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**Artists Rep's New Play Development Program**

## **Table | Room | Stage**

***Announces THREE MORE Commissions***

**Linda Alper, Larissa FastHorse, Andrea Stolowitz**

**PORTLAND, OREGON – July 19, 2016.** Artists Repertory Theatre has extended three play commissions, as part of the company's ambitious new play development program Table|Room|Stage (T|R|S), to Linda Alper, Larissa FastHorse and Andrea Stolowitz.

Artists Rep's [T|R|S program](#) will commission a total of eight plays by 2017 – at least four of the eight commissions will go to writers of color, at least four will go to women, one play will be written for young adults and one will be the Oregon Play Prize, awarded to an Oregon writer.

Alper, FastHorse and Stolowitz join Yussef El Guindi, the first playwright commissioned through T|R|S, to craft new plays with the support of Artists Rep. From varied cultural backgrounds and perspectives, these writers are asking provocative questions, playing with the form and structure of theatre, and challenging perspectives. Artists Rep is proud to begin work with this diverse group of playwrights and offer them the support they need to develop the stories they are compelled to tell. The works created by these writers through T|R|S will enrich the national new play landscape.

T|R|S was established by a \$125,000 Oregon Community Foundation "Creative Heights" grant to create a robust new play program that offers development opportunities for local and national playwrights, ensures that underrepresented voices are heard on stage, and establishes Artists Rep and Portland as an engine for new play development.

"We are excited to launch Table|Room|Stage at Artists Rep with these esteemed playwrights," said Dámaso Rodríguez, Artistic Director. "It's our goal to see these diverse, dynamic and fascinating new plays, as well as future T|R|S projects, fully realized on our stages and at theatres around the world."

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### **Playwright Commissions**

Within the T|R|S program, Artists Rep will offer commissions to eight playwrights to start a new play, to finish one already begun or to revisit one that hasn't yet been fully realized. Artists Rep is committed to offering women, writers of color and writers of work for young audiences a place at the table. T|R|S has now commissioned four of the eight playwrights: Linda Alper, Yusef El Guindi, Larissa FastHorse and Andrea Stolowitz.

### **LINDA ALPER**

A Resident Artist at Artists Rep, Linda has co-written adaptations and translations produced by the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, ACT in San Francisco, Denver Theatre Center, Virginia Rep; Santa Cruz, Colorado, Stamford (UK) and other Shakespeare festivals, as well as The Acting Company. Those scripts include: *Saturday, Sunday, Monday; Napoli Millionaria!; The Three Musketeers* and *Tracy's Tiger*. With Penny Metropulos, she wrote an adaptation of *Great Expectations*, which is currently playing in OSF's Angus Bowmer Theatre.

As an actress at Artists Rep, Linda has appeared in *The Price, Tribes, The Quality of Life, Ten Chimneys, Superior Donuts* and *The Cherry Orchard* and *The Skin of Our Teeth*. She has played leading roles at Portland Center Stage, Portland Shakespeare Project, Off Broadway, Mark Taper Forum, The Intiman, Seattle Rep, Cincinnati Playhouse, Baltimore Center Stage and other theatres, including 23 seasons with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival where she acted in over 50 productions.

Linda has won a Dramalogue Award for Best Actress, Fulbright Specialist Grant to Pakistan, Fulbright Travel Grant to Beijing, National Science Grant for Visiting Artist to Taiwan and an Oregon Arts Commission Individual Artist Fellowship. A graduate of The Juilliard School, she is a Fulbright Senior Scholar.

### **Project Description: *The Only Place Left***

Between 1937 and 1947, 18,000 thousand European Jews were refused entry to the United States, Canada, Mexico, South America, South Africa, Central America and Australia. Only Shanghai, the colorful and corrupt international city teeming with displaced persons from around the world, accepted them without visas. Although originally allowed anywhere in the city, they were eventually forced into a square mile ghetto, which they shared with 100,000 of the poorest Chinese.

Linda's new play, presently called *The Only Place Left*, will follow Lea Hermann, an adolescent girl from Berlin who grows to maturity in one of the most crowded, crime-ridden and unhealthy places on the planet. During her journey to adulthood, Lea discovers how her life is interwoven with that of others and what kind of responsibilities, even under extreme adversity, she has the courage and obligation to embrace. Writing for families and young adult audiences, Linda's project will be part adventure story, part coming-of-age and part exploration of a fascinating, nearly forgotten piece of history.

Linda will begin working on *The Only Place Left* in the summer of 2016. It will be developed and workshopped during Artists Rep's 2016/17 season.

[VIDEO LINK](#): Playwright project interview.

[INFO LINK](#): Learn more.

