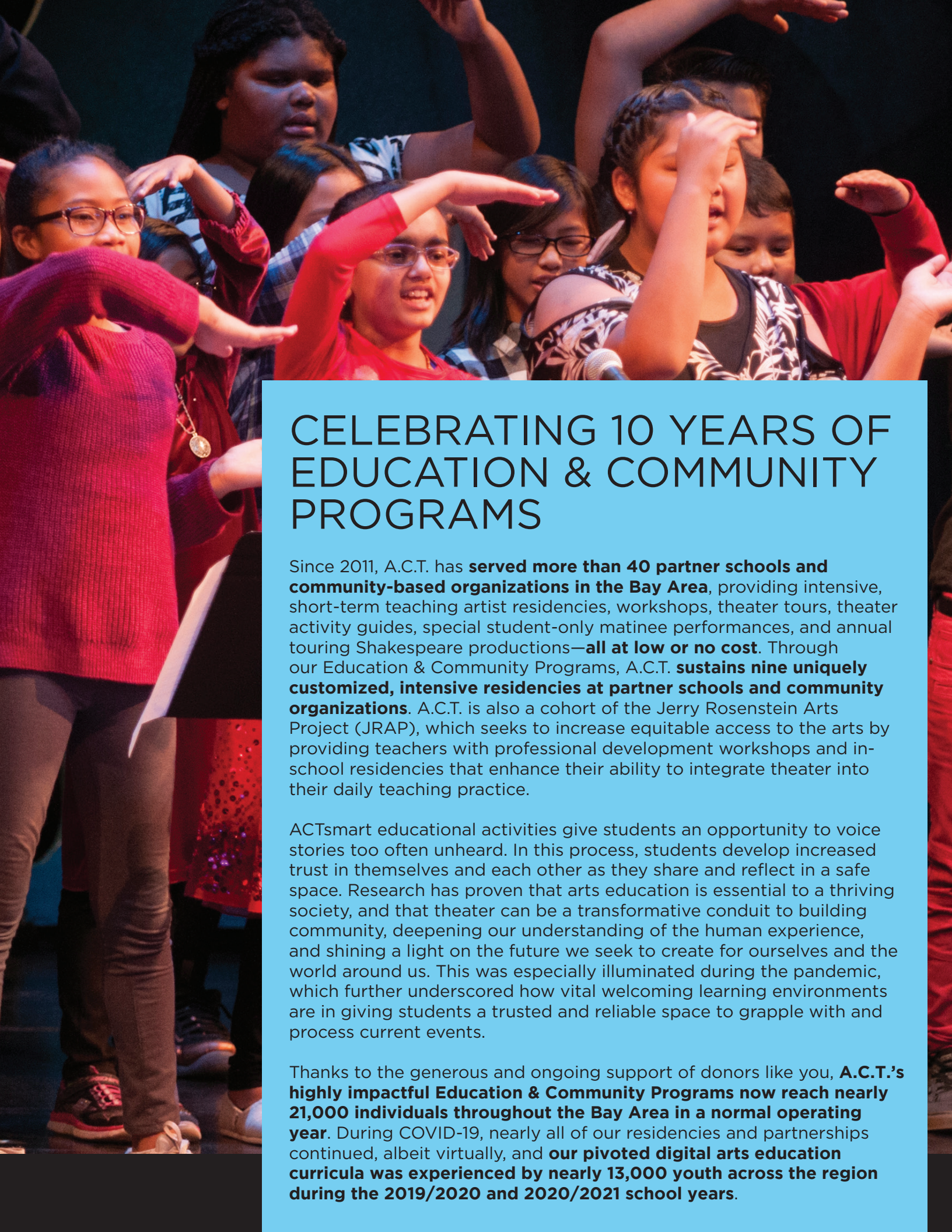


# A.C.T. PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS 2021



**A.C.T.**  
AMERICAN  
CONSERVATORY  
THEATER





## CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF EDUCATION & COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Since 2011, A.C.T. has **served more than 40 partner schools and community-based organizations in the Bay Area**, providing intensive, short-term teaching artist residencies, workshops, theater tours, theater activity guides, special student-only matinee performances, and annual touring Shakespeare productions—all at low or no cost. Through our Education & Community Programs, A.C.T. **sustains nine uniquely customized, intensive residencies at partner schools and community organizations**. A.C.T. is also a cohort of the Jerry Rosenstein Arts Project (JRAP), which seeks to increase equitable access to the arts by providing teachers with professional development workshops and in-school residencies that enhance their ability to integrate theater into their daily teaching practice.

