

# HAMPTONS FILM

## HAMPTONSFILM ANNOUNCES SELECTED SCREENWRITERS, SCREENPLAYS & MENTORS FOR 23rd EDITION OF THE SCREENWRITERS LAB

Mentors Include Award-Winning Filmmakers Ekwa Msangi (FAREWELL AMOR), David Hinojosa (PAST LIVES), and Samuel D. Hunter (THE WHALE)

Lab to Take Place April 14-16, 2023

**East Hampton, NY (March 28, 2023)** – HamptonsFilm, home of Hamptons International Film Festival, announced today the selected fellows, screenplays and mentors for the 23<sup>rd</sup> edition of their annual Screenwriters Lab, which will take place April 14-16, 2023.

The three selected screenplays for 2023's Lab are "Theory of Colors" by Shehrezad Maher, "Blue Boy" by Tyler Riggs, and "Arc" by Keisha Rae Witherspoon and Jason Fitzroy Jeffers. The Lab pairs rising screenwriters with established screenwriters, directors, and creative-producers for a weekend of one-on-one mentoring sessions.

"It is with great honor and excitement that we are able to help foster emerging talent through the intimate one-on-one mentorship program provided within our Screenwriters Lab for the 23<sup>rd</sup> year in a row," said HamptonsFilm Artistic Director David Nugent. "We look forward to hosting our talented slate of writers and mentors as part of our year-round programming here at HamptonsFilm."

This year's mentors include producer and 2AM's Founding Partner and Head of Production **David Hinojosa** whose most recent work includes Halina Reijn's BODIES BODIES BODIES, Billy Porter's ANYTHING'S POSSIBLE and Celine Song's upcoming PAST LIVES; award-winning filmmaker **Ekwa Msangi**, known for her award-winning and critically acclaimed feature film FAREWELL AMOR, which premiered in competition at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival; and **Samuel D. Hunter**, a MacArthur Genius Grant-awarded playwright and screenwriter best known for his award-winning full-length plays, including *The Whale* (which he adapted into the film directed by Darren Aronofsky and starring Brendan Fraser, who won an Oscar for his performance), *A Case for the Existence of God*, and *A Bright New Boise*.

HamptonsFilm also announced that **Shehrezad Maher** and her project "Theory of Colors" is the recipient of the 2023 Melissa Mathison Fund. The fund was established in 2016 and named for the late, beloved Oscar®-nominated screenwriter, and strives to foster the continued development of female writers in the industry. Previous recipients include **Farida Zahran's "The Leftover Ladies," Lana Wilson's "Back Seat," Kelly O'Sullivan's "Mouse," Kirsten Tan's "Higher," Aemilia Scott's "The Birthday Suit," Annabelle Attanasio's "Mickey And The Bear,"** and **Cathy Yan's "Dead Pigs."**

"Each year we look forward to the unique and valuable experience offered by our Screenwriters Lab which helps to amplify new voices in screenwriting," said HamptonsFilm Executive Director Anne Chaisson. "We are especially proud to have honored eight female screenwriters with the Melissa Mathison Award. These screenwriters get the added bonus of mentorship for a whole year, plus a live audience screenplay reading in New York City each winter, with a casting director and professional actors."

Highlights of the Screenwriters Lab over the past 23 years have included Andrew Semans'

RESURRECTION, starring Rebecca Hall and Tim Roth, which premiered at the 2022 Sundance Film Festival; Michael Tyburski and Ben Nabors' THE SOUND OF SILENCE, starring Peter Sarsgaard and Rashida Jones, which premiered at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival; Ísold Uggadóttir's AND BREATHE NORMALLY and Christina Choe's NANCY, which both premiered at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival and received awards for directing and screenwriting, respectively; Destin Daniel Cretton's SHORT TERM 12, starring Academy Award®-winning actors Brie Larson and Rami Malek, which won the Grand Jury and Audience Awards at SXSW in 2013; and Sara Colangelo's LITTLE ACCIDENTS, which premiered at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival, starring Elizabeth Banks and Chloe Sevigny.

Photos of this year's mentors and participants are available [here](#). For more information on this program, please visit the [HamptonsFilm website](#). The 31st annual Hamptons International Film Festival will take place October 6-15, 2023.

## **SCREENPLAYS**

### **"Theory of Colors" by Shehrezad Maher**

**Logline:** During preparations to sell their home where a tragic loss occurred many years ago, a disaffected teenager tries to reconstruct her past while an unlikely memory shadows her father. As one pursues and another flees closure, continuing as spectators of their own lives becomes increasingly untenable.

