

# 2024 Spring Athena Film Festival Writers Lab



# SCREENPLAY LAB PARTICIPANTS

## LOGLINES AND BIOS



### ***The Aquanauts* by Rachel Caccese**

In the summer of 1970, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration sends the first all-female team of marine biologists on a two-week underwater mission. The women must battle the dangers below while overcoming obstacles on the surface. Inspired by real events.

**Rachel's bio:** Story lover. More specifically she is an actor, writer, and filmmaker. Her work has received multiple grant awards and she is the co-founder of an artist-driven film production company.

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### ***HOT POT* by A. Lauren Lee**

2015, in Flushing, Queens, a newly divorced, dutiful, Korean grandma inadvertently becomes a pot dealer to elder Koreans and in doing something very wrong, figures out who she is and where she belongs "Finding a producers

Casting Korean-American actors

Casting actors from Korea

**A. L.'s bio:** A. L. Lee has made 4 short films that have won numerous awards. She has an MFA from Columbia University in screenwriting. Her latest project, "Hot Pot", is a feature screenplay that she hopes to shoot in 2024.

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### ***Inner Life* by Flavia Casà**

When Zainab (42), a Lebanese immigrant eager to settle into London with her traditional mother Maryam, struggles to get pregnant with her increasingly conservative fiancé, she expands her chances at fertility by moonlighting as a liberal version of herself and trying to conceive a baby with a British stranger.

Over the course of one weekend, mother and daughter clash with their new culture (and each other) and will make drastic choices, destined to define where they truly belong.

**Flavia's bio:** Flavia Casà is a francophone Turkish-Sicilian Writer/Director, whose film portfolio focuses on female-lead multicultural stories, which shed light on the suspenseful and intergenerational schisms of the coming-of-age theme. A graduate from Tisch School of the Arts, Flavia was mentored by DoP Emmanuel Lubezki, made the feature *Beautiful in the Morning*, which opened LA Femme Film Festival & is streaming on Herflix, and is developing a TV show with Inceptive Films. Flavia also produces fashion films and teaches screenwriting at the University of Warwick.

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### ***Love, From Ellie* by Chantelle James**

Struggling with grief over her deceased father, a young girl strikes up a friendship with her estranged homeless uncle. She decides she's going to "save" her uncle by helping him get a job. The plan backfires when her mom finds out that she has secretly been spending time with her uncle.

**Chantelle's bio:** Chantelle James is an Australian born award-winning filmmaker based in Austin, Texas. Her directorial debut short film 'A Thousand Times a Day', that she wrote, directed, and produced, has screened at over 20 festivals winning 6 awards including the Best Texas Short award at Topaz Film Festival 2023. Chantelle served on the board of Women in Film & Television Austin as Podcast Chair 2021 - 2023. She is a current member of the Alliance of Women Directors.

# EPISODIC LAB PARTICIPANTS

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### ***ARE YOU THERE GODS?* by Jo Rochelle**

A young, witty, and ambitious ballerina makes it her mission to become a principal dancer with a little help from the gods. We hear her fervent prayers as she aims for the lead role of Medusa at the sexist, sometimes hostile, ballet repertory based in NYC.

**Jo's bio:** Jo Rochelle is a Jamaican American TV writer and filmmaker, based in Los Angeles, originally from Minneapolis. Her work has screened at Dances with Films, Urbanworld, and BlackStar, among others. She has developed a family drama pilot at Netflix and wrote on seasons four and five of Good Trouble on Freeform/Hulu.

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### ***THE GENESIS FUND* by Laura L. Sydell**

As Charlotte (Lotte) Schmidt readies to release her revolutionary brain chip, which cures paralysis, she gets a visit from FBI Agents who inform her that the chip turned up in the body of a dead migrant. To prove her innocence, Lotte agrees to work as an undercover operative for the FBI. Over the course of the show, Lotte learns that her chip has been coopted to further a conspiracy headed by a Silicon Valley billionaire who plans to use genetics and biotech to create a racially stratified society with white people at the top.

**Laura's bio:** Laura Sydell likes to write about women up against impossible odds. As part of her work as NPR Digital Culture Correspondent, she became excited by the transformation of television. Sydell left journalism for TV to write stories that dig beneath the headlines into the deeper human emotions that drive innovation and change. She is also at work on a historical drama about Frances Perkins, the first woman in a presidential cabinet.

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***SHORTY DOO-WOP, ESQUIRE* by Stephan Collins-Stepney**

A 15 year old Black wunderkind graduates law school and achieves her dream of becoming a public defender, but her idealism is quickly challenged by the isms she encounters in addition to the usual problems of growing up. Encountering ageism & acne, this teenage public defender is up for the challenge before she learns to drive.

**Stephan's bio:** Stephan Collins-Stepney holds a Master of Fine Arts in Writing for the Stage and Screen from Queens University of Charlotte. They are an English professor at Morgan State University. He writes unique fish out of water stories featuring Black protagonists with intersectional identities in extraordinary situations that touch on social justice and human compassion.