The Bush Theatre, Oberon Books, the MA Dramatic Writing at Drama Centre London at Central Saint Martins and Writers at Work Productions launch competition series for students and teachers across UK

Thursday 17 December, 2015

PRESS RELEASE

UNDER STRICT EMBARGO UNTIL 17th DECEMBER

"Our research at Central Saint Martins showed that the lack of diversity in the writing industry begins at school and University level. We've pledged to provide access for students and teachers across the UK to the leading dramatic writing training coming of the industry for the first time"

That is the new pledge from the new MA Dramatic Writing at Drama Centre London at Central Saint Martins, the Bush Theatre and Oberon Books following the two year Year of Experimentation investigation into the future of dramatic writing training in the UK.

The Year of Experimentation investigation was conducted at Central Saint Martins with 11 leading industry professionals [Ola Animashawun, founder of the Royal Court Theatre's world famous young writers programme, John Yorke, founder of the BBC Writers Academy, the most influential training programme in the UK, Fin Kennedy, founder of Schoolwrights and Artistic Director of Tamasha Theatre Company who won the first Fringe First ever awarded for a school production, Nina Steiger, Associate Director at the Soho Theatre, Philip Shelley, founder of the Channel Four screenwriting course, Steve Winter, co-founder of the Old Vic New Voices 24 Hour Plays and TS Eliot exchange and Director of the Kevin Spacey Foundation, Caroline Jester, former Dramaturg at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre and the author of the book *Playwriting Across the Curriculum,* Stephen Jeffreys, former Literary Associate at the Royal Court Theatre whose Playwriting Masterclasses have led the way in the UK, David Edgar, founder of the UK's first MA in Playwriting and Kate Rowland, founder of BBC Writersroom and the former Creative Director of New Writing at the BBC].

Course Leader for the new MA Dramatic Writing at Drama Centre London at Central Saint Martins, Jennifer Tuckett said, "For two years, the new MA Dramatic Writing at Drama Centre London at Central Saint Martins has worked with 11 leading industry professionals as well as other industry partners including BBC Writersroom, Tamasha Theatre Company, ENO, the Bush Theatre, Kevin Spacey Foundation, Od Vic New Voices, Tonic Theatre and other partners to explore what dramatic writing training can be in the UK.

The Student Guide to Writing: Playwriting is our first initiative to improve dramatic writing training, providing access for the first time for students and teachers at schools and Universities across the UK to the leading training coming out of the industry.

We discovered that much of the leading industry training is inaccessible particularly if you live outside of London as much of it hasn't been published – for example, our lesson plan writers Ola Animashawun, Fin Kennedy, Steve Winter, Caroline Horton, Rebecca Lenkiewicz, and Lucy Kerbel have never published their training methods.

We found the impact of not having access to this training is massive – students feel that the industry is inaccessible and out of reach and not for them. For example at Salford University where I worked prior to setting up the MA Dramatic Writing at Drama Centre London at Central Saint Martins, student numbers studying playwriting were 0 when I joined the University, however I set up The Playwriting Network to provide access and advice from the industry and student numbers increased to 8 in year one of the module to 40 in year two to 80 in year three.

The impact of access to the leading industry training was also seen in student achievement – at Salford, my students were selected for professional theatre attachment writing competitions, beating off undergraduate and postgraduate competition to become a finalist of the BBC Future Talent Award etc, and, at Central Saint Martins, we've had our first cohort graduate last summer who are now working on theatre commissions, on television shows, whose films are in film festivals etc.

In addition, the British Theatre Consortium's recent conference we hosted "Cutting Edge: Theatre in Hard

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Times" found that less than a third of new plays are written by women and the In Battalions/Devoted and Disgruntled event we hosted earlier this year found diversity is a real issue in new writing so there is a real need to create a more diverse writing industry."

An outline of the competitions shape and contents can be found below.

10 leading professionals have now committed to writing lesson plans as pat of The Student Guide to Writing: Playwriting to provide access to their training.

The lesson plans will be published via the website www.thestudentguidetowriting.com which launches on 16th December.

