

The Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts

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Staging Old Masters: Former Prisoners Perform at the Pulitzer

In conjunction with the current exhibition of Old Masters works, the Pulitzer announces the launch of an innovative program in which former prisoners use the exploration of art and theatre to help develop skills for their future lives and employment. ***Staging Old Masters: Former Prisoners Perform at the Pulitzer*** features theatrical performances by former inmates on themes related to artwork featured in the exhibition. These will take place at the Pulitzer **with two performances every Saturday, April 4 through May 2, at 6:30pm and 7:30pm and two performances each Sunday, April 5 through May 3, at 1:30pm and 2:30pm. Performances are open to the public and free of charge.**

The actors are graduates of Employment Connection, the region's foremost workforce development agency assisting former inmates and homeless veterans. Agnes Wilcox, founder and artistic director of Prison Performing Arts, will lead a six-week class, held alternately at the Pulitzer and at Washington University, that begins with the exploration of Old Masters and their histories and stories, and continues with a study of writing, movement, voice and diction, and other performance skills. The program culminates in the creation and performance of short theatre pieces based on the students' interaction with the works featured in the exhibition. Concurrently, they will attend specialized classes through Employment Connection to bridge their work in class to the development of employment and life skills. Washington University students from the Performing Arts Department, the Department of English, and the Sam Fox School of Design and Visual Arts, as well as faculty from the Performing Arts Department will

collaborate with the actors to foster a mutually-beneficial learning environment, an open atmosphere and a supportive, team-building experience.

The Pulitzer is developing into a laboratory in which a variety of art forms can be used as a connection to the visual art exhibited in the building and as a way to engage the community. The theatre performances will explore how Old Masters can find resonance in the 21st century, building a bridge between the art and a new audience, all while incorporating beneficial skills that the students can use in their post-incarceration lives. Additional outcomes to the program include continuing the development of the students' stress-coping skills, increased awareness of diversity for all students, instructors, and audiences, and the successful employment of all of the participants.

Staging Old Masters: Former Prisoners at the Pulitzer will be documented online through videos, photographs, and interviews and will feature the process behind the program, from the initial classes to the final performances. To learn more about this program and to follow-along with the process visit: stagingoldmasters.pulitzerarts.org.

This program is generously sponsored by KWMU and Arts for Life.

Participating Organizations:

Employment Connection has over thirty years of experience of fulfilling its mission of “assisting persons with limited opportunities to self-sufficiency through employment.” Founded in 1977 after a study by the Young Lawyers Division of the Bar Association of Metropolitan Saint Louis found that employed ex-offenders were 66% less likely to return to incarceration, Employment Connection began to work on lessening recidivism through employment of those leaving prison. In 1980 Employment Connection became a full United Way member agency and expanded its service beyond ex-offenders, assisting recovering substance abusers, the homeless, high school dropouts and non-custodial fathers. In 2008, Employment Connection assisted nearly 1,500 individuals to employment, adding up to over 7 million dollars in wages. Employment Connection also manages two permanent supportive housing programs; Project Homecoming in Saint Louis County, and Project Homecoming-Veterans, and is one of the region's largest service providers to homeless veterans.

The George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis aims to create positive social change through its path-breaking research and educational

excellence. The Brown School's international community of faculty, students, and graduates works throughout St. Louis, across the country, and worldwide to apply new knowledge and use the best available evidence to impact policy, practice, and service delivery. The Brown School offers a doctoral degree, Master of Social Work and Master of Public Health degrees, as well as several dual-degree programs. The School is home to 11 research centers and applied programs. For more information, visit gwbweb.wustl.edu.

The Performing Arts Department in the College of Arts and Sciences, Washington University in St. Louis believes that the study and practice of the performing arts should play a central role in education. Theatre, dance, and film are humane, indeed "liberal" arts. These arts benefit from their inclusion in a liberal arts university, as the university itself profits from including them. The diverse historical and cultural perspectives provided by the liberal arts curriculum illuminate department majors' understanding of their developing crafts, and make them better artists. At the same time, non-majors and the university community at large have much to learn from theatre, dance, and film. For these are truly interdisciplinary arts, touching architecture, music, painting, history, literature, psychology, anthropology, and technology, so that the performing arts provide revealing windows for the historical, contemporary, and international study of culture. In the intellectual study and practical performance of theatre, dance, and film, we cultivate several aspects of human endeavor.

Prison Performing Arts (PPA) is dedicated to transforming the lives of adults and young people in the Missouri criminal and juvenile justice systems. PPA fosters individual and social change by providing current and former inmates with opportunities to participate in the performing arts as artists, students and audience members. PPA promotes learning through the arts, using the arts to provide an environment for self-discipline, commitment, and teamwork. The goal is to help inmates become productive, creative, and law-abiding citizens, both within the institutions and in our communities when they are released. Each year, Prison Performing Arts works with over 4,200 incarcerated youth and adults in four Missouri jails, detention centers, and prisons.

The Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts is committed to deepening the understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the visual, literary and performing arts. The building, designed by Tadao Ando is both a laboratory and a meditative space in which to experience these art forms and from which to further their vitality and recognition in society.

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