

**SUPER**

**NEW PLAY**

**SPECIAL!**



Playwrights Local Presents

# SUPER NEW PLAY SPECIAL!

## A FESTIVAL OF SHORT WORKS

May 13 & 14, 2022

### PROGRAM

**DIY:** Written by Brian Zoldessy and directed by Fred Sternfeld

**Frayed:** Written by Sara Bogomolny and directed by Casey Venema

**Moth to a Flame:** Written by Reys Phillips and  
directed by Eva Nel Brettrager

**Of Straw Dogs: A User's Guide to the Tao Te Ching:**

Written by Logan Cutler Smith and directed by T. Paul Lowry

-- Intermission --

**The Last Hurrah:** Written by Vickie L. Williams and  
directed by Luther Pete Robinson

**400 Hours:** Written by David Todd and directed by Christopher Johnston

**No Returns:** Written by Agnes Herrmann and directed by Rachel Zake

### CREATIVE TEAM

Stage Manager/Props Designer.....Lisa L. Wiley

Production Coordinator.....Eva Nel Brettrager

Lighting Designer.....Andrew Kaletta

Sound Designer/Assistant Stage Manager.....Neil Sudhakaran

Technical Director.....Tom Hayes

Production Manager.....David Todd

### NOTES

- All performances in tonight's event were intended to be produced live on stage. Due to the vagaries of this uncertain world, video recordings may be substituted for in-person presentations of particular pieces.
- Video/audio recording of this performance by any means is prohibited.
- This event is presented thanks to the generous support of Cuyahoga Arts & Culture, the Ohio Arts Council, & the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation.

Written by Brian Zoldessy

Directed by Fred Sternfeld

*DIY* is the latest trend in psychotherapy. Our protagonist has purchased the Porta-Shrink Do-It-Yourself Psychotherapy Kit, and every week, under the guidance of his cardboard cutout therapist, he strives to verbalize and face the fears that have plagued him for so long. Will today be his breakthrough session? Will additional sessions be necessary, or is he at the breaking point and about to abandon weeks of therapy?

Man -- **Doug Kusak**

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### Playwright



**Brian Zoldessy** (Professor Emeritus, Ph.D.) was Director of the Theatre Arts Department at Cuyahoga Community College, 1991-2019. He was the first non-tenured faculty member to receive CCC's Ralph M. Besse Award for Teaching Excellence and was honored with The Outstanding Achievement Award for Teaching by the International Conference for Teaching and Leadership. As a professional actor, Brian has worked in New York, L.A., Chicago, and Cleveland, and has appeared on Broadway, Off-Broadway, in television and films, having worked with Kevin

Bacon, John Travolta, and the late, great Jack Gilford. A winner of Kennedy Center's Irene Ryan Acting and Directing Awards, he has directed and produced over 100 productions. Brian also is a published poet and is the author of *The Theatre Appreciation Workbook: Exercises and Activities*. Brian was awarded Best Performance by an Actor by the Cleveland Critics Circle Awards for his performance in *The Normal Heart* (Ensemble Theatre) and Best Actor, 2013, for his performance in *Freud's Last Session* (Actor's Summit). Currently, Brian's most important roles are father and grandfather.

### Director



**Fred Sternfeld** is pleased to make his Playwrights Local debut. Recent credits: *Other Desert Cities* at Clague, *Death of a Salesman* at French Creek, *Good People* at Aurora, *Of Mice and Men* at Coach House and *You Can't Take It With You* at Karamu. Fred is widely represented on Northeast Ohio stages through diverse projects, garnering numerous honors and awards, some of which are listed here: *Next to Normal* at French Creek, *Company* & *A Little Night Music* at FPAC, *The Glass Menagerie* & *The Miracle Worker* at TrueNorth, *Yellowman* at Karamu, Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* at Beck Center, *Ragtime*, the musical & *A Shayna Maidel* at the JCC and *Fiddler on the Roof* & *The Sound of Music* at Cain Park. Additionally, he and his wife Randi were on the producing team for the Tony & Lortel nominated *Be More Chill*. Upcoming: *Fireflies* at Clague Playhouse, January, 2023. [www.fredsternfeld.com](http://www.fredsternfeld.com).

