



Epic Theatre Ensemble 2017 Annual Report





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From Epic

As a Co-Founder of Epic Theatre Ensemble, I am so proud to present this report to you on the incredible impact we've had in our 16th year. From international tours of both professional and youth productions that reached thousands of new audiences to college access numbers that surpassed even our boldest hopes, our 16th year represented the deepest and broadest impact the artists of Epic have had yet.

The key message of this report is hope; hope for a new role for theatre as a catalyst for justice in New York City's neediest communities, hope for stronger and bolder young people entering the workforce, and hope for a vision of artists as innovators and change agents. And with that hope, I want to convey an aligned message of deep gratitude.

Many of the people Epic serves would not be able to have their voices heard without your beautiful individual and institutional generosity; would not be able to use art to fight for justice; would not make it to college. Epic's artists, activists, and mentors are really just conduits, the cyphers who translate all that generosity into impact: hundreds of young people off to college, thousands of audiences moved to action, hundreds of thousands of dollars translated efficiently into hope.

That's why I am filled with the deepest gratitude toward Epic's loyal supporters, whose generosity makes our impact, and all that hope, possible.

Please enjoy reading about all of the successes you have made possible, and all best –

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ron".

Ron Russell
Co-Founder and Executive Director

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Our Mission

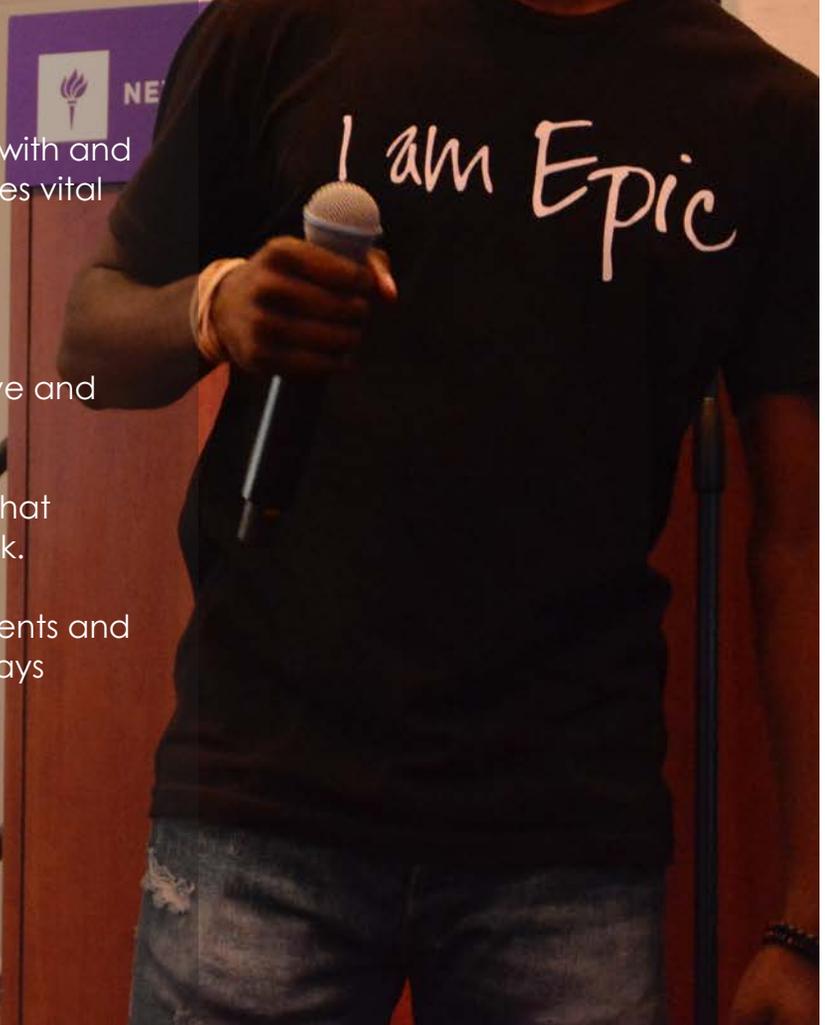
Courage.
Passion.
Commitment.

OUR MISSION:

Epic's mission is to create bold work with and for diverse communities that promotes vital discourse and social change.

We accomplish this mission by:

- Inspiring students to be creative and engaged citizens.
- Presenting compelling topics that transform the way people think.
- Collaborating with artists, students and thought leaders to produce plays about key issues.



The Who



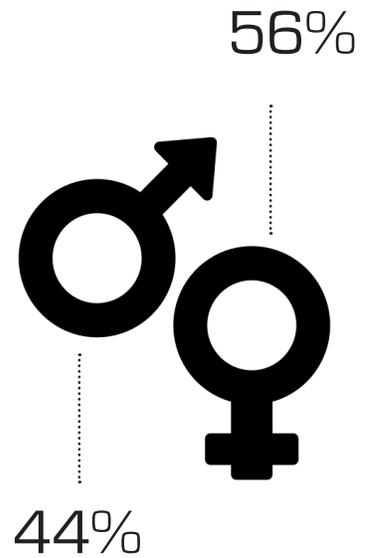
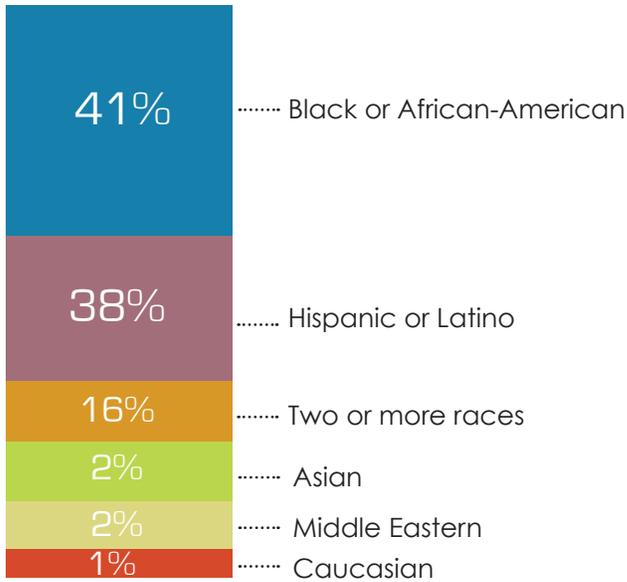
Epic is comprised of a ten-member Board of Directors, a **leadership staff of 7, 14 Mentor-Artists, and 22 additional artists** working on a per-presentation basis. Last year, Epic reached thousands of audiences across the city, state, and nation (and even a few hundred in Scotland and Canada) while also deeply impacting the lives of **1,700 public high school students**.

The professionals who comprise this artistic company are also trained teachers and youth mentors; the very same artists who are performing in Epic's Off-Broadway productions in the evening are working in under-resourced classrooms and communities the next morning to empower new voices and foster positive social change. From the three Co-Founders who still comprise the executive leadership of the company, to the many Mentors who are trained each summer to work in schools across NYC, to the new Artist Advisory Council of notable artists, Epic's artists embody its mission of social justice on stage, in schools, and on tour, and maintain a gold standard of theatrical transformation and audience impact.

In 2017, Epic partnered with **7 Title I high schools, including three core partnerships** serving every student every year at Chelsea Career & Technical Education HS, Bronx HS for Writing and Communication Arts (BHSWCA), and the Urban Assembly School for the Performing Arts (UASPA). Community partners included the Campaign for Educational Equity at Teacher's College, Appleseed NY (a pro-integration advocacy organization), and the Center for Ethnic, Racial, and Religious Understanding at Queens College. Working together, Epic artists, these advocates, school leaders and educators, and Epic students embrace and enact a uniquely American vision of diversity, equity, and true community empowerment through the arts.

