



CONTACT:
Nikki Battestilli
Marketing Director
412-431-4400 x230
nbattestilli@citytheatrecompany.org
CityTheatreCompany.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CITY THEATRE ADVANCES NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT IN THE MIDST OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Pittsburgh, PA (October 25, 2020): City Theatre remains committed to its support of new play development and launched several new works initiatives this fall, finding innovative ways to support playwrights.

City Theatre is excited to announce the creation of the **Kemp Powers Commission Fund for Black Playwrights**. The fund is made possible through the generous support of award-winning playwright Kemp Powers (author of last season's *One Night in Miami...*, which has just been adapted by Mr. Powers as a film distributed by Amazon Studios) and will offer an annual commission and developmental support to an early-career Black playwright.

"Back in 2019, City Theatre welcomed me with open arms by producing one of my plays, hosting a staged reading of another play, and inviting me to Pittsburgh so that I could interact with some of the dynamic youth playwrights of the city," said **Mr. Powers**. "As an artist, it is rare to receive that kind of institutional and community support, and it inspired me to want to pay it forward by offering support of my own to the next generation of storytellers."

The first artist to receive the commission is playwright **Ty Greenwood**. Mr. Greenwood is a Pittsburgh native, Washington & Jefferson College alumni, and recent graduate of the Carnegie Mellon School of Drama's MFA in Dramatic Writing program. The commission will give him the flexibility to work on a new play of his choosing and includes built-in developmental support as part of the process.

In addition, through the Powers Fund, City Theatre is providing activist **Treble NLS** and collaborators with support in exploring a new semi-autobiographical hip-hop musical. City previously collaborated with Treble through a long-standing partnership with 1Hood Media on the soundtrack for the theater's production of Dominique Morisseau's *Pipeline*, directed by **Reginald L. Douglas**. Treble NLS also recently performed as part of City Theatre's Drive-In Arts Festival at Hazelwood Green.

Earlier this month, City Theatre released four videos as part of the Census Project. Through support from the Census 2020 Philanthropic Fund at Grantmakers of Western PA, City Theatre commissioned four playwrights to create monologues inspired by the 2020 census. Each playwright was paired with a community partner organization working with populations likely to be undercounted. The resulting pieces highlight community concerns and the importance of the 2020 census. Playwrights include: **a.k. payne**, **Karla C. Payne**, **Tlaloc Rivas**, and **TJ Young**. Community Partner Organizations include: **412 Food Resuce**, **ARYSE**, **Gwen's Girls**, and **My Brother's Keeper**. All four monologues were filmed as short videos featuring Pittsburgh-based performers and directed by Maurice Redwood.

In addition to these projects, City Theatre is also one of 24 producing organizations collaborating to support **The Breath Project**—a new theatrical initiative formed by Artistic Director and Co-Founder **Gamal Abdel Chasten** and Co-Founder **Marieke Gaboury** in response to the current global spotlight on racial injustice against Black people. Through a national call for submissions, The Breath Project Virtual Festival will feature 24 8minute and 46 second digital works created by artists of color, including our partners at the **Alumni Theatre Company**. The festival will be held on Saturday, October 24 (5:00pm and 8:00pm EST) and Sunday, October 25 (8:00pm EST). The project also includes a digital archive of 65 full submissions to the festival. City Theatre will feature work by Pittsburgh-based artists leading up to the October presentations and invite audiences to join the virtual festival.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS:



