

# THE PUBLIC.

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Karina Billini



Tomas Endter



Jesse Jae Hoon



Humaira Iqbal



Celeste Jennings



Nina Ki



Gloria Oladipo



Valen-Marie Santos



Amita Sharma



Al Sierra

## THE PUBLIC THEATER ANNOUNCES 2023-2025 EMERGING WRITERS GROUP

### 10 Playwrights Chosen From More Than 500 Applicants

**Karina Billini, Tomas Endter, Jesse Jae Hoon, Humaira Iqbal, Celeste Jennings, Nina Ki, Gloria Oladipo, Valen-Marie Santos, Amita Sharma, and Al Sierra**

November 9, 2023 – The Public Theater (Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis; Executive Director, Patrick Willingham) announced today that 10 new playwrights have been selected for the **2023-2025 Emerging Writers Group**. Now in its ninth cycle, the **Emerging Writers Group** is an ongoing initiative that works with playwrights at the earliest stages of their career, creating an artistic home and offering support and resources for a remarkable group of up-and-coming playwrights. Selected from more than 500 applicants, the 2023-2025 Emerging Writers are **Karina Billini, Tomas Endter, Jesse Jae Hoon, Humaira Iqbal, Celeste Jennings, Nina Ki, Gloria Oladipo, Valen-Marie Santos, Amita Sharma, and Al Sierra**.

"EWG has been fundamental to The Public Theater's mission for the last 15 years, and we are inspired by the 10 remarkable writers who will now be a part of that legacy. At a time of great uncertainty, these artists are leading us into the future," said New Work Development's **Amrita Ramanan, Jack Phillips Moore, Zoë Kim, and Sarah Lunnie** in a joint statement. "We can't wait to spend the next two years sharing in fellowship with them, celebrating their individual and collective voices and vision."

Over the past 15 years, The Public's **Emerging Writers Group** has nurtured numerous playwrights who have gone on to have their plays staged at The Public and elsewhere around the country. Current and upcoming Public productions by EWG playwrights include *Manahatta* by Mary Kathryn Nagle and *Jordans* by Ife Olujobi. Previous productions include Mobile Unit's musical adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors* by Julián Mesri and Rebecca Martínez (2023); Drama Desk Award-winning Ryan J. Haddad's *Dark Disabled Stories* (2023); Mona Mansour's *The Vagrant Trilogy* (2022) and *Urge For Going* (Public Lab 2011); *Out of Time*, with contributions by Anna Moench (2022); *Eve's Song* (2018) and *Pretty Hunger* (Public Studio 2017) written by Patricia Ione Lloyd; MJ Kaufman's *Masculinity Max* (Public Studio 2018); *The Outer Space* (2017) and the Obie Award-winning *No Place to Go* (2012) written by Ethan Lipton; Ricardo Pérez González's *On the Grounds of Belonging* (Public Studio 2017); Christina Gorman's *Fidelis* (Public Studio 2015); *Detroit '67* (2013) written by Dominique Morisseau; Branden Jacobs-Jenkins' *Neighbors* (2010); and Raúl Castillo's *Knives and Other Sharp Objects* (2009).

Writers are selected biennially and receive a two-year fellowship at The Public, which includes a \$10,000 stipend. Staged readings of works by Emerging Writers Group members are presented in the Spotlight Series at The Public. The playwrights also participate in a bi-weekly writers group led by The Public's New Work Development department and opportunities to connect to established playwrights. Additionally, they have a chance to observe rehearsals for productions at The Public, receive career development advice from mid-career and established writers, and receive artistic and professional support from the New Work Development department and Public artistic staff. Members of the group also receive complimentary tickets to Public Theater shows, invited dress rehearsals, and other special events, and a supplemental stipend for tickets to productions at other theaters.

### **2023-2025 EMERGING WRITERS GROUP BIOS:**

**KARINA BILLINI** is a Dominican-American playwright, poet, and educator from Brooklyn. Billini completed her undergraduate degree in playwriting at Marymount Manhattan College and received her MFA in Playwriting from The New School for Drama. She is a proud alum of the New Harmony Project Conference, Ensemble Studio Theatre's Youngblood, and Pipeline PlayLab, among others. Her plays have been workshopped and/or produced at Alliance Theatre, Williamstown Theatre Festival, New Harmony Project, Fault Line Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, among others. Her play, *Apple Bottom*, is a recipient of the Ensemble Studio Theatre/Alfred P. Sloan Foundation commission. Billini is a first-year Lila Acheson Wallace American playwriting fellow at The Juilliard School. She is forever grateful for her mother (her favorite poet), Rafaela, and her five siblings for their limitless hope and humor.

