

# EDUCATION

## ANNUAL REPORT

### 2013–2014



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Melissa Murray  
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## **STAFF**

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Wade Handy, Education Programs Coordinator  
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# Introduction

The tide seems to be turning for arts education. A range of factors — arts-friendly policies by school administrations, an improving economy, effective advocacy — seem to have moved the dial at the school level. Principals are starting to understand that the arts benefit students in a variety of ways — intellectually, emotionally, and socially. And increasing numbers of these principals are turning to MTC, presumably because of the nature and the quality of the services we provide.

We have thus seen an increasing demand for services from schools throughout the region. We added some new ones to our roster this year, but at least as significantly, our current partners expanded our relationship to include more students. As a result, we served several hundred more young people this year than last — a 12% increase — and the trend is definitely on the upswing for the year to come.

In particular, principals of schools serving high-needs students have enthusiastically embraced our *Write on the Edge* playwriting residency program. They have come to understand that by integrating theatergoing with the creation and revision of original dramatic work, the program not only enhances students' writing skills but also develops their imaginations as well as the grit and persistence that come from undertaking a labor-intensive process over time.

As always, the quality of the work we do is far more important to us than the numbers we serve. We remain committed to ensuring that each student we serve enjoys a rich learning experience, deepening their understanding of themselves and the world through their encounters with professional theatre. And I'm pleased to report that teachers and students alike agree that we are succeeding in our aim. Here, some examples:

"I'm extremely grateful to the Manhattan Theatre Club for giving us the opportunity and experience of a lifetime. This is my first time going to a play. The experience was awesome."

"The play [*Commons of Pensacola*] showed that in order to be successful, you must first be at peace with yourself."

"[My students] refer to the experience often, as they do every year. It affirms the power of drama as an active, valuable presence in their academic lives. Once again, MTC provided a student audience a view of the human condition through drama."

In the ensuing pages, we will describe in detail the work we do that results in the rich learning and personal outcomes suggested by the quotes above.



David Shookhoff  
Director of Education

# 2013 – 2014 Schools

## **The Bronx**

1. Bronx High School of Science
2. Bronx Pathways to Graduation - Bronx Regional
3. Bronx Pathways to Graduation - Davidson
4. Community School for Social Justice
5. The Marie Curie School for Medicine, Nursing, and Health Professions
6. Passages Academy - Bronx Hope\*
7. Passages Academy - Horizons\*

## **Brooklyn**

8. Abraham Lincoln Young Adult Borough Center
9. Brooklyn Technical High School
10. Downtown Brooklyn Young Adult Borough Center
11. Passages Academy - Brooklyn Pride\*
12. Passages Academy - Crossroads\*
13. William Maxwell Career and Technical Education High School

## **Manhattan**

14. Bard High School Early College
15. Eleanor Roosevelt High School
16. Gramercy Arts High School
17. The High School of Fashion Industries
18. Manhattan Academy for Arts and Language
19. Manhattan Pathways to Graduation - The Door
20. Manhattan Pathways to Graduation - The Hub
21. Manhattan Pathways to Graduation - YouthBuild, NMIC
22. Manhattan Theatre Lab
23. Urban Academy Laboratory High School
24. The Young Women's Leadership School

## **Queens**

25. Beach Channel High School
26. Benjamin Cardozo High School
27. Flushing Young Adult Borough Center
28. High School for Arts and Business
29. Newcomers High School

## **Long Island**

30. North Shore High School
31. The Wheatley School

## **New Jersey**

32. Alternative Design Academy
33. Arts High School
34. High Tech High School
35. Jose Martí Freshman Academy
36. Memorial High School
37. St. Peter's Preparatory School
38. Union City High School

