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For immediate release.

**CENTER THEATRE GROUP LAUNCHES
THE L.A. WRITERS' WORKSHOP FESTIVAL: NEW PLAYS FORGED IN L.A.
ONE DAY EVENT ON SATURDAY, JUNE 23**

**THE FIRST PUBLIC OUTLET OF THE L.A. WRITERS' WORKSHOP
CENTER THEATRE GROUP'S LONG-RUNNING NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

**Plays By Three Writers' Workshop Participants From Throughout The Program's Thirteen Year History
Have Been Selected for the Festival's Inaugural Year**

Center Theatre Group has announced the launch of the inaugural **L.A. Writers' Workshop Festival: New Plays Forged In L.A.**, to celebrate some of the freshest and most exciting voices in modern American theatre coming out of Los Angeles and Center Theatre Group's long-standing L.A. Writers' Workshop. To be held annually at the Kirk Douglas Theatre, the festival will feature readings of three new plays by three L.A. Writers' Workshop participants from throughout the program's thirteen year history. The inaugural festival will be on June 23 from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. with readings of "A Kind of Weather" by Sylvan Oswald, "New Life" by Dan O'Brien and "How To Raise A Freeman" by Zakiyyah Alexander.

"The talent-level of writers who live and work in L.A. is unmatched," said Center Theatre Group Literary Manager and Artistic Engagement Strategist Joy Meads. "For more than a decade, Center Theatre Group has nurtured many of these exceptional voices through our Writers' Workshop – offering them the space and community to research and write new plays. Now, through our L.A. Writers' Workshop Festival, we can continue to support the excellence of the playwrights who call Los Angeles home by sharing their compelling new works with the public."

The festival begins at 11 a.m. with a breakfast reception and there will be a closing reception at 7:30 p.m.

The first reading at 12 p.m. will be "A Kind of Weather" by Sylvan Oswald. "A Kind of Weather" is the story of Kid, whose grieving father shows up at his Brooklyn doorstep, asks to move in and puts a cramp in his sex life. An obsessive-compulsive, time-jumping tragi-comedy, Oswald's play explores gender transition, its effect on family relationships and how we learn to be who we are.

Readings continue at 3 p.m. with "New Life" by Dan O'Brien, which follows a war reporter in Syria and a playwright in treatment for cancer as they try to sell a TV show. The conclusion to O'Brien's trilogy of poetic memoirs-for-the-stage (which include "The Body of An American" and "The House in

Scarsdale”), “New Life” dares to dream of healing after trauma, and of telling the truth of war as entertainment.

The festival’s final reading at 5.30 p.m. is “How To Raise A Freeman” by Zakiyyah Alexander. “How To Raise A Freeman” is a dark comedy that asks how a middle-class, African American family can keep their son alive in a world where every 28 hours a black man is killed by law enforcement.

Since 2005, local playwrights have been invited to spend a year with Center Theatre Group’s L.A. Writers’ Workshop researching and writing new works with the feedback of their fellow writers and artistic staff. Membership in the Writers’ Workshop begins with a residency year and continues with events and activities designed to build community and support professional and artistic development. The program is designed to foster new voices, inspire playwrights to create their best work, encourage bold writing and build relationships among local playwrights, Center Theatre Group and the Los Angeles theatre community. The current cohort includes Jeff Augustin, Marcus Gardley, Aleshea Harris, Laura Jacqmin, Matthew Paul Olmos, Jiehae Park and Molly Smith Metzler. In the thirteen years since its founding, the Writers’ Workshop community has grown to 89 playwrights, including Sheila Callaghan (“Shameless,” “Casual,” “Women Laughing Alone with Salad”), Jennifer Haley (“The Nether”), Dominique Morisseau (“Shameless,” “Pipeline”), Qui Nguyen (“Vietgone”) and Marco Ramirez (“The Defenders,” “The Royale”).

Sylvan Oswald is an interdisciplinary artist and assistant professor of playwriting at UCLA’s School of Theater, Film and Television. His work has been produced/developed at About Face Theatre, Berkeley Rep’s Ground Floor, Center Theatre Group, New Georges, Portland Center Stage, St. Ann’s Warehouse and Undermain Theatre among others. He has received a Thom Thomas Award from the Dramatists Guild, Soho Rep’s Dorothy Strelsin Fellowship, a Jerome Fellowship from the Playwrights’ Center, and residencies at MacDowell, Yaddo and Sundance/Ucross. His most recent project is “High Winds,” co-created with graphic designer Jessica Fleischmann and published by X Artists’ Books; and his lo-fi, semi-improvised web series about trans identity is available at outtakestv.com. He is an affiliated artist with Clubbed Thumb and an alum of New Dramatists.

Dan O’Brien is an internationally produced and published playwright and poet, whose awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship in Drama & Performance Art, the inaugural Edward M. Kennedy Prize for Drama Inspired by American History, the Horton Foote Prize for Best New American Play, the PEN Center USA Award for Drama, and, for poetry, the Fenton Aldeburgh First Collection Prize. His most recent play, “The House in Scarsdale: a Memoir for the Stage,” premiered at The Theatre @ Boston Court in 2017. His docu-drama about the haunting of war reporter Paul Watson, “The Body of an American,” has been produced in recent years off-Broadway, in London, and regionally in Chicago, Washington DC, Denver, Hartford, Portland and elsewhere. O’Brien’s poetry collections are “War Reporter” (CB Editions 2013, Hanging Loose Press 2013), “Scarsdale” (CB Editions 2014, Measure Press 2015) and “New Life” (CB Editions 2015, Hanging Loose Press 2016). “Dan O’Brien: Plays One” was published in 2017 by Oberon Books in London.

Zakiyyah Alexander’s work has been seen and/or developed all around the country, including the world premiere of “10 Things To Do Before I Die” (Second Stage) and the musical “GIRL Shakes Loose” (Penumbra). She is the winner of numerous awards and residencies; including the Helen Merrill Emerging Playwriting Award, ACT New Play Award/Lorraine Hansberry Prize, amongst others. She is also an alumna of New Dramatists and past participant in Center Theatre Group’s Writers’ Workshop. Past commissions include Second Stage, Philadelphia Theatre Company and the Children’s Theatre of

Minneapolis. A graduate of the Yale School of Drama (MFA in playwriting), for four years she was a Visiting Assistant Professor at Bard College where she taught undergraduate playwriting. Television credits include “24: Legacy” and “Grey's Anatomy.”

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.

Tickets for the L.A. Writers' Workshop Festival: New Plays Forged In L.A. are \$30 for all three readings or \$15 for individual readings. Starting Wednesday, May 2, tickets will be available by calling (213) 628-2772, online at www.CenterTheatreGroup.org, at the Center Theatre Group Box Office at the Ahmanson Theatre or at the Kirk Douglas Theatre Box Office two hours prior to performance.

The Kirk Douglas Theatre is located at 9820 Washington Blvd. in Culver City, CA 90232. Free three hour covered parking at City Hall with validation (available in the Kirk Douglas Theatre lobby).

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May 1, 2018