

L.A. Theater Collective Poor Dog Group Premieres GROUP THERAPY, 1/11

 broadwayworld.com/los-angeles/article/LA-Theater-Collective-Poor-Dog-Group-Premieres-GROUP-THERAPY-111-13-

20171220
by BWW News
Desk

December 20, 2017

UCLA's Center for the Art of Performance (CAP UCLA) presents celebrated Los Angeles-based contemporary theater ensemble Poor Dog Group in the world premiere of *Group Therapy*, a living documentary performance work that confronts the ensemble's year-long process of actual group therapy, in four performances Thursday, Jan. 11 to Saturday, Jan. 13 at UCLA's Little Theater. Single tickets for \$39 are now available online at cap.ucla.edu, via Ticketmaster, by phone [310-825-2101](tel:310-825-2101) and at the UCLA Central Ticket Office.



This new performance by Poor Dog Group, co-founded by writer and director Jesse Bonnell, draws on 16 hours of audio recordings from the group's actual therapy sessions with a licensed professional to examine their long-term collaboration, and how their relationship has progressed through marriages, divorces, disagreements, alcoholism, and the struggle of being professional artists.

"We have been recreating and responding to our past selves as a way to continue the practice of therapy and at the same time generate the work itself," said Bonnell. "I feel that it's important right now to practice empathy and to be very public about your experience. It's important for me that the show isn't just about the members of Poor Dog Group, that it reaches beyond us, to our community, our nation at large."

In 1968, the groundbreaking documentary *Journey into Self* revealed eight strangers as they underwent therapy in an attempt to "to discover the secret of being together," during a time of civil unrest and American consciousness raising. Nearly four decades later, Poor Dog Group's self-reflections unfold against the backdrop of a new cycle in our nation's social and political evolutions

.Having met at age 18 while attending CalArts, Poor Dog Group was founded in 2008. After more than a decade of creating theater together, the members amplify their self-interrogation into an uncensored - sometimes funny, sometimes poignant - work of live art. Through chance operations, each performance of *Group Therapy* is different and originates in a past encounter, then quickly spins into spontaneous reflections, real-time re-recordings and cinematic gestures. As the company members process their divorces, dependencies, privileges and vulnerabilities, they create a portrait of a generation's hustle and, above all, what it is like to

endure.

Group Therapy probes the inner workings of this long-term collaboration and close-knit group of friends as they confront the bold collective risk of performers who are charting new (and sometimes old) territory, together.

Funds provided by the James A. Doolittle Endowment. Additional funds were provided by Murray Hidary in support of CAP UCLA's Artists-in-Residence program. Commissioned by UCLA's Center for the Art of Performance and created as part of its Artists-in-Residence program, with additional residency support from the CalArts Center for New Performance, City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, The Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and The Headlands Center for the Arts. Group Therapy is a project of Creative Capital, and is produced in partnership with Los Angeles Performance Practice.

CAP UCLA's upcoming programs include Ann Carlson: Doggie Hamlet (Feb. 3-4, Will Rogers State Historic Park), Taylor Mac: A 24-Decade History of Popular Music (March 15-24, The Theatre at Ace Hotel), Farmhouse Whorehouse, An Artist Lecture by Suzanne Bocanegra Starring Lili Taylor (April 14, The Theatre at Ace Hotel), and Ann Hamilton and Siti Company: the theater is a blank page (April 28-May 12, Royce Hall).

CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:CAP UCLA presents Poor Dog Group: Group Therapy Thursday, Jan. 11 at 8 p.m. Friday, Jan. 12, 2018 at 8 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 13 at 3 p.m. & 8 p.m. UCLA's Little Theater at Macgowan Hall

Program: L.A.'s celebrated theater ensemble Poor Dog Group presents the world premiere of Group Therapy, a new work of documentary theater that delves into the group's actual transcribed therapy with a licensed professional.

After more than a decade of creating theater together, co-founder Jesse Bonnell and the members of Poor Dog Group amplify their self-interrogation in an uncensored - sometimes funny, sometimes poignant - work of live art. Through chance operations, each performance of Group Therapy originates in a past encounter, then quickly spins into spontaneous reflections, real-time re-recordings and cinematic gestures. As the company members process their divorces, dependencies, privileges and vulnerabilities, they create a portrait of a generation's hustle and, above all, what it is like to endure.

Tickets: \$39 Online: cap.ucla.edu UCLA Central Ticket Office: 310-825-2101, Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. UCLA's Little Theater at Macgowan Hall box office: open 90 minutes prior to the event start time.

Artist website: Poor Dog Group|Los Angeles Performance Practice Artist interview: JESSE BONNELL'S THEATER GROUP EXPERIMENTS WITH GROUP THERAPY SESSIONS

Jesse Bonnell is a writer and director based in Brooklyn, NY. He is a co-founder of Poor Dog Group, a collective dedicated to contemporary theater. Nationally, his work has been shown at REDCAT, The Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum, RADAR L.A., South Coast Repertory, The Getty Villa, EMPAC, The Collapsible Hole, Baruch Performing Arts Center and site-specific locations. Abroad, his work has toured throughout Eastern Europe including

Croatia, Poland and Serbia. He has received project support from Theater Communications Group, Foundation for Contemporary Art, United States Embassy Belgrade and Los Angeles County Arts Commission, and a Cultural Exchange International Grant from the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs. Jesse was awarded a MacDowell Fellowship and residencies at UCLA Hothouse, CalArts and Yaddo.

Recently he was in residency at Headlands Center for the Arts and this year will be in residency at UCLA's Center for the Art of Performance. [UCLA's Center for the Art of Performance](#) (CAP UCLA) is dedicated to the advancement of the contemporary performing arts in all disciplines - dance, music, spoken word and theater as well as emerging digital and collaborative platforms - by leading artists from around the globe. Part of UCLA's School of the Arts and Architecture, CAP UCLA curates and facilitates exposure to artists who are creating extraordinary works of art and fosters a vibrant learning community both on and off the UCLA campus.

The organization invests in the creative process by providing artists with financial backing and time to experiment and expand their practices through strategic partnerships and collaborations. As an influential voice within the local, national and global arts communities, CAP UCLA connects this generation to the next in order to preserve a living archive of our culture. CAP UCLA is also a safe harbor for cultural expression and artistic exploration, giving audiences the opportunity to experience real life through characters and stories on stage, and giving artists an avenue to challenge assumptions and advance new ways of seeing and understanding the world in which we live.