The Best Plays Theater Yearbook 2006 and Playwrights 2006, the 7th volume in our annual series of anthologies, is due for release February 2006. This new collection will introduce you to some of the seasons best new plays and playwrights that challenge the status quo of American life, that push the boundaries and definitions of traditional theatrical form, that explore and reflect that which we live. These plays, produced at venues such as Dixon Place, La MaMa, the American Living Room, Ice Factory, and the New York International Fringe Festival, are the work of dedicated young American playwrights. This volume you find two one-acts written by Alan Brody, and a pair of one-acts that offer contrasting views on family values and personal relationships. These two, compact, one-acts that demonstrate the power of the ten-minute play, and two pieces that confront the alienation and dehumanization that afflict our high-tech society. (See enclosed for more details.) Plays and Playwrights 2006 will also include, for the first time, NEW FEATURE as an appendix. This section is a directory of new American plays produced in New York City which will provide a detailed view of the vitality and diversity of American dramatic literature. This should prove an invaluable resource to all those interested in current drama, indispensable to academics, producing organizations, theatre goers, and historians.

In 1989 Susan Johann was hired to photograph Christopher Durang for a magazine article about his play Naomi in Her Living Room. The playwright was known for his outrageous comedy, so Johan anticipated a session with another wild, young eccentric. To her surprise, the man who came to her studio was mild mannered and buttoned down. Johann found this twofold captivating, and it was then that this project was born. Over the ensuing twenty-year period, she photographed more than ninety playwrights, including many winners of the Pulitzer Prize and other prestigious awards. Johann photographed Wendy Wasserstein, Anna Deavere Smith, August Wilson, and Nilo Cruz in the weeks after they won the Pulitzer. Tony Kushner sat for his portrait between the productions of part 1 and part 2 of Angels in America, Eve Ensler came to Johann’s studio during the week she was previewing her famous one-woman show, The Vagina Monologues, and George C. Wolfe for her theremorning after his play Spunk opened at the Public Theater. Each playwright was photographed in Johann’s studio using the same film, a single light, and a Plain backdrop, creating a portrait that captures and distills something essential—an intimate view. Her interviews with the writers’ personal and creative journeys including their inspirations, roadblocks, and obstacles, which influenced their work on paper and on stage. Even those who know Edward Albee’s plays intimately, for example, may be surprised by his incisive wit and formidable voice as revealed in his interview with Johann. Beyond the book, Focus on Playwrights is also a multimedia presentation in which Johann narrates an inside look at the theater and photography. It has been given at such venues as the New Dramatists in New York, the Eugene O’Neill Theater, the Tyron Fine Arts Center, and at the Photo Expo in New York.

For this book, Lawrence Harbison has interviewed successful playwrights who have developed relationships with theaters that regularly produce their plays, have at least one major New York production, have their plays published by a licensor such as Dramatists Play Service or Samuel French, have received commissions, and have an agent. Harbison asks each of them the same questions: How did you do it? Did it feature an introduction by Theres Ribak? And interviews with David Auburn, Stephen Belber, Adam Bock, Bekah Brunstetter, Sheila Callaghan, John Cariani, Eric Coble, Jessica Dickey, Kate Fodor, Gina Gionfriddo, Daniel Goldfarb, Kirsten Greenidge, Rinne Groff, Lauren Gunderson, Michael Hollinger, Rajiv Joseph, Greg Kotsis, Neil LaBute, Deborah Zoe Laufer, Wendy MacLeod, Iltamar Moses, Bruce Norris, Lynn Nottage, Aaron Posner, Adam Rapp, J. T. Rogers, Lloyd Suh, Carl Thomas, Sharr White, and Anna Ziegler. A valuable tool for playwrights, this book presents an intimate look at the development of their work, produced as a playwriting students. How did it all come about? What is the story of how it’s all come about? It’s a great resource for anyone interested in the world of theater. When Bella Baird, an isolated creative writing professor at Yale, begins to mentor a brilliant but enigmatic student named Christopher, the two form an unexpectedly intense bond. As their lives and the stories they create become intertwined in unpredictable ways, Bella makes a surprising request of Christopher that neither know if he can fulfill. Brimming with surprises. Rapp’s writing play explores the limits of what one person can ask of another.

NOT THE GIRL NEXT DOOR: JOAN CRAWFORD A PERSONAL BIOGRAPHY

One minute I’m in The Elk watching the football the next minute I’m at the beach with a Polish supermodel. Fucking come on. Lena meets Robbie. Girl meets Boy. Head over heels. Eyes only for each other. They don’t speak the same language, but they both know the language of love, and surely that’s enough for a while – until the unexpected and the unexpected and the unexpected. As their lives and the stories they create become intertwined in unpredictable ways, Lena and Robbie repeatedly try to find a common language and sweeter shared history. The Session is a heartfelt play about how couples communicate, taking in twenty years of a relationship that is based on misunderstanding and crossed wires. It received its world premiere at Soho Theater on 3 November 2015.