## **Westchester County**

39. Ardsley High School
40. Phoenix Academy\*

\* facility for incarcerated youth

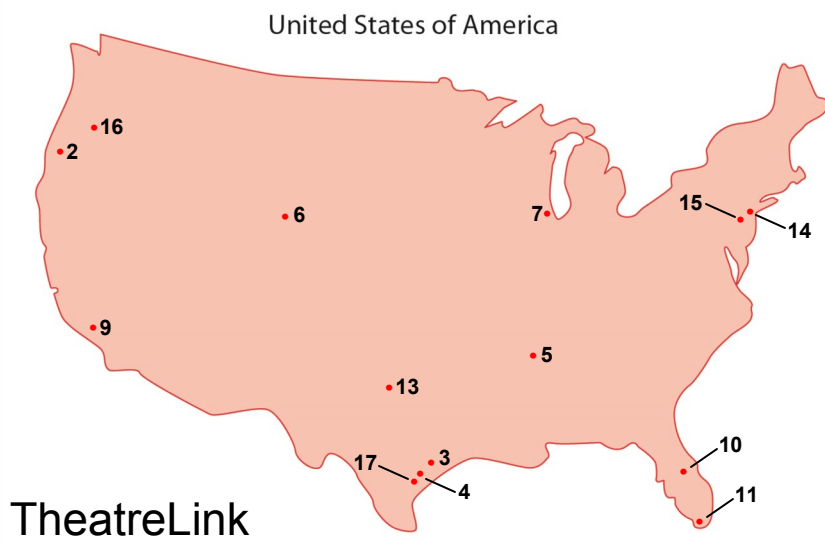
+ residential substance-abuse treatment center

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## **2013 – 2014 TheatreLink Schools**

1. Anatolia College (Thessaloniki, Greece)
2. Ashland High School (Ashland, OR)
3. Clements High School (Sugar Land, TX)
4. Columbia High School (West Columbia, TX)
5. Cordova High School (Cordova, TN)
6. Laramie High School (Laramie, WY)
7. Loyola High School (Wilmette, IL)
8. Marlborough College (Marlborough, United Kingdom)
9. Orange High School (Orange, CA)
10. Poinciana High School (Kissimmee, FL)
11. Robert Morgan Educational Center (Miami, FL)
12. Sacred Heart College (Johannesburg, South Africa)
13. The Shannon Learning Center (Haltom City, TX)
14. Smithtown High School (Smithtown, NY)
15. Spotswood High School (Spotswood, NJ)
16. Springfield High School (Springfield, OR)
17. Sweeny High School (Sweeny, TX)

# New York Area Schools



TheatreLink  
Schools

Greece



United Kingdom



South Africa



# Facts & Figures

Founded in 1989, MTC's Education Program has enriched the lives of more than 100,000 students and will continue to grow as an integral part of Manhattan Theatre Club.

## **PROGRAM GOALS**

- To deepen students' understanding of themselves and the world through the medium of theatre
- To help develop a knowledgeable, perceptive new audience for the theatre and for the arts in general
- To help stimulate participants' imagination, creativity, and critical-thinking skills through active engagement with challenging new theatre works
- To improve the ability of classroom teachers to teach the arts and to incorporate arts education into the curriculum
- To provide training for early-career theatre management professionals

<b>57</b> <b>Schools</b>	<b>19</b> <b>Teaching Artists</b>
<b>2,790</b> <b>Students</b>	<b>6</b> <b>Professional Development Workshops</b>
<b>31</b> <b>Interns</b>	<b>3</b> <b>Family Matinees</b>
<b>5</b> <b>Student Matinees</b>	<b>96</b> <b>Classroom Teachers</b>
<b>74</b> <b>School Residencies</b>	<b>9</b> <b>Subscriber Workshops</b>

# Education Initiatives

## Core Program

Students attend a matinee of an MTC production after intensive classroom preparation. Four workshops with MTC teaching artists and four led by classroom teachers enrich students' experiences of the performance. Students discuss the play, do improvisations on its themes, perform key excerpts, and write scenes of their own. This work provides specific insights into the plays being studied, and deepens the students' understanding of theatre in general. To ensure continuity, MTC maintains permanent school partnerships.

Reflecting a generally positive trend in recent years, the *Core Program* this year saw a significant uptick in the number of students served — 1,494 to 1,729, a 16% increase. We expect this trend to continue at least for the near future. But even more gratifying than the growing head count were the level of engagement and depth of response of our student audiences to the challenging material they encountered on our stages.



Students from The Young Women's Leadership School prepare to view *Outside Mullingar* by reading excerpts from the play.