ACTsmart educational activities give students an opportunity to voice stories too often unheard. In this process, students develop increased trust in themselves and each other as they share and reflect in a safe space. Research has proven that arts education is essential to a thriving society, and that theater can be a transformative conduit to building community, deepening our understanding of the human experience, and shining a light on the future we seek to create for ourselves and the world around us. This was especially illuminated during the pandemic, which further underscored how vital welcoming learning environments are in giving students a trusted and reliable space to grapple with and process current events.

Thanks to the generous and ongoing support of donors like you, **A.C.T.'s highly impactful Education & Community Programs now reach nearly 21,000 individuals throughout the Bay Area in a normal operating year**. During COVID-19, nearly all of our residencies and partnerships continued, albeit virtually, and **our pivoted digital arts education curricula was experienced by nearly 13,000 youth across the region during the 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 school years**.



**“THEATER CAN CHANGE PEOPLE BECAUSE USING YOUR VOICE OPENS PEOPLE’S EYES AND THEY SEE YOU AS A SPEAKER AND NOT A FIGHTER.”**

– BA, AGE 17 - DOWNTOWN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

**“THIS PROJECT [AT DOWNTOWN HIGH SCHOOL] HAS HELPED ME REALIZE MY POTENTIAL. I’M NOT JUST ANOTHER STATISTIC. I PLAN TO GO SOMEWHERE FAR IN LIFE, EVEN IF IT’S NOT ACTING.”**

– NM, AGE 18 - DOWNTOWN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT



## ARTS EDUCATION MATTERS

Students with access to arts education are:

### **2X AS LIKELY TO GRADUATE COLLEGE**

The arts help people succeed. Low-income students who are highly engaged in the arts are more than twice as likely to graduate college than their peers with no arts education. <sup>1</sup>

### **5X LESS LIKELY TO DROP OUT**

Low-income students who participate in the arts, both in school and after school, have a dropout rate of just four percent—five times lower than their peers. <sup>2</sup>

### **MORE LIKELY TO VOTE**

The arts make young adults more civically engaged. Seventy-eight percent of young adults who had arts-rich experiences were more likely to vote or participate in a political campaign. <sup>3</sup>

### **SCORE 100 POINTS HIGHER ON THE SAT**

Students who take four years of arts and music classes score, on average, almost 100 points higher on their SATs than peers who take less. <sup>4</sup>

### **5% DROP IN NEIGHBORHOOD CRIME**

Participation in after-school arts programs causes juvenile crime to fall by 4.2 percent on average and slightly more (5.4 percent) in lower-income cities. <sup>5</sup>

1. Arts Education Navigator: Facts & Figures. Americans for the Arts. Retrieved on 13 May 2018 from <https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/networksand-councils/arts-education-network/tools-resources/arts-ed-navigator/factsfigures>.

2. *ibid.*

3. Catterall, J. S., Dumais, S. A., & Hampden-Thompson, G. (2012). *The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies*. Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts.