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## **LARISSA FASTHORSE**

Larissa FastHorse is an award-winning playwright, director and choreographer based in Santa Monica. Larissa was awarded the NEA Distinguished New Play Development Grant, Joe Dowling Annamaghkerrig Fellowship, AATE Distinguished Play Award, Inge Residency, Sundance/Ford Foundation Fellowship, Aurand Harris Fellowship, and numerous Ford and NEA Grants. Larissa's produced plays include *Urban Rez*, *Landless*, *Average Family*, *Teaching Disco Squaredancing to Our Elders: a Class Presentation* and *Cherokee Family Reunion*. She has written commissions for Cornerstone Theatre Company, Children's Theatre Company of Minneapolis, AlterTheater, Kennedy Center TYA, Native Voices at the Autry, Artists Rep and Mountainside Theatre. She developed plays with Kansas City Rep, Artists Rep in Portland, Arizona Theater Company, the Center Theatre Group Writer's Workshop and Berkeley Rep's Ground Floor. She is a current member of the Playwright's Union, Director's Lab West 2015, Theatre Communications Group board of directors and is an enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Lakota Nation.

### **Project Description: *The Thanksgiving Play***

*The Thanksgiving Play* is a satirical comedy about four people attempting to devise a politically correct play for the local schools to celebrate both Thanksgiving and Native American Month. In order to be as respectful and accurate as possible, the three white actors defer to the only Native American in the room for guidance – a woman whose perspective on history and cultural respect is wildly different from their own. This mismatched foursome has to find their way through a crazy thicket of privilege, historical accuracy and school district rules. The schools are waiting – and the pageant must go on!

Larissa also received original development support for *The Thanksgiving Play* through the Joe Dowling Annaghmakerrig Fellowship from the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis.

[VIDEO LINK](#): Playwright project interview.

[INFO LINK](#): Learn more.

## **ANDREA STOLOWITZ**

Andrea's plays have been developed and presented nationally and internationally at theatres such as The Long Wharf, The Old Globe, The Cherry Lane, and New York Stage and Film. The LA Times calls her work "heartbreaking" and the Orange County Register characterizes her approach as a "brave refusal to sugarcoat issues and tough decisions."

Andrea premiered her play *Ithaka*, which was commissioned by Artists Rep, at the theatre in 2013. The play had its Midwest premiere in Chicago in 2014 at InFusion Theater, and won the 2015 Oregon Book Award in Drama. Andrea's play *Antarktikos* also won the Oregon Book Award for Drama (2013) and was published in July 2013 in TheatreForum magazine. The play world premiered at The Pittsburgh Playhouse in March 2013 and was workshopped at The New Harmony Project (IN), Portland Center Stage's JAW Festival, and at Seattle Repertory Theatre. It was nominated for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and received a 2015 Kilroy's List Honorable Mention. Her play *Knowing Cairo* premiered at the Old Globe Theatre, which earned San Diego's "Billie" Best New Play Award and an LA Times' Critic's Pick. It is published by Playscripts Inc. and continues to be

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produced nationally and internationally. It was presented at Profile Theatre (OR) in 2013. *Tales of Doomed Love* premiered in Washington, DC at The Studio Theatre. As part of the 2008 Fringe Festival, DC Theater Scene called it “one of the finest entries in the Capital Fringe” and the Triangle Independent named its production at StreetSigns Center for Literature and Performance (Chapel Hill, NC) “best new play.”

Andrea is a Resident Artist at Artists Rep, a founding member of the playwrights collective Playwrights West and works as a collaborating writer with the award-winning devised theatre company Hand2Mouth Theatre. A Walter E. Dakin Fellow at The Sewanee Writers Conference, Andrea has also been awarded residencies at the Sitka Center, Ledig House, Soapstone, Hedgebrook and Playa. Andrea has received individual artist grants from private foundations as well as State Arts grants from North Carolina and Oregon. She was the recipient of a DAAD research grant to support her 2014-15 residency in Berlin, Germany at English Theatre Berlin/International Performing Arts Center She is creating a new play for their 2017 season. An MFA playwriting alumna of UC San Diego, Andrea has served on the faculties at Willamette University, The University of Portland, Duke University and UC San Diego.

### **Project Description: *Refugee Radio***

While living in Berlin, playwright Andrea Stolowitz would sometimes listen to a radio program hosted by “El Capitan”, a Nigerian refugee now living in Germany. Using the medium of radio he leads refugees by his voice across the Mediterranean to Hamburg, providing them with advice, tips, and stories all along the way. Andrea was captivated by questions that arise when the largest refugee movement since WWII collides with fractious political climate and fear of terrorism: What happens when our desire to help and “do good” conflicts with our fear? What occurs when the hope for safety and asylum causes people to hide elements of their past? Is there one perspective with which to view a person’s story and history and what happens when this story can’t fit into easily understood notions of good and bad?

