



Young



Playwrights'



Theater

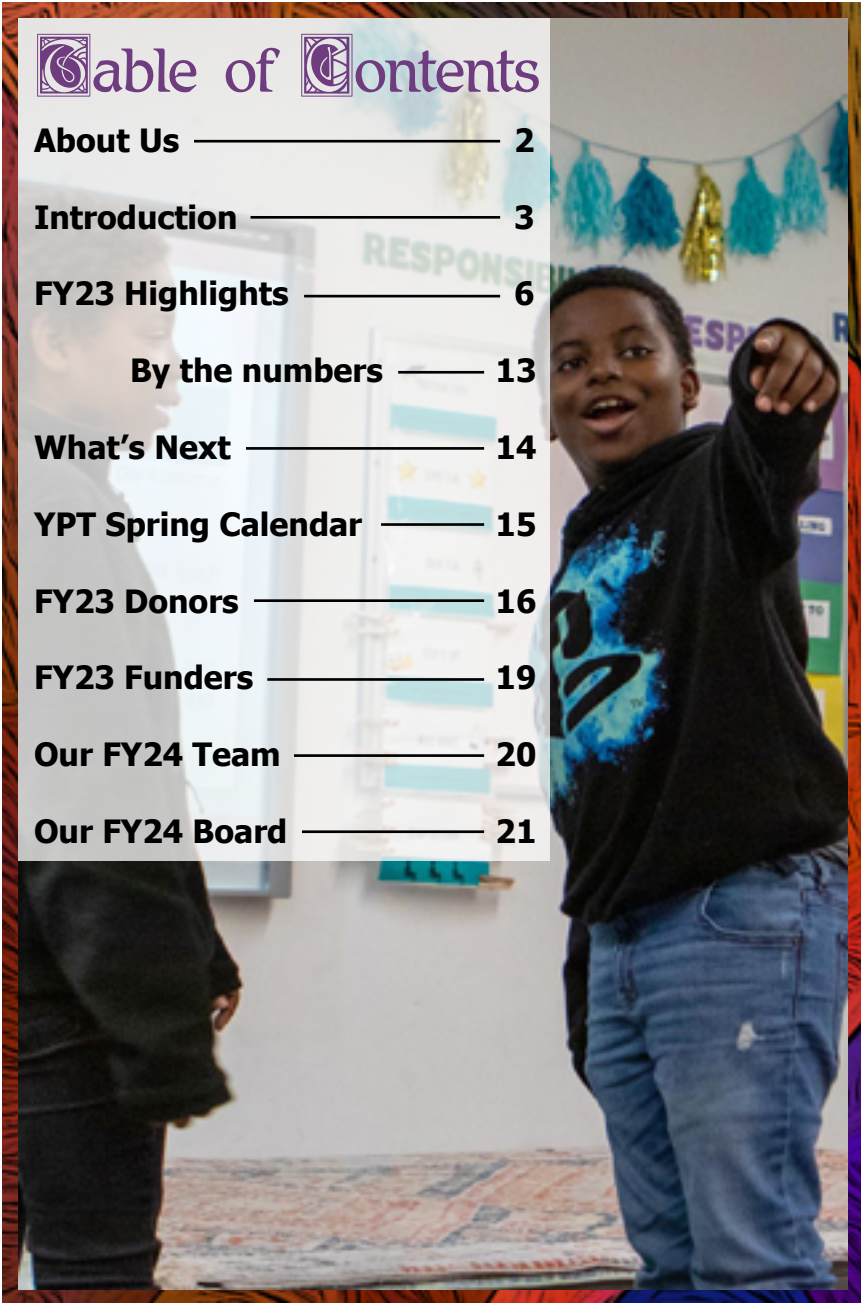
FY23 Annual Report: YPT Renaissance
A period of revival and re-emergence



Young Playwrights' Theater

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About Us

YPT inspires young people to realize the power of their own voices.

Because everyone deserves high-quality theater education that centers their voices, YPT provides inspiration, tools, and opportunities for young and emerging artists to develop and share their stories. We prioritize young people who are targeted by systems of oppression, and we also collaborate with people of all ages who are invested in the ways that theater can transform lives and communities.

