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Mo Holmes Wins 2026 Yale Drama Series Prize

Pulitzer Prize- and Tony Award-winning playwright Branden Jacobs-Jenkins selects Holmes' AMANDA; the winning play to be presented in a staged reading at Yale Schwarzman Center and then published by Yale University Press

NEW HAVEN, CT (September 3, 2026)—Playwright, librettist and dramaturg Mo Holmes will receive the 2026 Yale Drama Series Prize for her play, *AMANDA*. The work was selected by Pulitzer Prize- and Tony Award-winning playwright and Yale faculty member Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, in his second year judging the competition.

On Thursday, October 29, Holmes will be honored at Yale Schwarzman Center with a staged reading of *AMANDA* and the conferral of the David Charles Horn Award, which provides the winning playwright a \$10,000 cash prize. The play will also be published by Yale University Press, which collaborates with the David Charles Horn Foundation and Yale Schwarzman Center to administer the Prize and bring each year's winning play to performance and print.

Holmes joins eighteen playwrights recognized over the twenty-year history of the Yale Drama Series, which concludes with the 2026 award.

AMANDA, inspired by Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, is a psychosocial doll and puppet horror-fantasy charting the violence of becoming an upwardly mobile Southern Black girl. Set in a childish, anachronistic conception of Black D.C. across "plantation-times and now-times, and all the in-between." In the play, four characters, all named Amanda, move through a series of lessons on society, school, race and sex, salvation, secrets and more, under the watch of Mother. *AMANDA* explores what becomes possible during playtime: What if you could bite your Mother? Be her? Defend her? Touch her?

"I am thrilled to receive the Yale Drama Series Prize in its final year. Writing *AMANDA* was like writing in a diary. I wrote privately, vulnerably, to delight and frighten myself. It's ironic that it will be published, and yet fitting, as throughout the play the Amandas ruminate on what it means to debut: to be seen, heard, bought and consumed. Thank you especially to Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, whose adaptations motivated and inspired my own work on this play. His recognition of *AMANDA* is very affirming of this project, and so meaningful to me," said **playwright Mo Holmes**.

"We're honored to welcome Mo to the Schwarzman Center and to create space for *AMANDA* to make the essential leap from page to performance. It's a privilege to celebrate her achievement and the remarkable community of writers the Yale Drama Series Prize has championed over the past twenty years." said **Rachel Fine, Executive Director of Yale Schwarzman Center**.

“The Yale Drama Series has established an extraordinary pathway for emerging playwrights to have their work recognized, experienced by an audience and ultimately published by a distinguished press,” said **Niko Pfund, Director of Yale University Press**.

The Yale Drama Series recognizes an emerging playwright for an original, unpublished full-length play selected anonymously by a distinguished playwright serving as judge. Since its founding in 2006, the Yale Drama Series has served as a launching pad for emerging playwrights from around the world. Over twenty years, the competition has received more than 27,000 submissions from 134 countries and helped bring new voices to publication and production.

Established by Francine Horn in memory of her late husband and business partner, David Charles Horn, the Foundation has supported the Yale Drama Series since its inception, helping create opportunities for emerging writers to see their work performed and published.

AMANDA

Playwright	Mo Holmes
Director	Brittany Sue Vi-King
Dramaturg/ Stage Directions Reader	Octavia Washington
Cast Includes:	Carter Arden Isabella Carethers Lola Fadiran Anita Parrott

The following playwrights were shortlisted for the 2026 Yale Drama Series Prize, listed alphabetically:

- *Is Cry You Cry'n* by Dhari Noel

Dhari Noel is a Queer Black Caribbean Harlemites artist whose work explores the incoherence of race, failures of gender, and inherited performances. Their plays include *Is Cry You Cry'n?* (Judith Champion PlayLabs Reading Series at MCC; 2026 O'Neill NPC Finalist; Brown University's "Writing Is Live" festival), *Paris* (CWP), *Money Shot* (2025 O'Neill NPC Finalist), *Penguin Sex With Mr. Morgan* (ANTfest @ Ars Nova), *Man Made* (2024 O'Neill NPC Semi-Finalist; Cherry Picking), and *Spirit Junkie* (Cherry Picking @ The Wild Project). Dhari is currently a member of the Page 73 Writers Group. With support from Page 73, Dhari participated in Life Jacket Theater Company's inaugural 2026 Writers Room Residency. Additional honors include being a Tennessee Williams Scholar at the Sewanee Writers' Conference and an Emerging LGBTQ Voices

Fellow at Lambda Literary. Dhari has a BA in Sociology from Columbia University and an MFA in Playwriting from Brown University.

