

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

**JANE CHAMBERS AWARDS  
MAIN CONTEST WINNER 2019**

***IN THE CERVIX OF OTHERS*** by Alice Eve Cohen (6-8 with doubling: 3 F 2M 3 any gender; or 3F 3M. Without doubling, 10 actors: 3F 3M 4 any gender) Jessica is at her gynecological exam in 2018 during the Kavanaugh/Ford hearing, and simultaneously in 1991, during the Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill hearing. Woven into this time-traveling dark comedy is a mother-daughter tale of recrimination and forgiveness, an older woman reconciling with her younger self, a true story of pharmaceutical corruption, and the journey of a woman urgently trying to find her voice. Jessica's cervix is being filmed for a training video. While Dr. Cooperman narrates her cervix's perilous prenatal history, Jessica floats off the examining table and performs a stand-up routine on the ceiling. Her out-of-body storytelling launches her on an odyssey, during which she befriends the mythological Philomela from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Against the backdrop of the Kavanaugh and Thomas hearings, Jessica finds a window into her past and reunites with her late mother. When Jessica unravels the mystery of her mother's death and of her own injuries, she and Philomela travel to the end of the world to bring their story before the Court of the Gods—a trio of absurdly comical Gods who offer no more justice for women than do the Supreme Court nominees playing on television. With emotional force and hilarious wit, the play explores the many ways women are silenced, the misogyny that taints women's healthcare, and the transcendent power of mother-daughter love. *IN THE CERVIX OF OTHERS* is a riveting journey, funny, painful and absurd. For production rights, please contact: Elaine Devlin Literary; [Edevlinlit@aol.com](mailto:Edevlinlit@aol.com) 212-842-9030; or contact the playwright at [AliceEveCohen@gmail.com](mailto:AliceEveCohen@gmail.com)

**ALICE EVE COHEN** is a playwright, solo theatre artist, and author. Winner of the 2019 Jane Chambers Playwriting Award for *In the Cervix of Others*. Her solo play *What I Thought I Knew*—adapted from her memoir, published by Viking, winner of the *Elle* Literary Grand Prix and *O Oprah* magazine's 25 Best Books of Summer—is an O'Neill finalist, Jane Chambers Award Honorable Mention, and nominee for 5 regional Broadway World Awards. Other plays include *Mrs. Satan & The Nasty Woman*, *Thin Walls*, *Oklahoma Samovar*, *Hannah and the Hollow Challah*, *The Parrot*, and *Without Heroes*. Cohen's plays have been produced/developed at theatres including the Kitchen Theatre, New York Theatre Workshop, New Georges, Minnesota Jewish Theatre Company, the Women's Project, All For One Theatre, Cherry Lane Theatre, 78<sup>th</sup> Street Theatre Lab, Voice and Vision, Public Theatre, Theatre for the New City, Philadelphia Women's Theatre Festival, LA Women's Theatre Festival, KiMo Theatre, Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center, University of Michigan; and internationally at Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Galway Theatre Festival, Trinidad's Astor Theatre, Oslo Theatre Festival, and Jerusalem's Theatre Bama. Cohen has written children's television for Nickelodeon and CBS. Her books are published by Penguin, Algonquin, and Simon & Schuster, and a collection of her solo plays is published by NoPassport Press. The recipient of fellowships and grants from NY State Council on the Arts, Virginia Center for Creative Arts, the NEA, and Poets & Writers, she has been a guest artist at University of Michigan, University of Arizona, and the Envision Retreat. A member of New York Theatre Workshop's Usual Suspects and Ensemble Studio Theatre's Playwrights Unit, she has an MFA in Creative Writing from The New School and a BA in Anthropology and Theatre from Princeton University. She teaches playwriting and creative writing at The New School. [www.AliceEveCohen.com](http://www.AliceEveCohen.com)

**2019 RUNNER-UP**

***IPHIGENIA POINT BLANK: THE STORY OF THE FIRST REFUGEE*** (2W 2M 2 more and chorus any gender) by Lisa Schlesinger. Adapted from Euripides' Iphigenia plays, *Iphigenia Point Blank* follows Iphigenia, a teen-aged girl, through 2500 years of history and across contemporary war zones to

