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## LMDA Review, volume 6, issue 2

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# lmda review



Vol. 6, No. 2

## COMMENTS from the CO-PRESIDENTS

Tim Sanford and Erin Sanders

In the past ten years, what have we accomplished as an organization? Where should we be headed? As LMDA's new co-presidents, we sought some insight into these questions by revisiting the organizational by-laws.

The preamble to the by-laws contains traces of the defensiveness that used to affect our professional self-image: "dramaturgy and literary management are emerging as permanent artistic forces within the American theater" and one of the organization's primary functions is to "educate the public regarding the functions of dramaturgs and literary managers." We have come a long ways, however, from the days when we would regularly justify our existence in public forums to irascible playwrights and patiently define and explain our function to blank-faced audience members and college freshmen. Even extended family gatherings seem to occasion only the rarest spiels of self-definition from us these days.

As a profession we have "emerged." As an organization, there's still plenty of room for us to grow. Let's not forget that the original impetus for LMDA grew out of informal collegial box lunches between Anne Cattaneo, André Bishop, Jonathan Alper, and Steve Carter in New York about fifteen years ago. When we organized

officially in 1985, we were still primarily a New York organization, albeit a highly inclusive one. In ten short years, through the hard work of past presidents Alexis Greene, David Copelin, Anne Cattaneo, and Victoria Abrash and their executive staffs, and through the success and diversity of our annual conferences, we have become a truly national, indeed an international organization. We encompass most of the professional dramaturgs and literary managers in the country and continue to grow in Canada.

We feel that LMDA should now address itself to the second paragraph of the preamble:

*Through this organization, we will create a national network that will reaffirm and broaden the roles we have already come to play and will expand the possibilities of the field to other media and institutions.*

In light of this goal, we have decided to organize this year's conference in Los Angeles around the theme of the many names and roles of Dramaturgs. We're calling it "Cross-Pollinating the Theater: Art, Enterprise, and Dramaturgy." Los Angeles seems the perfect site to begin to discuss the emerging relationships between the theater and the film and television industries, and the roles dramaturgs and liter-

ary managers may play in these relationships. As acceptance of the dramaturg's role broadens, so may opportunities for employing dramaturgs.

It is our hope that the conference offers opportunities, through panels and demonstrations, to approach such related topics, as Film and Theater development; Directing as Dramaturgy; Playwrights Dramaturging Other Playwrights; Audience Development; Education, Criticism and Advocacy; Against the Mainstream; Fringe and Equity Waiver Theater in LA, and Musical Theater development.

We have also agreed to co-sponsor at least one panel with the Mark Taper Forum's *Blackmyths* writing group, lead by Artistic Associate L. Kenneth Richardson on the current state and future of African American Theater. We also hope to involve the strong Latino and Asian American theater communities.

We feel that LMDA should be a more inclusive organization. As a result, we hope to expand the ranks of LMDA's regions to include all those who practice the function of dramaturgy and literary management and help facilitate more regional activity. We also expect this effort to increase and diversify the organization's programming. We intend in these ways to raise the profile of dramaturgy (and not

*(continued on page two)*

## NEW DRAMATURGS

The first meeting of the New Dramaturgs group met at the end of November. As the new co-ordinator for this group, I was very excited about possibilities and opportunities for discussing working ideas amongst ourselves. Emily Morse and I met beforehand to discuss what we thought the group was about, and we realized that the definition of the group had to come from the members themselves. We feel first and foremost we are here to promote the work of the dramaturg, and to help student/early career dramaturgs and literary managers create and define their role within the professional world. A corollary to this aim is to provide a forum in which ND's can meet their colleagues to discuss projects and exchange ideas and information regarding job opportunities. All considerations stem from this; that is why we turn to members of the group to tell us about their work, and their needs. To that end, along with the introductory letter for the year we sent a questionnaire to ND's hoping the response would enable us to see who our constituents are, what they are doing and most importantly, what they want us to do for them. I'm sorry to say that from a mailing of 200, we received only 13 responses. Worse, the turnout for the meeting here at the LMDA office was extremely poor. Three New Dramaturgs, one proxy, and two new inquisitive non-LMDA people showed up. Even with a turnout of six people, we

