



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

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

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Themes of feminism and politics run deep in drama prize shortlist

Bold plays dealing with religion, revolution, suicide and sexism have been nominated for this year's James Tait Black Prize for Drama.

The four diverse dramas, whose stories span more than 450 years, chart the lives of people from key moments in history and explore the legacy of personal sagas.

Selected from 89 entries worldwide, the shortlisted works are:

- *Anatomy of a Suicide* by Alice Birch, commissioned by the Royal Court Theatre and first performed there in the Jerwood Theatre
- *Lions and Tigers* by Tanika Gupta, produced by Shakespeare's Globe
- *Glory on Earth* by Linda McLean, produced by the Royal Lyceum Theatre
- *Locker Room Talk* by Gary McNair, produced by Traverse Theatre Company

Alice Birch's *Anatomy of a Suicide* weaves together the stories of three generations of women in a family, all afflicted by depressive thoughts. The experimental play explores the personal trauma of suicide, and questions whether it can run through a family's DNA.

Lions and Tigers charts the epic tale of Tanika Gupta's great uncle and freedom fighter, Dinesh Gupta. Focussing on events in India in the 1930s, the play follows the 19-year-old revolutionary's emotional and political awakening as he pits himself against the British Raj.

Mary Queen of Scots is at the heart of Linda McLean's *Glory on Earth*. The all-women play examines the relationship between the young Catholic Mary Stuart and the Protestant reformer John Knox – both of whom believe that they have the God-given right to power.

Gary McNair's arresting play *Locker Room Talk* features four women repeating verbatim sexist remarks made by real men in anonymous interviews. The relentless misogyny – often glossed over as banter – highlights a perceived crisis in modern masculinity.

The winner of the £10,000 prize will be announced at an event hosted by television and radio presenter Shereen Nanjiani during the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. It is presented by the University of Edinburgh in association with Playwrights' Studio, Scotland and the Traverse Theatre.

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

Uniquely, the drama prize is uniquely judged by emerging artists and established theatre experts, rather than critics. The panel includes students and academics from the University of Edinburgh, representatives from the Traverse Theatre, Playwrights' Studio, Scotland, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Schaubuhne Theatre, Berlin, and a freelance theatre director.

Chair of the judging panel, Greg Walker, who is Regius Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature at the University of Edinburgh, said: "This year's shortlist displays an astounding level of ambition. Each playwright has dealt with challenging and important subjects in exciting and fresh new ways. When considering the award, we ask our judges to nominate dramas that make them look at life a little differently. This year's James Tait Black nominees more than fit the bill."

Previous winners include: David Ireland's confrontational tragicomedy *Cyprus Avenue* (2017); Gary Owen's one-woman monologue, *Iphigenia in Splott* (2016); Gordon Dahlquist's sci-fi play *Tomorrow Come Today*; Rory Mullarkey's *Cannibals* (2014); and Tim Price's acclaimed drama *The Radicalisation of Bradley Manning* (2013).

The James Tait Black Prize for Drama Award Ceremony takes place at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh, on Monday 20 August at 4pm. Tickets on sale now: 0131 228 1404 and online at www.traverse.co.uk

For further information and images please contact:

Kathryn Darcus, Press and PR Office, tel 0131 651 5587; 07875 395069; email Kathryn.Darcus@ed.ac.uk