



JULY 2014

MAKING THE CASE:

Transforming the Lives of Children Through the Arts

Volume II

Edited by Valentine Lysikatos

A publication of Variety the Children's Charity of New York.

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An essay compendium compiled
and edited by Valentine Lysikatos

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Variety the Children's Charity of New York supports grassroots non-profit organizations in the Tri-State area whose programs use the arts as a catalyst to transform the lives of under-served children.

LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

I am excited to share Variety the Children's Charity of New York's second volume of *Making the Case: Transforming the Lives of Children Through the Arts*. This year's compendium of essays includes three unique and powerful case studies about how effective arts programming can fundamentally change the lives of some of our communities' most vulnerable children.

At Variety New York we believe in supporting the most innovative and thoughtful transformative arts programs. As demonstrated by this year's authors, Variety New York and our grantee partners understand that the arts are not an "add on" or merely a nice pastime in which youth should engage. Rather, the arts are an integral part of a young person's development without which they lack the opportunities, experiences and exposure that can shape them as successful and personally fulfilled individuals.

We hope that the essays included in this publication offer insight not only into the importance of the arts, but into how their successful application can support unique and diverse populations of young people reach their fullest potential in life. This year, the three outstanding pieces include:

- *Opening the Door: Identifying Challenges in Afterschool Programming for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders*, by Sarah E. Melone, Co-Founder & Executive Director of MarbleJam Kids with Nancy Dhulipala and Anna Villa-Bager
- *Playing History: The Combination of Music, Social Justice, Aesthetic Reflection and Social Entrepreneurship*, by Luis Mojica, Ed.D., Founder and Executive Director of Multicultural Music Group
- *Beyond the Stage: An Integrative Arts-Based Model for Youth Development*, by Bailey Huguley, Member Service Supervisor and Jadrien Ellison, Arts Supervisor at The Door

The three organizations represented here have identified game changing ways to do this work better. They have identified and addressed inequities in services for young people facing severe challenges, identified methods to use the arts and music to build cultural competencies, academic achievement and community awareness, and developed strategies to embed and leverage the arts as a tool to provide young people a set of holistic services to ensure their safety and success.

The work executed and documented by organizations like MarbleJam Kids, Multicultural Music Group and the Door as well as all of Variety New York's grantees are fundamentally changing young people's lives. We hope these pieces have inspired you to examine and grow your own practice supporting youth through the arts. Only by sharing and celebrating this kind of work can we make a stronger case for the arts to transform the lives of youth!

Best Regards,



Jessica Bynoe



MarbleJam Kids was established by mothers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders who identified a need not being met by their excellent but rigid specialized school programs. MJK focuses on what is missing in the daily regimen of these programs. The integral curriculums of mainstream educational programs do not provide music, nor art. MJK programs provide opportunities in the arts to individuals with ASD's and are designed to exercise communication and social skills with peers outside of structured school settings, in a responsible and supportive environment.

OPENING THE DOOR:

Identifying Challenges in Afterschool Programming for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

by Sarah E. Melone

*Co-Founder and Executive Director, MarbleJam Kids
with Nancy Dhulipala and Anna Villa-Bager*

Receiving a diagnosis of a developmental disability for a child is a bewildering experience for any parent. Looking back on that day in a Developmental Pediatrician's office gives a vivid reminder of mixed emotions. Initially, there is relief. There is validation that our concerns and fears were heard, confirming all along what we already knew: that our child was not keeping up with their peers developmentally. The diagnosis provided further explanation for the quirky, compulsive behaviors, delay in language development and overwhelming anxiety presented in our small child. The news was also terrifying as there was no next step. The medical profession had no course of treatment, no plan of action, no protocol to follow, nor even a book or pamphlet dedicated to the subject of Autism to simply provide us with basic information. We left exhausted, nodding our heads to show understanding of the diagnosis, as we were wished "good luck" by the concerned staff.

Flash forward a few years and you will learn how parents, who were once drowning in isolation and exhaustion as they relentlessly pursued positive intervention for their own children's development, came together and pooled their resources to develop a community of support and interventions that can help all children. MarbleJam Kids (MJK) was established in August 2007 to address the needs of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs). The not-for-profit organization was founded by us, mothers of children with ASD's, who were united by our challenges and who identified the lack of opportunities present in our community.

We embarked on developing creative arts programs that were customized and therapeutically supported with professional staff, to target specific needs and whole child development. I, Sarah Melone, mother of three and a physical therapist by profession, along with Anna-Villa Bager, mother and professional dancer, and Jodi Uhl, mother and graphic artist, collaborated with other parents and professionals to develop programs that we are all proud of today. From the onset we were inspired by the personal challenges we faced, and Anna and I remain today as volunteer administrators in the organization to address the continuous needs of families in the community.

MJK is built from the heart, surviving by the strength and support of family and community, and evolving to answer the basic needs of its members. All human beings need companionship. For those with ASDs, the environment for friendships to thrive must contain skilled facilitators, excellent programming, and qualified professionals. The social awkwardness is obvious in small children as they curiously explore their world, and is even more apparent as they venture into teenage years. Their challenges of social networking may lead to social exclusion, depression, and isolation. MJK is committed to providing a safety-net, addressing these concerns of social isolation and vulnerability by introducing inclusive peer modeling programs that focus on the arts. MJK is a familiar space in which to socialize and build life-skills that will enrich them as they grow.

CREATING A CREATIVE ARTS ORGANIZATION

Our children were fortunate to be living in New Jersey, a state with good early intervention programs. In pre-school, we were introduced to Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA). ABA is a statistically based program intervention that teaches developmental skills and functional behaviors in a way that is recognized and translated to appropriate learned behaviors. Children learn to master skills through

repetition and reward, and slowly generalize the learned skills to other settings. ABA is practiced at school, and reinforced in the home and community. Parents learn how to interact with their child, most often by reinforcing the reward (offering something that really motivates the child to perform a given task), during everyday communication and interaction.

The ABA intervention becomes the life-line, as it puts into a place a system of reaching the child with autism, creating by-pass wiring in the brain for cause and effect relations, often with positive results. ABA helps unite a parent and child, establish routines, address behaviors, and create communication. It is a 24-hour intervention because for a child with autism, everything must be taught. Even the simplest aspects of life that come intuitively to normally developing children, are broken down into their most finite components and taught in sequenced steps. Functional skills are learned in this way, and manifest in really wonderful results for a child's developmental and communication skills.

With good intervention, the learned skills are generalized in novel or everyday settings, and more typical learning ensues. However, if the opportunity for novel learning isn't available, the growth of an individual in developing ease of expression can be halted. At times, the repetitive nature of the learned behavior can present as robot-like, where children follow a rehearsed social script as if in a play. This awkward behavior is socially stigmatizing and can lead to reluctance to venture outside of the comfort zone of a routine and rehearsed world. Something changing the flow of which they perceive as normal, along with the inability for them to regulate responses, can result in temper tantrums, violent outbursts or complete anxiety induced meltdowns. We can remember vividly our children exhibiting episodes of fear, anxiety tantrums, and panic attacks in places non-threatening to most people: restaurants, shopping areas, and play centers. The frustration, embarrassment, and heartbreaking inability to console or redirect your own child during these moments lead many parents to stick to calming familiar routines.