The launch will be marked by an event held by the MA Dramatic Writing at Drama Centre London at Central Saint Martins, the Bush Theatre and Oberon Books featuring guest speakers **Rob Drummer, Associate Dramaturg at the Bush Theatre, George Spender, Senior Editor at Oberon Books and Jennifer Tuckett, Course Leader of MA Dramatic Writing at Drama Centre London at Central Saint Martins and Director of Writers at Work Productions.**

Following the launch event, lesson plans will be released from January to March 2016 and will be:

Week One (Launch event): Starting Out – Rob Drummer, Associate Dramaturg, Bush Theatre

Week Two: Ideas – Ola Animashawun, founder of the Royal Court Theatre's world famous young writers programme

Week Three: Structure – John Yorke, creator of the BBC Writers Academy, the most influential writing training programme in the industry in recent yers, and author of the best selling book on storytelling *Into the Woods*

Week Four: Scenes – Jennifer Tuckett, Course Leader of MA Dramatic Writing at Drama Centre London at Central Saint Martins

Week Five Characterisation – Rebecca Lenkiewicz, playwright and mentor from the Bush Theatre

Week Six: Dialogue – Fin Kennedy, founder of Schoolwrights and Artistic Director of Tamasha Theatre Company

Week Seven: Theatricality – Steve Winter, co-founder of the Old Vic New Voices 24 Hour Plays and TS Eliot Exchange and Director of the Kevin Spacey Foundation

Week Eight: Rewriting – Caroline Jester, former Dramaturg at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre and author of *Playwriting Across the Curriculum*

Week Nine: Staging Your Work – Caroline Horton, writer, director, actor and mentor from the Bush Theatre

Week Ten: Final Advice – Lucy Kerbel – founder of Tonic Theatre and creator of Platform

Students and their teachers can follow the lesson plans to build up a play week by week.

At the end of the competition, 5 student winners will be selected to attend a bootcamp on playwriting at Central Saint Martins and see their work performed and published by Oberon Books.

At the end of the project the lesson plans and winning work will be published by Oberon Books to provide a book for use by students and teachers in schools and Universities across the UK to improve dramatic writing training the UK and provide permanent access to the leading training.

Associate Dramaturg at the Bush Theatre Rob Drummer said: “We're delighted to be partnering The Student Guide to Writing which forms part of our efforts to inspire and develop playwrights from a diverse range of backgrounds and to engage audiences nationally in new theatre writing."

Senior Editor at Oberon Books George Spender, said: ""All of us at Oberon are thrilled to be a part of this extremely exciting project that will no doubt have a tremendous influence on the next generation of writers and theatre makers."

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Notes to editors

The Year of Experimentation was a two year investigation by the MA Dramatic Writing at Drama Centre London at Central Saint Martins into the future of dramatic writing training in the UK and worked with 11 Masters to investigate this area:

Ola Animashawun, founder of the Royal Court Theatre's world famous young writers programme

David Edgar, founder of the UK's first MA in Playwriting

Stephen Jeffreys, Literary Associate for 11 years at the Royal Court Theatre whose Playwriting Masterclasses have led the way in the UK

Caroline Jester, former Dramaturg at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre and author of the book *Playwriting Across the Curriculum*

Fin Kennedy, founder of Schoolwrights, winner of the first Fringe First for a school production and Artistic Director of Tamasha Theatre Company

Lucy Kerbel, founder of Director of Tonic Theatre

Kate Rowland, founder of BBC Writersroom and the former Creative Director of New Writing at the BBC

Philip Shelley, instigator of the Channel Four screenwriting course

Nina Steiger, Associate Director at the Soho Theatre

Steve Winter, co-founder of the Old Vic New Voices 24 Hour Plays and TS Eliot US/UK Exchange and Director of the Kevin Spacey Foundation

John Yorke, founder of the BBC Writers Academy, author of the best-selling book on storytelling *Into the Woods*, Managing Director of Angel Station and the former Head of Drama at Channel Four, Commissioner for BBC Drama Production and Managing Director of Company Pictutes

The Year of Experimentation also worked with the following industry partners:

BBC Writersroom

The Bush Theatre

ENO

The Kevin Spacey Foundation

Old Vic New Voices

Tamasha Theatre Company

Tonic Theatre

The British Theatre Conference Cutting Edge: Theatre in Hard Times was hosted by the MA Dramatic Writing at Drama Centre London at Central Saint Martins on April 25th 2015

The Devoted and Disgruntled/In Battalions event was hosted by the MA Dramatic Writing at Drama Centre London at Central Saint Martins on June 17th 2015

Central Saint Martins:

Central Saint Martins is internationally renowned for the creative energy of its students, staff and graduates with an exceptional reputation for educating foundation, undergraduate, postgraduate and research students in arts, design and performance. CSM's award-winning campus at Kings Cross opens opportunities for creative collaboration and has provided an outstanding social scene for students.

Drama Centre London is one of the UK's leading drama schools and is part of Central Saint Martins.

Alumni from Central Saint Martins and Drama Centre London include Sarah Burton, Hussein Chalayan, Jarvis Cocker, Matthew Collings, Terence Conran, James Dyson, Michael Fassbender, Colin Firth, Gilbert and George, Antony Gormley, Tom Hardy, Christopher Kane, Stella McCartney, Alexander McQueen, Sandy Powell, Raqib Shaw, Yinka Shonibare, Joe Wright.

CSM is part of University of the Arts London, an international centre for innovative teaching and research in arts, design, fashion, communication and the performing arts. The University is made up of six Colleges: Camberwell College of Arts, Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design, Chelsea College of Art and Design, London College of Communication, London College of Fashion and Wimbledon College of Art.

The MA Dramatic Writing is run by Course Leader Jennifer Tuckett alongside Masters Ola Animashawun, David Edgar, Stephen Jeffreys, Caroline Jester, Fin Kennedy, Lucy Kerbel, Kate Rowland, Philip Shelley, Nina Steiger, Steve Winter and John Yorke.

For more information, please see:

http://www.arts.ac.uk/csm/courses/postgraduate/ma-dramatic-writing-drama-centre-london/

Bush Theatre:

The Bush is a world-famous home for new plays and an internationally renowned champion of playwrights. We discover, nurture and produce the best new playwrights from the widest range of backgrounds, and present their work to the highest possible standards. We look for exciting new voices that tell contemporary stories with wit, style and passion and we champion work that is both provocative and entertaining.

The Bush has produced hundreds of groundbreaking premieres since its inception in 1972, many of them Bush commissions, and hosted guest productions by leading companies and artists from across the world. The Bush is widely acclaimed as the seedbed for the best new playwrights, many of whom have gone on to become established names. The Bush has won over 100 awards, and developed an enviable reputation for touring its acclaimed productions nationally and internationally. For more information, please visit: www.bushtheatre.co.uk

Oberon Books:

Oberon Books is the UK's most exciting independent publisher specialising in theatre, drama and the performing arts. With a backlist of over 1000 books including the latest modern plays and classics from some of the world's leading dramatists and theatre makers, as well as a wide range of handsomely produced publications covering the theatre, opera, dance, biography, performance studies, monologues, practical guides and live art.

A prolific publisher with a reputation for publishing some of the most challenging, innovative and exciting drama happening right now, Oberon is going from strength to strength, publishing exciting plays at the National Theatre, Donmar Warehouse, the Royal Court, the Finborough, Traverse, Almeida and Soho Theatres to name but a few, not forgetting Broadway and the West End. For more information please visit: www.oberonbooks.com

Writers at Work Productions:

Writers at Work Productions is a writers development organisation, designed to explore new ways of working with and training writers. The company is run by Jennifer Tuckett, who is also the Course Leader for the MA Dramatic Writing at Drama Centre London at Central Saint Martins. Past projects include London Writers Week, run in partnership with Guardian Masterclasses, the Writers Guild of Great Britain and the MA Dramatic Writing at Drama Centre London at Central Saint Martins. For more information please see: www.writersatworkproductions.com

For further information on The Student Guide to Writing: Playwriting, photos or to arrange interviews please contact Jennifer Tuckett at j.tuckett@csm.arts.ac.uk

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