



Quarterly Newsletter of the International Centre for Women Playwrights

August 2005

Table of Contents

Editors Letter
by Elisabeth Arzberger (ear)

The Artist Basquiat 1
by Sharon Shipley

My First Residency 2
by Nancy Gall-Clayton

Journey to New Harmony 4
by Ludmilla Bollow

Unconventional Presentations 10
by Judy Freed

My "Critic" 13
by Marie-Jeanne Pense

A New Playwright Deals with First Reviews 15
by Hortense F. Gerardo

Visiting the Emirates 19
by Tami Canaday

Opportunities 23

ICWP Mission Statement 39

Editors Letter

Dear members of the International Centre for Women Playwrights it's been a pleasure to edit SEASONS as the summer-edition of our newsletter deals with all the stages a playwright goes through:

1st step: why do I write what I write asks Sharyn Shipley and finds the answer in a painter's oeuvre

2nd step: eager to write and not having the time and/or place? Nancy Gall-Clayton had the chance of her first residency

3rd step: as writing is a lonely business, Ludmilla Bollow was pleased to get an invitation to New Harmony's conference

4th step: you've finished your play and want it presented in an apt way? read Judy Freed's thoughts on the matter

5th step: you've finished your play but are not sure with yourself? Follow Marie-Jeanne Pense's example to choose your own critic

6th step: you've had a production, eagerly read the first review and get shocked! Hortense F. Gerardo's experience and reflection might be very helpful

7th step: you need inspiration? New encounters? Go abroad! Tami Canaday just came back from the United Arabian Emirates

8th step: you want to submit your play(s)? Find some opportunities at the end of our newsletter...

All the best,

ear
(Elisabeth Arzberger)

THE ARTIST BASQUIAT by Sharon Shipley

The artist Basquiat, whose work has become more and more popular, created his art with an eye to where it would stand in the creative lineage of modern art. He wanted to be an important artist in this regard. Looking at his work one might not have guessed that he started out with such a serious intent. A sample of his work can be found at: <http://www.caribvoice.org/AEtE/basquait.html>.

Up until most recently, I've just written whatever appealed to me, never questioning why it appealed, or if it would appeal to others. But now I want something more. Art critic Robert Farris Thompson writes, " What identifies Jean-Michel Basquiat as a major artist is courage and full powers of self-transformation. That courage, meaning not being afraid to fail, transforms paralyzngly self-conscious 'predicaments of culture' into confident 'ecstasies of cultures recombined.' He had the guts, what is more, to confront New York art challenge number one: can you transform self and heritage into something new and named?"

As a playwright, I am strongly drawn to traditional forms of storytelling. I want a plot. I want dramatic structure. How can I break free and still have the elements that I consider essential to getting and keeping the attention of an audience? Am I composer, working with elements that control the play of emotions? Am I a teller of tales that need a bonfire, a dark night and a drunken but attentive audience?

When I read about the latest fad in writing for the theater, unstructured, overly structured, one page, a full blown cycle, I shake my head. There is no place where I feel confident enough to break free of my cherished conventions.

Once I met Judith Krantz. She and I discussed her work (which I really enjoy). She said (I must paraphrase here) that people frequently asked her why she didn't write "better" "deeper" "more significant" books. To which she replied, "I write as well as I can." That's how I feel, at the moment. (May we all have the success of Ms. Krantz.)

But I anticipate the day when my mind will find a way to maintain the structure I love and yet break free from the limiting elements of it. What is the risk I long to take? What is the tale I will tell and how will I tell it? And, the biggest and always the most difficult question for me: what will I name it?

* * *

MY FIRST RESIDENCY

by Nancy Gall-Clayton

I remember my first bike, my first kiss, my first car, and my first job. Add to the list of memorable firsts my recent residency. It was so perfect, I began feeling nostalgic for it even while it was happening!

For one glorious week, I lived at Hopscotch House, a sprawling farmhouse built in 1848 situated on 400 acres of farm and woodland in Kentucky. KFW welcomes women who use art for social change, but they had never invited applications from women to fill the house at the same time.

Those who were chosen were invited to request up to \$400 for child care, gas money, artist supplies, or whatever else would make a residency easier. I bought my first laptop. What a gift!

The Hopscotch House manager, a gourmet cook who lives on another part of the 400 acres, prepared an orientation supper. A quitter and I shared a spacious twin suite full of natural light. Two visual artists, a photographer who turned her bathtub into a chemical bath, and an essayist were also part of the group.

After that first gathering, we were on our own in terms of schedule and eating. We'd bump into each other in the common areas--a beautiful deck, a library, the dining room, and of course, the refrigerator.

The House Manager provided optional activities (a ride to a farmers' market, a hike through the woods), but I opted out. In fact, I did not read the newspaper, listen to a radio, watch TV, or use a phone, and I waited until the second-to-last day to check my e-mail.

I worked 17 hours the first day! I never hit 17 again, but I had several double digit days. I wrote timelines and character studies and scenes, and I read books about guns and aging and playwriting. I also walked the labyrinth, often finding wonderful ideas floating to the surface of my mind as I did.

My writing, reading, and thinking took place in a studio where I established four work spaces. When I felt myself losing momentum in one, I moved to the next. The four were an easy chair, a desk with my laptop, a table where I wrote by hand with very sharp pencils, and a soft spot on the floor made with a sleeping bag and a pillow.

I live in a big house, but with dogs, kids, husband, and my intolerance for messes, I could never have tried the approach to constructing a play that I used in my studio. It's an idea from Buzz McLaughlin, and it really works. (See *The Playwright's Process*, page 129.) I had plenty of ideas, snippets of dialogue, thoughts about confrontations, plot, character quirks, back stories, and more, but it wasn't organized. I didn't want to, perish the thought, try to prepare an outline, but my head was so full, it was hard to concentrate on what I was writing.

My approach to the technique was cutting bright pink 8.5x11 paper into thirds. As I thought of something, I scribbled it on a pink sheet. If I was working on the first scene and something occurred to me that might go in the last scene, I wrote it on pink. If I had a question that required research, I wrote it on pink. I ended up with 60+ slips of paper. Per Buzz, I sorted them into set up, struggle, and solution AKA Act I, II, and III. As I worked, I added, deleted, and revised my pink. If I got stuck while working on one pink slip, I put it down and picked up another or a small group of them. Buzz thinks this technique enables a playwright to think about the play as a both whole and in structural terms from the beginning of the creation process.

I began to wonder how everyone else was doing, so I posted a note on the fridge (where else?), proposing a 7pm potluck the next evening. Not only did we eat together, we visited each other's studios and oohed and aahed. Even my pink slips were admired, but the group wanted to HEAR what I'd written.

I couldn't imagine reading the beginning of my unfinished very new, very drafty play. For one thing, I'm not an actress. No problem, they said, and it wasn't. Twenty-four hours later, 3 of them portrayed my 3 characters. We had a terrific post-show discussion based on a page full of questions I'd written. Great, I was thinking. I've got lots to work on when I get home, but I was not allowed to delay. They wanted to hear my next rewrite 24 hours later!

And believe it or not, those 3 had become the 3 characters. They did impromptu in-character improv the rest of the residency, and when we gathered for the second reading, one woman brought props, one changed her hair, and one had given herself a mustache and bound her breasts!

For a week, I was completely wrapped up in writing and the mutually supportive atmosphere we six created for one another. It was a wonderful week, a wonderful first residency.

* * *

JOURNEY TO NEW HARMONY
by Ludmilla Bollow

The New Harmony Play Project has beckoned to me for many years. I've submitted plays annually. This year I decide to give it one more try, sending "CHOKER CHERRY CORNERS--TAVERN & DANCE HALL" on 9/18/04, along with other required materials. Then, like other plays in my "Submitted" file, mostly forgotten.



READING at Barn Abbey
"CHOKER CHERRY CORNERS--TAVERN & DANCE HALL"

Jan. 5, 2005 - Receive e-mail from Walt Wangerin, chair of selection committee, inviting me to come to conference in May/June as Writer-In-Residence--all expenses paid. Yahoo! What a way to start the New Year! What an impressive citation for a playwright! I check their website for all who have been there before, and what it all means. Another Wow!

Jan. - May - Much correspondence. Much planning, reading, anticipation. Decide to buy laptop computer for the 16 days I'll be away. Good idea, but much new to learn.

May 7 - Phone call from Joel Grynheim, Project Manager about last minute things, saying I might be housed in Orchard House, one of three Victorian type homes where some writers will be staying. I tell him I'd rather stay at the New Harmony Hotel at the Conference Center, where I have already pictured myself. (I write better when housed alone.) He also informs me that due to a drop-out, there is an opening for my script to have a reading on Monday, first official day. Would I mind? "I'd love it," I almost scream, "I've been waiting for this opportunity for years."

