



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Cecelia Kouma - [ckouma@playwrightsproject.org](mailto:ckouma@playwrightsproject.org)  
Work (858) 384-2970

## ***Gritty dramas and a whimsical musical win Playwrights Project's statewide contest!***

**Who:** Playwrights Project

**What:** ***Plays by Young Writers***, a festival of winning scripts from the 34<sup>th</sup> annual ***California Young Playwrights Contest***

**When:** January 10-12, 16 & 22-26, 2019 (See schedule below)

**Where:** The Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre  
in the Conrad Prebys Theatre Center at The Old Globe

**Tickets:** Individuals \$25  
Seniors, Students, Military \$20  
School Groups of 10 or more \$10  
Other Groups of 10 or more \$15  
Opening Night (includes reception) \$60

**How:** Playwrights Project (858) 384-2970 or [write@playwrightsproject.org](mailto:write@playwrightsproject.org)  
For more information and reservations

**San Diego** – Playwrights Project will produce its 34th annual festival of *Plays by Young Writers*, sponsored by the Sheila and Jeffrey Lipinsky Family Fund, at The Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre in the Conrad Prebys Theatre Center at The Old Globe on January 10 - January 26, 2019. The festival will feature winning scripts from Playwrights Project's *California Young Playwrights Contest* for ages 18 and under.

Contest winners were selected from 415 plays submitted by students from across the state. Three scripts will receive full professional productions, and two scripts will receive staged readings in this highly regarded festival of new voices.

All 415 contest submissions were evaluated blindly by Rachael VanWormer (Contest Coordinator) and a pool of theatre professionals who volunteered their time and expertise. The top 50 scripts were reviewed by Cecelia Kouma (Executive Producer), who worked with the Contest Coordinator to choose 11 finalists whose plays were evaluated by Final Judges. Final Judges in the selection process included Danielle Mages Amato (Literary Manager at The Old Globe Theatre), Peter

Cirino (San Diego State University Theatre Professor), Thelma Virata de Castro (San Diego Playwrights Founder), Veronica Murphy (Artistic Director & Co-Founder of Write Out Loud), Deborah Salzer (Playwrights Project Founder), and Ruff Yeager (Co-Founder Roustabouts Theatre and adjunct instructor at Southwestern College). Yeager (who is also serving as Festival Artistic Director), Kouma and VanWormer chose the final plays for the season based on the judges' feedback and interviews of the top finalists.

Selection criteria focused on creative ideas, intriguing and authentic characters, fresh use of language, a story that is revealed through dialogue and action, and a script that would benefit from further development in the production process. All contest participants who requested feedback received individualized written critiques.

The Festival is divided into Program A (appropriate for ages 11+) and Program B (for ages 16+). Each program includes one staged reading and either one or two full productions. Two acting ensembles will present the two different programs, with actors playing multiple roles.

**Program A** for ages 11 and up (Directed by Ruff Yeager)

Full Production  
*Trash! The Musical*

Playwright  
Naomi Melville, age 17, Sabre Springs

Staged Reading  
*Just Let Me Help*

Playwrights  
Marco Herrera, age 14, Imperial Beach  
Chris Johnson, age 14, Imperial Beach

*Trash! The Musical* features discarded items in a trash can banding together in search of purpose. Through song and witty dialogue, this unlikely group sorts through their past, present, and hopes for the future. The script was written by Naomi Melville, at age 17, while attending Mt. Carmel High School. Director Ruff Yeager will direct and dramaturg this imaginative musical. Thomas Hodges, a *Plays by Young Writers* Festival alumnus, will provide musical composition support.

In *Just Let Me Help*, a camping trip provides a father and son with a greater understanding of one another. Playwrights Marco Herrera, and Chris Johnson, both age 14, composed their winning script while attending Bayfront Charter High School. Playwrights Project Teaching Artist and *Plays by Young Writers* Festival alumna, Mabelle Reynoso will act as the dramaturg/writing mentor.

