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Review: The Newsletter of the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas, volume 15, issue 1

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The
Newsletter
of the
Literary Managers
and Dramaturgs
of the
Americas



review

From the Editors

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Fall/Winter 2004

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Dramaturgical Debris

This issue of *Review* is long overdue. Among the reasons for its tardiness is a kind of sea change taking over the newsletter: *Review* is now an online publication. Not only does this change facilitate certain pragmatics of production and distribution, we hope this will make *Review* more readable, accessible, and timely.

Thinking about and planning for a move to the web has put us in mind of all the different metaphors that people have used for talking about the internet and the range of information that it accesses, from the valuable to the trashy. And it was while poking around on the internet that we discovered another one of these metaphors for the internet: the Western Garbage Patch. Over the last ten years, sailors and oceanographers have identified a stretch of ocean between Los Angeles and Hawaii that is covered with floating pieces of trash,

mostly various kinds of plastic. Fishing buoys, lost shipments of sneakers, and 29,000 bathtub rubber duckies. The ocean currents in that part of the ocean keep the Patch isolated and generally stable in location, though it continues to expand. Currently, that Patch covers an area the size of Texas.

We can scarcely comprehend an ecological crisis spot of this magnitude, but we also find something that stimulates our curiosity. Like the archeological digs that, on much smaller scales, find garbage pits that reveal much about the lives of past cultures, the Western Garbage Patch is a kind of vast, disorderly record of contemporary consumer culture: the things we make and buy and trade, and the reckless desire that often motivates our consumptions.

We can only hope that someday a global superfund cleans up the

the Western Garbage Patch — it's the sort of thing we'd be happy to see exist only in memory. But as awful as it is, it's a powerful image; a disturbingly seductive prompt to other ways of thinking about the detritus of world culture, the amalgamated stuff and trash on the internet, and the messy chaos of history.

The Production Notebooks, discussed in the IN PRINT section of this issue, put us in mind of historical metaphors. Or, more aptly, metaphors of history: collection, archive, encyclopedia. Reflecting on the history of LMDA itself, the year 2005 marks the 20th Anniversary of the founding of LMDA. In a special segment that we are inaugurating in this issue, we are featuring two interviews with LMDA past presidents Alexis Greene and David Copelin as part of our celebration. We will feature more interviews with past presidents in our next issue of *Review* and the celebration will culminate in a special presentation at the 2005 LMDA Conference in Austin in June. For more on the upcoming conference, please see the LMDA website at www.lmda.org.

We hope you enjoy *Review* in its new format, and we welcome your responses—and contributions! On any topic! Send us the news, views, and updates that *Review* really should be all about. So email us already.

—D.J. and Shelley

review

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Review is published twice yearly by the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas. Submissions should ideally conform to MLA format (but we're not too picky). Spelling differences between Canadian and US English will be preserved. As per the name of our organization, "dramaturg" will be the default spelling, but we will preserve the spelling of any submitter who prefers "dramaturge." The same will hold for "theatre" and "theater."

Inquiries from prospective contributors are encouraged. PROJECTS-IN-PROCESS queries should be directed to D.J. Hopkins: "D.J. Hopkins" <dhopkins@artsci.wustl.edu>. Queries regarding Review's IN PRINT section should be directed to Madeleine Oldham: "Madeleine Oldham" <madeleine@centerstage.org>. General inquiries and inquiries regarding feature articles may be directed to Shelley Orr: "Shelley Orr" <morr@artsci.wustl.edu>. Regional Update submissions should be directed to the appropriate LMDA regional representative. Questions regarding the Regional Updates section should be directed to Megan Monaghan: "Megan Monaghan" <megan.monaghan@woodruffcenter.org>. Review reserves the right to edit (for length) any Update submission without notification. Regional Updates should be 400–600 words in length: keep everybody informed about special events, readings, workshops, lectures, limited performances — the sort of thing that didn't make the subscription brochure.

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LMDA CONFERENCE 2004

life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness

by Michele Volansky

LMDA ANNUAL CONFERENCE • 24-27 June 2004 • Philadelphia

One man with courage makes a majority. —Andrew Jackson

Over the course of four days, June 24-27, 2004, nearly 200 dramaturgs, literary managers, other theater artists, and (shockingly) curious “civilians” joined together to investigate the various interpretations of the phrase “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” and the impact such a philosophy has had on the dramaturgical line of inquiry.

Thursday

Sessions for Thursday were built around the notion of “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness in one’s JOB” and the event was held in various spaces at the Wilma Theater. It was important to the planners that the space be welcoming and theatrical, as we sought to investigate the often-contradictory notions of “happiness” and “work.”

Schedule:

12:00-1:15 Speed dating (an introduction game)

1:15-2:45 Breakout Sessions

Informal sessions on issues related to the areas:

Early Career, Academic, Freelance, Institutional

3:00-4:30 Breakout Sessions

Using our Voices to Serve our Theaters

Using our Voices to Serve our Communities

4:45-6 Breakout Sessions

Technology and the Modern Literary Office

Negotiating Contracts with Playwrights, Actors and Directors

8:00 Keynote – at the Beth Zion Beth Israel Synagogue

Richard Stengel, President and CEO of the National Constitution Center

Members of the Conference Committee, along with the Board and Executive Committees, were impressed and pleased at the enormous turn-out the first day. Issues in breakout sessions ranged from the practical (“what do I actually do with my graduate degree,” “what are communal health plans that LMDA might offer to freelance members”) to the philosophical (“how might we foster play development on college campuses,” “how does one maintain an objectivity over the years at a particular theater”), while the afternoon focused on creating “wish lists” for office technology (working with software designer David Chaplin Loebell), a frank discussion about the role of contracts (for both dramaturgs and the artists with whom they work), community-based work that is dramaturg-driven (in concept, creation and execution), and the role the words “idea,” “status quo” and “revamping the audition process” have in a large theater.

