



“The R+J Effect”

Synopsis

The central goal of “*The R+J Effect*” is to add young voices to those already raised in calling to end gun violence in our community of Miami and in society at-large. At the same time “*The R+J Effect*” aims to provide a creative means to restore trust and understanding between the community and law enforcement. “*The R+J Effect*” also examines the influence of social media and the entertainment industry on young people and the need to differentiate between violence in fiction and violence in reality. This 90 minute adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* will comprise a joint cast from two, cross-town inner city schools; five students from Booker T Washington HS representing the African-American Montague family and five students from Miami Senior HS representing the bi-lingual Latino Capulet family. Under the direction of What if Works Inc. four post-graduate theater majors from Florida International University will conduct a semester-long series of workshops exploring literary and performance techniques. In partnership with the Miami Dade County Department of Police the actors will be mentored in the issues of gun violence preparing them for questions from audience members of all ages. Rap and hip-hop will play a significant role in the telling of the story. While “*The R+J Effect*” focuses exclusively on gun violence no weapon will be seen or used on stage but will instead be represented by inventive movement and innovative sound effects. The most significant element of the production is the audience. Youth, families and theatregoers will be joined by several police officers and, in a break from tradition, the action on stage will freeze while the audience, through a moderator, (the Friar as Life Coach & Mediator) engages in dialogue. Through interactive discourse such as this we believe empathetic engagement can be forged between community and law enforcement. In order to expand the message beyond our own community, What if Works and Booker T Washington HS plan to “pass-it-on” by partnering with schools and police departments in states hardest hit by gun violence. Partnering communities will include Washington DC, Denver, Baltimore, Chicago, New Orleans and New York. Our goal is to pass on the project together with all the production resources to other schools, and through careful instruction leave them with the knowledge to partner with a neighboring and produce the show on their own. It is hoped that a domino effect will eventually take place with the project’s message about gun violence being seen and heard by increasing number of young people. In this manner the “*R+J Effect*” will take affect beyond Miami reaching ever expanding and engaged audiences of youth, educators, law enforcement and community leaders.

In order to reach an audience beyond theatre WIW will develop a documentary to include first initial planning meetings, workshop mentoring with police, Shakespeare performance technique, rap and hip-hop mentorship, the first meeting between the two opposing families, growth in rehearsals, opening night Booker T Washington HS, performances at Miami Senior HS, Lyric and the Seminole Theatre with audience videotaped reaction and comments from actors, police, mentor-actors and school principals.

Those who have studied or attended Shakespeare's play recognize its transparent message, a message for all times – that killing can never be a choice - more so when the cost is seen in the loss of innocence. The goal of What if Works is to move young people's hearts into action . To join other voices raised to end an epidemic of tragedy.

Those who have studied or attended the Shakespeare's play recognize his transparent message, a message for all times – that killing can never be a solution to problem-solving, more so when the cost is seen in the loss of innocence. The goal of What if Works is to affect young people into action by presenting "*The R+J Effect*".