

Premiere Stages Assessment Report – 2013-2014 Academic Year

Mission Statement:

Premiere Stages is committed to serving the cultural needs of northern and central New Jersey through the development and production of high-quality Equity theatre premieres, professional development and educational initiatives for the local and campus communities, and the support and cultivation of emerging playwrights and theatre artists.

As a professional theatre company in residence at Kean University, Premiere Stages actively engages and enhances the specialized training programs at Kean, while embracing and serving a culturally diverse audience, underserved local youth, and a broad pool of gifted regionally-based artists.

Vision Statement:

The vision of Premiere Stages is to be recognized as a statewide cultural resource for the performing arts and a national model for how a professional theatre arts program can help support and strengthen opportunities and access for University students and the campus community.

Goals and Objectives:

SAMPLE. SEE PREMIERE STAGES 2014 PROGRAM REVIEW FOR A COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT PLAN FOR THE 2013-2014 ACADEMIC YEAR

Goal 1: Develop and nurture professional playwrights through a fast-track development process that provides playwrights in the region with detailed evaluations and professional readings, workshops and productions of their work.		
Objective	Data Results	Actions Taken Based on Data Collected
1.1: The Producing Artistic Director and Producing Associate will launch the Premiere Stages Alumni Reading Series. Building upon the theatre's relationship with the New York Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS), the theatre will solicit scripts from previous Premiere Stages Play	10/1/13: A tentative date of December 16, 2013 has been set for the first reading of the Premiere Alumni Reading Series through a partnership with Premiere Stages and the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. The reading will be at HBO in NYC. 12/1/13: The first reading of the Premiere Alumni Reading Series has	2/6/14: Premiere Stages successfully launched the Alumni Reading Series, with a staged reading of <i>Soldier's Heart</i> in New York. The well-attended reading helped to secure community partners for the July 2014 production as well as introduce Premiere Stages work to a wider audience and

Premiere Stages Assessment Report – 2013-2014 Academic Year

<p>Festival Finalists to be presented as staged readings in New York as part of the NATAS Monday Night Reading Series, hosted by Arlene Dahl. The readings will be co-produced in conjunction with the NATAS and presented in the screening room at HBO. The series will provide a showcase arena for professional alumni playwrights. Creating this new facet of Play Festival will broaden artistic collaborations while affording Play Festival Alumni an artistic home.</p> <p><u>Target date for first reading: 11/1/13</u></p> <p>Addresses KU Action 5.1 (Build the KU local extended community)</p>	<p>been rescheduled to accommodate the schedule of the playwright. The reading will be held at an alternate venue, but still in NYC so Premiere can solidify potential partners for the production of the 2014 Collaborative Premiere.</p>	<p>showcase the writing of Play Festival alumni Tammy Ryan.</p>
<p>1.2: The Producing Associate has initiated a new event specifically designed to offer a professional reading experience to a Kean student or alumni playwright who has demonstrated significant potential or high achievement in the discipline of playwriting. Professional theater producers, literary managers and Premiere Stages patrons will be invited to the reading, which will be held on January 29, 2014. It will be directed by the Producing Artistic Director, dramaturged by the Producing Associate/Resident Dramaturge and read by professional actors. A talk-back with the audience will follow.</p> <p>Addresses KU Action 5.8 (Enhance recognition of our accomplishments) and KU Action 2.4.4 (Increase student engagement)</p>	<p>10/15/13: Plays will be evaluated by the panel and one play will be afforded a public reading at Premiere in January 2013 with a talk-back with professional actors, director and dramaturg.</p>	<p>2/3/14: Premiere Stages selected <i>The One, Percy Ent</i> by Kean alumni Tariq Hamami ('06) for its inaugural Bauer-Boucher Kean Student/Alumni Reading, named for longtime supporters W. John Bauer and Nancy Boucher. The professional reading took place January 29, 2014 in the University Center Little Theatre, and was promoted through area publications, event calendars, e-blasts, social media, Kean Xchange, Cougar Link, and flyers. Admission was free, and the audience consisted of past and current Kean students and faculty, members of Kean's Senior Night Out Performances (SNOP) program, and the general public. The event was well-received by the playwright honored, who had the opportunity to see his play brought to life by</p>

Premiere Stages Assessment Report – 2013-2014 Academic Year

		professional actors, as well as Kean community members, who had the opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of a talented former student. The reading concluded with a post-show discussion that enabled the playwright to solicit and receive direct feedback from the audience as well as artists involved.

