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Review: A Publication of LMDA, the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas, volume 17, issue 2

D.J. Hopkins

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Review

A Publication of LMDA,
the Literary Managers
and Dramaturgs
of the Americas

Volume 17, Issue 2
Spring / Summer 2007

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THE CITY PROJECT

D.J. Hopkins

It all started with one of those damn Dramaturg Driven Grants. Ok, it may have started before then, but a pre-existing condition was sorely exacerbated by support from LMDA.

Two years ago I proposed a small symposium — small enough that I took to calling it “an elaborate get-together” — at the Seattle Public Library. I hoped to provide an opportunity for LMDA Northwest members to meet and mingle, but the event would also offer an excuse to collectively explore an innovative architectural space from the perspective of theatre practitioners. Theatre people are, after all, people who think about the relationships between bodies and spaces, along with words and actions and all the things that bodies do in spaces. The Seattle Public Library, designed by architect Rem Koolhaas, is a building that demonstrates insightful responses to the relationship between (private) bodies and (civic) spaces. The fact that there's a theatre at the heart of the building seems to me a subtle indication — if not a winking acknowledgement! — that performance is a key concept in this design. *[continued page 2]*



LITERARY MANAGERS
& DRAMATURGS
OF THE AMERICAS

conference preview

I've discussed the Seattle event (and, with Madeleine Oldham, the Seattle Public Library itself) in a previous issue of *Review* (16.2). I've also written about Koolhaas's design for the Prada store in NYC (*Review* 15.2), another innovative space with a theatre at its core. Koolhaas's obsession with creative research initially attracted me to his work — an architect who thinks like a dramaturg — but my lasting interest has come through considering the ways in which his buildings create spaces that anticipate not only where you *go* in the space, but what you *do* in the space.

My interests have expanded to include architecture more broadly, especially the increasingly active and influential practice of so-called “green” architecture. Today, architects ask not just about how interior spaces relate to bodies, nor only how exterior structures and forms relate to other buildings and the community, but: How does a civic landmark inform and respond to a civic space? And: How does a building responsibly respond to the environment over the life of the structure?

In my Dramaturg Driven Grant, I suggested that a session at an annual conference might be one way of sharing ideas with the LMDA community, and even widening the circle (to borrow a phrase from past-Prez Volansky) to include artists, academics, and others in the conversation. With support from many people, most notably LMDA President Brian Quirt, just such a session will be happening at the start of this year's conference. See page 4 for a brief summary of what that session will be like. I'm grateful to all who've helped make it happen.

And elsewhere in this issue, be sure to check out: Kathleen Mountjoy's juried article on dramaturging Spanish Golden Age plays for the RSC; Debra Cardona and Kate Farrington's conversation about the new book *The Shakespearean Dramaturg*; updates from Alberta and Georgia; and the conference preview, which starts on this very page!

See in you Toronto!

Review

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Review is published twice yearly by the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas. Submissions should ideally conform to MLA format, but we're not picky. Spelling differences between Canadian and US English will be preserved. As per the name of our organization, “dramaturg” will be the default spelling of this contentious word, but we will preserve the spelling of any submitter who prefers “dramaturge.” The same will hold for “theatre” and “theater,” “chesterfield” and “couch,” “lorry” and “truck,” “rubbish tip” and “garbage dumpster.”

Inquiries from prospective contributors are encouraged. All inquiries may be directed to D.J. Hopkins.

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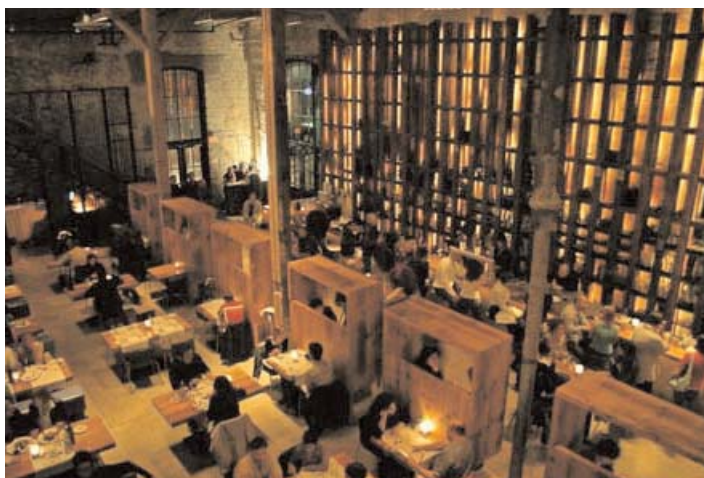
Review no longer does Regional Updates. Regional Update inquiries should be directed to your LMDA regional representative.

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The 2007 Conference will be held in the Distillery District and at theatres on nearby Front Street in the oldest part of Toronto. Founded in 1832, the Gooderham and Worts Distillery eventually became the largest distillery in the British empire. Set on 13 acres in downtown Toronto, the forty-plus buildings constitute the largest and best preserved collection of Victorian industrial architecture in North America. This pedestrian-only landmark has attracted internationally acclaimed galleries, artists from all corners of the arts spectrum, restaurants, cafes, boutique retailers and theatres, including George Brown College Theatre School and Soupepper Theatre. From the brick lined streets to the European-styled piazzas, The Distillery District is, as Toronto Life magazine says, “Toronto's hippest new neighbourhood.”

Conference Hosts

- **Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People (LKTYP)** is the largest theatre for young audiences in Canada, presenting new plays, innovative works and classics from children's literature.
- **Canadian Stage Company** is Canada's largest not-for-profit contemporary theatre company, with a line-up of current and classic plays in production on four stages.
- **Dancemakers' Centre for Creation** in the Distillery District is a home for its own internationally recognized dance works and a showcase for multi-disciplinary collaborations.



Toronto's Distillery District, once the largest distillery in the British Colonial Empire, is where many of the events of the 2007 LMDA Conference will be held. The area boasts beautiful historic buildings that have been repurposed into theatres, offices, shops, apartments, cafes, and restaurants.

Photos: Lucas Digital Art

Imda conference 07: Dramaturg Driven!

The 2007 conference program will focus on case studies of specific projects by the artists who created and developed them. Our goal is to talk about how dramaturgs can drive the creative process: what worked, what didn't work and why. LMDA wants to foster a discussion of what we have achieved, how dramaturgs can do this work more effectively and what models will best take us into the future.

Featured speakers and events include:

Wendy Lill (playwright & former member of the Canadian Parliament, Halifax) will open our AGM with a session on her years as a politician, her recent play *Chimera*, and the role of theatre artists in the making and unmaking of cultural policy.

