

UC SANTA BARBARA

THE *Current*

April 23, 2025

[Shelly Leachman](#)

LAUNCH PAD Amplify Festival pairs student artists with professional playwrights

Dozens of creators, a week's worth of rehearsals and roundtables, four public readings.

Now in its 20th anniversary year, LAUNCH PAD, UC Santa Barbara's innovative development program for new plays brings together more than 70 artists and staff for a new iteration of its Amplify Reading Series Festival.

On Friday, April 25 and Saturday, April 26, they will present public readings of dynamic new plays by four professional playwrights, all with UC connections: Leo Cabranes-Grant, matthew paul olmos, A. Rey Pamatmat and Megan Tabaque.

"This is our fourth Amplify Festival since 2020, and we cannot wait for these superb writers to collaborate with our students at UCSB," said [Risa Brainin](#), LAUNCH PAD's artistic director. "There is a special alchemy that occurs when veterans and emerging artists work together. We are looking forward to bringing these wonderful stories to life. It is particularly special in our 20th year to be working with writers with UC connections. Three of the playwrights — Cabranes-Grant, Pamatmat and olmos — all teach in UCSB's Department of Theater and Dance, and Tabaque is in the Department of Theatre, Film and Digital Production at UC Riverside."

The festival's format is identical to LAUNCH PAD's Summer Reading Series: Each play rehearses for 16 hours over the course of the week, followed by the public reading and post-show Q&A with the artists. During the rehearsal process, the playwright works with a director, a dramaturg and student actors to determine what needs to be streamlined to make themes, characters and the story clear for the play to achieve its maximum impact. The actors are primarily students from UCSB's theater department.

"The week provides a unique opportunity for our students to engage with working playwrights, directors and dramaturgs," said the festival's co-director [Annie Torsiglieri](#). "It's a thrill to be in these rooms with playwrights making revisions and actors absorbing new material every day."

Torsiglieri is also the faculty mentor for the festival's producing partner, UCSB's Amplify, a student-led initiative focused on elevating underrepresented voices via theater.

"Audience members and artists alike deeply experience the lives of those whose stories are being told," she said. "In this way, theater can change the world, opening minds and hearts and creating opportunities for greater empathy and understanding."

Admission to the public readings in UCSB's Studio Theater is [free with RSVP](#). The readings will also be livestreamed on the [LAUNCH PAD website](#). The plays are:

"that drive thru monterey," by matthew paul olmos and directed by Rose Portillo, is about a Mexican-American woman in 1971 Los Angeles who falls in love amidst mysterious premonitions about what lies ahead for her. (Friday, April 25, 4 p.m.)

"The Crossing Party," by Leo Cabranes-Grant and directed by Sara Rademacher, focuses on Two American families — one anglo, one Mexican — whose histories in Los Angeles intersect through the friendship of their children amidst an unwelcoming political environment. (Friday, April 25, 8 p.m.)

"Masters of Fine Arts," by A. Rey Pamatmat and directed by Katherine Chou, tells the story of five MFA candidates arguing about whether or not plays always have stories, by telling each other stories, all hidden within a play with no story.

(Saturday, April 26, 1 p.m.)

“The Rink at the End of the World,” by Megan Tabaque and directed by Risa Brainin, centers on a motley crew of figure skaters as they train, complain, destroy and rebuild each other on a quest to achieve the impossible. (Saturday, April 26, 5 p.m.)

Tabaque is the current resident playwright for 4 Seasons, a collaboration between [LAUNCH PAD](#), [Ignition Arts](#), [Seven Devils New Play Foundry](#) and [Tofte Lake Center](#).

“Our collective mission is to provide year-long, life-changing support to an artist who voices the kaleidoscopic American experience,” said Brainin. “4 Seasons is in its fourth year; LAUNCH PAD is proud to be part of this unique program.”

Media Contact

Shelly Leachman

Editorial Director

(805) 893-2191

sleachman@ucsb.edu

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.