



**TEACHER / STUDENT GUIDE**

**A program of SPARC**



School of the Performing Arts in the Richmond Community

2106A N. Hamilton St. Richmond, VA 23230 ☎ 804/353-3393 ☎ [www.SPARConline.org](http://www.SPARConline.org)

[www.newvoicesfortheater.org](http://www.newvoicesfortheater.org)

## Welcome!

Fostering and nurturing creativity in our youth is something we at SPARC pursue passionately. The world of theater is a perfect playing space for just this. Playwriting offers up not only the power of words but the opportunity to see those words come to life through characters, relationships and live performance.

Now in its 21<sup>st</sup> year, *New Voices for the Theater* invites your students to bring their voices to life by submitting their one-act plays. Eight winning playwrights from Virginia will be invited to Richmond for a summer residency, where they will develop their winning play and be immersed in learning the craft of playwriting – from workshops to revisions to having their play produced on stage with professional theater artists.

We need your help finding and cultivating Virginia's finest young writers. *New Voices* can be a tool for English teachers to teach dramatic form, a perfect match for Creative Writing or Drama, a way to offer extra credit in order to boost grades, or simply an encouragement for young writers to pursue their talent.

I have experienced first-hand what an invaluable experience this can be and how it has changed so many people's lives. Not only are we teaching the art of playwriting to high school students and giving them a rare and wonderful opportunity, but the program helps to enhance their self-expression, work collectively with others, and develop their resources to better prepare them for the challenges of college and adulthood.

Please join us in giving this opportunity to as many as we can by sharing *New Voices for the Theater* with other teachers and above all, with your students.

Thank for helping us to continue what has become a rich tradition in Virginia and fostering new voices into the world,

Laine Satterfield, Program Director – SPARC

SPARC sets the stage for life by serving youth, schools, families and communities throughout the capital region and Virginia. *Its mission is to inspire young people (ages 5-18) to reach their full potential through quality training in the performing arts.* SPARC is one of the largest providers of community-based theater arts training for young people in the nation. SPARC has recently purchased and is renovating its own center. Soon SPARC will provide the region with new educational studios, a black box theater for production and performance training, an operations center to support programs and outreach to schools and neighborhoods, and space for community use. *A capital effort is underway to address the \$2.9 million in needs. The Cabell Foundation has awarded a 2 to 1, \$250,000 Challenge Grant to inspire gifts at every level.* For more information / inquiries: 804/353-3393, or [www.sparconline.org](http://www.sparconline.org)

***New Voices for the Theatre is made possible by grants from the:  
E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation  
R.E.B. Foundation  
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## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

### **About the Program**

*New Voices for the Theater* is the nationally acclaimed statewide high school playwriting program that celebrates and cultivates young writing talent from across Virginia. One-act plays from around the state are submitted and eight winners are chosen by a Script Evaluation Committee. The *New Voices for the Theater* playwriting competition provides an exciting opportunity for Virginia students to work closely with professional theater artists during a summer residency in Richmond and bring their original one-act plays to life on the stage. The young playwrights will get to work with this year's *New Voices* Playwright-in-Residence, along with other theater professionals and writers. During the residency, students will participate in workshops and revise their winning scripts. The plays will be premiered as staged readings at the *Festival of New Works*.

### **History**

Over the years there have been countless playwrights, directors, actors and teachers who have stood by this program and its mission to nurture budding playwrights in Virginia. Community and SPARC board members have opened their homes to our residents for dinner, and many have donated funds which have helped sustain this program. Former students often come back to serve as actors, workshop teachers or resident advisors. In addition, major contributors have been stalwart benefactors who have kept this work alive even as it has been passed from one organization to another throughout these twenty-one years. The E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation has been a faithful supporter, repeatedly backing their belief in this program with generous contributions. We are also very grateful to TheatreVirginia for passing the program to SPARC. NEW VOICES could not be sustained without all of these people.

### **Submission Guidelines**

- Open to all Virginia student residents in grades 9-12
- No play should be more than 25 minutes' running time (approximately 20 pages)
- All scripts must be original – no adaptations or other authors' work. NO SCREENPLAY OR MUSICALS.
- All scripts must NOT have been previously produced in any capacity.
- Scripts must be typed with numbered pages and be securely fastened. Please do not use a report cover or binder.
- Each play should have a filled out application (download from [www.newvoicesfortheater.org](http://www.newvoicesfortheater.org))
- Each play must have a character breakdown and a cover page with the following

**Author's name**

**Address**

**School name**

**Phone number (Home & Cell)**

**Email (If you do not have email, please provide parent's email address)**

## HELPFUL HINTS (OR FAQ'S)

### 1) What does dramatic structure mean?

- A play starts with a situation (beginning). A conflict arises that changes the situation (middle). The resolution determines whether the conflict is resolved or not (end).
- The plot is the story of a play.
- When setting up your situation, you may want to start with answering the following questions: *Where* are we? *Who* is there? *What* are they doing? *When* is it? *Why* are they there? *How* did they get there?

