

For immediate release.

**CENTER THEATRE GROUP SELECTS 11 LOCAL STUDENTS FOR
2021 AUGUST WILSON MONOLOGUE COMPETITION REGIONAL FINALS
TO BE CAPTURED AT THE KIRK DOUGLAS THEATRE AND STREAMED ON
CENTER THEATRE GROUP'S DIGITAL STAGE MARCH 23 AT 5 PM**

**Top Two Students Will Be Joined by 2020 Finalist Tyla Uzo to
Participate in National Finals**

Center Theatre Group has selected 11 local high school students to participate in the regional finals for the 2021 August Wilson Monologue Competition (AWMC) to be held virtually with participants performing on the stage of the Kirk Douglas Theatre in early March. Viewed remotely but in real time by the competition's judges, the performances will be recorded and streamed during the live event on March 23 at 5 pm Pacific. The livestream of the event will be free to the public and available at CTGLA.org/AugustWilson2021.

This is the tenth consecutive year Center Theatre Group is hosting the Los Angeles 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. All previous competitions have culminated in an evening of monologues performed on the stage of the Mark Taper Forum.

"The August Wilson Monologue Competition is always one of my favorite evenings in the theatre each year," said Center Theatre Group Artistic Director Michael Ritchie. "For many of these young performers, this is their first introduction to the unparalleled cycle of plays by one of America's greatest playwrights, and the opportunity to witness the transformational power of August's work on these students and the chance to see the energy and the insights that they bring his words never fails to leave me awestruck. While the pandemic forced changes to the program this year, I am happy that the participants will still be performing on one of our stages and hope that this virtual format will make it easier for the wider community to experience the work of these amazing young performers who promise to be the future of theatre. I absolutely expect this year's event to be one of my favorite nights in front of a computer screen."

The students selected to participate in the regional finals are **Simone Baker** (Sherman Oaks), **Hazel Eko** (Los Angeles), **Willa Jackson** (Los Angeles), **Chazaiah Johnson** (Los Angeles), **Hailey Soomin Lee** (Redondo Beach), **Giselle Lopez** (Los Angeles), **Veronica McFarlane** (Whittier), **Stephen Moran** (Los Angeles), **Reva Pau** (South Pasadena), **Dillion Jerome Sowell** (Moreno Valley) and **Landon Wouters** (Fullerton).

Two finalists will be announced during the livestream on March 23. Those two finalists will be joined by one of last year's finalists, Tyla Uzo, in advancing to the national competition.

The students selected will receive master classes provided by Center Theatre Group. The sessions will allow the students to refine their performances while gaining valuable acting techniques.

The program kicked off this season with a preliminary audition that featured 113 students in 10th, 11th or 12th-grade from 33 different high schools in Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino and Riverside counties. Of those students, 45 advanced to a semi-final audition held live on Zoom in December 2020 where the aforementioned 11 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 an in-depth study of the work of August Wilson. This year, classes from Carson Senior High School, Edward R. Roybal Learning Center and Animo Leadership Charter High School are taking part in the residency. The students and teachers from the three classrooms selected will have the opportunity to view 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 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, New York; Chicago; Dallas; East Lansing; Greensboro, North Carolina; Hampton Roads, Virginia; Las Vegas; Los Angeles; Maryland; Milwaukee; New Haven, Connecticut; New York; Norfolk, Virginia; Pittsburgh; Portland, Oregon; San Diego; Seattle; and Urbana-Champaign, Illinois. Each city runs its program differently and each experience is designed to provide learning opportunities for high school students to study and practice the craft of acting through the work of August Wilson.

Center Theatre Group's August Wilson Program is made possible by the Michael Shaw Jacobs Fund and The Dwight Stuart Youth Fund. Additional support is provided by Cindy and Gary Frischling, the Lawrence P. Frank Foundation, the Sascha Brastoff Foundation, the Find Your Light Foundation and City National Bank. The August Wilson Monologue Competition Los Angeles Regional Finals is presented by the Center Theatre Group Affiliates.

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 "American Century Cycle," including two world premiere productions. Most recently, Wilson's "Jitney" had a successful run at the Mark Taper Forum in 2019.

More information on Center Theatre Group's August Wilson Monologue Competition can be found at [CTGLA.org/AugustWilson](https://www.ctgla.org/AugustWilson).

Center Theatre Group's Digital Stage is presented by American Express. As presenting sponsor of The Digital Stage, American Express Card Members enjoy special opportunities on the Digital Stage, including: presales and early access for limited-release premium events, invitations to private pre- or post-show meet and greets and access to exclusive content curated especially for Card Members.

Bank of America is Center Theatre Group's Season Sponsor, including Digital Stage programming. For more than 20 years, Bank of America has partnered with Center Theatre Group to provide innovative Education and Community Partnerships programs as well as present

world-class productions at the Ahmanson Theatre and Mark Taper Forum. Their generous support now extends online to the Digital Stage.

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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February 18, 2021