When Bella Baird, an isolated creative writing professor at Yale, begins to mentor a brilliant but enigmatic student named Christopher, the two form an unexpectedly intense bond. As their lives and the stories they create become intertwined in unpredictable ways, the novels become a common language and sweeter shared history. The Session is a heartfelt play about how couples communicate, taking in twenty years of a relationship that is based on misunderstanding and crossed wires. It received its world premiere at Soho Theater on 3 November 2015.

The second volume in this series brings together some of the best new writing from contemporary American playwrights. Each play is introduced by critically acclaimed writers themselves, THE EDGE OF OUR BODIES by Adam Rapp, introduced by AM Homes, follows a teenage girl Bernadette who has to grow up quickly when she discovers she is pregnant. THE COWARD by Nick Jones, introduced by Marsha Norman, is an absurdist comedy set in 18th century England. Lucius initiates a pistol duel, but when he finds he’ll have to fight the son of the man he challenged, he doesn’t want to go through with it. His plot to avoid the duel creates more trouble. THE BOOK OF GRACE by Suzan-Lori Parks, introduced by Oskar Eustis, portrays a dysfunctional American family, where anger and mistrust arise from the effects of historical abuse. WHAT ONCE WE FELT by Ann Marie Healy, introduced by Paula Vogel, is set in a mysterious parallel universe, where Macy is the last ever author to have been born. It has been given at such venues as the New Dramatists in New York, the Eugene O’Neill Theater, the Tyron Fine Arts Center, and at the Photo Expo in New York.
This collection includes every play performed at the 2007 Humana Festival of New American Plays.

As the details of HBO’s Boardwalk Empire emerged, it quickly became the most anticipated programme in the network’s history. The excitement was understandable—not only was the show created by Terence Winter, the man behind The Sopranos, but Martin Scorsese was one of the executive producers and would make a rare crossover to television by directing the pilot. The cast was led by the great Steve Buscemi and included some of the finest character actors in the business, whose previous work has included No Country for Old Men, This is England, and The Wire. Now that the prohibition epic has finally hit our screens, Boardwalk Empire has proven to be every bit as smart, brutal and thrilling as had been anticipated. Already renewed for a second season, it is set to become one of the defining series of the decades.

In The Metal Children, author Na’imla Egunfemi’s first published play, three generations from New York City, dealing with the realities of filming, biographies of key members of the cast and crew, and much, much more.

From a Pulitzer Prize finalist comes a hilarious and heartbreaking novel about a musician climbing back from rock bottom. As winter deepens in snowbound Pollard, Illinois, thirty-something Francis Falbo is holed up in his attic apartment, recovering from a series of traumas. His mother’s death, his beloved wife’s departure, and his once-ascendant rock band’s inescapable breakup. Francis hasn’t shaved in months, hasn’t had sex in months, hasn’t even gone outside in months. Based on extensive interviews in Cairo with revolutionaries and soldiers, and drivers of cabs, this new drama depicts both a revolution in progress and the society from which it springs.

For a lot of writers, the hardest part is that first draft. But Brooke Berman—an award-winning playwright, screenwriter and prose writer—can help make the process a lot less painful and maybe even kind of fun. A touching story about a brilliant, assertive woman who decides to make her own way in the world, The Metal Children explores what happens when fiction becomes a matter of life and death.

It’s January 28th, 2011 and Egypt stands on the brink. For Layla and Hisham, a young couple living in downtown Cairo, a dictatorial and corrupt government is only one of their problems. As the world shifts, cataclysmically, around them, some long hidden secrets threaten to emerge. Based on extensive interviews with a pair of former circus performers whose daughter has gone missing. The tight-knit community has already survived a blizzard, but there is more danger in store for the citizens of Pollard before summer arrives. Francis is himself caught up in these troubles as he becomes increasingly entangled in the affairs of others, with results that are by turns disastrous, hysterical, and ultimately healing. Fusing cumulative style with the seriousness attending an adulthood gone by, Rapp has written an uproarious, affecting novel about what we do and where we go when our lives have crumbled around us. Sharp-edged but tenderhearted, Know Your Beholder introduces us to one of the most lovably flawed characters in recent fiction, a man at last able to collect the jagged pieces of his dreams and begin anew, in both life and love. Seldom have our foibles and our efforts to persevere in spite of them been laid bare with such heart and hope.

Remember you saying you could speak to anything if you wanted to. Right? Did you say that? Remember that. Said you could speak to the stars. Just had to know how to do it. It’s raining in the Midlands. Again. It won’t stop. Someone’s standing in it. They’re shivering. They’re cold. They’re waiting for someone they haven’t seen in a very long time. They’ve got a rucksack full of alcohol. And a fish. A touching play about abandoned responsibilities, what we choose to remember and what we thought we’d forgotten. This 9-week program was conceived with the world premiere at the Old Red Lion theatre, London on 11 November 2013.