Our keynote speaker, Rick Stengel, took his time with the membership to discuss the topic of “leadership.” Using his friend and collaborator



Top: “Speed Dating” Conference participants get to know one another.
Middle: A Breakout Session in progress.

Bottom: Keynote Speaker Rick Stengel with Michele Volansky.

tor Nelson Mandela as a model, Stengel outlined the various ways one might be seen as a “leader,” from the obvious (calm in moments of crisis) to the more mystical (“leaders walk behind their charges”). Everyone emerged from his personable talk inspired by his charge that we nurture not only theatrical leaders from within our ranks, but cultural, academic, social and political leaders as well.

LMDA CONFERENCE 2004



ous ways dramaturgs could make their mark. On this particular day, the scheduled “speed dating” was greeted with uproarious applause – we believe that we will keep it for the next conference. It seems to be a most effective ice-breaker.

Schedule

10:00-11:00 Speed Dating

11:15-12:15 Regional Caucuses – an opportunity to network within one’s geographic region, led by Megan Monaghan.

12:30-2:00 Breakout Sessions

The Pursuit of Leadership – In Rehearsal and in Your Career
Political Theater – What Does it Mean Now?

3:15-4:45 Swap Sessions – examine the other issue

5:00-6:00 “The Riot Act – Sharing What We Learned”
Led by Mary Hagy

Evening Individual theater-going

Friday’s sessions afforded the membership the opportunity to expand the conversation to include key guests Grace Grillet and Lue Douthit (both of whom participated in the Stanford University Arts Leadership program during the summer of 2003); Kelly Robinson of the Toronto-based Mirvish Productions; as well as long-time LMDA member, Obie-winner, literary agent and activist Morgan Jenness. These unique perspectives, coupled with the networking of the morning session, enabled attendees to examine the role of the dramaturg beyond the walls of our own theaters. The sessions were particularly useful to the early career dramaturgs.

As anticipated, the Political Theater session was particularly contentious, with expectations and analyses of the U.S. political climate clearly informing the discussion. It was particularly illuminating to view the then upcoming U.S. election through the lens of our Canadian members. Their distance, coupled with their own national questions (Quebec, their relationship to Great Britain) made the sessions both fruitful and global, whether the topic was on theatrical programming or on grass-roots organization.

In the evening, several people went to see the Wilma Theater’s production of *Jesus Hopped the “A” Train*, while others went to the Arden Theater production of *Hard Times*. Many attendees were able to see the work of Philadelphia’s artists and response was overwhelmingly positive.

Saturday

This day’s events, titled “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness in One’s LIFE” were held at the august Union League, which afforded the membership unique access to this historic building. It was important to the planning committee that we encourage the membership to take the tour of the Union League in order to better understand their current policies and practices. LMDA members, who generally don’t like to be told to wear, were advised (and obliged) to wear long pants and no jeans.

It was also important for us to investigate, while in this building,



Top: Breakout Session on Political Theater.
Middle: At the Annual Banquet.
Bottom: Scott Horstein, winner of the Elliott Hayes Award for 2004.

Friday

Buoyed by Thursday’s sessions, Friday was again a day of provocative conversation. The topic, “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness in One’s FIELD” sought to examine the role of the dramaturg in the larger theatrical context. To that end, we invited Philadelphia theater and cultural leaders as well as arts leaders from outside the area to discuss vari-

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what is meant by “free time.” The Union League, as both a social club and a civic organization, offered us the embodiment of this seeming contradiction.

Schedule:

9:00 Tour of the Union League

10:00-11:00 Skill Sessions—*Hands on workshops*
Making Time Work: Priorities Management, led by Susan Smith
Having Time to Play

11:15-12:15 Swap Sessions

12:15-2:30 LMDA Annual General Meeting

2:30-5:00 “Just Like the Mummies, Dramaturgs Take to the Streets”
a cultural/historical/political scavenger hunt created by Ed Wagner

7:30 Annual Banquet—*Included in program: awarding of the Elliott Hayes Award in Dramaturgy and the transfer of the presidency.*

In an ideal world, the membership would have realized that the word “play” does not have to be in opposition to the word “work.” And, fortunately, this year, the ideal world was in Philadelphia. From Susan Smith’s smartly-designed tips on day planning to the lists of activities suggested by Shannon O’Donnell and Geoff Proehl (inspired by *The Artist’s Way*), LMDA members attempted to reconcile both their frustration and their joy at how they navigate time. The freedom that was permissible in the “rules” for the scavenger hunt allowed natives and non-natives to explore the secret treasures hidden in and around Philadelphia’s streets. With teams given credit for their creativity in setting up photos as well as in answering questions on the scavenger hunt, this final event was responsible for the seeming antithesis to dramaturgy – a sports-like competition. Who knew dramaturgs had it in them?

Sunday

In an attempt to facilitate the greatest participation possible, Sunday’s only scheduled event, the “Conference Wrap-up” was held at the conference hotel. While many people had to leave during the wrap-up session, attendance was still at an all-time high.

