LMDA Newsletters: Canada and the United States

LMDA New & Noteworthy, December 2019

Martine Kei Green-Rogers
Megan Monaghan Rivas
Diane Brewer
Elizabeth Williamson
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Martine Kei Green-Rogers, Megan Monaghan Rivas, Diane Brewer, Elizabeth Williamson, Amanda Dawson, and Jacqueline Goldfinger
Letter from the President:

Happy December, Everyone.

I hope that the end of the year/semester/etc. is going well for you all and we wish you a very happy new year!

Brenda Muñoz and I wanted to provide some updates about the June 2020 conference in Mexico City! The conference hotel is set! We will be at the Suites Obelisk. Please see below for more information. Also, feel free to start booking your room now.

Also, don’t forget that the deadline to submit a proposal for a session at the 2020 conference is approaching (January 31, 2020). The link to apply and details about the conference is [HERE](#).

We look forward to seeing you in 2020!

Sincerely,

Martine Kei Green-Rogers
This Fall, 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. In the first of a two-part series, Diane interviews Megan about the dramaturgical foundation of her playwriting.

How did you shift between your work as a dramaturg into that of a playwright with your version of *The Three Musketeers*?

It was originally a “bespoke project” for the School of Drama at Carnegie Mellon University where I teach. One of my colleagues had been asked to direct *Three Musketeers* at the end of the 2016-17 season, in a production featuring the graduating class in the acting program - a company of eight men and six women. We looked at many extant adaptations, but could not find any that offered substantial and roughly equal opportunities for such a cast. Then I read Dumas’ novel and found out why: there are only three full female characters in the book, plus a soubrette I think of as “half a character.” The next time I met with my colleague I said, “… or I could write you one.”

Did your research into other adaptations fuel your work as a playwright?

Reading the adaptations other playwrights had created assured me that this task could be done. If I’d read Dumas’ novel first, that might have been a serious question!
How is your version different from the others you read?
I almost don’t remember. As soon as it was determined that I would write one for CMU, which happened around October 2015, I embargoed the other adaptations and focused exclusively on Dumas’ book. I studied how it introduced and developed the central characters, and explored the meanings available if I shifted certain formerly male characters to female. My play reconceives some of Dumas’ iconic characters as women, and their 17th century France as a society in which women’s public roles and lives were as free and varied as men’s - all while delivering what audiences love and expect in *Three Musketeers*: comedy, romance, and big feathery hats. And swordplay, lots and lots of swordplay: everyone in the cast would have the opportunity to do stage combat.

I've met people who assume dramaturgs are rigidly tied to historical accuracy. But your play reminds me of a description of Dumas in *The Four Musketeers*. In that book, Kari Maund and Phil Nanson describe Dumas as a man who wrote “history as imagination would have it, not history as it really was.” If Megan-the-dramaturg had worked on this play during the developmental process, how would you have reacted to the way Megan-the-playwright played with history?
Fidelity to historical accuracy makes me roll my eyes and sigh. Dumas lived and wrote roughly 200 years after the period in which *Three Musketeers* is set. He was writing historical fantasy. I just took it a step further, from my vantage point in the 21st century. I think the key is to let the audience in on the knowledge that this isn’t history, so they can relax and enjoy the dramatic ride. I actually clung more closely to history when I wrote *Three Musketeers: 1941*, a much looser adaptation set in Occupied Paris, which premiered this past summer. In that play the entire second act’s plot is based on the real accomplishments of real Resistance fighters.

Did your dramaturgical sensibility ever get in your way?
I don’t think so. I felt like I was standing on the shoulders of giants. I’d spent 20 years serving as director and dramaturg for new works, and absorbing and learning from many of the best writers in our current landscape. I did know that I had to keep the writing process
separate from the revision process. “Write it now, fix it later” became a mantra.

Stay tuned for Part 2 in January 2020!

Megan Monaghan Rivas joined the faculty of the School of Drama at Carnegie Mellon University in 2013 after serving as literary manager of South Coast Repertory Theatre, and literary director of the Alliance Theatre in Atlanta and Frontera @ Hyde Park Theatre in Austin, TX. She oversaw the artistic programming for playwrights at the Lark Play Development Center in New York City and The Playwrights’ Center in Minneapolis. She has freelanced with the New Harmony Project, the O’Neill National Playwrights Conference, the Geffen Playhouse, Quantum Theatre, Aurora Theatre, the Salt Lake Acting Company, TheatreSquared, Actors Express Theatre, and Horizon Theatre. Megan has been honored with the Elliott Hayes Prize in Dramaturgy.

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

Q&A | Elizabeth Williamson

As a producer, director, and dramaturg, which role did you come to first?
In school, I both directed and translated/adapted. On my early shows in New York, at places like the New York Fringe Festival, and HERE, I started self-producing as well, and learned as I went. I’ve always enjoyed stepping from role to role as appropriate on a show, and I started producing other people’s work as well when I joined Pioneer Theatre Company to found their new play program in 2008.

How did you come to dramaturgy?
The first show I dramaturged was Mary Zimmerman’s M. Proust, which About Face premiered at Steppenwolf. My graduate work had been on Proust, so it felt like a natural fit.
From there, I started dramaturging as well as directing new work a fair bit, but it was probably working with Theatre de la Jeune Lune that I first really fell in love with working as a dramaturg – I love shaping a show with a great director and exciting ensemble. Dramaturgy also gives me the opportunity to work on a wide array of work, from premiering musicals like *A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder*, to dance theatre work like Big Dance Theatre’s *Man in a Case*, to plays like *The Inheritance*, or Bess Wohl’s *Make Believe*.