**Bio:** Born and raised in Karachi, Pakistan, Shehrezad Maher has screened her films at institutions and festivals such as Visions du Réel, RIDM, the LA Film Forum, Anthology Film Archives, UnionDocs, and Experiments in Cinema. Her work has been reviewed by publications such as Sight & Sound, Afterimage, POV Magazine, and Scroll, among others. Her feature film script, "Theory of Colors," was selected for Filmshop's works-in-progress workshop (Spring '23), made the second round of the Sundance Screenwriters Lab, and was a finalist for the Athena Film Festival Writers Lab. She is currently a nominee for the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage Fellowship program. She studied visual arts at Bennington College and earned an MFA from Yale University, where she was awarded the Blair Dickinson Memorial Prize.

### **"Blue Boy" by Tyler Riggs**

**Logline:** Insecure New Jersey bodybuilder Joey Rossi, aka Joey Muscles Marinara, has always been too small to qualify for Nationals, but when he starts abusing steroids in a last-ditch effort to go pro, he risks destroying every relationship he has while making a fool of himself every step of the way.

**Bio:** Tyler Riggs grew up outside of Tampa, Florida. At 21, he moved to New York and began his acting training under William Esper. After graduating from the Esper Studio, Riggs headed west to Los Angeles, where he started booking roles in low-budget features. It wasn't until he wrote and produced his first short film that he realized his interests lie behind the camera. After producing and starring alongside Rachel Brosnahan in the award-winning indie feature BOOMTOWN, Riggs directed his first feature, GOD'S WAITING ROOM, which premiered at the 2021 Tribeca Film Festival, where its lead actor, Matthew Leone, won Best Actor. His second feature, PEACE IN THE VALLEY, premiered at the 2022 Tribeca Film Festival and had its international premiere at Deauville Film Festival in France. BLUE BOY, the short film adapted from Riggs' feature screenplay, had its world premiere in 2023 at the prestigious Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival.

### **"Arc" by Keisha Rae Witherspoon and Jason Fitzroy Jeffers**

**Logline:** As a major hurricane looms, an alienated young hustler seeking answers about his mother's disappearance finds solace in a mysterious woman who seizes his town promising extraterrestrial salvation.

**Keisha Rae Witherspoon Bio:** Keisha Rae Witherspoon is a Miami-born filmmaker and artist whose work elevates unseen, unheralded black life and concern for the natural environment. Her most recent short film “T” screened at BlackStar Film Festival, Sundance Film Festival and Berlinale, where it won the 2020 Golden Bear for Best Short Film. “T” and her experimental short “1968<2018>2068” are currently streaming on The Criterion Channel. Keisha was one of *Filmmaker Magazine's* "25 New Faces of Independent Film" in 2020, is a 2022 USA Fellow, and is the inaugural recipient of the Lynn Shelton “Of a Certain Age” grant. She is co-founder and former creative director of Third Horizon Film Festival. Keisha is currently working on her feature-length directorial debut.

**Jason Fitzroy Jeffers Bio:** Jason Fitzroy Jeffers is a filmmaker from Barbados whose work focuses on giving rooted and nuanced voice to the Caribbean, pockets of subtropical Black life across the American South, and other marginalized, equatorial, Afro-diasporic spaces. He has produced award-winning short films that have screened at festivals such as Sundance Film Festival, BlackStar, and TIFF. More recently, he co-directed the short film DROWNING BY SUNRISE for The Intercept, and produced “T”, the 2020 winner of the Golden Bear for Best Short Film at Berlinale. He is a co-founder and former co-executive director of Third Horizon Film Festival, a showcase of cinema from the Caribbean, its diaspora, and the Global South. Jeffers is a 2023 USA fellow, and prior to his work in film, was a journalist with *The Miami Herald* and other South Florida publications.

## **MENTORS**

### **David Hinojosa**

David Hinojosa is Founding Partner and Head of Production at 2AM. David spent over a decade at Christine Vachon’s iconic award-winning production company Killer Films. While at Killer, he developed such titles as the Academy Award-winning STILL ALICE and Todd Haynes’ CAROL, which premiered in competition at the Cannes Film Festival and received six Academy Award nominations. Hinojosa’s producing credits include Janicza Bravo’s ZOLA, Todd Solondz’ WIENER DOG, Josephine Decker’s SHIRLEY, Brady Corbet’s VOX LUX, Miguel Arteta’s BEATRIZ AT DINNER and Paul Schrader’s FIRST REFORMED. Hinojosa’s most recent work includes Halina Reijn’s BODIES BODIES BODIES, Billy Porter’s ANYTHING’S POSSIBLE and Celine Song’s upcoming PAST LIVES. He is Co-Vice Chair of the Producers Guild of America East and Chair of the Independent Producer’s Task Force, and he lectures at New York University’s prestigious Tisch School of the Arts Graduate Film Program. Prior to Killer, Hinojosa worked at The Weinstein Company.