In their written responses they repeatedly provided evidence of deep understanding of the themes and issues in the plays they had studied and attended, based on inferences drawn from close observation of significant details in the production. They wrote tellingly about the inability of the characters in *The Snow Geese* to let go of the past and their denial of impending financial disaster. Students who attended *The Commons of Pensacola* often focused on the unyielding sliding glass door as a symbol of Becca's and Judith's spiritual imprisonment by a history of deceit, betrayal, and unfulfilled promise. Many wrote insightfully about the deathbed scene in *Outside Mullingar*; at least one speculated on the significance of Anthony's shadow, still visible in the bedroom doorway after he left, as an indication of the enduring connection between father and son. Another wrote at length about the pervasive idea of yearning in the same play.

Essays on *Tales from Red Vienna* frequently examined the play's final moment, when the protagonist, Hélena, forces open the apartment window in order to breathe. And many young writers were deeply





Brooklyn Technical High School students explore gender stereotypes in their preparatory study of *Casa Valentina*.

engaged by the dramatization of identity — sexual and otherwise — in *Casa Valentina* as something not fixed but malleable, manifesting itself in “infinite shades of gray.” Several wrote evocatively about the character Jonathon’s transformation into his female persona, Miranda; one described the “mismatched” mirrors in which Miranda saw herself as “odd, weird, and out of place [like Miranda], but in that moment... perfect and beautiful.”

Not only did our students clearly understand the plays they saw at MTC, in many cases they found them deeply relevant and meaningful. Their written responses evinced powerful personal connections between the ideas and images in the productions and their own lived experience. Several students who had come to the U.S. from another country identified with Viktorya in *The Snow Geese*, the immigrant maid who had been uprooted from a life of comfort in her native Poland. One described the character’s dissolving in tears as “a really

hard moment... I understand what it feels like.” Writing about the dénouement in *Outside Mullingar*, a student observed, “Anthony came forth, put his fears aside, and opened up his heart to a person who genuinely cares, and that’s an important thing that we can all take with us on our journey of life.”

It’s particularly gratifying to us that the students almost universally acknowledged the crucial role of the MTC teaching artists in facilitating their understanding of the plays under study and helping them make deep and powerful connections to their themes and images. Reflecting on her explorations of identity as part of a *Core* unit on *Casa Valentina*, one student wrote, “[The teaching artist] helped me further understand the plot, but also helped me discover things about myself and who I really, honestly am.”



Students attend the Education Matinee of *Outside Mullingar*.

# Education Initiatives

## Write on the Edge

Students develop original scripts inspired by the Manhattan Theatre Club production they have studied and attended. A team of professional actors, directors, and classroom teachers supervise the writing and revision process.

Since 1994, some of our most exciting and challenging *Write on the Edge* playwriting residencies have taken place at facilities for incarcerated youth. This was only the second year, however, of working with adolescents at non-secure facilities; we provided services to Brooklyn Pride and Bronx Hope, two programs run by Passages Academy, a multi-site facility for court-involved adolescents aged 11 to 16 where we have been working for quite some time — but only in the more traditional, secure sites.

As opposed to a secure location, a non-secure facility enables students to live in group homes as they transition back into their communities. Often the building that houses the school and the student residence is operated by an independent agency; dealing with the rules and constraints of the respective community-based organization adds additional layers of complexity to the administration and implementation of the residency. MTC artists and administrators have to adapt to fluid situations; we learn as we go along whom to contact about scheduling or to ask for necessary supplies, additional time, and sometimes even extra snacks for the hungry teens we serve.

Teaching Artist Carmen Rivera facilitated a unit at the Brooklyn Pride site this spring. She found the work to be both challenging

and rewarding. “In the secure facility where my husband (and MTC teaching artist Candido Tirado) works there is little for the young men to do, so writing is an escape. My girls knew their time at the facility was near an end, which made them excited and anxious,” explains Rivera. Additionally, she recognized that many of the young women had past histories of physical or emotional abuse, so there were immediate trust issues. “Even more than regular in-school units, you have to allow time for the students to open up both in person and in their writing. I found that sharing about my own losses and challenges helped to create a connection.”

