

ABOUT THE DOWN FOR #THECOUNT PLAYWRIGHTS



FRANCE-LUCE BENSON is an award-winning New York based playwright. She is currently working on *Deux Femmes On The Verge De La Revolution* (Dramatist Guild Fellowship), *The Deportation Chronicles* (Ensemble Studio Theatre w/ the ACLU), and was awarded a new play commission from the Ensemble Studio Theatre. Other plays include *Fati's Last Dance*, *Boat People*, (Princess Grace Award 2016 Runner Up), *The Devi's Salt* (Alfred P. Sloan New Play Commission), *The Talk*, and *Risen From The Dough* (Winner of the Samuel French OOB Festival 2016).

She has been published in several anthologies, including: The City Theatre Anthology 2015 (*The Talk*, *Risen From The Dough*), Bricolage Urban Scrawl 2005-2015 (*No Place, Somewhere*), 48 Hours...in Harlem (*Red Bottom*), and Monologues for Men and Women of Color, Routledge Press (*The Devil's Salt*, *The Talk*, and *Fati's Last Dance*). She has also contributed to The Dramatists Magazine (Season in Review 2016), served as a panelist and workshop leader at Citywrights Conference 2015, and a Lead Teaching Artist for Girl Be Heard.

France-Luce has also written for film and new media. Her feature length screenplay *Healing Roots* was honored with an award by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, and she was commissioned to write *Caroline's Wedding*, a feature length adaptation of Edwidge Danticat's acclaimed short story. She was awarded a diversity scholarship from the Upright Citizens Brigade, where she developed and produced *Black Baby Agency* for the web. Her play for young audiences, *Aftershock*, commissioned by City Theatre Miami, toured Miami Dade Public Schools as part of City Theatre's Short Cuts program in 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school year.

France-Luce is a 2015-2016 Dramatist Guild Fellow, a winner of the Samuel French OOB Festival, winner of NPNN Award for Best New Short Play, Recipient of Djerassi Resident Artist Fellowship, Eugene O'Neil National Playwrights Conference Observer Fellow, Princess Grace Award Runner Up, and Ensemble Studio Theatre Lifetime Member. Her plays have been produced by the Ensemble Studio Theatre, Crossroads Theatre, The Fire This Time Festival, The Billy Holiday Theatre, and Loyola Marymount University. She is an Associate Professor at St. John's University, a proud member of the Dramatist Guild, and New York Women in Film and Television.



EMILY MANN is a multi-award-winning director and playwright in her 29th season as Artistic Director and Resident Playwright of McCarter Theatre Center in Princeton, NJ. It was announced in January that her 30th season would be her last as Artistic Director. Under Ms. Mann's leadership, McCarter was honored with the 1994 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theater. Her nearly 50 McCarter directing credits include productions by Shakespeare, Chekhov, Ibsen, and Williams and the recent world premieres of Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*; *Baby Doll*; *Five Mile Lake*; *The Convert*; *The How and the Why*; *Miss Witherspoon*; and *Me, Myself & I*. This spring Mann will direct the McCarter-commissioned world premiere of Chris Durang's *Turning Off the Morning News*. Broadway: *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Anna in the Tropics*, *Execution of Justice*, *Having Our Say*. Her plays: *Having Our Say*, adapted from the book by Sarah L. Delany and A. Elizabeth Delany with Amy Hill Hearth; *Execution of Justice*; *Still Life*; *Annula*, An Autobiography; Greensboro (A Requiem); *Meshugah*; *Mrs. Packard*, and *Hoodwinked* (a Primer on Radical Islamism). She collaborated with Gloria Steinem on *Gloria: A Life* and

is working on the stage adaptation of *The Pianist*. Adaptations: *Baby Doll*, *Scenes from a Marriage*, *Uncle Vanya*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *A Seagull in the Hamptons*, *The House of Bernarda Alba*, *Antigone*. Awards: Peabody, Hull Warriner, NAACP, Obie's, Guggenheim; Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle nominations, a Princeton University Honorary Doctorate of Arts, a Helen Merrill Distinguished Playwrights' Award, and the Margo Jones Award given to a "citizen-of-the-theatre who has demonstrated a lifetime commitment to the encouragement of the living theatre everywhere."



GABRIELLE DENISE PINA is a poignant and masterful storyteller. Ms. Pina's novels have been described as "ever suspenseful" by *Black Issues Book Review* and "a spectacular effort" by *Written Magazine*.

