

'Writing' Exciting at Brown U

Now in its third year, the Writing is Live Festival at Brown University is an exciting opportunity to see a number of works in progress. Most importantly, the Festival will be the only time all of Brown's graduate students come together on a shared project, featuring six plays by writers in Brown's graduate and undergraduate theater programs. The Festival fosters the development and evolution of these artists and their works, focusing on collaboration and the meaning of text in performance.



One new play reading will be *Liquorland*, written and directed by Laura Colella, who says she applied to Brown so she could "shake up" her approach to writing while being exposed to new ideas and influences. "This has certainly come to pass, and another rewarding facet of the program has been the ability to workshop material with actors from the Brown/Trinity consortium, and on occasion, from the ART Institute in Cambridge."

"Writing Is Live has given me the chance to workshop my play with 10 actors almost daily for a couple of weeks, which is very luxurious," Colella says. "Working in film, I'm used to rushing. I've also always written and directed my films, and have carried that over into play-writing directing. It's interesting to see how the roles feel a little different in a theatrical context."

Colella's *Liquorland* is an adaptation of a screenplay that she adapted from a book, *The Republic of Wine* by Mo Yan. "It's pretty wild, funny and edgy, and reflects on certain anxieties of our time with a sort of warped mirror. It's about exquisite liquors, damaged heroes, and the decline of western civilization."

A playwright who will be seeing her play receive a workshop production at the Festival is Margaret Namulyanga, who is from Uganda.

"Coming to Brown andAmericamade me excited about my academic pursuits and nervous at the same time. I was nervous about how I was going to cope in a new environment," she says, adding that writing at Brown helped her to "break out of my African shell, made me more open minded and enthusiastic about my career as a writer as well as the affairs of the world."

"The MFA program has offered me a great opportunity to find my voice while I explore and question my position in the world," Namulyanga says. Of the Festival, she says, "This festival is not only a supportive environment for me as a writer, it's a window that helps me see what the theater world outside school will be like, while giving me an opportunity to showcase my potential at the same time."

Her play, *He Is Here He Says I Say*, was born out of a short poem she wrote during her first year in America. It is, she says, "a response to the inner and subtle consciousness women have about gender-based violence." She considers it a play that tackles a global problem, violence against women, using local experiences.

"The play's overriding message is express yourself," she says. Much of this message is based on what she has seen in her native culture, where women are not often able to speak up, to express themselves. "Words have a disarming power, I believe and I think that is why freedom of speech for women is not entirely granted in some cultures."

Writing is Live, runs Feb 3-12 at Brown