Victory Gardens Theater Announces Lineup for 2016 IGNITION Festival of New Plays

2016 Festival runs August 5–7, 2016

CHICAGO, IL – Victory Gardens Theater announces the lineup for the 2016 IGNITION Festival of New Plays, including The Wayward Bunny by Greg Kotis; BREACH: a manifesto on race in America through the eyes of a black girl recovering from self-hate by Antoinette Nwandu; EOM (end of message) by Laura Jacqmin; Kill Move Paradise by James Ijames; Gaza Rehearsal by Karen Hartman; and Girls In Cars Underwater by Tegan McLeod. The 2016 Festival runs August 5-7, 2016 at Victory Gardens Theater, located at 2433 N Lincoln Avenue.

IGNITION’s six selected plays will be presented in a festival of readings and will be directed by leading artists from Chicago. Following the readings, two of the plays may be selected for intensive workshops during Victory Gardens’ 2016-17 season, and Victory Gardens may produce one of these final scripts in an upcoming season.

"At Victory Gardens Theater, we bridge Chicago communities through innovative and challenging new plays by giving established and emerging playwrights the time and space to develop their work. This year, we have invited some of the most thrilling playwrights to join our IGNITION Festival," said Isaac Gomez, Victory Gardens Theater Literary Manager. "Their plays exemplify the current political and cultural zeitgeist of our city and country: the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, race and gender, the modern struggles of fatherhood, the insular world and morality of video gaming, and a woman’s journey to self-love. Come experience these new plays and hear what they have to say about the world in which we live."

All readings will be free and open to the public. For more information or to RSVP, visit www.victorygardens.org/ignition/ or call the Victory Gardens Box Office at 773.871.3000.

The 2016 Lineup Includes:

The Wayward Bunny
By Greg Kotis
Directed by Henry Wishcamper
Dramaturgy by Carina Abbaticchio
August 5, 2016 at 7:30pm

When a mystery writer returns to his childhood home in search of his missing son, he lives through a night of terror told through bedtime stories, past transgressions, and forgotten truths that force him to confront his essential nature.

About Greg Kotis
Greg Kotis is the author of many plays and musicals including Urinetown (Book/Lyrics, for which he won an OBIE Award and two Tony® Awards), ZM (Book/Lyrics), Give the People What They Want, All Your Questions
Answered, Michael von Siebenburg Melts Through the Floorboards, The Boring-est Poem in the World, Yeast Nation (Book/Lyrics), The Truth About Santa, Pig Farm, Eat the Taste, and Jobey and Katherine. His work has been produced and developed in theaters across the country and around the world, including Actors Theatre of Louisville, American Conservatory Theater, American Theater Company, The Apollo (West End), the Eugene O'Neill National Theater Conference, The Geva Center, Henry Miller’s Theatre (Broadway), Manhattan Theatre Club, New York Stage and Film, Perseverance Theatre, Roundabout Theatre Company, Soho Rep, South Coast Rep, and The Old Globe, among others. Future projects include a musical adaptation of The Sting, as well as plays involving salad bars, desert hide-outs, and lost children. Greg is a member of the Neo-Futurists, the Cardiff Giant Theater Company, ASCAP, and the Dramatists Guild. He grew up in Wellfleet, Massachusetts, and now lives in New York City.

IGNITION Opening Night Celebration
August 5, 2016 at 9:30pm
Stick around after the reading of The Wayward Bunny, for this opening night celebration with a live DJ, delicious appetizers, and complimentary drinks, as we raise a glass to kick off our IGNITION Festival of New Plays.

BREACH: a manifesto on race in America through the eyes of a black girl recovering from self-hate
By Antoinette Nwandu
Directed by Devon de Mayo
Dramaturgy by Polly Hubbard
August 6, 2016 at 3:00pm

What happens when an African American woman with a dead-end job and a fizzling relationship accidentally gets pregnant by a man she is not dating? BREACH is a play about motherhood, race, and how hard is it to love others when it’s you that you loathe most of all.

