

WHARTON CENTER INSTITUTE FOR ARTS & CREATIVITY  
and  
MSU DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE

2022-2023 YOUNG PLAYWRIGHTS FESTIVAL SCRIPT SUBMISSION RULES

**Eligibility:**

**Each participant must:**

- Be a Michigan high school student in grades 9–12;
- Be sponsored by a teacher willing to serve as the liaison between Wharton Center, the school, and the student applicant; and
- Complete an application form.
- Parent/guardian, sponsoring teacher and student signatures are all required.

If you are selected among the six finalists:

- You must be willing and available to work with a professional theatre mentor for 4-5 weeks prior to rehearsal.
- You must attend a dress rehearsal of your play on **Friday, May 12** and the public performance on **Saturday, May 13**, followed by an Artists' Forum from 5:00-9:00PM (See FAQ on the website for details).

**Guidelines:**

**All plays must:**

- Be original works;
- Have no more than 4 characters;
- Require only simple props, costumes, settings, and effects; and
- Have a maximum length of 12 pages.

**Format:**

Scripts must be submitted as a Word document with pages numbered.  
(\*\*No student names on scripts, as they are sent to judges anonymously).

Email scripts to: [laurie.briseno@whartoncenter.com](mailto:laurie.briseno@whartoncenter.com)

**All entries must be submitted electronically by Friday, February 10, 2023.**

Failure to meet any of the rules or guidelines  
will be grounds for disqualification from the festival.

Judges' decisions are final. Awards are not transferable.

## 2022-2023 YOUNG PLAYWRIGHTS FESTIVAL MENTOR DESCRIPTION

### Professional theatre mentoring at Young Playwrights Festival (YPF)

People serving as mentors for YPF are directors or playwrights from Michigan and around the Mid-West; these mentors are currently working in the professional theatre and have had experience working with young people. Once the six YPF finalists are selected, they will each be assigned a mentor. For the next 4-5 weeks, playwrights and their mentors will work to make revisions in each playwright's script. Communication will be via email, phone, or both. While everyone has time constraints, it is assumed that mentors and playwrights will spend about 2-3 hours a week working together, and the playwright will spend additional time outside those discussions to revise the play. Once the revisions are completed, the revised plays will be sent to MSU Department of Theatre in preparation for rehearsals.

**Note:** Playwrights are required to work with the mentor and revise their plays during this process. Refusal to do so could result in withdrawal of the play from the festival.

At present, YPF mentors for 2022-2023 are:

- Tomas Coté, Artistic Director, The Workshop Theater, New York City
- Nikki Ferry, Theatre Artist, Kentucky/Cincinnati
- Joe Giardina, New York City Theater Artist
- Jill Holden, L.A.-based Theatre Artist
- Patrick Hunter, Actor/Director
- Brian Taylor, Detroit-based Theater Artist, Barn Theatre, Michigan

### Schedule of YPF events during the weekend of May 12-13, 2023:

Friday, May 12, 5PM - mentors will gather at the Fairchild Theatre in the Auditorium building with their playwrights to meet each other and watch a dress rehearsal of their plays. This will be followed by a period of discussion about seeing the play for the first time.

Saturday, May 13, 2PM - playwrights, and mentors will watch the public performance of the plays. This will be followed by a reception and awards ceremony.

Saturday, 5PM to 9PM - all playwrights, mentors, directors, and actors will discuss each play and production at an Artists' Forum. The forum will be moderated by one of the mentors. A light supper and beverages will be provided during this session. Finalist playwrights may invite up to four guests to attend the May 13 Artists' Forum.

### **FINALISTS ARE REQUIRED TO ATTEND ALL SESSIONS ON MAY 12 & 13**

There are no exceptions. Please check your schedules in advance to be sure you have no conflicts that weekend (e.g., prom, spring musical, sport event, etc.)

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**2022-23 YOUNG PLAYWRIGHTS FESTIVAL  
FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS TIMELINE**

**September – November**

Visit [whartoncenter.com/ypf](https://whartoncenter.com/ypf) for playwriting tips and a information that includes entry rules, required forms and a sample script format. The application can be accessed using the following link: [forms.gle/e4ZWjKYxKD1Aoiho9](https://forms.gle/e4ZWjKYxKD1Aoiho9)

**Monday, December 12, 2022 – Script Entry Deadline**

- Scripts must be submitted electronically by Monday, December 12, 2022.
- Application forms must be signed by student, sponsoring teacher and parent or guardian and returned with scripts. Fax or scan is acceptable.
- Playwright must be a Michigan high school student in grades 9–12 to enter.
- Scripts must be original works.
- See Script Submission Rules included for complete details.

