FROM THE DIRECTOR

**Sonia Flew**, the program’s main-stage spring production, was certainly well attended at our “swing” space, the Players Theatre. The play written by Melinda Lopez and directed to stunning effect by full-time faculty member Dr. Nan Smithner, is set between post-revolutionary Cuba and post-9/11 America, and examines the impact of world history on the lives of ordinary people. It is a timely text focused on Sonia, a Cuban-American woman smuggled as a child out of Cuba and into the United States as a part of Operation Pedro Pan. Sonia’s journey is richly resonant with the experience of so many others who are torn between cultural and familial identity, and those who are caught between conflicting expectations and wants. The audience responses, especially those of the school students who attended the matinees, demonstrated the important role that Ed Theatre continues to play in presenting topical material that speaks powerfully to an urban audience. My sincere thanks to all those who contributed so strongly to the success of **Sonia Flew**.

This production was followed by **Shakespeare to Go** (STG), our energetic traveling troupe of actors, who landed in the Skirball Theatre to share their own adaptation of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. It was heartening to see so many members of our community, faculty, students, alumni and administration supporting STG, a student initiative begun in 2003. Speaking of student directed efforts, the Theatrix! Company dazzled us again with their 10-minute play reading festival, as did **Dr. Philip Taylor**, Program Director

Study Abroad: **Puerto Rico 2010**

By Sara Simons (Ph.D. Student)

“**Theatre Practices**” is a vague title for a class, and despite the colorful and detailed course book, I headed out for my Intersession class in Puerto Rico unsure exactly what it would entail. I was delighted to find a class that blended theatre with other art forms, engaging us in a way that was both compelling and aesthetically challenging. I would be remiss if I did not admit that I picked this class partly for the weather factor; it’s hard to turn down the opportunity to wear sandals for two weeks in the middle of a dreary New York winter. But while the warm air certainly made learning more pleasant, it was far from the most important part of this trip. Instead, it was the backdrop for a learning experience that seemed less like a traditional graduate school class and more like an exploration of beauty.

For me, the tour of beauty began the first day, when we went to **Sonia Flew**, the program’s main-stage spring production, was certainly well attended at our “swing” space, the Players Theatre. The play written by Melinda Lopez and directed to stunning effect by full-time faculty member Dr. Nan Smithner, is set between post-revolutionary Cuba and post-9/11 America, and examines the impact of world history on the lives of ordinary people. It is a timely text focused on Sonia, a Cuban-American woman smuggled as a child out of Cuba and into the United States as a part of Operation Pedro Pan. Sonia’s journey is richly resonant with the experience of so many others who are torn between cultural and familial identity, and those who are caught between conflicting expectations and wants. The audience responses, especially those of the school

**Ed Theatre Allows Me to Be Myself**

By Robert Stevenson (ETHR, ’13)

When I tell people I am studying Educational Theatre, they usually give the same response: “Oh, wow! Cool!” It is cool. In my second semester as an undergrad in the program, I have learned that my major is something to be proud of. It’s unexpected amongst other majors — setting me, and all of us, apart.

Coming to NYU this fall was incredibly exciting. My classmates and I had all come from years of education in which we had few
FROM THE DIRECTOR

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Regina Ress with her delightful Valentine’s Day storytelling event.

The semester has been charged with so many highlights that it’s difficult to single out any one particular event. Perhaps most memorable for me was the Research Course which internationally renowned scholar, Professor Johnny Saldaña, led with 28 of our graduate students. NYU prides itself on its ability to bring to campus many of the most influential figures in the field. In April, the NYU Forum on Citizenship and Applied Theatre was pleased to welcome innovators, artists and educators from across the world. And this summer Professor Helen Nicholson, prolific writer from Royal Holloway College will join our conversation series in London during study abroad, while at Washington Square, we are thrilled to be hosting a seminar on young people’s theatre to overlap with the June Play Development Series. My thanks to Teresa Fisher, retiring doctoral fellow, for all of her efforts in supporting this project and for promoting its ongoing importance in the arts community.