Brian Quirt, Artistic Director of Nightswimming, a Toronto-based theater company and VP Canada for LMDA, led the session. Past feedback sessions have utilized the Liz Lerman method of feedback, which LMDA has adopted as a highly productive and informative way of assessing not only conferences, but also theater and other arts productions, peer work and dramaturg-artist conversations. Quirt used Lerman as his inspiration, and crafted it slightly. He posed 4 questions:

“What compliments would you like to give to the Conference Committee?”

“What questions do you have for the Conference Committee?”

“Name a moment that stood out for you”

“What would you urge the Conference Committee to consider for next year?”

These questions, in this order, generated many thoughts, reflections and opinions, which are obviously too numerous to mention here. Compliments included the idea of swapping sessions, using the city not just as a back-drop but as a key component to the sessions and the advocacy of “play.” Questions ranged from why the conference seemed expensive to why we did not include theater critics in the discussion to why we were unable to include biographical additions to the packet of information.

Moments that stood out were Michele Volansky’s use of a mini-Liberty Bell to call the sessions to order, Morgan Jenness’s graceful comments on politics (and rounding up many dramaturgs to see *Fahrenheit 9/11* after the banquet) and the sheer number of early career dramaturgs and literary managers filling a good portion of the Wilma’s theater. Finally, considerations worth urging for next year included another aggressive push for diversity, a desire to never forget the notion of citizenship at every future conference and the opportunity to share “war stories.”

We would be remiss were we not to acknowledge the generosity of the Wilma Theater in hosting us Thursday and Friday, the Union League for Saturday, the Doubletree on Sunday and to Fergie’s Bar for serving as our “official conference bar.”



Top: “Alumni” of the Dramaturgy Debut Panel at the Association for Theatre In Higher Education.

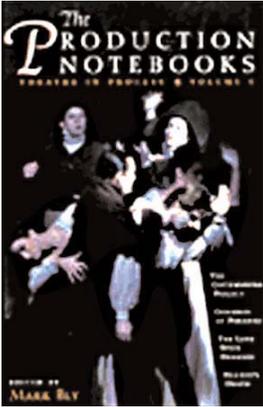
Bottom: As Michele Volansky ends her term as President, she welcomes Liz Engelman to the start of hers at the banquet.

in print

The Production Notebooks

edited by Mark Bly

a conversation between Danielle Mages Amato and D.J. Hopkins



The Production Notebooks: Theatre in Process. Vol. I. Ed. Mark Bly. New York: TCG, 1996.

The Production Notebooks: Theatre in Process. Vol. II. Ed. Mark Bly. New York: TCG, 2001.

The first two volumes of *The Production Notebooks: Theatre In Process*, the Theatre Communications Group series edited by Mark Bly, were published in 1996 and 2001. Each volume includes an introduction by Bly and four chapters written by working dramaturgs. Each chapter describes the dramaturg's experience of work on a particular project: the dramaturg's introduction to the project, her or his contributions over weeks or months of work, the collaborator's contributions, and finally audience and critical response to the production. Danielle Mages Amato and D.J. Hopkins sit down, virtually, to talk about these influential books.



D.M.A. What first strikes me about the notebooks is that they offer a response to the dramaturg's longing for some kind of documentation of the creative process — not to fix it or stabilize it — not as a “faithful” representation of the time-based, embodied process that it is, but as an aid to other dramaturgs, as a record of work lovingly done.

D.J.H. Yes, a response, a record. I think they do two things: they give the dramaturg a “thing”; whereas the set designer can point to a model or to the set itself and say “I made this,” so often dramaturgs don't have a concrete “product” that others can see. As my friend and director Deb Falb once put it, the dramaturg's work disappears into everybody else's work. But I know that I've felt the desire to have a thing: translation, adaptation, image wall, book of research, an essay, whatever. The notebooks give a material substance to the often immaterial work of the turg. Were you at UCSD the year that we were comparing dramaturgs to the angels in *Wings of Desire*? Invisible, substanceless, very well dressed, hanging out in the library, helping the desperate?

D.M.A. Yes, I think we often talk and write about the ephemeral nature of the production itself, but the ephemeral, never-repeated nature of process is rarely confronted, as it is so well here. I always wondered why I felt that powerful affinity for *Wings of Desire*!

D.J.H. The other thing that the notebooks do: they provide a kind of first draft of theatre history, and I think that Bly's editing is self-conscious about this function. The epigrams to the first book are from de Tocqueville and Brecht, both of which seem to relate the personal and the historical. And there are really three epigrams to the second book: quotes from Moss Hart and Herman Melville refer to the organization of “chaos,” and Bly includes Suzan-Lori Parks's wonderful line: “You should write it down because if you don't write it down then they will come along and tell the future that we did not exist.” While Parks was of course writing about African-American history, Bly shows how portable the phrase is, how applicable to the theatre (Parks's primary medium), and to all of history itself.

D.M.A. Here's a question I'd like to put to the production notebooks: who is meant to use them, and how are they meant to be used? Having asked that, I'll answer my own question. I think anyone interested in reading or teaching these plays in the future could benefit from reading the *Notebooks*. As any dramaturg knows, there's no better way to get to know a play than to work on a production, because it forces you to confront the play's meaning and structure in such a concrete way. It forces you to understand every moment, written and not-written. Maybe the next best thing to working on a production is to think through a production with a dramaturg who worked on it. One of my favorite moments in the notebooks is when Jim Lewis, in his piece on the “Clytemnestra Project,” mentions, almost in passing, this routine part of his daily work: “I gather and read almost all 60-plus versions of these three plays” (I:13). Wow. We read more before breakfast than most theatre artists do, well, ever.