About Antoinette Nwandu
Antoinette Nwandu is a New York-based playwright via Los Angeles. She is a second-year member of the Ars Nova Play Group, the 2015-16 Naked Angels Issues PlayLab Resident Playwright, and a Dramatists Guild Fellowship alum. Her plays have been produced and developed by Cherry Lane Mentor Project (mentor: Katori Hall), Page73, Ars Nova, PlayPenn, The Flea, Naked Angels, Fire This Time, The Movement Theater Company, WordBRIDGE, and Dreamscape Theatre. Honors include the Lorraine Hansberry Playwriting Award, the Negro Ensemble Company’s Douglas Turner Ward Prize, and a Literary Fellowship at the Eugene O’Neill Playwrights Conference. Antoinette has also been named a PONY Fellowship finalist, Page73 Fellowship finalist, NBT’s I Am Soul Fellowship finalist, and two-time Princess Grace Award semi-finalist. Education: Harvard, The University of Edinburgh, Tisch School of the Arts. Upcoming projects: The World Premiere of PASS OVER at Steppenwolf in May 2017.

Bringing New Plays to Life
August 6, 2016 at 5:00pm
As one of the leading theaters in new play development, Victory Gardens is home to some of the richest and boldest new plays premiering across the country. In a city where audiences are hungry for new theatre work, what is the current state of new play development and its future? What are the best practices for new play collaborations? How do we better support and produce new plays and playwrights? Join this timeless conversation on the new play process featuring IGNITION playwrights Greg Kotis, Antoinette Nwandu, Laura Jacqmin, James Ijames, Karen Hartman, and Tegan McLeod.

EOM (end of message)
By Laura Jacqmin
Directed by Monty Cole
Dramaturgy by Isaac Gomez
August 6, 2016 at 7:30pm
When the milestone date on their new video game is suddenly moved up – the week before Thanksgiving – a ragtag team of game developers must camp out at the office for seven days straight, crunching to meet an impossible deadline.

About Laura Jacqmin
Laura Jacqmin is a Chicago-based playwright, TV writer and video game writer, originally from Cleveland. Plays: Residence (40th Humana Festival of New American Plays at Actors Theatre of Louisville); January Joiner (Long Wharf Theatre); Ski Dubai (Steppenwolf Theatre); A Third (Finborough Theatre London); Look, we are breathing (Rivendell Theatre Ensemble; Sundance Theatre Lab); Dental Society Midwinter Meeting (Williamstown Theatre Festival; Chicago Dramatists/At Play, 16th Street Theater); Ghost Bike (Buzz22 Chicago). Awards: Wasserstein Prize, two NEA Art Works Grants, ATHE-Kennedy Center David Mark Cohen Playwriting Award, two MacDowell Fellowships. Illinois Arts Council Individual Artist Grant. Television: "Untitled 'Get Shorty' Series" (MGM/EPIX); “Grace and Frankie” (Netflix); “Lucky 7” (ABC). Video Games: “Minecraft: Story Mode” (Telltale Games). She received her BA from Yale University, and earned an MFA in Playwriting from Ohio University.

Artist Meet & Greet and Ice Cream Social
August 6, 2016 at 9:30pm
Hear from the artists themselves and cool off with boozy ice cream floats at this post-show artist meet & greet.

Kill Move Paradise
By James Ijames
Directed by Marti Lyons
Dramaturgy by Rebecca Adelsheim
August 7, 2016 at 12:00pm
Set in a netherworld, we follow Isa, Daz, Grif and Tiny as they try to make sense of the world they have been ripped from. Colliding the Elysium Greek myth with recent events, Kill Move Paradise is a expressionistic buzz saw through the contemporary myth that "all lives matter".

