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## THE JULLIARD DRAMA DIVISION'S LILA ACHESON WALLACE AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHTS PROGRAM

The **Lila Acheson Wallace American Playwrights Program**, created in 1993, has been led by Marsha Norman and Christopher Durang since 1994 (other esteemed playwrights to have led Juilliard's up-and-coming writers include John Guare and Terrence McNally, who co-created the program with Drama Division director Michael Kahn, as well as Jon Robin Baitz, Wendy Wasserstein, and Romulus Linney). Now in its twelfth season, the program offers one-year, tuition-free, graduate level fellowships to four new writers - Mike Batistick, Bathsheba Doran, Daphne Greaves, and Jenny Schwartz - and three returning writers - David Folwell, Noah Haidle, and Steve Harper. Purposefully small, Juilliard's Playwrights Program allows the young artists to focus on the practical aspects of dramatic writing while at the same time they are encouraged to take advantage of the wealth of resources within Juilliard's walls and – via the School's prime location on Broadway – New York City's greater theater scene. Students are permitted to take any class within the Division and are encouraged to see productions around the city by receiving free or discounted tickets to many events on and Off-Broadway. But the essence of the Program lies in the weekly workshop/seminars with the playwright heads that are specifically tailored for the group. In addition, twice monthly readings of the students' work allow the writers, with the help of Juilliard acting students and alumni, to tackle the practical aspects of creating a new play. The workshops culminate at year's end when students in the playwrights residency, like their peers from the acting program, present their work to professionals from New York and around the country as small productions. The intention is that these events will create a bridge for these young artists between Juilliard and the larger theater community.

Alumni of the program already have put this bridge to good use and their work has garnered considerable recognition, including productions, commissions, publications, and awards. In 2001 **David Auburn's** (1996) play *Proof* won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and the Tony Award for Best New Play, as well as the Lucille Lortel Award and Drama Desk Award for outstanding new play. In the summer of 2002 *Proof* had its UK premiere in London, starring Gwyneth Paltrow. *Proof* was selected, along with **Adam Rapp's** (2000) play *Nocturne*, for inclusion in *The Best Plays of 2000-2001*, a drama compilation that has been published every year since 1920. Mr. Auburn, who also won the Kesselring Prize for drama spring 2001 and wrote the book for Jonathan Larson's Off-Broadway musical *Tick, tick... BOOM!*, currently is working on film adaptations of his own play *Proof*, Scott Anderson's novel *Triage* for Sydney Pollack and Anthony Minghella's film company Mirage Enterprise, and Paul Watkin's thriller *The Forger* for producer Laura Ziskin and Miramax Films.

The Naked Angels Theater Company's production of **Stephen Belber's** (1996) play *Tape* opened in Los Angeles spring of 2001 after a sold-out Off-Broadway run. The production was directed in New York and Los Angeles by Geoffrey Nauffts, and the film version of the play, starring Ethan Hawke, Robert Sean Leonard, and Uma Thurman, was directed by Richard Linklater. In the spring of 2002, Mr. Belber's play *Finally* was performed at the Blue Heron Arts Center in New York,

directed by his wife, Lucie Tiberghien. Mr. Belber's latest play, *Mel and Gene*, had a workshop production with the Lincoln Center Directors Lab in the summer of 2002. In July 2002, Mr. Belber acted Off-Broadway in *Only the End of the World*, a French play translated and directed by Ms. Tiberghien, and was nominated (along with the members of the Tectonic Theater Project, of which Mr. Belber was one of the three associate writers) for an Emmy Award for Best Screenplay for *The Laramie Project*. In the summer 2003, Mr. Belber's play *A Small, Melodramatic Story* was featured at the O'Neill Playwrights Conference Summer 2003, along with **Cusi Cram's** (2001) play *Fuente*. At the same time **Adam Rapp** was selected as the Playwright-in-Residence at the OPC 2003. **Brooke Berman's** (1999) new play *Until We Find Each Other* was given a public reading at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in the summer of 2002 featuring Dallas Roberts (Group 23) and Robert Beitzel (Group 28). *Until We Find Each Other* was given its premiere in Chicago at Steppenwolf Theatre Company's new Garage Theater in the fall 2002. **Julia Jordan** (1996) wrote the book for a new musical version of *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, based on the book by Patricia MacLachlan, which had its New York City premiere at the Lucille Lortel Theater in July 2002. The production was presented by Theaterworks/USA and directed by Joe Calarco. **David Lindsay-Abaire's** (1998) short play *Snow Angel* had a workshop production at the Lincoln Center Directors Lab summer of 2002, directed by Jake Hart. In the same year Mr. Lindsay-Abaire's play *Fuddy Meers* was given its premiere in London in a West End production starring Jane Krakowski. He currently is developing a new half hour NBC comedy for Conan O'Brien's production company Conaco. **Matthew Swan's** (1999) film *Mr. Smith Gets a Hustler* had its New York premiere at the Screening Room in June 2002. His film *Ball in the House*, directed by Tanya Wexler, which features Jonathan Tucker, David Straitharin, Jennifer Tilly, Ethan Embry, Deidre O'Connell, and Dan Moran, also premiered in June 2002 at the L.A. Film Festival. **Daniel Goldfarb's** (1997) most recent play *Sarah, Sarah* will be presented at the Manhattan Theater Club's City Center Stage II in March 2004.

Other productions by Juilliard playwrights include **Kira Obolensky's** (1997) *Lobster Alice*, (Playwrights Horizons), **Daniel Goldfarb's** *Adam Baum and the Jew Movie* (Blue Light Theater Company), **Hilary Bell's** (1998) *Wolf Lullaby* (Atlantic Theater Company), and **Michael Develle Winn's** (1999) *Up Against the Wind* (New York Theater Workshop). **Cusi Cram's** *Lucy and the Conquest*, was first produced at Juilliard in February 2001 with actors in their third year, and also had workshops conducted in the summer of 2001 at the O'Neill Theatre Center, while Ms. Cram's short play *West of Stupid* was performed by the Hypothetical Theatre Company in New York. **Jessica Goldberg** (1998) conducted workshops on her new play, *Good Thing*, at the Mark Taper Forum and the New York Stage & Film. Ms. Goldberg's *Refuge*, which won the 1999 Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, was produced at Playwrights Horizons and published in *Best Plays by Women 1999*, opened in a German production fall 2001.

Past recipients of the Lila Acheson Wallace American Playwrights fellowship include: David Adjmi, David Auburn, Tanya Barfield, Stephen Belber, Hilary Bell, Eric Berlin, Brooke Berman, Peter Basta Brightbill, Cathy Caplan, Julia Cho, Cusi Cram, Alex Cunningham, Napoleon Ellsworth, Ron Fitzgerald, Etan Frankel, Jessica Goldberg, Daniel Goldfarb, Julia Jordan, Bob Kerr, Oni Faida Lampley, Deborah Laufer, David Lindsay-Abaire, Lynn Martin, Ellen Melaver, Kira Obolensky, Christian Papagapitos, Cybele Pascal, Adam Rapp, Jay Reiss, Leah Ryan, Julian Shepard, Tim Sheridan, Matthew Swan, Alex Tolk, Francine Volpe, and Michael Develle Winn.

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