SchoolTime Performance Series

out of bounds

Photo by Courtney Schmitz

Generous support for SchoolTime provided, in part, by

Merck Foundation

Verizon Foundation

Prudential Foundation

Panasonic

New Jersey Performing Arts Center

NJ Performing Arts Center
Fourteen-year-old Amy is typical of many young teens. She loves social media and enjoys when her “friends” write positive comments, click “like,” and show their enthusiasm for the things she posts. But when someone dares Amy to share an inappropriate photo online, those who dislike her action teach her a difficult lesson.

When she switches schools, Amy gets caught in a jealous rivalry between two close friends who are threatened by her arrival. One of them finds the inappropriate photo and decides to use the opportunity to make sure everyone in the school sees it too, resurrecting Amy’s embarrassment. She quickly learns the limitless reach and dark side of the cyber world.

With no place to hide, and the bullying increasing both in person and online, Amy stops going to school. The play takes a candid look at the damaging world of cyber-bullying as well as the complexities of female teenage friendships.

*Out of Bounds* was written based on frank input from teenagers, teachers, counselors, police, and parents, and brings a fresh, honest (and at times humorous), approach to a topic that remains one of the country’s most perplexing and urgent issues. In addition to the cyber elements of the story, the play explores feelings of isolation as well as powerlessness on the part of teens and also the parents and other adults who try to help.

The performance is brought to life by the Working Group Theatre Company, which seeks to involve audience members in the storytelling. They blend a documentary style with fictional stagecraft, and have been cited favorably by the *New York Times*.
What key messages do you hope both young people and adults in the audience take away from Out of Bounds?

In Out of Bounds the protagonist, Amy, makes a stupid mistake—she posts an inappropriate picture of herself online and it goes viral. Everybody makes mistakes, whether it’s saying something wrong online or making a fool of yourself in class, or a million other ways. Amy is haunted by this one mistake. A mistake that happens online has a terrifying permanency and reach that mistakes made in person do not have. What’s important to me is what happens afterwards. Is there forgiveness? Can we forgive ourselves and others and move forward? Can we acknowledge that we’re all vulnerable in this way and treat others as we hope others would treat us?

Some reviewers have said your play stands out because it portrays these issues as they really are, not some sanitized version of what is actually happening among young people today. How did you bring that kind of realism to your production?

Part of writing this show involved doing a lot of interviews with kids, parents, teachers, school counselors, principals and other adults who work with young people. It was very important to us that we didn’t talk down to the audience and that the characters and story seemed real. Too often, young people get told “do this” and “don’t do that”. It’s never that simple, especially with bullying. Most kids these days have been getting anti-bullying messages since they were in kindergarten -- when it’s the same old message coming at you, it’s very easy to tune it out. We wanted the play to reflect the complexity of bullying (for example, the bully might have reasons for doing what he or she does aside from just wanting to be mean) so that people could really empathize with the characters. That seems like the best way for the message to actually be effective.

Since you wrote Out of Bounds partly because of personal experience being bullied when you were young, what can you say about the long-term effects of being bullied?

When you’re made to feel badly about yourself it can eat away at your self-confidence. You start to think, “Well if those people thought that about me, probably everybody does.” Even if logically you know this isn’t the case, that horrible self-doubt can stick to you. In the play, Amy talks about it being like a stain that everyone can see. Some of the adults I spoke to are just now starting to reclaim their identity away from the names they were called as kids. For some, these experiences that happened to them when they were kids have affected their relationships, their education, and their careers. Not everyone reacts like this but for those who do, it’s really debilitating. I haven’t reacted this strongly but there’s always going to be a very sensitive 13 year old me inside my adult shell that worries about people turning against her if she does something embarrassing. That may sound silly but that worry is very real (despite logic) and sometimes my fear of being the loser or outcast has prevented me from doing things personally or professionally that I should have done.

In the play, one of Amy’s friends tries to defend her, but just gets bullied herself. This might seem discouraging to some. What do you hope viewers learn about being an ally to someone who is being bullied?

It’s not easy being an ally. That’s one of the problems I think with some anti-bullying messages that simplify the whole issue. If it was that simple, we wouldn’t still have such a terrible problem! I don’t think young people are naive and I think most of them want to do the right thing, but what that right thing is is incredibly complicated. Adults can be just as guilty—we know what we should do but don’t always do it.

