

San Francisco Playhouse Announces **PLAYWRIGHTS SELECTED** for Year Two of **5-YEAR COMMISSION PROGRAM**

SAN FRANCISCO (August 2019) — San Francisco Playhouse (Artistic Director **Bill English**; Producing Director **Susi Damilano**) continues its commitment to developing new plays and nurturing the voices of active playwrights with the selection of the five playwrights who will comprise the second year of the company's five-year commission program.

The recipients of these commissions are **Julie Hébert** (*Tree, Night Falls*), **Melissa Ross** (*An Entomologist's Love Story, Of Good Stock*) **Octavio Solis** (*Mother Road, Quixote Nuevo*), and **Teddy Hulsker** (first commissioned work). Each year, playwrights selected for the commissions include an established top playwright, two mid-career playwrights and one emerging playwright.

The **5-Year Commission Program**, which is a part of the Playhouse's acclaimed New Works Program, now entering its 10th year, was established in 2018 dedicated to the creation of 20 new plays over the next five years. The goal of the program is to provide more structure and long-range planning to the company's 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 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." Playwrights engaged in the first year of the program include Theresa Rebeck (*Seared*), Aaron Loeb (*Ideation*), Chelsea Marcantel (*White Girls Guide to International Terrorism*) and Christian Durso (a first commission).

The **New Works Program** at San Francisco Playhouse includes a Monthly Play Readings, 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 Hewlet 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

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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.



Julie Hébert was born in south Louisiana where the Atchafalaya River and Bayou Teche flow into the Gulf of Mexico, the deepest of the deep south, a hundred miles from New Orleans. After getting a bachelor's degree from Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, Louisiana, Julie convinced her parents she would take a year off doing plays in San Francisco before coming back home to go to medical school. In California, Julie met Sam Shepard, Robert Woodruff and other fully dedicated theater artists and realized this was her calling. San Francisco became home as Julie set off on a creative path, first directing then writing for the theater. The first play she directed was *Cowboy Mouth* by Sam Shepard and Patti Smith for the Eureka Theater Midnight Series. Since that long ago time Julie has directed dozens of new plays for some of the most daring theaters in the country including Steppenwolf, LaMaMa, the Magic Theater, Los Angeles Theater Center and many more. Julie wrote her first play, *True Beauties*, at Padua Hills Playwrights Festival, under the tutelage of the formidable Maria Irene Fornes. Julie directed the first production at the Magic Theater, where it was honored with the Best Play of the Year Award by the Bay Area Critics Circle. This recognition was another turning point: accepting writing as the central path of her life. Julie's plays have been produced across the country and honored many times, including with two PEN Awards for Drama. Her play *Tree* opened to stellar reviews and sold out houses at San Francisco Playhouse in 2015. Julie has written and directed for several hit television shows including "Nashville", "The Good Wife", "Boss", "Blue Bloods", "The West Wing", "ER", "Numb3rs" and most recently the Emmy Award-winning "American Crime", where she is an Executive Producer. Her television writing has been honored with a Prism Award and an Environmental Media Award from the Norman Lear Center



Melissa Ross is a graduate of the Lila Acheson Wallace Playwriting Program at The Juilliard School, a two-time winner of the Le Comte de Nouy Prize, and a proud member of both the Dorothy Strelsin New American Writers Group at Primary Stages and Labyrinth Theater Company. Plays include *Thinner Than Water*, *You Are Here*, *Do Something Pretty*, *The Allies*, *Nice Girl*, *Of Good Stock*, and *An Entomologist's Love Story*. *Thinner Than Water* and *Nice Girl* were both originally produced by Labyrinth Theater Company. *Thinner Than Water* is included in the anthology "New Playwrights: Best Plays of 2011" by Smith and Kraus. *Of Good Stock* received its world premiere at South Coast Repertory as a part of the Pacific Playwrights Festival, followed by a production at Manhattan Theater Club. *A Life Extra Ordinary* was a part of the 2015/2016 season at The Gift Theatre in Chicago. Melissa has had readings and workshops with The Amoralists,

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The Cherry Lane Theater, Colt Coeur, Dorset Theater Festival, Iama Theater Company, The Juilliard School, Labyrinth Theater Company, LCT3, Manhattan Theater Club, Montana Rep, New York Stage and Film, The New Group, South Coast Repertory, Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, and the TheatreWorks Palo Alto New Works Festival. She is currently working on additional commissions from South Coast Repertory and Manhattan Theater Club.



