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JOANNA FALCK

**ON THE DRAMATURGY OF
CONFERENCE-PLANNING**

Joanna Falck is the Literary Manager at Tarragon Theatre in Toronto, and is one of the lead organizers (along with VP Conferences Corianna Moffatt) of LMDA's 2018 Conference.

How's conference planning going? What's more or less challenging than you expected?

I'm really enjoying programming the conference - I've been attending LMDA conferences for about 20 years and I've thought a lot about what I like to see and do at a conference. I also got great advice from conference-goer-extraordinaire DD Kugler who said, "Plan the conference you want." Things I like in a conference are: long breaks, good places to eat nearby, a good conference bar, a variety of conversations, time when we're all in a room together. We got an overwhelming number of submissions which was great but I wanted the conference to still feel intimate. I chose a conference space that has 3 breakout rooms so there will only ever be 3 sessions going on at the same time. And I wanted each day to start with all of us together so each morning we've got a great session planned. The

challenging part has been the feeling that I'm having now of who are we not hearing from that we should be hearing from? But it's a great challenge.

LMDA has increased its focus on accessibility in general, with special focus going to its conferences. How is this year's conference building on the one in Berkeley last year?

I took a lot of notes at last year's conference and have tried to build on what happened in Berkeley. I'm proud to say that we're offering childcare for the first time at the this year's conference. I chose a conference site near a brand-new YMCA which is where our childcare will be - hopefully this makes attending the conference easier for parents. Financial accessibility has also been very much on my mind and the conference site is attached to a student residence which offers nice, new and affordable guest suites. All of our sites are fully accessible and were chosen with that in mind. We're also asking conference attendees to let us know what other accessibility needs they have - we've done a lot of research into ASL and interpretation services which we could offer and want to offer Relaxed sessions. Please do let us know how we can make the conference more accessible to you.

I know we're still in the planning phase, but what are you currently most excited about for this upcoming conference, both as far as programming goes, and in the structure/organization of it?

My goal in programming was to make it really hard to decide which session to choose: I call it FOMO-planning. I think we've got a great mix of academics, students, and professionals of all kinds talking about a variety of issues from the field. I don't have a single keynote speaker but we've got some great sessions opening each day of the conference - our first session will be with the two women who created the phenomenal podcast "The Secret Life of Canada." Falen Johnson and Leah-Simone Bowen are the hosts - they're both playwrights of color and they talk about the history of Canada that many of us didn't learn about in school. They do it in a way that's both fun and funny but also speaks to moments in our history that challenge the idea that people may have of Canada. If you haven't listened to it, check it out on iTunes! We're also offering a bus tour from First Story Toronto which will take you on an Indigenous tour of Toronto that I'm keen to take. We've got a cocktail event, hosted by LMDA Canada, happening in the glorious new Globe and Mail (our national newspaper) building's event space which gives you a spectacular view of the city and lake. And I'm doing a lot of research to find the best conference bar.

Interview by Jeremy Stoller

CATHERINE MARÍA RODRÍGUEZ

ON USING HER DRAMATURGY SKILLS TO SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT RECENT EVENTS IN NICARAGUA

Freelance dramaturg, El Colectivo (Yale School of Drama's Latinx affinity group) founder, and LMDA Board Member Catherine María Rodríguez speaks about her coverage of the situation in Nicaragua:

"Earlier this month, protests began in Nicaragua after the government failed to respond to a fire at Indio Maiz and then, a mere two weeks later, implemented a reform that would bankroll social security at the expense of the country's

workers, employers, and retirees. Under President Daniel Ortega, who years ago altered Nicaragua's constitution to eliminate term limits in his favor, the government responded to the peaceful protests with not only repression typical of Orteguista governance but also deadly violence. Within the first few days, riot squads killed a student and then an independent reporter. In the aftermath, facing massive protests, Ortega broke his silence to rescind the reforms and ask "to talk," hoping to appease protestors; however, the demonstrations have continued and expanded across the nation. Protestors now demand justice for those murdered by Orteguista forces as well as structural changes to the government. Nicaragua's Permanent Commission on Human Rights reports that the protests have resulted in at least 63 deaths, with 15 people missing and more than 160 wounded by gunfire.

"I'm Latina, yes, but more specifically I am US Nicaraguan. I was born -- in the States and at all -- because of the war in the late 70s/80s. When you read about Nicaragua, you are reading about my family and my people and our home. If you're feeling helpless, know that I do too. That said, there's something we can do: spread the word. My family and friends are begging us to listen. Until recently, international news coverage barely existed; generally, it has proven reductive. As a dramaturg, I understand the power of narrative and the importance of nuance in storytelling. I've taken to translating local reports from uncensored news media as well as family and friends currently in Nicaragua. I've also been marking my body with #SOSNicaragua and carrying on with my daily life; I do this to physically and publicly visibilize our psychic and corporeal trauma. Central Americans are

Four days of protests and clashes leave more than 30 dead in Nicaragua

[Link to original Spanish-language article](#)

Protests against the government of Daniel Ortega worsened across the country this Saturday, bringing the death toll to more than 30 casualties in the conflicts between police and civilians.

Original reporting by [Ivette Munguía Argeñal](#), [Leonor Álvarez](#), [María José Espinoza](#)
22/04/2018

Translated by Catherine María Rodríguez



historically overlooked, and right now, our histories and our people are being disappeared. As members of the international community, we can responsibly respond through the practice of listening, keeping ourselves informed and facilitating consciousness by using our platforms both electronic and interpersonal. Please join me in hearing and echoing the SOS from Nicaragua. Gracias."

If you want to follow this coverage,

- Catherine tweets from @latinadramaturg, and has been using the hashtag #SOSNicaragua
- she has been gathering coverage in [this public Google Drive folder](#)
- you can follow her on Facebook [here](#)



***Are you coming to the 2018
Conference in Toronto?***

Reserve your spot, and get the latest on programming, accommodations, and social activities, at lmda.org/conference.



Happy Hour with Boston LMDA and CompanyOne Boot Camp, 2017

Are you hearing about your regional meetups? If not, visit lmda.org/map to find out who your LMDA Regional Representative is.

If you are working in a region that does not yet have a region-specific group, and you would like one as a way to connect with others, apply for program funding, and other benefits, please reach out to VP Board Member
Jacqueline Goldfinger: regional@lmda.org.

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E-mail communications@lmda.org.

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