

## **PlayPenn New Play Development Conference**

### **Organizational Mission and Background**

#### **MISSION**

PlayPenn is an artist-driven organization dedicated to improving the way in which new plays are developed. Employing an ever-evolving process, PlayPenn creates a “relaxed tension” within which playwrights can engage in risk taking, boundary-pushing work free from the pressures of commercial consideration.

#### **CORE VALUES**

As an organization, PlayPenn believes in:

1. The artist as the fundamental authority in the creation of new work.
2. Fostering artists and their processes by providing as many resources and removing as many obstacles as possible.
3. A ferocious commitment to the collaborative process of our work.
4. Seeking diversities in voice, theatricality, language, style, class and culture.
5. Remaining flexible in our approach to our artistic and administrative processes, always looking for a better way to carry out our work.
6. Contributing to the artistic and cultural landscape of Philadelphia, the region, the nation and the world.
7. Executing all of our activities with honesty and directness.

In the seven years since its inception, PlayPenn has succeeded in raising the consciousness of our community in all areas of theatre practice related to the development and production of new work while gaining national attention for its contributions to the field. From the promotion of new performance pieces mostly concentrated in the activities of Philadelphia’s Live Arts Festival, to the establishment of a bi-annual New Play Festival by the Philadelphia Theatre Alliance, to the influx of playwrights into our community from around the country, PlayPenn has been an essential element in a confluence of activity of a community with a growing reputation for its commitment to the development and production of new plays.

We have chosen, in these past seven years, to primarily focus our efforts by establishing a summer conference that concentrates our work into a two-week period, making the best possible use of limited resources while carrying on the mission of bringing new work to the city, the region and the nation. By choosing playwrights from across the country, giving them the opportunity to work with the well-established director of their choice, providing a first-rate dramaturg, and surrounding the team with accomplished professional actors, designers, technicians and committed interns, we have created an environment that allows playwrights to write with the full administrative and artistic support that relieves the process of all possible friction, including the friction of potential commercial influence from producers. The concentration of this kind of work here in Philadelphia, local productions of the plays developed by PlayPenn, and

outwardly radiating successes will continue to make Philadelphia a destination for playwrights. Already, the work of the conference is beginning to expand outward to include year-round workshops and other aspects of support for a growing community of playwrights, theatre practitioners and the most important beneficiaries, the community at large.

As we look forward we imagine, and are planning for, a deepening and strengthening of our conference activities as we continue to develop and refine the processes that make PlayPenn an effective and meaningful development center for the playwrights in the American theatre. By a regular and ongoing attention to evaluation, we continue to structure development opportunities that are responsive to playwrights and their work.

During the past year we have been able to extend our commitment to the development process outward by offering workshop time to plays outside the summer conference framework and by partnering with local theatres to do so. Our work with Michael Hollinger on his play *GHOST-WRITER* in collaboration with Arden Theatre Company moved the play closer to readiness for its World Premiere in September 2010. In February we are partnering with InterAct Theatre Company to help develop Eric Pfeffinger's new play *SOME OTHER KIND OF PERSON*.

And in the past year we began offering playwriting classes to the community at large, taught by notable playwrights including Lee Blessing, JT Rogers, Bruce Graham, Michael Hollinger, and Jeffrey Hatcher.

### **The Learning and Working Environment**

The learning and working environment for interns will vary in nature relative to where conference planning and execution are in the year long process that leads to the actual manifestation of the conference, itself. During the early part of the internship period the environment is intimately collaborative, involving in-depth interaction and coordination with the Artistic Director, the Development Director, the Casting Director and the Production/Company Manager.

The work of PlayPenn culminates in bringing approximately 80 artists together for a concentrated period of two-and-a-half weeks in July. The second half of the internship will involve interaction with all of the artists involved in the execution of the conference – including playwrights, directors, dramaturgs, designers, technicians, actors and other interns - as well as continued work with the organization's leadership. These relationships begin to evolve once conference playwrights are named and directors and other collaborators are decided upon and engaged throughout the Spring. The intern will also interact with our publicist, Fleishman Gerber Associates, and a myriad of individuals in the community with whom we must arrange housing, catering and other services in the interest of a smooth running conference.

## **Context of the Project**

The work environment and consequently the overriding atmosphere at PlayPenn is one of breadth and depth. While there is a certain amount of specialization among the artists, technicians and administrators involved in producing the conference, all participants are intimately engaged with one another to varying degrees. An internship at PlayPenn has the potential to provide a broad ranging and substantive experience to the individual intern.

