



Young Playwrights' Theater

YOUNG PLAYWRIGHTS' THEATER CELEBRATES THE CREATIVITY OF WASHINGTON, D.C. AREA STUDENTS WITH PUBLICATION OF FIRST BOOK, WRITE TO DREAM

-Collection of Inspiring Works From Young Playwrights Demonstrates the Enormous Impact Arts Integration Can Have on Academic Achievement-

"I realized that I am more than just one of many, beyond a mere high school student with a negligible impact in society, and that I don't have to be Batman to distinguish myself from the crowd and have my voice heard. ... YPT opened my eyes to a world of endless possibilities."

-YPT Playwright Kenry Alvarado

"Anyone who thinks this playwriting program takes away from instruction time – just look at our test scores"

-Toni Conklin, Former DC Public Schools Elementary School Teacher

WASHINGTON, D.C. - - Young Playwrights' Theater (YPT), the award-winning Washington, D.C.-based non-profit professional theater devoted entirely to arts education, is celebrating the talent of dozens of young playwrights and sharing its formula for success with its first foray into publishing. Write to Dream: A Collection of Plays by the Students of Young Playwrights' Theater and the Tools to Turn Anyone Into a Young Playwright (Young Playwrights' Theater; ISBN #978-0615728032; 2012; \$ 16.99 paperback, available on Amazon.com), provides a captivating look into the imagination of creative young minds and showcases what can happen when young people learn to harness the power of the written word to express their ideas.

For the past seventeen years, YPT has inspired and empowered students in the Washington, D.C.- metro area to express themselves through an array of free, interactive in-school and out-of-school playwriting programs targeting primarily low-income and at-risk students. YPT has amassed thousands of plays in its repertoire and selected 30 of the most exciting and poignant plays from elementary, middle and high school students to feature in this book. Write to Dream also provides a glimpse into the YPT curriculum (tied to *Common Core* standards) as

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well as an assessment of the measurable academic progress these students made as a result of participating in YPT programs.

Write to Dream includes full scripts from plays on an array of topics ranging from a sophisticated satire on capitalism (written by a fifth grade playwright) to magnetic superheroes to inter-racial romance to homophobia to bullying and gang violence.

The plays are organized into three different sections by age group: All Ages Plays; 13 & Up Plays and 16 & Up Plays. The book intersperses short bios and interviews with many of the young playwrights in between the plays and delves into their inspiration as well as the impact YPT has had on their lives, and, in some cases, career paths.

Write to Dream also lifts the curtain on the playwriting process by sharing elements of the curriculum and actual lesson plans utilized by YPT that can be adapted by teachers across a variety of disciplines. Carefully designed to correlate with the nationally accepted *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts*, YPT programs have built-in tools to measure academic progress among students. Professional education evaluator Dr. Barry Oreck worked with YPT to develop these tools and discusses the results in the last chapter of Write to Dream. The 2011 assessments alone revealed significant improvement (at least a 30% increase) among students in critical thinking skills and in their ability to express themselves clearly and creatively through writing as a result of having participated in the program.

Though many of the playwrights in the book came from modest means and tough neighborhoods with limited opportunities for advancement, YPT provided a foundation and a launching pad from which they could flourish. Many of these same playwrights have gone on to attend top-notch universities and graduate programs to study business, law, writing and neuroscience, among other fields. Time and again, these playwrights verified that they followed these paths or aspired to achieve as a result of their YPT experience. "When I created my characters, I decided to leave the fear of judgment behind, believing that my work could change habits of hatred. I had been passive; but I now know, that being an advocate for justice is the

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path to a better future,” said playwright Amber Faith Walton.

“YPT gives students an outlet for creative expression and empowers them to discover the impact and value of their ideas and stories,” said Brigitte Pribnow Moore, executive director of YPT. “But what we’ve given them doesn’t hold a candle to the gift they’ve given back to us with these moving works. Whether these plays evoke laughter, tears, or cause readers to pause and reflect on an important social message, the ability of these young playwrights to craft such powerful plays is truly impressive.” Added YPT artistic director, Nicole Jost, “While this book is intended for and will appeal to a broad audience, we hope that teachers, in particular, will use it to engage and inspire their own students and foster learning in any subject whether it’s English, history or even math.”

Toni Conklin, a former teacher at Bancroft Elementary School in Washington, D.C who worked with YPTs’ In-School Playwriting Program for twelve years had this to say of the program, “YPT presents a kind of balance within schools, especially in the test-taking grades where there is lot of perspiration; YPT complements that with a lot of inspiration. It’s learning couched in a whole lot of fun.”

About YPT:

Young Playwrights’ Theater teaches students to express themselves clearly and creatively through the art of playwriting. Through interactive in-school and after-school programs, YPT activates student learning and inspires students to understand the power of language and realize their potential as both individuals and artists. By publicly presenting and discussing student-written work, YPT promotes community dialogue and respect for young artists. More information can be found at www.yptdc.org.

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