



FISCAL 2008 FINAL REPORT SUMMARY NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL APPROPRIATION

Lynda Zimmerman
Executive Director

Chris Vine
Artistic & Education
Director

Advisory Council

Stephen R. Aiello
Anne Marie Agnelli
Lois Amend
Michael Emont
George Fertitta
Charlotte Frank
Joanne Halev
David R. Jones
Rita J. Kaplan
Steve Krause
Sandra A. Lamb
Jack Lusk
Nancy F. Swartzell
Nancy Walker
David W. Weigel

The **Creative Arts Team (CAT)** is a university-wide initiative of the Office of Academic Affairs at The City University of New York (CUNY). CAT's mission is to challenge at-risk young people with participatory drama workshops and residencies that foster important learning skills and positive social development. Thanks in large part to generous support from the New York City Council, CAT has provided workshops and residency programs to nearly 11,000 citywide young people, their parents and teachers in 2007-2008. CAT's programs serve a variety of student populations in general and special education, alternative, and Head Start programs. Age-appropriate programs are offered at every grade level, from pre-kindergarten through high school, and beyond.

To date this year, CAT has provided 2,919 workshops – totaling 6,555 hours of service – for approximately 11,000 students, teachers, and parents throughout New York City. Many of CAT's current projects and programs are still in progress. Our full 2008 Year End Report, including full statistical and evaluative information, will be submitted this summer. Selected highlights follow.

CAT Youth Theatre

The award-winning CAT Youth Theatre (CYT) is CAT's out-of-school-time program. Established in 1995, CYT each year engages approximately 80 New Yorkers, ages 11-24 and from 58 schools in all five boroughs to participate, free of charge, in the creation and presentation of original, artistically sophisticated works on topics that are meaningful to the young people. In doing so, they strengthen skills related to both theatre and life – such as creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and decision-making.

This year, it is the **first and only American company ever selected** for the prestigious international *Contacting the World* program, which encompasses cross-cultural exchanges and will culminate in a festival in England in July 2008. CYT's *Contacting the World* partner, Project Phakama, based in London, UK, is comprised of refugees and asylum seekers from around the world. Every month, a creative task has been set for the paired companies to exchange in a process of getting to know each other and share devising techniques and work processes. The aim of the project is to open up to new influences, and for the collaboration to encourage each company to devise in a new way.

CYT has reached full capacity this year. All three units meet weekly. The Junior Youth Theatre (ages 11-14), which serves 20 young people, presented its December workshop performance to more than 60 parents and friends. The CAT Youth Theatre (high school students), has 46 members. Their original February-March production, *Gone to Look for America*, took place at the prestigious Aaron Davis Hall, on the CCNY campus, for 585 audience members.



The newest unit, The Ensemble, is composed of 11 CYT alumni, including six current CUNY college students. As well as developing their own original piece of theatre, Ensemble members provide mentoring for the younger groups and production and rehearsal support for the YT program staff. This year, for the first time, Ensemble members fully staffed the crew of the CAT Youth Theatre production, providing them with hands-on experience as well as the notion of how Youth Theatre members come full-circle, from learning to creating to running a full production.

During the 2007-08 year, the CAT Youth Theatre provided 122 extended out-of-school workshops, comprising 295 service hours, for 65 young people, and gave 14 performances for 1,030 audience members.

On July 19th and 20th, CYT will be holding special performances of their new production, *In the Shadows*, which they will perform at the *Contacting the World* Festival in Liverpool, UK, later this summer.

Shakespeare in the Classroom/NYC Student Shakespeare Festival



With continued success, CAT has produced the *Shakespeare in the Classroom/NYC Student Shakespeare Festival* since its founding in 1994. The project features professional development for teachers on how to devise student-centered scenes using Shakespeare's words and culminated in student performances.

CAT's intent is not only to enrich student learning in language arts and drama but also to advance teaching pedagogy and methodology in those areas. In this way, the impact extends far beyond the actual performances; teachers who participate are

now able to implement this student-centered, devising work throughout their careers.

