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### NEWS FROM THE O'NEILL

#### EUGENE O'NEILL THEATER CENTER ANNOUNCES 2008 NATIONAL PLAYWRIGHTS CONFERENCE SEASON

INCLUDES DEVELOPMENTAL PARTNERSHIP WITH CHICAGO'S GOODMAN  
THEATRE

ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE ARE LISA LOOMER, TRACY LETTS

WENDY C. GOLDBERG, LYNNE MEADOW SET TO DIRECT

Waterford, CT~ The Eugene O'Neill Theater Center today announced the eight plays to be developed at the 2008 National Playwrights Conference. The selected playwrights will spend the month of July developing their work with professional creative and support staff, including directors, dramaturges, actors and designers.

The works were chosen from the more than 700 scripts sent to the O'Neill through its Open Submissions program, which uses scores of readers to choose works without authorship attribution.

This summer's lineup includes a continuation of the collaboration begun last year with the Goodman Theatre of Chicago, Illinois (Robert Falls, Artistic Director). This year's collaboration will be **Regina Taylor's *Magnolia***, an adaptation of Anton Chekhov's ***The Cherry Orchard***. It also includes a project by Irish writer **Ursula Rani Sarma**, who developed her play ***The Exchange*** at the O'Neill in 2005.

Susan Smith Blackburn Prize winner **Lisa Loomer** (*The Waiting Room*) and 2008 Pulitzer Prize winner **Tracy Letts** (*August: Osage County*) will be Artists in Residence during the Conference.

Directors who have been confirmed for projects include NPC Artistic Director **Wendy C. Goldberg** (*Mistakes Were Made*) and Manhattan Theatre Club Artistic Director **Lynne Meadow** (*Smudge*). Directors for other 2008 NPC projects will be announced soon.

National Playwrights Conference Artistic Director Wendy C. Goldberg said "In my fourth season, we will continue our partnership with Chicago's Goodman Theatre and the Xerox Foundation in tandem with our commitment to the O'Neill's open submission process. The O'Neill was the first and remains one of the only theater organizations in the country committed to this process. Open Submissions allows playwrights who may not yet have agents to submit their scripts directly to the Conference. The eight plays in the season represent the next generation of playwrights. These writers were selected from nearly 800 submissions. These writers hail from various regions of the country and abroad. This summer, we welcome back **Ursula Rani Sarma**, a playwright from Ireland, as well as **Regina Taylor** in a collaboration with The Goodman"

"We are in a very exciting artistic moment for the O'Neill. In the 2007-2008 theatrical season, we have seen nine projects from the past three summers of my tenure move to significant world premiere productions in New York and around the country. The O'Neill process remains unique and helps support and profoundly nurture important theatrical storytellers."

Executive Director Preston Whiteway noted, "The National Playwrights Conference and the O'Neill remain at the forefront of new play development evidenced by these eight plays and two residencies chosen for our 44<sup>th</sup> season -- Wendy's fourth as Artistic Director. The writers and plays represent the spectrum of contemporary playwriting in America and Ireland. Wendy C. Goldberg has very successfully taken on the mantle of the National Playwrights Conference, which continues to be a leader in its field. This summer will be very exciting, and I know that based on Wendy's track record, these plays and playwrights have quite a future ahead of them."

#### **THE O'NEILL'S 2008 NATIONAL PLAYWRIGHTS CONFERENCE SELECTIONS ARE:**

##### **THE NEAR EAST by Alex Lewin**

Performances: Thurs. July 3 at 8:15 pm; Sat., July 5 at 8:15 pm

An American archaeologist teams up with an Arab activist to unearth "Mother of Books," the oldest scripture, from its resting place in the desert between Mecca and Medina. But their controversial mission affects a number of other characters, including a secretly gay Arab radical, a British spy, and the ghost of a precocious 13-year-old boy.