## **Program B** for ages 16 and up (Directed by George Yé)

### Full Productions

*Sea of Fog*  
*A Mother's Mother*

### Playwrights

Jack Ventimilia, age 16, Studio City  
Emma Kuli, age 18, Villa Park

### Staged Reading

*Have Hope*

### Playwright

Shyla de Hoop, age 11, Rolando

In *Sea of Fog*, two outsiders examine their differences and explore religion's place in a modern world. Compelling characters ponder issues of authenticity and vulnerability in this philosophical glimpse into teenagers' lives. Playwright Jack Ventimilia, age 16, wrote this script while attending Bridges Academy in Studio City. Director George Yé will also serve as the dramaturg for *Sea of Fog*.

*A Mother's Mother* explores the relationship between a pregnant teen and her mother. This heartfelt look into their bond provides the audience with insights into the stigma of teen pregnancy and the responsibility of motherhood. Playwright Emma Kuli, who now attends Santa Clara University, wrote her play while attending the Orange County School of the Arts. *A Mother's Mother* will be dramaturged by Playwrights Project Founder Deborah Salzer.

*Have Hope* by Shyla de Hoop depicts the journey of two young cats searching for their mother. Shyla wrote her winning script in a playwriting program taught by Playwrights Project Teaching Artist Aurrora Arnold in Mr. Hall's Humanities class at Creative Performing Media Arts School in San Diego. Her writing mentor will be Playwright Project Teaching Artist Aleta Barthell, who also founded Kids Act.

## **About Playwrights Project:**

Playwrights Project advances literacy, creativity and communication by empowering individuals to voice their stories through playwriting programs and theatre productions.

## **Festival Partnerships:**

Playwrights Project is a partnering organization in the San Diego Symphony's fourth annual *Hearing the Future* Festival. The San Diego Symphony's Festival, which runs January 9-27, 2019 and is curated by Matthew Aucoin, explores the power of music and art to give voice to the evolution and revolutions in the world at large. As a partner, the *Plays by Young Writers* Festival's mission goes hand in hand with that of *Hearing the Future*, by empowering young writers to share their voices and stories with the world.

## **Playwrights Project gratefully acknowledges support from:**

Sponsors: The Sheila and Jeffrey Lipinsky Family Fund, the City of San Diego Commission for Arts & Culture, Mandell Weiss Charitable Trust, and the California Arts Council.

Additional support provided by Community Service Association of San Diego Unified School District, The Samuel I. & John Henry Fox Foundation, Kinder Morgan Foundation, Kiwanis Club of La Jolla, the Arthur and Jeanette Pratt Memorial Fund, The Qualcomm Foundation, the San Diego County Community Enhancement Program, District 4 (Ron Roberts), Torrey Pines Bank, and U.S. Bank.

## ***Plays by Young Writers***

### **Schedule**

#### **Public Performances**

Saturday, January 12 – 7:30 PM – Opening Night (*three full productions/no readings*)

Friday, January 25 – 7:30 PM - Program B

Saturday, January 26 – 2:00 PM - Program B

Saturday, January 26 – 7:30 PM - Program A

#### **School Matinees** (*available to press; not available to the general public*)

Thursday, January 10 – 10:00 AM - Program A

Friday, January 11 – 10:00 AM - Program B

Wednesday, January 16 – 10:00 AM – Program A

Tuesday, January 22 – 10:00 AM – Program A

Wednesday, January 23 – 10:00 AM - Program A

Thursday, January 24 – 10:00 AM - Program B

Friday, January 25 – 10:00 AM - Program A

### **Production Team**

Executive Producer

Cecelia Kouma

Festival Artistic Director & Producer

Ruff Yeager

Production Stage Manager

Dominique Duren

Director - Program A Full Productions

Ruff Yeager

Director - Program B Full Productions

George Yé

Dramaturg – *Trash! The Musical*

Ruff Yeager

Dramaturg – *Sea of Fog*

George Yé

Dramaturg – *A Mother's Mother*

Deborah Salzer

Dramaturg – *Just Let Me Help*

Mabelle Reynoso

Dramaturg – *Have Hope*

Aleta Barthell

Costume Design

Jordyn Smiley

Sound Design  
Scenic & Properties Design  
Lighting Design  
Musical Director  
Composition Mentor

Opening Night Events Director  
Box Office & Marketing Manager

Justin Livengood  
Mike Buckley  
Chloe Clark  
Michelle Gray  
Thomas Hodges

Emily Fleet  
Nicole Hernandez