

PHOENIX PLAYERS THEATER GROUP

- Proposal -

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P A R T I W A L K I N G I N T H E F R O N T D O O R

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Flames

By Michael Rhynes

We who are the Phoenix Players of Auburn believe in the redemptive flame of rehabilitation. We affirm that we live in the dark ages of prison expansion and the warehousing of souls.

While our legislators and the courts debate how many souls can be stuffed into a single prison cell, we have embarked on a quest to become better human beings and productive citizens.

We seek atonement for catering to our base nature, because we acknowledge that the choice to do right or wrong has always been within our power. We wish to atone for those human beings for whom we've caused so much pain and suffering. We wish to atone to society for not living up to our organic contract by loving and caring for our neighbors. We wish to atone to our families for failing to reach our potential and their dreams for us.

We who are the Phoenix Players make a conscious decision to walk into the flames of your pain, suffering suspicions of our motives, disbelief of our goodness, your downright anger, and your grief, in hopes of being recreated in your loving, compassionate, and empathetic images.

Higher education is a myth behind these walls. In order to resurrect our souls, we have decided to grasp the Holy Grail that is the arts. If the arts can transform mud-baked villages into metropolises of light, why can't it transform us who live in hovels of despair?

We would rather have men writing plays than conceiving how to deprive innocent people of their lives and property. We would rather listen to men in this prison eulogize Caesar from the stage than hear it from the mouths of the clergy about how innocent people's lives were shattered by violence. We would rather have twelve men acting angry on stage than facing a jury of their peers.

Based on the polling of the men in this prison, we've drawn the astounding conclusion that drama courses with the hope of putting on a production would make a successful reintegration tool for us.

We seek not to make every man in this prison a professional dramatist, but to reconnect us to society, our communities, and our families, by learning through drama how to love, what it feels like to be compassionate, to forgive and be forgiven, to reach into the depths of our beings and bring forth our humanity.

We don't come to you as beggars but as men with hopeful hearts, along with the vision of changing this dark, dank world into a kaleidoscope of hope, where the diseases of idleness and worthlessness are banished forever.

M I S S I O N

The Phoenix Players² theater group utilizes theater to reconnect incarcerated people to their full humanity.

Actors make first-hand empathetic connections to the broader experience of human suffering, struggle, and happiness, by learning to "Live truthfully under imaginary circumstances"³.

This process will enhance compassionate engagement among human beings, prompt recognition of forgiveness' role in human development, and establish a renewed commitment to self-love.

The awareness acquired through thinking and acting beyond self-interest becomes the catalysis for choosing to live from one's higher nature. This experience significantly increases incarcerated people's chances of transcending the negative labels, and histories of criminality that define them within the greater society.

² No longer A.P.P (Auburn Phoenix Players) because the non-profit status opens us to a broader range of venues. Auburn is the present focus.

³ This concept is accredited to Constantin Stanislavski.

