

ROYAL COURT TODAY ANNOUNCES FIRST NATIONWIDE WINNERS OF THE YOUNG PLAYWRIGHTS AWARD 2026

The Royal Court Theatre has today announced the winners of the Young Playwrights Award 2026, the first cohort of winners since the award expanded from a London pilot to a nationwide programme.

The free-to-enter award for 13-18 year olds received more than 250 submissions from across the UK, following a national programme of free workshops and resources in partnership with writing organisations, schools and youth groups. Building on the success of the 2025 Awards, which saw winner *Godot's To Do List* by **Leo Simpe-Asante** programmed as a curtain raiser to *Krapp's Last Tape* starring **Gary Oldman**, the award aims to champion the voices of the next generation and promote access to creativity for all young people across the country.

The winners of the 13-15 age category are **Lucy Edda Leggatt** (*Fruit.*), **Rufus Peaty** (*You'll Live*); **Lucy Varley** (*A Shadow on the Ocean*).

In the 16-18 age category, the winners are **Thomas Mossman** (*Bus Stop of Strangers*), **Lucy Nicholas** (*Build-a-Boyfriend (please don't leave)*) and **Dhaani Singh** (*You Can't Say That*).

The Young Playwrights Award combines a national competition with a package of free creative support, challenging the lack of provision in the curriculum for theatre writing. Teachers and young people can access free educational resources on the Royal Court Theatre's website including video masterclasses from leading playwrights such as **Ryan Calais Cameron** (*For Black Boys...*) and **Nina Segal** (*Cow | Deer*) as well as lesson plans and Playwriting Club guides.

The six winning plays will be professionally performed as a festival of rehearsed readings in the Jerwood Theatre Upstairs from **9th to 11th July 2026**. A company of actors led by Royal Court Trainee Directors **Mayann Hapuntantri** and **Danielle Kassaraté** will stage the works, concluding with an award ceremony on **Saturday 11th July 2026**. All six plays will also be published in an anthology by awards partner Nick Hern Books.

Beth Flintoff, Young Writers Associate, said: *'It has been a privilege to read so many testimonies to the joys and pains of being a teenager in the UK in 2026. We have*

welcomed and appreciated every single one of the 262 entries, celebrating the effort, the creativity and the passion. The winning plays are genuinely brilliant, covering everything from a haunted dress to a secret boyfriend in a locker, and we can't wait to share them with an audience.'

Special thanks for further support from The David Laing Foundation, Enterprise Arts Trust, The Golsoncott Foundation, The John Thaw Foundation, Molecule Theatre Ltd, The Noël Coward Foundation, The Richard Radcliffe Trust, Royal Victoria Hall Foundation and Unity Theatre Trust.



Nick Hern Books
Theatre publishers & performing rights agents

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Listing info

Thursday 9th July 2026, 6.30pm (13-15 Age Category)

Friday 10th July 2026, 6.30pm (16-18 Age Category)

Saturday 11th July, 2pm (13-15 Age Category)

Saturday 11th July, 5:30pm (16-18 Age Category)

Ages 13-15

Fruit. by Lucy Edda Leggatt

"Whenever you sit here, I will always be beside you."

It's the 17th Century, and best friends Elizabeth and Jane dream of growing old together.

But when visions begin to visit Elizabeth, she starts refusing food in a quest for purity - and even Jane can't make her eat.

Lucy Edda Leggatt's *Fruit* is a raw, heartfelt and eerie exploration of friendship and devotion.

You'll Live by **Rufus Peaty**

'What if this wasn't just a dress being sold online, what if it's a burden, a nightmare, a body that someone doesn't want anymore...'

Abbie's prom dress was a steal at £5.39 from Vinted, and according to her best mate Amira, she looks unreal.

But ever since it's been hanging up in her wardrobe everything in life feels overwhelming. What if buying this dress from watchman99 was one big mistake...

You'll Live by **Rufus Peaty** is a haunting but humorous play about teen-hood and self-discovery.

A Shadow on the Ocean by **Lucy Varley**

"Do you still love your dad?"

After a ferry disaster leaves seventeen-year-old Ismail stranded at sea, he finds himself trapped in a lifeboat with a strange young girl.

As hunger and exhaustion begin to take hold, their conversation drifts towards grief, guilt and finding your way back to the people you love.

A Shadow on the Ocean is a tender play by **Lucy Varley**.

Ages 16-18

Bus Stop of Strangers by **Thomas Mossman**

"I was standing up for what's right."

It's Sunday morning at a bus stop. Chris wants to reconnect with his teenage son, Kenneth. But what begins as awkward small talk soon spirals into a clash over identity, masculinity and anger.

Thomas Mossman's *Bus Stop of Strangers* is a tense, sharp exploration of political division at its most personal.

Build-a-Boyfriend (please don't leave) by **Lucy Nicholas**

"He said he'd never leave."

Seventeen-year-old May has always had Lottie. But when first love pulls her best friend away, she finds comfort in a boy of her own - devoted, needy and dangerously hungry.

Lucy Nicholas' darkly funny play explores girlhood and the fear of being left behind.

You Can't Say That by **Dhaani Singh**

"You can't say that, Mum."

Tanya's questioning everything - language, politics, identity. Her mum just wants to get it right. But the rules keep changing.

A family kitchen becomes a generational battleground in **Dhaani Singh's** funny and excruciatingly familiar play.