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Highlights

- Membership Endorses “Resolutions to Improve Working Conditions”; see “Advocacy: Guidelines” by Lynn Thomson
- **Conference 2001: June 7-10, Denver, Colorado**
- Hayes Award 2000 to Lynn Thomson and Rebecca Rugg

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- “The Past Two Years, and on . . .” by Geoff Proehl
- Hayes Award Application and Membership Directory Mailed with this edition of the *Review*
- Special Section on LMDA Conference 2000 (N. Gantshar, ed.)

the lmda review

*The Newsletter of
Literary Managers and
Dramaturgs of the
Americas
Vol. 11, Issue 1
Fall, 2000*

**literary
managers
& dramaturgs
of the americas**

“It seems to me that if I had not been a writer, then I could have been a gardener.”

Anton Chekhov

Section I: In Review

WE ARE MOVING . . .

Here is the how to stay in touch. Our new phone number is **718-437-5462**. Our email address is **LMDA2000@aol.com**. Our web address is **www.lmda.org**. Our mailing address is currently the same (121 Ave. of the Americas, Suite 505, New York, NY 10013), but will be changing soon. Watch for a flyer in the mail and announcements on our listserv.

CONFERENCE 2001, DENVER, JUNE 7-10: GRAB YOUR CALENDARS

The Conference Planning Committee and the Executive Committee announce that Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas will hold their **2001 ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN DENVER, COLORADO, JUNE 7-10, 2001**. We are excited about a conference that focuses on a diverse community of artists and audiences in our theaters, as well as the possibilities Denver offers LMDA members and supporters. More information coming soon.... Gretchen Haley, 2001 Conference Planner

A. ADVOCACY: GUIDELINES BY LYNN M. THOMSON

We did it, every one of us.

Going back: On the night, of the day, of the business meeting (2000 conference in DC), DD Kugler commented on a moment: a silence. In recollection, that moment has

settled in my mind as indeed extraordinary. After a three hour discussion, and years within the membership of questing and questioning and controversy, a resolution at the business meeting was proposed—that those present support a proposed draft of employment guidelines and a call for a vote from the full membership. In response to the question of “those opposed” was a long, hard-earned, and very full silence.

The moment was of solidarity, community, a movement forward.

That moment continued on November 7 in the near unanimous passing of the revised employment guidelines. Present there were myself, Merv Antonio, Shirley Fishman. (No recounts were needed, but we did it anyway, and we did it by hand).

Going further back: At the conference in Tacoma, in 1999, the advocacy caucus (Shirley Fishman, Laura Castro, Maxine Kern, and myself) walked with the attendees through a process, from oral history to research to problem solving. We were taking our skills in collaboration and critical thinking and applying them to changing our professional lives. The oral histories, difficult, sometimes disturbing, occasionally funny, revealed our common ground. Members, new and of long-held national standing, unveiled similar experiences of low pay, overwork and insufficient credit that accompanied extraordinary tasks.

The histories were followed by information about models in other professions, reports of legal consultations, a survey, then problem solving. Out of the caucus afternoon emerged mutual understandings, culminating in the recognition of a need to support each other even when, or especially when, we do not require the same guarantees: solidarity. The result was a commitment from the executive committee to improve working conditions as part of the organization's stated mission; and a mandate for the advocacy caucus to propose how that commitment could be realized.

Of course the determining contexts for that day include the ongoing efforts of dramaturgs nationally, evolving the vision of what we do. Earlier in 1999, in consultation with George Thorn, a representative dozen professionals affirmed a statement titled, "Shared Values and Beliefs." (See url: http://www.lmda.org/members_only/Note.html; user name and password = LMDA.) The effort was organized by Geoff Proehl and supported by NYSCA (New York State Council of the Arts), with the special advocacy of Susan Jonas. In addition, significant portions of the last two national conferences of LMDA, under the leadership of Geoff Proehl, have concentrated increasingly on what constitutes the artistry of the dramaturg. The mode has been conversation, the subject often collaboration, the discourse itself collaborative. In 1999, building on discussion in 1998 and a proposal for a conference of self-examination from Paul Walsh, the national convention virtually abandoned the usual arrangement of

presenter and audience. The predominance of collaborative in-house conversations, often in small, sub-groups, yielded growth in the organization and the profession, a finding of common ground.

From the voices accumulated during the years of study and conversation and now membership affirmation, I started in 1999 to write proposals for employment guidelines, the goal for the Advocacy Caucus established in 1997. I wrote in constant dialogue with those members of the caucus available as well as a new committee, named in honor of a phrase used by John Lutterbie: Friendly Amenders. The goal was a document that would seek consensus, and if not uniform agreement, majority opinion. Working closely with Mark Bly, Lee Devin, Shirley Fishman, Brian Quirt and really too many to name, I was happy to find meeting places and even write what I personally didn't always agree with—but seemed the single voice of the membership. Attorney David Friedlander provided his expertise in entertainment law and his superior dramaturgy transformed the document.

At the 2000 conference, the Advocacy Caucus attempted to return to the oral history but the effort was unnecessary. The meeting of all attending the conference began with a need to investigate thoroughly the first draft of guidelines. Fortunately, that session was videotaped and perhaps sometime with new money we can make this record available. The tapes display large scale collaboration as discussion centered on both details and underlying conceptions of the work environment we wanted.

The guidelines were reconsidered, revised—more talking, e-mailing, faxing—then done, copied, mailed, voted on, and now we have them. Indeed, at least one member wrote at length about using them to her great benefit even before they were passed. (Ed. Note: see note by **Vanessa Porteous** in Section II.)

If this were a play, the story couldn't be clearer; the action crystalline. And there is more to do now: dissemination, more advocacy, more conversation.

Meanwhile, whatever we encounter, I hope we can all be sustained by imagining/recalling that silence.

* * * * *

B. LMDA MEMBERS MEET WITH THE NEA **BY GEOFF PROEHL**

On Thursday, June 15, just prior to the annual conference, Mark Bly, Liz Engelman, and Geoff Proehl met with Eleanor Denegre (Theater Specialist) and Barry Bergey (Folk and Traditional Arts) of the National Endowment for the Arts. We had hoped that Gigi Bolt (Director, Theater and Musical Theater), would be able to attend our annual conference just outside of Washington, DC, but she had business that took her out of town from the 15th to the 18th, so we set-up this meeting on the eve of the conference instead.

The goal of the meeting was simple: put names and faces to Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas and so begin to build a closer relationship between LMDA and the NEA. During the past year we had submitted a grant proposal to the NEA for administrative support that had been turned down. We wanted to do what we could to ensure the success of future proposals.

Although we had planned on a twenty to thirty minute meeting, we ended up spending nearly an hour with Eleanor and Barry. Over the course of that time, we talked with them about the work of LMDA and the state of the profession with Mark taking the lead, while Liz and Geoff tried to fill-in wherever we could. They talked with us about NEA services and Eleanor offered to review our most recent grant applications and make suggestions for future grant proposals. We left Eleanor and Barry with folders that included the most recent LMDA *Review* and a program for the conference, as well as a conference T-shirt (for Gigi) and copies of both *The Production Notebooks* and *Dramaturgy in American Theater*.

Although our greatest need is for operational support, we were reminded that NEA funding was project specific, although, of course, portions of the project

budget can go toward administrative and operating expenses. In preparing a grant, our hosts emphasized a point that dramaturgs should well understand: at the root of any successful proposal is a story well told. We should use our familiarity with narrative to tell our stories effectively, whether we are writing a grant for LMDA or for one of the theaters with which we work. Eleanor and Barry were also interested in the extent to which we as dramaturgs were involved in creating grant proposals for our theaters and talked about inviting dramaturgs to sit on the NEA's grant review panels in the future.

Mark asked Eleanor and Barry what, from their perspective, members of LMDA could do to support the NEA and the arts in general, as in responding to a particular arts crisis. Barry mentioned working with organizations such as the American Arts Alliance and the Theater Communications Group, but emphasized the importance of an ongoing effort, apart from moments of crisis. Elected officials need to hear from us not just when a problem arises but also during the times when arts programs are working well.

Finally, Eleanor and Barry provided us with brochures on various categories of grants for which we might apply.

Grants to organizations currently cut across four fields:

- ◆ Creativity (formerly Creation and Presentation): creating and presenting artistic work;
- ◆ Organizational Capacity (formerly Planning and Stabilization): developing strong and valued arts organizations;
- ◆ Access: increasing access to the arts for all;
- ◆ Education: lifelong education in the arts (creativity, education, organization).

This year's deadlines have passed. New applications will be available on the NEA web site in January 2001:
<http://arts.endow.gov/guide/Orgs01/OrgIndex.html>.

Recommendations for Follow-up:

- ◆ Continue to send Gigi Bolt our mailings and to invite her or members of her staff to our annual conferences;
- ◆ Follow-up on Eleanor's offer to review our last grant proposal in the near future and ask for suggestions of grants for which to apply in the future;
- ◆ Review the materials on grants we were given at the meeting, as well as the NEA web site, and determine which we want to pursue between now and next June's annual conference;
- ◆ Put together a small team to write a grant application for 2001.

* * * * *

C. UPDATE: THE ELLIOTT HAYES AWARD
BY MICHAEL BIGELOW DIXON
AND AMY WEGENER

After a review of the inaugural year of this award with LMDA President Geoff Proehl, a few changes were made in the guidelines and forms. The staff at Actors Theatre of Louisville will continue to administer the award.

- ◆ Three new judges were selected by LMDA President Geoff Proehl in consultation with the Actors Theatre staff. This year's judges are DD Kugler, Michael Kinghorn and Liz Engelman.
- ◆ Announcements of the revised deadline (February 15) were made in the LMDA *Review* and a membership mailing went out in the fall of 1999, though we're not sure the changes made it onto the LMDA web page, which may have led to one disappointed potential applicant.
- ◆ A reasonable number of applications/nominations were submitted. As expected, though, that number dropped from the inaugural year. Finding ways to encourage submissions will continue to be a part of the annual effort.
- ◆ In the first year of the award, the literary estate of Elliott Hayes provided \$1,000 (Canadian) to underwrite 2 years of the award. In the second year, the staff at Actors Theatre

raised another \$ 575 (mixed Canadian and USA dollars) through donations from family and friends of Elliott Hayes. This income should ensure a third year for the award in 2001 unless there is some change in sentiment from the membership. LMDA's officers are providing tax-statements for the contributors.

- ◆ The literary staff at Actors Theatre remains willing to serve as administrators for the award and we look forward to feedback from this year's conference. Some discussion about future funding sources is welcome, as well as refinements in the guidelines.
- ◆ Our thanks to all entrants in this year's award. We hope more of you will apply next year.

Postscript (fall, 2000): The guidelines have been slightly modified for the 2001 prize in dramaturgy, thanks to feedback from LMDA President DD Kugler. You will find them included with this issue of the *Review*. Also, three new judges have been selected by DD Kugler and the Actors Theatre staff for the third year of the prize: Des Gallant at Florida Stage, Mary Resing at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, and Gavin Witt at Northlight Theatre Company.

* * * * *

D. UPDATE: *SCRIPT EXCHANGE*
BY SONYA SOBIESKI

Script Exchange is a forum for LMDA members to share new plays and musicals that they feel are extremely worthwhile and that they think the membership should know about. The general focus is on scripts that would not already be widely known by the membership.

Play synopses can be submitted at any time by any LMDA member (as long as the submitter has no vested interest in the script, i.e. is the author or is attached as director). As Editor, I generally must solicit contributions. For each issue, in the interest of getting a diverse selection, I try to get a good regional mix of theaters, and I have yet to solicit the same theater twice.

