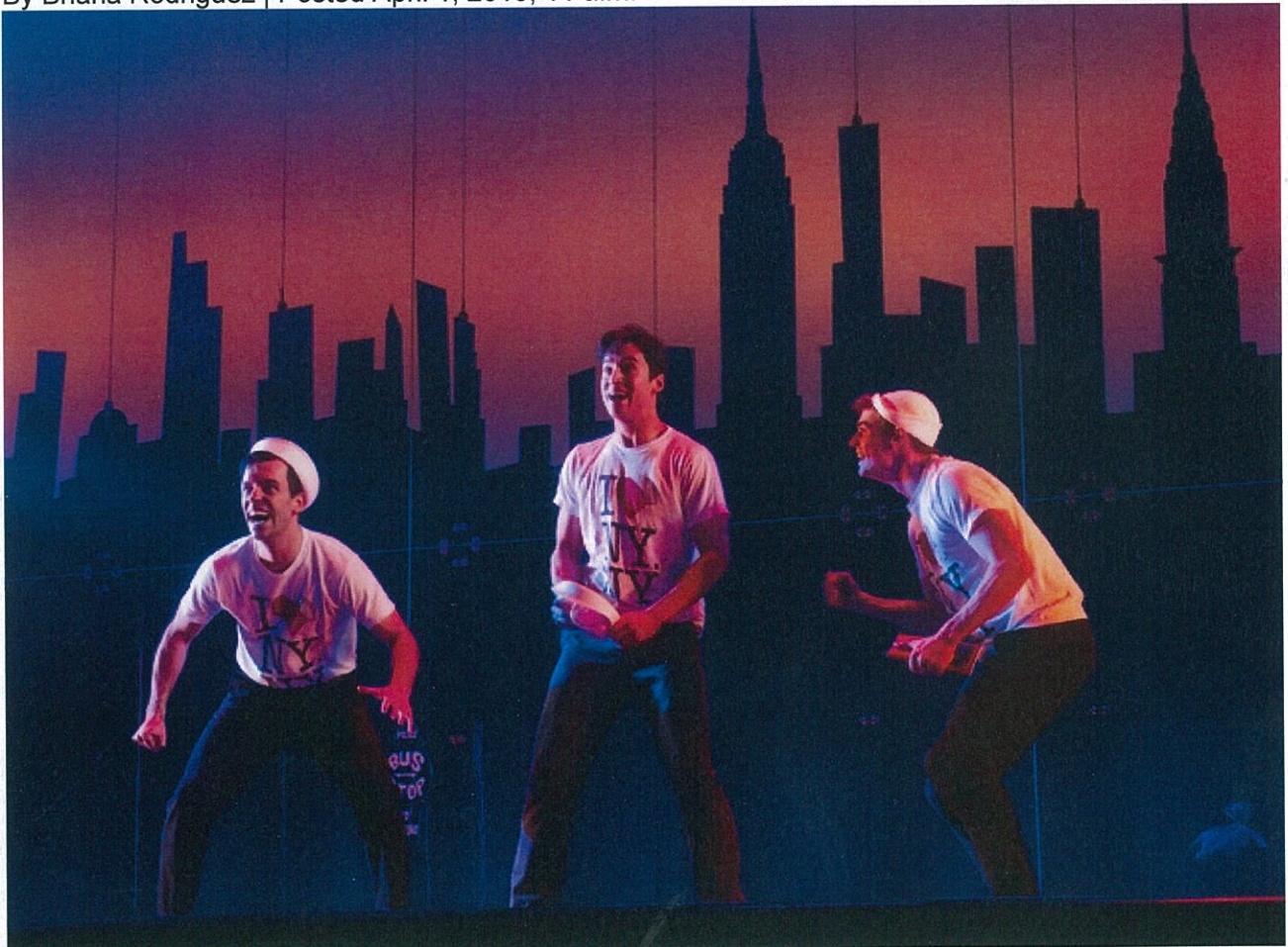


backstage★

- CASTING
- NEWS & REVIEWS
- RESOURCES
- ACTOR 101
- FORUMS

1 Way to Educate the Theater's Next Generation

By Briana Rodriguez | Posted April 1, 2015, 11 a.m.



The oohs and aahs were audible from over 1,500 New York City public school students when a backdrop of Coney Island at sunset dropped down on the Lyric Theatre stage during an educational performance of **"On the Town."**

The young NYC natives, ranging from third-graders to high school seniors, attended Creating the Magic, two two-hour performances and demonstrations from the musical's cast and set designers, on March 26. Theater hopefuls were shown how props like tables and giant dinosaurs appear onstage via motors and computers; how a production's entire lighting design can be controlled from an iPad; and listened to sound effects that blasted train and dinosaur roars over the theater's loudspeakers.

Inside Broadway, the Great White Way's not-for-profit educational organization now in its 33rd season, organized Creating the Magic so students could get a peek at what goes into staging a Broadway production. This year featured "On the Town," the musical revival about three sailors in the 1940s trying to have a real New York experience in the 24 hours before they set sail again.

"['On the Town'] is the ultimate [production for our NYC student audience] in that Broadway people created it—Leonard Bernstein, **Betty Comden**, **Adolph Green**; these are real giants of Broadway, but they're all New Yorkers as well," explained Inside Broadway founder Michael Presser between performances. "The Broadway musical has grown up here in New York, so this show? A natural!"

Featuring Clyde Alves, Jay Armstrong Johnson, and Tony Yazbeck's Creating the Magic replacement, ensemble member Michael Rosen, the performance included songs from the show originally staged in 1944, interviews with the cast members, who offered audition advice, and talks with theater managers and producers.

When asked what his favorite song was, 10-year-old Ryan Hiney from Public School 304 in the Bronx said, "It's hard because I like 'em all, but it's between 'New York, New York' and 'Ya Got Me.'" He added, "I really want to be an actor, so this helps me on my way. I just felt so excited coming! I want to be on Broadway, definitely, and I'm in a few plays at my school currently. We're doing 'The Wizard of Oz' at our school and I'm the Cowardly Lion, so I'm really happy."

"I would like to come to another one of these!" added his schoolmate and aspiring singer 9-year-old Hulaye Diallo.

In addition to getting the kids—spanning 56 schools and all five boroughs—excited about Broadway and familiar with live theater, Presser said the purpose of Creating the Magic is to show them what lies beyond the tip of the iceberg. "We want these kids to understand that there are jobs and there are professions here in this industry in addition to the actors on the stage," he said. "There's a whole army of people underneath them, and those people who the audience doesn't see when they come here in the evening, those people are highly skilled craftspeople and they're integral to the operation. Not everybody is going to be an actor, but there's a lot of other jobs that are happening in this building that are important for making theater possible."