The **15th annual NYC Student Shakespeare Festival** took place at the Lucille Lortel Theatre on Friday, April 11th, Monday, April 14rd, and Tuesday, April 15th. **During the three Festival days, CAT hosted 23 school groups with approximately 500 students.** This year we welcomed 12 new teachers, half of whom had never used drama before! Participating schools came from all five boroughs, Deer Park, Long Island and Princeton, New Jersey. CAT's commitment to engaging students from second to twelfth grade, from a variety of socio-economic neighborhoods and linguistic and cultural backgrounds, has continued to ensure that the program remains an accurate reflection of New York's diverse student population. This year, for the first time, we were excited to accommodate a school for special needs students in the workshops *and* Festival, PS 721K.



Healthy Choices & Young Adult Life Skills

CAT's *Healthy Choices* program, which examines risky behaviors and their consequences, has become a staple residency among CAT's repertoire of educational drama programs. In addition to guiding participating young people and adults through explorations of causes and consequences of violence, substance abuse and relationship abuse, CAT workshops include an examination of sexual activity and related risks as well as a focus on

effective communication skills, which are key for establishing trust and understanding and addressing sensitive issues such as those associated with sexual activity, use of controlled substances and relationship violence. This program is a longstanding partnership with the New York State Department of Health AIDS Institute.

Residencies were rendered in high schools, two Homes for the Homeless sites in Queens, Saratoga Family Inn and Springfield Inn, and Rikers Island facilities, the Rose M. Singer, Anna M. Kross and Otis Bantum Correctional Centers. **This year, approximately 1,608 adolescents and adults participated in 289 *Healthy Choices* workshops, totaling about 550 service hours.**

New York City HIV Prevention Peer Education Project

The NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Bureau of HIV Prevention and Control and the Department of Education's Office of Health and Family Living in partnership with the NYS Department of Health's AIDS Institute, began this project last year. Its aim is to support implementation of the DOE's updated HIV/AIDS Curriculum through peer education programs facilitated by seven community based



organizations (CBOs) in 11 high schools throughout the five boroughs. Because of its successful track record for designing youth-centered HIV Prevention programs for adolescents, CAT was chosen to organize and support the project for its second year, and to provide hands-on training to teachers from all eleven schools. Year two of the project is well underway. **CAT staff members have provided 40 service hours in workshops for 40 Peer Educators and 74 area teachers**, in presentation skills and interactive strategies in the HIV/AIDS Curriculum, respectively. We look forward to the culminating event on June 5th, when more than 100 Peer Educators, their teachers and their CBOs will gather and present their work for each other and for staff from the NYC Departments of Health and Education.

CUNY Middle Grades Initiative/GEAR UP

The **Middle Grades Initiative (MGI)**, a program of the CUNY Office of Academic Affairs, is operating with a partnership grant from the US Department of Education (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs – GEAR UP) aimed at increasing the number of low-income students prepared to enter and succeed in college. With CAT's interactive drama strategies, students explored the social issues and themes of education and academic achievement through real-life situations presented by the actor-teachers. One teacher commented that his students understood that people “can change for the better, and that conflict, especially internal, can be resolved over time.” CAT's actor-teachers also work with the teachers on how to make lessons more interactive and encourage students' confidence in asking questions, creating dramas and being a leader. To date this year, **CAT has provided 231 MGI workshops, 385 service hours, to 1,074 middle school students and teachers in the Bronx, Manhattan and Queens.**

Anti-Bullying/Anti-Harassment

CAT provides targeted citywide elementary and middle schools with specially designed workshops to help students explore social and personal issues such as violence prevention, exclusion, peer pressure, substance abuse and other risky behaviors. During CAT's anti-bullying workshops, students develop and exercise such skills as managing emotions, group and community building, negotiation, communication and leadership when addressing the dilemmas presented in the drama. 572 elementary and junior high school students have participated in CAT's anti-bullying workshops this year.



CAT's Peacemaker Project addresses violence prevention and leadership in targeted high schools. The program is designed to foster non-violence and enhance critical thinking and decision-making skills among the student participants. Each residency includes a violence prevention module as well as workshops on higher education, employment readiness, healthy relationships, sexual activity and personal responsibility. In addition, CAT provides violence

prevention workshops to several other schools throughout New York City. 444 high school students participated in CAT's Anti-Harassment workshops this year.