About James Ijames
James is a Philadelphia based actor and playwright. He has appeared regionally at The Arden Theatre Company, The Philadelphia Theatre Company, The Wilma Theatre, Baltimore Center Stage and Interact Theatre Company. James is a founding member of Orbiter 3 Playwright Producing Collective, a member of the InterAct Core Writers Group and a mentor for The Foundry. James’ plays include The Most Spectacularly Lamentable Trial of Miz Martha Washington, Moon Man Walk, WHITE, Abandon, Matter Out of Place, The Threshing Floor, and Osiris:Redux. ...Miz Martha was developed with PlayPenn and the Wilma Theater and received its world premiere with Flashpoint Theater. Moon Man Walk was world premiered with Orbiter 3 Playwright Collective. His play WHITE was apart of the 2015 PlayPenn New Play Conference and the 2015 Gulfshore Playhouse New Works Festival. James is a recipient of F. Otto Haas Award for an Emerging Artist, two Barrymores for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Play for Superior Donuts and Angels in America and a Barrymore for Best Direction of a Play for The Brother Size. Is an Independence Foundation Fellow and he is a 2015 Pew Fellow. James is the 2015 recipient of the Terrence McNally New Play Award for WHITE and the 2015 Kesselring Honorable Mention Prize for ... Miz Martha. He received a BA in Drama from Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA and a MFA in Acting from Temple University in Philadelphia, PA. James is Assistant Professor of Theatre at Villanova University and resides in South Philadelphia.

Gaza Rehearsal
By Karen Hartman
Directed by Chay Yew
August 7, 2016 at 3:00pm
A play within a play, a tragedy inside a comedy. A group of faculty and students at a large public university stage a little-known political drama, Goliath, set in Gaza, 2005. The playwright of Goliath is on faculty and in the room, desperate to "spark dialogue" about Israel/ Palestine on campus. And she does.

About Karen Hartman
Karen Hartman has four productions of three world premieres next season: *Roz and Ray* at Seattle Rep and Victory Gardens, *The Book of Joseph* at Chicago Shakespeare Theater, and *Project Dawn* at People’s Light. In 2014-15 she held the Playwright Center’s McKnight Residency and Commission. Some other works: Goldie, Max, and Milk (Steinberg and Carbonell nominations), Goliath (Dorothy Silver New Play Prize), Gum, Leah’s Train, Going Gone (N.E.A. New Play Grant); Girl Under Grain (Best Drama in NY Fringe); Wild Kate, ALICE: Tales of a Curious Girl (Music by Gina Leishman, AT&T Onstage Award); Troy Women; and MotherBone, score by Graham Reynolds (Frederick Loewe Award). Publications: Theater Communications Group, Dramatists Play Service, Playscripts, Backstage Books, and NoPassport Press. Awards: Hedgebrook, Sustainable Arts, Rockefeller Foundation at Bellagio, the N.E.A., Helen Merrill Foundation, Daryl Roth "Creative Spirit" Award, Hodder Fellowship, Jerome Fellowship, Fulbright Scholarship. Her prose has been published in the *New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. Alumna of New Dramatists and longtime Brooklynite, now Senior Artist in Residence at the UW School of Drama.  www.karenhartman.org

**From the Stage to the Streets**
August 7, 2016 at 5:00pm
August Wilson once said, “All art is political in the sense that it serves someone's politics.” With this year’s IGNITION plays touching on themes such as the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, race and gender, and the insular world and morality of video gaming, how do plays exemplify the current political and cultural zeitgeist of our city and country? Can art be activism? Join us for this timely panel conversation with IGNITION playwrights James Ijames, Antoinette Nwandu, Tegan McLeod, and other Chicago-based artists and activists.

**Girls In Cars Underwater**
By Tegan McLeod
Directed by Will Davis
Dramaturgy by Isaac Gomez
August 7, 2016 at 7:30pm

When newcomer Dusty is hired as a shot girl at one of the toughest bars in the city, she forms an unexpected bond with the hard-edged women who work there. Just as she begins to settle into her new family, Dusty loses herself in the underbelly of the night. *Girls In Cars Underwater* is an unflinching exploration of passion and compulsion, and the power of both to ruin or remake our lives.