# Frayed

Play 2

Written by Sara Bogomolny

Directed by Casey Venema

Sisters Arielle and Lara both dream of living fully realized lives. When an unexpected break up lands them in the same apartment, they struggle with the ways that each represents the very thing that they're trying to grow beyond.

Arielle -- **Hayley Johnson**

Lara -- **Hannah Woodside**

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## Playwright



**Sara Bogomolny** is an emerging arts manager, professional theatre artist, and native Clevelander. As an actor, her work has been seen at Cleveland Public Theatre, Dobama Theatre, The Cleveland Orchestra, Beck Center for the Arts, Ensemble Theatre, Interplay Jewish Theatre, Playwrights Local, Talespinner Children's Theatre, and the Minnesota Fringe Festival. Favorite directing credits include *Young Frankenstein*, *DNA*, and the devised *What Happens Next?* at the Academy for the Performing Arts in Chagrin Falls. Sara has served as an assistant director at

Ensemble Theatre, Beck Center for the Arts, and Theatre Unbound in Minneapolis-St. Paul. Sara studied classical acting at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London, holds a B.A. in Directing and Acting from Case Western Reserve University, and is currently pursuing a Master of Arts Management degree at Carnegie Mellon University.

## Director



**Casey Venema** is a director, actor, and intimacy choreographer focused on unique and unexplored narratives- particularly those centering women's voices. Recent directing credits include *Athena* (Rubber City Theatre) *Emilie: La Marquise du Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight* (Bucknell University), *You Can't Take It With You* (Little Theatre of Virginia Beach), *I'm Alive You Bastards And I Always Will Be* (Night Bloom Theatre Co.), and a filmed reimagining of *Hedda Gabler* (Equality Productions). Casey is also the resident intimacy director for Dobama Theatre and has

worked as an intimacy director for several other theatres in Northeast Ohio. In addition to her freelance work, Casey is the Co-Founder and Co-executive Director of Nightbloom Theatre Co., a Cleveland-based ensemble dedicated to strengthening the Cleveland theatre community by providing artistic opportunities to emerging artists. To keep up with Casey's adventures, follow her on Instagram [@caseyvenem8](https://www.instagram.com/caseyvenem8) or drop her a line at [www.caseyvenema.com](http://www.caseyvenema.com).

# Moth to a Flame

Play 3

Written by Reys Phillips

Directed by Eva Nel Brettrager

A young moth, having lived to the prime of her short life, chances upon a spider's nest during her evening flight. Had it been a normal encounter, she would have kept away to preserve her existence. However, one look into the spider's eyes sealed her fate. Experience the moth's last evening as she dances with death towards her demise.

Moth/Past Moth -- **Adam Harry**

Spider/Past Spider -- **Cat Kenney**

Brother Moth -- **TJ Hayes**

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## Playwright



**Reys Phillips:** A graduate of Cleveland State University, Reys Phillips is a creative writer by hobby but aspires to become a published author in the field of romance fiction. The short play, *Moth to a Flame*, was her first experience in playwriting following 10+ years of cultivating her skills as a writer. The play has been included in Cleveland's 4th Annual Playwrights Festival as part of their evening session of short plays. This was an immense honor for the young writer as the first showing of her work open to the public. With the Festival of Short Works event being the play's second production, the author is proud to see her work taking to the stage once more.

## Director



**Eva Nel Brettrager** (also festival **Production Coordinator**) is very excited to be back at Playwrights Local, directing *Moth to a Flame*. They previously stage managed *Millwood Outpost*. They are a jack-of-all-trades in the NEOhio theatre scene, having worked as director, stage manager, lighting designer, and actor with theatres including convergence-continuum, Cleveland Shakespeare Festival, Blank Canvas Theatre, Breen Center, Beck Center, French Creek Theatre, Ensemble Theatre, CVLT, and Tri-C West. They also serve as Facilities Coordinator for con-con. Up next, you can find them co-directing *Log Cabin* at con-con. Thank you for supporting live theatre. For more info, visit [www.evabrettrager.com](http://www.evabrettrager.com).

