

WOMEN AND THEATRE

Winter 2015



Letter from the President

As I embark on my tenure as President of the Women and Theatre Program, I first need to extend my gratitude to **Jen-Scott Mobley** for her excellent guidance and leadership. I am benefitting so much from her term by inheriting a healthy and vibrant organization that is focused not only on enhancing its future, but honoring its legacy. Taking over for Jen-Scott has a meaningful significance for me, because she was the person who brought me in to WTP in my first year at ATHE as a graduate student, and she's remained a valued colleague throughout.

In addition to the established duties of the President, I have several important tasks to undertake in the next two years. Those tasks, as I see them, are oriented around our membership:

- Capitalize on the growth of WTP over the past several years, in part by continuing efforts to celebrate interdisciplinary work and collaboration with other focus groups
- Support recruitment of new members, retention of established members and lauded past members through innovative and important programming
- Continue development of our web presence, culminating in a clean, minimal ATHE presence with a link to a professional external site. The external site will feature new branding and logos, as well as the following sections: WTP information and history

of the past 35 years, archived conference and event photos, details on upcoming conferences and application links, a home for the Jane Chambers contest, links to WTP and member sites/resources, officer information and contacts, archive of award winners, current newsletter, and newsletter archives

As I have mentioned at meetings and within discussions, I am devoted to the relevancy and immediacy of WTP, and the goals mentioned above are all designed to that end. In all of these ventures, I'm very pleased to be working closely with **Lindsay Cummings** as the Vice President and Pre-Conference Planner. Together, we hope to make Montreal's conference an exciting, thriving event that features established members, provides growth opportunities for graduate student and early career professionals, as well as a continuing home for mid-career artists and scholars. These things, after all, are part of what has made WTP so important over the past four decades. Continuing that legacy is no small task and I don't take it lightly. I have been involved with WTP for the last 10 years, and I look forward to an exciting continuing relationship with an organization about which I care deeply.

Dr. Lisa Hall Hagen is an Assistant Professor of Theatre History and Dramaturgy at Utah Valley University. She holds an MA in Playwriting from Boston University, and a PhD in Theatre History and Criticism from the University of Colorado, Boulder.

ATHE 2014- WTP-LGBTQ Debut Panel

By Jason Fitzgerald

After the success of last year's joint WTP-LGBTQ debut panel, the first event in many years to combine the forces of two ATHE focus group with overlapping concerns and shared memberships, it was a no-brainer whether to continue the collaboration for one more year.

Jason Fitzgerald and **Rose Malague**, in their second and final years as conference planners for LGBTQ and WTP, respectively, went to work creating a sequel for the 2014 ATHE conference in Scottsdale, AZ. They were especially fortunate to enlist **Jennifer DeVere Brody**, Chair of the Department of Theatre and Performance Studies at Stanford University, as the panel's respondent. With her help, and to no one's surprise, the result was a spirited, well-attended event that provided three exciting young scholars with an introduction to both groups and the thriving camaraderie they share.

The panel presented papers on topics that were diverse in medium

of study, style of presentation, and critical context, each of them offering new avenues of inquiry for queer and feminist performance. **Sonya Smith**, an MFA candidate from University of Colorado Boulder, began the event with her paper, "Beneath the Text: Gender Performance in Aerial Dance." Using her own work as a performer and choreographer, Smith revealed the queer potential of aerial dance, a dynamic form whose physical and technological virtuosity in combination with dynamic vertical relationships has received too little critical attention thus far.

Heather Denyer's presentation, "Looking Queerly for Feminist Spaces in Koffi Kwahulé's *Les Recluses*," followed. She applied her critical acumen to the under-examined play, mapping out the delicate process by which Kwahulé gave women a platform to discuss rape as a tool of war in Burundi. Although a series of travel misfortunes forced Denyer, a PhD candidate at City University of New York (CUNY), to miss the panel itself (Fitzgerald read her paper), she was able to enjoy well-deserved praise from both focus groups at the rest of the conference.

Lastly, **Natalie Goodnow**, an MFA student at University of Texas, Austin, presented "Are We Desolate?

A Transnational Feminist Response to Chicana/o Myth-Making." A very personal essay, delivered as a "dialogue" with her own convictions as they have been tested by experience, Goodnow interrogated the tendency of Chicano/a cultural workers toward historical myth-making and pursued responsible ways to address indigeneity in political performance.

Calling attention to the political tensions that characterize Arizona's relationship to minority and immigrant communities, and the importance of mobilizing queer and feminist critique in a state where the politics of space are often staged in tears and blood, Brody applauded Smith, Denyer, and Goodnow for their incisive and timely work. Offering each of them provocations to deepen their inquiries, Brody then moderated a discussion among the admiring attendees. Her concluding question for not only the panelists but all present, "How do we mobilize the performative work of the term 'queer'?" reminds us of the uncompleted, and ever-renewing, tasks ahead for scholars of queer and feminist performance, and of the necessity of pursuing that work both passionately and collaboratively.



