

**YOUNG
PLAYWRIGHTS
FESTIVAL**

Hear the World,

Heal the World



**BALTIMORE
CENTER
STAGE**

MAY 9, 2026

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Honor Native Land

Responding to a call from our Indigenous colleagues, collaborators, and neighbors, Baltimore Center Stage is working toward building meaningful and accountable relationships with the land we occupy. As a first step on this path, you'll see a land acknowledgment in each of our programs. Acknowledgment is itself a small gesture, and we look forward to continuing our efforts toward decolonization in a meaningful way. If you're interested in more information feel free to visit the US Department of Arts and Culture's "Honor Native Land" guide.

Baltimore Center Stage acknowledges that the land beneath us, this place, this community, owes its vitality to generations who have come before. Some were brought forcibly to this land, some came here in search of ownership or simply a better life, and some have lived and stewarded this land for countless generations. In a spirit of making erased histories visible, we acknowledge that we are standing on the ancestral and occupied lands of the Piscataway peoples. The Susquehannock, Lenape, and Lumbee peoples have also cared for this land. These peoples are not relics of the past. They continue to steward this land today with care, vitality, and tradition. Their relations are numerous throughout Turtle Island, and they continue to grow. We pay respects to their elders: past, present, and future. Please take a moment to consider the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement that bring us together here today. And please join us in uncovering such truths at any and all public events.

Additionally, in the spirit of reconciliation, you can honor the Indigenous peoples of this land by donating to Native American Lifelines, donating to or visiting the Baltimore American Indian Center & Heritage Museum, and supporting local Indigenous artists. These are only a few suggestions of the many ways we can move towards reconciliation.



BALTIMORE AMERICAN
INDIAN CENTER

THE INDIGENOUS ART GALLERY

Free to the public,
BCS Deering Lobby,
Tue - Fri 12PM to 5PM

NEW ARTWORK ON DISPLAY NOW!

The Indigenous Art Gallery at Baltimore Center Stage brings the voices and visions of Native artists into a public space where their stories can be seen, heard, and felt. It is a celebration of culture, heritage, and identity. In collaboration with local Indigenous organizations and artists working across mixed media, photography, and installation, each piece reflects resilience, expression, and cultural richness.

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Young Playwrights Artist
Amerya Wedington,
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Leadership Academy

in collaboration with LoveMore BMore

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GREETINGS BCS FAMILY!

*Hear the World,
Heal the World*

We are so incredibly excited to welcome you all to this year's Young Playwrights Festival - the oldest youth playwriting program of its kind. It's our 41st year taking the wonderful creativity and imagination of the youth in our state and putting it center stage, and we couldn't be more proud of this year's winners!

While YPF has historically celebrated the budding playwrights of Maryland, this year we've widened our artistic scope to celebrate the incredible poets of the future.

This year's theme: "Hear the World, Heal the World" was inspired by the current global climate and our societal search for understanding, connection, and change through radical kindness, vulnerability, and expression. This prompt is a courageous call to the young people of this state to speak up on the global inheritance they face, and to challenge the current world we live in through imagining the many worlds we can create, including the hope for a better future.

The plays and poems you are about to witness are an unearthing of just SOME of what is plaguing our youth. We received so many incredible submissions, each one highlighting something different, but all ringing true to the society that we are creating. Each play and poem is a true testament to the lyric "I believe the children are our future." From the normalization of A.I. in our everyday lives, to the stigma of helplessness and homelessness, to corrupt politics and beyond, our youth are distinctly affected by the world we have built for them - and it's about time we honor the accuracy and honesty of their perception and take what they have to say to heart.

We hope you **see** yourself. We hope you **see** others.
And we hope you enjoy the show.

Hope J. Hynson + Erin M. Pettigrew
Artistic Associates of Community & Youth Programs



**YOUNG
PLAYWRIGHTS
FESTIVAL**

MAY 9, 2026



THE PLAYS

***Overconsumption,
Underconsumption***

Avery Lenca
Dulaney High School;
16 years old, 11th grade

In Another Dimension

Danely Estrada Pineda
Holabird Academy;
14 years old; 8th grade

Next!

