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## Our Time Theatre Company

*This show was found in the 2006-2007 season archive on nytheatre.com.*

**nytheatre.com review**

John Jordan - Dec 16, 2006

Our Time Theatre Company, founded by artistic director Taro Alexander, is a nonprofit, artistic home for young people who stutter. I cannot personally understand or even begin to imagine the specific difficulties anyone who stutters must go through on a daily basis, but as an actor I do understand the wonderful world of the stage and how it can help to overcome fears and obstacles one may have in life. I must commend Alexander for all he has done. He is truly an amazing person.

As for the one-acts, they are incredible. This is the third year Our Time is producing a one-act program, where the oldest members of the group run the show. Each is employed as both playwright and director, utilizing the acting talent of fellow Our Time members, as well as professional performers who volunteer their time.

The first play of the evening, *A Sister's Hope*, is written and directed by 17-year-old Queens native Fern Schlesinger. This is the sweet story of teenaged Aya, and the love she has for her younger brother, Tori, who is dying. Aya would do anything to bring her brother out of his coma, including folding one thousand origami paper cranes. This refers to the Japanese legend wherein anyone who folds a thousand origami paper cranes will be granted a wish.

The second play, *2 Train*, masterfully written and directed by 16-year-old Manhattan native Jonathan Greig, is the political highlight of the evening. The premise is simple, yet the outcome and afterthoughts the audience is left with are astounding.

One morning the Mayor of New York City, along with his bodyguard, takes the subway (for political reasons, i.e., to be seen on the subway). The train gets stuck (not a surprise if you have ridden the NYC subway system). Once recognized, he begins the ritual of shaking hands and all of the passengers love him. All but one homeless man named Jim. Jim believes the Mayor does not really care about everyone...only those he chooses to care about. Jim raises many questions for which the Mayor does not seem to have any concrete answers, only prearranged, memorized responses. Why are laws set up to only benefit the rich? Where can the homeless get help? When Jim's end of the conversation turns more heated, he gets so frustrated he moves toward the Mayor, at which point the Mayor's bodyguard raises his firearm and shoots, killing Jim. The stage turns black as we hear a prerecorded news report describing an unfortunate accident involving a homeless man who was shot and killed while attacking the Mayor. The play ends.

The final and most inspiring piece of the evening, *The Perfect Place*, is written and directed by 16-year-old Brooklyn native Keith Russell. This is the story of Kevin, a teenager who stutters. We first see Kevin with his so-called friends, who tease and torment him relentlessly. Kevin then misdirects his built-up anger at being bullied towards his one true friend, Laurie. Luckily for Kevin, she is just that, a true friend, and she stays true to their friendship throughout.

Kevin feels he needs to stand up for himself—to stand up to the bullying and the teasing. He does. It happens again. He tells them to "STOP!" They laugh at him more, but they physically attack him, punching and kicking him on the ground. And even though Kevin has just been attacked, he has faith. He is not afraid anymore. He knows that he can say when enough is enough.

The play then takes a wonderful turn at this point as Kevin begins to sing about how he feels. The others from this play join Kevin onstage, singing and clapping and swaying to the music they are making —"You gotta love, chill out. Stop the violence." They sing into the curtain call.

This evening as a whole was truly amazing to me. Teenagers wrote these plays. I commend not only Our Time Theatre Company for bringing this program to the public, but the children themselves, for their bravery and courage to write about what they feel and believe.

Cliché as it is, these times they are changing every day and our youth are growing up faster every year. We as an audience are going to have to keep up with the likes of Schlesinger, Greig, and Russell. They are truly a welcome addition to the wonderful world of playwrights.

As for Our Time Theatre Company, I can only hope that it will be around for a long, long time.

**Opened**

Dec 15, 2006

**Closed**

Dec 17, 2006

**Producer**

Our Time Theatre  
Company