

Intern Program Has Low Profile But High Standards

By MAHIRA KAKKAR

The Professional Intern Program is one of the best-kept secrets at Juilliard. Not many people know of it, for the interns are not as visible or high-profile as the actors, dancers, musicians, and singers. Their work puts them backstage, under the stage, on top of the stage; in the basement, the dressing rooms, and in offices. They're the worker bees—the ones rigging the lights, fitting the wigs, stitching the costumes. Essentially, they're the magic behind the magic, a fundamental part of any smooth-running show.

Every year, hundreds of people from all over the world apply to work as interns alongside the professional staff within the School, either in technical theater production or arts administration. (Twenty-eight interns were accepted last year: 22 in various aspects of production and 6 in administrative departments.) The internships, which are full-time from September to May, serve as transition points between the apprentices' education at school and the professional world.

Technical theater internships include the areas of scene painting, props, costumes, wigs and makeup, electrics, stage management, and production assistant. Arts administration internships cover a variety of areas and are offered by other Juilliard departments, including the Orchestra Library, Drama Division, Dance Division, Vocal Arts, Facilities Management Office, and Concert Office.

Hands-on experience in a professional setting is one of the best ways to launch a career in theatrical production or administration.

The internship program was originally created in 1977 as a way to expand the staff in theatrical production within a limited budget, while at the same time providing young people with valuable hands-on experience to launch their careers. The program has gone through a number of changes in its 26-year existence: in the late '70s and early '80s, internships (called "fellowships" for a few years) focused on theatrical design, but by 1982, the emphasis was on the technical aspects of theater. Internships were originally available either for one semester (spring or fall) or for the full school year; in 1991 the semester-long option was discontinued after it had become apparent that a full year's participation provided a more well-rounded experience.

Arts administration internships were added in 1991, beginning with the Office of Special Projects and the Orchestra Library. Since then, the program has grown to include six administrative departments. Helen Taynton, the director of Juilliard's Professional Intern Program since 1984, says that it has been (and still is) in a constant state of being perfected.

While most of the applicants are those just graduating from college in technical or administrative fields who want to reinforce their learning, some older participants are changing careers or re-entering the work force. "They come from all over the world," notes Taynton, who adds, "the

program is also a nice way to come into New York City."

The rigorous selection process takes place via a written application, followed by in-person and phone interviews. The final decision is made in collaboration with the director, the intern's potential supervisor, and the department head. Once accepted, interns work in close conjunction with their supervisors and with Taynton to develop their goals and evaluate their progress. This is done through monthly meetings, both group and individual, where their experiences are discussed, concerns brought up, and objectives defined. Since they are an integral part of the shops or offices they work in, the more their supervisors feel comfortable with their abilities, the more responsibilities the interns are given.

A stipend of \$246 a week and basic medical insurance is offered to the apprentices. (Each year, the stipend is raised by about \$5.) Though New York City is expensive to live in, a few interns have been known to survive on their fellowships. The perks, however, outweigh the disadvantages of long hours and financial constraints. Not only do the interns undergo training with well-connected professionals and learn the latest skills and techniques, but they also have the opportunity to attend all productions at the School and receive backstage tours of Broadway theaters, the Metropolitan Opera House, and other professional theater centers. In addition, the network of former interns is extremely strong, vast, and well-connected. Meetings and discussions with alumni of the program are held throughout the year on a variety of relevant topics. Evaluations are held in the fall and the spring analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the interns as well as the departments they are conjoined with. At the end of the year, seminars on job interviews, presentation skills, and "what to do now that your internship is over" are held in order to prepare interns for the real world.

A large number of interns go on to get work right away; those graduating from the program have a powerful school name and reputation to back them. Juilliard interns are recognized to have received valuable experience in their fields, as well as a strong work ethic and professional standards of courtesy. Many previous interns have acquired jobs on Broadway; nearly all have gone on to be hugely successful in their spheres of work. Anika Davis Pratt, a former production assistant intern, is now the director of the part-time M.B.A. program at N.Y.U.'s Stern School of Business. Mahlon Kruse, an intern in 1988-89, is now production stage manager on *Man of La Mancha*. A number of current and former Juilliard staff members began as interns—including Kathy Hood, administrative director of the Drama Division; Cynthia Baker, recital hall manager in the Concert Office; and Jabell Hamilton, assistant to the administrative director of Vocal Arts (to name just a few).

S Hood, who interned in stage management and has called Juilliard her "artistic home" for 15 years now: "The Juilliard Internship Program allowed me to be part of an artistic community that nurtured and supported my creative, intellectual, and personal growth. The hands-on professional experience allowed me to observe and work with prominent theater artists, inspiring me to follow my current career path."

For many who want more time to get their feet wet before choosing a specific career path, the internships are ideal. "I knew I wanted to work in the arts, yet I was unsure of the exact profession," admits Jacqueline O'Reilly, who interned last year as a production assistant after graduating as a theater major from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Va. At Juilliard, she "got a little taste of everything," working on a range of productions from plays to

orchestra concerts. She says the nurturing environment—"where people want you to succeed"—was as valuable to her as the experience she gained.

Assisting Kathy Hood and her staff as the Drama Division's intern this past year, Sarah Hoenig's duties included everything from answering the phone, processing applications, and distributing tickets to assisting with brochures and house-managing a few productions. "I learned more than I could have ever expected and worked with incredible people in a really fun and productive environment," says Hoenig. "And I got to experience the theater scene outside Juilliard, as we were always getting free tickets and other opportunities around the city."

While Hoenig came from Maine for her internship, Stephen Czarkowski—last year's intern in the Orchestra Library—had just graduated from the Mannes College of Music with a master's degree in cello and conducting. Juilliard's internship afforded him the opportunity to stay in the city for another year, watching and learning from the many world-class conductors who come through the School. Czarkowski, who enters Catholic University of America's graduate diploma conducting program this fall and just made his debut conducting the National Symphony Orchestra in June, says he gained invaluable experience working in close proximity to Otto-Werner Mueller, the conducting program's director, and also enjoyed working alongside the work-study students. "Juilliard is an incredible place, the best of the best, and the people I have met have been truly terrific to me."

Andrea Dorf was the administrative intern in the Vocal Arts Department several years ago before joining the department's staff as assistant stage director and special events coordinator. She worked closely with the directors of Juilliard's opera productions and scenes programs, and realized that she wanted to channel her passion for opera into the field of directing. This fall, she enters the M.F.A. program in opera directing at the University of Cincinnati. "Everything that I learned during these years at Juilliard, particularly with regard to directing resources and methods of approach, proved incredibly useful when I was given the chance to direct a workshop performance of Mozart's *Clemenza di Tito* this past year," says Dorf.

It is fair to say that without the tireless support of the interns at Juilliard, many departments would find themselves understaffed and many shows and recitals would not run smoothly. Certainly the illusion of ease that performing arts students here strive for would be harder to maintain. Let us then give credit where it is due, and recognize one of the less visible programs at the School.

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