

Live Theatre Bursary Application:

Sarah Stephenson

SYNOPSIS

Sixteen-year-old Mona arrives at the off-grid commune where her father Shaun lives to stay for the summer. Reluctant but with no way to leave, she soon encounters a community of adult hippies, drop-outs, new-age conspiracists, and the enigmatic twins Ash and Luke, a year older than her. At first hesitant to let Mona into their world, they eventually form a bond based on a mutual desire to explore more of the world outside of the bubble they grew up in.

As their friendship blossoms, and Mona begins to understand her father and the rhythms of co-operative living, an unexpected eviction notice threatens the stability of the place they are all starting to think of as 'home'.

Driftwood is a coming-of-age play that asks the question, 'is it possible to go off grid?'

PROCESS

Before writing a word of dialogue, I will create an outline of the story and consider what the characters, setting(s), wants, needs, obstacles and themes are.

The most important thing after scoping out the story is to think very hard about what the best form would be for this story, and how to make the most of theatre as a live event.

I will then write out a list of scenes that 'need' to happen (e.g. 'Mona arrives at the commune'. 'Fox finds the eviction notice letter, but hides it from the others') and then a separate list of images or lines of dialogue, moments, I find intriguing ('Mona encourages Ash to wear lipstick for the first time', 'Fox dances to 'Once In a Lifetime'). Once these lists feel complete, I'll combine the two so that each 'necessary' scene also has a 'desired' moment attached to it. I found this tip from a talk Celine Sciamma gave online, and it's been a wonderful way to make sure each scene is both desired and functional.

I'll also do a lot of research, especially if there are clear facts around the subject, such as laws or rituals. For *Driftwood*, I'm speaking to relatives and friends who stayed at a commune called Runnymede in Sussex, whose eviction inspired my play.

ARTISTS INVOLVED - WRITER

Sarah Stephenson is a British-Filipino playwright who grew up in Somerset. Her short plays have been staged at theatres including: The Royal Court Theatre, Live Theatre, Theatre Deli and Theatre N16. She is currently a student on the Creative Writing MA at the UEA.

Whilst studying English Literature at Newcastle University, Sarah was initially developed as a writer through the Royal Court's Young Court programme and the BFI Young Screenwriters' Academy. She is drawn to stories that explore place, identity, memory, and the female coming-of-age.

Works in development include: ACE-funded devised play about death and farming: 'John Barleycorn Must Die' with Norwich-based Tombola Theatre.

Link to past work:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1c_ir4IXoECNz7ONI8UqMRnORE96GYn_x?usp=sharing