May 20 - Friday: I leave Milwaukee by plane to Evansville IN, where we are picked up by van and driven across the countryside to historic New Harmony. It's quaint, serene, and quiet--almost a step back in time. My hotel room is lovely! Fireplace. Balcony. Huge vase of fresh peonies, plus Welcome Packet on the bed, which includes booklet with photos and writeups of all writers, plus much more. At 7 p.m.

there's a cocktail party on the patio of the Red Geranium Restaurant, for writers, Board Members, and donors.

An elegant sit down dinner follows. It's all so embracing, I hardly have time to think of my play, THE BEACH CLUB, being performed in NY that very night. After, I set up my compute--89 messages. Have difficulty sleeping, as I've been dreaming all day while awake.

Saturday - Orientation Day: Film and tour of New Harmony. Today we're on our own for food, but given \$50 charge card. I buy a gallon jug of water during solo walk around town, get lost and end up lugging this heavy jug down strange streets in the heat, finally finding my hotel. Group from Orchard House left message to go to Strawberry Festival with them, but I'm too exhausted. 8 p.m. I join the Moon Walk in the Cathedral Labyrinth, (patterned after the one at Chartes Cathedral) in the Sacred Garden.

I walk in the circle of polished granite in my bare feet, stones still warm, moon shining, candles lit along the pathway. It's a symbolic entry way into this new path in my life, where I'm hoping to find my own center.

We are invited to Orchard House after and sit on the patio and talk and get acquainted. Jane Owen, the 90 year old benefactress/patroness for New Harmony joins us. An amazing woman. Lively, loves the arts, and gets to know each of us throughout the days. Rides her golf cart haphazardly around town, waving to all. Her subsidized artistic statues and grand gardens are everywhere. It's her town.

Sunday - An elegant dinner gathering this evening, as all actors have now arrived. Writers come forward, introduced individually. It's the writers that are the stars from hereon. Such a nurturing place. I can't wait for it all to unfold.

Before going on further about all the activities, I think I should highlight the invited writers. There are 11 selected playwright participants, and 8 are women!

FULL DEVELOPMENT WRITERS

(Plays given reading and development, plus another reading.)

SUSAN BATTEN: Screenplay, "WHY NOT", already receiving honors for this film. Young and lovely, also an actress on stage and the TV soap--"One Life to Live".

SUZANNE BRADBEERS: (Prev. NH attendee) Play, "THE ROOF". Numerous productions and prizes in playwriting. Charming and exuberant person.

RUSSELL DAVIS: "MAHIDA'S EXTRA KEY TO HEAVEN", an unusual script with Iraqi characters. He's also a juggler, practicing daily. He and I connect, as he also has Broadway Plays as his publisher, and we both like out-of-the box people.

Says he might just drive his truck to visit Wisconsin, with his girlfriend, who came for his final reading. We three conversed about the unusual and off-beat in life.

IRENE O'GARDEN: "LITTLE HEART" - Lovely lady, and wife of playwright John Pielmeier, who also visited. Impressive theatre credits, plus awards for children's books.

WRITERS IN RESIDENCE:

VINCENT DELANEY: Various good play credits, also an actor. Most helpful and charming. Minnesotan who's moving to Seattle, with new family.

LAURA HARRINGTON: Numerous play credits, including musicals. Teaches playwriting at Harvard. She and I connected, as we were both new this time. Gave me great idea for rewrite of my play during Open House Night at Orchard House.

ARLENE HUTTON: (Returnee) Impressive credits. New Yorker with plays all over and will be writer-in-residence at Sewanee Theatre for 9 months. She graciously introduced me to much about the project, before and after.

ANNE NELSON: (Returnee) Also at my hotel. Adjunct professor at Columbia University and Guggenheim Fellow for her non-fiction book. Award-winning journalist, and many play credits. A real lady, lovely person, with beautiful hymn singing voice. Gave slide presentation of her proposed new book--a nice extra.

THERESA REBECK: (Returnee) Great sense of humor. Plays done all over, also published. Film and TV writing credits include *NYPD Blue*, *LA Law*. Dynamic personality--from Brooklyn and proud of it.

MAT SMART: Plays done in high profile theatres. Just back from Paris. His father came for his reading. A nice unpretentious guy, fun, but serious about his writing.

OTHERS WHO STAND OUT:

JEFF SPARKS: One of NH founders and head of Heartland Films. (He and I have connection with Hollywood director, Scott Derrickson.)

DAVID McFADZEAN: Also with Heartland and NH founder. Creator and writer of TV show, "Home Improvement". Also wrote scripts for "Roseanne".

SUSAN GREENHILL: Talented NY actress who played lead in my play--beautifully! (Said she wants to do the same role whenever it's produced.)

DREW RICHARDSON: Actress who played other lead in my play--impressive credits. Also works at NY publisher, and teaches acting in summer in her home town in SD.

MICHAEL GROSS: Actor, formerly on "Family Ties". Entertaining, good sense of humor, also good writer. Made perfect firefly in my *FLICKERING FIREFLIES*.

GARY BAYER: Actor and Board Member--role in my play. Gave me much insight about script. I made special friends with him and his new wife. Nicely matched couple.

GEOFF PROEHL: Dramaturg. We talked much at lunch, and other times. Such a learned person. Teaches, dramaturgs, and directs at U of Puget Sound. Published book on Dramaturgy. We discussed many things, and he critiqued my play, also bought copy of my novel since he's interested in NY history. Awaiting his critique on that.

RISA BRAININ: Director--at numerous top theatres. Also at Milwaukee Rep, and will be back in Milwaukee in fall, and we plan to get together.

Tons of others attendees, too numerous to mention, will remain locked in my mind, and photos. A great mixture of young and old, even families and babies. Each one special!

Back to the days of my life

MONDAY: Reading of Irene O'Garden's script at 2 p.m. in Conference Center. Excellent! My play is tonight. I go through cuts (for stage directions) with my intern assistant. Each writer has an intern to assist in whatever needs to be done. What a gift!. At 7:30 I'm picked up by golf cart and carted to Barn Abbey, across the pond, where student interns are housed. The huge room with floor to ceiling windows is where my music stand reading is done. Full house. I'm entranced throughout.

My heart does flip flops to hear words spoken by professionals, giving it new dimensions. After, there is audience talk back, led by Walt. It's a magnificent evening, with a pro cello player, brought over by Jane, to play for us, a special finale. Exquisite. I walk out after, into the vast night, moon is shining, fire flies glittering--I could go home right now and feel fulfilled.

COMPRESSED RUNDOWN, CITING HIGHLIGHTS OF DAYS THAT FOLLOWED

WRITING: The whole area inspires creative writing, as if it's floats in the air from one to another. There is so much time to write--no distractions. I have TV in my room, but never turn it on. I can sit in the rocker and write on my yellow pad, or down by the pond, with swans swimming by, inside the open air roofless church. Almost anywhere. I rewrite *CHOKER CHERRY* several times, using new laptop. Conceive a new short play, *THE DANCE OF THE SUGAR PLUMP FAIRIES*. Ideas jump in from everywhere and I quickly write them down in my always-carried notebook. We discuss writing, theatre, with others at all times, uppermost in our minds. But other horizons are touched also.

WRITERS: Special gathering for all writers Thursday morn at New Harmony House to talk generally about writing, playwriting. All come from different angles. A wonderful sharing.

WRITERS (Minus one) AT NEW HARMONY 2005



Following Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. there is a Writers Forum in the theatre for all (townspeople included and also high school students, invited for the day.) There are open-ended questions from audience. A most diverse group of gathered playwrights, all with a passion for writing, but coming at it from different perspectives. It feels special being up there, being recognized as achieving some worthy goal. The writing aura is everywhere, when we eat, mingle, theatre usually the main subject. We wear our color-coded Writer name tags everywhere. The last Saturday night is an elegant sit-down dinner with 11 tables, a playwright residing at each table, their name on a center sign, with actors, interns, donors etc.. I have the opportunity to speak with the donor seated next to me and get insight into how the plays are chosen, and about my play. After, we are each introduced separately, spotlighting our backgrounds. Again, it's "our" night.

MEALS: Hearty breakfast, lunch and dinner most days in the conference center. Random seating at tables with white tablecloths, napkins, and gracious servers, even though it's mostly buffet style. The array of food is generous, excellent--something for everyone. But it's the camaraderie at the tables, a different mix each meal, that is the most rewarding. Pre-paid group meals at town restaurants on off-evenings are special also. Even an outdoor evening barbecue picnic. One morn we're invited for breakfast at a donor's huge farm. Pastoral and historic. It's never the same old, same old here.

