

For immediate release.

TEN FINALISTS SELECTED FOR FIRST ANNUAL HUMANITAS/CTG PLAYWRITING PRIZE

After reviewing over 230 play submissions, Center Theatre Group announced today that 10 finalists have been chosen for the first annual Humanitas/CTG Playwriting Prize. The award will be given to the best new, unproduced play written by a Southern California playwright.

The winning playwright will receive a \$5,000 cash prize and an additional \$5,000 will be given to a Southern California theatre to subsidize the play's world premiere production. Two runners-up will each be awarded a cash prize of \$2,000.

The winning and runner-up plays will be developed with CTG's literary staff, led by CTG's Director of New Play Development Pier Carlo Talenti, and presented in staged readings at the Kirk Douglas Theatre Rehearsal Room from February 12-14, 2016.

The winner and two runners-up will be announced at the annual Humanitas dinner on Monday, January 11, 2016, at the Directors Guild.

The 10 finalists and their selected works are **Ngozi Anyanwu** ("Good Grief"), **Linda Bannister and James E. Hurd Jr.** ("Turpentine Jake"), **Aleta Barthell** ("Window of Shame"), **Louis Hill** ("Lord of the Underworld's Home for Unwed Mothers"), **Jennifer Lane** ("Harlowe"), **David Meyers** ("How to Conquer America: A Mostly True History of Yogurt"), **Dan O'Brien** ("Scarsdale"), **Steve Totland** ("You Are Here"), **Stephanie Alison Walker** ("The Madres") and **Marlow Wyatt** ("SHE").

Ngozi Anyanwu is an actress, writer and producer with an MFA in acting from the University of California, San Diego. She is the founder of the 1st Generation Nigerian Project, where she served as Artistic Director. Anyanwu is currently the Co-Artistic Director of NOW AFRICA's Playwrights Festival. She is a recipient of the Djerassi Artist Residency. "Good Grief" follows Nkechi, a first generation Nigerian girl, and her misadventures of love, loss and growing up.

Linda Bannister is a professor of English and director of the journalism program at Loyola Marymount University. She has a Ph.D in Rhetoric, Linguistics and Literature from USC. Bannister began writing civil rights themed plays in 2003 with her partner, **James E. Hurd Jr.** The two were founding members of the Kohl Players Theatre Company in Los Angeles. James E. Hurd Jr. (1956-2014) was a writer, actor and director. With Bannister, he wrote the plays "One Sunday in Mississippi" and "Turpentine Jake," both of which were invited to the National Black Theatre Festival. "Turpentine Jake" tells the story of the uneasy co-existence of black turpentine slaves and their white overseers during 1937 Florida.

Aleta Barthell is a playwright and screenwriter. She created a pilot about the 12th century queen Eleanor of Aquitaine, for which she received a grant to study source material in Paris through the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Barthell is a teaching artist with Playwrights Project and founder of the youth theatre education program Kids Act. "Window of Shame" takes

place in 1834 New Orleans, where Sally, the cook, must risk her life to expose the secrets of her opulent employers.

Louis Hill received her MFA from the University of Iowa's Playwrights Workshop, where she was the Iowa Arts Fellow. In 2012, she received the Mark Twain Prize for Comic Playwriting from the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. "Lord of the Underworld's Home for Unwed Mothers" is a reimagining of the Demeter and Persephone myth.

Jennifer Lane is a playwright whose work includes "Harlowe," "September and Her Sisters," "The Seer and the Witch" and "The Burning Brand." She is a co-founding member of the Scripps Ranch Theatre's New Works Studio and an alum of the terraNOVA Collective's Groundbreakers Playwriting Group. Jenny is a teaching artist with the Playwrights Project, UC San Diego Extension and San Diego Writers, Ink. In "Harlowe," the title character convalesces from a physical trauma at her sister's house, where she spends hours languishing in the tub. It is the story of sisters, bodies and how people heal.

David Meyers is a writer whose play "How to Conquer America" was recently developed at Berkeley Repertory's Ground Floor. He has worked with South Coast Repertory, La Jolla Playhouse, Chalk Repertory and Moving Arts. Prior to moving to the West Coast, David was the Literary Associate at The Public Theater/New York Shakespeare Festival. "How to Conquer America: A Mostly True History of Yogurt" is a story of culture, appropriation, family and the American Dream.

Dan O'Brien is a playwright, poet and librettist living in Los Angeles. His play, "The Body of an American," is the winner of the Horton Foote Prize for Outstanding New Play, the Edward M. Kennedy Prize for Drama Inspired by American History, the PEN Center USA Award for Drama and the L. Arnold Weissberger Award. It will receive an off-Broadway production in 2016. His third poetry collection, "New Life," is forthcoming from Hanging Loose Press in Brooklyn. O'Brien is a 2015-2016 Guggenheim Fellow in Drama and Performance Art. In "Scarsdale" the playwright interviews lost relatives in pursuit of an answer to the mystery of the dissolution of his family.

Steve Totland is a playwright, performer and teacher. He is a founding member of Lifeline Theatre in Chicago where he worked on more than 30 productions. His work has won the New Play Competition at Center Stage Theater (Greenville, S.C.) and has been nominated by the Actors Theatre of Louisville for the Heideman Award. Totland has a Ph.D in Performance Studies from Northwestern University and teaches theatre at The Buckley School in Los Angeles. "You Are Here" asks the question, "What happens when a son's dreams are bought at the expense of his father's happiness?"

Stephanie Alison Walker is a Chicago-bred and L.A.-based playwright. She was the winner of American Blues Theater's Blue Ink Award and is a four-time Heideman Award finalist. She is a proud member of Playwrights Union, Antaeus Playwrights Lab, Chicago Dramatists Network Playwrights and The Dramatists Guild of America. In "The Madres," a mother and grandmother covertly search for Belen, nine months pregnant and one of the many disappeared people in Argentina's "Dirty War."

Marlow Wyatt is a Kansas City native and a magna cum laude graduate of Howard University. She developed The Girl Blue Project, a youth empowerment intensive that utilizes the performing arts to serve the emotional needs of low-income teens and girls in foster care. Her works include "Living the Dream," "Our Music, Our Spirit, Our Gospel," "Blue Diamond Daddies," "Li'l Easy" and "SHE." She is a two-time recipient of the Broadway Cares/Equity Fights

AIDS Discretionary Grant. “SHE” tells the story of a young girl who receives a life-changing opportunity and discovers that the small town she so desperately wants to flee is filled with the very people who give her wings to fly.

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