



**NONPROFIT DEDICATED TO PLAYWRIGHTS AND NEW-PLAY DEVELOPMENT  
NAMES NEW ARTISTIC DIRECTOR**

*PlayPenn Board of Directors Selects Che'Rae Adams to Lead Organization into New Era*

PHILADELPHIA, PA—(January 11, 2022)—PlayPenn, a nationally-acclaimed artist-driven organization dedicated to the development of new plays and playwrights, has named [Che'Rae Adams](#) its new Artistic Director. Adams will lead the 17-year-old nonprofit into a new era.

Adams spent the last 15 years as Producing Artistic Director of the [LA Writers Center](#), where she developed new work with local writers after previously serving as Director of Operations and Programming for the [Moss Theater in Santa Monica](#). A respected advocate for diversity, equality, and inclusion in the arts and culture community, Adams' recent major projects include *BREATHE: A BIPOC Reading Series* in response to George Floyd's murder; *Home: An Asian Voices Reading* featuring Asian-American stories; and *The Voices of Afghanistan*, a series of monologues based on interviews with Afghan artists in hiding. For the last two years, she's worked with HowlRound TV to develop diverse online programming that addresses the country's social inequities.

"I am thrilled to take up the baton that has been entrusted to me by everyone at PlayPenn," said Adams. "My entire career I've worked hard to reach new audiences by telling stories that truly reflect the diverse world in which we live in. Now is the perfect time for us to embrace our role as storytellers to our community, making inclusive and compelling work that is as relevant as it is excellent."

Adams said one of her priorities will be the relaunch of PlayPenn's [Annual Conference](#) in July 2022 with a renewed commitment to diversity and inclusion. Also, Adams has made the decision to ask for submissions for the 2022 New Play Development Conference exclusively from Philadelphia playwrights. The submission window will open January 15, 2022 and close February 15, 2022. For nearly 17 years, the Conference has helped playwrights fine-tune their work with great success; there have been over 400 productions of PlayPenn-developed plays.

PlayPenn conducted a top to bottom re-evaluation of the organization after former Artistic Director, Paul Meshejian resigned in July of 2020. Longtime staff member, [Sabrina Profitt](#) was appointed Acting Executive Director shortly thereafter and worked tirelessly with the board on an aggressive transformation strategy. The first step was hiring [Davis Gay + Associates](#), a consulting firm specializing in diversity and inclusion initiatives, to ensure that PlayPenn is creating an intentionally equitable organization.

Steps were then taken to make significant changes throughout the organization and in early 2021, a national search for a new Artistic Director was led by [Arts Consulting Group](#).

PlayPenn Board President Nancy Boykin said that in addition to the tremendous work that has been done over the 18 months to create needed change, the appointment of Adams will move PlayPenn into a new era.

“At its heart, PlayPenn is a group of artists who come together with a mission to develop the work of new playwrights, encouraging new voices, telling stories that speak to the community and engaging our audiences,” said Boykin. “Our organization needed amendment overhaul and that change has been critical to getting us back to our true mission.”

Boykin said they have done significant work to ensure change and will continue to do what is needed to pursue creative work as “an intentionally equitable and anti-racist arts organization that allows for a culturally diverse and inclusive future.”

Adams said it is her intention to honor the past by continuing to develop risk taking, boundary-pushing new plays. “However, I also want to build on the past by expanding our definition of new play development to include all forms of live entertainment that a playwright might need support with.”

Prior to bringing on Adams, last year PlayPenn appointed a new Operations Director, [LaShawna Bean](#); added four new Board members, all from the BIPOC community; partnered last summer with an Indigenous theater company, Native Voices at the Autry Museum, to develop a series of Indigenous plays; and reconfigured its budget to fund more diversity initiatives, community engagement, and professional development. For the first time in its 17-year history, PlayPenn is entirely female-led.

PlayPenn also hired interim lead artists, [L M Feldman](#) and [R. Eric Thomas](#), for [The Foundry](#), the organization’s emerging writer’s group, to cultivate and mentor the next generation of PlayPenn-supported playwrights. The Foundry offers a three-year program that provides craft and technique instruction, networking opportunities, and exposure as these emerging artists launch their playwriting careers.

“I am proud I could play a role in the rebuilding process,” said [Kimberly S. Fairbanks](#), one of the newly appointed board members. “Plays are a socially active force, allowing for cultural expression, societal reflection, and individuality that can highlight our commonalities and create a bridge to understanding. Having PlayPenn back in the game is good news for all of us.”

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*PlayPenn is a Philadelphia artist-driven organization dedicated to the development of new plays and playwrights. PlayPenn fully supports the needs of the writer and the demands of the play in an ever-evolving process within which playwrights can engage in risk taking, boundary-pushing work.*

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