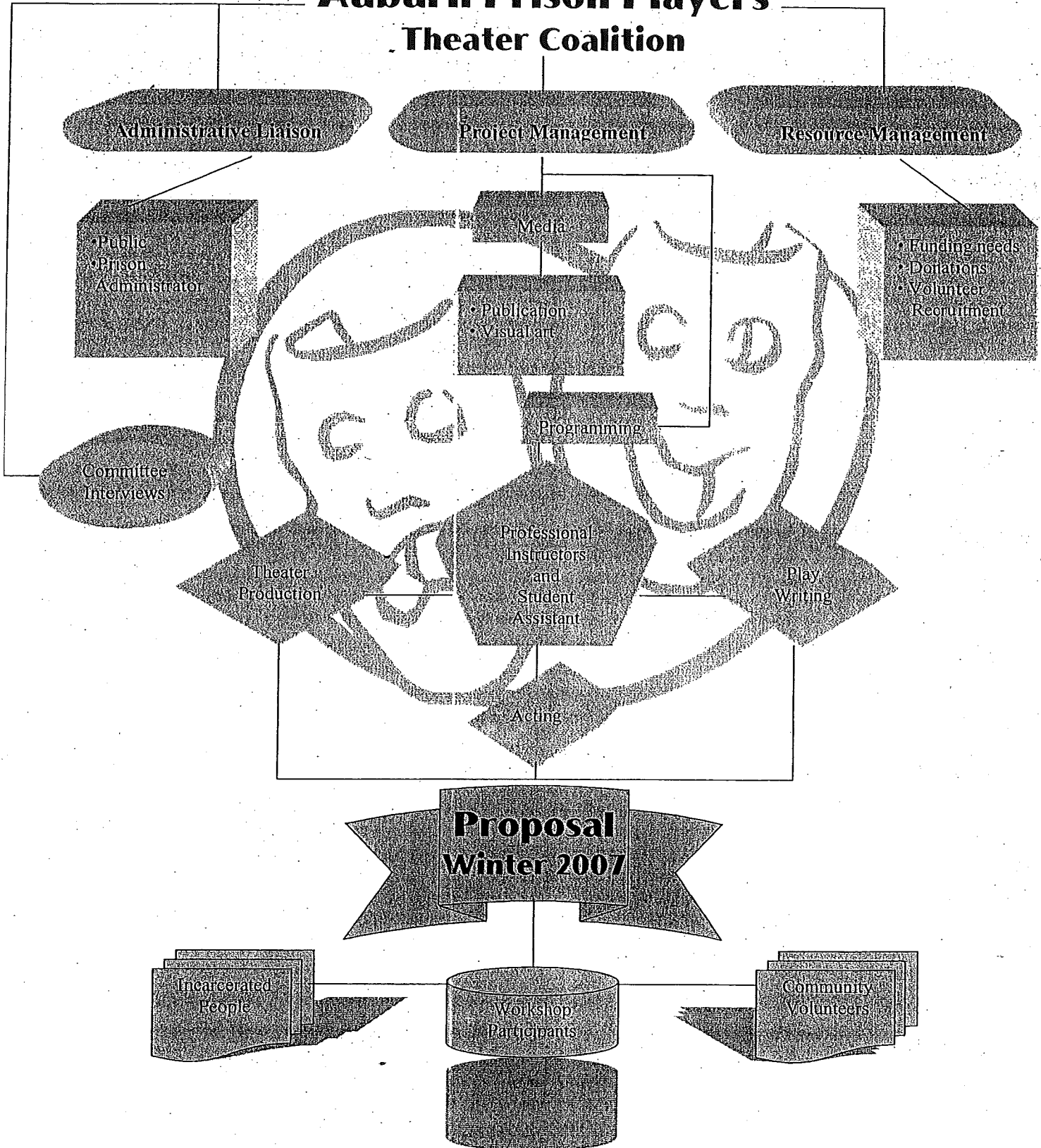
P A R T II R E P E R T O R Y P R O P O S A L

* GRAPH

* INFRASTRUCTURE

ALPP

Auburn Prison Players Theater Coalition



Auburn Phoenix Players

The Auburn Phoenix Players (APP) is a group of self-organized prisoners who are committed to working within the field of Theater, acting and play writing as a necessary extension of our existing efforts at personal development and reform. Presently, there is no Theater program within Auburn prison. WE would like to change this! With the help of members of the local Central New York community we could achieve this end. Below is an "outline" of the type of program we would like to see established, including descriptions of necessities that will be needed to make it possible.

Goal

Our ultimate goal is to be able to do a full theater production for the prison population, and approved members of society. We would like for this to be in three (3) different forms—all incarcerated people, a community/incarcerated people collaboration, and a community performance.

(Note: Auburn prison has a large auditorium, historically, and stage that is intended to accommodate a full theater production.)

As a secondary goal, and essentially, a fundamental prerequisite, we wish to establish a workshop forum where incarcerated people engage with, learn from, and are influenced by, the art of theater.

Categories of Programming

We have categorized this workshop into three (3) main areas of study. The following listing is not intended to be exhaustive. We welcome ideas about things that should be included.

Theater production

- Directing
- Stage management
- Set design

Play writing

The reading of theater literature, and have participants work at writing their own scripts for theater enactment. Building "personal narratives," journal writing, composing poems, with hopes of producing plays, monologues, and performance pieces.

Acting

- Public speaking
- Improvisation
- The craft of acting

Involved parties to this project

- Auburn Prison Administrators *
- Auburn Phoenix Players
- Community volunteers (participants)
- Theater & play writing professionals

(* *This role will be defined for you by our community liaison.*

Task Descriptions

Below are task descriptions for community volunteers who are interested in taking part in this project. The tasks are identified by areas of assistance that we would like to have as a dynamic of this program.

For the sake of informing yourself, read each task, then consider those that you are interested in filling.