D.J.H. I've been asked to teach a course on dramaturgy at Wash U next semester. You bet I'm going to use these books. The brief history of dramaturgy that starts the first volume would make that book valuable all by itself. But the individual entries give the reader insight into personal experience and give practitioners insight into, to put it bluntly, rip-off-able approaches to production challenges.

Danielle Mages Amato is the dramaturg / associate literary manager of The Studio Theatre in Washington, DC. She holds an MFA in Dramaturgy and a PhD in theatre from the University of California, San Diego. Her current book project, *From Organic to Postorganic: Changing Theories of Body and Drama*, explores the ways in which aesthetic theories in the theatre continue to parallel scientific understandings of the human body.

D.J. Hopkins is a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in Performing Arts and English at Washington University in St. Louis. He holds a PhD and an MFA from the University of California, San Diego. He recently served as dramaturg for an adaptation of Kate Chopin's novel *The Awakening*.

D.M.A. I'd be interested to know if anyone has used the *Production Notebooks* in the classroom to accompany a reading of these texts. If students are reading *In The Blood*, say, in a dramatic literature class, I think they could really benefit from reading John Dias's piece. It could be a successful way to focus student attention on production, and off the text as this impenetrable monolith. Scholars of these artists should also be required to read a dramaturgical notebook of a production of a play. How can you write about Wilson's work without knowing how it's shaped? Same for Shange.

D.J.H. I agree. I've used documentary video when teaching Wilson, but Baker's notebook provides valuable tools for considering Wilson's theatre, if not a colorful glimpse of just how quirky the man himself is.

D.M.A. Of course I also think dramaturgs could read the *Notebooks* for support — moral support, but also as an aid to imagining the many roles they could play in the projects that they work on.

D.J.H. So much of the writing is, though formal in tone, very personal. One of the great things about the *Notebooks* is that in each of them, at some point, the author says something to the effect of: I wonder if any of us has any clue where this show is going? Katherine Profeta's remarks about *Geography* capture the sense: "In any project built from scratch there's a fine line between artistic freedom and artistic free fall" (2: 200). Such expressions are rarely preserved in more academic, sanitized versions of theatre history (and I use "sanitized" as a bad word, knowing that as a theatre historian I'm one of the people who could write that kind of stuff). I think such displays of vulnerability humanize the theatrical process, as well as, more critically, demonstrating the instability of any final product, be it a text[, a production process,]or a performance.

D.M.A. I have to mention how much I like that Bly describes the *Notebooks* as "chronicles" of "thought-provoking explorations" (xiii). It presents the theatrical process as a journey; it makes the dramaturgs sound almost like theatrical Lewis and Clarks, conducting expeditions and sending back these notebooks as the result of their forays into the field.

D.J.H. What an appropriate comparison, this being the 200th anniversary of the start of the Lewis and Clark expedition. I think that the productions chosen for these volumes invite such historical

metaphors. Aeschylus and Shakespeare, Danton and Hester Prynne — the historical process is put on the stage in many of the pieces. Paul Walsh describes the new home of Theatre de la Jeune Leune as "vast, textured with history," and I think that phrase aptly describes these notebooks at their best (1: 195).

I have only one wish for the future of the *Notebooks* series (I think we're in agreement: let there be more notebooks!), that they could become less uniform. Several of the authors mention the many different approaches they took throughout a process: analyses, outlines, edits, adaptations, sketches, image research: I'd like to see some of that, to see a notebook that conveys a sense of the multiplicity and the "chaos" of the dramaturgical / historical process.

D.M.A. I completely agree. More notebooks! I'd also welcome a more flexible format, maybe even something that moved toward "The Production Scrapbooks." Depending on the creative team, some collaborations lean heavily on an exchange of visual materials — found or famous artwork, pages ripped out of magazines, weird collaborative drawings — and it would be nice to find a place for this material in the *Notebooks*. I'd also be open to more incoherence in the textual material, and the possibility of a notebook with less narrative.

I'm also glad that Bly decided to make the success or failure of the production, in the eyes of critics or even the artists themselves, insignificant. Bly writes: "We are interested in the evolution of the project, particularly discussions of the obstacles encountered, temporary aesthetic detours and artistic choices made." (xiv).

D.J.H. I think if "success" had been a criteria, two of the most exciting notebooks might have been left out. Walsh concludes the *Children of Paradise* notebook with the company's response to the mixed reviews of their sprawling, ambitious project that connected WWII, early 19th century, and, indirectly, current events (1: 199). And Lise Ann Johnson's documentation of Robert Lepage's *Shakespeare Rapid Eye Movement* records a fascinating amalgam of ideas that doesn't quite come together, but are nevertheless inspiring. Bly seems determined to document "failures" within the process and not only "successes" (whatever either of those words may mean), and this emphasis on process over product may be the greatest strength of the series.

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Anniversary Celebration

Interviews with Past LMDA Presidents Alexis Greene and David Copelin conducted by Nichole Gantshar

As part of our celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the founding of LMDA, we are taking time to reflect on the history of our organization as a way to mark the distance covered by both LMDA and the field of dramaturgy, which may provide a useful way to gauge where we would like to go next. Nichole Gantshar is in the process of interviewing those individuals who have served as president of LMDA to get a sense of the challenges that each faced and the hopes each had for dramaturgy and for the organization. We will be continuing this series in the next issue of Review. In this first installment, Nichole spoke with Alexis Greene and David Copelin. Alexis served as LMDA's first and third president and David was president from 1988-89. Enjoy this view into the early years of LMDA.