4. Arts Education Navigator: Facts & Figures.

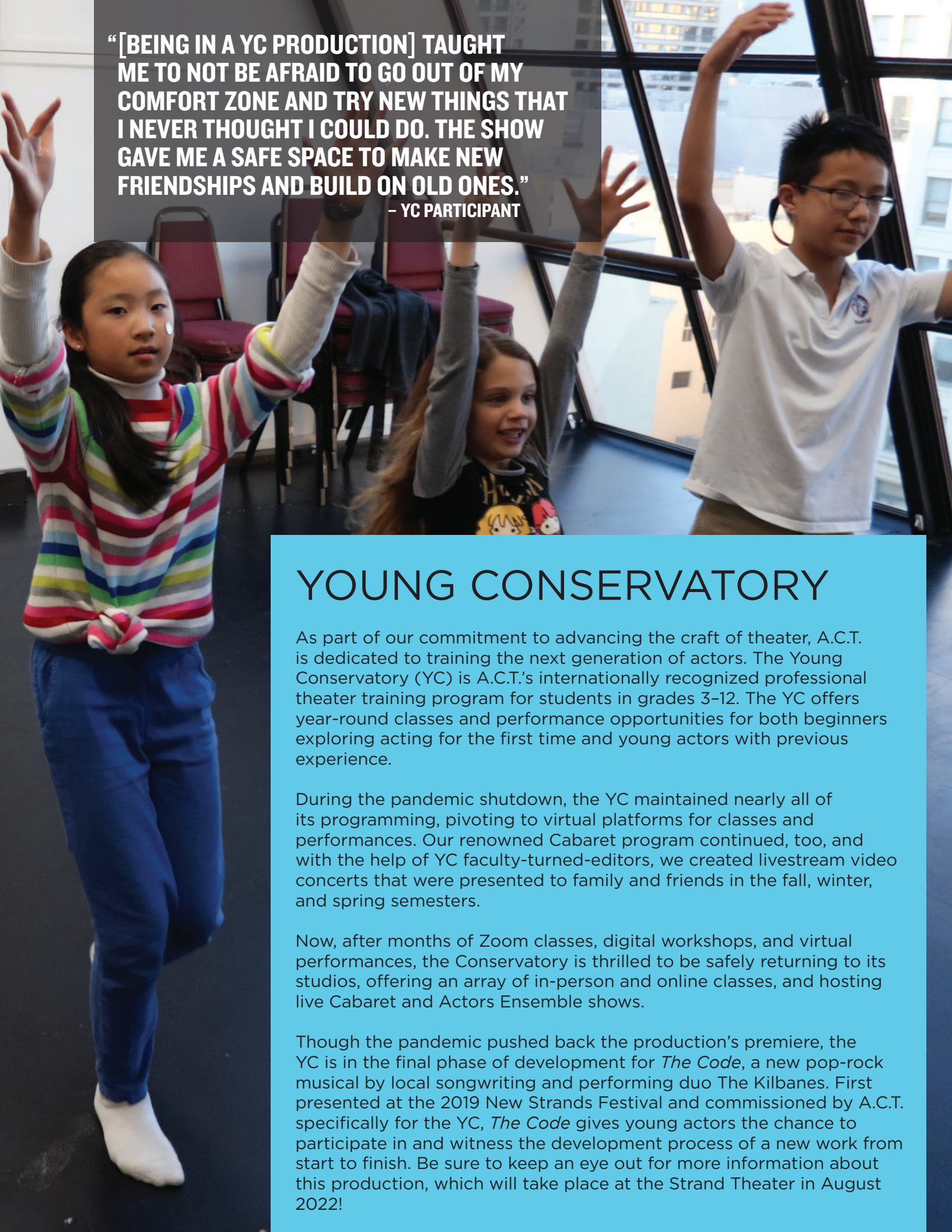
5. Gregg, M., Gupta, R., & Bach-Coulibaly, M. (2014, May 6). *After-school Programs & the Arts as Tools for Youth Development*.

Footnote. Retrieved 4 February 2018 from <http://footnote.co/after-school-programs-the-arts-as-tools-for-youthdevelopment>



**“[BEING IN A YC PRODUCTION] TAUGHT ME TO NOT BE AFRAID TO GO OUT OF MY COMFORT ZONE AND TRY NEW THINGS THAT I NEVER THOUGHT I COULD DO. THE SHOW GAVE ME A SAFE SPACE TO MAKE NEW FRIENDSHIPS AND BUILD ON OLD ONES.”**

**– YC PARTICIPANT**



## YOUNG CONSERVATORY

As part of our commitment to advancing the craft of theater, A.C.T. is dedicated to training the next generation of actors. The Young Conservatory (YC) is A.C.T.'s internationally recognized professional theater training program for students in grades 3-12. The YC offers year-round classes and performance opportunities for both beginners exploring acting for the first time and young actors with previous experience.

During the pandemic shutdown, the YC maintained nearly all of its programming, pivoting to virtual platforms for classes and performances. Our renowned Cabaret program continued, too, and with the help of YC faculty-turned-editors, we created livestream video concerts that were presented to family and friends in the fall, winter, and spring semesters.

Now, after months of Zoom classes, digital workshops, and virtual performances, the Conservatory is thrilled to be safely returning to its studios, offering an array of in-person and online classes, and hosting live Cabaret and Actors Ensemble shows.

Though the pandemic pushed back the production's premiere, the YC is in the final phase of development for *The Code*, a new pop-rock musical by local songwriting and performing duo The Kilbanes. First presented at the 2019 New Strands Festival and commissioned by A.C.T. specifically for the YC, *The Code* gives young actors the chance to participate in and witness the development process of a new work from start to finish. Be sure to keep an eye out for more information about this production, which will take place at the Strand Theater in August 2022!



