Page to Stage: Bringing Literature to Life

Princeton Public Library

Young Adult

|

Adults

|

Intergenerational

Page to Stage: Bringing Literature to Life

Mar 24, 2015

$2,501-5,000

$$$
Byline

Janie Hermann, Public Programming Librarian, Princeton (N.J.) Public Library

"Page to Stage: Bringing Literature to Life" was an ongoing arts and humanities initiative at the Princeton Public Library founded by director/actor Brandon Monokian

and librarian Janie Hermann. Through staged productions of plays adapted from or inspired by literature, this program brings characters to life and encourages reading in a fun and physical way. Performances have included "Tattoo Girl" by Naomi Iizuka, "Eurydice" by Sarah Ruhl, and for kids, an adaptation of "Jack and the Beanstalk" by Bill Springer.

Advanced Planning

Planning began in fall 2010 between Brandon Monokian and Janie Hermann. Most of the planning was done via email and telephone. The first step was to identify which plays we wanted to feature. Once plays were selected, Brandon would find the actors and they would hold some rehearsals offsite prior to the staged reading. Our goal for the program was to introduce works of literature through the lens of theater.

Marketing

We included each staged readings in our usual library PR (quarterly magazine, online events calendar, blog, Twitter, Facebook, press release, printed poster). Brandon also set up Facebook events for each reading. Some of the readings had 75+ in attendance while others had 10-12. Even when the audience was not large, we considered the reading to be a success as the smaller audience allowed for better interactions and discussion.

Budgeting

We did a total of 10 staged readings in this series from spring 2011 to fall 2013 with an average cost of $300 per reading. As the director, Brandon was paid a $200 or $250 stipend per play. The actors were largely students at a local university and mostly did the readings for the experience. For one or two larger productions, actors were each given $50 or $100 stipends. We created a video about the series that had a budget of $2,000. Other PR materials were minimal in cost.

Day-of-event Activity

The actors needed to have three or four hours in the room on the afternoon of a performance for a final rehearsal and run-through. Even though the actors were still "on script," they worked hard to have as much memorized as possible and also needed time in the performance space for basic blocking and staging on the day of the show.

The room set-up was usually pretty simple, as these were not full productions but rather staged dramatic readings with minimal props and scenery. We would set up 75 chairs for the audience and a small portable stage for the actors. Other small props were brought in as needed, but were kept to a minimum. Music was generally provided by a keyboard or ukelele.

Program Execution

The "Page to Stage" series ended up being 10 staged readings with an overall attendance exceeding 500 people. We had several regulars that attended almost every production, and we received lots of positive feedback from the community. The goal of bringing literature to light via theater was met and the after-show dicussions were a great enhancement.

Advice

The key to the success of this program was the commitment and enthusiasm of Brandon Monokian. Finding the right person to work with is definitely the first step; it needs to be someone who believes fully in the mission of the library and the program you are developing. We also looked for unusual productions that would intrigue and draw in people in new ways. Being willing to take a risk and do something different is how this type of program can be a success. Also, be willing to think in new ways about theater and how it can be impactful and how you can create imagery in unique ways.

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Supporting Materials

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Slideshow Images







Image



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Open Mic

Audiences:

Children (9 and under)

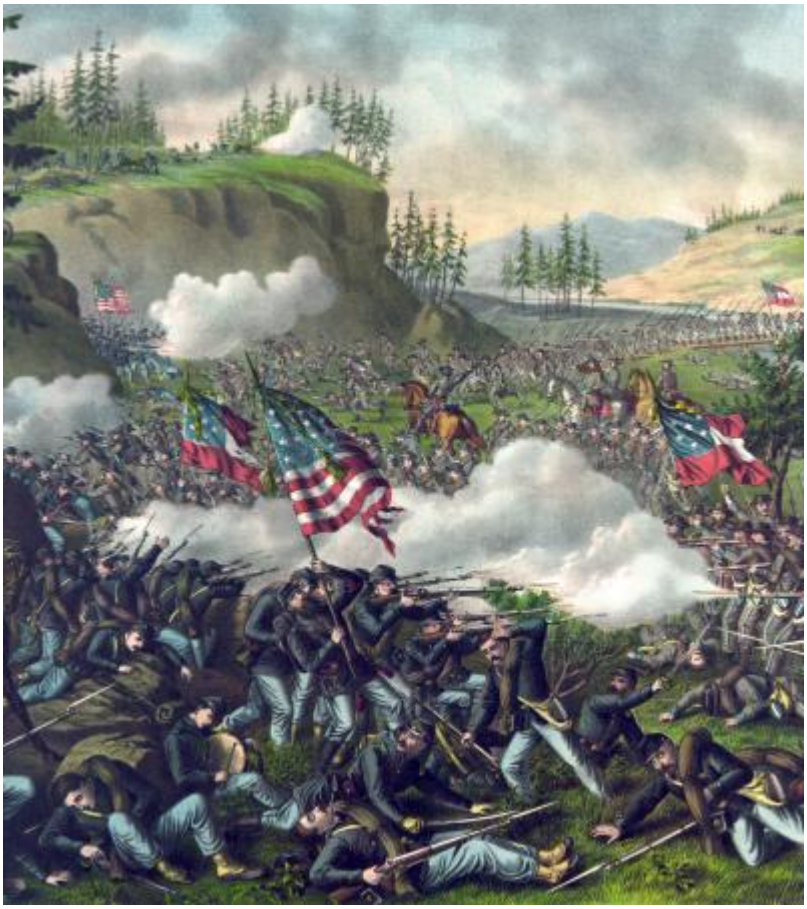
Young Adult (17 - 20)
Adults (21 and up)
Intergenerational
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Adults (21 and up)+ | $$
Image



Boogie-Woogie Pianist Matthew Ball

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)
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Civil War 17th Corps Field Hospital

Audiences:

Children (9 and under)
Tweens (10-12)
Teens (13-16)
Young Adult (17 - 20)
Adults (21 and up)
Intergenerational