STEPPENWOLF
FOR YOUNG ADULTS

February 14 – March 10, 2018
By Philip Dawkins
Directed by Devon de Mayo

The Burn
Dear teachers,

Thank you for joining Steppenwolf Education for the second show of the 2017/2018 Steppenwolf for Young Adults season exploring the question: When does a lie become the truth?

As always, we are excited to work with teachers from around the Chicagoland area to engage students in deep and thoughtful conversations around the themes of this play and welcome you to fully engage with this guide alongside the young people you work with. During its run at Steppenwolf, The Burn will reach over 4,400 students and educators during student matinees alone. This season, Steppenwolf Education is also thrilled to continue to expand our reach outside of our theater walls through our new City Connections program, as piloted last year with our tour of Monster with Storycatchers Theatre.

The City Connections model is principally rooted in building authentic and mutually beneficial partnerships and bringing Steppenwolf programming outside of the theater walls and into communities we don’t currently serve. Central to the mission of City Connections is to provide no-cost, barrier-free programming and establish long-term partnerships with community organizations working to empower Chicagoland youth. Having opened up a dialogue between organizations and bringing our programming on the road, our goal is for youth to feel inspired to come to Steppenwolf and experiment here as artists or arts appreciators.

This season, in addition to continuing our work with Storycatchers Theatre (winner of the 2013 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program award – learn more about their work on page 22 of this guide) touring our production of The Burn for a week to three Juvenile Justice Facilities in Illinois, we are working in the West Austin, Roseland, Englewood, and East Garfield Park communities. To reach these communities we are partnering with some truly incredible organizations: the Chicago Public Library, Snow City Arts, BUILD, Inc. and Embarc Chicago to facilitate artistic opportunities, on-site performances and teen workshops.

Thank you for joining us this season. If you are interested in learning more about our programming, or how to get your teen, school or organization involved in future Steppenwolf Educational programming, please don’t hesitate to reach out to Education Manager Jared Bellot at jbellot@steppenwolf.org.

See you at the theater!

The Steppenwolf Education Team
2. Mr. K keeps Mercedes after class in order to talk her into auditioning for his upcoming production of *The Crucible*. Due to her religious beliefs, Mercedes hesitates, not wanting to take part in the “witchcraft” she sees in the media, which, she explains, is one reason why she doesn’t go on the Internet. Still, Mercedes resolves to pray about auditioning.

3. Tara sends Mr. K a friend request on Facebook. Mr. K responds by telling her that he can’t be her friend while she’s his student. During their talk, Tara discovers Mr. K’s sobriety coin from Alcoholics Anonymous. Hurt that he has turned her down, Tara steals the coin from Mr. K’s desk.

4. Mercedes auditions for the school play and Mr. K offers her the lead role of Abigail. Later, Andi and Tara meet with Mr. K after he finds that they have both turned in the same research paper. Instead of reporting them to the principal, Mr. K compels both Andi and Tara to act in the play as an alternative to a potentially harsher punishment for plagiarism.

5. Mr. K discovers that his sobriety coin is missing and begins to “pray” in order to cope with the stress. Mercedes finds him praying and is reminded of her late brother. Mercedes opens up to Mr. K about her brother’s death and its impact on her.

6. After becoming friendly with Mercedes during rehearsals, Shauna helps Mercedes open an Instagram account in an act of friendship. The two open up to one another, as Mercedes tells Shauna about her brother’s past and Shauna expresses parts of her personality that she’s kept away from Tara and Andi.

7. On their group thread, Andi and Tara text hate messages directed against Mercedes. Shauna speaks out in Mercedes’ defense but is shut down by Tara. Shauna leaves the conversation as Andi writes #GodHatesMercy on a wall at school in permanent marker IRL.

8. At school, Tara, Shauna and Andi fight about who should take the blame for the graffiti. Tara gives Shauna the graffiti marker just before Mercedes walks in. When Mercedes sees Shauna holding the marker, she assumes that Shauna was deceiving her about wanting to be friends. Mercedes calls the three of them sinners and prays for God to “set these sinners on fire.” Insulted, Shauna realigns herself with Andi and Tara.