Mingze Li
McDonogh School;
16 years old, 10th grade

Poetically Speaking

Brooklynn Abela
Dulaney High School;
17 years old, 12th grade

God Gets An Urgent Call

William Bisset
The Odyssey School;
14 years old, 8th grade

***The Pumpkin That
Saved Riverwood***

Duncan Baker-Scott,
Amaro Benston,
Theodore Lanahan,
& Jaxon McGlone
Hamilton Elementary/
Middle School;
10 years old, 5th grade

THE POETRY

The Olive Branch

Kashifah Abbas
The George Washington University Online
High School; 12 years old, 8th grade

As The World Watched

Khalil Zion Aleong
George Washington Carver Center for Arts
and Technology; 14 years old, 9th grade

Untitled Piece

by Anonymous BCS Programming participant
from Western Maryland's Children Center

Untitled

De'sherea Ward
ConneXions Community Leadership
Academy; 14 years old, 9th grade



ON & AROUND THE STAGE

Carolyn Buck, Allison Brown
Tarshai' Peterson, JC Payne
Tracy "Symphony" Hall
Victor "Slangston Hughes"
Rodgers
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MOEZART PHOTOS



BEHIND THE PAGE

PLAYWRIGHTS



Avery Lenca
Overconsumption,
Underconsumption
Dulaney High School
16 years old,
11th grade

I am a creative writer and poet from Maryland. I enjoy being out in nature and it is the biggest source of my inspiration. I love animals and it has always been a dream to work with them. A few of my favorite things are youth group, kayaking, hiking, and making bracelets.



Danely Estrada Pineda
In Another Dimension
Holabird Academy
14 years old,
8th grade
Danely Estrada

Pineda is excited for the opportunity to be a part of the Young Playwrights Festival. This is her first time being introduced to playwriting through the YPF residency and she is so happy to be chosen. When not creating plays she attends 8th grade classes at Holabird Academy and is a part of student government as well as a key player in volleyball. She would like to thank her family, friends, and teachers for all their support and believing in her.



Duncan Baker-Scott
The Pumpkin That Saved Riverwood
Hamilton Elementary/
Middle School
10 years old,
5th grade

Duncan Baker-Scott is a fifth grade student at Hamilton EMS in Baltimore City. The eldest of three, he lives with his parents and two cats. He has previously studied Visual Arts with the

Baltimore School for the Arts TWIGS program. This year, in addition to writing plays with his friends, Duncan has been a member of the Maryland Science Olympiad and the Battle of the Books. In his free time, Duncan enjoys video games, drawing, reading, Dungeons and Dragons, hiking, and is a fan of the horror genre. He is a passionate ambassador for the safety and conservation of axolotls. Duncan would like to thank Ms. Knutson, his writing teammates, and Baltimore Center Stage for this opportunity!



Amaro Benston
The Pumpkin That Saved Riverwood
Hamilton Elementary/
Middle School
10 years old, 5th grade
Hi, My name is Amaro

Benston and I am a young playwright whose play got accepted into Baltimore Center Stage. I'm from Baltimore, Maryland. My hobbies are basketball and I also like playing with my friends. My favorite things are science, astronomy, and sometimes solving puzzles. My favorite art form is abstract art because even though it looks like a whole bunch of jumbled up colors, it can still mean something to the artist, and it's also really fun to figure out what the art is trying to convey. I see myself being an engineer because I think I have some of the traits and it would be a cool job designing and making things.



Theodore Lanahan
The Pumpkin That Saved Riverwood
Hamilton Elementary/
Middle School
10 years old, 5th grade
My name is Theo

Lanahan and I am a fifth-grader in Baltimore, MD. In my spare time, I enjoy soccer, birdwatching, traveling, and

BEHIND THE PAGE

playing piano. Music is probably my favorite art form. I could see being a soccer player when I grow up or maybe a pianist or ornithologist.



Jaxon McGlone
The Pumpkin That Saved Riverwood
Hamilton Elementary/
Middle School
10 years old,
5th grade

Jaxon McGlone is from Baltimore, Maryland and currently in 5th grade at Hamilton Elementary Middle School. Jaxon's favorite hobbies are playing football and basketball with his brother. A few of his favorite things are his family, friends, and his Great Dane pup named Jersey. Jaxon's favorite art form is music because it is soothing to his ears. In the future, Jaxon sees himself as a well structured man who has a job related to math.



Mingze Li
Next!
McDonogh School
16 years old,
10th grade
Mingze Li is currently
a sophomore in

McDonogh School and is excelling academically. Outside the classroom, Mingze's passions span from writing to medicine to piano. As a concert pianist, Mingze began learning piano at age six, and is currently studying with pianists Boris Slutsky and Yury Shadrin. He has received top prizes at numerous national and international competitions, such as the 2026 Emory University Young Artists Piano Competition, out of 12 competitors from across the US. Mingze has also performed with orchestras and in concert series in the US, Europe, and Asia. In addition to music, he enjoys writing and is very honored and grateful to be a part of this year's Young Playwrights Festival.



Brooklynn Abela
Poetically Speaking
Dulaney High School
17 years old,
12th grade
Brooklynn Abela is
thrilled to see their

play, *Poetically Speaking*, performed by Baltimore Center Stage! A current Dulaney High School Senior, Brooklynn endeavours to create stories and enjoys poetry, sudoku, programming, martial arts, and collecting quotes. In the future, Brooklynn will be attending UMBC for Computer Science and aspires to use digital, interactive media in order to continue telling stories. Brooklynn would like to thank their family, friends, and creative writing teacher, Mrs. Hopkins, for all of their support and encouragement, as well as everyone at BCS who worked to bring *Poetically Speaking* to life. And of course, thank you for attending! Brooklynn hopes you enjoy all of the plays and find ways to Hear the World, Heal the World in your own life; including using your passions to help mend the world. As Paul Vernon Buser once said, "desire, like the atom, is explosive with creative force."