Presently titled *Refugee Radio*, Andrea’s new play will utilize the current refugee crisis as the point of departure. She will be writing with Artists Rep’s company of Resident Artists in mind, drawing on their talent and imaginations as she develops the play. Her early thoughts on the project include using a Rashomon-like structure and utilizing radio/recorded voice as a theatrical element designed to unite characters across time and location. *Refugee Radio* will be developed during the 2016/17 season and workshopped at Artists Rep in the fall of 2017.

[INFO LINK](#): Learn more.

### **YUSSEF EL GUINDI**

Yussef’s most recent productions include *Threesome* at Portland Center Stage, ACT and 59E59 (winner of a Portland Drammy for Best Original Script); *The Ramayana* (co-adaptor with Stephanie Timm) at ACT; *Pilgrims Musa and Sheri in the New World* (winner of the Steinberg/ American Theater Critics Association’s New Play Award in 2012; Gregory Award 2011; Seattle Times’ “Footlight Award” for Best World Premiere Play, 2011) also at ACT, and at Center Repertory Company (Walnut Creek, CA) 2013; and *Language Rooms* (Edgerton Foundation New American Play Award, as well as ACT’s New Play Award), co-produced by Golden Thread Productions and the Asian American Theater Company in San Francisco; at the Wilma Theater in *Our Enemies: Lively Scenes of Love and Combat* was produced by Silk Road Theater Project and won the M. Elizabeth  
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Osborn award. His plays, *Back of the Throat* (winner of L.A. Weekly's Excellence in Playwriting Award for 2006), as well as *Pilgrims Musa and Sheri in the New World*, *Jihad Jones* and *The Kalashnikov Babes*, *Such a Beautiful Voice is Sayeda's* and *Karima's City*, have been published by Dramatists Play Service. The latter one-acts have also been included in *The Best American Short Plays: 2004-2005*, published by Applause Books. *Ten Acrobats in an Amazing Leap of Faith* (winner of Chicago's "After Dark/John W. Schmid Award" for Best New Play in 2006) is included in *Salaam/Peace: An Anthology of Middle-Eastern American Playwrights*, published by TCG, 2009. *Our Enemies: Lively Scenes of Love and Combat* is included in the anthology *Four Arab American Plays* published by McFarland Books. *Pilgrims Musa and Sheri in the New World* was included in the September, 2012 issue of *American Theatre Magazine*. And *Language Rooms* was published in Rain City Projects' anthology Manifesto Series Volume 3. Yussef is the recipient of the 2010 Middle East America Distinguished Playwright Award. He holds an MFA from Carnegie-Mellon University and was playwright-in-residence at Duke University.

**Project Description: *The Talented Ones***

The American Dream teeters on the edge of the abyss as immigrants Cindy and Omar face their thwarted dreams and unraveling marriage while Omar's buddy Patrick connives to push them over the edge. In this surprisingly funny dark comedy, trouble erupts one night when bad choices are followed by *verrrrry* bad choices. The stakes become lethal as these characters manipulate the truth and do anything to justify their desires.

*The Talented Ones* was the inaugural commission of Table|Room|Stage. The play had a workshop reading in June, 2016 and will be presented by Artists Repertory Theatre April 25 through May 21, 2017 as part of the 2016/17 season.

[VIDEO LINK](#): Playwright project interview.

[INFO LINK](#): Learn more.

**MORE ABOUT TABLE|ROOM|STAGE**

In August 2014, Artists Rep was the recipient of a \$125,000 Oregon Community Foundation "Creative Heights" grant to establish a robust new play development program that will create opportunities for local and national playwrights, ensure that underrepresented voices are heard on stage and establish Artists Rep and Portland as an engine for new play development, nationally.

T|R|S program initiatives include eight playwright commissions, the Oregon Play Prize and a new public theatre investigation program, *Fresh Eyes*. A remarkable intention of T|R|S is to provide the public greater and unique access to the process of new work development through [blogs](#) and online videos that allow for audience engagement. Through these strategies audiences can learn about this little-known part of the theatre world by witnessing the process of play planning, selection and development, as well as learning from writers and artistic teams about their processes and their challenges in developing new work. Leading these wide-ranging programs with the support of the OCF grant is Director of New Play Development & Dramaturgy [Luan Schooler](#).

"The mission of T|R|S is to create an effective, hospitable environment where playwrights can write their most urgent, tender possible worlds into existence," said Luan Schooler.

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### **The Oregon Play Prize**

[The Oregon Play Prize](#) is a \$10,000 commission for a new play by an Oregonian. The play will be provided with development support and be produced by Artists Rep in our season. The winning play will be selected public vote beginning mid-July.

