

## **RUDE MECHS – Outreach + the next generation**

Rude Mechs believes that economic status should not determine access to the arts.

### **Internship Programs**

Rude Mechs offers internships in production, administration and arts education. We believe it's important to serve as a bridge to the next generation of artists, and offer internships in just about everything we do. We give first priority to University of Texas Department of Theatre and Dance students. Our goal is to provide interns with opportunities to either work or observe work with mentorship in their area of interest, whenever projects are available. We do not ask interns to perform volunteer duties that do not build their desired skill set.

- Recent Interns – Where they are now:
  - **Eva Claycomb** – is a graduate of the National Theatre Institute. She is a local visual artist, designer, and musical theatre writer. We later co-produced her original work Tiny Lie Musical as part of our Rude Fusion series.
  - **Jenny Aarfmann** – interned with a focus on Off Center Teens and theatre education. She went on to attend UT Austin's Graduate Program in Theatre for Young Audiences. She is now faculty for Off Center Teens.
  - **Hannah Schatzle** – Interned with us with a focus in costume and technical theatre. She is now a freelance theatre costumer and Costume Production Assistant on the TV series Blue Bloods.
  - **Alexandra Bassett** – Interned with us as Assistant Director of the Lincoln Center premiere of Stop Hitting Yourself. She is now Managing Director of the company and has since directed productions around Austin and at UT Austin.
  - **Jared Oberholtzer** – Interned with a focus in design. He now works at the American Repertory Theatre as a designer on Susan Laurie-Parks' Father Comes Home From the Wars (Parts 1, 2 & 3) and has worked on productions at Playwrights Horizons, Signature Theatre, Hartford Stage, and Williamstown Theatre Festival.
  - **Patricia Bennett** – Interned with us as with a focus on Technical Direction on Stop Hitting Yourself and Fixing King John. She went on to study at UT Austin, with a dual major in Theatre and Civil Engineering.

### **Rude Fusion**

Rude Fusion is a venture designed to develop deeper relationships with some of Austin's finest theatre artists by co-producing their work and offering our support throughout their creative process. Rude Fusion provides Austin artists the freedom to take artistic risks, explore new ideas and collaborate with an even greater number of artists.

- Since inception in 2006, Rude Fusion has co-produced over 35 productions by Austin-based artists.
- Created in an effort to retain Austin Artistic Talent in the face of the affordability crisis affecting Austin artists and arts graduates and to sustain the creative population with more subsidized cultural opportunities so that new companies can afford to pay their artists.

- Rude Fusion has partnered with FuseBox every spring since 2007, offering free office and performance venue HUB space throughout its seasons.
- Rude Fusion co-produced four seasons of Black Arts Movement (a celebration of African American artists in the new millennium that puts the spotlight on the Black aesthetic of modern artists) through to its immersion into Pro Arts Collective.
- Rude Fusion – where are they now:
  - o **Underbelly**, a theatre company formed by three UT Theatre and Dance MFA graduates, Rude Fusion 2014 for their original work Church of the Passionate Cat, is slated in the Zach Scott Theatre season this spring for their adaptation of Alice in Wonderland.
  - o **Daniel Alexander Jones**, Rude Fusion/Fusebox 2015 was just awarded the Doris Duke Performance Artist Award, \$275,000 in flexible, multi-year funding for artists of continued and promising genius.
  - o **Rosalind Faires** – interned with us as an assistant director in rehearsals for Fixing Timon of Athens. Her interest is theatre direction with a focus on Shakespeare and classic works. We later co-produced her thesis play for her UT undergraduate theatre major as part of Rude Fusion 2015. She just graduated and went on to Assistant Direct at Dallas Theatre Center on their recent production of Sense and Sensibility. She will be directing Captial T’s production of David Adjmi’s Marie Antionette at The Off Center March 2016.

### **The Next Generation of New Work:**

Just in the last year, The Off Center served as the venue for 121 independent productions by local Austin theatre and dance companies and performers, with an annual audience total of nearly 16,000. By keeping our rental rates low and often giving the space away for free, and also offering free scenic materials from the Scenic Coop, we subsidize the work of these artists by about \$30,000 per year.

Rude Mechs served as the Resident Theatre Company of the University of Texas at Austin Department of Theatre and Dance through the 2014/15 scholastic year. This three-year residency provided university students the opportunity to work with the Rude Mechs to gain experience in our process for devising new plays and in the management of a professional theater company. We provided training in the areas of creation, production, and administration, with a focus on devised ensemble creation. Students also undertook internships in the areas of development, marketing/promotion, arts education, venue management, production and creation.

Through this innovative partnership with a renowned Tier 1 research university, a generation of new undergraduate and graduate students are gaining a unique perspective on all facets of theatre-making. We also serve as guest responders on Department of Theatre and Dance productions, and hold office hours to answer any questions students may have and to share real-world working experience of the company. For this work Rude Mechs received \$40,000 from University of Texas at Austin. In the past, Rude Mechs has received financial support from UT’s Departments of English and Women’s Studies for our annual outreach program, Off Center Teens. Additionally, we co-produced the presenting series “Throws Like A Girl” and “Crossing Borders” with support from the University of Texas Department of Theatre and Dance.

