

**THE PLAYWRIGHTS'  
CENTER  
MONOLOGUES**

FOR

**WOMEN**

**EDITED BY KRISTEN GANDROW  
AND POLLY K. CARL**

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# Creating the Life of Theater

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The Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis is celebrated by emerging and established playwrights as an essential artistic home. We nurture artistic excellence and new visions of theater, foster playwright initiative, and advocate for playwrights and their work. We continue to develop a community for new work in the American theater.

The genesis of new plays is with playwrights—and monologues—like those represented here. This collection showcases the spectrum of writing for the theater that is crafted by Playwrights' Center members.

Within these pages you'll find a mother's introduction of her twenty children, murderers and adulterers, and a survivor from a boat lost at sea who can now contemplate the future. There are women of a certain age coping with architecture gone awry, sexuality, loss and death, independence and war. You'll enjoy the intelligence and subtlety of a young woman leaving her boyfriend, a girl whose trailer-park world is disappearing, and a woman describing her first experience with death. You'll engage with girls and women escaping from violence and disability, handling affairs or aging, and explaining themselves to a world that seems to misunderstand. The characters in these striking monologues embrace life, learn to accept death, and live fully everything in between.

Playwrights write for *live* theater, for actors in front of an audience. These monologues feature outstanding writing for actors to seize, speak from the heart, and bring the words' actions to life for us. These are the words playwrights create and need to hear "in the actors' mouths." The monologues in these

pages are artistic tools for actors that allow hilarious, poignant, passionate, and spirited interpretation. When performed for acting classes and auditions, these monologues virtually guarantee unique material—a bonus for everyone involved.

New plays—and especially monologues like these—provide us with a powerful collective experience. In the theater with other people, strangers and artists alike, we share a space where new worlds are imagined and the complex issues of our lives are examined.

The aesthetically diverse voices of Playwrights' Center members speak with conviction, honesty, and humor. A collection of our playwrights' monologues for men is available in a companion volume. This set of books belongs on the shelves of every actor, theater educator, and playwright. We hope you'll agree!

—Kristen Gandrow

# A Destination for Playwrights

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The Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis has been developing new plays for the stage for nearly thirty-five years. During that time we have had the opportunity to work with some of the most important American playwrights, including August Wilson, Mac Wellman, Naomi Wallace, Lee Breuer, Craig Lucas, Theodora Skipitares, Suzan-Lori Parks, and Jeffrey Hatcher, to name a few. Plays by our writers have won every major award in the American theater.

Our presence as a vital new play development center is thriving, and our impact is reaching ever further, to playwrights at every level of their careers. The center annually awards more than two hundred thousand dollars in fellowships and grants. We are a national membership organization with more than four hundred members across the United States—some writing their first plays and others winning their first Obie award. The center is a creative home where playwrights can explore writing for the theater, emerge as new dramatic voices beginning to be heard throughout the country, and sustain professional careers as dramatists. The vital and engaging environment at the center offers playwrights encouragement and the creative freedom to imagine theater in every shape and genre.

The center's programs provide many varied opportunities for playwrights. Every Wednesday night at our roundtable, Twin Cities professional actors volunteer to read a new play, and a playwright-filled audience offers feedback and answers questions from the evening's featured playwright. Additionally, our playwrights' lab brings collaborators together throughout

the year for workshops and readings. Each year, produced plays throughout the country have their start at the center—as a seed of an idea or exercise in a playwriting class, a cold reading of a first draft, a staged reading, or a workshop.

We recently awarded a Playwrights' Center McKnight Residency and Commission to Craig Lucas. His development process at the center encapsulates our strength in bringing new plays to the American stage. Craig started with a proposal, which led to a first draft. Joined by some very talented local actors and a director from New York who is familiar with Craig's work, we spent an intense dramaturgical month workshoping the play with all of the collaborators. Rehearsals began two months later, and we launched a modest production. One year later, *Small Tragedy* won the Obie award for best new American play after moving from the Playwrights' Center to an Off-Broadway stage. Craig said of his time at the center, "I've never had a better experience developing a new play anywhere, in any venue, in this country or elsewhere."

Our members are the heart of the organization. The stories of the center's impact on playwrights' lives are myriad. Melanie Marnich tells of living in Cincinnati, working in an advertising agency, and becoming a member of the Playwrights' Center before she ever wrote a play. She knew she would eventually make her way to the stage, and regular communication with an organization for playwrights provided exactly the inspiration she needed. Since becoming a member, she has won numerous fellowships through the center, including a Jerome in 1999 and 2000 and a McKnight Advancement Grant in 2001 and 2004. Melanie's plays have won multiple awards and have been produced around the country, including twice at the Humana Festival and Off-Broadway.

Lee Blessing has said, "Without the Playwrights' Center, I never would have been a playwright." Referring to the center's pluralism, Blessing said he considers the center "one of the most important opportunities in the entire field of the arts." Our

openness to new voices and new forms creates a palpable energy that spreads across the nation and infiltrates theaters around the country. It's impossible to see new plays without encountering the center's impact on the field.

—Polly K. Carl