Jason Fitzgerald is a PhD Candidate in Theatre at Columbia University, where he is working on a dissertation relating the politics of authenticity to radical performance practice in the U.S. 1960s. He is also a dramaturg, with an MFA in Dramaturgy and Dramatic Criticism from Yale School of Drama, and a theatre critic. He has published reviews in *The Village Voice*, *Backstage*, *EDGE*, and *Slant.com*, and he has also published book and performance reviews in *Modern Drama*, *Theatre Survey*, *Theatre Journal*, *PAJ*, and *Public Books*. He served as conference organizer for ATHE's LGBTQ Focus Group for the 2013 and 2014 conferences.

Member News

By Kimberly Dark

"Becoming Travolta," performed at the 2014 WTP conference, is just out in the anthology *Queering Fat Embodiment* edited by Murray, Pause and Wykes on Ashgate Press. It's about my years as John Travolta— how fat girls always get the male roles and what that means for some queer femmes. *Huffington Post* has also reprinted the story; have a read [here](#).

Love, Sex and Laughter debuted in Australia in 2013 with dates in Melbourne, Brisbane and Cairns. Thought-provoking and hilarious, this show explores how male and female sexuality is different – and the same; how the body can be an ally, and how human connection trumps all other tragedies. Yes, it's a show for the queers – along with anyone who is intrigued by the complexities of gender and the body as a site of knowledge, pleasure and cultural meaning-making.

I performed a story from the show "Coming Out Fat" as part of **Jen-Scott Mobly's** "Fat Chance" panel at ATHE in Scottsdale. The story follows the dating foibles of a fat woman who knows that in order to be seen as beautiful, hot, and sexy, she must manage her identity as a fat person carefully. She also understands that not "coming out fat" is a mistake in a world that will give and withhold privilege with or without an individual's permission.

Love Sex and Laughter is scheduled for the 2015 Dublin International Gay and Lesbian Theatre Festival and has yet to make a U.S. debut. Find out more at www.kimberlydark.com.

Kimberly Dark is a writer, storyteller and speaker who helps audiences discover that we are creating the world, even as it creates us. She's the author of five award-winning performance scripts and a number of educational programs regarding the body in culture – how appearances and identities influence our experiences in the world related to gender, race, body type/size, beauty, ability, etc. She uses humor and intimacy to prompt audiences to discover their influences and reclaim their power as social creators.

Dark blogs regularly for *Huffington Post* and *Ms* magazine, in addition to contributing essays, stories and articles to a wide range of books and publications. She travels the English-speaking world doing performances and keynote presentations at colleges and universities, conferences, theatres and festivals. She has been invited to present her unique blend of performance and presentation, writing and workshops at hundreds of venues in the U.S., Canada, Australia, UK, Ireland and other nations during the past twenty years. She lectures in a graduate program in Sociological Practice at California State University, San Marcos.

The Evening Echo in Cork, Ireland says "the balance between objectivity and intimate analysis certainly gives Dark an edge and has made her a force to be reckoned with on every level. *The Salt Lake Tribune* in Utah says, "Dark doesn't shy away from provocative, incendiary statements, but don't expect a rant. Her shows, leavened with humor, are more likely to explore how small everyday moments can inform the arc of our lives." *The High Plains Reader* in Fargo, North Dakota says, "Dark's skill as a storyteller gets to your heart by exposing hers."



Want to circulate information? Start a WTP-related discussion? Any WTP member can post to the forums on the WTP section of ATHE's website. See <http://www.athe.org/group/WTP> for access and more information!

Joan Lipkin Receives WTP Achievement Award

Excerpts from the keynote:

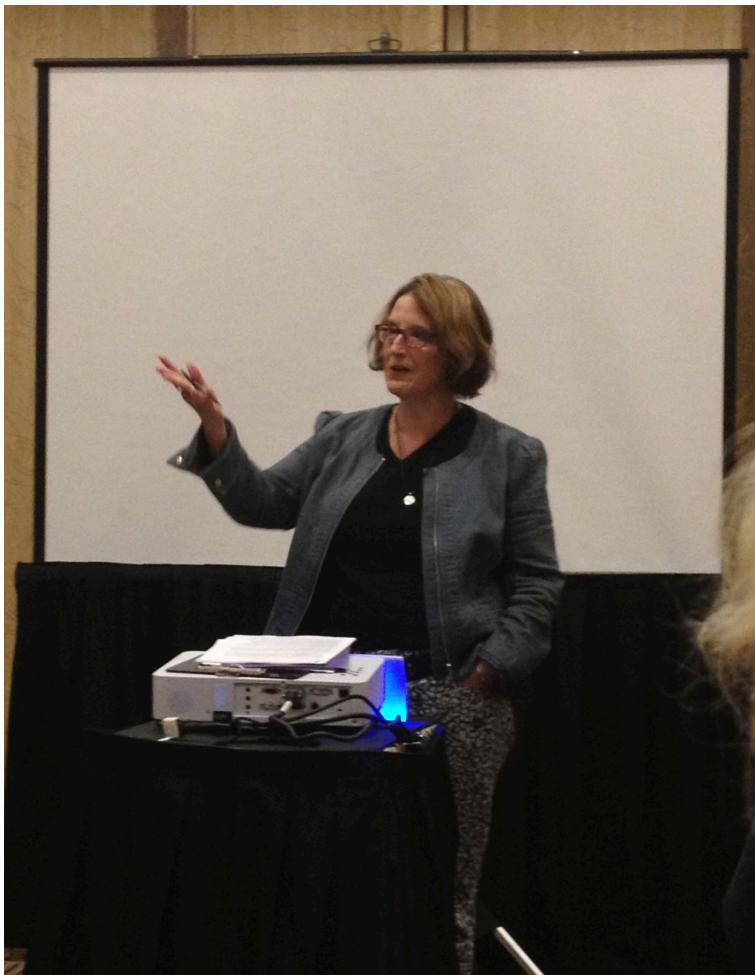


Bill Doan, Sara Warner, and Joan Lipkin after Joan's keynote.

I had the good fortune of reading about a WTP meeting about 20 years ago in a newspaper. In Chicago. I happened to be in Chicago at the time and managed to get myself there. I didn't know a soul there. And **Jill Dolan** greeted me as I came in. And I found ideas, ideas that people felt strongly enough about to argue. And I found feminists and feminists who were engaged with performance and I thought, what brave new world have I happened upon?

It is hard to run a small nonprofit that does radical work around social justice issues. I think one of the reasons why I stay with it, in addition to gorgeous moments of beauty, is that I am in search of an authentic conversation. There is so much manipulation by media, advertising, and political sloganeering. So many words. People talk a lot. They talk widely but not deeply. And the superficiality keeps us from connecting at a more meaningful level. I see possibilities for conversation in and through theatre with diverse groups of people that I don't see elsewhere.

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Joan Lipkin gives her keynote at the WTP precon.

I first met Joan at the Women and Theatre Program conference in Toronto. I was a nervous graduate student presenting for the first time at a professional organization, and she, my personal fairy godmother who sat down next to me, introduced herself, and made certain that I met everyone in the room. Joan's warmth and generosity of spirit made me feel so welcome and so at home that I found myself running for Vice President of the organization by the end of the conference. . . .

In the decade plus since we first met, I have had ample opportunity to witness Joan in action in a number of different contexts, and she never ceases to amaze me with her kindness, her ability to forge connections with and among people, and her keenly observant critical eye (in possession of a fierce intellect, Joan is one of the most erudite and well-read public intellectuals I have ever met). Her exuberant charm is absolutely infectious, and she uses her considerable charisma to forge difficult conversations – conversations about racism, sexism, and homophobia; conversations about economic inequality, incarceration, and the environment; conversations about health care, aging, and physical abilities.

Sara Warner



Joan Lipkin, Cecilia Aragón, and Sara Warner on the Past Officers Panel at the WTP precon.

As a playwright, performer, director, educator, and social critic, Joan shows us the power of theater to heal and to hit a nerve, to create intimacy and to foment dissent, to spark a revolution and to speak civilly with one another. Through her artistry and activism, she makes the world a better place for everyone. I can think of no one in our organization more richly deserving of recognition or more justifiably praise worthy for civic engagement through theater than Joan is.

Sara Warner

Keynote continued

Art is about connection, the ability to share, to empathize with other people's realities, no matter how remote or different. And when you can truly empathize, violence is hard to justify. I am deeply distressed by the growing culture of contempt that I see around me. Our collective imagination in this country right now is challenged by fear. When we dare to imagine freely, we conceive other ways of doing things and arrive at more positive, productive possibilities. So our opportunity as artists is about stepping back from that fear, and imagining. Imagining new possibilities in our classrooms and institutions and companies, regionally, nationally and in the wider world. How we can connect to each other in meaningful ways. How we can join to change things for the better, so we can live together in peace.

We can never really know the impact of art and what it makes possible for someone in the space of their own life. I fell for the theatre and

fell hard at an early age. And even as a child, I was moved by the sense of community that an audience could constitute, albeit temporarily. I didn't have words for any of this back then. The language and the analysis came later. I just felt deeply drawn to something I knew to be true.

What I know is that art saved my life as a confused and rebellious young girl growing up on the Southside of

Chicago and I believe it can save others.

Our lives need a witness. Being a witness to and for each other is the foundation for a civil society and at the heart of my life's work. I am grateful for the difficult and glorious work I have the privilege to do. And I really thank you for recognizing the meaning of this work and the my commitment and labor.