We administer customized, responsive educational programs, playwright-centered, process-focused productions, and other opportunities for youth and adults to develop creatively, personally, and professionally. Across all of our work, we center young people and their agency and adhere to our core organizational values of anti-oppression and antiracism.

We provide these opportunities in order to achieve youth development outcomes through theater education. We engage our students in joyful, creative play, bolster their confidence and personal resilience, enhance their writing, communication, and collaboration skills, develop young and emerging playwrights and theater artists, and create an arts-enriched world in which marginalized perspectives are valued and heard.

YPT believes that young people are inherently brilliant and we exist to share that brilliance with the world.

Our Mission

Young Playwrights' Theater inspires young people to realize the power of their own voices.



Introduction

Thanks to your continued support for Young Playwrights' Theater (YPT), we had an immensely successful return to fully in-person programming this year!

Our exciting year of theater education began in July 2022 with our free, five-week **Summer Enrichment** program at Cleveland and Hendley Elementary Schools. Meeting five days per week for five weeks, YPT worked closely with students identified by DC Public Schools (DCPS) as struggling the most with learning loss due to educational disruptions brought on by the pandemic to provide them with an engaging creative writing curriculum that validated their stories and skills.

Our **In-School Playwriting Program** continued with fully in-person programs at five DCPS schools, where students wrote, rehearsed, and performed their own original work at the annual DCPS Performing Arts Festival.

Beginning in January 2023, YPT partnered with Polite Piggy's — an out-of-school time childcare program for children ages 3-10 — to provide after-school playwriting programs for three schools: Tyler Elementary School, School-Within-School, and Maury Elementary School. YPT also implemented two cohorts of the 6-week **StoryArt** curriculum at the SEED School of Washington, DC and the Boys and Girls Club at Clubhouse 14. **StoryArt** incorporates a visual element that students create to tell their stories. This year, **StoryArt** students created puppets to be used in their performance about high school drama.

We had a successful first year of our new collaborative program

with the DC **Arts Education Alliance**, the Arts Institute for Creative Advancement (AICA). This community-led initiative brought together DC-based arts education providers to engage 20 youth ages 16-24 who were disconnected or disengaged from school and work as a result of recovering from the setbacks presented by the pandemic.

Finally, our year-long after-school program, **Students Advocating for the Eradication of Racism (SAFER)**, culminated in a live showcase in May with original arts activism pieces exploring the theme of what it means to build safe spaces for young people. This year's SAFER program featured collaborative efforts from students at Sitar Arts Center, School Without Walls, and Prince George's Community College.

As we returned to in-person performances, YPT presented **Silence is Violence: New Normal** on April 17, 2023. For this production, YPT asked students and performers to define the "New Normal" as society is still living through a global pandemic, and re-evaluating and re-imagining ways to live, work, and care for one another. In an evening of poetry, monologues, and performance, presented in-person and via simultaneous livestream, YPT students, playwrights, and other featured artists



Actor Ayana Fowler performs during the 2023 performance of **Silence is Violence: New Normal**.



Actors Ariana Almajan and Louis E. Davis perform plays written by students at MacFarland Middle School.

from around the United States presented an honest assessment of the “new normal” in 2023, and then imagined themselves into the near future, offering their boldest dreams, challenges, and intentions for 2026.

YPT continues to offer our **Abolishing Racism and Oppression in the Workplace (AROW)** antiracism and anti-oppression initiative for DC organizations. This year, Education Director Jared Shamberger and Executive Director Brigitte Winter worked with Washington Improv Theater on revising their educational curriculum and performance practices.

Finally, we are excited to announce that YPT completed a rigorous strategic planning process, including the development of a newly articulated theory of change to guide our future growth.

Stay tuned for exciting developments in the coming year, including new partnerships, a brand new Playspiration Festival, an expanded **SAFER** Showcase, **Silence is Violence**, YPT’s very own Prom Night, and much more!



