

## Confluence Regional Writers Project

The Festival launched the Confluence Regional Writers Project in 2018 to invest in promising and underrepresented writers in the bi-state area – and to help elevate their unique voices into the national conversation. The yearlong program offers playwrights a safe space to take risks on a new work via a generous stipend, guided mentorship and a supportive cohort of fellow playwrights.

### **2019**

Shualee Cook (St. Louis, MO)  
Kritin Idaszak (Chicago, IL)  
Mariah Richardson (St. Louis, MO)  
Carter Lewis, *Master Playwright*

### **2020**

Elizabeth Archer (Chicago, IL)  
Myah Gary (Carbondale, IL)  
Rob Maesaka (St. Louis, MO)

### **2021**

Courtney Bailey (St. Louis, MO)  
Melda Beaty (Chicago, IL)  
Delaney Piggins (St. Louis, MO)

### **2022**

e.k. Doolin (Edwardsville, IL)  
Hanna Kime (Chicago, IL)  
Novid Parsi (St. Louis, MO)

ST·LOUIS  
SHAKESPEARE  
FESTIVAL

# CONFLUENCE NEW PLAY FESTIVAL

MARCH 2022

Program Director, Nancy Bell

## EMERGING PLAYWRIGHTS COHORT

### 2020

Elizabeth Archer  
Myah Gary  
Rob Maesaka

### 2021

Courtney Bailey  
Melda Beaty  
Delaney Piggins

**FRIDAY, MARCH 18**

***BRONTË SISTER HOUSE PARTY***

by Courtney Bailey (St. Louis, MO)

The Brontë sisters – Charlotte, Emily, and Anne – of Victorian literary fame are trapped in a time loop where they are doomed to throw a fabulous house party every night for eternity.



**Directed by** Lucy Cashion

**Performed by** Nancy Bell\* (Charlotte), Sophia Brown\* (Emily), Rae Davis\* (Cathy), Colin McLaughlin (Bramwell), Alicen Moser (Kate Bush), Bianca Sanborn (Helen Burns) and Chrissie Watkins (Anne).

**About the Playwright:**

Courtney is a St. Louis based writer, actor, and maker who is passionate about creating meaningful, culturally conscious work for the stage. Her most recent full-length play, *Immersion Play*, premiered in a workshop production in New York City at The Connelly Theater (She NYC Arts). She earned her Ph.D. in English Literature from Baylor University in 2016, with a focus on Renaissance Drama, the plays of William Shakespeare and performance studies. She also holds an MA in English from Baylor and a BA in English from Mercer University. Courtney is an alum of the renowned SITi Company Summer Intensive (2018), where she trained in Viewpoints and Suzuki Method with SITi Company members. The 2018 intensive culminated with a workshop performance of THE BACCHAE, led by SITi's Anne Bogart. A proud member of the St. Louis theatre community, Courtney has been privileged to work with companies like the New Jewish Theatre (*District Merchants*), the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis (*Imaginary Theatre Co.*), SATE (*Doctor Faustus; Of Mice and Men*), Mustard Seed Theatre (*The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*), and Theatre Nuevo (*Fefu and her Friends*). In an interview for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, local actor-director Jacqueline Thompson describes Courtney as "a rising star and someone to watch." She is a founding member of EL HUERTO International Theatre Collective.

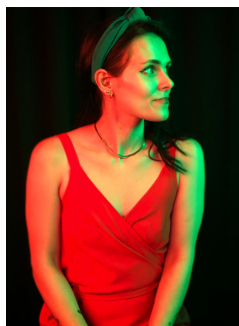
This play, *Brontë Sister House Party*, will have its full production premiere with SATE August 10-27, 2022 at The Chapel in St. Louis.

## SATURDAY, MARCH 19

### **CAN'T UNSEE**

by Elizabeth Archer (Chicago, IL)

Having failed to "make it" as an artist in NYC, Tiffany moves back in with her mother, Sharon, who lost her job and her boyfriend. Tiffany finds work as a Contract Content Moderator for Facebook and soon delves deeper into the chaos and despair of life both on- and off-line. Meanwhile, Sharon becomes increasingly shut-in, only watching "her YouTube programs" and gearing up for the coming end-times war.