Ruth Little (Associate Artist, Young Vic, London) will discuss her work at the Young Vic and her exploration of biology as a source of approaches to creating new work.

Yvette Nolan (playwright & Artistic Director, Native Earth Performing Arts, Toronto) will outline her company's collaboration with Aboriginal theatre artists in New Zealand and Australia.

Silvia Peláez (playwright, Mexico City) will speak about her writing, the theatrical scene in Mexico City, and the current cultural climate of Mexico.

Performance and the City: Symposium and Bus Tour—An exploration of architecture and its connection to the civic life of Toronto and theories of urban space. Organized by D.J. Hopkins, with keynote lecture by Kim Solga and Laura Levin, the highlight of the tour will be the spectacular new addition to the Royal Ontario Museum by "starchitect" Daniel Libeskind. An ideal introduction to Toronto! (limited seating/first come-first served advance registration)

365 Days/365 Plays by Suzan-Lori Parks—Our opening night performance of *Week 32* will introduce you to the work of eight leading Toronto companies as they interpret Parks' magical play cycle: Cahoots Theatre Projects, Dancemakers, LKTYP Student Ensemble, Modern Times Theatre Company, Native Earth Performing Arts, Nightwood Theatre, Obsidian, and Volcano. Our Sunday session will feature Suzan-Lori Parks and *365 Days* dramaturg/producer Bonnie Metzgar discussing their experience of *365* to date.



Toronto's Distillery District will enhance the LMDA conference by providing ample opportunities for socializing and networking.

Photo: Lucas Digital Art

Saturday Banquet—Gibraltar Point Centre for the Arts, located on Toronto Island, offers artistic retreats and residencies to creative thinkers from around the world. Our banquet on the edge of Lake Ontario, in a natural setting only a 15-minute ferry ride from downtown Toronto, will feature outdoor entertainment by Shadowland Theatre. This is a not-to-be-missed event!

Thursday, June 21 at LKTYP

11:00-6:00 Registration—LKTYP mainspace
11:30-3:30 Performance & the City—Symposium & Bus Tour
4:00-5:30 University Caucus: Hot Topics (all are welcome)
5:30-7:30 Dinner
7:30 Conference Launch: *365 Days/365 Plays*
9:30 Conference Bar

Friday, June 22 at Dancemakers

8:00-9:00 Breakfast and Registration at LKTYP
8:45-9:30 Walking Tour to Distillery District
10:00-1:00 Who's Doing What?
1:00-2:30 Lunch
Early Career Dramaturg Caucus meeting
2:30-5:30 Case Studies, Part 1

- Ruth Little
- Silvia Peláez
- Yvette Nolan

5:30-6:30 Playwrights Guild of Canada Reception
6:30 Dinner and Theatregoing

Saturday, June 23 at Canadian Stage

9:00-11:00 Registration
9:00-10:00 Breakfast
10:00-10:30 Wendy Lill
10:30-12:30 LMDA Annual General Meeting
12:30-2:00 Catered Lunch and Caucus Meetings

- Freelancers
- Institution-based Dramaturgs

2:00-3:15 Case Studies, Part 2

- Nuts & Bolts—dramaturgy techniques 1.0
- Cultural Translation—what is gained and lost in translation
- Dramaturging the Body—working in the world of dance

3:30-5:00 Case Studies, Part 3

- U Caucus—how do we get better at what we do?
- Dramaturging the Voice—working in the world of opera
- When Opposites Attract—what happens when wildly different companies come together to create?
- The Fence—playwright exchange across Europe

6:15 Bus from hotel to Toronto Island Ferry

7:30 Banquet at Gibraltar Point

Sunday, June 24 at LKTYP

9:00-10:30 Board Meeting
10:30-12:00 Case Studies, Part 4

- *365 Days/365 Plays*, Suzan-Lori Parks & Bonnie Metzgar

12:00 Conference Wrap Up

1:00-2:30 Executive Committee Meeting

Visit www.lmda.org for conference updates, registration, and information on Toronto events and activities during the weekend.



Performance and the City

SYMPOSIUM AND ARCHITECTURE TOUR

June 21, 2007

11AM to 4PM

Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People, 165 Front St. E., Toronto
Part of LMDA's International Dramaturgy Conference

Urban space has become one of the most active areas of investigation in Performance and Theatre Studies. The Performance and the City symposium invites scholars and artists to direct the lens of current urban thinking on Toronto itself. This event will address these spaces with a key question: what is the role of performance in understanding and negotiating the city?

Performance and the City will include a bus tour that will take the discussion to specific locations in Toronto. Symposium attendees will become motorized *flâneurs*, looking at the city from new perspectives. The highlight of the tour will be a visit to the Royal Ontario Museum and its new addition designed by Daniel Libeskind (box lunch included in this stop). The bus tour is co-curated by Shawn Micallef, one of the founders of Toronto's site-specific [murmur] project.

The symposium and tour take place on the opening day of the LMDA annual conference, and can be attended separately from the rest of the conference at the one-day rate of \$60US / \$75CDN. For more information or to download the LMDA conference brochure visit our website: <http://www.lmda.org/blog/Conference/Conference2007>

The Shakespearean Dramaturg

The book by Andrew James Hartley is discussed by
Debra Cardona and Kate Farrington

Andrew James Hartley's 2005 The Shakespearean Dramaturg: A Theoretical and Practical Guide, offers a step-by-step account of one practitioner's experience and approach to "classical" dramaturgy. Hartley starts not with the ubiquitous "what is a dramaturg?" but with a discussion of what he believes the position "can be." Taking the reader from the first rough cuts of a Shakespearean text to the rehearsal room, and finally to the post show discussion, Hartley examines in detail the various ways a dramaturg may have a real and lasting impact on a production.

Kate Farrington (KF): The first thing I thought as I was reading this book was "I wish I'd had something like this when I was first exploring dramaturgy in college." I already knew I was drawn towards classical scripts — particularly Shakespeare — and it would have been wonderful to have something so clear-cut — a kind of "how to" guide for someone going through the dramaturgical process for the first time. It seems old hat now to talk about the advantages of examining the bad quarto of *Hamlet*, or which editions of the plays have useful annotations, or what's available online, but as Hartley points out, everyone comes to dramaturgy from a different background and that kind of information can be absolutely vital starting out.

But this book isn't "Dramaturgy for Dummies" either. What makes it a good read is that it lays out Hartley's personal experiences and particular process very clearly and concisely. And, for me at least, it sparked a lot of interesting questions and discussion.

