

Blue Ink Award

for playwriting



American Blues Theater is an ensemble of artists committed to producing new and classic diverse stories that ask the question: “What does it mean to be American?”

Winner of the National Theatre Company Award from American Theatre Wing, American Blues Theater produces high-quality productions with a focus on stories that are relevant, timeless, courageous, and inclusive to the American spirit.

ABOUT THE BLUE INK AWARD FOR PLAYWRITING

Established in 2010 to support original, unpublished plays, the Blue Ink Award has grown into a nationally recognized platform for playwrights. Since its inception, the Award has named 16 winners, 197 finalists, and 283 semi-finalists, while distributing nearly \$15,000 annually in cash prizes and development support to artists across the country.

Winning plays have gone on to premiere in major theater markets including Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Boston, Seattle, Minneapolis, and San Diego, with many playwrights receiving further productions, commissions, and national recognition. Notable past recipients include Idris Goodwin, Benjamin Benne, Elaine Romero, and Kristoffer Diaz.

Each year American Blues Theater accepts worldwide submissions of original, unpublished full-length plays which have not yet received a professional production.

The winning playwright receives a monetary prize of \$3,000. Cash prizes are also awarded to finalists and semi-finalists. There is no fee to submit.

Submissions for the 2027 Blue Ink Award open August 1, 2026. All submissions must be received by American Blues Theater by August 31, 2026 at 11:59 PM CT. Playwrights may only submit one (1) manuscript each year for consideration.

Each play must be submitted with a letter written by a qualified theater professional or educator recommending the play or playwright.

Please see the next page for full competition rules and guidelines.

2027 BLUE INK AWARD SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

1. There is **no fee** to submit.
2. **Each play must be submitted with a letter written by a qualified theater professional or educator recommending the play or playwright.** “Qualified theater professional” is defined as an artistic director, director, literary manager, agent, theater professor or academic advisor, or someone in a similar artistic leadership position.
3. This contest is restricted to plays written predominantly in English. Worldwide submissions are accepted.
4. Submissions must be **original, unpublished full-length plays.** Adaptations are accepted with proof of rights held unless source text is in public domain.
5. Musicals, translations, and children’s plays are **not** accepted.
6. Playwrights may submit **only one (1) manuscript per year.**
7. **Plays that have been professionally produced or published are not eligible.** Plays that have had a workshop, reading, or non-professional production will be considered.
8. **Plays may not be under option or scheduled for professional production or publication** at the time of award announcement.
9. American Blues Theater reserves the **Right-of-First-Refusal to produce the world premiere of the winning manuscript** for one (1) year beginning on date of the public announcement of the winner.
10. Plays and recommendation letters must be **submitted digitally** as a PDF or Word Document via the submission form at AmericanBluesTheater.com.
11. If you need technological accommodations to submit your play, you may send scripts to American Blues Theater, 5627 N Lincoln Ave, Chicago, IL 60659. Scripts are ineligible if received after Monday, August 31.
12. Questions should be sent to info@AmericanBluesTheater.com.

Submissions for the 2027 competition must be submitted no earlier than August 1, 2026 and no later than August 31, 2026 at 11:59 PM CT.

American Blues Theater reserves the right to reject any manuscript for any reason. American Blues Theater reserves the right to not choose a winner for any given year and reserves the right to determine the ineligibility of a winner.

AMERICAN
BLUES
THEATER

Blue
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August 1, 2026

Submissions open.

August 31, 2026

Submission deadline.

March 2027

The Blue Ink Winner, Finalists, and Semi-Finalists are notified.

Summer 2027

The 2027 Blue Ink Festival.