**About Tegan McLeod**
Tegan McLeod was born in Iowa City, Iowa. She later moved to the UK where she went on to study English Literature at Oxford University. She began acting in the National Youth Theatre, and her first play Never Such Rain (written at age 18) was a runner-up in the Oxford New Writer's Festival. Dominic Cavendish of the Independent remarked: “Its virtues are outstanding...there's not a beat wasted in the dialogue...Do I feel guilty at this not getting through? Probably more so by the day.” Upon graduating, Tegan became one of only two playwrights, internationally, to be awarded a full scholarship to the University of Texas at Austin as a Michener Fellow in Playwriting and Screenwriting in 2013. At UT she has had numerous productions, most recently a world premiere of her first opera, produced in the New Works Festival, and entitled Rose Made Man; an opera about trans identity. At present she is completing her sixth full-length play, Girls In Cars Underwater, which was developed at Center Stage in Baltimore and will be workshopped at The Eugene O'Neill National Playwrights Conference this summer.

**IGNITION Farewell**
Sunday, August 7 at 9:30pm
Help us close out our IGNITION Festival of New plays with a champagne toast and light refreshments following the final reading of our festival.

The IGNITION Festival of New Plays receives major support from The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, The William and Orli Staley Foundation and Southwest Airlines, Victory Gardens' official travel sponsor. Templeton Rye is the IGNITION Festival Opening Night Sponsor and Lagunitas is the Official Beer Sponsor.

Performances are at the Victory Gardens Biograph Theater, 2433 N. Lincoln Avenue, in the heart of Chicago’s Lincoln Park neighborhood. Admission to all festival readings and events is free, though an RSVP is required. For
more information or to RSVP, visit www.victorygardens.org/ignition/ or call the Victory Gardens Box Office at 773.871.3000.

About Victory Gardens Theater
Under the leadership of Artistic Director Chay Yew, Victory Gardens Theater is dedicated to artistic excellence while creating a vital, contemporary American Theater that is accessible and relevant to all people through productions of challenging new plays and musicals. Victory Gardens Theater is committed to the development, production, and support of new plays that has been the mission of the theater since its founding, set forth by Dennis Začek, Marcelle McVay, and the original founders of Victory Gardens Theater.

Victory Gardens Theater is a leader in developing and producing new theater work and cultivating an inclusive Chicago theater community. Victory Gardens’ core strengths are nurturing and producing dynamic and inspiring new plays, reflecting the diversity of our city’s and nation’s culture through engaging diverse communities, and in partnership with Chicago Public Schools, bringing art and culture to our city’s active student population.

Since its founding in 1974, the company has produced more world premieres than any other Chicago theater, a commitment recognized nationally when Victory Gardens received the 2001 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre. Located in the Lincoln Park neighborhood, Victory Gardens Biograph Theater includes the Začek-McVay Theater, a state-of-the-art 259-seat mainstage and the 109-seat studio theater on the second floor, named the Richard Christiansen Theater.

Victory Gardens Ensemble Playwrights include Luis Alfaro, Philip Dawkins, Marcus Gardley, Ike Holter, Samuel D. Hunter, Naomi Iizuka, Tanya Saracho, and Laura Schellhardt. Each playwright has a seven-year residency at Victory Gardens Theater.

The Playwrights Ensemble Alumni includes Claudia Allen, Lonnie Carter, Steve Carter, Gloria Bond Clunie, Dean Corrin, Nilo Cruz, Joel Drake Johnson, John Logan, Nicholas Patricca, Douglas Post, James Sherman, Charles Smith, Jeffrey Sweet, and Kristine Thatcher.

For more information about Victory Gardens, visit www.victorygardens.org. Follow us on Facebook at Facebook.com/victorygardens, Twitter @VictoryGardens and Instagram at instagram.com/victorygardenstheater/


###