

SPONSORED BY THE WOMEN AND THEATRE PROGRAM &
THE ASSOCIATION OF THEATRE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

2013 JANE CHAMBERS AWARDS

Curated by Maya E. Roth

MAIN CONTEST WINNER

FULL/SELF (4W, 1M) by Claire Chafee. With wit and imagination, this play sheds fresh light on family, legacy, and living. Set in New York City and the mythic America West, three generations of women collide with the buried past in this sometimes surreal, sophisticated, and often funny examination of female lives and choices. Louise, just 14, sets off to summer camp, is intercepted by her long dead grandmother who drives her through the desert, puts her in a dress, brings her to meet her birth father and mother's early lesbian love, and lands her back in NYC to her furious single mother and psychoanalysis. The play's theatrical reinvention of the road-trip genre as a coming-of-age encounter with ghosts, the vitality of characters from the afterlife, and significant range of roles for women and a man subtly re-centers complex questions of identity, sexuality, class, and gender. Written with a striking facility for language, fresh storytelling, and wry wit as well as emotional complexity. For rights, contact Joyce Ketay of the Gersh Agency at 212-997-1818.

CLAIRE CHAFEE's works include *Whisper from the Book of Etiquette*, *Darwin's Finches*, *Why We Have a Body*, *Even Among these Rocks* and *Five Women on a Hill in Spain*. Her play *Why We Have a Body* premiered by The Magic Theatre in San Francisco and was later produced Off-Broadway by The Women's Project, as well as theatres across the US. Readings of her works have been done by New York Stage and Film, New Georges, Berkeley Rep and the Bay Area Playwrights Festival. Her awards include a Drama-Logue Award, the Bay Area Critics' Circle Award, a Princess Grace Special Projects Grant, and the Oppenheimer Award from New York Newsday for Best Emerging Playwright. Her work has been published by Penguin Books, Smith and Kraus (Best Women Plays of 1993), Alexandra Street Press, NuMuse and Zyzzyva. Claire holds an MFA from Brown and an Ed.M. from Harvard in Arts Education. She currently teaches creative writing at California College of the Arts (CCA).

RUNNERS-UP

SILENT SKY (4W, 1M) by Lauren Gunderson. A theatrically-savvy play in two acts based on the true story of 19th century astronomer Henrietta Leavitt artfully cast across a landscape of fierce sisterly love, early feminism in America, love, and science. In 1890, Henrietta leaves her family farm to work at Harvard Observatory only to be slotted with the other women as human computers doing math for the men. But Henrietta sees more in the numbers, and defies society, her heart, and herself to measure the luminous universe. Written with wit and a dynamic, fast-paced storytelling that moves seamlessly from history to emotions, this play elegantly reshapes our understanding not only of the woman who helped to prove the universe is larger than the Milky Way, but also a life's work. *Silent Sky* premiered at South Coast Repertory in 2011 and will be performed at TheatreWorks in January 2014. For rights contact her agent Corinne at chayoun@caa.com.

LAUREN GUNDERSON is an award-winning playwright living in San Francisco. She studied at Emory and NYU's Tisch where she was a Reynolds Fellow in Social Entrepreneurship. Her work has been produced and developed across the US, including South Coast Rep (*Emilie*, *Silent Sky*), The Kennedy Center (*The Amazing Adventures of Dr. Wonderful And Her Dog!*), Berkeley Rep, TheatreWorks, Crowded Fire, San Francisco Playhouse, Marin Theatre, The Magic, Actors Express, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Portland Center Stage, Second Stage, Impact Theatre, The Lark, and The O'Neill. *Emilie: La Marquise Du Chatelet Defends Her Life Tonight* is published with Samuel French. *Exit*, *Pursued By A Bear* and *Toil and Trouble* are published with Playscripts. She is a

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Playwright in Residence at The Playwrights Foundation and a proud Dramatists Guild member. Contact her at LaurenGunderson.com and [@LalaTellsAStory](https://www.instagram.com/LalaTellsAStory).

THE TOWN WITH VERY NICE PEOPLE: A Strident Operetta (8W, 8M, 6 either) by Domnica Radulescu. Featuring 12 tableaux that draw on epic, festival storytelling, music and innovative use of monologues, *The Town with Very Nice People* traces the transformation of a small bigoted Southern town in America into a utopian town of vibrant diversity. The play's explicit, sometimes irreverent exploration of feminist themes and the play's striking, distinctive main character— an émigré writer who has lived in the town for decades and suffered many inequities at the hands of the towns' people—make this play both innovative and daring. The wit, music, and cross-cultural perspective of this play invite experimental stagings and transformations. For rights contact the playwright at radulescud@wlu.edu or radlescum@gmail.com.