Synopses of plays that have already been advocated in a previous *Script Exchange* cannot be published.

If you are a LMDA member and have two to five plays you would like to advocate in *Script Exchange*, please email them to ssobieski@playwrightshorizons.org or fax them to me at 212-594-0296. The information required is title, author, brief (enthusiastic) synopsis, number of male and female actors needed, and author contact.

During the 1999-2000 theater season, four issues of *Script Exchange* were compiled and distributed to LMDA members. Two of these were "special focus" issues, one devoted to Canadian writers and one (as is customary every June) devoted to writers of the area in which the annual conference takes place, in this case Washington, DC and its environs.

All LMDA members should automatically receive *Script Exchange* four times a year. If you have not been receiving issues, please contact the LMDA office.

* * * * *

E. SPECIAL SECTION: CONFERENCE 2000

Presentation Of Elliott Hayes Award

To Rebecca Rugg
By Liz Engelman

I am jealous of Rebecca Rugg. Rebecca's integral role in the Yale School of Drama's production of *The People vs. The God Of Vengeance* exhibited what one of her professors deemed "exceptional and beyond-the-call-of-duty dramaturgy" — and continues to prove to me that our profession of dramaturgy is indeed "fucking amazing."

Rebecca arrived at the Yale School of Drama eager, she said, to get back into the practice of theater. Coming out of an English Ph.D. program steeped in theory and ideas, Rebecca was ready for making something practical. As fortune would have it, early on in her first year at Yale in her

Drama 50 class, she and her colleague Rebecca Taichman stumbled upon what grew to be one of the most promising projects I have heard about in many years.

Stumbling upon playwright Sholem Asch's Yiddish classic *God Of Vengeance*, both Rebeccas found the theatricality of the story unmistakable, and furthermore saw in this play an important critique of Jewish piety. As Rebecca continued researching the topic, she found that the play had been shut down in 1923 on charges of obscenity. The fact that the play had been so controversial in its time and was then relegated to historical silence fueled her and her director colleague's interest in the play, and increased their desire to research the play and perhaps put it on the stage.

And so, the first aspect of Rebecca's dramaturgy was put into practice; she and the library became fast friends. And the more Rebecca researched, the more interesting the context and content of the play became. While trying to solve the question of how to contemporize this Yiddish classic, Rebecca once again excavated an exciting object—all thousand pages of the 1923 obscenity trial transcript. As it was too good to put away, the Rebeccas began to investigate how they could join the transcript from the trial into the text of Asch's play. The project had become much more complicated than Rebecca had ever anticipated, and therefore much more interesting.

Asch's classic, written in 1907, deals with a brothel owner Yankel Tshapchovitz, who operates his illicit business in the tenement below his house, while upstairs he takes every measure to ensure that his pure, 17-year-old marriageable daughter is protected from the taint of the dealings below. Despite all his efforts, however, his daughter Rivkele falls in love with Manke, a prostitute from downstairs, and attempts to escape her suffocating household and hopefully begin a new life. At this discovery, Yankel is ruined, his hopes for respectability and redemption crushed, as he banishes everyone around him to the whorehouse at the end of the play, railing upon a vengeful god and exposing the hypocrisy behind his piety. While the play isn't quite *King Lear*, it has a tragic quality that is resonant with an audience today, even if the form is of a quite clunky old-

fashioned melodrama. This play, one of the most popular plays of the Yiddish stage, only ran into trouble when translated into English and produced at the Apollo Theatre on Broadway. Until then, it had enjoyed over a decade of success in over a dozen languages and had even received a popular run at the Greenwich Theatre in the Village before its move to the Great White Way.

Rebecca's avenues of research thus broadened to encompass the histories of Yiddish theater, Jewish New York, the first amendment, Sholem Asch, and the figures involved in the trial itself. Coincidentally, the Yale library housed the Sholem Asch papers and the papers of Harry Weinberger, the play's producer and defense attorney. The papers disclosed that the controversy surrounding the trial was engendered in large part by reactionaries in the German Jewish community in New York City, specifically by Rabbi Joseph Silverman, who believed that Asch's "lower depths tragedy" aired Jewish dirty laundry in a way that impeded the assimilation hoped for at the time. His outcry against the production led to its being shut down by the Grand Jury, with the cast members and producer Weinberger indicted on charges of obscenity and indecency.

Anti-Semitic backlash. Lesbianism. Homophobia. Sexism. Negative representation of Jews. There were so many issues, and not enough time.

Sex. Obscenity. Censorship. Might as well have been written today.

So what story was Rebecca going to tell? She and her partner had to weigh their responsibilities to the historical truth with the truths of the original play, as well as their own particular interests and enthusiasms regarding the piece. The Rebeccas soon realized that a workshop of their piece could not begin to do their subject justice, and hoped to develop the script to full production.

Thus Rebecca's role in this process had only just begun. From the initial phases of research, her role expanded to encompass every other aspect of the script's development; from the initial conception to advising Rebecca Taichman on the writing, to production dramaturgy, revisions, and grant writing.

After three years of development, *The People vs. The God Of Vengeance* was approved as Rebecca Taichman's thesis show. And then, Rebecca Rugg received the greatest dramaturgical reward she could hope for, the play became a catalyst for an international conference at Yale surrounding Sholem Asch, which was scheduled to coincide with the production, with the play as its centerpiece. Not only did the project bridge the gap between the Drama School and the rest of Yale University, its influence extended beyond the walls of the ivory tower and across the country at large, drawing scholars and even Asch relatives from around the globe. This collaboration focusing on the work of Asch, the theatrical history of the play, issues of translation, adaptation and censorship proved to be what another professor of Rebecca's called "a dramaturg's and theater-goer's dream."

In a way that sets the standards for dramaturgs, Rebecca expanded the boundaries of dramaturgy, touching on aesthetic, literary, and political concerns. As a Yale staff member offers, "Rebecca's project served to enrich the intellectual life of the Yale community, to highlight the magnificent Sholem Asch Collection housed at Yale, and to renew interest in Asch, a writer and dramatist whose work has been neglected too long." What could better fit the qualifications for the Elliott Hayes Award, given for distinctiveness, contextualization, impact and significance?

Rebecca's work on *The People vs. The God Of Vengeance* is a credit to the profession; the project would simply not exist without her. Her participation in the project not only helped to create a new play, but was also the catalyst for scholarship on a national level. The result is what one professor calls, "a sharply focused, harrowing, intense and highly theatrical courtroom drama." The Assistant Professor of Dramaturgy at U Mass, who first saw the workshop at Yale in 1997, claims, "I don't know of another single project where a single dramaturgy student has worn so many different 'dramaturgy hats' and with such success."

Let's thank Rebecca for all those hats, and ask her where she bought them all. I know the field could wear more of them more

often; I only hope we can all look as good in them as Rebecca did in hers.

* * *

**To Lynn Thomson
By DD Kugler**

I have the honor of presenting The Elliott Hayes Award, the LMDA Prize in Dramaturgy for 2000, to Lynn M. Thomson.

Let me begin with a quotation from one of her nominators:

I'm impressed and encouraged by Lynn's persistent inclusiveness when it comes to the relationship between academia and professional theater. She searches for ways in which the work of the academic and the work of the professional theater maker can come together. She then demonstrates this meeting in her own life that moves back and forth between these two worlds.

Lynn made a two-part application, academic and professional, and every aspect of the application is about PROCESS.

In 1997, Lynn accepted the position as Head of the MFA Program in Dramaturgy and Literary Criticism at Brooklyn College. She wanted her "classrooms to be not only about dramaturgy, but experiences in dramaturgy." But her vision was larger than the classroom: "I envision the theater department as if it were a theater. . . I see myself not only as head of a program, but as a dramaturg in the department: asking questions, offering information, engaging in problem solving... breaking down parochialism."

The first aspect of Lynn's academic work was theater curriculum development – revising an existing course, and introducing a new course. Both courses rely on 'collaborative dialogues,' exercises to teach collaboration which Lynn borrowed from Keith Johnstone's improvisations and Sanford Meisner's acting theory. "I take the students through exercises and then apply the process they learn to conversation. Conversation... the essential medium of the dramaturg... is a creative effort itself and an intimate part of the making of a

production and a play." The changes to the existing course, Introduction to Dramaturgy, encouraged students to explore the relationship between dramaturg/director through a range of projects: team protocol research, and team approach toward production of a revival; setting up a literary office with solicited unfinished scripts, selecting a play, presenting a staged reading. The new course which Lynn introduced, Models of Collaboration, consisted of readings, team research projects on historical collaborations, team dramaturgy on two projects—short (1 hr.) Shakespeare adaptation, and a 'from scratch' project (based on mutual interests and research, create script, present to class).

The second aspect of Lynn's academic work, a collaboration on a Theatre/Education initiative within the dramaturgy program and the School of Education, led to two new courses—the assumption of both is that graduate teachers and theater students work together as teams. In History and Theory of Theatre in Education, for example, students and teachers interact with professional theater artists in the classroom, as well as attending performance events, to develop in the students a vocabulary for responding to art, and to make connections between the arts and the classroom curriculum. In Theatre in the Classroom, guest teaching artists and classroom-teacher partners conduct workshops at schools in relation to mainstage productions; they also begin to identify a protocol for successful dialogue/collaboration between artists and teachers.

I would like to quote from several of Lynn's nominators about her academic work:

She has proposed the idea of 'conversation' as the occasion for change: conversation defined as an exchange in which all parties come away with new ideas, change in some way.

"I can attest to the enormous influence her curricular innovations have had..." and "to her skill at developing collaborations among high schools, teaching artists, theater professionals, and professors of education."

She has refocused the program to reflect her experience and passion for the active and collaborative presence of the dramaturg in every aspect of the production process... This central tenet animates every aspect of her work at Brooklyn College: program and curriculum development, teaching methodology, outreach to other departments, and recruitment. Her impact in all these areas has been impressive.

The professional part of Lynn's application highlights her extensive work in advocacy. Her goal is "to offer information, well-researched, raise questions, raise awareness about both the current practice and potential of the field, establish common ground so that we in the theater... can do better work. For me, the process and mission was the same as in any effort at collaboration: to ask questions, offer documented research, stir the moment in discourse that might lead to discovery."

In 1996, Lynn volunteered to form the Advocacy Caucus—acting on a belief that "ethics and aesthetics were related." At the '97 Conference, she spoke about the history of other theatrical professions seeking adequate working conditions: "to document what all theater professions have endured to find their place and achieve their due credit and payment." During 1997-98, the Advocacy Caucus created and distributed its initial report. With Co-Chair Shirley Fishman, Lynn created Advocacy Afternoon at the '99 Conference; she was particularly intent on including oral history—"to bring into the room the kind of discussion that had tended to happen on the fringes." That conference session led to the passage of two resolutions—1) that LMDA would seek to improve working conditions of dramaturgs, and 2) that the Advocacy Committee was mandated to propose specific guidelines. All LMDA members, but especially participants at this conference, are acutely aware of Lynn's work on the Advocacy Committee over the past year.

Again, let me quote those who nominated Lynn for her advocacy work:

Lynn has had the courage to use her own, sometimes painful and very public experiences as a springboard for trying to help others in the profession. She has had

the fortitude to confront controversial issues while at the same time making a genuine effort to find common ground.

She grounds her advocacy work in a strong historical sensibility of critical interactions among theater, class, gender, labor, economics, artistic identity and culture.

To my knowledge, no other scholar has addressed so comprehensively the evolution of modern American theater through the history and ethics of its professionalization.