However, avoiding new environments means we are missing out on possible learning opportunities and relationship building. Most children with ASDs gravitate to the company of adults, whom are patient, safe and predictable, rather than to peers whom are unpredictable and quick with communication. Children with ASDs also need to be included alongside typical peers to learn and model behavior. The challenge becomes: When can they do this if they are kept within the confines of their protective classrooms, rehearsing and repeating their exercises? As parents of children with and without disabilities, we knew that something within this developmental process was missing. We knew from our own experiences that our opportunities of arts, recreation, relationship building, hobbies and interests had molded our own sense of self and confidence.

Anna, as an accomplished dancer, knew that infusing the arts in her life provided a sense of accomplishment and wellbeing. The question begged: "Why not enroll my child in an after-school arts enrichment class?" An art class would be beneficial for her daughter, provide a break from the rigors of daily ABA therapy, and give her child a chance to interact with typical children. Realizing her daughter's needs would require extra support to help attend to the activity, Anna offered to provide the resource of an aide to help her child succeed in participating in an art program. Even with careful planning, Anna's daughter was denied access to the afterschool programs based upon her need for extra attention. It was thought, by school administration, that the environment may not be appropriate for a child with special needs. This was disappointing and frustrating to Anna, and to other parents. How can growth, peer interaction, and creative expression happen with peers if one does not offer them opportunities? How can a desired outcome of having their children transitioned back into mainstream school settings occur, when initial access to an environment is denied?

For us parents, when one door closes, another one opens. The answer to the frustrating questions became the opportunity. Why not develop a creative arts program that includes all children despite their developmental disabilities? Anna's experience as a performance artist and corporate entertainment producer lent the skills necessary to create a center for the arts, but being a parent of a child with autism did not exactly qualify Anna to work with special needs children. She was determined to educate herself, uncover resources, and to obtain data on special needs programs.

When she presented her idea to other parents, I was quick to come on board. As a physical therapist and also a mother of a child with an autism spectrum disorder, I knew as a professional the idea seemed logical, but that the reality was far from simple.

We were confronted with the pre-conception that there was one successful way to work with autistic children and the supporting science was intimidating. Adding my insight of a therapeutic model and clinical approach to programming, the concept of a possible arts intervention became clearer. I had extensive experience collaborating with creative arts therapists in clinical settings. I knew how to organize, plan and administrate a goal oriented approach to arts enrichment. We shared the same frustration finding after school activities that provided the necessary supports for our children. Living among similar families in the community, we understood the challenge of the increased expense when providing extra staff support, the inability to find a safe and calm environment for activities in the community, and the limited acceptance of their children by peers and instructors into a typical setting.

Anna's research uncovered that after-school programming directed toward children with autism is rarely available, for many reasons. Although the diagnosis may be the same, the presentation of the challenges of an ASD differs from person to person. A child may exhibit extreme behavioral challenges that could inhibit participation within group programs, or may present mild behaviors that stigmatize them from engaging with typical peers. Most children with the disorder require support during activities, and finding typical recreation programs that offer a structured curriculum which produces successful outcomes is unlikely.

Just as in the educational setting, children with autism need a therapeutic, child centered approach for their extracurricular activities, along with trained professionals to provide the care. Typical programs are not equipped to handle the challenge of a child with special needs, nor is it cost effective for a business to implement the extra staff and attention needed for some children. This extensive plan alone, with added professional staff support and structure, requires more cost considerations. Families are left to contribute themselves and provide staffing and support. However, they would not be able to continue with activities as they become cost prohibitive. The consensus among many parents was similar. Parents were tired of having their children 'fail' at activities, and providing extra support themselves just to participate. They were embarrassed and frustrated to be told that "their child was not ready" for a specific activity. This empowered us even more. Our children were ready and they were able. They simply needed to be set up for success.

Keeping all of these variables in mind, the challenge to engage children in the arts and social environments is difficult. For a child with autism, the environment, the approach in delivery of an activity, the careful selection of staff, and the individual needs of each child must be considered when introducing new and less-structured activities. The question for us was to decide which recreation activity could be administered while providing a responsible approach and still produce successful outcomes.

We determined that Creative Arts Therapies was the answer. Creative Arts Therapies address the emotional wellness of a person. The psychotherapeutic practice is used in clinical settings to address the needs of patients who have been through trauma and illness, as well as for individuals who struggle with mental health conditions. The mediums of art, music, drama, and dance are used as tools to help engage, express, develop, and build relationships under the care of a therapist. We embraced these principles and consulted with Dr. Suzi Tortora, a renowned expert in the field of Dance Therapy and a leader in her profession. Dr. Tortora assisted us to design our first pilot program in creative arts therapies, and stayed on as a mentor and staff educator for the first two years of programming. It is from her experience and guidance that we were able to form our own responsible approach to the creative arts.

This was exciting to us, as it seemed to be exactly what our children were lacking – the opportunity to express, explore, create and imagine. We knew they could do it, but our children needed help and

careful planning simply to learn to play and relate to others. Anna was excited to use her experience in the arts in an exciting new venture, and reach the lives of a young generation while meeting their emotional, physical, experiential, and social needs. I was empowered to use my professional experience in a similar yet completely new way. For years as a physical therapist I was confident in adapting physical environments for people with disabilities to be able to function with more independence. My practice as a physical therapist involved teaching people different ways to move, improving their function, and restoring their well-being. I looked at this adventure as simply a new way to apply my skills and to create safe environments, programs, and disciplines that addressed the needs of all who participate. Our initial collaboration was united by our own children, but we were meeting the needs of the families we met along the way.

Adding creative arts to the repertoire of programming during developmental years allows for an organic way to socially engage children using a common link. All children may enjoy music, movement, drama, and art, but children with autism are often judged by their presentation before any consideration is made to their potential to participate and contribute. It was in this area of defeat that we wanted to create success. By changing the environment, providing specific staff, creating a customized program, and understanding the specific needs to address each individual, we knew that the outcomes would improve. The goal of MJK is to address all the variables that inhibit children from learning, and to provide the opportunity for growth.

Initially, the diagnosis of an ASD certainly seemed overwhelming and it seemed that perhaps doors were closing on our children. However, learning about their challenges and understanding their need for life-long intervention fueled our strength to create opportunities. The knowledge that our children could succeed as others, with the proper support, validated the necessity to create those opportunities. We were beginning to open more doors.

Building from Strength - Staffing

The strength of the MJK organization lies in the likeminded goals of the professionals involved in the Board of Directors, administration, development, advisement, program staff services, and volunteer efforts. There is diversity in those who collaborate to plan activities and programs; including- clinicians, creative art therapists, art instructors, and educators. This represents the essence of MJK, where programs are created and modified to meet the needs of the participants. Activities may be 'out of the box', blending the creativity and expertise of many professionals. Elizabeth Balzano-Riley, MA, MT-BC, LCAT has been affiliated with MJK since its inception and states, "I knew immediately the program would be successful, as I believed it was trying to fulfill an obvious hole in what is offered to children with disabilities in terms of arts and recreation programs."