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interrogate the current conflicts in the Middle East and the refugee crisis, and ultimately, to change the ending of her story. In *Euripides' Iphigenia at Aulis* and *Iphigenia Point Blank* Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter Iphigenia so that the winds will blow and a military victory will be his. In the ancient plays, Iphigenia either escapes or she dies. In this adaptation, she journeys the path of the female refugee, with “no way forward” and “no way back” — a fate worse than death, according to the ancients. As in *Iphigenia at Taurus*, this adaptation explores the liminality of displacement, the disappearances in detention and the deaths that result from sexual and physical violence of war. *Iphigenia Point Blank* was written as a multidisciplinary piece in a lyrical style. With an original musical score by Kinan Azmeh. *Iphigenia Point Blank* enacts a performance ritual that seeks to keep the refugee/immigration crisis center stage, to provoke conversation about human rights and, ultimately, inspire hope and action. It is part of The Iphigenia Project, a series of multidisciplinary collaborations, begun in 2014, in response to the refugee crisis. Initially developed in collaboration with filmmaker, Irina Patkanian, director Marion Schoevaert and with many other artists at the University of Iowa's Partnership in the Arts, *Iphigenia Point Blank* will premiere in New York City in 2020 with the support of a New York State Council on the Arts grant.

**Lisa Schlesinger's** plays include *Iphigenia Point Blank*, *Celestial Bodies Trilogy*, *Rock Ends Ahead*, *The Bones of Danny Winston*, and *Seven Songs for Iphigenia*. Winner of the BBC Playwriting Award, she has received commissions from the Guthrie Theatre, the BBC, Ensemble Studio Theatre and fellowships from the NEA, TCG, CEC Artslink International, the Sloan Foundation, the Iowa Arts Council, the International Writing Program. Her plays are produced nationally and internationally and are published with Broadway Plays Publishing, Playwrights Canada Press, and NoPassport Press. Her theatre essays are published in *American Theatre Magazine*, *Performing Arts Journal*, *NoPassport*, the *New York Times* and elsewhere. Other middle eastern theatre works include *Twenty-One Positions* with Naomi Wallace and Abed Fattah AbuSrou, (Broadway Plays Press); *A Dream of the Sea: a performance parade*, in collaboration with Ashtar Theatre and Bread and Puppet Theater commissioned by the Palestine National Theatre's Every Which Way Festival; *The Gaza Monologues* with Ashtar Theatre; and *I Dreamed the Last Diamond Darter* (2016) commissioned by Coe College for college-aged female actors. Lisa is currently working on *Ruinous Gods*, the next performance in The Iphigenia Project, a series of multidisciplinary collaborations, begun in 2014, in response to the refugee crisis and as seen through the lens of the Iphigenia myth. She serves as Co-Head of the Iowa Playwrights' Workshop of at the University of Iowa. [www.lisaschlesinger.com](http://www.lisaschlesinger.com)

**HONORABLE MENTIONS**

***The Butch Project Part I*** (5f, 2m, + mixed ensemble) is the first of a three-part “multivariate investigation” of lesbian masculinity. With performance, music, as well as dance moving across a non-linear/ancestor track, the play uses memoir, history, and political commentary. Time, as well as gender, is fluid. *The Butch Project* follows the emotional journey of the protagonist Butch, simultaneously depicting childhood experiences, present-day action and projecting into the future. With striking and fresh story-telling conventions including choral response and movement, as well as interludes of popular song and jazz, *The Butch Project* exposes stereotypes and explores multiple lesbian identities, interrogating the ways in which gender identity and sexuality are never truly definable. ***The Butch Project*** features compelling characters including Butch whom we follow on a journey of self-discovery and actualization.

**Lynne S. Brandon** holds an MFA in Playwriting, Smith College, 2008. Additional studies with Sarah Ruhl, Stephen Adly Guirgis, Ellen McLaughlin, Emily Mann, James Lecesne, Sinan Unel. Full-length plays: *Maxine, And.*, *Bare Chested*, *At the Line* (semi-finalist, Eugene O'Neill National Playwrights

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Conference 2014; finalist, The Ground Floor 2015), *Mad Cow, Tops* (semi-finalist, O'Neill 2012). Short plays: *Isosceles, Sexism in Theatre, Not So Simple*. Publications: "Isosceles" in *Off the Rocks*, Vol. 20, New Town Writers Press, Chicago, IL, 2017; Program Notes, Tongue of A Bird, New Repertory Theatre, 2014; "Moving On", Scenes from a Diverse World, ICWP, 2013. Film: 'No More' from "At The Line," Women Only Productions, 2015. Selected readings and performances: *At The Line*, workshop production by Rad Fem Arts, Boston, MA 2018; "*Maxine, And..*," Athena Reads reading, Athena Theatre Company, New York, NY 2017; *Mad Cow*, workshop production by Rad Fem Arts, Boston, MA 2016; *Tops*, directed staged-reading, Boston, MA 2015; *Sexism in Theatre*, We Are Theatre revue, Guerrilla Girls on Tour, New York, September 2012. Script reader for Hartford Stage, New Repertory Theatre, Jane Chambers Award, Boston Theatre Marathon.  
[www.sites.google.com/site/brandonplaywright](http://www.sites.google.com/site/brandonplaywright)

