***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

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**And the winner is…**

*Essential Theatre announces the winners*

*of the 2018 Essential Theatre Playwriting Award*

February 2018 – Essential Theatre is proud to announce there are two winners of the 2018 Essential Theatre Playwriting Award: Rachel Graf Evans’ *Built to Float* and Avery Sharpe’s *Woke.*

*Built to Float* and *Woke* will both receive a full production in the 2018 Essential Theatre Festival this summer as well as a cash prize. Now in its eighteenth year, the Essential Theatre Playwriting Competition is the only contest exclusively dedicated to the work of Georgia playwrights.

Rachel Graf Evans is a writer, theatre artist, and serves as the Dramatists Guild Young Ambassador for Atlanta. *Built to Float* follows Tess, who quietly crusades to keep it together, working full time as a phlebotomist and caring for her ailing mother Marjorie who likes to harp on Tess’s dormant dreams of becoming a doctor. Suddenly, her sister Roz shows back up from rehab, pledging high expectations and a clean slate. When  
stranger William, an echo of their deceased father, arrives in town with a tempting new offer of employment, Tess tries her best to keep everyone from going under water. Everyone else, anyway.

Avery Sharpe is a playwright and actor. He studied acting and Spanish at Kennesaw State University. *Woke* is a play that follows two friends from different backgrounds who are trying to navigate the already rocky transition from high school to college. When a calamitous event captures national attention, they are forced to wrestle with their different understandings of social awareness. Through family, romance, and their own friendship, they painstakingly and comically explore what it truly means to be woke.

Can’t wait until the festival? Actor’s Express is hosting a reading of *Woke* on February 8 at 7:30 PM at the Atlanta Contemporary (535 Means St. NW, Atlanta, GA 30318). For more information and tickets, visit: www.actors-express.com/readings/woke-by-avery-sharpe

**Join Essential Theatre on March 10 to meet this year’s award winners and get your festival passes at the Festival Announcement Event at Get Scene Studios, near Atlantic Station.** Tickets on sale soon at EssentialTheatre.com. For more information on the Playwriting Competition or to submit your play, visit EssentialTheatre.com/Playwriting-Competition.

About the playwriting competition:

Now in its eighteenth year, this is the only contest exclusively dedicated to the work of Georgia playwrights. The winning play receives both a full production and a $600 cash prize. Playwrights must be current Georgia residents, and the plays must be previously unproduced. There are no restrictions as to style, length or subject matter. The deadline for the 2019 Essential Theatre Playwriting Award competition is April 23, 2018. Past Essential Theatre Playwriting Award winners include Karen Wurl, Karla Jennings, Vynnie Meli, Lauren Gunderson, and Topher Payne. For more information or to submit your play, visit EssentialTheatre.com/Playwriting-Competition.

*For more information and the latest updates, join our* [*newsletter*](http://www.essentialtheatre.com/EmailSignup.html)*, follow us on* [*Facebook*](https://www.facebook.com/NewPlays) *or* [*Twitter*](https://twitter.com/ATL_Essential)*, or check out our website at* [*www.EssentialTheatre.com*](http://www.essentialtheatre.com)*.*

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**For media inquires**Caroline Baxter, Marketing and Outreach Coordinator

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**Calendar Listings**

**Essential Theatre Festival Announcement Event**

**March 10, 2018**

The Essential Theatre at Get Scene Studios,

451 Bishop Street NW, Atlanta, GA 30318

Tickets available soon at: EssentialTheatre.com

**The Essential Theatre Festival**

**July 27th – August 26th**

The Essential Theatre

at West End Performing Arts Center

945 Ralph David Abernathy Blvd,

Atlanta, GA 30310

Tickets available starting March 10 at www.EssentialTheatre.com