Our Students

ETHNICITY



Students Epic Serves: **30,000** in 16 Years. **1,700** this past year





Students involved
in each program

IN-SCHOOL

1,700

AFTER-SCHOOL

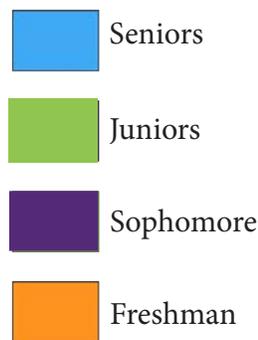
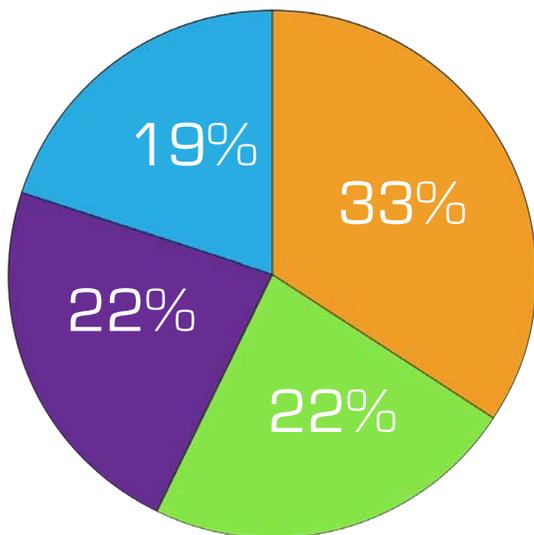
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EPIC NEXT

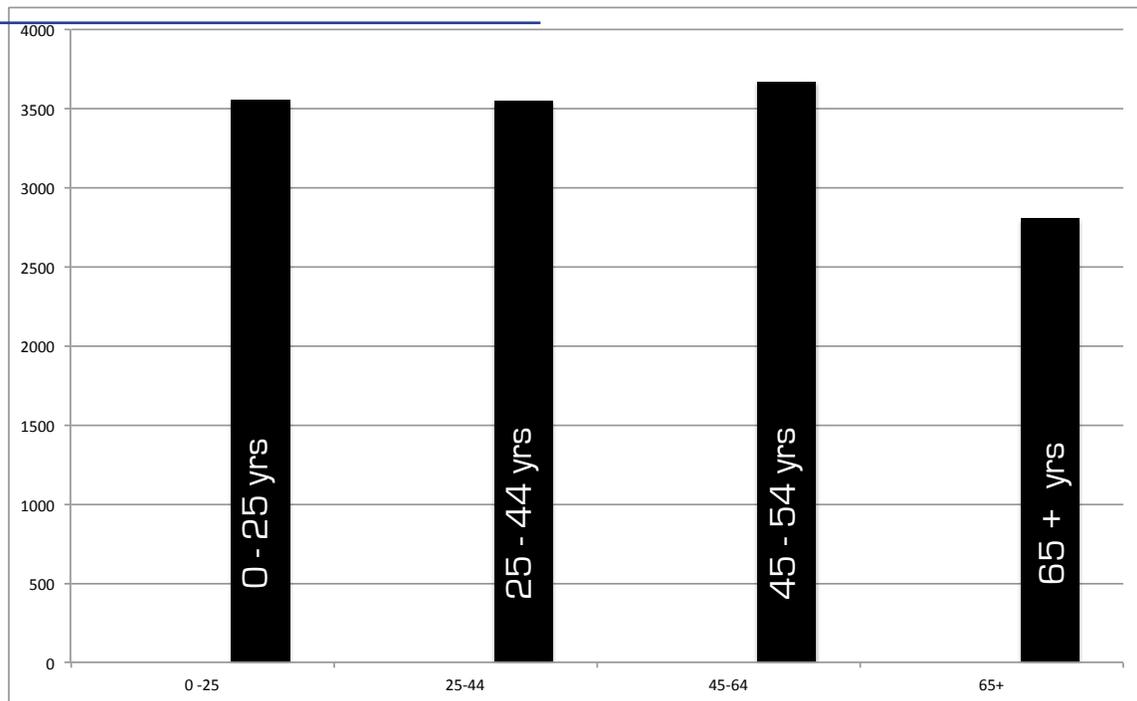
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94%

Qualify for
Free
or
Reduced-Price
Lunch



Our Audiences



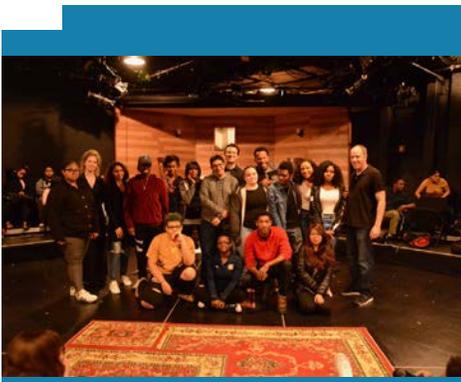
1,950
First - Time
Attendees

History and Background

Epic Theatre Ensemble is a 501(c) (3) organization comprised of artists and activists dedicated to making bold theatrical work on professional stages and in public schools that inspires dialogue about social, ethical, and political issues. Epic builds thoughtful citizenship in communities throughout NYC, **modeling creative engagement with civic issues** by commissioning, developing, and producing socially-minded theatre and connecting these plays to schools and neighborhoods via innovative in-school, after-school, and public performance programs.

The cornerstone of Epic's values is pairing professionals to work with our students as Mentor-Artists. The productions our students create ask big civic and political questions of immediate relevance, followed by challenging talkbacks.

Epic has commissioned 41 new works of socially-minded theatre including 4 from Epic NEXT, and won recognition via OBIE Awards and the Coming Up Taller Award from the White House.



In-School

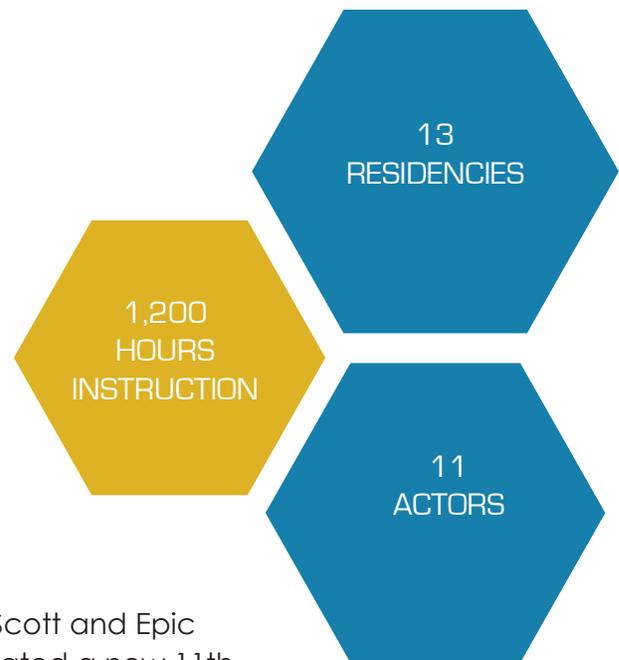


Epic Mentor-Artists visit all of the classes across a cohort (a grade-wide program) to engage students in creative projects that support academic benchmarks in English, History, Economics, and Science.

In FY17, Epic conducted at least three 20-session *Making History* in-school residencies at each three-core partner schools: Chelsea, BHSWCA and UASPA. Residences included a return to the classic 9th grade *Antigone* program and three new pilot versions of an 11th grade program called *Hypocrisy of the Nation*, connected to Epic's commission of Keith Josef Adkins' *The People Before the Park*, that 11th grade ELA teachers Jan Scott (Chelsea), Shawneeqa Greene (BHSWCA), and Elysa Barron (UASPA) all cited as "a highlight of their curriculum."

