



BBC World Service and British Council announce winners of the International Radio Playwriting Competition

BBC World Service and the **British Council**, in partnership with **Commonwealth Writers** and new co-producers **The Open University**, have today announced the winners of the 24th International Radio Playwriting Competition.

Australian playwright **Alana Valentine** was awarded the first prize in the English as a First Language category for her play *The Ravens*, while **Virginia Jekanyika** from Zimbabwe triumphed in the English as a Second Language category with her script *The Cactus Flowers*.

As part of their prize, Alana and Virginia will visit the UK later this month to attend a prize-giving ceremony on 22 October at Marlborough House, London. Whilst in the UK, they will also see their winning radio scripts recorded ahead of their broadcast on BBC World Service in 2015.

Ana Gonzalez Bello from Mexico also won the newly introduced Georgi Markov prize for her play *Diablo and Romina*. The new prize – which honours the script with the most outstanding potential from the competition's shortlist – was set up in memory of the writer and BBC World Service journalist Georgi Markov who championed freedom of creative expression. Ana will travel to the UK to attend the prize-giving ceremony in London and will also spend two weeks with BBC Radio Drama and BBC World Service.

This competition invites anyone resident outside Britain to write a 53-minute radio drama for up to six characters. This year's competition attracted nearly 1,000 entries with plays from a record 86 countries, including Jamaica, Rwanda, the Philippines, Botswana, Ukraine and Brazil.

The Winning Plays:

- **English as a First Language**
***The Ravens* by Alana Valentine**
Struggling to escape the world of prostitution, Kira has recently received a large sum of compensation money. Unsure what to do with it, and under pressure from an old friend, Kira meets Nina, a social worker in training, and an unlikely friendship develops.
- **English as a Second Language**
***The Cactus Flowers* by Virginia Jekanyika**
Three women start a fishing business in Lake Kariba, Zimbabwe in an attempt to pull themselves out of poverty. Just when business starts to pick up, they are hit by a sudden death and a bitter betrayal initiating a struggle for survival.

- **Georgi Markov Prize**
***Diablo and Romina* by Ana Gonzalez Bello**

Roxanne Romina lives with her mother in a small town in the south east of Mexico where nothing ever happens, until her cousin Frank returns from America and changes everything.

The judging panel included award-winning writer Winsome Pinnock; Executive Director at Doncaster's New Performance venue Kully Thiarai and multi-award winning actor, Henry Goodman; alongside BBC World Service Senior Commissioner, Steve Titherington; Director of Drama and Dance at the British Council, Neil Webb; and Executive Producer of BBC Radio Drama, Marion Nancarrow.

Playwright Winsome Pinnock says: "I really loved being a judge for the competition as I was constantly making new discoveries. I discovered new voices – playwrights I had never read before. I learnt about worlds that I might never have ventured into if the plays had not opened them up to me".

Commenting on the new Georgi Markov prize, Annabel Markov says: "My daughter Sasha and I are happy to see Georgi remembered as a writer here. In Bulgaria, where he was born, Georgi is now celebrated as one of the country's greatest literary figures. It can be difficult for a writer to succeed in another culture and it is wonderful that this award gives others that chance".

For more details on the competition, visit: bbcworldservice.com/radioplay.

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Notes to Editors:

BBC World Service is an international multimedia broadcaster, delivering a wide range of language and regional services on radio, TV, online and via wireless handheld devices. It uses multiple platforms to reach its weekly audience of 191 million globally, including shortwave, AM, FM, digital satellite and cable channels. Its news sites include audio and video content and offer opportunities to join the global debate. BBC World Service offers its multilingual radio content to partner FM stations around the world and has numerous partnerships supplying content to news websites, mobile phones and other wireless handheld devices as well as TV channels. For more information, visit bbc.com/worldservice.

The **British Council's Theatre and Dance** department links the best of the UK's performing arts with audiences and artists overseas. We develop opportunities for UK artists to present their work internationally. The main platform through which we do this is the biennial British Council Edinburgh

Showcase. Since 1997, the Showcase has given over 350 theatre and dance companies the opportunity to tour, build new relationships and open up new markets. We develop skills and practice through a range of activities including workshops, residencies, seminars and visits. We are committed to supporting new writing around the world and work with partners to support international playwrights, nurturing talent and sharing new global voices with UK audiences. Our practical skills development programme utilises the UK's expertise to lead workshops and courses in a diverse range of subjects, from lighting and stage design to producing, marketing and audience development. On-going projects such as Unlimited, originally a major element of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad, have shown the innovative work of Deaf and disabled artists from the UK on a global scale, from Bangladesh to Brazil, while also providing training opportunities; convening debate between practitioners; and the launch of a new website promoting their work around the world.

Commonwealth Writers is the cultural initiative of the Commonwealth Foundation. Commonwealth Writers inspires, develops and connects writers and storytellers in a range of disciplines. It then links them to groups which seek to bring about social change. For more information, visit www.commonwealthwriters.org

The **Open University (OU)** is the largest academic institution in the UK and a world leader in flexible distance learning. Since it began in 1969, the OU has taught more than 1.8 million students and has more than 200,000 current students, including more than 15,000 overseas. The OU is rated in the top five of UK universities for student satisfaction in the National Student Survey, since the survey began in 2005. In 2012/13 it had a 92% satisfaction rating. Over 70% of students are in full-time or part-time employment, and four out of five FTSE 100 companies have sponsored staff to take OU courses.

In the UK's latest Research Assessment Exercise (RAE 2008) The Open University was ranked in the top third of UK higher education institutions. More than 50% of OU research was assessed in the RAE as internationally excellent, with 14% as world leading.

The OU has a 41 year partnership with the BBC and has moved from late-night lectures in the 1970s to co-producing prime-time series such as Frozen Planet, Bang Goes the Theory, Britain's Great War, I Bought a Rainforest and Business Boomers. Regarded as Britain's major e-learning institution, the OU is a world leader in developing technology to increase access to education on a global scale. Its vast 'open content portfolio' includes free study units on OpenLearn, which received 5.2million unique visitors in 2012/13, and materials on iTunes U, which has recorded more than 60 million downloads.

For further information please visit: www.open.ac.uk