##### **BOX AMERICANA: a dream of WalMart by Jason Grote**

Performances: Fri., July 4 at 8:15 pm; Sun., July 6 at 5:15 pm

Box Americana follows Kelly, a perky and passionate cheerleader for Wal-Mart, and Danae, a devoted mother escaping a violent past, as they seek the Promised Land of

retail abundance. Sam Walton, wandering the earth as a spirit of late capitalism, haunts them as they try to make their lives in the epicenter of Sprawllville, USA.

**SMUDGE by Rachel Axler**

**Director:** Lynne Meadow

Performances: Thurs., July 10 at 8:15 pm; Sat., July 12 at 8:15 pm

When a young couple's first child doesn't turn out as expected, they're forced to revise their notions about what constitutes a life, and figure out -- in their own, specific ways -- how to be parents. A very, very, very dark comedy.

**MAGNOLIA\* by Regina Taylor**

Performances: Fri., July 11 at 8:15 pm; Sunday, July 13 at 5:15 pm

Magnolia is set in winter, 1963, as the schools, stores and real estate markets of Atlanta, Georgia are beginning to desegregate—much to the resentment of the white community. Lily, a white landowner, returns from Paris to find the Forest Estate, her family's land, on the brink of ruin. Thomas, a successful businessman and the descendent of former slaves to the estate, has a plan to save the land: turn it into subdivisions and sell it to the white families fleeing the city. Tensions build as members of the estranged family reunite to try and save their beloved land—magnolia trees and all.

**THUNDER ABOVE, DEEPS BELOW by A. Rey Pamatmat**

Performances: Thurs., July 17 at 8:15 pm; Sat., July 19 at 2:15 pm

Three homeless young friends — a Filipina-American with a hidden past, a Filipina transsexual, and a Puerto-Rican hustler — struggle on the streets of Chicago to scrounge up enough cash to bus it to San Francisco before the winter cold hits. All is going according to plan until Theresa dreams of a bearded man searching for her on Lake Michigan, a mystery man in sunglasses stalks Gil after he becomes the star performer at a drag club, a wealthy john appears to be falling in love with Hector, and Marisol, the assistant manager of a doughnut shop, begins practicing magic on them with her cups of far-too-strong coffee. With their hopes and friendships put to the test, will the trio be able to spare some change?

**MISTAKES WERE MADE by Craig Wright**

**Director:** Wendy C. Goldberg

Performances: Fri., July 18 at 8:15 pm; Sun., July 20 at 5:15 pm

Felix Artifex is a small-time Broadway producer struggling to launch "The Machine," his pet project about the French Revolution. Trouble is, he's trying to bring into alignment the diverse agendas of a cranky writer, a not-too-bright movie star, dozens of agents, the American military in Iraq, members of the insurgency, tile salesmen, airplane pilots — wait! I thought this guy was a producer! He's that and much more in this metaphysical journey into the mind that makes — and unmakes — the world.

**THE LEGEND OF MINNIE WILLET by Ann Marie Healy**

Performances: Thurs., July 24 at 8:15 pm; Sat., July 26 at 8:15 pm

Ladies everywhere doing all sorts of strange things: Taking and being taken, Passing on and being passed up, Falling in love and falling apart. What begins as a rollicking winter season of sexual abandonment ends with a chilling blood wedding for the legendary Minnie Willet: town maverick, town eccentric and, ultimately, town martyr.

**WITHOUT YOU\*\* by Ursula Rani Sarma**

Performances: Fri., July 25 at 8:15 pm; Sun., July 27 at 5:15 pm

All Simon ever really wanted was to have someone to love...but you should be careful what you wish for. Without You looks at the wonder and chaos of love and asks how much we are willing to sacrifice for it.

\***MAGNOLIA** is a collaboration with Chicago's The Goodman Theatre, Robert Falls, Artistic Director

\*\***WITHOUT YOU** is The Irish Project at the O'Neill

Schedules are subject to change. Tickets will be on sale beginning Wednesday, June 11. Please call the O'Neill Box Office at 860-443-1238 for times, prices and reservations. Outdoor performances will be moved indoors in the event of rain.

The Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, founded in 1964, is the pre-eminent center for the development of new works and new voices for the American theater. It has been home to more than 1,000 new works for the stage and 2,500 emerging artists. Scores of projects developed at the O'Neill have gone on to full productions at other theaters around the world, including Broadway, off-Broadway and major regional theaters. The O'Neill is itself the winner of a special Tony Award, the National Opera Award, the Jujamcyn Award for Theater Excellence and the Arts and Business Council Encore Award. The O'Neill's programs include the National Playwrights Conference, National Music Theater Conference, Puppetry Conference, Cabaret Conference, National Critics Institute, and the fully accredited National Theater Institute, which includes semester-long, fully accredited intensive theater-training programs and a six-week accredited summer program, Theatermakers. In addition, the O'Neill owns and operates the Monte Cristo Cottage, a National Historic Landmark and the childhood home of Nobel Prize-winning and four-time Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright, Eugene O'Neill. For more information regarding the Center, please visit the O'Neill website at [www.TheONeill.org](http://www.TheONeill.org) or call 860-443-5378.

## **BRIEF PLAYWRIGHT BIOGRAPHIES – NPC 2008**

### **Alex Lewin**

Alex Lewin is a 2008 graduate of the MFA program in Playwriting at the University of California at San Diego. His plays have been developed at Arena Stage, Geva Theatre Center, The New Group, Ensemble Studio Theatre, the Lark, Emigrant Theatre (Minneapolis), Bailiwick Rep (Chicago), and others. His play *The Near East* was a finalist for the L. Arnold Weissberger award, the Alliance Theatre's Keneda Graduate Playwriting Competition, and the Kennedy Center/American College Theatre Festival's Quest for Peace award. Alex is the recipient of a commission from Ensemble Studio Theatre and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and has held a residency at EST's Lexington Center for the Arts. Alex was a visiting fellow at the O'Neill in 2006 and is ecstatic to be returning.

### **Jason Grote**

Jason Grote's plays include *1001* (Denver Center, Page 73, Boston Court, Contemporary American Theater Festival, Mixed Blood, Marin Theater), *Maria/Stuart* (Woolly Mammoth), *Hamilton Township* (Soho Rep, Salvage Vanguard), and *This Storm is What we Call Progress* (Rorschach). His work has been developed at The O'Neill, The Soho Rep Writer/Director Lab, Playwrights' Horizons, Portland Center Stage's JAW/West Festival, and The Lark, among other places. Honors include an Ovation Award from The Denver Post, The P73 Fellowship, and "Best New Play" (for *1001*) from Denver's alternative weekly, Westword. *1001* was also included in critics' year-end top ten lists in Time Out New York, The Rocky Mountain News, and The Boulder Daily Camera. He is currently under commission from Denver Center, Clubbed Thumb, and Ensemble Studio Theater, and is a member of PEN and New Dramatists. Visit him at [jasongrote.com](http://jasongrote.com).

### **Rachel Axler**

Rachel Axler is a playwright and Emmy Award-winning comedy writer. Her plays have had readings at Manhattan Theatre Club, The Playwrights Foundation, The Lark and The Magic Theatre. She has received fellowships from The Dramatists Guild and The Lark Play Development Center, and is currently working on commissions from Lincoln Center and South Coast Repertory. In the spring of 2009, her play, *Archaeology*, will premiere at The Kitchen Theatre in Ithaca, NY. Rachel has been a writer on *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart since 2005, where, with the rest of the writing staff, she won an Emmy in 2006, was nominated for another in 2007, and received two Writers Guild Award nominations. Short humor pieces of hers have been published in The New York Times, New York Magazine, the journal *In Character* and in two editions of *Monologues for Women, By Women*. Rachel received a BA from Williams College, and an MFA in Playwriting from the University of California, San Diego.

