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Dallas Theater Center Announces Inaugural Commissions of Three Local North Texas Playwrights

DALLAS (September 18, 2015) – Dallas Theater Center announced commissions of three North Texas playwrights. Matt Lyle, Jonathan Norton and DTC Brierley Resident Acting Company member Steven Walters will each write an original full-length play for DTC in the next 12 months.

"Since arriving in Dallas eight years ago, I have been a fan of Matt, Steven and Jonathan's writing," said Artistic Director Kevin Moriarty. "I've been fortunate to see their work on local stages and watch them grow as artists. Their bold, funny and challenging work has already enriched and improved the North Texas theatrical landscape. I'm looking forward to collaborating with them on these new projects, which will make a significant impact on DTC, the Dallas/Ft Worth arts scene and the national stage."

These commissions of North Texas playwrights represent a new initiative at DTC, as part of its larger commitment to developing and producing new work. Lyle, Norton and Walters reside in Dallas and will each produce a first draft of their individual plays by May 1, 2016 and will culminate in readings of both first and second drafts by September 2016. After the commission year, DTC may continue to develop the plays with a goal of future production.

In addition, DTC will follow the footsteps of Playwrights Horizons in New York City, by providing compensation for each playwright's healthcare, as well as give them preproduction earnings comparable to what actors receive during rehearsals. The preproduction compensation will recognize time spent in rehearsals, casting sessions, director and design meetings, and readings.

"As a North Texas artist myself, it gives me deep satisfaction to see DTC making a strong commitment to these playwrights - both artistically and financially," said Lee Trull, Director of New Play Development. "Picking up the baton passed to us by Playwrights Horizons by giving writers fair compensation and health care is especially exciting."

DTC's ongoing commitment to New Play Development includes supporting a full-time Playwright in Residence on its artistic staff, currently held by Will Power; mainstage productions of new plays and musicals, including this season's *Moonshine: That Hee Haw Musical*, *Clarkston* and *Deferred Action*; commissions of new plays and musicals; opportunities for North Texas writers to participate in DTC's Dallas Playwrights Workshop and an ongoing playwrights group; and playwriting classes offered for adults and young people.

Lyle is the co-founder of Bootstraps Comedy Theater in Dallas, for which he currently serves as Artistic Director. In 2007, the *Dallas Observer* named Bootstraps as Best Small Theater Company and Lyle as Best New Playwright. Lyle's plays have been produced in Dallas, Chicago, New York, Orlando and the University of Michigan. His plays, *The Boxer*, *Hello Human Female* and *Barbecue Apocalypse* all garnered DFW Theater Critics Forum Awards for Best New Play and *Barbecue Apocalypse* was nominated for an American Theatre Critics Association/Steinberg New Play Award. Lyle is a member of the Dramatist Guild and the Playwright's Center. He graduated Summa Cum Laude from Stephen F. Austin State University School of Theatre and is a recipient of the Outstanding Theatre Graduate Award.

Norton's work has been produced or developed at PlayPenn, Black and Latino Playwrights Conference, TeCo Theatrical Productions, Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, Castillo Theatre, Soul Rep Theater Company, Nouveau 47, CrossOver Arts Theater, African American Repertory Theater, and the South Dallas Cultural Center. He is a recipient of a 2015 Artistic Innovations Grant from the Mid-America Arts Alliance. Norton is also a proud two-time recipient of the Diaspora Performing Arts Commission given by the South Dallas Cultural Center, an inaugural recipient of the TACA Donna Wilhelm Family New Works Fund, and was a Finalist for the Eugene O'Neill National Playwrights Conference. He was an inaugural member of Dallas Theater Center's Dallas Playwrights Workshop led by Will Power. He also serves as a HowlRound Commons Producer documenting Power's residency at DTC. Norton is a graduate of Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, Marymount Manhattan College, and the Master of Liberal Studies program at SMU.

Walters is a Texas-born filmmaker, actor, writer, director and producer. He is a member of the Brierley Resident Acting Company at Dallas Theater Center, in addition to being the resident playwright of Second Thought Theatre, a company he co-founded in 2003. As an actor, Walters is best known for his role on NBC's *Friday Night Lights* as guidance counselor Glenn Reed. As a screenwriter and producer, his films have played at SXSW, DIFF, Cucalorus, New Port Beach, Water Front, BFI London, Damah, SAIC, Attic, and Park City Film Music Festival among others. Walters is a co-writer and producer on the hit comedy *The Bounceback*, directed by Bryan Poyser, which premiered at SXSW in 2013 and was recently distributed by Tribeca Films under the title *Love and Air Sex* (New York Times Critics' Pick.) He also associate produced and appeared in director Eric Steele's award-winning film *Bob Birdnow* (Top Ten Undistributed Films of 2013, Indiewire.) His plays have been produced at Casa Mañana, Second Thought Theatre, Baylor University, the American Heart Association, Gardner-Webb University, The Festival of Independent Theaters, The Out of the Loop Festival, Firebone Theater, The EBE Ensemble and the Araca Group's Araca Project among others. Walter's newest play *BOOTH* was a recipient of TACA's Donna Wilhelm Family New Works Fund Grant in 2013 and was a semifinalist for the 2014 American Theater Critics' Association Steinberg New Play Award.

ABOUT DALLAS THEATER CENTER:

One of the leading regional theaters in the country, Dallas Theater Center (DTC) performs to an audience of more than 120,000 North Texas residents annually. Founded in 1959, DTC is now a resident company of the AT&T Performing Arts Center and presents its Mainstage season at the Dee and Charles Wyly Theatre, designed by REX/OMA, Joshua Prince-Ramus and Rem Koolhaas and at its original home, the Kalita Humphreys Theater, the only freestanding theater designed and built by Frank Lloyd Wright. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Kevin Moriarty and Managing Director Jeffrey Woodward, DTC produces a seven-play subscription series of classics, musicals and new plays and an annual production of *A Christmas Carol*; extensive education programs, including the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award-winning Project Discovery, SummerStage and partnerships with Southern Methodist University's Meadows School of the Arts and Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts; and community outreach efforts including leading the DFW Foote Festival and recent collaborations with the Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas Public Library, Dallas Holocaust Museum, North Texas Food Bank, Dallas Opera, and Dallas Black Dance Theater. Throughout its history, DTC has produced many new works, including *The Texas Trilogy* by Preston Jones in 1978, Robert Penn Warren's *All the King's Men*, adapted by Adrian Hall, in 1986, and recent premieres of *FLY* by Rajiv Joseph, Bill Sherman and Kirstin Childs; *Fly by Night* by Kim Rosenstock, Michael Mitnick and Will Connolly; *Giant* by Michael John LaChiusa and Sybille Pearson; *The Trinity River Plays* by Regina Taylor; the revised *It's a Bird... It's a Plane... It's Superman* by Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa, Charles Strouse and Lee Adams; *Give It Up!* (now titled *Lysistrata Jones* and recently on Broadway) by Douglas Carter Beane and Lewis Flinn; *Sarah, Plain and Tall* by Julia Jordan, Laurence O'Keefe and Nell Benjamin; and *The Good Negro* by Tracey Scott Wilson.

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