

2008 JANE CHAMBERS PLAYWRITING WINNERS

Sponsored by WTP & ATHE

***Unspeakable Acts* by Mary F. Casey**

CAST: 4 Women, 2 Men

In this feminist history, set during the repressive McCarthy Era, a tenured, nationally-prominent UCLA professor is suspended for alleged illicit lesbian activities at her home. Based on historical events, *Unspeakable Acts* follows one woman's courageous and years-long struggle against a powerful institution and society's censure. Opposed by an ambitious university dean, she risks everything to try to regain her position, her partner and her good name.

Written as compelling drama, with wit and heart. For rights, contact <mcplywrt@aol.com> or 310-444-7794.

Mary F. Casey is a Los Angeles based playwright whose full-length play, *Women and Horses and A Shot Straight From the Bottle*, a 2000 finalist for the Jane Chambers Award, received its world premiere at Echo Theatre in Dallas, Texas, in 2006 and was nominated for three Leon Rabin Awards through the Dallas Theatre League. Her short plays have been produced at Secret Rose Theatre, Celebration Theatre & Theatre of NOTE in Los Angeles – and at the Six Women Theatre Festival in Manitou Springs. A finalist for the 2007 Heideman Award at Actors Theatre of Louisville, she was also the recipient of the 2003 Butcher Scholar Award through the Women of the West Museum & the Autry National Center.

Runners-Up

***Retrospect for Life* by Dominique Morisseau**

CAST: 6 Women, 1 Man

Set in Detroit, *Retrospect for Life*, features five Black women of starkly disparate backgrounds and full of intra-racial prejudices who are detained inside an abortion clinic as protests rage outside. As their differences explode into confrontation, the women battle with their life choices and each other, daring to survive. With poetry, humor, pain and inspiration, this play openly addresses abortion as well as other urgent issues related to women's health, including: violence among women, female incarceration, stress and health issues, teen abandonment, and safe and healthy relationships. For rights, contact at <dominiquemorisseau@yahoo.com> or at 212.652.2848.

Dominique Morisseau, a native of Detroit, is the author of two NAACP Image Award-winning plays, and her work appears both onstage and in print across the U.S. Among the most noted are: her one-act play, *Black at Michigan*, which debuted to a sold-out house at the Cherry Lane Theatre in 2006, a ten-minute play entitled, *Socks*, and the two one-acts *Roses Are Played Out* and *Love and Nappiness*—all of which debuted at Center Stage New York and with the American Theatre of Harlem. Her writing can also be found in the sold-out literary journal, *Signifyin' Harlem*, and in the best-selling series, *Chicken Soup for the African American Soul*. Her full length play, *Retrospect For Life*, has been read at the National Black Theatre Festival, with Lark Play Development Center, the Hip Hop Theatre Festival, Classical Theatre of Harlem, ACT Now Foundation, and the Jourdain Theatre Co. She is currently an Actress-In-Residence at CUNY's Creative Arts Team where she leads workshops on HIV/AIDS awareness and Violence Prevention through Drama.

***Pony* by Sally Oswald**

CAST: 3 Male-identified (born female), Two Women

Pony is a creative response to the eerie and tense play *Woyzeck*, Georg Buchner's landmark expressionist drama. With *Pony*, Oswald's contemporary characters refer directly to the original work's climactic murder, which seems to catalyze events around a neighborhood in transition. We soon see that the citizens of this queer microcosm are also in transition, as they morph psychically and physically. Alternately disturbing & dryly funny, this highly theatrical play explores the fluidity and ambiguity of gender—and story. Contact via e-mail at <sallyoswald@hotmail.com> or tel. at 646.325.8417.