### **Regina Taylor**

Regina Taylor is an Artistic Associate of The Goodman Theatre, where credits include

The *Dreams of Sarah Breedlove* (premiered at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival); the award-winning *Crowns* (first produced at McCarter Theatre and at Second Stage in New York); the world premiere of *Oo-Bla-Dee* (2000 American Theatre Critics/Steinberg New Play Award); *Urban Zulu Mambo* (an evening of plays by Adrienne Kennedy, Ntozake Shange, Suzan-Lori Parks, Kia Corthron and Regina Taylor); and *Drowning Crow*. *Crowns* and *The Dreams of Sarah Breedlove* were both written and directed by Taylor. *Drowning Crow*, her adaptation of Chekhov's *The Seagull*, was produced on Broadway at Manhattan Theater Club's Biltmore Theatre. Other plays include *A Night in Tunisia*, *Escape from Paradise*, *Watermelon Rinds*, *Inside the Belly of the Beast*, *Mudtracks* and *Love Poem #97*. Taylor was the first black woman to play Juliet in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* on Broadway. Her other stage credits include *As You Like It*, *Macbeth*, *Machinal*, *A Map of The World*, *The Illusion*, *Jar the Floor* and *The Tempest*. For her role as Lilly Harper in the television series *I'll Fly Away* she received a Golden Globe, NAACP Image Award, and two Emmy Award nominations, all as Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series. Taylor recently received the NAACP Image Award for "Best Actress in a Drama" for her work on David Mamet's *The Unit* on CBS. Other television credits include *The Education of Max Bickford*, *Feds*, *In From the Night*, *Cora Unashamed*, *Strange Justice*, *Hostile Waters*, *Children of the Dust*, *I'll Fly Away: Then and Now*, *Howard Beach: Making a Case for Murder*, *Concealed Enemies*, *Crisis at Central High* and *Nurse*. Taylor's film credits include *The Negotiator*, *Courage Under Fire*, *The Keeper*, *Clockers*, *Losing Isaiah*, *Jersey Girl* and *Lean on Me*.

#### **A. Rey Pamatmat**

A. Rey Pamatmat's short plays *Ain't Meat* and *1260 Minute Life* premiered in "The Open Road Anthology" at the 2007 Humana Festival of New American Plays, and his play *Pure* was recently workshopped at the Ensemble Studio Theatre. In June, he will be Second Generation's (2g) artist representative to the Asian-American Theatre Conference hosted by Mu Performing Arts and Pangaea World Theater at The Guthrie in Minneapolis, where 2g will develop his play *Thunder Above, Deeps Below*. Other productions include *Deviant* (Vortex Theater Company, HX Magazine's Top Ten Plays of 2005, and nominated for two 2006 NYIT Awards including Outstanding New Script); *High/Limbo/High* (2004 Queer@HERE Festival). Commissions include: Actors' Theatre of Louisville, E.S.T./Sloan Science and Technology Project, Mabou Mines, and 2g. His plays have been developed at Playwrights' Horizons, Ma-Yi Theater Company, Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, Mabou Mines, 2g, the Vortex, The Lark Play Development Center, New Dramatists, the Yale Cabaret, and the HB Playwrights' Foundation. Other full-length plays include: *Beautiful Day, New, Unstick the Woman*, and *Picture 24*. Rey is a member of the Ma-Yi Writer's Lab and a Contributing Editor on Big Queer Blog. He was a 2007 artist delegate to the first U.S. Social Forum where he spoke on panels about artists of color and political activism. He was a 2002 Truman Capote Literary Fellow, a 2003 Playwrights' Center PlayLab Finalist (for *New*), and a 2002 Heidemann Award Finalist (for *Limbo*). B.F.A.: NYU, Drama. M.F.A.: Yale School of Drama, Playwriting.