MJK strives to foster a collaborative environment to validate the professionals, support their ideas and plans, and be proactive in responding to the needs of the population served. MJK aims to create an environment where the staff feel comfortable expressing their concerns and are part of the program development, thus taking pride in their accomplishments. The facility itself becomes their shared space in which they have a hand in creating and maintaining their workspace.

The structure of staffing at MJK begins with the administration, as a response to the needs of the community. From its most basic form, the organization is "child-centered" and driven by the needs of the population it serves. For instance, if a certain age group is shown to lack opportunities for a program in need, MJK will attempt to create an experience to fill that void. This may drive the need for hiring new or different professionals able to develop and provide the specific program. MJK's staff recruitment includes many factors in searching for individuals who possess the professional expertise to provide the creative art program. We look at their experience level to develop rapport with the population served, the ease of contributing to a team effort, and the vision to continue to develop programs to move the organization forward.

MJK believes that a strong community is rooted in the abilities of the individuals who make up that community. This applies to the intrinsic organization, as well as its participants. MJK staff benefit from

continuing education, and maintaining a dynamic working environment means offering progressive planning and learning opportunities. The passion of the founders is ingrained in all aspects of the organization with the constant mantra to address the needs of families and empower parents to create a path for their child's success. This may involve parent education, encouraging advocacy, and supporting consistency of care. The goal of MJK remains to enhance the quality of life by serving the special needs population, no matter where the challenges lie.

Developing from Knowledge - Therapeutic Programming

Internally, the Social Creative Art Therapy (SCAT) Programs are designed with integral planning and assessment taking place from an initial evaluation and throughout the duration of the program. Dina Friedman, LCW adds: "As the Social Worker for the program, I keep in touch with families to stay informed of any changes in their home, school and community activities. This helps the staff address any new challenges as well as celebrate and support new skills that the child learns." Families are involved with changes to program, identifying new needs, and carryover of learned strategies to home and community. This communication allows staff to change group dynamics, increase effectiveness of interventions, and support the skill sets that a child is learning.

As the Executive Program Director of MJK, I am constantly reminded of many instances where a parent is able to share their successful interventions with staff and improve the social interactions of a group. Last week I witnessed the staff following through on a simple request from a parent for the peers in her son's young adult group to wear nametags to improve the spontaneous communication of her son to his friends. Another time, a parent witnessed the positive behavioral interventions her son received during a recent therapy group and she was encouraged by his ability to stay on task during an art sessions. She is now using the same interventions at home for similar activities.

MJK professional staff meets regularly to discuss individuals, group interaction, and modality successes and challenges. In this manner, the programs can remain responsible to the individuals and families served. The anticipated outcomes are that the families feel represented in the care, and the individual feels they have an impact in their own programming. MJK hopes to view increased self-worth with an individual's ability to make choices within their programming. It is evident in the observations of the staff involved. "As a music therapist at MarbleJam Kids, I have seen first-hand the ways music, art, and dance therapy can affect a child and the way he interacts with his world. I have seen a child who is isolated join a group and a child who has physical challenges move with grace and confidence. I have been honored by first words and first songs, and every time I am awed by the power of creative expression. MarbleJam helps children with Autism Spectrum Disorders find their creative voice to join the world around them." Elizabeth Balzano-Riley, MA, MT-BC, LCAT.

The extensive therapeutic model design for the SCAT Programs is applied to all art instructional programs developed in order to preserve the consistency of program delivery. When structure is built in to the organization, it allows more continuity of care across the mediums, as well as to the external environment. The model consists of the entire process, from initial intake/evaluation to progress note-taking, through program development, to family involvement, and community transition. The model cannot be effective without team collaboration intrinsically within the organization and extrinsically with family, caregivers, and community.

In addition, our unique strategy emphasizes that the participants enrolled in the programs, along with their families, are the heart of the organization. Programs are "child-centered" in all aspects: from the initial development of a program, to the implementation of activities and goals during an individual's program, to the family support needs, and finally to the needs of a community via outreach. When children are given social opportunities in the form of supported arts programs, they not only contribute to themselves, but also to their families and their communities. This success is a celebration of the team approach and attention to the pulse of the environment.

Through the Open Door

Throughout our 7 years providing creative arts therapy and supported arts programming to children

with ASDs, we have witnessed the benefits of intervention and the potential of children involved. We can see how emotional wellness is the first step to behavior modification. We witness relationships form and grow through social arts programming and therapeutic arts approaches. We see children eagerly gather with peers that have the same interests as themselves. We also observe families that experience healthy bonds and communication through the effectiveness of arts programming. This transformation of an individual, and of a family, is what meets the global needs of children with autism.

“I cannot be more enthusiastic about MarbleJam’s programs! Natalie loves the social interaction and the arts-based program that they offer. In addition to Natalie’s enjoyment, I believe MarbleJam serves two very important functions. First, MarbleJam provides an opportunity for Natalie to have an engaging time with her friends after school. Second, MarbleJam provides program participation activities for children like Natalie who are entering their teen years. Although it is a well-known fact that young, autistic children do not grow up to be suddenly ‘no longer autistic’, there is a surprising lack of good programs for older children like Natalie.”

- *Julia Yong-hee Park, MarbleJam parent*

Venturing down this road comes with many challenges, but the rewards far outweigh the obstacles. We are encouraged by the approach to care we implement and by the effect it has on overall program success. The process of child centered programming - meeting the child where they are and building the curriculum around their abilities - allows for successful experiences. We take pride in attention to detail to ensure success. Like our staff and our mission, MJK is welcoming and accepting of all who enter. MJK will not be the place where a parent hears, “your child is not ready for this activity.” In fact, the opposite is true. We offer the open door, and children find their own path to follow.

MarbleJam Kids from its inception has been evolving and growing as needs present. We find strength in the community that gives us support, and we find promise in the children that we serve. At one time we were united by our own children in response to a missed opportunity. We continue today for the children we meet, and the mission to offer them those equal opportunities. We know that if given a chance - they will flourish, they will contribute, and they will be able to share their amazing qualities with others. For this we always say, “Let the marbles roll...”

About the Authors

Sarah Melone is the Co-Founder and Vice President of MarbleJam Kids, Inc. She graduated from the University of Scranton with a B.S. in Physical Therapy, with an interest in neurological rehabilitation. Sarah first practiced in the field of rehabilitation concentrating on neuro-rehab and alternative clinical rehab practices including serving as an Aquatics Service Supervisor and an Equestrian Therapist at Bryn Mawr Rehab in Pennsylvania. She draws experience from her work in hospital and medical centers, outpatient clinics, pediatric school programs, as well as faculty affiliations as course instructor and lecturer for Physical Therapy programs in local colleges and universities. Although committing to her busy family and volunteer status at MarbleJam Kids does not leave much time for her Physical Therapy practice, Sarah maintains a part time consultation position in a residential facility for disabled children and adults in Blauvelt, NY. At MarbleJam Kids, Sarah is active in program development and direction, designing and implementing policies, logistics, and procedure practices, as well as fundraising, grant writing, and advocacy. She leads the administration for Joey Travolta’s Short Film Camp each summer, and heads the committees for the annual gala event. Part of the driving force behind her creation of the signature Social Creative Arts Therapy Program at

MJK was from observing the challenges faced by her own son and others in his special education school program. Sarah's love for rehabilitation and alternative therapies continues to be inspired by the creative group of therapists she meets in the organization. Sarah lives with her husband and three children in Bergen County, NJ where she is active in school and community activities.

