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literary managers & dramaturgs
of the americas

new & noteworthy

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Read on for:

- an interview with two dramaturgs based at The Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science, and
- an announcement from LMDA VP Publications Kristin Leahey about the return of LMDA's *The Review*.

Q+A | Elizabeth Bojsza and Lydia Franco-Hodges



In 2009, actor, producer, and science enthusiast Alan Alda founded the [Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science](#) at Stony Brook University on Long Island, where programs are developed to translate scientific findings with the same enthusiasm and engagement as Alda does himself.

In this interview with Martha Wade Steketee, dramaturgs [Elizabeth Bojsza](#) and [Lydia Franco-Hodges](#) discuss their work with the Center, teaching scientists to tell their stories on stage, on the page, and to one another.

Tell me about your work as dramaturgs.

Franco-Hodges: I was an actor first, and found I was doing a lot of research for my characters. I felt my job was to look critically look at the text, figure out the super objective of my character, and know what's going on in the world of the play, in the life of the author, and in society when the play was written. When I came to my MFA in dramaturgy, I taught beginning acting classes with students from all over the campus, all different fields. My job wasn't to turn them into actors but teach them to be present. to connect, and really listen and talk with one another.

Bojska: I have an MFA, was teaching in the theater department here on campus, and was able to teach graduate courses for the Center. My specialty was a class called "Engaging Key Audiences" which led graduate students through the experience of re-packaging their messaging based on different audiences, getting them to pivot, be flexible, and realize there are an infinite number of stories you can tell.

How did you start working with the Alda Center?

FH: I was recruited in 2012 to lead workshops and started in January 2013. They asked me: do you think this is weird if you teach improvisation to scientists? I thought: absolutely not. One of the things required in communication is to be quiet and let the other person ask a question, to get people, in Alan's words, to lend themselves and to connect with the other person, with the audience, and to tap into clear and vivid and conversational communication. We know what we know, but what does the other person know? Who is the other person? And what is the best way to reach that other person and to make an impact with them?

EB: I started in September 2017. But I had been doing contract work with the Center for a few years. It had been on my radar and I was looking for this opening where I could get

more involved. Part of my thrill at getting this job is, I wanted to be on the front lines, I wanted to help with this problem that I see in our society right now, where there's a growing distrust of scientists and people are not engaging in hard conversation.

Describe some of your work with the Center.

FH: We teach graduate courses, and we serve the population here at the university. And we do workshops across the country and internationally at national laboratories, universities, foundations, meeting with senior scientists and graduate students.

B: We have periodic meetings instituted by our director [Laura Lindenfeld](#) at which we invite faculty from other departments across the university who are interested in our work for various reasons to be part of our conversation and enrich our investigations. At one of these meetings a few months ago, some of our postdocs presenting on their work (ranging from climate change to health communication), wondered if dramaturgs really understood what research was. This turned into an invitation from the group to teach them about dramaturgy as a field. Our seminar "Asking the Right Questions: Meaning-Making in Theatre and Communication" presented dramaturgy as characteristic, role, and function, and analogized the field to what the Center does: train people to ask questions. There were so many "ahas" in the room. Our scientist colleagues assumed we were all actors; all of this work is invisible to people who have only been in the audience.

LH: It's like new play dramaturgy. We're trying to help THEM craft and find the heart of their message.

B: We have a real commitment to experiential learning in each workshop. There's no lecture but there's facilitation, and we team teach with a message design specialist. We play off of each other in the moment; you never do the same workshop twice. We practice what we preach, and are really present and listen to the needs of the groups, and individuals who come to us with different work and stories to uncover.

Interview by Martha Wade Steketee

VP Publications Kristin Leahey

LMDA *Review* – Updates

Over the past year, a special subcommittee and I have been reflecting about the LMDA Journal *Review*. To note and as a reminder, *Review* is the journal of dramaturgy, edited by

the Literary and Dramaturgs of the Americas. The mission of the journal is to provide a venue for the exploration of dramaturgy, and for an ongoing conversation about the work of the dramaturg and the literary manager and their relationship to all stages of theatre-making.

A subcommittee was formed in 2016 to survey the field, assessing what material existed on and around the topic of dramaturgy and where *Review* asserted itself in the conversation. We examined the work the journal accomplished, how to sustain it, and possible areas for its growth. Additionally, conversations were had with the prior editors, regarding the successes and challenges of their their journeys spearheading *Review*.

Based on those findings, we are revamping our process for submission and publication:

- *Review* will be issued annually for the time being, as the subcommittee found that best serves the needs of the organization.
- 50% of the published articles will follow a scholarly peer-review protocol, while 50% will be follow a more flexible set of guidelines.
- Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis.

As the field of dramaturgy continues to evolve and, excitingly, more work is being published about dramaturgy and areas related to it in a multiplicity of venues, *Review* will reflect this expansion as well and our editorial team will also consider publishing work that addresses topics indirectly related to dramaturgy, for instance, projects inspired by a dramaturgical sensibility. *Review* publishes peer-reviewed scholarly articles, along with work in other formats, including expanded essays and interviews from the LMDA *Newsletter*, manifestos, book reviews, and an assortment of other types of submissions, which align with and expand the current mission of *Review*.

Call to Action!

We are actively seeking and accepting articles, interviews, proposals, and ideas immediately now with the goal of a summer 2018 publication! If you just submitted a proposal to the conference, why not expand it into an article? Please feel free to reach out to Kristin Leahey, VP for Publications and Review Editor to editor@lmda.org with thoughts and questions and material! And please quick out our updated website page at lmda.org/review.



One more exciting announcement about *Review*: over the past months, Geoff Proehl of The University of Puget Sound worked with Theatre Arts Department's Library contact and the Associate Director of User Services at the University of Puget Sound Collins Library, Lori Ricigliano, who placed all the past *LMDA Reviews* (Volume 1-23.2) online. You can find them on [The University of Puget Sound website](#).

As an introduction, Lori describes the content of the early *Reviews*, reflecting on the publications from 1986 forward. Many thanks to Geoff and Lori for this incredible work!

I hope you will explore the rich archive of material that's been made available, and that you will consider being part of the future of *Review* by submitting material to an upcoming issue.

Sincerely,

Kristin Leahey,
VP, Publications
Editor, *Review*

REGIONAL UPDATES



Happy Hour with Boston LMDA and CompanyOne Boot Camp, 2017

New Regional VPs:

Welcome **Paul Adolphson** from Asolo Repertory Theatre as the new Regional VP for **Florida**!

Kate Langsdorf and **Scott Horstein** are becoming the Regional VPs for Southern and Northern California, respectively. Thanks to Kate and Scott for all their work so far this year!

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.

Roxanne Ray in the **Northwest** is planning an online happy hour so that dramaturgs in her region can network and catch-up. If you are a Northwestern dramaturg and did not receive a date poll from Roxanne, email her at: northwest@lmda.org.

The **Philadelphia** Region is planning a networking mixer with LMDA, the Dramatists Guild and the Director's Gathering in April. We are still solidifying a date but please keep an eye out for more information.

Also! Don't forget to read interviews, articles and more about LMDA **Bay Area's** partnership with the ReOrient 2017 Festival this winter. You can read them on the LMDA site (<http://www.lmda.org>) under "Latest News."

If you have any questions regarding the regions reach out to Regional VP Board Member Jacqueline Goldfinger (regional@lmda.org).

Want to keep up with the conversation about the latest in dramaturgical activity?

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