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PLAYGROUND ANNOUNCES 6 NEW COMMISSIONS

NEW PLAY PRODUCTION FUND ROUND 2 DEADLINE: DEC 1

SAN FRANCISCO, (November 16, 2010) – **PlayGround** is pleased to announce commissions of six full-length works in development by Bay Area playwrights Cass Brayton, Geetha Reddy, Tom Swift, Diane Sampson, Malachy Walsh, and Erin Bregman. Walsh and Brayton are recipients of the 2010 PlayGround Fellowships. Diane Sampson was commissioned to write *Naked* after winning the 2010 June Anne Baker Prize, presented annually to a local female playwright representing a gifted new comedic and/or political voice for the stage. *Book Club! The Musical* by Geetha Reddy (a past June Anne Baker Prize winner) is PlayGround's first commission of a musical. PlayGround has commissioned thirty-four new full-length plays since 2002 and is today the largest commissioner of new plays by Bay Area playwrights. Through the **New Play Production Fund**, PlayGround also facilitates full production of these plays in partnership with Bay Area professional theatres. The next deadline for the New Play Production Fund is December 1, 2010. For more information on the New Play Production Fund, visit <http://playground-sf.org/productionfund>.

This newest batch of plays will be developed during the 2010-11 season and presented as staged readings during the 15th annual Best of PlayGround Festival in May 2011 at Thick House. New this year, PlayGround is also sharing excerpts from the works-in-development with the audience of PlayGround's popular monthly staged reading series, Monday Night PlayGround, in residence at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. In October, PlayGround presented an excerpt from Tom Swift's *A Marriage* and in November, PlayGround presented an excerpt from Malachy Walsh's *5 Women on a Playground*. The excerpt presentations are included in the price of admission for Monday Night PlayGround.

The 2010-11 commissions are:

Stiff Competition by Cass Brayton (2010 PlayGround Fellowship)

Is grieving a private matter, a public ritual, or opportunity knocking, dressed in a shroud? In this black comedy, the Chilblain family, facing the imminent demise of its matriarch, struggles after one of its members signs the family up to compete on the reality TV series, “Such Sweet Sorrow.” Not everyone wants the family’s impending vigil and grief televised in a bid to bury their departed with the stars at a famous Hollywood park, following a televised service of remembrance. The tears of some family members, blended as they are with stardust and dollar signs, must contend with the needs of others for whom, inexplicably, privacy remains an enduring value when it comes to matters of the clan.

Book Club! The Musical by Geetha Reddy

Based on the controversy that erupted when *New Yorker* writer Jonathan Franzen was invited and then dumped from Oprah’s Book Club following comments about his ambivalence about the distinction, *Book Club! The Musical* explores the forbidden love between a popular black TV talk show host and a painfully intellectual novelist. Their relationship complicated by the competing worlds of TV producers, book agents, radio talk show hosts, and The Book Club itself, will these two lovers be able to overcome the “great gulf” between TV and books?

A Marriage by Tom Swift

Based on the riotously funny and moving Best of PlayGround Festival 2005 and 2010 winners, *The Beginning* and *The New Season*, *A Marriage* follows the course of the marriage between two gay men with seriously different tastes and personalities. Relevant to the battle over gay marriage today, *A Marriage* follows the marriage of one odd couple from beginning to end.

Naked by Diane Sampson (2010 June Anne Baker Prize)

Naked explores what can happen when a comment made privately by a person of stature is taken — rightly or wrongly — to be politically incorrect, even intolerant, and made public. Jean Remner, a celebrated playwright and humanitarian, finds her life crumbling after saying something that can be construed to contradict everything she has stood for. How does such an event affect not only Jean, but others close to her, and where, in fact, does the truth — if there is such a thing — lie?

5 Women on a Playground by Malachy Walsh (2010 PlayGround Fellowship)

“Christina Walters Is A Blowjob Whore” is the name of the blog just-turned-13 Sarah has created. And that doesn’t sit well with her mother, Oona, a high powered executive in the midst of a career crisis. But when Oona’s ex-husband (and Sarah’s father) fails to show up at a rendezvous at a local playground to talk to the teenager about her virtual writings, the confrontation between mother and daughter turns into a heated exploration of what childhood is and isn’t, what’s real and what’s not, what’s safe and what’s truly dangerous.

John Jacob O’Reilly Smitherton by Erin Bregman

John Jacob O’Reilly Smitherton, founder and head banker of John Jacob O’Reilly Smitherton International, is not a crook. In fact, on the first day of the New Year he wakes up with the resolution to use his enormous fortune to buy world peace. With the help of Karen, his brilliant servant/housekeeper/barista/secretary/family tutor, he sets off in search of a voice the whole world can rally behind. This children’s play showcases a world where one happenstance thing always leads to another, and a moment of total world peace can be achieved through the simple act of singing a song.

Schedule of Excerpts at Monday Night PlayGround (at Berkeley Rep)

Mon, Oct 18 at 8pm *A Marriage* by Tom Swift
Mon, Nov 15 at 8pm *5 Women on a Playground* by Malachy Walsh
Mon, Dec 20 at 8pm *Stiff Competition* by Cass Brayton
Mon, Jan 24 at 8pm *Book Club! The Musical* by Geetha Reddy
Mon, Feb 21 at 8pm *Naked* by Diane Sampson
Mon, Mar 21 at 8pm *John Jacob O'Reilly Smitherton's Bid to Save the World* by Erin Bregman

Schedule of Festival Readings (at Thick House)

Sun, May 8 at 2pm *John Jacob O'Reilly Smitherton's Bid to Save the World* by Erin Bregman
Mon, May 9 at 7pm *Naked* by Diane Sampson
Sun, May 15 at 2pm *Stiff Competition* by Cass Brayton
Mon, May 16 at 7pm *A Marriage* by Tom Swift
Sun, May 22 at 2pm *Book Club! The Musical* by Geetha Reddy
Mon, May 23 at 7pm *5 Women on a Playground* by Malachy Walsh

For more information on PlayGround and the full-length play commissioning program, visit <http://playground-sf.org/commissioning.shtml>. For guidelines and application forms for the New Play Production Fund, visit <http://playground-sf.org/productionfund>.

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