

# Los Angeles

by Josh Gershick

**S**outhern California is brimming with brilliant writers who succeed on vibrant smaller stages yet seldom make the jump to LORT.

But a new Los Angeles playwrights' collective, "The Temblors" (their very name a synonym for earthquake), seeks to rock that landscape by producing mid-sized Equity world premieres of local writers, bridging the gap between the area's intimate, 99-seat stages and larger regional venues.

"I am quite literally a child of LA's intimate theatre community, which has always done daring work, much of which unfortunately goes unnoticed nationally," said Temblor Kemp Powers, whose plays include *One Night in Miami...* and *Little Black Shadows*.

"There is a perception that most playwrights living in Los Angeles are only here to work in film and television," said Powers. "We're hoping this initiative helps to establish a new understanding that there are many locally-groomed writers who are just as committed to writing for the stage."

The Temblors' mission, in part, is to underscore how amazing and diverse LA theatre can be and to provide a platform for the professional development of local writers.

"The name ties us to Los Angeles in a way that I think is really beautiful," said Temblor Meghan Brown, author of *The Pliant Girls*. "We're looking to make seismic shifts with our own pieces. We have encouraged each other to write the piece we've been dying to write, without being limited by cast-size or subject matter, or any of the other concerns that can creep in while trying to make a script producible."

Inspired by other playwright collectives, such as The Welders of Washington, D.C., and New York's now-defunct I3P, The Temblors' inaugural cohort of seven members will work as a team: each will write

one play for production, then serve variously as producer, dramaturg and/or fundraiser for their fellows' productions.

"I think there's incredible value in knowing how the sausage is made," said Powers, "and by having hands-on experience at every level of the theatrical food chain."

Fellow Temblor t. tara turk-haynes agrees.

"Putting on so many hats gives you an opportunity to see how you can expand yourself for the good of the art," said turk-haynes, whose play *The Mic Picks Up Everything* is among the collective's upcoming offerings. "I love producing, so I'm happy to say I can do more than just write for the stage. I can speak to every part of what it takes to make a piece exist."

The Temblors' goal is to produce seven new plays (at the rate of roughly two per year), over a four-year period, then select seven literary successors who will launch an entirely new cycle.

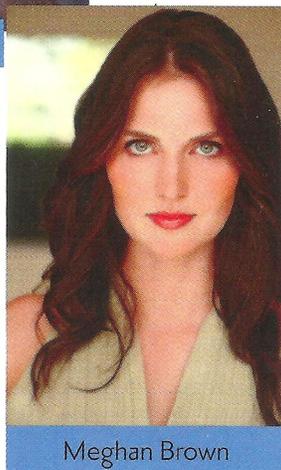
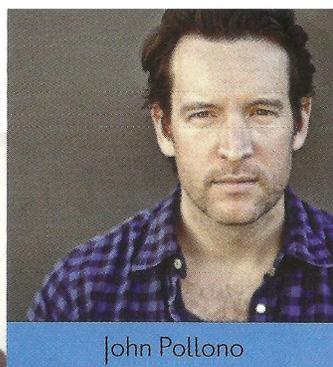
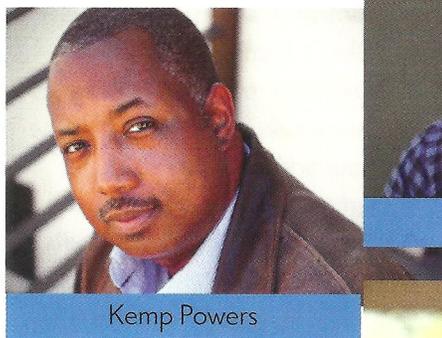
The Temblors' LA playwrights' initiative will work in partnership with the Latino Theater Company at the Los Angeles Theatre Center (LATC), the multi-cultural theatre complex located on Spring Street, in the city's historic core. LATC features five performance spaces, ranging from thrust to classic proscenium, and from 99 to 500 seats.

All of The Temblors' shows, said Kemp, will be produced under AEA's Small Professional Theatre (SPT) contract, governing theatres with 349 seats or fewer outside of New York and Chicago.

"This is a time of big change, in our business as well as in the nation as a whole," said Oliver Mayer, author of *Blade to the Heat* and *Blood Match*. "To be able to produce original work at the mid-size level is no small feat. We mean to break new ground, not only for ourselves but for the next generation of Temblors."

The Temblors' first production, slated for March/April 2017, will be Temblor John Pollono's *Rules of Seconds*. Set in 1855, the play—with a cast of ten and various locations—explores the Code of Dueling and its impact on a family caught in a deadly blood feud.

"Many of us cut our teeth in Equity-



waiver theatre, and like me, plan on continuing to produce in that space,” said Pollono, a founding member of LA’s Rogue Machine Theatre and author of *Small Engine Repair*. (That play had an award-winning run at Rogue Machine in 2011, then, in 2013, moved to NYC’s MCC Theater, where it also was a smash.)

But until The Temblors, said Pollono, he had never had his work produced locally in a medium/large theatre.

“I wrote a play that demands a bigger stage and a bigger house.” And, he added, “The vibe of a 200-plus audience is unmistakable.”

“I love intimate spaces,” said turk-haynes. “I also love the flexibility of not being limited just to intimate spaces. I’m excited to write something for a space I don’t normally have access to, since budgeting and finances tend to make the decision about the space over anything else.”

More than any other aspect of production, its finances—and specifically, fundraising—that individual Temblors find most daunting.

“I am particularly bad at self-promotion, and my comfort-zone is self-effacement,” said Temblor Nate Rufus Edelman, whose play *The Whores*—set in the nineteenth-century mining town of Silverton, CO—the collective will produce. “However, I deeply admire my fellow playwrights in The Temblors and feel genuinely blessed to be part of the group. It is a lot easier to promote the work of writers I very much like.”

“Fundraising is always challenging,” said turk-haynes. “As the world progresses, I worry that many people won’t understand the importance of keeping the arts alive through their support. As artists, we must constantly challenge ourselves to convey the importance of that support in ways that land.”

Visit The Temblors at [thetemblors.org](http://thetemblors.org).  
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