We were saddened to hear of the loss of Dr. Vera Mowry Roberts who passed away in early spring. Dr. Roberts, Emerita at Hunter College and founder of the theatre department there, was a great friend of NYU, and especially of our program’s founders Dr. Lowell and Nancy Swortzell. Vera stepped in to teach theatre history at NYU in the 1980s, and she was an important presence at the first International Drama in Education Research Institute, held at Griffith University, Australia, 15 years ago. I was privileged to witness first hand Vera’s impact on educational theatre. Tributes highlighted Vera’s sharp intellectual curiosity, her scholarship in theatre history, her great generosity, and her pioneering efforts to support the next generation, especially those of young women beginning in the Academy. Vera Mowry Roberts was one of a kind, and she will be greatly missed.

—Philip Taylor

P R O F I L E S

Spring 2010 Swortzell Scholars

The Program is pleased to introduce our two Swortzell Scholars for the spring term, Carolyn Burke and Abe Velazquez. The Lowell and Nancy Swortzell Scholarship was established in 2002 to offer financial support for graduate students. Recipients have included Hector Estrada, Teresa Fisher, Dori Robinson, Daphnie Sicre, Jonathan Shmidt and Jim Devivo.

Carolyn Burke was honored to receive the Lowell and Nancy Swortzell Scholarship. Since childhood she has been involved in the performing arts, and has done almost everything from church plays and piano recitals to hanging lights for a community theater. At the age of fourteen, she auditioned and was accepted in the Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music and Art and the Performing Arts where she studied vocal music for four years. After graduating from the FAME school, Carolyn found her way to Syracuse University where she then received a BFA in Acting. She has been a part of the Educational Theatre community at NYU since 2008 and has most recently been seen as Margaret in the mainstage production of Woyzeck and The Class Project (fall 2008), and has also been an active participant in a number of Theatrix! Play Festivals. Carolyn recently returned from an amazing Study Abroad experience in Puerto Rico and plans to graduate in May, 2010.

Abe Velazquez earned his B.Sc. from New York University and is currently working toward his M.A. in Educational Theatre in Colleges and Communities at NYU. From an early age, this South Bronx native has been recognized in New York City as a fierce battle MC, a conscious and profound poetry writer, and a creative visual artist.

As a member of Lyrical Circle, Abe co-wrote and acted in the play Off the Subject. The book, Off the Subject, was written soon after with foreword by Sekou Sundiata and afterward by Nikki Giovanni. The published work creates dialogue for the relationships between young men and women, questions social norms, and explores race, class, gender, and politics through poetry.

Abe tutors and mentors youth as a teaching artist at both public and private schools all across New York City & New Jersey.

His poetry and lifestyle have been broadcast on Urban Latino Magazine TV for positive Latino role models taking on the role of educators. His talents have been showcased at The SoHo House, CBGB’s, Bowery Poetry Club, The Door, Food for Thought Cafe, La Pregunta Arts Cafe, El Puente, The Nuyorican Poet’s Cafe, The Brotherhood/SisterSol, NYU, Columbia University, Fordham University, Wesleyan University, St. John’s University, SUNY Purchase, Swarthmore College, St. Peter’s College, CUNY Law School, and Hunter College among others.

What moves and inspires Abe the most is his desire to see a more compassionate and just society. Abe’s future goals include further developing his Taoist studies, developing his global outreach and aide movement, the “Heal the World” tour, and the construction of an art center in South America catering to youth arts development.

If you would like to donate to the Lowell and Nancy Swortzell Scholarship Fund, please visit:
http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/music/edtheatre/programs/scholarship

Carolyn Burke

Abe Velazquez

NYUSteinhardt
Revue

Number Thirteen, Spring 2010

Editor-in-Chief: Jonathan Jones
Copy Editors: Teresa Fisher and Evelynn Harmer
Photo Editor: Jonathan Jones

Program in Educational Theatre
Department of Music and Performing Arts Professions
Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development
Joseph and Violet Pless Hall,
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Study Abroad: Puerto Rico 2010

...to El Grupo de Teatro Yerbabrú. All over the studio hung brightly colored, fabulously constructed masks built by Deborah Hunt, one of the many guest artists with whom we had the pleasure of working. The presence of such vivid masks set the tone for the rest of the trip, exploring different facets of beauty across disciplines.