Rivera realized that many of the students wrote poetry, and once they trusted her, the young women would bring in their work to use as a starting point for their plays. “The girls wrote lovely pieces, some about what got them incarcerated and some that truly showed their imagination. It was especially gratifying when, after the final performance, several of the girls who had refused to participate in the residency were inspired by the experience and approached me to say, ‘Miss, I can do that. I can write a play.’”

# Education Initiatives

## TheatreLink

Students in geographically isolated communities collaborate on a playwriting/production project via the Internet. Classes at each site write an original play based on an MTC production; their play is then produced by students at a partner school. Using distance-learning technologies, students confer with MTC teaching artists, study the MTC play, and communicate with their partner school. The work culminates in a video presentation of each play.

The 2014 iteration of *TheatreLink* was built around Richard Greenberg's *The Assembled Parties*. To launch the project, the 16 participating teachers traveled to New York in December to participate in a two-day professional development workshop. The workshop aimed at preparing them to work in tandem with MTC teaching artists as they engaged with the play and the *TheatreLink* process in their classrooms. Topics ranged

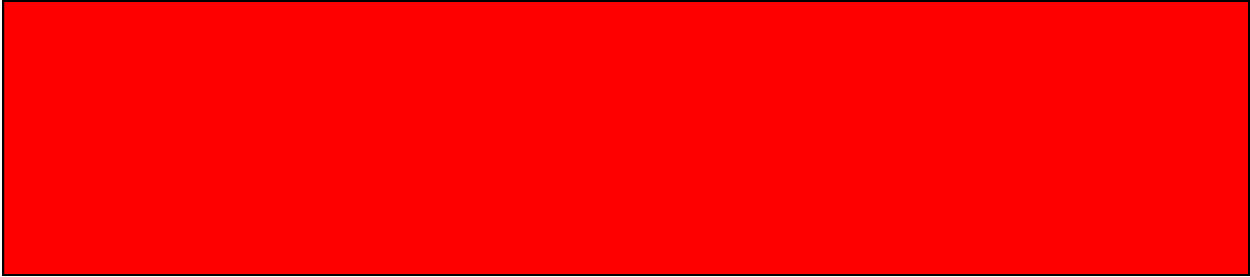
from using family stories to create dramatic scenarios to working with the writing prompt students were to use to create their original scripts; in addition, teachers were encouraged to generate their own topics for sessions known as "Open Space." Continuous communication and the sharing of ideas and inspiration were emphasized as keys to meeting success with the program's goals.



During *TheatreLink* training, teachers participate in the activities they will bring back to their classrooms.

Additionally, the teachers and teaching artists had the opportunity to interact with Mr. Greenberg and actress Jessica Hecht in a session moderated by Director of Education David Shookhoff. Mr. Greenberg discussed the genesis of the play, its developmental process, and MTC's production of the play; Ms. Hecht talked about her working relationship with Mr. Greenberg and her insights on playing the role of Julie Bascov. This conversation greatly aided the teachers' and teaching artists' understanding of how best to instruct their students.

Interaction with the playwright continued through the first phase of the *TheatreLink* process during the early winter months. After



*The Assembled Parties* playwright Richard Greenberg and actress Jessica Hecht (seated center) with teachers and teaching artists during TheatreLink training.

Greenberg. Questions ranged from those about his career path to in-depth interrogatories about the nature of relationships in *The Assembled Parties*. The dialogue between playwright and student is a true highlight of the TheatreLink program.

TheatreLink's students later utilized language similar to Greenberg's as they handed off the plays they wrote to their partner schools. This communication heightened the cultural exchange that TheatreLink provides its participants. One example is the play that students from Anatolia College in Greece wrote. Their play, *An Easter Gathering*, is set on Greek Easter, one of their culture's most important holidays, and is centered on expatriation as a result of a family's economic struggles – clearly, a demonstration of the immediate concerns in these high school students' lives.

reading and analyzing the play with their assigned teaching artist, students were given the opportunity to develop questions for Mr.



Students from Ashland High School interact with students from Anatolia College after viewing Anatolia's performance of Ashland's play.