Amy Guenther, Nicole Eschen, and Maria Beach listen to Joan's keynote at the precon.

ATHE 2014 - Member Notebook:

WTP Sponsored Successful Mentorship Panel

by Lynn Deboeck

Kristen Rogers, WTP's immediate past Graduate Student Representative, organized an exciting panel entitled, "Dream Lessons: What I Know Now That I Wish I Knew Then" with some of the most prominent theatre academics who each gave five pieces of advice for those younger in the field—advice in some cases they wish they had received when they were starting out.

The panel included **Cheryl Black**, **Esther Kim Lee**, **Rose Malague**, **Kim Marra**, **Heather Nathans**, and **Beth Osborne**. There were also three who were unable to be present at the panel, but still submitted advice (**Sarah Bay-Cheng**, **Dorothy Chansky**, **Judy Sebesta**). A hardcopy of all the academics' advice was provided to those in attendance.

Among the most repeated pieces of advice were tips on keeping a life-balance you are happy with, preparedness in teaching, tactics needed when negotiating salary, learning how to prioritize, finding ways to articulate your research, learning "admin" speak, and actively acquiring new skills. The panel also took several more specific questions from the attendees.

The panel was a great success and there has been talk of repeating the exercise next year. If you were not in attendance and would like to procure the handout with all the compiled advice that was discussed, contact Kristen at kristen.a.rogers@ttu.edu.



Lynn Deboeck is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Theatre at the University of Kansas. Her primary research interests include the theatrical depiction of maternity and motherhood and she is a proud wife and mother of three beautiful children.

Cheryl Black **University of Missouri**

I would like to emphasize the significance of mentoring, throughout a career, especially for women; so do seek mentors/mentoring for the various stages of your career.

Rose Malague **University of Pennsylvania**

Find ways to be rewarded by your own efforts, because that reward may not come from others.

Kim Marra **University of Iowa**

Take on a large lecture course - Many faculty avoid these, but I have found the one I teach to be a real boon for buying time and other benefits.

Dorothy Chansky **Texas Tech University**

Money: yes, what you negotiate at the start of your contract will be the basis for everything that happens thereafter. . . . My biggest piece of advice would be to get with some kind of financial planner from the get-go.

Beth Osborne **Florida State University**

Take stock of your life and career periodically, and shape your profile

accordingly. Where do you want to be and what do you want to be doing in 3 years, 5 years, and 10 years.

Esther Kim Lee **University of Maryland**

What's urgent is not always what's most important.

Sarah Bay-Cheng **University at Buffalo - State University of New York**

Find the discipline to be singularly, intently focused: work time is for working; family time is for playing/parenting. Enjoy both. Don't multitask.

Judy Sebesta **Higher Education Policy Institute**

It is important to provide the space and opportunity for our students to consider alternate paths, from corporate work, to non-profits, to state agencies, and the like. I will suggest two areas that can be extremely productive for students to gain experience in:

- grant writing and fundraising
 - project management (even things like conference and event planning)
- And gaining expertise in digital technologies never hurts, either.

2014 Jane Chambers Award

A Note from the Coordinator

By **Maya E. Roth**

Gina Young's *Femmes* was honored by WTP and ATHE in 2014 with our Jane Chambers Award. This creative, highly-theatrical play—which stages a deconstructed cabaret in its last act—rose to WTP's top slot for a new feminist script from among 114 submissions in 2014, moving through three rounds of adjudication in our 30th Anniversary of the Contest. Written by LA-based writer, performer and director Gina Young, *Femmes* (8F) is a contemporary lesbian adaptation of Clare Boothe Luce's *The Women*. It premiered at Highways, where it was

hailed as “slyly riotous” and “dazzlingly reconceived” by LA press.

Final round judges were struck with *Femmes'* feminist wit, its savvy exploration of lesbian identity, and the ways its theatrical form pushes boundaries both in style and subject matter. Set in a collectivist burlesque community for a diversity of femmes, the drama spirals when a community organizer's polyamorous girlfriend drops her overnight for a hot bartender. Her friends—an activist, an academic and a party promoter—are thrown into a girl/girl competition despite their best intentions and are ultimately forced to parse the ways in which butch/femme relationships do or don't replicate heterosexual stereotypes. *Femmes* provides an exhilarating diversity of roles for female performers, who through the burlesque scenes can shape local



Maya E. Roth is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Performing Arts at Georgetown University. She was honored to receive the Dean's Excellence in Teaching Award this year. She has overseen the Jane Chambers Playwriting adjudication since 2007.

performances, as we saw at ATHE to great effect,

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Jane Chambers Winner Gina Young chats with Maya Roth about *Femmes: A Tragedy*



I became a playwright and director by necessity, as a kind of “fuck that shit” gesture.