- *Boids* by reid tang

reid tang writes plays and things shaped like plays. Their work includes *Isabel* (NAATCO), *DEBT* (co-written w/ Adrian Einspanier, developed with Pride Plays, New York Stage and Film & *Breaking the Binary Theatre*), *WORK HARD HAVE FUN MAKE HISTORY* (Clubbed Thumb Summerworks), *FUTURE WIFE* (Relentless Award Honorable Mention, Goethe-Institut Beijing, Theatertreffen Stückemarkt), and *Party in a Google Sheet* (New Georges). They've been under commission with *Breaking the Binary Theatre* and New York Theatre Workshop, a recipient of the Sundance Institute Interdisciplinary Program Grant, and a MacDowell fellow. Currently, they're a resident playwright at New Dramatists and a Target Margin Institute Fellow. In the past, they've been part of Ars Nova's Play Group, the New Georges Jam, Clubbed Thumb's Early Career Writers' Group, and NYTW's 2050 Fellowship. They grew up in Singapore and presently live in Brooklyn, NY. reidtang.com

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About Mo Holmes

Holmes is a Black queer Southern playwright, librettist and dramaturg, born in San Antonio and raised on the long stretch of road from Texas to Alabama. She is the recipient of the Next Wave Initiative Lorraine Hansberry Award, a Sewanee Writer's Conference Tennessee Williams Scholarship, was a finalist for the Jane Chambers Award, and is a two-time O'Neill National Playwrights Conference semifinalist. Her play *AMANDA* is currently shortlisted for the Alpine Fellowship Theatre Prize. Her short play *MALACHI LIKE A REQUIEM FOR A GLACIER* was selected for DePaul University's Climate Action New Play Collective and was a semifinalist for Jewish Plays Project's On One Foot Ten Minute Play Festival. Her other writing has been developed and/or presented at the Samuel French Off-off-Broadway Short Play Festival, the Playwrights' Center, Vertigo Theatre, Minnesota Opera and Atlanta Opera.

As a dramaturg and teaching artist, Holmes has supported new play development at Good Apples Collective, the Playwrights' Center, Guthrie Theater, Jungle Theater, Horizon Theatre Company and Columbia University School of the Arts. She is an MFA candidate in Playwriting and Undergraduate Writing Program Teaching Fellow at Columbia University.

About Branden Jacobs-Jenkins

Branden Jacobs-Jenkins is a Brooklyn-based playwright, producer, Pulitzer Prize winner and Tony winner. Recent theatre credits include *Purpose* (Pulitzer Prize; Broadway, Second Stage and Steppenwolf), *Appropriate* (Tony Award; Broadway, Second Stage), *The Comeuppance* (Signature Theatre), *Girls* (Yale Rep), *Everybody* (Signature Theatre), *War* (Yale Rep; Lincoln Center/LCT3), *Gloria* (Vineyard Theatre), *Appropriate* (Obie Award; Signature Theatre), *An*

Octoroon (Obie Award; Soho Rep, Theatre for a New Audience), and Neighbors (The Public Theater). He currently teaches at Yale University and serves as Vice President of the Dramatists Guild council and on the boards of Soho Rep, Park Avenue Armory, the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, and the Dramatists Guild Foundation. Honors include a USA Artists fellowship, a Guggenheim fellowship, the MacArthur fellowship, the Windham-Campbell Prize for Drama, and the inaugural Tennessee Williams Award.

About the David Charles Horn Foundation

The David Charles Horn Foundation was established in 2003 by Francine Horn, David Horn's wife and partner in the international fashion publication service Here & There. In its work, the Foundation seeks to honor David Horn, whose dream of having his own writing published was never realized, by offering other writers the opportunity for publication. Previous judges for the playwriting prize are Edward Albee, Sir David Hare, John Guare, Marsha Norman, Nicholas Wright, Ayad Akhtar, Paula Vogel, Jeremy O. Harris, and a one-time panel of previous winners Neil Wechsler, Frances Ya-Chu Cowhig, Virginia Grise, Jacqueline Goldfinger, Leah Nanako Winkler and Rachel Lynett.

About Yale Schwarzman Center

Based in New Haven, Connecticut, and located in the historic heart of the Yale University campus, Yale Schwarzman Center is a commons for university life where art, culinary, and wellness experiences converge to build bridges, nurture creativity, and foster kinship and belonging. Positioned at the intersection of social connection, creativity and self-expression, the Center includes several flexible spaces in which members of the Yale and New Haven communities engage through free, public programming that ranges from the intimate to the grand. The Center's iconic building—constructed in 1901, rebirthed in 2022 following a renovation by Robert A.M. Stern Architects, and recognized for excellence by the Institute of Classical Architecture & Art—has recently been the site for world premieres and commissions by Nathalie Joachim, Bryce Dessner, and Ash Fure, to name a few. The Center's impact extends well beyond its walls through programming and programmatic partnerships within its home city and across the country.