



CROWDED FIRE THEATER

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Crowded Fire Theater Announces 2024-26 Resilience & Development (R&D) Playwright Cohort

San Francisco, CA, May 23 2024 – Crowded Fire Theater (CFT), known as a vital home for new play development and production on the West Coast, is thrilled to announce the fourth cohort of the **Resilience & Development (R&D) Lab**, supporting four playwrights in the development of new works. The playwrights selected for the 2024-26 cohort are **Aidaa Peerzada, Anthony Doan, Ashley Smiley, and Leigh M. Marshall**. Over the next two years, CFT is committed to supporting these four visionary writers, bolstering the development of new and original pieces.

“Crowded Fire is excited to continue supporting the work of local Bay Area playwrights through our fourth Resilience & Development lab cohort,” shares CFT Leader of Artistic Producing Caro Asercion. “These daring writers are exploring questions of narrative form and structure; of intimacy, legacy, and personal histories; and of what it means to search for deeply human connections in our rapidly transforming social landscape.”

Leader of Artistic Curation & Producing Nailah Harper-Malveaux shares, “The chemistry of this group is bursting with possibility, a flair for the epic, and a desire to create their own mythology! Each playwright has deep local roots, whether through performance, working behind-the-scenes in production, or creating space for other writers to develop their craft. We cannot wait to see what new works are created through their unique lenses and writing styles.”

As part of Crowded Fire’s revolutionary shared leadership model, the 2024-26 R&D Lab cohort will be co-facilitated by Harper-Malveaux and Asercion.

About the R&D Lab:

Founded in 2017, the Resilience & Development (R&D) Lab was first envisioned by former Artistic Director Mina Morita and Resident Artist emerita Lisa Marie Rollins as a playwright-centered artistic incubator, focusing not only on the development of new plays, but on cultivating playwrights as holistic and interdisciplinary artists. Previous cohorts of the lab ran for 18 months. To provide a more expansive new play development process, the fourth cohort will run for two full years.

Previous playwrights supported by the R&D Lab include Denmo Ibrahim, Nick Mwaluko, Star Finch, Julius Rea, A-lan Holt, Linda Maria Girón, Eugenie Chan, Maria Jenson, and Lisa Marie Rollins. Pieces developed through the Lab have gone on to receive further development with Town Hall Theatre Company, San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Company (SFBATCO), and through Crowded Fire’s own Matchbox Reading Series.

About the playwrights:

Aidaa Peerzada (she/her) is a Black and Pakistani American theatre maker based in the Bay Area. Her plays have been developed with the Playwrights Foundation, Prop Thtr, Catalyst: C3T, Meet Cute LA, Northern Sky Theatre, and SFBATCO, where she is also part of the artistic staff. As an actor, Aidaa has performed with Magic Theatre, Marin Theatre, Word 4 Word, SFBATCO, Pittsburgh Public, Illinois Shakespeare, Utah Shakespeare, Steppenwolf and American Players Theatre. Aidaa studied at the Baltimore School for the Arts and went on to receive her BFA in Drama from Carnegie Mellon University.

Anthony Doan (he/they) is a queer, first-generation Vietnamese American theatre artist currently based in the Bay Area. He writes to excavate and process truth from and for the interconnected and complex human experience. Notable projects include developments with More Más Marami Arts and Contemporary Asian Theatre Scene in addition to recognition as a semi-finalist in the 44th Annual Bay Area Playwrights Festival. Through an anti-racist, culturally-informed lens, they strive to viscerally entertain and challenge audiences, provoke political thoughts, and inspire people to empathetically listen to the world in a different vibration. Anthony received his BA in Drama at the University of California, Irvine. IG: @theanthonydoan

Ashley (A.M.) Smiley (she/her), otherwise known as Smiley, is a playwright, cultural architect, artist advocate and disruptive dreamer born and raised in San Francisco, CA. Most recently, Smiley debuted the world premiere of her first full-length original play *Dirty White Teslas Make Me Sad* at the Magic Theatre, and she is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in the Historic and Cultural Studies of Religion at the Graduate Theological Union.

Leigh M. Marshall (she/her) is a multidisciplinary writer/performer and the Theater & Film Editor online at BOMB Magazine. Her work has been selected for Berkeley Repertory Theatre's Ground Floor Residency, the Lanford Wilson New American Play Festival, Iowa New Play Festival, the Examined Life Conference, the Prague Quadrennial, and Live Design International. She is a resident playwright at the Playwrights Foundation. BA: Stanford University. MFA: Iowa Playwrights Workshop.

About Crowded Fire Theater Company:


Crowded Fire Theater Company was founded in 1997 by a group of young artists interested in experimental contemporary theater. Known for developing and producing poetic, bold, relevant works by up-and-coming playwrights, CFT contributes to the creation of a contemporary canon that reflects the diverse world in which we live.

Operating with a shared leadership model, CFT produces one to three mainstage shows each season, and actively supports the creation of high-quality contemporary theater through commissions, in-house workshops, a playwright-in-residence, and an annual free public reading series.

Winner of 2018 'Best of the Bay,' the company has been described in American Theatre Magazine as "instrumental in introducing the Bay Area to new writers who push the boundaries of what theatre can be" and "one of the most reliable local stops for high-quality new work by diverse voices." In our 25-year history, CFT has cultivated rich, long-term relationships with our Bay Area audiences, serving as a true regional home for fierce, new plays.

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PAST press releases

 2021 R&D Lab Press Release Final