Gina Young

MER: What compelled you to write this fabulous play?

GY: *Femmes: A Tragedy* is both a love letter to and criticism of the queer femme and lesbian communities of which I am a part. It was inspired by Clare Boothe Luce's 1936 play *The Women*, which is still such a fresh and accurate satire of the way women sometimes tear each other down, despite the two waves of American feminism since its publication.

MER: Can you share a few words about the reading-- and what it tapped into for you and/or the audience?

GY: It was amazing. I was so lucky to find a cast from all over the country that understood the subject matter so

thoroughly and with such nuance, including **Holly Hughes** who has long been an inspiration of mine. With virtually no rehearsal, they were phenomenal! They had the audience in stitches the entire time-- that kind of knowing laughter that is a playwright's dream. One of my favorite pieces of feedback was hearing **Julie Rada** say that she has never, as an actor, been given an opportunity to play a character that was so close to her own identity and experiences. It is so important that we continue to bring more and more marginalized voices to the stage.

MER: You're a performer of your own and others' work as well as a playwright and director. How do these connect?

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JC Award continued

and our audience enjoyed how the play creates a wry, loving view on patterns and fault-lines in lesbian communities. Young's charismatic cast of lesbian characters (diverse in generation, race, persona, profession, body-type and values) present not only an exhilarating array of roles for performance, but also ample opportunities for talented performers to shape their own performance personas as came to the fore in the WTP's reading for ATHE, directed by Young herself. Our cast featured a talented cadre of feminist performers affiliated with WTP, the LGBTQ Focus Group, and, for some, lesbian performance in the Phoenix area; our performers— **Lisa Biggs, Lindsay Cummings, Osiris Cuen, Carolyn Goelzer, Natalie Marlena Goodnow** (past Jane Chambers winner), **Holly Hughes, Julie Rada, Cynthia Rena, and Carin Silkaitis**—did an exhilarating job of claiming this play and its performer-centered possibilities.

Gina's other plays and films—including *Tales of a Fourth Grade Lesbo*, honored as an Asuncion Playwrights Project Semi-Finalist, *she cuts herself/she likes to write*, rated as a *Time Out NY* Critic's Pick, and *God in a Girl*, which received a BAX Grant— also frequently orbit around lesbian and queer protagonists. Her theater work has appeared at a range of venues, including REDCAT, Highways, WOW Cafe Theatre, HERE Arts Center, The Lyric-Hyperion Theatre, Pasadena Playhouse, The BRIC Studio Theater, The FUSE Festival curated by Dixon Place, BAX/ The Brooklyn Arts Exchange, Live Girls! in Seattle, Washington, The Baltimore Playwrights Festival and the Page to Stage Festival at the Kennedy Center. She has also toured

the US and Europe extensively, including via the original performance art pop duo TeamGina, whose video "Butch/ Femme" screened at LGBT film festivals worldwide, won multiple awards and garnered over 250,000 hits on YouTube. See <http://www.ginayoung.com> and our sidebar for more on Gina's work—and our reading of *Femmes*.

WTP was equally delighted to honor four other plays for the professional Jane Chambers Contest this year: *Seamless* by **Dorinne Kondo**, our Runner-Up, and, as Honorable Mentions, *Baby Strike!* by **Liza Case**, *Goddess of Mercy* by **Jenny Connell Davis** and *Exile is my Home* by WTP's **Domnica Radulescu**. Snippets of Radulescu and Connell Davis' work were shared at WTP, after the reading of *Femmes*. WTP's honored plays range from a moving, often comedic, exploration of Japanese-American identity, history, and gender refracted through family, work and generation by Kondo in *Seamless*, to a dystopic, absurdist (yet all-too-real) vision of America post-Roe vs Wade written by Case for *Baby Strike!*, that gestures toward Lysistrata. Two of the honorable mention plays interact with global perspectives in significant, quite different ways: Radulescu's ensemble exploration of exilic lives, loves, losses, and prospective transformations in *Exile is my Home* is set in a fairytale galaxy that reverberates in profound, sometimes playful, ways with our diasporic world and Davis' fast-moving *Goddess of Mercy* moves from realism to expressionism to query how a triad of young New Yorkers are ensnared with global capitalism and politics, imperiling indigenous rights—and, unexpectedly, their own family.

I was struck this year that Case had won the 2010 Student Jane Chambers Award for her play *The Unspoken Ones* and Radulescu received recognition in WTP's final round the second year running—for her *The Town With Very Nice People: A Strident Operetta* was awarded Runner-Up from the Jane Chambers Contest in 2013. Another rewarding marker of sustained feminist engagement over time among the honorees comes through the work of Dorinne Kondo, Professor of Ethnic and Women's Studies at USC, and an award-winning scholar (as well as a dramaturge for Anna Deavere Smith's *Twilight: Los Angeles*). Kondo, this year's Runner-Up, echoed the words of many others, when she shared how validating the Jane Chambers recognition can be—for we serve as an audience who "get" the feminist and cultural stakes of the play/s in ways literary departments rarely do. (So advocate for production!)