Lynn "has challenged all of us in the profession to understand what we do as dramaturgs and literary managers and how we want to be perceived and treated in the workplace. I know of no one in the profession who has dedicated as much time, commitment and concern to these issues."

"Not only did she address the LMDA organization...but... the theater profession at large at numerous conferences, panels, roundtables and discussion groups," and in journals...

I can think of no other dramaturg who has in the last five years made a greater or more direct contribution to the advocacy of dramaturgy as a profession." Her "work keeps our eyes on the big picture, by analyzing the past, assessing the present, and making plans for the future. According to all criteria—contextualization, a distinctiveness, ethics, significance, and impact—Dr. Thomson's work epitomizes the achievements that the Hayes prize was created to acknowledge.

Join with me in acknowledging one of two the winners of LMDA's Elliott Hayes Award 2000 in Dramaturgy—Ms. Lynn M. Thomson.

* * * * *

Conference Panels and Sessions Edited by Nichole Gantshar

Each conference has its moments of magic where the passage of time appears to stop. These moments can happen in an official

panel or, at LMDA, they are as likely to happen on a march to find a local bar. We came together June 15 at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia to share stories and triumphs as well as to commiserate. The following is a brief synopsis of several conference panels and sessions as witnessed by Lynn Thomson, Michael Devine, Liz Engleman, Roxanne Henize, Harriet Powers and Lee Devin.

* * *

Hot Topics: This panel allowed each dramaturg to discuss the wide variety of subject matter that makes up our profession. Lee Devin, from People's Light and Theatre Company, reported on a project he's developing with his son concerning the dramaturgy of Internet banking. Barbara Bell read portions of a paper "Gunboat Diplomacy," on dealing with the multiple interpersonal dynamics required to practice effective dramaturgy. Kae Koger, a professor at the University of Oklahoma, reported on a five week sabbatical stint at the Humana Festival in Louisville. Mark Bly, Associate Artistic Director of the Yale Repertory Theatre and Chair of the Playwriting Program, talked about an upcoming premier of *The Bungler* by Moliere. Several academic projects are at work. Jonathan Hammond is analyzing the ethics of dramaturgy. At the Saskatchewan Playwrights Centre, Marie Mendenhall is working on the Centre's history. Rhonda Robins, a student at the University at Stony Brook, discussed the role of dramaturgy position in advocating productions of plays by African American authors.

* * *

Conversations About Digital

Dramaturgy: Moderator Tom Shafer, the dramaturg at Indiana University, championed using production listservs or university Intranet service to occasionally take the place of meetings. Shafer said new software has made it easy to produce web pages that serve as an effective tool to share production information. Designers will especially benefit because their designs can be produced more realistically than they do as a pen and ink rendering on paper. At IU, they use each productions site to offer links to artist's other work. The website also offers almost limitless

potential to record the production history, drafts of the script, etc. In using the web, Shafer discussed the distinction between searching sites with static vs. dynamic pages. Static pages have fixed content, but dynamic web pages are actually constructed each time they are viewed by a browser. Most personal home pages are static, but sites for newspapers, encyclopedia articles, or catalogs are dynamic and are assembled from various text data bases and formatted into a pleasing layout. Most search engines are set up to query and find information from static pages, but are unable to access the information displayed on dynamic pages. More advanced search engines, like Apple's Sherlock 2, are being developed to allow searching dynamic web sites like dictionaries and encyclopedias. Bronwyn Eisenberg described her multi-media project on immigrants. It is designed with amusing images that will catch and keep the attention of students such as a rolling bagel cursor, superimposed heads which fall off, a boat passing the Statue of Liberty. (See url: <http://php.indiana.edu/~tpshafer/digitaldramaturgy.html>.)

* * *

Key Note: Moises stated that he found his inspiration from George Seurat's pointillist paintings. His intense interest is in the intersection between formal questioning and meaning and content. Kaufman illustrated how this manifested itself in both of the Tectonic Theatre Company's productions of *Gross Indecency* and *The Laramie Project*. His stage constructions are part reconstructions of history, as in the case of Oscar Wilde and current events, as with the Laramie Project. His company's exploration of structure, construction, and contextualization focuses on how to construct meaning in the theater; a composition in time. Kaufman was most articulate—and even poetic—about his examination of the dialogue between form and content, and how to incorporate it into a theatrical language. Moises spoke of the light emanating from a Seurat painting on the wall of a museum, as if it had its own inner light. Like Seurat, Kaufman's formal experiences have their own beauty—and insight.

* * *

Dramaturg As Generator: How are we as dramaturgs creative participants in theater-making, either within or apart from our institutions? We have to dramaturg the structure of organizations, not just plays.

"...dramaturgs belong to that catalogue of unseen but essential professions, like archivists, curators, and book editors: people who are passionate, intelligent, but necessarily egoless about what they do, and probably invisible while doing it." — Robert Simonson, "The Literary Guy: Defining the Dramaturg."

Brian Quirt, chair of the Canadian caucus, opened this panel by speaking about his company Nightswimming in Toronto. His position as dramaturg of Factory Theatre is half time, which allowed him to create his own development company, Nightswimming, six years ago. Nightswimming was partly inspired by the LMDA Conference at Yale, where Quirt remembers an intense discussion on the topic, "Can the dramaturg be considered an artist?" "The answer was obvious to me," Quirt said. "Yes. I am."

Quirt described the theater as a company of dramaturgs, unhampered by production deadlines, with the emphasis on the process of developing stage work. Nightswimming awards funding upfront for drafts of plays. Nightswimming commits to a workshop, and the format changes from project to project as dictated by each project's needs. To bring the work to the next level, Nightswimming develops working partnerships with various other companies. Performance pieces developed at Nightswimming, including one developed by Quirt, have been picked up and given full performances. The company then received a royalty for the work.

Gayle Austin, a dramaturg and professor at Georgia State University, developed a class called "Cafe Apres," a year-end, almost-no-budget performance "slot" for work that comes out of classes, mentored by only three faculty.

"We have no black box, only one proscenium theater," Austin said. Having a long-standing interest in both the Cabaret Voltaire and Dada, Gayle generated and distributed an idea for a set of performance pieces, and also designed a ground plan.

Graduate students created digital films and a Dada-ist script. The cafe served as what Austin calls "collage dramaturgy" and galvanized student involvement. The Dean, who had not attended a theater production in the past eleven years, came and encouraged her to start a performance center, even promising money.

Maxine Kern, a New York City based freelance dramaturg, added to the discussion by commenting on the actor/dramaturg, Paul Schmidt.

Kern was a researcher on an interactive exhibit Schmidt executed with Robert Wilson, who was responsible for creating the overall design. Schmidt was responsible for text. They expected to complete the project in two years. Five years later, Kern and the researchers entered the project. The museum staff was skeptical that anything new could be added to the project, but Schmidt had the opposite reaction. Schmidt treated his "team," with respect, trust and freedom.

The last panelist, Mark Bly, Associate Artistic Director at the Yale Rep, discussed how in his role as a dramaturg at Yale, he became a producer bringing together various artists to share their work on the campus. He grew tired of bringing in one-man shows and broadened his definition of theater to include dance and other performance genres. Doing so, made his financial role as producer be that of a dramaturg, helping artists bring new work to fruition.

* * *

Multi-Authorship: Too Many Cooks? No one model exists for sharing power in the creative process. At any LMDA meeting, we support each other with the retelling of unsuccessful ventures and celebrate the successful collaborations. To change the disappointing ventures, Lynn Thomson, Head of the MFA Program in Dramaturgy at Brooklyn College, said we need to address the hierarchy naturally found in human behavior and build equality into that structure. We have to change the language of leadership, Thomson said. She said collaborative relationships are best begun casually and perhaps outside the confines of a discussion surrounding the project. Others discussed the idea of co-leadership

and added that to keep that relationship healthy an artist has to do more than just “be.” Both roles, whether one is an “idea person” or a “leader,” both have to be active participants. Charles McNulty, literary manager at the McCarter theater, and Janice Paran, director of play development at McCarter, said that when the two of them collaborate one might concede space to the other at different times in the process, but that method of work might not always be the best way. Yet, each collaborative moment need not be a negotiation. Liz Engleman, Literary Manager at A Contemporary Theatre, reminded the group that an information comment given at the right time can have enormous effects. Other dramaturgs shared stories of successes when playwrights and directors were very cooperative. A key to success was both parties being aware of when they could process new information.

* * *

Desperately Seeking Research: Most of the participants in this panel agreed that advance work is vital to successful research. This advance work could include mailing research packets to actors, directors, designers, etc. before the rehearsal process begins, taking part in early design conferences, and setting up a clear working relationship with the director through pre-production discussions.

The conversation soon glided into the realm of director/dramaturg relationships, which can be fraught with friction. Among the many diplomatic strategies discussed were setting up a clear method of information distribution, finding out the director's specific approach and needs, setting up dramaturg/actor time within the rehearsal process, bringing your own methods to the table (“Here's what I normally do”), and asking to attend auditions.

The panel tackled the question of knowing the best technique to deliver all of the information the dramaturg has accumulated. The most common and flexible techniques are video, pictures, and music, as well as text. The panel encouraged dramaturgs to require actors to do much of their own research, either through interviews, on-site, or traditional information search.

* * *

On Copyright: Jennifer Nelson, a DC based director and playwright, Lue Douthit and Carl Settlemyer, an attorney with Lusker and Lusker, from Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts discussed how copyright affects our lives as dramaturgs. Most of the session revolved around the attorney answering questions from the audience. His answers varied on particular details but his answer remained consistent with what both Nelson and Douthit told the audience about their own work—at every point in the production process it is important to check with artists and ensure their cooperation (code word equaling permission). Settlemyer said the most important thing for theatres was to prevent themselves from needing his services. He said that if—as an example—a photographer filed suit stating that the theatre abused the photographer's copyright by using a photo in a lobby display, the attorney could argue a fair use defense against the photographer's claim. But Settlemyer wants dramaturgs to keep that scenario from every happening. Even if the theatre is on the correct side of the law, legal fees to prove that the theatre is in the right could be quite expensive. He told dramaturgs to ask permission when they adapt material, display it or use it in study guides. Dramaturgs can protect themselves and their theatres by documenting in writing their efforts to ask permission. He told the audience that there was no one answer to our copyright concerns. Each situation could bring about a different interpretation of the law. NOTE: Carl Settlemyer is available to answer questions from LMDA members. Email ngantshar@aol.com if you wish to contact him.

* * *

The Dramaturg As Advocate For The Arts On City, State/Provincial, And National Levels: Tom Birch of the Legislative Counsel for the National Assembly of State Arts advised dramaturgs to be more involved in grant writing and to explain what they do and tell their stories to those in public office. Birch said it is important to give the impression of being a numerous and visible part of the constituency. It is important to explain what that dramaturg does, the theatre's

programs, what those mean to the public, and to always leave handouts/presentation material that will help the funding agency remember the theater's work.

Birch explained that lobbying (up to a certain percent of the total budget) is legal for any nonprofit organization and can be done at a very low cost and/or in collaboration with other groups. Lobbying is the communication with a legislator or public official with the intent to influence legislation. This can be as simple as writing letters. Birch stressed that letters carry more weight with elected officials than postcards or petitions. These latter forms of correspondence often won't be read. The best idea is to send a hand written or typed letter to the target government official stating both concerns and excitement. Birch further explained that arts continually lose funding because people tend to write their representative only when they object to a project. The goal then is to write letters about how the arts have impacted the community's life, and to write letters of encouragement to elected representatives who support the arts. It is also vital to encourage audience members to write, as well. A theater could, for example, list local representatives in a theater's program with the request that audience members write and say they enjoyed a particular show or season. But nonprofits must never ask audience members to vote for a specific candidate.

