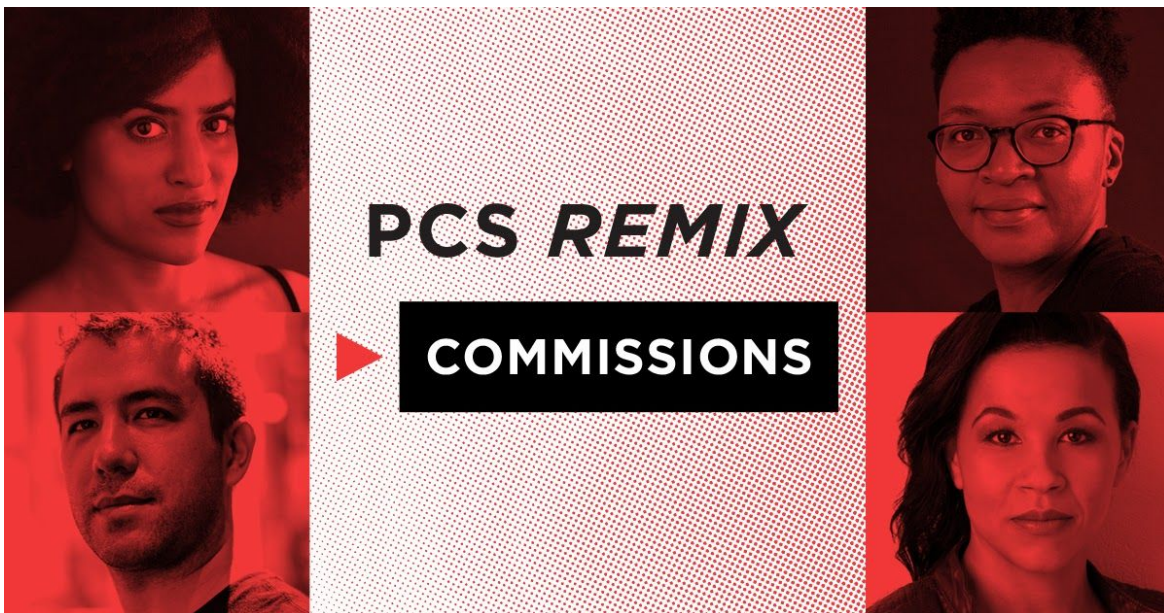


MEDIA RELEASE

Portland Center Stage Commissions Four New Plays From Celebrated Writers Brittany K. Allen, Christina Anderson, Christopher Chen, and Portland-based Anya Pearson



January 27, 2020 — PORTLAND, OR. Portland Center Stage has commissioned four new plays from celebrated writers Brittany K. Allen, Christina Anderson, Christopher Chen, and Portland-based Anya Pearson. The commissions are part of the [**PCS Remix: Commissions**](#) program, which was launched to lift up some of the most exciting voices in American theater while stages are dark, and to generate a wellspring of theatrical offerings to draw from when theaters are able to welcome the community back into their houses once again.

“I am over the moon with joy to have these four brilliant, visionary playwrights under commission at PCS,” Artistic Director Marissa Wolf said. “As we wrestle with the continued

challenges our field faces during the pandemic, I'm thrilled to invest in the voices of these four playwrights whose work will help chart a course for the company's future."

The PCS Remix: Commissions program builds on PCS's long-standing dedication to supporting new works for the stage. PCS has a robust history of commissioning, developing, and producing new plays, through programs such as the NW Stories series and JAW: A Playwrights Festival. Throughout the development process for these new scripts, PCS will offer the community opportunities to engage with these innovative playwrights.

ABOUT THE COMMISSIONS

Brittany K. Allen's commission is her second collaboration with PCS, following the world premiere of her play *Redwood* in 2019, in which Allen also starred as Meg. Of this new commission, Allen said, "this moment is one for radical imagining, and I'm excited to use this resource to daydream toward the future I want to be part of building; the better country, the better timeline. Narratives matter, and I'm glad for the provocation to push against the ones that have harmed our most vulnerable communities. The play I'm writing is in early stages still, but it's to do with socialist utopia, intersectional coalition building, the ways we find and nurture community as adults, and most definitely Black joy. Also, RVs? We'll see!"

Portland-based artist **Anya Pearson** is also familiar to PCS audiences through her short play *Three Love Songs*, which was commissioned by PCS at the beginning of the pandemic for the national Play at Home series. *Willamette Week* raved that it was "a masterpiece that emerged from the wreckage of 2020."

"I am beyond honored to receive this commission from Portland Center Stage — and to be part of this amazing and formidable lineup of BIPOC playwrights," Pearson said. "We need theatre now more than ever! The collective breath, the joy, the vulnerability, the investigation of the

soul, and the reimagining of what it means to gather, to hold space, and to dream of a better world for all of us.”