Overall, Epic implemented a total of 13 grade-wide residencies at our three schools; 3-4 in each school, including one for each grade plus a second 10th grade program at Chelsea based on the *Trial of Robespierre* program that teachers are slowly taking over as a core part of their curriculum, but for which they still request Epic support. In the 10th grade at BHSWCA, we piloted a new video production component of our curriculum by having a 10-visit program dedicated to student teams making 1-minute PSAs. These 13 residencies consisted of a total of over 1,200 hours of student instruction delivered by 11 artists, with additional artistic support coming from 10 additional actors, 3 supplemental playwrights, and a filmmaker.

The *Antigone Adaptation Project* and the *Trial of Robespierre* include literary analysis, student research, creative writing, multiple pathways to success, and targeted preparation for state-wide exams.



Highlights included:

Chelsea: Longtime partners English teacher Jan Scott and Epic Co-Founder and Site Manager James Wallert created a new 11th grade program called *Hypocrisy of the Nation* based around a production of Keith Josef Adkins' *The People Before The Park*, an Epic commission about the displacement of the free black community of Seneca Village to make way for Central Park.

BHSWCA: Adkin's *People Before The Park* was also used, but the project was implemented differently. After seeing the play at the New York Historical Society, and researched on contemporary issues around gentrification and displacement in NYC in their History classes, students in ELA classrooms formed 4-person debate teams to create structured debates pro-and con- for contemporary gentrification.

UASPA: 10th grade *Human Rights Theatre Project* saw students write plays based on news articles on current global human rights issues. Topics included current examples of forced marriage, child labor, and violence against LGBTQ communities. This project achieved a 98% project completion rate and culminated with readings of each sophomore student's original research-based play - performed by an ensemble of Epic's professional actors.

After - School (Remix)



Epic after-school programs operate at each of the three partner sites and serve approximately 170 students who self-select for this rigorous artistic project. This project is a demanding **5-month process**, where students rigorously debate the social and political questions of a classical play; decode the meaning of the text; weave their own writing into the fabric of the script; and, work with Mentor-Artists to rehearse and perform the production, as much as 4 days a week, for a total of 180 hours.

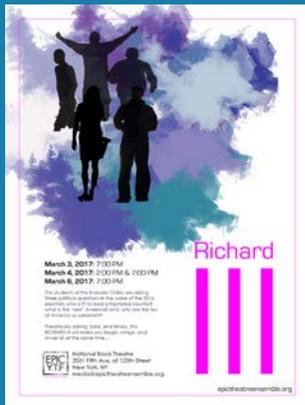


Youth Theatre Festival (YTF)



Epic's after-school Remix Program set a new record for student engagement, with **172 participants** from a total of **6 schools**. Each March, the three REMIX final productions feature students working on stage alongside professional actors, designers and directors. This year's festival reached an audience of over 2,500 theatregoers.

This year's festival took place from March 3 - 21 at the National Black Theatre (2031 5th Ave, New York, NY 10035) and showcased "remixed" versions of three Shakespeare classics: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard III*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*. Each Epic YTF performance was open and free to the public.



BHSWCA: *Richard III*

Set in 1960-1980s NYC, students used the evaluation of *Richard III* to ask three political questions in the wake of the 2016 election: Who is fit to lead a fractured country? What is the "real" America? And, why are the lies of America so persistent?



Chelsea: *Much Ado About Nothing*

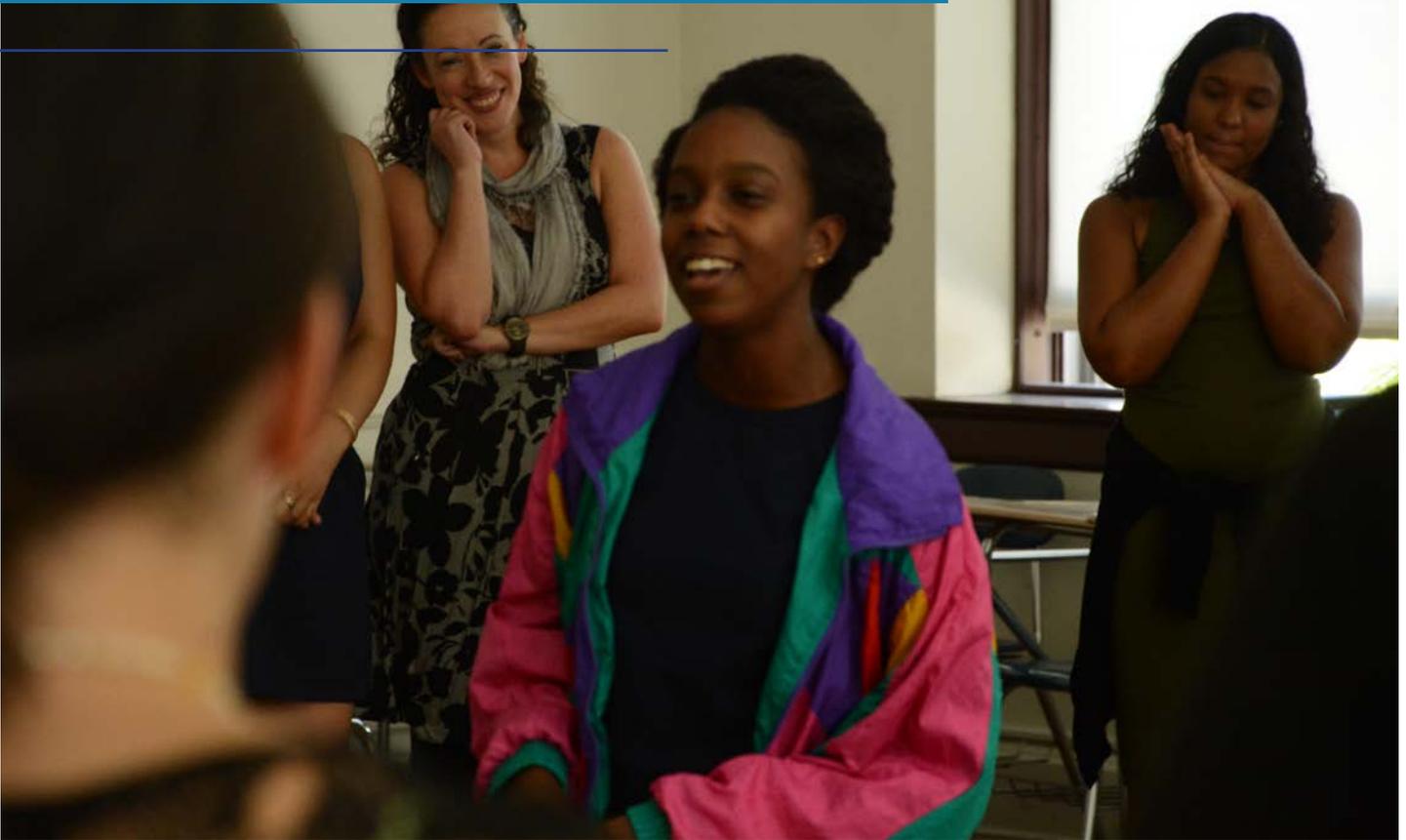
Set in present day NYC, gossip filled the hallways, classrooms, and bathrooms of a New York City High School in this fresh contemporary version of Shakespeare's classic romantic comedy.



UASPA: *Romeo and Juliet* REMIX

Set in present day East Harlem, students' production concept was inspired by the tragic loss of one of their classmates to gun violence.