Other ways to get politicians to support the arts include inviting them to opening nights and other events as well as introducing the official at the top of the show. Additionally, Birch encouraged members to go to candidate town meetings and ask questions about the candidates support for the arts. A theatre can also use its board members strategically by inviting a legislator to meet with its board or by making connections with elected officials through board members. When legislators meet people who play a large role in the community and support the arts, they begin to see the arts as part of a larger demographic.

At the end of the session, Mr. Birch charged us with a mission, “You're all deputized to go out and lobby for change. Let's gather our posse and wrassle us up some politicians!”

* * *

Entrances And Exits: It's all in the timing. Many participants' questions and concerns revolved around how to ease the tensions and/or possible misconceptions often encountered within this relationship. Some stories dealt with the dramaturg's actual corporeal presence in the rehearsal process: "Where are you seated? How often do you go?" Many others concerned notes and note-taking strategies, including the 'Three Strike Rule' (giving a note three times before letting it lie), choosing battles carefully, and generalizing notes so that the director does not feel threatened by specific "acting" or "directing" notes. In various anecdotes it was noted that advance discussion of the work environment and expectations quite often eased relationships within the rehearsal process. Whether by forming an actual contract or by constructing a simple argument technique (so that whatever conflicts arise may be productive), talking with the director before the rehearsal process begins (or, if possible, even before she talks with the designers) can be critical. At various times in the process, a dramaturg may get stuck when trying to start a conversation but it is key to remember that at a "party" we've brought a truckload of chips and dip for everyone to share. Dramaturgs bring a lot to the table, and deserve the professional respect we seek. All of the tactics and perseverance can and will pay off in the future, when dramaturgs have to worry less about being accepted and more about the work at hand.

* * *

The (New Play) Workshop's The Thing: This workshop focused on three dramaturgical roles: dramaturgical programs, the long-term process of developing a play, and the design of specific workshop processes.

Mary Resing, dramaturg at Woolly Mammoth, said that at her theater the workshop process has too often been without an "independent contractor," and left up to "individual tradesmen." At Woolly Mammoth, the playwright in residence chooses two plays to be workshoped. In one successful situation, the playwright had already received a lot of feedback on his play. To finish the process,

he brought in a director familiar with the script whose focus was to "whip the script into shape" and fix the problems.

The success of this model, was further reinforced by the resident's second workshop. With the second play, a new director with whom the playwright had not previously worked, was brought in to direct a play that was symphonic and non-linear. Rather than focusing on the play's problems, the new director focused on getting the play on its feet so problems could be examined later through the performance. Resing said the play turned out brilliantly but was very unfocused. That dilemma raised the question, "Is the intention of the playwright to whip a script into shape or to apply process to the specific play's needs?"

Audience members commented that the question also included the problem of priorities, and how far down that list language might be. And that these questions are best answered depending on the stage of the process. Is the play in script dramaturgy or production dramaturgy? It is important to note the distinction between understanding a play and fixing it.

Michael Kinghorn, of Alliance Theatre, said that when he started his job he and the Artistic Director agreed to make new production dramaturgy a regular part of the programming and budget. He developed a program called "Groundworks." Its intent was to bring new playwright's works closer to production. This meant concentrating on fewer plays with a greater commitment to each. The program also had a goal of being inclusive and multi-cultural. Kinghorn warned about the danger of feedback without context. To bring about this context, audience members added that workshops need break time. Time between workshops for reflection helps avoid the "fix it" mentality.

Megan Monaghan, playwright services director at the Playwrights Center in Minneapolis, opened by describing theater's fantasy radio slogan as "all new plays, all the time." The Playwrights Center is non-producing but offers a variety of workshops. The largest workshops they do at the Playwrights Center is two weeks and involves three to five playwrights. Each playwright chooses

a collaborator: a director, actor, choreographer, composer, etc.

The playwright has more than 30 hours of workshop time with artists in this model and the rest of the time can be spent in consultation with collaborators or "staring at the moon." To help the playwright chose his or her tools, Monaghan sets up a timetable schedule with "optional" elements such as technical consultation for production. The smallest workshop works with or without actors and focuses on specific scenes.

Peter Hays described three processes which take place at his theater. The first are readings, which include pre- and post-workshop sessions between dramaturg and playwright. The XX theater offers about 10 of these a year. The second format is concert readings. The plays in this series get two nights with an audience. The performers are always on book, and sometimes there is even movement. There are five-to-six of these a year. The third workshop involves three weeks of rehearsal, with sets, lights, costumes and sound, culminating in performance that is NOT a world premiere. These workshops, about three a year, try not to be production-oriented.

* * *

Anne Cattaneo On Commissioning New Work: Anne Cattaneo, Dramaturg at Lincoln Center Theatre, champions keeping commissioning as a producing creative process. Once the play is delivered, the commission just marks the beginning of a process. The playwright should continue to be involved in selection of cast, director, and with other production-related concerns. A dramaturg can be the key to fixing the playwright up with the right director.

In a bad situation, commissioning new work could be a form of "indentured servitude," forcing playwrights to "work off" their commission, becoming a burden rather than a form of assistance. Good intentions in the commissioning process take a small miracle to actually become a produced play.

At its best, commissioning, Cattaneo said, is simply one part of a dramaturg's

relationship with a writer. This approach, she said, she could trace back to Moliere. It became popular again in the 1970s when the idea of creating social relationships between collaborators in the theater, creating a consistent team of director/writer or playwright/artistic director, actors, designers and others, all became associated with theaters as artistic teams. Since her work grew out of such a relationship, Cattaneo said she lacks confidence commissioning the work of someone she does not know.

The relationships begun in the literary office allow a dramaturg to know who is out there and what kind of work that artist might be able to produce. When Cattaneo worked with the Acting Company, it commissioned a series of Chekov short stories to be developed into plays by a variety of playwrights. Cattaneo used her relationships with playwrights to fix each playwright with a story that matched their voice.

Cattaneo urged each literary manager to approach a new script as if it is the next *Waiting for Godot*. The core of building these successful relationships, Cattaneo said, comes from answering every letter and responding to every script. Successful relationships come from telling a playwright what's going on and ensuring he/she doesn't ever have to wait for an answer. Trust is key.

To keep herself aware of new talent, Cattaneo does not employ outside readers in her literary office. Instead, she uses her experience to determine quickly if a play simply isn't right for her theater and will not then continue to read the play.

Another aspect to making the commissioning process successful is timing. Cattaneo shared an anecdote of when Chris Durang was at a blocked stage in his writing. He was still healing from the death of his mother. A commission at that point in his career resulted in *Beyond Therapy*. But, Cattaneo warned Durang would probably not be at a stage in his life now where a commission situation would work. The dramaturg needs to intuit what a playwright needs and if he/she can benefit from the commission.

Another successful example at Lincoln Center is Jules Feiffer. At age 71, he had stopped writing cartoons because he was "too busy" and wanted to focus on other projects. He was ripe for a commission for a new play.

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H. REGIONAL NEWS

LMDA Regions And VPs A Note From Liz Engelman

LMDA FOLKS TAKE NOTE!! THE COUNTRY IS CHANGING RIGHT UNDER US!!

Please do look in the front of your membership directory at the newly configured Regional Listing. You may now be part of a different region than before, so do look to see where you now are—you'll have a different sticker on your nametag next year! These regional changes were made after discussions at this past conference as to how to continue to strengthen the regional activity. Instead of trying to geographically map what states or cities might be in the most contact with one another, we decided to follow the facts: who's already talking to whom, and how we can further encourage this. So we're following the trend, rather than trying to lead it. You will notice that there are some areas that are underrepresented, or have no representation at all. If you would like to become a regional vice-president for one of those areas, please contact me by email (engelmal@acttheatre.org) or phone (206-292-7660). If you are currently a regional vice-president and no longer want to be, please also contact me at the above.

In a continuing effort to foster communication inter- and intra-regionally, we encourage the regional VPs to aim for at least two meetings a year among their membership, and to report back to me on the issues discussed. These meetings play an integral role in the conference planning.

For a current list of regional VPs see the membership directory included with this mailing of the *Review*.

* * *

News From Canada By Brian Quirt

The LMDA Canadian Caucus will be holding its annual meeting in Calgary on March 2, 2001 at 1pm at Alberta Theatre Projects during ATP's playRites Festival of new plays. I urge you all to attend the festival, if possible, and join us in Calgary for the meeting and a great weekend of theater.

You can get more information about the festival from Vanessa Porteous, dramaturg at ATP, at vporteous@ATPlive.com.

The Canadian Caucus, as of summer, 2000, now has 59 members from across the country, with an influx of recent members from Vancouver and the prairie provinces. The current renewal campaign has been very successful, with more than half the membership renewed for the upcoming year.

The Caucus published a substantial newsletter in the fall of 1999 and is preparing another edition to be sent out later this summer. A subsequent edition will be created this fall.

The Toronto Caucus, led by Iris Turcott at the Canadian Stage Company, and Brian Quirt, initiated a regular but very casual monthly meeting last fall at a downtown bar. Attendance has been good and the discussions have been excellent. Currently on a summer hiatus, this get-together will resume in the fall. If you plan to be in Toronto, please contact Brian and join us if your visit coincides with our meeting. In addition, the Canadian Caucus held meetings in Calgary in February 2000 and Vancouver in May 2000.

The Caucus is a forum for Canadians to address specific dramaturgical issues, and also, increasingly, a clearing house for questions about contracts and other professional issues. Clearly the existence of the Caucus has begun to spread through the Canadian theater community; the conferences in 2001 and 2002 will be excellent opportunities to further that awareness. We hope the Advocacy's Guidelines will offer the Canadian Caucus detailed information that can be supplied to theaters, service organizations, and individuals throughout Canada.

* * *

News from Baltimore

Editors Note: Baltimore Center Stage recently received a remarkable grant earmarked for dramaturgy. Reprinted below is the press release announcing this new endowment:

What is a dramaturg? With a \$1 million challenge grant to establish the American theatre's first endowment specifically for Dramaturgy, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has enthusiastically endorsed the answer developed over the last twenty years by Baltimore's Center Stage: a dramaturg is an integral component of an artistically driven theater or theatrical production—and is worth significant financial support as well. When matching funds are collected the **Center Stage Mellon Endowment for Dramaturgy** will total more than \$2 million. The theater's trustees and major donors already have pledged nearly \$770,000 to match the Mellon Foundation's \$1 million gift, which is restricted to the support of Center Stage's dramaturgs and their work.

Center Stage has one of the country's largest Dramaturgy departments. Resident Dramaturg **Charlotte Stoudt**, who holds a doctorate in English from Oxford University, has been with the theatre since 1995 and frequently collaborates at the Kennedy Center and Baltimore Theatre Project as well. Associate Dramaturg **Jill Rachel Morris** earned her MFA from Yale after doing her undergraduate study at Harvard, and also serves as curator of the theater's Off Center performance series. She represents the theatre in New York, building relationships on its behalf with artist like Eric Bogosian and Danny Hoch.

