



**PLAYPENN EXPANDS 2023 PROGRAMMING TO SUPPORT MORE LOCAL PLAYWRIGHTS,
SETS THE RETURN OF THE RENOWNED NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE IN 2025 IN
CELEBRATION OF THEIR 20th ANNIVERSARY**

The Playwrights Cohort at PlayPenn, Independent Workshop Readings, and a Digital Speaker Series are launched as part of new initiatives to serve a larger number of writers.

PHILADELPHIA, PA—(March 2023)—PlayPenn announces its return to The Drake Theatre in July with readings of six brand new, full-length plays. For a second consecutive year, the focus will be on uplifting Philadelphia playwrights. Four of the readings will feature work by graduating members of [The Foundry](#): **Robynne Graffam, Griffin Horn, Devin Randall, and Megan Schumacher**. In addition, there will be two independent PlayPenn Workshop presentations, both consisting of a week-long rehearsal process. The first of the two will be in partnership with [The Sol Project](#) (recent recipient of the Obie Grant from the American Theatre Wing in recognition of outstanding achievement in Off-Broadway and Off-Off Broadway theater during the 2020-2022 season) and will center a local Latiné writer. For the second, PlayPenn will present an online reading of *“I” is for Invisible* by DeLanna Studi, Artistic Director of Native Voices and citizen of the Cherokee Nation. All six readings will be free and open to the public.

PlayPenn’s newest initiative, **The Playwrights Cohort at PlayPenn**, will be a year-long professional development program open to emerging Philadelphia playwrights and will focus on navigating the industry. This program will be in partnership with the [Dramatists Guild](#). **Emmanuel Wilson**, the Executive Director of Creative Affairs at the guild says, “Understanding your craft is important, but craft without building the necessary skills to understand commerce and self-advocacy breeds far too many situations where a writer can be taken advantage of. Philadelphia writers are craving community spaces to better understand their place in the industry, and no one is better suited to create these spaces than PlayPenn and the Dramatists Guild.” Every month experts in their sector will engage the cohort on subjects such as entertainment law, building a portfolio, finding representation, having agency in the rehearsal room, managing personal finances and more. The Cohort will operate on a hybrid model, holding monthly meetings in person and online. Applications are now available on the [PlayPenn website](#) and will be accepted through April 4, 2023. The Cohort and Foundry are two different programs; The Foundry will continue to center on the playwright’s artistic growth, while The

Cohort will empower freelance writers to grow as entrepreneurs capable of making savvy business decisions.

Videologues: A PlayPenn Speaker Series is a new program helmed by **Santiago Iacinti** (they/them) Associate Artistic Director and Director of Education, which will offer a series of interviews with creative luminaries in the new play development field. Each session will be filmed and available online to stream on demand.

The Cohort, The Foundry readings, the independent workshops, and the Videologues will enable PlayPenn to support more playwrights in 2023 than the number of writers historically selected for the Conference. “The leadership team knows and honors what the Conference means to the community, and now we are interested in what more PlayPenn can offer,” added PlayPenn’s Artistic Director, **Che’Rae Adams**.

In its 18-year history, all events at PlayPenn have been free of charge. In 2023, offering patrons an accessible and affordable night in the theater will remain a core value, however, it is just as important that we keep our doors open, and pay artists and staff a fair wage. To sustain equity, PlayPenn will move into a donation-based pay-what-you-can model.

Iacinti shares that, “The reality is that most theaters operate on a deficit. This new model comes after a six-month review of PlayPenn’s operations budget. The landscape of grants and giving is changing. Since the pandemic began, many theaters nationwide have closed down or scaled back both on programming and staff size. The impact has been felt especially hard by organizations that develop new plays. Despite this shift, we have seen organizations and artistic leaders share resources as well as amplify each other’s work, which has become a lifeline for the theater community at large.” PlayPenn Board President **Nancy Boykin** adds, “In confronting these cutbacks, we have taken the time to strategically plan so that we can maintain the mission - to support the needs of the writer.”

Following the success of the 2022 Conference, which employed 106 local artists, PlayPenn will present a revitalized New Play Development Conference in 2025 in celebration of their 20th anniversary. **Susan Dalian**, Associate Artistic Director who helms production for the Conference adds, “Setting the next PlayPenn Conference together with our 20th anniversary, gives us the dual opportunity to engineer more exciting plans and events around the Conference as well as celebrate the 20 years of our new play development work.”

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ABOUT THE FOUNDRY

[The Foundry](#) provides a three-year program to support emerging playwrights in Philadelphia with professional development, networking opportunities, and exposure as they launch their playwriting careers. Under the guidance of lead artists, playwrights meet as a group and have the opportunity to share their work and add tools to their craft and creative practice. Lead Artists, **L M Feldman** and **R. Eric Thomas**, facilitate the meetings. Members participate in craft building workshops with guest speakers, network with theater professionals, and receive graduation readings.

<https://www.playpenn.org/the-foundry/>

The program is free of charge and is only open to playwrights living in Philadelphia.

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ABOUT THE SOL PROJECT

[The Sol Project](#) is a national theater initiative dedicated to amplifying the voices of Latiné playwrights by supporting, nurturing, and advocating for fully realized productions in NYC and beyond. Founded by Jacob G. Padrón and driven by an artistic collective, The Sol Project works in partnership with leading theaters to center Latiné dramatists and nurture a growing community of Latiné theater artists. With the writers we champion, The Sol Project aspires to create a bold, timeless, and kaleidoscopic body of work for the new American theater.

<http://www.solproject.org/>

The artistic collective includes Adriana Gavia (Co-Artistic Director), Rebecca Martínez, David Mendizábal, Jacob G. Padrón (Co-Artistic Director), Julian Ramirez, and Laurie Woolery. Isabel Pask is the Producing Associate. Brian Herrera is the Resident Scholar. Stephanie Ybarra is the Resident Dramaturg.

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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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