DOMNICA RADULESCU is the Edwin A. Morris Professor of French and Italian literature at Washington and Lee University. She is the author of two best-selling novels: *Black Sea Twilight* (Doubleday 2010) and *Train to Trieste* (Knopf 2008), published in twelve languages and winner of the 2009 Library of Virginia Fiction Award. Her play *Naturalized Woman* was produced at the Thespis Theater Festival in New York City in 2012. She has authored, edited and co-edited several scholarly books on theater, exile and representations of women and received the 2011 Outstanding Faculty Award from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

THE DRAPER'S EYE (FW, 3M) by Fengar Gael. A full-length contemporary fairytale that is both unnerving and fascinating, *The Draper's Eye* is set in the Garment District of New York. In Spindles Fabric Shop, women appear to be vanishing. Penelope, a young violinist whose disabled sister is dying, and Siegfried, a window draper, vendor, and former physics prodigy, attempt to unravel the mystery while falling uncannily in love. An investigation ensues, involving a journalist who spread news of the mysterious shop while Siegfried attempts to prove the existence of a fold in the fabric that leads through unseen dimensions to a parallel universe. This play's creative storytelling, experimental premise, and cross-cultural diversity of roles for women and men makes it a compelling chamber play. For queries contact the playwright at Fengar@aol.com or her agent at bostler@bretadamsltd.net.

FENGAR GAEL's plays include *Drink Me*, *The Spell Caster*, *The Usher's Ball*, *Beggar at the Feast*, and *Opaline*. Her plays have been developed and produced at the New York Stage and Film Company, the Utah Shakespearean Festival, the Salt Lake Acting Company, the Moxie Theatre of San Diego, The Kitchen Dog Theatre, Rorschach Theatre, the Venus Theatre, Resonance Theatre MultiStages, and CAP 21 in New York, where she is a writer in residence. She is a recipient of: the Craig Noel Award and Playwrights First Award; commissions from South Coast Repertory and National New Play Network; and a playwriting fellowship from the California Arts Council. *The Draper's Eye* is being featured in The Landing Theatre's 2013 New American Voices Play Reading Series.

TAKARAZUKA!!! (4W, 2M) by Susan Soon He Stanton. Part ghost story, part love story, part entree to a Japanese theatrical sensation, this magnetic new play follows Yuko, a famous performer of male roles for the all-female Takarazuka musical theater troupe, as she ages out of her coveted role as "Top Star." On the eve of her retirement, a BBC film crew arrives to document the captivating, gender-bending, Western-style revue world of Takarazuka, which draws Nigel, the filmmaker, into Yuko's world. Strange things begin to happen at the theater, culminating in a haunting possession.... Multi-layered and meta-theatrical, this play's distinctive subject, cross-cultural storytelling and inventive web of relationships makes it a striking play for the stage. *Takarazuka!!!* has been produced by Clubbed Thumb and Playwrights Horizons in workshop; it was also the winner of Kumu Kahua's Pacific Rim Prize, runner-up

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for Southern Rep's Ruby Prize and Portland Center Stage JAW. For rights, contact the playwright at <susan.stanton@gmail.com>.

SUSAN SOON HE STANTON's plays include *Takarazuka!!!*, *Seek*, *Cygnus*, *Furball*, *the things are against us*, *Murdo*, *The Underneath*, *The Art of Preservation*, *The Nose*, and more. Her work has been produced or developed at The Public, Clubbed Thumb, Playwrights Horizons, Kennedy Center, SoHo Rep, The Flea, Kumu Kahua, Joe's Pub, Honolulu Theater for Youth, InkWell, Rising Circle, 2G, Southern Rep, Yale Cabaret, TerraNova and others. She is a member of The Public's Emerging Writer's Group and MaYi Playwrights Lab. Her awards include the Van Lier Fellowship at the Lark and a Sloan Foundation feature film development grant. She received her MFA from Yale in Playwriting and BFA from Tisch. Originally from Honolulu, Susan now lives in New York City.

A MAN, HIS WIFE, AND HIS HAT (2W, 4M, 1 either) by Lauren Yee. With humor and creativity, this full-length comedy presents a klezmer-inspired love triangle between a man, his wife, and his hat. Playfully riffing on gender roles no less than Jewish culture, this play begins with Hetchman, who loves his hat. Oh, and his wife, too. But when both go missing, the retired hatmaker vows to stop at nothing to find them, if he can ever muster the strength to leave the comforts of his armchair. But the arrival of a talking wall and a hungry golem threatens to derail his endeavor. Theatrically inventive and funny, *A Man, His Wife and His Hat* was produced at The Hub Theatre in April 2013 and will receive its off-Broadway premiere with Playwrights Realm in August/September 2013.