Play Writing professionals

APP is in need of volunteers who are able to conduct a workshop that will include teaching participants the discipline of script writing, monologues, poems, etc.; encourage participants to journal, and more.

We are open to receiving an "outline" of a workshop or class curriculum that develops these types of skills. This includes a description of the material that will be needed to facilitate the teaching of your curriculum.

Theater professionals

Someone who is willing to teach a curriculum that develops acting skills.

Non-professional community volunteers

APP recognizes that there are non-professionals that are within the theater network and have much to offer this project. Our invitation includes college students. Our plan is to have students assist professionals in administering lessons, and possibly carrying out their agenda when situations require the need. Additionally, we seek volunteers to participate as "participants" at the level of students.

Group Leaders

The positions for group leaders are Administrative Liaison, Project Management, and Resource Management.

Administrative Liaison: The duty of this office is to handle public relations (media), and matters dealing with the prison administration (presenting proposals, volunteer applications, meetings, etc.).

Project Management: This office manages both media—APP publication, visual art presentation of group; and programs—organize scheduling and planning for theater and writing professionals who will conduct workshops at the prison, including student assistance assigned to work with the professionals.

Resource Management: This office manages our funding needs and donations received. It also involves active recruitment of volunteers for each aspect of our program.

(Note: Each office can be made up of a mixture of insider/outsider networking. This way we maximize participation and production).

Donations

In our efforts to get started APP will be in need of resources, and the future may likely reveal areas that require continued funding. We welcome donations of money, books, supplies, etc. Donations can be made to our program community and project liaison.

Public Relations

As prisoners it is one of our biggest concerns to assure the preservation, authenticity of publicity and information that is intended to reflect who we are, and what we are doing to reform ourselves. In this role, we anticipate that you will identify avenues and venues through which the work that is being done in this program can be exposed to the community, local and abroad. This includes making appearances within the prison to stay abreast of the program's development. Finally, in collaboration with other members of the project, contribute to a "newsletter" publication that can be circulated by APP.

Serving on the Prison Arts Coalition Committee

We seek members on the committee who are able to commit time to the maintenance of this program (i.e., planning, meeting, traveling inter-community, etc.). Also, people who would write grant proposals.

Workshop Time Schedule

Location – Auburn Prison, 135 State Street, (P.O. Box 618) Auburn, New York 13021

Time – 7:00pm to 9:20pm (*all volunteers must be at the prison gate by 6:15pm to allow time for processing into the facility*)

Osborn School – The facility has a school building where all evening activities are held.

Workshop cycle – On-going indefinitely.

Workshop size – 20 to 25 students; approximately 10 volunteers

* * *

P A R T III T HE WORKSHOP

- * WORKSHOP SEQUENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
- * PARTICIPANT 'CORE GROUP'
- * EVALUATION TEAM
- * ORIENTATION
- * TROUPE MORALE
- * PROPOSAL TO ADMINISTRATION

W O R K S H O P S E Q U E N T I A L D E V E L O P M E N T

This workshop has four sequential phases that run within a six-month cycle. Between each workshop cycle there shall be a 'Break Period'.

Phase One: Orientation / Introduction

Goal: Participants will be oriented on workshop structure and rules. (See, Appendix, 'PPTG Orientation Manual').

Phase Two: Engaging the Technical Art of Acting

Goal: Students will improve their ability to speak, and move with confidence and intention. Students will discover how to connect with, and conform their feelings.

Activities: (TBA)

* Classes start with 'Warm-up exercises'.

* Students are engaged in an extensive exploration of preparatory and community building exercises to develop a foundation to be built upon as the workshop progresses.

The following is a list of some exercises that we would like to see utilized:

Preparatory:

- Relaxation - Games - Balance and 'Body / Think'
- Space and movement - Concentration and Attention
- Impulse and Direction

Community

- Trust & Respect - Making a machine - Showing and Telling
- Entrance and Exit - Blocking - Meeting & Greeting

Phase Three: Exploring The Experience & Creating Original Pieces

Goal: Students are engaged in structured exercises intended to offer varying experiences of the human condition. After exposure to these exercises participants will create response pieces for presentation through performance. Students will also engage in activities that require them to further apply and integrate the insight gleaned from their engagement with workshop material.

Activities: (TBA)

* Classes will start with 'Warm-up exercises'.

