

Seattle Rep Announces Second Round of Playwright Commissioning Project, 20x30: Reimagining the Anthropocene

Nonprofit's commitment to commission 20 playwrights between 2020-2030 continues, supporting artists and planting seeds for the future.

SEATTLE (May 6, 2022) -- Seattle Rep today announced a second round of its large-scale playwright commission project, **20x30: Reimagining the Anthropocene**, in which the organization has commissioned three playwrights in an effort to plant seeds for the future of the industry. Those three playwrights join the ranks of six previously commissioned artists, and include **Amy Freed** (Pulitzer Prize-nominated *Freedomland*), **Julia Izumi** (*miku, and the gods.*; *Sometimes the Rain, Sometimes the Sea*), and **Benjamin Benne** (*Alma; In His Hands*). While Seattle Rep has a long-standing commitment to commissioning and premiering new plays, this initiative is part of the largest single commitment to the commissioning of new work in Seattle Rep's 59-year history. For details visit seattlerep.org

20x30: Reimagining the Anthropocene

20x30 ("20 by 30") is Seattle Rep's ambitious playwright commissioning project for the new decade. Between 2020 and 2030, the program will commission twenty playwrights to each write a play inspired by life in our moment.

Anthropocene is a term that suggests we have entered a new geological age where human activity is the dominant force shaping our environment. The commissioning project's goal is to engage a diverse group of theater artists around the idea of the Anthropocene during what promises to be a pivotal and transformational decade for our nation and our world. What does this moment in time mean for each of us, and how is our experience differentiated by—or united across—race, culture, country, class, or generation?

"It struck me that interpreting this 'age of the humans' would contain a lot of creative possibilities for theater makers," says artistic director Braden Abraham. "The topic is so large, it's almost impossible to wrap our minds around it. But we've entered a time of wide agreement that the repercussions of climate change are inescapable—economically, politically, and ontologically. It's part of our culture now and culture must be part of how we address it. We need new stories, new forms of communication, a different understanding of how we think about our relationship to the planet, and towards one another. The idea is meant as a starting point, not a destination. I wanted to create a large container for creative inspiration to hopefully expand the ways we think about this transformational moment we're living in, and imagine new pathways going forward."

The first round of 20x30 commissions included an exciting range of notable playwrights, including **Nathan Alan Davis** (*The Refuge Plays, The High Ground, Nat Turner in Jerusalem, Dontrell Who Kissed the Sea, and The Wind and the Breeze* – winner of the Lorraine Hansberry Award), **Larissa FastHorse** (2020 MacArthur Genius Fellow; co-founder of Indigenous Direction; *The Thanksgiving Play, What Would Crazy Horse Do?, Average Family*), **Zora Howard** (*STEW* – 2021 Pulitzer Prize Finalist for Drama, *AtGN, BUST, HANG TIME, and GOOD FAITH*), **Sylvia Houry** (*Selling Kabul, Power Strip, Against the Hillside,*

The Place Women Go, 2021 Whiting Award), and **Mary Kathryn Nagle** (*Manahatta*, *Sovereignty*, *Katrina Stories*, *Welcome to Chalmette*; Executive Director of the Yale Indigenous Performing Arts Program).

“My process with 20x30 thus far has been quite freeing,” says last year’s 20x30 recipient Zora Howard. “When I am starting a new project, I work best when I am able to sit with a concept or an idea for a long time before drafting or even outlining the story. That period of the process – the observation, research, note-taking, inspiration-seeking period – is most precious to me, and in most situations, especially when under commission, that period is often cut short out of necessity. The 20x30 commission has allowed me the space to play, to dance even, in the concept phase of development. When there is no mad rush to choose the first, or easiest idea of the many that come, that’s when the impossible ideas, the more compelling, more challenging ideas are able to mature and come to fruition. That is what I am always hoping for, but it takes time.”