Cont:

### **Off Center Teens (Formerly Grrl Action)**

Founded by Rude Mechs in 2000, this program was designed to empower girls, and now teens of all genders, to find their public voices and collaborate with peers from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The curriculum links creative writing and performance with self-defense and confidence-building techniques. The teens develop individualized projects and build myriad skills to set the groundwork for future careers both inside and outside the arts. Grrl Action culminates in a fully produced student-devised, student-authored, student-performed public production. No former experience with creative writing or performance is required. In 2010, we renovated The Off Center and opened The Off Shoot, a classroom and rehearsal space dedicated to new-play development and education through the year and to Off Center Teens each summer.

- *The Austin Chronicle's* Best of Austin named the program Best Evolution of Teen Empowerment in September 2015 and Best Club for Teen Performers in September 2014.
- Applications are need-blind Ninety percent of our 2014 summer cohort received need-based scholarship. Fifty percent of our 2015 summer cohort received need-based scholarship. Rude Mechs believes that economic status should not determine access to the arts. This is why all of our performances include “pay-what-you-can” nights, and why our Off Center Teens has always offered need-based scholarships to at least half of each class.
- Since its inception we have actively recruited students from underserved populations through organizations such as the Settlement Home, Breakthrough Austin, Communities-In-Schools, GenAustin, and OutYouth, among others.
- In contrast to most social programs and camps for teens, Off Center Teens holds firm that you can never age out of the program. Teens that have otherwise been disconnected from support systems or education at age 18 by the state, are always welcome back as a returning student, or as an intern, and in some cases have excelled in their theatre and education work to be able to return as teachers during the summer.
- Each summer the program operates with a 1:1 and up to 1:4 mentor to student ratio.
- Former OCT / Grrl Action students:
  - o **Katie Van Winkle** – is an MFA/PhD candidate in UT Austin’s Performance as Public Practice Graduate program in the Theatre and Dance Department.
  - o **Natalie Hutchins** – Came back as intern and went on to attend Austin’s McCallum Fine Arts Academy and is now studying theatre at Northwestern.
  - o **Marisol Sobeck** – Came back as an intern and is now a senior at The Art Academy at McCallum. She is mentored by former and current Off Center Teens faculty poets, and is one of the youngest submitting poets to national contests.
  - o **Eliza Steiker** – is currently attending UT Austin where she studies psychology with a focus on coping mechanisms in teenagers.
  - o **Amelia Rose** – was awarded a Full Ride Merit Scholarship and an additional \$20,000 as Creative Art Scholarship to Hollins University.

- **Isaura Martinez** – All of her projects and pieces during the summer program were built about America’s relationship with immigration. She works now with IT Works Global, heading their immigration counseling and outreach services.
- **Sarah Crow** – went on to study at Cooper Union and is now a performance artist and graphic designer in Brooklyn
- **Tina Van Winkle** – went on to intern in production management and later became a company member. She stage manages Rude Mechs productions.

#### Off Center Teens Assessment

In the summer of 2009, Off Center Teens (Then Grrl Action) conducted an assessment and statistical analysis to gauge program outcomes and potential impact on participants’ lives. We received a small grant to bring in Kate Robinson, a performance management consultant with 13 years of experience developing outcomes-driven performance management practices for non-profit organizations. Upon initial review of Grrl Action’s mission statement and practices, we identified two key measurable outcomes: Resilience and Self-Efficacy.

According to Bonnie Bernard, a researcher at the University of Minnesota’s National

Resilience Resource Center, “Resilience is a capacity all youth have for healthy development and successful learning.” The ability to tap into this resilience depends upon community support and environmental factors in the young person’s life.

The Colorado Trust defines Self-Efficacy as “how youth view themselves and their abilities to cope with the basic challenges of life” And according to The Encyclopedia of Human Behavior, “Self-Efficacy is people's beliefs about their capabilities to exercise influence over events that affect their lives.”

Most exciting are the following results, which show an increase in specific indicators of Resilience and Self-Efficacy, two key outcomes associated with positive youth development:

- Cooperation shows a 12% increase
- Sense of Self shows a 9% increase
- Self-Awareness shows a 13% increase

The results of Robinson’s assessment show that Grrl Action achieves outcomes that promote positive youth development by providing targeted activities to improve Self-Efficacy in participants and help them tap into their innate Resilience. These activities are as follows:

- Mastery Experiences – participants write and develop creative performances based on their own lives, and set a goal to perform them to public audiences at the end of the summer workshop
- Opportunities for participation – participants devise and agree upon the rules for the group, and inform program success through daily feedback to facilitators
- High expectation messages and beliefs – participants are expected to perform for each other throughout the workshop and take part in two public performances.
- Caring Relationships – participants support one another’s self-expression by giving feedback on and acting in their colleagues’ performance.