UC SANTA BARBARA

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# Diverse Voices, Amplified

To amplify the voices of underrepresented writers: That's the aim of a new reading series organized by UC Santa Barbara's Department of Theater and Dance. And it will deliver on that promise by way of six new plays.

The BIPOC Reading Series Festival boosts the stories of writers from diverse backgrounds, featuring new works by professional playwrights chosen from National New Play Network (NNPN)'s Affiliated Artists.

Coordinated by Risa Brainin, artistic director of LAUNCH PAD, UCSB's acclaimed program for the innovative development of new plays, the festival premieres the first weekend in April 2021.

"The UCSB Department of Theater and Dance is dedicated to centering equity, diversity, inclusion and access in all of our work. This project kicks off what we plan to be a series of ongoing events uplifting voices of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) artists," said Brainin. "We are so proud to be in collaboration with the National New Play Network to present these dynamic, bold and entertaining plays."

The six plays that have been selected are:

- *A Medusa Thread* by Candrice Jones
- *A People's Guide to History in the Time of Here and Now* by Rehana Lew Mirza
- *American Fast* by Kareem Fahmy

- *Exotic Deadly: or the MSG Play* by Keiko Green
- *Lorena, A Tabloid Epic* by Eliana Pipes
- *Pilar and Paloma* by Milta Ortiz

All six plays will be developed through workshops and presented to the public virtually, as part of a collaboration between UCSB and NNPN. “We are delighted to have been able to bring this opportunity to our Affiliated Artists of color and are excited to see and share the results of this amazing partnership with UC Santa Barbara with our Member Theaters and new play theater-makers," said NNPN Executive Director Nan Barnett.

Along with LAUNCH PAD, the festival is co-sponsored by two other initiatives in the Department of Theater and Dance: New and Reimagined Work, run by Professor Vickie J. Scott, which aims to encourage and support new plays while nurturing the next generation of playwrights, directors, choreographers, designers, administrators and performers, and AMPLIFY, a student-led organization mentored by Professor Anne Torsiglieri, committed to sharing and promoting the voices and stories of underrepresented people in order to encourage justice, equity, diversity and inclusion on campus and beyond.

In keeping with LAUNCH PAD’s tradition of collaboration between new and experienced artists, the plays will feature a mix of students and professionals, both onstage and behind the scenes.

“Actors include current students, alumni, faculty and guest artists,” Brainin explained, “Each play has an experienced director and dramaturg, as well as UCSB design, playwriting, stage management and directing students participating in the process. We love how this mix of professionals and students allows for a fantastic exchange of ideas between emerging and veteran artists.”

The BIPOC Reading Series Festival will be presented virtually on Friday, April 2, and Saturday April 3. Audiences will be invited to attend three readings each day, followed by a Q&A with the playwright, director, dramaturg and actors. More details can be found on the LAUNCH PAD website here.

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## About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.