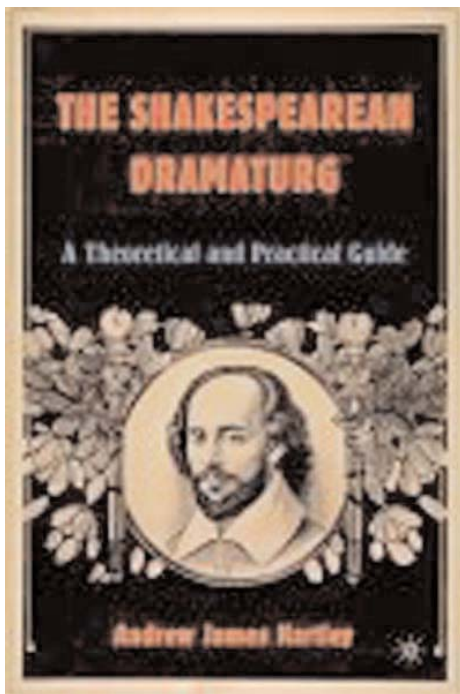
Debra Cardona (DC): I couldn't agree with you more. What struck

me was how flexible Hartley was when it came to cutting Shakespeare's text. The three-pass process Hartley puts forward — highlighting with italics or boldface what words and phrases may be opaque to the actor as well as the audience, what could possibly be cut, what should definitely be cut, and, most important, why — is terrific. Hartley gives plenty of examples of how to trim down the text, even going so far as to change words or phrases for the sake of audience clarity. There is an explanation in the footnotes for each change. I have to admit, however, that the freedom he used in changing words in the text for ones that the audience could better understand did cause me a little worry. Wouldn't doing that with great frequency mean that perhaps we are underestimating our audience, or underestimating the skill of the actor in putting across the word's meaning? I would have liked to have had examples of other dramaturgs' work as well, just to compare and contrast methods and to get a few different points of view. What do you think, Kate?

KF: I think his discussion of script cutting is really well thought out (and potentially opens up a pretty meaty discussion about when interpretation crosses over into adaptation). One should be careful, as you say, not to underestimate the audience or actors. Or the playwright. Sometimes Shakespeare's language is complicated with a purpose, and it's a thin but important line between confusing archaism and intentional ambiguity. But I absolutely appreciate his argument. If there are sections of the text that create unnecessary or unintended distance between the audience and the play, than the dramaturg has an obligation to address that.

Another part of the book I found really intriguing was Hartley's discussion of post-rehearsal dramaturgy (classical or otherwise). He gives a very specific breakdown of the differences between pre- and post-show discussions and what he sees as the appropriate topics for each, as well as some examples of program notes. And he discusses the dramaturg's face-to-face relationship with the audience. It's often an "understood" part of the job that we write articles, lead talkbacks, and in general serve as a resource for audience outreach, but Hartley posits that the dramaturg might also be the best barometer for a theatre's patrons. As he says, audiences are unlikely to be "star struck" by a dramaturg and might offer more honest reactions to him or her than they might to the actors or director. It definitely argues for a full time dramaturg for every theatre, doesn't it?

DC: Amen to that! In the final section of *The Shakespearean Dramaturg*, Hartley takes a firm stance on how to approach program



The Shakespearean Dramaturg: A Theoretical and Practical Guide, by Andrew James Hartley. Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. \$24.95 Paperback.

notes and synopses. He presents what problems both an over-abundance of material as well as a complete lack of material in the program can present. The question is, depending on the theater's preferences and its budget as well as how much space a dramaturg is allotted in the program, what can best serve the production as well as its audience? It's an incredibly valuable discussion to have. Hartley is against anything that could possibly coach the audience into "a proper reading" of the play they are about to witness, even offering the possibility of handing out program notes after the performance. He is also no fan of telling the audience every twist and turn of the plot — "a brief summary would suffice" — so they are left with something to discover. I would have to agree with Hartley on this, although I personally don't mind spectators having program notes to read beforehand. If the performance has been particularly intriguing — or confusing — people like to give the program notes another read at home.

As with the text cuts, Hartley provides examples of ways to approach writing program essays, from performance-specific notes to a discussion of the history of the play itself. Again, I would have preferred reading essays from a number of dramaturgs, just to get a variety of styles and possibilities.

Your thoughts, Kate?

KF: Goodness, if our audience at The Pearl didn't get at least one article to read before the show, we might have a riot on our hands!

Definitely — the more styles the better! I would even love to see three or four different people's dramaturgical casebooks for a single Shakespeare play laid out side by side. Imagine the range it would cover, from heavily conceptualized productions to ruffs and rapiers! It's easy to forget (especially for early career dramaturgs) that we're none of us doing this in a vacuum, and it would be lovely to look at established signposts for a particular text: warnings and helpful hints that everyone could use.

I really appreciated the practical way Hartley looks at the ins and outs of the job. We've all experienced the anxiety of navigating around an uncertain relationship with a director or felt isolated from the "juicier" parts of production, and Hartley offers some pretty sound advice on how to manage those tensions (including when to back down). He voices the reality that a dramaturg's authority as an "intellectual presence" can be a deadening influence on everyone if he or she sees themselves as the advocate of the text as an isolated aspect of the production — which is absolutely true (and a little scary). Basically, he says if we want an equal share in the artistic

experience of the show, it's our responsibility to use our powers for good!

In all, I think the book is a good mix of practical advice and personal experience — and I think it has a nice hint of celebration behind it as well. No more explaining what we do — let's just enjoy doing it, and doing it well.

DC: I couldn't have said it better myself.

Kate Farrington is the Resident Dramaturg of the Pearl Theatre Company in New York City. Her work this season includes production dramaturgy for Arms and the Man, School for Wives, Toys in the Attic, and The Cave Dwellers, and numerous articles for The Pearl's show-specific newsletters and study guides. She holds an MFA in Dramaturgy from Brooklyn College.

Debra Cardona is the Resident Dramaturg at The Classical Theatre of Harlem in New York City. She has had the pleasure of 'turguing Funnyhouse of a Negro, Waiting for Godot, King Lear, and CTH's recent production of Marat/Sade. She holds an MFA in Dramaturgy from Brooklyn College.

Editor's Note: In the interests of full disclosure, I happen to have written a review of The Shakespearean Dramaturg for the most recent issue of Theatre Journal. My review was arranged after I asked Debra and Kate to hold this conversation, and at no point did I talk to them about their opinions on the book or offer mine. For another perspective on Hartley's book, see TJ 59.2 (May 2007): 337–339, or visit Project Muse: <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theatre_journal/>.