Ty Greenwood holds a B.A. in Communication Arts with an emphasis in Rhetoric and Honors in Theatre from Washington & Jefferson College '17 and a Master of Fine Arts degree from Carnegie Mellon University '20, in Dramatic Writing. In 2013, Greenwood landed a four-year scholarship/apprenticeship with KDKA TV- News Pittsburgh where he wrote anchor packages and helped produce the “Pittsburgh Today Live Show,” through the Emma Bowen Foundation, an organization that places college students with a corporate sponsor, with a goal of promoting diversity in the media. In 2016, his short film “Fuzzy on the Details” was entered into the British Film Festival. The same year he also received the “Ubuntu” Emma Award through the Emma Bowen Foundation for his sense of community, promotion of diversity and togetherness in his work, at Washington & Jefferson College and the media. He has presented his short play, *Not A Fairy Tale* and research “Protecting our Black Men: Black Masculinity and the use of the Black Body in “For Black Boys Who Have Considered Homicide...” at the Mid-America Theatre Conference '18. He developed and had a staged reading of his full length choreopoem play, *Death Dream* at Alumni Theatre Company 2019. Recently, he participated in City Theatre’s 2019 Momentum Festival where he presented an excerpt of *Untitled Thesis Play* as part of the “In Their Own Voices” event. His work focuses on telling stories that are not damaging to the identity, existence and bodies of Black people, but are rather empowering, unapologetic and radical in nature.



Treble NLS is a multi-talented artist hailing from Pittsburgh, PA, the same city that gave you names like Mac Miller, Wiz Khalifa, August Wilson, and Andy Warhol just to name a few. He is a performer, poet, songwriter, producer, head teaching artist at 1Hood Media, and just about anything he needs to be in the moment. Treble NLS found his beginnings in programs like Center of Life’s KRUNK movement where the NLS acronym first originated. Originally meaning Next Level Shit then transitioning to Never Lose Sight, NLS is a movement that was thought up in the midst of failure to add emphasis on the fact that failure is not the end of the road. With albums like “Reine: Story of an American Reject,” Treble puts emphasis on the emotional side of existence in hopes to add “human” to the list of things black bodies are perceived as. From producing scores for plays like *Pipeline* to co-writing albums like Brittney Chantele’s “A Fire on Venus” and “The Golden Opportunity,” Treble NLS hopes to keep expanding his boundaries creatively while never losing sight of his humanity.



a.k. payne is a playwright, artist-theorist and theatermaker whose people are rooted in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Her plays love on and engage the interdependencies of Black pasts, presents and futures and seek to find/remember language that might move us towards our collective liberation(s). She holds a B.A. in English and African-American Studies from Yale College and is currently pursuing an MFA in playwriting from Yale School of Drama.



Karla C. Payne is an accomplished writer, as well as a veteran stage actress/singer/dancer. Under the penname “Spirit-Lead (lehd),” Karla released her award-winning spoken word CD, *Words Unspoken* in 2012, a poetry chapbook entitled *From My Indigo Pen* in 2015, and her most recent spoken word CD, *Relatively Speaking*, in 2017. She is currently working on her newly written one-act play, *Collateral Damage*. Karla is the mother of two beautiful sons and a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated.



Tlaloc Rivas writes, creates, and directs theatrical experiences. He works actively in equity and inclusion in all facets of his work with over 25 years of experience in community engagement, social justice, and theater training. His plays include *Take What You Can Carry*, *Divisadero*, *Johanna: Facing Forward*, and *Byzantine*. Current commissions include: *Maypearl* (a new version of Dürrenmatt’s *THE VISIT*) for St. Edward’s University (Jan-Feb 2021); *From Somewhere*, a one-person show co-written with Cuban-American performer Anthony Rodriguez for Aurora Theatre Company (Aug-Sept 2021); and *Kaliban: Waterloo, IA a New Now*

Commission from writer/activist Lauren Gunderson. Closer to home, he is the writer/director of *The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano* (based on the novel by Sonia Manzano) for New Hazlett Theatre’s CSA Season 8 (March 2021). He is the co-founder of the Latinx Theatre Commons, and the producer of the writing series: *The Latinx Superfriends Playwriting Hour* on HowlRound.com. He is a member of the Dramatists Guild and the union of Stage Directors & Choreographers. Tlaloc graduated with honors from UC Santa Cruz, earned his M.F.A. in Directing from the University of Washington School of Drama, and was an inaugural Presidential Postdoctoral Fellow at Carnegie Mellon University School of Drama. TlalocRivas.com



