FROM THE DIRECTOR

What does it mean to truly affect the lives of others? As I pondered our exciting spring semester, and the multitude of projects happening in our dynamic Ed. Theatre community, I thought about how very far we as theatre artists and educators have come on the path of humanistic exchange. Recently I was asked by Dr. Lawrence Ferrara, Director of our Department of Music and Performing Arts Professions, to compile a summary of “inreach and outreach” components in our program. Through my investigation, I was thrilled to discover that our body of faculty and students is delving deeply into an interwoven palette of initiatives that reach out to the community, as well as bringing many students and audience members in to see our shows and participate in conferences and workshops. Here is a sampling of the semester:

In our January intersession, 15 students traveled to Puerto Rico for an intensive two-week course where they studied with leading Puerto Rican artists and educators, saw performances, reached out into the community — interacting with youth groups and teaching in a public school. A record of this journey can be seen on the award-winning video clip by students Christina Rodriguez and Daphnie Sicre (see link page 10).

In late February, we experienced the poignant production of Kindertransport, directed by Dr. David Montgomery. In addition to eight shows, nearly 200 high school students learned about the Holocaust in our matinee series, where in post show talkback sessions, they met members of the

Study Abroad: What is Puerto Rico? Community and Art

By Erin Kaplan

The first thing I noticed when I stepped off of the plane was that everything was in Spanish. I was so excited to be able to speak the language in a foreign country. Then I realized that while Puerto Rico may be Spanish-speaking, and its bright colors, warm weather and sun-drenched beaches might feel like a

Deborah Hunt’s masks look on as students work. foreign country, I was still in the United States.

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ON STAGE | Theatrix!

By Teresa Fisher

Two years had passed since I last directed a play, so I jumped at the opportunity to direct a production in the Theatrix! One-Act Festival this spring. In choosing which show to direct, it somehow seemed fitting to revisit the first play I ever directed. Fifteen years ago, I directed The Problem, by A.R. Gurney, as part of a

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

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Kindertransport Association who had lived through this time. In February and April we experienced compelling storytelling events, one by adjunct and curator of the series, Regina Ress, followed by performances by Heather Forest and Carmen Deedy. In March, our Theatrix! Festival offered three exciting productions directed by doctoral student Teresa Fisher, undergraduate sophomore Scott Bartelson, and undergraduate senior Mimi Lui.

In April we hosted the extremely successful Shakespeare Forum, directed and coordinated by Professor Joe Salvatore, with expert assistance from doctoral students Desiree Hamburger, Amy Cordileone, and masters student Blake McCarty. Including presentations, performances, and workshops from international scholars and experts, we also presented performances by our own touring company Shakespeare-to-Go!, as well as the Shakespeare Youth Ensemble, who had worked intensively with students from Salvatore’s class, Shakespeare’s Theatre II, this semester.

In June we presented the New Plays for Young Audiences series, featuring new works by playwrights Lois Lowry, R.N. Sandberg, and Y. York. This summer we will continue to offer courses on the Washington Square campus, as well as through four dynamic study abroad programs in Uganda, London, Ireland, and Brazil.

Exciting developments occurred in course work and curricular planning as well. Dr. Christina Marín’s Applied Theatre students completed fieldwork in settings that included the Harvey Milk High School, New Alternatives for Children, Inc., and the Brooklyn Young Mothers Collective. Additionally, in adjunct professor Stephen DiMenna’s class, Creating Theatre with Young People, our students worked on the new production of the MCC Youth Company, Uncensored, which was presented at the Zipper Theatre in May. For the new Dual Certification Degree in Theatre and Social Studies, Dr. David Montgomery continues to develop a partnership with (Out) Laws & Justice to work with middle school teachers in establishing an interdisciplinary curriculum integrating history/social studies, language arts, and drama.

The highlight of my semester has been my work at Woodbourne Correctional Facility, continuing on with the group taught last year by Dr. Philip Taylor in Katherine Vockins’ organization, Rehabilitation through the Arts (RTA). In planning my sessions, I decided that a full-fledged physical theatre workshop, with extensive movement and voice work, might be most beneficial for the group of male inmates. This turned out to be a good instinct, as the men playfully engaged in eclectic movement, vocalized wildly, improvised with text, created poetic dreamscapes, and lifted each other grandly in physical graphics. Accompanying me were my physical theatre masters students Erin Kaplan and Dawn Slegona MacDonald, who approached the work with great generosity, dynamic energy, and profound sensitivity. Founders Fellow and doctoral student Kevin Bott also continued his work with inmates at Sing Sing this spring.

While the role of program director requires immediate and continuous decision-making and planning, I would like to thank my full-time colleagues David Montgomery, Christina Marín, and Joe Salvatore for their great willingness to collaborate, discuss, and work as a team this semester. We also have had brilliant ongoing support from our superb group of doctoral students, and Administrative Assistant Rochelle Brown and her team of work-study helpers.

This fall we will welcome a very large group of MA candidates into our ranks, divided among four master’s degree programs, as well as three new doctoral candidates. Due to the untiring efforts of Joe Salvatore and his recruitment team (Kevin Bott, Teresa Fisher, and myself), we have tripled the number of incoming undergraduate candidates for the Fall.