* Students will explore, intimately, the complex and diverse layers of human experience. Workshop material is selected based upon its embodiment of the following three ideals: 1) Compassionate engagement between human beings, 2) The role of 'Forgiveness' in human experience, and 3) Self-love. These three ideals function as 'Vantage Points' that, when put together, set up a sort of three-dimensional lense through which participants will be observed for evaluation purposes.

* Activities in this phase of the workshop will fall under three headings:

A] Pre-existing work

B] Improvisational Performance ²

C] Creating Original Performance Pieces

A] Pre-existing Work: We are open to any theater performance pieces or literature that provides participants with adequate examples of compassion, forgiveness, and love. However, we specifically seek piece that embody some of the below themes:

- Domestic violence - beating the odds - Woman's stories
- Coping with abuse: physical, emotional, drug & alcohol, etc.
- Using Creativity & Innovation to succeed
- "Outsiders" integrating into groups / communities
- Overcoming the fear of success & failure

Note: We ask that a list of theater performance pieces be made so that we can select pieces from it for the workshop.

B] Improvisation: We want to integrate the following exercises, with the stated modifications, into the workshop.

* TENSES:

For most of us, incarceration has brought an abrupt halt to many aspects of our personal development. This exercise allows us to identify and reconnect with the hopefulness- and sorrow of unfulfillment -that defined us as individuals, before incarceration.

Exploring tense in this way gives participants the opportunity to acknowledge the link between past experiences and emotions and trauma that we are trying to reconcile in our lives today. This awareness offers participants the opportunity to use this workshop to discover a remedy or outlet for their unreconciled past.

Self identification is a good way for participants to start the workshop. If their past was full of potential, their task is to build upon it. If their past was defined by 'brokenness', their task is to forgive then begin building 'wholeness' in their life.

* STATUS:

As incarcerated people, we are stigmatized, primarily, by our criminality, but also our social status, education, and more. Paired participants will select one of a few 'status relationships':

- prisoner v. guard - judge v. criminal
- victim v. perpetrator - teacher v. student
- master v. servant - child v. parent - male v. female

This exercise sets the foundation for a 'debriefing' that discusses the role of status / authority in our society. Awareness of the 'social contract' may open Participants to exploring how bias and ignorance may affect one's perception of their own, or another's status. Also, participants can look at the ways which status-based ways of relating influences their approach to navigating relationships with people.

* MASKS:

As prisoners, our physical environment limits and biases basic interaction between the people around us. The social construction developed within this frame often undermines an individual's equilibrium of body / mind expression. The prison, systematically, as an institution of conformity and control, seeks to mold its subjects into a despondent and submissive heap.

Mask, is a way to get in touch with our individual body / mind equilibriums. We can build upon this awareness of self throughout the workshop. Self-recognition is a prerequisite to establishing genuine and authentic 'Self-love' and compassion.

The mask allows participants to disengage from the powerful influence of the prisons' social construct. Thereafter, participants can identify, engage, and integrate this self-awareness to reestablish their body / mind expression.

Other Improvisation Exercises:

- Who / Where / what - Object / Resistance - SET
- Point of concentration - Character

C] Original Performance pieces: To give us confidence, purpose, and opportunity. Creating original pieces is a way of looking at ourselves with scrutiny and healthy intent, then project our ideals and hopes upon it.

Participants will be taken through a few 'Guided Reflections' (listed below), then told to create their own original work in response to any of the 'Historical perceptions of incarcerated people'. Original works should confront these criticisms.

Articulation and demonstrating how these 'Historical perceptions' don't apply, is a crucial step in each participant's process of creating change.

Some 'Guided Reflection Exercises':

- Character biography - Two-person scenes (5-lines / 1-theme)
- Post card performance

NOTE: There will be a night reserved for performance of these original pieces. This promotes communal recognition and solidarity.

Exercise Debrief:

Exercises should be debriefed to determine what insight was gained, and to address important issues that participants may have missed. In the absence of experience, and tested knowledge (of 'social constructs', and 'processes') prisoners fill-in voids with ignorance, bias, and / or engage absentmindedly. Debriefing allows participants to identify and associate what they have learned with what they already know, and fill voids of knowledge with newly learned information.

NOTE: We will not say directly what we expect / hope for participants to get out of any particular exercise, as it relates to Compassionate Engagement, Forgiveness, and Self-love. Instead, we will elicit their feedback by posing questions that relate to these three vantage points.

