

YOUNG PLAYWRIGHTS' THEATER

FY26 ANNUAL REPORT



From YPT's Executive Director

Dear Friends,

This year, Young Playwrights' Theater (YPT) celebrated **30 years of inspiring young people to realize the power of their voices** through creative writing and theater!



Since 1995, YPT has reached more than 30,000 young writers and artists and over 100,000 audience members. Our alumni have gone on to be professional writers, performers, and leaders in their communities. And we never would have gotten this far without you—the brilliant artists, educators, volunteers, arts administrators, donors, alumni, and audience members who have cultivated YPT over the last three decades.

"[Participating in YPIP] inspires me to write more. It's opening that door, it's opening the floodgates. It's showing me I can do this, and not to be afraid of it."
— *Jaden, YPT playwright*

The theme of our 30th anniversary year was "Giving Flowers." In the theater, giving flowers is a gesture of appreciation and gratitude for an excellent performance, and we were thrilled to spend the year giving everyone—from our newest playwrights to our founding board members—their flowers.

As I shared with our gala attendees that night, I was 23 years old when I started working at YPT in 2006, younger than some of our playwrights. We had four staff members back then, a \$400,000 budget, and 400 amazing student playwrights. And when I became Executive Director at 29 years old, I remember telling the board in my interview that we would be a million-dollar organization with a million-dollar impact someday, which we achieved for the first time in 2021, in the midst of a global pandemic.

And now, five years later, we are facing the toughest political and economic climate in YPT's history, and we are still here, still inspiring young people to realize the power of their own voices through theater and creative writing and career mentorship. In fact, **in the last year alone, we reached over 1,000 young playwrights across Washington, DC, Maryland, and Northern Virginia.**

Because, as our founder Karen Zacarías has often said, YPT's mission has always been connected to the heartbeat of our community.

And you are that heartbeat — whether you joined this community three decades ago or three weeks ago.

Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for showing our young writers that their voices matter, that they matter, and that people are listening. I hope you enjoy reviewing highlights and photos from our milestone anniversary season in this annual report. Congratulations on 30 years of YPT!

Warmly,

Brigitte Winter
Executive Director

"I will remember that this was my first time doing something like this, actually enjoying myself and writing my own story."
— *Queen, YPT Playwright*



Our Mission

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

About YPT

Founded in 1995 by celebrated playwright Karen Zacarías, Young Playwrights' Theater (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.

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

"I noticed my skills in writing becoming better and I enjoyed it more and more. The people are also great, and I am very happy to be writing with all of them. They are all great writers and their feedback and comments really helped me grow in playwriting. I am proud of my play and the plays of the others around me." — *YPT Playwright*

Stay Connected

Keep up with YPT's latest performances, programs, and events by subscribing to our newsletter and following us on social media!

@yptdc



Scan here to subscribe
to YPT's newsletter.





Program Highlights

Across the entire year, **YPT served over 1,000 elementary, middle, high school, and college-aged youth** and expanded and strengthened many of our partnerships with schools and organizations like Columbia Heights Education Campus, the SEED School of Washington DC, and Signature Theatre. And professional actors visited YPT classrooms across the DC region to perform our students' plays, validating and celebrating their voices.

Our young playwrights this year also included 100 incarcerated and justice-involved youth at the Maya Angelou Academy, who employed playwriting as a tool to process their complex emotions related to their incarceration, LGBTQ+ youth from across Washington, DC, who explored and celebrated themes of personal identity and gender euphoria through creative writing and performance, and young writers and composers who created a collaborative play set to a musical score through a special new partnership with DC Youth Orchestra Program.

And we expanded opportunities for career mentorship, empowering a new cohort of emerging playwrights, performers, and production artists to kickstart their careers through initiatives like **Young Playwrights in Progress** and the **Arts Institute for Creative Advancement**.