9. A series of hate posts and death threats, directed at all four girls, emerge online. Tara, Shauna and Andi accuse Mercedes of being behind the attacks and demand Mr. K punish her. He agrees to approach Mercedes, but when he does, Mercedes maintains her innocence. Later, Tara, Andi, and Shauna find Mercedes outside of class and beat her up.

10. Mercedes, still bloodied, sits outside the Principal’s office and listens as Mr. K tells her that the police suspect she sent the death threats and that, as a result, she has been expelled and may face charges. In the meantime, he offers to help Mercedes navigate her future. Holding hands, they wait for the police...
The Burn
Character Profiles

By Steppenwolf Education Apprentice Am’Ber Montgomery

@StepEd: Meet the characters of The Burn and explore their social media profiles to learn more about who they are, the online and IRL identities they cultivate, and the ways that they use social media.

Mercedes (Played by Phoebe González)
@Mercedes2374  Followers: 1  Following: 4
New to School. Quiet, attempts to blend and disappear, but is unsuccessful due to the fact that she sticks out like a sore thumb. From a very conservative Christian family. Mercedes uses social media to SPREAD and HIDE.
@Mercedes2374: You know what I like about my church? You have to be there. If you want to walk toward your salvation you have to put yourself actually in a room with other believers.

Erik (Played by Erik Hellman 2/14 - 3/3) (Played by Pat Whalen 3/6 - 3/17)
@booksnbikez29  Followers: 99  Following: 97
An idealist. Had dreams of making it as an actor in Chicago. Truly loves theater. Teaches English and Drama, but would much rather just be teaching Drama. Lets his job consume his life, and this sometimes allows him to get caught up in “student drama.”
@booksnbikez29: We all need that one place in our lives that allows us to be our true selves.

Tara (Played by Birgundi Baker)
@badgr1T  Followers: 3500  Following: 1000
Popular (by any means necessary). Wants to be seen. And wants to be the one everyone looks to for what to think, wear, say and do. Incredibly sharp. She’s able to use reason, fact and logic to justify her attacks upon other, weaker girls. Because she can. Uses social media for VISIBILITY.
@badgr1T: The more people who see it, the more people can talk about it, and the truer it becomes. It’s up there. It’s fact now.

Andi (Played by Nina Ganet)
@Andizzle03  Followers: 1000  Following: 2500
BFFs with Tara, though she may not like her all the time, she’s obsessively enamored with her. Academically mediocre and fine with that. Sliding by in all aspects of life. On the basketball team, and serious about it, but constantly on academic probation. Uses social media to SEARCH and FOLLOW.
@Andizzle03: I can be a gazillion different people if I feel like it!

Shauna (Played by Dyllan Rodrigues-Miller)
@WoW_4evr  Followers: 600  Following: 250
A seeker: of information, of approval, of help. Popular enough, but only at the mercy of Tara and Andi. She’s the student in class who can always find the right answer, but doesn’t always know what to do with it. Uses social media for its PERSISTENCE and CONSISTENCY.
@WoW_4evr: It’s okay to keep some stuff private. Not everything has to be set to public.
Philip Dawkins: The idea that you can put out any sort of hateful speech that you want while thinking that you can hide behind anonymity or you can hide behind free speech is more relevant than ever. Just because you’re free to do something doesn’t mean there’s not going to be consequences.

Now we have a bullying running the country. Whatever you think about him, I think we can all agree that he uses bullying tactics. It’s an interesting moment to try to teach young people to model behavior that bullying is never okay, even if you happen to be right about something. ‘Rightness’ doesn’t give you carte blanche to be disrespectful and horrible to people and disregard their feelings. We are living in a polarized time where there’s no room for a gray area. Everything is yes or no or black or white, and that is destructive. It doesn’t leave room for conversation.

Jared: We are living in a polarized time where there’s no room for a gray area. Everything is yes or no or black or white, and that is destructive. It doesn’t leave room for conversation.

Jared: So why tell this story today in 2018?

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Jared: How is The Burn in conversation with our season theme, “When does a lie become the truth?”

Philip: When I hear it I wonder: What is the truth and what is a lie? Something that is a lie for one person can be true in somebody else’s mind, and something that is true for me may not be true for you. And we can say exactly the same thing. Does something become a lie just because the context around it changes? I don’t know, but I think ultimately, the idea that there is just one truth is naïve and not conducive to acting with empathy.