Maurice Redwood is an actor/filmmaker/director with 10+ years of acting experience and 7+ years of filmmaking experience. Throughout his artistic career, he has had opportunities to work with and learn from artists from all mediums, specifically stage and screen. Maurice is the CEO/Producer at Redwood Media Group LLC, a production company providing media and video services for Pittsburgh artists and community members. He is passionate about creating and participating in works that not only increase his own knowledge and experience, but also help to add to a diverse artistic community. He is also a producer at Pittsburgh based production company, CREW Productions LLC, which provides production and media services to local artists, arts organizations and

arts supporters. Notable stage credits: August Wilson’s *FENCES*, August Wilson’s *JITNEY* (Pittsburgh

Playwrights Theatre), *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* (Barebones Productions Co.), *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* (Prime Stage Theatre), *Lower Ninth* (Caravan Theatre of Pittsburgh), *Shakespeare's King Lear* (Pittsburgh Irish & Classical Theatre). His film acting credits include *Per-Sep-Shuhn* (TeeJay Vision Films), *Holding Rough* (Jake Savitz Productions), *House of Stones* short film (RMG), *Chocolate for Life* (UWebTv); Editing credits include *The 411 with CREW 412* (CREW Productions LLC), *#LWB Web Series* (Brittany Leanna Productions LLC).



TJ Young is a Texas-born playwright and dramaturg based in Pittsburgh where he serves as co-representative for the Dramatists Guild - Pittsburgh region. His plays include *No. 6* (2017 Harold and Mimi Steinberg Award Winner – KCACTF), *Lyon's Den* (2018 Harold and Mimi Steinberg Distinguished Play Winner), *Dark Skinned Pavement* (2020 Inkslinger Playwriting Award Winner), *Ruby's Baby Blue* (2016 John Cable Short Play Regional Selection- KCACTF), *Hell is Empty* (2017 John Cable Short Play Regional Selection - KCACTF), *Hallmark* (TETA Playfest 10-minute Winner), *Cupid*, and *The Frontline*. His 10 minute plays are : *Before the Fire* (Fade to Black 2018 Festival Selection), *Effie*, *Rock the Cradle*, *Lilies*, and *Stuffed*. He is the recipient of the 2017 Ken Ludwig Playwriting Scholarship. He has had productions at Texas State University as part of their New Works Festival, Director/Designer Collaboration Project, and as part of their 2016-2017 Main Stage Season. He is the 2019 Spotlight Artist of Throughline Theatre Company in Pittsburgh, PA. He received his MFA in Dramatic Writing from Texas State University. He has been a Teaching Artist with City Theatre in Pittsburgh and worked with Quantum Theatre in Pittsburgh. He is also the NPP Vice-Chair for Region 2 of the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. He is a Partner at subTEXT Solutions Dramaturgy Group and with the groundbreaking Entertainment Engineering Collective.

ABOUT CITY THEATRE:

Founded in 1975, City Theatre is entering its 46th season as Pittsburgh's home for bold new plays. Located in the historic South Side on its four-building cultural campus, the company produces a season of regional and world premieres; its renowned Young Playwrights Festival, celebrating its 20th year; a season-long reading series of new works in progress; and the annual Momentum Festival. City Theatre's mission is to provide an artistic home for the development and production of contemporary plays of substance and ideas that engage and challenge a diverse audience. With a pre-Covid annual average operating budget of \$3 million, City is the largest performing arts organization not located in Pittsburgh's downtown Cultural District and is a constituent and core member of the League of Resident Theaters (LORT), Theatre Communications Group (TCG), and the National New Play Network (NNPN). Marc Masterson returned as Artistic Director in July 2018, after an 18 year absence, to join Managing Director James McNeel as co-leaders of the organization.

Like all almost all arts organizations, City Theatre was forced to halt its 2019-2020 season in the middle of March due to the Covid-19 national crisis. Its modified 46th season began in September with a reimagined line-up of shows, including the creation of a live, outdoor drive-in theatrical experience (making City Theatre one of just a few organizations nation-wide to find a safe way to perform before in-person audiences) as well as a suite of original digital content.

###