Associate Dramaturg **James Magruder** holds two master's degrees and a doctorate from Yale and was Resident Dramaturg from 1992 to 1999, the longest tenure in Center Stage's dramaturgy history, before curtailing his schedule this season to focus more on his own writing. His adaptation of Marivaux's *The Triumph of Love*, which had its world premiere at Center Stage, was honored as an Outstanding Translation of the Year 1997 by the Society of American Literary Translators and was turned into a Broadway musical by Magruder, composer

Jeffrey Stock, and lyricist Susan Birkenhead. His 1998 treatise on the value of dramaturgy prompted the Mellon Foundation, which is uniquely proactive in its arts funding, to ask Center Stage how they could support this critical piece of the theater's artistic mission. (Ed. note: We hope to publish this piece in the next *Review*.)

At Center Stage, where one of the most satisfying things about the Mellon challenge grant is that it will help raise the national profile of a little-understood profession, the dramaturgs and Resident Director Tim Vasen make up Artistic Director Irene Lewis's creative brain trust, collaborating on everything from specific productions to season planning to helping set a tone and direction for the theater's future.

“Whether the task at hand is microscopic—explicating a single line from *As You Like It* in rehearsal or helping choose a translation of *The Cherry Orchard*—or telescopic—pushing me to consider how to re-conceive the mainstage season—I rely on this sounding board to shore up the essential concept of 'artistically driven,’” says Irene Lewis. “The dialogue among us, the brainstorming, the troubleshooting, the practical dreaming, is constant and constantly fascinating.”

* * *

News from Chicago By Gavin Witt

In the midst of July, Northlight Theatre, along with Steppenwolf and the Goodman, played host to an unprecedented open house and symposium for interns—past, present, and potential. From morning to evening, eager young up-and-comers from the Chicago metro area and beyond crowded into Northlight's mainstage auditorium to hear from and talk with panelists from a wide range of theatrical ventures, mostly to gain an introduction to each element. Designers, stage managers, production managers, directors, actors, dramaturgs, literary managers, outreach coordinators, and others spoke about their work, their experiences, their training, and the Chicago theater community. Represented were everything from the major LORT theaters to off-Loop

storefronts to nomadic start-ups to freelancers. A host of theaters and arts groups sent people to set up booths for recruiting and informational presentations to further bombard the attendees with material and to ensure the event was mutually beneficial to all.

The panel of Literary Managers and Dramaturgs consisted of Tom Creamer (Goodman and Victory Gardens); Julie Dubiner (Defiant, Steppenwolf, and freelance); Sara Gubbins (Naked Eye, Steppenwolf, and freelance); Gavin Witt (Northlight and greasy joan and co.); and Jim Sherman (resident playwright at Victory Gardens). The panelists spoke first about the varying nature of their roles and responsibilities in different environments—and the similarities—each describing the priorities he or she brought to work as a dramaturg on new scripts or works by dead writers, or to reading scripts for their own company or for others. The panel discussed the role of dramaturg as the long-term memory in a process; the balance of asking questions to advance one's agenda versus illuminating the playwright's or director's vision; and the division of responsibilities between a production dramaturg and a playwright. Jim Sherman, for instance, had never worked with a dramaturg as such on any of his plays, but feelingly described the extent to which he relied on a trusted circle around him to perform that function—from reading and questioning drafts to helping with research.

We threw into the discussion Nakissa Etemad's handy and comprehensive description of what a dramaturg is and does from her San Jose Rep newsletter, which opened up some good questions from the audience and some disagreement among panelists about what elements seemed to come first. We carried forward the conversation from the conference about dramaturg as creator, which really only led to questions about what entailed “creating.” With some leading from and interchange with the audience, the panel described the astonishingly wide array of ways in which we'd come to be doing what we were doing—in several cases quite accidentally. Anecdotally, Richard Pettengill of course had to make an appearance here, and the saga of his first day as dramaturg at Court Theatre passes to the next generation: calling, somewhat at random, the backstage

hallways at the Yale School of Drama while some random grad students went in search of somebody, anybody who could tell him what a dramaturg was and did (finally reaching, I believe, Art Borecca). This was about where we left it, with all assembled still productively wondering, as we always seem to be, what the heck a dramaturg is and does.

About a week later, there was a smaller meeting (hardly worthy of the name), as about half a dozen of us gathered over beers and burgers at a local “actor” bar to catch up on the conference and other recent doings. The ever-elusive Tom Creamer made a second appearance—though whether lured by the prospect of copies of the Advocacy Report or by the dandy Guinness would be hard to determine . . .

Those unable to attend the annual meeting in DC were briefly caught up, and copies of the advocacy report were distributed to gleeful, appreciative clamor. Sarah and Julie filled us in on the status quo post Volansky at Steppenwolf, where they will be serving as production dramaturg contractors while Ed Sobel takes over the literary management duties. Volansky had done a marvelous job in absentia of arranging a set of useful questions and parameters for them, but there was still much to be determined, and no doubt highly instructive problems and solutions will arise over the course of this year for us all to learn from.

We gossiped madly about the Goodman's lack of a concrete season despite the momentous move into a new space, and how the priority seemed to be squarely on

shows that might make successful transfers to New York. We shared around qualms and perspectives in general on past work and future work, heard about great relationships with directors—like Roxane's work at Center Theater where the director used a good past experience with a dramaturg to insist that she be included and paid—and bad ones (thankfully few). Commiserated about balancing work—either freelance or institutional—with other demands, and how to say no to what you actually love to do. Agreed it would be great to follow up on copyright discussions at the conference with some of our own here in town, maybe in association with larger regions. Argued union vs. guild vs. other associative status for the future of LMDA. And lost the rest in a hot, humid, haze of beers.

Section II: Essays and Articles

Deadline for Submissions for Peer Review pieces: January 1, 2001; send 3 hard copies without your name and a cover note with your name and address to G. Proehl/Review, Theater, Univ. of Puget Sound, 1500 N. Warner, Tacoma, WA 98416.

A. THE PAST TWO YEARS, AND ON . . . BY GEOFF PROEHL

When **Jayne Koszyn** wrote the notes in the fall 1998 *Review* that ended her presidency, she did an elegant and gracious job of thanking her collaborators and introducing me. I did my poor imitation of Jayme in my final comments at this last year's conference banquet at George Mason. I will not try to repeat that imitation here. It would take about as many words as the comments I've made below to do so satisfactorily.

The principal resource that makes LMDA possible is volunteerism. Except for the small hourly wage we pay our administrator, virtually all other organizational work is given for free, carved out of incredibly busy lives. Indeed LMDA administrators themselves have regularly worked numerous hours off the books in order just to keep up with the basic demands of their jobs. Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas exists today because of the work that these

administrators have performed and because presidents, officers, conference planners, regional VPs, special project directors, and many others have devoted hours and hours of their time to the organization.

As you read through my notes below, you will see the names of those who have done so much to make this organization what it is, especially in recent years. I wish for **DD Kugler**, our new president, and his Executive Committee the kind of help he offered me so many times in the past two years, for the ongoing friendship and labors of love of those named here and many more besides.

It has been a joy to serve as LMDA's president, even though there were times when I would charge out of my office, especially early on, and beg my colleagues never to allow me to take on this kind of job again. All in all, those times were few compared with the many hours spent with friends working on projects about which we mutually cared. The pleasure of work, of friendship, of shared passions—these elements have always been central to my

involvement with the community of people that make up LMDA.

What follows below is, however, a bit drier, more report than essay or personal journal. Although not my favorite form of writing, it seems appropriate for the record to note some of what we're doing now, to summarize some of what we've learned in the past two years from our many conversations together, and to speculate a bit on the future.

Part I: The Last Two Years in Review: July 1998-June 2000

Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas, now in its fifteenth year as a professional service organization, continues to affirm the function, explore the practice, and promote the profession of dramaturgy and literary management in the United States and Canada. Through a range of programs and initiatives LMDA works to improve the environment both for these fields and for theater in general. LMDA's membership is strong and growing. In the fall of 1998, **Lisa Fabian**, a work study student at the University of Puget Sound,

rebuilt our membership database. Some of our membership information was incomplete because of difficulties with our software. Lisa therefore gave everyone on our most up-to-date membership list an expiration date of 5/31/99, knowing a significant number of those members were lapsed or inactive. So, in November of 1998, omitting all the 5/31/99 memberships from the database would have left a total of 0; less than a year and half later, by January of 2000, that same operation would have shown over 400 new memberships or renewals. In our current renewal cycle that began June 1 of this year, we have over 325 renewals or new memberships at our new rates: \$60, active (voting) member; \$45, associate member, \$25, student member, and \$130, organizational member. Beginning this year, we also initiated a single, annual expiration date for all memberships. This relieves the LMDA administrator from the task of sending renewal letters throughout the year and makes it easier for members to remember when their memberships expires. It also allows us to do a single membership drive each spring.

In the last two years (from the fall of 1998 to the fall of 2000), we have published five editions of the LMDA *Review* (well over 150 pages in all of news, resources, essays, and articles, including extensive coverage of the June 1999 conference and June 2000 conference). Under **Sonya Sobieski's** editorship, we have also published eight issues of the LMDA *Script Exchange* with its short descriptions of new plays recommended by member dramaturgs and literary managers. Under **Mark Bly's** editorship, the second volume of *The Production Notebooks* has now gone to press. Published by the Theatre Communications Group, it provides unique insights into the rehearsal processes of several productions from a dramaturgical perspective. The Early-Career Program, under the leadership of **Bronwyn Eisenberg**, has continued to compile its online *Guide to Internships* (over thirty-five listed) and through the New York metro listserv has made complimentary tickets available to many early-career members of LMDA. The University Caucus with **Lee Devin** as chair maintained its online *Guide to Dramaturgy Programs* (over forty listings) and put one of its two source books for dramaturgs and

teachers of dramaturgy online. Both programs (Early-Career and UCaucus) also arranged special programming for their constituencies at both conferences. Last winter, **Shirley Fishman** organized a master class on dramaturging Shakespeare taught by **Robert Blacker**. For a small fee, fifteen members were able to attend four two-hour sessions of intensive textual analysis.

Our Discussion List (open to members and non-members) has become a vital element of the organization with hundreds of subscribers and thousands of messages. These postings cover a wide range of topics from relatively simple queries, often answered in a matter of minutes, to extended discussions of complex issues (e.g.—copyright questions, the lack of plays by women in theater programming; the dramaturg/director relationships) with threads that extend over days and weeks. Our **web site** (www.lmda.org), with its links to other web sites maintained by LMDA members, particularly “The Dramaturgy Pages” (www.dramaturgy.net/dramaturgy/) and “dramaturgy northwest” (www.ups.edu/professionalorgs/dramaturgy/), provides an extensive archive of resources, as well as membership applications and other information for potential members. **Winston Neutel** has headed LMDA's new technologies program for several years now and has been particularly instrumental in bringing dramaturgy online.

The Canadian Caucus (**Brian Quirt**, chair) published three newsletters, two of which were sent to the full membership. Other Canadian activities included regular caucus meetings in Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver. Canadian membership in LMDA, now over sixty, continues to grow. A Canadian Dramaturgy Conference is being planned for Toronto next summer. (See also article by Brian Quirt in Section I.)

LMDA has continued to make alliances with other theater organizations. In June of 1999 LMDA accepted an invitation to attend the Theatre Communication Group conference in San Francisco. (The conference coordinator was past LMDA president, **Victoria Abrash**.) In 1999 and 2000, LMDA members met twice with

Todd London of New Dramatists and its writers to discuss the new play development process. Prior to the June 2000 conference, **Mark Bly**, **Liz Engelman**, and Geoff Proehl met with representatives of the National Endowment for the Arts. (See also article in Section I of this *Review*.) Regular recipients of our mailings now include the Black Theatre Network, Asian American Arts Alliance, Association of Hispanic Arts, the Non-Traditional Casting Project, and others. We have established an informal, ongoing relationship with **Ted Shank** and the journal *TheaterForum*: this spring, they inserted information about LMDA in each of their journals, just as we now regularly include information about *TheatreForum* in the *Review*. As of this summer, we have also affiliated with the Association for Theater in Higher Education. This affiliation, without undercutting LMDA's status as a service organization for theater professionals, makes it possible for LMDA to sponsor two sessions at the annual ATHE conference. It also makes available space in the ATHE newsletter to announce upcoming LMDA events.