**Directed by** Sam Hayes (2021 Directing Fellow)

**Performed by** Adam Flores (Skylar), Michelle Hand\* (Marsha), Tony Merritt, II (Marc), Alicen Moser (Tiffany), Suki Peters (Sharon/Jean) and Valentina Silva (Fawn).

### **About the Playwright:**

Elizabeth Archer hails from Edmonton, Alberta, and holds an MFA in Writing for Screen+Stage from Northwestern University, a BA in English from Fordham, and an Associate's Degree from the American Academy of Dramatic Arts East. She is a graduate of The Second City Chicago's Musical Improv and Improv Conservatories. A book of Ukrainian folk verses she compiled and edited was published by the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, University of Alberta and is now used as part of the curricula at Ukrainian bilingual schools in Western Canada. In June 2014, her play *Old Gray Devil* was performed as a part of the Source Festival (Washington, D.C.). In December 2014, her play *Both Sides, Now* received a staged reading at Chicago Dramatists and was also performed as part of the 2015 Source Festival. In summer 2016, Elizabeth served as co-producer for her play *TROLL* put on by Fraud & Phony Theatricals, a new Chicago theatre collective she co-founded. She is a two-time semi-finalist for the Eugene O'Neill National Playwrights Conference, and a semi-finalist for the 2016 P73 Playwriting Fellowship. Her play *El Words* was produced by Chicago's Fury Theatre as a part of their 2016 SAST Festival and her 10-minute play *La Donna e Mobile* received a reading in May 2017 at the Stella Adler School of Acting (in conjunction with the Harold Clurman Playwrights Unit) in NYC. Elizabeth was a finalist for the 2018 Campfire Theatre Festival. [eearcher.com](http://eearcher.com)

**SUNDAY, MARCH 20**

**FEEBLEMINDED**

by Melda Beaty (Chicago, IL)

On a sweltering southern day in 1965, North Carolina's Eugenics Board played God. After a brutal rape, they deemed sixteen-year-old Laine feeble-minded and unfit to bear any more children for the "good of society." She, and a disproportionate number of poor, black girls and women, suffered coerced sterilizations because the law of the land said so, but when The Spirits of Laine's ancestors appear, North Carolina learns that they played God with the wrong one.



**Directed by** Tiffany Fulson

**Performed by** Sophia Brown\* (Nurse/Smith/Betty Baker), Cassidy Flynn (Ghost Galton/Ghost Sims), Ricki Franklin (Laine), Anita Jackson (Ms. Ollie/Deborah/Spirits), Tony Merritt, II (Kenny/others), Carl Overly, Jr.\* (Teddy/Husband), Bianca Sanborn (Casey/Doctor/Spirit), Chandler Spradling (Justice Butler/others) and Eric Dean White\* (Justice Holmes/others).

**About the Playwright:**

Melda Beaty is a passionate playwright. Her first play, *Front Porch Society*, delves into the complex and connected lives of elderly Black women in the Mississippi Delta on the eve of the 2008 presidential election as they relive the struggles of Jim Crow, the fight for civil rights, and the trauma of the senseless killings of Black boys. It world premiere at The Ensemble Theatre in Houston, TX and a mainstage production at the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem, NC. Her second play, *Coconut Cake*, was a semi-finalist for American Blues Theatre Blue Ink Playwrighting Award and had staged readings the National Black Theatre Festival and ReadFest in Houston, TX with virtual readings at St. Louis Black Rep and The Ensemble Theatre. Her one-act stage play, *Thirty*, was a finalist in the Blackboard Play Festival and WayWard Sisters Third Annual Workshopping Women's Voices. Her upcoming short film, *Cupcake*, chronicles the divide mental illness creates between a mother and her daughter. In addition, Melda is an author of two books, performance review editor for tBTR, and freelance contributor to Black Masks Magazine. Born in Jackson, Mississippi but raised and resides in Chicago, Illinois, she earned a B.A. in Broadcast Communications from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a M.A. in English at Illinois State University. In her spare time, she enjoys cardio and strength training, live theater, concerts, reading, traveling, and hanging with her three Z's (her daughters). @meldacreates meldacreates.com