Jared: That idea was also explored this fall in our production of Arthur Miller’s The Crucible. How is The Burn in conversation with Arthur Miller’s play?

Philip: The Crucible is such a rich source material. The Burn doesn’t fit nicely on top of The Crucible as a direct overlay. It’s not, “this character is a direct representation of this character.” It’s not a neat one-to-one parallel. It’s more like The Crucible is a ghost haunting the world of The Burn. That’s kind of what I thought about while I was writing it.

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Jared: Tara has a line midway through the play which reminds me of what you’re talking about – “If you put something on the internet, people will rip it and burn it and reshape it into something new. You shouldn’t have put it out there if you didn’t want it sampled and handed back to you. It’s creation. It’s remix.”

Philip: I read an article recently attacking the creators of Stranger Things for referencing so many 80s movies, but one of the points of that show is a homage to all of these 80s movies. Some people are like, well that’s stealing, and other people are like, no that’s homage. And I think: Why does it have to be one or the other? Why can’t it be all of it? There’s nothing new under the sun. There is no such thing as creation. There are only chemical reactions and the energy that is given off by the chemical reaction. To think that we’re all creating something new is vanity. This play is a remix of The Crucible. This play is what playwright Paula Vogel calls answering back to the playwrights who came before. This is my answer to Arthur Miller, whom I respect in the extreme. This is my love letter back to his body of work which was a love letter back to the Greeks. I don’t feel it to be stealing or appropriation; it’s just a continuing of the conversation across the ages.
Philip: Social media is a tool, and any tool can be used appropriately or inappropriately, creatively or thoughtlessly. I tried to make all of the characters in this play smart in their own ways. Even though Andi is made fun of for being stupid, she’s really not. She’s using tactics to survive in ways that she thinks ingratiates her to others, and she’s doing it in a very smart way. I think that each of them is using social media as a tool in a way that they think furthers their survival in high school, a place where survival is always on your mind.

Jared: How do you think that this survival tactic, the juggling act of maintaining and adhering to these multiple identities, affects Andi, affects Shauna, affects Tara?

Philip: A major question the play explores is how each of these characters juggle all of their many identities at one time. They’ve been given too much to hold, and they’ve been expected to cultivate and carry too much on their own, and they’ve also been expected by those above them just to know how to do it and know how to do it perfectly. And then when they don’t do it perfectly, they get in trouble. But they’re not really being instructed or helped or guided on how to juggle that successfully.

Jared: As we wrap up: If you had to choose a social media platform to represent you – which would you choose and why?

Philip: I would choose the street protest, the original form of social media, because it’s one I know how to do and it’s one I’m comfortable with. In protest, you have to put your body into a situation. If I stand in front of a car and raise my bike above my head, then it’s not like the worst that can happen to me is I might get offended. The worst that can happen to me is that someone might run me over. I prefer to put my whole self behind the cause or my whole self behind what I’m writing. That would be my social media platform. Standing in the town square on a soapbox or marching with others in allied causes and using my voice alongside others using theirs, rather than shouting something entirely into the void.

Jared: Thousands of students from across the Chicagoland area will be seeing the show. What do you hope that they will take away from it?

Philip: This is always the first question I start with before writing a play. I call it the “car-versation.” Because it is the conversation that I want people to have on the car (or bus) ride home after the play. This play has many, car-versations, but I think one of the main questions this play is asking is, in what ways are we using social media to become even more ourselves and more a part of our real communities, and in what ways are we using it to divide and to push away and to isolate? And how am I using it in my own life and in what ways am I using it to draw me closer to others, and in what ways am I using it as a defensive mechanism to keep anyone from becoming closer to me?

#TheGivenCircumstances

By Education Manager Jared Bellot

Although playwright Philip Dawkins has acknowledged that the characters and plot of The Burn do not directly parallel the characters and plot of The Crucible, Philip was greatly influenced by Arthur Miller’s play, and acknowledges that the world of The Burn very much lives in conversation with the world of The Crucible. While characters may not have exact doppelgangers – alternate versions of themselves who are experiencing identical journeys and obstacles – Mercedes, Tara, Andi, Shauna and even Mr. Krawacek are all grappling with similar questions and quandaries as their Salem counterparts in The Crucible. Particularly of note are the similar ways in which the young women of these two stories are shaped by the pressures of their given circumstances, and how the actions they take are direct responses to the roles they play in their communities.

