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PAULA VOGEL SELECTS

**“APOLOGIES TO LORRAINE HANSBERRY
(YOU TOO AUGUST WILSON)”**

BY RACHEL LYNETT

AS WINNER OF THE

14TH ANNUAL YALE DRAMA SERIES PRIZE

PLAYWRIGHT RECEIVES

\$10,000 DAVID CHARLES HORN PRIZE

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New York, NY (April 7, 2021) – The 2021 **Yale Drama Series Prize**, one of the theater world’s most prestigious playwriting prizes, will be awarded to **Rachel Lynett** for her play ***Apologies to Lorraine Hansberry (You Too August Wilson)***. The 2021 award recipient was chosen by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright **Paula Vogel**.

Lynett’s *Apologies to Lorraine Hansberry (You Too August Wilson)* is set in the fictional world of a post-second Civil War, Bronx Bay, an all-Black state (and neighborhood) is established in order to protect “Blackness.” As Jules’ new partner, Yael, moves into town, community members argue over if Yael, who is Dominican, can stay. Questions of safety and protection surround both Jules and Yael as the utopia of Bronx Bay confronts within itself where the line is when it comes to defining who is Black and who gets left out in the process.

This year the **Yale Drama Series Prize** once again saw a robust and talented group of applicants dedicated to writing for the theater, receiving over 2050 submissions from 60 countries. In addition to the winner, Vogel selected three runners-up—the most finalists ever chosen by a judge—including **Timothy X Atack** for *Babel’s Cupid*, which according to Vogel “depicts two women, a local expert and a translator of multiple languages engaging with an American man on a critical technological installation on tribal land. We discover that collaboration depends on what is not translated, and the centrality of the translator who wisely knows that diplomacy and sexual attraction rest upon mistranslation”; **Molly Bicks** for what Vogel calls “her vivid and twisted comedy *Miss Atomic Power* in which we crash land in the desert at a UFO attraction with real live aliens. Daughter of a former Miss Atomic Power, BETS must decide on whether or not to compete in the Miss Atomic Power pageant or join a class action suit against the government for radioactive exposure”; and **Francisco Mendoza** for *Machine Learning*, “a brilliant first-generation computer scientist creates a machine to take care of his estranged alcoholic father. With comedy and melancholy hand in hand, we witness the son Jorge coding the machine, Arnold; in the process father and son learn to listen and speak to each other through the mediation of the machine,” added Vogel.

Now celebrating its fourteenth year, the Yale Drama Series Prize is the preeminent playwriting award in cooperation with **Yale University Press** and is solely sponsored by the **David Charles Horn Foundation**. The Yale Drama Series Prize is awarded annually for a play by an emerging playwright, selected by a judging panel of one—a distinguished playwright of our time. The winner receives the David Charles Horn Prize of \$10,000, as well as publication of the winning play by Yale University Press and a staged reading. Due to Covid, this year's reading will take place virtually on a date to be announced. The Yale Drama Series is an annual international open submission competition for emerging playwrights who are invited to submit original, unpublished, full-length, English language plays for consideration. All entries are read blindly.

"This year's submissions were incredibly gifted and aesthetically diverse, and in truth, at least ten plays could have been chosen as the recipient of the Yale Drama Series Prize," said judge **Paula Vogel**. "The winning play, *Apologies to Lorraine Hansberry (You Too August Wilson)* by Rachel Lynett, is a taut examination of the impact of racism in a future African American state after the next Civil War in America. How do the community members of a fictional "Bronx Bay" protect Blackness? Who gets to define Blackness in a gated Black community? And ultimately, in policing Blackness, what families and relationships are torn asunder in this new world? With a metatheatrical playfulness and a direct inclusion of actors and audience alike, Rachel Lynett's play exposes the many layers to the notion of race in order to awaken us."

Francine Horn, President of the David Charles Horn Foundation, said, "From the first page of Rachel's amazing play you recognize her exceptional talent for engaging her audience at the start. She imagines a second Civil War that is followed by a treaty that establishes four States in different parts of the country that are totally segregated and restricted to a conformist population. Rachel creates a Black community called Bronx Bay. Keeping it pure creates difficulties, conflicts and expulsion. Rachel is a brilliant writer who isn't shy or quiet about her deep-seeded fears, disappointments and questioning hope. My only disappointment was that the play ended. I hope one day her imagination will create the other three states. Thank you, Rachel, for joining our team of exceptional playwrights that have won the Yale Drama Series competition."