Goal 2: Produce professional productions of premieres that explore and address contemporary and social issues, providing a unique professional theatre experience to New Jersey patrons and artists in the region.

Objective	Data Results	Actions Taken Based on Data Collected
<p>2.1: The Producing Artistic Director will commission a new Liberty Live project to increase partnerships and collaborative possibilities as part of the 350th Anniversary celebrations for New Jersey and Elizabeth. Premiere will partner with the Liberty Hall Museum, NJSCA, the New Jersey Historical Commission, The Department of State, the New Jersey Theatre Foundation, the Township of Elizabeth, the Union Freeholders and others to develop and market the play for a production as part of Premiere Stages' FY15 season. A Staged Reading of the play</p>	<p>11/11/13: Premiere Stages commissioned <i>At Liberty Hall</i>, which is a time-bending story that has a young Alexander Hamilton corresponding with a modern-day immigrant through a drawer in a desk at Kean's Liberty Hall Museum. In addition to the partnerships outlined above, Premiere also solidified external partnerships with Terence C. Reilly Middle School in Elizabeth as well as the Alexander Hamilton Awareness Society to plan and collaborate on the 2014 production. The Staged Reading was sponsored with a Union County HEART Grant, and took place in the University Center Little Theatre November 8 –</p>	<p>Project/final data will occur/be collected in F15</p>

Premiere Stages Assessment Report – 2013-2014 Academic Year

<p>will be held at Premiere in November 2013 to hear and discuss the current draft and solidify additional partnerships for the production. <u>Target dates: Staged Reading: November 8-10, 2013. Production: October 16-19, 2014 (FY15).</u> Addresses KU Action 5.1 (Build the KU local extended community) and KU Action 5.8 (Increase sponsorship of community-based programs)</p>	<p>10, 2013.</p> <p>6/1/14: The Audience Services Coordinator has been invited by the Union County Office of Cultural & Heritage Affairs to attend a marketing strategy meeting for Four Centuries in a Weekend, Union County's annual heritage festival, on 6/20/14 at Liberty Hall Museum. The festival, as well as an encampment of the Brigade of the American Revolution, coincide with Premiere's full production of <i>At Liberty Hall</i> at the museum October 16 – 19, 2014.</p>	
<p>The Producing Associate and Audience Services Coordinator, under the direction of the Producing Artistic Director, will continue to develop, nurture and expand existing partnerships and forge new external collaborations in order to reinforce the topical issues explored in the plays selected for the FY14 Premiere Stages Season and expand the population of patrons, educators and artists who are involved (TBD). <u>Target date: Ongoing</u> Addresses KU Action 4.1.2 (Enhance inclusivity, equity and diversity)</p>	<p>9/1/13: Premiere Stages, through the work of the Producing Associate and Audience Services Coordinator, established new partnerships with multiple community organizations over the course of the 2013 Season. Community partners included The American Conference on Diversity (<i>Clybourne Park</i>), the Kean Counseling Center, and Prevention Links. Following a post-show discussion for <i>The Beautiful Dark</i> featuring Prevention Links Executive Director Pamela Capaci, Premiere Stages will meet with the organization to explore the possibility of further collaborations including teaching residencies.</p>	<p>6/1/14: Premiere Stages has begun to secure campus and community partners for its 2014 Season, including Safe Horizon, Kean's Office of Veteran Student Services, the Counseling Center, and Military OneSource; these partners provide resource materials related to issues raised by Premiere's plays, participate in post-show discussions, and attract new patrons to Premiere's shows through cross-promotion and discounts.</p>