While it is easy to judge the choices of characters like Abigail Williams, whose accusations of witchcraft come with a literal death sentence, or Mercedes Keller, who violently retaliates against a trio of bullies, as “bad” or “wrong,” a closer look at the ‘social media feeds’ of these young women reveal a decision making process that, while flawed, possess more humanity than a quick scroll might suggest. While reviewing the events leading up to the climaxes of these plays (below) and while in the audience for The Burn (at Steppenwolf) don’t excuse these actions, but ask yourself “how do the given circumstances in our lives influence our decision making, for better, or for worse?”

Given it’s necessary to consider these given circumstances when understanding the events of the play and learning who these characters are, what other choices might Mercedes have made at the end of The Burn?

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Public vs. Private: The Remix (Classroom Activity)

By Education Manager Jared Bellot

ACTIVITY TIME: This activity (as outlined) is designed for 45 minutes before or after students see the show.

Inspired by the themes of public identity vs private identity, this activity will give students the opportunity to reflect on their own lived experiences and remix another’s in the creation of a social media post that examines the question: How do we curate different identities based on context and audience?

STEP ONE – READ AND DISCUSS

Have students read the following Mark Zuckerberg quote that Philip Dawkins chose to include in the epigraph for The Burn. Reflect and discuss the following as a class or in small groups:

“Having two identities for yourself is an example of a lack of integrity.” – Mark Zuckerberg

• Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
• Why do you think Zuckerberg thinks having two identities implies a lack of integrity?
• What causes people to curate different identities for themselves?
• Is one identity “more real” than others?
• How do you balance your multiple identities, both online and IRL? Do you find this juggling act to be disingenuous? How do you decide what each identity looks like?

ACTIVITY TIME: 10 mins

STEP THREE – RESPOND AND REMIX

Have students randomly trade their narrative with another member of the class (suggested: place all prompts in the center of the room and have students choose another at random). Each student should read through “THE ORIGINAL POST” that they have chosen and complete the sections labeled “THE REMIXED POST” and “THE REMIXED IMAGE” on the following page, creating a social media post accompanied by an image and a hashtag that “remixes” the original post into something people would engage with on social media. Make it funny, make it poignant, make it eye-catching, etc.

For example, if the original post was:

THE ORIGINAL POST (EXAMPLE)

I actually really don’t like Beyoncé’s music; I think that she is totally overrated and untalented.

The remixed post might read:

REMIXED POST (EXAMPLE)

Mainstream Billboard 100 artists are so soulless – no musicality whatsoever. All about that good music and those indie artists (emphasis on artist). 
#GoodMusic #DontBeASheep #BeyonceWho

THE REMIXED IMAGE (EXAMPLE)

STEP FOUR – REVISIT & REFLECT

Return the remixed post to its original owner. In the space labeled “THE COMMENT BOX” on the following page, have students reflect on how their original narrative was tweaked, altered and remixed. Use the following questions to help guide reflection:

• What was it like to give away your original post to an unknown entity who would be able to remix your “truth”? What was it like to remix someone else’s “truth”?
• What part of your original post do you feel has changed the most? Why do you think this is?
• What stands out most to you in the remixed post? Is there anything that surprises you?
• Do you still feel any sense of connection to or ownership of the original post? Why or why not?

THE ORIGINAL POST (EXAMPLES)

• I actually really don’t like Beyoncé’s music; I think that she is totally overrated and untalented.
• I suffer from pretty severe social anxiety, and constantly overthink things.
• I still sleep with a stuffed teddy bear from when I was a little kid.
• I consider my parents to be my best friends.

STEP TWO – RESPOND AND REMEMBER

Reflect on a moment in your life when your private identity (who you are when you are at home, alone, around those people you are closest to) and public identity (who you are in school, in your community, what you put on social media) diverged, or did not line up with one another.

