

EARLY STAGES



Students from Lower East Side Prep. H.S. at the off-Broadway hit *Altar Boyz*.

Over 5,000 students at over 50 schools have participated this season!

Shows seen Sept '08- March '09 through Live Theater Program

- 13, A New Musical
- A Tale of Two Cities
- Boeing Boeing
- Gazillion Bubble Show
- Hairspray
- Legally Blonde
- Mary Poppins
- Phantom of the Opera
- Shrek the Musical
- Slava's Snowshow
- Spring Awakening
- Taking Over
- Wicked
- Altar Boyz
- Fuerza Bruta
- Lincoln Center Chamber Music
- Paul Taylor Dance
- Reasons to Be Pretty

April 2009 Newsletter

Fuerza Bruta was the first play that I ever went to. I could relate to this in my life right now that I am breaking through the bad habits of my past.
-Juan from Stanley Isaacs



Students from G.E.D.+ at Stanley Isaacs Center waiting to see *Fuerza Bruta*.

From the Desk of one of our Live Theater Program Educators,

We have been to eight shows so far this year. My students have started realizing that there is more to life than that which they have already experienced.

They have experienced "dressing up" and going out with their teacher. They have learned the rules of being a polite audience.

They have seen shows like "13," "Boeing, Boeing," "Wicked," "Hairspray," "Spring Awakening," and "Shrek," and they have spent time discussing them. Ranging from issues like alienation to the differences between slapstick and other types of comedy, my students have expanded their horizons and points of view. They are starting to spend time, during their lunch period, discussing shows they've seen,

My students were mesmerized by *Fuerza Bruta*. After the show, we stood outside the theater and discussed symbolism. My students were able to see more than just the visual and we discussed the show in terms of the violence of modern life as well as in terms of inter-personal relationships. At one point in the show, a character stood at the top of stairs and, finally, chose to jump. We discussed the concept of "taking a leap of faith."

During a class lesson the next day, these students made the connection between what we were discussing and "taking a leap of faith." They had taken something experienced from theater and from our discussion and used it in their everyday lives. I was so very proud.

My students delve into their emotions and their own personal experiences to write essays that have depth. They share their essays with their classmates with whom they've seen shows as well as with those classmates who have not joined us.

One of the goals of "Early Stages" is to develop and nurture the next generation of theater-goers. To this end, you are succeeding, at least with my students. Those who saw "*Fuerza Bruta*," for instance, have discussed it with classmates and they are talking about going together this summer, on their own, to see it again and to have some of their classmates who haven't seen the show join them.

I am so grateful to "Early Stages" for the opportunities afforded my students. Thank you,
Len Berman at Stanley Isaacs Center

“I’ve seen a tremendous change-both in the way children listen and respond to literature-as an outgrowth of our residency program and our commitment with Early Stages. And I’ve also seen a change in the ways teachers read, and the kinds of activities and requirements that they’re expecting of the children.”

Carole Nussbaum, Principal, PS203



“Mara was wonderful. She knew just how to manage and teach 28 active minds. My children really loved to hear the stories and learned a lot about character.”

First Grade Teacher at PS 188

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A Word on our **Storytelling Program:**

A few weeks ago I jumped the B Train and hauled up to 178th Street in the Bronx, headed to MS145, a magnificently diverse school, where Early Stages provides a Storytelling and Drumming program for the 5th and 6th grade. There I met Jackie, Rain, Jeanine, Linda, and a few other ES board members.

I had no idea what to expect, but I was thrilled by what I saw, as we spent the morning sitting in on a few percussion classes run by Juan Usera, an obviously talented musician and a potent teacher. The way he instructed the fifth graders was extraordinary -- his vibrance, enthusiasm and skill were inspiring for everyone in the room. He was firm but always entertaining and never condescending.

The kids were, for the most part, rapt. By the end of each class he had all 25-30 students working together and creating real rhythms with a variety of percussion instruments from around the world. He also never failed to throw in covert lessons on life, geography and much more.

Word is, he teaches history as well, and I'm sure it's a knockout class. In fact, I'd bet Juan could even make math exciting; although, perhaps that's asking too much from a mere mortal. Seriously, if you get a chance check this guy out.

-Early Stages Board Member Sam Whitehead



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