

Central Works

THE NEW PLAY THEATER

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CENTRAL WORKS 2025 SEASON

3 Plays - 3 Premieres

New Work for a New Chapter

March–November 2025 - Season 35

Push/Pull by Harry Davis Mar 1–Mar 30

The Last Goat by Gary Graves Jun 28–Jul 27

Dada Teen Musical: The Play by Maury Zeff Oct 18–Nov 16

Berkeley City Club

2315 Durant Avenue, Berkeley 94704

CENTRAL WORKS 2025 SEASON begins March 1 and runs through November 16, 2025 featuring the world premieres of 3 new plays. This 35th season begins with *Push/Pull*, a play about young men; continues in the summer with *The Last Goat*, another odyssey; and in the fall flips to *Dada Teen Musical: The Play*, a lesson in art & politics—set in a high school. Opening on March 1: *Push Pull*, a play by Harry Davis in which 2 young men set out on a journey of physical perfection through bodybuilding...Is it a pathway to fulfillment, or a dangerous delusion? Summer reveals *The Last Goat* by Gary Graves, where, on the Greek island of Kasos a young woman in desperate isolation encounters a young man. Is she falling in love or being used? Or is she using him? The final production of the season opens October 18 with *Dada Teen Musical: The Play* by Maury Zeff, in which the creation of a Dadaist musical unleashes chaos into the raging hellscape of social anarchy in a high school.

Last season, *The Dignity Circle* by Lauren Smerkanich, developed in the the CW Writers Workshop, was awarded **Best Entire Production in its category**. Central Works takes risks. At Central Works, we fearlessly embrace edgy, controversial issues, and are committed to developing and producing challenging new works with talented local artists and ensuring fair compensation to our workers, all while maintaining affordable admission prices. Central Works is “The New Play Theater.”

CENTRAL WORKS 2025 SEASON

New Work for a New Chapter

Push/Pull Mar 1–Mar 30
written by Harry Davis
directed by Gary Graves

World

Premiere #76: from the Central Works Writers Workshop
A new play about young men

“One must imagine Sisyphus jacked and tan...”

Clark is a young man at the age of 24. A devastating breakup results in a brief stay at a mental health facility under suicide watch. Upon release, he reconnects with his childhood friend Nolan, now an amateur bodybuilder determined to get his Pro Card. Nolan agrees to get his old friend “totally jacked” if Clark will be his competition coach. Together these two set out on a journey of physical perfection through a regimen of discipline, drinking your milk, and the 7 Compulsory Poses. A pathway to fulfillment, or a dangerous delusion?

Harry Davis is a playwright and performer living in Orinda, CA. Previous writing credits include *The Hedgehog’s Dilemma* (Yale Cabaret) and *Soda Jerks* (UC Santa Barbara’s New Works Lab) as well as previous workshops with Central Works. His professional acting credits include *The Antipodes* as Brian (Actor’s Reading Collective) and *Murder on the Orient Express* as MacQueen (Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park). He earned his BFA in Theater from UC Santa Barbara.

The Last Goat Jun 28–Jul 27

written by Gary Graves

World Premiere #77: An Odyssey

“Are you ... a Goddess?”

On the Greek island of Kasos, in the distant past, Kori lives in an old family farmhouse with only her grandmother to keep her company. They are the last two surviving inhabitants on the island, eking out a meager existence through the backbreaking work of subsistence farming. Kori longs to escape the desperate isolation of the island and see the world, but that would mean abandoning her grandmother to solitude and destitution. When a young man staggers into the old house, claiming he was shipwrecked on the island, tradition demands they offer the wayfarer hospitality. But can he be trusted? He claims to be the son of a wealthy landowner on another island. Kori wonders if he might be her ticket to freedom. Her grandmother believes he’s after the farm, or Kori—or both! Is Kori falling in love? Or is she just using the handsome young stranger? Or...is he using her?