***Magdalena's Crossing*** by Carolyn Nur Wistrand (5W, 3 M, diverse, double casting) by Carolyn Nur Wistrand. This modern tale of life on the Southwest border is set between El Paso, Texas and Juárez, Mexico. Alternating between magical realism and grittiness, the story centers on Magdalena, a young woman from the colonias in Juárez, who flees Mexico illegally to escape spousal abuse. Desperate to survive without documentation and limited English skills, Magdalena finds work in a seedy bar in downtown El Paso, where Dalia, the matron, serves as her employer, teacher, and pimp. When Jamal, an African American soldier stationed at Fort Bliss enters the lounge, his presence unravels Magdalena's guarded secret. A chorus of Latina women serve as the collective consciousness as the divergent border cultures begin to collide. *Magdalena's Crossing* shifts between one young woman's past in Juárez and present in El Paso, ultimately leading to murder and her spirit's choice of where, truly, is home, while the brutality of our present-day immigration crisis looms. For production rights, contact David I. L. Poole at [dilpoole@gmail.com](mailto:dilpoole@gmail.com) or the playwright at [carolnur9@gmail.com](mailto:carolnur9@gmail.com)

**Carolyn Nur Wistrand** is a New Orleans-based playwright originally from Flint, Michigan. Her plays include *Rising* (Mario-Fratti-Fred Newman International Political Playwriting Award, Castillo Theatre); *9 Steps from St. Ann Street* (New Perspectives Theatre); *When Marie Took the Power* (Savannah Black Heritage Festival); *She Danced With A Red Fish* (Inkslinger National Playwriting Award, Southeastern Louisiana University); *Dirt Bleeds* (Tennessee Williams Literary Festival); *Second Coming* (Love Creek, Open Eye & Playwrights Preview Productions); *Watchwomen* (Commissioned for World Aids Day, Savannah State University); *Táhirih* (International Baha'i Youth Conference, University of Indiana, Bloomington); *Ida B. 'n The Lynching Tree* (Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History); and *Magdalena's Crossing*-the result of a two year residency in El Paso, Texas-(Teatro Bravo, Bilingual Center for the Arts, Bridge Initiatives, Echo Theatre, Wordsmyth Theatre, and The Negro Ensemble Company). Her plays are published with Africa World Press, One Act Play Depot, Contemporary Drama Service, Coachella Review, Drama Notebook, and Carmel Publishers in Chandigarh, India. She is a member of the Dramatists Guild, ICWP, a recipient of a MCACA/NEA Award and a NEH Summer Fellowship (*Enhancing the Teaching of Ancient Greek Drama at Historically Black Colleges and Universities*). Carolyn Nur is an Assistant Professor of English at Dillard University in New Orleans (the oldest HBCU in Louisiana) and lectures in The Dept. of Africana Studies, University of Michigan-Flint.

***Derecho*** (3F 3M) by Noelle Viñas

This realist play centers Latinx lives with heart and social concern. Sisters Eugenia and Mercedes Silva grew up in the immigrant enclaves of northern Virginia and went entirely separate ways: one pursuing politics, the other just getting by. When a bad storm strikes, Eugenia uses it as a unique opportunity to host high school friends she hopes will help her join the wave of women of color

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elected for state office. As the house becomes a trap with friends and lovers from both worlds, Mercedes and Eugenia must address the tensions between traditional Latino family values, the community Eugenia hopes to represent, and the sacrifices we make for a definition of American success, forgetting the costs to self, culture and others.

**Noelle Viñas** is a Uruguayan-American playwright, educator, and theater-artist from Springfield, Virginia and Montevideo, Uruguay. An Emerson College alumna, she is a resident playwright at Playwrights Foundation and a 2019 Djerassi Resident Artist. Her play *Derecho* is a 2019 Bay Area Playwrights Festival Finalist and a 2019 Premiere Stages Semifinalist. *La Profesora*, her one-woman show starring Virginia Blanco, was produced by TheatreFirst and is in development for a podcast called *Abuelito* with We Rise Production. Earlier works *Nevermind* and *Apocalypse, Please* were self-produced in Boston and San Francisco. In Fall 2019, she will be attending Brooklyn College for her Playwriting MFA under Erin Courtney. Contact Noelle.vinas@gmail.com

***Queen Cleopatre and Princess Pocahontas*** by Rhianna Yazzie. (4 W 6M with doubling)  
This ensemble play follows an alternate version of the “Pocohontas story” by chronicling the lost story of Pocohontas’s older sister Matachanna, who was renamed Cleopatre by the English. With compelling characters and lyricism, this unexpected story challenges the “received information” about historic indigenous people with perspectives shaped from within tribal ways. Based in fact but fictionally embellished, ***Queen Cleopatre and Princess Pocahontas*** excavates the life and contributions of a hidden figure in Native American history, foregrounding tribal values, offering audiences an indigenous feminist perspective via an epic adventure that spans 40 years of American History. This play would appeal to an array of audiences, including youth.