The 'Evaluation Team' will document the group's response to exercises, make assessments of exercise effectiveness, evaluate our approach to presenting exercises, and make recommendations for improvement.

Phase Four: Performance Development

Goal: Members will arrange, rehearse, and develop characters for the work selected to be performed.

Activities

- * class sessions will be held in actual performance space.
- * END OF Workshop Cycle: Two separate nights of performance for prison / community audience.
- * All Improvisation exercises referenced herein, including modified exercises, come from Anthony Frost & Ralph Yarrow (Palgrave, 2007) IMPROVISATION IN DRAMA
- * 'Guided Reflection Exercises' are taken from Cornell University's theater 2870 curriculum

PARTICIPANT 'CORE GROUP'

Because our workshops will be on-going we want a 'Core Group' of participants who will commit to being permanent members. This 'Core Group' serves two purposes:

1. Mentor / Facilitator: 'Core Group' members will model for participants expected and progressive participation within workshops.
2. Evaluation: This 'Core Group' will be evaluated separate from regular participants.

We believe that a 'Core Group' of committed participants will promote workshop continuity. This group will consist of 3 - 6 members.

SELECTION CRITERIA

We want members to be of the best quality and potential. 'Core Group' criteria is stated below:

* Have a positive history, and cross-sectional record of participation in positive prison activities. (i.e., Cornell, A.V.P, positive associations within the prison environment (no gang members).

* Positive disciplinary record. This reflects stability. We want men who are likely to be in the program for a few cycles of evaluation.

* Men who have a history of high program retention. This is a marker of sound investment.

Responsibility & Board Rules:

* To model behavior, and facilitate workshop cohesion.

* Attend PPTG 'Instruction / Evaluation Meetings'. At these meetings members will receive instructions for workshop collaboration with directors, be briefed on new workshop material, participate in selection of 'workshop Performance pieces', and be evaluated.

* Confidentiality

* Professional Behavior: When interacting with volunteers within workshops or during meetings.

* No Dissent: Any grievances are addressed to the PPTG Director(s) at meetings, never within the workshop

* Conflict: Not tolerated. Members who can not get along will be removed.

* Carry your weight: All members must fulfill their obligations.

Instruction / Evaluation Meeting: PPTG Director(s) should meet with the 'Core Group' once a month. The best day would be Saturday mornings. The facility's Media Center has a designated 'Conference Room' that is open from 9:00 am - 10:45 am on weekends. Other days / times can be scheduled.

E V A L U A T I O N T E A M

A team of professionals, and / or volunteers qualified to conduct evaluations of workshop shall constitute our 'Evaluation Team'. This 'Evaluation Team' will be on-sight during workshops. This team is charged with making and maintaining records of participant & workshop development, and scheduling all evaluations throughout workshop. A file of 'Portfolios' of all participants shall be created and maintained- for evaluation purposes.

PPTG will evaluate participants' incremental development in the areas of **Compassion** for human beings, awareness of the role of **Forgiveness** in human development, and renewing their commitment to **Self-love**.

The two components of our evaluation process are as follows:

1. Participant: Oriented to providing insight and guidance for each participant's personal development.

- Regular participants
- 'Core Group' participants

2. Workshop Evaluation: For PPTG Directors to assess and improve the effectiveness of our workshop, and promote its value to attract funding.

Evaluation Process

- in sequence -

Participants

1) Questionnaire: During Orientation all participants will be required to fill-out questionnaires. Questions fall into three categories:

- A) General Education & Program History
- B) Pre-Incarceration & Childhood Rearing & Experience
- C) Perception, Insight & Experience, and Expressiveness

These questions are oriented to provide us with a 'base of knowledge' from which all evaluations will be made.

2) Mid-Term Eval: Approximately half-way through the workshop a night will be scheduled to conduct a 'Mid-term Evaluation'. The night will likely be a video viewing or open activities night for performance, while one-on-one evaluations are conducted. participants will receive 'up-dates' on their workshop participation progress in specific skill set areas, and receive formal recommendations for how they may continue to improve.

3) Final Evaluation (Self-Evaluation): A day will be set aside to do this evaluation before the troupe's performance within the prison.

This evaluation will identify each participant's sense of their progress achieved during previous parts of the workshop. We anticipate that their responses will be useful for measuring individual and group progress. Questions will be asked in context of what they learned & value about workshop. (We hope to have professionals draw-up this sort of 'pointed questioning').