Nancy Dhulipala is the director of fund raising for MarbleJam Kids. She received a B.F.A. in Theatre from Ohio State University and is a certified Music Together instructor from the Center for Music & Children in Princeton, NJ. Nancy began work in professional theatre as a member of the first apprentice class with The Purple Rose Theatre Company. While in Detroit she worked on productions at The Gem, The Attic Theater, The Strand, Jewish Ensemble Theatre, The Second City-Detroit, Michigan State Theatre, 1515 Broadway and Greenfield Village. Highlights of her theatre career include cast and crew-member of world premier plays written by Don Nigro, Jeff Daniels and Paul Green. Nancy corporate marketing for Information Builders, Inc. and was Assistant Marketing Manager for the launch of iWay Software, Inc. Nancy has always valued the opportunity to volunteer with organizations big and small including The American Red Cross, The Alpine Education Foundation, The Alpine Home & School Association, Parent Advisory Committee for Special Needs, The Simpson-Baber Foundation for the Autistic and The LAM Foundation. Nancy is an Emeritus Advisory Board Member for The Simpson-Baber Foundation for the Autistic and an Executive Board Member for MarbleJam Kids since 2011. Nancy began volunteer work in 2009 for MarbleJam Kids with the Peer Vision projects, the annual Joey Travolta Short Film Camp, committee head for annual gala and managing funding relationships and grant projects for the organization.

Anna Villa-Bager holds a B.S. in Dance with an emphasis on Psychology from the State University of New York at Brockport. Anna's experience in the entertainment industry spans over twenty years in all aspects of entertainment including corporate show production: from initial concept to completion. In the large corporate arena, Anna co-developed and produced national and regional industrial shows for many companies including Johnson & Johnson, Cooper Vision, and Becton Dickenson. She served as a spokesperson and performer with Adidas USA for International Super Shows worldwide. Her portfolio includes an extensive theatrical performance career. She has worked with Anthony Quinn, Leila Kedrova, Joel Grey, Jason Alexander, and has appeared in national and local television commercials over the years. As an original cast member of Jerome Robbins Broadway, previously known as Andi Tyler, Anna performed and assisted Mr. Robbins in the reconstruction of dance pieces from notation and old film archives and performed for the entire Broadway run. Other performance credits include Broadway, International and National Tours, regional and children's theater, film and television. She currently develops programming and manages the administration of the organization. She also teaches dance to pre-school aged children, teens, and adults both with and without special needs. Anna grew up in Bergen County NJ and with her husband and young daughter who was diagnosed with an ASD at the age of 2. It is her daughters' love for music, dance, and art that inspired MarbleJam Kids. Anna maintains her status as a member in good standing with SAG-AFTRA and Actors Equity Association.



The Multicultural Music Group is an arts education organization that focuses on the use of global history, music performance and aesthetic reflection as a combined tool to promote music proficiency, inter/intra personal skills, cultural understanding and social justice awareness.

PLAYING HISTORY:

The Combination of Music, Social Justice, Aesthetic Reflection
and Social Entrepreneurship

by *Luis Mojica, Ed.D.*

Co-Founder and Executive Director, Multicultural Music Group

ORIGINS: EVELYN PLACE

After six years of music training at City College in the late eighties, and with many live music venues closing their doors to performing musicians all over New York City, it seemed that teaching was my only alternative for a steady income. I had never liked the idea, especially with the terrible reputation of urban public schools. Nevertheless, at that time teaching was my only option. Thus, I became a general music teacher at a local school in the Bronx traveling from room to room providing music appreciation to indifferent students. As expected, I was ready to leave this position by the end of my first year. That is, until my Principal offered me the opportunity to conduct a small music ensemble with selected students because the orchestra music teacher was retiring. As promised, the following year I was in charge of the school orchestra. However, I still needed professional development to teach urban students and a budget to repair the inoperable instruments that I inherited. Nevertheless, I was determined to turn the situation around.

After two years of working with the NYC Department of Education (NYCDOE) and experiencing a lack of administrative support, I decided to search for external help. I asked for corporate support from the local businesses and had bake sales and small fundraisers coordinated by parents. Local newspapers and cable news helped to publicize my presentations. Elected officials openly supported my school ensemble, community artists and scholars collaborated with my students and consequently grant proposals were approved in order to maintain the flow of artists into my classroom residencies, buy new instruments and repair the existent ones. Sooner, rather than later, I had my classes running as a private enterprise with enough funding and community collaboration to cover basic needs, hire teaching assistants, provide professional development and structure the curricular implementation.

Finally, the program was operating with full financial and community support. Nevertheless, something was missing. Even though, my classes were performing with acceptable music accuracy I didn't feel the students' passion for this aural phenomenon that I loved so much. One day, I had one of my Latino students approach me with a very bold statement: "Mr. Mojica, you are such a racist person." I could not believe what I was hearing, a Latino like me calling me a racist. My answer was immediate: "Why did you say that?" and without hesitation he replied: "We only play the music and study the history of your place of origin, we don't play the music of the different students in this classroom, only yours." He was right, we only played what I knew the most, what I respected, what I valued, what I studied. This experience not only made me aware of my teacher-centered style but also how students needed to have empathy with the curricular topics in order to be interested and motivated.

I began arranging new music that resembled other cultures until the day I was invited to perform with my students at a multicultural music festival in Brooklyn. We played three beautiful pieces: an Afro-Caribbean Medley, a delicate French Minuet and a Gospel Spiritual. At the end of the performance, some members of the Muslim community asked for a piece in honor of the upcoming Ramadan. Therefore, we played a piece that I arranged from a Middle Eastern music live performance at Central Park. I remember that I turned to conduct the ensemble and the auditorium was three quarters full but at the end of the performance I turned back and it was almost empty. The person who invited us

indicated that we played a belly dancing piece for an orthodox Muslim community. Thankfully, it was not a serious offense, but it certainly was not the most appropriate performance for the occasion. After this eye-opening experience, I realized that knowledge of the cultural background was crucial for the establishment of mutual respect and relevant impact.

I started creating collaborative partnerships with social studies teachers, history professors, and professional composers from various ethnic groups. As the collaborative partnerships developed, I began to discover the depth and breadth of global history. A greater discovery was the noticeable interest and enjoyment that my students and many audiences demonstrated when they listened to and participated in music that depicted historical events from various cultures. Students were interested in learning the hidden aspects of history and how they connected to many cultures including their own. For them, it was like finding a treasure. In addition to the students' surprising discoveries, the impact of these events was magnified when they played music strictly composed to depict those events by composers within the culture. These experiences gave the students the opportunity to express their emotions through journals and/or group discussions. A similar response yielded from the audiences at the concert presentations. At these events, we presented the historical topic in panel discussions and then the students and professional musicians performed the music. The impact of the music/history combination and the acceptance from the audiences was unimaginable.

