



Zora Howard
(photo: Jason Zeren);
Andrew Rincón
(photo: Mike
Petrie Jr.); Lucas
Baisch (photo:
Haley Schwartz)

Up Front

EMERGENCE

Tom Sellar and Ashley M. Thomas

This issue of *Theater* presents three new plays by so-called emerging playwrights—meaning (in the professional parlance of literary offices and grant makers) that to date the authors have enjoyed relatively few full productions on America’s institutional stages. The adjective *emerging*, perhaps once useful as a rough indicator of career trajectory, is often thrown around too casually: it doesn’t serve the many artists who have honed their craft in less conventional spaces or who understandably eschew the standard development process (reading, workshop, studio staging, etc.). Industry people also sometimes use the term to imply, falsely, that such playwrights are somehow still finding their artistic footing, even though many new dramatists embrace bolder and more intricate expressions than “mid-career” or “established” authors.

The three plays collected here testify to the richness that can be found in “emergence.” Zora Howard’s play *THE MASTER’S TOOLS* uses the mythic stage character of Tituba to evoke the brutality suffered under American chattel slavery and raise the possibility of vengeance. Lucas Baisch’s kaleidoscopic piece *On the Y-Axis* contemplates the dark and bewildering contents of a terrorist cell’s hard drive. In his play *I Wanna Fuck like Romeo and Juliet*, Andrew Rincón, too, delves into mythology, supporting a vision of love as chaotic and uncategorizable. While a great deal of this work was developed at a time before most of us could fathom the societal shift now at hand, these writings are representative of all that we’ve experienced and seen. Evidence of the hopeful world we’re all reaching for can be seen in the past, present, and future forecast in these plays. We, too, are emerging—into a new time.

It is often believed that works created for the stage are meant to be seen and not read. Reading each play, for us, was an act of care for both the writers and the stories they offer with social commitment and personal vulnerability.

By presenting these three works—the product of a summer’s reading of new writing—we hope to call attention to the exciting new generation of American voices on their way to the large stages and publics their work deserves.