Thus I send you my greetings from the seat of the interim program director for the year 2008, while our esteemed leader Dr. Philip Taylor is on sabbatical. The contents of this newsletter will reveal the achievements of alumni and the many honors and awards recently given to current colleagues and students. Indeed, those of us working in the Program in Educational Theatre do profoundly extend our gratitude to Drs. Nancy and Lowell Swortzell, founders of our program in 1966, for their prescient awareness that Educational Theatre would continue to reach out extensively and have an exciting impact on educational, cultural, and global communities in the 21st century.  

— Dr. Nan Smithner  
Interim Program Director

NYU Steinhardt  
Revue  
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Study Abroad: What is Puerto Rico? Community and Art

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What is Puerto Rico? Is it a state? A commonwealth? A territory? A country? This question seemed to appear in each and every adventure on the trip. In meeting artists of every medium, the prevailing question seemed to be one of self-identification revolving around this and other questions.

We met artist Antonio Martorell, whose exhibition of items recovered from his burned home were stunning. These items posed the question, “What is beauty?” Maybe the stories that we use to define ourselves are what make us beautiful, and many of those stories often involve some sort of destruction. It is as though only with the tearing down of our preconceptions of how things should be, can we see what they are.

If it is the stories that define us, then the performance of dancer Tersea Hernandez, was certainly relevant. Her notion of “parada” or “stop” was a challenge to us all to stop talking about our stories and start acting on them. Her experience as a citizen of “PRUSA” or Puerto Rico/ USA asked the question of who we are in connection with our land and nation.

If it’s our land and nation that define us, then the youth theatre group, Jovenes Del Noventa y Ocho (Youth of 98), undoubtedly had something to add to our experience as they reflected, through devised theatre, upon the violence they saw in their culture. They challenged the contemporary notions of the lack-adaisical youth culture, seeing themselves as fully realized activists.

If activism is what defines us, then Teatrotes Ambulantes, facilitated by Dr. Rosa Luisa Márquez, had a great deal to teach us as they enacted Boal’s forum theatre, addressing issues of oppressive education systems, family structures, and sexual politics. As we intervened, trying to influence the outcomes of the scenes, we saw that success could be best achieved by reaching out to our community. Maybe it is the community that defines us.

What struck me most about the community-based theatre in Puerto Rico was just how much of a “community” it was. Everyone knew everyone else, had worked with them, supported them, and came to see their performances. It is as if the people there are in constant conversation with one another about the state of their nation and themselves through their art. The open and loving manner in which they worked made them both teachers and students of individual experience, which is ultimately the supreme goal of educational theatre.

Through our courses in Physical

| ON STAGE | Theatrix!

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one-act festival in the theatre undergraduate program of my alma mater. I don’t recall how I happened upon the play, but I soon fell in love with its witiness and satire, although the boundaries it pushed did scare me.

As I thought about that directorial debut, I remembered the fight to find rehearsal space, the negotiation for casting actors from a limited pool, and the personal struggle to find my way as a novice director. Overall, I recall thoroughly enjoying that arduous process of directing and the joy of creating an entertaining show in which my actors also strengthened their acting skills through the rehearsal process.

Given that experience, I wondered how I would feel about directing that same play today. How would I approach it armed with my new knowledge and experiences gained from years of directing, as well as from my time here in the Educational Theatre program steeped in the work of Augusto Boal and others? Given my renewed appreciation for the power of theatre to educate as well as entertain, how would that awareness translate into my directing or would it? Most importantly, how would I deal with the gender and racial stereotypes satirized in the play? Fifteen years ago, I ignored them out of ignorance and embarrassment. Now, older and wiser, I had a chance to take a fresh look at the play and at my directing style. What an amazing opportunity!

The wonderful aspects of being part of a Theatrix! production include spending time with fellow students in both creative and edu-

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Theatrix!

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cational endeavors. While there is always a lot of negotiation around use of space and scheduling, as well as casting actors from a limited pool, there is also a plethora of support, sharing, and laughter.

Directors Scott, Mimi, and I were all able to learn from each other as well as from our actors, our designers, and the Theatrix! board. There are few things more gratifying than seeing your work and the work of fellow students come together successfully on stage.

We each chose a very different project to produce, which showed off some of the breadth and depth of our educational understandings, interests, and processes. I can only speak for myself, but looking at Gurney’s play through the lens of oppression, for example, as well as utilizing my counseling knowledge in the process of character development with my actors, provided for a much richer production than the one I directed fifteen years ago.

While I had a successful production then, it was, however, a much more superficial one. While the difference may not be obvious to the casual observer, I hope the extra work and thought we put into the process, as well as the opportunity for the audience to discuss the play with us via the talkbacks, deepened the experience for all involved.

Lisa Vastano and Alexander Kranz argue about what to do with “the problem?”

I can’t wait to be part of the next Theatrix! production! ☻

In addition to The Problem, Scott Bartelson (BS ETHR) directed Feiffer’s People by Jules Feiffer, and Mimi Liu (BS ETHR), directed Who is Chasing Whom? by Lynne Alvarez.

Happenings

Arts Education — To What End?

