

# STAGES



## CALLING ALL PLAYWRIGHTS PANTO: REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS TO BE PRODUCED NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2024

Stages is accepting playwright proposals for the commissioning of a new Panto musical. We are seeking a world premiere adaptation of a fairy tale, fable, or modern pop culture story for children and families. The playwright whose idea is selected will receive a full commission and mainstage production of the show in November and December of 2024.

### WHAT'S A PANTO?

Panto is a British theatrical tradition: a genre of musical comedy that is suitable for children while still including mild innuendos for adults. It usually retells a nursery rhyme or fairy tale, but modern adaptations have branched out to other sources as well. Panto is a rich, spectacle-filled celebration of local references, puns, gags, slapstick humor, songs, dances, and interaction with the audience. A sample excerpt is included here from 2021's *Panto Little Mermaid* by ShaWanna Renee Rivon and Elizabeth A. M. Keel as a reference for both style and formatting.

### APPLICATION MATERIALS

Please submit your treatment, a resume, and a writing sample as a single PDF file.

- The treatment should include either an outline of the plot broken down by scenes, or a clear narrative arc (around 2-3 pages). There should also be a character breakdown and a song list signaling either parodies of known music, or intent for an original score.
- The inclusion of the character **Buttons** is required. He serves as the audience's friendly guide, and is a key part of our brand from year to year. You can watch a video of *Story Time With Buttons* [here](#) to get a feel for the character's kindness and silliness.
- For the writing sample, please include either two separate scenes or one full act. (The work may be produced or unproduced.) Please submit no more than 50 pages of writing total.

### SELECTION PROCESS

Stages has made a standing commitment to the Houston community, and we will prioritize local writers in our consideration. We also utilize a volunteer Season Selection Committee composed of staff members hailing from all of our departments. This group will review all submitted proposals as a collective. Several playwrights will receive interviews from an Artistic panel regarding their proposal, and one will be chosen for production. It's entirely possible that another finalist could be commissioned for a future season.

## TIMELINE

- Complete applications are due by March 1, 2023.
- Finalists are selected by April 17, 2023 and will meet with an Artistic panel from the Season Selection committee for interviews by April 30, 2023.
- The winner will be notified by May 19, 2023.
- An outline and character list is due by July 1, 2023.
- The rough draft of the completed play is due by October 1, 2023.
- The final rehearsal draft is due by January 5, 2024.

## PAY

This offer pays a \$5,000 commission total (either for an individual writer, or shared by a team). It will be paid in three installments: upon execution of agreement, delivery of the full rehearsal draft, and at the official press opening of the production. Though a commissioned work, the playwright retains sole ownership of the piece. Stages and the playwright will negotiate in good faith regarding additional royalty rights for any subsequent productions.

## PRODUCTION HISTORY

Please note: we have already produced the following Pantos, and are seeking a new fairy tale, fable, or modern pop culture story to share with children and families. **We are especially interested in the premise of a *Harry Potter* Panto, but are open to all proposals.**

Panto Cinderella (2008, 2017)  
Panto Sleeping Beauty (2009)  
Panto Pinocchio (2010)  
Panto Red Riding Hood (2011)  
Panto Mother Goose (2012)  
Panto Goldilocks (2013)  
Panto Rapunzel and Zombies (2014)  
Panto Snow Queen: Unfrozen (2015)

Panto Wonderful Wizard (2016)  
Panto Star Force (2018)  
Panto Hansel & Gretel (2019)  
Button's Sleeping Beauty (2020)  
Panto Little Mermaid (2021)  
Panto Snow White & The Seven Dorks (2022)  
Panto TBA (2023)

## CONTACT

Please contact our Artistic & Community Engagement Administrator (and previous Panto playwright) Elizabeth Keel at [ekeel@stageshouston.com](mailto:ekeel@stageshouston.com) for assistance or submission.

