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LMDA New & Noteworthy, November 2019

Martine Kei Green-Rogers
Natasha Sinha
Amanda Dawson
Janine Sobek Knighton

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A Note From Our President: starting the countdown to #LMDA20

The 2020 Conference is 7 months away! The time is going fast!

Brenda Muñoz (our 2020 Conference Coordinator) and I have some exciting updates that we wanted to share.

First and foremost, we wanted to announce the conference venue. The conference will be at the Centro Cultural del Bosque (Campo Marte, Paseo de la Reforma y, Av. Paseo de la Reforma s/n, Miguel Hidalgo, 11560 Ciudad de México, CDMX, Mexico).

Centro Cultural del Bosque (CCB), sponsored by Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (INBA), is a recognized cultural center in Mexico City that offers a wide spectrum of performances and cultural events for all public. It is located at the skirts of Bosque de Chapultepec, next to Paseo de la Reforma and Auditorio Nacional, and close to emblematic museums such as Museo Nacional de Antropología (National Museum of Anthropology), Museo de Arte Moderno (Modern Art Museum), and Museo Rufino Tamayo.

If you are interested in seeing this on a map, please click HERE.
Centro Cultural del Bosque has kindly invited LMDA to host keynote presentations, panels and roundtables in three of their theatres:

- Teatro Orientación
- Teatro El Galeón
- Teatro El Granero

LMDA will hold the regional brunch at:

- Plaza Ángel Salas
- Save the Date: Wednesday June 17th, 2020 12:30pm

Note: All spaces are wheelchair accessible.

We are currently working to secure the conference hotel and the keynote speakers (yes, there will be more than one speaker)! The format for the keynote will be an experiment that we are sure you will not want to miss. We will share more as this idea continues to develop.

We also want to acknowledge that there are concerns about the conference costs. We are working very hard to keep the costs as close to that of the Chicago conference. We are gathering resources to help you navigate the costs of attending, especially since the conference is one more day than our normal.

On that note, we are playing with a different format for the conference so feel free to attend for some or all of the conference. Whether you attend for some or all of the days, it will be a fun conversation about dramaturgy.

We hope you will start to make plans to join us June 17-20th for our last conference rooted in the “Crossing Borders” theme. It is sure to be a great conversation about Latinx dramaturgies and theatre-making rooted in the city of the conference while looking out and forward to collaborative global possibilities.

The link to the conference announcement and panel submission portal may be found HERE.

Sincerely,

Martine Kei Green-Rogers

*** please see the Announcements section below for more about the conference ***
How did you find your way to dramaturgy?

I’ve always been a literary person... No friends + insomnia in middle school = reading a novel per night for years on end! And for fun in high school, I'd write up my thoughts on plays/musicals--breaking them down, placing them in various contexts, flagging questions. Once I was at Barnard College, I figured I'd expand on that and do a literary internship at a theatre agency so that I could read a bunch of new scripts before anyone else knew them. That was honestly my only reason. An agent found out I read everything in the mailroom, and then asked me to read specific scripts. I loved having some value to professional theatre folks, so I became an assistant at literary agencies. I got to know the writers, which led to talking through drafts. Eventually, by having deep discussions with playwrights and directors and composers, I found myself in the role of dramaturg for new works—sometimes unofficially, sometimes officially.

In what ways do you see the overlap between dramaturgy and producing?

For me, producing organically incorporates dramaturgy. The choices made and the resources prioritized should be based on what’s best for the dramaturgical health of the production. And precedent only takes you so far... particularly when working on innovative work that needs to be supported differently than what may be the usual within a traditional producing process. All aspects of production can be customized per play, with the dramaturgy of the piece providing the map. It’s also the only way I know how to navigate the options at hand, since all shows need to creatively solve for the fact that reality is a collaborator in theatre (particularly in NYC)!

You have had the opportunity to dramaturg/produce some incredible productions and projects—what has been one of your favorites?