# Education Initiatives

## Stargate Theatre Company

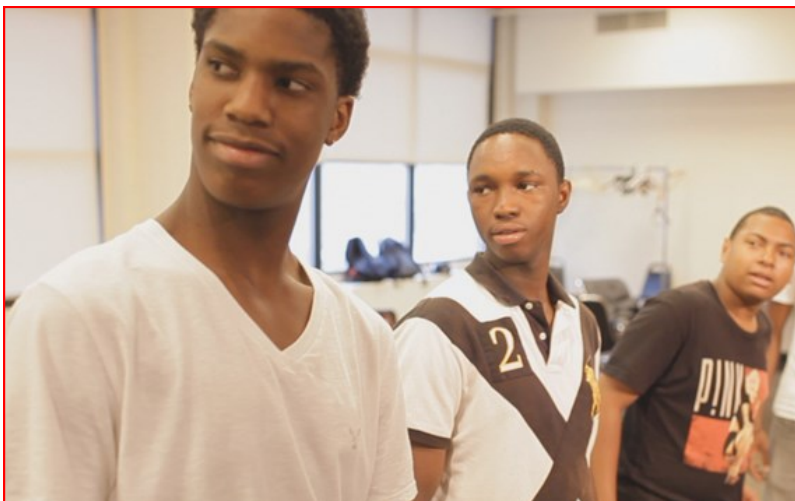
At-risk and court-involved youth develop workforce readiness and literacy skills through an intensive six-week theatre-making process. The program culminates with a performance of their collaboratively written play in an off-Broadway venue.

Last summer saw the launch of the Stargate Theatre Company, an exciting theatre-making, workforce readiness, and literacy project for court-involved youth. For six weeks in July and August, a small group of young men met for three hours almost daily to write, rehearse, and ultimately perform a theatre piece, which they titled *Behind My Eyes*.

We recruited the participants from various youth service agencies around the city. Once accepted, they became company members; we paid them the minimum wage as employees of Manhattan Theatre Club. We emphasized to them that this was a job; instead of flipping hamburgers or stocking store shelves, their job was to create a piece of theatre, something which none of them had

ever contemplated doing before.

Under the leadership of Judy Tate and Stephen DiMenna, two senior teaching artists and theatre artists in their own right with years of experience with at-risk and incarcerated youth, the project entailed two major phases, writing and rehearsal. For the first three weeks, Judy provided a variety of writing prompts, including themes like “my neighborhood” and “who I really am.” Almost daily, the company read and discussed poetry by writers such as Langston Hughes and Nikki Giovanni, some of which served as writing prompts as well. They read relevant newspaper articles, including an op-ed piece about Trayvon Martin, which inspired one of the most moving sections of the final performance.



Stargate company members rehearse in preparation for their performance at New York City Center, Stage II.

During the rehearsal phase, the young men memorized lines and learned blocking, challenges they had never faced before. Judy and Steve brought in a choreographer to incorporate movement into the emerging piece, adding yet another challenge for these novice thespians.



Co-Artistic Director Stephen DiMenna provides direction to Stargate company members.

Some of the company fell by the wayside — sadly, we had to dismiss participants who were repeatedly late or absent. But seven of them stuck with it to the end and were rewarded for their efforts with thunderous applause and a standing ovation after their two performances at New York City Center, Stage II on a Saturday in August. *Behind My Eyes* was an enormously empowering success for the performers.

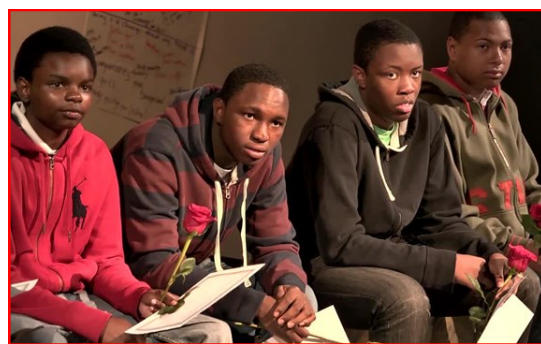
Of course the primary aim of the project was not so much to turn the young men into theatre artists (though we would welcome that outcome) but to instill in them crucial workplace and life skills — discipline, resilience, teamwork, creative problem



Stargate Theatre Company members perform *Behind My Eyes* at New York City Center, Stage II.

solving — that will help them become happy and productive workers and community members.

