

American Academy of Arts and Letters

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NEWS RELEASE

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TWO MUSICALS WIN 2011 COMPETITION

New York, February 11, 2011 – Winners of the 2011 Richard Rodgers Awards for Musical Theater were announced today by the American Academy of Arts and Letters, which administers the Rodgers Awards.

The winning musicals are:

Dogfight by Peter Duchan, Benj Pasek, and Justin Paul

Gloryana by Andrew Gerle

Dogfight was awarded a studio production and *Gloryana* was awarded a staged reading.

The intent of the Richard Rodgers Award is to nurture talented composers and playwrights by enabling their musicals to be produced in New York City. Former award recipients include Maury Yeston, *Nine*; Jonathan Larson, *Rent*; Julie Taymor and Elliot Goldenthal, *Juan Darien*; Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty, *Lucky Stiff*; Jeanine Tesori and Brian Crawley, *Violet*; and Scott Frankel, Michael Korie, and Doug Wright, *Grey Gardens*. Since 1980 seventy works have received Rodgers awards.

This year's jury included Stephen Sondheim (chair), Lynn Ahrens, John Guare, Sheldon Harnick, David Ives, Richard Maltby, Jr., Jeanine Tesori, and John Weidman.

Set in 1960s San Francisco, *Dogfight* (based on a screenplay by Bob Comfort) tells the story of Eddie Birdlace, a Marine set to ship out to Vietnam. He and his fellow Marines hold a cruel competition for money, a “dogfight” party, to which each man brings the ugliest date he can find. Eddie finds Rose, a diner waitress whose idealism and compassion challenge Eddie throughout their emotional evening, his last before he heads off to war. When he returns, a broken man, to a changed America, he may finally be ready for the redemptive kindness Rose offers.

Gloryana is an eclectic original musical centering around a shooting in a racially divided small Mississippi town and the stories of those whose lives are touched by it. As modern Southerners struggle with their cultural identity and two teenagers stare down death row, the letters between a Confederate soldier and a Union nurse give us hope for the future.

Richard Rodgers, elected to the Academy in 1955, endowed these awards in 1978. The awards provide financial support for productions, studio productions, and staged readings of original musicals, by nonprofit theaters in New York City. The Richard Rodgers Awards are the Academy's only awards for which applications are accepted. **Application forms for the Richard Rodgers Awards may be downloaded from www.artsandletters.org.**

BIOGRAPHIES

Peter Duchan, Benj Pasek, and Justin Paul authors of *Dogfight*

Peter Duchan (book) co-wrote the screenplay for *Breaking Upwards*, which IFC Films released in 2010. *Breaking Upwards* received its world premiere at the South by Southwest Film Festival in 2009. Peter also served as Associate Producer of the film. He co-wrote a short film, *Unlocked*, which was an Official Selection of the Tribeca Film Festival, Gijon International Film Festival, and many others. Peter was a finalist for the 2010-2011 Princess Grace Award for Playwriting for his play, *Lavender Scare*. This March, the play will be presented as part of the Geva Theatre's Plays-in-Progress series. He was Assistant Director for the off-Broadway production *Not a Genuine Black Man* at Daryl Roth's DR2 Theater. He graduated cum laude from Northwestern University.

Benj Pasek and Justin Paul (music and lyrics) projects include *A Christmas Story* !(5th Avenue Theatre), the musical adaptation of Roald Dahl's *James and the Giant Peach* with the dance group Pilobolus (Goodspeed), *Edges* (licensed by Music Theatre International), the Disney TV series *Johnny and the Sprites*, *Duck for President* and *If You Give A Pig...*(Theatreworks USA). Pasek and Paul were winners of the Jonathan Larson Songwriting Award, 2007, Dramatists Guild Fellowship 2007-2008, Fred Ebb Award Finalists, 2010, Sundance Institute Fellowship, 2011 and "50 to Watch" from Dramatist Magazine. Benj and Justin received BFAs from University of Michigan, Musical Theatre.

Andrew Gerle, author of *Gloryana*

Andrew Gerle is a previous 3-time winner of the Richard Rodgers Award for *The Tutor* (book and lyrics by Maryrose Wood), winner of a Jonathan Larson Award for *Meet John Doe* (with Eddie Sugarman), and the first recipient of the Burton Lane Composer's Fellowship from the Theater Hall of Fame. He has been a fellow at the MacDowell Colony and a writer-in-residence at the Eugene O'Neill National Musical Theater Conference and the Ucross Foundation. His play, *Renovations*, will receive its world premiere this March at the White Plains Performing Arts Center, and his opera, *The Beach* (libretto by Royce Vavrek) will receive a reading as part of New York City Opera's VOX series in May. He is the author of *The Enraged Accompanist's Guide to the Perfect Audition*, released by Hal Leonard/ Applause Books in March.

The American Academy of Arts and Letters was established in 1898 to "foster, assist, and sustain an interest in literature, music, and the fine arts." Election to the Academy is considered the highest formal recognition of artistic merit in this country. The Academy is currently comprised of 250 of America's leading voices in the fields of Art, Architecture, Literature, and Music. The Academy presents exhibitions of art, architecture, and manuscripts; and readings and performances of new musicals throughout the year, and is located in three landmark buildings designed by McKim, Mead & White, Cass Gilbert, and Charles Pratt Huntington on Audubon Terrace at 155 Street and Broadway, New York City.