### **Ekwa Msangi**

Ekwa’s award-winning and critically acclaimed feature film FAREWELL AMOR premiered in competition at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival, garnering 98% on Rotten Tomatoes. The film won the Sundance Amazon Producer’s Award and the NYWIFT Directing Award, amongst other distinctions, and was bought for distribution by IFC Films for North America, MUBI and Netflix for Worldwide. Previous to that, Ekwa has written and directed several shorts, including the award-winning comedy SOKO SONKO (The Market King), and FAREWELL MEU AMOR, starring Tony Award nominee Sahr Ngauja, and Nana Mensah. For FAREWELL AMOR Ekwa was awarded the NYWIFT Director’s Award, the 2020 Durban International Film Festival award for Best Screenplay, and the 2021 Indie Spirit “Someone To Watch” Award. Recent awards include 2020 Sundance Momentum Fellow, 2020 BAFTA Breakthrough, 2022 USA Artist Fellow, and 2022-2024 ReFrame Rise Director. One of Ekwa’s key goals as an artist is to transform our society’s images and relationships with African cultures, and to empower African filmmakers in telling their stories.

### **Samuel D. Hunter**

Samuel D. Hunter grew up in Moscow, Idaho, and lives in New York City. His full-length plays include *The Whale* (Drama Desk Award, Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Play, GLAAD Media Award, Drama League and Outer Critics Circle nominations for Best Play), *A Case for the Existence of God* (New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award for Best Play), *A Bright New Boise* (Obie Award, Drama Desk nomination for Best Play), *Greater Clements* (Drama Desk nomination for Best Play, Outer Critics Circle Honoree), *Lewiston/Clarkston*

(Drama Desk nomination for Best Play), *The Few, A Great Wilderness, Rest, Pocatello, The Healing, and The Harvest*, among others. The film version of THE WHALE, directed by Darren Aronofsky and starring Brendan Fraser, was nominated for a 2023 BAFTA Award for Best Adapted Screenplay and received three 2023 Oscar Nominations and two wins. He was also a writer and producer on all four seasons of FX's *Baskets*. He is the recipient of a 2014 MacArthur "Genius Grant" Fellowship, a 2012 Whiting Writers Award and an honorary doctorate from the University of Idaho. His work has been produced Off Broadway in New York City by Lincoln Center Theatre, Playwrights Horizons, LCT3, Signature Theatre, Page 73 Productions, Clubbed Thumb, and Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre. Elsewhere, his work has been produced by Theatre Royal Bath, Dallas Theatre Center, Seattle Rep, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, South Coast Rep, and Victory Gardens, among others. Two published anthologies of his work are available from TCG Books, and a third is forthcoming. He is a member of New Dramatists and a current Resident Playwright at the Signature Theatre in New York City. He holds degrees in playwriting from NYU, The Iowa Playwrights Workshop, and Juilliard.

### **ABOUT HAMPTONSFILM**

HamptonsFilm, home of the Hamptons International Film Festival (HIFF), based in the Hamptons on the Eastern End of Long Island, was founded in 1992 to celebrate the art of film and to introduce a unique and varied spectrum of international films and filmmakers to our audiences. A non-profit organization with year-round screenings of global narrative and documentary films, an annual Screenwriters Lab, a summer documentary showcase, and extensive educational initiatives, HamptonsFilm offers programs that enlighten, educate, and provide invaluable exposure for filmmakers, while also providing the East End of Long Island with an educational and cultural experience that enriches the lives of its citizens and contributes to the local economy. HIFF, celebrating its 31st year, is an annual premiere film event in New York State, and an intimate showcase of some of the year's best offerings in contemporary cinema from around the world. Awarding prizes to filmmakers in cash and goods and services of over \$130,000, each year, with over \$5 million awarded in competition funds and services over the decades, our program continues to play an important role during awards season. For more information, please visit [hamptonsfilmfest.org](http://hamptonsfilmfest.org).

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