Another highlight of the trip was our “Transforming Spaces” workshop with two more of our guest faculty, Rosa Luisa Márquez, from the Theatre department at the University of Puerto Rico, and Antonio Martorell, a renowned Puerto Rican artist who works across different media to create stunning pieces that reflect social and cultural concerns. Rosa Luisa and Antonio are a dynamic duo, and early in the trip, they led us in a workshop that transformed the space of a UPR art museum into our own magical version of Project Runway, creating elaborate costumes from rolls of white paper, and using the costumes as the centerpiece for creating brief visual stories. The workshop transformed not only the space of the museum, but also the way many of us viewed the construction of a story, starting not with a plot outline but with an image, and building a story from there. This workshop was a prime example of the way that beauty can be found in unexpected places.

The tour of beauty continued throughout the trip. One of my favorite mornings was a Physical Theatre workshop led by NYU’s own Javier Cardona, who showed us how beauty can be found within the body, in simple movements that flowed together (and made our legs hurt the next day!).

A big focus of this course was doing Theatre of the Oppressed work. We worked in small groups to create Forum Theatre pieces on topics that mattered to us, and we presented the work at an Open Forum held in the theatre at UPR. Our Theatre of the Oppressed work was facilitated by Julian Boal. While Julian made it clear up front that he is not his father, he has a fun and engaging style all his own. I greatly enjoyed working to develop our Forum Theatre pieces and experimenting with different rehearsal techniques. Aesthetically, my favorite part was working to develop the abstract introduction to the piece. I had not created that kind of work before, and I found it powerful. Once we had our introduction, we worked to develop the rest of our piece, which was not easy. One of the best moments of the trip for me was working with my group on the grass outside our hotel as our ideas finally coalesced and we put together a strong and coherent piece.

In our final days, we rehearsed the pieces, explored the roles of the protagonist and the antagonist, and got tips on jokering from Julian before our final performance. Having an audience there was wonderful — the audience members jumped in with interventions I never would have thought of and shaped the pieces in a new light, opening up new perspectives on dealing with oppression.

Overall, the trip was an intense and rewarding experience and a vivid tour of beauty through the disciplines.

A blog chronicling the Study Abroad trip in San Juan can be found at: http://theatrepractices.blogspot.com/

Further information on Study Abroad Programs in the Program in Educational Theatre can be found at: http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/music/edtheatre/programs/summer/abroad

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Rosa Luisa Márquez — An Inspiration

Born in Puerto Rico in 1947, Rosa Luisa Márquez has a Bachelor’s Degree from the University of Puerto Rico, an M.A. from New York University, and Ph.D. from Michigan State University. Dr. Márquez is a Full Professor of Theater and Drama at the University of Puerto Rico where she teaches Introduction to Theatre, Theater Games, Socio-drama, Theatre History, Latin American and Post-Brechtian Theatre, and stages plays.

Dr. Márquez trained in street theater and founded Anamú Theater Collective. She was a constant apprentice to Peter Schumann of the Bread and Puppet Theater, Augusto Boal of the Theater of the Oppressed, of Grupo Yuyachkani from Perú, and Grupo Malayerba from Ecuador. She has developed her own theatrical language in collaboration with Puerto Rican graphic artist Antonio Martorell. Her projects have traveled extensively through North and South America and the Caribbean. Dr. Márquez is the winner of the Puerto Rican Drama Critics Circle Award for Theatrical Creativity, 1990 and Best Production Award for her staging of Jardín de Pulpos, 1996, for the University of...

An accomplished actress and director, dramatist, radio and TV producer and announcer, Dr. Márquez published her first book on her own methodology: *Brincos y Saltos: el juego como disciplina teatral. (Leaps and Bounds: Games as Theatrical Discipline)*. A second edition was published in 1996. In 2002, she published *Historias para Ser Contadas: el montaje*, a model book of her staging of Osvaldo Dragun’s Latin American classic and is presently working on a documentary on theatre games as an educational, social change, and performance tool.