Premiere Stages Assessment Report – 2013-2014 Academic Year

Goal 3: To provide professional enrichment opportunities for Kean University students through master classes, lectures, showcases, placement in Equity productions and the Premiere Intern Program.		
Objective	Data Results	Actions Taken Based on Data Collected
<p>3.1: The Producing Associate will create a database of all students who participate in the Kean Showcase, Intern Program, Inside TV, and Equity productions. The PA will monitor their progress by checking with them on an annual basis to see how their career is progressing. This information will be used for internal assessment purposes, recruitment efforts for the Department of Theatre and for reporting purposes for external funding entities who support Premiere Stages (when applicable). <u>Target date for all databases to be in place: 3/1/14</u> Addresses KU Action 5.1(Build the extended community) and KU Action 5.8 (Enhance recognition of accomplishments)</p>	<p>12/6/13: The Producing Associate has compiled a Google doc database with contact information for students, actors, playwrights, interns, and technical staff who have worked with the program starting from the summer of 2006. The database is constantly being updated as the theatre continues to forge new partnerships and consolidate information from previous seasons. The hope is for the database to include tracking of alumni projects and former interns and students as a resource to illustrate how the program has grown and the number of artists increased.</p>	<p>3/15/14: Premiere Stages staff used the database to: secure “where are they now” information for the 2014 anniversary season brochure, invite alumni and past festival playwrights to submit scripts, invite previous Premiere affiliated staff and artists to events and provide data for reporting purposes.</p>
<p>3.2: The Audience Services Coordinator will actively reach out to KU students via surveys, attendance at meetings by student groups, and events and initiatives where Premiere Stages is represented, to educate students about the opportunities inherent in Premiere Stages programming as well as the educational and entertainment benefits available through Premiere Stages.</p>	<p>10/16/13: Premiere significantly expanded its student database (students who attend and participate in PS events) in FY14 by participating in a number of campus events, including Open House, Campus Awareness Festival/Kean Day, and New Student Orientation, among others.</p>	<p>5/1/14: Premiere staff have been invited to speak at Department of Theatre meetings, raising awareness about upcoming events and internships available to Kean students at Premiere. Premiere also established a volunteer ushering program to enable Kean students of any department to attend Premiere productions free of</p>

Premiere Stages Assessment Report – 2013-2014 Academic Year

<p>Target date: Ongoing</p> <p>Addresses KU Action 2.4.1 (Develop a comprehensive First Year Academic Experience for entering undergraduate students)</p> <p>and</p> <p>KU Action 2.1.5 (Market new initiatives that support the student academic experience)</p> <p>and</p> <p>KU Action in 2.4.4 (Increase student engagement)</p>		<p>charge in exchange for serving as volunteer ushers.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">3.3:</p> <p>The Producing Artistic Director, through the continued cultivation of external partnerships and the expansion of existing affiliations, will continue to ensure that KU students are incorporated into all aspects of Premiere Stages operations, ensuring the students have hands-on professional training and exposure that will make them amongst the most competitive in the nation. These aspects include acting and understudy roles in Premiere's Equity productions, EMC union credits, design and directing assistantships, professional internships (both on campus and with external organizations), teaching assistantships and networking opportunities with leading professionals in the field (through the Kean Actors Showcase, Premiere Artists and Inside TV).</p> <p>Target date: Ongoing</p> <p>Addresses KU Action 2.4.1 (Develop a comprehensive First Year Academic Experience for entering undergraduate students)</p> <p>and</p> <p>KU Action 2.1.5 (support the student academic experience)</p> <p>and</p>	<p>9/22/13: In addition to receiving professional credits as interns, design assistants and understudies, two students were cast in the winner of the Play Festival, including one in the lead role. The student received excellent press/exposure, including an excellent notice in The New York Times.</p>	<p>1/16/14: The Producing Artistic Director sent the Premiere Stages Long Range Plan to the Ocean County Arts Team who visited the Kean campus and followed up with summer intern and audition announcements. Ocean County students subsequently applied to Premiere Stages and were interviewed in March.</p> <p>3/23/14: All graduating acting students in the Acting as a Profession course secured electronic and printed headshots for the Kean Acting Showcase in preparation for pursuing acting jobs upon graduation. Students also researched websites and a third of the students have already created professional websites.</p>

Premiere Stages Assessment Report – 2013-2014 Academic Year

<p>KU Action in 2.4.4 (Increase student engagement)</p> <p>and</p> <p>KU Action 5.1 (Build the extended community)</p> <p>and</p> <p>KU Action 5.1.2 (Explore new learning opportunities)</p> <p>and</p> <p>KU Action 5.7 (Cultivate partnership sites and establish affiliation agreements)</p>		

Goal 4: Provide an arts education outlet for children and their families through innovative theatre programs offered through the Premiere Stages Play Factory.

