1-2020

**New & Noteworthy, January 2020**

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Highlights of Dramaturgy in the 2010s

by Morgan Grambo

With the arrival of the new decade, let's take a look back on some favorite dramaturgical moments of the 2010s. Each moment signifies a shift in our dramaturgy and literary management practices that exemplify how our members and collaborators are making an impact in our theatres and greater communities.

Let's begin by highlighting the Bly Creative Capacity Grants and Fellowships, with its first grants administered in 2014 and continuing impact on sixteen significant projects and their communities. This grant program was created by LMDA through the inspiration and generosity of Mark Bly. View the project overviews for each year they were awarded: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017. With these projects, that push dramaturgy into generative positions and grant programs such as the Bly Creative Capacity Grant Program, dramaturgs continue to challenge and create theatrical events, communities, projects, and platforms that exemplify our ever-expanding capabilities.

The 2010s saw major improvements in communication and connectivity with the founding of two major platforms: HowlRound and TheTheatreTimes.com. Founded in its earliest incarnation in 2011, the mission of HowlRound is to serve as “a free and open platform for theatremakers worldwide that amplifies progressive, disruptive ideas about the art form and facilitates connection between diverse practitioners.” If you are not already familiar with HowlRound’s programming (including HowlRound TV, which streams LMDA’s annual
conference, and the Latinx Theatre Commons) and interested in hearing from the voices in our community or perhaps contributing your own ideas and practices to the commons, visit their website.

TheTheatreTimes.com, founded by Magda Romanska and Beatriz Cabur in 2016 and currently run by Romanska and Kasia Lech, has created a similar paradigm shift as a portal for global communication on theatre. The platform has published “over 3,500 articles and theatre reviews covering theatre in 90 countries and regions. With 30 thematic sections, more than 150 Regional Managing Editors, over 60 media partners around the world, and 60,000+ followers on social media,” according to Romanska, the reach of TheTheatreTimes.com is vast. View the platform’s articles, as well as PERFORMAP, an interactive digital map of global theatre festivals which was funded by the first LMDA Innovation grant by visiting their website. In 2018, Romanska received the Elliott Hayes Award for Outstanding Achievement in Dramaturgy for TheTheatreTimes.com. With the contributions of TheTheatreTimes.com and HowlRound, it is clear that connectivity was a priority of dramaturgs in the 2010s, and points toward a new decade of practice that encourages the sharing of ideas, practices, and events for continued growth.

Let’s take a moment to highlight this acknowledgement of a dramaturg’s work on the most visible stage in theatre, the Tony Awards - video. This gratitude toward Ken Cerniglia (very deserved - congratulations, Ken!), by name and title during the live broadcast of the 2019 Tony Awards by Anaïs Mitchell for Ken’s work as the dramaturg for Hadestown is an example of appreciation and recognition that dramaturgs rarely receive. While public thanks is not required, it is powerful, especially if it encourages folks to look up who that may be and what is their role in the theatre. The growing visibility of our discipline in moments such as this and across a variety of outlets, inside and outside of the theatre world, has been a personal highlight in dramaturgy for me over the latter half of the decade.

The final highlight in dramaturgy resulted in a paradigm shift in January 2015: the launch of New Play Exchange. Entering its sixth year as “the world’s largest digital library of scripts by living writers,” the platform boasts over 30,000 scripts by nearly 8,000 writers. New Play Exchange, a project from the National New Play Network, is continuing to develop new ways to serve its community, rolling out updates that aid playwrights in identifying, tagging, and sharing their scripts most efficiently and accurately; aiding dramaturgs and readers to
search for scripts, share their recommendations, and list their services as freelance dramaturgs; and aiding organizations in streamlining submission and evaluation processes within the platform. If you are not already a member, explore their website and follow NPX on social media for updates on the ever-evolving platform.

These highlights in dramaturgy from the 2010s are only a small handful of an incredibly diverse and impactful array of contributions dramaturgs and literary managers have made to the world of theatre and our larger communities. Share your own highlight in dramaturgy from the past decade on social media and tag LMDA in your post! We look forward to the innovations in dramaturgy in the 2020s.