In total, 1,016 citywide elementary, middle and high school students participated in 329 Anti-bullying or Anti-harassment workshops during the 2007-08 year, comprising 685 service hours.

Youth in Transition

In a new effort this year, CAT worked with CUNY's John F. Kennedy, Jr. Institute to provide *Youth in Transition* workshops at Hostos Community and Lehman Colleges. Through the lens of theatre, CAT teaching artists engaged the young people on issues that they may encounter in making the transition into the workplace. The interactive approach allowed this special needs population to explore issues such as honesty and difficult situations in the workplace, as well as appropriate dress codes, behavior and language, time management, supervisor and co-worker interactions, and interview skills. The programmatic end of this project was two-fold: as well as the student workshops, CAT also provided joint workshops for the students *and* their parents/caregivers with an added emphasis on how to support the students during their transition. During this special project, **CAT provided 66 workshops, comprising 140 service hours, to 323 participating students and adults.**

CUNY Black Male Initiative

CAT was selected to participate in the third round of this City Council funded project. CAT's workshops, *Success by Degrees: Supporting Academic Success through Interactive Drama Strategies*, focused on helping targeted populations identify, understand and address key issues that may impede them in completing their degrees, while strengthening their confidence, motivation and engagement in the college community. **Thus far, 190 CUNY**



students, on seven campuses, have participated in *Success by Degrees*, and another 50, at an eighth campus, will participate before the end of the year. In addition, CAT provided professional development/planning/orientation workshops for representatives of all eight participating campuses. Overall, the workshops have been very successful, with students reporting strengthened life skills such as a sense of personal responsibility, critical thinking, conflict resolution and job preparation, as well as increased confidence in balancing their personal and academic lives. **To date, CAT's Parent and Adult Services program has provided 82 workshops, 195 service hours, to participating students.**

Adolescent Literacy

2007-2008 was the second year of CAT's participation in this innovative DYCD initiative to support the literacy skills of Level 2 readers in sixth and seventh grade. CAT again worked with three targeted schools: **Frederick Douglass Academy II in Manhattan, Renaissance Charter School in Queens, and In-Tech Academy in the Bronx.**



This year, with NYC DYCD approval, CAT shifted its services for Level 2 readers in sixth grade from an after-school to an in-class format. The change provided CAT with an unprecedented opportunity to develop an intensive in-school partnership with teachers in support of their existing curriculum. Once again, we assessed students' levels of oral reading fluency and confidence as readers using two proven instruments: the *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)* and the *Reader Self Perception Scale* – and we saw impressive improvements in student scores.

Frederick Douglass Academy II saw an increase in attendance and a decrease in tardiness, which was an issue at the school, and 25% of participants moved from an ELA level 2 to level 3. In-Tech Academy had a 71% improvement in participants' ELA levels; for the non-English speakers at this school, having two bilingual Actor-Teachers, who at one point did not speak English themselves, was a cultural motivator and confidence builder. At Renaissance Charter School, ELA levels rose from 67% to 80% in oral and reading aloud skills, and participating students and teachers became eager to participate in active lessons, particularly in the performance aspect of answering questions and creating things. Two sixth grade students who could not read for the ELA exam during the first two rounds passed fully on the third; another, who speaks a dying Mexican dialect, did not speak or participate at all until the second-to-last week when she volunteered to read an original poem to the class.

During the 2007-2008 year, CAT provided 891 literacy workshops, totaling 2,275 service hours, for 733 elementary and middle school students and teachers.