Objective	Data Results	Actions Taken Based on Data Collected
<p style="text-align: center;">4.1:</p> <p>In order to expand the base of earned and contributed funding for Premiere Stages, the Producing Artistic Director, with the benefit of a larger pool of teaching artists to draw from, will expand the number of Play Factory residencies currently in place. In addition, the PAD will hire teaching assistants, including KU students, to support the teaching artists, trained using the Play Factory lesson plan templates so they can be elevated to teaching artists for subsequent residencies to further expand the roster of teaching artists. The expanded residencies will be supervised by the Producing</p>	<p>9/10/13: Premiere Stages successfully expanded its roster of teaching artists, including training and hiring Drew Hirshfield for four residencies in 2013. The theatre was also able to hire in two camp directors to work with the Producing Associate and education interns for the 2013 Camp Premiere.</p> <p>11/1/13: Premiere Stages has established a Play Factory residency with Terence C. Reilly Middle School in Elizabeth that will begin in February 2014.</p> <p>12/1/13: Premiere Stages has increased the Play Factory Residency</p>	<p>11/15/13: Lindy Foreman from the KU Foundation Office has submitted a proposal to Elizabethown Healthcare Foundation, upon their request, for support of the launch of numerous Play Factory residencies for senior citizens based in eastern Union County (Roselle, Elizabeth, Hillside, Union).</p> <p>2/1/14: Premiere Stages received a \$5000 grant from the Westfield Foundation to fund a residency at Sunrise of Westfield.</p>

Premiere Stages Assessment Report – 2013-2014 Academic Year

<p>Associate. <u>Target date for new residencies to be in place for Spring of 2014: 12/1/13</u> Addresses KU Action 5.1(Become centers of value-added activities that educate, inform, enliven and entertain) and KU Action 5.7 (Cultivate partnership sites – state-wide school districts)</p>	<p>Program for Spring 2014 to include residencies in Lakewood, Rahway (two), Harrison, Glen Rock, and at the community program Mothers at Heart, located in Elizabeth. Any additional residencies will be added to the fall of 2014 (FY15).</p> <p>1/15/13: Premiere Stages has solidified a partnership with Sunrise of Westfield to launch the first Play Factory residency for senior citizens. The Producing Associate has submitted a proposal to KeanLIFT in support of the Sunrise residency with a threshold amount of \$5,000 to launch the residency. In addition, the KU Foundation will submit a grant to the Westfield Foundation in January 2013 requesting start-up funds.</p>	<p>5/5/14: Premiere Stages successfully concluded the Sunrise of Westfield Residency, launching the program while meeting all goals and adhering to all terms of the grant.</p>

Goal 5: Ensure the program is poised for growth and sustainability through strong marketing practices, good budget practices and financial diversity, a stable staff structure and sound strategic planning.

