

ST·LOUIS SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

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For immediate release.

ST. LOUIS SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES 3rd ANNUAL

CONFLUENCE NEW PLAY FESTIVAL

APRIL 14, 15 and 16, 2023 at 7 PM

FEATURING THE PREMIERES OF THREE NEW WORKS FROM MISSOURI & ILLINOIS PLAYWRITERS,
and OPEN APPLICATIONS FOR NEXT CONFLUENCE REGIONAL WRITERS COHORT.

St. Louis, MO (February 23, 2023) – The St. Louis Shakespeare Festival (Tom Ridgely, Producing Artistic Director) and Program Director Deanna Jent opened applications for the 2023 Confluence Regional Writers Project – a fellowship for playwrights based in Missouri and Illinois – and announced the schedule for the third Confluence New Play Festival on April 14, 15 and 16. Three newly commissioned plays from the 2022 cohort - and one from a Southern Illinois University MFA Playwriting candidate - will premiere over a weekend of staged readings at the Festival's rehearsal hall in St. Louis's Grand Center Arts District.

The Confluence New Play Festival was founded to propel voices from the Midwest onto a national stage and is the only new work program dedicated to playwrights from the Missouri-Illinois bistate region. Since the creation of Confluence in 2018, 13 new works have been commissioned and developed, nearly half of which have gone on to world-premiere productions around the country.

"The mission from the start of Confluence has always been to foster a culture of playwriting in and around St. Louis that gives new works from the midwest a chance to thrive," says Tom Ridgely.

"Supporting playwrights is just the start. Our goal is to create a space for relationships to be built with directors, actors and audiences. That's how we believe we can help make St. Louis a home for the next generation of American theater makers."

The members of the 2022 cohort to premiere plays in April are **e.k. Doolin** of Edwardsville, IL; St. Louis-born and Chicago-based **Hanna Kime**; and **Novid Parsi** of St. Louis, MO.

Shakespeare Festival created Confluence in partnership with Nancy Bell (Director of Theater at St. Louis University), who led the program until 2022. Taking over for Bell as program director is Deanna Jent, a Drama Desk-nominated playwright, founder of Mustard Seed Theatre and author of the 2022 Shakespeare in the Streets play, "Winds of Change".

"I'm excited about how Confluence offers playwrights time and resources to develop their script," says Deanna Jent in her new role. "We met for 6-8 hours a month: reading scenes and discussing everything

from titles to the history of hot dogs. Typically playwrights work alone, so being a part of a cohort, walking with other writers on the same journey, is a unique and invigorating experience."

The staged readings will begin at 7 p.m. nightly, followed by a conversation with the playwright and director. Single tickets (\$12) and weekend passes (\$30) are now available on the Festival [website](#). Current students can attend for free with a valid student ID.

- April 14 - *The Life You Gave Me* by Novid Parsi (St. Louis, MO); directed by Adam Flores.
- April 15 - *Dogs* by Hanna Kime (Chicago, IL; directed by Nancy Bell.
- April 16 - *Titania & Oberon's Road Trip* by e.k. doolin (Edwardsville, IL); directed by Miranda Jagels Félix.

A free student presentation and staged reading has been added on Sunday, April 16 at 3 p.m. in partnership with Southern Illinois University at Carbondale's MFA program. MFA candidate Pearl Moore's, *Murphy's Law of Pretenders*, will be read by fellow students and will be free to attend.

"This is the fourth year of new commissions for Shakespeare Festival, that's 13 brand new works developed under the program, including the three plays that will premiere in April," says Ridgely on the program's success. "Since 2019, five have received full productions in St. Louis and across the country."

The most recent premieres out of the Confluence program include Courtney Bailey's play *Bronte Sister House Party* with S.A.T.E. which received eight 2022 Theater Circle Nominations including Best New Play and Myah Gary's play *Feminine Entergy* just wrapped up a critically-acclaimed run at Mustard Seed Theatre.