Epic NEXT: Year - Round Training



FIELD TRIPS

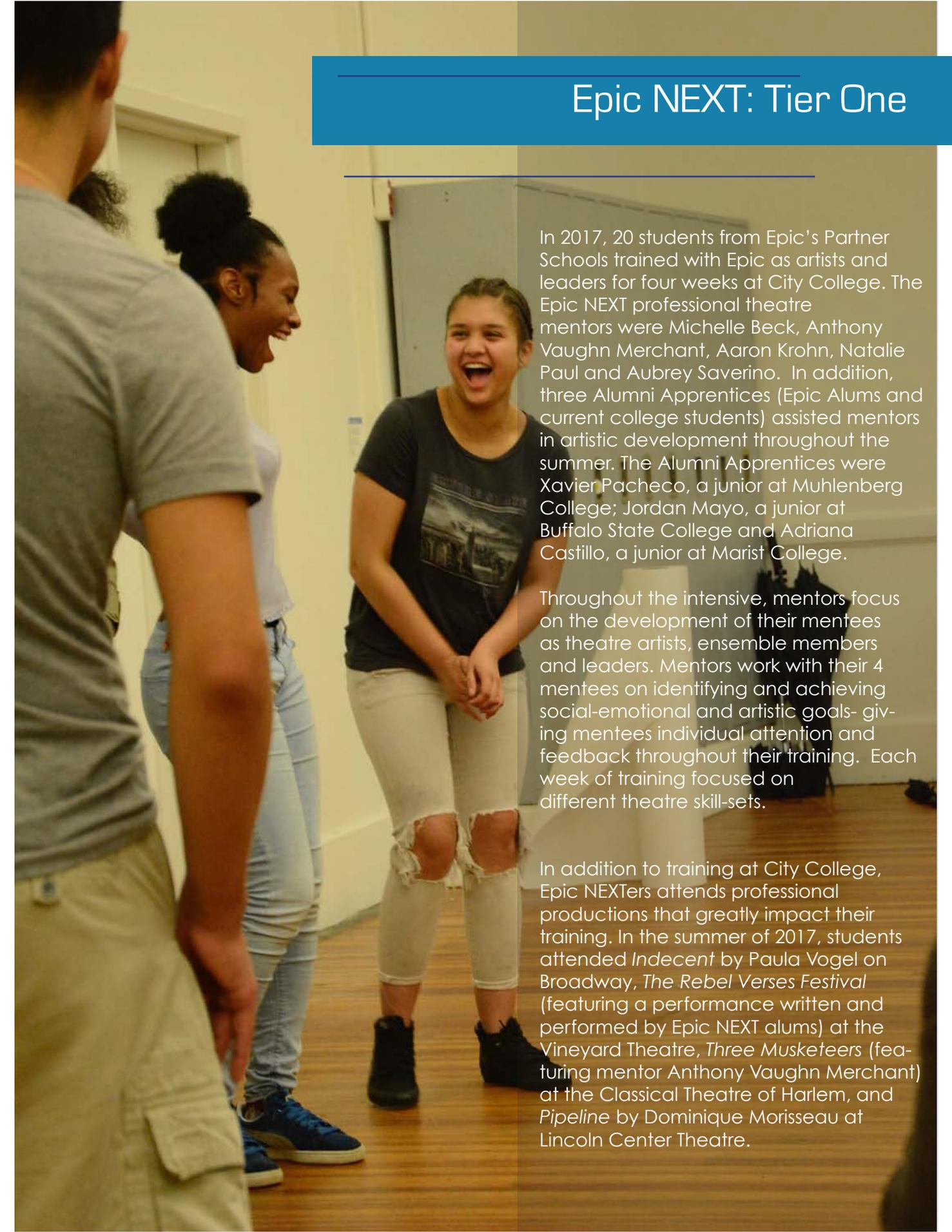
During the school year, Epic NEXT takes frequent field trips to see plays both on and Off-Broadway. In 2016-2017, Epic Next attended *Her Pormanteau* and *Sojourners* (both written by Epic NEXT mentor Mfoniso Udofia) at New York Theatre Workshop, *Jitney* on Broadway (starring Epic NEXT mentor Carra Patterson), *Public Enemy* at The Pearl Theatre (starring Epic NEXT mentor Nilaja Sun), *My Name is Gideon* and *Coriolanus* (featuring Epic NEXT mentor Aaron Krohn) at Barrow Street Theatre.

WORKSHOPS

This past year Epic NEXT participated in multiple guest-artists workshops.

In April 2017 Epic NEXT participated in a three-hour workshop with the National Theatre of Scotland.

In April and May 2017, Epic NEXT participated in multiple workshops with Susan Kelechi Watson (NBC's *This Is Us*) focused on the collaborative process of new play development. Four students wrote original 10-minute plays and were matched with student directors and actors. This project culminated with Epic Next's New Play Festival at the Acorn Theatre at Theatre Row in May 2017. This program will be expanded further in the Spring of 2018 – co-led by Susan Kelechi Watson and Artistic Director Melissa Friedman.



Epic NEXT: Tier One

In 2017, 20 students from Epic's Partner Schools trained with Epic as artists and leaders for four weeks at City College. The Epic NEXT professional theatre mentors were Michelle Beck, Anthony Vaughn Merchant, Aaron Krohn, Natalie Paul and Aubrey Saverino. In addition, three Alumni Apprentices (Epic Alums and current college students) assisted mentors in artistic development throughout the summer. The Alumni Apprentices were Xavier Pacheco, a junior at Muhlenberg College; Jordan Mayo, a junior at Buffalo State College and Adriana Castillo, a junior at Marist College.

Throughout the intensive, mentors focus on the development of their mentees as theatre artists, ensemble members and leaders. Mentors work with their 4 mentees on identifying and achieving social-emotional and artistic goals- giving mentees individual attention and feedback throughout their training. Each week of training focused on different theatre skill-sets.

In addition to training at City College, Epic NEXTers attends professional productions that greatly impact their training. In the summer of 2017, students attended *Indecent* by Paula Vogel on Broadway, *The Rebel Verses Festival* (featuring a performance written and performed by Epic NEXT alums) at the Vineyard Theatre, *Three Musketeers* (featuring mentor Anthony Vaughn Merchant) at the Classical Theatre of Harlem, and *Pipeline* by Dominique Morisseau at Lincoln Center Theatre.

Intensive Breakdown

WEEK ONE

Ensemble & Improvisation

The first week is dedicated to training in long-form improvisation. Students learn key principles and techniques that prepare them to perform "The Harold" – a three-act improvisation form. The structure of the Harold is later used in the devising process during the third week of the Intensive.

Acting technique & Monologue Performance

The second week focuses on acting technique applied to text. Mentors individually assign their mentees monologues from published plays. Mentees are coached by their mentors and Alumni Apprentices and perform their monologues for Tier One & Tier Two.

While working on their monologues, students learn fundamentals of acting technique including how to identify and use Objectives, Actions/Tactics, Given Circumstances, and Internal Obstacles. Mentors lead additional workshops in Voice and Text work.

WEEK THREE

Movement & Devising

Guest artist Darci Fulcher (trained in LeCoq movement) develops a movement vocabulary with the ensemble that is used in the final performance.

Students work together to devise their original play, following the 3-Act structure of The Harold - scripting the play using a combination of improvisation and playwriting.

Rehearsal & Performance

The final week is dedicated to rehearsing and performing their original one-hour play. Artistic Director Melissa Friedman directs the ensemble alongside the team of Epic Next Tier One Mentors. They perform their play twice for an audience of their peers, family and invited guests in a professional venue. In 2017, they performed *Uniform: A Part to Play* at Theatre Row.

WEEK TWO

WEEK FOUR

Epic NEXT: Tier Two

During the Summer Intensive, Epic NEXT Tier Two students continue their training as artists and leaders. Students spend the first week of the intensive at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, PA. This week focuses primarily on College Preparation. Students are introduced to five colleges through tours and meetings. Epic Executive Director Ron Russell leads students in workshops on the college application and selection process. Students also participate in four workshops led by Muhlenberg Theatre Professors including: James Peck's workshop on Directing, Francine Roussel's workshop on Clowning, Holly Cate's Movement class and Charlie Richter's Audition workshop.

Following the week at Muhlenberg, Tier Two students work with their mentors on developing their skills as artists and refining their work within the ensemble. Each mentor leads a specific artistic training track. Past units have included Nilaja Sun's Solo Theatre track and Mark Harris' Immersive Theatre track. In 2017, Tier two students engaged in the following:

- Directing led by Ron Russell
- Playwriting led by James Wallert
- Stand-up Comedy led by Devin Haqq
- Movement led by Noelle Ghossaini

Following this training, Tier Two students begin research and development of their original touring play.

