**Working Theater** is dedicated to producing new plays *for* and *about* working people.*

Our 31st Season ran from September 2015 to June 2016 and featured the development, workshopping, and production of new plays specifically aimed at reaching our audience of working men and women.

This year we continued our Five Boroughs/One City Initiative, working with over 70 theater artists and serving over 2000 audience members across the 5 boroughs of NYC.

*working people refers to the wage and salaried workers of modest means working in factories, stores, offices, hospitals, classrooms, and other workplaces throughout America*
LETTER FROM THE PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Working Theater’s 31st Season saw the first full touring production to come out of our Five Boroughs/One City Initiative. The initiative, launched during our 30th year, is creating new pieces of theater in collaboration with venue partners and members of the community in neighborhoods in each of the five boroughs of NYC. We will premiere each of the remaining plays off-Broadway and then tour to the boroughs. This year’s production, *The Block*, originated in the Bronx and was written by Dan Hoyle and directed by Tamilla Woodard. Our community and venue partners were CASA, a housing rights group, and New Settlement Community Apartments, a housing development in the Highbridge section of the Bronx.

On June 23rd at 8pm I stood in a large barn-like room at Snug Harbor Cultural Center in Staten Island that we had converted into a theater for the final performance of our borough tour of *The Block*. I gave my final curtain speech of the run to a house of 18 people. I was actually encouraged by the turnout in Staten Island. Most of the people in the audience lived on Staten Island and heard about the production through word of mouth. For the Five Boroughs project to reach its potential we have to keep showing up, keep engaging with our communities and keep bringing great theater to neighborhoods of working people throughout New York City. The Bronx performances of the tour were filled with community members eager to see their stories come to life onstage. We played to sold out houses there, in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens, and I know it is only a matter of time before our Staten Island audiences reach the same numbers. A hit with critics and audiences alike, *The Block*, was an ideal piece to kick-off the multi-year commitment to serving working people in the areas of New York City where they live.

Our 31st Season culminated in the production of *The Block* but was full of many more projects and activities which you can read about in subsequent pages of this report. We spent time in Bushwick working on Ed Cardona Jr.’s *Bamboo in Brooklyn*, directed by Ana Margineanu, hosting community story circles, an extended intergenerational theater workshop, and a staged reading of the play for those community members who helped generate material for Ed and Ana. We spent afternoons on the South Shore of Staten Island meeting with members of the community that Chisa Hutchinson’s play *Breaking Bread* is about. And playwright Dan Hoyle led our TheaterWorks! class (which teaches working people to write and perform their own short plays) to members of CASA in the Bronx. Outside of the Five Boroughs Initiative, we were able to host a reading series of a trio of works by three extraordinary theater makers: Kathryn Hamilton of Sister Sylvester, Emma Weinstein and Stefanie Zadravec.

As always I am extremely grateful to Working Theater’s Board of Directors for enthusiastically embracing the Five Boroughs/One City project. I am equally grateful to all the artists involved, my partner and the Artistic Director of the project, the insanely talented Tamilla Woodard, and our extraordinary venue partners for taking the leap with us. But, none of this work could happen without the support of YOU: our sponsors, contributors, audience members and volunteers. Thank you for partnering with us in creating theater for and about working people and presenting it in communities where working people live. I look forward to sharing our plays about Queens, Brooklyn, Manhattan and Staten Island with you in subsequent seasons.

- Mark Plesent, Producing Artistic Director
BROOKLYN

STAGED READING:

BAMBOO IN BROOKLYN

by Ed Cardona, Jr.
directed by Ana Margineanu

with Edna Lee Figueroa, Nic Grelli, José Melián, Tyrien Obahnjoko, Michelle RanSui, Reza Salazar

commissioned by Working Theater as part of its Five Boroughs/One City Initiative

February 26, 2016
at RBSCC’s 10 Forrest Community Room, Bushwick, Brooklyn

Bushwick was recently mentioned in Vogue magazine as one of the 15 hippest neighborhoods in the world. While for the long-term residents it has never been hip, it has definitely always been home. Cardona’s play weaves a traditional narrative with a surreal exploration of gentrification inspired by the psychedelic murals that cover the walls of this suddenly trendy neighborhood.

Special thanks to Supporters and Friends of Bamboo in Brooklyn who contributed their time and stories:

Richard Rathburn ∙ Claudio Aukaman ∙ Dennis Flores Furee ∙ Maya Meissner ∙ Jonathan Auch Kweighbye
Sergeant Kevin Bryan ∙ Brigette Blood ∙ Sonia Rivera ∙ Alexander Morales ∙ Kenneth Kern ∙ Jeanette Wright ∙ Ingrid Sylvester
Vijai Bissesar ∙ Ana Nogueira ∙ Father Jorge Ortiz-Garay ∙ Dasic Fernandez ∙ Narcissa Ruiz ∙ Father Kelly
Salvation Army Community Center ∙ Angela Battaglia ∙ Liz Aponte ∙ Charlie Maldonado ∙ Francis Blacklock

and to Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council and the staff and crew at 10 Forrest.