Our winner of the Student Jane Chambers Contest is *Fuck La Vie D'Artiste* by **Georgette Kelly**, with **Bianca Sams'** *Rust On Bone* named our Runner-Up, both described along with other honorees on our WTP Website. Other plays which advanced to our Final Round for the Main Contest were: *Ugly Lies the Bone* (**L. Ferrentino**), *A Knee that Can Bend* (**E. Goidel**), *The Strangest Thing* (**W. Dann**), *Soldier Girl* (**K. Kelleher**), *Zen and the Art of Mourning a Mother* (**E. Goldman-Sherman**), *Señorita Monthly Juice* (**Z. Ruiz**), *Seek* (**S. Soon He Stanton**), and *Four Days in the Delta* (**K.D. Boers**).

Fuller details about all of the honored plays for 2014, as well as author bios, are posted on WTP's website.

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Chat with Gina Young continued

GY: I started out as an actor, and I was shocked and turned off by how many times I saw sexist writing and sexist directing limit the roles available to women. I became a playwright and director by necessity, as a kind of "fuck that shit" gesture. At the end of the day, I really just want to be telling new stories, or reinterpreting old stories in new ways. I still love acting, but it feels far more urgent to me that we achieve some kind of gender parity/gender diversity in the writing and directing world.

JC Award continued

Our continued call to help recognize and advocate for the production of these smart, powerful feminist plays remains. This year, as in so many recent ones, the plays suit a diversity of missions, audiences, venues, and performance styles. All, meanwhile, stage under-represented themes and/or lives refracted through feminist perspectives and all feature significant roles for a majority of female performers; many also experiment with form.

Thank you to all who served as adjudicators this year. There were fourteen of us, all together, most affiliated with WTP and from across the country. Together, we're finding distinctive plays to honor—and to call out to colleagues as well as the field. It's our 30th Anniversary of the Jane Chambers Play: May we see another 30 more, and help next generations of feminist playwrights not only to rise—but to find their audiences and production homes. A special shout-out, too, to **Jen-Scott Mobley** who will join me in stewarding this coming year's



Reading of Jane Chamber's Award winner, *Femmes: A Tragedy*, at the conference.

Georgette Kelly wins Student Jane Chambers Award for *Fuck La Vie D'Artiste*



I am currently developing my play *Ballast* for an industry reading with TerraNOVA Collective Groundbreakers Playwrights Group in New York (January) and a staged reading through The Alliance Theatre's Keneda National Graduate Playwriting Competition in Atlanta (February). More info is available on my website, GeorgetteKelly.com.

ATHE 2014 - A Recap of the Graduate Student Panel at the Precon

By Kristen Rogers



Kristen Rogers is currently a PhD candidate in Fine Arts (Theatre) at Texas Tech University. She holds an MFA in Acting from the Actors Studio Drama School, and has worked as an actor, director, and teacher in New York, Los Angeles, and the Chicago area. Kristen is currently working on her dissertation, tentatively titled, "Mediatizing the 'Madwoman': Analyzing the Treatment of Female Mental Illness on Stage and Screen."

Closing my term as graduate student representative, I once again had the great privilege to solicit and select papers for what has become (thanks to my predecessor, **Heidi Schmidt**) the annual Graduate Student Panel at the Women and Theatre Program pre-conference. The panel is designed to showcase current graduate student work on women in theatre, whether or not participants have previously presented at a national conference. The goal is to continue to encourage graduate students who are already members of WTP, as well as to seek out new potential members, by providing a place for them to present research in a supportive environment that cultivates useful feedback.

As convener of the panel for the past two years, my personal goal has been to assemble a group of papers that collectively explore very diverse subject matters and perspectives, and that certainly rang true this year. At the same time, I am always amazed how the seemingly unrelated papers ultimately do speak to one another,

and I am fascinated by the rich dialogue that ensues once they have been presented.

This year, we were able to accept four proposals for presentation. **Anndretta Lyle Wilson**, a PhD candidate from the University of California, Los Angeles, presented her paper, "Women Staging Joy: Marion Williams and Vinnette Carrol Deliver *Black Nativity*." In it, Wilson examines the "tension surrounding conception and production" in art, as well as the primacy of text in consideration of authorship, as she questions the erasure of the contributions made by performer Marion Williams and, in particular, director Vinnette Carrol to the often-produced, much-beloved play known as Langston Hughes' *Black Nativity*.

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Leslie Gulden, Teresa Minarsich, Amy Guenther, and Anndretta Lyle Wilson present on the Grad Panel at the WTP precon.

