

PLAYGROUND SOLO PERFORMANCE FESTIVAL

PlayGround: <http://playground-sf.org/solofest>

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PlayGround Announces Inaugural Solo Performance Festival

Lineup- Lisa Evans, Malcolm Grissom, Marjorie Hazeltine, Michael Phillis,
Katie Rubin, Thomas Robert Simpson, Nina Wise, and Dan Wolf
3 Weeks / 8 Writer-Performers / 36 Performances

January 11-28

POTRERO STAGE

1695 18th Street, San Francisco, CA

SAN FRANCISCO – PlayGround has announced the lineup for the inaugural PlayGround Solo Performance Festival, a celebration of the best in Bay Area solo performance, running **January 11-28 at Potrero Stage**. The festival features 36 performances by 8 local artists over three week, including **new works by Lisa Evans, Malcolm Grissom, Marjorie Hazeltine, Michael Phillis, Katie Rubin, Thomas Robert Simpson, Nina Wise, and Dan Wolf**, each running about an hour. The festival, one of PlayGround’s new “pop-up” programs, represents an extension of PlayGround’s mission and commitment to the discovery of bold new voices for the stage and the first PlayGround offering fully dedicated to solo performance. Tickets are \$21-\$36 and All-Festival Passes start at just \$88. Pick-4 Passes are \$64. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit <http://playground-sf.org/solofest> or call (415) 992-6677.

Lisa Evans

YOU REALLY SHOULD SIT LIKE A LADY (OR HOW I GOT TO FEMME)

Jan 12-7PM / Jan 13-6PM / Jan 21-3PM / Jan 27-2PM

What do martial arts, early 90s R&B divas, crotchety elders and sailor moon have to do with gender? A whole damn lot! Join Lisa Evans of Peacock Rebellion for an exploration of the hilarious, perplexing and sometimes infuriating contradictions in the process of gender identity formation in their first-ever full length, solo show, incorporating comedy, spoken word and live generated music. *Running time: 60 min.*

Malcolm Grissom

ME, MY SONG AND I

Jan 13-8PM / Jan 18-7PM / Jan 20-2PM / Jan 26-8:30PM / Jan 28-5PM

“You don’t sound black. Darth Vader sounds black. You sound like a gay Muppet.”

That’s an example of a stereotype comic storyteller Malcolm Grissom has faced. “To me, being black means you’re either an angry radical, a Baptist preacher or Urkle. *Me, My Song and I* is a true story of navigating the ups and downs and twists and turns of life after his happy childhood is turned upside down by a debilitating disease. This story is about how Malcolm overcame his illness and, even more, how he found beauty and success despite life’s many adversities. This dramady is a mixture of stand-up comedy, spoken word storytelling. *Running time: 60 min.*

Marjorie Hazeltine

THE NOTORIOUS B.U.G.

Jan 11-7PM / Jan 18-8:30PM / Jan 20-8PM / Jan 21-1PM / Jan 28-1PMIn 2016 a praying mantis was named after Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. This mantis was big news, even making *The Washington Post* because she was discovered in a very particular way. Scientists typically classify mantids using the males of a given species. However, doctoral student Sydney Brannoch, who happens to be a young woman, decided to investigate several female specimens and thus discovered *Ilomantis ginsburgae*, a whole new species that had been misidentified for decades. News organizations interviewed Brannoch about the role of women in

science and the use of female specimens in scientific taxonomy, but now, the mantis herself is speaking out, telling her story in this one-woman show. She traces how her life has changed since being discovered and named after the notorious R.B.G. Up until now, gender and womanhood have been foreign concepts to the mantis, but now she must reconcile her new gendered identity, her relationship to one of the most famous advocates for gender equality, and her pesky, ever-present desire to devour her mates. *Running time: 50 min.*

