



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

in association with Playwrights' Studio, Scotland and the Traverse Theatre

News Release

Issued: 14 June 2016

Drama prize shortlist places women's stories centre stage

Plays dealing with addiction, social injustice and capital punishment have been shortlisted for the James Tait Black Prize for Drama – an accolade linked to Britain's oldest literary awards.

The three nominations – selected from more than 200 entries worldwide – place remarkable and complex female characters at the centre of the work. The shortlisted dramas are:

- *People, Places and Things* by Duncan Macmillan, produced by the National Theatre in the West End – a co-production with Headlong and National Angels
- *Iphigenia in Splott* by Gary Owen, presented by Sherman Cymru
- *hang* by debbie tucker green, produced by Royal Court Theatre

The £10,000 drama prize is presented by the University of Edinburgh in association with Playwrights' Studio, Scotland and the Traverse Theatre.

This year's winner will be announced at a ceremony on Monday, 22 August in the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh, where readings of each play will be performed by professional actors. The event is part of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and tickets to attend can be booked online.

The prize was launched in 2012 when Britain's oldest literary awards, the James Tait Black Prizes, were extended to include a new category for drama.

Duncan Macmillan's acclaimed drama *People, Places and Things* tells the story of Emma, an actress whose life has spun recklessly out of control because of her addiction to drink and drugs.

Gary Owen's monologue, inspired by Greek mythology, presents a modern-day anti-hero. *Iphigenia in Splott* centres on Effie, a young Welsh woman who initially appears as an abrasive loudmouth that drinks and takes drugs. After a night with an ex-soldier, a chain of events reveal Effie's vulnerability and leads to a rousing attack on austerity in the NHS.

hang by debbie tucker green is set in a near future where victims of crime can decide their perpetrator's punishment, with options including the death penalty. The play follows in real time a character making her decision regarding her perpetrator's fate. *hang* premiered at the Royal Court Theatre and was directed by debbie tucker green.

The drama prize is unique in that it is judged by emerging artists and established theatre experts, rather than critics. The accolade is awarded to the best new play in English, Scots or

Gaelic, which demonstrates an original theatrical voice and makes a significant contribution to the art form.

Chair of the judging panel, Greg Walker, who is Regius Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature at the University of Edinburgh, said: “This award seeks to support and encourage those playwrights doing something different. This year’s shortlisted plays certainly do just that. Each accomplished work is a worthy winner, addressing serious issues with invigorating style and gusto.

“We are incredibly proud of the James Tait Black Drama Prize and look forward to revealing the winner at the award ceremony in August.”

The judging panel includes students and academics from the University of Edinburgh, representatives from the Traverse Theatre and Playwrights’ Studio, Scotland. This year the prize was also judged by Schaubuhne Theatre in Berlin, a major hub of new playwriting in Europe.

Maja Zade, Dramaturg at Schaubuhne Theatre, said: “The standard of submissions was so high that it was a struggle to pick only three finalists. However, I’m really excited by the playwrights that we ended up choosing: each have a distinct, original voice.”

Orla O’Loughlin, Artistic Director at the Traverse Theatre said: “We are delighted to be hosting the ceremony for the James Tait Black Prize for Drama at the Traverse again this year. I was especially impressed by the strong, complex women characters at the heart of the work.

“The ceremony is open to the public and I would encourage everyone to join us in celebrating these extraordinary plays that resonate so powerfully for a contemporary audience and speak so directly to the times in which we live.”

Previous winners include Gordon Dahlquist’s sci-fi thriller *Tomorrow Come Today*, Rory Mullarkey’s first full-length play, *Cannibals* (2014) and Tim Price for his acclaimed drama *The Radicalisation of Bradley Manning* (2013).

Tickets for the James Tait Black Prize for Drama Award Ceremony can be booked via the Festival Fringe: <https://tickets.edfringe.com/whats-on/james-tait-black-prize-for-drama-2016-the-award-ceremony>

For further information and images please contact:

Kathryn Dunlop, Press and PR Office, tel 0131 651 5587; email kathryn.dunlop@ed.ac.uk