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THD07534 Education/Outreach Programs in the Arts

Professor Phil Sumpter

October 19, 2020

Final Assignment

**Proposed Program:** *The Industry Bridge Program: Connecting High School and College Students to the Theatrical Industry*

**Organization:** Paper Mill Playhouse in Millburn, New Jersey

**Grant Opportunity:** Arts Professional Learning Institute (APLI)

**Grant Amount Seeking:** \$10,000

**Preface:** When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020, the theatrical industry was brought to an unprecedented standstill. To this day, we still do not when we will be able to resume activity that is even remotely similar to what we were accustomed to. Not only are our workers, our creatives, our artists, our administrators out of work, but we risk talent leaving the field because they can no longer bare the financial hardships of being unemployed for so long.

We are also at risk of facing another crisis. High school students, college students, graduate students, young professionals, who had all hoped and dreamed of working in this field, whether it be as an artist or as an administrator, find themselves at a crossroad. They are about to enter a field that is faced with uncertainty beyond the typical challenges that come with a life in the arts. With crushing student loan debt to pay off, and a creative economy devastated by a global pandemic, what will they choose to do? Will they choose to patiently wait for the day that theatres are given the green light to reopen to begin their careers, or will they choose to pursue another field?

In order for the performing arts industry to rebuild and retain its future post Covid-19, mentorship of young professionals will be essential retaining the future of

our industry. Mentorship will allow our industry to foster and develop talent, to ensure that we keep going forward. We must take action and offer any available resources we have to this upcoming generation of talent and teach them the value of a meaningful life in the arts. This is where the Paper Mill Playhouse Industry Bridge Program comes in.

**Description:** The Paper Mill Playhouse Industry Bridge Program is designed to connect high school and college students, as well as recent graduates, aspiring to build their career in any discipline in the theatrical industry. Over the course of its history Paper Mill Playhouse has worked tirelessly to present world class musical theater for our audiences. Paper Mill is able to do this though working with visionary artists, technicians, and administrators to create the work our audiences have come to enjoy on our stage.

The Industry Bridge program will be designed for two different levels. Level one will be designed for high school juniors and seniors interested in studying the performing arts in college. Level two will be designed for college and graduate students about to enter the field. The program will span over the course of one academic year. Both levels will connect students to our artistic and administrative staff and our broader network through a series of lectures, workshops and masterclasses online via Zoom until we are allowed to gather in person when it is safe to do so.

**Admission:** Students from partnering high schools and colleges will be invited to apply. The application process will open in January 2021, and will close March 2021. The application will include a professional objectives statement, resume, and letter of recommendation from a faculty member at the student's school. Candidates will then be invited to interview come April 2021. Candidates will be notified of their selection in May 2021.

*Level One: High School Juniors and Seniors***Partnering Schools:**

- Rosa L. Parks School of Fine and Performing Arts- Paterson Public School District  
Ms. Jalyn E. Lyde- Principal
- Arts High School- Newark Public School District  
Ricardo Pedro- Principal
- Millburn High School- Millburn Public School District.  
Dr. William Miron- Principal

Level one will introduce students to a variety of career in theatre across all disciplines; performing, technical, and administrative. Most high school students and their families are most likely unaware of what careers are out there and available in our industry. They are under the impression that a college major or career in the arts is limited to performing. The goal of this level is to make students aware of all the unique possibilities a career in the arts has to offer, as well as what that life, with all its challenges and rewards, may look like, before they enter college. To do so, students will meet once a month to participate in a variety of workshops, masterclasses and lectures on a different topic/career led by industry professionals. Students must come prepared to each seminar with three questions to ask the lecturer at the presentation and keep a virtual journal about their thoughts and impressions on each presentation. Having that full range of knowledge and expertise across all different disciplines will allow students to explore other interests and decide what is the best path forward for them as they enter college.

**Proposed Topics Timeline**

September 2021	Introduction to the industry. Producing. Nonprofit vs commercial theater.
October 2021	Life as an Actor
November 2021	Management (General, Company and House)
December 2021	Design (lighting, sound, costume, hair, makeup)

January 2022	Arts Education
February 2022	Life as a musician
March 2022	Stage Management
April 2022	Marketing and Public Relations
May 2022	Directing

\*Presenters will consist mostly of volunteer staff members from our company. On the occasion, when we do not have a person on staff who is an expert on such topic, we will budget for a guest to present.

### *Level Two: College Students, and Young Professionals*

#### **Partnering Universities:**

- Montclair State University- Montclair, New Jersey  
Paul Mugleston: Chairperson, Theater and Dance
- Kean University- Union, New Jersey  
Jonathan Mercatini, Ph.D
- Fairleigh Dickinson University- Madison, New Jersey  
David Landau- Professor

Level two is designed for students about to enter the workforce. Students must be currently enrolled in a partnering university, or have graduated within the same year they are applying for the program. Each department at Paper Mill, which includes office of directors, development, marketing and publicity, finance and administration, education, audience services, and production, will take on three to six students for an entire academic year and help mentor them into the next phase of their careers. Students will be required to attend biweekly seminars and workshops on both topics related to their department and what their department is currently working on at Paper Mill. Students will also have the option to sit in on seminars in other departments, should they wish. On occasion, students will have the opportunity to shadow department staff members at events, meetings or performances over the course of the program.