When and how did you get added to the production team for Matthew Lopez’s *The Inheritance*?

*The Inheritance* was the first play we commissioned after I became Director of New Play Development at Hartford Stage, so I’ve been working on it with Matthew Lopez since before he started writing it!

What was unique about working on *The Inheritance*?

Shortly after we commissioned the play, Matthew asked me to organize a research forum for him, and we got together gay men from three generations to have a private afternoon-long conversation, discussing their lives, coming out, AIDS, and the gay rights movement. It was a deeply moving afternoon, and all the men commented on how rarely they sat down with gay men of other generations in that way. The importance of that kind of intergenerational conversation became one of the play’s main subjects. Getting to work on the piece with Matthew from that early research through last month’s Broadway premiere was wonderful – as
dramaturgs we often jump in later in the process, but on every piece I dramaturg I like to read the first draft, in order to understand the original impulses, and it was better still to be involved even before there was a full draft!

As the dramaturg for The Inheritance, what was your role in the transition from London to Broadway?
I’ve worked closely with Matthew, and also with director Stephen Daldry, on the shape and structure of the play throughout the process. When I’m working with Matthew (this is our third show together), he always asks me to suggest cuts, and we joke I’ve cut as much out of the play as is left in it at this point! But seriously, moving from London to New York, the main work was in restructuring the character Toby’s journey through Part 2. Because it’s a seven hour play, there was still work on the script Matthew hadn’t had a chance to finish in London, and there were substantial rewrites and restructuring of Part 2. We kind of took Part 2 Act 1 apart and put it back together again, with a more streamlined structure, and a clearer journey for Toby.

Elizabeth Williamson (Dramaturg). Broadway: The Inheritance, A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder (Tony Award for Best Musical), Anastasia. Off-Broadway/Regional: The Body of an American (Primary Stages); Matthew Lopez’ Somewhere and Reverberation, Make Believe, The Flamingo Kid, The Engagement Party, An Opening in Time, Rear Window, Man in a Case (Hartford Stage); Touch(ed), In, Find and Sign (Pioneer); M. Proust (About Face/Steppenwolf). London: The Inheritance (Young Vic/West End). Directing: Jane Eyre, Henry V, Cloud 9, Seder (Hartford Stage). NEA Fellow in Literary Translation. Associate Artistic Director/Director of New Play Development at Hartford Stage, where recent commissions include The Inheritance, Bess Wohl’s Make Believe and Kaneza Schaal’s JACK &. Education: Oxford University, Bennington College, the École Jacques Lecoq.

Interview by Amanda Dawson

#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

CONFERENCE HOTEL
Conference Hotel: Suites Obelisk
Obelisk Suites has 85 fully equipped rooms and suites. The establishment has 24-hour reception, free WiFi, free parking, access to the gym, and continental breakfast included in all fares.

The following room fares will be available for reservations between June 14th and June 23rd, 2020 - that's 3 days before and 3 days after the conference takes place. You can make your reservations starting today with the code: LMDA2020

Tel. (55) 5279 6363 or E-Mail: reservaciones@suitesobelisk.com or recepcion@suitesobelisk.com

- All rooms are subject to availability
- Please ask for the hotel payment and reservation policies.

STANDARD ROOM
This room is 24 square meters, available with one king-size bed or two single beds.
$2,856.00 MN —> $150.32 USD (if $1.00 USD = 19.00 MN)

JUNIOR ROOM
This suite is 31 square meters with one king-size bed or two single beds.
$2,856.00 MN —> $150.32 USD (if $1.00 USD = 19.00 MN)

SUITE
This suite is 66 square meters one King Size bed.
$3,700.90 MN —> $194.78 USD (if $1.00 USD = 19.00 MN)

MASTER SUITE
This suite is 66 square meters, two bedrooms with king-size beds.
$6428.38 MN —> $338.34 USD (if $1.00 USD = 19.00 MN)

CONFERENCE TRAVEL
Remember that Interjet Airlines offers a group rate for groups of 10 or more people flying from the same city. If you'd like to open a list for your city, please contact president@lmda.org and let us know.

Also, if you buy your tickets from today up until January 1st 2020, you can get a discount up to 80% off flights. Right now you could find flights for the dates of the 2020 Conference from around $200.00 USD flying from cities like NY, Chicago, San Francisco or LA, around $250.00 USD flying from Vancouver, and around $300.00 USD flying from Toronto or Montreal. Be sure to check it out ASAP.

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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**

**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](http://lmda.org)). RSVP to [regional@lmda.org](mailto: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](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](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](mailto:communications@lmda.org).

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**LMDA’s The Field Grant**

LMDA’s Field Grant is intended to support dramaturg-led projects towards an expansion of the field in geographic space throughout the Americas. This grant’s purpose and goal is to further the applicant’s intentions to promote dramaturgical activity particularly in México and/or Latin America, in indigenous spaces throughout the Americas, in rural areas, and in underserved communities. The applicant may propose partnership with an organization of their choice or produce independently. The Field Grant is available for all LMDA members.

Proposals are due **January 1, 2020**! Read more [HERE](mailto:communications@lmda.org).

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**Interested in contributing to the next newsletter? Have content ideas?**
E-mail [communications@lmda.org](mailto:communications@lmda.org).

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**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!