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**Essential Theatre’s 20th Festival**

**Support Local Playwrights, Actors, and Directors**

Atlanta, July 2018 – Essential Theatre is presenting its 20th Festivals with the world premieres of three plays and three staged readings, all by Georgia playwrights. “Built to Float”, by Rachel Graf Evans, directed by Peter Hardy, opens Friday, July 27, 2018 at 8pm at the West End Performing Arts Center. “Woke”, by Avery Sharpe, directed by Ellen McQueen, opens Friday, August 3, 2018 at 8pm at the same venue. Both plays reveal uncomfortable truths and conflicts which often lie dormant in everyday superficial interactions.

“Built to Float” addresses mental illness head on. In the words of the playwright, Rachel Graf Evans, the play “bring[s] to light the ways that addiction, mental health, trauma, family - the forces of nurture versus nature - can manifest and interact.” “Woke” addresses the disappointing outlooks found amongst friends and family in our politically divided landscape. In the words of the playwright, Avery Sharpe, the play is “both an inquiry and an imagining of how people engage each other in tough, complicated conversations and still find the grace to humble themselves regardless of being ‘right or wrong’”. This is Essential Theatre’s 20th Festival, which gives voice to local playwrights, and has thus far premiered 31 new works by Georgia playwrights.

“Built to Float” stars Rachel Wansker and Heather Scroeder, and “Woke” stars Derrick Robertson and Paul Danner. The Festival features all local talent, working to serve and contribute to the Atlanta arts scene.

“Built to Float”, by Rachel Graf Evans, directed by Peter Hardy, opens Friday, July 27, 2018 at 8pm at the West End Performing Arts Center. “Woke”, by Avery Sharpe, directed by Ellen McQueen, opens Friday, August 3, 2018 at 8pm at the same venue. The West End Performing Arts Center is located at 945 Ralph David Abernathy Blvd, Atlanta, GA, 30310. The Bare Essentials Play Reading Series runs August 7, 14, and 22; “A Bunch of Different Ways I’d Like to Die” runs August 16 and 17. Festival Passes are on sale now! Visit essentialtheatre.tix.com or call 404-212-0815.

Now in its twentieth year, the Essential Theatre Playwriting Competition is the only contest exclusively dedicated to the work of Georgia playwrights. The winning play receives both a full production and a $750 cash prize. Playwrights must be current Georgia residents, and the plays must be previously unproduced. There are no restrictions as to style, length or subject matter. The deadline for the 2020 Essential Theatre Playwriting Award competition is April 23, 2019. For more information or to submit your play, visit EssentialTheatre.com/Playwriting-Competition.

*For more information and the latest updates, join our* [*newsletter*](http://www.essentialtheatre.com/EmailSignup.html)*, follow us on* [*Facebook*](https://www.facebook.com/NewPlays) *or* [*Twitter*](https://twitter.com/ATL_Essential)*, or check out our website at* [*www.EssentialTheatre.com*](http://www.essentialtheatre.com)*.*

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**About Essential Theatre:**

*Essential Theatre: Giving Georgia Playwrights a Voice since 1999*

The 2018 Essential Theatre Festival continues Essential’s tradition of premiering the latest and best new works by Georgia playwrights and bringing Atlanta what’s new this summer with this year’s contest winners, *Built to Float* by Rachel Graf Evans and *Woke* by Avery Sharpe, a two-night presentation of *a bunch of different ways i’d like to* die by Tim McDonough, and the Bare Essentials Play Reading Series.

The Festival runs July 27 through August 26 at the West End Performing Arts Center, 945 Ralph David Abernathy Blvd, Atlanta, GA.