### **Craig Wright**

Craig Wright's plays include *The Pavilion* (Rattlestick Theater-- 2005-2006 Drama Desk Nominee for Outstanding Play, City Theatre, Florida Stage, Stages Rep), *Main Street* (Great American History Theatre), *Orange Flower Water* (The Edge Theatre, CATF, the Jungle, Steppenwolf), *Recent Tragic Events* (Playwrights Horizons, Woolly Mammoth) *Molly's Delicious* (Arden Theatre, Arizona Theater Company), *Melissa Arctic* (Folger Theatre—Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding New Play), *Grace* (Woolly Mammoth—Helen Hayes Nomination for Outstanding New Play, Northlight Theatre, Furious Theater- LA Drama Critics Award for Best Play), *Lady* (Northlight—2007 Jeff Award nomination for Best New Play, Stages Rep and upcoming at Asolo Theater and in LA), *The Unseen* (Actors Theatre of Louisville, Stages Rep) and currently *Better Late*, co-authored with Larry Gelbart, playing at Northlight. His plays are published by Dramatists Play Service, Playscripts Inc., Dramatic Publishing, Samuel French and Smith & Kraus. He is the recipient of fellowships from the McKnight Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. He holds a M.Div. degree from United Theological Seminary. He has written for numerous television shows including *Six Feet Under* (Emmy nomination) and is the creator of the ABC series *Dirty Sexy Money*.

### **Ann Marie Healy**

Ann Marie Healy's play *Have You Seen Steve Steven* was developed at the Sundance Theater Lab this past summer. It was subsequently produced by 13P, the Obie-award winning playwright collective (directed by Anne Kauffman). Her play *The Night That Roger Went To Visit The Parents Of His Old High School Girlfriend* premiered in the 2006 EST Marathon of One-Acts plays (directed by Andrew McCarthy). *Now That's What I Call A Storm* was the recipient of a workshop fellowship with MCC Theater (directed by Jo Bonney), and produced by Edge Theater Company, directed by Carolyn Cantor and featuring Marylouise Burke. *Dearest Eugenia Haggis* was developed at LAByrinth Theater's 2004 summer intensive and The Cape Cod Theater Project. Her writing is published through Samuel French, Smith & Kraus, Playscripts and The Kenyon Review. She is an affiliated artist with the Obie-Award winning theater company Clubbed Thumb; a member of MCC's Playwrights Coalition; a member of 13P, a former member of the Soho Rep Writer/Director Lab, and a writing fellow at New River Dramatists. Ann Marie was recently awarded a 2006/07 Sloan Commission and a 2006 NYSCA commissioning grant. She is currently studying with Paula Vogel and Bonnie Metzgar in the Playwriting Graduate Program at Brown University.

### **Ursula Rani Sarma**

Ursula Rani Sarma is from the West of Ireland and of Irish/Indian descent. Some of her previous work for stage includes *...touched..*, *Wanderings*, *Gift*, *Blue*, *Orpheus Road*, *When the War Came*, *Patriotism* and *The Exchange*. These plays were commissioned by companies such as the National Theatre London, Paines Plough Theatre London, The Traverse Theatre Edinburgh, Stephen Joseph Theatre Scarborough, The Abbey Theatre Dublin and The New Theatre London. She has written three plays for radio, *Car Four* and *A Tiny Light in the Darkness* for the BBC

and *The Fisherman* RTE. Ursula translated *The Dogs Facing The Hare* by Italian playwright Luca De Bei for the National Theatre Studio in 2004. She is currently developing plays for The Traverse Theatre, The Stephen Joseph Theatre and The National Theatre. Her play *The Spider Men* received over thirty five productions throughout the UK, Ireland and Europe as part of the National Theatre Shell Connections project before receiving its National Theatre premiere in London in July 2006. Awards which Ursula's work has received includes: Irish and British Arts Council Awards, Irish Times ESB Theatre Award, Edinburgh Fringe Festival Award and the Heidelberg Audience Choice Award. Other ongoing projects for Ursula include an Irish Arts Council-commission on Inishlacken Island off County Galway, the development of several feature films for companies such as Film Four, B3 Media and lebrocquyfraser and the creation of an original libretto for Cork Midsummer Festival 2010. Coming Up: In June, Ursula will direct the world premiere of her new play *The Magic Tree* as part of the Cork Midsummer Festival before the play travels to the Edinburgh Festival in August; and The Traverse Theatre will produce her play *The Dark Things* as part of their 2009 season. Ursula previously attended the O'Neill in 2006 with her play *The Exchange*.

