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Playwrights Chosen for Lifeline Theatre's 2nd Annual BIPOC Writer's Workshop, Presentation Summer 2023

CHICAGO – **Lifeline Theatre** has selected two powerhouse playwrights to take part in its 2nd annual Adapting to Stage Developmental Workshop. Over the next five months, **Desi Moreno-Penson** and **Brandon Zang** will work in tandem with members of Lifeline Theatre's artistic ensemble along with a small creative team of their choosing to develop their world premiere stage adaptations, culminating in a small-scale public presentation of their works in process in July 2023 (dates forthcoming).

"We were thrilled to receive so many entries this year," enthused Artistic Director **ILesa Duncan**, "which more than doubled over last year." Ensemble member and workshop coordinator **Frances Limoncelli** added, "in addition to the number of responses, we were excited by the caliber of the playwrights who applied. It made choosing very difficult."

PLAYWRIGHTS:

- **Desi Moreno-Penson** (she/her) is a playwright, actor, dramaturg, and independent theater producer based in NYC. She has an MFA in Dramaturgy and Theater Criticism from Brooklyn College. Her plays have been developed/produced at Ensemble Studio Theater (EST), INTAR, MultiStages, Perishable Theater (Providence, RI), Henry Street Settlement, SPF-Summer Play Festival, terraNOVA Collective, Downtown Urban Theater Festival (DUTF) @the Cherry Lane, Urban Theater Company (Chicago), Teatro Coribantes (San Juan, PR), among others.

Play Synopsis: Her new play, ***EL BACALAO: The Catfish Man***, loosely based on Euripides' *THE BACCHAE*, and taking place in the small backwater town of Thebes, Florida, tells the story of a dysfunctional, cantankerous Cuban family on the verge of losing everything. A storm's coming; a restaurant is closed; a young girl is dead. And a Yoruban demigod is hell bent on vengeance.

- **Brandon Zang** (he/him) is a playwright from Vancouver, British Columbia. His play, *Ah Wing and the Automaton Eagle*, is the winner of the Canadian Playwriting Competition Special Merit Award, the Olga and Paul Menn Foundation Prize, and a Wayward Voices Panel Favorite. Zang is currently a MFA playwright at Boston University and holds a double BA in anthropology and theater from the University of Chicago.

Play Synopsis: Adopted by an American family when he was a baby, 15-year-old Benji has no memory of his life in China. However, after he is cast as Puck in his school's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Benji's method acting exercises begin to blur his sense of reality. In the mystical land of the fairies, Benji has a chance encounter with the Chinese goddess Nüwa, who may hold the key to the boy's connection to his birthplace. Told through a blend of Shakespearean fantasy and Chinese folklore, ***Fairyland*** is a story about the melancholy of separation and the child trafficking endemic in China.

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Celebrating its 40th season, Lifeline Theatre continues to explore, interpret, and reimagine books and other literary works to create stories that move us beyond the margins of our own lives. Lifeline Theatre – Big Stories, Up Close.

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