Christina Anderson’s work is new to PCS, but her play *How to Catch Creation* had its West Coast premiere at Oregon Shakespeare Festival in 2019, directed by Nataki Garrett, and her play *pen/man/ship* was presented at Portland Playhouse in 2017. Anderson has previously collaborated with Wolf on the world premiere of *Man in Love* at Kansas City Repertory Theatre.

"Marissa is one of my favorite collaborators," Anderson said. "I respect and appreciate her work and approach to creating theater, so when she invited me to write a commission for PCS I leapt at the opportunity. American cities inspire much of my work," Anderson continued. "I look forward to creating a new piece that re-examines what it means to ‘stay at home’ in our present day."

Playwright **Christopher Chen** is also new to PCS, but his play *Caught* was lauded when it was produced at Artists Repertory Theatre in 2017. Chen has collaborated with Wolf on numerous projects. "I couldn't be more thrilled to reunite with Marissa Wolf. Marissa helped shape my career and voice as a playwright by shepherding two of my most significant early plays into existence. I am so excited to continue this most meaningful of collaborations," Chen said.

PLAYWRIGHT BIOS



Brittany K. Allen is a Brooklyn-based writer and actor. She's a proud member of the Obie Award-winning EST/Youngblood, an alumna of the Emerging Writers Group at The Public Theater, and was a 2017 Van Lier New Voices fellow at The Lark. She has developed work with Manhattan Theatre Club, Ars Nova, Woolly Mammoth/Telephonic Literary Union, Harlem9, and

Kansas City Repertory Theatre. She currently holds commissions from Playwrights Horizons, Manhattan Theatre Club/Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, and Studio Theatre. Her writing has been supported by residencies at SPACE on Ryder Farm and the Sewanee Writers Conference. Her prose appears, or is forthcoming, in *McSweeney's Quarterly Concern*, *Catapult*, *Kenyon Review Online*, and *Longreads*, among other places, and her short fiction has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize. B.F.A., NYU-Tisch. brittanykathrynallen.com



Christina Anderson's plays have appeared at The Goodman Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, The Public Theater, Yale Repertory Theatre, and Kansas City Repertory Theatre, among others. Awards and honors include: 2020 United States Artists Fellow, MacDowell Fellowship, Lilly Awards' Harper Lee Prize, Herb Alpert Award nomination, Barrymore nomination, and a New Dramatists Residency. Her work has appeared multiple times on the annual Kilroys' List. She is the winner of the

Lucille Lortel Fellowship. Her plays include: *How to Catch Creation*; *The Ripple*, *The Wave That Carried Me Home*; *Man in Love*; *pen/man/ship*; *The Ashes Under Gait City*; and *Blacktop Sky*. She taught playwriting at Wesleyan University, Rutgers University, SUNY Purchase College, and served as the interim head of playwriting at Brown University. Christina recently worked as a staff writer on Edie Falco's CBS drama *Tommy*. She's currently producing an EP of instrumental hip hop music and working on her first TV pilot, *The Only Isaac*. christinaandersonwriter.com



Christopher Chen is a San Francisco-based playwright whose plays include *Caught* (The Play Company, InterAct), *The Headlands* (LCT3), *The Hundred Flowers Project* (Crowded Fire), *The Late Wedding* (Crowded Fire), *Mutt* (Impact Theatre/Ferocious Lotus), *Passage* (Soho Rep, The Wilma), and *You Mean To Do Me Harm*

(S.F. Playhouse). Honors include the Obie Award for Playwriting, the Steinberg Award, the Barrymore Award, the Glickman Award, the Lanford Wilson Award, the Sundance Institute/Time Warner Fellowship, the Paula Vogel Playwriting Award, and the inaugural Ollie Award. christopherchen.org



Anya Pearson is an award-winning playwright, poet, producer, actress, and activist. She was recently named a Hodder Fellow at Princeton University's Lewis Center for the Arts. She is on staff at Corporeal Writing, where she runs a BIPOC writing collective. She is currently finishing her debut collection of poetry, writing three pilots, interrogating what it means to make art through little square barriers on Zoom in a new experimental project called *Community*, 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), *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, Portland Center Stage). Memberships: LineStorm Playwrights, Dramatists Guild, Couch Film Collective, Actors' Equity Association. anyapearson.com

PCS REMIX: COMMISSIONS

New plays are electric! They are a statement of our time, our evolution, our humanity. PCS has a robust history of commissioning and developing new plays through its annual JAW festival and programs such as the NW Stories series, which commissioned Lauren Yee's *Young Americans* — a play slated for its world premiere in PCS's upcoming season. In addition to supporting the development of these four new scripts, the PCS Remix commissioned artists will

also be featured in roundtable discussions about the creative process and other curated touchpoints to connect with the community.

PORTLAND CENTER STAGE

Portland Center Stage is among the top 20 regional theaters in the country. Established in 1988 as a branch of Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the company became independent in 1994. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Marissa Wolf and Managing Director Cynthia Fuhrman, 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 new works festival, JAW. Portland Center Stage's home is at 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, and the first performing arts venue in the country, 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.

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