#### **Tracy Letts, Artist in Residence**

Tracy Letts is the author of the plays *August: Osage County*, *Killer Joe*, *Bug* and *Man From Nebraska* (named one of Time Magazine's Top Ten Plays of 2003). He is an ensemble member of the Steppenwolf Theatre Company. His appearances there include: *Homebody/Kabul*, *The Dazzle*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Three Days of Rain*, and *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*. Film appearances include: *Guinevere*, *U.S. Marshalls* and *Chicago Cab*. TV appearances include: *The District*, *Profiler*, *The Drew Carey Show*, *Home Improvement* and *Seinfeld*. Tracy made his directing debut at the Lookingglass Theatre with Glen Berger's play *Great Men of Science, No's 21 & 22*. His play *Bug* was made into a feature film directed by William Friedkin and starring Ashley Judd. Mr. Letts was the recipient of the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for his play *August: Osage County*.

#### **Lisa Loomer, Artist in Residence**

Lisa Loomer's most recent play, *Distracted*, had its world premiere at The Mark Taper Forum, went on to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and will open at The Roundabout Theater in New York in 2009. *Living Out* had its world premiere at The Mark Taper Forum and was produced at Second Stage in New York in 2003, directed by Jo Bonney. It has subsequently been produced across America at such theaters as Seattle Repertory, Missouri Repertory, The Denver Center, and Theater Works, as well as in Mexico and Israel, sometimes in bi-lingual productions. Ms. Loomer is perhaps best known for *The Waiting Room* which went from The Williamstown Theater Festival to The Mark Taper Forum to highly successful productions at Arena Stage and Trinity Rep, and then on to The Vineyard Theatre in New York. It has subsequently been produced at theaters throughout the United States, in Europe, and in Egypt. Ms. Loomer's first work for theater was a collaboration entitled *A Crowd of Two* at The American Place Theatre, followed by a one-woman show *All By Herselves* at the

Westside Arts. Other plays include: *Birds*; *Maria, Maria, Maria, Maria!*; *Accelerando*; *Looking For Angels*; *Expecting Isabel*; *Bocon!*; *Cuts* and *Chain Of Life*, which have been produced at such theaters as Arena Stage, The Mark Taper Forum, The Kennedy Center, The Public Theatre, Intar, The Los Angeles Theatre Center, Seattle's Group Theater, Stage Left in Chicago, The La Jolla Playhouse, Mixed Blood, The Open Eye, The Odyssey, and in Germany, Alaska, and Mexico. For The Cornerstone Theatre Company, she wrote *Broken Hearts*, produced at The Los Angeles Theater Center. *The "B.H. Mystery"* brought together actors and community people from four "BH" neighborhoods in L.A.: Boyle Heights, Broadway Hill (or Chinatown), Baldwin Hills, and Beverly Hills. Ms. Loomer is an alumna of New Dramatists and the recipient of two grants from the NEA and a grant from the NYFA. Awards include the Jane Chambers Award, the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, The Kennedy Center Fund for New American Plays Award, a Garland Award, and the American Theatre Critics Association Award (twice). She also received an Imagen Award for positive portrayals of Latinos in all media. Her plays appear in *The Best Plays of 1998-1999*, *The Best Plays of 1994-1995*, and *The Best Plays of 2003-2004*, and are published by Dramatists Play Service, TCG, Dramatic Publishing and Arte Publico Press. *The Waiting Room* and *Living Out* are taught in university drama programs, Women's Studies programs, and Latino Studies programs. She is also a screenwriter. Her first film, *Looking For Angels*, was chosen by Sundance for its first co-lab with the Latin American Film Institute in Cuba where she had the opportunity to work with Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Other film credits include *Girl, Interrupted* and *Nappily Ever After* for Halle Berry, soon to be in production.

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