Gary Graves has been a resident playwright and company co-director at Central Works since 1998. He has been a part of developing 75 world premiere productions with the company, many of which he has either written and/or directed. Titles of plays he has written include: *Red Virgin*, *Richard the First (a trilogy)*, *Machiavelli’s The Prince*, *The Grand Inquisitor*, *Chekhov’s Ward 6*, *Wonderland*, *Mondragola*, *Boss McGreedy* and *The Contest*. He directed the company’s first collaboratively developed script, *Roux*, at the Berkeley City Club in 1997. He also leads the Central Works Writers Workshop, and he teaches playwriting regularly at the Berkeley Rep School of Theater.

DadaTeen Musical: The Play Oct 18–Nov 16

written by Maury Zeff

World Premiere #78: a new comedy from the Central Works Writers Workshop

Theater! Dadaism! Demagoguery!

*Dada (or Dadaism): revolutionary art movement of the 1920s. Dada = anti-art

Annabelle is 17. She is the only high school student in the world whose Harvard application is an act of rebellion (she comes from a Yale family.) When she hatches a scheme to do a Dadaist version of

The Sound of Music to round out her college application, she unleashes chaos into the raging hellscape of social anarchy: high school.

Maury Zeff (Playwright) is a long-time member of the Central Works Writers Workshop. His plays have been performed around the US and in Europe. His writing has been published in *American Fiction*, *Southern California Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, and elsewhere. He has received commissions and fellowships from PlayGround, the SF Olympians, and the San Francisco Writers Grotto, where he works and teaches. He won the Clark-Gross Novel Award, was nominated for a Pushcart Fiction Prize, and was a finalist for the Ink Slinger Playwriting Award, Acacia Fiction Prize and Tobias Wolff Fiction Prize. Maury earned a creative writing MFA from the University of San Francisco, is a nationally-rated Scrabble player, and won third place in the 2024 O. Henry World Championship Pun-off in Austin.

Central Works the Company

Company co-directors Jan Zvaifler and Gary Graves remain steadfast in their mission to develop and produce new works. “New plays are the lifeblood of the theater,” says Ms. Zvaifler. “We look at current events, politics, classic literature and traditional storytelling to bring our audience face to face with the challenges of our lives everyday, juxtaposed against the reflections of history, both recent and far-reaching. Given our current harrowing times, we all need an opportunity to pause, feel, think and act.” The special intimacy of the Central Works theater offers this in a truly unique package. For over three decades Central Works has filled a special niche for theater artists in the San Francisco Bay Area, producing more new plays by local playwrights than any other company in the region. “The New Play Theater” utilizes three basic strategies: some are products of the Central Works Method, some are developed in the Central Works Writers Workshop, and some come to the company fully developed.

The Central Works Writers Workshop is an ongoing commissioning program established in 2012. Twice a year, in 12-week sessions, 8 local playwrights are selected to develop projects through informal readings and carefully directed discussions. In 2023 Central Works produced 3 world-premiere plays developed in the Writers Workshop, and another 2 out of 3 commissioned scripts in both the 2024 and 2025 seasons.

Central Works Method plays bring together writer, actors and director at the very outset of the playwriting process. In a supportive workshop environment, group research and collective brainstorming contribute to the entire development of the script. The CW method produced such scripts as Lauren Gunderson's, *Ada and the Memory Engine*, and Christopher Chen's *The Window Age*.

For more information, visit our website: www.centralworks.org

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Theater! Dadaism! Demagoguery!

Times: Thur & Fri 8pm, Sat 7pm, Sun 5pm

Tickets: Fri-Sun, \$35-\$45 depending on performance; Thur & previews, Pay-What-You-Can

Service Fee: \$3.50, online at centralworks.org.

All remaining tickets are available starting at noon on the day of the show on a sliding scale: \$20-\$45 (Fri-Sun)

We reserve seats only for subscribers, it is general seating for all other ticket holders. For more information call 510.558.1381 or visit centralworks.org