To be an ally, you don’t necessarily have to throw yourself in the line of fire. There are quieter things you can do that can also help, such as not participating in bullying online or in person, or speaking to the target quietly and letting them know you don’t feel that way, or getting help from a teacher.

I think it’s fair to say that most people, especially in middle school, want to be in the majority. If the majority of people are bystanders (and they are) and the majority of bystanders say “we won’t tolerate bullying” and act as allies to the target(s), then the bully is suddenly in the minority and that could really influence their behavior.

When thinking about the actors who would one day be cast in the play, what qualities did you have in mind, besides stage skills, and how much of the play’s success is because of the huge likability of the cast?

One challenge with casting this show is that three of the characters are meant to be 14. For many reasons, we can’t cast 14 year olds so we needed to find actors who could believably play that age. For the public version, two of these actors had to also be able to play adults since we use double and triple casting. We needed actors who had a great age range. The likability of the cast is huge! We wanted actors who would feel comfortable being silly (especially our actor who plays Mr. F.) and who would be comfortable interacting with the audience.

Were they any modern plays, books, and/or films that influenced or from which you draw inspiration?

Most importantly, we look for a sense of calling to the work. Being In terms of what I read and watch (on stage and on screen), my tastes are pretty broad. Two influences for this play were the documentary Bully, directed by Lee Hirsch, part of which is set in Iowa, and the non-fiction book Sticks and Stones by Emily Bazelon. I highly recommend both!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PREPARE for the performance</th>
<th>TEACHER FOCUS</th>
<th>STUDENT ACTIVITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prepare for the performance by highlighting students’ online footprints</strong></td>
<td>Prepare for the performance by highlighting students’ online footprints</td>
<td>Your bullying exposure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take an anonymous classroom survey of students’ habits and usage of social media platforms. Share the results with the class and ask them to think about their online habits while watching the play.</td>
<td>Before the performance, consider whether you have witnessed or participated in any cyber bullying behavior. Read about best online practices to prevent cyber bullying.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPERIENCE the performance</th>
<th>How to experience the performance</th>
<th>Standing in the actors’ shoes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How to experience the performance</strong></td>
<td>Encourage students to watch with an open mind. Remind them that at various times in their school and social lives, they may have behaved as one or more of the characters in the play.</td>
<td>While watching, imagine yourself in the shoes of each character for a few minutes. Think about what it feels like to be the victim, the bully, the ally, the adult. Observe the actors’ reactions and what feelings they are trying to show for each character.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REFLECT, RESPOND and READ</th>
<th>Reflect and respond to the performance</th>
<th>Compare script and stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflect and respond to the performance</strong></td>
<td>Discuss with students their various reactions to the play. Supervise students’ exploration of some of the sites in the Resources list, and ask for student opinion about which pieces of advice seem do-able, and which are unrealistic.</td>
<td>Review the play in script form (available as a pdf — see Resource list). Look carefully at the language of the bully vs. the language of other characters. Talk about the power of words and language, especially on a screen; think about tone and how it cannot be determined in writing vs. speaking aloud.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOCUS</th>
<th>Show the web’s memory</th>
<th>Demonstrate how impressions last</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Show the web’s memory</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrate the lasting power of the Internet with the Student Activity, emphasizing that the second scenario represents the archiving nature of electronic communications.</td>
<td>Write your name on an index card with your non-dominante hand. Add an unflattering word. Keep it on your desk for a period of time. Then, you may try to get rid of it, but only by moving it to another part of their desk, putting it on the bulletin board, or moving it to another student’s desk, but NOT in the garbage. Think about how you can only move it to another place where it’s visible, but not get it into the trash.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORIGINATE</th>
<th>The distance between thought and action</th>
<th>Noticing multiple dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The distance between thought and action</strong></td>
<td>Ask students to consider how quickly the characters formed strong opinions about one another that only considered or responded to one piece of information about the other person.</td>
<td>Pair up with another student. Each makes a list of their own, including: their hobbies, interests, goals, likes, talents. Swap lists, read the partner’s list, and then spend a few minutes asking one another questions based on the list. Finally, each one reads their partner’s list aloud to the class, which creates a well-rounded picture of each student, and helps see one another as more than a one-dimensional label.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REHEARSE</th>
<th>Playwrights Among Us</th>
<th>Curtain Call!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Playwrights Among Us</strong></td>
<td>Lead student groups in writing a new scene to follow the final one in the play. Pose questions that will help them think through what might realistically happen next. Do things work out in Amy’s favor after all? What snags might crop up? Who does and says what?</td>
<td>In small groups, write the next scene in the play. Use your imagination, but mostly your firsthand knowledge of how kids your age might actually react next. Within the group, assume character roles and read your new scene aloud.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAKE magic</th>
<th>The Kids “Rule”</th>
<th>You “Rule”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Kids “Rule”</strong></td>
<td>Talk about how, in the play, Mr. F had “rules for life.” Ask students to think about and discuss some of the things they believe in doing or not doing—both serious and light-hearted.</td>
<td>Write down some of your own personal “rules for life” on different colored sticky notes or index cards. Design a place to display them in the classroom, and group the together those that are closely related to one another. After the display has been up for a period of time, discuss together and make a list of any missing or new rules that would make everyone’s life better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NJ ARTS STANDARDS</td>
<td>COMMON CORE STANDARDS/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NATIONAL ARTS STANDARDS</strong></td>
<td><strong>NJ SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NJ Arts Standards</strong></td>
<td><strong>English Language Arts</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 The Creative Process</td>
<td>SL 6-10.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 History of Arts &amp; Culture</td>
<td>SL 6-10.2 Interpret information presented in diverse media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Performance</td>
<td>SL 6-10.4 Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Aesthetic Response &amp; Critique</td>
<td>RL 6-10.7 Compare and Contrast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**National Arts Standards**

