

## LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCES INVENTIVE SERIES OF WORLD-PREMIERE, DIGITAL WITHOUT WALLS (WOW) PRODUCTIONS

***FAVORITE WOW ARTISTS BLINDSPOT COLLECTIVE, MIKE SEARS AND LISA BERGER,  
BRIAN LOBEL, AND 2020/2021 ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE DAVID ISRAEL REYNOSO  
PARTNER WITH PLAYHOUSE ON DEVELOPING NEW WOW PROJECTS  
THAT FOSTER HUMAN CONNECTION WHILE SHELTERING IN PLACE***

### ***BLINDSPOT COLLECTIVE NAMED PLAYHOUSE'S 2020/2021 RESIDENT THEATRE COMPANY***

La Jolla, CA – La Jolla Playhouse is pleased to announce a new series of imaginative, digitally-delivered productions as part of its acclaimed **Without Walls (WOW) program**. From intimate, one-on-one experiences to collective events, these brand new virtual WOW offerings bring world-class artists directly into patrons' homes, helping to create social contact during this isolating time.

The Playhouse is launching the series with four favorite WOW collaborators: UK-based artist **Brian Lobel** (2013 WOW Festival's *Carpe Minuta Prima*), San Diego-based artists **Mike Sears and Lisa Berger** (2019 WOW Festival's *How High the Moon*) and **Blindspot Collective** (2019 WOW Festival's *Hall Pass*); as well as internationally-renowned designer and **Playhouse 2020/21 Artist-in-Residence David Israel Reynoso** and his company **Optika Moderna** (WOW Festival's *Las Quinceañeras* and *Waking La Llorona*; Off-Broadway's *Sleep No More*).

The works by Blindspot Collective, Sears and Berger, and Reynoso/Optika Moderna are all **world-premiere La Jolla Playhouse commissions**. Tickets for these four projects will range from free to \$25. Dates and ticket information to be announced shortly.

"Our WOW series is extraordinarily well suited to this unprecedented moment when we're all sheltering in place, offering groundbreaking theatre that re-imagines the relationship between artist, audience and story in a virtual space," said **Christopher Ashley**, The Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse. "Each of these innovative works is essentially about human connection. At a time when we're physically unable to be together, they address how art can help people feel bonded in moving, inventive and deeply humane ways."

The virtual WOW series will feature **BINGE**, a one-on-one performance piece created by renowned artist **Brian Lobel & Friends** that takes the solitary experience of binge-watching television shows and transforms it into an opportunity to find comfort in the lives of fictional characters. Tailor-made to fit the life of each individual audience member, the performance offers a live Zoom session with a personal artist companion, resulting in the prescription of a classic television episode to provide a little bit of solace at home. Leave your own drama behind, and insert yourself into a world where whatever the drama, it'll probably be solved in under 30 minutes.

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**Blindspot Collective**, led by Co-Directors Blake McCarty and Catherine Hanna Schrock, is developing a new WOW piece entitled *Walks of Life*, an original, Playhouse-commissioned work of auditory theatre featuring short scenes by playwrights and composers from across the country. In the midst of a pandemic that fractures and isolates our communities, this aural experience offers the opportunity to safely and imaginatively reconnect with each other by bearing witness to life's intimate moments captured entirely in sound. Participants experience the piece while walking independently through their own neighborhoods, and over the course of three 30-minute parts, they are introduced to characters and stories that might be unfolding in the homes around them.

Blindspot Collective has also been named the Playhouse's **2020/2021 Resident Theatre Company**. Spearheaded by Ashley, the Playhouse's Resident Theatre Program aims to encourage the artistic development of local performing arts organizations, while advancing and contributing to the San Diego theatre scene as a whole. The program provides a temporary home each year to a local company without a permanent venue, including performance space, lighting and sound support, as well as marketing and development assistance.

Local artists **Mike Sears** and **Lisa Berger** are creating *Ancient*, a Playhouse-commissioned video installation that explores the relationship between repetition and meditation, the routine and the ancient. With an original score composed by Shawn Rohlf for cello, piano and guitar, text by Rainer Maria Rilke, and a company of nine actors, *Ancient* invites the audience to observe an unfolding of day-to-day tasks that have been in play for centuries. An opportunity to experience nothing happening -- and everything happening. A reminder that we have been here before and that somehow, we go on.