Mural by Owen Dipple.
You are invited to the Gibilisco Family Reunion dinner! Join us for this immersive event which explores community, family ties and racial tension. Come hungry – baked ziti is on the menu!
STAGED READING: TO THE BONE

written & directed by Lisa Ramirez

with Juliana Aiden, Lucca Damilano, Annie Henk, Bobby Plasencia, Lisa Ramirez, Elizabeth Ramos, Gerardo Rodriguez, Chris Stack, Andrea Thome

commissioned by Working Theater

March 7, 2016

at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, Manhattan

Inspired by actual interviews with immigrant workers in the poultry processing plants of upstate NY, To the Bone examines the very nature of equality and justice in contemporary America through the eyes of five women whose migration to the U.S. in search of a better life brings its own test of the human spirit.
MANHATTAN
READING SERIES OF NEW PLAYS

April 2016 at the Dorothy Strelsin Theatre, Manhattan

THE MAIDS’ THE MAIDS
created by Sister Sylvester
directed by Kathryn Hamilton
co-written and performed by Giovanna Almeida, Laudiceia Calixto,
Kathryn Hamilton, Rebeca Medina, Rita Oliveira
object design by Juan Betancurth lighting design by Bruce Steinberg dramaturgy by Jeremy M. Barker
translation & surtitle operation Vanessa Bretas, Stephen S. Chacon
previously developed & performed by Terence Mintern, Isabel Sanchez, Sofia Ortega
first performed at Abrons Arts Center

In The Maids’ The Maids, director Kathryn Hamilton and Sister Sylvester company members have partnered with domestic household workers in New York City to devise a response to Jean Genet’s notorious 1947 one-act The Maids.

THE BOAT
by Stefanie Zadravec
directed by Daniella Topol
commissioned by Working Theater
with Nadia Bowers, Leeanne Hutchison, Ted Koch, Sam Lilja, Danny Wolohan
stage directions read by Marisela Gonzalez, stage managed by Mae Frankeberger

Set during the unemployment crisis following the 2008 economic collapse, The Boat follows two brothers who struggle financially and emotionally to keep their families afloat after a factory shutdown puts an end to economic prospects in their Upstate NY town.

COME MY BELOVED
created & directed by Emma Weinstein
dramaturgy by Jeremy Stoller
with Francesca Choy-Kee, Hannah Hodson, Michael Micalizzi, Caitlin Morris, Emily Shoolin, Justin Weaks
stage directions read by Jonathan Draxton, stage managed by Mae Frankeberger

An exploration of Black and Jewish romantic relationships from the 1930’s to now, Come My Beloved looks at intimate and familial love as a way of understanding how race has both separated and united us over time.
THE BALLAD OF ELLA MAY
at the IBEW LOCAL 3 WOMEN’S CONFERENCE
written by Cori Thomas
music by Julia Barry
lyrics by Julia Barry, Cori Thomas, Ella May Wiggins
directed by Stephen Brown-Fried
music direction by Julia Barry, costume design by Nicole Slaven
with Bridget Beirne, Kimberly JaJuan, Sabina Petra
accompanist Max Mamon
stage manager Will Rucker

May 23, 2016 at IBEW Local 3, Electchester, Queens

Commissioned by Working Theater and IBEW Local 3, The Ballad of Ella May is a mini-
musical about the life of 1920’s textile worker, balladier and union organizer Ella May Wiggins.
OFF-BROADWAY PREMIERE & BOROUGH TOUR

THE BLOCK

by Dan Hoyle

directed by Tamilla Woodard

developed with Tamilla Woodard and Maureen Towey

with Yvette Ganier, Nathan Hinton, Robert Jimenez, Clinton Lowe, Flaco Navaja

commissioned by Working Theater as part of its Five Boroughs/One City Initiative

May 28 – June 11: Urban Stages, Manhattan
June 13 – 14: Ridgewood Bushwick Youth Center, Brooklyn
June 16 – 17: Local 3 IBEW Auditorium, Queens
June 18 – 19: Pregones Theater, Bronx
June 21 & 23: Snug Harbor Cultural Center, Staten Island

Set Design Raul Abrego · Costume Design Sarita Fellows · Lighting Design Alan C. Edwards
Sound Design: Mark Van Hare · Props Design Claire Kavanah · Dialect Coach Beth McGuire
Production Stage Manager Danielle Teague-Daniels · Assistant Stage Manager Genevieve Ortiz
Production Manager Tony Crawford · Associate Production Manager Randi Rivera
Casting Support Annie Henk · Press Representation Dan Demello
Dontrell’s just come back from upstate, no, not like Upstate upstate, just with his girl, you know, quiet workin’ man life. Now he’s back on his block in the Boogie Down, the South Bronx, where he did his dirt years back, but he’s not tryin’ to be grimy no more. Nah man, he’s trying to do good. But do you have any idea what that’s really like?

Based on conversations and interviews over two years in the South Bronx and with members of CASA, a project of New Settlement Community Apartments, comes a play that will change the way you look at New York.

The Block was made possible with funds from the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, the Howard Gilman Foundation, the Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation, the Shubert Foundation, and the One World Fund. Performances of The Block in Queens were generously supported by a grant from City Council Member Rory Lancman, facilitated through New York City’s Department of Cultural Affairs.