As Artist-in-Residence at MIT’s Music and Theatre Department from 1992-1993, Dr. Márquez established bridges between diverse groups and theatres in the U.S. and Latin America. Since 1989, she has been a member of the Board of Directors of the International School of Theatre of Latin America and the Caribbean headed by Argentinean playwright Osvaldo Dragn.”

Rosa Luisa first met Augusto Boal in 1979 and incorporated his theories and practice into her courses thereafter. She spent 1982-1983 as his apprentice in Paris and acted in one of his plays. In 1986, she accompanied Boal back from exile to Brazil and collaborated with him as he developed theatre projects for the public school system.

She remained in constant contact with Boal throughout the rest of his life and participated in projects with him both in the Americas and Europe. Kyla McHale, student on the study abroad program, noted Dr. Márquez’s reflection that, “What is generous of Boal is that he gives us the alphabet but we make the words” — a statement McHale would apply to all of the work we do as she sees it as a perfect analogy for graduate school (we are given the alphabet and then write the words, sentences and curriculum ourselves).

In 2004, Márquez co-planned the Puerto Rican component of the NYU intersession course in community theatre. During the summer of 2006, she connected NYU with Boal in Río and helped coordinate a workshop with students from NYU as well as students and alumni from the University of Puerto Rico.

Dr. Márquez’s participation in the study abroad program this January was transformative for many of the students. Sasha Lakind described Rosa Luisa as, “An inspiration — each day bringing something new for us to discover, presenting ideas to blow us all away with so many treasures to hold onto.” Visiting student, Thom Hecht, remarked about Dr. Márquez’s pedagogical approach, describing it as, “Hands-on, stimulating and shaping the idea of applied educational theatre throughout the workshop. Márquez explained that it is vital that the facilitator demonstrates and participates in every trust exercise to gain the trust of the group.”

Dr. Márquez is presently on sabbatical after chairing the Interdisciplinary Studies Program at the University of Puerto Rico for five years. Ph.D. candidate Teresa Fisher praised Dr. Márquez’s work with our program, labeling her as, “An amazing facilitator, incredibly generous, and compassionate,” and we are lucky to have her as part of our Educational Theatre family.

**Dr. Rosa Luisa Márquez — An Inspiration**

*continued from page 3*

**Forum on Citizenship and Applied Theatre: Planning and Preparation**

By Teresa Fisher (Ph.D. Candidate)

Plans for the 2010 Forum on Citizenship and Applied Theatre started well before the 2009 Forum on Theatre Pedagogy had even taken place. While painstakingly considered, choosing a new focus is relatively easy compared to all the planning and preparation steps which precede each year’s forum.

The 2010 Forum Planning Committee was led by Dr. David Montgomery, Visiting Professor in the Program in Educational Theatre. He was assisted by Amy Cordileone, Ph.D. candidate and Super Adjunct; Jonathan Jones, Ph.D. Fellow; Daphnie Sirec, Ph.D. candidate; Sara Simons, Ph.D. Fellow; Teresa Fisher, Ph.D. Fellow; Evelynn Harmer and Christopher Goslin, MA students. The committee spent the past year, especially the past six months busily making plans for the 2010 Forum.

What goes into planning a forum? First, a focus must be chosen and developed into a clear proposal. This is done by examining current theory and practice in the field — what questions are being asked, what are people doing in the field, and what do practitioners, educators, and researchers want to know more about — as well as what is happening in the global community. With last year’s passing of Augusto Boal, a leader in applied theatre and a truly remarkable global citizen, all our thoughts turned to how we use theatre, especially in communities, prisons, hospitals, schools, and other sites, to transform society. As explicated in its description, “The goal of this forum is to facilitate a dialogue on citizenship and applied theatre contexts through exploring the field of arts-based community engagement. The forum will also investigate the perceived boundaries and barriers for artist/educators committed to understanding the roles and responsibilities of citizens in both local and global communities.”

Once the focus of the forum is chosen and goals set, attention shifts to the practical matters of putting together a call for proposals, finding keynote and panel speakers, securing space and materials, networking with potential collaborators, reviewing proposals, registering participants, coordinating the budget, ordering food, finding volunteers, creating welcome packets, and a hundred other tasks along the way.