I remember one example from a student journal while we were studying the civil rights movement and playing Billie Holiday's 'Strange Fruit': "The experiences of African-American people in the US can relate to the race relations that my family experienced in the Dominican Republic." The student was referring to the Parsley Massacre, a topic that we previously studied with the music of Juan Colon. The student's homeroom teacher indicated to me how these topics impacted this student so much that she was motivated to write a special project about the incidents that took place in the Dominican Republic during Trujillo's regime and compare it with the lynching situation in the United States. Moreover, the guidance counselor created a series of talks in which the students discussed topics about the current race relations in the school, home and the community; it was one of the most impactful experiences in my teaching career.

In a few years, this concept was labeled as "Playing History." This teaching and presenting strategy gave the students and audiences the opportunity to learn historical events from different parts of the world, relate this information to customized music depicting these events and reflect on the music/history combination and its relevance to their actual lives. For seven years we continued upon this path, and the students had the opportunity to perform in different venues in New York City and travel to different performing festivals in the US and Canada. Most importantly over 95% of the students in the program completed high school and continued to post-secondary education. This retention outcome was a noticeable contrast to the increasing dropout rate of urban minority students in New York City.

THE MULTICULTURAL MUSIC GROUP

After ten years working for the NYCDOE, I decided to take a new challenge, as the new Artistic Director of the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music (BCM). This new endeavor gave me the opportunity to try this comprehensive teaching concept with a different population. After one year of implementing the "Playing History" at BCM, the institution approved the World Music Series, an annual concert series in which students and professional musicians presented their usual repertoire, and at least one commissioned piece resembling a social issue. Artists such as Tito Puente, Simon Shaheen, Frank London and Olu Dara performed with our students.

While I was enjoying the curricular achievement of "Playing History" at BCM, I could not ignore the increasing drop-out rates at some of NYC's most underserved schools. The success of the program's past paved the perfect path for the creation of Multicultural Music Group to serve as a tool to improve the academic and social conditions for these underserved youth. Through the support of the Echoing Green Foundation, the sponsorship of the NYC Department of Education and the guidance of the

Doctoral Program at Teachers College, MMG was created and included three major components: a professional performing orchestra, professional development workshops and an outreach program in NYC public schools. All components had a music/history/reflection aspect in their programming.

For the next ten years the MMG accomplished several positive outcomes. Some of them were related to the students' accomplishments through Playing History and others were related to the multicultural and pluralistic concepts of our program. The first achievement was the removal of five public schools we had programming in from the NYS Schools Under Registration Review list (S.U.R.R.). In 1998, three schools in Community School District Ten (CSD10) and two public schools in District Six were removed from the NYS low performing schools' list after completing two years of Playing History as school wide programs and improving 30% or more of the students standardized test scores. Irma Zardoya, Superintendent of CSD 10, commented on this outcome in a personal letter to MMG: "Your expertise in urban instruction, ability to support the core curriculum through arts integration and most importantly the attendance improvement as a result of the innovative music instruction, helped three of our schools to be removed from the New York State Department of Education's list of low performing institutions. We commend you for this wonderful achievement."

As a consequence of these results and the exposure of the MMG Orchestra and its panel/concert presentations at conferences such as the National Community Arts Guild and the National Association of Symphony Orchestras, the MMG was recognized in 1999 by President Clinton's Initiative on Race as one of the "Promising Practices for Racial Reconciliation". This recognition and the collaboration with the United Nations Association's education programs at the Bronx and Westchester Schools, lead to another national acknowledgement in 2002 by The Civil Rights Coalition for the 21st Century recognized MMG as a "Promising Program" for its efforts in promoting multicultural understanding and world peace.

In 2006, the MMG was designated an official "Arts for Peace Ambassador" by the World Association of Former United Nations Internees and Fellows (WAFUNIF) and the United Nations Association (UNA) the two official Civic Charters of the United Nations for our active participation in their instructional programs. The same year, the MMG was selected to receive the Union Square Award for its positive achievement on supporting minority urban students' high school graduation and consequently the post secondary enrollment of our students in higher education institutions in the Mid-Atlantic region.

At the peak of MMG's positive outcomes, I had the offer to work at the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music as the New Dean of Academic Affairs. This position not only provided the opportunity to apply the Playing History concept in teaching training courses but to prepare a substantial amount of educators to disseminate this strategy to as many students as possible. As the new teachers and teaching artists started applying this concept in their jobs, other local Prep Programs became interested and consequently requested the implementation of this comprehensive concept in their curricula. Currently, four higher education institutions in Puerto Rico are implementing the Playing History concept in their Teachers' Prep Programs, graduating approximately 200 student-teachers per year which in turn can affect the lives of thousands students in public and private schools. The MMG collaborative program with higher education in PR absorbed most of the NYC MMG's senior faculty. A situation that provided very positive outcomes in our new place of work but resulted in an extremely detrimental aspect for the MMG outreach programs in the NYC public schools.

THE NEW REALIZATION: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

After fifteen years of service in the NYC Public Schools, and the expansion of Playing History with higher education institutions in Puerto Rico, the MMG administration determined that it was time to complete a new strategic plan to decide the direction for the next five years of programming and operations. The results of the strategic plan presented very good aspects of the programs especially in the curricular component. Nevertheless, the study also reflected that our teaching in the NYC public schools was not implementing the Playing History concept as described in the curriculum.

This situation was a direct result of the MMG's senior faculty relocation to the higher education component in PR, the high mobility rate of new faculty in NYC during the financial crisis and the lack of funding for professional development for the new teaching artists in NY. Therefore, NYC students' retention rate was declining, the music performance level was low and the new teaching-artists were frustrated with the outcomes. It was an urgent call for professional development and a deep assessment on how to improve the implementation in the NYC programs.

Contrary to their counterparts in Puerto Rico, the MMG programs in NYC had a constant decrease in their professional development funding. As stated by Michele Kotler in her essay "Open Art Surgery" in the 2013 edition of *Variety New York's Making the Case* compendium:

"Although foundations recognize the importance of training, it is common to hear that they only support the direct work we do with children. We believe the training is 100% connected to the direct service we provide in vulnerable youth. In fact, it's pure math. You train one artist and, all of a sudden, your impact grows exponentially. That one artist will leave the training program and go on to transform the lives of hundreds, maybe even thousands, of children through her or his art form."(page 7)

Fortunately, after searching for support with various funding organizations, we were granted a Youth Service Improvement grant in 2011 with the William T. Grant Foundation. This grant provided the opportunity to improve the curriculum implementation through professional development. In addition to the professional development, the grant also provided the opportunity to implement a mixed method assessment coordinated and analyzed by the Center for Arts Education Research (CAER) at Teachers College, Columbia University. The assessment demonstrated excellent outcomes for the first year which continued with even better results in 2012.