# Of Straw Dogs: A User's Guide to the *Tao Te Ching*

Play 4

Written by Logan Cutler Smith

Directed by T. Paul Lowry

*Of Straw Dogs* is inspired by tales surrounding the composition of the *Tao Te Ching*, a classic of Eastern religious philosophy. The *Tao* was supposed to have been written by Lao Tzu, who is supposed to have existed, at the behest of the keeper of the pass, through which Lao Tzu was passing – supposedly. Brian is a gatekeeper; he keeps a gate. He's an ordinary person with ordinary problems, holding it together as best he's able, when he meets Lao Tzu, the old master, who comes riding by on a blue Ox. And Brian's life (at least the part of it you'll see onstage) will never be the same again.

Brian -- **Travis Williams**

Ox -- **Jack Matuszewski**

Lao Tzu -- **Lifan Deng**

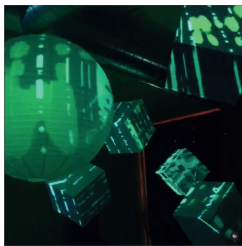
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## Playwright



**Logan Cutler Smith** is a Cleveland-based theatre artist, sculptor, and educator. Logan studied Theatre and Sculpture and Marlboro College in Marlboro, VT before earning an MFA in Creative Writing from Cleveland State University. His conceptually exuberant dramatic writing has lately gestured towards the deliberate distortions of reality television and American folk tales. His plays have been performed at Convergence Continuum, Cleveland Public Theatre, and Playwrights Local. Logan is a member of the Playwrights GYM at Dobama Theatre.

## Director



**T. Paul Lowry** has served in artistic, production and design capacities with such companies as Long Wharf Theatre, Playwrights Horizons, Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Dobama Theatre, Cleveland Public Theatre, New Haven Theater Company, and Talespinner Children's Theatre. T. Paul teaches theatre at Hathaway Brown School and serves as the Technical Director/ Production Designer. His directing and design work includes: *Egress* (Cleveland Play House); *Ella Enchanted*, *The Nether* (Dobama Theatre); *The Fantastic* (WSR); *American Dreams*, *Fire on the Water*, *Rastus & Hattie* (Cleveland Public Theatre); *Uz*, *Donde esta My Home* (Teatro Publico de Cleveland); *The Turing Machine* (Theatre Ninjas); *To the Orchard*, *Things as They Are* (Playwrights Local 4181); and *Angels in America* (Oberlin College). [www.tpaulowry.com](http://www.tpaulowry.com).



# The Last Hurrah

Play 5

Written by Vickie L. Williams

Directed by Luther Pete Robinson

Based on interviews with three Cleveland local Tuskegee Airmen, the late Lieutenant Colonel Clarence Jamison, the late Master Sergeant Thomas Austin, and Corporal Roy Richardson, as they point out black achievements in the U.S. Armed Services. Those achievements are labeled as hurrahs. The first hurrah was when racists believed black people were incapable of learning. The Tuskegee Airmen not only learned how to fly, but their superior flying techniques won them eight Distinguished Unit Citations. Racists also believed blacks should be kept separate from white society. Tuskegee Airmen refused to accept discrimination and their actions at Freeman Field resulted in President Truman signing an Executive Order to integrate the U.S. armed services. Hurrah! In 1941, they won the first Top Gun Gunnery Competition, and after years of not being given credit, they finally provided proof, the last hurrah.

Thomas Austin -- **Prophet Seay**

Clarence Jamison -- **Greg White**

Roy Richardson -- **James Allen McGilbray**

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## Playwright



**Vickie L. Williams** is a playwright, a writer, and a visual artist from Northeast Ohio. Her plays were read and/or presented at Cleveland Public Theatre, the Karamu House, CPH's Brooke Theatre, WAUL Actor's Studio, Playwright Local, and the Sky Blue International Playwright Competition, Cambridge, Great Britain. Vickie has earned a B.A. in Communications. She has contributed works into several anthologies, the latest being, *365 Women A Year: A Playwriting Project*. Some of her plays include *Diamond In The Rough*, *Image Freedom*, *Commemorative*, and *Vigil*. Vickie is a Puffin Foundation and an Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award (2008) recipient. She is a grandmother of a nine-pound multi-pooch. She thanks God for all the wonderful things He does and her family and friends for their love and ongoing support.

