

Press release
10 September 2025

ROYAL COURT THEATRE ANNOUNCES FIRST-EVER NATIONAL YOUNG PLAYWRIGHTS AWARD



Artwork by **Guy J Sanders**.

The Royal Court Theatre has today announced its first-ever nation-wide, open-access Young Playwrights Award, inviting every teenager in the country to try writing a play. The programme is the first of its kind led by London's Royal Court as the home of British new theatre writing, aiming to support grassroots creativity and champion the voices of the next generation.

The Young Playwrights Award combines a free-to-enter national competition for 13-18 year-olds, with a package of free creative support. Competition entries will open in January 2026, with the winning plays published by awards partner Nick Hern Books and professionally performed in the Jerwood Theatre Upstairs as part of a festival in July 2026.

Challenging the lack of curriculum provision for theatre writing, the Royal Court is also providing free materials to support every teenager's playwriting journey, whether independently or in classrooms. These include teacher and facilitator resource packs, support for setting up your own Playwriting Club, and video masterclasses by award-winning playwrights from **Ryan Calais-Cameron** (*For Black Boys...*) to **Nina Segal** (*Cow | Deer*).

Extending its reach, the Royal Court will also work with writing organisations across the UK, alongside local school and youth groups, to promote the award and deliver over 30 free workshops led by professional playwrights. Partners include **ArtfulScribe** (Southampton), **Literature Wales**, **Literature Works** (South West), **Moniack Mhor** (Inverness), **National Centre for Writing** (Norwich), **New Writing North** (Newcastle), **Writing East Midlands** (Nottingham), **Young Identity** (Manchester).

The national programme follows a successful London pilot in 2025, which received over 150 entries. Across two age categories (16-18 and 13-15), winners were: Marcos Byrne, Leon Chin-Kemp, George McAree, Sapphire Naggie, Aasiya Nsubuga and Leo Simpe-Asante. All six winning plays are now available to read online as a free e-book published by Nick Hern Books.

2025 award winner Leon Chin-Kemp said: *'Having your play performed is like going on a very high zipwire – you feel nervous before it happens, but when it starts it feels great! I'm really glad I entered, and I would encourage anyone else to, it was an amazing experience!'*

Announcing the national programme, **Beth Flintoff, Royal Court Theatre Associate Playwright & Young Writers Associate, said:** *'Right now, most people go through school never encouraged to try writing for theatre. With the Young Playwrights Award, we want to change that - and ensure these creative opportunities are available for everyone. We're calling on every teenager, teacher, parent and playwright to help spread the word and give it a go!'*

Ahead of entries opening in January 2026, full competition details and learning resources are now available via royalcourttheatre.com.

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