

The University of Edinburgh in association with Playwrights' Studio, Scotland and the Traverse Theatre



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

News Release

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Drama prize shortlist linked to UK's oldest book awards unveiled

Plays featuring body-swapping, the theft of Albert Einstein's brain and Medieval Scottish kings have been shortlisted for the James Tait Black Prize for Drama.

The three nominations announced today (13 July) have been selected from more than 180 entries world-wide. The shortlisted dramas from playwrights based in Scotland, England and the United States, are:

- *Tomorrow Come Today* by Gordon Dahlquist, first produced by Undermain Theatre, Texas
- *The James Plays* by Rona Munro, presented by National Theatre of Scotland, Edinburgh International Festival and National Theatre of Great Britain
- *Incognito* by Nick Payne, a Live Theatre, nabokov & High Tide Festival Theatre production in association with The North Wall

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, 24 August in the Traverse Theatre, where readings of each play will be delivered by professional actors. The event is open to the public and tickets 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.

American playwright Gordon Dahlquist's science fiction drama *Tomorrow Come Today* is set in the near future where the wealthy are able to cheat death by switching their bodies for newer, healthier ones.

Rona Munro's *The James Plays* were premiered at the Edinburgh International Festival in 2014, and will be touring again later this year. The trilogy of historical dramas chart the lives and deaths of King James I, II and III of Scotland, who ruled the country throughout the fifteenth century.

Following his critically acclaimed *Constellations* tour, neuroscience is the focus of Nick Payne's ambitious new play *Incognito*, which layers three interwoven tales. The first centres on pathologist Thomas Stoltz Harvey, who allegedly stole the brain of the recently deceased Albert Einstein in 1955. The story then shifts to a patient undergoing pioneering brain

surgery in 1953, and then to a modern-day clinical neuroscientist struggling with her relationships.

The drama prize is judged by postgraduate students and academics from the University of Edinburgh. 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.

Regius Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature at the University of Edinburgh, Greg Walker, who is Chair of the Judges for the James Tait Black Prizes said: “The James Tait Black Prizes are renowned for celebrating the very best in literature. Now in its third year, the drama award has established a strong reputation for showcasing some of the world’s finest playwrights.

“I’m delighted to say that this year is no different. Each shortlisted play addresses its subject with gusto, with thought-provoking, compelling narrative. We are thrilled to celebrate these playwrights’ work during the Edinburgh Festival Fringe this August.”

Member of the judging panel and Director of Creative Carbon Scotland, Ben Twist, said: “This year's longlist was impressive and as wide-ranging as the judges' discussion. We narrowed it down to three works of great variety in form and subject matter, each of which would be a worthy winner.”

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).

Linda Crooks, Executive Producer at the Traverse Theatre said: “It is with pride that the Traverse Theatre Company once again hosts the prestigious James Tait Black Award. We are delighted to be involved in this celebration of the best of contemporary drama and to honour these leading and inspirational playwrights.”

Click here to book tickets for the James Tait Black Prize for Drama Award Ceremony:
<http://www.traverse.co.uk/whats-on/event-detail/621/james-tait-black-prize-for-drama-2015-award-ceremony.aspx>

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