Alexis Greene • LMDA President 1985-86, 1987-88

Are you still a dramaturg and involved in LMDA (please state your current job)? Why or Why not?

Currently I am literary manager at the Barrington Stage Company in Sheffield, Massachusetts, where last year I ran a national playwriting competition. But that is really a part-time job, and I have always mingled dramaturgical duties with other work, such as writing books about theatre and reviewing theatre.

What was the biggest challenge facing the organization during your presidency?

I was president twice: the first year of LMDA, in 1986, and again during its third year. I would say the biggest challenge was to prove that we were an organization with staying power, that our reason for coming into being was sufficient to sustain the organization indefinitely.

What accomplishment are you most proud of during your tenure?

I'm most proud that the organization gained a foothold with members and the theatre community, that we proved the organization was necessary and effective. On a practical level, I was proud that I was able to secure a home at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, for after our early years at New Dramatists, we had to find another venue. CASTA, largely through the assistance of Edwin Wilson, gave us a free home for many years.

How has the profession changed since you were president?

I think it's clear that the profession has become generally accepted, that playwrights and directors assume that, when they work at a theatre, chances are there will be a dramaturg on hand to participate.

Clearly, also, the role of literary manager has become accepted on the staffs of most theatres, where once upon a time they were a rarity.

What were your goals as president? Did you accomplish them? What were the roadblocks? Has any of that changed?

Again, my goal as president was mainly to increase the acceptance of this field that was relatively new in the American theatre. To be sure, there had always been "play doctors," but the idea of a dramaturg, a person who knew theatre in a practical way and also a scholarly way, was new, and the concept of a permanent literary manager on the staff of a theatre was also comparatively fresh. I wanted to establish the viability of the organization by establishing the tradition of an annual conference, and I achieved that. I and the members wanted to convince theatres that dramaturgs and literary managers should be paid more, should not be in the category of "last hired, first fired," and my success on that score was limited.

Can you share a funny anecdote/favorite story from during your tenure?

A funny anecdote...that's a hard one. I have memories of heading down to the post office with Larry Maslon and getting out enormous mailings. I have fond memories of sitting around New Dramatists during our brown-bag lunches [editor's note: LMDA first began as a series of lunches in NYC. The members would meet from time to time for the lunches Greene mentions]. I remember our first annual conference, at the O'Neill Playwrights Center, and listening to Joe Chaikin talk haltingly but beautifully about theatre. I remember sitting in C. Lee Jenner's living room in Greenwich Village (Jenner was co-founder with me) and hearing our pro-bono lawyer tell everyone in the place, which was crowded with dramaturgs, that, if our organi-

zation made it past the five-year mark, we would probably survive. So I don't know about funny, but those are some of the moments of our birth that I recall.

Who was your mentor?

Well, I suppose if I had a mentor it would have been Rod Marriott, the wonderful dramaturg and literary manager for Circle Repertory Company, who would sit in those brown-bag lunch sessions and talk quietly about plays, and I learned about new plays and young playwrights simply by listening to him. Susan Gregg, who at the time was literary manager at New Dramatists and is now associate artistic director at the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, was also enormously helpful.

What excites you about the profession? Why? Has that changed over the years?

What excited me back in 1986 and still excites me now is that the profession allows you to work with new writers and new plays. Obviously dramaturgy is vitally important when rehearsing and producing classical plays, but I've always been drawn to new writers. To me, there is something about helping a play move from the moment it lands on your desk, to a reading, to a workshop, and then to a full production that is incredibly creative and rewarding. It's a long, long process, potentially full of pitfalls. Can you convince your artistic director that the play is worth taking a chance on? Is the playwright open to working on the script? Can you get the best actors, the best director for the play? But on those occasions when it happens, there's a kind of joy in it.

David Copelin • *LMDA President 1988-89*

Are you still a dramaturg and involved in LMDA (please state your current job)? Why or Why not?

Yes to both. I am freelance now, being more of a playwright, but the turgish drive in me is still strong.

What was the biggest challenge facing the organization during your presidency?

The invasion of the academics, who at that time were mediocre time-servers. Things have improved a lot!

What accomplishment are you most proud of during your tenure?

Getting the first 2 Canadian members in Michael Devine & DD Kugler, and organizing the first Conference away from the East Coast in San Francisco (in 1989).

How has the profession changed since you were president?

It has grown, become better recognized, funded, respected, and varied in its approach and its applicability.

What were your goals as president? Did you accomplish them? What were the roadblocks? Has any of that changed?

I did accomplish the two goals above, making LMDA both international and truly national. Roadblocks were uncertain funding, a database that no one knew how to keep current, and power struggles on the executive. I believe it has all improved, not that I keep track.

Can you share a funny anecdote/favorite story from during your tenure?

At our conference, the keynote speaker was Anne Bogart. She spoke of a production that was great art, and consequently NOT meant to last. This phrase made a huge impression on me, as it helped me get over the *Das ist die ewige kunst* criterion.

Who was your mentor?

Robert Brustein and Gordon Rogoff

What excites you about the profession? Why? Has that changed over the years?

The brilliance, energy, and humanity of so many of us, and our belief in theatre's purpose and importance despite so much mediocrity and bottom-line thinking. I guess it's what has always excited me about dramaturgy in America, from its baby steps to its current lofty (?) heights.

