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## **BOPA AND THE BALTIMORE FILM OFFICE ANNOUNCE THE WINNERS OF THE 18<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL BALTIMORE SCREENWRITERS COMPETITION**

The **Baltimore Film Office** at the **Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts (BOPA)** announces the winners of the **18th annual Baltimore Screenwriters Competition**. In the features category, first place goes to Michael Harris for "Premium Economy," second place to Ari Silver for "Under the Moon," and third place to Taja Copeland for "Running Out of Time." In the shorts category, first place went to Treasure McCorkle for "Reconstruction," Mecca Verdell won second place with "Beyond Breath and Time," and Lee Connah took third with "Carpiercer."

The winners, who will receive cash prizes, were selected by the competition judges, film industry professionals Nina Noble, Ken LaZebnik, David Talbert, and Annette Porter. **The winners were announced on Saturday, May 6 at 12:00 p.m.** at the Student Center Theatre at Morgan State University.

### **ABOUT THE COMPETITION**

The Baltimore Screenwriters Competition is a project of the Baltimore Film Office in conjunction with film programs at Johns Hopkins University and Morgan State University. Funding is provided by the Screenwriting and Animation Program and Gilliam College of Liberal Arts at Morgan State University.

Additional support is courtesy Write Brothers, creators of Movie Magic screenwriting software. Submitted scripts receive coverage from students in the Johns Hopkins University and Morgan State University screenwriting programs and by local screenwriters and producers. The final screenplays are judged by industry professionals in film and television, including producers and writers working on projects for HBO, Netflix, and others.

### **ABOUT THE BALTIMORE FILM OFFICE**

The Baltimore Film Office serves as the designated liaison between production companies and city agencies, providing one-stop shop access to city services and expedited permits for the purpose of economic development. It also serves as liaison between production companies and businesses, crew and communities, and markets Baltimore as a first-class location for the film industry. Learn more about the Baltimore Screenwriters Competition and the work of the Baltimore Film Office by visiting [baltimorefilm.org](http://baltimorefilm.org) and following the Baltimore Film Office on their Facebook page.

### **MEDIA CONTACTS**

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*Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts (BOPA) is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization which serves as Baltimore City's arts council, events center, and film office. By providing funding and support to artists and arts organizations, as well as producing cultural events across the city, BOPA's goal is to make Baltimore a more vibrant and creative place to live and work.*

## WINNERS IN THE FEATURES CATEGORY

### FIRST PLACE

"Premium Economy" by Michael Harris

*Over 24 hours, a recently divorced accountant loses his job, his Jeep, and accidentally traffics heroin. His only escape? Become a beige pants Badass – aka a Dadass.*

**Michael Harris** is an actor, improviser, and teaching artist. He has performed locally at Chesapeake Shakespeare Company, The Kennedy Center, and Studio Theater, among others. Michael has been a performer & teacher with Baltimore Improv Group (BIG) for almost 20 years and served as BIG's Executive & Artistic Director from 2010-17. He has been an invited performer at Comedy Festivals from NYC to Austin and Chicago to Philly. Michael has taught improv to thousands of people throughout the DMV, and taught applied improv to local clients including Johns Hopkins, T. Rowe Price, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

### SECOND PLACE

"Under the Moon" by Ari Silver

*Set in Jewish Baltimore, a young woman is attacked by a werewolf the month before her wedding. Soon she experiences a horrific transformation that threatens the lives of her family and neighbors.*

**Ari Silver** is a 2x Screencraft Horror finalist, a Shore Scripts finalist, and has placed in more than a dozen-and-a-half other screenwriting competitions. He's lived between several states and two countries but has always called Baltimore home.

### THIRD PLACE

"Running Out of Time" by Taja Copeland

*Triti mourns the recent loss of her relationship with James by traveling back in time to relive the memories that she cherished most with him after discovering she has the power to do so. However, she soon learns that using this power ages her quickly and she must find a way to get rid of it before it results in an early death.*

**Taja Copeland** is a 23-year-old director, writer, cinematographer, and editor from Philadelphia. She now resides in Baltimore where she works as an Assistant Production Coordinator at her alma mater Morgan State University in the department for Screenwriting and Animation. She also serves as the head writer for Ten01 Media, a film company in Philadelphia, as well as the video intern for BmoreArt Connect and Collect initiative. Recent accomplishments include winning a Telly award for being a director on the To be Seen, To be Heard, To be Celebrated campaign for Under Armour. Copeland also won the Judges Choice award in spring 2022 for her short film titled, "The Death of Us," at the first annual film festival for Underground Studios, a film organization that she founded in 2021.