Rachel Lynett, winner of this year's prize said, "When I wrote *Apologies to Lorraine Hansberry (You Too August Wilson)*, I wanted to break as many "rules" as I could. As someone who is multiracial and multicultural, I often feel by existing, and I am sometimes breaking the rules and wanted to write a play that reflected that. I have also spent a lot of time thinking about how to get catharsis in plays about race and how I could find a way to give the actors of color on stage a way to reclaim that. It has been incredibly humbling to see that this play resonates with others when it feels like an argument within myself. Every year, I look to see who has won the Yale Drama Series Prize and immediately add those plays to my reading list as a guide to where I think conversations about theatre and playwriting are headed. It feels incredibly surreal to know this year my name is added to the list of so many artists who I've admired and respected for years."

AN EXCERPT FROM APOLOGIES TO LORRAINE
HANSBERRY(YOU TOO AUGUST WILSON):

JULES

Alright. Damn. Please continue to take your time.

White folx call what I'm about to do "exposition." But the Black folx in the audience know I'm about to preach. The world you're about to see ain't yours. It's not a parallel universe, it's not alternate reality. It's something else. It lives in the imagination of every person of color in this room.

When I get bored, I like to remove one historical event and say to myself "would that make the playing field fair?" What if there had been a revolt when Trump got elected? Or, what if there had been no slavery? Like at all. Can you even imagine the world without it? Our whole socio-eco-system is built on the backs of people who look like me. And I know, I know, I know. The playwright's hand is showing. Get over it. That's kind of the point.

So, re-setting the clock. Slavery never existed. And since I know some of y'all are triffin, let me be clear. The African diaspora due to the slavery of West Africans never happened. The Roman still enslaved the Greeks and the idea of slavery still exists but Black people, my people, were not slaves. We weren't forced onto ships, our names and family histories weren't taken from us. That has been erased.

During the Industrial Revolution, there was a great migration of Africans across the world but especially to Great Britain and the colonies. Though no one came through trying to steal resources from continental Africa, no one came through with resources either.

The African people became incredibly advanced but the only way to mass produce the technology was to take it over seas themselves. Black folk all over the world came up with brilliant inventions and became scientists, doctors, inventors.

But thanks to general xenophobia, many of their inventions, the credit to who invented what, was stolen from them. And when they tried to speak out against it, suddenly people started going missing. And then more and more people went missing. Names vanished from history.

Y'all should know history is written by white folks anyway.

ABOUT RACHEL LYNETT

Rachel Lynett is a playwright, producer, and teaching artist. Her plays have been featured at Magic Theatre, Mirrorbox Theatre, Laboratory Theatre of Florida, Barrington Stage Company, Theatre Lab, Theatre Prometheus, Florida Studio Theatre, Laughing Pig Theatre Company, Capital Repertory Theatre, Teatro Espejo, the Kennedy Center Page to Stage festival, Theatresquared, Equity Library Theatre, Chicago, Talk Back Theatre, American Stage Theatre Company, and Orlando Shakespeare Theatre. Recently, *Last Night* and *He Did It* made the 2020 Kilroy's List. Rachel Lynett is also a Visiting Assistant Professor at Alfred University, the Artistic Director of Rachel Lynett Theatre Company, and the Executive Director for Page by Page.

ABOUT THE YALE DRAMA SERIES PRIZE

Previous winners of the **Yale Drama Series Prize** include **John Austin Connolly's** *The Boys From Siam* (selected by Edward Albee in 2007), **Neil Wechsler's** *Grenadine* (selected by Edward Albee in 2008), **Frances Ya-Chu Cowhig's** *Lidless* (selected by David Hare in 2009), **Virginia Grise's** *blu* (selected by David Hare in 2010), **Shannon Murdoch's** *New Light Shine* (selected by John Guare in 2011), **Clarence Coo's** *Beautiful Province* (selected by John Guare in 2012), **Jen Silverman's** *Still* (selected by Marsha Norman in 2013), **Janine Nabers's** *Serial Black Face* (selected by Marsha Norman in 2014), **Barbara Seyda's** *Celia, a Slave: 26 Characters Testify* (selected by Nicholas Wright in 2015), **Emily Schwend's** *Utility* (selected by Nicholas Wright in 2016), **Jacqueline Goldfinger's** *Bottle Fly* (selected by Nicholas Wright in 2017), **Leah Nanako Winkler's** *God Said This* (selected by Ayad Akhtar in 2018), and **Liliana Padilla's** *How to Defend Yourself* (selected by Ayad Akhtar in 2019). The Yale Drama Series competition took a one-year hiatus in 2020.

ABOUT THE DAVID CHARLES HORN FOUNDATION

The **David Charles Horn Foundation** was established in 2003 by Francine Horn, David's wife and partner in the international fashion publication service *Here & There*. David was a man of vision and discipline with an overriding dedication to the written word. His dream of having his own writing published was never realized. The Foundation seeks to honor David's aspirations by offering other writers the opportunity of publication. More particularly, the Foundation supports emerging playwrights, perhaps in greater need of assistance today than beginning writers in any other of the literary arts. The Foundation provides all funding for the Yale Drama Series.

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