LMDA Regional Updates

Even when we aren't meeting at our annual conference, LMDA members can stay connected with dramaturgs in their area through their Regional VP. Please feel invited to send news about theatrical happenings in your neck of the woods to your VP. Many regions hold LMDA gatherings throughout the year (often in connection with theatre festivals and the like)—your Regional VP can make you aware of those events. Or if you have an idea for an event, please contact your VP. Below is a list of the VPs along with their e-mail addresses. Go ahead, build those dramaturgical networks! We all know how useful they can be!

BUTTE (Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota): Kathleen McLennan—kathleen_mclennan@und.nodak.edu

CANADA: Brian Quirt—bquirt@interlog.com

GREATER MIDWEST (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin): Art Borreca—art-borreca@uiowa.edu, Adrien-Alice Hansel—ahansel@actorstheatre.org

METRO CHICAGO: Rachel Shteir—rshteir@depaul.edu

HOMESTEAD (Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas): Kae Koger—akoger@ou.edu

METRO PHILADELPHIA: Shannon O'Donnell—srodonnell@yahoo.com

MID-ATLANTIC (Delaware, Maryland, DC, Virginia, West Virginia): Madeleine Oldham—madeleine@centerstage.org

NYC: Elizabeth Bennett—ebennett@mtc-nyc.org

NORTHEAST (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, NY State, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont): [Marge Betley (on sabbatical)—mbetley@gevatheatre.org], Ilana Brownstein—sparkleturgy@earthlink.net

NORTHWEST (Northern California, Idaho, Oregon, Washington): Bronwyn Eisenberg—imogen@alumni.princeton.edu

PLAINS STATES (Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska): Susan Gregg—sgregg@repstl.org, Carter Lewis—carterwl@earthlink.net

ROCKIES (Colorado, Utah, Wyoming): Amy Jensen—amythyst-jensen@netscape.net

SOUTHEAST (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee): Freddie Ashley—freddie.ashley@woodruffcenter.org

SOUTHWEST (Arizona, Southern California, Nevada, New Mexico): Allison Horsley—ahorsley@ljp.ucsd.edu

LMDA CANADA

LMDA Canada's annual Mini-Conference on Dramaturgy was held in early July in Toronto. Case studies by artists from across Canada and abroad were presented to a full house of theatre professionals from Toronto and beyond. The conference was once again focused on dramaturgical process and dealt with designers, site-specific work, first time playwrights, devised work and political theatre.

The next event is our annual meeting in Calgary to be held on Friday March 4th at 1pm. This meeting brings together LMDA members and other interested artists from throughout Canada while they are in Calgary for the Alberta Theatre Projects Playrites Festival. I urge any and all LMDA members to join us at this wonderful festival and bring your ideas to our meeting that afternoon.

Finally, Canada LMDA Board members Iris Turcott and Kelly Robinson have attended their first board meetings this year, and we are delighted by their commitment and by the perspective they bring to the table. Look forward to more events in the future, and to an increased effort to stimulate conversation about dramaturgy in Canada.

Brian Quirt—VP, Canada

“The Philly Fill-In”: An Update from the Metro Philadelphia Region

The Philly community welcomes Walter Bilderback as the new Literary Manager/Dramaturg at The Wilma Theatre. Walter has previously worked in similar positions at Center Stage (Baltimore), La Jolla Playhouse, the Alliance Theatre, and Dallas Theater Center. He's also a director, playwright, sometime movement artist, and novice puppeteer. Walter reports: “I'm still in the process of moving

in, and just spent four days with my five-year-old son celebrating his birthday and showing him Philadelphia, which he described approvingly as the ‘biggest city in town.’”

Past President Michele Volansky has finally made the transition down to Washington College, as Assistant Professor of Drama, teaching classes in theater history, theory, and dramaturgy, along with a freshman Community, Nation and World class on “great American speeches,” allowing her to indulge her political fantasies. Michele continues to freelance in the Philly area—recently *The Underpants* at the Arden, and later this season *The Story* at Philadelphia Theatre Company. Michele and Cordelia the Dog are having a grand time teaching, watching student rehearsals and observing the democratic process through the lens of the coveted 18-24 vote.

Harriet Power returned from a year in Rome, Italy, where she directed the Italian premiere of *Dinner With Friends* for The English Theatre of Rome, supported by the American Embassy and the Comune di Roma. The professional cast, who performed in English, hailed from Iran, Rome, and the U.S., and the sellout production, which attracted a broad spectrum of Italian and expatriate audiences, was extended. The most exciting dramaturgical outreach: a bilingual videoconference with playwright Donald Margulies, hooked up from his Yale office by satellite with 40 people at Rome's American Embassy: including Harriet, an Italian director who staged (in Italian) *Collected Stories* last year in Rome, a professor of comparative literature at L'Universita degli Studi di Roma, and a large group of artists, journalists, and members of Rome's cultural community. While in Rome, Harriet also had her first experience of film dramaturgy, serving as dramaturg for the film-in-progress *Saef O Allah* (“Sword of God”) by Fariborz Kamkari, a drama set in contemporary Iran (the first cut had to be smuggled out of the country by co-pro-

LMDA Regional Updates

ducer Fabrizia Falzetti). The film, re-edited, will be sent to the Berlin Festival and will hopefully cross the ocean. Harriet, now back in the U.S., just directed Yasmina Reza's *ART* for Villanova Theatre.

Freelance Dramaturgs Nicole Mancino and Gina Pisasale have been hired by Eucalyptus Pictures to do dramaturgical research and writing for three documentaries to appear on A&E Biography. If anyone wishes to know anything about Eric Clapton, Pete Townshend and Led Zeppelin, please speak to them. Nicole has also just signed on to do dramaturgical work for Backseat Productions' January production of Kushner's *Angels In America: Millennium Approaches*. Gina just finished dramaturgy for *Arabian Nights* at the Arden, and will design the set for *Twelfth Night* at Villanova this winter.