The professional development was designed to provide an environment in which teaching artists could discuss their experiences and challenges with teachers and administrators where "Playing History" was implemented. Training participants also learned new techniques in classroom management, curriculum integration, and multicultural music strategies that have been shown to be successful with urban students. Furthermore, the training led by experts in the areas of fundraising, marketing and community collaboration, gave MMG teaching artists an opportunity to meet on a monthly basis to demonstrate new strategies, track and monitor progress, address challenges, and highlight successes in the implementation of our comprehensive curriculum. Juan Ubiera, our percussion specialist and current music director of Mott Hall High School, highlights marketing, community collaboration and the practical aspect of the sessions as the best components of the professional development: "After the sessions, I was able to obtain funding from local businesses in exchange for ads in our concert programs, present my students at different venues with full house attendance utilizing free advertising and receive compensation for students' stipends by performing at assemblies and graduations in schools without music programs."

The assessment process by the Center for Arts Education Research evaluated the students' outcomes and the program implementation. The process involved data collection analysis and reporting of data results. The evaluation was structured as a pre and post assessment in three major areas: academics (achieved by using the students' report cards and standardized test results), music juries (utilizing rubrics measuring their development in history, performance and aesthetic reflection) and social skill development (measuring intra-personal, inter-personal, diversity, ethics and aesthetics). The evaluation also considered program observations; interviews with students, parents and teachers; students and teachers' journals and students and group formative portfolios.

The outcomes of the improvement grant reflected the necessary training that we needed for new teaching artists in the areas of curriculum integration, marketing, fundraising and community collaboration. This instruction provided the new MMG faculty a clearer perspective of the affective

and cultural integration with the technicalities of music education. Two years after the completion of this training, the new teaching artists who were part of this instruction are now in charge of programs at the schools and are providing training to new recruited faculty. Moreover, the grant management component prepared the participating faculty to obtain promotional news coverage for their programs, funding support from new entities and established new community collaboration with artists, performing venues and scholars.

The evaluation aspect provided evidence of students' attendance increase and significant correlations between the use of music, history and reflection with the improvement of social skills and academic achievement. These are crucial outcomes that certainly help in the reduction of the achievement gap. Nevertheless, these and many other services provided by arts based organizations need the support of constant professional development and the collaboration of higher education institutions for major relevant impact on urban minority students.

After the positive outcome of the inclusion of "Playing History" into the existing curricula of music education courses in Puerto Rico and the encouraging effect of our faculty training in NYC, the MMG is looking to increase its collaboration at the higher education level. This concept will provide training in the "Playing History" concept to more teachers in the NYC public schools and consequently to more students in unprivileged areas. This year we concluded a teachers training series at Teachers College, which served graduate students in the music education program, local teaching artists and arts education administrators. We hope to expand these services to Lehman College and the Bronx arts community next academic year.

This constant striving for growth is what distinguishes MMG as a social change institution. The core of MMG stays true to its mission: to incorporate music strictly composed to depict historical events in its curriculum. The interpretation of such music combined with group reflection promotes an overall greater global understanding, cultural awareness and compassion. Surpassing the individual, the goal of "Playing History" is to make a societal impact by transforming lives, communities and making history.

About the Author

Luis Mojica is a native of the Caribbean region and a musician and educator by heart. Luis completed his doctoral degree in administration and supervision at Teachers College, Columbia University, and also studied composition independently with Latin pianist Charlie Palmieri, and Pulitzer Prize winner David Del Tredici. He worked with the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music as Artistic Director, with the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music as Dean of Academic Affairs and with the Caribbean University of Puerto Rico as External Affairs Coordinator and Chancellor of the Bayamon Campus. He currently serves as Executive Director of the Multicultural Music Group, Co-Principal Investigator for the Center for Arts Education Research and auditor for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.



The Door's mission is to empower young people to reach their potential by providing comprehensive youth development services in a diverse and caring environment. Since 1972, The Door has helped a diverse and rapidly growing population of disconnected youth in New York City gain the tools they need to become successful, in school, work and in life.

BEYOND THE STAGE:

An Integrative, Arts-Based Model for Youth Development

by Bailey Huguley, Assistant Director of Programming, The Door

and Jadrien Ellison, Arts Supervisor, The Door

INTRODUCTION

We are so frequently told to “think outside the box,” but what if we learned to think through the box, or better yet, to make a new box, a box that fits each of us and our own, unique identities, ways of being in the world, of moving through our communities and cultures, and creating our lives. That is what highly effective arts programming does. Participation in the arts teaches us to re-examine the world around us, to stop taking things at face value, to question boundaries and limits, and to reach over, under, around, and through them. It teaches us to re-define community, to build new bridges, and to find unexpected partnerships.

The value of arts is so much greater than the creation of a final product, and arts programming alone is not enough. It is the process- the journey of creativity- that changes who we are at the core, which is why truly effective arts programming must emphasize the whole person, the whole process. The biggest challenge is engaging young people, keeping them engaged, and getting them what they need, whatever that is. Through a comprehensive youth development lens, the emphasis is placed on just that, the development of a young person. The Door’s arts intensive model capitalizes on this process over product by building in a plethora of additional supports and services to encourage young people to grow into truly independent adults.

WHAT IS THE DOOR?

The Door – A Center of Alternatives, Inc. was founded in 1972 as a multi-service youth development agency. The goal in the 70’s was to provide a full range of integrated services at a single site, free of charge to young people. Forty years later, we are still working towards that goal. The Door’s mission is to empower young people to reach their potential by meeting their needs in a caring, supportive and nonjudgmental environment. We provide a full range of youth development services, including reproductive health care and education; mental health counseling and crisis assistance; legal assistance; GED; tutoring and homework help; college access services; career development, job training, and placement; supportive housing; leadership development; arts, sports and recreational activities; and nutritious meals.

Participants note that The Door not only provides them with what they need, but changes their perspective on life, by broadening their horizons and opening their eyes. Young people flow seamlessly between services, accessing the things that work for them at their current stage of life. The Door is meant to grow with participants, and to support them throughout their journey into adulthood. When youth first enter the space, they are often surprised by the range of services that greet them. They are typically referred for very specific needs, but frequently end up needing or wanting something very different once they arrive.

Last year, The Door served nearly 10,000 young people from all five boroughs of New York City and nearby communities: 39% from Brooklyn, 25% from Manhattan, 18% from the Bronx, 14% from Queens, and 4% from Staten Island and the metropolitan area. The majority of Door members came from low-income families and communities with high unemployment rates, failing schools, substandard housing, and high rates of crime and violence. Door members were predominantly

African American (53%) and Latino (33%). More than half of all members were over 18, and the agency has developed expertise in serving older, hard-to-reach, out-of-school, young people. Over 20% of members this past year revealed that they have experienced homelessness or had been placed in foster care, 18% were involved with the justice system, and many have children of their own. Door members are incredibly diverse, representing a huge range of New York City's young people, including youth who are foreign-born (20%) and who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ).

Since The Door's inception, our Arts Program has functioned as a critical point of entry for at-risk, low-income New York City youth who have profound needs and widely diverse backgrounds. In fact, 17% of our members join specifically to access the arts. The majority of Door members come from chronically under-funded schools with little or no arts programming, or are out of school and do not have a structured community that offers them arts or other enrichment activities. The Door offers a safe, confidential, and accepting environment where youth can participate in visual, music, literary, and performing arts programs that would otherwise not be available to them. We purposefully weave arts programming into The Door's multi-layered support services to help ensure that all youth are provided access and connection to needed services across the agency. The arts are a program area that is, and has always been, vital to our work as artistic expression and exploration embody the spirit of The Door community.