Time will finally judge how effective we were. But we have remained in touch with our “magnificent seven.” We are pleased to report that one of the company members enrolled in *Write Now!*, our after-school playwriting program, one got an internship with a video production company, one secured a job, with our assistance, as an usher at a midtown theatre, and one was accepted at two colleges and will be a freshman in the fall.



Stargate Theatre Company members participate in a post-performance discussion.

# Education Initiatives

## Write Now!

Highly motivated high school students learn about the art and craft of playwriting through weekly after-school sessions conducted by master playwright/mentors. Participants develop plays by bringing in successive drafts for critique by the leaders and the group. The program culminates in a rehearsed reading of the participants' work by professional actors for an audience of family and friends.

*Steven Primero, a graduate of Memorial High School, participated in the Write Now! program from 2010 to 2014. He now studies playwriting at Philadelphia's University of the Arts. This is his reflection on his time participating in Write Now!*

Over the four years of my high school career, I never appreciated the value of hard work and friendship as much as I did when I was attending MTC'S *Write Now!* program. Being a theatre major at my public high school, I constantly traveled from cast to cast hoping to find dedicated, long-term friendships with fellow cast members. But of course, that isn't always the case. Then in my freshman year, my theatre teacher told me of this playwriting program since I had told her I had interest in writing stories. She directed me towards MTC's and reluctantly I signed up, thinking it wasn't really a big deal. I was wrong.

Four years later, MTC's *Write Now!* program has changed me to become a better playwright, performer, professional, and person. I had this idea that my only career track would be musical theatre, but becoming part of MTC's family, gaining all these great long-term friendships, and immersing myself into the playwriting culture, I decided to go to

college for playwriting. I was inspired by all the stories I heard when I was in the room, by all the characters that were created in that roundtable, and by all the choices that were made to carry each story forward. I was astounded by how one "normal" group of kids could create such an array of great work and great storytelling. The dynamic of this program is impeccable. This is where great storytelling starts and it's why I chose playwriting as my major: I want to experience this dynamic throughout my whole life. Why perform someone else's story when you could just create your own?



The Spring 2014 cadre of *Write Now!* students, including Steven Primero (second from right), with teaching artist Julie Leedes Bienstock (far right).

# Education Initiatives

## Professional Development

Classroom teachers, school administrators, and teaching artists participate in workshops built around Manhattan Theatre Club productions. This process strengthens their understanding of MTC's instructional models and introduces them to innovative techniques for teaching dramatic literature.

At least six times a year, a group of dedicated classroom teachers convene voluntarily at MTC's Creative Center for an intensive three-hour workshop focusing on a specific MTC production, which they then attend.

These workshops have proven enormously beneficial over the years, despite the wide disparity in the teaching situations of the various participants. Some teach in comprehensive high schools, others in alternative programs for high-needs students, still others teach in secure and non-secure facilities for court-involved youth on Rikers Island and elsewhere in the city. Some teach in the suburbs; some in high-poverty neighborhoods. Many come from our partner high schools (workshop participation is a prerequisite for collaborating with us), but others come because they find the workshops valuable for their particular classroom situations.

Virtually without exception, participants' written evaluations attest enthusiastically to the value of the workshop experiences.

They often describe how the workshops develop their own aesthetic literacy— that is, their ability to perceive and understand both



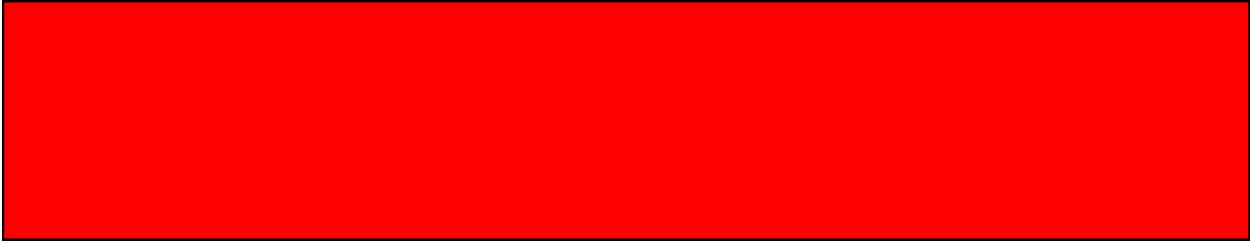
An improvisation related to "terror and exaltation" at the *Casa Valentina* teacher workshop.

the play under study and, by extension, plays in general:

*Layers of meaning, identification of motifs and dramatic structures, and collaborative creation all helped me visualize and comprehend more than my solitary reading [could provide].*

— Helene Alalouf,  
Stern College for Women  
*Outside Mullingar* workshop





Participating teachers read their original scene at the *Tales from Red Vienna* workshop.