## Director



**Luther Robinson, a/k/a Pete**, is a Cleveland-born professional actor/director. A longtime member of SAG-AFTRA, he appeared in several motion pictures in the '70s and '80s and hundreds of stage production across the country. His film credits include: *Up Your Ally*, *Down on Us*, *Our Winning Season*, *G.O.R.P.*, *Wacko*, and *The Return*. His recent stage productions include *As You Like It*, *Winter's Tail*, *Two Trains Running*, *The Bloodless Jungle*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, and *Of Mice and Men*. Luther made his directorial debut in 1989 with the Production of *Mahalia* at L.A.

Playhouse. His director credits include *Day of Absence*, *Old Love*, *The River Niger*, and recently *Men Don't Cry*, written by Steve Hood and performed at the Karamu House.

# 400 Hours

Play 6

Written by David Todd

Directed by Christopher Johnston

An anomic night owl explores the city at 4:00 a.m., finding flashes of memory in a series of couples he encounters.

Voyeur -- **Benjamin Gregg**

Woman -- **Dayni Mahar**

Man -- **Wesley Allen**

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## Playwright



**David Todd's** plays have been presented or developed in NYC at theaters including 59E59, Dixon Place, the Little Theater, HERE, and NY Theatre Workshop, regionally in DC, Portland, and Chicago, and internationally at the LaMaMa Spoleto Open in Italy. His residencies include Hangar Theater (Ithaca, NY), Classic Studio (NYC), and Chicago Dramatists. He earned his MFA at NYU (Goldberg Award; Harry Kondoleon Award) and his PhD at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He has taught writing and literature at NYU, SUNY Stony Brook, and Otterbein U., and

currently is teaching in the NEOMFA writing program. He is a Usual Suspect at NY Theater Workshop and a Collaborator with the NYC-based Monk Parrots. His nonfiction book *Feeding Back* was published by Chicago Review Press, and his play *Joy in Repetition* was published by Connotation Press. He is a past Regional Representative for the Dramatists Guild and OAC Individual Excellence Award recipient.

## Director



**Christopher Johnston** is a playwright, director, and freelance journalist. His plays have appeared at Cleveland Public Theatre (*Sexually Explicit Material*, *The Mind Field*, *Theories of Relativity*, *The Mad Mask Maker of Maigh Eo*, *Elitsa the Inside Talker*, *Flights of Fancy*, *Elitsa Revisited: The Bearded Angel*, *The Great Firefly Expedition*, *ENDependence*, *Al Chemy*), Dobama Theatre (*Murder in Mind*, *Loud Americans: A Punk Saga*, *Ghosts of War*, *My Body is Blue*), convergence-continuum theatre (*Spawn of the Petrosexuals*, *APORKALYPSE!*, *Selfies at the Clown Motel*, *The*

*Chaste Genius and His Death Ray Gun*, *Black Mongoose and His Lil Purple Butterfly*, *My Body is Blue*), Notre Dame College (*Peace at Home: Veterans of South Euclid*), Talespinner Children's Theatre (*Finn McCool*, *The Rainbow Serpent*) and West 88th Street Theater in New York (*Last Light*). He is a member of the Dramatists Guild and serves on the board of convergence-continuum theatre and the American Society of Journalists and Authors.



# No Returns

Play 7

Written by Agnes Herrmann

Directed by Rachel Zake

A young woman tries to return a wedding shower gift, but is informed that there is a no-return policy on intimate apparel. After much discussion, the talk turns to what?

Jenny -- **Michala Peltz**

Marie -- **Emily Taylor**

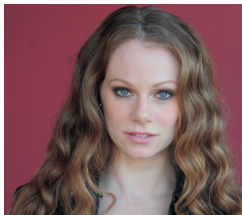
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## Playwright



**Agnes Herrmann** is an actor and playwright. She is a graduate of the American Musical and Dramatic Academy. She began her career in dinner theater, appeared in summer stock and Off-Off Broadway theater venues, and worked for more than twenty years as a voice actress in New York. Her VO credits range from national commercials (Thompson's Water Seal) to industrials (Bristol Myers Squibb), broadcast TV (*60 Minutes*), radio drama (The Ring Lardner Playhouse), and cartoons (*Yu-Gi-Oh*). Since living in Cleveland, she has performed at Ensemble Theatre, Cleveland Public Theatre, Theatre in the Circle, Dobama Theatre, and Playwrights Local, and has been active in film (including the role of Archer's Woman in *The Road*, with Viggo Mortensen, and many others). She's written many 10-minute plays and a full-length comedy, *Makin' Sawce*, and she is currently working on a full-length musical, *The Storm*, about asylum seekers.