LAUREN YEE's writing has been developed at Lincoln Center Theatre/LCT3, The Public Theater, Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre, Second Stage Theatre, Williamstown Theatre Festival, the Bay Area Playwrights Festival, Kitchen Dog, the Magic Theatre, PlayPenn, and the Playwrights' Center. Her play *Samsara*, last year's runner-up for the Student Jane Chambers Contest, will be workshopped at the O'Neill Conference this summer. Lauren is a Women's Project Lab member, a Ma-Yi Theatre Writers Lab member, Second Stage Theatre's Shank playwright-in-residence, and the Playwrights Realm resident. She was previously a MacDowell fellow, a MAP Fund grantee, and a Public Theater's Emerging Writers Group member. She is under commission from Lincoln Center Theatre/LCT3 and Encore Theatre. BA: Yale. MFA: UCSD. <www.laurenyee.com> For rights, contact the playwright at lauren.d.yee@gmail.com or her agent, Antje Oegel, at 5240 N. Sheridan #814, Chicago IL 60640.

STUDENT CONTEST WINNER

HELLO, I'M EVE (African-American cast of 6W, 2M) by Rebecca Nicholson. This compelling two-act play recasts the biblical Eve as a witty, sardonic feminist exploring the frustrations of life with Adam—and her own desire for a world outside of Eden. Eve's musings serve as a thread connecting episodes depicting various African American women's experiences from the first day of creation to the present... Characters confront issues of infidelity, intraracial prejudice, rape, domestic violence, and loss with the same sense of inquiry and desire for knowledge exemplified by the play's eponymous protagonist.

REBECCA NICHOLSON received her undergraduate degree from Metropolitan State University's Theatre Arts Program and is currently a M.F.A. student at Columbia University School of the Arts. She was a Many Voices Fellow at The Playwright's Center of Minneapolis from 2008-2010, and a Festival Core Artist at Bedlam Theatre in 2011. Her work has appeared at such theatres as The Pillsbury House Theatre, The Bedlam Theatre, The Playwright's Center and The Classical Theatre of Harlem.

STUDENT CONTEST HONORABLE MENTION

BATTLE CRY (4W, 4M) by Bianca Sams. This two-act realist play tells the powerful story of Claudette Colvin, an unsung hero of the Civil Rights Movement. In 1955, Colvin was arrested in Montgomery,

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Alabama for refusing to give up her seat to a white passenger. Civil rights leaders initially championed Colvin's case as a galvanizing concern for the movement, but Colvin's status as a pregnant, un-wed teen later prompted leaders to relinquish her plea and her image in favor of Rosa Parks', who, as a respectably married woman, offered a less controversial face for the cause. From Colvin's initial excitement over support from the movement to her disillusionment following the leaders' rejection, Sams examines the personal costs of this successful political movement and questions how class and representation shape our nation's histories.

BIANCA SAMS completed her undergraduate studies at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and is currently in the M.F.A. playwriting program at Ohio University. She describes her artistic style saying, "If Whoopi Goldberg, Tennessee Williams, and Sam Shepard could artistically have a love child...That would be me." Sams is a member of the Old Vic New Voices Network New York, and her work has appeared at numerous theatres, including Karamu House, Cleveland Public Theater, and Public Theater in New York. Find more information at www.biancasams.com.

THE JANE CHAMBERS AWARD recognizes plays & performance texts by women that present a feminist perspective & significant roles for female performers. The Contest welcomes experimentation in form. Understanding feminism to refract across diverse sex, class, race, cultural and geographic perspectives, the Award is given in memory of lesbian playwright Jane Chambers who, through her plays *A Late Snow*, *Last Summer at Bluefish Cove*, *My Blue Heaven*, *Kudzu*, & *The Quintessential Image*, became a major feminist voice in American theatre. Sponsored by the Women and Theatre Program with the Association for Theater in Higher Education, the Jane Chambers winner receives \$1,000 & a reading of the winning play at ATHE. Student winners receive a reading at the annual WTP Conference and a \$150 prize. Guidelines for submission—and our curatorial notes on recent honorees —can be viewed at www.athe.org/wtp/. This year's Main Jane Chambers Winner —FULL/SELF by Claire Chafee—rose from 114 submissions. The Student Winner —HELLO, I'M EVE by Rebecca Nicholson—rose from a pool with plays representing top MFA programs from across the US. Judges include thirteen feminist theater artists and scholars from across the U.S. Contact Maya Roth (mer46@georgetown.edu) for questions about submission, adjudication or giving.

In 2013, we are publicizing the \$30 for 30 Years Initiative in Recognition of the 30 years that WTP has hosted the Jane Chambers Award, most recently with ATHE. We welcome individual donations, which make the prizes for Main and Student divisions possible... To view an archive of all winners since 1984 visit our website: <http://www.athe.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=138>