I’m the worst at choosing favorites so I’ll completely cheat and talk about recent projects. I had the best time dramaturging Dave Harris’ TAMBO & BONES at Ojai Playwrights Conference. Taylor Reynolds (director) put it on its feet since that was the developmental
step that Dave needed for the play, and it helped us understand where information about a particular setting was needed versus where it was begging the question. And I was deliciously submerged into the mindset of Cesar Alvarez & Emily Orling with THE ELEMENTARY SPACETIME SHOW (directed by the sublime Sarah Benson) at New York Stage & Film. It somehow centers teenage suicide with searing honesty and killer score. I love how unexpected it is. Then with producer hat on at Signature, Dave Malloy’s OCTET was a full production of my most primal strain of theatre love (ie: musically-complex, necessary, and unconventional musicals). Making that live cast recording happen was also a total thrill, knowing we’d capture the score forever.

And Beehive Dramaturgy Studio—which I co-founded with Molly Marinik and Jeremy Stoller—has grown in exciting ways since 2016! Via Beehive, I’m proud of working with some of my favorite theatre companies not only by dramaturging shows, but also by helping create more inclusive pools of strong readers, analyzing how selection processes best function for a given company, and acting as artistic consultants in programming. To be honest, I’ve been very lucky to have a hand in choosing almost all projects I take on in some capacity or another, so whatever I’m working on at a given time is most likely a favorite—I think we all feel that in the theatre, when things are going right!

Natasha Sinha is Director of Artistic Programs at Signature Theatre, where she spearheads new artistic programs, and is artistic line producer for select works. From 2012-2018, she was Associate Director of LCT3/Lincoln Center Theater, which exclusively produces premieres. She is on the Advisory Boards of SPACE on Ryder Farm, Rhinebeck Writers Retreat, and Musical Theatre Factory (where she co-moderates MTF’s POC Roundtable, exclusively for musical artists of color, and advises on various programs, including MTF MAKERS). Natasha is the recipient of the 2019 LPTW Lucille Lortel Award, and co-founder of Beehive Dramaturgy Studio (www.BeehiveDramaturgy.com).

Interview by Amanda Dawson

A Closer Look at KCAC'TF Dramaturgy

By Janine Sobeck Knighton
One potential impactful experience for a student dramaturg is participating at the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF). This USA-based program holds eight annual regional competitions during the first of the year with four of the winners going on to the national competition in April in Washington DC.

At the 2019 LMDA conference in Chicago, I held a workshop that was centered around the student experience at KCACTF. My own experience with KCACTF in grad school had been a wonderful opportunity to be in the same room as other dramaturgs and introduced me to LMDA as an organization that I wanted to join.

Now that I am currently serving as co-chair of Region 8, I find that I am asking questions about how to open the experience of KCACTF to more students, how to increase the quality of the experience, and how to expand the collaboration between the dramaturgy program and the New Play Program (aka playwriting program).

The conversation in the room benefited from having other regional chairs as well as students who had already gone through the KCACTF experience. As there is usually little conversation across regions, it was a great opportunity to see what other areas of the country were doing within their own programs.

The conversation stayed dramaturgical in nature, focusing on the positives of each program as well as questions about areas open for improvement. Some of the best experiences listed included a Program Note revising session (for notes that were to be included in the New Play Project readings), having the regional chairs serves as a respondent for different regions, allowing the students to get direct feedback from the respondent immediately after they present their project, and making sure the dramaturgy boards were visible and accessible in the gallery with the rest of design and tech.

Some of the best conversations came around the areas people felt needed some improvement. For instance, there was acknowledgement that there was no standardized support for the dramaturgs across all the regions – each coordinator did what they felt best (or what they had inherited). In the case of the assessment part of the festival, where a professional respondent adjudicates each of the students’ work (including written packets and display boards), ideas from different regions included having the respondent or the chair talk about expectations for the assessment of the student work, having photo examples of successful board displays, and creating a Tips and Tricks document of how to
create a successful board that tells the story of the student's work that was available on the website before the students submitted their application.

The conversation is the room has continued with regional chairs swapping emails and sharing information, resources, questions, and further ideas to consider. I hope that all these conversations will serve to increase both access to and the experience of KCACTF for students across the United States.

Janine Sobeck Knighton
Co-chair, Region 8, KCACTF
Assistant Professor, Utah Valley University

#LMDA20 // Conference Countdown

Crossing Borders Pt. 3:
Dramaturgy Around the World
June 17-20, 2020
Ciudad de México, México

BOOKING YOUR TRAVEL
If you are planning to join us for the Annual Conference, now is the ideal time to start searching for a flight. The prices are at their lowest between 3 to 4 months before departure. It's also cheaper to depart on Tuesday and return on Wednesday to save a small percentage.

