

For immediate release.

**FINALISTS ANNOUNCED FOR
2021 DOROTHY AND RICHARD E. SHERWOOD AWARD
Center Theatre Group's \$10,000 Award Supports Innovative L.A. Theatre Artists**

Three finalists have been selected for Center Theatre Group's 2021 Dorothy and Richard E. Sherwood Award: **D'Lo**, **Lena Sands** and **Mikaal Sulaiman**. Center Theatre Group recognizes and celebrates this year's finalists for their exceptional contributions to the Los Angeles theatre landscape and their work as innovative and adventurous artists.

Paying tribute to the memory of Dorothy and Richard E. Sherwood, the \$10,000 award aims to cultivate innovative theatre artists working in Los Angeles who push formal and aesthetic boundaries and demonstrate dedication to improving their respective artistic fields. The winner of the \$10,000 award will be announced in 2021. The two additional finalists will receive a \$2,000 honorarium.

D'Lo is a queer/transgender Tamil-Sri Lankan-American actor/writer/comic whose work ranges from stand-up comedy, solo theatre, plays, films, short stories and poetry. His solo shows "Ramble-Ations," "D'FunQT," "D'FaQTo Life" and "To T, or not To T" have toured theatres and festivals nationally, and he is a regular performer/speaker on the college/university circuit. He is currently working on his latest solo called *Queer Noise* with support from Center Theatre Group's Library Series and LA LGBT Center. His work has been published or written about in academic journals and anthologies, with features in *The Guardian*, *NBC* and *The Advocate*. He created the "Coming Out, Coming Home" writing workshop series with South Asian and/or immigrant LGBTQ Organizations nationally. His acting credits include: "Looking," "Transparent," "Sense8," "Mr. Robot," *Connecting* and Issa Rae-produced "Minimum Wage." Currently, he has a series based on his life that is set up at BTR Media and Paul Feig's Powderkeg Media. Most recently, D'Lo was awarded the Artist Disruptor Fellowship through the Center for Cultural Performance and 5050x2020 an initiative started by Joey Soloway, and he is also a Civic Media Fellow through USC's Annenberg School of Innovation funded by the MacArthur Foundation.

Lena Sands designs costumes for live performance, installation and film. Using a variety of materials and methods to create bold and distinctive visuals, Lena collaborates with ensembles and communities to investigate bodies, histories and the divine. Her most recent projects include SITI Company's "The Bacchae," which portrayed androgynous anarchy in battle with male hierarchy, and Four Larks' "Frankenstein," a meditation on flesh and obsession. She also designed the Ovation-nominated costumes for Critical Mass Performance Group's "Ameryka."

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Lena has designed for companies including Deaf West Theatre, East West Players, Cornerstone Theater Company and Watts Village Theater Company, and her work has been seen at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), the Guthrie Theater, The Wallis, the Kirk Douglas Theater, the Getty Villa, the Skirball Cultural Center and REDCAT. Her designs for “Venus” by Suzan-Lori Parks were displayed at the State Historical Museum in Moscow as part of the exhibition “Innovative Costume of the 21st Century: The Next Generation.” Lena has an MFA in Design for Performance from California Institute of the Arts.

Mikaal Sulaiman, originally from Rochester New York, currently resides in Los Angeles working primarily as a sound designer and composer. He attended the University of the Arts receiving a BFA and later studied the Jacques Lecoq approach to avant garde theatre at the London International School of Performing Arts. Mikaal also writes and directs from time to time. He is currently writing and devising an avant-garde headphone play titled Project Black Plague. PBP has received artist residencies at Space on Ryder Farm in Upstate New York, Ucross Foundation in Wyoming, as well as VoxFest at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. Some of Mikaal’s sound design credits on world premiere shows include “Rags Parkland” (Ars Nova) *Lucille Lortel Award winner, “Fairview” (Soho Rep) *Pulitzer Prize Winner for Drama and “Underground Railroad Game” (Ars Nova) *Obie Award Winner. He has received nominations from Bay Area Theatre Critics, Audelco Award, Lucille Lortel Award, and Drama Desk Award for sound design. He is also a Henry Hewes Design Award recipient. Mikaal also hosts a podcast, “Black Enso,” which can be found on most podcast platforms.

Since 1996, Center Theatre Group has recognized and celebrated local theatre artists with the Richard E. Sherwood Award. In 2018 Dorothy Sherwood, Richard’s wife and fellow champion of innovative and adventurous theatre artists, passed away. To honor the passion and dedication of both patrons of the arts, the award was renamed the Dorothy and Richard E. Sherwood Award.

Dorothy and Richard E. Sherwood were patrons of the arts with a special appreciation for artists who are in the vanguard of theatre. Richard was president and then chairman of the Center Theatre Group Board of Directors from 1980 until his passing in 1993. The award is established as an endowed fund at Center Theatre Group by their family, friends, colleagues and fellow board members, to honor the family’s passionate commitment to theatre. Dorothy Sherwood was deeply involved in the curation and selection process, hosting salons at her home for many of the artists, traveling to theatres around Los Angeles to support new work, and ensuring that the award would truly help recipients.

Mat Diafos Sweeney is the most recent recipient of the Dorothy and Richard E. Sherwood Award. Previous awardees include performance artist/comedian/writer Kristina Wong (“Kristina Wong for Public Office”), set and projection designer Hana S. Kim (who designed the August Wilson Monologue Competition at the Taper), lighting designer Pablo Santiago (“Zoot Suit” and “Valley of the Heart”), lighting designer Christopher Kuhl (“The Nether” and “Appropriate”), costume designer Ann Closs-Farley (“Women Laughing Alone With Salad,” “Zoot Suit”), director Lars Jan (“The White Album”), director/performer/choreographer Ameenah Kaplan (“The Royale,” “Facing Our Truth”),

playwright John Belusso (“The Body of Bourne”) and director Robert O’Hara (“In the Continuum,” “Eclipsed”) among others.

Center Theatre Group, one of the nation’s preeminent arts and cultural organizations, is Los Angeles’ leading nonprofit theatre company, which, under the leadership of Artistic Director Michael Ritchie, Managing Director / CEO Meghan Pressman and Producing Director Douglas C. Baker, programs seasons at the 736-seat Mark Taper Forum and 1600 to 2100-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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December 16, 2020