By Dawn McDonald

As Educational Theatre students, we are constantly exploring how the arts can be used to teach people in unique and progressive ways. The conference “Arts Education — To What End?” held at NYU on March 7-8 investigated this issue and attempted to determine the role of arts education in an era of standardized testing, shrinking budgets, and educational reforms that purport to keep teachers accountable and to leave no child behind. Arts educators from around the world converged for a day of lectures and workshops in multiple arts disciplines. Among them were our very own doctoral candidate Desree Hamburger and doctoral student Jennifer Holmes who gave a talk called “The Sorting Hat: A Closer Look at Drama in Education,” which explored the role of drama in education through the world of Harry Potter. Additionally, doctoral candidate Amy Cordileone’s lecture “Frierian Mud” highlighted “the professional struggles of working across continents” as experienced through her work with school children in Uganda. Edmund Chow, a graduate of the Educational Theatre EDTC program, presented his model for prison arts programs in his lecture “Exploring (Dramatic) Principles for Sustainability: Lessons from a Singapore School.” These lectures, as well as the others I attended, gave fine examples of how people are currently using their art to make a difference in the world, and demonstrated why the arts should be given more attention in our schools.

As I reflect on the conference, however, I find myself returning again and again to the same question. Now that we know WHY arts education should be a bigger part of our education system, HOW can we make that a reality? The day before the conference, Mayor Bloomberg announced that, according to a survey, only four percent of the city’s elementary schools meet the state’s requirements for arts education.

Perhaps you are asking yourself: What can I do about it? I am simply one person. What difference can I make? The answer is: More than you think. As I learned at the conference, change can begin with a gesture as small as telling a friend about what you do. This was suggested by Joan Lazarus of the University of Texas-Austin who concluded her lecture “Theatre Education on the Verge of Change: A Call to Action” by having audience members close their eyes and envision how the world could be in five years, followed by how theatre education could be. She then asked us to come up with one action we would take within three days that would move us in the direction of our vision. We went around the room and shared our goals. This became our contract; our promise to do something concrete to bring about change.

That is what I challenge you to do. What will you do today or tomorrow to help make arts education more of a reality in our schools? Start a conversation with an administrator at the school where you work, approach a school that you know does not have a theatre program, present your own program ideas at an arts conference, or maybe just research and get involved with organizations whose mission is to advance the presence of the arts in our schools. The size of the action you take is not what matters. What matters is that you take action. That is the lesson I took away from this conference, and it is what I hope you take away from this article. ☻
Happenings

Applied Theatre at NYU and Beyond

By Daphnie Sicre

Many students in the Educational Theatre program are donating their time to create workshops for the campus community and beyond. From Laban movement technique development, to incorporating basic dramatic activities, to teaching play therapy, or promoting social justice, students are educating their peers and the community.

In September, Dr. Christina Marin offered a workshop to the entire Educational Theatre community on how to enhance workshop skills and encourage students to create, co-facilitate, and offer their services all over campus and beyond. In her session, she presented possible activities, presentation styles, and the importance of processing and planning in advance.

Before this workshop, I had the privilege of observing Dr. Marin conduct a workshop for NYU’s Office of Residential Education. Afterwards, I was inspired to create my own workshop and help educate others around campus on issues of social justice and identity. Dr. Marin referred me to a few organizations around school; granting me the possibility to run my own workshops using Theatre of the Oppressed techniques to teach students about social justice, educate teenagers on self image issues, and promote the teachings of Martin Luther King, Jr. using Image Theatre. I loved sharing my knowledge and seeing how we learn from one another.

Sheng-Tao Fan, a graduate student in Educational Theatre from Taiwan, was asked if he would work with students from the NYU Taiwanese Student Association to create a ten-minute performance celebrating the Chinese New Year. Using Environmental Theatre, Improvisation Theatre, and Sculpture Theatre techniques, he created a ten-hour workshop spanning four days that included participants from Columbia University, Pace University, NYU Tisch, and the fashion and brand management industry in China and Taiwan. Creating a performance piece was only the tip of iceberg, as Fan feels the process is more important than the product. “Theatre-based techniques can really improve awareness and trigger potential power,” said Fan, “and by doing these workshops, we can motivate more people to contribute to others. It is not only about training those non-performers to create and present a performance but rather about encouraging participants to explore different cultural backgrounds.”

Doctoral student Teresa Fisher, has run a series of workshops all over campus and afar. Fisher has presented at the American Alliance for Theatre and Education and the Pedagogy of the Oppressed conferences. She said: “I’ve taught basic dramatic activities to use with a group for ice breakers. I also taught how to create board games that use dramatic activities. I have also helped facilitate two diversity workshops at NYU — one during Welcome Week and one for the Silver School of Social Work’s January orientation.” Doing this type of work has taught Fisher patience and time management; two skills that she will be able to apply once she becomes a professor: “I learned that there is never enough time, and that you should plan to do a very small piece of something rather than try to chew off a huge chunk of your work. I have also learned that you should be prepared to give the participants something concrete they can take back with them, or they feel that you’ve wasted their time. They want to make their jobs easier and more fulfilling, not just hear your cool ideas.”

Another student that has co-facilitated a workshop with Dr. Marin is MA candidate Naomi Tessler. “I’ve learned how to listen to participants, engage individuals and help foster community and encourage self-expression. I have also learned to pick up on people’s cues, when to move on to a new exercise, when to stay focused on what we’re working on, and how to be present and genuinely aware and in tune with my participants and myself.” Tessler feels that facilitating these workshops promotes community and fosters unity, and she says, “In workshops, the hierarchy that can accompany being a teacher is mostly obliterated and everyone can share on a more open and honest level and work from a place of truth and love and creativity rather than operating from fear or intimidation.”

Doctoral student James Webb conducted workshops in Laban Movement Technique for professor Joe Salvatore’s Shakespeare Youth Ensemble and professor Nancy Smithner’s Physical Theatre course. Masters candidates Anna Scanlon and Manuel Simons provided a free teaching artist workshop based on the work they created when developing educational curriculum for Kindertransport.

