

Press Contact:
Rick Miramontez / Michael Jorgensen
rick@omdkc.com / michael@omdkc.com
212-695-7400

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, PLEASE

AYAD AKHTAR SELECTS
"GOD SAID THIS"
BY LEAH NANA KO WINKLER
AS WINNER OF THE
12TH ANNUAL YALE DRAMA SERIES AWARD

PLAYWRIGHT RECEIVES
\$10,000 DAVID CHARLES HORN PRIZE

New York, NY (March 27, 2018) -- One of the theater world's most prestigious playwriting prizes, the **Yale Drama Series Prize**, will be given to **Leah Nanako Winkler** for her play *God Said This*. The 2018 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 on October 30, 2018.

Now celebrating its twelfth 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is an annual international open submission competition for emerging playwrights who are invited to submit original, unpublished, full-length, English language plays for consideration.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 **Bleu Beckford-Burrell** for *Lyons Pride*.

"I was very moved by Leah's play about a family caught between cultures, set in the final weeks of a mother's life," said judge **Ayad Akhtar**, who chose *God Said This* from over 1,600 submissions from 50 countries. "I found it witty and wise, inhabited by a poignant specificity that conveyed me to a deeply felt sense of the universal -- of the perfection of our parents' flawed love for each other and for us; for the ways in which the approach of death can order the meaning of a human life. I am grateful to the talented and dedicated members of the jury and to Francine Horn and everyone at the Yale Drama Series for all their hard work."

Francine Horn, president of the David Charles Horn Foundation, said, "In reading Ms. Winkler's play, it is clear that she has a deep understanding of the human condition and the challenges that separate or bond families when faced with losing a parent. Ms. Winkler writes with a compassion and wit that defies her age. We are proud to add Leah to our growing family of talented playwrights. We will follow her career with great enthusiasm and loud applause."

Leah Nanako Winkler, winner of this year's prize said, "I wrote this play quietly on a hospital couch last spring as my mother was undergoing chemotherapy treatments at the Markey Cancer Center in Lexington, Kentucky. At the time, I would have never imagined that it would win any prize, nevertheless from such a prestigious institution like Yale, chosen by Ayad Akhtar- a playwright I greatly admire who blows me away with his depth and understanding of the world. All I can say is that I'm so happy, grateful and thankful. I can't help but think of my drama teachers, Jason Meenach

and Lisa Osterman at Tates Creek High School who told me theater was a safe place to do unsafe things. I hope to continue writing from the heart without fear, and this honor means the world to me and my mom."

With her mom undergoing chemotherapy, New York transplant Hiro returns home to Lexington, Kentucky after years away. Sophie, her born-again Christian sister, fights to maintain her faith amid adversity. James, their recovering alcoholic father, wants to repair his fractured relationship with his daughters, but redemption isn't easy. And John, an old classmate and single dad, worries about his legacy. Wry and bittersweet, **God Said This** is a portrait of five people confronting mortality in very different ways—and unexpectedly finding that their struggles bring them together.

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.

Leah Nanako Winkler is from Kamakura, Japan and Lexington, Kentucky. Three months after submitting *God Said This* to the Yale Drama Series competition, Leah was told the play would have its world premiere at the Actors Theatre of Louisville's 2018 Humana Festival. *God Said This* will also be a part of Primary Stages' 2018-2019 season. In addition, her play *Two Mile Hollow* (2017 Kilroys List) is having a simultaneous world premiere in theaters throughout the country. Previous plays include *Kentucky* (2015 Kilroys List, World Premiere with EST/Page 73/Radio Drama Network, West Coast Premiere with East West Players), *Death For Sydney Black* (TerraNova Collective), *The Internet* (Incubator Arts Project), and *The Adventures of Minami* (The Brick). Leah is the 2018-2019 Jerome Fellow at the Lark. She is also a member of Ma Yi, Ensemble Studio Theatre, the WP Theater Playwrights Lab, and the Dorothy Strelsin New American Playwrights Group at Primary Stages. She was a 2017 Sundance/Ucross fellow. Recently, Leah was awarded the first-ever Mark O'Donnell Prize from The Actors Fund and Playwrights Horizons. Leah is also one of the first recipients of Audible's new commissioning program for emerging playwrights.

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), and **Jacqueline Goldfinger's** *Bottle Fly* (selected by Nicholas Wright in 2017).

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

####

www.dchornfoundation.org
www.omdkc.com
www.twitter.com/omdkc