For a lot of writers, the hardest part is that first draft. But Brooke Berman—an award-winning playwright, screenwriter and prose writer—can help make the process a lot less painful and maybe even kind of fun. It doesn’t matter if you write fiction, a play or a screenplay; her 9-week program will take you from a blank page to an actual, workable, wonderful, imperfect first draft. You’ll learn: How to find a compelling theme How to develop interesting, believable characters How to find the perfect setting for your work How to find the conflict that will drive the story How to structure your piece. And how to put all this great stuff together into your first draft Writing isn’t easy. But that doesn’t mean it has to be torture. Let Brooke Berman guide you to that amazing feeling of accomplishment—and in the meantime teach you a lot about writing.

Far from the glittering lights of Broadway, in a city known more for its horse racing than its artistic endeavors, an annual festival in Louisville, Kentucky, has transformed the landscape of the American theater, The Actors Theatre of Louisville—the Tony Award–winning theater of Kentucky—has been a center of new play development for over thirty years. As the world shifts, cataclysmically, around them, some long hidden secrets threaten to emerge. Based on extensive interviews with a pair of former circus performers whose daughter has gone missing. The tight-knit community has already survived a blizzard, but there is more danger in store for the citizens of Pollard before summer arrives. Francis is himself caught up in these troubles as he becomes increasingly entangled in the affairs of others, with results that are by turns disastrous, hysterical, and ultimately healing. Fusing cumulative style with the seriousness attending an adulthood gone by, Rapp has written an uproarious, affecting novel about what we do and where we go when our lives have crumbled around us. Sharp-edged but tenderhearted, Know Your Beholder introduces us to one of the most lovably flawed characters in recent fiction, a man at last able to collect the jagged pieces of his dreams and begin anew, in both life and love. Seldom have our foibles and our efforts to persevere in spite of them been laid bare with such heart and hope.

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In this freakishly funny and vividly imagined absurdist nightmare for our time, the inert occupants of an East Village apartment - members of a band once called "Lester’s Surprise," now remembered simply as "Less" - are going numb. Pill-popping Chase and Staples, who look like they’ve been living on their sofa since the previous spring, sit mesmerized in front of the television until its untimely demise. Desperately in need of technological stimulus, they decide to call up their weird neighbor, luring him upstairs and under Chase’s narrative spell so that Staples can steal his Magnavox via the fire escape. The strange arrivals and events that follow move from the hilarious to the disturbingly existential, as Rapp’s electronic-age creatures long to feel something, to be part of something, or to be of use: "A television blares in the background. A bloody child is carried into the room. And at least three kinds of bodily fluids are spilled. This can mean only one thing: Adam Rapp is back in town. Mr Rapp has always written with the energy and tastefulness of a punk rock band, so it should come as no surprise that his latest, FINER NOBLE GASES, follows the drugged-out members of an East Village rock group who waste away their days in front of the television, their eyes half-open, looking almost comatosed. In 2000 Mr Rapp burst on the scene with NOCTURNE, a highly praised monologue about a piano prodigy living in the shadow of the death of his sister. Since then he has written a handful of grimly poetic plays including FASTER, TRUEBLINKA and STONE COLD DEAD SERIOUS - none of which you would probably want to take your grandmother to. The hallmarks of his plays are slangy, potent dialogue; a dark, often baroque worldview; and a deep wallowing in the gratuitous. Mr Rapp is aiming for something much more grand and metaphysical than just another mundane tale of arrested development." - Jason Zinoman, The New York Times

"Rapp has concocted a smelly brew here, but like all poisons it can be intoxicatingly fun to watch other people imbibe the stuff" - Robert Hofler, Variety

A harrowing trilogy from the OBIE Award-winning author of "Red Light Winter."

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Recent plays from "one of the more daring young stylists working today" (David Cote, Time Out New York) Adam Rapp’s plays have captivated audiences across the country with their unflinching explorations of the good, the bad, and the ugly in America’s heartland and cities. Gathered here are three of his latest works: Faster, in which two young grifters try to strike a deal with the devil during the hottest summer on record; Finer Noble Gases, a lament for a band of arrested thirty-year-olds slouching toward adulthood amid East Village decay; and the Off-Broadway hit Stone Cold Dead Serious. An honest, strange, and humorous look at a blue-collar family struggling to survive in the face of disability and addiction, and the seemingly unreal lengths their teenage son will go to save them from themselves, the play prompted Bruce Weber to rave in The New York Times: "Rapp is very gifted, and, even rarer, he has something to say... Stone Cold Dead Serious[is] brave, compassionate, and... breathtakingly moving. It is the work of a playwright who is forging an oral voice... Its rendering of the shared language of loved ones illustrates how families can remain intimate even when they are in shards. Its depiction of a working-class America that is unable to dream of anything beyond enduring is as sincerely sad a commentary on our culture as I’ve seen in recent memory. And its fear for young people is, unfortunately, deeply convincing.”