New Voices 39 | Call for Interest

Introduction
2022 will mark the 39th year of WPI’s New Voices play festival! With this call for interest, we invite the WPI community to join this annual production as playwrights, dramaturgs, designers, managers, technical staff, and more. Read on for information about the festival & its history.

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to gr-nv-submissions@wpi.edu.

Festival Timeline
The New Voices festival takes place over multiple terms, and features two major components: the solicitation, selection, & development of new scripts (during B & C terms); and the design, staging, & presentation of those plays (during C & D terms). Here’s a rough overview of the festival process:

Key Dates
- Script Submissions open: December 17, 2021 – January 2, 2022
- Scripts Announced: Friday, January 21, 2022
- Production Teams Mixer / Final Call for Interest: Sat-Sun, January 22-23, 2022
- Production Teams Announced: Friday, January 28, 2022
- Script Development Period: January 24 – February 13, 2022
- Design Period: February 14 – March 4, 2022
- Auditions & Callbacks: February 21-25, 2022
- Rehearsal & Build Period: March 14 – April 8, 2022
- Technical & Dress Rehearsals: April 7-13, 2022
- Performances: April 14-16, 2022
Festival Overview
Throughout the summer & fall, Drama/Theatre begins recruiting students to work on the festival, focusing particularly on those interested in completing projects (practicums, minor capstones, & MQPs). This staffing process ramps up near the end of B Term, with an informational interest meeting and the establishment of a play selection committee (comprised of student dramaturgs & DT faculty).

Script submissions open near the end of B Term, closing before the end of winter break. At the start of C Term, the selection committee reads all the plays, chooses 5-9 for inclusion in the festival, and extends invitations to the accepted playwrights. Once the plays have been finalized, DT conducts a mixer event, collects final student interest, and assigns a production team (dramaturg, director, rehearsal stage manager, & designers) to each play.

Once assigned, the playwrights begin working with their mentor and dramaturg on revising & improving their scripts. After 2-3 weeks of development, final scripts are submitted, and the design process begins. Over the next 2-3 weeks, designers collaborate with their playwrights, directors, and each other to craft designs that will serve & showcase the festival plays—both individually and collectively. Some designers (like scenery) will need to serve the needs of all the festival plays, whereas others (like costumes & props) can focus on 1-2 individual scripts. Final designs are submitted at the end of C Term and/or the beginning of D Term.

Auditions take place during the design period, so that casting can be finalized before the end of C Term. Rehearsals & build/load-in both begin at the start of D Term and run for four weeks, followed by technical rehearsals and then performances.

COVID Considerations
Public health considerations & WPI policies permitting, New Voices 39 will be presented in-person with a live audience in WPI’s Little Theatre. If circumstances prevent a fully live & in-person production, the festival may be moved to another venue, postponed (to no later than May 30, 2022), or adapted into another form (such as a video recording, distributed digitally, as a livestream or asynchronously). If circumstances further prevent the rehearsal, recording, or distribution of the festival, New Voices 39 may be cancelled.

Festival Staffing & Mentorship
New Voices is staffed primarily by students, all of whom have faculty mentor/advisers in their discipline. These mentors provide guidance & feedback to students, and in many cases also advise student projects (practicums, minor capstones, MQPs). The festival’s leadership team is comprised of all these mentor/advisors, plus 1-2 festival stage managers, who help coordinate the needs of all the plays.
Each play also has a production team, comprised of a playwright, dramaturg, director, rehearsal stage manager, designers, and cast. Some of these production team members (particularly in scenery, lighting, & sound) may work on the whole festival, whereas others (such as those in costumes & props, rehearsal stage managers, directors, & cast members) may work only on 1-2 individual plays.

To express interest in working on New Voices (in any capacity except playwriting or performance), please fill out the DT Project Application & Production Interest Form.

**Script Submission**

Students wishing to engage in New Voices as playwrights must submit their scripts via the NV Script Submission Portal.

Script submissions must follow the guidelines below. Any submissions that do not meet these criteria will not be considered for the festival.

