

*The Rum Diaries Presents, July 2, 2019*

Victoria Z. Daly's plays have been presented at the Actors Studio, Last Frontier Theatre Conference, ATHE Conference, Gi60 Festival (NYC and UK,) Warner International Playwrights Festival, Alliance for Jewish Theatre, Berrie Center, Spokane's KPBX-FM (NPR,) 1:One UAE Theatre Fest (Dubai,) and Edinburgh Festival, among other venues. She is a Faculty Member in the Dramatist Guild Institute's Plays in Progress Program. Vicki founded and directs The 9th Floor, a New York City writers/actors' collaborative, currently in its eleventh season. She has been a television producer at Lifetime Cable Television, script consultant at Warner Brothers, and executive at ABC. Education: MFA in Dramatic Writing, NYU/Tisch; A.B. and M.B.A., Harvard; Certificat d'Etudes in theater from L'Ecole Jacques Lecoq. [www.victoriazdaly.com](http://www.victoriazdaly.com)

1. What were the early influences on your writing and how do they manifest in your work?

Here are a few:

From the time I was three years old, my Dad brought me into New York City to see musicals.

- When I was a teen I saw Marcel Marceau perform. That led me, after college, to enroll at the Ecole Jacques Lecoq, an international school of physical theater, in Paris.

- Gary Garrison, the great American teacher and mentor of playwrights, taught me to ask WHY a play belongs on a stage (as opposed to a tv or movie screen.)

The confluence of all of this means I'm happiest when I'm writing with big, theatrical elements that tell the intimate journeys of characters. I love to see how I can tell an inner story using not just dialogue but also physicality, props, sound, lighting, etc.

2. How does writing change the writer?

My writing usually starts with a strong feeling or question about the world (or the humans in it) that I'm trying to work out for myself. Finishing the play

doesn't give me definitive answers, but the act of writing allows me deeper understanding of the complexities buried within the questions.

3. What books have fortified you as a writer?

So many! Myths and fairy tales (which I loved as a kid and still do) -- the characters' wants and needs are so clear and oversized. Lots of books about playwriting (notably *The Inside Story* by Dara Marks and *A More Perfect Ten* by Gary Garrison.) Lots of plays, especially those by Paula Vogel (e.g. *How I Learned to Drive*) and Sarah Ruhl (e.g. *Eurydice*), rich both in theatricality and depth of character.

4. Is the unconscious mind a writer's best friend? If so please answer.

It's for sure one of them! The most fun I have writing is when I put pen to paper (which uses a different part of the brain than writing on a computer,) go "into the zone," and surprise myself.

5. What are you working on now?

A play called *Shell Collection* (currently a one-act that I think will become a full-length) about three sisters who have two days to divide up their late mother's possessions, sell her Florida condo and spread her ashes over the Gulf of Mexico. The process doesn't go well -- especially because the dead mother keeps showing up to tell one of the sisters that she does NOT want to be buried at the beach.

6. Last book you read

*The Baltimore Waltz* (a play,) by Paul Vogel, and *The Untethered Soul* (a book on the meditative mind,) by Michael Singer.

7. Advice to new writers just starting out?

1) Trust yourself and your instincts. 2) Ask yourself why you're writing what you're writing -- what are the questions you're trying to sort out by writing your play? 3) Find a group of people you trust with whom you can share your work. If you can't put together a writers' group where you live, you might be able to do so online.

8. If you could tell your younger writing self anything, what would it be?

Be kinder to yourself. Create your own definitions of what success looks like and remind yourself of those often.

9. What's the best way to market your writing?

All sorts of resources exist online to help you find submission opportunities. Because so many people submit their work to these, however, they're competitive and therefore a numbers game -- meaning the more you submit your plays, the more results you'll get. The best way to market is through personal connections. It's worth doing the former to get to the latter, because you never know where the production or reading of even a short play leads to connecting with a producer or director who loves your work.

10. How do you select the names of your characters?

Names convey gender, ethnicity, place of birth, age, and even characters' relationships. The pure sound of a name (percussive, melodic, etc.) also conveys information about energies and personalities, or even whether the character is comic or more serious. I try to consider all those parameters.