FY23 Highlights

Strategic Planning

Near the start of FY23, YPT began an extensive strategic planning process. We spent a year engaging in deliberate vision alignment, strategy, and planning work to take advantage of opportunities for growth as a result of the changing landscape of youth education and theater in the past few years. More than ever, it is critical that YPT prioritizes the accessibility and sustainability of our work and work environments, as well as our ability to provide sustainable work for artists and partners in a field that many artists are currently finding financially unsustainable.

We assessed the continued relevance of our mission and core work in this changing world and established five goals to accomplish in the next three years. We have also developed a newly articulated theory of change to guide our growth. This theory of change highlights our commitment to youth development outcomes through theater education and the dismantling of oppression by closing racial opportunity gaps in arts education.

Over the next three years (FY24-FY26), we are committed to engaging our students in joyful, creative play, bolstering their confidence and personal resilience, enhancing their writing, communication, and collaboration skills, developing young and emerging playwrights and theater artists, and creating an arts-enriched world in which marginalized perspectives are valued and heard.

Strategic Plan Goals

Goal 1: Increase consistent and equitable access to a high-quality theater education for Washington, DC students that centers their agency and voices.

Goal 2: Develop diverse dramatic storytelling programs and playwright-centered, process-focused productions that meet young people where they are, honor and nurture their inherent brilliance, and develop their confidence, creativity, communication, collaboration, and personal resilience.

Goal 3: Increase awareness of and engagement with YPT's brand, mission, and work locally and nationally.

Goal 4: Identify and address accessibility barriers in YPT's work environment, production processes, and educational offerings.

Goal 5: Sufficiently and sustainably resource the work of YPT in a way that aligns with our antiracist and anti-oppressive values.

EXCEL Award

YPT Executive Director Brigitte Winter was awarded the 2022 Excellence in Chief Executive Leadership (EXCEL) Award by The Center for Nonprofit Advancement. The award honors Brigitte's innovation, motivation, community-building, ethical integrity, and strategic leadership. It is also important recognition for YPT's antiracism and anti-oppression work, our values-driven operations, and our unique collaborative leadership model. As Brigitte shared with the award committee, "Considering me—and YPT—for this award is a public statement that how we do the work is as important as the work itself."



YPT Executive Director Brigitte Winter holds up her EXCEL Award.

Young Playwrights' Workshop Program

This year, YPT's Programs Team partnered with five DCPS classrooms to devise and write original plays for the DCPS Performing Arts Festival at the Kennedy Center. The program not only nurtured students' playwriting skills but also fostered teamwork, communication, and



Workshop Teaching Artist Madison Chapman leads a class at Plummer Elementary School.

artistic exploration as they collaboratively created their unique plays. Students at The School Without Walls were invited to watch a performance of *Love Like Tuesday*, a new Commedia dell'arte play presented by Faction of Fools Theater Company at Capitol Hill Arts Workshop. Students provided feedback on the play-in-progress, and were treated as content experts due to the high-school subject matter. For many, it was also the first time they had an opportunity to see live theater. The experience deepened their relationship with literacy and informed their own playwriting during the semester.

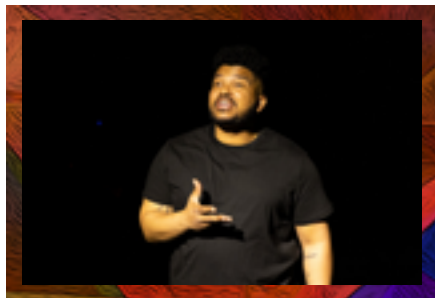
Each school's journey in the Young Playwrights' Workshop was distinct, but in the end they performed amazingly creative pieces with a mixture of emotions ranging from nervousness to awe.

"My cheeks hurt from smiling as I heard their words come to life and saw how proud they were of their work."

Workshop Teaching Artist Madison Chapman

Silence is Violence

Silence is Violence (SiV), YPT's social justice performance series, had its successful culminating performance on April 17 — our first live performance since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. For this performance, titled **Silence is Violence: New Normal**, YPT conducted an online open call on our website for submissions on unique thoughts and reflections from individuals on life and the state of the world in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. We then combined these submissions with original writing by students at Prince George's Community College and the new Arts Institute for Creative Advancement to create a tapestry of poems, monologues, and scenes that were staged, directed, and performed by local professional actors. As a reflection of our commitment to accessibility, this performance was also live-streamed for those who were unable to attend in person and then remounted and recorded to share on YouTube for an extended virtual "run."