In the section labeled “THE ORIGINAL POST” on page 14, have students individually respond to the following prompt (letting students know that this response will be shared with others):

Write about something in your life that you would not share on social media because you think it is embarrassing, unflattering or because you think that people might judge you for it.

For example:

THE ORIGINAL POST (EXAMPLE)

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The remixed post might read:

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THE REMIXED IMAGE (EXAMPLE)
Meet the Steppenwolf Education teaching artists who work on exploring the themes of The Burn with thousands of students across the Chicagoland area as a part of our in-school Residency Program!

Peter Andersen  Kari Betton  Jazmin Corona  Christina El Gamal

Tiffany Fulson  Cara Greene Epstein  Charles Andrew Gardner  Greg Geffrard

Larry Grimm  Wilfredo Ramos Jr.  Fatima Sowe  Mara Stern

Interested in learning more about our In-School Residency Program? Email Education Manager Jared Bellot at jbellot@steppenwolf.org.
When the Online World Becomes (In) Real (Life): A Timeline

By Education Projects Assistant Fatima Sowe

Through social media, we can now interact with the world effortlessly. However, anonymous online platforms also give us the cover to engage in cruel, thoughtless, and aggressive acts, by obscuring the victims and consequences. When we can’t see someone’s reaction, it’s easy to dip our toe in the bullying pool. As a result, a few comments or likes can quickly spiral into a mob reaction with real world impacts. The examples included in this timeline illustrate the IRL effects of online bullying.

1991
Romantic Manipulation
The first recorded occurrence of romantic catfishing (the act of setting up a false personal profile on a social networking site for deceptive purposes). Journalist Lindsay Van Gelder publishes an expose about a man named Alex posing in chatroom as a woman with paraplegia named “Joan” for over two years in order to manipulate others. Alex would go on to serially deceive countless individuals in intimate online relationships.

1997
Ideological Hit List
Militant anti-abortionist Otis Horsley publishes a website providing the home addresses of abortion providers in the United States. The act of publishing an individual’s private information for the access of an online mob of harassers is known as doxing. Horsley took doxing a step beyond harassment, encouraging assassination in “wanted style” posters. Eight abortion providers were killed and 17 murders were attempted as a result of the website.

1999
Legal Repercussions
California is the first state to pass significant cyber-harassment legislation regulating online behavior. Four weeks after the legislation was passed, Los Angeles prosecutors brought the first case against a 50-year-old man who retaliated against rejection from a 28-year-old woman by harassing the victim online, inviting IRL threats. He was tried and found guilty.

2003
RIP Trolling
7th grader Mitchell Henderson commits suicide and his online Myspace Memorial is infiltrated by trolls from infamous message board site 4chan. These “trolls” differ from general mainstream internet mischief makers due to their strong affiliation with an organized culture of pranksters, who harm “for the LULZ” (read: for the sake of personal enjoyment at the expense of another). This phenomenon known as RIP trolling, often escalates from the online harassment to IRL trolling through the doxing of the grieving’s personal information. In the case of the Henderson’s, the harassment moved offline into trolls pretending to be Mitchell, prank calling the Henderson home.

2013
Financial Crash
Hackers tweet from the Associated Press’ twitter account claiming that explosions at the White House had injured President Barack Obama. Within minutes the isolated tweet caused instability in global financial markets, causing the S&P 500 Index to lose $130 billion. Once the mistake was discovered, the loss was managed, but revealed the real life impact social media could have on economics.

2016
Social Media Shutdown
Comedian Leslie Jones’ website is hacked and filled with crude images and memes, harassment tied to her appearing in a remake of Ghostbusters. As indicated by the crude content, the attack was motivated by Jones’ gender and race. The harassment caused Jones to leave Twitter and involved the CEO of Twitter banning the inciting internet troll Milo Yiannopoulos from the social media platform.

2017
Admission Rescinded
After discovering offensive posts in a private Facebook group, 10 prospective Ivy League students have their admissions offers revoked. This is part of a growing phenomenon on elite campuses where meme-sharing culture is flourishing as a release amidst the high-pressure environments. Though many such forums are spaces to critique the university administration and school culture, the groups that feature more nefarious content face similarly significant consequences.