Colleagues and Collaborators:
The Three Musketeers
An Interview with Megan Monaghan Rivas and Diane Brewer

In fall 2019, LMDA members Megan Monaghan Rivas and Diane Brewer worked together on a production of Megan’s spirited reinvention of The Three Musketeers at the University of Evansville. This is the second of a two-part series. Please see the December 2019 newsletter for Part I.

(DB) How did your extensive work as a dramaturg help you shape the story?
(MMR) Because I was so accustomed to generating multiple options for playwrights I would work with, it was easy for me to generate multiple options for myself and to play out in my head what the repercussions of those choices would be for the rest of the story. This skill took on extra importance once I decided that I would depart from Dumas’ plot.

In the novel, Cardinal Richelieu is trying to take down the Queen of France. The reason Dumas posited was that Richelieu had made romantic overtures to the Queen and been rebuffed, so now that he thought she had accepted similar overtures from someone else he had the classic “dog in the manger” reaction. With its resonances of controlling women’s sexuality, that wasn’t interesting to me. I needed Richelieu to have some better goal in mind, and it soon became clear that he wanted power. He was far and away the most intelligent person in his society and he occupied an incredibly privileged position, but he wasn’t born royal - so he had to watch while less capable people occupied the throne. My Richelieu would want the throne for himself, so he would have to get rid of both the Queen and the King, without anyone tracing the plan back to him.

(DB) In the UET production, unlike at CMU, a female actor played D’Artagnan. Did you need to change anything other than pronouns to adjust to that casting?
(MMR) After two productions in the original gender scheme, I had a long discussion with the director about opening up the gender possibilities for the third production at UET. I
emailed the whole cast informing them that I intended to match the characters’ genders to the performers’ identities. The actors got to choose what pronouns their characters would use. For d’Artagnan, I made a sweep through the script not just for pronouns, but to clean up the numerous places I had the character addressed as “sir” and any other gendered language that needed adjusting. Because d’Artagnan and Constance’s love story would now be a queer one, the director sought other opportunities to place same-sex relationships in the audience’s view in street scenes, the royal ball at the end of the play, etc. We didn’t want to make this relationship “the exception, the only” or to have it fraught with extra peril in the imagined society the play presents.

(MMR) What was it like for you to work with a fellow dramaturg as the playwright, on the University of Evansville production?
(DB) I loved having another person on the team who understands what it is to navigate a hybrid identity that includes dramaturgy. With you in the room (or even on the other side of an email), I found myself indulging in the privilege of effortless communication.

(MMR) Were there any advantages or disadvantages for your team of student dramaturgs on that project?
(DB) Advantages, yes.

I look for every opportunity to help my students see that dramaturgy is not a synonym for research. Remember that question about Queen Anne’s miscarriages that appeared in an early rehearsal report? My assistants on Team Dramaturgy (the fabulous Olivia Pedersen and Allie Forte) jumped in with a straightforward answer to a straightforward question. You and I (in separate cities, and at the same time) approached the question dramaturgically: the number of miscarriages is less important than the physiological experience or the cultural attitudes about miscarriage that might have impacted the interaction between the
King and Queen in the scene.

Research is an important skill, but knowing how to connect it to the story is the heart of dramaturgical practice. And there’s nothing like having another professional dramaturg on the team to help drive that point home.

*Diane Brewer teaches theatre history and dramatic criticism at the University of Evansville, where she also dramaturgs and directs. She chairs the Da Vinci Institute, a network of Evansville, Indiana community leaders that fosters collaborations that integrate the arts and sciences. Her work as a director is a featured subject in *Deaf Side Story: Deaf Sharks, Hearing Jets and a Classic American Musical* (Gallaudet University Press). Her published articles have appeared in *The Dramaturgy Protocol, The Dramaturgy Sourcebook* (vols. 4 and 5), *Theatre Topics, PAJ: Performing Arts Journal*, and *HowlRound* at the Center for Theater Commons. She is a member of LMDA.*

Production Photos from the University of Evansville’s production of *The Three Musketeers* in Fall 2019. Production Photos by Daniel Knight.