**January 2023** – Twelve semifinalist playwrights are chosen to work with faculty mentor, Dr. Daniel Smith, Professor, MSU Department of Theatre, to prepare their scripts for a second reading.

**February 20** – Six finalist scripts selected to be produced on stage

- Playwrights are assigned a professional mentor
- Auditions, casting

**April**

- **Monday, April 17, 4:00 – 6:00PM (Attendance required)**
  - Finalists and directors meet to discuss scripts

**May**

- **Friday, May 12, 5:00 – 10:00PM (Attendance required)**
  - Playwrights and mentors' dinner meeting.
  - Attend final dress rehearsal.
  - Discuss rehearsal with mentor and prepare for Saturday.
- **Saturday, May 13, 2:00PM – Free Public Performance (Attendance required)**
  - Fairchild Theatre in the Michigan State University Auditorium
  - Post-performance reception, recognition, and awards ceremony
  - 5:00-9:00PM-Artists' Forum for playwrights, directors, actors to assess the work of all plays in a moderated session. Light dinner provided.
- **Monday, May 15, 10:00AM – Free High School Performance**
  - Fairchild Theatre in the Michigan State University Auditorium
  - School reservations due by May 2, 2023

# W H A R T O N

September 2022

Dear Playwright,

As you prepare to write and submit your play, I encourage you to take a few minutes to read a play that we produced as part of the Young Playwrights Festival in 2013. It was written by Hanel Baveja, then a high school student at Huron High School in Ann Arbor. By reading her play, *The Property Ladder*, it may help you in thinking about story, dialogue, themes and character development. The play is not overwritten yet sufficiently tells the story with enough detail to make the characters real while captured in an intriguing narrative.

This does not mean you have to write a play in this same "style." You are perfectly free to choose any style or genre you want (comedy, satire, farce, drama, docudrama, theatre of the absurd, etc.) based on any subject matter you are interested in. Hanel's play is just an example of a well-defined script.

In addition to reading Hanel's play, I encourage you to read or see as many plays as you can before you write. You may find a particular play or playwright that inspires you.

Good luck on your play. I look forward to your submission to the 2022-2023 Young Playwrights Festival!

Best,



Bert Goldstein, Director  
Wharton Center Institute for Arts & Creativity

W H A R T O N C E N T E R  
I N S T I T U T E F O R  
A R T S & C R E A T I V I T Y

SUPPORTED BY MSU FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

Michigan State University  
750 E. Shaw Lane, East Lansing, MI 48824

# **The Property Ladder**

By: Hanel Baveja

## **SETTING**

*A real estate office, seventh floor. Near New York; maybe Long Island.*

## **CHARACTERS**

Todd – boss of real estate company, slightly greying, nicely dressed, the kind of man who doesn't wait for anyone.

Colin- tall and lean, obviously dressed to impress, younger than Todd.

Cassandra- beautiful, dressed in very expensive clothing with very good taste, fairly young.

Aila- receptionist, demure, clever, plain, any age.

## **ACT ONE**

### **Scene One**

*Midday. On SL, COLIN is in his cubicle, silently on the phone with his client. After a moment, AILA gets up and knocks on the door of TODD's office, where he is sitting and typing.*

AILA

The sales reports are here, sir.

TODD

Good. Set them on my desk, please. I'll take a look at those later. (beat) Or should I look at them now?

AILA

Sir, it's Colin. He is...doing very well. He umm..he has the highest sales curve of...I think of anyone on the floor.

TODD

Colin, did you say? Tall guy? Rather high pitched voice, a bit eager?

AILA

Do you want to speak to him?

TODD

Yes, I think I will. We haven't promoted anyone in a while.

AILA

Two months, sir. I'll send him in.

TODD

Good, will you? I know just the thing to... kill two birds with one stone. Something like that.

AILA

Understood, sir. I'll call him in.

*exits*

COLIN (on the telephone)

-Yes, of course, Mrs. Branson- I'll send over the paperwork today. You have a wonderful day.

AILA

Did you just close the colonial on Parkway?

COLIN

Yes, to Mrs. Branson. She's a real piece of work- her husband is *absolutely* insane, and you should see the daughter. Just like her mother. Mundane clients seem to be an endangered species lately.

AILA (receiving phone call)

Colin? Todd wants to see you in his office.