**TOMAS ENDTER** is a Nehithaw actor and playwright from the lands of the Suquamish on the Key Peninsula and Ho-Chunk land in Verona, Wisconsin. A founding member of the Fair Verona Shakespeare Company, Endter has been involved in the theater since 2012, eventually moving on to study at The New School of Drama, graduating in 2020. Their works have been most recently seen with Amplify Theatre Collective in their 2021 showcase, with their play *Hostile*, and the Yale Indigenous Performing Arts Program, where they won the 7th annual competition in 2022 for their play *Built on Bones*. A scene from *Built on Bones* would later be featured in The Public Theater's "What do you know?: Reflections from Indigenous Artists" in November of 2022.

**JESSE JAE HOON** is a playwright, organizer, and actor—born in South Korea, raised in Chicago and Berlin, and based in Queens. Hoon is a hopeful cynic whose work combines raucous comedy with a deeply felt sense of urgency to investigate power, class, hope, and our responsibility to the collective good. He's the current CRNY Resident Artist at Ma-Yi Theater Company; a 2024 MacDowell Fellow; a 2022-2023 Writing Fellow at The Playwrights Realm; under commission from Theater J; the inaugural Radio Roots fellow with The Parsnip Ship, under guidance from Iyvon Edebori and Al Parker; an inaugural member of the Orchard Project Adaptation Lab; and a member of The TANK NYC's LIT Council, Page Break, and the COOP's Clusterf\*\*k. He holds an MFA in Playwriting from Hunter College and a BFA in Drama from NYU Tisch (Playwrights Horizons).

**HUMAIRA IQBAL** (she/her) is a British Indian Muslim, writer-poet-actor based in N.Y.C, born and raised in East London/Essex, U.K. Iqbal's key inspirational themes are women and violence, but community and history are at the core of her work, striving always to tell the unknown story. Iqbal is a recent MFA graduate from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts in the Dramatic Writing department. Iqbal has also had the honor to train as an actor at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama's BA (Hons) Acting program and has now been in the professional business for just over four years. Iqbal was the 2022 recipient of The BAFTA Pigott award and has had the privilege to be part of two in-demand writing groups in the UK; SOHO Writers Lab and the Royal Court Writers' Group. Some of Iqbal's previous acting work includes working with the BBC, Arcola Theatre (*Spun*), Royal Court, Royal Stratford East (Director: Nadia Fall), and debuting the short film *Didi* at HollyShorts (USA). Follow Iqbal on Instagram @humi.iqbal to get all current creative updates.

**CELESTE JENNINGS** is a playwright and costume designer. Using the language of her family, she quilts love songs for Black folks. Her work invites her community to stop and rest awhile as they refamiliarize themselves with the poetic diction of home. She loves to incorporate her unique perspective into her work and is particularly motivated to uplift and protect Black women as a writer and designer. Her dream projects evoke the past, present, and future and remind Black women that they are loved, that they're soft, powerful, capable of resting, deserving of liberation, and that they are everything—that they always have been. She's a 2023/24 NYTW artistic fellow, and most recently, her play *'Bov Water* was produced at Northern Stage. She developed another play with music, *Contentious Woman*, with PlayCo. Selected work includes *Citrus* (produced at Northern Stage) and *Processing*. Lately, she collaborated with JAG in a designer workshop for *Urinetown*. Recent/current design work includes *Malvolio*, with the Classical Theatre of Harlem; *Finding Freedom* at the Charleston Gaillard Center; and *Fat Ham* at Huntington Theatre and The Alliance.

**NINA KI** (xe/she/they) is a Queerean (Queer + Korean) American playwright living in Brooklyn. Xe graduated from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts in 2008 with a BFA in Dramatic Writing, and xer plays have been read, recorded, and presented nationwide, including with Clubbed Thumb, Ma-Yi Theater Company, MCC Theater, The Parsnip Ship, Yale Summer Cabaret, and Queens Theater. Xer play *Moon Bear* was given special consideration for the Relentless Award, and xer play *Ravage* was a finalist for the Playwrights Realm's Fellowship. Xe was also an inaugural member of The Parsnip Ship's Radio Roots Writer's Group and a member of Clubbed Thumb's Early Career Writer's Group, and is a member of Ma-Yi's Writers Lab. To contact xer or learn more about xer work, please visit xer website at [www.nina-ki.com](http://www.nina-ki.com)

