

Young People's Program Playwright Contest 2005

On Sunday June 5, Blueberry Pond Theatre Ensemble of Ossining honored the winners of its 2005 Young Playwrights Competition with staged readings of their plays. Winners in the high school category were Jesse Bordwin of Scarsdale, a student at Edgemont High School, and Maria Devlin of Bronxville, a student at Bronxville High School. Alexandra Ingber, who lives in Ossining and attends Anne M. Dorner Middle School, was the winner in the middle school category. The winners received cash prizes and enjoyed readings of their plays staged by members of Blueberry Pond's professional ensemble. A reception followed in Cedar Lane Park, the site of Blueberry Pond's theatre.

The director of Blueberry's Young People's Program, Gayle Hudson, created the competition to encourage area young people to write for the theatre. "There are many forms of creative writing that students are exposed to in school, but few are led to playwriting," said Ms. Hudson. "Blueberry Pond, whose mission is to develop and produce original works, has developed a program where young people can explore theatre as whole-theatre artists. Even our youngest members are busy writing short scenes. We offer more than the usual acting classes for kids. And we're free!"

Jesse Bordwin's play *A STUDY OF HUMANITY*, about a troubled teenage boy's search for stability, was written specifically for the competition. "I have struggled for a while to write a play....When I completed this short play, let alone winning and seeing other people perform it, it really gave me the chills," said Mr. Bordwin. "Blueberry's Competition gave me the impetus to go out and achieve things that I might not have."

Maria Devlin's *LATTER DAY SAINTS* concerns the friendship of two teenagers who confront issues of trust, competition and forgiveness while visiting a Catholic Church. Ms. Devlin, who hopes someday to be published, said, "Nothing pushes a writer to finish and perfect a piece like a deadline with a potential reward – and nothing is as rewarding for a playwright as seeing his play put on. The biggest problem I see among my writing friends is a lack of continuous effort....Contests help push us....it was the first writing competition I ever entered. The play was also the first play I'd ever written, so that itself felt like a big step to take. But when I got the flyer, I thought, 'I really, really want to try this,' and I immediately started brainstorming ideas. From the writing process to the news about the finalists, the contest was a mix of excitement and confidence mixed with anxiety and nerves. It made writing feel exactly the way I'd always thought writing should feel--inspiring, unpredictable, and elating."

The middle school winner, Alexandra Ingber, wrote *ALONE* about a young girl whose struggles with friendships are aggravated by her family's frequent moves from town to town. "The experience of entering this competition has been fun, and now I've learned that I can actually write a script!" said Ms. Ingber, who hopes to become, as a writer, a combination of Stephen Sondheim and J. K. Rowling. "Above all, I really want to become an actress. I was just cast in a play at Blueberry Pond called *OUTLOUD*, and I can't wait!"



Photo by Paul Magliari.

Blueberry Pond Young Playwrights Competition winners are pictured with YPP Director Gayle Hudson and Blueberry Pond Ensemble founding member Stephan Summa after readings of their winning plays. From left to right, seated, Maria Devlin, Alexandra Ingber, and Jesse Bordwin; standing, Ms. Hudson and Mr. Summa.

OUTLOUD, a new musical about the journey through female adolescence, is based on the writing of young women and features a cast of local young people. OUTLOUD opens at Blueberry Pond's Cedar Lane theatre, 235 Cedar Lane, Ossining on September 6.