

ARTS for Youth

SPOTLIGHT

Aisling Ringrose writes about what matters to her

Aisling Ringrose has loved to write for as long as she can remember.

"Even before I could write my thoughts down coherently, I remember telling stories to my friends to entertain them and daydreaming of characters going on adventures. The first time I remember actually trying to write down a book (it ended up being about two pages long) was when I was in the second grade, and it was about a slave traveling the Underground Railroad. I guess I've always liked writing about heavier topics," she says.

Her writing recently won first place at Barter Theatre's Young Playwrights Festival. Her winning play, "Pauses" is about a married couple sitting at a kitchen table, signing divorce papers. "It's melancholy, not full of action and screaming and crying. It's kind of a quiet, gentle, hopefully realistic approach to a serious situation. I don't want to call it slow to mean that it

drags, but it's slow in the sense that it's not action-filled. It's just two people who are very tired and very broken talking to one another.

"Winning was shocking. I thought that the story I wrote had potential, and I figured that with a bit of work, I could do something with it, but the fact that they chose this new draft as a winner was incredible to me. Junior year has been so busy. I barely had time to edit that thing. It truly was an honor, and I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to have such qualified people review my work. It was really special seeing my play performed. To see these characters, who have only ever existed in your head, suddenly appear on a stage, moving and talking, is really incredible. I cried more than I'd care to admit.

"I've always been a really private writer, so even this competition freaked me out; I don't keep a diary, so I put

my thoughts and feelings into my characters. Having someone read one of my pieces feels to me like they're reading my diary. However, this experience has helped me realize that sharing what I've written really doesn't have to be all that scary, so I think I'll be a little bit more public with my work in the future," Aisling says.

This was her second year submitting to the festival. "Last year, I wrote a play, and it got nowhere, but I got some helpful feedback, and the experience undeniably helped improve my writing," she says.

Aisling enjoys the challenge of writing plays. "In other types of prose, you have verbs, adjectives, adverbs, detailed description and inner thought. In playwriting, you have the dialogue. That's it. You have to propel a story forward and grasp an audience's attention simply from the words one person says to another, which is super challenging and really fun," she says.

She likes to write about topics that matter to her. "Some people write to escape the real world; I think I write to embed myself further in it. I try to learn something about the world from everything that I write. I guess that means I would generally lean more towards realistic and historical fiction. I love to read everything, though; I don't have a favorite genre," she says.

Her writing influences are Pam Jenoff, Marcus Zusak, Emily Dickinson and Oscar Wilde. She says many people in her personal life inspire her to write, such as her parents and teachers. She is president of the Creative Writing Club at Abingdon High School.

When she isn't writing, she also sings

in the Abingdon High Jazz Choir and participates in choral events. She performs in the school's musicals and performed in Theatre Bristol's "Fiddler on the Roof." She says her "weird" hobby is alphabetizing things. "I'm generally pretty unorganized, but all of the books on my shelf are always in perfect alphabetical order."

Aisling isn't sure what she wants to do in the future. "I'm one of those weird people that's interested in everything, and I can see myself in a hundred different futures going down a hundred different paths. I do know that I'll never stop writing, whether I do it professionally or just as a hobby."

She is the 16-year-old daughter of Vinny and Trish Ringrose of Bristol, Virginia. She attends Abingdon High School. *A!*



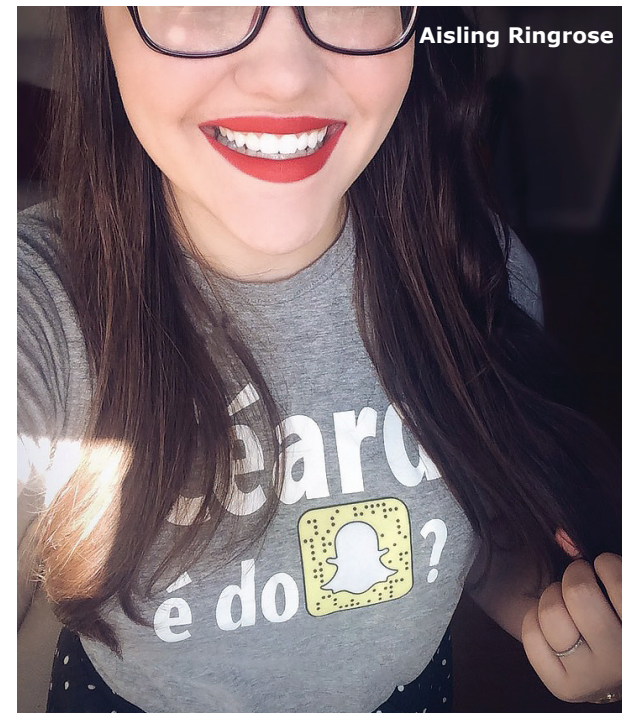
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