Working Theater would also like to thank Joe Docetti and Local 3 IBEW for their donation of pipe and drape, and Jose Vargas and the Bronx UFT for their donation of sound and lighting equipment for our borough-wide tour of The Block.

Special thanks to our borough presenting partners: Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council & Ridgewood Bushwick Youth Center, IBEW Local 3, Pregones Theater and Snug Harbor Cultural Center.

And thank you to all of the CASA Members and Bronx Residents who shared their stories for The Block.
In our 31st Season, we hosted our 16-week playwriting and performance class for members of CASA in the South Bronx. Students wrote and performed in their own short plays alongside a professional playwright, a professional director & professional actors. The final performance also featured an excerpt from Working Theater’s 2016 production, Dan Hoyle’s *The Block*.

**Final Performance: Thursday, January 21, 2016 at Pregones Theater, Bronx**

**THE PLAYS:**

*Two People Go To Vote* by **Joseph Cepeda**  
*Steps* by **Althea Matthews**  
*The Transit* by **Joseph Smalls**  
*Smudge* by **Stephanie Londono**  
*A Walk in the Park* by **Porfirio Caraballo**

TheaterWorks! Instructor/Director: **Dan Hoyle**  
Guest actors: **Yvette Ganier, Clinton Lowe, Flaco Navaja**  
TheaterWorks! Stage Manager/Producing Intern: **Haley Wolf**

The 2016 TheaterWorks! Program was co-sponsored by CASA and Working Theater  
**Susanna Blankley**, Director, CASA | **Sheila Garcia**, Deputy Director, CASA

Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA) is a membership driven tenant organizing project of New Settlement Apartments that works primarily in the Southwest Bronx whose mission is to protect and maintain affordable and safe housing through collective action.

The TheaterWorks! Program is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, and the Axe Houghton Foundation.
Working Theater partnered with the Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council in Bushwick, Brooklyn to engage the community in workshops, readings and full productions. In addition to the reading of Ed Cardona, Jr.’s *Bamboo in Brooklyn* and the touring production of Dan Hoyle’s *The Block*, we presented:

**STORY CIRCLES**

*November - December 2015*

moderated by Reza Salazar and Yadira de la Riva

We hosted 3 sessions of story circles within the community centers of the RBSCC, where residents came together to share stories, hopes and dreams, and to reflect on the meaning of community.

**INTER-GENERATIONAL THEATER WORKSHOP**

*March 5th - 12th, 2016*

facilitated by Tamilla Woodard

Young adults between the ages of 13 – 19 and seniors 65 or better were invited to a workshop where participants wrote, interviewed and dialogued to create a collaborative original play.

Photos of the Inter-Generational Theater Workshop at RBSCC by David Crespo.
2016 ANNUAL AWARDS CEREMONY

honoring EDISON SEVERINO
Business Manager, LiUNA Local 78
for bridging the gap between the arts, labor & community

May 9th, 2016 at 6pm
at Sardi’s Restaurant

featuring cocktails, dinner, dessert, Silent Auction and a “feel good auction” (in which participants bid to donate tickets to community members for our touring production of The Block) and entertainment featuring a selection of musical numbers from the Ballad of Ella May and a performance excerpt from The Block.

Thanks to all who supported the 2016 Annual Awards Ceremony:

VIP Tables:
Asbestos, Lead & Hazardous Waste Laborers Local 78 • Belluck & Fox
Cigna • Greater New York LECET • Laborers Eastern Region Organizing Fund

Patron Tables
Mason Tenders District Council • United Federation of Teachers

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* member, Working Theater Board of Directors

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Our generous friends and volunteers:
Cheryl Asher • Rodger Belknap • Shayna Carney • Connie Coddington
Grace Côté • Zachary Moody • Susan Wilson

2016 Annual Awards Ceremony photos by Grace Côté.
SUPPORTERS

Working Theater is extremely grateful to all who have supported our 31st Season!
(FY 2015 to date: July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016)
We would also like to give special thanks to those who participated in our new “Financial Resilience Campaign”. Started with a generous $20,000 grant from the Howard Gilman Foundation, individuals and companies who participated in this campaign donated above and beyond their general annual donation to create a new fund specifically to reduce debt and establish a cash reserve for the company.

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The Working Theater Co., Inc
Fiscal Year 2015: July 2015 to June 2016

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SPECIAL THANKS

to our friends and volunteers who donated their time and resources this season:
Cheryl Asher, Rodger Belknap, Sarah Levine, Rebecca Martinez,
Zack Moody, Laura Carbonell Monarque, Dina Vovsi, Susan Wilson

Working Theater is a member of the Alliance of Resident Theatres / New York,
the service organization for New York City’s non-profit off- and off-off-Broadway theaters,
and Theatre Communications Group

Working Theater’s programs are sponsored in part by public funds from
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with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature
and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs,
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Major institutional funding provided by the Howard Gilman Foundation, the One World Fund,
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2016 subsidized rehearsal studio space provided by the A.R.T. / New York Creative Space Grant.