MORNING PRAYER : There's a circular chapel behind the hotel. Each morn at 8 a.m. there's an informal, voluntary, non-denominational prayer service, led by Walt Wangerin. We begin with rousing hymn singing, short sermonette by Walt, and

maybe individual thoughts. It's a lovely way to begin my day. The group varies, but Jane is always there, wearing a straw hat and warm smile. The cellist is present, the morn after his concert, and gives each of us a CD called COMPASSION, saying it was his most exhilarating earthly experience. Musicians and monks from East and West, including the Dalai Lama, played their concert in the depths of the Mammoth Caves. It's inspiring. I sometimes play it in the background as I write. Blessings here are many, from unexpected sources.

VISITORS: Families and friends are welcome, but must register beforehand. Nancy Gall-Clayton (ICWP from Louisville KY) drives up on first Thursday, and I eagerly await my dear friend's visit. It's fun showing her around, introducing her to many (some whom she already knows). We visit Orchard House. That evening we go to reading of Laura's gripping play about WWII in Belgium. Later we walk the quiet streets. Jane gives us a joyous ride in her golf cart. We sit in the quiet garden with fountains and ground lights, and talk. Nancy sleeps on the cot in the alcove of my room--but we're up way late. In the morn we read her new 10 min. play together, have breakfast, and all too soon I'm waving goodbye.

ENTERTAINMENT: There's always scheduled play readings, and sometimes unscheduled readings--your choice. There's workshops, attendees offer from their varied expertise. I go to Body Image Workshop led by actress Susan Greenhill. Nice diversion. At 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday there is a Harmo-Nanny at the Barn Abbey. A free-for-all evening of volunteer fun. Some great singers, riotous acts. Young actor even casts my ten minute play "FLICKERING FIREFLIES", with Michael Gross and others. It's hilarious! Audience loved it, so did I. Chance to offer a humorous side of my writing. Another evening, attended a folk concert downtown, above an old bookstore. Tim Grimm, who just toured with Grapes of Wrath, doing the music. Entrancing. Some go to opening of Star Wars at the only movie theatre in town--I don't. I have money left on my food card, and decide to use it for a chair massage at the spa. It's so so much more rewarding than food.

FAREWELL: All too soon it's Sunday, June 5. Suitcases are rolling everywhere. Hugs and tears from everyone. My bus leaves at 11 a.m. for the airport. I hate leaving any place, but this time the heartstrings are stretched. After airport delay, I'm finally home, but not really, as New Harmony lingers strongly (still does). There are many follow-ups--notes from friends, photos to remind. Scripts to write. But the best aftermath is that the lit rep from Actors' Theatre in Louisville was at NH and asked for our scripts.

So, CHOKE CHERRY is now waiting in line at a new place, for the possibility of another life on the stage. I still believe in miracles and that wonderful things can happen--New Harmony is proof of that.

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UNCONVENTIONAL PRESENTATIONS

by Judy Freed

The audience hiked across the grass, then disappeared into the forest. As I followed them toward the trees I wondered: what have I gotten myself into? I'd written this musical for traditional productions. How would it play outdoors with the audience hiking to a different location for each scene? And what would happen two weeks later, when the same show was produced by a different theater company using life-size puppets?

Last fall my musical *Sleepy Hollow* received two unconventional productions. The first, by Chicago-based Theatre-Hikes, was staged at outdoor venues across the Chicago area. The second, by Michigan's Acorn Theater, was a sophisticated puppet show combining elements of shadow and bunraku puppetry.

Having two such unusual productions in performance at the same time was both exhilarating and terrifying. Along the way, I learned some important lessons about writing musicals for nontraditional presentation.

The lessons started with casting. Director Lara Tibble explained the Theatre-Hikes requirements: Energy is key. Actors need to be fit enough to hike one to two miles and still deliver a strong performance. Some actors would double as instrumentalists, so we'd be looking for solid players with portable instruments. And above all else, we'd need actors whose voices could carry. There are so many uncontrollable sounds outdoors: birds, airplanes, cars, the wind. If an actor can't project, the wind will just blow their words away.

A little voice in my head started to panic. This is a musical! The wind can't blow our words away!

Casting at Acorn Theater was even more discombobulating. We actually needed three casts for the puppetry production. Live actors would voice the roles. Puppeteers would manipulate the puppets' bodies. And the puppets themselves--our physical "cast"--would be designed and built by director Kim Clark and his staff. As Kim showed me the sketches I began to realize what a leap of faith we were taking.

Which brings us to the orchestrations. At Theatre-Hikes, the instruments had to be portable and primarily acoustic. We ended up with a flute, a violin, and a keyboard on a wheeled cart. At Acorn Theater, the instruments included a well-amplified rhythm section and an old-fashioned pipe organ whose pipes were built into the theater's walls. There wasn't enough time to create two sets of orchestrations for these totally different ensembles. So composer Elizabeth Doyle prepared a single score with a piano part, vocal lines, chord markings, and two staves of counter-melodies. We'd have to rely on the music directors to take it from there.

We took another leap of faith when director Lara Tibble asked for some script changes. At Theatre-Hikes, she explained, our only "sets" would be trees, rocks and

bushes. And because nature is so real, any pantomimed set pieces might come across as distractingly false. Would I mind getting rid of all the indoor sets? I cringed. In other productions of our show, some of the biggest laughs had come from bits about doors and windows. But what she said made sense. So our indoor scenes were rewritten for outdoor locations. Our nighttime scenes were reworked for staging in daylight.

At Acorn Theater, we had a different set of concerns. Clever lyrics and rapid-fire dialogue that had been funny in every other production seemed plodding and overdone here. I couldn't figure out why. Then Kim Clark showed me a set of storyboards he had made for the overture. Suddenly I understood. Puppetry is a visual medium. In many ways it's like animated film. If there's nothing to look at but talking heads, the scene goes flat. So lyricist Owen Kalt and I began working on cuts.

Meanwhile, the little voice in my head panicked again. One of the most important moments in our show was a love ballad that had always been staged with two characters alone in a spotlight. Would this pivotal moment fall flat when performed by puppets?

Finally our opening days arrived. The Theatre-Hikes production was pure magic: walking through the trees at the peak of their fall colors; watching scenes play out on hilltops and at the edge of a small lake. It was a fast, funny, larger-than-life production. We knew we had a hit on our hands when a group of young teenagers who had been socializing in the park stopped to listen to a song...then joined the hike for the rest of the show.

Two weeks later, Acorn Theater spun magic of a darker kind. From the moment we entered the theater, we were transported to a richly textured world of movement, sound, special effects, and emotional intensity. When the love ballad began I crossed my fingers. As the music rose, the puppets and their puppeteers rose into the air on a hydraulic lift--a simple, eloquent gesture that saved the song. As for the climactic scene where Ichabod Crane meets the Headless Horseman....all I can say is that it was so eerie I had trouble falling asleep that night.

So what advice would I give to a playwright considering a nontraditional production of a traditional script?

- Saying "yes" to a nontraditional production can be a tremendous leap of faith. Make sure the people you'll be working with are experts in their form. Make sure you feel good about the direction that they'll be taking with your piece.
- Some nontraditional theaters are not accustomed to working with outside authors. Make sure your input will be welcome. Have a contract that includes all the protections you would expect in a conventional production.
- Having said the above, be willing to listen and learn. Be flexible when it's for the good of the production. This is your chance to try something new.

- Most of all, embrace the experience. Your work may grow in ways you never could have imagined. Your own definition of "theater" might be changed forever.

As for *Sleepy Hollow* ... I hear there's a theater troupe in Chicago that performs on horseback. I wonder if they'd be interested in a musical....

Judy Freed has written the books for five musicals including *Sleepy Hollow*; *Emma & Company*; and *Me and Al*, or *How I Died in the Saint Valentine's Day Massacre*. <http://www.freedwrites.com>. Copyright 2005 by Judy Freed.

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MY "CRITIC"
by Marie-Jeanne Pense

When I write a new play I write what I know and what I am sure I can make an audience mystified by. However, I am not a writer who writes alone. I cannot sit down and write what I want to write, proofread it, revise it and then feel satisfied that I have done the job I set out to do. I have a very close friend I entrust this to. My best friend of 14 years has become my muse, my editor and my critic. She didn't like it in the beginning. She kept telling me that she didn't want to hurt my feelings and that whatever I wrote was going to be great. After all, I was the writer, not her.

Then we started to go to more plays and she started to take notes on the actors, props and the reaction from the audience. She became a great asset to me. She would say, "That play was good but I don't think the lead was cast right." She started to look at the theater with new eyes and tell me what she thought worked and what she didn't like. I found this information very valuable (still do). I mean, I have an audience member that is giving me feedback and helping me to write a better play, a play she would be willing to sit through and find enjoyable. Maybe even take her boyfriend to next time.