Undergraduate student, Issac Polanco and graduate student Blake McCarty have also helped facilitate and run workshops in their residence halls. They, too, are using theatre techniques to spread social consciousness, create a communal environment, and educate their peers.

As an educator and Educational Theatre student, I am impressed with the quality of work my colleagues are doing, the willingness to share their time, and the passion to continually educate others inside and outside the classroom.
**EDUCATIONAL THEATRE PROFILES**

*Between Lesson Plans and Downing Caffeine, Future Teachers Emerge: An Undergraduate Teaching Experience*

By Amy Russell

If one entered the infamous Pless Hall Lounge, it would be easy to spot the Educational Theatre undergraduate senior. We are the ones wearing slightly rumpled, yet professional clothing, with lesson plans and half finished journals piled around us. We are the ones proof-reading each other’s resumes and drowning in caffeine. We are actors, singers, stage managers, and dancers, but this year, most of all, we are student teachers.

After three years of preparation, student teaching became the final hurdle that we had to jump before we attained success. At first it was truly quite terrifying. We were worried about being only two or three years older than our students. We had fears about bumping heads with our cooperating teachers. We even wondered if our professional wardrobe would sustain three months of constant use. But with only a final semester to go, most of our fears have been squashed and we are now focusing on our triumphs.

During our time in front of the class, many of us have found our favorite age range to work with, while others have discovered that the classroom is not a good fit. Some who thought they could only deal with the little ones have discovered that they like working with teenagers. Others have firmly stated that they will never mentor again. We have learned how to adapt and think on our feet, throwing out days’ worth of work and creating something amazing in minutes. We have created process dramas and tableaux, spreading the educational theatre jargon to bemused teachers all over Manhattan and Brooklyn. We have learned more about the power of theatre and the power of education than we ever thought possible, but most importantly we have learned about ourselves.

The undergrad seniors have watched multitudes of graduate students come and go. We have seen eight mainstage performances, observed the hiring of numerous faculty members, and spent thousands of hours in the Pless Hall Lounge. We took advice, gave advice, and created advice. We entered the program on the threshold of adulthood and, four long years later, we are leaving it ... as teachers.

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*Internships Considered: Dress Rehearsal for Life after Graduation*

By Carolyn Wright, EDTC ‘08

Every year, students at Steinhardt consider the possibility of working on an internship. They ask themselves: Will an internship actually prepare me for the real world? Or should I jump right into a real job? My answer is short and simple: an internship is worth it. Participating in an internship will provide you with practical, hands-on experience in a field of interest that will prepare you for professional life. The key to finding the internship that suits you best is research and commitment.

As an intern, it will be beneficial to think of yourself a part-time employee during your time with the company. Your selected company is giving you the perfect forum to practice for the real world, so take advantage of the opportunity and do your best.

Consider your internship a dress rehearsal and ask questions and observe others. Take notes. Make choices about yourself as a future professional. Check in with your mentor or your boss throughout your internship to assess your performance.

My personal experience as an intern this past academic year has been extremely rewarding. I organized my schedule so that I could intern with both MCC Theater and New Victory Theater. MCC Theater is an off-Broadway theatre that produces new works and has its own youth company that focuses on acting and playwriting. New Victory Theater is a company that specializes in theatre for children and families and presents about twelve shows each season.

My internship at MCC Theater was with the Education and Outreach Department. I worked ten to twenty hours each week over a six-month period. I spent eight hours per week in the office assisting the Director of Education and Outreach, John Michael DiResta. I spent an additional three to eight hours with the MCC Theater Youth Company in workshops, play readings or on theatre field trips. The internship coincided with my academic work in Stephen DiMenna’s course here at NYU, entitled Creating Theatre with Young People. I found it helpful to be able to make connections between the administrative, academic, and creative aspects of working with young people. While working with MCC Theater, I learned how to plan, administer, and direct an after-school youth company program.

My internship at New Victory Theater was with the Education Department and differed from my experience at MCC Theater. I worked 18-20 hours per week, and my duties included: researching themes and dramatic activities for performance-based “School Tools” (the New Victory Brand curriculum guide), observing in-class teaching artist workshops, participating in teaching artist training, ushering for student matinee performances, assisting during weekend family workshops, and participating in brainstorming sessions. While working with New Victory Theater, I learned how to develop a teaching artist residency with an accompanying curriculum guide and how to incorporate education and theatre programming.

Clearly, these experiences have been excellent additions to my coursework at NYU. I encourage all students to take advantage of the opportunities that New York City has to offer with its thriving arts education scene.
NYU Steinhardt’s Program in Educational Theatre brought together more than 150 educators, artists, and scholars for a three-day forum exploring the performance and teaching of Shakespeare in the 21st century. The forum took place on Thursday, April 24 through Sunday, April 27 at NYU’s Kimmel Center for University Life.

Entitled “Shakespeare: Page, Stage, Engage,” the forum included moderated paper panel presentations, workshops, and moderated scene presentations from Shakespeare’s plays. The presenters included representatives from the Folger Shakespeare Library, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Shakespeare & Company, and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, among other academic institutions and performing arts companies from around the world.

Forum attendees addressed four overarching questions as part of their presentations: Why is Shakespeare still part of our theatrical vocabulary? How are we approaching Shakespeare’s canon in the 21st century? To what extent does his canon fit into our ever-changing and multicultural, globalized landscape? And why is Shakespeare’s work a fundamental component of English and theatre curricula?