This year we were fortunate to have many distinguished leaders in the field of applied theatre join us, including Michael Rohd (Sojourn Theatre, Portland, Oregon), author of *Theatre for Community, Conflict, and Dialogue*, Margarita Espada, a dedicated artist, educator, and cultural organizer, and Julian Boal, founding member of GTO, Paris. Additionally, preeminent legal scholar, Anthony Thompson, helped us interrogate the question of what constitutes citizenship in society. In addition to those honored guests, the committee received a great many exciting proposals for workshops, performances, narratives, and paper presentations including a significant number of international proposals.

Next year’s forum will examine Drama and Health Education and include a keynote address by Ross Prior, editor of *Journal of Applied Arts and Health*. For further information, please contact Sara Simons at sara.simons@nyu.edu.
EDUCATIONAL THEATRE PROFILES

Methods and Materials of Research with Visiting Professor Johnny Saldaña

NYU was thrilled to host Johnny Saldaña in spring 2010. Saldaña is a Professor of Theatre in the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts’ School of Theatre and Film at Arizona State University (ASU) where he has taught since 1981. He has been involved in the field of theatre education as a teacher educator, drama specialist, director, and researcher.

Mr. Saldaña is the author of Drama of Color: Improvisation with Multiethnic Folklore (Heinemann, 1995), a teacher’s resource text and recipient of the 1996 Distinguished Book Award from the American Alliance for Theatre & Education (AATE); Longitudinal Qualitative Research: Analyzing Change Through Time (AltaMira Press, 2003), a research methods book and recipient of the 2004 Outstanding Book Award from the National Communication Association’s Ethnography Division; Ethnodrama: An Anthology of Reality Theatre (AltaMira Press, 2005), an edited collection of ethnographic-based plays; and The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers (Sage Publications, 2009), a handbook on qualitative data analysis. His forthcoming textbook, Understanding Qualitative Research: The Fundamentals, will be published by Oxford University Press in 2011. Saldaña has published articles in such journals as Youth Theatre Journal, Stage of the Art, Teaching Theatre, Research in Drama Education, Research Studies in Music Education, Multicultural Perspectives, Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy, and Qualitative Inquiry. He has also published chapters on research methods for such titles as Arts-Based Research in Education, Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research, Handbook of Longitudinal Research, and entries for The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods.

Saldaña’s research methods in longitudinal inquiry, ethnodrama, and coding have been applied and cited by researchers internationally. He is an eight-time recipient of the President’s Citation of Merit from AATE, the 1989 Creative Drama Award, the 1996 and 2001 Research Awards from AATE, the Burlington Resources Foundation Faculty Achievement Award in 1991, the ASU College of the Arts Distinguished Teacher of the Year Award in 1995 and 2008, and the ASU College of the Arts Research Award in 2005. In 2000, 2008, and 2009, he was recognized as a finalist by the ASU Parents Association for Professor of the Year.

Mr. Saldaña received his BFA in Drama and English Education in 1976, and MFA in Drama in 1979 from the University of Texas at Austin. Saldaña has taught at UT-Austin and Washington State University in Pullman. He was born in Austin, Texas, and currently resides in Phoenix.

At NYU, as well as teaching the research methods course, Saldaña gave a fascinating lecture on his latest research, “Lifelong Impact: Adult Perceptions of Their High School Speech and/or Theatre Participation.” The purpose of the “Lifelong Impact” study is to determine in what ways participation in high school theatre/speech classes and/or related extra-curricular activities may have positively influenced and affected adults after graduation.

CURRENT DOCTORAL RESEARCH

By Daphne Sicre (Ph.D. Candidate)

Jim DeVivo is in the preliminary stages of drafting a dissertation proposal and is currently enrolled in the dissertation proposal seminar taught by Professor Elizabeth Norman. He plans to study the experiences of student writers who participate in young playwrights festivals conducted by professional theatre companies in the United States.

Dana Edell is in her fifth (and final!) year of the doctoral program in Educational Theatre. Her dissertation, titled “Say It How It Is: A Study of Urban Teenage Girls who Challenge and Perpetuate Cultural Narratives through Writing and Performing Theater,” is in its final revisions and she aims to file in April 2010. The study analyzes and explores the experiences of teenage girls who participated in the community-based performing arts organization, viBe Theater Experience, over two and half years.