Central to the ongoing life of the organization are our annual conferences: in the last two years, one in June of 1999 at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington (**Jane Ann Crum**, **Lee Devin**, **Liz Engelman**, and **DD Kugler**, chairs; **Louise Lytle**, conference coordinator) and the other in June of 2000, at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia (**Jane Ann Crum** and **Brian Quirt**, chairs; **Louise Lytle**, conference coordinator). Since the 1999 conference was on the West coast, we decided to hold the 2000 conference in the east and in a city we'd never visited before. This location made it easier for dramaturgs based on the Atlantic seaboard to attend and many did, including representatives from Charlotte Repertory Theater, Florida Stage, Hippodrome State Theater, Studio Theater, McCarter Theater, People's Light and Theater Company, Woolly Mammoth Theater, Geva Theatre, the Public Theatre, Brooklyn College, Gertrude Stein Repertory Theatre, the Drama League, the Dalton School, the State University of New York at Stony Brook, Hunter College, and Lincoln Center. (Many worked to make this conference a success, but special thanks to the conference planning committee: **Lee Devin**, **Liz Engelman**,

Kristin Johnsen-Neshati, Mary Resing, and **Tricia Roche**; conference logistics and planning: **Richard Parker**; site research: **Verleah Brown-Kosloske, Joanie Leverone**; see special section on the conference in this *Review*.)

Central to the work of this year's conference was the presentation of "Proposed Resolutions to Improve Working Conditions" by the Advocacy Caucus (**Shirley Fishman** and **Lynn Thomson**, co-chairs). The resolutions provided comprehensive descriptions of various kinds of dramaturgical work along with detailed recommendations for appropriate credit and compensation. After an afternoon during which we discussed these guidelines in detail, conference attendees voted to send them, with some further revision, to the membership as a whole for ratification. (See piece by Lynn Thomson in Section I.)

We are now well into a new two-year term (July 2000-June 2002) with a new slate of officers. In addition to **DD Kugler** of Simon Fraser University as president, the new Executive Committee includes **Merv Antonio**, Public Theater, vice-president/NYSCA (New York State Council of the Arts) contact person; **Liz Engelman**, A Contemporary Theatre, vice-president/regional activities; **Winston Neutel**, vice-president/new technologies; **Brian Quirt**, Factory Theater, vice-president/Canada, **Michele Volansky**, Philadelphia Theatre Company, vice-president/development; **Maxine Kern**, freelance dramaturg, treasurer. **Mark Bly**, Yale School of Drama, and **Allen Kennedy**, the Dalton School, came onto the board to fill vacancies. Mark will serve as our new Board Chair, replacing **Peggy Marks** who faithfully served the organization in that position over the course of several presidencies.

The incoming Executive Committee replaces **Jane Ann Crum** and **Allen Kennedy**, vice-presidents; **Liz Engelman**, secretary; and **Tricia Roche**, treasurer. Along with administrators **Celise Kalke** and **Ginny Coates**, these individuals wrote grant proposals, searched for office space, moved office furniture, xeroxed *Script Exchanges*, mailed brochures, lined up conference programming, brainstormed solutions to the crisis of the day, spent

hours on the phone or online, and much more. Their work was physical and emotional and mental. They offered encouragement and were central to all of the work and planning that was done in these past two years. Time and again, each of them rendered remarkable service to the organization. As a president, I could not have asked for a better set of collaborators.

Part II: Where do we go from here?

One of the pleasures of the last two years as president of Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas was the opportunity to work with **George Thorn**. Thorn and Nello McDaniel are consultants to arts organizations by way of Arts Action Research. With the help of **Susan Jonas** and **Linda Earle** of the New York State Council of the Arts, **Allen Kennedy** submitted a grant proposal that, when funded by NYSCA, resulted in a series of meetings between Thorn and various members of the organization.

Our goals, as they emerged in our work with Arts Action Research, were (1) to clarify our shared values and beliefs as members of LMDA, (2) to rearticulate our mission, (3) to examine existing LMDA programs in light of points one and two, and (4) to become clearer about the kinds of projects LMDA would pursue in upcoming months, limiting our focus to two or three specific initiatives. We pursued these goals in conversations with George and the membership between the fall of 1998 and our June 1999 conference. To some extent, this paper is another step in that process, my own attempt to review the work we have done and consider its implications. The following notes highlight some of the issues we explored with Thorn, as well as observations informed by numerous conversations with the members of the Executive Committee and other members of LMDA. (The document we created for the conference on our shared values and beliefs, "a note to ourselves," is available online, url: http://www.lmda.org/members_only/Note.html. User name and password = LMDA.)

Precariousness: Although as an organization and a profession we have much to celebrate, it's important to realize how precarious LMDA's existence is. We cannot assume that just because LMDA is

strong and vital today that it will still exist two or three years from now. This precariousness is not unremarkable in the world of not-for-profits and the arts; it's the norm. As Thorn points out and as most of us know from our own experiences as theater makers, our theaters are leveraged well beyond their human and material resources, often by as much as 30 to 50%. I don't want to be alarmist or melancholy on this point. I'm happy to embrace our high wire act, but every now and then we need to remind ourselves of the height and gauge of the wire.

Financially, LMDA existed in the last two years on an annual operating budget of under \$15,000. (This figure excludes conference income and expenses, which are generally designed to break even.) About 3/4s of our income comes from membership dues; the balance from grants, in recent years mostly from the New York State Council of the Arts. NYSCA's ongoing support has been wonderful, but we are too dependent on this one source of funds. Our operating budget is easily spent on rent, phone service, copying, mailings, and a small salary for our office administrator who works an average of 8-12 hours a week. In the last two years, we have never been in the red, but we are operating on the edge. At the end of her presidency, **Jayne Koszyn** was able to leave the organization with a small surplus that has cushioned our ups and downs. Despite careful, frugal spending, that surplus has, however, been slowly shrinking, leaving us with limited funds in reserve.

Our small budget puts a cap on the hours our administrator can work each week and the amount we can pay her: the job as now constituted is at least a 20 hour a week position and the hourly pay should be increased by 20 to 30%. This position serves the basic infrastructure of the organization. At times in the organization's history, individuals have been frustrated that calls were not returned or that other basic services were not performed. Based on the experience of the past two years, I would say that the primary reason for this is not administrative neglect, but that we simply have not been able to fund enough hours of work per week to keep up with the basic ongoing needs of a membership of now between 350 and 400 individuals.

In the last two years, the University of Puget Sound has indirectly subsidized our office services, particularly through the use of department work study students, **Lisa Fabian** and **Laurie May**. With the help of department secretary, **Kay Dam** and others, they not only rebuilt and maintained our database but also assembled and sent out several mailings, including all of the *Reviews*, several editions of the *Script Exchange*, and conference brochures. **Louise Lytle**, now a graduate of Puget Sound, served for a small fee as our conference coordinator for two years: processing registrations, making logistical arrangements, returning phone calls and emails. Other students served as interns in various capacities during the year and at the 1999 conference. Puget Sound has also paid for phone and fax expenses, as well as a fair amount of copying. This support has allowed our New York office to perform other essential functions. But most presidents will not have the resources that Puget Sound was able to provide, nor will most professional dramaturgs, unlike academics such as myself, have time built into their positions for professional service and development.

How then have we survived this long? Volunteerism, tenacity, the work of talented administrators. But we need to be aware of the accumulated drain that operating on the edge places on human beings and the attrition it causes. For example, our inability to adequately pay administrators and offer them a reasonable number of hours per week means that turnover in this position is an inevitability and with each turnover comes a new cycle of training in order to get a new administrator up to speed. It has meant that members have become frustrated when a simple request—a change of address, for example—is not met. And so, memberships are lost. Because the infrastructure is under duress, board members and volunteers have become discouraged when they offer help but do not then receive the kind of direction or support they need to proceed. Other potential human and material resources also remain untapped. As anyone who has supervised interns will attest, recruiting and directing volunteers is a time consuming task, as involved, for examples, as writing a detailed grant proposal or cultivating a donor. Under duress, it is often easier to

simply do a job rather than making what amounts to a long term investment by engaging someone else's involvement or searching out new resources. In the long run, all of this exacts a cost.

There's no easy solution to our precariousness. We are a young, relatively small profession in a chronically underfunded art form. Funding for service organizations is limited and the kind of funding we most need—basic operating expenses—is often unavailable. I see no immediate threat to our ongoing existence, but I do want, in the midst of both our many accomplishments and our occasional frustrations, to note the fragility of this creation, now fifteen years old. I want to underscore the ongoing need for all of us to consider what we can do to ensure that the good work LMDA does will continue for many years. Much of what follows is informed by this desire.

Process: In his work with us, Thorn emphasized the need for us to stop seeing ourselves or encouraging others to see us as inherently inept managers or business people, just because we are artists. He reminded us that theater makers have remarkable records in terms of on time delivery, collaborative processes, and the efficient use of limited resources in the making of a unique, custom-built creation. Instead of seeing ourselves as dysfunctional in the practical world of managing resources, we need to appreciate the skills rehearsal has given us.

We do not need to think of ourselves as changing hats when we go from the work of making a play to the work of making an organization like LMDA. Filling positions on the board, for example, is comparable to casting and we should cast those roles with as much care as for any production we undertake. Our understanding of the role a board member will play should be as informed as our understanding of a character's place in the world of a play. Here are some other parallels: in planning the Tacoma conference, we assigned a person to dramaturg all or part of each conference day; in editing the *Review*, we practice the same skills we use in working on a new play; the build toward the first day of a conference parallels the build toward an opening; to be a member of the Executive Committee is to agree to

dramaturg LMDA in addition to the dramaturgical work we are doing in the theater. I was impressed when I heard **Abigail Adams** of People's Light and Theater Company describe how these ideas changed how she perceived her role as an artistic director, so that the process of running and maintaining People's Light (not just directing a play or choosing a season but all aspects of the work—budgeting, staffing, maintenance, fundraising) became an aesthetic process.

For some, these ideas will seem to overly broaden both the idea of the dramaturg and the concept of aesthetic work. And indeed, making a work of art is almost always more difficult and demanding than making and maintaining a non-profit. Nonetheless, the idea that we stop seeing ourselves as managerially impaired and that we persistently work at reconceiving each aspect of our organizational efforts as aesthetic or rehearsal-like functions offers a way into our work that is less alienating than seeing it as a burdensome chore that takes us out of areas of endeavor that we love and in which we excel. These insights offer us a continuity of process that can carry us from one project to another, from one conference to the next, from the efforts of last year's Executive Committee to efforts of this year's.

Focus: Thorn further suggested that as an organization we need to think as rigorously as possible about what we can and cannot do with and for our members. The tendency is for organizations like ours to begin with a small, relatively homogenous membership and a fairly simple mission: for example, gatherings for lunch by New York-based dramaturgs to share ideas about the work they were doing were one of LMDA's points of origin. Now the organization has an international membership with a wide range of interests and needs from the undergraduate student looking for a graduate program in dramaturgy to the early-career dramaturg looking for guidance on the level of compensation she should receive for her first job to the assistant professor trying to make a tenure case on his work as a dramaturg to the literary manager who wants to hear recommendations for plays from her fellow dramaturgs to the production dramaturg who simply needs a phone number for someone he met at a

conference. As we try to respond to all these different needs, which are at least more diffuse (if not more difficult) than trying to find a time and place for lunch, the danger is that our programming will become "a mile wide and six inches deep." Thorn's advice: realize that focusing on meeting the individual needs of an ever-more heterogeneous membership will become increasingly frustrating both for the member and the organization and that instead we need to understand membership as primarily an opportunity to do collectively what we cannot do individually to improve the environment for dramaturgy and literary management.