BLITZ WEEKEND

by Adriana Bucz

Every winter, Alberta Theatre Projects of Calgary presents one of Canada's most ambitious slates of new plays. This year, ATP celebrated the 21st Annual Enbridge playRites Festival of New Canadian Plays from January 31 – March 4, 2007. Adriana Bucz received support from an LMDA travel grant to attend the Festival.

I was extremely pleased to be awarded this travel grant, as the ATP Enbridge playRites Festival is one that I have heard about over the years, and never quite managed to get to. The award ensured that myself, and one of my theatre collaborators at Craning Neck, could attend the weekend. We kicked things off with an informal, but informative, LMDA Canada meeting. This was a terrific opportunity to meet LMDA members that were unable to attend the last LMDA conference. I was reminded of the wealth of experience and diversity that exists in Canada's theatrical community. It was also a chance to hear about what LMDA members in my area were working on, and potential individuals I might like to contact in the future with questions – a valuable resource for someone like myself with an emerging theatre company.

The rest of the weekend afforded me the opportunity to see six performances – including a showing of seven ten-minute plays. For starters, this meant getting to see a lot more theatre than I can normally cram into my week. It also offered a chance to be exposed to a different theatrical aesthetic. All Canadian theatre is not the same, and the theatre I most often see is created and performed by Vancouver companies. At Craning Neck, we are constantly asking ourselves what we offer to Vancouver theatergoers that is different than other theatres. Is there a niche left unfulfilled? A style unexplored? A voice silenced? The answer is “Of course!” of course, but it is tempting to imitate the aesthetic or thematic patterns I begin to see in my hometown. To see something utterly new is inspirational, even if it is a form of theatre I will not explore myself. LMDA allowed me to be theatrically ‘shaken’ – and vigorously — all in one weekend.

Aside from the four main plays running on Blitz weekend, I was also able to attend Koffee Klatsch, the book release party for Voices from France: plays that developed through the Banff Playwright's Centre's exchange with French playwrights. This opened me up to not only the theatrical ideas of other city, but of another country and culture. It resonates with me as a Canadian-Hungarian theatre artist (born in Canada, but raised to speak Hungarian fluently). One of my goals in theatre has always been to initiate a dialogue with a Hungarian the-

atre company, and see what arises from the exchange. This is a plan of action that Craning Neck is pursuing for next year. Seeing the success of the Banff-France exchange gave me renewed inspiration.

Each of the plays/performances we saw sparked lengthy discussion and debate between my collaborator, Jeremy Waller, and me. The play *This is Cancer!* had us debating our own company's mandate to try to truly include the audience. Is that possible while still maintaining a fourth wall? *Cancer* removed any walls between the audience and the performer and, as a result, is able to thrust the audience into an excruciatingly beautiful and oftentimes deeply uncomfortable place. I don't want to start reviewing the plays here, but needless to say they all posed artistic questions for me that led to even more questions. I am still thinking about them now, long after the event. I think Jeremy summed up our experience better than I can: life doesn't get any better than seeing multiple performances in a single weekend, and getting to discuss them late into the night in the comfort of your (luxurious, I have to add) hotel room.

Adriana Bucz is Artistic Director of Craning Neck Theatre in Vancouver, a company committed to exploring untold stories through training, ensemble, dramaturgy, workshop, and production. She is currently producing Michael Springate's one-man performance kut, directing Maya Suess's performance art/art installation Knead, and preparing for Craning Neck's weeklong workshop on Lasquiti Island in the Georgia Strait this summer.



Encouraged!

LMDA member Freddie Ashley is recognized for
advancing the arts in Georgia.

By Megan Monaghan

In February 2007, dramaturg and LMDA Regional Vice President Freddie Ashley was one of three inaugural recipients of the Arts Encouragement Award. Freddie is the full-time Literary Manager of the Alliance Theatre, teaches part-time at Kennesaw State University, and maintains an active freelance directing career. All of these endeavors create a rich, if wildly busy, artistic life that clearly earns Freddie this degree of recognition.

The Arts Encouragement Award was created this year by the Charles Loridans Foundation, a significant supporter of the arts in Atlanta since 2001. The Arts Encouragement Award intended for emerging artists, and the Loridans Arts Award for more senior artists, both carry unrestricted cash grants from the Foundation directly to the honored artists.

“These new awards programs are intended to recognize, encourage, and reward a select group of individual Atlanta artists from across a number of disciplines,” said Robert G. Edge, chairman of the Loridans Foundation and a partner with the law firm of Alston & Bird. “We want to honor people at various stages of their artistic careers—those who are clearly accomplished, exceptional artists but who remain largely ‘behind-the-scenes’ and may be unfamiliar to the public as well as those who are only now emerging but who have already demonstrated remarkable promise.” Freddie was the only theatre artist to be recognized with the Arts Encouragement Award this year.

A cum laude graduate of Georgia’s Shorter College, Freddie went on to earn an MFA in Performance from the University of Southern Mississippi. He joined the staff of the Alliance Theatre in 1999. After a brief stint as a buyer for the production department, Freddie found a home in the literary department where he rose from Literary Assistant to Literary Associate, then in 2005 was promoted to Literary Manager. In 2002, Freddie was a co-recipient of LMDA’s Elliott Hayes Award.

Freddie found out that he had won the Arts Encouragement Award when he received a notification letter from the Loridans Foundation in January 2007. Seeing the Foundation’s letterhead envelope in his stack of mail at work, Freddie presumed that the letter inside would

be an invitation to participate in a panel to determine funding for other arts organizations, or to raise the profile of the arts in Atlanta. Little did he know, the funding and the raised profile would both be his own. The following month, Freddie attended the awards ceremony, where Actor’s Express board member Mark Williamson (also a partner at Alston & Bird) saluted Freddie’s work and presented him with a silver julep cup. Freddie made some brief remarks, discussing why he is committed to making his artistic life in Atlanta and how the varied work he does in different organizations reflects the diversity displayed by the larger community. When asked why he would stay in Atlanta, Freddie responded, “Why would I want to be anywhere else?”

Freddie describes the current state of dramaturgy in Atlanta as being “on the rise,” particularly when it comes to freelance opportunities. While the flagship Alliance Theatre is the only company to employ dramaturgs in full-time staff positions, other companies such as Horizon Theatre have long histories of engaging dramaturgs for particular projects in production or new play development. Actor’s Express, where Freddie directs regularly and has taught dramaturgy for the past two years, is exploring ways to involve dramaturgs in the new play development program the company is creating. Several talented emerging dramaturgs in Atlanta have helped increase the visibility of the art form, branching out into dance and movement theatre.

