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Berkshire Playwrights Lab debuts virtual conversation series Off The Cuff beginning July 22nd
Smart talk about theater
In partnership with the Berkshire Museum

On July 22nd at 6:00 pm, Berkshire Playwrights Lab, in partnership with the Berkshire Museum, will debut BPL presents Off the Cuff, a virtual series of three expansive, free-wheeling conversations among theater professionals. Each program in the series will take a deep dive into societal and cultural issues that affect theatergoers and theater makers alike at this consequential moment for both the theater and the country.

The trilogy of hour-long conversations will be streamed live online on YouTube and Facebook Live, July 22nd, August 5th and August 19th at 6:00 pm and will then be available for ongoing viewing on the Berkshire Playwrights Lab and Berkshire Museum websites. Viewers of the live broadcasts will be invited to submit questions to the participants during the program.

Participants will be a mix of accomplished writers, directors, actors and producers tangling with broad-ranging questions such as:

- Given its far-reaching effects on every facet of our lives, how will Covid-19 impact the theater world?
- Has the theater community been complicit with or resistant to white supremacy?
- What should be the mission of the American Theater going forward? Who are we, what do we stand for and where do we go from here?

BPL will tap its extensive network of friends and collaborators to ensure these conversations are must-see events. Already committed to the July 22nd premiere are:

- **Marsha Norman**, Pulitzer and Tony Award-winning Playwright, (‘Night Mother, The Color Purple, The Secret Garden)
• **Wendell Pierce**, NAACP Obie winner and 2020 Olivier Award nominee, owner of WBOK1230.com, an Equity Media station (*The Wire, Treme, Jack Ryan,*)

• **Tracy Scott Wilson**, Emmy nominee and Peabody Award-winning Playwright and TV Writer (*The Americans*, then upcoming Aretha Franklin biopic, *Respect*)

• **Flody Suarez**, TV and Broadway Tony-nominated Producer (*8 Simple Rules, Rise, The Cher Show*)

• and **Jamil Jude**, *True Colors Theater's* Artistic Director, and award-winning Director and Playwright

Guests for future programs include:

• **Tony Shalhoub**, Tony Award, Golden Globe, and Emmy-winning Actor (*Monk, Marvelous Mrs. Maisel, The Band's Visit*)

• **Tom Fontana**, Emmy and WGA-winning Writer (*Homicide Life on the Streets, Oz*)

• and **Dan Lauria**, renowned Broadway and TV Actor (*Lombardi, The Wonder Years*)

The conversations will be cohosted by BPL co-artistic directors, Joe Cacaci and Felicia Harden, with participation from BPL co-artistic directors Richard Dresser, and James Anthony Tyler.

“The conversations will be lively, spontaneous and far ranging,” says BPL Co-Artistic Director Joe Cacaci. “Viewers will hear innovative ideas as they are first expressed and will get a behind-the-scenes look at how theater professionals apply their experience to come up with creative solutions to complex problems. In years to come, we may have the pleasure of knowing we were there when the future began to be shaped.”

This program represents a unique partnership between BPL and the Berkshire Museum, a 117-year-old institution in Pittsfield, Mass., with deep roots in the Berkshire community. The interdisciplinary museum explores the intersections between the arts, science, and history and is committed to supporting the arts, especially in times of change.

“Theater, with its immediacy and capacity to humanize complex social questions, will play an important role in framing public dialogue about post-pandemic society and racial justice,” said Jeff Rodgers, Executive Director of the museum. “The museum is proud to support and amplify conversations that explore how theater will evolve to help us understand and shape the remarkable change the world is currently experiencing.”

All programs are free and registration is not required. Simply visit [facebook.com/BerkshirePlaywrightsLab](http://facebook.com/BerkshirePlaywrightsLab) or [https://tinyurl.com/BPL-Youtube](https://tinyurl.com/BPL-Youtube).

**About Berkshire Playwrights Lab**

Berkshire Playwrights Lab occupies a unique position in the theater landscape, both locally in the Berkshires and nationally. For 15 years, BPL has been one of a few organizations in the country to focus solely on the development of new plays, and, consequently, on the development of new playwrights. A sharp focus on new talent and new ideas has given BPL
expertise in finding adventurous thinkers and lively pockets of creativity in the theater community nationwide.

Over 15 years of cutting-edge work, BPL has:

- offered scores of playwrights the unusual four-day opportunity to hone their new plays in collaboration with professional actors and a director, culminating in an elaborately staged reading before a large live audience of up to 400 people.

- actively engaged audience members in the process of “creating theater.”

- taken some of those new plays to full production, like James Anthony Tyler’s *Some Old Black Man*, which had its premiere reading at The Mahaiwe, its premiere production at St. James Place and its NYC premiere production at 59E59th St. theaters. In addition, BPL has served as a pipeline for new material for theater companies across the country—among them Berkshire Theatre Festival, New Jersey Repertory, Shakespeare & Company and The Public Theater—where plays that BPL launched were given full productions.

- nurtured local writing talent through The Radius Festival and Berkshire Voices Writers Workshop.

- forged deep collaborative relationships with actors, playwrights, directors, producers and artistic directors across the country. Their participation in these conversations acknowledges the value they place on their partnerships with BPL.

**About the Berkshire Museum**

Located at 39 South Street in downtown Pittsfield, Massachusetts, the Berkshire Museum combines art, science, and history to create thought-provoking experiences for the whole family through interactive programs, interdisciplinary exhibitions, and engaging online series. The museum building will reopen its doors beginning August 1, 2020. Plan your visit at berkshiremuseum.org or go to explore.berkshiremuseum.org to enjoy the Berkshire Museum wherever you are.