Previously announced full productions include *Tidy* by Kristin Idaszak (Rivendell Theatre Ensemble), *Suffer the Children* by Mariah Richardson (COCA), and *With* by Carter Lewis (Perseverance Theatre). Shaulee Cook's play *And Certain Women* was further workshopped by the Shakespeare Festival in the summer of 2022.

The application for the 2023 Confluence Regional Writers Project is now open to current residents of Missouri and Illinois. Playwrights must submit a writing sample and play idea by Friday, March 10, online at www.stlshakes.org. A diverse panel of theater artists and Program Director Deanna Jent will choose the next cohort. The fellowship award includes a \$3,000 commissioning stipend and six-month mentorship culminating with a staged reading. The 2023 finalists will be announced at this year's Festival.

Event details: Confluence New Play Festival readings will take place on April 14, 15 and 16 at 7:00 p.m. at the St. Louis Shakespeare Festival rehearsal hall (3333 Washington Ave., St. Louis, MO 63103). Single tickets (\$12) and weekend passes (\$30) are now available for purchase. Current students can attend for free with a valid student ID. For more information and tickets, visit www.stlshakes.org/confluence.

The inaugural Confluence Regional Writers Project was generously funded by Sondra & Dorsey Ellis.*

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

FRIDAY, APRIL 14 AT 7 P.M.

***The Life You Gave Me* by Novid Parsi (St. Louis, MO)**

A son tries to save his mother. She has other ideas, however. So do two mysterious strangers who watch the play—and ask the son to tell the story again and again until he gets it right, whatever right might be. Directed by Adam Flores. Dramaturgy by Robert Maesaka.

SATURDAY, APRIL 15 AT 7 P.M.

***Dogs* by Hanna Kime (Chicago, IL)**

On a Fourth of July sometime in the future, five women take the stage to compete in the annual Hot Dog Eating Contest, each one hoping to make history, to conquer nature and to shatter our perception of what the human body is capable of. DOGS is a dizzying and high-intensity exploration of capitalism, competition, and consumption that poses the question: how long can we keep all this up? Directed & Dramaturgy by Nancy Bell.

SUNDAY, APRIL 16 AT 7 P.M.

***Titania & Oberon's Road Trip* by e.k. doolin (Edwardsville, IL)**

The fairies Titania and Oberon are at a point in their eternal relationship where things are no longer working, and each of them thinks they know how to fix it, even though they are both hiding some major truths from each other. This is a play in deep conversation with Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that focuses on love, relationships, the open road and, of course, fairies. Directed by Miranda Jagels Félix. Dramaturgy by Susie Lawrence.

SUNDAY, APRIL 16 AT 3:00 P.M. (FREE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SIUC)

***Murphy's Law of Pretenders* by Pearl Moore (SIUC – MFA Playwriting Candidate)**

Murphy, Gia, Sophie, and Riley, who were once BFFs go to their school reunion and get sucked into their childhood dress-up chest. Chaos ensues. Directed by Segun Ojewuyi

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

e.k. doolin, she/her, lives and writes in the MetroEast area of St. Louis. Her plays have been produced by the Slightly Askew Theatre Company, Prison Performing Arts, the Center of Creative Arts (all of Missouri), 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 was produced by

the Heartland Theatre of Bloomington, IL, in July of 2022. e.k. is pursuing her Master of Fine Arts with a concentration in Playwriting from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale.

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’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 English and American literature degrees from Swarthmore College and Duke University. He lives in St. Louis with his husband.

CONFLUENCE PLAYWRIGHTS

2022

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

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)

2019

Shualee Cook (St. Louis, MO)
Kristin Idaszak (Chicago, IL)
Carter Lewis (St. Louis, MO)
Mariah L. Richardson (St. Louis, MO)

The St. Louis Shakespeare Festival strives to foster community and joy across the St. Louis region through the Shakespearean tradition of art for all. Since 2001, the Festival has grown from producing a single production of Shakespeare in Forest Park to a year-round season of impactful programming in exciting and accessible venues throughout the bi-state area. Artistic and education programs reach over 50,000 patrons and students each season. Their award-winning work has been featured in the *New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Bloomberg News*.