

## JANE CHAMBERS AWARDS

### MAIN CONTEST WINNER 2018

**QUEENS** (7W, with double casting), by Martyna Majok. This bold story of immigration, humanity, and Americanization centers on the lives of two generations of immigrants who collide in a basement apartment in Queens, NY. Epic, personal, and political, *Queens* explores the cost of closed doors and of forgetting where you came from. With poetic and unsentimental force, the play fluidly moves back and forth between two cultural moments in the life of the Queens apartment — 2001 and 2017 — while memories of other times and places give voice to the fourteen women of varying backgrounds and ages who have left their homelands (from Eastern Europe to Central America to the Middle East) to come to the US. Majok's richly drawn characters engage us with humor and passion exploring the motivations, betrayals, hopes and fears of a group of women — at once disparate and connected— making their way in the most difficult of circumstances. *Queens* offers a powerful window into the camaraderie and crises among women united only by circumstance and geography. Majok's characters haunt long after the 'curtain goes down.' For production rights please contact Olivier Sultan at Creative Artists Agency: Olivier Sultan; olivier.sultan@caa.com

**Martyna Majok** was born in Bytom, Poland. She was awarded the 2018 Pulitzer Prize for Drama for *Cost of Living* (Williamstown Theatre Festival, Manhattan Theatre Club). Other plays include *Sanctuary City* (New York Theatre Workshop), *Queens* (LCT3/Lincoln Center, La Jolla Playhouse), and *Ironbound* (Steppenwolf, Round House, WP/Rattlestick, Geffen Playhouse, National Theatre of Warsaw and other theatres in America and abroad). Awards include The Lucille Lortel for Outstanding New Play, The Greenfield Prize (first female recipient in drama), The Lanford Wilson Prize, Lilly Award's Stacey Mindich Prize, Helen Merrill Emerging Playwright Award, Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding New Play, The Kennedy Center's Jean Kennedy Smith Award, David Calicchio Prize, NYTW 2050 Fellowship, NNPN Smith Prize for Political Playwright, and Merage Foundation Fellowship for the American Dream. She also received the Student Jane Chambers Award for *the friendship of her thighs*. MFA, Yale School of Drama, Juilliard; BA, University of Chicago. Alumna of Ensemble Studio Theatre's Youngblood and WP Lab. Martyna was the 2015-2016 PoNY Fellow at the Lark Play Development Center and is a 2018-2019 Hodder Fellow at Princeton University.

### 2018 RUNNER-UP

**ALLOND(R)A** (3W 4M) by Gina Femia. Featuring a diverse cast of Latinx and African-American characters *Allond(R)A* is a coming of age story told against the backdrop of hot summer in the Coney Island Houses. Seventeen year-old Allonda lives with her deceased mother's friend and watches the world unfold through her window. However, she has big dreams: she's a straight A student, and aspires to be a professional wrestler. Through her passion for wrestling Allonda establishes a circle of friends, discovers new levels of empowerment and self-esteem even as she wrestles with her budding sexuality and betrayals at home. With wrestling as a uniting activity among the young characters, *Allond(R)A* is fresh and compelling story telling elucidated by strong characterization and dialogue marked by frequent poetic turns that captures the stark beauty of city life. In a remarkable "gender neutral" zone, wrestling becomes the language and salvation for Allonda's mixed circle of friends, ultimately enabling her a true superhero story conclusion to declare her independence, claim her lesbian desire, and escape her circumstances. For information about producing the play contact the playwright via her website at [www.femiagina.com](http://www.femiagina.com)

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**Gina Femia** has written 29 full-length plays which have been produced/developed at Playwrights Horizons, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Pipeline Theatre, New Georges, Theatre of NOTE, and the Great Plains Theatre Conference, among others. She is the 2018 Winner of the Leah Ryan Prize for Emerging Female Playwrights and an Alum of EST Youngblood, Pipeline Theatre's PlayLab and New Georges' Audrey Residency. She's a current member of Project Y's Writer's Group, a New Georges Affiliated Artist and has received residencies with P73, Powerhouse, NTI at the O'Neill, SPACE on Ryder Farm, & Fresh Ground Pepper. She's been nominated for the Doric Wilson Award and the Cherry Lane Theatre Mentor Project. MFA, Sarah Lawrence College (Lipkin Prize in Playwriting).