Michael Phillis

DOLLS

Jan 13-2PM / Jan 14-5PM / Jan 20-6PM / Jan 25-8:30PM / Jan 28-7PM

Dolls is the story of a man's life as seen through the eyes of the dolls he has collected from adolescence to old age. It is the Day-After-Christmas (also known as Orientation Day for toys) and a group of freshly-unboxed dolls (the audience) awakens in their new home – the colorful and unpredictable world of the United Shelves of Frank's Collection. During their Orientation Day tour, the new arrivals meet a diverse array of doll characters that include an unstable porcelain Southern belle, an openly gay action figure, an embittered Barbie knock-off, and a reclusive wedding cake figurine. As the story of Frank's life unfolds, Phillis uses monologue, movement, music, and a few action figures to create and embody a unique and utterly original doll society full of unforgettable characters. A humorous and thought-provoking allegory, *Dolls* uses a toy story to explore the very real, very human themes of political strife, racism, classism, homophobia, and self-acceptance. *The Bay Area Reporter* called the World Premiere production of *Dolls* "a magical solo show ... that pretty much encompasses the entire human experience ... in just 70 minutes, and without a single human character ever uttering a word." *Time Out New York* gave *Dolls* 4 stars, calling it, "amusing, imaginative, and perfectly suited to its intimate Fringe stage." *Running time: 75 min.*

Katie Rubin

WHY I DIED, A COMEDY!

Jan 12-8:30PM / Jan 13-4PM / Jan 19-7PM / Jan 21-7PM / Jan 27-8PM

When the pressure of being human becomes too much, we should never forget that spiritual suicide is always an option. If it's true that our attachment to worldly concerns and ambitions is the cause of our suffering, then dissolving those ambitions into the Light of All That Is should bring complete and perfect peace to our hearts, right? Maybe... *Why I Died* explores the questions and challenges raised by the complex and often soul-sucking aspects of being a person among other people, while also being a formless spiritual essence attempting to evolve in 3-dimensional reality. *WID* tells the story of Katie Rubin's attempt to navigate a deep spiritual awakening in the face of a tight writing deadline. Along the way, she deals with and plays the roles of her hilariously pushy producer, a codependent mugger, a loose and vapid pop star, an infomercial saleswoman, a New Age Gueess, A Sufi "Perfected Master," a clueless boyfriend and a bevy of false prophets. Through the voices of 10 comedic characters, Rubin chronicles her attempt to create and evolve simultaneously. Will her spiritual and creative efforts merge? Or will she have to give up one for the other? *Running time: 75 min.*

Thomas Robert Simpson

COURAGE UNDER FIRE: THE STORY OF ELROY

Jan 14-7PM / Jan 20-4PM / Jan 25-7PM

Courage Under Fire is a personal story about Thomas Robert Simpson's father. The story explores how he transcended Jim Crow's insanity to commit a personal act that was revolutionary. To tell the story, Thomas traces four generations of his family to understand the evolution of this act and its significance in the life of Elroy. *Courage Under Fire* is a multi-media theatre work that uses text, video and projections to help tell the story. *Running time: 50 min.*

Nina Wise

WHAT JUST HAPPENED?

Jan 14-3PM / Jan 26-7PM / Jan 27-6PM / Jan 28-3PM

Nina Wise's *What Just Happened?* is an improvisational performance based on personal and political events which have transpired over the previous twenty-four hours. Wise tell stories using her physicality as well as language and sound. Her autobiographical performances, known for their warmth and compassion, weave irony, physicality and insight into complex, spontaneous narratives. Her work, which has been compared to a cross between Lily Tomlin, the Dalai Lama and Jules Feiffer, is at once full of humor and poignancy. Audiences

repeatedly report that they have never seen anything quite like Wise before and that they are at one instant laughing so hard they are falling off their seats and the next moment moved to tears. *Running time: 60 min.*

