Fellows Spotlight

The Fellows Program serves as a beacon for talent, offering a unique platform for artists to hone their craft, connect with industry leaders, and bring their creative visions to life. With a rich tapestry of mentorship, workshops, and networking opportunities, this program embodies our belief in the transformative power of storytelling. Let’s get to know some of our current Fellows and their work:

NICHOLAS CONNORS
Project: Coal Age
Hometown: Appleton, WI
“I loved working on my new musical Coal in the DGF Fellowship under the guidance of Michael Korie, Jess McCloud, Tom Kitt, and our distinguished guests. I can confidently say that the DGF Fellowship experience has made an indelible impact on Coal and the development of my writing voice.”

SMJ
Project: Racoon Play Age
Hometown: Mount Vernon, OH
“All of my work explores our world’s sometimes funny, sometimes heartfelt, and sometimes terrifying stories.”

ZIZI MAJID
Project: The Rejects
Hometown: Syracuse, NY
“Developing The Rejects whilst in the DGF Fellows program has been an incredible experience—the opportunities to present work and hear from the best in playwriting and musical theater have enriched and grown my craft.”

AARON COLEMAN
Project: Barrington Falls
Hometown: West Covina, CA
“If audiences deeply ponder who we are as a people as I delight and entertain them, I have succeeded. The DGF Fellowship and my cohort of astonishing writers has helped me make breakthroughs both in my scripts and in who I am as a playwright and human.”

GLORIA OLADPO
Project: The Care and Keeping of Schizophrenia
Hometown: Chicago, IL
“I write dark comedies about Black women, using humor and absurdism (and Sleep Demons and glitter) to explore caregiving and trauma. I’m so grateful for this program and cohort for the opportunity to dig into this work!”

MATTHEW LIBBY
Project: Data and Sisters Age
Hometown: Los Angeles, CA
“I tend to gravitate towards stories about the complexities of human identity in an increasingly technological world, and I’ve worked on two plays under that umbrella as a DGF Fellow. It’s been such a pleasure exploring these plays inside this magnificent cohort, and the opportunities and support given to me to present my work as a Fellow have been invaluable.”

JORIAH KWAMÉ
Project: How to: You Age
Hometown: Kalamazoo, MI
“Being a DGF Fellow has really expanded my knowledge of industry standards, common workflows, and creative process. I have been able to take an abstract idea and morph it into a product I can continue to invest in.”

Our 2023 Gala celebrated creativity, uniting playwrights, composers, lyricists, librettists, and patrons in homage to dramatic storytelling. Honoring Leonard Majzlin and Lynn Nottage, this event highlighted mentorship, showcased seasoned artists, and propelled the foundation’s mission to empower emerging voices.

As DGF’s largest annual fundraiser, we are so grateful to everyone who contributed to this memorable evening, and the event’s resounding success affirmed the enduring spirit of creativity within our community.

From Top Left: Lynn Nottage - 2023 Gala Honoree; Rachel Rosoff - DGF Executive Director; Leonard Majzlin - 2023 Gala Honoree; Andrew Lippa - DGF Board President; Lynn Nottage and Kara Young - 2023 Gala Performer; Patti LuPone - 2023 Gala Performer

3 Questions with David Henry Hwang

What inspired you to become a playwright, and how has your background influenced your work?

I was brought up in a musical family. When I was 10 years old, my mother became a pianist for a production at a new theatre in my hometown of Los Angeles: East West Players, the nation’s first AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islander) theatre. I had the choice of going to rehearsals or being babysat by my aunt, so I chose the former. I don’t actually remember much about the show but in retrospect, it seems significant that, at a young age, I saw people who looked like me as actors, directors, and theatre administrators. Perhaps this made it possible for me to think about writing plays when I got to college.

Many of your works touch on the concept of “otherness” and the idea of feeling like an outsider. How do you believe your exploration of this theme contributes to a broader conversation about identity and belonging?

When I first began wanting to write plays, I had no idea that I was going to tell AAPI or Asian stories. The summer before my senior year in college, I had the opportunity to study with Sam Shepard, Maria Irene Fornés, and other great playwrights, who taught me to write more from my subconscious. Suddenly, issues started appearing on the page: stories about immigration, assimilation, racism, and clash of cultures. Ever since then, playwriting has been a way to explore my “otherness” and learn more about myself and my relationship to the world: who I am and where I belong.

Throughout your career, you’ve received critical acclaim and awards for your work. What advice would you give to emerging playwrights and artists who aspire to make a meaningful impact in the world of theater and storytelling?

The thing that makes you unique, idiosyncratic, and weird—that is your superpower as a writer. Critical acclaim and awards are certainly nice when we manage to receive them—but they’re the icing on the cake, not the cake itself. When we write what we care about, we are certainly more likely to have a successful artistic experience—and ironically, more likely to succeed in our careers as well.”
As we reflect on the achievements and impact of the Dramatists Guild Foundation throughout 2023, we’re energized by the writers we can help, all made possible by your generosity. Throughout the year, our programs and initiatives reached new heights, providing crucial support to playwrights, composers, librettists and lyricists at various stages of their careers.

Through our Grants program, we distributed over $1 million directly to dramatists through our Emergency, Housing Assistance, Bridge, Strike Relief, and Disaster Relief Grants.

"The Housing Assistance truly helped me in a time when I was financially and mentally strapped. Without hesitation, the Dramatists Guild Foundation was willing to help which is something I will truly remember forever. I wish there were more people and groups like this. Thank you for helping me." – Anonymous, NYC

"The Dramatists Guild Foundation is a Godsend for new writers on a limited budget offering invaluable space to work on your scripts, hold Table Readings, and more. The staff is always friendly and helpful from answering questions regarding schedules, and setting up assigned rooms with requested additional equipment from tables, chairs, and music stands. Rooms are always clean, and bright and have the needed furnishings. I have used them now 3 times for my Table Readings. What more can one say? You’re just amazing!" – Lynn, NYC

Reflecting on the Year

As we celebrate our 30th year, we’d like to thank everyone who has contributed to DGF’s success. We are grateful for all who have supported us, and we look forward to continuing our work in 2024.

The Writing Rooms, made up of the Music Hall, Composers Corner, and Writers Den, hosted hundreds of writing sessions, developmental readings and presentations, and dramatist gatherings. In 2023, we provided space to over 2,000 dramatists (completely free of charge!) who collaborated with nearly 10,000 artists.

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