

DEBRA PASQUERETTE

Director of Education

Geffen Playhouse Education Director Debra Pasquerette has dedicated her life to capturing the essence of theater and making it interesting and accessible to youth. Growing up, Pasquerette was very active in the live arts and calls her experiences “life changing.” With a cemented desire to pass on the same inspiration to others, she pursued a degree in performance studies from the Arizona State University. After graduating, Pasquerette jumped at the opportunity to be the Artistic Director for Positive Force Players where she could realize her dream of implementing a comprehensive theater-training program for teens dealing with critical issues.

Once established with Positive Force Players, Pasquerette moved with the group to work intimately with Stagekids Imago Theater where she further developed her ideas on youth programming. Pasquerette then worked as the manager of youth theater programs at Playwrights Workshop Theater where she became a writer-in-residence, using those skills to further spread her message. While at Positive Force Players, she wrote and directed *About Time: HIV and AIDS* for which she won an International Monitor Award in 1995. She also received a Telly Award for her series *Reality Rules* that appeared on PBS.

Having gained recognition as a television writer, Debra Pasquerette moved to Los Angeles where she joined the Geffen Playhouse as the director of education, despite the fact that at that time the theater had no education program. She looked at it as a blank slate on which to build a strong education and outreach program. After only one year in the position, Pasquerette single-handedly started Saturday Scene, a theater series aimed at children aged two to twelve where kids take an interactive part in various aspects of the theater. Pasquerette was also aware that there were many children who didn't have the resources to come to the Geffen to experience world-class theater, so she mobilized to create the Student Matinee Program, a model initiative that not only included theater tickets, but also focused on educator workshops, study guides and Q&A sessions with the artists. However, Pasquerette didn't feel the theater's community outreach was complete until she developed CREATE (Community Representatives Engaged in Active Theater Education), a multilevel community outreach program that engages leaders from identified marginal community groups and their constituents in workshops, performances and access to the tools of the theatrical process.

A nearly one-woman force for community outreach, the only things Pasquerette loves as much as theater education is her large collection of exotic animals. But she doesn't keep all those pets to herself – Apolo, one of Pasquerette's talkative parrots – has become the unofficial mascot of Saturday Scene.