My "critic" went to the opening night of my first play and said it was good, let me know what didn't work and I tried to improve. Of course having a mediocre cast (most of which hadn't set foot on stage before our first rehearsal) didn't help, but they were willing to work with me and get better.

That's another story all together though.

My point is this, I write for me and for an audience but I don't try to market what I have written until I let someone I know and trust implicitly read it. I'd had my parent's take a crack at it but being parents they thought it "was great!" and that I shouldn't change anything. Of course after the first two plays were sent back I started to think maybe I should get more readers. My husband was no help, aside from the fact that he is inflicted with the same "great!" illness that my parent's have and he isn't "cultured", as he calls it. (He is a NASCAR fan who thinks theater is boring. I am not sure why we are still together.) so he reads my work and says what he thinks I need to hear. Not very helpful.

Then my best friend expressed an interest in reading my work.

When I first asked her what she thought, she balked, turned red and said it was great and that I was a great writer. All I could think was "oh no! not another one."

When we got together again I laid it on the line for her. "I need someone that can be objective and supportive. I need to know if you can look at what I write and tell me what is wrong; grammatically, punctually and the such. I already have a cheering section, I need help. I want someone I respect the opinion of to read what I write and

critique it for me. I won't be mad at you, I mean I am asking you to do this so I am ready for whatever you are going to say."

She took a deep breath, looked at my manuscript and then at me and said "I don't understand this."

I started to repeat what I had said when she shook her head.

"I know what you mean. What I mean is, I don't understand this." (She held up my manuscript.)

To say the least I was shocked. I thought what I wrote was good and pretty clear.

"What exactly don't you understand?"

Well, it began with that one question, and now she likes it when I bring her new work to look over. She isn't a professional but she is objective and, after her first balk, she is more than willing to help me succeed.

She is the person I give my manuscripts to first and the one I call my critic.

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A NEW PLAYWRIGHT DEALS WITH FIRST REVIEWS

by Hortense F. Gerardo

A writer friend told me recently that there are a few major milestones in the career of a playwright, and that I was about to experience one of them when I witnessed for the first time the curtain going up on a real stage inside a real theater, with professional actors emoting the words of a play I had written. This past spring, I was ecstatic to learn that one of my plays was peer-reviewed and accepted into the seventh annual, highly-acclaimed, Boston Theatre Marathon at the Virginia Wimberly Theatre in the Stanford Calderwood Pavilion. The Boston Theatre Marathon, for those who don't know, is an event in which fifty new, 10-minute plays are presented, non-stop, over a ten-hour period, as part of a fundraising event for the theatre community. The event, known locally as the BTM, has become a kind of institution like its namesake sports event, the Boston Marathon. Among playwrights, acceptance into the BTM has become a rite of passage among contenders on the Boston theatre scene. This was to be the first time any of my work would be produced by a professional theater in Boston, and only the second time ever for one of my plays to be fully produced, so this was in a way my coming out event as a Boston playwright. A very insightful director brought my play to life with the help of four talented professional actors. To top it off, my play was selected to be the first among all fifty plays to open the Marathon. This is all to say that by the time of the tech rehearsal, I was feeling on top of the world and very fortunate, indeed, to be a playwright.

As in any morality tale, there was an omen. Mine came in the form of a fortune cookie, at the end of a meal with one of the actors. We were celebrating a great dress rehearsal and excited about the opening in less than a week. The fortune read, "Starting now your luck will change." For someone who's down and out, or for whom things are simply going badly, this might have been encouraging news. I thought nothing about the fortune at that moment. In hindsight, had I fully appreciated how well everything was going for me at the time, I might have heeded this message as a warning.

Days later, on the day of the Marathon, I was greeted by the staff at the ticket window and welcomed with a sticker to wear that read, "Playwright", enabling me to enter the theater free of charge and to sit in an area specially designated for the playwrights, a thrill for a newbie like myself. The director came out to give me a hug, and I felt protected in a cocoon of enthusiasm and support from my family and friends. My heart pounded as I watched the lights go up and I was delighted to hear the audience respond at crucial moments in the play. The words I'd written took on new nuance on stage, and I was genuinely proud and honored by the work of the director, actors, technical crew, and stage hands. At the reception party afterward, I was introduced to artistic directors, actors and producers, two of whom gave me their business cards with requests for samples of my work. The entire experience of being in the Marathon, and having one of my plays produced for the first time by a professional company on a Boston stage, was a thrill and, by some accounts, a success of sorts.

Perhaps the extreme highs I felt going into and immediately after the production may account for why four days later, eagerly searching the local papers for a review of my play, I was surprised (shocked, actually) to find one which read in part, "...just as well it was over quickly." Another play in the BTM was referred to by the same reviewer as dealing with guilt "in a far more clever way" than my play did. I thought I took the comments in stride, but slowly realized that the review was undermining my writing in subtle ways. Two days after reading it I found that the comedy I was writing unexpectedly turned into a serious drama. Worse yet, I was feeling self-conscious about a semi-autobiographical dramatic piece I'd written a month earlier and felt compelled to lighten it up a bit, to shave down some of its raw edges.

In the past, once I decided on a story and have done a fair amount of research about a subject, sketched out some good character bios, have a good feel for the sounds of their voices, basically done all the prep work that my esteemed playwriting instructors ingrained in me early on, I was reasonably confident about how to proceed. Even if I received constructive criticism, I responded by adjusting the work technically. I never questioned my subject matter or the voices I gave to my characters until I read that review. One of my playwriting mentors and a close friend told me that I have to shake it off and try to shut out the "critical voice" in me. She was right of course, but I wasn't actually able to pull it off without losing several precious days of writing. Nobody had prepared me for how to respond to a critical review, one which was particularly dismissive in such a casual way, on work which had meant quite a lot to me.

In the days after the review came out, I received calls from well-meaning friends, wanting to cushion the blow. "Reviewers have to be catchy in order to get anyone to read their work, and it's easier to take someone down than to give praise." "There's no such thing as bad publicity..." "Reviewers can't write anything original, so they make a career of commenting on other people's work." "Who gives a damn what they say so long as they spell your name correctly?" "That's good! Without humility you learn nothing. Learn to love yourself, in spite of failure, and you will begin to learn the meaning of true love." (The last quote, admittedly, was from a yoga instructor who was referring to my inability to hold Frog Pose for three minutes, but it helped.) All of this had the effect of mental potato chips, making me feel content for the moment, but leaving me hungry for something else to power me through my reviewer-induced angst. Initially, I thought to write about my experience in order to vent some of my own frustration regarding the role of the theater critic. On further consideration, I recognized that what I learned might be of help to some other aspiring playwright in a similar circumstance. Here's a distillation of the best advice I received.

In the days following the publication of the BTM review, I had lunch with a young choreographer who is highly-regarded among her peers in the dance community, and has been consistently singled out as an up-and-coming artist and a "hot pick" in our city's publications over the past four years. I wouldn't have thought she would be able to relate to my experience, given all the kudos and awards she'd received. On the

contrary, young as she is, she had much to say on the subject of critics and their comments:

I introduced a piece as a work-in-progress at a concert in which several choreographers were presenting new works. In the program I mentioned specifically that I was trying out something new for me, wanting to push myself beyond my comfort zone, and that it was an unfinished work." So afterwards, this reviewer, who has been a big supporter in the past, came up to me after the concert and just said, 'Cut it out. Just don't do it. It's not clear what you're trying to do.' Well, duh...I said it was an unfinished work! I was so upset I couldn't speak.

Later, when she was preparing a piece for another performance, she decided to stick with her tried and true techniques, and created a piece that she says, "I knew people would love. It had canons and flowing phrases, and it was all technically very good...and it bored me. But I was right. They loved it."

This gifted artist recognized that even the most well-meaning, casual comments from a reviewer had a potentially debilitating effect on her work, but she also wanted to be aware of what the reviewers were saying. Her solution was to have someone else, a trusted friend, read her reviews and pass along the ones that might be helpful. In her case, her husband, who is a noted musician himself, and who would read the reviews about her anyway, vetted the articles and read to her what she might like to hear.

Also in the days following the release of the review, I ran into a respected playwright, and a powerful advocate for artists within the Boston theatre community. I actually felt shy and embarrassed about facing her, given the review I received. I assumed everyone involved in the Marathon had read it, so I thought I'd fend off any potential awkwardness by mentioning it at the start. In fact, she had not read the review at all, and had this to say, "Don't even give it a second thought. I never read my reviews, good or bad. Even the good ones mess with your head." She went on to say that what matters is the feedback you get from the audience, and that the real test was having it chosen in the first place to be in the Marathon.