Sally Oswald is a playwright, librettist, editor, and advocate for adventurous new writing. *Pony* was developed with the support of the Ontological-Hysteric Theater, The Millay Colony for the Arts, The Ohio State University Thurber House Fellowship, and a Jerome Fellowship from the Playwrights Center in Minneapolis. The play was recently presented as part of Portland Center Stage's JAW Festival. Sally's play *Vendetta Chrome* was produced as part of Clubbed Thumb's Summerworks 08 Festival, and her text for Dan Hurlin's show about outsider photographer Mike Disfarmer will premiere at St. Ann's Warehouse in February, 2008. Additional affiliations

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include New Georges, Dixon Place, Little Theater at Tonic, and Polybe+Seats. Honors include fellowships from the MacDowell Colony, the Dramatists Guild and Ensemble Studio Theatre. Sally holds an MFA from Brown University and a BA from Barnard. She is the founder and co-editor with Jordan Harrison of *Play: A Journal of Plays*, the only American journal devoted to plays (www.playjournal.com), which has published 3 print issues and 8 postcard-plays and received press in the Brooklyn Bullet, Backstage & American Theatre.

Honorable Mentions

***Quark* by Gloria Bond Clunie**

CAST: 2 Women, 2 Men

Smart and deftly-shaped human drama, this moving science play asks: With commercial flights into outer space a reality, will we soar into the great beyond of space or feed the starving children on this planet? Dr. Alexandra Seabold, an astrophysics professor, and her husband Terry, a kindergarten teacher, face personal challenges and humanitarian urges as they struggle to decide if journeys into space are “worth” it. *Quark* was a finalist for STAGE’s 2007 International Script Competition for new plays about science & technology. Contact at <gbclunie@aol.com> or by tel at 847.869.1963.

Gloria Bond Clunie is the award-winning playwright of *Shoes*, *Quark*, *Sweet Water Taste*, *Living Green*, *Mirandy* and *Brother Wind and Dream: A Tribute to Martin Luther King, Jr.* An original member of the Playwriting Ensemble at the Tony Award-winning Victory Gardens Theater in Chicago, IL, Ms. Clunie received the 1995 Joseph Jefferson Chicago Theatre Award for Best New Work/Adaptation, the 1994 Theodore Ward African-American Playwriting Award & the 1999 AATE Distinguished Play Award for her play *North Star*, which premiered at Victory Gardens. She holds an MFA in Directing from Northwestern University, and is a full-time Creative Drama Specialist in the Evanston, IL school district.

***what remains is the (stillness) of objects* by Laylage Courie** CAST:4 Women; 1 Man

A haunting theatrical “fantasia,” written in response to Bergmann’s *Cries and Whispers*, this text for the stage features Maria and Karin, two sisters, returning to their childhood home to attend to Agnes, their dying sister. In the agonizing monotony at her bedside, the Doctor is conjured; objects radiate pathos; kinship is toasted; and intense memory, fantasy, and emotions bloom. Contact at <laylage@luminouswork.org> or 718.788.3021.

Laylage Courie is a Brooklyn-based writer and theater-maker who crafts “simple luminous theater” that recontextualizes the spoken word. Her work includes surreal cabaret, powerpoint presentations with film scores, tea parties for voice and debris, and poetic play scripts. Her work has appeared at the NY Fringe Festival, Dixon Place, the Obie-award winning *Little Theater*, the Bowery Poetry Club, the Looking Glass Theater forums, the North American Cultural Laboratory, at the 1996 Olympic Arts Festival, the International Festival of Women Playwrights, in video-shorts, bars, cafes, lofts, and old houses. She is online at *www.luminouswork.org*.

***What Once We Felt* by Ann Marie Healy**

CAST: 6 Women (13+ characters)

This creative science fiction play is set in a city by the river, where society divides along the lines of imperfect DNA, trashy bestsellers and fertility porn. The play’s Macy O. Blonsky—author of the last print-published novel in the Western World—must decide how far she will go to bring her creation into the world. *WHAT ONCE WE FELT* is a gripping, humorous romp through the annals of genocide, suicide, infanticide, and atrocious manners. Contact via Mark Christian Subias Agency at <mcsasst@nyc.rr.com>or at 212-445-1091.