ROUND TWO 20x30 COMMISSIONED PLAYWRIGHTS



Amy Freed

Amy Freed’s plays include *Freedomland*, for which she was nominated for the 1998 Pulitzer Prize; *The Beard of Avon*; *The Psychic Life of Savages*; *Claustrophilia*; *The Ghoul of Amherst*; *Still Warm*; *Safe in Hell*; *Restoration Comedy*; *You, Nero*; and *Hell to Pay*. Her work has been produced at American Conservatory Theater, California Shakespeare Theater, South Coast Repertory, New York Theatre Workshop, Seattle Rep, Goodman Theatre, Playwrights Horizons, Woolly Mammoth, and Yale Repertory Theatre, among others. She has been the recipient of the Joseph Kesselring Prize, the Charles MacArthur Award, and has won the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award numerous times. Aurora Theatre Company commissioned a new play from Freed for the

company’s first Global Age Project new works festival. She currently teaches acting and playwriting at Stanford University.



Julia Izumi

Julia Izumi’s work has been developed and presented at MTC, Clubbed Thumb, New Georges, Bushwick Starr, WP Theater, Berkeley Rep’s Ground Floor, SPACE on Ryder Farm, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Ojai Playwrights Conference, Seattle Rep, The COOP, NNPN/Kennedy Center MFA Playwrights’ Workshop, Great Plains Theatre Conference, Williamstown Theatre Festival, CAATA’s National Asian-American Theatre ConFest, and Pork Filled Productions. Honors for her work include the OPC Dr. Kerry English Award, O’Neill’s NPC Finalist, Kilroys List Honorable Mention, and KCACTF’s Darrell Ayers Playwriting Award. She is a current New Dramatists Resident. Current commissions: True Love Productions, MTC/Sloan, Playwrights Horizons. MFA: Brown

University. juliaizumi.com



Benjamin Benne

Benjamin Benne (he/him/his) is a David Geffen/Yale School of Drama M.F.A. candidate in Playwriting and represented by Paradigm Talent Agency. He is a member of the Dorothy Strelsin New American Writers Group at Primary Stages and currently under commission from South Coast Repertory Theatre. His work has been developed by the O'Neill National Playwrights Conference, Playwrights Realm, The Lark, The Public Theater, Roundabout, Denver Center, The Old Globe, Two River, Boston Court Pasadena, SPACE on Ryder Farm, Pillsbury House Theatre, and Parley, among many others. He has been awarded Portland Stage's 2020 Clauder Competition Gold Prize, Arizona Theatre Company's 2019 Latinx Playwriting Award, Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival's 2019 Latinx

Playwriting Award, American Blues Theater's 2019 Blue Ink Playwriting Award, Playwrights' Center's 2017-18 McKnight Fellowship in Playwriting and 2016-17 Many Voices Fellowship. Scheduled productions in 2022 include *In His Hands* with Mosaic Theatre Company and *Alma* with Center Theatre Group, ArtsWest, and American Blues Theater. benjaminbenne.com

ADDITIONAL SEATTLE REP COMMISSIONS: ELIZABETH GEORGE FOUNDATION

In addition to Seattle Rep's 20x30 playwright commissions, the organization recently received a grant through the Elizabeth George Foundation that will fully fund three commissions from emerging writers. Beginning their work in 2022 are playwrights **Vickie Ramirez**, **Vivian J.O. Barnes** and **Nick Malakhov**. To keep up with all of Seattle Rep's work commissioning artists, visit SeattleRep.org

