Annual Report
July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022
Reconnecting with Our Community
About Young Playwrights’ Theater

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

YPT believes that creative expression and theater are valuable tools for the education, enrichment, and self-actualization of young people. Through our programs and productions, we fulfill their creative vision by hiring professional artists to guide and perform original youth-generated work for their peers and the public.

YPT believes it is important that youth, especially those whose voices are often minimized, have access to high-quality arts education that centers their experience and is culturally competent and affirming for all young people involved. To do this work, YPT acknowledges oppression and reduces its harm through our internal and external structures and practices.

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

Connect with us!

yptdc.org  facebook.com/YPTDC  @yptdc  youtube.com/yptdc  @yptdc
Introduction

Thanks to your continued support for Young Playwrights’ Theater (YPT), our programs made their way back into DC, Maryland, and Virginia classrooms. After two years of responsive, virtual operations, we are glad to support students of all ages in their transition to in-person learning.

This year, our In-School Playwriting Program convened at Chelsea School and H-B Woodlawn Secondary Program, while our newest program, Storytelling and Arts Resources (StAR), a professional development program for DC educators. In partnership with Sitar Arts Center, we launched Students Advocating for the Eradication of Racism (SAFER), which culminated in the SAFER Performance for Social Justice, an in-person public showcase of the students’ original arts activism piece.

While we love to interact with students and educators in person, we still recognize the importance and need for our virtual programs. Trainings and workshops for StAR were completed virtually this year to provide flexible, consistent support for participating educators. Abolishing Racism and Oppression in the Workplace (AROW) continues to reach participating companies through virtual meetings and trainings with YPT Education Director Jared Shamberger and YPT Executive Director Brigitte Winter. Our third Young Playwrights in Progress playwright, Elizabeth Shannon, engaged monthly in virtual writing workshops with YPT Artistic Director Farah Lawal Harris, and YPT presented two workshop readings featuring professional actors live on YouTube. And we continue to reach hundreds of young people interested in learning playwriting through Writers at Play, YPT’s self-paced virtual playwriting program.

The past few years have shown how resilient and adaptive our staff, students, and programs can be, and how we can innovate and expand our programs in the coming year. This includes expanding our support for DC Public School educators through a year of professional development, coaching, and co-teaching with YPT’s Young Playwrights’ Workshop, the production of YPT’s first-ever Silence is Violence podcast, and a family-friendly fundraising event featuring a pop-up drive-in movie experience!

Students Advocating for the Eradication of Racism (SAFER) participants Alice, Eryka, Estephanie, Jacqueline, Laura, Logan, Lucinda, and Lucy perform a live reading of their devised performance piece that explored what safety really means for DC’s youth Friday, May 13, 2022.

Students Advocating for the Eradication of Racism (SAFER)

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Students Advocating for the Eradication of Racism (SAFER)
Program & Production Highlights

Our return to in-person programming and continued efforts in virtual learning opportunities opened doors for us to try new things, while meeting the health and safety needs of our partner schools as students returned to classrooms.

SAFER
In partnership with Sitar Arts Center, we completed our first year of Students Advocating for the Eradication of Racism (SAFER). Ten students ages 16-18 participating in SITAR Arts Center’s S.E.A.L. (Sitar’s Emerging Arts Leaders) program met regularly throughout the year with FY22 Program Manager Claudia Rosales Waters and FY22 Program Assistant Jimmy Watkins and local activists to share their lived experiences, identify systemic issues, and propose ideas for creating safer spaces. Their creative work culminated in a choreopoem performed at SITAR Arts Center, which was attended by approximately 40 members of the community. The creative work touched on issues affecting students in our area, including issues of gentrification, immigration, the school-to-prison pipeline, gender identity and sexual orientation, and white supremacy.

SAFER Student testimonial
“‘AROW is built on the idea that antiracism and anti-oppression work isn’t just about shifting hearts and minds, but about fundamentally upending the day-to-day policies and practices that may unintentionally reinforce oppressive systems and values.’
— Jared Shamberger,
YPT Education Director
and
Brigitte Winter,
YPT Executive Director
From: “Facing Our Failure: The Power of Acknowledging Racism Within the American Theatre.”

Young Playwrights in Progress
Through Young Playwrights in Progress, Artistic Director Farah Lawal Harris and Production Associate Keta Newborn selected emerging playwright Elizabeth Shannon, a recent graduate from Governor Thomas Johnson High School in Frederick, Maryland, through a competitive submission process for a year of mentorship, dramaturgy, and workshopping of her original play, Mama Bushwick Is Dead. Following a small, invitation-only workshop reading and feedback session with local professional artists, YPT presented a public, virtual, live reading of the play on June 9, 2022, which featured professional actors and was followed by a second feedback session to support Elizabeth in continuing to revise her work.