ARTS AT THE DOOR

The Door's Arts Program consists of several different elements that work together to create a whole, comprehensive experience. Artistic disciplines include visual arts, music, theater, and dance. Visual arts offerings range from fashion design to fine arts to graphic design and video production. Music offerings include protocols and production, songwriting, live recording, instrumental lessons, percussion, and DJing. Our theater program includes improv exploration and a range of ensemble options focusing on social justice. The dance program includes opportunities to explore multiple forms of dance, choreography, and a wide range of performance opportunities. Additionally, a tech crew exists in order to support the technological and structural needs of these programs, and provide exposure to alternative careers in the arts.

Within each discipline classes focus on final products with an emphasis on individual expression and artistic growth. We provide structured, goal-oriented activities with benefits that include intensive learning opportunities alongside low threshold, open classes. The classes include portfolio development, introduction to career and education opportunities, as well as lifelong health and wellness resources.

A Bridge to Services...

An overarching goal of the program extends beyond the arts to serve as a connection to other much-needed on-site supportive services, including health, mental health, career, education, supportive housing, and legal assistance. It is our goal to ensure that all staff actively seek out and provide referrals for needed services across the agency, and that all young people have a rich experience that moves them forward in their lives. Young people frequently come to The Door because of arts programming, or stay because of their involvement in one or more of the many creative outlets available. In fact, 93% of young people who access arts programming also take advantage of other support services.

Participation in arts programming allows for an extended period of relationship building, testing our space, and establishing a sense of interest and comfort. A young person may enter our space for a music class, and ultimately decide to access GED or college access services, receive a physical or dental exam, begin to see a counselor, or work towards a career in a field that interests them.

Participant Story

Cesar came to The Door seeking support for housing and basic needs. A young visual artist, he spends his days selling his art in

SoHo, but needed some extra help. He comes daily for meals and a space to work on his art, and has been connected to a case manager who is working with him on a housing application.

In many ways, the arts serve as a gateway to other services at the agency. Young people are drawn to the creative spaces and outlets available to them, and stick with us as a result. They come to rely on our space not only to feed their creative needs, but also to support them in other aspects of life. They build relationships with our staff and with each other. As they explore their needs and goals, their participation within the building grows to support them.

Participant Story

Edgar, a participant from the summer dance intensive last year who has since gone on to college recently returned to access the health center. He told us that when he realized he needed help, The Door was the first place he thought of, and he immediately reached out to a staff member he had formed a relationship with over the summer.

Building Leadership Capacity...

Through a broad array of arts-based intensives, young people are introduced to the critical role of the arts as a means of self-expression and creativity, healthy development, advocacy, and leadership, while learning much-needed skills to advance academically and professionally. Participation in arts programs allows youth to build healthy, supportive relationships with adults and presents leadership opportunities as youth plan, orchestrate, and lead projects and performances. Young people learn the value of creative expression, and are afforded opportunities to develop and demonstrate mastery.

For many of the youth we see, failure has been a substantial element in their lives. Traditional schooling has focused on shortcomings as opposed to strengths, and the multitudes of obstacles they experience as adolescents have emphasized those failures. For these young people, participation in arts-based programming is one of the first times they are able to feel and be seen as successful. The strengths-based approach of The Door's programming is, for many, a large shift in perspective, leading to healthy and positive relationships with adult mentors and peers that, hopefully, extend into the broader community.

Participant Story

TJ came to The Door looking for a safe space. He had made a name for himself dancing in public spaces, but was ready for a new challenge and was looking for a space to work with his own growing dance crew. He is now working on obtaining stable housing and has an internship at The Door teaching dance to younger students. Using an array of the supports available to him at The Door, TJ has made incredible strides towards stability and adulthood in his time with us.

Exploring New Things & Coming Together...

An additional and significant element of arts programming is that it offers a common meeting ground for young people from incredibly diverse backgrounds and experiences. These creative spaces become literal melting pots, bringing together young people who are runaways and homeless, recent immigrants, LGBTQ identified, and more, all from unique backgrounds. These diverse classes offer incredible opportunities for cross-cultural exposure and learning. By engaging with one another in these forums, young people learn to understand one another, to sense that the world is much larger than their own unique experience, and to use tolerance and compassion.

Exposure to new and exciting ideas is reinforced through relationships with other young artists throughout the country and the world. We have embarked on several projects both domestically and internationally in which we share music and art electronically. Youth at The Door have had the

opportunity to engage with young people from London, Berlin, and other cities in this way. This sharing has prompted discussions about the differences and similarities in educational systems, employment, race and racism, sexuality and sexual identity, and political issues around the world. These cross-cultural exchanges have been instrumental in helping to push young people to think in bigger and broader ways and to tackle personal and social issues through creative outlets.

WHAT IS THE INTENSIVE PROGRAM?

History

The model for the summer intensives has been developed over the past four years with its roots in our dance program. Growing from the need for our dancers to spend longer periods of time rehearsing together for performances and an interest in exploring multiple forms of dance, The Door's performing arts coordinator developed a seven week, full day program for his dancers. As we developed closer relationships with participants, it became increasingly apparent that many of them were not accessing the supportive services, and that there was an incredible amount of potential for collaborative work.

We began to build in supports from The Door's other program areas, marketing them as arts-specific workshops. These workshops included nutrition for dancers, careers in the arts panels, exploration of arts-based college options, yoga classes, and sexual health. As a result, participants, many of whom were accessing The Door solely for arts programming, began to meet staff from other program areas, build relationships, and utilize a wider range of support services.

As our intensive offerings have grown and expanded to other disciplines, specific and intentional opportunities have been created for overlap and support from the larger Door community in order to build these services into the overall artistic and personal growth of the participant. In fact, exposure to these services throughout the intensives often fosters interest in other areas and creates opportunities for youth outside of the arts. Two intensive participants, a dancer and a visual artist, were inspired by the workshops they attended over the summer facilitated by the adolescent health center's peer educators. They have subsequently become peer educators themselves, working in the health center to spread awareness of sexual health issues facing youth throughout their community. As evidenced here, young people frequently expand their areas of interest to include new educational and career goals as a result of the exposure they receive.

Participant Story

Emmanuel, a young man who emigrated here from Haiti, came to us with an interest in singing. As an undocumented youth about to graduate from high school, he was struggling with his desire to pursue college. He is working with The Door's legal and college access programs to explore and expand his options for furthering his education. At the same time he continues to pursue his newfound interest in music production and develop marketable skills for the future.

Program Structure

The summer intensive program has grown dramatically over the past four years, first with the addition of a music track, and last year with the addition of both visual arts and theater. Within each of these disciplines, the basic principle of exposing youth to support services and cultivate holistic wellness has remained central. In their current form, summer arts intensives run for seven weeks, Monday through Thursday from 12pm-6:30pm. Each day begins with a communal lunch, followed by the opportunity to engage in studio work in various electives within each genre, and culminates with a community dinner that is open to all. Fridays are reserved for field trips, which bring together young people from across disciplines to explore the larger world of arts in New York City. All disciplines culminate in an exhibition and live performance showcasing their talents and original works.