This was my first time attending ATHE or participating in a WTP event and I am deeply grateful to have had the opportunity. Being in the grad panel gave me a chance to share research that I am just starting to develop and it was exciting to get such positive feedback from some amazing women in our field.

Leslie Gulden

Grad Student Panel continued

Next, **Amy Guenther**, a PhD candidate from the University of Texas at Austin, presented her paper, “Variations on ‘A’ Theme: Whiteness, Sexuality, and Motherhood in Theatrical Adaptations of *The Scarlet Letter*.” In particular, Guenther’s paper examines two feminist adaptations produced in the 1990s, Phyllis Nagy’s *The Scarlet Letters* (1994) and Suzan-Lori Parks’s *In the Blood* (1999), analyzing them as reactions to the romanticization of Puritanism and its inherent patriarchal values during the previous decade. Then **Teresa Minarsich**, who has since graduated with her PhD from Arizona State University, presented her research on what it is like to be a girl in the United States today. Her study, “Girl-becomings: Girls Theorizing Girlhood through Visual Art, Theatre and Digital Communications,” details her experiences over the span of one semester working with The Girls Institute for Future Leaders, during which she directly engaged with adolescent women, ages fourteen to seventeen, encouraging and asking them to analyze the ways in which they perceive and perform their own identities. Finally, **Leslie Gulden**, a PhD

candidate at Texas Tech University, presented her paper, “The Trifles of Theatrical Eco-Criticism.” Not only does she offer a detailed eco-critical analysis of Susan Glaspell’s *Trifles*, proposing that productions of the play ought not dismiss the value of the products of nature, animals, and other environmental factors too often hidden from the audience’s view, Gulden also draws a metaphorical comparison to the field of theatrical eco-criticism itself, suggesting that it is an approach to research and dramaturgy taken on primarily by female scholars and possibly viewed, at least at this point, as “less important” in more dominant methodologies.

As a group, these presentations inspired interesting questions and energetic discussion regarding our understandings of identity, perception, and visibility. Much of our post-presentation conversation focused on the importance of being seen and truly recognized, especially when so often placed in the position or role of “other.” Though their problems and conclusions varied greatly, each of these graduate students asked us to pay attention to issues that we may not have considered previously – and, because of their work, we did.



Attendees listening to the Grad Panel at the WTP precon.

Letter from the Vice President: Forward to Montréal: Pre-Conference 2015

By Lindsay Cummings



Lindsay Cummings is an Assistant Professor of Dramatic Arts at the University of Connecticut, where she teaches dramaturgy and dramatic literature. Her work on the playwright Naomi Wallace appears in the recently released collection, *The Theatre of Naomi Wallace: Embodied Dialogues*, edited by Scott T. Cummings and WTP's own Erica Steven Abbitt, from Palgrave Macmillan.

In 2015, the Women in Theatre Program will mark its 35th anniversary. I am so pleased that my first year as Vice President coincides with this milestone. The theme for the ATHE conference could not be more appropriate: *Je Me Souviens*.

Of course, *Je Me Souviens*, the official motto of Montréal, the site of our gathering, is a phrase with multiple implications and translations. While it is usually translated into English as “Lest we forget,” in French it evokes something more akin to “I remember,” a defiant declaration that the past—including the city’s French history—is alive in memory. As we think ahead to Montréal, this motto provokes us consider, more broadly, attempts to elide uncomfortable histories and acts of national and cultural forgetting.

Moreover, these varying translations remind us that language is intimately connected to culture and history. Memory itself is an act of translation—a form of figuring and refiguring the past in the present. Building on these ideas, our theme for the 2015 Pre-Conference will be “Acts and States of Translation: The Shifting Languages of Feminism, Theatre, and Performance.” We encourage you to

think not just about theories or instances of translation, but the performance or act of translation as well. What does it mean to be in the process of translating—moving between languages, cultures, and times? As the title indicates, we want to think about translation in many contexts. How do we translate between theory and practice? Between classroom and rehearsal room? Across time, space, and culture? Across borders, national and otherwise?

This theme prompts us to consider which ideas, texts, and performances cross borders and which do not. Who or what is available “in translation,” and to whom? This is particularly pressing issue as we gather in Montréal. Canadian theatre—and French Canadian theatre in particular—is still seldom discussed, produced, or studied by those of us living just south of the border.

I am reminded of Chicana Studies and transnational feminism scholar Maylei Blackwell’s notion of *translengua* or *translenguaje*, which literally translates to trans-tongue or trans-language. Blackwell uses *translenguaje* to describe the translation of political praxis and organizational strategies across

cultural and national borders. *Translenguaje* entails a critical awareness of the social hierarchies and contexts on both sides of the border, and thus an awareness that ideas and political solutions cannot be uncritically applied in new contexts. We should look across borders, Blackwell says, but we must do so with an acute awareness of what does and does not “translate.”