**HONORABLE MENTIONS**

***BULL IN A CHINA SHOP*** (5 F) by Bryna Turner. Inspired by the real letters between Mary Woolley and Jeannette Marks spanning from 1899 to 1937, this fast-paced comedy asks: What is feminist revolution and how do we achieve our ends? What happens when your passions and aspirations world put you in conflict with the world and your life partner as you pursue your true potential? How do we change and grow old together? This thoughtful queering of an under-represented lesbian history effectively uses anachronisms of contemporary language and mixes post-modern colloquialisms with the historical specificities of Wooley's life and times (when she was President of Mount Holyoke 1900-37) to speak to patterns of women's emancipation movements, lesbian love relationships, and values and stakeholders in US academic institutions. *Bull In A China Shop* offers excellent roles for multiple female characters who move across a range of ages. With wit it uses the framework of Wooley and Marks' relationship to interrogate ongoing debates in feminism including about how we practice our individual feminisms and the tensions between activism, radicalism, and more restrained advocacy within existing institutions.

**Bryna Turner** is a Brooklyn-based playwright originally from Northern California. Her play, *Bull in a China Shop*, recently premiered at LCT3, and will be produced by About Face Theatre in Chicago this spring. Her work has also been developed with Abingdon Theatre Company, Clubbed Thumb, Colt Coeur, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Mendocino Theatre Company, Mount Holyoke College, Rainbow Theatre Project, and Rutgers University. Other plays include: *Carlo at the Wedding*; *Lights Over Philo*; *The Stand-In*; and *How to Separate Your Soul from Your Body (in ten easy steps!)*. She is an alum of Clubbed Thumb's Early Career Writer's Group, a MacDowell fellow, and holds an MFA in Playwriting from Rutgers University. She is currently working on a commission for Lincoln Center Theater and was awarded their Emerging Artist Award of 2018. For producing information, go to [www.samuelfrench.com/p/62556/bull-in-a-china-shop](http://www.samuelfrench.com/p/62556/bull-in-a-china-shop)

**FUEL** (1 Female, 3 Male-identified, 1 non-binary/Transmasculine) by Caridad Svitch. You live in a place that reeks of gasoline. You run on fuel. You don't know anything else except living hard and surviving, but one day that fuel is gonna run out. How are you gonna know who you are, then? This is the story of Baby and their people living in a town left for dead or the "Ballad of Baby and Girl in this here mad America." Svitch's haunting play explores environmental destruction, poverty, capitalism, learned violence and the toll of despair and fear. Yet folded within is an aching love story, with hope for healing self and exploitation of the world. Svitch's language—both colloquial and poetic—captures rhythms of poverty and open spaces. Protagonist Baby works at a gas station, the same one her Da worked at before he went blind; Da performs ritual griefs outside praying for penance for generations of violence. Baby and her cohorts engage their regular junk yard rituals of bonding even as a mysterious animal locked in the barn rages against unspeakable violence committed against it. A love story between Baby and Girl finally unwraps protective layers

**FEMINIST PLAYS BY WOMEN, WITH GREAT ROLES FOR WOMEN (AND SOMETIMES MEN)**

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of toughness and ferocity, suggesting that recognition and tenderness still have human currency. For rights to produce contact: Elaine Devlin Literary, Inc., 411 Lafayette Street, 6th Flr. NY NY 10003; <[edemlinlit@aol.com](mailto:edemlinlit@aol.com)>; or author at <[csvich21@caridadsvich.com](mailto:csvich21@caridadsvich.com)>.

**Caridad Svitch** received the 2012 OBIE for Lifetime Achievement and the 2011 American Theatre Critics Association Primus Prize for *The House of the Spirits* (based on Isabel Allende's novel). Key works in her catalogue include *12 Ophelias*, *Alchemy of Desire/Dead-Man's Blues*, *Iphigenia Crash Land Falls...*, and *RED BIKE*. She sustains a parallel career as a theatrical translator, and also as editor. She is founder of NoPassport theatre alliance and press, and associate editor of *Contemporary Theatre Review* for Routledge, UK. Caridad has edited several books on theatre and performance. Her works are published by TCG, Intellect Books, Seagull Books, Broadway Play Publishing, Manchester UP, Eyecorner Press, and Bloomsbury/Methuen Drama, among others.