## FRIDAY, MARCH 25

### **FEMININE ENERGY**

by Myah Gary (Carbondale, IL)

*In this comedy, three long-time friends navigate their fertility, their relationships, and their womanhood.*



**Directed by** Jacqueline Thompson

**Performed by** Sophia Brown\* (Katie/Doctors/Nurse), Rae Davis (Redina/Jasmine/others), Michelle Dillard (Mama Tina/Mama Kay/Others), Ricki Franklin (Monique), Carl Overly, Jr.\* (Marcus/Paul/Others), Maasai Rodgers (Debra) and Chrissie Watkins (Soleil).

### **About the Playwright:**

Myah L. Gary is a playwright-health educator from Carbondale, Illinois. She is an interdisciplinary doctoral candidate in Health Education and Theater at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Her plays focus on creating a dialog around health and social issues. Myah is the author of the full-length plays, *Blemished Brown Beauties*, *Jesus in the Ivory Tower*, *The Woman Who* and *Penetrate*. In 2018, she wrote, directed, and produced the full-length children's musical *Kendall Saves the Day* as part of The Creative Academic Performing Arts Academy (T.C.A.P.A.A) program that she founded. In June 2019, her piece *Blood Memory* was performed at a Valiant Theater summit (Chicago, IL). In August 2019, her play, *Blemished Brown Beauties* was performed as a staged reading at The Playwright's Center in Minneapolis, MN. In November 2021, Myah had the opportunity to dramaturg for *Kaleidoscope Crown* written by Ashleigh Akilah Rucker and performed through the COCAwrites program in St. Louis, MO.

## SATURDAY, MARCH 26

### **HOMES**

by Delaney Piggins (St. Louis, MO)

This is a story about the rebellion against climate inaction. Based on the long-ago buried ghost town of Singapore, Michigan, *HOMES* asks how modern young people reconcile with the generations before them to face the climate crisis with a little help from the mythological and natural world.



**Directed by** Jess Shoemaker

**Performed by** Sohpia Brown\* (Glacier/Eli), Michelle Dillard (Maggie), Michelle Hand\* (Marcha/Charles Douglas/Trisha), Emily Klingensmith (Emily), Colin McLaughlin (Uncle Ned/Dave), Carl Overly, Jr.\* (Uncle Jay/King Strang), Maasai Rodgers (Alison), Bianca Sanborn (Juniper) Michael Tran (Ari) and Chrissie Watkins (Kathryn/Patty/Clarissa).

### **About the Playwright:**

Delaney Piggins is a St. Louis Theatre Artist, Playwright and Producer. She currently serves as the Artistic Producer at COCA – Center of Creative Arts, where her work as producer, artist and teacher has shaped the programming and productions of COCAwrites, which aims to develop plays for multi-generational audiences by a multi-generational team of artists. She also teaches playwriting and acting at COCA. Delaney previously served as an Associate Producer on St. Louis Shakespeare Festival's "Shakespeare in The Streets", and Lead Teaching Artist for their community engagement and education programming. Delaney's play *Burden of Proof* premiered at SATE in 2018 and was produced in November of 2020 by Exit Left Theatre Company. As an intimacy choreographer, Delaney collaborates with various companies and educational institutions including St. Louis University. As an actor, Delaney has worked with companies including The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, St. Louis Shakespeare Festival, The New Jewish Theatre, and Bread and Roses, MO. She holds a BFA in Acting from The Conservatory of Theatre Arts at Webster University.



**SUNDAY, MARCH 27**

**TOLSTOY'S RESURRECTION**

**by Rob Maesaka (St. Louis, MO)**

As the great Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy lies dying in a remote railway station in Astopovo, his wife of almost 50 years is forbidden to sit by his side. Before he passes and history is written, Sonya Tolstoy takes advantage of one final opportunity to set the record straight.



