

PHILADELPHIA
YOUNG PLAYWRIGHTS
Educating students for life

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Philadelphia Young Playwrights to Honor Mayor Nutter, June 4
Annual Benefit celebrates 21 years of tapping the potential of youth through playwriting, features 2007 Pulitzer Prize finalist Quiara Alegria Hudes

PHILADELPHIA – In celebration of its 21st year, **Philadelphia Young Playwrights** will hold its annual benefit, ***Write On! A Philadelphia Young Playwrights' Celebration***, on **Wednesday, June 4th** from 6:00 - 8:30 p.m. at World Café Live (3025 Walnut Street, Philadelphia). Young Playwrights will honor **Mayor Michael A. Nutter** with the newly created Civics Award, created for the Mayor to honor his commitment to the concepts of civility and respect for others.

The ***Write On!*** celebration, which includes a cocktail reception, awards ceremony and live performances, will highlight the transformative effect of the Young Playwrights experience and will feature inspiring selections from past and present winning young playwrights, including 2007 Pulitzer Prize finalist **Quiara Alegria Hudes**, whose show *In the Heights* is currently a hit on Broadway.

Tickets start at \$125 and can be purchased by calling Young Playwrights at **(215) 665-9226** or visiting **www.phillyyoungplaywrights.org**. The event serves as a fundraiser for Young Playwrights' programs throughout the year, showcases student work, and honors outstanding members of the arts and business communities who have made a lasting impact on Young Playwrights.

In addition to Mayor Nutter's Civics Award, Young Playwrights will also honor **Virginia and Harvey Kimmel** with the Patron Award; **Carole Hass Gravagno** with the Distinguished Service Award for Outstanding Service in the Greater Philadelphia Community; **Thelma Reese** with the President's Award for Special Achievement; and the Strawberry Mansion High School playwriting team of student **William Withers**, teacher **Donna Hart**, and teaching artist **Seth Bauer** with the Adele Magner Memorial Award, given each year to a student, teacher and teaching artist for their exemplary collaboration, perseverance and transformation in the program.

Young Playwrights' Alum, Honorary Benefit Chair, and 2007 Pulitzer Prize finalist, **Quiara Alegria**

Hudes will share with guests how her experience with Young Playwrights shaped her as a student and later as a professional playwright. “In terms of having someone say, ‘You can do this!’ – it was very important,” says Hudes. “Young Playwrights was the first actual step in realizing why I write, and how I write.”

Hudes will look back at her journey from student playwright to Broadway as scenes from her 1993 winning student play *My Dreams About Girls* and the 2007 finalist for the Pulitzer Prize *Elliot, A Soldier's Fugue* are performed at the benefit. Young Playwrights will also show featured video footage of her Broadway hit, *In the Heights*, which *The New York Times* called “a singular new sensation.”

Born and raised in West Philadelphia and a student of Central High School, Hudes was a 1993 Young Playwrights Playwriting Festival winner. She holds degrees from Yale and Brown Universities, is a resident writer at New Dramatists, and a previous Page 73 Playwriting Fellow. Her newest play, *26 Miles*, will soon premiere at Atlanta's Alliance Theatre. Hudes continues her involvement with Young Playwrights and will be elected to the board of directors in May.

For 21 years, Philadelphia Young Playwrights has listened to and valued the voices of the region's young people. Through the Young Playwrights program, thousands of area students from elementary to high school have expressed themselves through playwriting, not only discovering their own inner voices, but also listening with respect to the voices of their peers.

“Playwriting is the creative instrument that unlocks the door, offering even the hardest to reach student a reason to engage and participate,” says Executive Producing Director **Glen Knapp**. “The interaction that results from this creative process gives students opportunities to tackle thorny personal and societal topics together, in a constructive way. It builds bridges to understanding; it provides a positive outlet for expression; it teaches respect for self and others, all the while improving literacy.”

Honorary Chairs of the *Write On!* celebration are **Oliver St. Claire Franklin, OBE**; **Quiara Alegría Hudes**; and **Carole and Joseph Shanis**.

Founded in 1987 by Adele Wagner, and led today by Executive Producing Director Glen Knapp, Philadelphia Young Playwrights is an award-winning program that taps the potential of youth and inspires learning through playwriting in up to 50 public and private K-12 schools each year. A leader in the region's educational programs for youth and built upon its primary belief that all students have something important and valuable to say, Young Playwrights has enriched the Greater Philadelphia community, touching the lives of thousands of students, teachers and parents for the past twenty years.

Each year, the Young Playwrights program pairs theater professionals with individual classroom teachers and works closely with them to integrate playwriting into the curriculum. By teaching students to draw on

their own personal experiences and imaginations during the creation of their plays, Young Playwrights helps them improve their writing, literacy and problem solving skills while simultaneously strengthening self-expression. For many students, working with Young Playwrights is a life changing experience, shaping new views of themselves as writers, artists and successful individuals. When students write about their lives, they are empowered to change them.

Young Playwrights is a past recipient of 2005 and 1997 Barrymore Awards for Excellence in Theatre Education and Community Service, a 2003 George Bartol Award for Excellence in Arts Education, a national "Points of Light" designation, and a 2004 Eastern University Award for Nonprofit Excellence.

Generous support for *Write On!* is provided by event sponsors Beneficial Bank, Clarion Printing, Cozen O'Connor, General Econopak, Inc., GoldsmithKahn Associates, Harmelin Media, The Haverford Trust Company, Independence Foundation, Jones Apparel Group, Metro Philadelphia, The New York Sun, The Philadelphia Foundation, SBK Pictures, Inc., Sheehan Events, and The Target Corporation.

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