To be considered for the prize, the plays must be by a resident of Oregon. Scripts may be in any stage of completion, from a well-developed idea to a completed draft, but must be unproduced. Plays were submitted to Artists Rep between November 1, 2015 and January 31, 2016. Three finalists have now been selected by a panel of Artists Rep staff and volunteers who have read and rated all submissions. Submissions were provided to the readers using a blinded format with the playwrights' names removed from all submitted documents so that the reading committee did not know who wrote the plays they read. Likewise, when voting, the public will not be given the playwright's name. Descriptions and writing samples of the finalists' projects will be posted on the Oregon Play Prize webpage in July 2016. Oregonians will vote for the play they most want to see produced. The Oregon Play Prize will be awarded at the beginning of the 2016/17 season in September 2016. The timeline to production will depend on the readiness of the project.

### **Fresh Eyes**

For selected plays during each season, this T|R|S program brings 'civilians' into the rehearsal process. On selected productions each season, we invite volunteers from diverse backgrounds to join us for four rehearsals, and then to share their observations in the [Fresh Eyes blog](#). No special knowledge or experience is required of these volunteers – just a bit of time and curiosity. The aim is that the new perspectives of our guests will illuminate the inner workings of a production for our audiences and community at large, while also helping us learn about the challenges and obstacles a production may present to audiences.

In the 2015/16 season, volunteer "fresh eyes" shared their experiences with *The Understudy*, *We Are Proud to Present...*, and *The Skin of Our Teeth*. The public can follow along as a production develops through the lens of our guests on the *Fresh Eyes* blog. From the first reading and design presentations, through scene work, staging and technical rehearsals and first preview, this program provides a unique 'insider civilian' perspective. Learn more [here](#).

### **ABOUT ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE**

[Artists Rep](#) has become a significant presence in American Regional Theatre with a legacy of world, national and regional premieres of provocative new work with the highest standards of stagecraft. Our commitment to local artists is embodied by our company of Resident Artists, 24 professionals of varied theatre disciplines who are a driving force behind Artists Rep's creative output and identity. This commissioning program will position Artists Rep as an engine for new play development in the region and beyond. With this New Play Development program, Artists Rep strives to empower and support Oregon-based playwrights while also creating a Portland home for writers from around the country to develop their work. Additionally, this program will make a meaningful impact on equity in the arts by mandating opportunities for women writers and writers of color, and cultivating the next generation of theatre-goers by creating work specifically for young people (13 and up).

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Portland's premiere mid-size regional theatre company is led by Artistic Director Dámaso Rodriguez and Managing Director Sarah Horton. Founded in 1982, Artists Repertory Theatre is the longest-running professional theatre company in Portland. Artist Rep became the 72<sup>nd</sup> member of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) in May 2016 and is an Associate Member of the National New Play Network (NNPN).

[Artists Rep's 2016/17 season](#) offers a stylistically diverse season of seven imaginative and entertaining plays that grapple with family and the pursuit of happiness. The season features one World Premiere commissioned by Artists Rep's new play development program [Table|Room|Stage](#), along with five Northwest Premieres (including a musical) by some of the best emerging contemporary playwrights in the country, and one re-imagined classic featuring an all-female cast. The 2016/17 selections emphasize the aesthetic and scope of work Artists Rep has been committed to producing for almost 35 years as Portland's premiere mid-size regional theatre.

Artists Rep productions feature the work of a core group of 24 multidisciplinary theatre professionals. Hailing from around the country, our [Resident Artists](#) are nationally renowned and award-winning actors, directors, writers, designers and educators who have chosen to make Portland and Artists Rep their artistic home. Working together and independently, they create inventive and theatrically rich experiences for our audiences while playing a major role in defining Portland's cultural landscape.

Artists Rep is also home to the [ArtsHub](#), serving as a community arts center, where our performance venues and lobbies buzz with creative energy and Portland's arts-loving audiences can gather. We offer a home within our facility to a diverse range of artists and arts organizations. They can thrive here with access to affordable administrative, performance and rehearsal space, as well as a myriad of support services. Over the last year, hundreds of performances, events and happenings by Portlanders found a place in our building.

Artists Repertory Theatre's mission is to produce intimate, provocative theatre and provide a home for artists of varied backgrounds to take creative risks. We are committed to world-class acting, directing, design and stagecraft that support new playwriting and aspire to embody great literature, moving audiences to truly feel — to *experience* — storytelling in a way that only the best live theatre can.

The 2016/17 Artists Repertory Theatre season is presented by Ronni Lacroute/WillaKenzie Estate and David and Christine Vernier. Other season support comes from the Regional Arts Culture Council, Oregon Community Foundation, Collins Foundation, Meyer Memorial Trust, James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation and Work for Art.

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