

Work of Young Playwright Madeleine Le to be Featured at ACT Theatre Festival

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Madeleine Le (second from right) is one of several young playwrights that will be featured at the 2015 Young Playwrights Festival at ACT Theatre from March 5 to March 7. • **Courtesy Photo**

Every year, **ACT Theatre** sends theatre artists into Puget Sound area schools to teach the basics of playwriting to students. This Young Playwrights Program culminates in a **Young Playwrights Festival**, in which top scripts emerging from the program are given a professional staged reading at ACT Theatre.

One of the participating playwrights in 2015 is Madeleine Le, who hails from **Seattle Academy**. Her play *The Doctor in the Aoi Dai* will be presented. “The selection of my play was a shock for me,” Le said.

Le previously had limited hopes that the script would be successful. “The most I had expected was an honorable mention, or to have my play read at a smaller theater,” she said. “So, when I found out that my play would be read for the program, I was excited, happy, and shocked at the same time.”

While many playwrights focus on themes, plot, or action, Le's greatest interest in playwriting is her characters. "I'm much more of a writer who focuses on character interaction, than action," she said. "Even though novels are good and I've written some before, I have trouble writing about objects or landscapes, something that is more prominent in novels than in plays. I'm just more interested in speech, so playwriting gives me a chance to write in the style that I like."

Character development hasn't always been easy for Le. "In the first drafts of my play, I found that the characters would just shift from one belief to another, in a very unnatural sense," she said. "ACT's mentors for the YPP have truly helped me develop that skill."

"Another skill that I've learned is how to create realistic characters," Le added. "In the brainstorming stages of my play, my characters were very stereotypical (i.e. controlling grandmother, rebellious daughter, etc.), and ACT's mentors were able to give me criticism on how I should make these characters more realistic through dialogue."

Le's personal interests also shaped the subject matter of her play. "One of the things that I enjoy is to look at the different cultures (both modern and traditional) and see how they differ from ours," she said. "I also like looking at Asian American culture and see how it differs from Modern Asian Culture and American Culture. I was recently looking at LGBT rights in Asia and I was very shocked at how the LGBT rights in Asia were practically nonexistent."

She combined this interest with her observation of the wide variety of family dynamics at play in Asian-American families. "Some parents are full on 'Tiger Parents,' while some parents are more lax and other parents are in between," she said. "Same with the kids: Asian-American teens are more than just the 'quiet nerdy kid.' Asian-American kids can be brilliant athletes, the life of the party, or angry rebels."

Le believes generational conflict is ripe for dramatic action. "No matter what type of person they are, I've seen that kids will still clash with their parents, no matter what."

Le has been enjoying the rehearsal process to bring her play from the page to stage. "I really like working with my director," she said. "When I first met him, he seemed very excited, and had many great suggestions for how to take my play from script to stage."

She has also been impressed with the publicity around the Young Playwrights

Festival. "ACT Theater has been awesome with getting the word out and are always alerting me of things coming up," she said.

Similarly, Le has experienced encouragement from her family. "My family has been supportive throughout the entire time," she said. "They've always supported my brother and me in everything we do, in both arts and sciences. They haven't read my play yet, but they're excited to see it being performed on stage."

It appears that Le's participation in the Young Playwrights Program has expanded her visions of her future goals. "Even though I want to pursue engineering or a science-related major in college, I would like to get involved in screenplays," she said.

"I've always liked movies, particularly foreign films, and I do like learning new languages," Le added. "I might try and see if I can get involved in the film industry in Asia, but realistically, I would like to do something in the Asian-American film community."

The 2015 Young Playwrights Festival will be presented from March 5 to 7 at ACT Theatre, 700 Union Street, Seattle. For more information, visit www.acttheatre.org.