**GLORIA OLADIPO** is a playwright based in New York, proudly hailing from Chicago, IL. She writes Black comedies about Black women, exploring themes of caregiving, mental health, and trauma through a mix of realism and absurdism. Oladipo is a 2022-2023 Dramatists Guild Foundation Fellow and 2023 Seven Devils New Play Conference resident, where her play *The Care and Keeping of Schizophrenia (and Other Demons)* was in development. She is a 2023 Gingold Group Speaker's Corner fellow, with her play *I Wanna Kill, Annie G*. Oladipo is 2023 artist-in-residence with New York Stage and Film in Poughkeepsie, NY. Oladipo is also a Velvetpark Writers Residency finalist. Oladipo is also an award-winning cultural critic and journalist. She is a 2022 National Critics Institute fellow at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, an opportunity she was selected for via the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival Institute for Theatre Journalism and Advocacy. Oladipo's work has appeared in *Teen Vogue*, *The Guardian*, *Bitch Media*, and other publications. She is incredibly grateful and excited to be joining the Public Theater's Emerging Writers Group. Oladipo holds a Bachelor of Arts and Sciences from Cornell University. [gloriaoladipo.com](http://gloriaoladipo.com)

**VALEN-MARIE SANTOS** (she/they) is a Latine writer, director, and actor originally from south Florida. As a multi-hyphenate artist, she believes each discipline has an undeniable effect on the others. Through their work, Santos spotlights young people, women, family, and the Latine experience within the U.S. Her play *National Merit*—a drama about the faults of the American education system—received a virtual reading by BoHo Theatre in May 2021, and went on to receive its first full production in August 2022. Her play *Perreo*, a drama set in the Miami reggaeton scene, was selected for the 2020 Agnes Nixon Playwriting Festival, and her comedy about the murder of a fourth-grade class pet *Butterscotch* was student-produced at Rider University in 2019. *Using Protection*, a web series they directed and co-created with Rishi Mahesh and Madi Hart, premiered at the 2022 SeriesFest in Denver. When she's not working on projects, Santos is

also studying tarot and astrology, painting, songwriting, and spending way too much time making Spotify playlists.

**AMITA SHARMA** (she/her) is a writer and actor. Her plays include *Birth of a Mother* and *Nani*. She participated in the Restorative Story Writers Workshop at The Barrow Group (2020-2022). She then performed her works-in-progress at the Solo Development Series at The Barrow Group. Sharma is a graduate of the professional actors training program at the William Esper Studio. She hails from rural Iowa and the outskirts of Detroit. The generational impact of the South Asian diaspora, hope, and transformation are driving forces in her work. [amita-sharma.com](http://amita-sharma.com)

**AL SIERRA** (he/they) is an Afro Puerto Rican-Jamaican, New York City-born and -based playwright, writer, and actor. He received a BSc. from Cornell University and worked in advertising as a copywriter and creative director before embarking on his journey as a storyteller. His plays include *clean*, *The Peak*, and *...when the sea comes home*. His work has received developmental support from The National Black Theatre and The National Queer Theater. He is a 2022 Learning to Love Fellow of The Gatekeepers Collective. When he's not telling stories, Sierra spends an inordinate amount of time thinking about inequality, identity, NYC, blackholes, the 90s, and Rihanna.

### **ABOUT THE PUBLIC THEATER:**

**THE PUBLIC** continues the work of its visionary founder Joe Papp as a civic institution engaging, both on-stage and off, with some of the most important ideas and social issues of today. Conceived over 60 years ago as one of the nation's first nonprofit theaters, The Public has long operated on the principles that theater is an essential cultural force and that art and culture belong to everyone. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Oskar Eustis and Executive Director Patrick Willingham, The Public's wide breadth of programming includes an annual season of new work at its landmark home at Astor Place, Free Shakespeare in the Park at The Delacorte Theater in Central Park, the Mobile Unit touring throughout New York City's five boroughs, Public Forum, Under the Radar, Public Lab, Public Works, Public Shakespeare Initiative, and Joe's Pub. Since premiering *HAIR* in 1967, The Public continues to create the canon of American Theater and is currently represented on Broadway by the Tony Award-winning musical *Hamilton* by Lin-Manuel Miranda. Their programs and productions can also be seen regionally across the country and around the world. The Public has received 60 Tony Awards, 190 Obie Awards, 57 Drama Desk Awards, 61 Lortel Awards, 36 Outer Critic Circle Awards, 13 New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards, 62 AUDELCO Awards, 6 Antony Awards, and 6 Pulitzer Prizes. [publictheater.org](http://publictheater.org)

The Public Theater stands in honor of the first people and our ancestors. We acknowledge the land on which The Public and its theaters stand—the original homeland of the Lenape people. We acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced removal from this territory. We honor the generations of stewards and we pay our respects to the many diverse indigenous peoples still connected to this land.

**The LuEsther T. Mertz Legacy Trust** provides leadership support for The Public Theater's year-round activities.

The **Judith Champion New Works Development Fund** supports commissions and new play development at The Public.

The **Irene Worth Fund for Young Artists** provides funding for the Emerging Writers Group.

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