## THIS IS IMPORTANT

Stages is committed to advancing equity, diversity and inclusion. We are committed to creating and maintaining a safe creative environment for staff, artists and our community. We know that through discussion and expression, we can continue to promote change in a positive direction. We believe that diversity on and off stage is important. We are committed to bridging cultural gaps and creating an environment of inclusion and equity for all. It is our intent to provide equal opportunities to all who may apply. We welcome every race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, genetic makeup, gender identity or expression, disability, veteran status and thinking style.

**EXCERPT FROM PANTO LITTLE MERMAID**  
by Elizabeth A. M. Keel & ShaWanna Renee Rivon

*Hairielle appears with a comb and a cloud of floor-length, tomato red hair. Her lengthy mane is full of ocean trash, and she spends the song frantically fishing items out: six-pack ji rings, shopping bags, and more. The weirder the sight gags get, the better.*

**HAIRIELLE**

I AM SO LATE! GREAT BARRIER REEF...  
MOM'S GONNA GIVE ME OH SO MUCH GRIEF.  
GETTING DRESSED SHOULDN'T BE, SHOULDN'T BE DISGUSTING.  
LOOK AT THE TIME, FLYING RIGHT BY!  
HOW MUCH DEBRIS IS "UNDER THE SEA?"  
TOUCHING MY HAIR MAKES ME THINK,  
"GROSS. HUMANS RUIN EVERYTHING!"

*Hippo, a pregnant seahorse and her best friend, arrives, panting and stretching out his back.*

**HIPPO**

Hairielle! Everybody's waiting! You missed the opening number! Don't you *want* to swim to the surface?

**HAIRIELLE**

Of course I do! I've been holding my breath for sixteen years over it! But Hippo, first you've got to help me get all this crud out.

**HIPPO**

Have you thought about a haircut?

**HAIRIELLE**

Mom won't let me swim with scissors.

**HIPPO**

And I don't have fingies.

**HAIRIELLE**

I'VE GOT GASKETS AND GINGKO A'PLENTY.

**HIPPO**

You've got Post-its, and Cheez-its galore.

**HAIRIELLE**

YOU WANT DOOHICKEYS? I'VE GOT—  
Wait, are you eating those?

**HIPPO**

I'm pregnant! Don't crave-shame me.

**HAIRIELLE**

Fair enough.

**HIPPO**  
I WANT MORE!

**HAIRIELLE**  
WELL, I WANT THE GARBAGE PUT IN A CAN.  
I WANNA SWIM WITHOUT DETRITUS PILING.  
GETTING GUNK TRAPPED UNDER MY TAIL, STUCK IN MY FEE–

**HIPPO**  
FINS!

**HAIRIELLE**  
ANTIQUES ROADSHOW WON'T BRING ME JOY  
AS LONG AS MY SCALP FEELS LIKE A HOARDER'S PANTRY.  
FACED WITH A TIDAL WAVE OF...WHAT'S THE WORD...

**HIPPO**  
*(Replacing an expletive, covering his unborn baby's ears.)*  
“Stuff?”

**HAIRIELLE**  
WHAT WOULDN'T I TRY TO PICK UP ALL OF THESE PLASTICS?  
WHAT WOULDN'T I DO TO FIX A PROBLEM THAT FEELS SO DRASTIC?  
I'M WILLING TO SHARE WITH THOSE UP THERE  
IF THE HUMANS AGREE TO PLAY FAIR.  
THIS YOUNG MERMAID WILL GO ON CRUSADE, AND SERENADE!  
I'M WILLING TO SHOW THEM HOW COMPOST WORKS.  
ANSWER THEIR QUESTIONS, AND GET TO SCRUBBING!

*Hippo finds a bottle of Windex.*

**HIPPO**  
What's in this bottle? And why does it–

**HAIRIELLE**  
No, don't–!

**HIPPO**  
OW! *BURN!*

**HAIRIELLE**  
WHEN'S IT ENOUGH? TIME TO GO UP! GROW UP AND FACE THE WORLD THAT'S ABOVE.  
THEY HAVE TO RECYCLE FOR OUR MUTUAL SURVIVAL. WE'RE A PART OF THEIR  
*(Wait for it...)*

ECOSYSTEM!