- Scripts must be producible dramatic works, such as: short plays, musicals, or monologues.
- Scripts must be written & submitted by members of the WPI community.
  - Current WPI students may submit multiple scripts; all other WPI community members (faculty, staff, alumni) may submit only 1 per year.
- Scripts must be original works. Adaptations will be permitted only if the original source material is in the public domain.
  - If submitting an adaptation, note the source material on the title page.
- Each script may have a performance length no longer than 15 minutes.
  - If submitting part of a longer work, include a description of the full piece, with information contextualizing the portion submitted for the festival.
- **Scripts PDFs must be anonymous; the name of the playwright may not appear anywhere on the script pages, in the header/footer, or in the filename.**
- Formatting Requirements:
  - File Format: PDF
  - Typeface: 12 pt. Times New Roman, double-spaced
  - Character Names: in all caps (e.g. HAMLET: To be or not to be…)
  - Stage Directions: in italics and parentheses
  - Page Numbering: all pages must be numbered in the upper right corner
  - Act/Scene numbers are optional but encouraged
- Required Information:
  - Page 1: Play Title (no author name)
  - Page 2: Synopsis (approx. 25 words); Setting (place & time); any other key information or author notes
  - Page 3: Character List, including a 1-2 line description of each character
Script Selection
The selection committee will choose pieces for the festival based on the following criteria:

- **Producibility & Scope** – cast size, length, design/tech needs, safety issues, etc.
  - All NV scripts will be treated equitably, so each selected script may require no more than 20% of the festival’s total resources (budget, length, etc.).
- **Equity & Inclusion** – character representation, offensive language/scenarios, etc.
  - Drama/Theatre is committed to upholding WPI’s Values Statement.
  - Plays that promote discrimination, hate speech, or other inequitable ideas will not be considered for the festival.
- **Diversity** – of genre, style, subject matter, setting, roles, design opportunities, etc.
- **Artistic Quality & Polish** – structure, language, clarity, etc.

Once all the festival plays have been chosen & confirmed, scripts not selected for the festival will be deleted from DT’s files. Scripts selected for the festival will be shared with the WPI community and eventually added to the Drama/Theatre archives.

Script Development & Playwright Expectations
As a curricular production in an academic theatre program, New Voices is committed to providing a meaningful educational experience for its playwrights through mentorship, coaching, & collaboration. This participation is intended to enrich the writers’ theatrical understanding of their own play and of how a script goes from page to stage, as well as to ensure that the playwright’s intent is upheld throughout the production process.

If accepted to the festival, playwrights must participate fully in the development & production process, including:

- Engaging with mentor & dramaturg in script development & revision
- Delivery of a revised script by the date required
- Participation in design meetings & rehearsals (at least 1 of each)
- Timely communication with festival staff (responding within 48 hours)
- Participation in other required production activities, such as Strike & the Post-Production Discussion

In submitting their play for consideration, playwrights must affirm that:

1. The submitted play is a wholly original work, written exclusively by the playwright—notwithstanding any inspirations/adaptations disclosed during submission.
2. If their play is selected, the playwright will grant irrevocable performance rights to WPI Drama/Theatre for its production & presentation. These rights shall expire at the end of WPI’s current academic year (May 30, 2022).
3. If this play enjoys future productions, the playwright will make best efforts to ensure that the following language appears in all future production programs:
"[PLAY TITLE] was first developed & received its premiere in the 2022 New Voices play festival at Worcester Polytechnic Institute."

A Brief History of New Voices

New Voices is one of the nation's longest running collegiate new and original play festivals. In 37 festivals, New Voices has featured 468 original plays by 259 playwrights.

From 1982 until 2006 (when New Voices became established in the Little Theatre), the festival featured a varying number of performances of original, unpublished scripts submitted by the entire WPI community—students, faculty, staff, alums, family, friends, acquaintances, audience members, and others.

In 2007, the selection committee for New Voices 25 chose only seven plays for inclusion in the festival. This was quite a departure from previous years, which had featured as many as 27 plays. (Yes, 27 different plays were included in New Voices 7!) This downsizing allowed for all seven New Voices scripts to be presented in a single evening, and moved the festival away from the more chaotic previous model in which plays were presented in random groupings, with too few actors and unpredictable technology requirements. When asked to describe what they believed would be an ideal number of plays, the New Voices 25 selection committee said: 5-9 plays, with no play requiring more than 20% of festival’s resources (including budget, actors, time, etc.). Since 2007, the New Voices has worked well when adhering to these “25 Guidelines.”

In 2014-2018, due to the growth of WPI’s academic programs in creative writing and theatre production, and the expanded study of dramatic literature in Humanities and Arts courses, the New Voices 32-35 teams chose to focus the festival on undergraduate playwriting by limiting script submissions to only WPI students. For New Voices 36, the team re-opened submissions to the entire WPI community (including students, faculty, staff, and alumni), with the goal of providing an opportunity for the entire WPI community to get involved with the festival; but in order to keep the focus on students, the team limited submissions from all non-students to one script each.

Continuing in the spirit of the “25 Guidelines,” the 2021 New Voices 38 selection committee began limiting the length of submitted scripts to 15 minutes or less. This adjustment helped build greater equity & balance within the festival, and so is being continued with New Voices 39.