A third friend recounted an interesting anecdote when I mentioned that I wouldn't read any reviews by anyone again. During the Senate hearings regarding the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court, after Anita Hill testified, Chairman [Senator] Biden asked Thomas his response to her complaint. He replied that he had left the chamber so as not to hear what he thought would be calumny. Biden, incredulous, scolded Thomas for not wanting to hear the charges in order to better defend himself. My friend, like Biden, thinks that generally it is good to be aware of what is being said about you, and to learn from it, then move on.

Since the BTM I got word that my play, the same one performed at the Boston Theater Marathon and which received the bad review, is a 2005 finalist for the

Heideman Award in the National 10-minute Play Contest sponsored by the Actors' Theatre of Louisville. I didn't know this was any big deal until I saw that my former graduate school advisor and a well-respected and oft-produced Boston playwright, lists being a Heideman Award Finalist among the 10 honors and awards of his career, which spans over 30 years.

The lesson here is that there is no accounting for peoples' tastes, and all we can do as artists is to keep plugging away at what we believe in. Another play of mine was recently produced on a Boston stage, and although I have not created my own modus operandi for dealing with reviews, to a certain extent nothing can ever have quite the same impact as the first review. Maybe I'll just write an article exploring lessons learned from review #2. Better yet, I'll just beat on, borne back ceaselessly toward writing new plays.

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VISITING IN THE EMIRATES **by Tami Canaday**

In July, I spent time in the city of Al Ain in the United Arab Emirates with my brother and his family. This wealthy Arab country is located next to Saudi Arabia and north of Oman. I wanted not only to visit my brother and his family, but I wanted to experience a Muslim culture. Because my sister-in-law, Holly, is a physician at a local hospital, she has made friends with both wealthy nationals and poor local expatriate women living in the UAE, plus she has access during her follow-up medical visits into the homes of local Muslim women. The Arab culture is a social society and with its extreme dry heat and the limitations placed on women, visiting in each other's homes is a vital part of women's lives. This is an account of four visits I made over a three day period.

First Visit

After removing my sandals and placing them neatly next to a floorboard by the front door, I gaze out at one of the largest living rooms I have ever been in. It is filled with numerous sitting areas, Oriental rugs, immense interior columns, and floor vases filled with dried flowers. Gilded frames with paintings of Arabic desert scenes and black and gold wall decorations are elegantly arranged on its walls. A fussy billowing chandelier hangs from the ceiling in front of the room's centerpiece: an enormous white marble staircase that splits to the left and right at the second floor landing. This palatial home is one of six homes, in a gated compound, in which all the homes have been built exactly alike for six brothers who belong to a wealthy national UAE family. Holly and I are visiting two sisters, Lina and Ma'isah, who are the wives of two of the brothers; moreover, Lina and Ma'isah and their husbands are first cousins. The remarkable home we are in is Lina's.

Before I can be effusive to Holly over the surroundings, Lina, with her humorous eyes, greets us in English and politely inquires about our families. A chador lightly covers her head and she's wearing a silver embroidered kandura. The kandura is a long dress worn under the traditional black full-length abba. After she warmly greets us, Lina ushers us over to an informal sitting area with four plump couches, lined with pillows, surrounding a low rose-colored table. On the wall are photographs of Lina's father-in-law with the Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan, ruler of Abu Dhabi, who died last year. While Lina and Holly talk in Arabic, I perch on the edge of a couch across from an older heavily made-up woman who is wearing a burqa. I sneak peeks at her, while she stares past me. Lina is holding an Arabic newspaper with headlines about the recent bombings in the Egyptian resort city of Sharm-el-Sheikh. Her voice is angry, while she and Holly discuss the bombings. Later, Holly tells me Lina called Osama bin Laden the devil.

A quiet Sri Lankan maid, carrying a tray of Arab cookies and coffee seasoned with cardamom, places the tray on the table. Lina asks if we would like coffee. Taking coffee is part of the Arab tradition; accepting the offer, which Holly and I do, is a

traditional sign of friendship. Lina mischievously tells me she is going to teach me the proper way to drink Arabic coffee: the right hand accepts the coffee cup; the hostess remains standing with the coffee pot ready to serve her guests (this was disconcerting for me, as Lina stood in front of me waiting; as a result, I gulped down lots of hot coffee); if one wishes for more coffee, hold out the cup; when one is finished, shake the cup back and forth and the hostess will take the cup. Lina is all motion and laughter. Another Sri Lankan maid places a platter of fruit and nuts on the table and leaves to answer the front door.

Two young women visitors, wearing abbas and chadors, enter with their children. They join us, while their children run off to play. Once the women remove their chadors, they are friendly and animated with hearty talking, clucking, and head shaking. Lina leaves us to direct the lunch preparations. She arrives with a plate of sugar doughnuts and doughnut holes. Next, the two maids place Fatayer, a dish of pastry pockets filled with cheese and a pureed nut filling, and a local dish called Balaleet in front of us. The Balaleet with its vermicelli noodles, chopped eggs and nuts, the blended spice zattar, and saffron threads tastes like a yummy dish of Pad Thai. We end the meal with cups of hot shai (chai) seasoned with zattar. Despite the older woman's reserve, Lina's generosity and open affection for the Westerners drinking and eating in her midst is my first encounter with an acceptance that I will receive during all of my visits.

Second Visit

After lunch, Lina's younger sister Ma'isah arrives with a Gucci purse tucked under her arm. Even without knowing what kandura Ma'isah is wearing under her full-length abbas or what she looks like (her face is shrouded), she radiates sophistication. Holly and I air-kiss Lina good-bye, for it is time for us to visit Ma'isah. Because of the waves of heat outdoors, we decide to drive across the compound to Ma'isah's home. We kick off our sandals outside its arched entryway and enter Ma'isah's equally spectacular house; it is a collector's home of a world traveler. Ma'isah removes her chador and she is stunning with eye-brows like Frida Kahlo. We dispense quickly with the formality of drinking coffee together, since I have been invited to Ma'isha's boudoir to look at her collection of kanduras.

Holly and I stand in Ma'isah's walk-in closet, with its multiple cupboards and light scent of musk, watching Ma'isah pull out a royal blue silk or a gold laced or a multi-colored kandura, one after another, until it is too exhausting for me to absorb. When she pulls out a puce and gold striped Moroccan kandura, I exclaim over it with polite enthusiasm. Ma'isah indicates that I am to have this kandura. I think she is kidding, but she is not and she indicates that I am to go into the next room to try it on. I look over at Holly and she nods, "Yes." Later, I learn an Arab hostess may feel obliged to give her guest an object that is specifically admired, and if an offer is made, the hostess will not brook a refusal. I return wearing the willowy kandura and twirl like I am wearing my first prom dress. Holly and Ma'isah applaud.

We all plop down on a caramel brown rug to look through Ma'isah's wedding album now three years old. Photos show a traditional bride with henna decorated hands and gold rope necklaces. There are photographs of Ma'isah alone, or with her husband, or one photograph with various male relatives superimposed into the photograph of her and her husband. There are no photographs of any women or other non-relative male wedding guests. (Women and men celebrate weddings separate from each other) A Muslim woman in this culture must get permission from her husband or a male family member to be allowed to be photographed; a husband or male relative as a rule does not want the woman's photographic image to be gazed upon by any outside males. After putting the album aside, Ma'isah shows us her wedding gifts. From a low dresser cabinet, she takes out boxes and boxes of gold and diamond necklaces, anklets, bracelets, and rings. With a benevolent admiration for her wealth, she piles the 24-karat jewelry into a small casual heap.

Since Ma'isah's husband will be arriving soon, it is time for Holly and me to depart, but first Ma'isah sprays several heavy-scented perfumes on us, which is part of the local tradition. While I change back into my clothes, Ma'isah prepares a swinging incense burner with the wood incense Palo Santa. When I return, she swings the burner with its sensual and sweet smell of Palo Santa under my arms, under my blouse, and under my skirt to let the smoke from the incense permeate my clothing. This is done to mask a woman's smell of sweat from the intense outside heat. We say good-bye to Ma'isah.

Third Visit

The next day, I accompany Holly and an Indian nurse on a medical home visit to two sisters who have had babies just days apart. They are a local national family living in a traditional residential compound of connected dwellings that is surrounded by a walled corridor with each residence

having its own gate. Beyond the gate, there is an open courtyard and then the family residence. One of the young mothers, Suha, greets us at the gate and we follow her through the courtyard, past several date palm trees, into a windowless front room. The room is lined with floor couches with matching pillows. Next to the TV console, on the wall, are two prints of Sheik Zayed Bin Sultan. On the floor is a plate of fresh fruit. Once I sit down on the couch, I hear the murmur of children and women's voices coming from the next room. Flies sleepily circle me. Holly and the nurse start examining Suha's infant. Suha's head is intently inverted toward them like a comma. Suha's infant girl is patted and plumped by Holly and the nurse, for she is a healthy baby.