COLIN

Now?

AILA

Yes. Now.

COLIN

Thank you. How do I look? God, I'm sweating like a twelve year old. Do I look okay?

*COLIN walks over to TODD's office. Deep breath. Knocks on window.*

COLIN

Sir, you uh- you wanted to see me?

TODD

Yes. You can sit. (beat) I'm going to be rather frank with you. I've been reviewing your file, and you seem to have closed more leads in the last month than everyone else has done in the last quarter. Your sudden...dedication to your job has not gone unnoticed.

COLIN

Thank you, sir.

TODD

You see, Colin- I've called you in here because I'd like to make a deal with you. My fiancée and I have been looking for a new house, and I've finally found the perfect house- perfect location, everything. It's private. Top of the list- well, it's been removed from the list because, well, I want it.

*laughs*

Now here's where you come in, okay? Are you listening, Colin? Good. You know, I'm a very busy man. My fiancée, she's very..hard to please. She's full of contradictions. Yes, that's the word. Contradictions.

COLIN

With all due respect, sir, I've never sold a house cold.

TODD

Lie and say you've seen it, always. I believe certain people should be lied to regularly, as habit.

COLIN

But, sir-

TODD

Colin, let me tell you something. At the end of the day, it comes down to the numbers. It's the numbers game. Get in or get out. Doesn't matter how good of a person you are. Doesn't matter if you're the kind of guy who would stop and pick up a puppy off the road or the kind of guy who would run it over with his car. All that matters, *really* matters, are your numbers at the end of the day. How many houses you sell.

I don't care if the basement is leaky or if you have to fudge the mortgage numbers. You have to look people in the eye and lie to them. Tell them whatever they want to hear. Tell them the neighborhoods going up. Tell them the crime rate is zero. Tell them you're meeting twenty-nine different buyers after this meeting and it'll be gone by the end of the week. You think it actually matters what the house looks like? Your job is to paint a picture, to put rose-colored glasses on your clients so quietly they can't even tell that they're wearing them.

You don't like that? You're too moral, too nice of a guy to look a woman in the eye and lie straight to her face? Get out, then. Welcome to the rat races, buddy, we're all in this. Welcome to the numbers game.

So this is it. You only need to convince her to let me buy the house. And, if you can do this, I will promote you. Look, I'm not saying this is easy. This is the company level promotion- most people won't get it until their second or third year, tops. We're not going to give this promotion to just *anybody*. Sound good?

COLIN

Yes, sir. Thank you – I promise, you won't be disappointed.

TODD

Here – is the key, and the file. 3775 Parkway. You'll meet Cassandra in half an hour.

COLIN

Cassandra?

TODD

Yes, that's what I said. Try to keep up. I have a couple lunch meetings in the city, so –

*COLIN stands up, holds door open for TODD as he rushes out. COLIN stands for a moment, looking out the window. AILA enters, tidying up.*

COLIN

*(Looks out window. Beat)*

Look at the sky – all the purpley pink. Have you ever seen anything so magnificent? I didn't know Todd had such a nice view.

AILA

Yes, the pollution from the auto plant does tend to make pretty colors this time of day.

*AILA exits, and with a pleased sigh, COLIN sits down on the couch, and opens the file.*

## Scene Two

*In the house. COLIN is taking off his shoes when CASSANDRA rings the doorbell. Long pause, as they avoid eye contact. Set-up of house is up to the director; can be a blank space, as they describe the imagery.*

TODD

Hello/

CASSANDRA

How are you?

*(beat. both laugh, nervous)*

I thought it was you.

COLIN

You've dyed your hair.

CASSANDRA

Don't you like it?

COLIN

Of course I do. It's just – different. I mean, I haven't seen you since-

CASSANDRA

You wanted me to dye it for ten months, remember? After we watched that stupid movie with Marilyn Monroe. I thought it would make you laugh or something. *(beat)* Are you alright? You look sick.

COLIN

I feel sick. *(beat)* Do you remember when we first met?

CASSANDRA

Of course.

COLIN

I smiled at you, and you threw up.

CASSANDRA

Aren't you going to invite me in?

COLIN

Of course. Sorry. How - have you been? Todd is a great boss. The best.

CASSANDRA

Great. I know, he's..great.

COLIN

Todd loves the house.

CASSANDRA

Of course he does. I think it's too dark. There are lots of windows, but there's never enough light in the house – something to with the way the walls are shaped, he says. Have you seen it?

COLIN

(beat) No.