The forum also featured performances by the Program in Educational Theatre’s touring Shakespeare-to-Go! Company and the Shakespeare Youth Ensemble.
ON STAGE | NYU Steinhardt’s Kindertransport: Lighting a Candle in the Darkness

By Jonathan Shmidt

“We old ones invest our future in you…”
— Kindertransport, Diane Samuels

When a theatrical work is able to transcend the stage, reach out, and have a deep impact on those who witness it, the experience becomes an opportunity to educate through theatre. NYU Steinhardt’s production of Kindertransport not only deeply affected the cast and crew who brought it to life, but was able to leave a mark on its audience by passing on the legacy of a story that must be told.

Not many people know that right before the onset of World War II, roughly 10,000 Jewish children were sent away from their families and put onto trains bound for England, hoping to escape the oppression of the Nazis. Britain allowed these refugees into the country, and many were taken in by foster families, who offered to help. Diane Samuels’ moving play chronicles the journey of one of these children, Eva, and explores the emotional ramifications of this experience throughout her adult life. In writing the play, Diane Samuels interviewed several individuals who were saved through the Kindertransport as children. The cast and crew of our production were given the incredible gift of preparing for this production in the same way.

On our second day of rehearsal, the company had the rare opportunity to spend the afternoon with individuals whose lives were forever changed by World War II and the Kindertransport. We met our guests through an organization called the Kindertransport Association (KTA), which has reunited several survivors of this rescue mission later in life. Our group of guests included several Kinder, individuals who escaped Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia through the Kindertransport as children. In addition, we welcomed members of the “Second Generation,” or children of the Kinder. On the stage of the Provincetown Playhouse, we sat in a circle and spent the afternoon listening to their stories. These individuals shared their lives with us, and gave our cast and crew insight into their experiences as children, as well as the long lasting effects of these events throughout their lives.

Deeply affected by our time with these individuals, we launched into rehearsals knowing that we had the opportunity to bring an important story to the community. But our mounting of this play was not enough. We realized that our work with the KTA could not end in our rehearsal process. Understanding the educational potential of our work, several of the Kinder agreed to participate in talkbacks with our audiences following each performance. These incredible moments of conversation and sharing between the audience, the cast, and the Kinder proved to be a thought provoking and emotional dialogue for all.

Perhaps the most moving of these experiences occurred during a talkback following our student matinee performance. After watching the production, our high school audience intently listened to the stories of two Kinder during the talkback. One student, who seemed perplexed but focused during their stories, finally raised his hand and asked, “Can you tell me what war this is? Where did this happen?” The importance of keeping these stories alive, especially with the next generation, became shockingly clear in this moment.

Over the course of our time with the remarkable Kinder, we realized that in twenty or thirty years, this type of dialogue will no longer be possible. Only artifacts will remain. How will stories like this one be told when those who experienced it first-hand are no longer present to share their legacy? How will we be able to pass on this history of intolerance and discrimination so that we can prevent genocide from ever happening again? Echoed by the character Faith in the play, “Who’s going to be able to take care of their memory?” In working on this production, and witnessing the educational potential of theatre, it became clear to me that one powerful answer to these questions can be found in the creation of art. Through theatre, we are able to pass on the torch, inspiring change and challenging ideology. In this way, we are able to illuminate stories that need to be told to each generation.

Jonathan Shmidt is an MA candidate in the Educational Theatre program. Along with Ph.D. student Daphnie Sicre, he served as an assistant director on this production as well as dramaturg, under the direction of Visiting Assistant Professor David Montgomery.

Members of the KTA and the cast of Kindertransport pose after a talkback workshop.

Cast members and KTA members gather around Peter Kollisch as he shares his personal items from World War II.
**Kindertransport: Telling the Story**

By Jessica Schechter

It’s hard to believe that only three months ago I was in the Educational Theatre office sitting on the couches across from Carolyn Wright reading the script for the first time. As we began to read the story of a little German Jewish girl named Eva, we both choked back tears. It was clear that an incredible journey was underway. Little did we know that just a couple of days later, we would become united through embodying her life and her story. While over the break I concerned myself with line memorization and the learning of multiple accents, it was not until our second rehearsal that the reality of the Kindertransport really took effect.

Diane Samuels writes in her preface to the play that while the exact details of the play are not any one person’s story, “most of what happens, did happen to someone, somewhere.” On our second day of rehearsal, we were fortunate enough to see some of the faces behind the 10,000 stories, as we met with several members of the Kindertransport Association (KTA). That’s when the realization kicked in that we are not just telling Eva’s story, but their stories as well. These were real people who survived through one of the most tumultuous times in human history, and they are an integral part of our history. After the KTA members shared their experiences with us, the cast as a whole gained a much greater insight into their characters, as well as a profound understanding of how important it was that these stories be told.

Working on this production was an experience like no other. I had never dreamed that I could be a part of any of the department shows due to my Sabbath observance, but thanks to the incredible understanding and creative thinking of David Montgomery (director), Jonathan Schmidt (dramaturg, assistant director), Daphnie Sicre (assistant director), Katie Pekey (production stage manager), and the stage crew, everything became possible. Their generous accommodations made me grateful that, unlike the Jews in Germany during the Holocaust, I would not miss out on any opportunities because I was Jewish.

The show itself is emotionally charged, and really affected me as an actor and a person. The play challenged me to deal with questions of assimilation, guilt, religious conviction, and identity. These were not just the character’s struggles, but mine as well.

