



## Welcome to 17percent - a new organisation to promote and support female playwrights

17percent founder Sam Hall is a female playwright. She graduated from City University's MA in scripts and plays last year. Over the past few years she noticed a vast discrepancy between the numbers of women on writing courses she had attended and those who are working as practising playwrights. Where do all the well-qualified female playwrights go? Why don't they make the transition from student to practising playwright? Is there an industry bias - and why does it matter if there is?

Gender roles/stereotypes are still prevalent all around us: why is it shocking that a new nurse in a long-running TV soap is a male? Why do we assume that the stockbroker mentioned in the latest City scandal will be a man? Why will those working in the 'caring professions' and charities be more likely to be female? And why are most practising artists working in all fields of the theatre, radio, film and TV - 'the industry' - male?

To single out the script writing industries might seem just like a drop in the ocean of the bigger equality issue, but never-the-less, at 17percent we believe it is a positive, fundamental step, because drama - be it on stage, on TV, on film, on radio, online or on any new platform - is incredibly influential and important. There is a deep need in human beings to tell and to hear stories: drama has huge opinion forming power, and it is essential that *all* voices are heard.

17percent aims to redress the current gender imbalance in plays being produced in the UK, by providing women with opportunities to develop as writers, through peer-to-peer networking and educational opportunities, championing women's achievements in the theatre, promoting female writers and providing positive female role models and inspirations.

## New on the website: Shelley Silas gives her advice

Shelley writes for theatre, radio and television. Plays include *Eating Ice Cream on Gaza Beach* (NYT/Soho Theatre), and *Falling* (The Bush). She is currently developing a recently optioned television comedy series.



"There is a definite discrepancy in the broadcast material for men v women writers. We all know it, we are all trying to change it. Whether we can or not is another matter. About a quarter of TV writers (in the UK) are women, slightly less for radio. It's shocking but true. And some men are aware of it and want to make changes, sadly it's the broadcasters and producers and artistic directors who make the decisions. I was recently turned down for a TV job, because I was too old! So women, in particular older women writers (and older women in general, in life, in the world) have a much harder time.

How do we change this? Never give up. Believe in your work. Keep writing, keep sending work out, make contacts directly with the people who make the decisions. Don't pester them, but send e-mails, ask about work. What's the worst that could happen? They say no? Big deal. At least they'll have heard about you. I honestly believe meeting people is a real bonus, for them and for you, because we all have preconceptions about

people, and often all they know of you is your work - which is not representative of who you are as a person. Getting to know directors/producers/script editors/literary managers and starting relationships with them is I think, a way forward. And it is not impossible. They are human too, some of them at least! There are a lot of fantastic TV/Theatre/Radio people out there who are not ageist or sexist, who want great ideas and brilliant scripts, but often they face opposition from the decision makers. Every time I look through the Radio Times and see how many more men are writing than women, I sigh. So do most of my women writer friends.

My ultimate advice is keep writing, keep doing what you're doing. It's good to see 17percent campaigning for women writers, alongside the rest of us. Maybe, just maybe, we can all make a real difference."

**Read more advice and inspirational stories on the website - <http://17percent.co.uk/index.php>  
If you have a story to share - get in touch.**

## 17percent events



### Medway group

The pilot Medway group met on 24 November at the Deaf Cat Cafe in Rochester.

The group at this stage is very small but perfectly formed! The members have various levels of experiences of writing include an ex-journalist, an ex visual artist and a teacher of youth theatre. All of the members have had plays produced on either a fringe or TIE basis. All are keen to use the 17% forum to network and develop their writing, and excited about the planned launch events. The first showcase of new work is planned tentatively for February next year.

The group meets at the Deaf Cat Cafe in Rochester on a monthly basis, if you are a Kent-based female playwright and would like to join, please email [17percentcampaign@gmail.com](mailto:17percentcampaign@gmail.com)

Next meeting: 29 December, 3pm.

### An event in Kent early next year

We plan to hold a fundraising and promotional evening in January or February. This evening will take the format of rehearsed readings of extracts from new work. If you would like to get involved, or find out more, please email us.

### To support 17percent

If you would like to get involved with 17percent, please email us, stating your interest.

If you wish to unsubscribe, please email [17percentcampaign@gmail.com](mailto:17percentcampaign@gmail.com) with the word 'Unsubscribe' in the header.

## High-light on writing opportunities

### Contributions to the blog and website

If you have a view or suggestion for either the blog or the website, or would like to write something, please email us. We are particularly interested to know what topics you would like us to run courses on.

### Fast approaching competition deadlines

Short plays wanted by 360 Theatre, deadline 11 December 2009

Plays about science and/or technology sought by the STAGE International Script Competition, deadline 15 December 2009

New Playwrights Awards from Playwrights' Studio, Scotland, deadline 15 December 2009

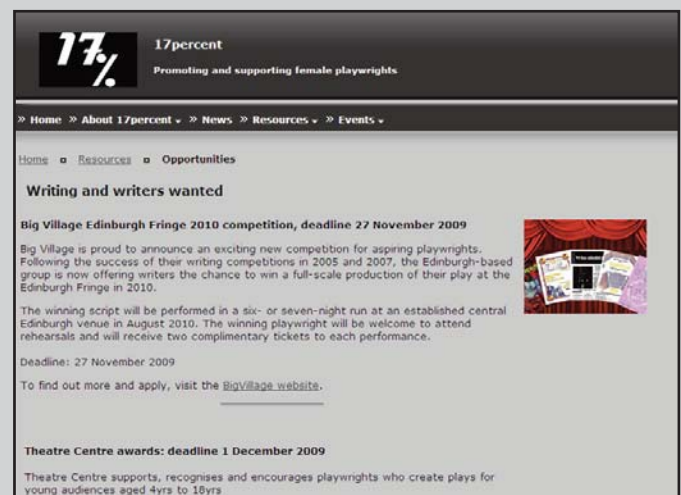
The Westminster Prize - deadline 11 January 2010

Leah Ryan's Fund for Emerging Women Writers annual prize (New York) - deadline 15 January 2010

Script Space 3 seeks one act plays for rehearsed readings, deadline 15 January 2010

High Tide Festival, deadline 15 May 2010

Full details of these and more on the website: <http://17percent.co.uk/Opportunities.php>



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