



Young
Audiences
Arts for
Learning
New Jersey &
Eastern
Pennsylvania

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**Bringing More Arts to More Children
Young Audiences Hires Two New Staff**

PRINCETON, NJ; August 20, 2013 — Young Audiences New Jersey & Eastern Pennsylvania (YA) is proud to announce and welcome two new full-time staff members to their growing organization. **Michelle L. Marigliano** joined the YA staff as *Special Projects Coordinator* and **Christopher Parks** has come on board as *Producing Director*.

Marigliano, a long-time YA master teaching artist, will be responsible for coordinating YA's new *Sandy Relief Arts Education Initiative*, focusing on the power of the arts as a vehicle for healing and recovery and bringing arts education programming to 15 schools affected by Hurricane Sandy in New Jersey. The initiative is funded through the New Jersey Recovery Fund and YA fundraising efforts. She will also spearhead *Creative Beginnings*®, YA's award-winning pre-school arts program, and will oversee the organization's evaluation and assessment efforts.

"In my work as Special Projects Coordinator at YA, I look forward to fostering creative and collaborative relationships that advance and integrate the best practice of arts education into our nation's schools and community centers," shared Marigliano. "In taking these exciting next steps with YA, I will use my knowledge to help advocate for how the arts are not just helpful, but are a necessity in preparing young people for success in school and in life, and to help develop proactive, engaged and thinking citizens."

Prior to working at YA, Marigliano owned and operated the community arts center, Encore Center for Performing Arts. She also held positions at the West Windsor Arts Center and is a Board Member for Dance NJ. As an early childhood development specialist for over twenty years, Marigliano's creative movement and SAORI weaving work has inspired students to explore new territory, take risks and create confidence. Her exemplary communication style encourages students and teachers alike to engage in an organic and collaborative manner that produces a positive learning environment. Marigliano's work has been published in *Young Child* and presented at educational conferences and she is a graduate of Sarah Lawrence College.

Maureen Heffernan, YA's Director of Arts and Education said, "It is a privilege to have the opportunity to work with Michelle as we have collaborated on numerous initiatives over the past



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six years and I never fail to be inspired by her knowledge of the arts, her insights into all types of learners and her passion for the work of artists in schools.”

Parks comes to YA from the McCarter Theatre Center where he served as Education Director for the past twelve years. A dedicated director, producer, playwright, and educator, Parks brings an abundance of knowledge and passion for arts education. In his position as Producing Director he will play an integral role in developing new original work for schools.. Current projects that will be touring this year are *The Odyssey Experience* and *Sunjata Kamalenya*. These two unique Experiential Theater productions were created by Parks during his time at the McCarter. His cutting edge work creates theatre experiences in which audiences don't just watch the plays but are active collaborators in the performance. In addition to touring these two shows this year, he will also introduce a new theater production of a Greek myth called *The Adventures of Perseus*. In addition, he will produce an outdoor school field trip festival event celebrating New Jersey's 350th Anniversary. The spring event will feature a variety of exciting performances and engaging hands-on experiences that focus on NJ's contributions to innovation, diversity and liberty.

“I love how Young Audiences affords opportunities for kids, parents, and educators to experience and engage directly and equitably in both the visual and performing arts, no matter their level of talent,” expressed Parks. “The arts are all around us in everything we do and it is important that as a society we recognize the importance of arts enrichment in the lives of every child regardless of what careers they choose to pursue.”

Parks has written and directed touring productions for elementary and middle school students, including *The Adventures of Perseus*; *The Tempest*, a *Puppet Play* (adapted from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*); *The Arabian Nights*; *Sunjata Kamalenya* (developed first at The John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts); and *The Odyssey Experience* (also Florida Rep 2012-13). Parks also co-wrote *Lucky Girl*, a play exploring domestic violence, and was the editor and writer of additional materials for Jack Gelber's final play, *Dylan's Line*. He also created Youth Ink!, a playwriting residency program which has empowered thousands of New Jersey high school students to write ten-minute plays. As a teaching artist Parks has directed thousands of k-8 students in countless residency and workshop productions. He co-founded the New Jersey Renaissance Kingdom, where he served as one of the principal playwrights and directors during the ten years of his involvement. He founded and is the Artistic Director of The Experiential Theatre Company which tours productions throughout the United States and Canada. Christopher is a graduate of Mason Gross School of the Arts.

“The first time I saw a play written and directed by Christopher Parks I was amazed by the worlds he had created within a school auditorium,” said Heffernan. “He is a visionary in the field of theater for young people and having him as part of the Young Audiences staff promises a vital exciting new phase for us in the creation of new work for our schools and communities.”



YA President and CEO, Laurence Capo expressed, “Michelle and Chris bring not only their brilliant talents but also a passion and understanding of the importance of introducing the arts and creativity to the children of New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania. They will help YA continue to grow as the leading arts education organization and will help us explore exciting new ways to engage children in learning. We are proud to have them aboard.”

PHOTO CAPTION #1 – Michelle L. Marigliano, new Special Projects Coordinator at Young Audiences New Jersey & Eastern Pennsylvania.

PHOTO CAPTION #2 – Christopher Parks, new Producing Director at Young Audiences New Jersey & Eastern Pennsylvania.

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About Young Audiences

Founded in 1973, Young Audiences New Jersey & Eastern Pennsylvania is the premiere arts-in-education resource in the region, providing high-quality performances and artist-in-residence programs to nearly 500,000 children pre-kindergarten through 12th grade annually. Young Audiences’ extensive professional artist roster represents all art forms—from dance and theater to music, language and visual arts.

Young Audiences’ programs are accessible to all socio-economic, ethnic, cultural, and geographic communities, and are designed to strengthen the arts in schools, meet local and state curriculum standards, involve families in arts activities, and enrich cultural life in New Jersey and Pennsylvania communities.

Young Audiences New Jersey & Pennsylvania is the first arts education organization designated as a major service organization by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, and, as part of the national network of Young Audiences, Inc. was awarded the National Medal of Arts by President Clinton. Young Audiences provides over 4,000 programs annually and are made possible in part through a grant from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State and Pennsylvania Council of the Arts. Additional funds come from the National Endowment for the Arts, foundations, corporations and generous individuals.

To learn more, visit www.yanj-yaep.org. To be “social” with us, join us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)