What then should membership in LMDA provide? In terms of basic member services, perhaps three benefits: an annual conference, a membership directory, and a newsletter. Other activities and projects are significant; these three are central. These benefits have one thing in common: they make communication amongst members possible; they enable collective action. Each Executive Committee inherits the responsibility of maintaining these basic services. Beyond these services, we need then as an organization to develop ongoing processes to identify those collective actions we deem most necessary.

The working group included Mark Bly, Jane Ann Crum, Lee Devin, Michael Bigelow Dixon, Bronwyn Eisenberg, Liz Engelman, Shirley Fishman, Gretchen Haley, Susan Jonas, Celise Kalke, Allen Kennedy, DD Kugler, Tom O'Handley, Richard Pettengill, Geoff Proehl, Brian Quirt, Tricia Roche, and Lynn M. Thomson. Some of us met with Thorn in person in January and April of 1999. Others shared their input over the phone or in writing. Those that met with Thorn came to a fairly simple clarification of our mission by way of a series of phrases first suggested by **Brian Quirt**: *to defend (later affirm) the function, explore the practice, and promote the role (later profession) of literary management and dramaturgy*. These three goals cover all of our current work and are in line with the organization's original mission statement. They articulate the distinction many of us make between dramaturgy as a vital function that might be practiced by various members of a production team and dramaturgy as a specific role in the theater making process.

They emphasize both our desire to push the edges of the discipline forward as a practice and the need to work toward improving the conditions in which we work. They move us toward internal dialogue and projects amongst ourselves as well as external dialogues and projects with other theater professionals.

In recent years, a number of specific projects focused internally or externally on one or more of these goals. One excellent example has been the work of the Advocacy Caucus. Although members attitudes toward how we approach issues of credit, compensation, and work load vary, mid-year, regional, and annual meetings made it clear to the Executive Committee that members wanted to have a conversation about strategies for dealing with these concerns and that in time we needed to develop a clearer sense of the organization's role in providing models for dramaturgs and other theater professionals. The actual work on the project as well as the initiative for its inception was, however, undertaken by the caucus under the leadership of **Shirley and Lynn**. They received essential, but limited support from our offices. The work could proceed because an infrastructure was in place; the core of the work itself was the product of the initiative and persistence of a small handful of individuals.

Another example is the **Elliott Hayes Award**. Clearly, we need to continue to communicate to the larger theatrical community what it is we do and to put forward models of that work at its best. **Michael Bigelow Dixon** of Actors Theatre in Louisville approached the Executive Committee with the idea for this award in the summer of 1998. Again, the organization provided the basic elements without which this effort would not have been possible: mailing labels, a newsletter and web sites to disseminate information, an annual conference at which the awards have been presented, judges. **Michael, Amy Wegener, Liz Engelman, Actors Theatre, friends and family of Elliott Hayes**, and others provided the resources (financial and human) that made the project a reality.

What then do we need to focus on or to continue to focus on in the immediate future? Here is my list, informal, unofficial

and not as focused it should be. *Indeed, I think I was less successful as a leader in this area of our work (in limiting and directing our areas of focus) than others.* The urge toward expansiveness is difficult to resist.

I don't offer this list as a blue print for the current Executive Committee. Most of all, given my earlier comments, I do not suggest that this is what the current Executive Committee *should* do. Rather, it's a beginning point for conversations about where we go from here. Whenever I use the word "we" below, I'm referring to ourselves as a collective, not to imply what I think someone else should do.

Infrastructure

As noted above, we need to be extremely clear about bottomline functions that will allow this organization a vital, ongoing life. How do we ensure from month to month that money will be there (1) to elicit and process memberships, (2) to maintain a database and membership directory, (3) to plan and execute an annual conference, (4) to communicate regularly with members by mail or online, (5) to identify and recruit members to serve on the Executive Committee and in other key roles. Any number of special projects might be discontinued but without these actions, LMDA would not be able to provide its most basic benefits.

I am particularly pleased that **DD Kugler** has designated **Michele Volansky** as a new member of the Executive Committee to focus on long term development and funding and that Mark Bly, as new board chair, will also explore these issues. But the stewardship of these essential services belongs no more to the board or Executive Committee than it does to the membership as a whole.

Advocacy

This fall members ratified the Advocacy Caucus's guidelines for credit and compensation ("Proposed Resolutions To Improve Working Conditions"). (See Lynn Thomson's piece in Section I.) This brings to completion one of the most significant projects in the organization's history. After a well-deserved break, the caucus and membership will need to determine our next steps in this direction. In what way and to what extent will we make these

guidelines available not just to members but to our collaborators as well: artistic directors, managing directors, producers, department chairs, and deans? How will we use these guidelines to engage in constructive conversations amongst ourselves and our collaborators? What processes will we develop to amend and revise them in the coming years? As individuals and as an organization, how will we give these resolutions added weight in terms of current and future practice?

Affiliation/Collaboration

We need to continue to reach out to our collaborators (writers, directors, actors, designers, producers). Officially and unofficially we have interacted in recent years with the Theatre Communications Group, New Dramatists, the Dramatists Guild, the Society for Stage Directors and Choreographers, the Black Theater Network, *TheatreForum*, Alberta Theater Projects, the East Central and Southeast Central Theater Conferences, the Association for Theater in Higher Education, the National Endowment for the Arts, and others. How can we continue and deepen these and other relationships? How can we use these relationships to analyze the nature of our collaborations and respond to their challenges? Dramaturgy has been around long enough now to alienate some of our fellow theater makers. How can we understand, address and lessen that alienation?

Perhaps most important of all, individually and collectively we need to continue patiently and persistently and carefully to explain and demonstrate to others the role/roles dramaturgy and the dramaturg play or can play in the theater. We often become cranky when asked again and again what a "dramaturg" does or what "dramaturgy" is. We don't have the luxury of opting out of this. We need instead to embrace each question as an opportunity to begin a dialogue not only about what we do but about theater making in general. We have the wonderful privilege of helping to forge a still relatively new (at least to North America) discipline. Along with that privilege comes the ongoing challenge of trying to explain to others the nature of a thing that is still finding its nature. I like the word *dramaturgy*, because it's strange, because it is alienated from the apparent,

transparency of so many words. Its opacity, its clunkiness is a gift.

In our talks with George Thorn, I got the impression that based on the work he does with a wide range of theaters that he thinks that we as dramaturgs and literary managers significantly underestimate the extent to which our colleagues understand what we do, that we are either cavalier or naïve in our assumption of the extent to which others understand and value dramaturgy's role in the theater. Of course, many directors, writers and artistic directors understand this word far better now than fifteen years ago, but our work will not be done even when every director, writer, and artistic director embraces the concept. We need also to help managing directors, technical directors, producers, actors, department chairs, academic deans, funders, and many others from the person who answers the phone at the theater to the newest member of the board to better understand dramaturgy as role and function. For the last conference, we created a T-shirt that answered the question "What is dramaturgy" with an extended list of specific tasks that several of us compiled (See url: www.ups.edu/professionalorgs/dramaturgy/nwquest.htm). The implicit message? If your theater does this work then you are doing dramaturgy and if you have not engaged the help of someone experienced and trained in dramaturgy or literary management to further these efforts, then perhaps you should. I'm not trying to sell T-shirts here or to create reductionistic job descriptions, but in this and other ways we need to embrace the simple process of explaining what dramaturgy offers academic and professional theaters, remembering finally that the most persuasive explanations any of us can make will be the excellence we model in the work we do. This drive toward excellence does not stand in isolation from the other areas noted here. Excellence, for example, is in part a function of the ability to grow and mature in the field over the course of a career. If, however, dramaturgs must leave the profession because they are inadequately compensated or because burnout, then the possibilities for this much needed growth and development are cut short.

Exploration

If dramaturgy was an automobile I would say that we've barely begun to break it in, at least the North American model. It still has that new smell about it. We've just driven it around the block a few times, have only done a short road trip or two.

A unique aspect of this professional service organization, of Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas, is that it functions a bit at times like a learned society. I treasure this part of our heritage. It is what brought me to my first conference and what, beyond friendships, most brings me back to conferences year after year. I say "learned society," even with its pedantic and academic overtones, because I have an image of physicists say or geographers or astronomers coming together to share their latest findings about atoms or river systems or galaxies and in sharing them making and remaking the world. I use this image because I want to insist on dramaturgy's persistence as a space in which academics and professional theater makers gather for a conversation, a space that refuses the anti-intellectualism and anti-professionalism that has marked so much of the relationship between the university and the playhouse in North America.

I would not want to work in a field that I did not think had this potential to grow new knowledge. I am not interested in working out what it is dramaturgy can do and then moving on to more pressing concerns. Such has not been the case for the craft and art of the writer or actor or designer or director, nor should it be for the dramaturg or literary manager.

Speculating on just where those openings are is the subject for another text, it is the value of speculation itself that I close with here, of dreaming and re-dreaming the function and the practice and the profession.

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B. NOTE TO FELLOW LMDA MEMBERS FROM VANESSA PORTEOUS

This summer, when Alberta Theatre Projects and I re-negotiated the terms of my employment, we based our discussions on a version of LMDA's "Proposed Guidelines For Employment, Category A."

In our case traditional production dramaturgy (generating a protocol, etc.) is an "exceptional service," while many hours of developmental dramaturgy are routine. Working with the writer for more than two months before opening is normal. So we modified the guidelines to suit our needs. Our version of the guidelines became an attachment to my letter of employment, and both ATP and I have agreed to abide by it.

Through this process, the LMDA guidelines made it easier to prioritize responsibilities, to discuss released time (a new phrase for us) and to make the point in writing that when time permits, gigging or training elsewhere while working for ATP is of benefit to the company.

I've since found that the guidelines also have a salutary psychological effect. I know exactly what I'm here to do, I've agreed to do it, and I'm proud to do it. When extra demands arise, or more commonly, when I'm tempted to take on another labor-intensive, admin-heavy new activity, I can pause and review in my mind what I'm hired to do. Is it more important that I sit in my office all afternoon and wordsmith a blurb for our corporate sponsors, or should I go home and actually read some of those plays that have come in?

With my shiny new letter of agreement, it seems easier somehow to figure out what's really important for the company and the art, and to feel secure that when I'm dramaturging, or assisting in the development of new plays, or Managing Literature I guess you could call it, I'm actually doing my job.

I'd like to thank the Advocacy Caucus, the Friendly Amenders, and the LMDA membership as a whole for these guidelines. I'd like to applaud my boss, Artistic Director Bob White, also a member of the LMDA, for initiating their use at ATP. I'd like to commend Gie Roberts, Managing Director of ATP, for incorporating them officially into the terms of my employment.

I encourage others in Canada and the USA to follow suit. Try it. You won't regret it.