After nine emotionally charged performances, the final dialogue of the last scene rang especially true at the final Sunday show. As the characters of Faith and Evelyn lock up the attic of haunted memories, Evelyn says to her daughter Faith, “All done in here?” to which she replies, “Yes we are.” The chilling sound of the Ratcatcher resonates as they exit, sending the message that the memories of the 10,000 Kinder can never really be locked up. Though the show may have closed, the powerful experience of working on Kindertransport will remain with me, and the impact of Eva’s story on my life will never be forgotten.

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**I’ll Have a “Shakespeare-to-Go,” with an Extra Side of Drama!**

By Erica N Giglio

Who are these Shakespeare-to-Go! people you speak of? We are an ensemble consisting of both undergraduate and graduate students in the Educational Theatre Program at NYU. We tour to schools throughout New York City, and make Shakespeare accessible to students of all ages. For many of the audience members this is not only the first Shakespeare performance they have ever seen, but it may be the first stage production they ever experience.

This semester, the Shakespeare-to-Go! Company (STG) is performing *The Tempest*, a play packed with themes of greed, freedom, justice, and magic. Under the direction of Joe Salvatore and assistant director Blake McCarty, our challenge as an ensemble is to bring the text to life. Thanks to our directors we are meeting that challenge in each school that we visit.

Part of being an STG company member involves creative problem solving. What about a large wooden ship, which sways in the wind, being blown from large industrial fans set in the stage wings? While this sounds exciting, STG has the challenge of creating the same effect for the audience with no budget at all. We have to be able to create a full production of special effects, costumes, and set design. Everything is actor-generated, and though the production is “minimal,” the effect is extraordinary. Our voices become the whistles of the storm; our feet stomping the floor bring out the thunder; our hands pounding our thighs elicits the deluge of rain. No lights, no massive ship, no water, no fans, sometimes no stage at all. Just us, and the problem is solved.

I am always amazed during the post-production talkbacks at just how much students of all ages comprehend and retain. Their intuitive questions and reactions are indicators that the company has succeeded in our mission. It just goes to show that Shakespeare is timeless, and the tradition of keeping his works alive, especially for our youth, is imperative.

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Photos by Christian Nichols
Photos courtesy by Britt Shubow
Student, Faculty and Alumni Achievements and Awards

ACHIEVEMENTS

Ami Formica (EDTC 2008) presented a paper entitled, “Shakespeare and Young People: To Contemporize or Not to Contemporize?” at NYU’s Steinhardt’s forum, Shakespeare: Page, Stage, Engage.

Dr. Robin Levenson (Ph.D. 2007) graduated with a Nominating for Outstanding Dissertation. Her dissertation, “Acting in Translation,” is interdisciplinary, and explores the nature of translation for the stage from the point of view of the actor, in the last four plays of Anton Chekhov. Routledge Publishers has asked her for a proposal for a book based on the dissertation. In June 2007, she presented a piece comparing translations of Anton Chekhov’s Three Sisters, complete with English actors playing the scenes to an international audience at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, England. The conference was called “Staging Translated Plays,” and included well-known playwrights, actors, translators, and scholars from around the globe. Now she is an assistant professor of acting and voice at Oklahoma City University.

Jessica Rodriguez Lisboa (EDTC 2006) will be leading a dialogue entitled “Teacher/Researcher” on collaborative classroom research at the Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Conference in Omaha, NE in May.

Jerry Maraia (EDTC 2005) presented a workshop on “The Art of Change: Exploring Culture, Theatre, and the Development of Young People” at the Performing World Conference in Tarrytown, NY with Jennifer Holmes (Ph.D. student) this past fall. He will also be presenting another workshop entitled, “Interdisciplinary Multigenre Projects in the Middle School Classroom” at The National Council of Teachers of English in San Antonio, TX in fall 2008.

Jennifer Nario (ETHR 2007) presented “Stories of the Covenant House of New York: Using Theatre for Social Advocacy” at the AATE Conference in Vancouver, BC. This year she will return to AATE in Atlanta, GA to present, “Inspire, get ED! Arts Integrated Learning in Community Partnerships.”


Alexander Santiago-Jirau (current EDTC) will be appearing as a guest lecturer for “Reading Against the Grain: Looking at César y Cantar by Dolores Prida” Spanish in Performance: Theatre, Department of Spanish, Drew University, Madison, NJ. He also facilitated a workshop on “Breaking the Silence: Using Theatre of the Oppressed Techniques to Explore Issues of Identity and Oppression with LGBTQ and Straight Youth” at the 14th Annual Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Conference in Omaha, NE. In July, he will facilitate another workshop entitled “Creative Learning, Creative Work: Preparing Young People for Careers in the Arts” at the National Career Development Association’s Global Conference in Washington, DC. Finally, he will be facilitating the Careers in the Arts Summer Institute for Educators for the Center for Arts Education in New York City in August.

Daphnie Sicre (Ph.D. student) presented “Shakespeare in Spanish” at NYU’s Forum, Shakespeare: Page, Stage, Engage. In May, she traveled to Adelaide, Australia to present a paper on “Revisiting Caldwell Cook: a contemporary perspective on his work and how it could apply to an urban school setting today” at GENER8 Drama National Conference 2008. In July, she will be presenting “Sak Pase? Nap Boule” an ethnodrama exploring Haitian-American voices in drama with her former students at the AATE Conference in Atlanta, GA.

