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**CENTER THEATRE GROUP NAMES THREE LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS
FOR 2020 AUGUST WILSON MONOLOGUE COMPETITION NATIONAL FINALS IN NYC
Top Two Students Will Participate in National Finals on Broadway on May 4**

Center Theatre Group has named **Kyle Branch, Tyla Uzo** and **Fletcher Jones** as the top performers of the **August Wilson Monologue Competition** (AWMC) Regional Finals held at the Mark Taper Forum on February 25, 2020. **Branch** and **Uzo** will go on to represent Los Angeles in the national finals on May 4, 2020.

Kyle Branch of Los Angeles County High School for the Arts has placed first in the regional competition, earning a \$500 scholarship; Tyla Uzo of Ramón C. Cortines High School of Visual and Performing Arts took second place with a \$400 scholarship; and Fletcher Jones of Ramón C. Cortines High School of Visual and Performing Arts took third place and a \$300 scholarship. Both Branch and Uzo 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 28 other students from cities around the country. Fifteen of those students will be selected for the national finals while the other 13 will be part of a performance montage. Jones will serve as the Los Angeles alternate.

This is the ninth consecutive year that Center Theatre Group hosted 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.

Branch, Uzo and Jones were selected from a pool of 12 regional finalists representing nine local high schools within Los Angeles, Orange and Riverside counties. As preparation for the national component of the competition, the top two selected students will receive master classes to workshop their monologues.

AWMC kicked off this season with a preliminary audition that featured 122 students in 10th, 11th or 12th-grade from 30 different high schools in Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino and Riverside counties. Fifty-four of those students advanced to a semi-final audition held at The Music Center Annex in December 2019 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 an in-depth study of the work of August Wilson. This year, classes from Ánimo Leadership Charter High School, Carson High School and Roybal Learning Center are taking part in the residency. The students and teachers from each school attended 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; Greensboro, North Carolina; Los Angeles; New Haven, Connecticut; New York; Norfolk, Virginia; Pittsburgh; Portland, Oregon; San Diego; and Seattle. 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.

Center Theatre Group’s August Wilson Program is presented by the Center Theatre Group Affiliates. The August Wilson Program receives generous support from the Dwight Stuart Youth Fund and the Rosenthal Family Foundation as well as support from The Michael Shaw Jacobs Fund, Lawrence P. Frank Foundation and Sascha Brastoff Foundation.

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 “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 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 the leadership of Artistic Director Michael Ritchie, Managing Director 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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