

2015/2016
annual report



TADA! Youth Theater

15 West 28th Street, New York, NY 10001 | www.tadatheater.com | 212.252.1619

“We’re a family -- one big crazy, happy, hard workin’ family”

These words to our signature song (written by Joel Gelpe over 30 years ago) resonate in a meaningful way for so many people involved with TADA! over the years.

Emmy Award-Winning Jordan Peele (Ensemble alumnus) hosted TADA!’s Gala last spring and he has recently joined TADA!’s Board of Directors. Other alum performed or volunteered or worked while even others traveled from across the US to be in the audience to support their childhood home away from home. It was thrilling and rewarding to see how much they all still care about TADA!. The love and support in the room from the Alum, the current Ensemble, their parents, Board members, major donors, and theater royalty such as Sheldon Harnick, Chita Rivera, Barbara Cook, John Doyle, and Jason Robert Brown was truly inspiring.

It was, indeed, a wonderful night and a wonderful year for TADA! which you can read about in the following pages.

So, what’s next? After 30+ years, I think, “It’s about time!” The musicals planned for this upcoming season all involve time – a look back at a century past, an exploration of a year in NYC, and a typical day in the life of a kid. Like all TADA! shows, this season’s productions deal with important topics such as racism, women’s rights, fitting in, and freedom for all. It’s about time that TADA! be known throughout NYC as a second home for kids and teens interested in musical theater.

Given the collaborative nature of my work as a Co-Founder, Director, and Musical Theater Playwright, I welcome new partnerships and opportunities. With this in mind, after 15 years as TADA!’s Executive and Artistic Director, I am excited to begin this year with the new role of Producing Artistic Director. This change will allow me time to develop newly commissioned work. Over the next five years TADA! will produce multiple world premieres. Alongside my new role, I am excited to announce TADA!’s new Executive Director, Rod Christensen, who was TADA!’s Director of Education for the past seven years. As Executive Director, Rod will focus on the health and wealth of TADA! as we continue to grow and develop programming for young people that inspires them to be creative, learn, and think differently. This coming year is one of planning and setting the stage for a great, successful future.

See you soon at the theater,

Nina

Janine Nina Trevens
Producing Artistic Director



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TADA! also wishes to thank the generous donors who contribute under \$100. Every dollar makes a difference and we appreciate your support.



Cast members in TADA! production of *Maggie and the Pirate*

Youth Theater

During the 2015/2016 season TADA! produced three mainstage musicals at our 90-seat theater. Thanks to funds from many institutions, government agencies, corporations, and individuals, TADA! was able to offer discounted tickets ranging from \$0 to \$10 per child. The productions were:

BANNED BROADWAY featured teenaged Resident Youth Ensemble (RYE) members who presented songs and scenes from musicals or plays that have been censored and/or banned in the US. This was the second iteration of this program that was initially inspired by a partnership with the National Coalition Against Censorship. The two-night presentation was on October 29-30, 2015.

THE GUMBALL GANG: CRIME-SOLVING KIDS (Book, Music, Lyrics-Jim Colleran; Direction/Choreography-Joanna Greer; Music Direction-Matthew Gregory; Set Design-Carl Tallent; Costume Design-Cheryl McCarron; Lighting Design-Steve O'Shea) The cast was made up of 21 RYE members. The show ran for 22 performances between January 22 and February 15, 2016, for 1,771 audience members, exceeding our income goal. 43% of audiences were able to take advantage of discounted seats: The Children's Aid Society, Girl Scouts, Center Against Domestic Violence, New York Cares, Cooke Center for Learning and Development, and the School of Urban Technology brought groups to see the production. The theme of the show was about embracing your unique talent.

UP TO YOU (Book/Music-Eric Rockwell; Lyrics-Joanne Bogart; Direction-Janine Nina Trevens; Choreography-Joanna Greer; Music Direction-Matthew Gregory; Set/Lighting Design-Steve O'Shea; Costume Design-Keiko Obremski) The cast was made up of 34 RYE members with five roles double cast to provide more performance opportunities for them. The show ran for 23 performances between April 16 and May 21, 2016, for 1,414 audience members, which also exceeded our budget goal. 35% of audiences were able to take advantage of discounted tickets: The Caedmon School, PS 86, School of Urban Technology, and New York Cares brought groups to see the production. The themes of the show were politics, power, popularity, and bullying.

ADVENTURES FROM EZRA JACK KEATS was a two-part theater experience including a brand new dance piece entitled **SKATES**, (Music/Music Direction-Matthew Gregory; Choreography-Joanna Greer); and a revival of a TADA! favorite, **MAGGIE AND THE PIRATE** (Book/Lyrics-Winnie Holzman, playwright of *Wicked*; Music-David Evans; Direction-Janine Nina Trevens, Choreography - Joanna Greer; Music Direction-Matthew Gregory.) Set and lighting design-Steve O'Shea; Costume Design-Megan Turek. The cast was made up of 20 RYE members. The show ran for 32 performances between July 9 and August 4, 2016, for 2,673 audience members. 71% of audiences were able to take advantage of discounted tickets: The Jamaica YMCA, Black Spectrum Theatre, Center Against Domestic Violence, Dorothy Day Early Childhood Program, Good Shepard Services, St. Margaret's Church, Thurgood Marshall Academy, Village Kids Summer Camp, and many others brought groups to see the show. This production was mounted in honor of Ezra Jack Keats' centennial, by the request of the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation. The themes of the show were storytelling, friendship, and the death of a pet.