Vickie Ramirez



Vickie Ramirez (*Tuscarora*) is a founding member of Chukalokoli Theater. Her work has been developed and/or produced at Native Voices at the Autry, Alter Theater, The Public Theater, The Roundabout Theatre Company, and Labyrinth Theater Company. Honors include Resident New Dramatists through 2027, Winner of the 2020 Smith Prize for Political Theater (NNPN), Honorary Mentions on the Kilroys List in 2019 for *Pure Native* and in 2014 for *Standoff At Hwy#37*, Semi-finalist Bay Area Playwrights Festival 2019, Semi-finalist Eugene O'Neill National Playwright's Conference 2018, and Alumna-Public Theater's Emerging Writers Group 2009. Productions: *Pure Native* — Alter Theater and Native Voices at the Autry, *Standoff at Hwy#37* — Native Voices at the Autry and the University of South Dakota, *Glenburn 12 WP* — Summer Shorts at 59E59, and *Smoke* — Mixed Phoenix Theatre

Group at Pershing Square Signature Center. Published: *Monologues for Actors of Color: Women*, *Monologues for Actors of Color: Men*, and *Contemporary Plays by Women of Color Edition 2*. Member: Dramatists Guild and PEN America. Consultant: "Outer Range" for Amazon TV.



Vivian J.O. Barnes

Vivian is a Los Angeles-based playwright. She is a Playwrights Center Venturous Fellow (formerly at The Lark) and a member of the Geffen Playhouse's 21-22 Writers' Room. Her work has been produced at Actors Theatre of Louisville's 44th Humana Festival and in Steppenwolf Theatre's digital NOW series. She has developed plays with Manhattan Theatre Club, Second Stage Theater, Clubbed Thumb, Montana Repertory Theatre, and Ojai Playwrights Conference. Over in the TV world, she's been staffed on shows at Amazon and UCP/Peacock.



Nick Malakhov

Nick Malakhov (he/him/his) is a multi-racial, Dominican and Ukrainian writer and theater educator. His full-length work includes *AFFINITY LUNCH MINUTES* (2021 O'Neill National Playwrights Conference), *A PICTURE OF TWO BOYS* (upcoming World Premiere at New Conservatory Theater Center and 2022 BAPF finalist), *SEEING EYE* (Victory Gardens Ignition Festival, Fresh Ink Ink Spot Festival, and finalist for the 2019 O'Neill NPC and the 2018 LTC/HowlRound Carnaval), and *GRIT* (developed with Playhouse on Park and 2021 Princess Grace Award Finalist). His other work has been developed or produced by the Ithaca College Theatre Department, the Open Theatre Project, the Q Collective, the Boston Theater Marathon, and more. Nick was a Company One Playlab Unit member for C1's 2019 season.

ABOUT SEATTLE REP

Seattle Rep puts theater at the heart of public life. Founded in 1963 and winner of the 1990 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre, Seattle Rep is currently led by Artistic Director Braden Abraham and Managing Director Jeffrey Herrmann. Over a season and throughout the year, Seattle Rep collaborates with extraordinary artists to create productions and programs that reflect and elevate the diverse cultures, perspectives, and life experiences of the Pacific Northwest. Seattle Rep's nationally recognized programs include the New Play Program, Seattle Rep's Public Works, the Next Narrative Monologue Competition, Pay What You Choose ticketing options, and numerous audience enrichment and engagement opportunities including post-play panels, discussions, and community events and presentations.

Seattle Rep has always been committed to supporting new work from playwrights, directors, composers, and more. Through commissions and its new play development lab, The Other Season, Seattle Rep offers artists the resources they need to bring the next great play to life. Recent and notable commissions that have been produced on Seattle Rep's stages include *Pullman Porter Blues*, *Lizard Boy*, *The Great Society*, *A Great Wilderness*, and the adaptation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the*

Baskervilles. 20x30: Reimagining the Anthropocene represents the largest, most sustainable, consistent, and robust commissioning program the organization has ever committed to.

Seattle Rep's artistic staff reads material for consideration from a variety of sources including agent recommendations, colleague theater seasons, the Kilroys List, and more. Seattle Rep is dedicated to considering work by BIPOC and female identifying/trans/non-binary artists and commits to that work representing at least half of the scripts read by our season planning committee. All artists selected for commissioning programs are committed to Seattle Rep's racial equity policies as part of their commission partnership.

SeattleRep.org.

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