

# Gitelman and Good Publishers Share How High School Plays and Musicals Help Students Build Confidence and Creativity

*The educational theater publisher uses its curated catalog and educator resources to support the growing conversation on school plays in teen development.*

IL, UNITED STATES, March 19, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Every year, thousands of high school drama directors face the same decision: "which play or musical do we do?" The question sounds simple, though in practice, it rarely is. The right production must fit the stage, the budget, the cast size, and the schedule. More than anything, it must fit the students and enable them to shine. [Gitelman & Good Publishers](#), a theatrical publishing house focused exclusively on educational and community stages, was built around the belief that this last part is the one most publishers get wrong.

## High School Theatre and Student Development

Research linking theatre education to youth development has been building steadily for years. The Educational Theatre Association, among other organizations, has pointed to consistent evidence that students involved in school drama



The Amphibians by Dan Caffrey, © dav.d photography, 2024



Orphan Train by L. E. McCullough (book), Doug Katsaros (music), Michael Barry Greer (lyrics) © Richard Finkelstein, 2007

programs tend to develop stronger communication skills, sharper emotional literacy, and a greater capacity to work under pressure with peers. These are not abstract outcomes. Colleges and employers pay close attention to exactly the kind of collaborative resilience that ensemble theatre tends to produce.

Even so, many high school drama programs keep reaching for the same productions season after season, not because those scripts serve their students best but because they feel familiar. Gitelman & Good Publishers was founded on a different premise: drama education works better when the material is genuinely matched to the students performing it. That sounds obvious. It is, in practice, harder to execute than it looks.

### What the Rehearsal Room Actually Teaches

Ask any experienced theatre director what the rehearsal room does for students, and the answer usually goes well beyond opening night. Young actors are asked, repeatedly and in front of their peers, to attempt something, fall short, take notes, and try again.

Practiced over months, that process builds a specific kind of confidence, not the kind that comes from being told you are talented, but the kind that comes from learning you can recover. Drama education researchers have consistently identified ensemble-based rehearsal as one of the more reliable environments for building that skill.

Gitelman & Good Publishers founder Jason Sebacher has seen this work up close. Before launching the company, he spent nearly a decade as a volunteer theatre educator with Chicago Public Schools and holds a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) from Carnegie Mellon University's School of



SPIDER by Madeleine Adriance, © Lee McNeely, 2023



Her Beautiful Sound by Cris Eli Blak, © Roberta Sell, 2018

Drama. His editorial approach to building the catalog reflects that

background directly. Scripts are selected for teen performers specifically, not adapted downward from productions written for adult companies. The difference shows in the writing.

"Witnessing the enthusiasm of teenagers for stories that are both challenging and enjoyable has inspired my commitment to providing plays with real substance. They rise to the challenge; they WANT to rise to the challenge. Our plays not only entertain but also empower students to explore the complexities of our world today." -- Jason Sebacher, Founder and Managing Editor, Gitelman & Good Publishers

### A Catalog Organized Around Real School Stages

The company groups its plays for high school students into thematic collections, each built around a different kind of dramatic question. The "Plays of Resistance and Resilience" collection includes *On Account of Sex* by Bryan Colley and Tara Varney, a musical centered on the women's suffrage movement, and *The Trial of Mother Jones* by Roger Holzberg, a courtroom drama rooted in the American labor movement. These productions ask students to carry genuine moral weight in front of an audience, not simply deliver lines.

The "Dreams and Determination" collection moves into broader imaginative territory. *Gilgamesh* by Domenick Scudera brings the ancient Mesopotamian epic to a school stage with flexible, low-tech staging requirements. *To Thine Own Self Be True* sets a contemporary senior year against the structure of *Hamlet*, and is a comic exploration of grief and identity. Both titles are written to challenge experienced performers without leaving the ensemble behind.

### Plays Written for the World Students Are Living In

One of the more discussed titles in the current catalog is *Unprotected Text* by Michele Aldin Kushner. The play follows two high school students in the aftermath of a private text message gone public, addressing consent, reputation, and the particular cruelty of digital exposure without lecturing its audience.

It premiered at the New York International Fringe Festival after being developed with students at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. Kushner is a graduate of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts Dramatic Writing Program and has had her work recognized at national festivals and competitions. Her inclusion in the catalog reflects the publisher's standard: writers who have tested their material in front of real audiences, not just on paper.

Techies by Mark Rigney is set among a high school crew staging *The Crucible*, and tracks what happens when a crisis fractures the team behind the scenes. Sightings by Mona Z. Smith follows three teenagers who become the subject of public attention after an unexplained event, using the pressure to examine credibility, peer influence, and the cost of speaking up. Neither play uses its teenage characters as vehicles for adult messages. Both treat the stakes as real.

## Resources Built for the Teachers Running These Programs

Choosing the right production is only part of the job. Gitelman & Good Publishers pairs its catalog with a full set of educator resources: free lesson plans tied to specific plays, a dedicated playwriting curriculum, and virtual author sessions that connect students directly with the writers behind their scripts. Each element is designed to extend what is happening in the rehearsal room into the wider life of a drama program.

Karen Pionke, the company's Education Programs Manager, spent years building a nationally recognized theatre program at Viking Middle School in Gurnee, Illinois, where she directed more than 120 productions, two selected for the International Junior Thespian stage. She also served on the National Board of the Educational Theatre Association and contributed to theatre curriculum development with the Illinois Board of Education. Her experience shapes the practical emphasis of the company's support materials, which are built around the actual constraints of school programs, not ideal ones.

Free lesson plans are available for a wide range of catalog titles, including *Orphan Train*, *Tales of Odysseus*, *Her Beautiful Sound*, and *The Haunting of Ebenezer Scrooge*. For schools interested in developing original work, the playwriting curriculum helps students move from performing scripts to understanding how they are constructed. That shift tends to change how students engage with the performance work itself.

## Staging and Licensing Without the Friction

Many productions in the catalog are written with minimal technical demands so that stagecraft for high school students stays achievable on a real school budget. Scripts are delivered digitally, with cast breakdowns and production notes included so directors can assess a title fully before they commit.

The catalog is organized by cast size, genre, run time, and lead gender, giving directors a practical way to narrow their search based on the real constraints of their program. Schools with smaller programs can filter for three-to-eight actor casts. Larger ensembles can find productions that put twenty or more students on stage in roles that matter.

## About Gitelman & Good Publishers

Gitelman & Good Publishers is a theatrical publishing house dedicated to providing high school drama teachers with a curated selection of plays and musicals written for teen performers and educational stages.

The catalog includes full-length plays, musicals, one-act productions, and an educator resource suite covering free lesson plans, a playwriting curriculum, and virtual author sessions with playwrights. Scripts are organized by cast size, genre, run time, and lead gender to support production planning. Gitelman & Good Publishers is based in Chicago, Illinois.

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