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**Co-Presidents**  
Tim Sanford  
(Playwrights Horizons)  
Erin Sanders  
(Second Stage Theatre)  
**VP-Communications:**  
John Glorie  
(South Coast Rep)



**Secretary:**  
Jayme Koszyn  
(Huntington Theatre Co.)  
**Treasurer:**  
Michael Bigelow Dixon  
(Actors Theatre of Louisville)  
**New Dramaturg Coordinator:**  
Julie Blehls - (Work House Theater)



**Script Exchange Editor:**  
Lynn M. Thompson (Circle Rep)  
**Administrator:**  
Emily Morse (Arden Party)  
**Production Diaries Editor:**  
Mark Bly (Yale)  
**University Caucus:**  
Jayme Koszyn  
Susan Jonas  
Geoffrey Proehl (Univ. of Puget Sound)





(New Dramaturgs  
continued from page one)

discussed some insightful and useful ideas. Our ambition is to inspire current members of ND's to be more participatory and to aggressively recruit new members from that pool of theatre artists who perform the function of a dramaturg without holding that staff position. We encourage regional members to form ND groups under the auspices of their local VPs. A time slot at the annual conference will permit a general confab amongst these groups. In the meantime, the newsletter can serve as a forum for discourse amongst ourselves. We welcome any comments or questions addressed to the ND column. To return to the ideas tabled at the introductory meeting, Shirley Fishman suggested a model of "Modular Internships." These would serve a dual purpose: to allow NDs to work on projects as a means of introduction to the professional world, while introducing theatres without dramaturgs to our profession. This last point is a key one in our plans for expanded activity, tying in with those people who function as unacknowledged dramaturgs, this heightened consciousness on the part of theatre artists should mobilize early career professionals as well as our group. Keeping in the spirit of active communication, roundtable discussions are being planned for the spring. Let me close by reminding everyone that we are here for you. If this group is to be a success, we need energetic participation from all of our members. Let us know what you're working on. Recommend projects. Refer people. If you don't live in the New York Metro region, keep in touch through your regional VPs. LET US KNOW YOU'RE OUT THERE, AND WE'LL BE THE STRONGER FOR IT.

—Julie Bleha

## THE FOLLOWING ARE MINUTES FROM THE ANNUAL MEETING AT THE ATLANTA CONFERENCE IN JUNE 1994.

The first bit of business on the agenda was the announcement of the new Executive Committee. Tim Sanford, Erin Sanders and Vicky Abrash announced the results of the election. Tim Sanford and Erin Sanders are Co-Presidents; Michael Dixon is Treasurer; John Glorie is Vice President of Communications and Jayme Koszyn is Secretary.

Seventy-four people voted Yes; 2 people voted No, and 1 person Abstained.

### QUESTION OF PROCESS OF NOMINATION

We vote every two years. In the past, nominations for President have been made by active members. The nominated President would then propose a Slate and active membership would vote Yes or No. There have been some questions about the nomination and election process. Should all positions be nominated? Should the President choose officers? Any ideas??? Nichole Gantshar spoke in favor of the current process. Presumably the President has been around a while and would be capable of organizing a functional executive committee based on knowing who's out there in the professional world. Tim Sanford brought up the notion of having a President who is not located in New York City. Although this is not the current practice, the notion has come up in the past.

### FIVE YEAR PLAN

Concerning the issue of having a President not located in the New York City area, Vicky Abrash suggests this is something that should get resolved by the Five Year Planning Committee. The office and all the LMDA history are located in New York City. Having a President outside the New York Metropolitan area would be a problem right now

Perhaps it could be structured so that we have a NY President with a non-NY Vice President.

■ Cattaneo: There are so few dramaturgs working in New York as opposed to the rest of the country that rotating officers is important. If you can anticipate being in New York and time in your career permits, please offer yourself as an officer.