Teresa Fisher's dissertation will consider how obesity is experienced by emerging adult women. She will utilize theatre for social change, specifically a combination of Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed and Rainbow of Desire forms, to explore, interrogate, and understand obesity. This arts-based qualitative study will aim to investigate the internal and external oppressions that exist within obesity.

Daphnie Sicre is currently researching the discourse of race in performance and the drama curriculum, studying theories and practices of applied theatre for social change, directing bilingual productions and focusing on a global perspective for Theatre for Young Audiences. The focal points of her dissertation are the African-American and Latino representations and the performance of AfroLatinidad manifest in the play Platanos & Collard Greens as experienced and negotiated by the director, playwright, actors and audience members. This semester, she plans on handing in her dissertation proposal so that she can finally start her research!
ON STAGE | Woyzeck on Woyzeck

By Robert Keith (ETHR, ’12)

In the early part of 1836, a terminally ill Georg Büchner spent his last months working on what would become his magnum opus. It was based on the tragic life of Johann Christian Woyzeck, a former soldier who was deemed psychologically incompetent shortly before his public execution. As both a doctor and a dramatist, it seemed that Büchner was inspired by the moral questions raised by Woyzeck’s fragile psychology. He chose to abandon the grandiose Aristotelian hero and instead focused on a workingman’s tragedy with its roots firmly in historical fact.

Through the use of medical documents and court transcripts he produced three fragmented drafts before his untimely death. The text was saved by his brother and eventually edited into a performable text by Gisli Örn Gardarsson to produce a brutally surreal adaptation. The work immediately gained popularity and was produced at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Malthouse Theatre (Melbourne, Australia), and most recently by our own New York University. Woyzeck seemed to be finding his voice again, but who exactly was he speaking to over a hundred years after his execution?

Shortly after the fall run of the Educational Theatre Program’s Woyzeck, several members of the cast (myself included) met with director Dr. Philip Taylor and prepared a condensed form of the show to be performed for a collection of inmates at Woodbourne Correctional Facility in upstate New York. This presentation was the culmination of a month-long collaboration between the Educational Theatre Program and Rehabilitation through the Arts (RTA).

Performing Woyzeck for the inmates proved to be an entirely different experience from our two-week run in the Black Box. Firstly, we were stripped of all of the safety nets that modern theatre provides. Without the use of costumes, lights, and the massive amount of water, we were to rely entirely upon Büchner’s words and the story we were telling. In this foreign territory we stared into the eyes of men who most likely understood Woyzeck better than we ever could. Despite all my empathy for the character, Woyzeck’s extreme violence and persecution were foreign to me; they merely existed in my life as abstractions — hints of feelings that I attempted to recreate onstage. Here there was no room for abstractions; the audience alone had brought the work to a new level of reality, elevating it far beyond the realm of academia.

Dr. Taylor structured the showing informally, so the inmates were able to actively participate with guided discussion at the end of every scene. The men became so genuinely eager to participate with questions and observations, that by the end of the show they could hardly contain themselves within their seats. In Woyzeck’s final monologue, he appeals to audience’s sympathy and asks, “Do you think I killed someone? Am I a murderer?” Suddenly there came a chorus of yes from the audience. However, it was by no means a disrespectful interjection. It was a sincere reaction, a proclamation that there would be no denial here; Woyzeck was guilty. This is not to say the inmates were not empathetic with Woyzeck; their adaptation proved quite the opposite.

About a dozen men took the stage, none of whom had any prior performance experience, and began a much different Woyzeck. They modestly worked through the story incorporating both tragedy and humor in a modern context. The inmates proved themselves to...
be very serious artists as they interwove what seemed to be their own struggles, vices, and backgrounds into the play. As we watched a desperate drug-addled Woyzeck struggle his lover in both rage and confusion, I felt privileged to view something so powerful. As Marie grew still in that man’s arms, the silence proved it was no longer about Woyzeck, or Büchner, or theatre: it was about understanding. Understanding violence. Understanding each other. Understanding a darker side of humanity that builds up and festers if unattended. Any doubt in my mind was immediately erased; Woyzeck had spoken clearly to them, and they had readily received the message.