The southeastern U.S., Freddie notes, is “a little behind the dramaturgy curve.” He has found that more universities than professional theatres employ dramaturgs, and that often those dramaturgs are restricted to research functions without connection to the rehearsal process. Freddie identified a challenge “to create a discourse that allows people to investigate a deeper understanding of how dramaturgs can enrich the collaborative process.” At the recent SETC (Southeastern Theatre Conference) annual convention, Freddie and his Alliance colleague Celise Kalke answered that challenge by offering a dramaturgy workshop. Most attendees were faculty members seeking definitions of dramaturgy and ways that dramaturgs can enhance their departments’ work and educational missions. Freddie

and Celise took the opportunity to debunk some myths about dramaturgs and bring forward good, current information.

Even before the recognition of the Arts Encouragement Award, Freddie's dance card was filling up for the 2007–2008 season. At the Alliance, he will do production dramaturgy for *Doubt*, *Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris*, *Sleuth*, and children's productions of *Degas' Little Dancer* and *Seussical*. He directed the Actor's Express production of *The Great American Trailer Park Musical*, then this summer he will christen Aurora Theatre's brand new space with a production of *Camelot*. As the fall rolls around, Freddie is slated to direct Lee Blessing's *A Body of Water* for Aurora, *The Last Schwartz* for the Jewish Theatre of the South, and a new production of *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* for Actor's Express. And Freddie's teaching commitment to Kennesaw State University continues unabated.

As he keeps all those plates spinning simultaneously, Freddie notes that LMDA provides him a great network of colleagues. "We are resources for each other. I have relied on fellow LMDA members for

support and help on numerous occasions. I have certainly relied on LMDA's leadership for counsel and support with regard to local advocacy issues," noted Freddie in an interview for this article. He said that he especially benefits from "the fact that the organization exists with a system in place for us all to be in touch with each other... I appreciate that LMDA is not at all hierarchical, and places no value distinction between dramaturgs working in academia, in producing institutions, or in freelance settings. LMDA's resources for day-to-day work, advocacy, brainstorming and big-picture ideas, are all greatly beneficial to my life as a dramaturg."

Megan Monaghan is the Literary Manager of South Coast Repertory in Costa Mesa, CA. Previously, Literary Director of Alliance Theatre in Atlanta, Director of Playwright Services at The Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis, and Director of New Play Development at Frontera @ Hyde Park Theatre in Austin, TX. MFA, Directing, the University of Texas at Austin. BA, Emory University.

The Role of the Dramaturg in the RSC's Spanish Season From Golden Age Page to Stratford Stage

by Kathleen Mountjoy

Kathleen Mountjoy is a final-year doctoral student at the University of Oxford specializing in Spanish Golden Age plays in performance. She founded the first Playwriting and Dramaturgy society at Oxford, which offers practical workshops and stages its members' new work. Mountjoy has given academic papers at conferences in the UK, Spain, and the US, including symposia for the Association for Classical Hispanic Theatre, the Association of Hispanists of Great Britain and Ireland, and ATHE (2006 Dramaturgy Debut Panelist). She is published in Comedia Performance as well as Antes y después del Quijote. Her favourite theatrical experiences include directing Tom Stoppard's Arcadia (2004), translating and directing Cervantes's entremeses at the Edinburgh Fringe (2005), and introducing the role of the dramaturg to Oxford for Macbeth and Fuente Ovejuna (2006).

In addition to translating from Spanish to English, the Royal Shakespeare Company's team of writers working on their 2004–5 Spanish Golden Age season also needed to translate the plays from the seventeenth to the twenty-first centuries. In order to do both of these jobs effectively and accurately, they worked with Hispanist academic consultants from Oxford, Belfast, and London universities. Part of my job as dramaturg during this season, then, involved serving as a translator not only from Spanish to English, but also between the language of Spanish letters as it is written and spoken in academia, and the parlance of the theatre practitioners working for the RSC. In translating academic work to feed the actors' and directors' creative processes before and during rehearsal, I found that a successful theatrical ensemble thrives on the mingling of these different voices directed toward a common goal. Now that the RSC's Spanish Golden

Age season has closed, I am able to posit a model for future productions of the comedia in English, one that recognizes the need for the language of the scholar and the artist to be made mutually intelligible by the dramaturg as mediator.

Why was the RSC putting on Cervantes and Lope de Vega?

The Royal Shakespeare Company typically stages the work of Shakespeare, based in the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. However, in 2004 they announced the opening of their Spanish Golden Age season, with four productions and one radio play for BBC 3. Precedent for the season lies in the very reason its home, the Swan Theatre, was established. In 1986, Trevor Nunn and Terry Hands opened the Swan, a space purpose-built for playing the works of Shakespeare's contemporaries, European writers and occasionally Shakespeare's plays. In 2002, Gregory Doran led a Jacobean season of five rarely seen plays by Shakespeare's contemporaries. The newest artistic director, Michael Boyd, riding on the back of that season, said, "The success of and hunger for this work illustrated our audience's desire to see unknown pieces of drama in an intimate space and the Spanish Golden Age productions build upon this (Program note for *The Dog in the Manger*). So, although the Swan, with its studio feel, is regularly used for contextualizing Shakespeare by staging his English contemporaries, the Spanish season was the first time a major season of foreign language plays of the same age had been done by the RSC in this way.

Michael Boyd also made changes in the structure of the company, convinced that the future lies in the past. Under Boyd, the renewed RSC describes its purpose as "Defined by Ensemble: Our work is created through the ensemble principles of collaboration, trust, mutual respect, and a belief that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" (Annual Report 3). For the 2004–5 season, Boyd created two ensembles, one to work on four Shakespearean tragedies in the main house, (*Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, and *King Lear*)



Photo 1. Rebecca Johnson in *The Dog in the Manger*.

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and a smaller ensemble for a Spanish Golden Age season in the adjacent Swan. Both ensembles enjoyed longer rehearsal periods than normal (for example, twelve weeks for *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet*, nine for *The Dog in the Manger*), and another feature of the ensemble season was the doubling of roles, so that most all the actors in the Golden Age ensemble were in at least three of the Spanish productions, and all of the actors were in the final piece, *Pedro, the Great Pretender*. This duplication of roles caused a rich intertextuality among the productions. Also, for its successful Spanish Golden Age season, the ensemble was expanded to include academics and professional Hispanists within the RSC's family of theatre makers. My main contention in this article is that Boyd succeeded in creating an ensemble that included academics' participation, but that this ensemble format engendered opportunities and problems in the way theatre practitioners and academics collaborate. I worked on the season first as a literal translator, then in rehearsals for two of the productions, writing programme notes and translating for the company in Madrid. Throughout the process I was called to arbitrate between the academics consulting for the Company at large, and the acting company in rehearsals.