**Rhiana Yazzie** is a Navajo playwright and all around theatre maker (Producer, director, actor) and filmmaker based in Minnesota. She is a 2016/17 Playwright’s Center McKnight Fellow, a two-time Playwrights’ center Jerome Fellow (2010/11, 2006/06) and was a Playwrights’ Center Core Member for three years. She just finished her new play *Queen Cleopatre and Princess Pocohontas* for a joint commission from the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and the Public Theater for American Revolutions: The United States History Cycle. This past January she finished principal timing on her first feature film *A Winter Love* in which she is the writer/director/actor. She was a playwright in residence at the William Inge Center where she is currently working on a commission. Rhiana’s play for young audiences, *Chile Pod*, about a Mixtec girl was commissioned by La Jolla playhouses and toured to 18,000 Youth in Southern California schools and communities. <https://rhianayazzie.com/>

**STUDENT CONTEST WINNER 2019**

***WHY IS THIS NIGHT DIFFERENT?*** by Aja Nisenson. It is the first night of Passover, and Haley is introducing her parents to her boyfriend, who is not only 20 years older, but also \$150,000 in debt. Things get even more complicated when Mom reveals a secret that shakes the established order, and forces the family to confront the past and move forward into the future. A bold and irreverent comedy about a mother’s coming-of-age at 65.

**Aja Nisenson** is a playwright and performer originating from New Jersey. Her plays include: *Slap* (Take Ten, National MFA Playwrights Festival), *Park Slope Under Water* (Iowa New Play Festival), *The Wait* (Iowa New Play Festival), *Piccola Così* (FringeNYC, soloNOVA Arts Festival, Triad Theatre), *Daja Vu, A French Cabaret Gone Awry*, (Eugene O’Neill Cabaret Conference, FringeNYC, Flute Bar Gramercy) *My Life is a Woody Allen Film* (United Solo Theatre Festival, EstroGenius Festival), *Five Years Later* (Salem Theatre). She is a MacDowell fellow and has held

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fellowships at the Eugene O'Neill Cabaret Conference and The Marble House Project. Aja received her BA from Brown University and is an MFA candidate at the Iowa Playwrights Workshop.

**STUDENT HONORABLE MENTION**

***Santosh***, or ***the J3ng@ Play***, by Sowmya Ashokkumar. Melissa, a survivor of multiple instances of sexual abuse, has finally found a woman she likes dating, Simone. When their relationship becomes exclusive, Melissa's trauma resurfaces as a haunting figure who cannot stop playing the famous block-stacking game. Part thriller, part dramedy, *Santosh* or *The J3ng@ Play* highlights the beauty and joy of new relationships while navigating past trauma.

**Sowmya Ashokkumar** is an LA-based playwright, screenwriter, and educator from the Bay Area. Her writing centers (queer) women of color in narratives about home, hope and healing. She was a member of PlayGround SF's Writers Pool (23<sup>rd</sup> Season) where her short plays were selected for S.T.E.M Night and WomenArts Night. She has been a member of City Light Theater's LightSource Writers' Group. Her play *Phoenix* has been read at Playwrights Foundation's A Night of New Works and EnActe Arts Inc.'s staged reading series, Playful@EnActe. Recently, her MFA thesis play, *Santosh* or *The J3ng@ Play*, became a semifinalist for the 2019 O'Neill National Playwrights Conference. Sowmya has also been an educator for over a decade, specializing in English, Dramatic Writing, and US History & Government. BA in English: UC Berkeley. MFA in Dramatic Writing: Carnegie Mellon University.

**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— *IN THE CERVIX OF OTHERS*—rose from about 350 submissions. Honored plays suit a variety of theatre missions and feminist perspectives. The Winning Student Play— *WHY IS THIS NIGHT DIFFERENT?*—receives \$250 and a reading at the WTP Conference.

In 2019, the Main Contest was stewarded by Jen-Scott Mobley with the assistance of Maya Roth, and involved twenty-three feminist readers from across the U.S. in three rounds of adjudication.

Maya and Jen-Scott are co-editors of 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* was released by NoPassport Press this spring and is available on Amazon. The second volume (*Cross-Cultural Plays from the Jane Chambers Prize*) is forthcoming in 2020.

The 2020 Student Contest was coordinated by Megan Stahl.

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

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