Epic NEXT: College Access



All Epic NEXT students, and most REMIX seniors, receive individualized guidance on college search/choice, application development, and financial aid, including visits from Admissions Officers, ACT prep, and overnight college visits.

This past year, thanks to the support of the Meringoff Foundation through a special requested grant, Epic was able to bring all 26 of our Epic NEXT/REMUX seniors on a multiple-college overnight trip in the fall of 2016. Students were divided into three cohorts, based on current Grade Point Average.

Colleges were chosen by Epic's Executive Director and College Access specialist, Ron Russell, based on a combination of factors: the aforementioned GPAs and the associated likelihood of receiving significant scholarships from a school (either merit-based, or need-based through programs like the Educational Opportunity Program, EOP), prior Epic Student success at the school, active interest from the school in recruiting our students, including interest of Admissions Officers to recruit at our school sites, and finally, financial aid profile of the school.



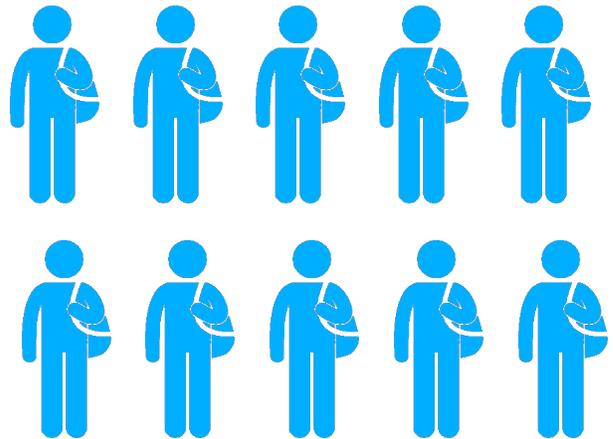
100% of Epic NEXT participants graduate from high school on time, compared to 72% in their demographic.

Those that attend college earn \$1.13M in merit-and need-based scholarships to significantly reduce the \$1.27M of total annual costs of their schools. **11 recent graduates are on completely free rides** to their chosen higher institution.



7

SCHOOLS



94% go onto college



Epic students visited 19 different colleges across the country, including: Franklin & Marshall College (Pennsylvania), Denison University (Ohio), SUNY Potsdam (New York), and Howard University (Washington, D.C.)



Touring

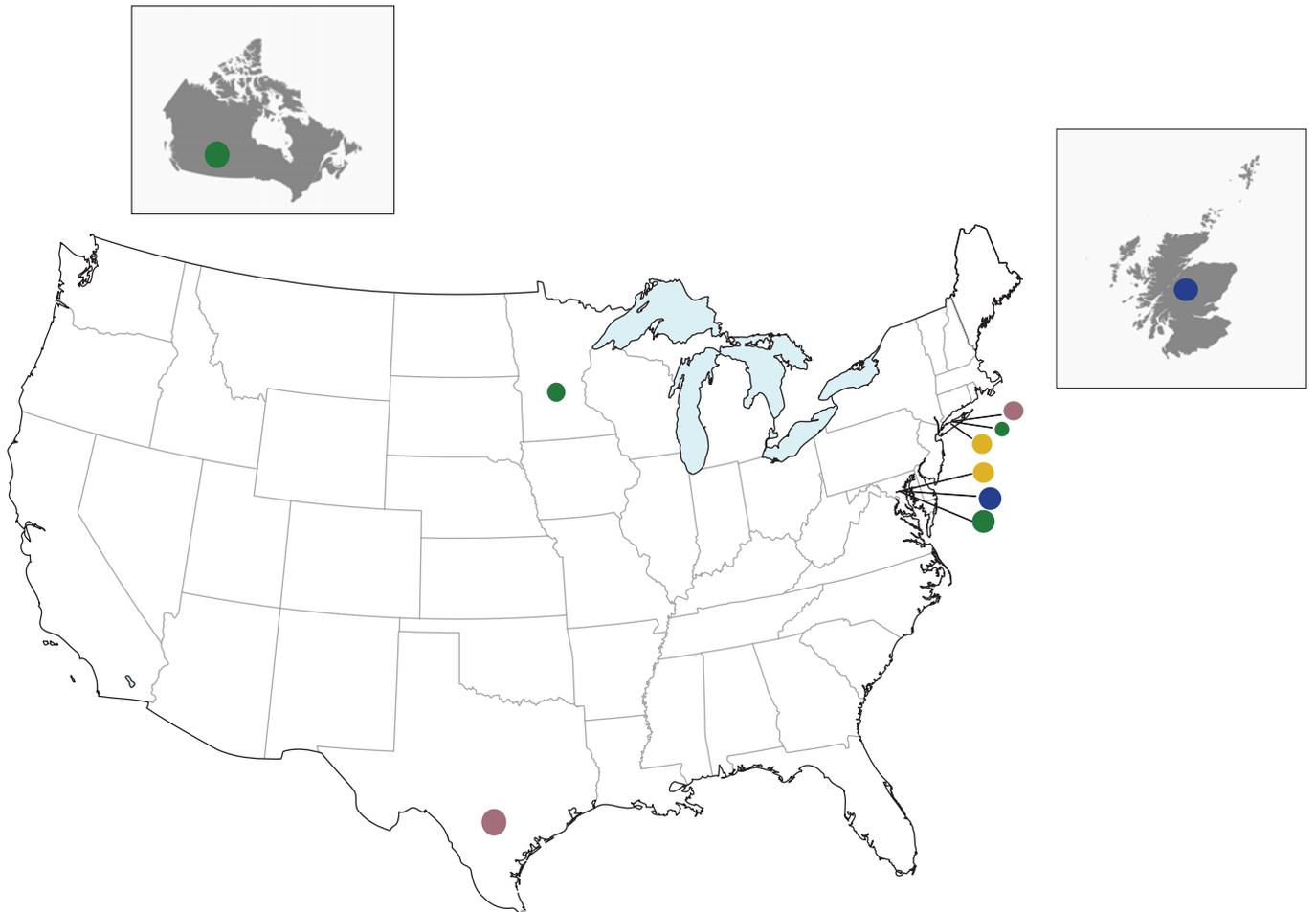
Every year, Epic NEXT Tier Two students participate in a six-week summer program to receive training and workshops in writing, directing, performance, leadership, civic engagement and college readiness. As the culmination of their work in the summer intensive, the students integrate the ideas and concepts learned in the program to create a 30 minute touring theatre piece about a specific aspect of education policy.

Last year, Epic partnered with New York Appleseed & Teachers College to commission Epic NEXT to create *Laundry City*, an exploration of educational segregation. Over 60 years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, New York City is one of the most segregated school districts in the United States. Conceived, written, and performed by NYC Public High School students, *Laundry City* is a hilarious and provocative look at what "Separate but Equal" means to us today. The show has performed throughout New York City, at schools and communities going through re-zoning processes, as well as at a New York State Education Board of Regents meeting in Albany, and at the American Educational Research Association's annual conference in San Antonio.

Laundry City continues to tour this year alongside Epic NEXT's latest piece, *Building Blocks: Colorful Minds*, which examines how Science and Math is taught in public schools.



Touring Locations



Laundry City

NYC area
AERA Conference, San Antonio, TX

Pike St.