Which plays? How were they selected?

The Spanish Golden Age Season opened on 14 April 2004 at the Swan Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon with the performance of *The Dog in the Manger* (Lope de Vega's *El perro del hortelano*), directed by Laurence Boswell and translated by David Johnston. *Tamar's Revenge*, James Fenton's translation of *La venganza de Tamar* by Tirso de Molina, directed by Simon Usher, was scheduled to open two weeks after the *Dog*, but after previewing for a week beginning 28 April, was delayed opening until 15 June 2004. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's *House of Desires* (*Los empeños de una casa*), directed by Nancy Meckler and translated by Catherine Boyle, opened on 30 June. Philip Osment's translation of Miguel de Cervantes's *Pedro, the Great Pretender* (*Pedro de Urdemalas*), directed by Mike Alfreds, opened on 1 September. The fifth work in the season, Calderón's *Daughter of the Air*, was translated by Sarah Woods with the academic collaboration of Jules Whicker, and was given as a performed reading in the Swan on 8 October and aired on the BBC's Radio 3 on 21 November 2004.

When the Swan season closed on 2 October 2004, the company then transferred to Madrid for ten performances at the Teatro Español (23-31 October 2004). Following this transfer, the company toured to the People's Theatre in Newcastle (8-25 November 2004), and the Playhouse Theatre in London (2 February-26 March 2005).

Selecting five plays out of the hundreds of seventeenth-century comedias was no small task for those responsible, but this choice was not left to the producers of the RSC alone. Instead, specialists in the Spanish Golden Age were commissioned from the very beginning for unprecedented involvement in each play's selection, interpretation, and presentation processes. These specialists were my doctoral supervisor, Jonathan Thacker, along with Jack Sage and Catherine Boyle, both of King's College, London, and David Johnston of Queen's College, Belfast. It is not normal practice for play-selection to be decided by non-RSC artistic staff. Beginning with a "virtual seminar," the academic consultants exchanged many emails

with the season's artistic director, Laurence Boswell, over the course of the year before the translators signed their contracts. Their discussions were based on thirty plays which they suggested be quickly translated in "literal" versions for the directors to make their decisions. The questions of "what is literal translation?" and "how literal is literal?" pervaded the process all the way through to the Madrid tour.

So how did I get involved?

It was in the creation of the literal translation of *Pedro, the Great Pretender* that I first became involved in the project. Jonathan Thacker had been on the committee of academics helping with the play-selection process, along with Jack Sage. Sage had been working closely with Philip Osment, the poet charged with the translation of *Pedro*, and Mike Alfreds (one of the founders of the influential theatre company, Shared Experience) the director. After scrupulously interrogating two distinct literal translations, Alfreds and Osment asked Sage to undertake a new version, deciding that the "literals" they had been looking at had been useful for the purposes of selecting the play, and they could see its potential, but that they did not have a translation from which to work that was accurate enough. Because of the short space of time in which this translation was to be undertaken, Sage asked my supervisor if I would like to do half of it, and I agreed.

We felt that a "literal" should include choices without making decisions as to tone and form. Our aim was to provide Osment with as much raw material to work with as possible, leaving the business of

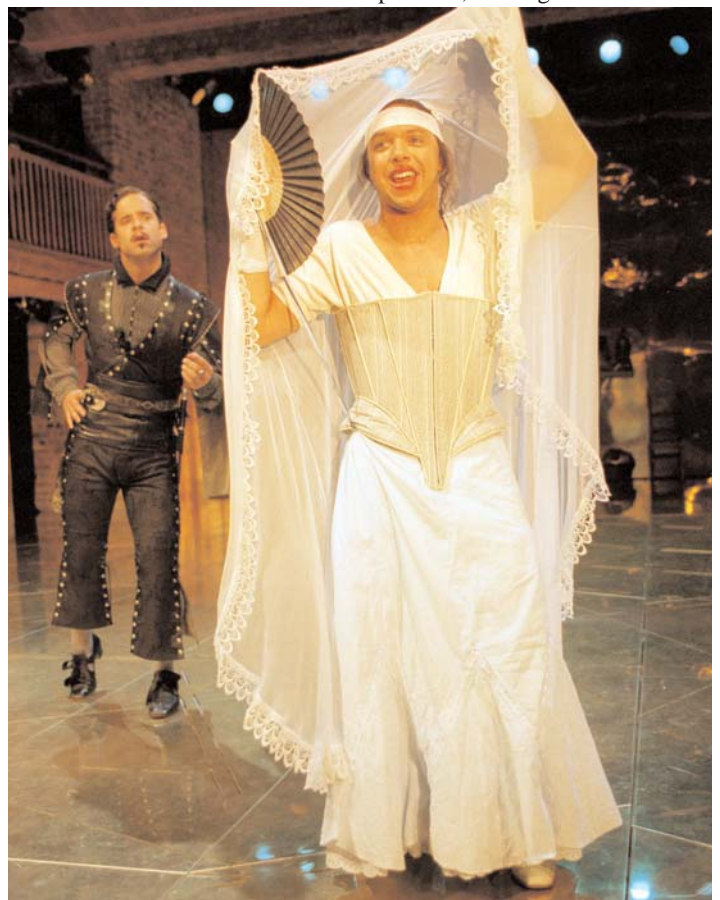


Photo 2. Simon Trinder in *House of Desires*.

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creating stage lines to him. For example, see Table 1.

Instead of adding directly to the dialogue to clarify its meaning, we provided bracketed information to explain the seventeenth-century references such as “*espejuelo*” or “mirrors,” which even today’s Hispanic theatrical spectator may not know means “dazzling with polished cards.” In addition, when two meanings sprang from the same word, we provided “and/or” options using slashes, to admit the potential for “*sotil*” to mean both “subtle/cunning,” to take one example. These methods foster a literal translation which serves not as a finished script, but only as a linguistic bridge between the original and the final English performance texts, leaving plenty of creative space for Osment’s skilful versification. I would like to point out that Osment’s version retains the verse-form and rhyme scheme of the original; his translation is unique in that he was the only translator to match the varying versification of the original. For this reason the cast found the verse of this play to be “more like Shakespeare” than *The Dog in the Manger*, which had a much more modern register and used an eight-syllable line scheme throughout. Our translations, along with copious endnotes, were copied to the director and translator as well as the dramaturg at the RSC, Paul Sirett. The literal translations were used directly by Philip Osment and James Fenton, but Catherine Boyle and David Johnston, then heads of Spanish departments at UK universities, had no need of them or used their own. “Final” versions were then distributed to the company, and rehearsals began.

