

The University of Edinburgh in partnership with the National Theatre of Scotland in association with the Traverse Theatre



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH



News Release

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Provocative productions come top as drama shortlist is unveiled

Plays dealing with drone warfare, immigration and cannibalism have been shortlisted for a drama prize associated with Britain's oldest literary awards.

The three nominations for the James Tait Black Prize for Drama were announced today (26 June) and were chosen from more than 180 entries worldwide.

The shortlisted dramas are from playwrights based in the UK and US. They are:

- *Grounded* by George Brant, produced by The Gate Theatre, London
- *Cannibals* by Rory Mullarkey, produced by the Royal Exchange, Manchester
- *Some Other Mother* by AJ Taudevin, produced in association with The Tron Theatre in Glasgow and the Scottish Refugee Council; supported by Stellar Quines and On Fife

The £10,000 drama prize was launched in 2012 by the University of Edinburgh in partnership with the National Theatre of Scotland and in association with the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh.

There will be an award ceremony to announce the winner at the Traverse Theatre at 6pm on 11 August, which is open to the public.

The event will be hosted by Joyce McMillan, one of the UK's most esteemed arts writers and theatre critics. Extracts from the three shortlisted plays will be read by a company of actors – produced by the National Theatre of Scotland.

American playwright George Brant's one-woman play *Grounded* follows an American fighter pilot whose unexpected pregnancy forces her to work remotely as a drone pilot from a trailer near Las Vegas, killing people thousands of miles away and then returning to her family at the end of each day. Completely removed from the reality of the war in which she is fighting, the play explores the psychological impact of this type of combat.

Cannibals is British playwright Rory Mullarkey's first full-length play. Set in a remote post-Soviet region, the ramifications of war and starvation are explored. The drama centres on Lizaveta, who is forced to flee from her home. On the run, she meets a variety of characters and ultimately becomes a victim of human trafficking.

AJ Taudevin's *Some Other Mother* also deals with conflicting identities. Set in a Glasgow tower block, and mixing myth with social realism, the drama is about a mother and daughter who have escaped persecution in West Africa. It explores the psychological wounds inflicted by the immigration process.

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.

Last year the prize was awarded to Tim Price for his acclaimed play *The Radicalisation of Bradley Manning*.

Neil Murray, Executive Producer at The National Theatre of Scotland said: "It is a very exciting shortlist of plays, all of which have had a major impact on audiences. I very much look forward to the challenge of selecting a winner."

Judging panel member Nicola McCartney, a playwright and lecturer at the University of Edinburgh, said: "This shortlist represents some of the finest work in what has been a remarkable year for theatre. The James Tait Black Awards are renowned for showcasing the very best new drama and we are delighted to celebrate the work of playwrights for a second year."

Click here to book tickets for the James Tait Black Prize for Drama Award Ceremony:
<http://www.traverse.co.uk/whats-on/event-detail/412/james-tait-black-prize-for-drama.aspx>

Further information on National Theatre Scotland can be found at:
www.nationaltheatrescotland.com

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BACKGROUND NOTES

The National Theatre of Scotland is supported by the Scottish Government. Since its launch in February 2006, the National Theatre of Scotland has been involved in creating over 204 productions in 182 different locations. With no building of its own, the Company takes theatre all over Scotland and beyond, working with existing and new venues and companies to create and tour theatre of the highest quality. It takes place in the great buildings of Scotland, but also in site-specific locations, airports and tower blocks, community halls and drill halls, ferries and forests. The Company has performed to over 1, 000,000 people across four continents. www.nationaltheatrescotland.com