Ann Marie Healy’s play *The Legend of Millie Willet* was recently developed at the National Playwrights’ Conference and *What Once We Felt* will be produced this coming season at About Face Theater in Chicago. Other recent plays include *Dearest Eugenia Haggis*, *When He Gets That Way*, *Have You Seen Steve Steven*, *Now That’s What I Call A Storm* and *Somewhere Someplace Else*. Her writing is published through Playscripts, Inc., Samuel French, various Smith & Kraus anthologies, in *The Kenyon Review*, and as one of the plays in *Funny, Strange, Provocative: Seven Plays by Clubbed Thumb*. She is an affiliated artist with the Obie-Award winning theater company Clubbed Thumb; a member of MCC’s Playwrights Coalition; a member of 13P, a former member of the Soho Rep Writer/Director

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Lab, and a writing fellow at New River Dramatists. She was also awarded a 2006/07 Sloan Commission and a 2006 NYSCA commissioning grant. In May, Healy completed her MFA with Paula Vogel and Bonnie Metzgar at Brown University.

***Big Baby* by Sibyl O'Malley**

CAST: 5 Women, 1 Man, 1 gender neutral

With free-wheeling theatricality, *Big Baby* explores the perils of American entitlement, misguided matricide and any theatrical undertaking. Two teenage girls plot violent revenge for the mothers who abandoned them. This story is framed by two elements: a narrator and a big baby. The narrator, marginalized and threatened with funding cuts, fights the play's culture of fantasy and forgetfulness. The baby indulges the girls' righteous pursuit of power and media coverage, and is so big, so new and so cute that no one seems to mind when its appetites consume the play. Genre-shifting absurdism. For rights contact at <sibylomalley@att.net> or 213.713.6885.

Sibyl O'Malley's credits include *Alice and the Magestic Guts* (Toy Theater Festival/ Walt Disney Concert Hall), *Yes is a long time* (Bootleg Theater), *Full Tilt Float* (RedCat, Plaza de la Raza), *Lamentations of the Pelvis* (Betalevel) and *The End of the Boesmani Rainbow* (Celebration Theatre). Sibyl won a merit scholarship to CalArts, an Altvator Fellowship with Cornerstone Theater Company, and she has been commissioned by the Community Arts Partnership and Center Theater Group. She has mentored playwrights through the Virginia Avenue Project, the Stonewall Day Center and Plaza de la Raza.

STUDENT JANE CHAMBERS AWARDWINNER

***Good Egg* by Dorothy Fortenberry** (Yale University).

Good Egg explores the emotional and ethical issues surrounding reproductive rights and genetic testing through the story of Meg and Matt, two siblings, when Meg—who is the primary caregiver to her brother Matt—decides to get pregnant and have her embryos pre-screened for bi-polar disorder due to Matt's struggle with the illness.

Dorothy Fortenberry's plays include *Good Egg*, *Bibles and Candy*, *After the Flood*, *We're Celebrities . . . We're Just Not Famous Yet*, book and lyrics for the musical *Bicycling for Ladies*, and the solo piece *Paint Show*. Her work has been developed at Arena Stage, Ars Nova, Perishable Theatre, Studio 42, and The Tank, and produced by Journeyman Productions and Vital Theatre Company. She served for two years as an Artistic Associate of the Yale Cabaret, and has taught playwriting in Washington, DC and New Haven, CT. She is the winner of the ASCAP Cole Porter Prize in Playwriting from the Yale School of Drama and has been nominated for the Weissberger Award and the Wasserstein Prize.

The JANE CHAMBERS AWARD recognizes plays & performance texts created by women that present a feminist perspective & contain significant opportunities for female performers. This annual award, founded in 1974, welcomes experimentations in form and is given in memory of lesbian playwright Jane Chambers who through her plays such as *A Late Snow*, *Last Summer at Bluefish Cove* and *My Blue Heaven* became a major feminist voice in American theater. Sponsored by the Women and Theatre Program with the Association for Theater in Higher Education, the Jane Chambers winner traditionally receives a cash award and a rehearsed reading at ATHE. In 2008, these eight plays rose to the top from over 100 submissions, as selected by a panel of a dozen feminist theater judges. In addition to WTP and ATHE, financial contributions this year were given by Jill Dolan, Brown University, and Georgetown University – part of a crucial and ongoing fundraising drive. Guidelines for submission and donation can be viewed at the WTP website: <<http://www.athe.org/wtp/html/chambers.html/>>.