CASSANDRA

What? Why would he ask you to sell it to me then?

COLIN

Well. Don't tell him this, but he's going to promote me. If you buy the house, I mean. I mean, I wasn't supposed to tell you that. He seems to think you have a bit of a soft spot.

CASSANDRA

A promotion? You're up for a promotion?

COLIN

Yes. So if you'll just let me point out a few features – the floorplan features over twelve different rooms on the main level alone, and -

CASSANDRA

I don't like it. It's claustrophobic. There are too many rooms and not nearly enough windows. And...it feels dusty. Some houses make me feel so trapped. A prison.

COLIN

How can it be a prison? The beach! It has a lovely view of the beach-

CASSANDRA

-Sand! What a novelty-

COLIN

-the entire foyer has ten foot ceilings, it's- palacial/

CASSANDRA

Pretentious/ (beat) Pretense squeezes out of that foyer like stomach fat. The higher the ceilings, the lower the morals of the people who live under them. Don't you think?

COLIN

We had a ground level apartment.

CASSANDRA

Yes, and you hated it.

COLIN

It was very - flat.

CASSANDRA

You always looked so miserable inside it.

COLIN

I lived with it though, didn't I. For you. God, I would have lived with anything for you.

CASSANDRA (suddenly)

Except marriage, clearly.

COLIN

Cassandra-

CASSANDRA (suddenly)

Are you happy, Colin?

COLIN

I'm not unhappy. It's almost the same thing, isn't it?

CASSANDRA

I'm thinking of dying my hair again. What you think?

COLIN

Don't change the subject.

CASSANDRA

What do you think?

COLIN

I couldn't care less. Hair is hair is hair, really. It falls off, it grows back. Like – grass, or something. Now I'm changing the subject. Why *don't* you want to move here?

CASSANDRA

It means moving away from everything I know. The city, the people, the constant noise. There's never a moment of silence. Out there, it's....it's on the ocean, just two people. It's what old people do when they retire and have had enough of city life.

COLIN

Have you been upstairs? The floors are gorgeous, antique mahogany. You've always liked wood floors.

CASSANDRA

Yes, Todd had the workmen dig up the beautiful carpet in the study because he likes the way the wood looked, all scratched and dark. I've never understood why some people pay so much for damaged things.

COLIN

You used to hate carpet – remember- we had that cream spread everywhere? Except for the red tiles in the kitchen.

CASSANDRA

That wasn't carpet, it was linoleum.

COLIN

The house has five bedrooms, here, this one is the master suite-

CASSANDRA

You could fit five of ours into here, don't you think? It was only a two bedroom apartment, after all...

COLIN

It's a beautiful room – crown molding, space to put a few bookshelves and armchairs over here-

CASSANDRA

Besides, what are we going to do with four extra rooms? Oh – I didn't mean –

COLIN

It's – fine.

CASSANDRA

Whoever did end up renting the apartment next? I don't think I ever found out –

COLIN

It was the Parkinson's – the couple with the three-year old, the little blond boy.

CASSANDRA

That room, they would have had to redo it for a boy. He probably hated the walls – we painted them pink and yellow, remember? Like those little cakes, your favorites –

COLIN

Hampsteads cakes. They tasted like lemonade.

CASSANDRA

Right. I dream about her sometimes. How she's eight and wants us to paint over the dancing animals near her bed. Maybe she likes to paint. Maybe she likes to read. All I know is – I love her, and, she's beautiful.

COLIN

Your smile is still the same – it's beautiful and sad. Just like your eyes, just like a fire. She would have had your eyes, I'm sure of it. (beat) Have you seen the study? You can see the ocean from the third floor. It's a beautiful view.

CASSANDRA

Yes, but I can see the sky from every room in our current house, what's the difference?

COLIN

The ocean is....a force. It can....carry you away. To anywhere.

CASSANDRA

Oh darling, not here. Ten feet, maybe. The tides aren't strong enough.

COLIN

It can carry pieces of you.. A letter...or a photograph. All your skeletons. You could let all of your skeletons, all of the lives you're not living float away from you until they're just specks in the distance like stars. I wish I could. God, I wish I could.

*beat*

You would be so close to the ocean - you could go everyday if you felt like it. Wouldn't that be nice? Being so close to the ocean? It's romantic, after all. Terribly, tragically romantic.

CASSANDRA

I wish you wouldn't speak to me like you're trying to sell me a house.

COLIN

Forgive me darling, but I am trying to sell you a house.