William Bisset
God Gets An Urgent Call
The Odyssey School
14 years old, 8th grade
William Bisset has had
a somewhat short but

prosperous career. He began acting when he was 11 in 5th grade as an oompa loompa but he was quickly then given much more complex roles, most recently when he became Beetlejuice this year in his school's musical. However his playwright interest was shown much sooner and while this is his first official script, he has aided in creating several skits with his cousins (and sisters) in his grandparents'

BEHIND THE PAGE

basement. He also frequently dabbled in “World Building”, that while never written down, displayed his creative interest in several fictional worlds. The idea for *God Gets an Urgent Call* was inspired by his and his family’s interest in politics, religion, and satire, all of which has been combined into the play you will see now (to the annoyance of several people... maybe).

POETS



Kashifah Abbas
The Olive Branch

The George Washington University Online High School
12 years old, 8th grade

Ever since she was young, Kashifah has always enjoyed writing plays and poems. As she became older, poetry became her way of expressing herself, while advocating for others using impactful word choices and strong imagery. She currently attends George Washington University Online High School, where she participates in numerous clubs such as the National Junior Honors Society, Red Cross Club, and GW Medical Team. Whenever she’s not writing, she likes to indulge herself in a few hobbies that include horseback riding, playing golf, reading, journaling, and making bracelets in her spare time. Kashifah dreams of attending Yale and Princeton University, where she dreams of studying medicine.



Khalil Zion Aleong
As The World Watched
George Washington Carver Center for Arts and Technology
14 years old, 9th grade
Khalil Zion Aleong

is a young emerging actor, dancer, musician, playwright, author, & director based in Baltimore, MD. His recent roles include Thibaut in Carver Theater Company’s adaptation of *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* by Timothy Mooney, adapted from Molière, A Dancing Chef in B&O Railroads 2025 production of *The Polar Express: Train Ride*, and Donald in Carver Theater Company’s adaptation of *Community Garden* by Justin Borak. They are currently attending George Washington Carver Center for Arts & Technology under the Acting Prime.

Khalil is passionate about storytelling of all forms—whether that be through acting, music, dancing, or writing, he enjoys taking every opportunity presented to him to grow his artistic skills under all branches. Outside of acting, he enjoys gaming, watching movies and TV, his favorite artists Michael Jackson and Beyoncé, and spending time with his friends and family.

He would like to thank his family and friends, including but not limited to, his Pop Pop, who takes on all the hats as his grandfather, chauffeur, and best friend; his mother; his girlfriend, Grace Gresdo; and all his other family members who encourage his artistic spirit. He’d also like to thank his Acting Teachers, Ms. Hall and Mr. Diem, for helping him grow not only as a performer, but as an artist who can really play into the freedom of art itself and getting to make bold informed choices through it. He’d like to give one final shout-out to his ELA

BEHIND THE PAGE

Teacher Ms. Paxson for giving him the Poetry project that got him to create the poem that he will be performing today.

De'Sherea Ward

Untitled

ConneXions Community Leadership
Academy

14 years old, 9th grade

De'Sherea is excited to be participating
in the Young Playwrights Festival this
year.

Founded in 1963 and designated the State Theater of Maryland in 1978, Baltimore Center Stage provides the highest quality theater and programming for all members of our communities, including youth and families, under the leadership of Artistic Director Stevie Walker-Webb and Producing Director Ken-Matt Martin. Baltimore Center Stage ignites conversations and imaginations by producing an eclectic season of professional productions across two mainstages and an intimate 99-seat theater, through engaging community programs, and with inspiring education programs. Everything we do at Center Stage is led by our core values—chief among them being Access For All. Our mission is heavily rooted in providing active and open accessibility for everyone, regardless of any and all barriers, to our Mainstage performances, education initiatives, and community programming.

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Aaron Fletcher
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Parker

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AUDIO & MULTIMEDIA
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AUDIO ENGINEER
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AUDIO & MULTIMEDIA
APPRENTICE
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WARDROBE HEAD
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COSTUMES OVERHIRES
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Samantha Brewer

ASSISTANT LIGHTING
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Kim Parson

STAFF ELECTRICIAN
Arden Tierney

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PROPERTIES DIRECTOR
Rachael Erichsen

ASSISTANT PROPERTIES
MANAGER/ARTISAN

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LEAD CRAFTSPERSON
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PROPS INTERN
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TECHNICAL DIRECTOR
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