Since its inception, PlayPenn has fostered a process that is committed to the artist. In the interest of supporting the work of our most promising playwrights, PlayPenn has engaged in an ever-evolving process that fully supports writers toward bringing their plays to a state closer to production readiness without commercial pressures or constraint.

In the first six years of PlayPenn's activities, the Annual New Play Development Conference, which is the centerpiece of the organization's work, has grown substantially. During its inaugural Conference in 2005, four plays were developed over two weeks and one symposium was offered to the public. PlayPenn's 2010 Conference developed nine plays, holding a pre-conference retreat, presented one symposia, engaged conference participants in professional development forums and held post reading gatherings in the interest of fostering audience feedback in a relaxed, informal, non-threatening environment.

PlayPenn is intent upon expanding the reach of our impact beyond the Philadelphia theatre community in the interest of exerting our influence on the national and international communities of both theatre professionals and playgoers alike. The organization's growth and success has led to its having established itself as one of the most respected and highly regarded development organizations in the country.

We are now in a position to share the fruits of our success by offering the experience of our work process to talented young people looking to understand the substance of our work and the commensurate administrative organization that supports that philosophical foundation. Equally as important, we have grown to the point of benefiting from the contribution of young, bright students whose talents will help to expand our understanding of ourselves and our reach into the community to populations that are not as well represented at our public events as they might be. The future of our organization and our profession depends upon an appreciation by the next generation of theatre artists, administrators and audience.

## **The Intern Project Summary**

The Internship will take place during normal business hours and outside those hours when it's necessary and/or convenient. During the conference itself, hours will often push into the evening. Some of the work will be performed at PlayPenn's office (220 West Evergreen Avenue, Philadelphia) Monday through Friday, and during the conference the work will be performed at the Adrienne Theatre, but there is a considerable amount of work that will be able to be performed offsite and outside normal business hours, including research of various kinds, identification and alignment of conference elements that rely on relationships with other businesses and organizations, and the establishment and upkeep of electronic social networks. We can be flexible but would want to establish a regular schedule at the outset that accommodates our needs and the needs of the intern.

### **Project Details**

#### **Weeks 1-5 (May 16<sup>th</sup> – June 19<sup>th</sup>)**

- Research, update and maintain database of Artistic Directors and Literary Managers of theatres and play development organizations across the country and around the world
- Create dramaturgy notebooks for plays selected for development during PlayPenn's 2011 Conference
- Coordinate with Publicist and Development Director a plan for establishing and enhancing PlayPenn's presence in electronic-based communities
- Establish online box-office
- Assist Development Director with announcement to institutional funders and pre-booking of VIP seats
- Assist Artistic Director and Casting Director in organizing and monitoring auditions for conference plays
- Solicit local businesses for in-kind catering support for conference activities
- Coordinate design and layout of Conference Brochure
- Participate in organizing form and content of pre-conference retreat

#### **Weeks 6-10 (June 20<sup>th</sup> – July 25<sup>th</sup>)**

- Assist Production/Company Manager in organization of conference travel, housing, and donation collection
- Maintain Conference presence in electronic-based communities like Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Philadelphia New Play Initiative and Theatre Alliance list serves
- Function as box officer on rotating schedule with other interns
- Provide hands-on support at donor cultivation events

- Oversee collection of data, layout, and execution of conference program booklet
- Function as assistant dramaturg on one of the six Conference plays

In addition to these areas of focus, the intern will be spending some time and attention on assisting the Artistic Director and the Development Director in accomplishing general administrative tasks

### **Experiences / Benefits Offered**

Depending on her or his abilities upon entering the internship, the PlayPenn intern will acquire a more complete understanding and experience of what goes into creating a public presentation of new work and all of the substantive elements that support PlayPenn's conference organization and execution. These areas will include research and distillation of information about how the field is populated, a more complete understanding of the structure and function of electronic social networking sites, brochure and program design, dramaturgical research and dramaturgical practice. No less important are the contacts that the intern will make with top level artists practicing in the areas of playwriting, direction, design, dramaturgy and technical support. The intern will also have the benefit of participating in a playwriting class led by a nationally recognized playwright with their work presented, along with that of other conference interns, in a public forum.

### **Essential Skills:**

The ideal candidate will have a deep and broad interest in the theatre, with an appreciation for dramatic literature. Ability to work with electronic design and database programs a plus. A familiarity with social networking sites on the internet and ability to communicate with others and write well along with an outgoing manner and social comfort are essential.

### ***Contact for the Organization is:***

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