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**AYAD AKHTAR SELECTS
“HOW TO DEFEND YOURSELF”
BY LILY PADILLA
AS WINNER OF THE
13TH ANNUAL YALE DRAMA SERIES PRIZE**

**PLAYWRIGHT RECEIVES
\$10,000 DAVID CHARLES HORN PRIZE**

New York, NY (February 20, 2019) -- One of the theater world's most prestigious playwriting prizes, the **Yale Drama Series Prize**, will be given to **Lily Padilla** for her play *How to Defend Yourself*. The 2019 award recipient was chosen by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright **Ayad Akhtar**. The winning play will receive a private staged reading at Lincoln Center Theater's Claire Tow Theater in the fall.

Now celebrating its thirteenth year, the **Yale Drama Series** is the preeminent playwriting award in cooperation with **Yale University Press**, and is solely sponsored by the **David Charles Horn Foundation**. The Yale Drama Series Prize is given out annually for a play by an emerging playwright, selected by a judging panel of one--a distinguished playwright of our time. The winner receives the David Charles Horn Prize of \$10,000, as well as publication of the winning play by Yale University Press and a staged professional reading. The Yale Drama Series is an annual international open submission competition for emerging playwrights who are invited to submit original, unpublished, full-length, English language plays for consideration. All entries are read blindly.

This year's runners-up is **Gina Femia** for *Allond(R)a*. Allonda and her friends are wrestling their way through the summer - sometimes it's on the playgrounds of Coney Island, sometimes it's with their feelings and often it's at home. A coming of age story about friendship and heartache, *Allond(R)a* asks how much is too much to fight for?

"It was a year of strong submissions, with a particularly muscular sample of deft, moving plays about the toxic interplay of power and sexuality," said judge Ayad Akhtar, who chose *How to Defend Yourself* from over 1,750 submissions from 65 countries. "Lily Padilla's play about desire, defense, and the insidious, labyrinthine reach of rape culture is that rare thing: Formally inventive, timely, accessible, and soulful. I can't wait for people to experience it."

Francine Horn, President of the David Charles Horn Foundation, said, "The intensity of Lily's play is intertwined with a deep respect for how healing comes from a sense of community. Her characters approach the news of their mutual friends' rape by participating in a self-defense class. This communal interaction not only prepares

them to take charge of their fate, but also to love. Humanity wins. Ms. Padilla is a very worthy winner. We applaud Ayad's choice."

Lily Padilla, winner of this year's prize said, "I feel so grateful and inspired to win the Yale Drama Prize. *How to Defend Yourself* comes from listening to the parts of me that were shamed into silence; to be able to write it was healing beyond what I had imagined. That folks are connecting deeply with the play is gorgeous affirmation of what is possible when we act together in service of our collective liberation. I am in awe of and deep gratitude for the many folks who have given their energies, time, talents and hearts to holding these stories with me. Kim Rubinstein encouraged me to keep writing this play, even when I was terrified. She directed the UCSD production with extraordinary compassion, boldness and presence simultaneous with her brave process of calling out sexual harassment in the American Theatre. My partner, Dylan Key, is the first reader on everything I write, and holds incredible space for me to show up bravely and see myself. I am ever grateful to the communities of artists, peers, healers, supporters and mentors at UCSD, the Ojai Playwrights Conference, Victory Gardens, the upcoming Humana Festival production directed by Marti Lyons, and beyond who have supported and nourished my voice and becoming. "

Seven college students gather for a DIY self-defense workshop after a sorority sister is raped. They learn to use their bodies as weapons. They learn to fend off attackers. They learn "not to be a victim." Learning self-defense becomes a channel for their rage, anxiety, confusion, trauma and desire – lots of desire. *How to Defend Yourself* explores what you want, how to ask for it, and the insidious ways rape culture steals one's body and sense of belonging.

The David Charles Horn Foundation was established in 2003 by Francine Horn, David's wife and partner in the international fashion publication service *Here & There*. David was a man of vision and discipline with an overriding dedication to the written word. His dream of having his own writing published was never realized. The Foundation seeks to honor David's aspirations by offering other writers the opportunity of publication. More particularly, the Foundation supports emerging playwrights, perhaps in greater need of assistance today than beginning writers in any other of the literary arts. The Foundation provides all funding for the Yale Drama Series.

ABOUT LILY PADILLA

Lily Padilla makes plays about sex, intersectional communities and what it means to heal in a violent world. Their play, *How to Defend Yourself* is a Susan Smith Blackburn Prize Finalist and will be produced in the 2019 Humana Festival and at Victory Gardens Theatre in 2020. Padilla's work has been developed with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Ojai Playwrights Conference, Victory Gardens, WP Theatre, INTAR Theatre and San Diego REP. Padilla facilitates playwriting workshops with the La Jolla Playhouse/TCG Veterans & Theatre Institute and teaches playwriting and devised theatre at USD and UCSD. They are commissioned to make the following plays: a sleepover play about Latinx teens at a STEM Summer Camp about competition, internalized oppression, science, healing and magic (NNPN Commission!), A play which ricochets through the landscapes of dolls, intellectual property lawsuits & how we come to understand our bodies (Colt Coeur), and something TBA with South Coast Rep! MFA, UC San Diego, BFA NYU Tisch. Padilla is also a director, actor and community builder who looks at rehearsal as a laboratory

for how we might be together. www.lilypadilla.com

ABOUT THE YALE DRAMA SERIES PRIZE

Previous winners of the **Yale Drama Series Prize** include **John Austin Connolly's** *The Boys From Siam* (selected by Edward Albee in 2007), **Neil Wechsler's** *Grenadine* (selected by Edward Albee in 2008), **Frances Ya-Chu Cowhig's** *Lidless* (selected by David Hare in 2009), **Virginia Grise's** *blu* (selected by David Hare in 2010), **Shannon Murdoch's** *New Light Shine* (selected by John Guare in 2011), **Clarence Coo's** *Beautiful Province* (selected by John Guare in 2012), **Jen Silverman's** *Still* (selected by Marsha Norman in 2013), **Janine Nabers's** *Serial Black Face* (selected by Marsha Norman in 2014), **Barbara Seyda's** *Celia, a Slave: 26 Characters Testify* (selected by Nicholas Wright in 2015), **Emily Schwend's** *Utility* (selected by Nicholas Wright in 2016), **Jacqueline Goldfinger's** *Bottle Fly* (selected by Nicholas Wright in 2017), and **Leah Nanako Winkler's** *God Said This* (selected by Ayad Akhtar in 2018).

For additional information about the **Yale Drama Series**, visit www.dchornfoundation.org.

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