CUNY Prep

Since joining the CUNY family, CAT has partnered with a number of CUNY initiatives and campuses, and has developed a special relationship with CUNY Prep Transitional High School. CUNY Prep's students participated in our High School Literacy and Violence Prevention workshops. During evening hours, CAT's Parent and Adult Services Program provided workshops, for students 18-24 years old, in GED test prep and work readiness, focusing on the



“steps to success.” **Over all, CAT provided 100 workshops, totaling 250 service hours, to 212 CUNY Prep students during the 2007-2008 year.**

Emergent Literacy and Social Skills

Through its Early Learning Through the Arts program, CAT provided residencies to early childhood programs to enhance both literacy and socialization skills, as well as professional development and an extended Teacher Mentoring Model. This year CAT offered two different residencies: “Alphabet Keepers,” a literacy-rich drama curriculum for early learners, or “Tale of the Tancho,” a groundbreaking and unique (for the age group) anti-bullying program.



In the “Alphabet Keepers”, students become elves in the Land of Letters who must protect the letters from the Word Wizard. Students use the letters to create stories, songs and dances, and work as a team to keep the Wizard at bay. In an expanded version of the residency, the children discover that the Wizard can’t read and are always eager to help.

The “Tale of the Tancho” residency brings Japanese cranes to the classroom, who, with help of the children, must create a new migratory community. When one of the cranes begins to pick on the other, the children respond (often quite strongly) and help guide them through the conflict. The Tancho curriculum was so

popular this year, as it was the first of its kind offered for early learners, that we had to turn down some requesting because we simply did not have enough people. Even teachers involved in “Alphabet Keepers” residencies requested conflict resolution for future workshops.

Though the three-year CSR partnership with PS 15 ended after last year, the administrators and teachers at the school did not want to stop working with CAT. Therefore, the school engaged CAT to provide drama and group-building/socialization skill-building and professional development workshops for third to fifth graders and a special program to develop communication skills between parents and their children.

In all, CAT provided 494 emergent literacy and social skills workshops, totaling 880 service hours, to 1,836 early grades students, teachers, and parents.

Professional Development: Paul A. Kaplan Center for Educational Drama

Through CAT's professional development program stream, the Paul A. Kaplan Center for Educational Drama, we provided learning opportunities to more than 1,000 teachers, actors, teaching artists, parents, and youth workers this year. This coming September, we will introduce the first and only M.A. in Applied Theatre -- interactive drama for learning and change -- in the United States.

The M.A. emerges from CAT's 34 years of pioneering and effective work in educational, social service, and other settings in New York City, much of which City Council has supported and made possible. It will be a formal academic venue to train the next generation of leaders in this growing field.

We have received more than 50 applicants for the 24 available slots in the inaugural year of the program, which can be completed in two years full-time or four years part-time.

Graduates will be equipped to pursue work with youth, the elderly, incarcerated individuals, and others. The M.A. is offered in partnership with the innovative CUNY School of Professional Studies.

Over the past year, CAT **continued its existing graduate courses and non-credit workshops. We provided 10 graduate courses (450 service hours) to 109 educators, teaching artists, and youth development professionals, and 437 professional development workshops (1,180 service hours) to 1,457 participating adults.**



PARTNERSHIPS

The New York City Council is a valued partner in CAT's ongoing efforts to improve the lives of young people in New York. The Council's support of CAT's programs for young people, educators, and parents, not only helps CAT achieve its service goals but also serves as leverage for attracting service partners as well as other public and private sector funding.

In addition to the City Council, current and representative support and/or service awards have come from:

- TASC (The After School Corporation)
- Safe Space
- CUNY Prep
- CUNY Black Male Initiative
- NYC Department of Correction
- NYC Department of Education
- NYC Department of Youth and Community Development
- NYS Department of Health
- NYS Senate
- NYS Assembly
- NYC ACS – Head Start
- Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens
- The Dana Foundation
- Bay and Paul Foundations
- Marion E. Kenworthy-Sarah H. Swift Foundation
- United Way of NYC
- Rita J. and Stanley H. Kaplan Family Foundation
- BWF Foundation, Inc.
- American Dream Foundation
- Anonymous major donor
- Many generous individuals who recognize the importance of CAT's work.



CONCLUSION

CAT offers its sincere appreciation to the New York City Council for supporting the use of interactive drama as a tool for strengthening academic achievement, bolstering pro-social attitudes such as tolerance and respect, and increasing resiliency in NYC's youth. We look forward to providing our full report over the summer, after all of our 2007-2008 projects have been completed.