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NICHOLAS WRIGHT SELECTS
“CELIA, A SLAVE: 26 CHARACTERS TESTIFY”
BY BARBARA SEYDA
AS WINNER OF THE
9TH ANNUAL YALE DRAMA SERIES AWARD

PLAYWRIGHT RECEIVES
\$10,000 DAVID CHARLES HORN PRIZE

New York, NY (April 15, 2015) -- One of the theater world's most prestigious playwriting prizes, the **Yale Drama Series Prize**, will be given to **Barbara Seyda** for her play *Celia, A Slave: 26 Characters Testify*. The 2015 award recipient was chosen by playwright **Nicholas Wright**, who serves as judge for the 2015 and 2016 competitions.

This year's runners-up are Craig Thornton for *The High Cost of Heating* and Abe Koogler for *Kill Floor*.

“I'm thrilled to choose Barbara Seyda's play for the 2015 Yale Drama Series,” says Nicholas Wright. “My reason for rating the play so highly was the thick lump of pain that it placed in my chest and that I carried around with me for days afterwards. I had a completely primitive and intuitive reaction to the tragedy of the story and to the whole of life, in a way.”

Francine Horn, president of the David Charles Horn Foundation, says, “From the moment I began the play, I could not stop reading. And, like Nicholas Wright, it stayed with me for a very long time. The horrors just don't seem to go away. What was, still is. So, with a full heart I welcome Barbara Seyda to our small family of winners, and applaud her effort to point out the horrors of racism and the failure of justice, not for all.”

Celia, A Slave: 26 Characters Testify is a play based on the trial transcripts and court records from the State of Missouri vs. Celia, a Slave, file #4496, Callaway County Court, 1855, Fulton, Missouri. At age 19, Celia, a female slave, was accused, convicted and hanged for killing her 66 year old master, Robert Newsom, a prosperous Missouri landowner. The play is a tableau of interviews with the dead.

Now in its ninth year, the Yale Drama Series Prize is given out annually for a play by an emerging playwright, selected by a judging panel of one – a preeminent 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 reading at Lincoln Center Theater's Claire Tow Theater. 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is an annual international open submission competition for emerging playwrights who are invited to submit original, unpublished, full-length, English language plays for consideration. Seyda's play was selected from 1,478 entries from 47 countries.

Barbara Seyda is a writer, editor, photographer and designer based in Tucson, Arizona. She has a B.S. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and an M.F.A. from Mason Gross School of Art, Rutgers University. Her published titles are "*Women in Love*" (Bulfinch imprint of Little, Brown & Co.) and "*Nomads of a Desert City*" (University of Arizona Press). She currently is a free-lance editor for Rio Nuevo Press and The Southwest Center. As a researcher and developmental editor on over eighteen titles,

her focus is the native art, culture, history, ethnography and oral traditions of the American Southwest. Seyda has taught at Rutgers University, Pratt Institute, The New School for Social Research and the University of Arizona. Along with her passion for writing, Seyda has over 35 years in theatre production. "*Celia, A Slave*" is her first play.

British playwright **Nicholas Wright** serves as judge for the 2015 and 2016 Yale Drama Series Award. Born in Cape Town, South Africa, he was a child actor who studied at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. He has written over 30 plays, libretti, and screenplays, including *Vincent in Brixton*, *Mrs. Klein*, and *Traveling Light*, which have been performed all over the world from London's Royal National Theatre, Royal Shakespeare Company, and Royal Court, to Broadway by New York's Lincoln Center Theater. His play *A Human Being Died That Night* will begin performances at BAM this spring (May 29 – June 21, 2015).

Previous winners of the **Yale Drama Series Prize** include **John Austin Connolly** (selected by Edward Albee in 2007), **Neil Wechsler** (selected by Edward Albee in 2008), **Frances Ya-Chu Cowhig** (selected by David Hare in 2009), **Virginia Grise** (selected by David Hare in 2010), **Shannon Murdoch** (selected by John Guare in 2011), **Clarence Coo** (selected by John Guare in 2012), **Jen Silverman** (selected by Marsha Norman in 2013) and **Janine Nabors** (selected by Marsha Norman in 2014).

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

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