TADA!'s education department created a show companion guide to accompany each production to help parents and teachers further explore each play's themes and engage in pre or post-show activities. We also continued "Audience InterACTives" where young audience members participated in theater games related to the shows' themes. The participating children learned a number from the show and performed it with cast members on the stage. This was the second year of InterACTives and we saw growing popularity from the year before.

Resident Youth Ensemble

TADA!'s Resident Youth Ensemble was once again a free, year-round, pre-professional theater training and youth development program, served 81 New York City kids ages 8-18. Of the participants, 85% were returning members from the previous year. Open auditions for the RYE took place on September 30, October 2, 3, 7, 9, with callbacks on October 16 and 17, 2015. Out of the 200+ interested children and teens that auditioned, 27 new members were accepted into the program. Also, in the fall of 2015, RYE staff engaged in private meetings with all 81 members. The purpose of these meetings was to outline each

member's goals, strengths, and expectations for the program during the subsequent 12 months. 20 returning members rose to the status of "Principal" members, which means they had completed at least two full years and productions after their apprentice year at TADA!.

57% of RYE members were female and 43% were male; 30% identified as African-American, 32% as White/Caucasian, 9% as Hispanic/Latino, 6% as Asian and 23% as of mixed ethnicity. 85% resided in one of the five boroughs of New York City – 37% from Manhattan, 27% from Brooklyn, 9% from Queens, 10% from the Bronx, and 3% from Staten Island. 7% of the Ensemble commuted from other areas in New York State, including Westchester and Long Island, 7% commuted from New Jersey. More than 59% of the Ensemble reported a total family income less than the self-sufficiency standard for NYC.

Throughout the year, each RYE member was given access to free training that included rehearsals that took place for approximately 6 weeks before each production, group vocal lessons, a 'Triple Threat' dance workshop, weekly general dance classes, and musical theater history.

The RYE program focuses not just on artistic success but also in the areas of academic achievement, personal/social growth, and pre-career development, ensuring today's participants become productive, well-adjusted adults of tomorrow. Middle and high-school-aged participants were offered age-appropriate discussion-based workshops on social issues including:

- Girls Talk/Guys Talk – an outside program created and run by a TADA! alumnus. Topics covered by the RYE this year were "Knowing Your Rights" "Body Image," and "Understanding Derogatory Language."
- Financial Literacy - a new workshop by a TADA! Board Member and Financial Analyst. The response was very positive and plans are in place to offer more in-depth sessions in the future and similar programs for younger members.

Ongoing programs for all RYE members also included free, healthy snacks from Fresh Direct and Trader Joe's during each class or rehearsal; paid first job opportunities for high school-aged members; designated homework time; college preparation assistance that included essay writing, financial aid, scholarship research, and campus tours; transportation subsidies to and from TADA! for those demonstrating a financial need; leadership opportunities for Principal Members through the Ensemble Youth Council; International Youth Exchange with students from outside NYC including a trip to England; community service hours to give back to the organization, and a cash incentive program for Principal Members to mirror a real-life salary, reward exemplary behavior, and provide tangible consequences for falling short of expectations.

To assess the program, TADA! asked RYE Members and Parents to complete anonymous surveys. Of the respondents, 79% of the parents said that if TADA! were not free, they would not be able to participate, and nearly 20% said their child would not have anywhere else to participate in the arts or have a safe place to go afterschool. When asked what their child would likely do if not the RYE program, many said they would instead stay home with electronics and several said they would worry about their child spending that time getting into trouble. When asked about the changes in their child since joining TADA!, the improvements noted were 70% in academics, 75% in life skills (punctuality, responsibility, ability to keep commitments), 90% in social skills communication, such as the ability to make friends, and work in a group.

The kids' surveys revealed that since joining TADA!, 97% of participants think their participation has helped them to confidently take on new challenges in life; 95% feel more comfortable reaching out socially to others with different backgrounds; 87% are better students at school and feel more prepared for their next school; and 98% said they are happier with themselves.

Lastly, we are pleased to report that TADA! earned 4 National Youth Arts Awards and 14 additional nominations during the 11th Annual event (Supporting Actor in a Musical, Supporting Actress in a Musical, Full Ensemble in a production, and Set Design.)

Arts Education

Last year, TADA! presented 189 residency programs at 50 schools and community centers throughout the city. Programs ran anywhere from 1-40 sessions, which happened over the course of 1-20 weeks and sometimes occurred twice weekly spanning anywhere from one month to the bulk of the school year.