Pina was viewed as "the writer to look out for" when she published the acclaimed short story *Uncommon Revelations* for the ESI Anthology. That year also featured the birth of her thesis project, *Bliss* into her first novel, which culminated in a three-book deal with Random House and a national book tour. Pina's long-awaited sophomore novel, *Chasing Sopheia* was released in October 2006 and has become a book club favorite.

Pina taught in the Master of Professional Writing Program at the University of Southern California for the past ten years, where she also received a Master of Arts degree. In March of 2012, Pina premiered *Letters from Zora: In Her Own Words* starring Vanessa Bell Callow, a play that showcases the artistic and literary triumphs of the venerable Zora Neale Hurston at the University of Southern California to a sold-out crowd of over twelve hundred. *Letters from Zora* premiered and sold out all five shows at the Pasadena Playhouse in August of 2013 and was back by popular demand at the Pasadena Playhouse the following year for eight shows. Both Gabrielle Denise Pina and Vanessa Bell Calloway were nominated for NAACP Theater Awards for Best Playwright and Best Actress respectively in 2014. *Letters from Zora* also opened the season to rave reviews at the Tony award winning Crossroads Theater in October of 2014. *Letters from Zora: In Her Own Words* also opened the DC Black Theater Festival in June of 2015 to rave reviews and was selected to open at the National Black Theater Festival in Winston-Salem, North Carolina last August. Her second play *Dreaming of Harlem Under a High Southern Sky* premiered to a sold-out house as part of the Visions & Voices: Arts and Humanities Initiative at the University of Southern California in March of 2015. This summer WACO Theater owned by Tina Knowles Lawson and Richard Lawson hosted *Letters from Zora* to a sold out back by popular demand run. Further *Letters from Zora* premiered at Karamu Theater in Cleveland, Ohio, the oldest African American theater in the nation, this past June. *Dreaming of Harlem Under A High Southern Sky* will also open there for the 2019-2020 season.

Ms. Pina is also hard at work on her third novel, *A Season for Hummingbirds*, and she just completed her third play, *Someone to Watch Over Me*, a riveting innovative work about the prolific life of Ella Fitzgerald, which will premiere Spring of 2019. She is also the author of *Bucking the Line* an authorized biography of the Clougherty family, the founders of the Farmer John brand, and she is currently penning the authorized biography for Gina Rivera, founder of Phenix Salon Suites which will be made into a feature film upon completion. Further, Ms. Pina delivers lectures on the Harlem Renaissance and teaches master classes on writing at various colleges and universities all across the country.



BLUE MCELROY is a North Texas playwright, born and raised in Oak Cliff. She enjoys writing about things that others aren't talking about. Her hope is to showcase on stage topics that need exploration and discussion. Her plays feature the dynamics between families, particularly in times of crisis. Her play, *Cardboard Box* delves into darker themes of childhood and how communication breakdown builds emotional barriers that are difficult to get past.



KAT RAMSBURG is a Los Angeles based playwright. Full-length plays include *Anatomy of a Hug* (Semi-Finalist, O'Neill Theatre Conference), *Stupid Hope*, (Drama League New Directors/New Works grant), *Wendy Unwritten*, *Drive You Happy* and *Love Cloud*. Her plays have been produced, commissioned and developed by Primary Stages: ESPA Drills, The Great Plains Theatre Conference, Trustus Theatre, The Road Theatre, Northern Writer's Project, Acadiana Repertory Theatre, The Bechdel Group, New Origins Theatre, The Bridge Initiative: Women in Arizona Theatre, The Evergreen School, Ugly Rhino Theatre Company, Rising Sun Theatre Company, Exit 7, and The Little Theatre. By day she works on the Netflix original series, *13 Reasons Why*.



KIANA "KIKI" RIVERA (she, we, us) is an internationally produced, award-winning theatre artist, educator and arts activist. Kiki has a BA in Theatre from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM), MFA in Playwriting (UHM) and member of the 2018 ArtEquity cohort. She is also associated with the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF) as a Region VIII Respondent. Original plays include *Puzzy* (featuring award-winning New Zealand Playwright Victor Rodger), *Fa'alavelave: The Interruption* and *Lost Boy* featured in Plantation Plays commissioned by The Leeward Theatre at Leeward Community College. As an educated gender-queer person of color (Samoan-Filipinx born and raised in Hawaii) that is cis-femme presenting, Kiki recognizes her privilege and responsibility to those marginalized communities. Her work focuses on cultural and sexual identity and the effects of colonization. Kiki is one of many voices for Pacific Islanders in the diaspora and is published in *Samoan Queer Lives* edited by Yuki Kihara and Dan Talaupapa McMullin. Kiki believes in self-reflective storytelling from a contemporary indigenous perspective and creating space for marginalized theatre artists of color.