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What I will remember the most was being able to chat for a few minutes before we got to work. I was able to meet new people and make new friends; doing this has also helped me see things from a different perspective, especially when brainstorming.
— SAFER Student testimonial

AROW
This year, Education Director Jared Shamberger and Executive Director Brigitte Winter provided more than 200 hours of antiracism and anti-oppression consulting through the Abolishing Racism and Oppression in the Workplace (AROW) initiative. We worked with seven Washington, DC-based nonprofit organizations, providing over 200 hours of support. We were able to highlight our efforts to assist organizations in this way through an article published October 2021 in American Theatre titled “Facing Our Failure: The Power of Acknowledging Racism Within the American Theatre.” The article highlights our internal story with developing practices to openly and often talk about racism, and how that led to the creation of AROW.

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StAR Classrooms
In response to the growing threat of teacher burnout in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, YPT launched Storytelling and Arts Resources Classrooms (StAR Classrooms). This program specifically supports educators looking for ways to integrate arts into their daily teaching. Our first cohort of StAR included educators from Creative Minds Charter School and Watkins Elementary School who worked together to learn arts integration tools and develop and deliver their own arts integrated curriculum unit. Each of their classes also received an In-School Playwriting Program residency taught by a YPT teaching artist, serving 80 total students across five classrooms.

“YPT’s impact through StAR Classrooms is not only evident in my students’ educational development this year, but will have a long lasting impact on future students as well.”
– Rashida Hightower,
5th Grade ELA/SS Teacher

StoryArt
We were excited to launch the first year of StoryArt, a six-week intensive after-school program for District Youth ages 12-18 at Washington School for Girls and The SEED School of Washington, D.C. Students met for two hours each week to learn about playwriting and visual storytelling, developing their written and visual storytelling skills, and their sense of empowerment through writing, devising, and designing. At the conclusion of the program, they each published a graphic novel incorporating all of the skills they learned.

Below: An excerpt from “The Tale of Sharks and Minnows” by 5th grade StoryArt student Ter’re.
FY22 Achievements

Our Students

Reach
This year we reached 509 students and 233 audience members across the Washington, DC metropolitan region.

87% of our students are youth of color; 66% of our students are African American, 18% are Latino, 12% are Caucasian, and 4% are from other ethnic and racial backgrounds.

Of the youth we serve:

12% are English Language Learners.
15% receive special education support.
75% align with the DC Office of the State Superintendent for Education’s (OSSE) definition of "At-Risk".

“So many kids across DC have important stories to tell, and YPT gives them the platform they need to tell those stories.”
Paul, YPT Alumnus

The DC Office of the State Superintendent for Education’s (OSSE) definition of “At-Risk”—students who are homeless, in the DC foster care system, qualify for TANF or SNAP, or high school students that are one year or more older than expected age for their grade level.

200+ HOURS of antiracism and anti-oppression counseling
YPT delivered more than 200 hours of antiracism and anti-oppression consulting to seven Washington, DC-based nonprofit organizations.

Learn More
Abolishing Racism and Oppression in the Workplace (AROW) is a comprehensive engagement that supports companies in implementing meaningful antiracist and anti-oppressive policies and procedures within their workplace. If you are an organization leader or staff member who wants to learn how YPT can support your antiracism and anti-oppression goals, please contact Jared Shamberger, YPT Education Director, at jshamberger@yptdc.org.
We continue to grow

In anticipation of a challenging 2021-22 season, we built a lean budget that sustained our full staff and core operations.

We weathered the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic by securing PPP loans and emergency grants, and by establishing several new earned income streams, but remained worried the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic would negatively impact the health of our community and our nation’s economy.

“We hoped for the best, but planned for the worst.”
Brigitte Winter,
YPT Executive Director

Together we accomplished more than we could ever have imagined a year ago. We safely returned to on-site operational and programmatic work, and completed an inspiring year of in-person and virtual program residencies and performances. We significantly exceeded our goals, raising over one million dollars to support YPT’s work for the first time in our history.

Looking ahead

YPT will be re-investing for long-term sustainability

Thanks to your generosity

Thanks to the generous support of our community and conservative budgeting, we are in a strong financial position going into the 2022-23 season.

Reinvesting in ourselves

We are planning to re-invest surplus resources into our organization to support our first planned million-dollar budget.

Growing our organization

This financial strategy will increase staff salaries, expand our program staff, and fund new technology, COVID-19 mitigation supplies, and other resources.

Long-term goals

Applying these strategies to “right-size” our operations will push YPT toward long-term sustainability.

FY22 Unaudited Income
1,041,369

FY22 Expenses
861,057
There is so much to look forward to this year. We will continue in-person delivery of our core programs—the In-School Playwriting Program, our After-School and Summer Playwriting Programs, StoryArt, and SAFER, and we will expand our professional development offerings for classroom teachers through our new Young Playwrights’ Workshop partnership with DC Public Schools. We will continue to work with our third Young Playwrights in Progress student, Elizabeth Shannon, as she finishes working with a dramaturg and moves on to writing the final draft of Mama Bushwick Is Dead, and Artistic Director Farah Lawal Harris will further explore the potential of virtual storytelling through a weekly Silence is Violence podcast. We are anticipating the return of in-person community and fundraising events, which will include a family-friendly drive-in theater experience, with more details to come. AROW will release a planned video series further expanding our reach to outside organizations in need of antiracism training. These programs and initiatives are molding YPT’s FY23 to reach even more students, teachers, and organizations, deepening our impact in our local community and beyond.