CASSANDRA (sharply)

You're trying to skip two ropes at once. Careful, or you'll get hanged.

COLIN

Don't be horrible.

CASSANDRA

I'm not buying the house.

COLIN

You will.

CASSANDRA

I refuse to.

COLIN

You will.

*(beat)*

You're a terrible liar, Cassandra.

CASSANDRA

*walking*

Do you hate me yet?

COLIN

I never blamed you, you know.

CASSANDRA

That was the worst part. We never even saw her, Colin. I would give anything to be able to go back and hold her. How could I live with myself after what happened?

COLIN

So you decided that not living with me was nearly the same thing.

CASSANDRA (with some kind of heartbreak)

You're happy now. Look – you're up for a promotion. It's fantastic news. When we were married you couldn't even keep your – sock drawer tidy.

COLIN

*(beat)*

I suppose he buys you lots of nice things.

CASSANDRA

Does that hurt your feelings?

COLIN

Not at all. Just an observation. I'll bet Todd has a drawerful of socks that he keeps so organized you could just die. I'll bet he washes each pair by hand. I see it now – they're organized in alphabetical

order, argyle in the front, then black plain, then black ribbed, all the way to yarn ski socks. The whole way thorough they're organized short to tall from left to right. I'm – sorry. I'm not trying to be rude. You seem happier, that's all.

CASSANDRA

I am. Thank you.

COLIN

Full of *joie de vivre*. Flushed, fresh faced...luminous. You're glowing.

CASSANDRA

Thank you.

COLIN

You look fatter, too.

CASSANDRA

Don't be an - asshole.

COLIN

Has he been feeding you well? Champagne and caviar seven days a week?

CASSANDRA

Don't be nasty, Colin.

*stands up, moves over to window*

You're still in love with me, aren't you?

*(beat)*

Aren't you?

COLIN

I think I love you, yes. I don't think I'll ever stop loving you, really. But you're engaged, darling- I hardly think I'm *in* love with you.

CASSANDRA

Yes, I am engaged, aren't I?

COLIN

Is it different, the second time around?

CASSANDRA

Not really. It's Todd's fourth.

*(beat)*

COLIN

Four, fourteen, forty. Tell me darling, is it strange having four ghosts of past lovers around every time the two of you are whispering to each other? Assembling next to you in their finest jewels every time you go to a party?

CASSANDRA

Shut up.

COLIN

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm horrible, I know. But I love you. I love you.

CASSANDRA

He's funny, you know. He's hysterically funny. He makes me laugh so hard sometimes I feel like crying.

COLIN

Is that good?

CASSANDRA

I can't even look at you. I don't even know you. Todd would never say such horrible things to me. You're right about something though. This house, it's beautiful. I thought it was missing something before, something I couldn't find a name for yet. I know it now. We never found it. I'll call Todd after our meeting. He will be so - happy.

COLIN

The nurse who came into the waiting room to wake me up had red hair and smelled like cigarettes. They needed my permission to remove the fallopian tube. I followed her to a - a glass window, and I looked at you, lying there. You looked so small against the pillow. I told them to do whatever they needed to do.

*(deep breath)*

Our baby was a girl. The first time I saw her, she might have been sleeping. Her hair was more yellow than brown. When I held her in my arms, she was so light. It felt like I wasn't holding anything at all, let alone a person.

I never got to see her eyes.

### Scene Three

*COLIN is sitting dumbstruck on the couch, stands up as TODD enters*

TODD

Well, congratulations, Colin. You've done the impossible; you've won over my fiancé. I must say, I'm impressed.

COLIN

It's a beautiful house.

TODD

It is, indeed. Well, I have some good news, Colin. You are going to receive the company level promotion – and all it took was a few good words from me and I've managed to get you a position as head of our Ithaca branch.

COLIN

Ithaca?

TODD

Oh, you're going to love the city. Prime housing markets, even better than here. It's scenic, beautiful – the perfect place to settle down.

*During the next part, Aila comes out, clears everything from Colin's cubicle, and fill the office with balloons and a cake.*

COLIN

That's a lot of balloons, you really didn't... How many are there?

TODD

One for everyone house you've sold. I don't think anyone else has had this many, ever.

*TODD exits briefly, and enters, carrying a cake*

Here it is. The ice cream cake. It's always my favorite part. Aila, cut him the first slice. Colin, I ordered chocolate, I hope you don't mind.

*(beat)*

Cassandra said it was your favorite.

*Blackout*