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Young writers explore timely issues in Playwrights Project's 35th festival

Who: Playwrights Project

What: ***Plays by Young Writers***, a festival of winning scripts from the 35th annual ***California Young Playwrights Contest***

When: January 29-February 1, 2020 (See schedule below)

Where: The Salvation Army's Joan B. Kroc Theatre

Tickets: Individuals \$30
Seniors, Students, Military \$25
VIP admission (includes receptions) \$60
School Groups of 10 or more \$10
Other Groups of 10 or more \$15

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

San Diego – Playwrights Project will produce its 35th annual festival of *Plays by Young Writers*, sponsored by the Sheila and Jeffrey Lipinsky Family Fund, at The Joan B. Kroc Theatre on January 29 - February 1, 2020. The festival will feature winning scripts from Playwrights Project's *California Young Playwrights Contest* for ages 18 and under.

Contest winners were selected from 561 plays submitted by students from across the state. Three scripts will receive full professional productions, and one script will receive a staged reading in this highly regarded festival of new voices.

All 561 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 8 finalists whose plays were evaluated by Final Judges. Final Judges in the selection process included Lauren Yee (Award-Winning Playwright & *Plays by Young Writers* Alum) Danielle Mages Amato (Literary Manager at The Old Globe Theatre), Jacole Kitchen (Artistic Programs Manager & Local Casting Director at La Jolla Playhouse), Thelma Virata de Castro (San Diego Playwrights Founder), 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. All contest participants who requested feedback received individualized written critiques.

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. This year's playwrights coincidentally are all female and all wrote their winning scripts while residing in San Diego County.

This year's production will be Playwrights Project's first at The Salvation Army Kroc Center's Joan B. Kroc Theatre, and we are excited to be producing the festival in this beautiful venue embedded in the community. This year's Festival is an opportunity to attract schools, patrons and community members new to Playwrights Project, and also to draw others south of the 8 freeway to help demystify what some perceive as a dividing line within the County. Playwrights Project is committed to bringing playwriting programs and quality theatrical productions to all members of our community, including those reluctant to explore their own creative expression and those who may not see themselves as conventional theatregoers. Playwrights Project believes anyone can experience success as writers, individuals of all ages and all backgrounds.

Festival Program for audiences of all ages! (Directed by Ruff Yeager)

Full Productions

Like Father, Like Daughter
Feliz Cumpleaños
Love is Blind

Playwright

Izzy Ster, age 16, Carmel Valley
Jordan Marie Finley, age 17, San Diego
Aiko Lozar, age 15, Carlsbad

Staged Reading

The Hurricane

Playwright

Torrey Woodfill, age 11, San Diego

Like Father, Like Daughter portrays the evolution of the relationship between a father and his daughter throughout the daughter's transition from adolescence to adulthood. Playwright Izzy Ster was inspired to write the script after a mundane visit to a gas station with her own father, and shared "It wasn't a particularly interesting outing and I have not experienced the trials and tribulations that the characters endure during this play, but one of my favorite parts of dramatic writing is how the weirdest and most unexpected objects, people, and experiences spark an idea for a script." Sixteen year old Izzy attends Canyon Crest Academy, where she participates in Envision Conservatory for the Humanities, National Charity League, their literary magazine *Plutonian Shore*, and *Pulse Magazine*. When she's not reading or writing, Izzy enjoys volunteering, going to the theater, and spending time with family. Local actor, playwright, and Playwrights Project Teaching Artist Tori Rice will dramaturg *Like Father, Like Daughter*.

Timely and locally relevant *Feliz Cumpleaños* showcases the struggles of two San Diego teenagers Camila and Santiago, whose parents have been deported.

Playwright Jordan Marie Finley, age 17, said she wrote her winning script because "In every neighborhood, in every school, there is a Camila and a Santiago. They are smart, they are tenacious, they are funny, they are beautiful... They live here, they love here, and they belong here." She believes "Theatre has the power to change the world. It also has the power to change hearts" and she hopes that *Feliz Cumpleaños* will succeed at both. Jordan is a graduate of Francis Parker School and is now a freshman at UC Santa Barbara where she is pursuing a major in Literature and Writing. Jordan is long time member of Jack and Jill of America's San Diego Chapter and Girl Scouts San Diego, where she completed all levels of Scouting and earned a 2019 Emerging Leader and Lifetime Achievement awards. Playwright and Playwrights Project Teaching Artist Mabelle Reynoso will serve as Jordan Marie's writing mentor.

Love is Blind: A Spoken Word Play exists in a future where love is predestined, and black and white vision explodes into technicolor upon meeting your algorithmically compatible perfect match. Teenagers Amber and Blake start to question their friendship as each begins to see color. *Love is Blind* was written by 15 year old Aiko Lozar of Carlsbad. Aiko wrote the first draft of her play during her sophomore year at Carlsbad High School and received first place in two regional high school speech and debate competitions, and fourth place at the Interstate Winter Classic. After falling in love with the characters and the message, she decided to write an hour-long version of the play. Ten months later, she produced and directed the completely student-led play at Carlsbad High School, which sold out all four showings. This experience inspired Aiko to found the Student Production Club, a club that provides a platform for students to write, direct, and produce their own cinematic and theatrical productions. Aiko is also the Event Coordinator for Spoken-Word Poetry Club, a graduate of New York Film Academy's summer intensive. Festival Artistic Director Ruff Yeager will support Aiko dramaturgically.

In *The Hurricane* by Torrey Woodfill, two friends experience the emotional rollercoaster of facing one's fears. Contest Coordinator Rachael Van Wormer said after reading Torrey's script, "their friendship is supportive and dynamic- you see how each character influences the other's behavior." Torrey, age 11, wrote her winning play during a Playwrights Project residency at Creative and Performing Media Arts School in Greg Lindsey's 6th grade class, led by Playwrights Project Teaching Artist Gerry Flores. Torrey currently attends Albert Einstein Academy Charter Middle School, and enjoys writing and playing soccer in her free time. Playwrights Project's Founder Deborah Salzer will serve as dramaturg to support Torrey throughout her revision process.

About Playwrights Project:

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

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, Kiwanis Club of La Jolla, the Arthur and Jeanette Pratt Memorial Fund, The National Endowment for the Arts, Torrey Pines Bank, and U.S. Bank.

Plays by Young Writers

Schedule

Public Performances

Saturday, February 1 – 7:30 PM

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

Wednesday, January 29 – 10:00 AM

Thursday, January 30 – 10:00 AM

Friday, January 31 – 10:00 AM

Production Team

Executive Producer	Cecelia Kouma
Festival Artistic Director & Producer	Ruff Yeager
Production Stage Manager	Veronica Marquez
Director	Ruff Yeager
Dramaturg – <i>Love is Blind</i>	Ruff Yeager
Dramaturg – <i>Feliz Cumpleaños</i>	Mabelle Reynoso
Dramaturg – <i>Like Father, Like Daughter</i>	Tori Rice
Dramaturg – <i>The Hurricane</i>	Deborah Salzer
Costume Design	Jordyn Smiley
Sound Design	George Yé
Scenic & Properties Design	Mike Buckley
Lighting Design	Chloe Clark
Events Director & Marketing Manager	Emily Fleet
Box Office	Nicole Hernandez