Rehearsal Dramaturgy

Catherine Boyle had been part of the initial committee of academics involved in the play-selection process, and had provided the company with her literal translation of *House of Desires*. She was eventually asked to replace the first translator, Bryony Lavery, and was commissioned to undertake the final stage version. She had a request from the season’s artistic director, Laurence Boswell, for a student to be available for the first weeks of rehearsal in London (the company rehearses in London before making the move to Stratford) in order to check the original text against the English if and when the directors deem it necessary. Because of my familiarity with the plays of the season from doing the literal translation of *Pedro*, Catherine Boyle

put my name forward as this student who was to be present in rehearsals. The idea was that keeping a translator in rehearsals would ground the project in contact with the Spanish text. It is not the usual practice for dramaturgy to be undertaken by the RSC in this way. Usually if researchers are called in to advise, it is for specific textual questions or general background, and this work is almost always done at arm’s length over the telephone because the dramaturgy department is usually too busy with other work to attend rehearsals. Exceptions include Gregory Doran’s academic consultant in the Jacobean season, and the academics used on Ibsen’s *Brand*.

So from 16 February until 5 April 2004, I assisted in the daily rehearsal process of *The Dog in the Manger* as an assistant to the RSC’s Dramaturg, Paul Sirett (whose office is in London). I worked under the title of Script Consultant and was on hand for daily reference and clarification of the original Spanish text. As the translator, David Johnston, could not be present in rehearsals, I was also responsible for suggesting and conveying cuts and changes to his evolving translation. During rehearsal breaks each day, I would compose emails to David Johnston outlining that day’s proposed cuts and changes as discussed in rehearsal. I served as a conduit from the rehearsal room to the academic advisors hired by the company to ask questions about the text. An example of this kind of work can be seen in Table 2.

The line with the asterisk, “That was no ghost no fantasy/ conjured from some deceitful dream” was not initially in the script, but was added in rehearsal after looking at the Spanish (“ni sueño que me ha burlado”) and the literal translation (“nor a dream that deceived me”) caused us to ask Johnston to write a line strengthening the portrayal of dreams and fantasy in the play, a Baroque fixation.

This example is an instance in which the director guided his cast in appealing to the authority of the “original,” both in using Lope’s words in Spanish and confirming with the “second opinion” of the literal translation. It is not common practice to use a literal translation in rehearsals. I would not recommend its presence in the rehearsal room unless for the use of the rehearsal dramaturg, who can filter its errors and useful interpretations into helpful solutions; offering alternative translations to the actors without mediation can result in confusion and draw the actors’ focus from the text they must learn and deliver.

Cervantes
gran jugador de las cuatro,
y con la sola le vi
dar tan mortales heridas,
que no se pueden decir.
Berrugeta y ballestilla,
el respadillo y hollín
jugaba por excelencia,
y el Mase Juan hi de ruin.
Gran saje del espejuelo,
y del retén tan sotil,
que no se le viera un lince
con los antojos del Cid.
(I. 724-735)

Sage and Mountjoy, Literal Translation
a great player of the hidden-four-cards trick,
and with [the piles he made at] one-hand cheating,
I saw him
inflict wounds so mortal/painful
they cannot be described.
[Making cards] with little pimples and indents
or notches or smudges were tricks
he played par excellence,
and also the Master John son-of-a-bitch.
He was a great crafts man at ‘mirrors’ [dazzling
with polished cards]
and so subtle/cunning at keeping cards up his
sleeve/hidden in his clothes
that not even a lynx
wearing the spectacles of El Cid himself would
have seen [through] him.

Osment Stage Version
He’d conjure tricks out of nowhere:
with a single hand I’ve seen him deal
blows on his foes that made them reel
and feel stumped by the thumps of his
trumps.
Bumps and indentations, smudges
and notches and crenellations
were tricks that were all on the cards,
and polishing them till they dazzled,
and other devilish high jinks.
Even a lynx wearing the specs of El Cid
would be hoodwinked and not perceive
what he concealed up his sleeve.
(Osment 36-37)

Table 1.

Lope de Vega

¡Ah gentilhombre, esperad!
 ¡Teneos, oíd! ¿qué digo?
 ¿Esto se ha de usar conmigo?
 ¡Volved, mirad, escuchad!
 ¡Hola! ¿No hay aquí un criado?
 ¡Hola! ¿No hay un hombre aquí?
 Pues no es sombra lo que vi, [*]
 ni sueño que me ha burlado.
 ¡Hola! ¿Todos duermen ya?
 (I. 5-13)

Gwenda Pandolfi Literal Translation

Ho my fine fellow, wait!
 Come back, d'you hear me!
 Is this the way to treat me?
 Come back, wait, listen!
 Ho there! Not a servant about?
 Ho there! Not a man in the place?
 What I saw was no ghost [*]
 nor a dream that deceived me.
 Ho! Are they all asleep?
 (I.11-12)

Johnston Draft 2.1 1

Wait, sir! Stand your ground! Wait I said!
 This is an outrage! Come back, sir!
 Stop where you are! Hello! Anyone!
 Are they all asleep? Well, I'm not.
 That was no ghost, no fantasy[*] conjured
 from some deceitful dream.
 I saw him clear as day. Hello!
 Wake up, will you! I need help!
 (Johnston Draft 2.1 1)

Table 2.

One of the potential problems of working this way can be seen in *The Dog in the Manger*. Of all four productions, the prompt-book script of *Dog* showed the most deviation from the translator's published script. For example, note that Johnston's lines are octosyllabic, including the new line added in rehearsal. Sometimes, in the rehearsal rewriting process, this verse-form was not always strictly maintained. Johnston agreed that rehearsal changes were part of the nature of the process of working with a new translation, and the production script was in the domain of the director. This kind of trust between a writer and a director is rare and was only really possible because the two men had worked closely together on collaborative translations in the past. David Johnston and Laurence Boswell worked together on a season of Spanish Golden Age plays in the early nineties at the Gate in Notting Hill. Their collaborative method was tried and true: that season won an Olivier award in 1992. I would

cite this collaboration as another occasion in which the season carried a sense of continuing ensemble work built upon past connections.