Note: We decided to evaluate before final performances because the workshop's value is in the 'Process', not the end performance.

Workshop

4) Evaluation Report: This report is for both the participant and PPTG Directors.

* Participant: The 'Evaluation Team' will compile this report on the participant's workshop progress. The report will focus on 'General theater' skill sets, and formally address a participant's development / progress in the areas of 'Self-love', Forgiveness, Compassionate Engagement, and 'Capacity Building' (citing specific point within the workshop, which, when plotted, evidences the 'Evaluation Team's' findings). This report gives participants a post-workshop focus, and sense of achievement that- we hope -they will integrate into their daily lives in a positive way.

* APP Directors: Each participants portfolio will be compiled into a "Workshop Case File". The Evaluation Report will measure the group's progress from 'Start-to-Finish'. Areas such as 1) participant commitment (increase in participation quality), 2) attitude towards topics, and 3) goal statement.

Findings will be used to prove the workshop value and impact upon the lives of its participants. Making the case for 'Capacity Building'.

'CORE GROUP' & EVALUATION

PPTG is committed to the idea of "change in progress", that change is an on-going evolution. For the 'Core Group' participant, their experience within this program builds capacity in the areas of 'Community collaboration' and 'Peer-Leadership'.

We follow the long-term development of group members. The first cycle for each 'Core Group' member will be the same as regular members. Their second cycle, and all cycles thereafter, will exclude the Questionnaire and the Mid-term evaluations. Instead, evaluations will be held during 'Instruction / Evaluation Meetings'. For the 'Final Evaluation' and 'Evaluation Report' Core Group members will be given a different 'Self-Evaluation', and receive their 'Evaluation Report' when other troupe members receive theirs.

WORKSHOP DEBRIEF MEETING

Following the end of the workshop PPTG Workshop Directors, Evaluation Team, and 'Core Group' members will meet for a 'Workshop Debriefing session'.

O R I E N T A T I O N

- Participant Selection -

Participants will be selected by the PPTG Directors & Co-Leaders.

* Facility Announcement: An institutional announcement will be made to the general population.

* People seeking enrollment will send their requests to the Osborn school academic supervisor. A list of names will be compiled and turned over to PPTG Program Director(s).

* Orientation Night: The first 20+ names on the list will be placed upon a call-out for 'Orientation'. Inmates will be briefed on workshop rules, fill-out questionnaires, and participate in activities. PPGT Directors will observe the participation of potential participants. We are looking for participants who demonstrate a positive and 'open' attitude, and have a good questionnaire.

Selection of participants will be compiled into a list and returned to the Osborn school Education supervisor who will deliver individual 'invitations' to the selected inmates.

T R O U P E I D E N T I T Y & M O R A L E

- Auburn Theater Community -

Insignia: To create a distinguished identity for an Auburn Theater Community. The creation of a 'Theater Community' identity is fundamental to inspiring participant pride and morale. Other than religious groups, only AVP and Cornell University inspires a strong group identity that is positive.

Insignia should be placed upon:

- * Folders (Colorful)
- * Orientation Manuals
- * Certificates: For completion of Workshops.

NOTE: In prison 'Group Identity' is common place. We want to tap into this norm to create a cadre of committed participants who will champion personal development through PPTG.

P R O P O S A L I S S U E S

The following information must be included in the proposal being submitted to the Auburn Prison Program Superintendent.

A] Workshop Cycles: Six month cycles, with a 'Break Period' in between cycles.

B] Orientation Process: An 'Orientation' for every workshop cycle.

C] PPTG Performances: Two performances, one for 'Community' another for 'Prison population' at the end of each workshop cycle. All performances will be video-taped and used to promote PPTG.

A separate filing of paper work will clarify the items needed for performances. For the 'Community Performance' we want family members of participants to be eligible to attend as "Community Guests" (see, DOCS Directive #4022 Special Event, policy allows families to attend graduation celebrations for educational programs [i.e., GED]).

The presence of family makes good on PPTG's goal to contribute to participants' personal development. Aware that their family can attend, participants may approach the workshop with greater anticipation and willingness to work on themselves. This may be their one opportunity to address and apologize to their family and members of society for the pain and suffering caused by their criminal behavior.

D] Workshop Schedule:

- Two Workshops per week. 7:00 pm - 9:15 pm in the Osborn school building.