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**#LMDA20 // Conference Countdown**

**Crossing Borders Pt. 3:**

Dramaturgy Around the World  
June 17-20, 2020  
Ciudad de México, México  
Conference Venue: Centro Cultural del Bosque

LMDA’s mission with this exciting gathering is to ignite a global conversation about the purpose/function/utility of dramaturgs by asking how dramaturgy is practiced in varying countries.

This conference seeks proposals for panels, round tables, workshops, and other dynamic conversations about what constitutes “dramaturgy.” We invite attendees and presenters to explore how dramaturgy has developed in your country, region, and/or organization and especially encourage panels that explore, dissect/interrogate, and incorporate a bilateral or multicultural point of view.

The deadline for proposals is FRIDAY, JANUARY 31, 2020. Members of the LMDA Conference Planning Committee will review all applications, and we thank you for your ideas.

Please fill out the form below and email conference@lmda.org with any questions.
Submit your proposal here: [2020 LMDA Conference Proposals](#)
LMDA Conference Planning Committee encourages and prioritize proposals from diverse voices and artists.

In addition, we have a few calls for participants in the following panels:

**LMDA UNIVERSITY CAUCUS HOT TOPICS 2020**

HOT TOPICS IS BACK AND HOTTER THAN EVER! Hot Presenters at the 2020 LMDA conference will talk about a provocative question, assertion, issue, or project with which they are currently (passionately) engaged to initiate conversations and collaborations, or to address pressing issues for dramaturgy. Speakers have just five minutes each to open a door onto their topic. The strict time limit allows for multiple presentations and follow-up conversations. It also requires careful preparation. At four minutes, the convener will give the presenter a one-minute warning; at five minutes, the presenter will be gently, but firmly, yanked off of the stage, no matter how hot they are!

**HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?** To submit a HOT TOPICS proposal, contact Dr. Michael Chemers, Vice President for University Relations, at chemers@ucsc.edu. Proposals include your name and affiliation, your topic title, and a 30-word (maximum) summary of your talk’s content.

**IF YOU MISS THIS, YOU BETTER BE DEAD OR IN JAIL, AND IF YOU'RE IN JAIL, BREAK OUT!**

**PLAYWRIGHTS UNDER THE RADAR**

Using the Hot Topics format, each presenter will get five minutes to sing the praises of their chosen playwright. Ideally, this playwright has had several successful, but local productions. LatinX, Indigenous, and diverse artists are especially encouraged to contribute to this session. Please email president@lmda.org if you are interested in participating in this session with your name, affiliation, the playwright or theatre-makers’ name, and a short bio of the artist.

**NNPN/NPX SESSION**

NNPN/NPX has asked for our help! They would like to meet with us to explore what everyone thinks and feels about the NPX -- what you like and don't like about how it works, what you wish it did, and so on -- and to discuss (and gather feedback on) some new features they expect to be building over the coming three years. Be on the lookout for this session and please stop by the session to contribute your thoughts.

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**NEA Grants**

We're honored to have received support from the NEA for our 2020 Conference -- learn more about the full 200 recipients and their initiatives [here](#).
Dramaturging Your New Year: 
5 Questions to Ask Before Creating New Year's Resolutions
A Blog by Heidi Schmidt

Check it out on the LMDA Website!

Upcoming Regional Events

Times for all regional events are listed in the time zone of the actual event.

**Metro Philly**
Monday, February 10 @ 7:30pm
LMDA will hold a networking event with The Dramatists Guild and Page By Page for LMDA members. You should have received details in your email. If you didn’t, let us know: regional@lmda.org

**Mountain West**
Tuesday, February 11 @ 6:30pm
Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Newman Building
For the Love of Dramaturgy: Join us for a panel discussion on case studies on dramaturgy in the Mountains West Region and, of course, chocolate. The event will be livestreamed. RSVP to https://forms.gle/QMH5ua44wYH2xSxb6 for streaming info.

