

THE SANDRA FEINSTEIN **GAM** THEATRE

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THE GAMM THEATRE TO HOUSE AND ADMINISTER STATE'S FIRST RESOURCE CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL TEACHING ARTISTS

PAWTUCKET, RI (August 28, 2013) – **The Sandra Feinstein-Gamm Theatre** (The Gamm) in collaboration with **Rhode Island State Council on the Arts** (RISCA) is pleased to announce the creation of the **Rhode Island Teaching Artists Center** (RITAC) aimed at connecting Rhode Island-based teaching artists with job opportunities in the public and private sector. The center, funded by a **\$29,900** grant from the **Rhode Island Foundation**, will be **housed at and administered by The Gamm Theatre**. RISCA will be providing additional funds, as well as staff assistance.

The foundation's support for the initiative came out of a national study on the state of teaching artists and the future of arts education, headed by arts and cultural policy analyst Nick Rabkin at NORC at the University of Chicago. Providence was one of the 12 cities included in the project, which has provided the largest data set on teaching artists in the United States to date.

"The study found that teaching artists bring innovative teaching methods and curriculum into schools. Developing collaborative professional development opportunities like these were among the key recommendations to support the future of arts learning," said **Mary-Kim Arnold, the foundation's grant officer for arts and culture**. "We are pleased to see The Gamm working with RISCA to lead this effort for the benefit of Rhode Island teaching artists and for the diverse communities they serve."

RISCA Education Director Sherilyn Brown reiterated the need for professional development in the field.

"Teaching artists around the country have fostered academic learning, social and emotional growth, creative thinking and innovation, and health and healing with all ages and in diverse kinds of settings, from school rooms to corporate board rooms, to community centers, to nursing homes and hospitals," said Brown. "Yet the profession of the teaching artist has gone largely unsupported and unrecognized. The RITAC project is an exciting opportunity to support and promote one of Rhode Island's most valuable natural resources, our teaching artists."

Starting in September, RITAC aims to establish a physical and virtual resource for mentoring, professional development, employment opportunities, and marketing assistance, among other needs. The center will also evaluate the impact of teaching artists within government, business, health care, social services, creative industries and K-16 education, with an emphasis on greater collaboration. Teaching artists will be invited to share pedagogy, methodology, lesson plans, employment opportunities and ideas for improving the profession. A website, now under development, will serve as a virtual platform to share that information. Additionally, the center will host bi-monthly meetings and workshops covering such topics as the growing role of the TA in the healthcare field, raising a family while working as a TA, and how to explain your work and document results. A steering committee of local arts education leaders will oversee and evaluate the year-long pilot program, with newly hired **Project Director Arik Beatty** coordinating events and researching similar programs across the country.

The Gamm Theatre's Education Department has been serving the Pawtucket School Department since 2006, supplementing its small staff of in-house teaching artists with freelancers in order to meet the growing need. In recent years, that work has expanded beyond the classroom to include non-profit organizations and social service agencies such as The Autism Project and the RI Department of Health.

“Despite the documented value of the teaching artist in all learning and healing environments, there is a distinct lack of support systems to bridge the gap between professional TAs and those industries that would benefit from their skills,” said **Gamm Education Director Steve Kidd**. “As one of only two year-round professional theaters in the state, The Gamm is proud to collaborate with RISCA to address this need in a very practical way.”

ABOUT THE GAMM THEATRE

Founded in 1984 as Alias Stage, the non-profit Sandra Feinstein-Gamm Theatre creates the finest of live theater, engaging the audience intensely in current and recurrent issues of consequence. The Gamm further serves the public with educational outreach programming designed to support the theatrical experience, and help sustain and enhance the intellectual and cultural life of its community. The Gamm is a member of New England Area Theatre (NEAT), a bargaining unit of the Actors' Equity Association.

ABOUT RHODE ISLAND STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

The Rhode Island State Council on the Arts is a state agency, supported by appropriations from the Rhode Island General Assembly and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. RISCA provides grants, technical assistance and staff support to arts organizations and artists, schools, community centers, social service organizations and local governments to bring the arts into the lives of Rhode Islanders.

ABOUT THE RHODE ISLAND FOUNDATION

The Rhode Island Foundation is the largest and most comprehensive funder of nonprofit organizations in Rhode Island. In 2012, the Foundation made grants of more than \$30.4 million to organizations addressing Rhode Island's most pressing issues and needs of diverse communities. Through leadership, fundraising and grantmaking activities, often in partnership with individuals and organizations, the Foundation is helping our state reach its true potential. For more information, visit www.rifoundation.org.
