



MEDIA ADVISORY

Old Pueblo Playwrights’ 37th Annual New Play Festival: Seven Playwrights Premiere Eight Original Works April 2026

Theatre, Culture and Lifestyle Editors

TUCSON, ARIZ.—February 12, 2026—The Old Pueblo Playwrights 37th Annual New Play Festival (NPF) presents staged readings of *eight original works by seven playwrights* at Tucson’s venerable Invisible Theatre this April.

“As one of America’s longest running dramatist groups, Old Pueblo Playwrights is thrilled to partner with a bevy of local talent to bring literary theatre to life,” says 2026 Festival Coordinator [John Vornholt](#). “As always, our annual celebration of Tucson theatre has something for every taste and attention span. And our ‘pay what you will’ policy allows for every budget.”

“Kristen Kallen-Keck—well-known to many of us for her acting chops—makes her Festival debut with *Moving Day* at our traditional ‘Saturday Shorts matinee,’” notes Vornholt. The *NY Times* best-selling author, actor, playwright, director, producer, screenwriter, journalist, and Active Imagination Theatre co-founder, has been president of OPP for more years than he’d like to recall. And this year, the indomitable playwright mines an excruciating personal experience for *The Chemo Lounge*. His moving, often humorous, new drama debuts Saturday night.

Other Festival veterans include award-winning Dramatist Guild member and OPP board member Leslie Powell whose plays have been read and produced in Toronto and throughout the Southwest. Co-founder of the North Shore Readers Theatre Collaborative, Writers & Actors Ink, and Random Acts festival, Powell returns with two short plays.

Other Festival favorites include OPP Treasurer and University of Arizona College of Medicine Professor [Mel Hector, MD](#), who explores AI’s dangers in *AI AI O*. Dramatists Guild and OPP board member [Liisa Rose](#)—who holds an MA in theatre education from the University of Arizona and an MFA in playwriting from Southern New Hampshire University (where she also teaches), and has performed on stages from Arizona to Japan—returns with *Clutch*.

OPP’s Social Media Coordinator and [Adrian Cory](#) closes out the Festival Easter Sunday night with *Don’t Feed the Troll*, which debuted January at Tucson Fringe who warned of “strong language, depictions or discussion of violence, and sexual content. Several of the UK ex-pat’s plays have been produced for stage and radio, including *Social Outcast* (Canal Café Theatre, London), *The Knight of Malta* (Manhattan Repertory Theatre, NYC), and *Terror on Edge Island* (Narada Radio Company).

“Like Hamlet, we believe the play’s the thing,” notes Vornholt. “Each play is performed just once, script in hand, on a simple set, with full lights and sound. Post-performance talkbacks allow the audience to participate in improving our plays.”

WHAT	April 2026: 37th Annual OPP New Play Festival
WHERE	Invisible Theatre, 1400 N First Avenue @Drachman, is a fully accessible Tucson theatre featuring wheelchair-accessible parking, entrance, and restrooms.
PHOTO CAPTIONS	PHOTO #1: [left to right/top] OPP playwrights Adrian Cory, Mel Hector, John Vornholt, Liisa Rose, [left to right/bottom] Debra Vassallo, Kristen Kallen-Keck, and Leslie Powell, will present new works at the 37th Annual Old Pueblo Playwright Festival.
ADMISSION	No reserved seats. Pay what you will at the door via cash, check; or OPP’s VENMO account. No credit cards. Free bottled water. Donations welcome!

<p>THURSDAY April 2 7 PM</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DEBRA VASSALLO: “HOA Blues”—<i>The HOA fund is down to \$77.13; streets are filled with potholes, the liability insurance is set to expire, and a hedge fund plans to tear down homes and build high-rises. What’s the Sparkling Springs board to do?</i> Dennis O’Dell directs Elvia Bow (ALEXIS), Dave Cavallero (CARL), Roseann Couston (SAVANNAH), Kay Ewy (PHILIPPA), Rob Sanders, Plant Wrangler (PEACE LILY), and Joe Smith (TIM); Liisa Rose (FACILITATOR),
<p>FRIDAY April 3 7 PM</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MEL HECTOR: “AI AI O”—<i>Whose intelligence is more “artificial”? How does AI impact ethical choices? Are meaningful safeguards even possible?</i> Zach Wetzel directs Kevin Chess (DETECTIVE CARBONA), Meagan Jones (MELODY BARKER), Joe Smith (STEPHEN HOLT), Halsy Taylor (ETHEL VOLK), Hannah Taylor (CAROL SINGER), Ellie Vought (MARGO HOLT), and Jeff Webster (HERBERT VOLK/AI HERB); John Vornholt facilitates.
<p>SATURDAY April 4 2 PM</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LIISA ROSE: “Clutch”—<i>Gunshots, watermelon, a Mallard duck. A pair of siblings deal with their shared childhood trauma in different ways.</i> David Sewell directs Roark Polzin (CHRISTOF) and Petra Polzin (JULIA); Leslie Powell facilitates. ▪ LESLIE POWELL: “WHAT A TRIP”—<i>Two sisters tangle with a federal agent and learn to see each other as never before. Comedy ensues.</i> Dave Sewell directs Sydney Flynn (RITA CLARK), Kim Lowry (LOUISE CLARK), and Steve Waite (FEDERAL AGENT DARLING); Gavin Kayner facilitates. ▪ LESLIE POWELL: “CHANGE”—<i>In a world of “haves” and “have-nots,” three characters, trapped underground, learn lessons of late-stage capitalism and the dangers of disconnection from basic humanity.</i> Pat Timm directs Sydney Flynn (YOUNG THEY), Kim Lowry (OLD THEY), and TBD (MAN); Gavin Kayner facilitates. ▪ KRISTEN KALLEN-KECK: “MOVING DAY”—<i>A missing cat might just derail a couple’s big, exciting move.</i> Drew Kallen-Keck directs himself (BRAD) and Robin Mirlocca (AMBER); TBD facilitates.
<p>SATURDAY April 4 7 PM</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ JOHN VORNHOLT: “The Chemo Lounge.” <i>Whoever we may be on the outside, we share our demons, dangers, decisions, here as we fight to survive.</i> Stan Sutherland directs Adrian Cory (DR. SARNOFF), Eric Everts (HANK/COLIN), Meagan Jones (TERRIE), Robin Mirlocca (CRYSTAL) Stephanie Sikes (SHELLY), Joe Smith (BILLY); TBD facilitates.
<p>SUNDAY April 5 7 PM</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ADRIAN CORY: “Don’t Feed the Troll.” <i>When an op-ed columnist’s world is ripped apart, she seeks to take down the online troll causing her despair.</i> Cory directs Chad Eggen (MELON), Meagan Jones (AMY), Drew Kallen-Keck (DAN), Mattie Klass (MALE CUSTOMER/PRISON GUARD), Tristan McCrocklin (ANON THE TROLL), Kira McNeill (LIV), and Courtney Pulitzer (NAOMI); Steve Duson facilitates.
<p>FYI</p>	<p>Old Pueblo Playwrights, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, has been inspiring writers to create new dramatic works for four decades. Table-read and critique original works Monday nights at 7. Follow us on Facebook. Visit us at oldpuebloplaywrights.org. Donate at theoldpuebloplaywrights@venmo.com or send your checks to PO Box 775, Tucson AZ 85702. Special thanks to the Arizona Commission on the Arts for their ongoing support.</p>
<p>NPF landing page on OPP Web site</p>	
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