The reverberation of consequences from the cyber world to our own can be resounding, and can quickly escalate into IRL conflict or crime. The allure of anonymity online can bring out the worst of folks, and what might seem like a harmless click can very quickly turn into something much larger. We’ve seen examples of seemingly innocent online activity impacting relationships, employment, college admissions, and global economic markets. Clearly the power that we have at our fingertips is real, so perhaps the ultimate question is – what will you do with it?
However, by the end of the play, friction between Mercedes and Shauna inspires Shauna to stop resisting
the idea of bullying Mercedes. To impress Tara, Andi takes a graffiti marker and writes the hashtag they've come up
with to embarrass Mercedes — "#GodHatesMercy" on the school wall.

DESIRE FOR APPROVAL

If a young person admires an adult or a peer who engages in bullying, that young person is more likely to
engage in bullying as well, in order to win the role model’s affection or approval. In a published 2010 study on young
people who bully their peers, Professor of Sociology Rene Veenstra wrote, “bullies care a lot about others’
affection and don’t want to lose it.” We see this with Andi in The Burn. Andi has a secret crush on Tara, who
strongly dislikes Mercedes. To impress Tara, Andi takes a graffiti marker and writes the hashtag they’ve come
up with to embarrass Mercedes — “#GodHatesMercy” on the school wall.

CHANGES AT HOME

The arrival of a new sibling, the tug of war between parents undergoing a divorce, the departure of a loved
one, or another major life event in a young person’s home environment can leave a young person with many
emotions and fewer systems of support to process those emotions. In an attempt to lessen the emotional burden
that they bear, young people in turmoil may try passing their fears and pain onto others. In The Burn, Mercedes
struggles for years to bear the pain she feels after her brother Gabe’s violent death. When Shauna makes light
of Gabe’s death, Mercedes reaches a breaking point. No longer able to carry the weight of her pain alone,
Mercedes chooses to lash out and share her hurt with Shauna and the other girls via the burn page she creates
as retaliation.

COVING WITH INTERNAL CONFLICT

Some people have a natural difficulty dealing with stress, confusion, and conflict. Others may find it challenging
to maintain a high sense of self-esteem. According to Ditch the Label, an anti-bullying charity, people who bully
are “far more likely than average to have experienced a stressful or traumatic situation in the past 5 years”.
Bullying others can be a way to avoid internal struggles and boost one’s sense of power and control.

RELAXED ATTITUDES TOWARD BULLYING

A community where people tolerate bullying, underplay its seriousness, or even celebrate causing harm can
encourage young people to engage in bullying themselves. Bullyingstatistics.org notes that in a community
where there are no “high standards for the way people treat each other [...] bullying may be more likely
and/or prevalent.” In The Burn, Mr. K catches Andi and Tara cheating on an assignment and forces the two of
them to join the school production of The Crucible, or face discipline from the principal. Tara accuses Mr. K of
bullying her and Andi, but he dismisses her concerns. Instead, he teases them by saying “Later, witches” as he
walks away laughing. Mr. K’s unsympathetic response toward Tara and Andi’s perspectives makes Tara and
Andi wonder if they can trust him. Mr. K’s later ambivalence about punishing Mercedes for making the burn
page confirms Tara and Andi’s doubts, contributing to their decision to punish Mercedes themselves.

JOINING THE CONVERSATION

Pain can be a feeling no one wants to hold. Like Andi’s marker, pain can easily be passed on and passed
around. At the same time, the harms, like Tara’s hashtag, that come from bullying can be difficult, if not
impossible, to erase. But the pain that encourages hurt can also be the pain that promotes healing.
The marker Andi used to anger Mercedes can also be used to process tough emotions. Imagine Andi’s
marker is in your hand. What would you write or draw on Andi’s wall? How would you join the conversation?
On the next page, push yourself to think about how you might respond if you were to find yourself in a
similar situation.
THE SCENE

THE SCENE is a special opportunity for high school students to score an affordable ticket to a Steppenwolf production, meet Chicago’s most celebrated artists and connect with other teens who are passionate about theater. Each ticket includes dinner and post-show discussion with the actors.