Watch the full performance

Students Advocating for the Eradication of Racism

"I realized that I too had judgments and stereotypes to dismantle and question. And because I had found such a safe space in my friends and peers, I was determined to become this safe space for other people."

SAFER student

On May 5, the year-long after-school **SAFER** program culminated in a showcase of original student work exploring themes of what it means to build safe spaces for DC youth. One highlight was seeing a student join the actors in performing on-stage, reinforcing program themes of youth activism and empowering the student with a unique performance experience. Another highlight was the collaborative process that contributed to this performance — our community of youth writers expanded from one to three sites where students all contributed work to the performance. This breadth of community allowed **SAFER** to engage youth perspectives from all over DC. For example, a sophomore at Duke Ellington School wrote a response to a piece created by a playwright at Prince George's Community College, which, teaching artist Kwanza Billy said, "added depth to our stage reading by pulling attention to the youth experience of navigating through the COVID-19 pandemic and the uprisings after the murder of George Floyd across the country as a young Black youth with family pressure to exceed."



Watch the full performance



Partying with YPT

YPT reintroduced ourselves to in-person fundraising with two successful events during FY23.

YPT's first in-person fundraiser since 2020 was hosted at Denizen's Brewing Company in Silver Spring. 50 guests attended to laugh and enjoy each other's company while hearing from our directors about YPT's mission and effect on the community.

In May 2023, YPT brought some magic to the Takoma Park area by hosting a one-night drive-in movie fundraiser! Over 100 people attended the Reels and Wheels event featuring "Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella", celebrated for its racially diverse cast, with Brandy gaining the informal position as the "first Black Disney princess" when it originally premiered in 1997.

During these events, YPT raised over \$20,000, bolstering YPT's mission of amplifying youth voices. Equally vital was the events' role in reconnecting YPT with our community. Both occasions served as a heartfelt introduction to our neighbors in Takoma and a tangible manifestation of unity and engagement.



Young Playwrights in Progress (YPIP)

Playwright Elizabeth Shannon completed her work with YPIP, transforming her one-act play *Mama Bushwick is Dead* into a full-length piece. Last summer, Elizabeth worked with local dramaturg Joan Cummins to expand the world of her play and add more depth to her characters. She said her incredible growth was thanks to the dedicated mentorship from Artistic Director Farah Lawal Harris and Production Manager Keta Newborn, along with the agency and collaboration YPIP afforded her.

"My play would not be where it is today, nor would I be as developed as an artist, without the mentorship of Farah, Keta, Joan, and Young Playwrights' Theater."

2022-23 Young Playwright in Progress
Elizabeth Shannon



Watch the
live reading

The Arts Institute for Creative Advancement

YPT joined the inaugural year of the new **AICA** to provide playwriting lessons to participating students. Designed and managed by the DC Arts Education Alliance, the **AICA** is a six-month stagehand training & apprenticeship program primarily focused on training and serving young adults facing systemic economic, racial, educational, social, and other barriers to high-wage careers. YPT was thrilled to showcase these students' work through an in-person staged reading at the Theatre Lab in April that was also live-streamed for a virtual audience.