The other young mother, Inaya, enters and she sits down next to me holding her tightly swaddled baby with its spiky black hair. I look at Inaya, but she is bowed-down over her baby. Inaya looks about nineteen. She has henna dyed feet and intricate henna designs snake up her ankles. When Inaya glances at me, I see moist black eyes. Holly walks over to Inaya and gently kneels before her to take the infant.

She unwraps the swaddling and hands the tiny girl to the nurse to be weighed. The nurse tells Holly the baby has lost weight since her birth. Holly asks Inaya to breast feed her baby, so she can observe Inaya and the baby together. It is too intimate for me to watch; I look away. Perhaps sensing my discomfort, Suha kneels in front of me and starts peeling and cutting up fruit. A sister-in-law enters with a tray of coffee. Suha offers me a cup of coffee and I accept (in my right hand). I also nibble on a few pieces of fruit. Suha, sitting on her knees, remains in front of me ready to serve me more coffee or fruit. After Holly makes a follow-up appointment with Inaya, Holly accepts a cup of coffee and politely chats in Arabic with the sisters. The sister-in-law returns carrying a large plate of dates for us to take home. The appointment is over; we air kiss the sisters, twice on each cheek, good-bye.

Fourth Visit

Zahra', a Palestinian expatriate, is wearing a turquoise kandura and a black scarf over her curly hair when she welcomes us at the gate of her family's compound. She is thirty-seven and the mother of five children. Her husband is employed feeding camels. Expatriates in the UAE comprise approximately seventy-five percent of the population in the UAE. Most of the expatriates are from India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, the Philippines, Europe, and America. Although, Zahra appears tired, she is the warmest of all the women I have met because she intimately involves me in her cooking and watching her children. Her sitting room is sparsely decorated with two run down couches, a nondescript table, a TV console, and an old buzzing air conditioner. There is a salon off the sitting room, which is formally decorated with blue and yellow furniture and gilded mirrors, but the door to the salon remains closed during most of our visit.

Holly and I join Zahra' in her kitchen, with its bare walls, to learn how to prepare a pan Arabic dish she is making for lunch. She demonstrates how to cook the chicken parts in onion and oil. She pulls a small bag of dried lemons from a cupboard to add to the dish. We are to eat at noon, but Zahra's husband calls to tell her that he has been told by his boss to work later than usual. Lunch will be served when Zahra's husband is allowed to get off work and return home. Along with Zahra's children, most of my afternoon is spent watching American family movies with Arabic subtitles on television. Occasionally, I wander into the kitchen to watch Zahra' cook. When Zahra's husband, a nice cheerful man, arrives around three-thirty in the afternoon we take a seat around the table in the sitting room to eat. We hunch over our separate plates, drink cups of Coke, and serve ourselves from the communal pot in the middle of the table. For the first minute or two we quietly eat, but then everyone starts talking. Zahra' offers to dish up second and third helpings of the chicken rice dish. After lunch, Holly and I say good-bye to Zahra' and her family.

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OPPORTUNITIES

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ACTORS THEATRE OF LOUISVILLE NEW PLAY PROGRAM

Please Note: Plays and synopses will NOT be accepted or considered via e-mail or any electronic submission.

At this time we are accepting full-length plays from literary agents . We are, however, unable to accept unsolicited manuscripts . If you do not have an agent , you can still send us a letter of inquiry along with a synopsis and a 10-page selection from the script. If the material interests us, we will contact you with a request for the complete script.

Although we accept plays throughout the year , we complete most of our reading between April and October , and most playwrights are notified of the status of their submissions in the late summer or fall. The

Humana Festival of New American Plays, Actors Theatre of Louisville's main venue for producing new work, is an annual event held in February and March.

Our current program to identify emerging playwrights is the National Ten-Minute Play Contest . This contest for one-act plays of ten pages or less is open to any and all playwrights . Information about the contest can be found on our website under the section "10-Minute Play Contest." Or, if you prefer, send us your snail mail address and we will be glad to send you a copy of the brochure.

We appreciate your interest in Actors Theatre of Louisville and wish you the best of luck in your playwriting endeavors.

Send Submissions or Synopses To:

New Play Program
Attn: Adrien-Alice Hansel
Actors Theatre of Louisville
316 West Main Street
Louisville, KY 40202-4218

<http://www.actorstheatre.org>

STARK RAVING THEATRE

Stark Raving Theatre will be accepting submissions for their 2006-2007 season between July 21 and December 1, 2005.

No email queries.

To submit, send us the following:

1. A cover letter
2. A full theatrical resume
3. A synopsis of the play(s) you are submitting.
4. The first 10 pages of the play(s) you are submitting.
5. A current, reliable email address for our reply.
6. An SASE if you want your materials returned; otherwise, we will recycle.

They are usually able to respond to queries in 2-3 months, and to full scripts in 6-8 months.

Send materials to:

Stark Raving Theatre
Attn: Gretchen Icenogle
Literary Manager PMB 383
25 NW 23rd Place, Ste 6
Portland, OR 97210

For more information, see their web site at
<http://www.starkravingtheatre.org/playsubmit.php>

COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY THEATRE

The Third International Playwriting Competition offering the Larry Corse Prize for Playwriting

The Larry Corse Prize for Playwriting was established in 2003 by Larry Corse, Professor Emeritus of Theatre and English at Clayton State University, to encourage the development and production of new works for the stage. The 2004 competition was won by Robert Karmon for his play "Caliban and Miranda." In 2005, the competition moved to its new host, Columbus State University Theatre, Columbus, Georgia. The 2005 competition received 325 plays from 12 countries and was won by William Missouri Downs for his comedy "Seagulls in a Cherry Tree."

The Prize: \$1,000 and a production by Columbus State University Theatre.

Eligibility: The competition is open to all. The Play:

1. A play submitted to the competition should be finished, original, in English, and must not have been previously published or performed (excluding workshop readings).
2. The play may be either full-length, one-act, or a series of related one-acts, and should have a running time of between 45 and 120 minutes.
3. The number of actors needed for the play should be between 5 and 10.
4. A play previously submitted to this competition may not be re-submitted without substantial revision.

Columbus State University Theatre will have first production rights for the winning play. The playwright will retain all other rights, including copyright, publication and performance rights. If for some reason, Columbus State University Theatre is not able to produce the winning play within two years of the announcement of the winner, first production rights revert to the playwright. If, in the opinion of the jury, no play worthy of the prize is submitted, Columbus State University

Theatre reserves the right to withhold the prize. Submitting a Play:

1. Because the play will be submitted to the juries anonymously, the author's name should not appear on any page of the play.
2. Plays should be submitted with a cover page containing the following information:
 - Author's name
 - Author's address
 - Title of play
 - Author's phone number and e-mail address
 - A signed statement that the play has not been previously produced or published.

Following the cover page, please include a brief synopsis of the play.

Deadline for Submission: Plays must be received by the Columbus International Playwriting Competition on or before November 7, 2005.

Address for Submissions:
Columbus State University
Theatre International Playwriting Competition

#324 931 Monroe Drive NE, Suite A102
Atlanta, Georgia USA 30308

Plays cannot be submitted by e-mail. Copies of the plays submitted will not be returned. Please do not send one and only originals. The plays will initially be read by theater professionals. Eight to ten finalists will then be submitted to the Theatre Faculty of Columbus State University for final judging. The selection process should be complete by February, 2006.

For additional information, contact Steve Graver, Department of Theatre, Columbus State University at Graver_StevenCcolstate.edu or by writing to the above mailing address.

JEWISH CULTURE PLAY COMMISSION

National Foundation for Jewish Culture commissioning a new play on Jewish experience, culture, history, traditions. No application fee. Info: www.jewishculture.org/theater/theater_npc.html or contact krunk@jewishculture.org
Phone: 212-629-0500 x215.

Proposal deadline: 9/8

EPIPHANY THEATER COMPANY

EPIPHANY THEATER COMPANY is accepting plays for its Words Up reading series: submission policy

- Full-length plays, one-acts, 10 minute plays, any subject matter
- must be typed and in standard American play format
- no more than 6 players
- send SASE if you'd like your play returned
- please NO EMAIL SUBMISSIONS

Send to:

Literary Department
Epiphany Theater Co.
154 Christopher Street
2B New York, NY 10014

NO DEADLINE GIVEN

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA

Subject: Science and Technology Playwrighting Competition.