TICKETS ARE JUST $10

Purchase tickets at the door 30 minutes before the show, or in advance by calling Steppenwolf Audience Services at 312-335-1650. Use code 35026

UPCOMING EVENTS

THE SCENE: THE BURN
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24
AT 7:30PM (post-show)

Questions? Please contact Education Manager Jared Bellot at 312-654-5643 or jbellot@steppenwolf.org.

STEP IN

STEP IN is a series that offers teens from all over the city the chance to participate in hands-on theatre workshops alongside some of the most exciting theatre artists working in the city right now while learning more about the Steppenwolf Young Adult Council, an afterschool program for teens interested in careers in the arts.

ADMISSION IS FREE!

To reserve your spot, please RSVP to Education Manager Jared Bellot at jbellot@steppenwolf.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11
WEDNESDAY, MAY 2
All events last from 4:30-6:00pm

Questions? Please contact Education Manager Jared Bellot at 312-654-5643 or jbellot@steppenwolf.org.

WRITING PROMPT: WHAT MOTIVATES A “BULLY?”

The marker is now in your hands...

On the first whiteboard – reflect on, and describe a time that you’ve felt othered or been bullied. Then create a hashtag that is representative of that experience

On the second whiteboard – reflect on, and describe a time that you’ve acted as a bully or othered someone else, either purposefully or accidentally, that you wish you could have changed your actions. Then create a hashtag that is representative of that experience

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which example was harder to think about and reflect on – why?
2. How did reflecting on these moments from your own life impact how you felt about the actions of the characters from The Burn?
3. Does understanding an individual’s given circumstances affect how you think about the act of bullying? Why or why not?
Storycatchers Theatre guides young people to transform their traumatic experiences into powerful musical theatre, inspiring them to develop the courage and vision to become leaders and mentors. By creating support for youth within the criminal justice system, Storycatchers prepares them to change their lives and emerge successfully from court involvement.

Steppenwolf Education is honored to be able to partner with our friends at Storycatchers and to work with them to tour our production of The Burn to hundreds of youth at three juvenile justice facilities throughout Illinois.

We asked Edmund O’Brien, Program Manager for Storycatchers’ Firewriters program at the Illinois Youth Center (IYC)-Chicago, to talk about working with young people living in a juvenile justice facility. He responded, “Almost none of the boys in Firewriters have ever performed in front of an audience before, let alone written songs and stories about their own lives, and they seldom believe they can accomplish such a thing. Yet, four times a year I get to celebrate their achievements at a cast party following the performances of the work they create. And every time, they are filled with pride. They see themselves and each other in a new light.”

O’Brien continued, “Thanks to the generosity of theaters all over Chicago, I’m also able to bring select groups to see professional productions. Sometimes we see plays that I have read or seen before, but when surrounded by teens whose trauma-filled lives have led them to their current situation, I experience these works in a new light. During a discussion of the way that Arthur Miller used the Salem Witch Trials as an allegory for McCarthyism at the Steppenwolf for Young Adult’s production of The Crucible this fall, the guys told me they could write an allegory about the police force to explain how a gang really works.

Unfortunately, only small groups of five are allowed to leave to see these plays. That’s why I’m so excited to be a part of the partnership between Storycatchers, Steppenwolf, and the Juvenile Justice Facilities that will allow The Burn to be toured to hundreds of youth inside their current walls. These audiences will be filled with boys and girls who have most likely never seen a professional theatre production before. Hopefully they’ll be primed to consider the major themes of the play after the teaching artists of Storycatchers and Steppenwolf engage them in workshops to discuss, debate, and create art around the themes of bullying, second chances, “ruined” futures, and revenge. And I’ll be entering the audience just as primed and ready to see The Burn in a new light for myself.”

**STORYCATCHERS THEATRE AND STEPPENWOLF: A NEW LIGHT**

A Conversation with Edmund O’Brien, Program Manager at Storycatchers Theatre

**FAST FACTS THE BURN ON TOUR TO JUVENILE JUSTICE FACILITIES**

- **Youth and staff reached**: 350+
- **Hours of instructional time provided by Steppenwolf and Storycatchers teaching artists**: 20
- **Tour performances with the full cast**: 7

We will travel to
- Illinois Youth Center Chicago
- Illinois Youth Center Warrenville
- Cook County Juvenile Detention Center

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**Storycatchers Theatre**

**Steppenwolf**

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**STorycatchers Theatre and Steppenwolf: A New Light**

A Conversation with Edmund O’Brien, Program Manager at Storycatchers Theatre
FILMS

Bully
This 98 minute documentary explores the emotional journey of five families who have been affected by bullying during the course of a year in American public schools.