# MFA PROGRAM

In August, A.C.T. welcomed back the MFA Class of 2022 for their final year of studies. Since March 2020, A.C.T.'s MFA program has seen tremendous evolution and adaptation. COVID-19 brought all in-person training to a halt and the students' daily classes, rehearsals, and performances shifted to take place over Zoom. After a year and a half of virtual learning and digital productions, in-person classes have resumed, and this semester is proving to be a busy one. As the entire industry has seen sweeping changes, the MFA curriculum has expanded as well, now including workshops and classes on self-taping, self-branding and building personal websites, cinematography, and on-camera acting classes. Other curricula shifts include seminars featuring emerging technologies and the work of actors beyond the stage, focusing on motion capture, voice-over work, and video games. We've also made a conscious effort to increase diversity among the MFA faculty. In addition to their rigorous class schedule, the students audition throughout the year for MFA performances, as well as for A.C.T.'s mainstage season productions. These performances help the students qualify for their Actors' Equity cards.



At A.C.T., the MFA and new works development programs have a symbiotic relationship, partnering closely together. Throughout the year, MFA students may be invited to join new play development workshops. These workshops provide playwrights with an all-too-rare “sandbox” in which to explore their early ideas without the pressure of a public reading, while MFA students gain the experience necessary to thrive in the new play landscape. Since March 2020, MFA students have been a part of seven new play workshops and readings, including: *Vivarium* by Jaclyn Backhaus; *Stacy* by Ruby Rae Spiegel; *Untitled Measurement Play* by Mia Chung; *The Road Weeps, The Well Runs Dry* by Marcus Gardley; *Miss Dorrit* by Marisela Treviño Orta; *Untitled* by Anne Washburn; and *The Haunting at Camp Winona* by Mara Nelson-Greenberg.



# NEW WORKS & NEW VOICES

San Francisco is a city known for innovation and out-of-the-box thinking. Over the years, A.C.T. has made it a priority to present, grow, and expand our new works program. During our 2020/2021 season, 88% of our artistic budget was dedicated to investing in artists and in the development of new works. While theaters across the country were shuttered during the pandemic, unable to present performances to live audiences, playwrights—new and established—were furiously writing the stories of tomorrow, pushing the form and expanding the American-theater canon.

Every play was once new. As part of our new works development program, we have the extraordinary privilege of watching these plays unfold at A.C.T. from the start, witnessing that very first iteration in its infancy. Meet A.C.T.'s currently commissioned artists, all of whom are dreaming up and developing work we hope to produce in the coming years, whether as part of our mainstage season, Young Conservatory, or educational and community partnership programs:

## KATE ATTWELL

*Big Data:* In a time when technology has given unprecedented access to our behaviors and choices, can your digital footprint capture who you really are? Can it be used to predict your future choices? Inspired by her experience touring Mozilla's "Glass Room" pop-up interactive exhibit, Attwell explores the vertiginous possibilities of the new age of AI.



## CHRISTOPHER CHEN

*Communion:* A one-person play designed for a virtual, interactive experience that embraces the Zoom medium and asks the audience to commune with each other against incredible odds.



## JULIA CHO AND SERET SCOTT

*Untitled:* a collaboration between playwright Julia Cho and director Seret Scott.



## EISA DAVIS

*||: Girls :||: Chance :||: Music :||:* A play with music exploring the expansive terrain for self-discovery opened by a summer music program, inspired by Davis's transformative experience with a Berkeley youth orchestra. Set today, this play explores the creative awakening and coming of age of four young women in an increasingly turbulent and unstable world.



## ALESHEA HARRIS

*A Feast of Rabbits:* A co-commission with Center Theatre Group.



## CRAIG LUCAS (WITH DESIGNER DAVID ZINN)

*A Christmas Carol:* An updated adaptation of the holiday classic—an annual tradition at A.C.T.—infused with theatrical magic.



## KATE KILBANE AND DAN MOSES

*The Code:* Seven students at an elite preparatory academy are sequestered in the school reading room, tasked with a high-stakes presentation on the school's founder. As the project progresses, buried secrets emerge and history comes alive as the students wrestle with what their school has become, and what it has the potential to be. (Commissioned and developed through A.C.T.'s Young Conservatory.)



## WILL POWER

*Mary Pleasant:* A play inspired by the life of Mary Ellen Pleasant—a San Francisco resident, a Black American, an entrepreneur, and a millionaire—who was instrumental in funding John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry in 1859.



## ALFREDO RODRIGUEZ, CARIDAD SVICH, DÁMASO RODRÍGUEZ, LORENA FEJOO

*Mí Cuba:* Inspired by four artists' personal experiences defecting from Cuba and making their lives in the United States, *Mí Cuba* is an evening-length, devised piece that celebrates these artists' roots while embracing the blending of cultures, artistic media, and life stories.