The Move to Stratford-upon-Avon

After nine weeks spent rehearsing in Clapham North, in London, the company packed up and made the move to Stratford. Excitement was mounting as the opening of *The Dog in the Manger* grew closer, and rehearsals began in Stratford for *House of Desires*. At this point it looked as if my time with the RSC was drawing to a close, for as technical rehearsals began the text was all but fixed and my services seemed no longer needed. However, just as I was settling back into my graduate student life in Oxford, the academic consultant for *Pedro, the Great Pretender*, got in touch with me to say that the director for that play had asked if I could sit in on his rehearsals for *Pedro* as I had for *Dog*. So I packed up my dictionaries and my scripts and went back to Stratford. Although it is anecdotal, this return merits mentioning for future productions: the Company was able to provide me with housing in Stratford, which resulted in my time there being much more productive and less exhausting than it had been under the weight of the two-hour commute to London to rehearse with Laurence Boswell. Also, by the time of this second production, I felt as though I was an integrated part of the ensemble, which encouraged a trusting relationship between the company and my voice in the rehearsal room. I would stress that this kind of trust, and continuity of team members over the course of a season, contributes strongly toward the progress one can make when working with a company. The personal relationships between directors and dramaturgs are extremely important for bridging gaps between disciplines, for a director must feel that he or she can relate to and understand the material the dramaturg presents, and already having the support of the cast when I met Mike Alfreds leant credibility to my work from the first day of rehearsing *Pedro*.

My role in rehearsals for *Pedro, the Great Pretender* was different from working with Mike Alfreds than it had been with Laurence Boswell. Alfreds' approach was much less text and language-based than Boswell's had been, and so I was not required to answer questions on nearly every line as I had been in London. The reason for this, as you can see from our literal translation above, is that the meticulous work of hashing out the sense of every line had been done by the director and translator in the run-up to the time that rehearsals began. This work had been done in rehearsal with Boswell, who changed a great deal of the script while rehearsing it, but Alfreds made only minimal changes to the script once it was



Photo 3. Julius D/Silva and John Ramm in *Pedro*.

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delivered to the actors. Alfreds spent each morning for the first few weeks of rehearsals in silent work on movement and character, and my role was to research the period and provide explanations for references to Spanish and seventeenth-century customs and vocabulary which was not contextually explained in Osment's translation. I provided translations of *La gitilla* and *La ilustre fregona*, short novellas also by Cervantes with similar themes and characters as *Pedro de Urdemalas*, and I was much more on hand to explain lines rather than to change them. Osment, the translator, was present for the first two weeks of rehearsal, eliminating the need for the involved email process of changing lines during *The Dog in the Manger*.

Education Events and Symposia

Surrounding the performances, the RSC Education department ran a series of talks and symposia offering the audience access to the theatre practitioners and academics working on the season. The academics and consultants who had initially been involved in the play-selection and explication process in the time before rehearsals began were able to share their knowledge with the audience. In addition to sessions about the structure of the acting companies in the Golden Age and talks on what the corrales were like, I also gave a session on my dramaturgical process and working with translators in an event titled "Relay Writing." One of the highlights of these talks was "Girls on Top," a performance of *House of Desires* for which the audience experienced the segregation of the audience typical in the corrales, with the women in the circle and balcony and the men in the stalls on the ground floor. Before the performance, the audience was instructed that they could be more rowdy and vocal than normally expected of a polite Stratford audience; and the actors found themselves engaging in banter with hecklers throughout the show. (Most of the actors were grateful to have to endure this "historical" experience only once.)



Photo 4. Rebecca Johnson and Katherine Kelly in *House of Desires*.
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The RSC in Madrid

Thanks to a grant from my university, I helped the company around Madrid and led a tour of Lope de Vega's house for the actors. I interviewed audience members after the performances to convey audience response and reaction back to the company. The most problematic aspect of performing in Madrid was working under a subtitle screen, as the plays were performed in English with Spanish subtitles for the Madrid audiences. There was a heated debate among the academics on this matter. Some believed that the original seventeenth-century text should serve as the subtitles. Others contended that the language was too difficult syntactically, and in terms of vocabulary, for modern audiences to absorb at the breakneck speed of a subtitle. For this reason the subtitles were very different for *The Dog in the Manger* and *House of Desires* in which the English translations as spoken onstage were actually re-translated for the subtitles, and for *Tamar's Revenge* and *Pedro, the Great Pretender*, in which the original text was used, but heavily cut for purposes of space.

With the subtitles the issue of literal translation, which had slipped to the back of the ensemble's minds, came again to the fore. This occasion offered yet another instance of the importance of the academic consultants' point of view, for Catherine Boyle even provided meticulous re-revisions of the subtitles which were sent for her approval. I went through this process with her and interviewed the Spanish audience for their views of the subtitles' effectiveness. Many of the Madrid audience members did speak English, but those who did not appreciated the simpler, re-translated subtitles more than the cut versions of the originals which did not follow the words spoken on stage as closely. With the comedies, there were two waves of laughter, once from the English-speaking audience and again, slightly later, from those following the subtitles. This wreaked havoc with the actors' timing at first, but shortly they adapted and toward the end of the Madrid tour I often forgot that the subtitles were there.

Leaving a Trace

An important part of the dramaturg's work is to document productions for the purposes of future research. The most lasting record of this particular season's work is probably the translations, each of which was published by Oberon. As performance of Golden Age drama is growing, marked by this RSC season in the UK and the Chamizal festival in the US, scholarship of the period's drama is also developing. There is now an academic journal, *Comedia Performance*, which came out in 2004, in which Jonathan Thacker and I both published after the RSC season. We are also working on a bilingual version of *Pedro de Urdemalas* which will feature notes and critical comments drawn from our experience of the first professional production of the play in English, by the RSC.

It is unusual for scholars and practitioners working for the RSC to maintain close working relationships after the season has closed, as most of the dramaturgical and research work for the RSC productions takes place over the telephone before a play begins rehearsals. This season was different, evidenced by the presence of Laurence Boswell and members of the acting company at the "Language and Meaning" conference at King's College in 2006, the fruits of which are to be published later this year. That conference provided another opportunity to develop the relationships between representatives of

the range of disciplines within the members of the ensemble. The varying philosophies of literal and performance translation came to the roundtable discussions in a live performance of interchange and debate. At that conference, in which lessons learned by both sides of the divide were shared, the ensemble nature of the company shone as a functional model of collaboration between academics and theatre practitioners, mediated by a production dramaturg. Overall, the season fulfilled Michael Boyd's purpose to create an ensemble "greater than the sum of its parts." This model creates opportunities for artistic collaboration and recognizes the translation process required between the different languages of those who work on the page and those who work on the stage.

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