Claire Cox, a recent Philadelphia transplant, is at work on a play about land-use politics, sprawl, and faded Ocean Beach prophets in Southern California.

Larry Loebell, Dramaturg for InterAct Theatre announces: "We started our first 4 play season with *HOMELAND SECURITY* which had its premiere run at Victory Gardens last year. Playwright Stuart Flack was in Philadelphia for rehearsals and opening. Next up for us is a production of Lee Blessing's *WHORES*, followed by the world premiere of Catherine Filloux's *THE BEAUTY INSIDE*, a co-production with New Georges. On the personal front, I the dramaturg on the upcoming New Paradise Laboratory piece. My play, *GIRL SCIENCE*, was honored, work-shopped, and read publicly as part of the Earth Matters on Stage Festival in Arcata, CA in September, was also part of the PTC Stages festival last spring, was included in the Seven Devils Playwright's Conference last June, and is a recipient of an EST/Sloan Foundation rewrite commission this year. My new play, *LA TEMPESTAD* was workshopped in NYC by the Resonance Ensemble in November."

Shannon O'Donnell reports that "People's Light & Theatre is celebrating our 30th Anniversary by starting a new holiday tradition, we hope, with our first original Pantomime in the British tradition, complete with silly songs, slapstick comedy and the beloved cross-dressing Dame. Company member Kathryn Petersen adapted Gary Smith's panto *Sleeping Beauty*, along with Vince di Mura adapting and composing music infused with Gospel, Jazz & Blues for that particularly American flavor. It promises to be a riotous time this winter, and hopefully for many winters to come."

Philadelphia Theatre Company seeks a Literary Manager/Dramaturg, with prior experience. Please send letter of interest, resume and three references to: Literary Manager/Dramaturg Search, Philadelphia Theatre Company, 230 S. 15th Street, 4th Floor, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Philadelphia, PA 19102; via fax at 215/985-5800; or to sgaronzik@phillytheatreco.com. No phone calls, please.

Shannon O'Donnell—Regional VP, Metro Philly

Bay Area Regional Report

The Magic Theatre opened its season with the world premiere of the musical *The Opposite of Sex*, with music and lyrics by Douglas J. Cohen and book by Robert Jess Roth and Douglas J. Cohen (based

on the screenplay by Don Roos), and will present new works by Charles Grodin, Rebecca Gilman, Wesley Moore, John Belluso, Victor Lodato, and Betty Shamieh. Mark Routhier is the Literary Manager there. Across the bay in Berkeley, Impact Theatre continues its series of daring interpretations of Shakespeare with *Othello*, featuring a dark-skinned African-American lesbian Othello and a light-skinned African-American male Iago. Impact Theater is helmed by Artistic Director and dramaturg, Melissa Hillman.

In San Francisco, the Playwrights Foundation has extended the scope of its activities beyond the annual Bay Area Playwrights Festival to include classes. Organized quarterly, the Foundation's workshops are taught by various playwrights of both local and national reputation, such as Claire Chafee, Octavio Solis, Liz Duffy Adams, and Christine Evans. The Playwrights Foundation has also taken an active role in coproducing new works developed in the Bay Area Playwrights Festival with Bay Area theatres. This season it co-produced Liz Duffy Adams' *Dog Act* with Shotgun Players in Berkeley and will co-produce Liz's new musical *All The Truth In The World* this spring with Crowded Fire Theatre Company in San Francisco. Crowded Fire will also present the world premiere of Christine Evans' *Slow Falling Bird*, which was presented in the 2003 Bay Area Playwrights Festival. Duca Knezevic is the new Director of Literary Services at Playwrights Foundation, and former Literary Manager Christine Young has become Artistic Associate and Festival Producer.

An exciting new organization, The Bay Area League of New Play Theatres, has been founded here. Bringing together dramaturgs and artistic directors from a cross section of Bay Area Theaters, including most of the theaters in this regional report, the group serves both as a forum for discussion on how to approach the development of new work and as a way to share resources with member theaters, with the goal of nurturing new work and playwrights. The group meets monthly, with some meetings dedicated to hearing excerpts from the works of new writers. The website is www.newplaysleague.org.

Enrique Uruete is the new Literary Manager at Fool's Fury, one of the many flourishing smaller-sized Bay Area theater companies.

The California Shakespeare Theater (CalShakes) is collaborating with Campo Santo to create and produce a new play by Naomi Iizuka. Called *Hamlet: Blood on the Brain*, it's a reimagining of *Hamlet* set in the drug-infested Oakland of the 1980's. There have already been a number of Oakland-based community events as the two theater companies do extensive outreach into Oakland, and Iizuka has also been teaching writing workshops in Oakland. The collaboration will culminate with a Fall 2006 premiere of the play, directed by Cal Shakes Artistic Director Jonathan Moscone, and co-produced with Campo Santo at San Francisco's Intersection for the Arts.

Playground, a theater dedicated to staging and producing new 10-minute plays by Bay Area writers, opened its season on Monday, Oct. 18th with staged readings of six new plays on the Berkeley Repertory Theatre stage. Monthly classes in playwriting are also offered. Bronwyn Eisenberg is the new Literary Manager and Dramaturg for the group, which has never had a resident LM/turg before

LMDA Regional Updates

now. Bronwyn has also accepted a new position of leadership at the California Shakespeare Theater as Director of Artistic Learning.