University of California launches International Competition for plays about Science and Technology with \$10,000 Prize. The Professional Artists Lab and the California NanoSystems Institute at the University of California, Santa Barbara announce a collaborative effort, the first International STAGE Script Competition, open to plays about science and technology. The winning script in the Scientists, Technologists and Artists Generating Exploration (STAGE) competition will receive \$10,000 USD; a staged reading with a cast of professional actors and simultaneous participation in an awards event with distinguished professionals from the worlds of theatre, film, science and technology; and the opportunity to go through the Professional Artists Lab's development process, which includes access to advice and guidance from professional theatre and film artists as well as experts in the fields of science, engineering and technology. Scripts will be judged by an esteemed panel of jurors from both the arts and sciences. Thus far, the judges include two Nobel Laureates: Dr. David Gross (Physics, 2004) and Dr. Alan Heeger (Chemistry, 2000). Additional judges to be announced shortly.

Submitted plays must explore scientific and/or technological stories, themes, issues or events. (The competition is not open to plays written in the genre of science fiction.) Entries must be postmarked by Dec. 15. The winning play will be announced on June 15, 2006. For details about the competition and submission guidelines, visit <http://www.cnsi.ucsb.edu/stage>.

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SOUTH CAMDEN THEATRE COMPANY MAKE PLAYS, NOT WAR!

Looking for short (20 minutes or less) one-act plays for Acts of War theater festival next April. New non-profit theatre in Camden, NJ is seeking one act plays concerning the war in Iraq for a one-act festival in April 2006. The festival, Acts of War, will feature four plays, no longer than twenty minutes long, with no more than four characters. A simple set is desired. Looking for plays with all viewpoints on the war.

Forward a copy of the play and SASE to:

South Camden Theatre Company
318 Hudson Street
Gloucester City, NJ 08030
(Att: Literary Manager).

Deadline: 10/1/05.

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POCO LOCO PLAYERS

Humorous Plays about God

The Poco Loco Players have a night of one acts planned around the theme "a humorous look at God." Perhaps we'll call it Shorts on God? But does he wear boxers or briefs. You'll have to wait and see. The main play for the evening will be The Whole Shebang by Rich Orloff to be presented with other short plays in Spring 2006. We are currently looking for other plays to go along with this theme.

If you have a play that works with the theme, submit your plays to pocolocoplayers@yahoo.com in Word or rtf format or you can email a hyperlink to a html version of your play. The plays can be as short as a few minutes or be as long as 35-40 minutes such as the Whole Shebang.

The deadline is September 1, 2005

For more details: <http://www.geocities.com/pocolocoplayers/contest.html>

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CHESHIRE CAT PRODUCTIONS

Looking for a two-character one-act romantic comedy (approx 35-40 mins) for one man and one woman to be included in an evening of one-acts on relationships

Submissions via email to Bernie Cardell
bernster74@hotmail.com

NO DEADLINE GIVEN

DIJO PRODUCTIONS (3 OPPS)

DIJO Productions LLC is a California theatrical production company, founded by Diana Burbano and Jerry Oshinsky. Jerry is a partner in the law firm which represents ICWP and he has asked me to forward this call for submissions.

Background

Diana and Jerry met in the late Spring, 2004, when they both were actors in a play by Monica Palacios, "Sweet Peace", performed in Santa Barbara. They decided to create their own production company--DIJO. At about the same time, Jerry became the

"Reading Series Coordinator" at The Ensemble, an Equity theater in Santa Barbara. Diana is an LA-based Equity/SAG actress and Jerry is a DC attorney, who also has acted and produced on both coasts. Diana also has been featured recently at South Coast Rep, Boston Court in Pasadena, CASA 0101, Center Stage in Santa Barbara, and many other theatres. Among many other productions, as DIJO, they produced and acted in staged readings at the Ford in LA, CASA 0101 in LA, and The Ensemble in Santa Barbara. Staged readings included *Death and the Maiden* by Ariel Dorfman, *Patient A* by Lee Blessing, *Illuminating Veronica* by Rogelio Martinez, as well as plays by Carl Sternheim and new plays at The Ford.

They are now looking, as DIJO, to branch out into full productions and to continue with staged readings. They are looking into production space in the greater LA area. Ultimately they would like to have their own space.

Call for Submissions:

DIJO seeks submissions of plays for full productions. While DIJO typically features Latina and Latino playwrights, that is not its exclusive mission. Of particular interest are plays that are "cutting edge" and take risks with subject matter or form. The submissions that they are seeking for full productions could have been produced previously, but not necessarily.

- Cast size: No preferred minimum or maximum.
- Works need not be written by women exclusively, although they do have an interest in promoting women playwrights.
- Pay is involved both for readings and full productions, and they do expect to be operating, for the most part, under Equity arrangements. Scripts may be submitted by US and non-US playwrights, keeping in mind that the audiences will come from California.

Diana appears on the IMDb website and Jerry can be "Googled" under Jerry Oshinsky and Jerold Oshinsky. A good deal of Jerry's "law stuff" will pop up on Google, and some of his theater activities.

Currently, Jerry is the Chairperson of the new Santa Barbara Theatre Co., which supercedes his Ensemble position. (Recently they featured *Eva Marie Saint* and *Jeff Hayden* in *Love Letters* by A. R. Gurney.)

Other Opportunities for playwrights: A) DIJO now seeks submissions, for 2006, of plays by Latina playwrights or plays on Latino themes written by non-Latinos) that have not been produced previously, for possible inclusion in the Ford Program. The Ford program each summer includes staged reading series of 11 new plays by Latino/Latina playwrights, or on Latino themes, that have not been produced elsewhere. In the current season, all of the writers are Latino/Latina--including DIJO's two productions by Alfonso Ramirez and Carlos Lacamara. DIJO submitted about 6

scripts and two were chosen, as part of the 12-play series. Others included: Caridad Svich, Elaine Romero, and Anne Garcia-Romero.

Last season featured a play by Lisa Cantor, a non-Latino, called Buried Secrets, which portrayed the plight of Mexican Jews during the Inquisition. The Ford website discusses this series.

B) Diana and Jerry also are assisting, on an informal basis, Santa Barbara City College, which is a wonderful, non-Equity house, which typically offers an Equity Guest Artist Contract to their lead. If Diana and Jerry see a script that they think might be of interest to City College, they would pass that on with the playwright's permission.

Submissions can be sent to Jerry or Diana by email in PDF or Word formats, or by regular mail.

Postal Addresses:

Jerry Oshinsky
1177 Oriole Rd.
Santa Barbara, CA 93108 USA

Diana Burbano
8460 Truxton Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90045 USA

E-mail:

Jerry Oshinsky: oshinskyj@dsmo.com
Diana Burbano: Grouchol@pacbell.net

Questions: to the email addresses above or call
Jerry at 202-828-2251 or 805-695-0791
Diana at 310-437-9246

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SON OF SEMELE ENSEMBLE

Hello! I am on the Administrative Staff and a part of Literary Department for Son of Semele Ensemble. We are a theater company based in Los Angeles and we produce original and under-exposed plays. As a member of the Lit. Department, I am always looking for new plays for our company to possibly produce in the next season. I would love for your members to share their work with me. They can email me at sharyn@sonofsemele.org.

Thank you very much, Sharyn Gabriel

RADHICA GANAPATHY DISSERTATION /ANTHOLOGY

I, Radhica Ganapathy, am a doctoral student at the Department of Theatre and Dance, Texas Tech University. My dissertation is a concentrated study of dramatic autobiographical texts written by contemporary female playwrights. This will also serve as an anthology compilation of new autobiographical plays by women.

If you would like to contribute to the above study of dramatized works of Female Autobiography, please note the following criteria essential for submission:

1. Autobiographical plays
2. Written by women from 1980 to Present
3. Unpublished
4. Full length plays preferred; one acts considered
5. Produced works preferred; unproduced works considered

Women from international communities are welcome to submit. I do need the plays to be in English - translations into English are welcome too. Please mail submissions, accompanied by cover letter, resume, production history, and synopsis to the following:

Contact Person &t Address:

Radhica Ganapathy
Texas Tech University
Department of Theatre and Dance Box 42061
Lubbock, TX 79409-2061

For further queries:
E-mail: radhicaganapathy@yahoo.com
Telephone: 806-747-3308

UNFINISHED BOSTON

What does it all mean? What are we looking for? There are thousands of possibilities; here are some we've imagined:

- Stories whose Boston neighborhood setting--the Ladder District, Roslindale Square, East Boston--is integral to the story's development

- Fiction that deals with/discusses race/race relations in Boston (past, present, or future)
- A false history of Boston's mayors
- Alternate histories in general, for example a story about Malcolm X's days in Roxbury
- Stories that make Boston neighborhoods come to life (such as old Scollay Square, or Clearly Square)
- A story from the point of view of a regular at the pit in Harvard Square
- The story of a fictional 1950s-60s era cabal led by Celtics star Bill Russell, Jacqueline Kennedy, and Mayor John B. Hynes: how and why they formed, why it was never found out
- Stories that wonder about Boston-specific things: what invention will emerge next from MIT and who's behind it; the Big Dig as a backdrop for a trying time in the life of a tunnel worker, etc.