Manuel Brian Simons, (EDTC 2008) presented “Acting with Conscience and Inspiring Change” at the National Union of Jewish Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, and Intersex Students. He presented the same workshop at the Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Conference in Omaha, NE in May, and again in Atlanta, GA at AATE, “Acting with Conscience: Walking in Gandhi’s Footsteps.” In October, he will present, “Acting with Conscience in the Face of Oppression: Queer Voices and Diversity Education in Participatory Democracy” with Christiana Moore (EDTC 2007) at the Transformative Learning Center, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in Ontario, Canada.

Dani Synder (Ph.D. 2008) will be the new Assistant Professor of Theatre History and Dramaturgy at Illinois Wesleyan University.

AWARDS

Amy Cordileone (Ph.D. student) was awarded the Outstanding Achievement and Citizenship Award in the Graduate Ed. Theatre Program.

Teresa Fisher (Ph.D. student) was awarded the GSO Steinhardt Outstanding Student Star Award.

Anne Richie S. Garcia (EDTC) earned a Steinhardt Dean’s Grant for Student Research for 2008-2009.

Desiree Hamburger (Ph.D. candidate) was awarded the Steinhardt Teaching Excellence Award for Part-time Faculty.

Dr. Christina Marin (Assistant Professor) was awarded the GSO Steinhardt Outstanding Faculty Star Award.

Katie Pelkey (ETHR 2008) was awarded the Outstanding Achievement and Citizenship Award in the Undergraduate Ed. Theatre Program.

MJ Phillips (ETED 2008) was the Banner Bearer for the Department of Music and Performing Arts Professions at the Valedictory Celebration at Radio City Music Hall.

Isaac Polanco (ETHR 2008) has been awarded the NYU President’s Service Award for extraordinary and positive impact on the University community. He is also this year’s recipient of the 2008 NIA Award Lorraine Hansberry Artistic/Performance/Fine Arts Award for outstanding participation and accomplishment in drama, dance, vocal, and/or the visual arts.

Christina Rodriguez (EDTA 2008) and Daphnie Sicre (Ph.D. student) were the Steinhardt Photo Essay Winners, for photo essay on the Puerto Rico Intersession. (www.steinhardt.nyu.edu/photo_ essays/puertorico2)

Amy Russell (ETHR 2008) won the John W. Withers Award for outstanding scholastic attainment and for upholding the highest ideals of service, loyalty, and devotion to her school and graduating class.

Professor Joe Salvatore was awarded a 2008 Steinhardt Faculty Challenge Grant in the Art and Culture category for his project “Open Heart: An Interview Theatre Exploration of Gay Men and Open Relationships.”

Simnia Singer Sayada (EDTC 2008) has received the E. George Payne Award in recognition of outstanding leadership, superior scholarship, and humanitarian principles.

Manuel Brian Simons (EDTC 2008) was inducted into Kappa Delta Pi, International Honor Society in Education, in May 2008.

Lisa Vasfallo (ETHR 2008) was the Steinhardt baccalaureate ceremony student speaker at Radio City Music Hall.
Where Are They Now?
Profiles of Recent Alumni

The Educational Arts Team (EAT), including four NYU alumni (Carmine Tabone, ’78; Dom Buccafusco, ’82; Sobha Kavanakudiyil Paredes ’03; and Peter LaBrusciano, ’05), is completing a three-year Arts-in-Education project funded by the United States Department of Education. EAT developed 40 lesson plans integrating drama with language arts and social studies for twenty-eight 4th and 5th grade classes in the Jersey City Public Schools. Independent evaluators from Seton Hall University found significant academic and pro-social improvement for the 550 participating students in contrast to a control group of the same number. Evaluation findings and a handbook of the lessons that address New Jersey’s Core Curriculum Content Standards are available.

Nicole (Nikki) Kaplan (EDTC 2004) is now working in a children’s theatre, Imagination Stage, in Bethesda, MD. She works in the education department as an administrator, teaching artist, and director of several youth theatre productions a year. Her biggest passion is working on the Speak Out On Stage Jr. Program, a year-long program for 4th-6th graders working with a professional playwright, music composer, and director to create an original musical that “speaks out” to issues and topics important to those students. The students are exposed to the entire process of theatre, from a play’s conception to a professionally supported production. They learn the values of ensemble and artistry, and are given the opportunity to voice the loves, fears, and concerns of their lives. www.imaginationstage.org

Donna Kelly Romero (EDTC 2008) welcomed her son, Thomas James, in March ‘07. She is currently teaching English at Villa Maria Academy in Malvern, PA, and writing for Philadelphia Maven Magazine (www.philadelphiamaven.com). She returned to NYU to present a workshop at the Shakespeare Forum in April.

Christina Neubrand (EDTC) is currently working at St. John’s Episcopal School in Dallas, TX where she is spearheading the Drama Department, as well as an Arts Integration initiative. Christina works with young people from kindergarten through 8th grade and has initiated 20 theatre-integrated projects within the school’s curriculum. The school’s 7th and 8th grade drama elective has performed three full-scale productions thus far, Improv 2007, Everyman, and Bye Bye Birdie, and Shakespeare’s Showcase in the Park is slated to cap off the school year.