And they universally express enormous enthusiasm for the overall experience:

*The total experience is most valuable, since each component can be applied over and over. ... I would like more workshops — longer workshops. It's hard to suggest improvements for such well-planned workshops packed full of insights and activities.*

— Laurie Block Siegel,  
Home School Educational Alliance  
*Tales from Red Vienna* workshop

*Always a treat. I learn something new each time.*

— Thom Newton,  
A.E. Smith High School  
*Casa Valentina* workshop

*The activities actually all built one upon the other. ... The learning is based on well-designed activities. I have done 12 years of "PD" — this is RARE!*

— Robert Gladding,  
Eleanor Roosevelt High School  
*The Commons of Pensacola* workshop

They almost always affirm the applicability of the workshop content to their teaching practice:

*The use of different modalities to capture the essence of this play can be transferred to using a variety of teaching approaches that can reach students with differing learning styles.*

— Andrea Starr,  
PS147Q  
*Outside Mullingar* workshop

*The exercises in the workshop... help kinesthetic learners to invest in the play.*

— Sarah Kim,  
East River Academy  
*Tales from Red Vienna* workshop



Teachers engage in a playwriting activity at *The Commons of Pensacola* teacher workshop.

# Education Initiatives

## Family Matinee

Students bring an adult of their choice to a Saturday morning workshop focusing on the MTC production they attend in the afternoon. These matinees promote family theatregoing and intergenerational dialogue.



“The morning’s workshop really helped when looking at the play because you looked at the characters differently.”

—Participant, *Casa Valentina* Family Matinee



“After the performance, our group had a great conversation about the themes, relationships, conflicts, and objects (symbols) used in the play as first suggested in the workshop.”

—Participant, *Outside Mullingar* Family Matinee



“The workshop was so helpful in bringing out the theme of the play and making the viewing experience so much deeper. ... We plan to see more dramas as a family now.”

—Participant, *The Snow Geese* Family Matinee

# Education Initiatives

## Adult Education

The Adult Education Program gives MTC audiences an opportunity to deepen their understanding of MTC productions through conversations with theatre professionals and outside experts, behind-the-scenes views of the production process, and hands-on theatre workshops.

One of the perks of being an MTC Patron or subscriber is the opportunity to take part in an exclusive series of educational workshops aimed at deepening the theatregoing experience. Led by Education Director David Shookhoff, *Patron/Subscriber Workshops* allow participants to explore the themes of our Friedman Theatre productions in advance of attending a performance, and *Curtain Calls* offer the opportunity to reflect on the play at the conclusion of each production's run.

With activities ranging from group improvisations to creative writing exercises, attendees participate at the level at which they feel comfortable. Sessions associated with *Outside Mullingar* asked participants to demonstrate major life milestones through tableaux, while gender roles and the idea of one's "secret self" were explored in the workshop for *Casa Valentina*. Participants frequently commented on the extent to which the preparatory workshops provide greater context and perspective on each play's characters, themes, and time period. One workshop attendee said about the *Outside Mullingar* workshop, "There is no doubt that attending this educational event was helpful to me. It made watching the play more enjoyable and a much richer experience."



Participants create a tableau at the *Outside Mullingar* workshop.

*Curtain Calls* provide participants the opportunity to analyze and evaluate the play. Typically attracting a smaller group than the preparatory workshops, these events are akin to fireside chats; participants read aloud pivotal scenes from the play they have seen, then discuss character motivation, imagery, and themes. Participants remarked that the season's *Curtain Calls* were "intimate," "thought-provoking," and "enhanced the theatre experience."