Dan Wolf

END OF THE SILENCE

Jan 11-8:30PM / Jan 14-1PM / Jan 19-8:30PM / Jan 21-5PM / Jan 27-4PM

As Daniel says in the play, "This is a podcast about the untimely death of an artist from Hamburg, Germany and the questions I never asked him. This is a podcast about healing the wounds of history through the relationship of two people who speak different languages but fight for a way to understand each other. But this is also a podcast about death, and so it's not meant to go on forever. Just a few episodes." *End of the Silence* is solo play about a podcaster making a podcast. Using field recordings, voice actors, music, movement, spoken word and rap, the performance will follow a series of "takes" as Daniel creates his podcast series. It plays out like a live podcast as Daniel is capturing the story in real time using fragments of the past while at the same time moving through the grief of a lost friend. *Running time: 40 min.*

PlayGround Solo Performance Festival Artist Bios

Lisa Evans is a black non-binary performance artist, producer and cultural worker based out of Oakland, CA. They can be seen in award winning filmmaker Cheryl Dunye's short film, *Black Is Blue*. Most recently, Lisa produced and directed the multidisciplinary piece, *Niggas Speak of Rivers*, a site-specific, multi-room immersive performance piece focusing on queer and trans black liberation. They also recently premiered their solo show, *You Really Should Sit Like A Lady (or how I got to Femme)*, as a part of the Hope Mohr Dance Project's 2017 Bridge Project at CounterPulse. Lisa is also a 2017 YBCA Fellow.

Malcolm Grissom's life started in the back seat of a sports car, in front of his entire neighborhood. So, it's no surprise that he has spent most of his life onstage. As the stepson of a musical genius with a corny sense of humor and son of a wannabe actress, dancer, teacher, politician, rocket scientist, faith healer and psychic, Malcolm was destined to be a professional funnyman. Malcolm shares his stories to children and adults alike. Currently, Malcolm is working on his third and fourth solo shows, as well as launching a storytelling podcast. Grissom's other passion is employment counselling.

Marjorie Hazeltine is an actor and teacher in the Bay Area. In addition to acting in traditional plays, Marjorie uses theatre to explore more social and political messages. She has written and performed several plays specifically analyzing gender and femininity. She received her MA in Performance Studies from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where her work focused on the ways asylum-seekers needed to craft and perform testimony in order to be seen as credible in a court setting.

Michael Phillis is an award-winning Bay Area writer, director, performer, educator, and filmmaker. He began his career as a solo performer, producing and performing his solo plays *FINDING MRS. MILLER* (2004), *D*FACE* (2006), and *DOLLS* (2008) in San Francisco, New York, LA, and schools and universities around the country. As a playwright his works include *WISH WE WERE HERE* (2010), *THE BRIDE OF DEATH* (2012), *WUNDERWORLD* (2013), *IT'S CHRISTMAS, CAROLE!* (2013) and numerous short plays for adults and children. He is the co-creator and director of *BALONEY*, San Francisco's popular gay all-male revue, and an actor in many theater, film, television, and drag projects. Michael's film directorial debut, *MINI SUPREME* (2015), was an Official Selection for Frameline, Outfest, Palm Springs ShortFest, and over a dozen film festivals worldwide. He is currently shooting his feature film *THE BRIDE OF DEATH* in San Francisco.

Katie Rubin is an Actress, Comic and Solo Performer with an MFA and a BA in Acting from UC Davis and Amherst College respectively. Her first solo work, *Insides OUT!*, received a nine-week Equity run at The Sacramento Theater Company, and then toured nationally to over 100 venues for 8 years. Since then, she has created 4 more solo pieces, two of which were commissioned by Capital Stage in 2010 and 2014, respectively. She currently tours as a Comic, and teaches acting at A.C.T., and Improv at Stanford.

Thomas Robert Simpson, actor, director, producer, and writer is the founder and artistic director of the award-winning AfroSolo Arts Festival, now celebrating its twenty-fourth season. Noted for his acclaimed one-man show, *Still Headin' fo' da' Promise Land*, Simpson writes and performs solo works about the African American black male experience. Recently he has been performing biographical works based on the lives of black men. He strives to give voice to these men by portraying them as three-dimensional individuals choosing to live to the height of their ability. For more info, visit afrosolo.org.