1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
5. Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.
6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.
7. Perceive and analyze artistic work
8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding

**FIND THE STANDARDS**

For more detailed information on the standards, visit these websites:
- COMMON CORE STANDARDS - www.corestandards.org/
- NJ SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS - www.state.nj.us/education/cccs/2014/ss/
- NJ ARTS STANDARDS - www.state.nj.us/education/cccs/2009/1.pdf
- NATIONAL ARTS STANDARDS - www.nationalartsstandards.org

**RESOURCES**

The National Bullying Prevention Center:
www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/?gclid=CK-5-YG-b2LoCFY5AMgod5AQAZw

Understanding, Preventing, and Intervening in Cyberbullying:
www.preventingbullying.promoteprevent.org/cyberbullying

Effects of bullying that linger into adulthood:

What to do if you are being cyber-bullied:
www.deletecyberbullying.org/what-to-do-if-youre-a-victim/

How teachers are empowering students to become allies:
www.teachingchannel.org/videos/be-an-ally

Strategies for being an ally, before, during and after bullying:

10 Tips to help you if you are being bullied:
www.starsnashville.org/10-tips-to-help-if-you-are-being-bullied/

Kids’ rules for online safety:
www.safekids.com/kids-rules-for-online-safety/

A teenager reflects on his former bullying behavior:
www.teenink.com/nonfiction/memoir/article/516787/A

An adult working in radio discusses his childhood and teenage bullying behavior:
www.k99.com/confessions-of-a-former-bully-brians-blog/

Preparing students to role-play bullying scenarios:
www.connectability.ca/2010/10/29/the-importance-of-role-play/

Out of Bounds production information, background, suggested activities and script:

Website of Out of Bounds playwright Jennifer Fawcett:
www.jenniferfawcett.org/
Shakespeare once wrote that “what’s past is prologue” and while he never could have anticipated the Internet, this wise quote seems to aptly summarize what many teens and young adults are discovering about what they post: that it can follow them, and that it’s accessible, almost forever, if anyone is determined to find it.

Just a few short decades ago, youthful indiscretions were frequently left in the past, forgotten or at least hidden by a lack of access. If there was no paper trail, no official record of something, no one speaking up about what a foolish teenager did in a careless moment, then what happened in the past stayed in the past.

No longer. Now, the internet is preserving anything teens post, share, tag, tweet, or text, and the cyber trail can last long after an original user has deleted it. By then, an inappropriate note, a risky photo, a mean-spirited rant could have been downloaded, shared, archived, and spread around. And when a compromising photo lands on the electronic device in the hands of someone with ill intentions, the cyber-bullying can quickly escalate and the fallout can be terrible.

Teens and preteens, inundated with anti-bullying messages throughout their school years, often tend to tune them out. Timely and relevant stories like that in Out of Bounds, with its frank depictions of Amy’s serious situation, can help move teenagers to a more nuanced understanding of their actions.

