from The University of Texas at Austin. She has also trained at The Birmingham Conservatory for Classical Training at The Stratford Shakespeare Festival in Canada, The School at Steppenwolf in Chicago, and Stella Adler Actor's Studio in New York.

JAW Teen Playwrights Showcase

Directed by Melory Mirashafri

Sunday, July 30 · 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.

Live Music Concert with Lo Steele Band

Sunday, July 30 · 4 p.m. · Ellyn Bye Studio



Lauren "Lo" Steele is a singer, songwriter, and award-winning actor from Portland, Oregon. You may have recently seen her performing original music in The Mayday Lovestream's one-year anniversary show or for Clackamas Repertory Theatre's solo-show *Queen's Girl in the World*, for which she won a Drammy Award. Check out her recent album *Happy Girl*, featuring the single, "Nighttime Friends," available on all platforms.

JAW PRESS PLAY EVENTS

WWJP Street Dance Showcase

Friday, July 28 · 6:30 p.m. · Main Lobby

Kick off JAW weekend with this wildly popular showcase, presented by Jesus Rodales of WWJP. Featuring street, club, and urban dance styles, performed by artists from a variety of local Portland area dance crews and institutions.

Kimo Camat

Saturday, July 29 · 3 p.m. · Main Lobby

Enjoy the cool, summertime vibes at JAW with a performance by Portland-based vocalist Kimo Camat, who will be singing a "Kiki's Summer Lovin" set filled with love songs and spoken word performance, with piano by Dave Lerman.

Danielle Barker

Saturday, July 29 · 6:30 p.m. · Main Lobby

Come check out a JAW weekend pre-show music set by local Portland-based musician and vocalist Danielle Barker. The intimate performance will feature a mix of original music and cover songs that are rooted in jazz and RnB styles.

DJ Perreo Princess

Sunday, July 30 · 12 p.m. · Main Lobby

Join us for a JAW pre-show music performance by DJ Perreo Princess, who will be spinning a mix of music that spans genres and geography from cumbia and quebradita to dancehall and perreo.

JAW LABS

Saturday, July 29 - 12 p.m. to 2 p.m.

Sunday, July 30 - 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Lab space is limited, so admission is by lottery. To enter the lottery, email education@pcs.org

with your choice of labs in order of preference. Please keep an eye on our website for Lab descriptions coming soon.

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.

[Portland Center Stage's 2023-2024 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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