Nina Wise, performance artist, writer, director and educator, is known for her provocative and original performance works which have been produced in the United States, Europe, South America and Asia. Her pieces have garnered seven Bay Area Critics' Circle Awards, and she has received, among other prestigious honors, four National Endowment for the Arts fellowships. Her written pieces have appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies. She is the founder of Motion Theater®, a form of autobiographical improv, and the author of *A Big New Free Happy Unusual Life*.

Dan Wolf is an actor, rapper, playwright, director, producer and educator. His work crosses artistic and cultural borders to combine conventional theater styles with the themes, language, music, history, politics, and aesthetics of the Hip-Hop generation. Dan is a founding member of the critically acclaimed Hip Hop music and theater collective Felonious. Dan is also the Artistic Director of Sound in the Silence an experiential education project that uses history to inspire new performance and creative expression.

CALENDAR EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:

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PlayGround Solo Performance Festival Performance Schedule

Thursday, January 11, 2018

7PM – *The Notorious B.U.G.* / Marjorie Hazeltine

8:30PM – *End of the Silence* / Dan Wolf

Friday, January 12, 2018

7PM - *You Really Should Sit Like A Lady (or how I got to Femme)* / Lisa Evans

8:30PM – *Why I Died, a Comedy!* / Katie Rubin

Saturday, January 13, 2018

2PM – *Dolls* / Michael Phillis

4PM – *Why I Died, a Comedy!* / Katie Rubin

6PM - *You Really Should Sit Like A Lady (or how I got to Femme)* / Lisa Evans

8PM – *Me, My Song and I* / Malcolm Grissom

Sunday, January 14, 2018

1PM – *End of the Silence* / Dan Wolf

3PM – *What Just Happened?* / Nina Wise
5PM – *Dolls* / Michael Phillis
7PM – *Courage Under Fire: The Story of Elroy* / Thomas Robert Simpson

Thursday, January 18, 2018

7PM – *Me, My Song and I* / Malcolm Grissom
8:30PM – *The Notorious B.U.G.* / Marjorie Hazeltine

Friday, January 19, 2018

7PM – *Why I Died, a Comedy!* / Katie Rubin
8:30PM – *End of the Silence* / Dan Wolf

Saturday, January 20, 2018

2PM – *Me, My Song and I* / Malcolm Grissom
4PM – *Courage Under Fire: The Story of Elroy* / Thomas Robert Simpson
6PM – *Dolls* / Michael Phillis
8PM – *The Notorious B.U.G.* / Marjorie Hazeltine

Sunday, January 21, 2018

1PM – *The Notorious B.U.G.* / Marjorie Hazeltine
3PM – *You Really Should Sit Like A Lady (or how I got to Femme)* / Lisa Evans
5PM – *End of Silence* / Dan Wolf
7PM – *Why I Died, a Comedy!* / Katie Rubin

Thursday, January 25, 2018

7PM – *Courage Under Fire: The Story of Elroy* / Thomas Robert Simpson
8:30PM – *Dolls* / Michael Phillis

Friday, January 26, 2018

7PM – *What Just Happened?* / Nina Wise
8:30PM – *Me, My Song and I* / Malcolm Grissom

Saturday, January 27, 2018

2PM – *You Really Should Sit Like A Lady (or how I got to Femme)* / Lisa Evans
4PM – *End of the Silence* / Dan Wolf
6PM – *What Just Happened?* / Nina Wise
8PM – *Why I Died, a Comedy!* / Katie Rubin

Sunday, January 28, 2018

1PM – *The Notorious B.U.G.* / Marjorie Hazeltine
3PM – *What Just Happened?* / Nina Wise
5PM – *Me, My Song and I* / Malcolm Grissom
7PM – *Dolls* / Michael Phillis

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