Cultivating the Garden State

By Jim DeVivo (EDTC 2001, incoming Ph.D. Student) and Alex Sarian (EDTC 2008)

It has been a joy in past newsletters to read about the wonderful things that Educational Theatre students and alumni are doing around the world. We are excited to tell you about what’s going on in the city’s backyard: New Jersey. We form two-thirds of the Education Department at Playwrights Theatre of New Jersey, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, professional (Actors’ Equity) theatre in Madison, New Jersey. This is Jim’s sixth year with the company (his first as Director of Education). Alex began as the

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Russell Granet

By Adam Crescenzi

Russell Granet humbly credits his achievements in the field of educational theatre to his great formative experiences as a graduate student in NYU Steinhardt’s Educational Theatre Program. While at NYU, he directly applied the theories and concepts he learned at night to his own practice as a teaching artist during the day in New York City public schools. While obtaining his master’s, Granet volunteered with NYU’s Creative Arts Team, an experience that increased his awareness and interest in serving populations with disabilities and special needs. To this day, Granet states, “Regardless of what I’m hired to do, whether it’s public speaking or guest lecturing, and regardless of what program I’m dealing with, I always push for kids with disabilities.”

After he received his Master’s degree in 1995, Granet took a position as the Director of Education at the American Place Theatre, where he had the opportunity to developing new curricula. While running its Literature to Life and Urban Writes programs, he learned the necessity of quality throughout the work one produces, especially when one’s target audience is children and adolescents. As he says, “In order for quality to exist in their work, kids have to see quality work.” Also while there, he achieved a milestone: he’s been to every last stop on every subway line in order to bring the arts to overlooked schools on the outskirts of New York City.

Ultimately, Granet’s experience at American Place Theatre inspired him to develop systemic changes in the arts within the educational system. This passion led him to a prominent role as Director of Professional Development with the Center for Arts Education (CAE), the largest fundraising organization for arts education in New York City. Working alongside the Department of Education, he spent ten years diligently crafting quality-sequential arts programs. Because of his conviction, not only for theatre, but for all art forms — visual, music, dance — over 300 schools have now been served by the CAE’s quality-sequential arts programs.

Throughout this experience, Granet recognized a steady arc within his own learning curve in the field. His subsequent goal centered on the question, “How do we maintain and cultivate leaders in the field of education?” This goal led him in March 2007 to create his own company, Arts Education Resource. A national and international program, Arts Education Resource functions as a primary resource for schools and cultural organizations. It focuses its efforts on students with disabilities, access to the arts for everyone, and making assessment accessible.

Granet’s work in the field of education has led him across the globe, to such countries as Egypt, England, Kenya, Tanzania, and Turkey, but he always finds time to return to the place that provided the launching pad for his career. He firmly believes that what has led him to where he is today was his ability to “recognize opportunities, seize opportunities, and remain connected to other graduates of NYU’s Ed. Theatre Program.” In 1995, Granet was asked to design a course for NYU entitled Drama with Special Education Populations, a course he continues to teach today. In fact, his presence within the program as a faculty member, mentor, and friend is something that Steinhardt students whole-heartedly appreciate. “I think Russell’s greatest strength is his ability to

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Cultivating the Garden State

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Education Associate in January 2008. We’re also teaching artists for the theatre.

Playwrights Theatre (PTNJ) is a community of writers, theatre artists, and arts educators committed to Developing the Dramatic Imagination® of audiences and students of all ages. PTNJ advocates the creative process through the writing and performance of all genres of literature. The New Play Development program assists new work and new writers for the stage through a comprehensive program of readings, workshops, and main stage productions. Educational programs extend creative experiences and process-oriented learning to a broader community through residencies in schools statewide and through onsite classes. PTNJ values these dual focus areas equally, and encourages its community to participate fully in both. The Education Programs introduce students of all ages and backgrounds to the possibilities inherent in thinking and communicating creatively. PTNJ’s Writers Project provides hands-on workshops led by professional writers-in-residence to students in schools and community centers throughout the state, reaching over 15,000 students annually.

Spring is festival/assembly season for us. PTNJ teaching artists are wrapping up in-school writing residencies in poetry, prose, and playwriting. Some residencies include a Language-in-Motion assembly where actors from our roster will go in to the schools to rehearse and perform staged readings of the students’ work. Conducting rehearsals at the school provides a unique opportunity for the young writers to continue with the writing process by attending rehearsals and interacting with the director and cast. We have found great success employing college students and recent graduates as our actors, thereby introducing many college actors to the possibilities of educational theatre. Plus, performing for children is an excellent experience, as children comprise some of the best audiences imaginable.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Russell Granet

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model great teaching — preparation, action, reflection,” says Lizzie Hetzer, an EDTC student. “Russell pointed out to us that it’s not about having a ‘special education’ teaching style — it is just about good teaching.” EDTC graduate, Chrissy Moore, echoes these sentiments: “He stated on the first day of class that the goal for the course was to make sure we had the tools to teach any student who stood in front of us. In my own practice, I find myself continually reflecting on the experience he created for us and the questions he posed.” But perhaps EDTC student, Steven McIntosh, sums Russell’s contributions to the field best when he says, “If arts education was a body, I’d certainly place Russell at the heart, because of how much his work supports practitioners and programs throughout New York City.” I echo Steven’s words when he states that Russell Granet is “a priceless resource to anyone who has anything to do with progressive education.”

LOOKING FOR SHAKESPEARE 2008:
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM

Directed by Sharon Counts (EDTA 2006)
July 25 and 26 at 8 pm, July 27 at 3 pm
Provincetown Playhouse, 133 MacDougal Street
TICKETS: $5. For reservations, please call 212 998 5867.