

San Francisco Playhouse announces commitment to new plays with 5-YEAR COMMISSION PROGRAM

SAN FRANCISCO (March 2018) — San Francisco Playhouse (Artistic Director **Bill English**; Producing Director **Susi Damilano**) expanded its commitment to developing new plays and nurturing the voices of active playwrights with the launch of a 5-Year Commission Program dedicated to the creation of 20 new plays over the next 5 years. This will elevate the Playhouse's acclaimed New Play Program, now approaching its 10th season.

Each year, the playwrights selected for the commissions will include an established top playwright, two mid-career playwrights and one emerging playwright. Playwrights already engaged for the first season include **Theresa Rebeck** (*Seared*), **Aaron Loeb** (*Ideation*), **Chelsea Marcantel** (*Airness*) and **Christian Durso** (a first commission). Playwrights in future years include **Lauren Yee**, **Julie Hebert**, **Jen Silverman** and **Christopher Chen**.

The impetus for the program is to provide more structure and long-range planning to the already robust but informal commission program which has produced such plays as *Seared* by Theresa Rebeck, *Bauer* by Lauren Gunderson, *Pluto* by Steve Yockey, and *You Mean to Do Me Harm* by Christopher Chen. The 5-Year Commission Program transforms the San Francisco Playhouse into a major incubator of original material that will enrich the Bay Area and national theater communities.

San Francisco Playhouse Board President Andrew Teufel expressed his support for this new program: "The magnitude and duration of our new commitment will help us accommodate highly accomplished and busy playwrights who require long development lead times while also allowing us to foster emerging playwrights who can benefit from a well-established company's nurturing guidance."

San Francisco Playhouse Artistic Director Bill English elaborated on the inspiration for this new program and its significance: "We believe that playwrights are the prophets of our time, blessed with sensitive antennae that, from the tumultuous roar of our culture, are able to pull down essential insights that can show us who we are and how we can cope with the times in which we live." He continued, "Our commissions will be aimed at boldly addressing and posing insights on the social challenges of today."

SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE

5-Year Commission Program

Bay Area-based playwright Lauren Gunderson, whose play *Bauer* was nurtured by San Francisco Playhouse prior to moving to a successful New York City Off-Broadway engagement, was thrilled to learn of the program: "This broad and brave new commissioning program from San Francisco Playhouse is such an exhilaration for Bay Area theatre and across the country. What a gift to the relevance and vibrancy of American theatre to see 20 new plays and musicals come to life at a company that nurtures new work with care and craft."

The **New Play Program** at San Francisco Playhouse includes the Monthly Reading Series, the 3-play Sandbox Series of World Premieres, and the 5-Year Commission Program. The Playhouse's commitment to new works has been honored by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, The Edgerton Foundation, The Biller Foundation, The Zellerbach Foundation, The Hewlett and Gerbode Foundations and the American Theatre Wing. The program has achieved significant critical and commercial milestones: two Will Glickman Awards in the past four years; the Sandbox Series smash hit *Ideation*, which recently completed a successful Off-Broadway engagement in New York City; and George Brant's *Grounded*, which went on to international acclaim after its Sandbox premiere.