**Northeast**
Saturday, February 8 @ 1pm
Gathering at UMass Amherst's New Play Lab to attend a reading of The Interrobangers by M Sloth Levine and engage with the playwrights and other dramaturgs in the region over drinks and food. Meet at UMass Amherst Theater Department for Coffee/pastries at 1pm, performance at 2pm to be followed by drinks/food/networking at The High Horse, 24 N Pleasant St, Amherst. Contact: talya.anne.kingston@gmail.com for more information or to reserve a free ticket.

**Southeast**
Friday, February 28 @ 6pm, SETC Conference
LMDA will be holding at networking happy hour at the 2020 SETC Conference. Location TBA. Watch your email and the regional Facebook page for more info.

**Southwest**
Late February or Early March
Dramaturgy Open Office Hours. More details to come!
All Region Online Conversation
Tuesday, March 3 @ Noon-1:30pm (EST)
Musical Theatre Dramaturgy - Members Only
Spend your lunch chatting with Ken Cerniglia (Disney), Allison Horsley (Broadway, La Jolla Playhouse), Carrie Chapter (O'Neill Center, Philadelphia Theatre Company), and Allison Schwartz (Paradigm Agency) about the nuts and bolts of Musical Theatre Dramaturgy and getting your show to the stage. Email regional@lmda.org who will verify your members and send you log-in information. For our online activities, we use Zoom. To learn more about Zoom, watch this short video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFhAEoCF7jg

Metro NYC
Tuesday, March 10 - Save the Date
We’re bringing back our annual Speed Networking Night! Get to know local LMDA members, students, and artists from the community. More info to come.

All Region Online Conversation
Monday, May 4 @ 8-9pm (EST)
Dramaturg-Director Hyphenate Jam - Members Only
Calling all Dramaturg-Director Hyphenates! A number of members have shared interest in discussing the pros and cons of both dramaturging and directing - either doing it all on one show or switching hats for various shows. In May, we’ll come together for a relaxed discussion about being a dramaturg-director, what that means to different people, and the challenges/rewards you face. Email regional@lmda.org who will verify your members and send you log-in information. For our online activities, we use Zoom. To learn more about Zoom, watch this short video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFhAEoCF7jg

Great Plains
Late May
LMDA at Great Plains Theatre Conference - Event TBA!

If you are not sure which region you belong to, find out here: https://lmda.org/map. You are welcome to belong to multiple regions or, if you are traveling, attend events in multiple regions.

Make sure to join your regional Facebook page and watch the ListServ for details about the below events as well as new events added throughout the season.

Region Facebook Groups:
Canada
Mountain West (Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado)
Greater Midwest (IL, IN, IA, western KY, MI, MN, OH, WI)
Metro Bay Area
Metro Chicago
Metro NYC
Metro Boston
Central Appalachia (WV, VA, eastern KY, northern TN, and western NC)
Florida
Metro Philadelphia
Mid-Atlantic (DC/Maryland/DE)
Northeast (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York State, Rhode Island, Vermont, Pennsylvania)
Northwest (Idaho, Oregon, Washington)
Southern California
Plains (Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska)
Southeast (Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, eastern North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, southern Tennessee, western NC)
Southwest (Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, California)
Third Coast (Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas)

Regional questions? Reach out to the VP of Regional Activity Jacqueline Goldfinger (regional@lmda.org).

Your Dramaturgy Ad Here!

We’re reserving this high-value newsletter real estate for our Institutional Members. Do you have a job posting you want our readers to see, an M.F.A. program looking for a well-qualified applicant pool, or a festival you want to make sure smart dramaturgs have on their radar? This is the place for it! Institutional Memberships are only $200, and they come with four individual member profiles for your organization to divvy out as you see fit.

Let your organizational leadership know that we’d love them to join the LMDA party!

Interested in contributing to the next newsletter? Have content ideas?
E-mail communications@lmda.org.

Want to keep up with the conversation about the latest in dramaturgical activity?

- Follow us on Social Media (@LMDAmericas) by clicking on the logos below!

- Subscribe to our listserv