

PLAYS & PLAYWRIGHTS

NEW PLAY AWARDS ANNOUNCED

The first Playwrights USA Awards, totalling \$20,000, will be presented on April 16 to the authors of the five plays selected for TCG's *New Plays USA 2*, an anthology of works developed and produced in nonprofit U.S. theatres over the past two seasons. The cash awards as well as funds to publish the winning scripts have been provided by a grant to Theatre Communications Group from Home Box Office.

The plays are *Buck* by Ronald Ribman, nominated by the American Place Theatre and Playwrights Horizons of New York; *Food from Trash* by Gary Leon Hill, nominated by the Actors Theatre of Louisville; Roger Downey's translation of *Mensch Meier* by Franz Xaver Kroetz, nominated by The Empty Space of Seattle; *Mercenaries* by James Yoshimura, nominated by the In-terart Theatre of New York; and *Secret Honor, The Last Testament of Richard M. Nixon: A Political Myth* by Donald Freed and Arnold M. Stone, nominated by the Los Angeles Actors' Theatre.

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The HBO grant, which is the first of its kind to be made by a pay TV company, will be divided into prizes of \$4,000 per play. HBO vice president Bridget Potter said the award was created "to help insure the existence of an ongoing pool of dramatic writers from which all performance media can draw."

James Leverett, TCG's director of Literary Services and editor of the *New Plays USA* series, said connecting the cash awards to the publication of the plays "brings proper focus to drama as literature. Plays are brought to life on the stage, but only through publication do they continue to live for future generations."

'FEN' IS WINNER

British playwright Caryl Churchill has been named winner of the 1983 Susan Smith Blackburn Prize for *Fen*, her bleak, class-conscious drama about the lives of women farmworkers. The award is given annually to a woman writer for an outstanding new work for the English-speaking theatre.

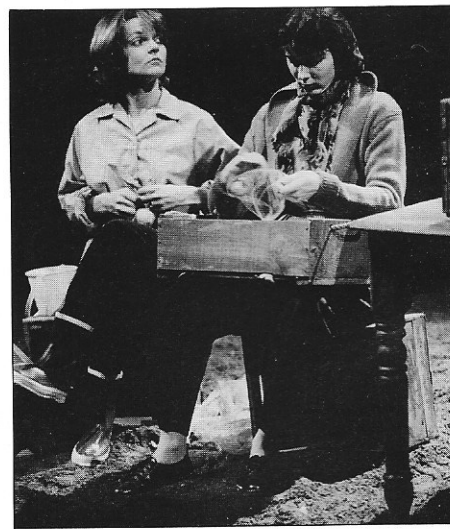
Meryl Streep presented Churchill a cash award of \$2,500 and a Willem de Kooning print in ceremonies Feb. 24 at the Players Club in New York.

First performed by Joint Stock Theatre Group in London in 1982-83, *Fen* was seen with an English cast at the New York Shakespeare Festival last summer and reopened at the Festival's Public Theater with an American cast Feb. 23.

The Blackburn prize, established in 1978, reflects the values and interests of Susan Smith Blackburn, an American actress and writer who grew up in Houston and lived in London for the last 15 years of her life. The contest has been instrumental in focusing attention on the work of women playwrights and in fostering the interchange of plays between the U.S. and Great Britain. Plays are submitted by theatre professionals from both countries.

Judges for the 1983 award, in addition to Streep, were Edward Albee, Howard Davies, Christopher Hampton, Ann Holmes and Hilary Spurling.

To celebrate the fifth anniversary of the prize, five Houston theatres have chosen nine Blackburn-finalist plays for production during 1983-84. The Royal Shakespeare Company



Pamela Reed, left, and Linda Griffiths are in the American cast of Caryl Churchill's award-winning *Fen*.

has expressed interest in staging the runner-up in this year's contest, Lynn Siefert's *Coyote Ugly*.

YOUNG PLAYWRIGHTS GO PUBLIC

After two highly successful years at New York's Circle Repertory Company, the Young Playwrights Festival, sponsored by the Foundation of the Dramatists Guild for writers under the age of 19, is moving a few blocks west to the Public Theater. Five short plays, together making up one program, may be seen there May 1-20. They are *Romance* by Catherine Castellani, 18, of Delmar, N.Y.; *Meeting the Winter Bike Rider* by Juan Nunez, 17, of Steger, Ill.; *Fixed Up* by Patricia Durkin, 16, of Essex Fells, N.J.; *In the Garden* by Anne Harris, 17, of Averill Park, N.Y.; and *The Itch* by Ana Gottlieb, 17, of Brooklyn. The plays will be directed by James Milton, Shelly Raffle and Elinor Renfield, and designed by Patricia McGourty, Loren Sherman and Mal Sturchio.

In addition, six more plays will receive staged readings during the festival: *Liars* by Joseph Yesutis, 16, of Burr Ridge, Ill.; *We Three Kings* by Alexander Frere-Jones, 16, of Brooklyn; *Tender Places* by Jason Brown, 12, of Pittsburgh; *Buddies* by Kevin Hammond, 17, of Washington, D.C.; *Living in the USA* by Julie Tayco, 16, of Oakland, Calif.; and *Always Open* by Rebecca Gilman, 18, of Trussville, Ala.