Objective	Data Results	Actions Taken Based on Data Collected

Premiere Stages Assessment Report – 2013-2014 Academic Year

<p style="text-align: center;">5.1:</p> <p>Continue to explore ways in which partnerships with press organizations, restaurants, local businesses (Ursino and others) and external organizations/co-producing entities can be formed to increase the pool of patrons who attend Premiere Stages events, while offering more package possibilities (dinner and hotel packages). <u>Target date: Ongoing</u> Initiated by Producing Artistic Director and coordinated by the Audience Services Coordinator and members of the Advisory Board. Addresses KU Action 2.1.10 (Community based partnerships) and KU Action 2.1.10 (Attract more people to campus)</p>	<p>9/23/13: Premiere Stages successfully lobbied the Star Ledger and the paper returned to review both FY14 fully produced productions. Premiere Stages had a record number of critics (9) attend and review the September 2013 Premiere of <i>The Beautiful Dark</i>. Single ticket sales for <i>Clybourne Park</i> (July/2013) and <i>The Beautiful Dark</i> (September/2013) were buoyed by positive reviews from The New York Times, The Star-Ledger, Curtain Up, The Alternative Press, The Examiner, NJ Arts Maven, Talkin' Broadway, and The Westfield Leader, as well as Kean University's two student newspapers, The Tower and Cougar's Byte.</p>	<p>4/28/14: Premiere Stages has secured five cooperative advertising partners for the 2014 Season: Rock'n Joe Café, Suspenders Pub & Restaurant, the University Diner, Tropicana, and the Kenilworth Inn. The four dining partners paid a small fee in exchange for advertising in Premiere's 2014 Season Brochure (20,000 printed) and playbills (approximately 6,000 printed per season), as well as inclusion in dedicated e-blasts sent to every patron that purchases a ticket to one of Premiere's 2014 performances. Premiere's hotel partner, the Kenilworth Inn, agreed to provide limited complimentary rooms to visiting artists and technicians during technical rehearsal periods in exchange for advertising in season materials. All four dining partners are in close proximity to Kean's campus and moderately priced, ensuring patrons dining options commensurate with Premiere's extremely affordable ticket prices (\$15 - \$30).</p> <p>5/1/14: Premiere will drive even more traffic to its cooperative advertising partners through "reminder" emails sent to all ticket buyers 48 hours before performance, alerting patrons to pre-show and post-show dining options available in immediate vicinity. These e-blasts will</p>
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Premiere Stages Assessment Report – 2013-2014 Academic Year

		<p>also include directions to Kean’s campus, venues, parking, and accessibility information. Premiere is also working with University Relations to design a permanent “Plan Your Visit” tab on the website, housing all information included in the “reminder” e-blasts. This should reduce confusion and streamline the planning process for patrons before they even set foot on campus.</p> <p>6/1/14: Producing Associate Clare Drobot met with Ursino Restaurant staff to discuss pricing and menu options for the <i>Soldier’s Heart</i> Opening Night Party (scheduled for July 11, 2014 at Ursino). The new “Plan Your Visit” tab on Premiere’s website goes live 6/10/14.</p>
<p>5.2: Given the continued growth and expansion of Premiere Stages, the Producing Artistic Director will include in the 2014 Premiere Stages Program Review a compelling request for the University to fully fund the salary, benefits and pension of the Audience Services Coordinator given how essential the post is to both the program and the university (the position is currently part-time with no benefits, and entails significant additional responsibilities for Liberty Hall Museum and University Relations). A full-time staff member dedicated exclusively to marketing and audience outreach would ensure that all efforts were carefully considered and</p>	<p>10/23/13: Group sales were up by over 30% in FY14, and <i>Clybourne Park</i> (July 2013) set box office records for the Zella Fry Theatre. Heather Kelley, Premiere’s Audience Services Coordinator, was instrumental in increasing individual as well as group ticket sales, and raising visibility both on campus and off. In her efforts to reach a larger percentage of Kean’s student population, Heather promoted all 2013 events on Cougar Link, Kean’s online student group management and extra-curricular involvement tracking system, as well as social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.). She attended a number of on-campus events and increased Premiere’s student email database by over 400 contacts in September alone. Heather has revived Kean’s</p>	<p>6/2/14: Additional justification for establishing the Audience Services Coordinator as a full-time line is included in this document in the sections: <u>8. Summary and Recommendations</u> and <u>9. Additional Resources Requested</u>.</p>