Octavio Solis is a playwright and director whose works include *Mother Road*, *Quixote Nuevo*, *Hole in the Sky*, *Alicia's Miracle*, *Se Llama Cristina*, John Steinbeck's *The Pastures of Heaven*, *Ghosts of the River*, *Quixote*, *Lydia*, *June in a Box*, *Lethe*, *Marfa Lights*, *Gibraltar*, *The Ballad of Pancho and Lucy*, *The 7 Visions of Encarnación*, *Bethlehem*, *Dreamlandia*, *El Otro*, *Man of the Flesh*, *Prospect*, *El Paso Blue*, *Santos & Santos*, and *La Posada Mágica* which have been mounted at the California Shakespeare Theatre, Mark Taper Forum, Yale Repertory Theatre, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Denver Center for the Performing Arts, the Dallas Theater Center, the Magic Theatre, Intersection for the Arts, South Coast Repertory Theatre, the San Diego Repertory Theatre, the San Jose Repertory Theatre, Shadowlight Productions, the Venture Theatre in Philadelphia, Latino Chicago Theatre Company, Boston Court and Kitchen Dog Theatre, the New York Summer Play Festival, Teatro Vista in Chicago, El Teatro Campesino, the Undermain Theatre in Dallas, Thick Description, Campo Santo, the Imua Theatre Company in New York, and Cornerstone Theatre. His collaborative works include *Cloudlands*, with Music by Adam Gwon, *Burning Dreams*, cowritten with Julie Hébert and Gina Leishman and *Shiner*, written with Erik Ehn. Solis has received an NEA 1995-97 Playwriting Fellowship, the Roger L. Stevens award from the Kennedy Center, the Will Glickman Playwright Award, a production grant from the Kennedy Center Fund for New American Plays, the 1998 TCG/NEA Theatre Artists in Residence Grant, the 1998 McKnight Fellowship grant from the Playwrights Center in Minneapolis, and the National Latino Playwriting Award for 2003. He is the recipient of the 2000-2001 National Theatre Artists Residency Grant from TCG and the Pew Charitable Trust, the United States Artists Fellowship for 2011 and the 2104 Pen Center USA Award for Drama. Solis is a Thornton Wilder Fellow for the MacDowell Colony, New Dramatists alum and member of the Dramatists Guild. In addition to his commission from San Francisco Playhouse, he is working on commissions for the Arena Stage and South Coast Repertory Theatre.

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Theodore (Teddy) J.H. Hulsker is a San Francisco Bay Area native who has been designing and creating theater professionally since 2010. In 2012 he graduated from San Francisco State University as Drama Department Honoree. Since then his sound designs have been heard in numerous theaters within the Bay Area and across the nation. Recently, with support from the San Francisco Playhouse, he studied projection design and will incorporate this new element into his career. He has received numerous nominations for design work from Bay Area Theater Critics

Circle, Theater Bay Area, and TSDCA. In 2012 he received the Eric Landisman fellowship grant which identified him as an emerging designer. Sound design, which requires active listening, has guided his approach in other creative pursuits. He also devises and curates new theatrical experiences with San Francisco based company Mugwumpin and founded Oakland based Klanghaus out of pocket in mid 2015. Klanghaus received Theater Bay Area's CA\$H grant in 2016 to fund another year of monthly happenings and continued development of new works. He strives to bring a flexible, imaginative, and supportive attitude to any creative endeavor.