**David Israel Reynoso/Optika Moderna** is creating a one-of-a-kind Without Walls experience that takes audiences members on an inventive, multi-sensory virtual journey without ever leaving their living room. Following a set of clues, guests will unlock an online secret portal and meet Optika Moderna's mysterious opticians who will reveal their latest procedure: *Proyecto: Portaleza*. This kinetoscopic wormhole expedition will engage audiences' senses in unexpected ways. This world premiere will evoke all the visual lushness, theatrical surprise and one-on-one connection of Optika Moderna's acclaimed WOW pieces *Las Quinceañeras* and *Waking La Llorona*, re-envisioned through the lens of a digital space.

Since its inception in 2011, **Without Walls (WOW)** has become one of San Diego's most popular and acclaimed performance programs. This signature Playhouse initiative is designed to break the barriers of traditional theatre, offering immersive, site-inspired and digital works that venture beyond the physical confines of the Playhouse facilities. Over the last decade, the Playhouse has commissioned and presented a series of immersive and site-based productions at locations throughout the San Diego community, including *Susurrus* (2011) at the San Diego Botanical Garden, *The Car Plays: San Diego* (2012) in the Playhouse parking lot, *Sam Bendrix at the Bon Soir* (2012) at Martinis Above Fourth, *Accomplice: San Diego* (2013) in Little Italy, *El Henry* (2014) at SILO in Maker's Quarter, *The Grift at the Lafayette Hotel* (2015) in North Park, *The Bitter Game* (2016) at Writerz Blok, *What Happens Next* at the Challenged Athletes Foundation (2018), as well as four biennial WOW Festivals in 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2019.

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The virtual WOW series joins the Playhouse's previously-announced series of online content, including **LJP Vault**, a series of posts by staff members and artists sharing favorite Playhouse memories; **Artist Alley**, a collection of exciting artist-driven content, such as live master classes and rarely-heard cut songs from Playhouse musicals; and **Create & Learn** educational tools and fun at-home activities for educators, students and families. This digital content is available on the Playhouse website at [LaJollaPlayhouse.org](http://LaJollaPlayhouse.org), as well as on social media channels: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

### Artist Biographies

**Lisa Berger** is a freelance director, Meisner Teacher and Professor of Theatre. Her San Diego directing credits include *How High the Moon*, *The Car Plays: Incident Row* (La Jolla Playhouse WOW Festival); *The Car Plays: We Wait* (La Jolla Playhouse, Moving Arts); *Red Bike* (Moxie Theatre); *Red Truck, Blue Truck, When It Comes and Skelton Crew* (readings; The Old Globe); *The Moors*, *The Long Christmas Ride Home* (Patte Award) and *Looking for Normal* (Diversionary Theatre); *Parlour Song* (Backyard Renaissance); *A Beheading in Spokane* (Cygnet Theatre); *Ajax* (co-direct The Old Globe MFA program); *Metamorphoses* (San Diego City College); *Credible, The Secret in the Wings, Anatomy of Gray, Eurydice and A Streetcar Named Desire* (USD); *The Collector* (Animal Cracker Conspiracy); *Buried Child, Simpatico, Things We Want* (New Village Arts); *Killer Joe* (Compass Theatre - Patte Award). She received her M.F.A. from the University of Montana and is also a graduate of The William Esper Studio in New York City She currently teaches at Mira Costa College, City College and University of San Diego. She is co-artistic director of Meisner/Chekhov Integrated Training Studio.

**Blindspot Collective** develops radically inclusive programming that cultivates new work, emerging artists, and diverse audiences. The company develops transformative theatre that amplifies marginalized voices, illuminates untold stories, and energizes vulnerable communities in San Diego County. Since its founding in 2017, Blindspot Collective has collaborated with La Jolla Playhouse; The Old Globe; California Center for the Arts, Escondido; Diversionary Theatre; ARTS (A Reason to Survive); UC San Diego and other community partners to develop projects that meaningfully engage audiences and artists in the blindspot of society. The organization centers equity, inclusion, and pressing social issues in its work on and off stage with collaborators that include San Diego Unified School District, Juvenile Court and Community Schools, Cajon Valley Union School District, and Live Well San Diego. Most recently, Blindspot Collective was the first theatre company to be awarded a performing arts residency at the San Diego International Airport, where the organization developed and presented site-specific performances in 2019. The company has received acclaim for its original work, including *Hall Pass*, an immersive musical featured in the 2019 Without Walls Festival; *Qulili*, a documentary play based on the stories of local refugees developed with support from the Critical Refugee Studies Collective; *The Magic in this Soul*, a verbatim play about discrimination and resilience that won the Audience Favorite Award at the 2018 San Diego International Fringe Festival; and *Untold*, another verbatim play about mental illness that won the Dunn-Rankin Award for New Work at the 2017 San Diego Fringe. The company also develops interactive Forum Theatre for youth audiences, including *Safa's Story* and *Danny's Story*, which allow young people to consider the complexities of difference and prejudice. Those two productions have been seen by over 12,000 students in the past two years.