Intensive instructors are practicing artists with diverse backgrounds who teach within a mentorship framework. Additional support and instruction is provided in specialized skills, including portfolio development, auditioning, marketing, and branding in order to compliment educational and professional pursuits in the arts. Instructional time is also dedicated to attending off site performances and visiting professional arts venues and schools. Each intensive is designed to meet young people where they are in regard to skill level and particular area of interest, and maintain open accessibility while allowing for deeper exploration.

Participant Story

Will has had what he calls “a very unique journey” at The Door. He began as a participant, and then moved on to become a peer educator in the health center. When he went to college and began to pursue his true passion, graphic design, he was continually called upon by the community to assist with graphics needs. Eventually, he transitioned roles yet again, becoming a teaching artist and helping Door members learn Photoshop and work on their own projects. Will truly understands what it means to meet someone where they are, and notes that “With each individual young person, it’s a bit tailored to their strengths and interest. For people with some knowledge, I skip ahead and challenge them more. For others it’s more about lingering on topics to build a better foundation.” This individualized approach is implemented across disciplines, helping young people tackle projects that are at their skill level, and build upon what they have learned.

The flexibility of the program within the existing structure allows for the opportunity to engage in many genres within each discipline. Participants begin together as a group, but break out to receive specific individualized instruction in areas of interest, and then reconvene and pull it all together and create a cohesive whole. Specific work is created in a more insular environment, but is shared and feeds into a much larger product, which is presented at the culmination of the program. This freedom to explore the many elements that constitute creative expression allows young people to push boundaries, introduces them to new ideas within an area of interest, and helps them to connect with adult mentors and other youth with similar or complementary interests.

The Door’s many supportive services have created workshop opportunities specifically targeting artists in order to capture their interest and ensure relevant content. Our career and education programs work with intensive participants in goal setting, interview skills, portfolio development, higher education in the arts, alternative careers in the arts, and making the jump from local art to global careers. Our health and wellness programs have created a wellness for artist series that includes meal planning on a budget, yoga, meditation, healthy relationships, stress management, and more. Additionally, our legal department offers information and support around how to sell your art without selling out, understanding intellectual property, and learning about workplace rights for artists.

These workshops and offerings shift and evolve along with our population of young artists. Many participants connect to these services during the summer, but use them continually throughout the year as they work towards achieving goals.

Participant Story

Ashley, a participant in our visual arts summer intensive, has worked diligently throughout the fall and winter with teaching artists and staff from our college access program to create a portfolio for art school, where she is applying for the fall. She, like many members, is dedicated to pursuing what she loves and finding the path on which she will be most successful. Without the support at home or

in her overcrowded school to tackle the overwhelming process of building a portfolio, applying to school, and receiving financial aid, she thought college was not an option for her. Seeing those dreams become a reality for participants is a daily reminder that creative energy can help us to overcome incredible adversity.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

The development and growth of the arts intensive program has been a journey. We have learned an incredible amount along the way: about who we are, who we serve, and how to best support creativity and growth within our community. We have expanded the number of youth served and the disciplines available to them, and have created a structure that keeps everyone moving and on track. However, there is much more to learn, and the possibilities that exist are tremendous.

have learned that young people are most successful when they are given a broad range of choice within a structured setting. This coming summer, we are broadening the scope of our program to include leadership development opportunities and community service experiences for all participants. Additionally, we are increasing the ability for students to experience different disciplines and create a program that meets their individual needs with the potential for individualized final projects. We are also increasing our one-on-one goal setting sessions with young people in order to ensure that each participant is receiving the supports that they need.

While we have added additional disciplines, and have built overlapping time into the summer days, we hope to find more concrete ways to cross disciplines in order to create a large-scale, inclusive culminating event in which everyone is represented and working together. A dynamic, interdisciplinary showcase would truly bridge gaps, increase communication and exposure, and bring our community of artists and art appreciators together in a new way.

We are constantly seeking to enlarge our portfolio of external contacts with whom to connect young people. It is our goal that participants have multiple opportunities to meet, talk with, and learn from professionals in the field, and that they be exposed to careers in the arts that are representative of the many ways people support creative work professionally. As we grow, we continue to establish these relationships and connect young people to the larger arts community of New York City.

In the coming years, it is our hope that we will build on the electronic international exchanges that have begun so successfully and find ways to allow our young people to engage in physical exchanges across communities, cultures, and countries. We know that participation in the arts helps young people to broaden their understanding of the world, and engaging more intimately with the larger world around them seems a clear and important next step.

Additionally, as we move ahead, we are beginning to establish a clearer pipeline for young people moving out of our intensive programs and into leadership roles. We have built relationships with programs that allow us to place young people who have demonstrated commitment into internship roles as arts teachers for younger participants while receiving ongoing instruction and support from The Door.

While we recognize that The Door is uniquely fortunate to have in-house supportive services, we believe that the success of this integrative model illustrates the need for all arts programming to incorporate multiple forms of support for youth in order to promote holistic development. Throughout this program, our ultimate goal is to support youth in their totality, and to offer exposure to lifelong learning opportunities, the cultivation of a true appreciation of the arts, and the ability to build the skills, networks, and personal abilities necessary for success in the arts and beyond.

About the Author

Bailey Huguley is the Assistant Director of Programming at The Door—A Center of Alternatives, with a focus on program integration. The Door strives to provide comprehensive services to youth, emphasizing holistic youth development. Ms. Huguley received a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Barnard College and, subsequently, a Master's degree in Social Work from Hunter College.

Jadrien Ellison is the Supervisor of Arts Programming at The Door—A Center of Alternatives. Through the Performing, Visual and Literary Arts offerings at The Door, young people are introduced to the critical role of the arts as a means of self-expression, personal creativity, healthy development, advocacy, and leadership while learning the skills to advance academically and professionally. Mr. Ellison trained in theatre at the Rosa L. Parks School of Fine and Performing Arts and received his Bachelor's in Africana Studies from Lafayette College. He attended Brunel University in London, earning a Master's in Contemporary Performance Making. With many years of artistic practice, community outreach, and program management experience, Mr. Ellison has held a variety of professional roles in arts education that supports the intellectual and artistic growth of young people.

About the Editor

Valentine Lysikatos, Operations and Communications Manager, has been part of the Variety the Children's Charity of New York team since 2009. She holds a MA in Humanities and Social Thought from New York University. Her research focused on Cultural Studies and the Media. In 2008, she received a BA in Communications and minor in Theater Studies from Quinnipiac University.

Ms. Lysikatos has extensive experience in event and theater production including working with Women's Project & Productions, a non-profit organization and the nation's oldest and largest women's theater production company, during their 2008-2009 season. She has been a member of the East River Commedia Theater Company since 2009 and works annually to produce the undergroundzero festival whose focus is on experimental theater.

She is currently a member of The League of Independent Theater of New York, a voting member of The New York Innovative Theater Awards and sits on the Young Professionals Council of EcoHealth Alliance, a non-profit organization that focuses on the conservation of biodiversity in our global ecosystems.



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