At the end of the program, the students in the office of directors, development, audience services, finance, and education departments will present a project that is of interest to them and of what they have learned over the course of the program. The project could include research on a topic related to their field, creating a new initiative for Paper Mill Playhouse, a business proposal, or anything else that may be of interest to them. Students in the Production and Marketing/ Public Relations department will work together to produce a performance, of any kind, in our black box theater as a fundraiser for The Bridge Program. They will be given an allowance within the program budget to do so. Like an actual producer, students will then be responsible for raising whatever money they may need beyond the allowance, as well as making all financial and artistic decisions.

Upon successful completion of the program, which will also include an exit interview, Paper Mill will then offer their network to promising candidates to help them navigate the next phase of their career. This could include making introductions and setting up informational interviews with colleagues in our network, writing letters of recommendation, and being guaranteed an interview for any positions that may become available at Paper Mill within five years of completing the program.

Suggested Sequence of Program	
Fall 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to the program and department.</li> <li>• Discuss the institution as a whole (organizational structure, company roles).</li> <li>• Discuss what the department does in relationship to Paper Mill.</li> <li>• Discuss current projects.</li> <li>• Begin to cover all different facets of their department and field.</li> <li>• Invite students to assist at events/shadow performances, or sit in on meetings.</li> </ul>

Winter 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin discussing the final project for each department.</li> <li>• Advisor will work with students to pick a topic that interests them.</li> <li>• Students will continue to learn about their field more in-depth.</li> </ul>
Spring 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete and present final projects.</li> <li>• Close out the program, final takeaways, tips for success.</li> <li>• Conduct exit interviews and program evaluations</li> <li>• Begin introducing students to contacts within our network.</li> </ul>

**Staff:** The program supervisor will oversee the entire program operation. They will be responsible for both levels and coordinating all that is associated with the program such as overseeing the application process, coordinating with schools, students, and guest speakers, and ensuring students meet the goals of the program. Each department in level two will have a bridge advisor. With the program supervisor, they will design a curriculum for what they feel their students should cover over the course of the program. The bridge advisor will be responsible for ensuring student are actively engaging with the program and will mentor them through their final project.

- Matthew Luminello: Program Supervisor.
- Patrick Parker: Associate Artistic Director (Office of Directors Level Two Advisor)
- Pat Zappone: Development Advisor (Development Level Two Advisor)
- Stefhanie Rueda: Marketing Associate (Marketing/ P.R Level Two Advisor)
- Stephanie Carr: Business Manager (Finance Level Two Advisor)
- Mariah Black: Education Associate (Education Level Two Advisor)
- Alison Kopki: Subscription Assistant (Audience Services Level Two Advisor)
- Patrick Heydenburg: Production Manager (Production Level Two Advisor)

## Program Budget

<b>Level One Guest Speakers</b>	3 (Performer, Stage Manager, Design and Musician) at \$150 a class. <b>Total: \$550</b>
<b>Level Two Advisors Stipends</b>	8 Advisors at \$800 for the year <b>Total: \$6,400</b>
<b>Program Supervisor Stipend</b>	<b>Total: \$2,000</b>
<b>Final Production Budget Allowance</b>	<b>Total: \$900</b>
<b>Total Expenses:</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>

### Conclusion:

High schools and colleges should be excited about The Industry Bridge Program at Paper Mill Playhouse. The program is designed to provide two critical pieces that I believe are missing from our industry today. The first being the introduction to the industry as a whole, starting in high school. Most students are brought up in a family where both parents work standard, middle class, 9-5, jobs. They do not know what a life in the arts looks like. They also do not comprehend the scope of the industry, or all of the jobs that are available to them, beyond what they see when they attend theater as a patron. Going to college knowing what types of careers are available to them, will give them a jump start in choosing an area of study, and eventual career.

For college students, and recent graduates entering a highly competitive field, having a network, and an organization take an interest in you, is a significant career advantage. The advice most students receive is to take on internships to build up your resume and make connections. The issue with internships is that too often, that work is remedial and below what a student is capable of. Because organizations rotate through interns on a semester or seasonal basis, these experiences do not last very long. The

organization is often overloaded with all of the interns that come in and out of their office. Not only does the intern not get the full picture of the organization they are at, but the organization does not get to know the intern all that well. When the internship is over, the intern is often left to their own devices to find their next job and with no guarantee of employment at that company.

The Industry Bridge Program attempts to solve these problems by taking steps to ensure student success. We want to educate students and best prepare them for the career path they have chosen. We want to give them the opportunity to take what they are learning and apply it to a professional setting. We also want to set students up for the future which is why we want to extend our network to them, and help them with job placement.

By supporting the Paper Mill Playhouse Industry Bridge Program, you are supporting the future of the theatrical industry. You are giving young professionals incredible access to an industry that thrives on passionate, creative, driven individuals. Our program will genuinely invest in our students. We want them to have the mentorship, skillset, and network to thrive in a competitive industry. At a time of so much uncertainty for our industry, we must invest in our young talent, and teach them the value of a life in the arts.