TADA! also held classes at the main 28th Street location on weekends and after school. 25 different class types were held weekly for eight weeks during the fall, 12 weeks during the winter, 5 weekly classes were available for the spring, and 19 different camps were offered throughout the year, ranging from one day to one week. During the summer, week-long camps were also held at TADA! and a space on the upper west side of Manhattan. TADA! classes and school programs for Pre-K to 12th grade were taught by TADA!'s roster of 50 professional Teaching Artists (TAs). In all, TADA! held 77 onsite classes and camps and extended \$10,983 in financial aid for participants who requested it.

One of our most extensive and impactful programs was the Musical Theater Writing Residency at PS 69 in Brooklyn. TADA! served two fifth grade classes of 28-29 students between October 6th and March 8th for a residency which focused on Black History, Civil Rights & Emancipation. Three 5th grade English Language Learners classes (including 12 special needs students) also participated in a skills-building residency there. In addition to enabling the students to delve more deeply and creatively into their school subjects as well as learn valuable communication skills, the school also sought to improve their skills in language acquisition/communication.

To measure the impact of this program, as a representation of all of TADA!'s programs, all 129 students were tested for "content area vocabulary" early in the TADA! residency and then re-tested after the sessions were completed. In comparing pre-test and post-test scores, the findings showed that 58% of students improved in content area vocabulary. 32 of those students increased their score by 10 points, 23 students increased their score by 20 points, 13 students increased their score by 30 points, six students increased their score by 40 points, and one student increased his score by 50 points. One 5th Grade teacher said about these results: "The majority of the population of this school consists of recent arrivals or first generation Americans. For most students (58% of the student body,) English is not the student's primary language and larger percentages are still immersed in their Native Language at home. As a direct result of the TADA! program, our students have markedly increased their content area vocabulary testing performance."

Residencies took place at:

- Bronx schools - Monroe Academy, IS 217, Girls Prep Bronx Middle School
- Brooklyn schools - P.S. 69 Vincent D. Grippo School, P.S. 132 the Conselyea School, P.S. 193, P.S. 274 Kosciusko School, P.S. 682 The Academy of Talented Scholars
- Queens schools - Academy of the City Charter School, I.S. 61 Leonardo Da Vinci, P.S. 12 James B. Colgate School, P.S. 58 School of Heroes, P.S. 101 School In The Garden, United Nations International School Queens Campus
- Manhattan schools - Emma Lazarus High School, P.S. 125 Ralph Bunche, P.S. 166, P.S. 212 Midtown West School, P.S. 397 Spruce Street School, Success Academies 1, 2 and 3, P.S. 11, P.S. 116 Kids Club, P.S. 199, Ethical Culture, International Pre-Schools, IS 210, Metropolitan Montessori, Montclare Children's School, Liberty High School, St. Joseph School-Yorkville, United Nations International School Manhattan Campus and more.



51% Education Programs
16% Individual Giving
11% Foundation & Corporate Grants
9% Special Events
5% Government Grants
5% other Earned Income
3% Box Office



45% Education Programs
37% Theater Programs
17% Administration
7% Fundraising

Administrative Update

We are pleased to project a balanced budget for FY16. Income was nearly equal parts earned (\$1.12M) and contributed revenue (\$800K), which is typical for the organization. Earned income was generated by onsite class and camp registrations, theater ticket purchases, school residency programs (funded by private schools, the NYC Department of Education, PTAs), and rental of the TADA! theater or rehearsal studio. This revenue exceeded staff budget predictions for the year. Tax-deductible contributions were made by a combination of individuals (through direct appeals and special events), corporations, foundations, and government. A kid-fueled Dance-A-Thon fundraiser occurred in the fall of 2015 and raised 50% more than the previous year and development staff completed significantly more grant applications than previous years and the number of institutional funders grew by more than 15%. We are pleased to welcome Dramatists Legal Defense Fund, Fund for the City of New York, Marta Heflin Foundation, Kars4Kids, Tiger Baron Foundation, GIC, General Electric, and Royal Bank of Canada into our funding family.

TADA! has been steadily paying down debt acquired during more challenging years and made concerted efforts to successfully grow the Board of Directors and individual donor base (which rose by 14%). These efforts have proved successful and enabled the organization to hold a high-end gala in May 2016 honoring Chita Rivera, Sheldon Harnick, and long-time Board Member, Stephen T. Rodd.

New for FY17

We have made significant staff changes to focus human resources on artistic programs, development, and administration. After 15 years serving as Executive & Artistic Director, Janine Nina Trevens is thrilled to be able to focus more specifically on artistic programs as she transitions into TADA!'s Producing Artistic Director. Director of Education, Rod Christensen, has stepped into the Executive Director role. The Education Department is now run by two Senior Education Managers, Katy Knowles who was promoted to the position and new staff member Keith Huff. Kaila Mackenzie was promoted to Director of Marketing and Lauren Bond is now the Administrative Associate/Audience Services Manager. We are also pleased to welcome Wilson Rivera as the new Business Manager and Laura Talbot back as Fundraising Manager. FY17 will be a year of planning and building with our outstanding staff. We look forward to sharing it all with you.



Gala Host Jordan Peele



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RYE Members with Gala Honoree Chita Rivera

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