YPT’s first podcast

YPT Artistic Director Farah Lawal Harris will further explore the potential of virtual storytelling through a weekly Silence is Violence podcast that follows the unfolding of original audio plays by a collective of DC playwrights and storytellers ranging in age and experience in the field.

DCPS Summer Enrichment Program

For years, YPT has maintained a partnership with DC Public Schools (DCPS). In addition to providing playwriting programs in DCPS classrooms during the school year, we also facilitate workshops at DCPS school sites during the summer. This summer, the DCPS Summer Enrichment Program expanded our time with summer students across eight DC classrooms, enlisting the skills and talents of eight YPT teaching artists for 25 hours each week.

The Young Playwrights’ Workshop

In FY23, YPT is building on our experience providing professional development support for educators by providing summer curriculum coaching and workshops on building inclusive classrooms, and by launching our new Young Playwrights’ Workshop program. Through the Young Playwrights’ Workshop, YPT provides a year of professional development, coaching, co-teaching, and direct classroom programming for a cohort of five DCPS theater teachers. These teachers will work with Program Manager Madison Chapman integrate both playwriting and performance into their theater arts curriculum, and the program will culminate with their students performing their original plays at the annual spring DCPS Performing Arts Festival.

Strategic Planning

In 2022-23, YPT will undergo a comprehensive strategic planning process to determine our goals for the next few years. YPT is at an organizational inflection point as we’ve organically evolved and changed so much of what we do in response to the ongoing global pandemic. We’ve reflected recently as a staff and board that it feels like the right time for deliberate vision alignment, strategy, and planning work. We need to assess the continued relevance of our mission and core work in this changed world, and establish a long-term plan that responds to the new normal, pushes our most effective initiatives toward greater sustainability, increases salaries and benefits for staff, plans for the funding and infrastructure necessary to make all of these shifts, and reconnects YPT with our community after two years of pivoting and disconnection. We look forward to seeing what emerges from this exploratory process and can’t wait to share our discoveries with you.
Our Donors in FY22

Jennifer Alvarez                        Perry Foreman
Mike Baker                             Kandace Foreman
Phyllis Bellamy                        Courtney Froemming
Vanessa Bendinelli                     Phillip Genera*
Susan Bize                             Richard Gervase and Stuart Delery
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Deven Comen                            Alison Drucker and Tom Holzman
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Jack Feeko                             Louisa Fouls Newlin and William
Jill & Paul Feeko                      Newlin
Henry Fernandez                        Catherine O’Connor

*CDonors that have scheduled recurring donations to YPT*

While we do our best to be accurate, if you notice a mistake please contact Development Director Brenna Hill at bhill@yptdc.org.
Our Funders in FY22

GENESIS INSPIRATION FOUNDATION
This year, YPT was honored to receive a generous, first-time gift of $75,000 from the Genesis Inspiration Foundation to support our arts education programming. Like YPT, Genesis believes that arts can open doors, foster collaboration, and expand minds. Since its inception in 2018, Genesis has donated nearly $5 million to fund youth arts programming at museums, schools, and nonprofit arts and cultural organizations nationwide. We look forward to growing this new partnership and seeing the impact of Genesis’s giving on young creative minds across the country.

GEICO
For more than 40 years, the GEICO Philanthropic Foundation (GPF) has supported organizations that strengthen diverse communities across the country. Last year, YPT was proud to receive a generous $25,000 gift from the GPF, which works with thousands of community-based organizations to provide opportunities for associates to give back where they live, learn, work, and play. We are honored to partner with GPF and excited to create lasting impact in our community.

Arts Forward Fund
Capital for Children
Capitol Hill Community Foundation
Charles and Joan Hermanowski Family Foundation
City of Alexandria Office Of The Arts
Corina Higginson Trust
DC Bridge Fund
DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities
Dimick Foundation
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United Planning Organization
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Webber Family Foundation
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Unitarian Universalist Church - Reston

Seeking Volunteers
Young Playwrights’ Theater is looking for volunteers willing to fill a variety of roles during fundraisers and other events! This is a great opportunity to help YPT grow and build better relationships with our community. If you or anyone you know may be interested in volunteering, contact Development Director Brenna Hill!

Brenna Hill
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202-387-9173 ext. 104
Our FY23 Team

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Our Board in FY23
Paul Feeko, Chair
Partner, EY (Retired)

K. Michele Walters, Vice-Chair
Arlington, VA

Lemar White, Treasurer
Ethics & Compliance Program Manager/
Diversity Coordinator, Google

Katy Dunn, Secretary
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HomeSmart

Lara Trujillo Webb
Senior Manager, Contracting Center of
Excellence, PwC

Get Involved
YPT seeks board members who understand and value racial equity and anti-oppression as organizational operating principles and share our passion for affirming the brilliance of young people and advancing access to arts education that centers the experience of youth, especially those whose voices are often minimized. Contact Brigitte Winter at bwinter@yptdc.org.