These are not meant to be prescriptive, but idea or sparks to give you a better idea of the kind of thing we're looking for.

<http://www.unfinishedboston.com/submissions.php>

Submission Guidelines:

- submit in rich text format only as an attachment any length up to 5000 words
- Email submissions only: editor@unfinishedboston.com
- Submissions deadline 9/1/05

Unfinished Boston will be a 250 page perfect-bound book distributed across the United States, and available at most bookstores, with regional and national promotion. Publication will be in Spring 2006.

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FLINT CITY THEATRE

We are a non-profit theatre on a shoestring budget. If your play is selected for production or stage reading, we cannot offer any money. However, we will be happy to send you all related press (posters, program, reviews etc.) in hard copy and/or electronically.

If your play is selected for production, your bio, pic and related info you send will be displayed on the News page of our website during the course of rehearsal and production.

If you send us hard copy and wish to have your play returned to you, you must send a postage paid envelope.

Short Play Festival

Performance, Jan 26, 27, 28, 2006. Dedicated to the promotion of new plays.

- 10-20 pages
- 2-5 characters
- Minimal set
- No previously published plays.
- Deadline: Sept 1, 2005

We will contact you ONLY if we select your play for stage reading or production.

General Submissions

- You may submit plays of any length for consideration for stage reading and/or production throughout the season.
- No previously published plays.

Please note that response to your submission is dependant on the availability of readers.

We will contact you ONLY if we select your play for stage reading or production.

You may submit electronically, as a word or PDF attachment to
Subject: FCT Play Submission
contact@flintcitytheatre.com

or hard copy to:
FCT Play Submissions
PO Box 158
Flint, MI 48501-0158

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HEATHER ALDRIDGE-VENTUCCI

As most of you know we closed our theater doors in January of 2003. We thank all of you for the fond memories, support, and participation in our theater and productions.

After a two-year break we are looking to move forward and continue our original mission of developing new playwrights, directors, and actors, in a safe and encouraging environment.

We are currently looking for one-act plays , either dramatic or comedic, with strong character-driven female roles.

Upon choosing one acts, we will plan to do: • A reading series of ten one-acts

- A workshop of four of those one-acts
- A full production of two-three of those one-acts

All of the above will include talkbacks with the audience in an effort to involve the community in the decision-making and development of the plays. Send me your work, send this email on to others, and please keep in touch.

Sincerely,

Heather Aldridge-Venitucci

(yes, I have broken down and started to use my married name) Send all scripts to haldridge@nyc.rr.com

Call with questions: 212-592-9029

COWGIRL SCRIPTS

Sharon Stearns of Wishbone Productions is looking for scripts (especially one-woman shows) about cowgirls.

Below is most of what I know, pasted here from her emails. I've also directed her to the ICWP website for more info on the group.

"I am part of a small theatre company - Wishbone Productions that works out of The Historic O'Keefe Ranch in Vernon, B.C. (Theatre seats 170) Cowboy/girl/ western themed material with music, goes over well...."

Send scripts to Sharon at:
Wishbone Productions
Box 5, Dunster, B.C. VOJ 1JO Canada
or send query via email at stearnssa@yahoo.com

Peace, Vicki
Vicki Caroline Cheatwood
www.vickicarolinecheatwood.com

NO DEADLINE GIVEN

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THEATRE ONE PRODUCTIONS

located 45 miles south of Boston is seeking new plays for stage readings, future slams and possible full productions.

- Comedies preferred but will strongly consider dramas.
- Children's plays and musicals not accepted at this time.
- Please do not send original copies as none will be returned, however if your work is selected you will be contacted so you can participated in audience feed back of your play.
- Appreciate plays with no more than 4 characters as our venue is a small.
- The plays can be 5, 10, 60 up to 90 minutes.
- Monologues and performance pieces also accepted.

Theatre One's mission goals is to nurture, develop and encourage playwrights.

Please send plays to:

Theatre One Productions, Inc.
C/O Peg Holzemer
12 Spencer St. # C Middleboro, MA 02346
or attach in Word and e-mail to
Pegasus@mlp.com

Thank you

NO DEADLINE GIVEN

LIVE GIRLS!

Seeking Submissions of plays by women for 2006 Season All submissions must be postmarked by Sep 15th, 2005

We are looking to fill the following spots in our upcoming season

- Two full-length plays to be produced in, March and September. Plays may have received previous productions but preferably not in the Seattle area. Special attention for the March slot will be given to plays about or inspired by real women to be produced in honor of Women's History Month.
- 10-minute plays for our annual festival of shorts, Quickies to be produced in June. Plays submitted for Quickies may have had previous productions but new works are encouraged.
- Unproduced plays seeking development for Live Girls! Playwriting Lab, dates TBA. Plays submitted for the Lab will receive a public staged reading. We are interested in both one-act and full-length plays for the Playwriting Lab.
- Live Girls! season also includes: three one-act plays commissioned for Holiday XXX, a reading of a new play commissioned for our Lab, and invitations for writers to be involved in our Bakers Dozen experiments. All writers who submit will be considered for these opportunities but let us know if you are particularly interested in any or all of the above.

Submission Guidelines

- All submissions must be received by post.
- Please include a letter of introduction noting: if your play has had any previous productions, your email address for correspondence, and your bio as a playwright
- Playwrights may submit up to 2 plays.
- If you would like your scripts returned please include a self addressed stamped envelope.
- For full-length play submissions please include only 10-15 pages
- For 10-minute and one-act submissions please include entire play
- All playwrights will be contacted by email regarding the status of their submission by December 15th, 2005.

Mail submissions to:
Live Girls! Theater
3518 Fremont Ave. N. #478
Seattle, WA 98103

Please direct any submission questions to:

Zoe Fitzgerald

Associate Artistic Director and Literary Manager
Live Girls! theater
zoe@livegirlstheater.org

www.livegirlstheater.org

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THE NEW GROUP: IMMIGRANTS' THEATRE PROJECT

the Martin E. Segal Theater of The Graduate Center, CUNY, present, for the third year, its ground-breaking reading series dealing with the experience of immigration in the 21st century, entitled:

Dis-Location and Re-Invention: International Plays about the Experience of Immigration

With the state of the world as it is, this is an important topic for theatre and dramatic consideration. The past series included a mix of plays by American writers with a wide range of ethnic backgrounds: Caribbean, Iranian, Italian, African-American, Puerto Rican, Vietnamese, Filipino, Jewish, Chinese, Korean, Irish, German. The playwrights were: Kitty Chen, Michael angel Johnson, Joe Hortua, Linda Faigoa, Quiara Nudes, Qui Nguyen, Keith Byron Kirk, Novid Parsi. The 2006 series will feature a selection of 4 -5 new plays from writers from the US and around the world dealing with immigration and refugeess internationally. We are looking for finished pays, in English or translated into English, whose themes relate to immigration and refugees in the non-US world. These plays will be part of the readings series in the Spring, 2006, at the Martin E. Segal Theatre. All readings are followed by a post-show Q & A with the playwright, director, and an expert on the particular topic or culture dealt with in the play. We are NOT looking for plays in early stages of development. However, they can be new translations. If the playwright is not from the US, we will make an attempt to bring the playwright to NY, hopefully in cooperation with other international institutaions. There is a small stipend for the playwright and a chance to hear the work in the theatre/academic New York community.

DO NOT SUBMIT THE ENTIRE PLAY. You will be contacted if we are interested in looking at the entire script.

The deadline for submission is September 15, 2005.

- Please submit the following :
- Your Name
- Country of Origin Phone/Fax
- Email
- Curriculum Vitae
- Bio Synopsis of the play
- TWO scenes from the play, or the equivalent of about 10 pages.

Please address any questions or send the information to the following curator:

Ian Morgan
Associate Artistic Director
New Group
ian@thenewgroup.org

For information on the above organizations you can visit our websites:
www.thenewgroup.org

www.immigrantstheat.org

www.gc.cuny.org

We look forward to hearing from you!!!
Marcy Arlin
Immigrants' Theatre Project

MISSION STATEMENT

To support women playwrights around the world by:

- bringing international attention to their achievements
- encouraging production of their plays, translation, publication, and international distributions of their works
- providing means for communication and contact among the sister community of the world's women dramatists assisting them in developing the tools of their craft, in determining their own artistic forms, and in setting their own critical standards encouraging scholarly and critical examination and study of the history and the contemporary work and concerns of women playwrights
- supporting their efforts to gain professional equality, and to express their own personal, artistic, social, and political vision without censorship, harassment, or personal danger

More information about ICWP at:
www.internationalwomenplaywrights.org