■ Michael Dixon posed the question, Why does the President need an office? What does s/he need? Vicky's response to Michael's question: Hands on help with mailings, constant contact with administrator, all the office files are located there, grant applications, access to printing and postage. We can't have the files unavailable for the time it would take to move them. Perhaps there should be a new structure, open to restructuring ideas. Maybe the President should be more of an idea person.

■ Robert Menna: One person with access to files, and one person at conference site.

■ Vicky: Encourages everyone to be in touch with Tim and Erin with ideas. Also please be more involved. There is a turnover every two years that creates openings for new blood and new relationships. We need to hear from you. If you're interested in being a regional vice president or anything, let us know.

### REGIONAL STRUCTURE AND NEW DRAMATURGS

At this time, most of the activity is in the New York Metropolitan area because it's centralized. Hard to gather people in other regions based on proximity. Jayme Koszyn (Secretary, Regional VP coordinator, University Pre-Conference organizer and formerly most active regional

(Co-Presidents continued from page one)

just of dramaturgs) in the national theater. Our ultimate goal is empowerment. By demonstrating the creativity, insight, and versatility of our membership, we will establish our ability to lead our theaters.

We close by reminding you that LMDA is a member-driven organization. As co-presidents, we promise to give our time vigorously to the organization to insure the excellence and expansion of its programs. But we expect the membership to reciprocate by sharing its ideas and responses to us and to each other. In the coming months, we will be polling the membership about a number of issues: the effectiveness of Scriptshare and the newsletter and possible changes in the by-laws. We urge you all to respond.

VP) will be in charge of revitalizing the regional VP structure. Recommendations should go to Jayme.

■ Is Canada one region? Who are the possible VP candidates within Canada? Please give your suggestions to Jayme.

■ Should someone from Canada always be on the slate of Executive officers? With President nominating the slate, how does someone unknown get nominated. Seems impractical. Maybe Vice President should be Canadian, or create a Canadian liaison. How should we approach that?

■ Judith Rudakoff: The travel expenses for the LMDA conferences especially with the exchange rate is very costly and effects Canadian participation. We need outreach to Canada and Central and South America.

We would like more involvement. The growth of the Canadian membership has been good for the organization. We would like to

### REGIONAL VICE-PRESIDENTS

**Northwest:**  
Robert Merina  
(Intiman Theatre)  
Cynthia White  
(Oregon Shakespeare Festival)



**Northern California:**  
Nancy Griffiths  
(Berkeley Repertory Theater)  
Mark Cuddy  
(Sacramento Theater Co.)



**Southern California:**  
Frank Dwyer  
(Mark Taper Forum)

**Four Corners:**  
Elizabeth Ramirez  
(Arizona Theater Company)  
Aden Ross  
(Salt Lake Acting Co.)



**Homestead States:**  
Chris Baker  
(Alley Theater)  
Brad Mooy  
(Arkansas Rep)



**ANNOUNCEMENT:** Plans for the fourth annual University Pre-Conference are already underway, to be held on Friday, June 23. Jayme Koszyn will be overseeing pre-conference planning, along with Susan Jonas and Geoff Proehl, who will be putting together panels. They are looking for anyone who has suggestions or would like to participate in any way. Geoff's session will focus on the possible roles of dramaturgy and the dramaturg in undergraduate education. Call him with suggestions or questions at the Theatre Department at the University of Puget Sound (1500 N. Warner) in Tacoma, Washington, 98416; phone 206/756-3101; e-mail, gproehl@ups.edu. Susan and Jayme will be organizing the dramaturgy and university round-table where members can discuss topics related to the field; contact Susan at 212/254-0246 or Jayme at 617/266-7900, ext. 2528 if you are interested in participating.

(continued from page two)

know what the Canadian constituents need from LMDA. Everything comes out of the organization," said Vicky Abrash.

■ Anne: Funding sources here fund LMDA but not Canada. We want to have everyone together. Perhaps we could create some link with the 501c3 status and start an LMDA in Canada.