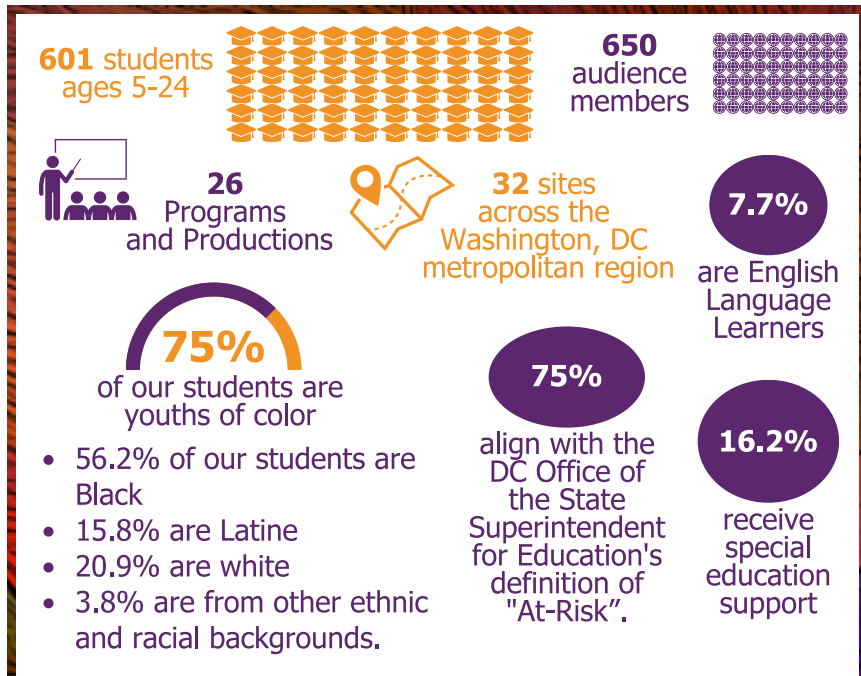
Watch
the full
performance

AROW (Abolishing Racism and Oppression in the Workplace)



YPT continues to offer our AROW initiative for organizations across the country. Over the course of FY23, YPT Education Director Jared Shamberger and Executive Director Brigitte Winter worked with Washington Improv Theater (WIT) on revising their educational curriculum and performance practices through an antiracist and anti-oppressive lens. They are also in the process of developing an antiracism training video series to be offered through our online learning management system, with the goal of increasing the reach and accessibility of these offerings.

FY23 by the numbers



What's Next

In FY24, we will continue our mission to inspire young people to realize the power of their voices, highlighting the discussion about bodily freedom and joy as our first annual season theme. You will see this theme woven into many of our programs, productions, and events throughout the year.

During FY23, YPT completed an extensive strategic planning process. We are using the findings from that process to guide our next three years of growth and development!

One focus of growth for YPT is to expand the accessibility of all our performances and educational content through a new Virtual Theater on our website. We are all very excited to launch this initiative and will be livestreaming all of our public performances in the next year, providing educational opportunities for everyone to access, and hosting all manners of other activities and virtual happenings.

Education Director Jared Shamberger and the YPT Programs Team are also in the process of establishing YPT's new Playspiration Festival. This festival will allow students to give and receive feedback with students at other schools and to perform their original plays for their peers. We are hoping this exciting event will incentivize participation, build connections and mutual support among partner schools, and provide an opportunity for celebration and affirmation of all participants.



YPT Spring Calendar

Young Playwrights' Showcase: my.self

At PGCC Center for Performing Arts
 Friday, 2/23/24 | Sat, 2/24/24
 7:30 pm | 2 pm & 7:30 pm

Prom Night with YPT

At Metrobar
 Sat, 3/23/24
 8 - 11 pm

Silence is Violence

At PGCC Center for Performing Arts
 Friday, 6/21/24 | Sat, 6/22/24
 7:30 pm | 2 pm & 7:30 pm

Young Playwrights in Progress Live Reading

Spring 2024
 More details to come



Sign up for our newsletter
 for the latest information!




Y23 Donors

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
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Addie Feeko
Jack Feeko
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Karen Zacarias

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While we do our best to be accurate, if you notice a mistake please contact Development Director Brenna Hill at bhill@yptdc.org.

FY23 Sponsors



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SEEKING VOLUNTEERS

Young Playwrights' Theater is looking for volunteers willing to fill a variety of roles during fundraisers and other events! If you or anyone you know may be interested in volunteering, scan the QR Code and fill out our volunteer interest form.



Our FY24 Team

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ur FY24 Board

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Contact Brigitte Winter at bwinter@yptdc.org to learn about becoming a YPT Board Member!

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Paul Feeko
Chair June 2020 - June 2023



K. Michele Walters
Vice-Chair June 2021 - June 2023

Welcome
our new Board Chair
and Vice-Chair!



Lemar White
Chair June 2023



Michone T. Johnson
Vice-Chair June 2023

