

News Release

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UNDER STRICT EMBARGO UNTIL 20.00 BST MONDAY, 24 AUGUST

Body swap play by bestselling author wins leading drama prize

An ominous science fiction drama about people who swap bodies to cheat death has won one of the UK's most distinguished literary awards, the James Tait Black Prize for Drama.

Tomorrow Come Today was written by Brooklyn-based playwright and bestselling sci-fi novelist, Gordon Dahlquist. The winning play, which set against the backdrop of an impending apocalypse, was first produced by Undermain Theatre, Texas.

The prize was launched in 2012 when Britain's oldest book awards, the James Tait Black Prizes, were extended to include a new category for drama. It is presented by the University of Edinburgh in association with Playwrights' Studio Scotland and the Traverse Theatre.

The winning playwright travelled from the US to receive his £10,000 prize at an award ceremony this evening (24 August) in Edinburgh's Traverse Theatre. The event was presented by arts journalist Neil Cooper. Extracts from the three shortlisted plays were performed by a professional cast of actors.

Tomorrow Come Today is set in the near future where the wealthy are able to prolong life by switching their bodies for newer, healthier ones. The drama unfolds as central character Poul – played by three different actors as his brain is switched to new bodies – realises that time is running out on earth.

The other shortlisted plays are Rona Munro's *The James Plays* and Nick Payne's *Incognito*.

Rona Munro's trilogy chart the lives and deaths of King James I, II and III of Scotland, who ruled the country throughout the fifteenth century.

Incognito by Nick Payne interweaves three stories, all focussing on neuroscience. First, the theft of Albert Einstein's brain in 1955, on to a pioneering brain operation in 1953, and finally the focus shifts to a modern-day clinical neuroscientist.

Chair of the judging panel and Regius Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature at the University of Edinburgh, Greg Walker, said: "All three shortlisted plays display striking and original talent and each has made a lasting impact in theatre – making it a very challenging job to select a winner. The engaging innovation of Gordon Dahlquist's ominous science fiction drama stood out in the end, and we are delighted to celebrate his work at this evening's event."

The James Tait Black Prizes are distinguished in the way they are judged. Each year, postgraduate students and academics from the University of Edinburgh join together with Playwrights' Studio Scotland and the Traverse Theatre to form the drama judging panel.

Judges award the prize to the best new play in English, Scots or Gaelic, which they consider demonstrates an original theatrical voice and makes a significant contribution to the art form.

Previous winners include Rory Mullarkey's first full-length play, *Cannibals* (2014) and Tim Price for his acclaimed drama *The Radicalisation of Bradley Manning* (2013).

Should you wish to attend this evening's award ceremony, please contact Kathryn Dunlop no later than 6pm today - kathryn.dunlop@ed.ac.uk / 0787 539 5069.

Further information on the James Tait Black Prizes:

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/news/events/tait-black>

For further information and images please contact:

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