Premiere Stages Assessment Report – 2013-2014 Academic Year

<p>coordinated, and demonstrate Premiere's ongoing commitment to expand its staff and resources in service of the campus community and patrons in the surrounding regions.</p> <p><u>Target date for position request: June 1, 2014. Target date for position to become a permanent position: 9/1/14 (FY15)</u></p> <p><u>Addresses KU Action 5.1 (Build the KU local extended community)</u></p>	<p>Senior Night Out Performances program (SNOP), a discounted ticket program for low-income seniors, maintaining a current list of members, and sending targeted mailings.</p> <p>10/16/13: The Audience Services Coordinator combined all extant patron lists for Kean University's Senior Night Out Performances (SNOP), a discounted ticket program for low-income seniors, and uploaded the subsequent list to Vendini, the box office's marketing and ticketing system. All SNOP members have now been added to Premiere's primary mailing list, as well as marked as "SNOPs" in Vendini so that Premiere Stages may contact them directly about discounted tickets to future performances. Box office patron reports indicate that – to date - at least 63 of SNOP's 154 current members have purchased discounted tickets to one or more of Premiere's 2013 performances. The Audience Services Coordinator successfully merged Premiere's two Facebook accounts. A Premiere Instagram account was also established.</p> <p>10/16/13: The Audience Services Coordinator facilitated the successful upload of all of Premiere's patron data (all mailing and email lists) to Vendini, the box office's new ticketing and email marketing system. The theatre is now able to track how much revenue is generated by every email sent. The Audience Services Coordinator also updated all of Premiere's patron lists in the Jersey Arts List Exchange (JALX), and was able to augment Premiere's mailing list for the 2013 season brochure and subsequent postcards</p>	
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Premiere Stages Assessment Report – 2013-2014 Academic Year

	<p>with additional addresses provided by other JALX member theatres.</p> <p>3/17/14: The Audience Services Coordinator attended the 2014 NJ State Thespian Festival (attended by 663 high school students) with representatives of the Kean Department of Theatre in order to better coordinate recruitment efforts.</p> <p>5/1/14: Three of Premiere Stages' Spring 2014 playwriting residencies were the direct result of outreach by the Audience Services Coordinator: Terence C. Reilly School No. 7 in Elizabeth, Mothers at Heart in Elizabeth, and Sunrise of Westfield. All three contacts have also expressed interest in arranging group sales to Premiere's 2014 Season.</p>	
<p>5.3:</p> <p>The Producing Artistic Director will initiate a campaign to raise funds for new seating for the Zella Fry Theatre in order to provide more comfort for patrons and meet current fire code regulations with flame retardant seating.</p> <p><u>Target date: Grants submitted by 8/1/13</u></p> <p><u>Funds secured by 1/1/14</u></p> <p>Addresses KU Action 8.1.1 (Enhance existing facilities)</p>	<p>12/3/13: The Producing Artistic Director received three award letters indicating new funding for seating for the Zella Fry Theatre: \$10,000 from the Hyde and Watson Foundation, \$7,500 from the Union Foundation, and \$5,000 from the E.J. Grassmann Trust for a total to date of \$22,500.</p>	<p>5/1/14: The new chairs for the Zella Fry will be delivered on May 1. Kean University has agreed to match the funds raised by Premiere Stages to afford the venue with 125 new chairs and storage racks.</p>
<p>5.4:</p> <p>The Producing Artistic Director will lead efforts to secure start-up and sustained funding to launch a playwriting residency program in senior centers, under the umbrella of the Play Factory, focusing on creating living histories for the stage and supporting lifelong learning for</p>	<p>11/15/13: Lindy Foreman from the KU Foundation Office has submitted a proposal to Elizabethown Healthcare Foundation, upon their request, for support of the launch of numerous Play Factory residencies for senior citizens based in eastern Union County (Roselle, Elizabeth, Hillside, Union).</p>	<p>5/5/14: Premiere Stages successfully concluded the Sunrise of Westfield Residency, launching the program while meeting all goals and adhering to all terms of the grant.</p>

Premiere Stages Assessment Report – 2013-2014 Academic Year

seniors. <u>Target date for funds to be secured for initial residency: 3/1/14</u> Addresses KU Action 5.2.4 (Revenue sources for “start up” programs) and KU Action 5.8 (Sponsorship of community based programs)	2/1/14: Premiere Stages received a \$5000 grant from the Westfield Foundation to fund a residency at Sunrise of Westfield.	