**Directed by Adam Flores**

**Performed by Michelle Hand\*** (Mrs. Tolstoy/Jailer), **Bruce Longworth\*** (Tolstoy), **Colin McLaughlin** (Genrlteman/Nekhludoff/Young Tolstoy), **Maasai Rodgers** (President/Simonson/Dr. Makovitsky/Nathalie), **Bianca Sanborn** (Rozalia Oni/Simonson/Dr. Makovitsky) and **Michael Tran** (Kony).

**About the Playwright:**

Rob Maesaka was born and raised in New York City with a passion for theatre. He came to St. Louis to attend Washington University where he received his Bachelor of Arts in English Literature and then his Masters of Arts in Theatre. Since the days of being a professional student, Rob has taught at Wydown Middle School in the Clayton School District for the past 25 years – 9 years of drama and 16 years of Literacy. Rob's playwriting career began with adapting classic stories to be performed at school. The first adaption of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" which was written with musical collaborator Jerry Estes was published by Shawnee Press. Other adaptations include *Around the World in 80 Days*, *The Prince and the Pauper*, *Treasure Island*, *Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves*, and *The Canterville Ghost*. After many years of writing adaptations, Rob began writing full-length original scripts several years ago. His first script *White to Gray* was developed during a Summer playwriting workshop with Dr. Deanna Jent and was performed by The Mustard Seed Theatre Company in 2015. Rob's one-minute play "The Birthday Wish" was also performed at the Every 28 Hours Play Festival in 2017. Other full-length scripts include *A Question of Loyalty* about the Japanese Internment during WWII and *The Butterfly People* which is set in Joplin, MO when the class five tornado struck in 2011.



## 2022 EMERGING PLAYWRIGHTS COHORT

### e.k. Doolin (Edwardsville, IL)

e.k. doolin, she/her, lives and writes in the Metro East area of St. Louis. Her plays have been produced by the Slightly Askew Theatre Company, Prison Performing Arts, and the Center of Creative Arts (all of Missouri), and York College (PA), Geneva Theatre Guild (NY), Cutler Bay Theatre (FL), Theatre is the Cure (CA) and Slackline Theatre (UK). She also has had staged readings produced by The Q-Collective and Tesseract Theatre, both of St. Louis, MO. In January of 2022, her one-act play *Running Uphill to Smooth Criminal* was a Region 3 finalist at the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival and will be fully produced by the Heartland Theatre of Bloomington, IL in July of 2022.

### Hanna Kime (Chicago, IL)

Hanna Kime is a St. Louis-born and Chicago-based playwright. Recent works include *Next Door* (developed with Steep Theatre), *The Best Damn Thing* (2021 O'Neill Finalist, Selected for UP: Renewal Reading Series), *The Targeted* (2020 O'Neill Finalist, 2021 BAPF Semifinalist), and *Now More Than Ever* (produced by St. Louis Actors Studio, Winner of OKC Rep's Stage@Home Contest). Her full-length works have been read or developed with Steep Theatre, UP Theater, Jackalope Theatre, The New Coordinates, Broken Nose Theatre, First Floor Theater (where she served as Literary Manager from 2018-2021 and is now a company member), and Sideshow Theatre (where she is an Ensemble Member). Outside of her own writing, Hanna works as a dramaturg and teaching artist. She graduated from the University of Chicago in 2018 with degrees in English and Gender and Sexuality Studies.

### Novid Parsi (St. Louis, MO)

Novid Parsi's plays have been produced or developed by Golden Thread Productions (San Francisco), The New Group (New York), Paines Plough (London), Playwrights Foundation (San Francisco), Queens Theatre (New York), and Silk Road Rising (Chicago), among others. His work has been recognized by the Jeff Awards (Best New Work nominee) and in multiple years by the O'Neill National Playwrights Conference and the Bay Area Playwrights Festival. Novid earned degrees in English and American literature from Swarthmore College and Duke University. He lives in St. Louis with his husband.



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Allie Magee, *Marketing & Communications Manager*

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## IN MEMORY OF

**Sondra Ellis**

Whose support, along with her husband Dan Ellis,  
helped found the inaugural year of Confluence.