■ Vicky: That takes just 1 or 2 people and some money.

■ Elizabeth Ramirez: The script exchange is invaluable. It seems that people don't always come to the conferences but VP structure keeps the ongoing network. It's part of the overall structure.

#### FUTURE CONFERENCES

Richard Rose, an LMDA Board Member who could not be with us in Atlanta suggested Stratford, Ontario in 2 years. It was at this point that Vicky Abrash passed the Presidential baton to Tim Sanford and Erin Sanders.

■ Vicky: Do we want to keep the annual conference? Same form? Planning takes a lot of time.

■ Susan Jonas: Wants to keep it annual. If that means more support, we'll give it.

■ Lenny Pinna: As a freelancer and outside New York, the annual conference is the only way of keeping in touch. Regional affiliation is not strong enough.

■ Judith Rudakoff: Canada in two years is a good idea but rather than Stratford, how about Toronto? It's the third largest theater center in the English speaking world. There's a lot of work produced there and it covers a wide range of aesthetic. She was against Stratford based on its location and proximity to Toronto. It's three hours outside Toronto; limited access.

■ Bob White: This conference was my third. I left Seattle feeling hostile and bored. Montreal was a non-event. Atlanta confirmed Kugler's reasons for getting me to join. Expressed issues of dramaturgical function with panels and social tone. I loathe Stratford.

■ Tim: It's rare when there's theater but that's not why I come.

■ Response: You live in New York. Some participants are hungry for theater. Atlanta conference was more engaging, different environment. We've never been to Denver or New Mexico.

■ Vicky: Toronto, any other ideas?

■ Anne: Perhaps we could schedule a specific day to go to Stratford as a side trip?

■ Judith: Yes it would be possible to do that but the Festival happens in April.

■ Allen Kennedy: Conference is a retreat. What about Pepperdine to escape the urban world?

■ Tim: We should consider College campuses. UCLA may be an option. The logistics will be interesting. When you talk theater, there's the Taper, South Coast Rep in Costa Mesa, San Diego, Equity Waver Theaters, East West Players. We're hoping to enlist the help of the Aubrey Skirball Kenis Foundation. It would be productive to create some dialogue with people at the Taper. We will probably have to get buses to take people around.

■ Michael Dixon: For the various festivals at Actors Theatre of Louisville, Budget will donate mini-vans and then are driven around by interns.

■ Allen: I would love to see us make work in a certain way.

■ Michael: Tim Miller's workshop in LA does that.

■ Bob White: Canadian Professional Theater. Stories that help organizations share stories. Gets people started.

(continued on back page)

## NEW E-MAIL ADDRESS FOR DRAMATURGY LIST

The LMDA University Caucus E-Mail project has a new contact address: "gproehl@ups.edu." Send a note to this address to request a list of e-mail addresses of dramaturgs and individuals interested in dramaturgy (writers, directors, teachers, and students). You can also add your name to this list or use it as a bulletin board to pass on information or ask questions. The contact address listed in the last issue had a typo, so if you tried to get through and failed try again with this one. For further information or assistance you can also call Geoff Proehl at the Univ. of Puget Sound: 206-756-3101.

For all those interested parties, especially those who attended this event at the Atlanta Conference, Michele Volansky sent the following article which she found in the Louisville Courier Journal last August.

## STONE MOUNTAIN SHOW TO SOFTEN REBEL IMAGERY STONE MOUNTAIN, GA. (AP)

A new laser show being developed for Stone Mountain Park, where the faces of Confederate heroes are carved into the exposed granite, will feature the Confederate battle flag and the song "Dixie" in a less prominent role — if at all. Laser shows have been popular for a decade at Stone Mountain, the South's version of Mount Rushmore. The rebel flag has been emblazoned across the mountain's face during the show, which has featured an Elvis Presley rendition of "Dixie." A park spokeswoman said the changes are being made because the laser show is being redesigned, not because of criticism.

