



Student-Driven Performing Arts & Mentoring  
www.unchainedtalent.org

## FACT SHEET

### Summary

Unchained Talent is a place where the students' voice matters. Students work together to write and perform their own music, drama and dance material for their classmates and a diverse audience from the Baltimore community.

### Mission



The mission of Unchained Talent is:

- to educate, inspire and change young people through access to the performing arts,
- to re-energize school communities by providing performing arts opportunities in under-used school spaces, and
- to respond to young people's development needs through consistent positive adult mentor relationships.

### Goals



Students will have:

- access to participate in and enjoy the performing arts,
- higher attendance rates and better grades,
- a deeper understanding of self and community and
- a richer educational experience to prepare themselves for their futures.

### Population Served



Students come primarily from Doris M. Johnson and Heritage High Schools, located on the Lake Clifton campus between Harford Road and Belair Road and 25th and 32nd Streets. Most of the students live in the surrounding neighborhoods (Clifton-Berea, Coldstream-Homestead-Montebello and Belair-Edison) but may come from any Baltimore City neighborhood or any Baltimore City school. Performances are generally held at the Lake Clifton Campus Theater, though other performances have been held at community and neighborhood events.

### Track Record

In just four years, Unchained Talent has grown from a dream with one part-time volunteer to a \$100,000 per year, 501(c)3 non-profit organization led by an Open Society Institute Fellow. It began with ten students and now has over 150 students signed up. Almost every consistent Unchained Talent student is still enrolled in or has graduated high school.

### Program Summary



Unchained Talent has grown organically in response to students needs. The program currently includes:

- After-school programming that is safe, productive, and team-oriented
- 2-3 theatrical performances and 2-3 musical performances each year
- Creation and performance of honest, student-written theatre productions, as well as repertory theatre performances
- Honest, student-original music created in in-house Recording Studio
- Paid Student Leader apprenticeships, which were developed for our senior students in response to their very real financial responsibilities and to acknowledge their leadership
- Mentoring relationships with reliable consistent adult mentors
- Life skills trainings, such as financial management, health and sexuality, and taking responsibility for your actions
- Job skills trainings including basic jobs skills, understanding what professionalism is, and specialized performing arts competencies



**“My godmother says I cannot go to drama if I don't go to school, so I go to school.”**  
-Arkeena Reid, founding student member and Unchained Talent alumna

## Some Past Shows



## Community Partnerships



- **Concrete Jungle:** *Performed May 2008.* A student-written and -directed full-length hip-hop musical following the lives of several diverse characters struggling to make it in the “Concrete Jungle.”
- **Fame! The Musical:** *Performed April 20, 2007.* A moving and inspirational musical about the value and reward of hard work, based on the lives of a group of students attending New York’s High School for the Performing Arts.
- **World HIV/AIDS Day:** *original songs and skits addressing stigma and prevention*
- **Who Will Heal Our Community?:** *Performed November 17, 2006.* A powerful theatrical production designed to inspire discussion about our community, its needs and problems, and our responsibility to it. Content written by students and community members and performed in partnership with WombWork Productions.
- **You Think You Know Me But You Really Don't:** *Performed May 19-20, 2006.* The first full length student-original play, sharing stories about teen relationships, sexuality, sex abuse and other things you may not know about our students' lives.
- **Generationships:** *Performed December 9-10, 2005.* A play of student-original work exploring the relationships between the generations.
- **Devastation, Forgiveness and Love:** *Performed May 13-14, 2005.* Student and existing works on the topics of devastation, forgiveness and love.
- **Unified:** *Performed December 9-10, 2004.* An evening of showcase performances featuring well-known favorites, unique pieces and original works.

In addition to its ongoing partnerships with Doris M. Johnson and Heritage High Schools, Unchained Talent partners with other youth development organizations, social change agents, area theatres, and organizations promoting state-wide arts education:

- A 2008-09 collaboration with Run of the Mill Theatre to offer the Variations process to our students through training in performance technique and playwriting
- Technical support from Follow Your Dreams Records helped build the youth-driven Recording Studio
- A partnership with Civic Works allows college interns to earn education awards as AmeriCorps members
- Partnerships with local colleges and businesses help students to see the connection between the skills developed in Unchained Talent and their future.
- A collaboration with WombWork Productions led to the development of new theatre work, including “Who Will Heal Our Community?”
- The partnership with the Montebello Police Athletic League (PAL) Center allowed our students develop work skills and better learn their craft by providing a free summer theatre camp to younger children at the PAL Center.

## Why Performing Arts



Performing arts teach one to:

- take positive risks and problem solve,
- develop empathy, self-confidence, responsibility, self-control, concentration, discipline, and self-expression,
- strengthen skills in writing, reading, algebra, geometry, history, geography, carpentry, teamwork, finances, project planning, presentation skills and business management.

Colleges seek out and select students who participate in extracurricular activities and possess these skills.

## Executive Director Contact Information

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