## MFONISO UDOFIA

*Untitled Ufot Cycle Play:* Mfoniso Udofia continues her epic nine-play Ufot family cycle with a new play for young audiences. This piece follows the third generation of the family and centers on Kufre, a 14-year-old Nigerian-American boy who has just arrived in Harlem and who must figure out how to fit in. *Her Portmanteau*, the fourth play in the cycle, was produced at A.C.T. in 2019.



## ANNE WASHBURN

*Untitled:* A new play set in San Francisco during the tumultuous years of 1968–1973. Washburn intends to explore experimental utopian movements of the era, with a particular focus on communal living and psychedelic drug use.



## LAUREN YEE

*Untitled:* A co-production with Signature Theater in New York.



# BACK TO OUR STAGES (SOON!)

Our 2022 season is about to begin! We cannot wait for the momentous and celebratory return to live productions and look forward to welcoming you back very soon.

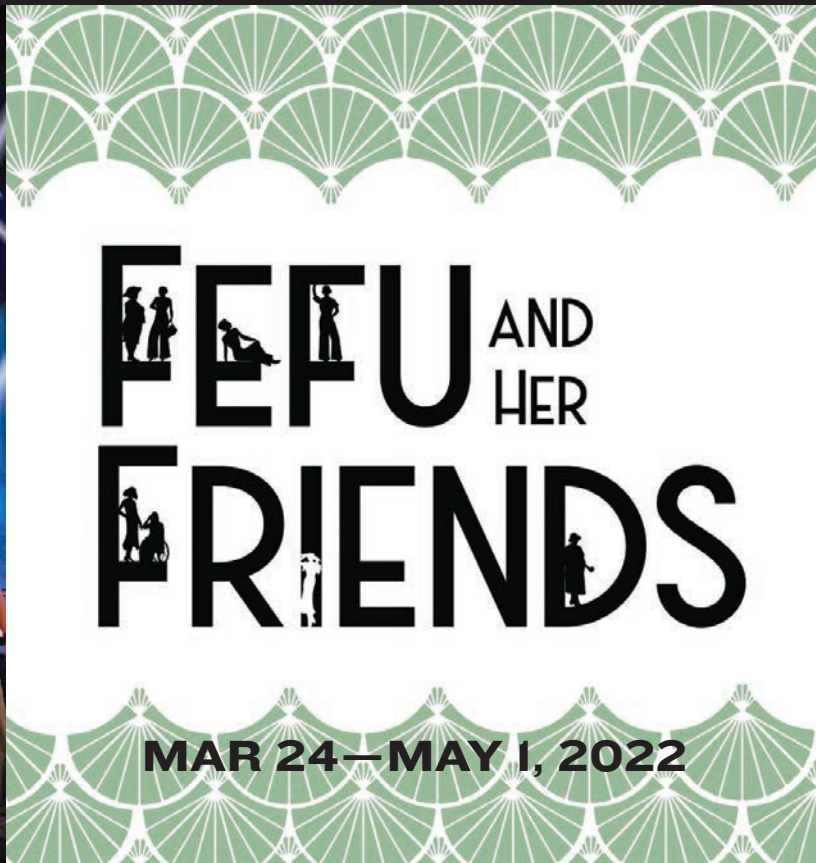


freestyle  
love  
supreme

JAN 21—FEB 13, 2022

LEAD SPONSOR 

A photograph of five performers on stage during a freestyle rap performance. The stage is lit with blue and white spotlights. A large, stylized graphic of a microphone with a flame-like top is overlaid on the image.



FEFU AND  
HER  
FRIENDS

MAR 24—MAY 1, 2022

A poster for the production 'Fefu and Her Friends'. The title is in large, bold, black letters. The word 'FEFU' has silhouettes of people inside the letters. The background features a repeating pattern of green fan-like shapes.

THE NATIONAL THEATRE AND NEAL STREET PRODUCTIONS'



THE  
LEHMAN  
TRILOGY

APR 20—MAY 22, 2022

A poster for 'The Lehman Trilogy'. The title 'THE LEHMAN TRILOGY' is written in large, bold, black letters. The background shows silhouettes of people in suits against a cityscape at night.



SOUL TRAIN

A WORLD PREMIERE MUSICAL

SEP 16—OCT 16, 2022

A poster for the musical 'Soul Train'. The title 'SOUL TRAIN' is written in large, bold, gold letters. The background is a solid purple color.

You made all this—and so much more—possible. Thank you, truly, for your ongoing and generous support of ACT. We remain tremendously grateful.