The publication of **WHAT IS DRAMATURGY?** This is to announce the forthcoming publication of *What Is Dramaturgy?* edited by Bert Cardullo. This book is a collection of essays and interviews that attempts to explain and demonstrate the role of the dramaturg in the theatre. Represented in this volume are noted theatre practitioners—among them Martin Esslin, Kenneth Tynan, and John Lahr—from the three Western countries where dramaturgy is extensively practiced: Germany, England and the United States. In addition, *What Is Dramaturgy?* includes a section on dramaturgy in Eastern Europe as well as an anti-dramaturgical manifesto by Carol Rosen.

*What Is Dramaturgy?* will be published by Peter Lang in February 1995. Please contact their book-order department at 62 West 45th St., New York, NY 10036-4202; phone (800) 770-5264.

**Great Lakes:**  
Roger Danforth  
(Cleveland Playhouse)  
Charles Smith  
(Northwestern University)



**Ohio River:**  
Janet Allen  
(Indiana Rep)  
Susan Gregg  
(Repertory Theater of St. Louis)



**Northeast:**  
David Kent  
(Merrimack Rep)  
Lenora Inez Brown  
(Syracuse Stage)



**Southeast:**  
Adam Versenyi  
(Playmakers Rep)  
Carolyn Cole  
(North Carolina Playwrights Center)  
Del Hamilton  
(Seven Stages)



**ANNOUNCEMENT:**

The New York Metropolitan area will be having a regional symposium on "Criticism and Dramaturgy." It is planned for April 13 at 6pm in the auditorium at the CUNY Grad. Center, 33 W. 42nd St. We will be following this announcement with a letter giving more details. We hope other regions can organize similar symposia in their regions in the Spring.

**CONGRATULATIONS!**

to Lenora Champagne and Robert Lyons. Amelie Louise Champagne Lyons was born on Dec. 19, 1994 @ 1:52 pm. She weighed 6lbs and was 18 inches long.

*(Continued from page three)*

■ Elizabeth R.: Invited Tim Miller to Oregon to do some work. He had never worked with a dramaturg and was very excited by the process. He's very generous with his time. She is willing to talk to him.

■ Comment: I am intrigued by the idea of dramaturgical functions that's served. Is there a way of outreaching to whoever is doing it in LA?

■ Erin: We will be outreaching to the film community. Artistic Directors, Directors and Story Editors. Approves of Anne's idea of doing a conference in the West, or Midwest.

■ Anne: We have active members in Dallas and Denver. Who's in Utah or

Santa Fe? Maybe we should consider that area in for the conference in three years.

■ Lenora Brown: Doesn't want to go to Colorado.

■ Nichole Gantshar: What about Milwaukee? Great conference city.

■ Tim: Eventually we'll do another conference in New York.

■ Tim: I went to Occidental College in Eagle Rock. I would not like to go to the part of town in which USC is located, but it is close to the Taper.

■ Erin: Dorm set-up...Do people want to know other available housing options?

Response: Yes.

**IN MEMORY of**

*Lynn Sobieski*

Nov. 21, 1955  
Sept. 24, 1994

■ Kugler: A good bar is important.

■ Anne: Try to get your organizations to send you. Helps you, helps us.

Majority voted Toronto in Two years.

**SAVE THE DATE!**

Annual Conference  
June 23 - 26 in L.A.

**Mid-Atlantic:**  
Sydney Mahone  
(Crossroads Theatre)  
Michael Hollinger  
(Wima Theatre)



**Canada:**  
Michael Springate  
(Prairie Theatre Exchange)  
Judith Rudakoff  
(York University)  
D.D. Kugler  
(Northern Light Theatre)



**Metropolitan New York:**  
Bruce Whitacre  
(Manhattan Theatre Club)  
Victoria Abrash  
Lenora Champagne  
(C.S.C.)



**BOARD:**  
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Lewis Falb  
Christopher Gould  
Lynn Holst  
Cynthia Jenner  
Joyce Ketay  
Diane Krausz

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