Abrons Arts Center, NYC
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
Washington, D.C. - Woolly Mammoth Theatre
Minneapolis, MN - Pillsbury House Theatre

Ad Astra

Washington DC
Acorn Theatre, NYC

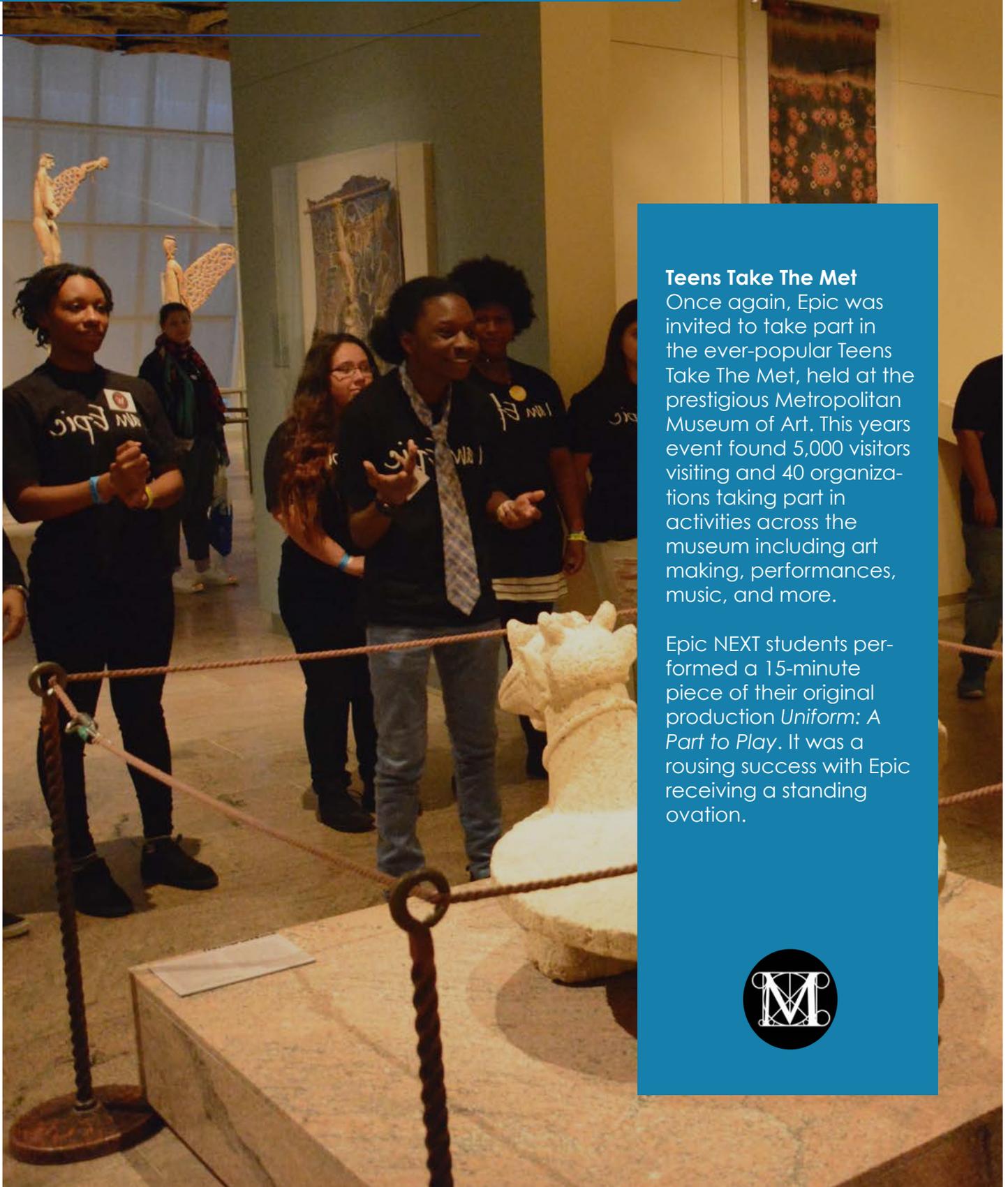
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AERA Conference, Washington, D.C.
Stirling, Scotland



Laundry City has reached **14 schools** and educational conferences in **6 cities** with over **4,000 youth and adult audiences** throughout 2016-2017. As a result, Epic NEXT has spent the summer of 2017 triple-casting *Laundry City* as we're anticipating up to **30 performances** across the city and country in 2017-2018.

Epic Journeys



Teens Take The Met

Once again, Epic was invited to take part in the ever-popular Teens Take The Met, held at the prestigious Metropolitan Museum of Art. This year's event found 5,000 visitors visiting and 40 organizations taking part in activities across the museum including art making, performances, music, and more.

Epic NEXT students performed a 15-minute piece of their original production *Uniform: A Part to Play*. It was a rousing success with Epic receiving a standing ovation.





On October 19, 2016, 86 juniors from Epic's partner school Urban Assembly School for the Performing Arts were invited to attend a special student matinee of HAMILTON as part of the Gilder-Lehrman Institute of American History's Education Program. Putting an Epic spin on the recommended prep curriculum, Epic Artistic Director Melissa Friedman, visited students in their US History and English classes. Over 8 sessions Friedman led students in the research of American historical figures and events from Hamilton's era, and the use of that research to craft musical responses that captured historical social justice issues reflecting our own time. Three students that Friedman worked with extensively in Epic's in-school and after-school programs wrote a song and were invited to perform it onstage at the theatre before the matinee!



Epic Partnerships

Spotlight

Funded by The Ford Foundation, Epic's Spotlight: Human Rights program brings playwrights together with social justice professionals to create new plays about Human Rights. The program emphasizes forging meaningful relationships between artists, activists, and community partners. This past year Epic formed a working group with four selected playwrights and four human rights workers to share writing, identify the most challenging questions in the field of human rights, and explore how theatre can illuminate those questions for a general audience. In 2018, each playwright and human rights partner will work together to create a new play that can service the needs of a human rights organization. Epic's community partners include Sauti Yetu Center for African Women, Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence, The New York Collective of Radical Educators, and African Services Committee.

In September a series of 4 Roundtable Forums were held; each forum was hosted by Epic in conjunction with Lark PDC. Each Roundtable Forum was dedicated to one of the identifiable themes (Economic Fairness, Educational Equity, Human Rights, and Gender, Sexuality & Reproductive Justice), open to interested playwrights and targeted invitees from social justice organizations and provided an opportunity to purposefully engage theatre artists with social justice workers, explore the pressing issues within a particular field, and gain a sense of how to ignite conversation around these questions. Forums were mediated by Epic's James Wallert and Lark's Krista Williams.

For the playwrights, this is dramatic material; for the human rights professionals this can be an outline for a new initiative or program, a draft of an advocacy or fundraising letter, a journal entry, or text from a web page.

Current Production: PIKE ST.

Such is Ms. Sun's ability to transmit the strong personalities of her characters that I had to keep stopping myself, as I wrote this review, from checking the program to look up the names of the actors playing Manny and the rest. The small Abrons stage seems to have been populated by a large, multitalented cast.

The New York Times

Seeing Nilaja Sun perform solo is like watching a virtuosic musician. The masterful way she plays her instrument—her chameleonlike self—inspires awe as she conjures a vibrant community alone onstage, with startling changes in voice and demeanor signaling a switch to another character.

Time Out New York

It might be a one-woman show, but it has a cast and set that could fill a movie — all conjured up by Sun's warm and witty words, delivered by more "big" characters than you'd think it was possible to cram into one play, each fascinating, flawed and funny.

The Scotsman

In the shadow of the Manhattan Bridge, a struggling family prepares to ride out the next big storm. Unable to move her teenaged daughter Candace — whose mysterious aneurysm has rendered her unable to move or breathe on her own — out of their crumbling tenement, Evelyn plans for more than just survival: she fights for healing and redemption.

Featuring her trademark humor, political incisiveness, and virtuosity, Nilaja Sun brings to life the entirety of the Lower East Side, from decorated Puerto Rican war veteran Manny, to octogenarian downstairs neighbor Mrs. Applebaum, to Candace herself.

Pike St. is an original production that deals with issues of inequity in terms of economics, race, and disability.