## Director



**Rachel Zake** is a director, writer, and actor. She has published three books: *Two People are Coming out of a Building* (2014, fiction), *The Nomad Diaries* (2017, nonfiction), and *Pants Off/ Dance Off: A Gentleman's Guide* (2019, nonfiction). Her plays have been seen onstage at Playwrights Local and other Cleveland venues. Rachel has been acting for over 29 years (Dobama Theatre, Ensemble Theatre, Cain Park, Playwrights Local, and Halle Theatre among others). She is a member of SAG-AFTRA, Dobama Theatre's Playwrights' GYM, and The Dramatists Guild of America. She also served as Artistic Director of Playmakers Youth Theatre in Beachwood, OH, having directed 47 productions in her time there.

## CREATIVE TEAM

**Lisa L. Wiley (Stage Manager/Props Designer)** has designed props for several Cleveland-area theatres. Everything from Expressionistic “newspapers” and old polaroids, to old apple cores and exotic plants, tricky drink glasses and edible dirt. Lisa holds a bachelor’s degree in Theatre from Ashland University and has years of experience stage managing, designing and directing. In addition to “gettin’ her crafty on,” she is a voice-over artist, standardized patient and also performs with Women in History. Lisa is passionate about the arts and considers it an honor to help bring new works to life.

**Eva Nel Brettrager (Production Coordinator):** See page for *Moth to a Flame* above.

**Andrew Kaletta (Lighting Designer)** began an association with Cleveland Public Theatre as both an electrician and carpenter that evolved into a relationship with Cleveland State University Dance, first as an electrician and then becoming lighting designer and technical director. He was the technical director and designer for the Cleveland Performance Art Festival and served as lighting designer for Dobama Theatre and as the assistant technical director/master electrician at Oberlin College. He currently is the shop manager for Ingenuity Festival and creates lamps ([kalettastatuary.com](http://kalettastatuary.com)). His work with Cesear’s Forum includes Michael Frayn’s *Copenhagen*, Yasmina Reza’s *Life x 3*, Lanford Wilson’s *Take 5*, and Peter Weiss’ *The Investigation*.

**Neil Sudhakaran (Sound Designer/Assistant Stage Manager)** is a dual kidney/liver transplant survivor, who has acted, directed, and written numerous theater and film projects. When not pursuing his passion for the arts, Neil is the Director of Marketing for BrightCovers translucent patio covers and Vice President of Orange Horn Media. Neil lives in Twinsburg with the love of his life Madison, his best friend Francois, and their beautiful daughter Ollie. Upcoming projects include Adam Sandler’s *Hustle* on Netflix this June, and *A Man Named Otto* with Tom Hanks, slated to premiere Christmas Day 2022.

**Tom Hayes (Technical Director)** is an award-winning playwright who received his MFA from Cleveland State University and the NEOMFA program. His play *Lord of the Burgeoning Lumber* was awarded “Best Original Script by a Local Playwright 2008” by *Rave and Pan*. He is the Managing Director of Playwrights Local.

**David Todd (Production Manager):** See page for *400 Hours* above.

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## COMPANY

**Playwrights Local** is dedicated to supporting the dramatists of Northeast Ohio. As a playwrights’ development and production center, we foster diverse talents and present locally written works. We strive to increase the impact of original theater on the community and to raise the profile of area playwrights both within Greater Cleveland and beyond.

- [www.playwrightslocal.org](http://www.playwrightslocal.org)
- [www.playwrightslocal.org/plradio](http://www.playwrightslocal.org/plradio)
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## THE GHOST SHIP HUNTER

A Radio Play

Written by Christopher Johnston

Directed by Rachel Zake

A Radio Play

Written by Gail Nyoka

Directed by Terrence Spivey

## LOVE AND ECSTASY