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[Brian Lobel](#) is a performer, teacher and curator who is interested in creating work about bodies and how they are watched, policed, poked, prodded and loved by others. His practice is most efficiently described as Former-American-Camp-Counselor-Turned-Performance-Artist, and his work has shown work internationally in a range of contexts from Sydney Opera House, to Harvard Medical School, to the National Theatre (London) and Lagos Theatre Festival, blending provocative humour with insightful reflection. Major projects include *BALL & Other Funny Stories About Cancer*, *Purge*, *Hold My Hand and We're Halfway There*, *Ruach*, *24 Italian Songs & Arias* and *Cruising for Art* which have been presented in over 25 countries internationally. Brian has received commissions and grants from the Wellcome Trust, Complicite Jerwood, and Arts Council England, among others and is the author of *Theatre & Cancer* (2019). Brian is a Professor of Theatre & Performance at Rose Bruford College, an Artist in Residence at King's College, the co-founder of The Sick of the Fringe and a Winner on the tv show *Come Dine With Me*. The highlight of Brian's professional career was being featured on the #EveryOutfitonSATC instagram account, to which Sarah Jessica Parker herself wrote "Wait, what?"

[David Israel Reynoso](#) is a scenic/costume designer and the creator, with **Optika Moderna**, of La Jolla Playhouse's acclaimed Without Walls Festival productions of *Las Quinceañeras* (2019) and *Waking La Llorona* (2017). Other Playhouse designs include: *Queens*, *At the Old Place*, *Tiger Style!*, *Healing Wars*, *The Darrell Hammond Project* and *Kingdom City*. He is also recognized locally for his designs of The Old Globe's *Ebenezer Scrooge's Big San Diego Christmas Show*, *As You Like It*, *The Tempest*, *The Wanderers*, *tokyo fish story*, *Twelfth Night*, *Arms and the Man*, *Water by the Spoonful* and *Time and the Conways*, among others. The Obie Award-winning costume designer of *Sleep No More* (New York and Shanghai), Mr. Reynoso's other selected work includes: *Hamlet* at ACT and *Futurity*, *Cabaret*, *The Snow Queen*, *Alice vs. Wonderland* at ART. He is the recipient of the Creative Catalyst Grant of The San Diego Foundation, an Elliot Norton Award, a Craig Noel Award nomination and multiple IRNE and BroadwayWorld Award nominations.

**Mike Sears'** plays include *Red Truck/Blue Truck*, *How High the Moon* (Craig Noel Award nomination, Best New Play), *Cowhead*, *The Corpse Bride*, *The Pied Piper: A Punk Rock Musical* and *Felt*. Mike's work has been developed by The Old Globe, Cygnet Theatre, Muscle and Bone Co. His play *How High the Moon* was recently produced by La Jolla Playhouse for their 2019 WOW Festival. Awards include The 2015 San Diego Creative Catalyst Grant (\$20,000 prize) to write *How High the Moon*, The Cygnet Theatre Finishing Line Commission, The Old Globe Playwrights Commission and SD Actors Alliance Best of the Fest Award. He is a member of The Playwrights Center and The Dramatists Guild. He earned a B.F.A. in Acting from The University of Montana and the Maggie Flanagan Studio in New York City.

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**La Jolla Playhouse** is a place where artists and audiences come together to create what's new and next in the American theatre, from Tony Award-winning productions, to imaginative programs for young audiences, to interactive experiences outside our theatre walls. Founded in 1947 by Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire and Mel Ferrer, the Playhouse is currently led by Tony Award winner Christopher Ashley, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse, and Managing Director Debby Buchholz. The Playhouse is internationally renowned for the development of new plays and musicals, including mounting 105 world premieres, commissioning 52 new works, and sending 33 productions to Broadway – including the hit musical *Come From Away* – garnering a total of 38 Tony Awards, as well as the 1993 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre.

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