Upcoming Production: AD ASTRA

James Wallert's new play *Ad Astra* enjoyed staged readings in New York and Washington, D.C. last year in advance of Epic's upcoming Off-Broadway production. Here's what some of our post-show panelists had to say about the play:

As the author of *Von Braun: Dreamer of Space, Engineer of War*, which partly inspired James Wallert's *Ad Astra*, I wish to endorse the play as a substantive work of theater. It takes the facts of Wernher von Braun's life in Nazi Germany and the United States and artfully mixes them with fiction to produce a stimulating theatrical experience that asks fundamental moral questions about his Nazi past and the American decision to bring him over. It will be a valuable experience both for students and adults, provoking debates about morality and history.

Michael J. Neufeld, Senior Curator, Space History Department, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

Ad Astra is a wonderful example of a stage production that brings together the history of the space program, entertainment, and education into a single unified experience. The value of this play is not only that it is consistently enjoyable, but that it doesn't avoid the hard historical questions. This is a one-of-a-kind experience, bringing a deeply controversial episode of our space program to the stage.

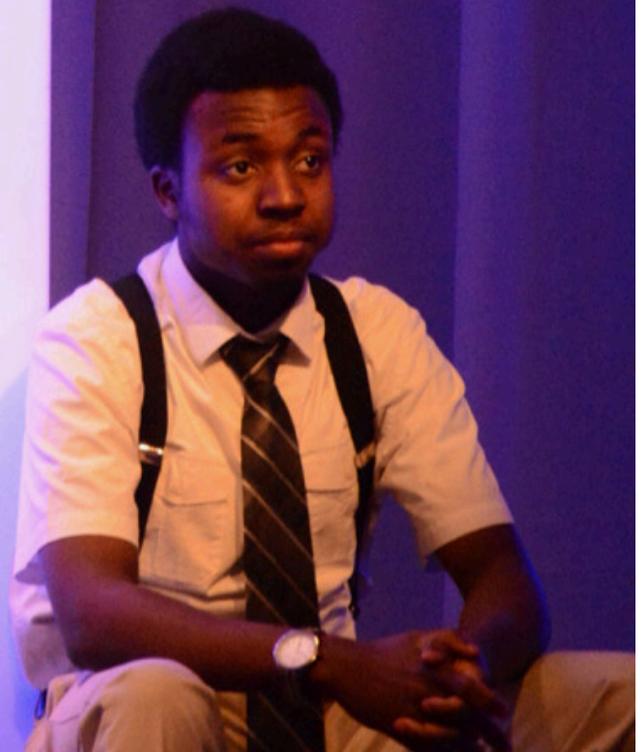
Asif Siddiqi, Space Historian and Guggenheim Fellowship winner

Annual Benefit

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a black and white patterned top, is speaking at a white podium. She has her hands clasped in front of her and is looking slightly to the right. The background is a dark curtain with blue and purple lighting.

Epic Theatre Ensemble hosted its annual Education Benefit on May 1st, 2017; TV Actress and Epic Mentor-Artist Susan Kelechi Watson hosted the event. 138 attendees joined Epic students, staff, board members, and artists at the National Black Theatre in Harlem to watch Epic NEXT perform *Laundry City* and *The Real America*. Epic used this benefit to honor its outstanding education partner Megan McMahon from Urban Assembly School for the Performing Arts, for the amazing work she does as Principal.

This year's benefit raised \$102,000 for Epic's youth development programs.



New Programs

This past year Epic expanded in two exciting ways, with the creation of both its **Corporate Employee Engagement Program** and its **Artist Advisory Council**.

The **Corporate Employee Engagement Program** is Epic's new program that allows supporters to create the engagement opportunity that is best suited for them. Epic works closely with donors and organizations to build an engagement program that generates the greatest impact for its students and the donors and volunteers involved.

This past summer, Epic held its first ever Corporate Engagement Volunteer Day. Volunteers from Prosek Partners, Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP, and Bloomberg joined Epic's rising seniors for a two-hour session to introduce students to the college search and application process. Students learned a variety of things, including how to find the "right" college, the best way to fill out an application, and how to secure financial aid.

Artist Advisory Council



Kathleen Chalfant



Susan Kelechi Watson



Sanjit De Silva

Over twenty professionals have been named to the Artist Advisory Council (AAC) representing actors, producers, directors, and industry leaders. The AAC will help Epic further its goal of empowering young people by connecting them to professional theatre-makers.

Council Members will work directly with the young people Epic serves in special workshops throughout the year at Epic's new space within the Theatre Row complex on 42nd Street, mentoring students in theatrical skill development. They will also act in an Advisory role to steer Epic's leadership toward new opportunities for these young people to engage in professional theatre, both as audiences and as emerging creators.

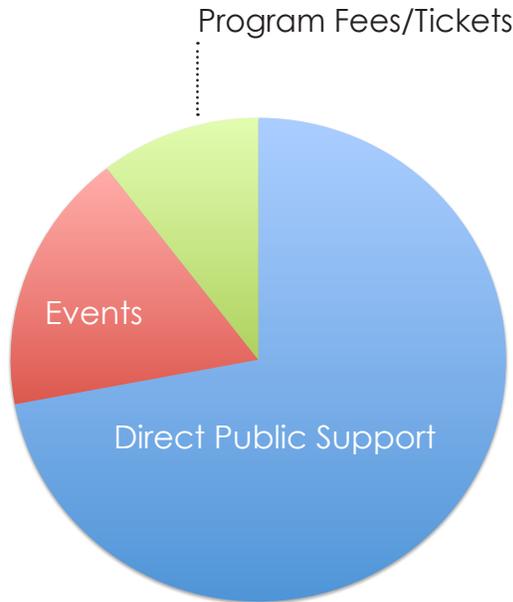
Recognized and handpicked by Epic's Co-Founders for their commitment to social justice and their understanding of the critical role the arts play in education and youth development, each member has demonstrated a desire to reinforce and advance Epic's mission of transforming audiences and students from passive bystanders into active participants, forging a more inclusive and collaborate vision of America.

Epic Theatre Ensemble is honored to have these critically acclaimed individuals stand alongside them in their efforts to develop a socially-minded society where theatre fosters awareness of current civic issues that affect under-represented communities.

The current list of luminaries is as follows:

Vanessa Aspillaga ● [Michelle Beck](#) ● Len Berkman ● [Eric Booth](#) ● Kathleen Chalfant ● [Dominic Colon](#) ● Sanjit De Silva ● [Brandon Dirden](#) ● Peter Jay Fernandez ● [Devin Haqq](#) ● Rhett Henckel ● [Ty Jones](#) ● [Aaron Krohn](#) ● Anthony Vaughn Merchant ● [David Miner](#) ● Donna Murphy ● [Chris Myers](#) ● Estelle Parsons ● [Heather Raffo](#) ● Tonya Pinkins ● [Ruffin Prentiss III](#) ● Lisa Rothe ● [Aubrey Saverino](#) ● Godfrey L. Simmons Jr. ● [David Strathairn](#) ● Jacob Ming Trent ● [Susan Kelechi Watson](#).