Bronwyn Eisenberg and Enrique Urueta

Southwest Regional Update

From John Gloré at Center Theatre Group: CTG held the dedication events for the new 320-seat Kirk Douglas Theatre in mid-October, with the first words spoken by Kirk D. himself. The theatre opened its first production at the end of October, the world premiere of a CTG-commissioned play from Chuck Mee, *A Perfect Wedding*. The Douglas theatre's first season is composed of six world premieres—in addition to the Mee, the subscription season includes Jon Robin Baitz's *The Paris Letter*, Chay Yew's *A Distant Shore*, and Nancy Keystone's *Apollo* (yes, the season will offer "everything from Mee to Yew"), and the theatre will also house two new youth theatre pieces, Charlayne Woodard's *Flight* and a Doug Cooney/David O musical adaptation of *The Persistent Gappers of Fripp*. Outgoing CTG Artistic Director Gordon Davidson officially hands over the reins to Michael Ritchie on January 1, 2005; Gordon will stay on through the end of the 05/06 Season, which will climax with an as yet undetermined production, directed by Mr. D himself. The new plays in the Douglas as well as the new August Wilson play AND Luis Alfaro's *Electricidad* at the Taper mean that John and Pier Carlo Talenti will have their dramaturgical hands full for the rest of the year. They're also trying to nail down the specifics of their New Work Festival, which has been postponed from the fall to early 2005, because of the opening of the new theatre.

From Simon Levy at the Fountain Theatre: In the last 18 months (2003/2004), Simon has directed 3 Los Angeles Times Critics' Choice shows in L.A., including Lynne Kaufman's *Daisy in the Dreamtime*, *Uncle Vanya* for Actors Co-op, and *Going to St. Ives* (which went to the Edinburgh Festival this summer). His critically-acclaimed production of Terrence McNally's Master Class recently closed after a phenomenally successful 8-month run, and has been nominated for 3 OVATION Awards, including Best Production, Director, and Lead Actress. He also directed a critically-acclaimed production of *Awake and Sing* for International City Theatre in Long Beach earlier this summer. As for current and future projects, Simon will direct Rupert Holmes' *Accomplice* for the Colony Theatre in February, 2005, and is in development with several other plays that will premiere next year. He was the producer of the World Premiere of Athol Fugard's new play, *Exits and Entrances*, at the Fountain Theatre which was nominated for 3 OVATION Awards, including World Premiere Play, Director, and Lead Actor. Simon is finishing writing his newest play, *Conscience of His Country*, based on the life of Nobel Laureate, Andrei Sakharov.

Simon's one-act, *Pink Skin*, was produced in April at the Bloomington Playwrights Project in Indiana, and will be produced at the sideproject in Chicago in June 2005. His play, *She-Who-Is-Made-Of-Clay*, among its many awards, has been chosen as one of ten finalists for the Shenandoah International Playwriting Competition. His official stage adaptation of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, the

first ever approved by the Fitzgerald Estate, has been optioned by a commercial producer and is under consideration at several theatres for production for the 2005-2006 season.

From Susan Merson: Her new one-act *On the Way Up*, directed by Sara Botsford, is included in the New Playwrights Festival at Theatre Tribe in Los Angeles thru December. Visit www.theatre-tribe.com for more info. Susan's play, *Bounty of Lace*, directed by Rebecca Novick, was read at A Traveling Jewish Theatre in San Francisco, sponsored by Golden Thread Productions on November 1, 2004. Golden Thread is a company focusing on the issues of the Middle East. For more information check out their website at www.goldenthread.com. The play deals with love and politics in Israel today. It was commissioned by the Jewish Women's Theatre Project, and had a staged reading there, at Ensemble Studio Theatre (NY) and at Theatricum Botanicum, with Ellen Geer. Also, look for Susan's new book, titled *Your Name Here: An Actor and Writer's Guide to Solo Performance* to be published in December 2004 from Star Publish (<http://starpublish.com>). A nuts and bolts guide to developing solo theater pieces for actors, writers and public speakers of all kinds, *Your Name Here* details six different forms of solo plays as well as offers down to earth advice, specific exercises and new monologue material that will demystify the process for beginners and offer new insights to old pros. The paperback edition will be available at online stores such as Amazon, Barnes and Noble and Books A Million; it can be ordered at eBookAd.com. Learn more at www.susanmerson.com.

At La Jolla Playhouse, we are in the middle of our run of *Jersey Boys*, a world premiere musical about Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons. After TWENTY YEARS, the Playhouse offices are finally moving out of the double-wide and into our first permanent offices next to our new Potiker Theatre, a fantastic black box with flexible seating for 350-450. Unfortunately construction was delayed and we have replaced our scheduled last show of the season, Lee Blessing's *The Scottish Play* (which had been slated to open the Potiker in November) with a Feydeau farce called *Private Fittings*, adapted by Mark O'Donnell, which will now open the Potiker in February. We've announced four projects for the 2005 Season, with more season and workshop announcements to come in the weeks ahead: a hilarious world premiere screwball musical called *Palm Beach*; the world premiere of Lee Blessing's *The Scottish Play* (same team, different slot); another world premiere, *The Essential Alice*, based on the novels of Lewis Carroll, adapted by Annie Weisman with music by Michael Friedman; and a full run of the play that inaugurated our Page To Stage new play development program, *I Am My Own Wife*, starring Jefferson Mays.

Allison Horsley—Regional VP, Southwest