**MILK AND GALL** (4W 2M w/ doubling) by Mathilde Dratwa. *Milk and Gall* opens as Vera gives birth to a baby boy on election night 2016, juxtaposing the crisis of childbirth with the emergence of a "Man-Baby" president. With absurdist comedy, this play raises a magnifying glass to the experience of being a new mother under Trump and this era of "ideal mothering" mantras. Over the course of one seemingly unending year, tensions mount between Vera and her second-wave feminist mother; she struggles to connect physically with her husband and her friendship with her Syrian-American best friend, Amira, falters. A surreal funny play that explores the terror of the mundane: Vera is stuck in a world of sleep deprivation, diapers, breast pumps and padsicles while everyone else she knows is out marching. *Milk And Gall* depicts the experience of childbirth and the challenges of birthing and early motherhood with humor and a touch of the absurd — from a shapeshifting baby to a sassy back-talking Alexa device and a funeral for Vera's former self. For production info, please contact the playwright directly at [mathilde.g.dratwa@gmail.com](mailto:mathilde.g.dratwa@gmail.com)

**Mathilde Dratwa** : is a Belgian playwright and filmmaker based in Brooklyn. She is a member of Dorset Theater Festival's Women Artists Write initiative and of New York Foundation for the Arts' Immigrant Artist Program; has been a co-leader of the FilmShop collective; and is a two-time Pulitzer Center Grant recipient. Her theater credits include *Milk and Gall* (Great Plains Theater Conference, LAByrinth theater company's intensive/retreat, O'Neill National Playwrights Conference Semi-Finalist) and *Escape from Garden Grove* (Last Frontier Theater Conference, Maxim Mazumdar New Play Competition Finalist). She wrote and directed the narrative short films *Peta Pan* (starring Independent Spirit Award Nominee Nisreen Faour) and *Escape from Garden Grove* (Sundance Channel Shorts Contest Finalist), as well as the web series *Almost Anonymous* (best original concept, NYC WebFest). Mathilde's nonfiction work has been featured in various forums, including French newspaper *Le Monde*, and screenings at the United Nations' ECOSOC chamber. A seasoned educator, Mathilde is a Master Teaching Artist for Roundabout Theatre Company, the New Victory, the Shakespeare Society and the School of *The New York Times*.

**THE NICETIES** ( 2W) by Eleanor Burgess. At an elite East Coast university, an ambitious young black student, Zoe and her esteemed white professor, Janine meet to discuss a paper the college junior is writing about the American Revolution. They're both liberal. They're both women. They're both brilliant. But very quickly, discussions of grammar and Google turn to race and reputation, and before they know it, they're in dangerous territory neither of them had foreseen – and facing stunning implications that can't be undone. *The Niceties* is a "page turner" from the moment, Zoe walks in: a compelling and emotional critique of the ways in which white feminism and many within the Ivory Towers continue to fail people of color and neglect histories in favor of learned narratives rooted in patriarchal frameworks. With precise and provocative dialogue the script does not let Janine (or the audience) sidestep persistent micro aggressions perpetrated daily against

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people of color even by those who believe themselves to be “woke.” Fearlessly and succinctly, through razor sharp dialogue and relatable characters, *The Niceties* engages in important conversation/conflicts today. For production information, contact the playwright through <[www.eleanorburgess.com](http://www.eleanorburgess.com)>.

**Eleanor Burgess:** *The Niceties* will have its joint world premiere this Fall with Huntington Theatre Company, Manhattan Theatre Club, and McCarter Theatre Center. Her plays have been produced at the Alliance, CATF, Centenary Stage Company, and Portland Stage, and her work has been developed with New York Theatre Workshop, New Group, Ensemble Studio Theatre, the Civilians, the Lark Play Development Center and I73. Burgess grew up in Brookline, Massachusetts, studied history at Yale, and recently completed the M.F.A in Dramatic Writing at NYU/Tisch. Contact

