



Your Personal Report on the
Craig Zadan Memorial Fund





Jennifer Hudson, performing at the tribute, envisioned and led by Bob Greenblatt and Neil Meron which raised \$250,000 in Craig's honor.

On a very moving and memorable evening in November 2018, we all joined together to collectively remember Craig Zadan's extraordinary lifelong accomplishments in expanding access to the world of theatre for people across all divides: race, income, age, geography. But we also resolved to do more than remember. We resolved to transmute our grief into something – powerful—a legacy of ever-expanding access to theatre for young people of all races.

Toward that end, the Educational Theatre Foundation (ETF) established a vehicle, the Craig Zadan Memorial Fund for Racial Equity in School Theatre, to translate the outpouring of generosity on that night into a permanent funding stream for high school and middle school plays and musicals, especially in communities of color that—more often than not—face stark disparities in access to such opportunities.

Little did we know that this undertaking would soon become centrally relevant to a transformation in our national consciousness — an awakening to the price we all pay for racial disparities.

We all need good news these days, and so we are delighted to report back to you now on how we have been putting your contributions to work and advancing that resolution in ways that are already serving as a source of hope during these uncertain times.



Neil Meron and Bernadette Peters

▶ We formed a Celebrity Advisory Board for the Craig Zadan Fund, one comprised of many of the great talents who spoke or performed at Craig's memorial, including: Kristin Chenoweth, Kenny Leon, Audra McDonald, Bette Midler, Bernadette Peters, Danny and Lilly Pino, John Stamos, John Travolta, Nia Vardalos, and Renee Zellweger.

▶ We formulated a plan to grow the \$250,000 in initial contributions to a permanent fund of \$1.25 million through foundation grants and individual donations. This will enable us to give five grants of \$10,000/year to five schools in communities of color every year in perpetuity.

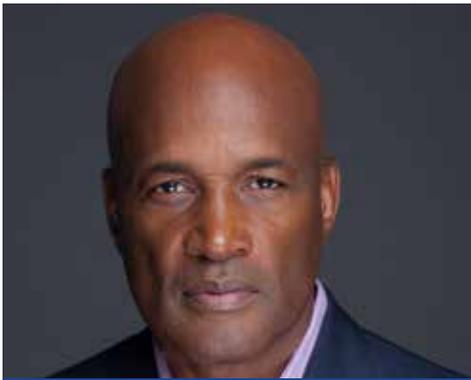
▶ We assembled a six-person leadership group of senior philanthropic leaders to help design and realize this campaign.



Darren Walker

▶ We announced the plan at the 2019 Thespians Go Hollywood gala, one year after the celebration of Craig's life, where we also officially renamed the Thespians Go Hollywood Award the "Craig Zadan Theatre for Life Award," and presented it to Bernadette Peters, a member of the Celebrity Advisory Board, and raised additional contributions for the fund.

▶ Darren Walker, President of the Ford Foundation, made a grant enabling us to begin the work even before the permanent fund is in place. We are currently in discussions with schools in Atlanta, Miami, Fresno, and Cincinnati to be the first recipients for the 2020-21 school year. We plan to engage our Celebrity Advisory Board members who grew up in high school theatre in these cities, as well as overlay in-kind contributions from studios or networks that can help professionalize the productions or launch them with red carpet premieres.



Kenny Leon



Danny and Lilly Pino



Audra McDonald



Pathway

RACIAL EQUITY THROUGH SCHOOL THEATRE

Working closely with the Celebrity Advisory Board and ETF Board of Trustees and staff, we have been developing a unique programmatic strategy around the schools selected for Craig Zadan Fund support. The strategy, which we call “Pathway,” emphasizes the ways that a school theatre experience can open up avenues of opportunity — not only in the fields of theatre and entertainment, but along any life trajectory pursued by self-actualized, supported young adults.

This theme of pathway is especially meaningful to us as we remember Craig. Craig was forever acting as mentor, coach, and guide to younger people in his life. And while he spoke often of dogged determination and commitment to goals; he spoke just as often about the importance of improvisation, flexibility, and adaptation. He believed in seizing unexpected opportunities, even if it meant that a film, tv show, theatrical production -- or even a career -- might not end up as originally planned. This openness to finding a personal passage was central to the genius of his greatest accomplishments; and it is, we believe, central to any effort to enable full inclusion in our society. And as a nation, we have all reached a crossroads in our path and must collectively choose our future.

During this time of national crisis, when schools are shuttered, life-and-death civil rights issues have been laid bare, and so many pressing public health and economic concerns dominate our thinking, it is easy to forget how essential the arts are to our fundamental humanity. And how critical they are to the development of young people for whom this unnerving moment in time is a key stage of their growth. Rip Rapson, President of the Kresge Foundation, who attended and contributed to Craig’s memorial event, put it this way:

The arts help fortify civil society’s ability to cope, to adapt, and to imagine the future. They can detect order within disorder – think of the powerful poetry so many of us have shared to help make sense of the insensible. They can substitute the unexpected and fresh for the conventional and insular – think of the magically inventive and beautiful virtual choruses on YouTube. They can offer a vision of connection as an antidote to isolation – think of the singers on the balconies of Italy. They can offer beauty in the face of the repellent – think of the countless examples of self-expression popping up in windows, on sidewalks, and along the streets in places like Detroit, or Memphis, or New Orleans. And they can transport us to a different reality. Think of how the original cast of Hamilton recently did a virtual reprise of “Alexander Hamilton” for a nine-year old whose dream of attending the show was dashed by the virus.



2019 Thespians Go Hollywood

It is in that spirit that we hope you will remain engaged in this profoundly important undertaking in Craig's name.

Elwood Hopkins
*Craig Zadan's Husband &
Educational Theatre Foundation,
Board of Trustees*

Julie Cohen Theobald
*Educational Theatre Foundation,
President*