Check out Interjet, which has significantly lower rates than other airlines and hosts direct flights to Mexico City from multiple cities throughout the Americas.

If you'd like to coordinate with your Regional VP, Interjet offers group rates for groups of 10+ flying from the same city: https://www.interjet.com/groups.aspx?culture=en-US

CONFERENCE SURVEY
Whether or not you're planning to attend the 2020 Conference, we are interested in knowing your thoughts about it. Please take five minutes to complete this survey by December 2, 2019.

CONFERENCE PROPOSALS
LMDA’s mission with this gathering is to ignite a global conversation about the purpose/function/utility of dramaturgy by exploring how dramaturgy and dramaturgical acts develop in your country, region, and organization. We are excited to see proposals from you for workshops, roundtables, panels, informal conversations, and additional formats and structures that incorporate global perspectives on acts of dramaturgy in theatre and performance. In addition, we specially invite (and want to center) conversations that connect to the art and artists of Mexico City, Mexico, and South American countries.


**Upcoming Regional Events**

**REGIONAL UPDATE** by Jacqueline Goldfinger

So far this theater season, we’ve had 162 participants in fall LMDA Regional Activities both online and in-person. We’ve also co-sponsored ReOrient 2019 Festival of Short Plays in San Francisco and the Company One Boot Camp in Boston, as well as Live Tweeted the Rural Arts and Culture Summit.

In LMDA’s partnership with Golden Thread as a co-sponsor of their ReOrient 2019 Festival, three Publications Dramaturgs Emily DeDakis, Scott Horstein, and Michael Malek Najjar each wrote an article on the festival playwrights, collaborators, and their artistic process. Check out the articles and more on https://goldenthread.org/productions/reorient-2019/ and on LMDA’s website.

I hope that you'll join us for an event soon!

**Metro NYC**
Mingle with your Metro-NYC friends at this year's Holiday Party Tuesday, December 10th 7-9pm at Citizen M (218 W 50th St NYC).

**Third Coast**
Monday, January 6 @ 5:30pm CST
Connect with other dramaturgs from across Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas to share about the challenges and successes occurring in our region. We'll also use this time to collect ideas for discussions that would best serve our region's dramaturgs at future events. All LMDA members living and/or working in the Third Coast region are welcome to attend. This Happy Hour will be hosted on Zoom - RSVP to Regional VP Haley Nelson for the access link: Thirdcoast@lmda.org
Northeast  
Early February  
Gathering at UMass Amherst to attend a reading at the New Play Lab and engage with the playwrights and other dramaturgs in the region over drinks and food afterwards. More details to come.

Metro Philly  
Monday, February 10 @ 7:30pm  
LMDA will hold a networking event with the Dramatists Guild and Page By Page. More info to come.

Southeast  
Friday, February 28 @ 6pm, SETC Conference  
LMDA will be holding at networking happy hour at the 2020 SETC Conference. More details to come.

Great Plains  
Late May  
LMDA at Great Plains Theatre Conference - online and in-person events to be announced!

Three More All Regional Conversations TBA This Spring  
The topics of these conversations will be Musical Theatre Dramaturgy, Director-Dramaturg Hyphenates, and Dramaturgy: The Real World.

Sunday, January 12 Online All-Region Conversation, 4-5pm EST  
Dramaturgy, The Real World: Side Gigs, Internships, and How to Make a Life in our Field with Anna Morton (McCarter Theater, Roundabout) and Jordana Fraider (NNPN), facilitated by Jacqueline Goldfinger (independent artist)

Join us for a one hour Q&A and get answers to your pressing questions about making a life in the arts in the new year. Members only conversation. Make sure to renew for 2019 in order to be able to participate (lmda.org). RSVP to regional@lmda.org.

More events to be announced.

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. (A list of links to regional Facebook pages is at the bottom of this article.)

For our online activities, we use Zoom. To learn more about Zoom, watch this short video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFhAEoCF7jg
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).

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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**.

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

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