**WENDY AND THE NECKBEARDS (5W 6M)** by Kari Bentley-Quinn. A pop-culture satire that will make audiences laugh and gasp with recognition: Wendy, is an optimistic, sweet spirited plus-sized 17 year-old social media influencer and makeup guru from Texas. After she “comes out” as a feminist she has her world exploded by internet trolls — alt-right groups and radical Men’s Rights Activists — represented by a Chorus of Neckbeards who lob vile, sexist, weightist vitriol at Wendy via the internet, making it their personal mission to make her life a living hell for her coming out as a proud, body positive, feminist. Meanwhile, Jess, a woman in her 20s, discovers that her long term boyfriend Chad spends his time harassing young women on the internet to “blow off steam.” Chad fixates on Wendy as his world devolves, and the two begin talking frequently on Twitter. Chad’s best friend Shih – the play’s narrator who frequently uses metatheatrical humor in asides to the audience — reveals his huge crush on Jess’ best friend, Bree. While Shih watches way too much porn and smokes too much weed, he secretly wants to be a better person. Then the stories converge in this darkly comic examination of the current culture of internet harassment, the cycle of abuse towards women, and toxic masculinity in the age of Donald Trump. For rights please contact: [Kari.bentleyquinn@gmail.com](mailto:Kari.bentleyquinn@gmail.com) or [www.karibentleyquinn.com](http://www.karibentleyquinn.com)

**Kari Bentley-Quinn** is a playwright based in New York City. Her plays have been presented at or developed with Lesser America, Mission to (dit)Mars, The Secret Theatre, Caps Lock Theater, Artemisia Theater, The Brick Theater, Packawallop Productions, Lark Play Development Center, Fringe NYC, the Play Development Collective, and more. She has been a finalist for the O’Neill NPC, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, the Playwrights Realm and the Public Theater Emerging Writers Group. Kari’s full-length plays include *Paper Cranes* (Backstage Critic’s Pick), *The Unlikely Ascent Of Sybil Stevens* (The Secret Theatre New Voices Project), *The Ocean Thought Nothing* (O’Neill Conference Finalist), and *Wendy And The Neckbeards* (The Relentless Award Honorable Mention). She was the 2015 recipient of the Rita and Burton Goldberg Playwriting Award. Kari holds a BA in Theatre Arts from Pace University and an MFA in Playwriting from Hunter College, where she studied with Tina Howe, Mark Bly and Arthur Kopit.

**STUDENT CONTEST WINNER 2018**

**SON OF SOIL** portrays three young black mothers – Ruth, Patricia, and Sage – who have made excruciating sacrifices to save their sons from racialized violence. When Ruth’s son is murdered, Patricia’s daughter becomes pregnant, and Sage’s son returns home to join the all-white police force. All three women must confront how good, desperate intentions ruined their friendship and their children’s lives as they attempt to heal a fractured community.

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**Andie Berry** is a writer and scholar from Silver Spring, Maryland. She is a second-year student in the English Ph.D. program at Yale University where she studies the intersections between trauma, collective memory, performance, and race in late-20th and 21st century dramatic literature. Her plays are deeply influenced by her involvement in the Midwest and national spoken word poetry scenes as well as other social justice arts organizations. Her works have largely been performed in St. Louis as part of the A.E. Hotchner Student Playwriting Festival and Washington University in St. Louis's Performing Arts Department 2016-2017 season. She is currently in the early stages of a new play about anonymity, grief, and city living.

**THE JANE CHAMBERS AWARD** recognizes plays & performance texts by women writers that present a feminist perspective & contain significant roles for female performers. This annual award, established in 1984, 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. We understand feminism to refract across diversity, welcome experimentation, and often honor works that stage under-represented voices on the stage. Sponsored by the Women and Theatre Program (WTP) with the Association for Theater in Higher Education, the Jane Chambers winner receives \$1000 & a reading of the winning play at ATHE. Guidelines for submission—and our archive of recent winners—can be viewed at <[www.athe.org/wtp/](http://www.athe.org/wtp/)>. We rely upon private donations to fund this Award. This year's winning play— *QUEENS*—rose from nearly 400 submissions. Honored plays suit a variety of theatre missions and feminist perspectives. The Winning Student Play—*SON OF SOIL*—receives \$250 and a reading at the WTP Conference.

In 2018, the Main Contest was coordinated by Jen-Scott Mobley with the assistance of Maya Roth, and involved over twenty-five feminist readers from across the U.S. in three rounds of adjudication. Together, Jen-Scott and Maya are working on a two-volume anthology of recent winning plays to increase production and recognition of the impressive works the Award honors. The first volume: *Lesbian and Queer Plays from the Jane Chambers Prize* will be released by No Passport Press in late 2018.

The 2018 Student Contest was coordinated by Elaine Molinaro.

For more information on the Awards, or to reach the coordinators, refer to the WTP Website.