Many of YPT's after-school programs are now offered year-round, and we are already seeing the impact of these deeper, long-term partnerships. At the start of our school-year-long program at Brookland Middle School, only 33% of youth reported that they like to use writing in school as a way to express their ideas. **At the conclusion of the program, 100% of students shared that they enjoyed writing during the school day!**



Production Highlights

YPT took our season on the road this year, making our Baltimore debut! With support from the Children's Theatre Foundation of America, YPT produced **Riot: The Beat of Freddie Gray**, Ty'Ree Hope Davis' beautiful solo performance, at Baltimore's Everyman Theatre. Over three performances, the show reached 700 audience members, including 400 Baltimore high-school students. Riot follows the story of Freddie Gray, a young Black man murdered by Baltimore police officers in 2015, and Ty, a middle school student who witnessed Freddie's death. The play explores themes of memory, resilience, and the fight for justice, culminating in a powerful realization that Freddie's heartbeat lives on in the collective spirit of those who continue to fight for change.

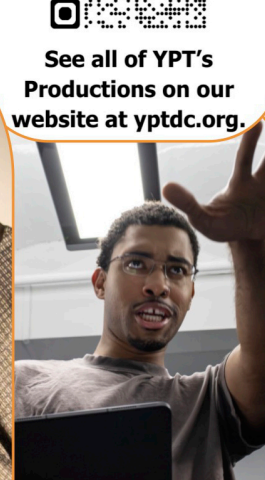
As one enthusiastic patron shared, "The best performance I've ever seen [at Everyman Theatre] was recently, the one-night show about Freddie Gray. Magnificent!"

This year also marked the 10th anniversary of **Silence is Violence**. With support from HumanitiesDC, YPT's Artistic Director Farah Lawal Harris produced our first-ever podcast, documenting 10 years of YPT's social justice performance series.

YPT also expanded our important partnership with Howard University through our career mentorship initiative, **Young Playwrights in Progress**, producing workshop readings of new solo shows by three Howard University seniors on the Busboys and Poets Takoma stage!



See all of YPT's
Productions on our
website at yptdc.org.





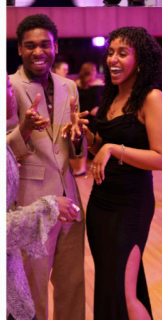
YPT turned 30 years old!

YPT turned 30 this year!

We kicked off this special season with an art installation at Willow Street Gallery created in collaboration with DC Arts Studios and artist Vanessa Strickland, which documented and celebrated YPT's three decades of history.

Then 30 important culture makers, including icons like Gloria Estefan, Bryan Terrell Clark, Psalmayene 24, Molly Smith, Billy Porter, and more, shared their perspectives on the power of storytelling and creative expression through an inspiring month-long social media campaign to raise awareness of community-based youth art institutions like YPT.

And we closed out our season with **The Giving Flowers Gala**, a gorgeous night of food, drinks, dancing, and fundraising, during which we were delighted to honor YPT's 2026 Giving Voice Awardee, YPT's Founding Managing Director Karen L.B. Evans, and our inaugural Rising Voice Awardee, YPT playwright and Howard University Alumnus, Ty'Ree Hope Davis.



Watch our 30-year impact video on our Virtual Stage at yptdc.org.



Gloria Estefan
Cuban-American singer-songwriter and actress



YPT REACHED:

1,056 + 1,067

STUDENTS

AUDIENCE MEMBERS



93% of our students are youth of color.

66 % are Black.

27% are Latine.

26% are English Language Learners.

18% receive special education support.

66% align with the DC Office of State Superintendent for Education's definition of "Economically Disadvantaged."



LIVE

Livestream attendance accounted for nearly 50% of YPT's total audience reach in FY26.

YPT hosted 717 Workshops in FY26! Across all the schools we worked with last year, we totaled 1,472 program hours!



61% of youth who did not enjoy writing at the beginning of programming reported that they now enjoy writing at the end.



88% of students said YPT inspired them to think creatively.



84% of students said they felt more confident after working with YPT.

Share

82% of students said they feel safe sharing their thoughts and ideas with others after working with YPT.

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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



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Email bwinter@yptdc.org to find out how!



Young Playwrights' Theater