### 2) What is a character breakdown?

- A character breakdown should include only basic information about the characters' gender, age, or any other important defining qualities that aid the plot. Keep it simple.
- Please keep cast sizes small. No playwright can bring to life but so many characters in a one-act play. Make sure each character has a real purpose for being on stage.

### 3) What is character development and why is it important?

- A character's development means that at least one of the characters changes, learns or loses something as the situation changes.
- The audience needs someone to root for, or to care about. Try to make your characters as complex, as three-dimensional and as real as real people!

### 4) What is theatrical action?

- A simple rule of thumb is "show, don't tell". What happens in your play? What changes the situation at hand?
- If a character doesn't say it or do it, we, as an audience, don't know it. The plot of your play lies in action and dialogue, not narration, unless specifically a part of your dramatic structure.

### 5) What is a scene?

- A one-act play may consist of many scenes. A scene is continuous action in a single setting. Please refrain from jumping back and forth from setting to setting. A play is meant for the stage, not the screen. For example, a 20 page play should NOT have 20 different scenes.

### 6) Where do I start?

- Anywhere! A newspaper article, a real-life event, an overheard conversation, history, myth, fantasy, anything can spark a play. Take inspiration from life and what you observe around you.

## TESTIMONIALS

This program gave me permission to channel a voice that had barely even broken yet, so young I didn't even know what to say. It compelled me to develop, giving me a stage to speak my mind -- and wouldn't you know it, but I kept going back to that program, summer after summer, hungry to speak volumes now. Because -- once that theatrical dam's broken, there's no patching it up again. And here I am -- having been raised in a program that I've watched grow up on its own, like watching a younger brother develop into an adult. I can't help but think of New Voices as family now -- which is why I absolutely refuse a summer to go by where I don't give back to the program in whatever shape or form. Because if I was just one out of a million kids in Virginia who ran the risk of slipping through the cracks, saved by the grace of playwriting -- then you better believe it's worth my time to ferry those up-and-coming writers towards their own voices, however I can. - **Clay Chapman, 6-time New Voices winner, professional playwright, guest artist and two-time Playwright-in-Residence**

I've made some of the greatest discoveries and memories about writing, people and life through this experience. – **Hillary Ruddell, Playwright (Purcellville)**

I got a chance to see something so special to me on stage. I got a chance to take an idea and turn it into something so magical. This was one of the happiest moments of my life. – **Katy Turnage, Playwright (Richmond)**

Thank you so much for this life-changing opportunity... I walked away with so much more knowledge about what I love to do, playwriting, but most importantly, I walked away knowing a network of other Virginia writers, who all became some of my best friends. - **Haygen Walker, Playwright (Prince George)**

Being able to work with professionals in the theatre industry who treat you as an equal is an immensely rewarding experience...I came away knowing that it's not such a stretch for me to see myself becoming someone who does theatre professionally, and helped give me the confidence to know that I have the talent and am in the process of acquiring the knowledge to make that dream a reality. – **Duncan Lyle, Playwright (Richmond)**

I have learned more about writing in these three weeks than I have in all of high school – **Helen Mittmann, Playwright (Williamsburg)**

I had an amazing time. This is one of the most unique things I've ever experienced, and I wouldn't trade it for anything. I feel like these three weeks have made me grow as both a writer and a person. Thank you all for everything! – **Sara Katherine Rock, Playwright (Williamsburg)**

The program itself is its greatest strength. What it offers to students is exactly what high school kids need: caring people who respect what they have to say but also teaches them to think critically about how they are saying it. – **Callie Byron Donnelly, director**

Introducing budding actors/writers to the professional process and involving them directly with seasoned directors/performers is invaluable. – **Jennifer Massey, actor**

I am, once again, impressed with this program and the collaborative efforts from all sides that work together and meet as one to produce a living, breathing rendition of the students pieces.– **Melissa Rayford, stage manager**



*A statewide project of SPARC*

**Playwright Application Form**

Name of Student \_\_\_\_\_  
First Middle Last Nickname (if applicable)

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Street/PO Box/Route City State Zip

Phone of Student \_\_\_\_\_  
Home (area code) Work (area code) Cell (area code)

Email of Student \_\_\_\_\_

Play Title \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_  
Birthdate (mm/dd/yy) Current Grade

School Name \_\_\_\_\_

School Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Street/PO Box/Route City State Zip

Teacher at school sponsoring your application \_\_\_\_\_

I am a high school student and would like to be considered for the *New Voices* residency.  
(please check) \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no\*

I have read the "Residency Policy and Guidelines" page and will abide by the rules.  
(please check) \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no\*

I have never been suspended from school for any reason\*  
\*I understand that a suspension will make me ineligible for the residency  
(please check) \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no\*

My electronic signature below signifies that this is my own original work which I have not copied or plagiarized from any source.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Playwrights:** Email or mail both the form AND script to: newvoicesva@gmail.com  
2106 A N. Hamilton Street \* Richmond, VA 23230