Cyber-bullying spills over from screens into real life, often creating real and lasting psychological damage for its victims even into adulthood—something young bullies usually do not think about or understand.

Among the many harmful after-effects include loss of confidence and self-esteem, failing grades, and truancy, and can rapidly escalate to dangerous behaviors like cutting, eating disorders, and suicide.

Efforts are constantly being made to combat cyber-bullying by teachers and school administrators, counselors, police outreach programs, parent groups, and others who want to inform, empower, and educate young people. Some of the most powerful anti-bullying messages now are coming from reformed bullies who have begun writing and making videos about their experiences as bullies and why and how they eventually changed their ways.
vocabulary of Bullying, Cyber-bullying, and Social Media

**Ally** – A concerned onlooker who supports the victim and/or attempts to intervene on his or her behalf in an effort to help stop the bullying.

**App** – Short for “application.” Denotes an electronic platform for communication and interaction, typically accessed via a smartphone or tablet.

**Bully** – A person who repeatedly and intentionally enacts aggressive or violent behavior toward another, in an attempt to gain power, intimidate, harm, or otherwise damage the victim physically, mentally, or both.

**Bullying** – A repeated pattern of aggressive attacks (physical, verbal, mental, or a combination) aimed at another person, intended to cause them mental and/or physical harm. The bully seeks to establish power over their victim.

**Cyber-bullying** – Bullying that takes place over electronic means: cell phones, online, social media, websites, apps, texting, etc.

**Doxing** – Posting or sharing an intended victim’s personal information, such as address, phone numbers, family make-up, schedules, and other details that would make it easier for someone to locate them in the real world.

**Empathy** – The ability to look at a situation from the perspective of another human being, and to imagine that person’s feelings and emotions. An ally to a bully would be expressing empathy by lending support and understanding.

**Facebook** – The most prominent social media networking site and app used by close to two billion people worldwide. Users connect via “friend” requests and can exchange information, hold discussions, view images, and search for new contacts.

**Instagram** – A social media app that hosts photos and short captions and allows the user to view and share among a network of other users.

**Online footprint** – A person’s online activity taken as a whole, comprised of their presence on various websites, apps, social media networks, and other static or interactive areas.

**Snapchat** – A social media app that hosts text or images for a very short period of time, and then wipes them away.

**Social Media** – Any electronic platform where friends and strangers exchange information, ideas, and images via text, photos, links.

**Twitter** – A social media networking site and app that lets users share public messages, photos, and links, limiting text posts to 140 characters.

Photo by Margaret Kispert
BRING THE ARTS TO YOUR SCHOOL

In-School Residencies: Drama + Social Studies. Dance + Math. It all adds up in NJPAC’s In-School Residencies in which professional teaching artists partner with educators to bring the arts into the classroom. Each 7- to 10-week program culminates in a student performance or an interactive family workshop. All programs address state and national standards. NJPAC is the regional provider in New Jersey for international arts programs like the Wolf Trap Institute’s Early Learning Through the Arts Program and Dancing Classrooms Global.

Assemblies: NJPAC presents engaging school assembly programs that are presented by professional artists that invite students into the enchanting world of live performance. NJPAC’s assembly series promotes cultural awareness and invigorates learning by presenting works that are connected to your school’s curriculum.

STUDY THE ARTS AT NJPAC

After School and Saturday Programs: NJPAC’s after school and Saturday programs are geared towards students at every level—from those who dream of starring on Broadway to those who are still learning their scales. Students work with professional artists to build technique and develop their own creative style in chorus, contemporary modern dance, hip hop, jazz, musical theater and symphonic band.

Summer Programs: Want to begin to explore the arts? Or immerse yourself in the study of one genre? Then join us at NJPAC next summer in one of seven programs that spark the creativity in every child through the study of music, dance and theater.

NJPAC Arts Education programs are made possible through the generosity of our endowment donors:
The Arts Education Endowment Fund in honor of Raymond C. Chambers, The Joan and Allen Bildner Family Fund, Toby and Leon Cooperman, Albert and Katherine Merck, and The Sagner Family Foundation

Generous annual support for NJPAC Arts Education Programs is provided by:

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call our education sales team at 973-353-7058 or email us at artseducation@njpac.org. Visit us at www.njpac.org/education.