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**MARYLAND ENSEMBLE THEATRE**

**Presents**

***METLab Plays in Progress: A Festival of New Play Readings***

**By JD Silvert**

**July 19 – 27, 2018**

FREDERICK, MD (July 5, 2018) - **Maryland Ensemble Theatre (MET)** isproud to present METLab’s *Plays in Progress: A Festival of New Play Readings.* Now in their fourth year of *Plays in Progress,* METLab once again offers regional playwrights an opportunity to present staged-readings of their selected work. Of the over 100 submissions reviewed, seven were chosen to be featured in this year’s *Festival of New Play Readings*. The festival includes six nights of new play readings on the MET’s mainstage, and one evening of four short plays at The Main Cup in Middletown as part of their “Coffee House Series”.

METLab Producer J.D. Silvert is enthusiastic about sharing these original works with MET audiences. “METLab affords many opportunities. It gives the MET a chance to highlight some outstanding, and often emerging, playwriting voices in the region. The laboratory setting allows playwrights to experiment. By selecting plays in progress, actors, directors and dramaturgs work on and rehearse new versions of the play at every rehearsal, thus given the playwright a clearer understanding of what works and what should be revised.  This is a unique opportunity for the audience as well to get a sneak peek on the creative process, not to mention adding to it!”

The Mainstage *Plays in Progress* series will include readings of works by three regional playwrights; Emily Denny’s “The Lavenders”, Quinn D. Eli’s “In Common” and Haley Platz’s “A Real Bitch.” Following each staged reading, there will be a guided talk-back with the audience in which the playwright will receive feedback, reactions, and suggestions. The playwrights will then have the opportunity to implement rewrites and changes to their script before regrouping with their cast and crew for a second staged-reading. After the second staged reading, there will be an additional audience talk back (post-show discussion) in which the playwright can see how their changes to the script were received by the audience. Mainstage *Plays in Progress* tickets are $12 per show and includes admission to both readings of the same show.

The first Plays in Progress reading on the mainstage is “The Lavenders” by Emily Denny, directed by Tabetha White. Setting is June 1953. Two childhood friends, a gay man and a gay woman, consign themselves to a lavender marriage to conceal their sexuality from their conservative friends, family, and neighbors. But unspoken secrets about their past, and difficult questions about their future are causing tension. And a night entertaining company threatens to pull apart both their fake marriage and their real friendship. “The Lavenders” first reading will be on Thursday, July 19th at 7:30pm. The second reading will be on Saturday, July 28th at 7:30pm.

Next up on the mainstage is Quinn D. Eli’s “In Common”, directed by Lia Seltzer. A black man is murdered in a faraway country. A young woman from New Zealand is shot dead here in the States. These two seemingly unrelated occurrences are haunting Melanie, a journalist trying to make sense of random violence from the past. When a new relationship offers an escape from the loneliness of her work, Melanie discovers the delicate threads that can bind us together — and the unmistakable forces that can drive us apart. “In Common” first reading will be on Friday, July 20th at 7:30pm. The second reading will be on Thursday, July 26th at 7:30pm.

The final mainstage reading is “A Real Bitch” by Haley Platz, directed by Brandon Scott Boyd. Six twenty-something young women make up the most unconventional, un-girly, ill-equipped bridal party one could imagine. They have gathered at a Hawaiian estate to celebrate the bride, Peytie, their friend who is planning her best day ever even as she struggles with an increasing diagnosis that puts a deadline on her life. The girls are all prepared to put aside their personal problems and celebrate, distract, and pamper Peytie by drinking (lots of drinking), smoking (homemade Hawaiian sativa), tanning (or burning), dancing to angsty music (think Mr. Brightside), and being overtly merry and irresponsible, but will unexpected guests (boys), rash plans, and dark secrets ruin their paradise? “A Real Bitch” first reading will be on Saturday, July 21st at 7:30pm. The second reading will be on Friday, July 27th at 7:30pm.

METLab’s “Coffee House Series” will feature one evening of four short plays at The Main Cup in Middletown, MD on Wednesday, July 25th at 7:30pm. In this warm, inviting coffee house setting, audiences will have the opportunity to relax, sip some wine, grab a bite or enjoy a fresh brewed coffee. All four plays will be directed by Tim Seltzer, a MET company membe,r The “Coffee House Reading Series” will feature Tyler Powell’s “Saving Laurel”, Jean Burgess’ “Deleted”, Katie H. Smith’s “We Go Back a Long Way” and DC Cathro’s “That Kiss.” No tickets are necessary for the four “Coffee House Series” plays, but advance reservations are appreciated.

In Powell’s “Saving Laurel”, a couple recall their college-days study of the story of Apollo and Daphne in Ovid’s Metamorphoses. They are shocked to find that this story seems to be repeating itself in the lives of the couple’s 18-year-old son and the young woman he loves.

“Deleted” is centered around Allen, an unscrupulous businessman, who wakes up in an unfamiliar place, surrounded by blurry photos, text messages, emails, faxes and files as well as cacophony of sound. He is disoriented, confused, and wants out. Enter, The Keeper of the Land of Delete.

Smith’s “We Go Back a Long Way” explores the complicated bonds linking four women who were raised in a problematic society with impossible expectations, and grapples with how to navigate life as a progressive, profoundly disgusted woman at the start of the Trump era.

And finally, “That Kiss” tells how Monica, who hasn’t seen Kelly since college, is taken aback when Kelly shows up on her doorstep in a wedding dress to profess her love.

Altogether, METLab’s *Plays in Progress: A Festival of New Play Readings* offers a unique theater experience for audiences. Tickets for the mainstage readings may be purchased by phone at (301) 694-4744, online at [marylandensemble.org](http://marylandensemble.org) or in person at the MET box office.

**METLab Festival Fact Sheet**

**MAINSTAGE READINGS**

Where: Maryland Ensemble Theatre, 31 West Patrick Street, Frederick, MD 21701

Admission: $12 per show (and includes admission to both readings of the same show).

Schedule:

**Thursday, July 19th @ 7:30pm**

“The Lavenders” – first reading

**Friday, July 20th @ 7:30pm**

“In Common” – first reading

**Saturday, July 21st @ 7:30pm**

“A Real Bitch” – first reading

**Thursday, July 26th @ 7:30pm**

“In Common” – second reading

**Friday, July 27th @ 7:30pm**

“A Real Bitch” – second reading

**Saturday, July 28th @ 7:30pm**

“The Lavenders” – second reading

**COFFEE HOUSE SERIES**

Where: The Main Cup, Middletown MD

Admission: FREE! Advance reservations appreciated.

Schedule: one evening of four short plays on Wednesday, July 25th @ 7:30pm.

**BOX OFFICE:** 301-694-4744 or marylandensemble.org at the MET (Tuesday- Thursday 10 a.m. – 3 p.m., Friday 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. and 1 hour before each show.)

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**MARYLAND ENSEMBLE THEATRE MISSION:** Maryland Ensemble Theatre (MET) is dedicated to the creation and production of extraordinary theatre art through the combined voices of a diverse ensemble of professional resident artists who are influential leaders in the community and visionaries in the art of theatre.

To learn more about MET, visit [www.marylandensembletheater.org](http://www.marylandensembletheater.org).

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