

Toowoomba student wins 2021 Young Playwrights' Award

A deeply moving, coming-of-age story has won Queensland Theatre's 2021 Young Playwrights' Award.

Sandra Miller's *Paradise Dreaming* received the top prize in one of the strongest pools of entries seen in the almost 20-year history of the award.

Queensland Theatre Artistic Director, Lee Lewis praised Sandra, a Year 12 student from The Glennie School, for *Paradise Dreaming* achieving what all good playwrights strive to do — offer a new perspective on who we are collectively — with a voice that's full of warmth and authenticity.

"The Young Playwrights' Award is our way of recognising the great young writing talent in this state," Lee said. "It is so important to identify and celebrate the voices of our theatre future."

"Young playwrights are fierce. It is a huge undertaking to craft a whole play, and these writers do so in the midst of all the demands of school and family and our fast society. They write because they have something in them that *must* be said, and I love that they have identified that it must be said live on stage."

"*Paradise Dreaming*, Sandra's remarkable play, and all the shortlisted plays this year, are about things that matter to us all right now. These stories are urgent and moving. They inspire me to work harder as an artist," Lee said.

Sandra receives an all-expenses paid trip to Theatre Residency Week at Queensland Theatre during the September school holidays, including dramaturgy sessions to develop her script before a professional reading of her work.

"*Paradise Dreaming* is about my family," Sandra explains. "It tries to capture our first moments in Australia and is special to me because I'm painting a picture we all remember differently. I use a broad brush to encapsulate the cocktail of emotions that filled us all — as well as navigating the guilt I feel whenever I miss Africa."

"Winning the Young Playwrights' Award just means so much to me, it makes me emotional to have my work recognised at such a high level. It's deeply validating and humbling."

"I'm looking forward to working with professional artists to improve my work — there is so much life that comes out of a script when it is read aloud. I cannot wait to learn more about playwriting, extend my dramaturgical knowledge and ask so many questions!"

The Queensland Theatre Young Playwrights' Award is one of the longest-running prizes for student writers in the country. Past recipients include multi-award winning playwright and screenwriter Angela Betzien (ABC TV's *Total Control*), who received the Young Playwrights' Award twice. Her more recent plays (*The Hanging, Egg, Helicopter*) have continued to win awards and be performed in theatres around the world.

Queensland Theatre Young Playwrights' Award 2021

Winner

Paradise Dreaming – Sandra Miller | The Glennie School, Toowoomba

Shortlist

Greek Mythology for Millennials – Gabriel Donaldson | Toowoomba Grammar School

Neverland – Brydie-Rose Peters | Ferny Grove State High School

Keeping it Together – Suki Wallace | Queensland Academies Creative Industries, Kelvin Grove

My Name is Tommy – Grace Wilson | Australian Christian College, Caboolture

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