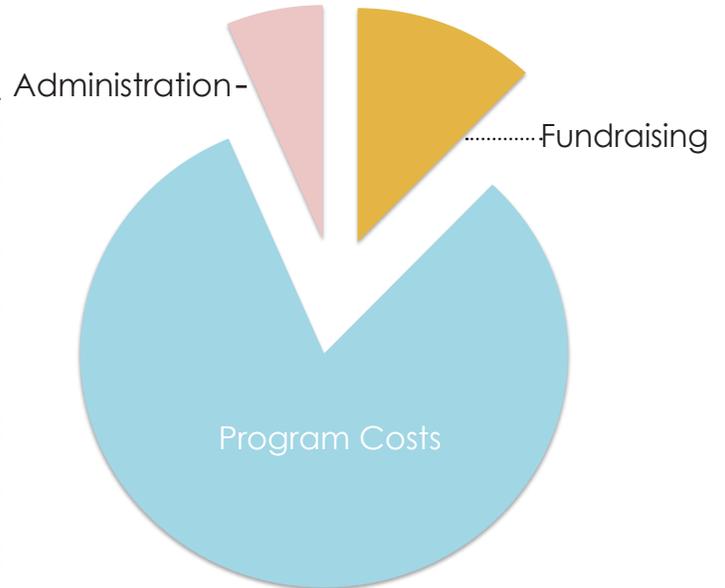
Financials



INCOME

	Events	\$96,530
	Program Fees/Tickets	\$161,100
	Direct Public Support	\$664,050

\$921,680



EXPENSES

	Administration	\$99,020
	Fundraising	\$52,330
	Program Costs	\$665,000

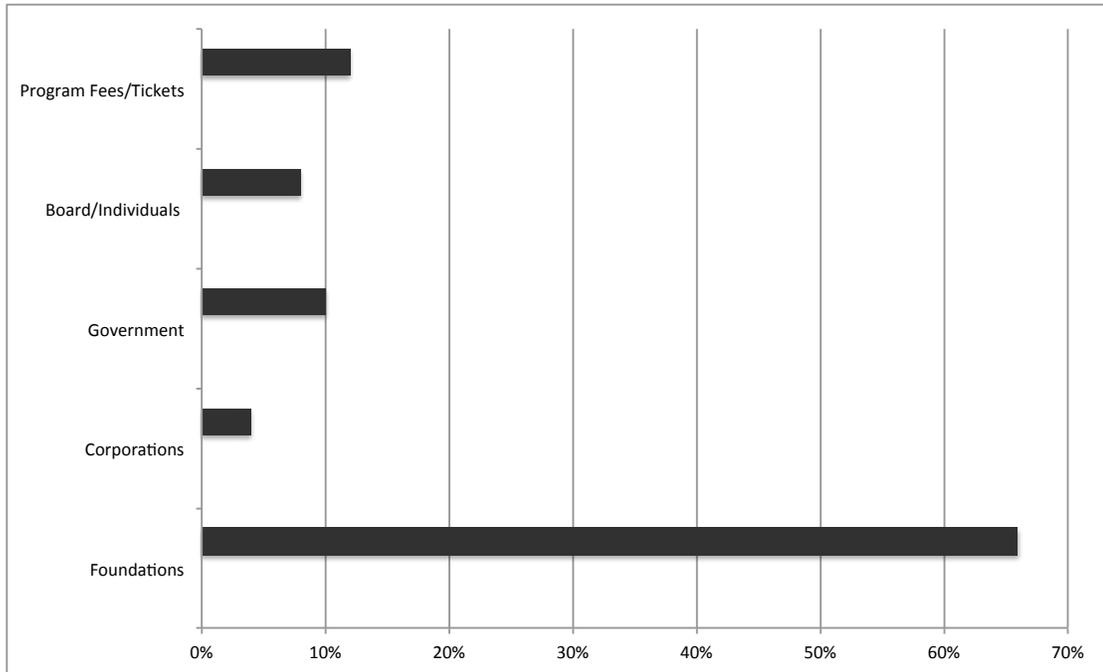
\$816,332

Once again, in FY17, Epic posted a significant operating surplus, the result of further streamlining of administrative expenses and reducing production costs.

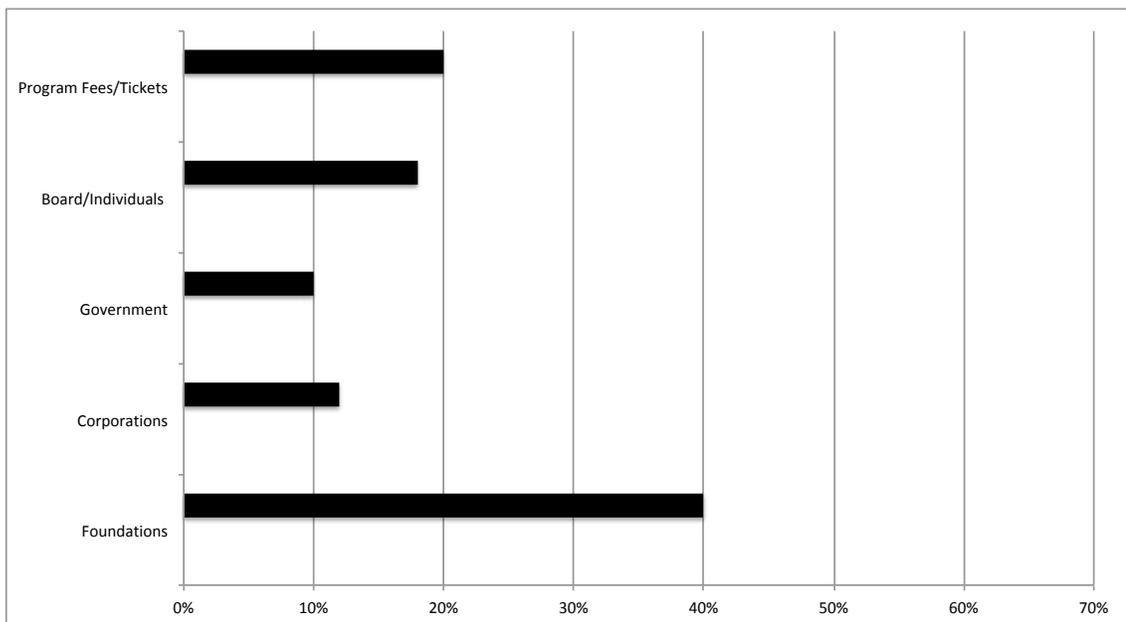
This trend, continued as planned through FY18, will close the book on Epic's historical debt from the impact of Hurricane Sandy and other economic factors from 2012-14. During this period of robust surpluses, program size and the number of audiences served has actually increased annually. Beginning in FY19, Epic's strategic plan calls for us to grow the budget by approximately **\$350,000 over 3 years.**

As the charts below illustrate, another key feature of the new strategic plan is to diversify funding sources over the next three years. Epic's historical public support has been heavily weighted toward Foundation grants, as is shown in clear in the first chart. As Epic looks to deepen the impact of its existing programs, and foster the critical interactions between the programs, Epic is moving toward a more balanced approach with a strategic emphasis on increasing support from individuals and the corporate community. These sources of support are both more sustainable than most Foundation funding, and are typically geared toward general operating rather than specific program support, a shift which will be critical to the growth projected above.

Historical Support



Balanced Approach



Letter from the Board Chair

When I joined the Epic board almost five years ago, my first impression was how well the students performed on stage in plays they themselves wrote and produced. This program model represented the center point of what Epic was all about.

Within the past five years, my understanding of the importance of this program has dramatically evolved. Epic not only produces great artists, it ensures that these students have opportunities both on and off the stage, by helping them to succeed at school, graduate and become productive citizens.

Epic provides students with opportunities-- many that may be "firsts" for them: collaborating on projects, learning the importance of schedules and deadlines, producing original work for the stage that will be seen by the world for the very first time, receiving an applause and taking a bow, and perhaps most important, planting the seeds for a robust life beyond the Epic stage into college and eventually the workplace.

Our story is a "story of firsts," and after our first 16 years as the Epic Theatre Ensemble, we continue to develop and refine that narrative. In fact, due to the growth of our Epic NEXT program and its success with college access, we can now proudly boast a 100% graduation rate for our Epic NEXT participants, 43 to date, earning a total of over \$1.1 million in annual merit-and need-based scholarships.

I am reminded of this every time I watch a rehearsal or see a final performance. It is not important to come in first, but it is important to keep accumulating a list of firsts, building upon experiences that will make our students stronger, more resilient and prepared for life beyond Epic. Our Epic team strives each and every day to elicit the best possible outcomes for the students in our programs. And for that, I want to thank all of you – our Epic staff, students, and supporters – for your commitment to creating a life full of firsts that challenge our students and encourage them to be the authors of their own destiny.



Mark Kollar
Chairman, Epic Theatre Ensemble

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