People have frequently asked me what Woyzeck had to do with educational theatre. I could talk about the roots of socially conscious theatre, its adherence to a documentary impulse in theatre, or a dozen other intellectual justifications — but it’s not really about that. It’s about leaving that prison knowing that your art form had given twenty inmates the opportunity to further understand a dark and potentially volatile part of themselves in a safe and healthy manner.

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Student Conversations: Bringing Woyzeck to the Schools

By Tyler Eccleston-Grimes (ETHR, ’12)

When dealing with mature and complex material it is essential to start conversations and educate those who will be witness to it, especially when they are younger students. As the opening of Woyzeck drew near, the cast and assistant director made their way to the schools to help prepare the students for the show they would be seeing. Our goal was to engage the students who would be coming to our two student matinees in a conversation rich enough to bring them into the world of our play.

Our first visit brought us to Gramercy Arts High School where we joined an acting class led by a very enthusiastic teacher, Mr. Simeon Buresch. The students were bright and eager to participate as we began our activity. Using a visually stimulating monologue that is repeated several times throughout the show, we read the monologue out loud and asked the students to stop us at every image we came across. After finding about thirty of them, we separated the kids into groups where they had to physicalize the different images, using combinations of sound and movement. The results were astounding. Each group brought powerful thought and meaning to their images and the room buzzed with understanding. The students were able to have fun, talk about the show, get at deeper meanings behind the text, and get to know the cast all at once. We can only guess from their stretched smiles that they enjoyed the activity.

A week later we went to Brooklyn School for Music & Theater where we taught not one, but two different classes, with the assistance of Ms. Stacey Cervellino. The first class we taught found us with the same activity as at the Gramercy Arts High School. Although it was the same process, we had drastically different results. These students, using the same words, managed to create completely different (though equally thought-provoking) pictures from those of their predecessors a week earlier.

As an educator and facilitator it was amazing to see how much meaning and imagery can come from a text, and to see how different students reacted to it. With the second class came a new activity. Being that it was the “advanced” acting class, we thought they could handle a different activity. As Woyzeck was based on current events during the lifetime of Georg Büchner, we read a newspaper article about the 1964 murder of Kitty Genovese where her neighbors turned their heads while she screamed for help in the street below. It became the students’ job to get into groups and become the neighbors and act out the various scenarios that prevented these individuals from helping their neighbor. Each group brought a compelling argument to why no one might have helped this poor woman and they raised several questions about self-preservation and the family unit.

What resulted was some of the greatest audience engagement I’ve ever witnessed. The two schools who came to the student matinees were engrossed in the action on stage which was reflect-ed in the talk back where they asked smart, complex, and original questions about the play. Gone were the questions asking what the actor’s favorite color was, replaced by questions about the nature of the abstraction in the text, only further proving the importance of education and conversation that good theatre should raise.
Observations on the Rehearsal Process for Sonia Flew

By Lily Winograd (ETED)

From an Educational Theatre perspective, one thing I have learned is that theater is a community building agent. Nan Smithner, the director of the spring play, Sonia Flew, used movement and characterization techniques to work their natural magic towards community building. There was no need for ice breakers because the theatrical activities that Smithner facilitated already asked the actors to work together as an ensemble.

Although time was one of her biggest concerns when beginning the rehearsal process, Smithner used the first week of rehearsals for ensemble building activities and exploration of the show. Smithner employed the Viewpoints technique, which she learned from its originator, Mary Overly. Smithner explained Viewpoints as, “A way of defining movement, a way of creating ensemble, a way of understanding special relationships between actors.” With the use of Viewpoints, actors got a chance to experiment with their body, the space, and those around them — and these activities helped foster an environment from which a bonded ensemble emerged. When asked about the group as a whole, Nan described how impressed she was with the talent, enthusiasm, and versatility of the cast. As Nan put it, “I feel that everybody has something to teach each other,” and allowing the cast to openly reflect on each activity and technique enabled this teaching to occur.