As a result of the tremendous value they provide, *Patron/Subscriber Workshops* experienced steady growth during the 2013–14 season; attendance was up 28% from the previous year.

# Education Initiatives

## The Paul A. Kaplan Theatre Management Program

MTC's internship program is a practicum for theatre management and artistic professions. Undergraduate and graduate students and early-career professionals are assigned to specific departments. To enrich their experience, interns participate in weekly seminars with MTC staff and members of our extended artistic "family."

During their exit interviews, interns tick off the list of skills they acquired working at MTC; examples include a deeper understanding of the not-for-profit theatre landscape in New York, comfort dealing with budgeting software, and a stronger mastery of spread sheets. Another set of skills, which seems to track far beyond their time at MTC, includes a sense of confidence and the ability to self-critique.

Allyson Capetta, who completed her nine-month internship in May 2014, described her experience working in the Institutional Giving office as "[grant]writing boot camp." But of equal importance to her was that the position, "...brought to light traits I did not know I possessed and gave me the confidence to use them in a professional setting." These discoveries about herself as a professional and a strong writer allowed Allyson to move into a position in the Development Department at the New York office of the University of Pennsylvania directly following her internship.

While Flora Pei asserts that her tenure in the Marketing Department during the 2007–2008 season helped instill in her a strong work ethic, it also honed her ability at self-evaluation. Flora explains, "The more I did at



The Spring 2014 interns attend a seminar with Artistic Director Lynne Meadow. Two of these interns are now full-time employees of MTC.

my internship, the more I learned about myself. I was able to assess my abilities better. That was crucial when I started going on job interviews." She used that ability in her work at Signature Theatre and currently as a Social Media Supervisor at AKA NYC. As Flora asks rhetorically, "How do you move forward in your career if you do not know what you excel at and how to improve your skill set?"

The Kaplan Program is designed to answer that question. Through guidance and feedback, we enable MTC interns to recognize and acknowledge the strengths they possess and to develop the new skills and capacities they will need.

# New Next Year

Next season we will have an opportunity to reacquaint ourselves with old friends:

*Write Now!* students extol the program as a safe laboratory to explore playwriting; however, many past participants have articulated their frustration with the lack of a creative outlet once they've left high school. Last spring, the Education Department launched the *Write Now!* Alumni Group which began meeting in the summer of 2014. In contrast to the traditional *Write Now!* model, the group will not have a designated leader, allowing the writers to generate their own prompts and critique one another's works. The program will culminate with a reading at summer's end staged with collegiate actors, all friends of the writers.

✱

Our distance learning program, *TheatreLink*, will welcome Pulitzer Prize–winning playwright John Patrick Shanley, whose play *Outside Mullingar* will serve as the model on which the students will base their own work. Over the years, beginning with *Beggars in the House of Plenty* in 1991, John's plays have been focal points for both our *Core* and *Write on the Edge* programs. This year we will be able to introduce him and his work to schools all over the country and around the world. Not only will students use his play as an inspiration for their own writing, but John himself will speak with participating *TheatreLink* teachers during our professional development conference here. Then, in the spring, he will respond to students' emailed queries about *Outside Mullingar* and playwriting in general.

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A successful second iteration of the *Stargate Theatre Company* took place during summer 2014. We anticipate continued expansion of this program during the 2014–15 season. More details on the summer 2014 iteration will be presented in the *2014–15 Annual Report*.

✱

And continuing this year's trend, we anticipate significant growth in all our programs, in particular the *Core Program* and *Write on the Edge*.

*Core Program • Write on the Edge*  
*TheatreLink • Stargate Theatre Company*  
*Write Now! • Professional Development*  
*Family Matinee Program • Adult Education*  
*The Paul A. Kaplan Theatre*  
*Management Program*

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“The visit by professional actors who performed our work gave us a newfound appreciation for the difficulty of writing a play and it gave us an increased sense of pride to be able to see our own plays acted out by professional actors.”

—*Core Program Student*

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“The workshop has served to develop students’ ability to analyze not only their work, but that of their peers, also.”

—*Teacher at Bronx Pathways to Graduation - Davidson*

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“I appreciate the time you gave to help us show our true potential.”

—*Write on the Edge Student*