## WINNERS IN THE SHORTS CATEGORY

### FIRST PLACE

"Reconstruction" by Treasure McCorkle

*Reconstruction is about a mortician and professor who begins to have auditory hallucinations at the end of his mortuary class. He then finds himself locked in the building overnight and his mental wellbeing rapidly deteriorates over the course of the evening.*

**Treasure McCorkle** is an award-winning screenwriter and producer from Baltimore. She currently majors in Film and Moving Image on the Writing and Producing Track at Stevenson University, where she has been awarded scholarships and grants for her impressive academic record and artistic ability. She has worked on many projects in different roles ranging from director and cinematographer to editor. Treasure has also written many acclaimed short films – one, "True," won Stevenson University's 2021 Screenwriting Contest and was produced in 2022. McCorkle is currently working on several projects, including her thesis short film "AVA," set to premiere May 2023 at Stevenson University.

### SECOND PLACE

"Beyond Breath and Time" by Mecca Verdell

*A young black woman realizes her anxiety grants her the ability to time travel to childhood memories she cannot change.*

**Mecca 'Meccamorphosis' Verdell** is an internationally winning spoken word poet, teaching artist, and actor for film and theatre (locally and off Broadway). Verdell uses their anger and passion to speak on the 'soft' and 'pink' of Black culture. Their writing fearlessly unveils Black American shadows that exist from generational trauma. They center the pain, joy, and beauty of Blackness through the lens of womanhood, and queer experiences. As a teaching artist, they've used their work to connect teachers and students to create emotionally intelligent responses in an academic space. Verdell has crafted poetry to be used in marketing campaigns as a Visit Baltimore Ambassador and for the National Education Association. They have also performed at universities, embassies, and theaters to show audiences how poetry can peek into the spirit and turn healing into ritual. Their debut book, "The Things I've Unlearned" is an example of that process.

### THIRD PLACE

"Carpiercer" by Lee Connah

*A single mom, a cabbie, a librarian with a secret, and an immigrant college student are forced to live together in a cramped moving car when the soaring cost of housing and extreme anti-homeless parking policies leave them no choice.*

**Lee Connah** grew up in Baltimore and is a graduate of Loyola University. A lifelong builder and maker, he has been a teacher, log cabin builder, basket maker, molecular biologist, luthier, biodiesel pioneer, and, most recently, a self-employed carpenter for the past 20 years. His initial means of storytelling was through music: songwriting, recording, and making lo-fi music videos and mashups. Lee has completed two crankies (hand-cranked, illustrated, moving scrolls that tell stories) with several more in process. "Carpiercer" was originally conceived as a DIY web series to be shot in Baltimore entirely in and around his Subaru Forester but is now being adapted into a feature length work.

## ABOUT THE JUDGES

**Ken LaZebink** writes for television, film, and theatre. He shares story credit with Garrison Keillor for director Robert Altman's film, "A Prairie Home Companion." LaZebnik wrote the Lionsgate film Thomas Kinkaid's "Christmas Cottage," released in 2008, starring Peter O'Toole and Marcia Gay Harden. His television writing ranges from over twenty scripts for "Touched by An Angel," to writing for "Army Wives," "Providence," "Star Trek: Enterprise," and the new series "When Calls the Heart" on the Hallmark Channel. He is the director of Long Island University's MFA in Writing and Producing for Television.

**Nina K. Noble** is a freelance producer and producing partner of David Simon's Blown Deadline Productions. With Simon, she has produced three long-running series and three miniseries for HBO: "The Wire," for which she won a DGA and Peabody award as well as a BAFTA nomination, the Peabody award-winning "Treme," and "The Deuce." Miniseries include "The Corner," which won the 2000 Emmy for best miniseries, "Generation Kill," and "Show Me a Hero," and "We Own this City."

**Annette Porter** is a producer at Nylon Films, an independent film company based in Baltimore and co-director of the JHU MICA Film Centre. She is also the director of the Saul Zaentz Innovation Fund at Johns Hopkins University, whose mission is to support new and emerging voices in filmmaking. Recognized for building and managing creative production teams internationally, Porter has directed and/or produced short and long form factual films on topics ranging from contemporary arts and culture to environmental and social issues for clients including Avon, Campaign for Female Education, Rambert Dance Company, UNESCO, Victoria & Albert Museum, Warner Brothers, Women's Aid, BBC, NBC, ITV, Discovery (Fr), and NHK (Japan).

**David E. Talbert** is an American playwright, author, and filmmaker. He is a graduate of Morgan State University and attended the New York University film program. Talbert has won numerous NAACP awards for his work "The Fabric of a Man," and a New York Literary Award in 2007 for his musical "Love in the Nick of Tyme." Talbert has also produced a television reality show, "Black Stage," in which actors and singers compete to win a part in one of his plays. Talbert's first film, the Sony Pictures comedy "First Sunday," was released in 2008, and in 2015, the Universal Pictures comedy, "Almost Christmas." More recently, Talbert wrote, directed, and produced the critically acclaimed "Jingle Jangle: A Christmas Journey," Netflix's first original live-action musical. Talbert has a multi-year first-look deal with Netflix, launching Golden Alchemy Entertainment with his wife and producing partner Lyn Sisson-Talbert.