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## Arts, Humanities, Museums: Background (1973-1976): News Article 01

Joan Pierotti

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## 'The Therapy of the Living Stage'

To see a group of high school students totally turned on, not by "speed" or pot, but by joy, enthusiasm and inner energy, is a rare and beautiful sight, especially when you teach, as I do, in an inner-city high school where being turned off and tuned out is endemic to school life.

Recently, a group of students from my acting class had the opportunity of participating in the Living Theater student workshop directed by Robert Alexander of Arena Stage, which Judith Martin described in her March 17 Post article, "The Therapy of The Living Stage." They were so moved by what they experienced that day that instead of going home from Arena, they returned to school and came bursting into my last period class filled with excitement and talk of "living statues," "transformations" and "When can we

go again?" They had, indeed, been transformed and opened up by that experience, and it was really beautiful to behold.

I knew how they felt because I, too, had experienced the Living Theater three years ago in their summer workshop. It was without a doubt the most freeing, creativity-generating class I have ever taken, and I was able to use what I had learned in my teaching at Ballou.

Ms. Martin referred to the Living Stage as a kind of "therapy," and it certainly is. Though the setting and techniques are those frequently associated with the theater, what is learned applies not only to the business of "acting" but even more to the business of living. Students not only get in touch with their creative potential but also grow in self-confidence, self-image and their ability to relate to and share with others on a much deeper level than before.

The Living Theater gets much of its funding from the National Foundation for the Arts. I am grateful that their generosity has students in action. I wish that our schools and governmental institutions could see what a freeing, creative and enlivening experience not only the Living Stage but the theater in general is for young people and what it does for their sense of themselves. They might reconsider their priorities about where and how they spend money.

JOAN PIEROTTI,

Teacher, Ballou Senior High School.

Washington