Section III: Resources

A. SPOTLIGHT ON EARLY CAREER DRAMATURGS

Cornwell On Cornwell

Rachel Cornwell will be available for a fulltime assistant literary manager or dramaturg position beginning on January 1, 2001. She will relocate to become an enthusiastic and productive member of your theater team. Rachel is a responsible and creative young dramaturg who is looking forward to continuing her theater career with a growing company. In the past, Rachel was an intern at Florida Stage in Palm Beach where she assisted the literary manager Des Gallant with reading and analyzing new scripts. She also provided research to the playwright, director and cast for the Carbonell-winning and world premiere production of *The Garden of Hannah List*. She then worked at Theater League in Kansas City, Missouri interpreting Equity Booking Agreements and maintaining relationships with Broadway tour management. Rachel will finish her MA degree in Drama from Florida State University this December.

During her time at FSU, she has lectured, served on the organizational committee for the School of Theatre's annual symposium, as well as presenting a paper there, and she has worked as the dramaturg for the mainstage production of *The Crucible*. Recently she served as the dramaturg for Theatre Southeast's *Steel Magnolias*. You may contact her at rccornwell@yahoo.com or (850) 539-4022.

GANDROW ON GANDROW

Kristen Gandrow is a dramaturg, writer, and theater historian with graduate degrees in nonfiction and in dramaturgy from the University of Iowa, where she was most recently a dramaturg in the Iowa Playwrights Workshop. Kristen has more than a dozen production dramaturgy credits on both the mainstage and in new play development. She is currently theater reviewer for the *Iowa City Press-Citizen* and is seeking a regional theater dramaturgy and/or literary manager position. Contact info: Kristen Gandrow, 319-338-8784; gandrow@inav.net.

(If you are an early-career dramaturg and would like to send in a paragraph about your interests and training, please contact the editor.)

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B. DRAMATURGY OPENING ARENA STAGE

TITLE: Dramaturg
DEPARTMENT: Artistic
REPORTS TO: Artistic Director

PURPOSE OF POSITION: Lead Arena Stage's effort to attract and work with the best American writers and support the Artistic Director in the areas of literary analysis and dramaturgy. Part of artistic team including the Artistic Director, Literary Manager, Artistic Associate and Associate Producer.

REQUIREMENTS: A comprehensive knowledge of contemporary and classic theater, excellent writing and supervisory skills, dramaturgy experience, especially American voices.

MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES: Be a major national presence for Arena Stage's artistic ambitions. Work closely with and support the Artistic Director, undertaking artistic and organizational tasks as assigned.

Responsible for identifying, seeking out, attracting and keeping contact with major established playwrights, emerging playwrights, both locally and nationally. Guidance and supervision as appropriate to Literary Office. As appropriate, serve as dramaturg for Arena productions. Facilitate and collaborate as part of the Artistic Team in the season planning process. Write articles for organizational and public forums, productions at Arena, new plays, and organizational initiatives. Represent Arena Stage locally in the community and nationally in theater-related events. Serve as member of the Senior Leadership team.

Please send: resume, references and writing samples to Anne Paine West, Executive Office Assistant, Arena Stage, 1101 Sixth Street, SW, Washington, DC 20024; fax 202-488-4056. No e-mail submissions please.

* * * * *

C. INTERNSHIP AT THE WOMEN'S PROJECT

The Women's Project and Productions is accepting applications for unpaid internships in Literary Management. Please send a cover letter, resume, and critical writing sample to: WPP, Internship Coordinator 55 West End Avenue, New York, NY 10023.

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D. LITERARY RESIDENCY IN NEW YORK

Playwrights Horizons' 2000-2001 season Literary Residency is still available. This is a perfect opportunity to gain professional theater experience and learn about the artistic workings of a nonprofit theater devoted to new American work, as well as attain a broad knowledge of the New York theater community. Duties include reading scripts, writing evaluations, discussing new work, organizing readings, and scouting

theater. The pay is \$100/week. (P.S. Both the Literary Manager and Artistic Director of Playwrights Horizons were once Literary Residents.) Send cover letter and resume to Sonya Sobieski, Literary Manager, Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St., New York, NY 10036.

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E. DRAMATURGY/LITERARY MANAGEMENT INTERNSHIP AT ARENA STAGE

A full-time internship position is available in Literary management for the winter/spring (January - May/June). Intern gains administrative and practical experience in dramaturgy, critiquing scripts, preparing study guides, etc. Interns must have a basic knowledge of theater history, a strong knowledge of dramatic literature and excellent written and interpersonal skills. \$120/week stipend. Please fax a cover letter, resume, references, writing sample to: A. Lorraine Robinson, Arena Stage, 1101 Sixth Street, SW, Washington, DC 20024, T: 202-554-9066; F: 202-488-4056. lrobinson@arenastage.org. www.arenastage.org. EOE.

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F. JOB OPENING AT UCSD

Assistant Professor of African American Dramatic Literature: Tenure-track Assistant Professor of African American Dramatic Literature for joint appointment in Departments of Theatre and Dance and Literature, effective 7/1/2001. Appointment will include teaching in the undergraduate and Ph.D. programs of both departments. Ph.D. or equivalent and record of, or proven potential for, distinguished scholarship and effective teaching of courses in African American dramatic literature at both levels required. Salary commensurate with experience and based on UC pay scale. Non-citizens should state immigration status in CV. Send letter of application, CV, dossier, and writing sample(s) to Walt Jones, Chair, Department of Theatre and Dance 0344, UCSD, 9500 Gilman Drive, La Jolla, CA 92093-0344. Enclose SASE for return of

writing sample(s). Closes December 8, 2000, or until filled. EOE/AA.

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G. A NOTE TO LMDA MEMBERS FROM MARNIE ANDREWS

National Repertory Theater Foundation offers an annual National Play Award of \$5,000 to one playwright and \$500 to four other playwright finalists. In addition, when the five finalists are chosen, NRTF over the last couple of years has offered a staged reading festival of all five plays in Los Angeles. This year, NRTF and USC are combining resources, and flying the playwrights there to work for a week with the directors and actors. We hoped to apply for a grant to include dramaturgs in that process, but we have postponed that until we see how this partnership works with USC.

The idea I propose as a member of the NRTF Board and LMDA is the possibility of offering dramaturgy as an additional service to the playwrights who submit plays to the National Play Award competition. It is proposed that as a beginning to a potential ongoing relationship, the dramaturgs could be matched with submitting playwrights in their geographic areas who request dramaturgical consultation. The dramaturgs would prepare a written, in-depth script analysis, and then have two face-to-face meetings with the playwright after the writer had time to incorporate the written notes and possible rewrites. For that work, the suggested fee would be \$250. The foundation's interest is to promote play development in such a way that scripts come from all of the United States, and not just the larger cities. Since LMDA has representation all over the country, I wanted to approach the membership about the feasibility of such a process, and to gauge the interest of LMDA members in participating in this venture. (NRTF would also need to figure out how much it would cost us to administrate this service in terms of coordinating the contact between playwright and dramaturg, and fees such as mailing, script copies, etc.)

If LMDA members are interested in participating, or if they have further

suggestions about how dramaturgs might best work with these playwrights, please contact me by email: marniejean@aol.com or by phone (201) 963-9637. We do not know at this point how many of the submitting playwrights would be interested, but we are planning to survey those writers in the upcoming January to March 2001 submission period. If members of LMDA are interested, we would include questions regarding the dramaturgy possibility on that survey.

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H. UNITY FEST 2001 CALL FOR SCRIPTS

THE NEW YORK TIMES:
"Gay pride is in the air. And it's on stage as well in The Fourth Unity's festival of one-act plays at Unity Fest, a program that explores the strengths and limitations, part and parcel, of any simple definition of gay community."

THE VILLAGE VOICE:
"Flawlessly executed and not a bummer in the bunch. Actually, while with any series of 11 plays a measure of inconsistency can be expected, Unity Fest comes close to total bliss. The variations are stunning and a tragicomic tour de force."

- ◆ The Fourth Unity is soliciting scripts for its annual festival of new plays in celebration of gay pride, to be presented at the Bank Street Theater in Greenwich Village during June, 2001.
- ◆ DEADLINE: submissions must be received by January 15, 2001.
- ◆ 15-25 minutes is the ideal length. Scripts in excess of 45 minutes cannot be considered.
- ◆ Selected plays must be New York City premieres.
- ◆ Topics and themes must be of immediate importance and/or interest to the gay community. Unique viewpoints are especially appreciated. We encourage minority submissions and plays with minority characters.

- ◆ Royalties will not be paid.

Mail submissions to: The Fourth Unity Fest 2001, Post Office Box 208, Brooklyn, NY 11217

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I. CALL FOR DIRECTORS, ACTORS, DRAMATURGS

ATHE's Playwrights Program is seeking directors, dramaturgs and actors to work with the twelfth New Play Development Workshop at the ATHE Conference in Chicago, August 2-5, 2001. Directors, dramaturgs and actors are invited to submit applications to work with the six to seven short (10 minute) scripts which will be selected for this event. Each playwright will be assigned a director, a dramaturg, and a group of actors; these creative teams will work on the scripts throughout the four-day conference for an average of two to three hours per day. (Attendance at the rest of the ATHE conference is possible and encouraged.) The Workshop will culminate in a public, script-in-hand reading of the plays in a SHOWCASE OF SCRIPTS on Saturday afternoon or Sunday morning.

The New Play Development Workshop affords playwrights, actors, directors and dramaturgs the opportunity to work with artists from all over the country who are experienced in dealing with original material and to have their work presented at the conference. Actors, directors and dramaturgs should send letters of application, along with a two-page resume which indicates, in particular, the applicant's experience with original scripts; actors should indicate age-range and include a photo. The letter of application should indicate the applicant's willingness to attend ALL sessions of the workshop, from Thursday morning, Aug. 2, through Sunday afternoon, Aug. 5; the letter should also include a mailing address, along with telephone, fax and e-mail info. The DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS is December 1, 2000.

Director, actor, dramaturg applications should be sent to Judith Royer, 7847 Flight Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90045. Phone, (310) 670-0362; FAX (310) 215-0967 :jroyer@earthlink.net.

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J. CALL FOR UPDATES TO THE LMDA GUIDE TO PROGRAMS IN DRAMATURGY

Does dramaturgy play a significant role in the curriculum of your college or university, graduate or undergraduate?

If so, please complete the information requested below for the "The LMDA Guide to Programs in Dramaturgy: a guide to post-secondary education in dramaturgy" and send, email or fax it to Geoff Proehl (Theater, U. of Puget Sound, 1500 N. Warner, Tacoma, WA 98407; fax, 253-879-3500; gproehl@ups.edu.)

If you are already listed in the Guide, check your online listing, (http://www.lmda.org/members_only/Guide.html; username and pass word = LMDA) and then send any corrections to Proehl. Please do not send handwritten copy.

- Name of Program or University:
- Address:
- Phone:
- E-mail:
- Program or department web site: <http://>
- Chair:
- Dramaturgy contact person (name/phone/e-mail):
- Degrees Offered by Program:
- Requirements for Completion of Degree:
- Production Opportunities:
- Publications:
- Program Description (**What role does dramaturgy play in your theatre program?**)
- (Online version of this questionnaire: <http://www.ups.edu/professionalorgs/dramaturgy/quest.htm>.)

Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas: Board of Directors

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Literary Managers And Dramaturgs Of The Americas

WE ARE MOVING . . .

Here is the how to stay in touch. Our new phone number is **718-437-5462**. Our email address is **LMDA2000@aol.com**. Our web address is **www.lmda.org**. Our mailing address is currently the same (121 Ave. of the Americas, Suite 505, New York, NY 10013), but will be changing soon. Watch for a flyer in the mail and announcements on our listserv.

The current user name and password for member only sections of the LMDA web page (www.lmda.org) is "LMDA."

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