- For the performance preparation phase of the workshop we want approval to hold sessions in 'performance space' in facility.

- Performance space: Chapel, 2nd floor Gymnasium area, or Auditorium

- Class Size: 16± , and 5 - 7 volunteers.

- Class Space: To accommodate space for activities we request the R.S.A.T / A.S.A.T wing of the Osborn school building (rooms, 36 or 39, etc.)

E] Equipment: We will need a storage locked for approved workshop items (i.e., stationary, text, approved on-site theater props, video / audio tapes, non-recording tape player, etc.).

Performance only: We will file necessary paperwork requesting approval for performance items. (i.e., costumes, microphone, etc.)

Masks: A segment of workshop will be dedicated to mask work (masks will need gate passes)

F] PPTG Meetings: 'Instruction /Evaluation Meetings' must be approved as a monthly component of our workshop. Also, before orientation night, we should have approval to meet with selected 'Core Group' members, PPTG Directors, and [Auburn prison Staff, if necessary].

PART IV A DREAM DIFFERED

- OUR JOURNEY & OUR HOPE -

*a letter to
you*

A D R E A M D I F F E R E D

IPTG Co-Founders Michael Rhynes and Clifton K. Williamson have been traveling the long road of 'Redemption' for 24 years and 13 years, respectively. Our collective 37 years of active participation and observation helped define our approach to this project. Beyond our personal experiences we've read literature that discussed theater in prisons. Individually, we bring to the table knowledge of how to cope with, and negotiating the trauma of incarceration. We are linked by our choice to live through our artistic self-expression.

We share an appreciation for a few artistic outlets, however, our strongest intersecting-interest is theater.

We started working on this project in late 2007. With the help of two particular people who volunteer their time to make a difference behind prison walls, today we are able to present this proposal to you

We want to share with you our insight on the specific prison dynamic that frustrates our redemptive efforts.

Our Journey

Reform and rehabilitation is presumed to be part and parcel of serving an imposed sentence. However, our experience of incarceration has, unfortunately, proven this presumption to be lacking in integrity. Presently, the penal system is not living up to its stated pledge to reform and rehabilitate. It is true that mandatory treatment programs like GED & vocational training are provided. However, those of us who are enrolled in these programs quickly figure out that we are on our own when it come to Gaining any useful or transformative lessons out of them. Curriculums and information are often outdated, and apparatuses are obsolete. Most of us fail terribly to teach ourselves, no matter much we genuinely want to learn.

For us, the reality of having to teach ourselves, marked the beginning of our personal commitment to fulfill the 'Dream of Redemption'. Yet, for others, this marked the END of any hope to make good on this 'Dream'.

The next obstacle on the 'Road To Redemption' is DOCS program policy. Once the minimum program requirements are fulfilled enrolment in additional treatment and / or vocational programing is prohibited.

The only other available venues to continue positive self-development are 'Inmate Organizations'. Several Inmate Organizations exist, but only a few are genuinely healthy places for learning. For the organizations that are positive, and produce viable programs, they struggle with gaining administrative support to solidify the program, under their organizational banner, within the facility.

Both of us have endured the daunting experience of witnessing viable programs fade due to the lack of Prison administration support, or having them taken from us and turned into state programs. This practice is contrary to DOCS directive #4760-Inmate Organization.

The practice of not sponsoring, or simply taking programs from prisoners has several negative implications, two particular points are:

1) Reform behind prison walls must include a component of 'Empowering the prisoner'. We must be given the opportunity to exercise leadership roles, and collaborate with community groups as a way to 'Capacity Build' before we are released. Present penal practice undermines this sort of 'Empowerment'.

2) It is common for the Program Founders to not receive formal (written) recognition from the prison administration. Written documentation is crucial. The Penal system constantly relies upon our recorded 'Criminal History' to define who we are. Without a record of 'good' many reform efforts are lost, thus, we are left without testimony of our redemptive qualities- our commitment to personal development.

We recognize the importance of making connections beyond these walls. Viable programs must be introduced from the outside in order to help the people on the inside.

Our Hope

We hope that this proposal, when formally accepted, will be taken through the standard process of recognizing adopted projects, and that our humble contributions will be recorded in a form that can be use to verify our efforts.

We are most grateful to our two community advocates, without their faith and commitment it is unlikely that our proposal would have made it this far.

We are thankful for this great opportunity.


Clifton Kent Williamson


Michael Rhynes