A Girl Like Her
This film explores the secret hell of daily torments Jessica has been living due to her tormentor and former friend Avery. Jessica enlists a camera and her best friend to capture Avery’s harassment and begin to not only confront her bully, but to heal.

SELECTED WEBSITES

Social Media: A Guide for Teens
http://www.ala.org/yalsa/sites/ala.org.yalsa/files/content/professionaltools/Handouts/snforteens.pdf
This handy factsheet from the Young Adult Library Services Association provides great ideas for teens to help their parents, teachers and others understand their use of social media, and to develop an understanding about reputation management and good privacy practices in the online world.

Cyberbully Research Center: Resources for Teens
https://cyberbullying.org/resources/teens
Find downloadable fact sheets and resources guides on several topics related to bullying including smart social networking, cell phone safety and sexting.

FICTION

Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass by Meg Medina
Piddy Sanchez is the target of a bully at her new school. To confront her nemesis, Piddy must learn the importance of friends and family – and of accepting herself for the person she truly is.

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian by Sherman Alexie
Arnold aka Junior fights bullies, his alcoholic father and the crushing poverty found on his reservation with humor and art. Yet when Junior attends a new school, he must also define and choose his tribe.

Bone Gap by Laura Ruby
Eighteen-year-old Finn is the only witness to the abduction of a town favorite Roza, but his inability to distinguish between faces subjects him to ridicule and bullying. A 2015 National Book Award finalist by a Chicago author.

Girl Mans Up by M-E Girard
Pen (short for Penelope) is a 16 year old who lives outside gendered lines and because of this her immigrant parents and ex-best friend attempt to bully her into fitting in their versions of who she should be. Despite this Pen navigates her true self and the person reflecting back at her in the mirror.

NONFICTION

The Survival Guide to Bullying by Aija Mayrock
Featuring “roems” (rap poems”), quizzes and tips, this book, written by a teen who was bullied, aims to help other teens not only survive the toughest days, but also to help them create a better life going forward.

Vicious: True Stories by Teens About Bullying
Twenty teen authors tell their own tales of being bullied at school, on the street and online. The stories collected here provide perspectives about victims, perpetrators and bystanders and provide deep fodder for discussion.

It Gets Better: Coming Out, Overcoming Bullying, and Creating a Life Worth Living
This anti-bullying book has a focus on LGBT themes, and was born from the “It gets better project”, a collection of videos reaching out to youth struggling with their identities, urging them to stay strong because there is hope for their future.

We at Steppenwolf Education are thrilled to continue our work with the Chicago Public Libraries as a part of our City Connections partnership – a new program model rooted in building authentic and mutually beneficial community partnerships and bringing Steppenwolf programming outside of the walls of the theater and into new communities throughout the Chicagoland area.

As a part of this partnership, we turned to the CPL staff to provide their expert opinions on ways teachers and students might dive deeper into the world of this production. The following lists have been prepared by Chicago Public Library staff as a resource guide to help you and your students explore themes and topics related to The Burn. Learn more about what CPL has to offer at chipublib.org. And see the bottom of the opposite page for information about the 2018 ChiTeen Lit Fest!
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Steppenwolf for Young Adults is a citywide partner of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) School Partner Program.
The Young Adult Council is a unique program for passionate and motivated high school students who wish to learn the inner-workings of professional theater from the most celebrated artists in the city. In addition to face time with these leading professionals, Council members attend the best plays in Chicago, learn how to analyze and speak about these plays and lead events for their peers around Steppenwolf productions in hopes of inspiring a new generation of theatre enthusiasts and practitioners.

Applications are available on March 1, 2018.

Like the Steppenwolf Young Adult Council on Facebook and Instagram! Or visit steppenwolf.org/youngadultcouncil for more information.