Many of us are engaged in institutional acts of translation—making our artistic work legible for ever-expanding administrations intent on quantifiable ways to evaluate the success of colleges, departments, and individual faculty. When is it in our best interest to use the language of our administrations (increasingly a corporate language), and when is it advisable to insist on a different language? What are the benefits and drawbacks of both strategies? And what is the effect of the increasing slippage of corporate language into the academy? I find myself becoming increasingly more polyglot—but not in the way we usually mean this term.

continued on the next page

The 2015 WTP Pre-Conference: “Acts and States of Translation: The Shifting Languages of Feminism, Theatre, and Performance”

The precon will take place at McGill University, just minutes from the ATHE Conference hotel. It will feature presentations by Canadian playwright **Erin Shields**, winner of the 2011 Governor General’s Award for her play *If We Were Birds*, as well as past WTP officers **Jill Dolan** and **Jennifer De Vere Brody**. And there is more in the works! Keep an eye out for program updates and the Call for Presenters, coming in March!

VP's Letter continued

As I move from classroom to scholarly writing to committee work to company dramaturgy, I have to code switch quickly between theoretical jargon, marketing buzzwords, and corporate idioms. While this linguistic dexterity is crucial to my daily life, I find myself troubled by the seemingly easy plasticity with which I move from one form to another and the “cut and paste” thinking that affords me daily efficiency, a signal of the market pressures that dictate my working practices. What is being lost in translation?

This conference theme allows us to expand on some of our ongoing conversations. In recent years, we have spent quite a bit of time discussing the ideal feminist syllabus and ways to expand the presence of women in theatre history classrooms. What acts of translation—literal, theoretical, and metaphorical—need to happen to assist this project?

Finally, as an organization, this 35th anniversary celebration is a chance for us to think about generational relationships within WTP, as well as in feminism more broadly. What past struggles and successes still resonate strongly today, what has been forgotten, and what projects,

concerns, and concepts need to be translated to address new social, political, and institutional realities? How might we forge stronger bonds between early career professionals and our more senior artists and scholars? As one step in that process, we will host a second iteration of the Past Officers Panel, introduced in our Scottsdale meeting, in which former WTP officers **Jill Dolan** and **Jennifer DeVere Brody**, among others, will share their thoughts on where the organization has been, where it is now, and where it might go in the future.

Think big. Start planning early. I look forward to seeing in Montréal.



Jen-Scott Mobley and Jessica Del Vecchio at the ATHE reception.

WTP Membership and Conference Registration

WTP's membership year runs from the first day of September to the last day of August. As a member, you receive two newsletters each year, which include letters from the WTP President, WTP member features, reports on the Jane Chambers competition, ATHE conference news, and programming for WTP conferences. Please support WTP by joining our organization or renewing your membership via our patron pay pal link [here](#).

For more information, visit [WTP's website](#).

From the Editor

The WTP Newsletter not only serves to disseminate information about WTP, but to provide a sense of community and connectivity amongst WTP members.

To that end, I welcome any articles addressing issues relevant to WTP members, and any questions, comments, suggestions, or letters to the editor.

For example, submissions might include:

- WTP Member Feature Column - an article that highlights a WTP member's recent or forthcoming project
- WTP News and/or Opportunities - including brief publications announcements, summaries of artistic projects, performance reviews, or calls for contributors/collaborators/artists

- Updates on past Jane Chambers Award winners
- Past President's Column - did you serve as WTP President? Tell us about your experience, and what you have been up to since!
- Descriptions of and responses to conference presentations, panels, and performances
- Pictures of WTP members or happenings

If you are interested in submitting something, please email me.

Thank you,
Jessica Del Vecchio,
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WOMEN AND THEATRE General Information

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About WTP

The Women and Theatre Program is a self-incorporated division of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) that began in 1974. At that time, the goal was to bring professional theatre women together with women in academia. In the years since its inception, WTP has sponsored panels and activities at ATHE's annual conference. In 1980, WTP began holding its own annual conference. WTP conferences feature panels, informal discussions, workshops, and performances as a means to foster both research and the

production of feminist theatre activities. WTP conference topics have included the intersection of theory and performance, multicultural theatre, lesbian theory and theatre, and many related aspects of feminist inquiry.

In addition to its conference activity, WTP, in collaboration with ATHE, sponsors the Jane Chambers Playwriting Award. This award is one of the few nationally recognized competitions for women playwrights and attracts over 200 submissions annually. The award-winning play is given a reading at ATHE, and an

annotated list of the top contenders is circulated to the WTP members and over 400 regional theatres. WTP also sponsors the annual Jane Chambers Student Playwriting Award, and the winner is given a staged reading at our annual conference. The continuing goal of WTP is to enable feminist inquiry and to provide opportunities for discussion between those who teach, perform, and theorize about feminism, theatre, and performance.