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**CENTER THEATRE GROUP NAMES THREE LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS
FOR 2018 AUGUST WILSON MONOLOGUE COMPETITION NATIONAL FINALS IN NYC
Top Two Students Will Participate in National Finals on Broadway on May 7, 2018**

Center Theatre Group has named **Hannah Franklin**, **Gerardo Navarro** and **Jackson Lewis** as the top performers of the August Wilson Monologue Competition (AWMC) Regional Finals held at the Mark Taper Forum on March 5, 2018. **Hannah Franklin** and **Gerardo Navarro** will go on to represent Los Angeles in the national finals on May 7.

Hannah Franklin of Orange County School of the Arts has placed first in the competition, earning a \$500 scholarship; Gerardo Navarro of Ramon C. Cortines School of Visual and Performing Arts took second place with a \$400 scholarship; and Jackson Lewis of Agoura High School took third place and a \$300 scholarship. Both Franklin and Navarro will also receive a paid trip to New York City to perform on the stage of the August Wilson Theatre on Broadway. They will compete in a semi-final round with 22 other students from cities around the country. Fifteen of those students will be selected for the national finals while the other nine will be part of a performance montage. Lewis will serve as the Los Angeles alternate.

This is the seventh consecutive year Center Theatre Group is hosting the Southern California component of the national monologue competition. The program is designed to inspire and educate Los Angeles youth using monologues from August Wilson's "American Century Cycle," a 10-play cycle that details the complexity of the African American experience in the 20th century.

Franklin, Navarro and Lewis were selected from a pool of 12 regional finalists. The 12 students represented eight local high schools within Los Angeles and Orange counties. As preparation for the national component of the competition, the three selected students will receive master classes to workshop their monologues.

The program kicked off this season with a preliminary audition that featured 145 students in 10th, 11th or 12th-grade from 32 different high schools in Los Angeles, Ventura, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Fifty-four of those students advanced to a semi-final audition held at The Music Center Annex in December 2017 where the aforementioned 12 regional finalists were selected to move forward.

Center Theatre Group also offers an in-school residency as part of the larger August Wilson Program. The August Wilson In-School Residency is a semester-long program that provides Title 1 students with a multidisciplinary study of the work of August Wilson. This year, classes from Animo Leadership Charter High School, Carson High School, East L.A. Performing Arts Magnet and Ellen Ochoa

Prep Academy will take part in the residency. The students and teachers from the four classrooms selected will attend the AWMC Los Angeles Regional Finals as part of their residency experience, witnessing the power of theatre as their peers bring August Wilson’s characters to life.

“AWMC is one of the ways we honor the legacy of playwright August Wilson—a man whose work is truly timeless transcending race, gender and generations,” said Center Theatre Group Director of Education and Engagement Tyrone Davis. “It’s such a privilege to see young people from all over Los Angeles take on these iconic characters from the American theatre.”

AWMC is a national program presented by Kenny Leon’s True Colors Theatre Company and Jujamcyn Theaters and hosted in cities throughout the country, including Atlanta, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, New Haven, New York, Pittsburgh, Portland, Seattle, Dallas and Greensboro, North Carolina. Each city runs its program differently and each experience is designed to provide intensive learning opportunities for high school students to study and practice the craft of acting through the work of August Wilson.

The Southern California component of the August Wilson Monologue Competition is led by the Center Theatre Group Education and Community Partnerships Department. One of the most active theatre education programs in the country, Education and Community Partnerships reached roughly 34,000 students, teachers, patrons and community members throughout Southern California in the 2016-2017 season.

Funding for Center Theatre Group’s August Wilson Program is provided by the Center Theatre Group Affiliates. The program also receives generous support from Center Theatre Group’s Corporate Circle, Joseph Drown Foundation, the Dwight Stuart Youth Fund, Hearst Foundations, the Rosenthal Family Foundation and Hope Landis Warner.

Center Theatre Group honors its long-standing relationship with August Wilson through its August Wilson Program, as well as through its continued production of Wilson’s work. Center Theatre Group has presented nine of Wilson’s plays, including two world premiere productions of his work. Most recently, Wilson’s “Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom” had a successful run at the Mark Taper Forum in the fall of 2016.

More information on Center Theatre Group’s August Wilson Monologue Competition can be found at www.CenterTheatreGroup.org/AugustWilson.

Center Theatre Group, one of the nation’s preeminent arts and cultural organizations, is Los Angeles’ leading nonprofit theatre company, which, under Artistic Director Michael Ritchie, programs seasons at the 736-seat Mark Taper Forum and 1600 to 2000-seat Ahmanson Theatre at The Music Center in Downtown Los Angeles, and the 317-seat Kirk Douglas Theatre in Culver City. In addition to presenting and producing the broadest range of theatrical entertainment in the country, Center Theatre Group is one of the nation’s leading producers of ambitious new works through commissions and world premiere productions and a leader in interactive community engagement and education programs that reach across generations, demographics and circumstance to serve Los Angeles.

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March 8, 2018