A significant hurdle that the director had to overcome involved the structure of the play as it differs from most other plays in that the first and second acts have two completely different casts. The different characters only meet during two short occasions in the play. A risk to directing a play that is organized in such a way is that the actors may only bond with the other actors in their respective act. Smithner explained, “In this play, the merging of the two worlds is really important to the telling of the play. You could just exist in separate worlds and never meet in rehearsal. I told them that the show wouldn’t succeed unless we had an ensemble feel to it with all of the disparate scenes.” One of the techniques that Smithner used to fix this potential issue was to have the actors create a back-story with partners that they do not meet in the play. After doing this activity, the actors shared wonderful insight into their characters and into the relationships between the two different casts. Without doing this activity, the actors may not have had the chance to explore the connections between those that they do not meet within the confines of the play.

Some other techniques that were used to lead the actors towards building an ensemble included physical and emotional gesture, mirroring, and in depth conversations about some of the issues that the play brought up. The bonds made between those involved with the show can also be attributed to the passionate cast and crew involved with making Sonia Flew a success. Thanks to Nan Smithner, the cast and crew of Sonia Flew came together to work towards a common goal: a compelling performance.

Ed Theatre Students and Alumni Create First Foot Theatre Productions

By Guleraana Mir (EDTC, ’09)

First Foot Theatre Productions was a dream that took over six years to formulate and less than six months to realize. It is remarkable what can be achieved when you have the deep-set love of theatre, support from fabulous friends and the educational foundation of an institution like New York University.

Founded by Guleraana Mir, an alumnus of EDTC and Christopher Goslin, a current student in the same Educational Theatre Masters program, First Foot began its journey in the Ireland Study Abroad, summer 2009. Chris and Guleraana met in Dublin and empowered by the creative atmosphere initiated a series of conversations along the lines of “wouldn’t it be awesome if we started our own theatre company?” These ramblings continued until the end November when finally Chris filed with New York State and an LLC company was born.

Passionate about the concept of applied theatre; a sense of theatre grown from a community, to benefit communities around us, Mir and Goslin made the executive decision to leave the LLC and file for nonprofit status. First Foot is an organization that represents the ideals of Augusto Boal and his contemporaries, upholding the notion that theatre is a tool to not only look at the world and ourselves, but also to motivate change: Acting, Collaborating, Transforming. A mission statement was drafted, expressing the desire to create professional, socially aware theatre and suddenly it all became very real.

It didn’t take much longer to start “living the dream.” Five other individuals were soon found and a seven-member board was created. Made up of the following individuals, it was time for First Foot to take its first steps and recognize that as a collective it has some of the best artists and educators that New York City has to offer: Guleraana Mir, Artistic Director (EDTC Alum); Chris Goslin, Managing Director (EDTC Student); Liz Weixel, Program Director (EDTC Alum); Kathi E. Emori, Marketing Director (EDTC Alum); Daphnie Sicre, Educational Director (PhD Candidate); Erin R Kaplan, Associate Artist (EDTC Alum); Karl Williams, Board Member (EDTC Alum).

Thus far First Foot has produced the first of its Workshops and Whiskey play-development series with many more planned. The event in January was a resounding success, leaving standing room only and boasting attendance of a mixture of students, friends, colleagues, professional actors, the general theatre-going public and a healthy collaboration with the staff of City Lights Youth Theatre.

With every step taken, First Foot gets closer to achieving the monumental goals set by its team and living the dream everyone in this business holds for themselves.

You can find out more about this epic venture and offer your support at: www.firstfoot.org

First Foot is always seeking submissions for short plays for its Workshops and Whiskey series, to submit, follow the guidelines on the website. If you are an actor or director and wish to be involved in any of our productions, you can also find guidelines on the site.
Playwrights at Work: Theatrix! and the New Plays for Young Audiences Series

By Jim DeVivo (Ph.D. Candidate)

Conventional thinking is that writing is a solitary act. That may be true of the initial drafting of the piece, but once what is written reaches an audience, the act of writing becomes a dialogue. This is especially true of playwriting, which requires the eventual collaboration of actors, directors, designers, and audience to realize a playwright’s words on stage. This process was on display during the Theatrix! presentation of new plays by young playwrights this past November.

In the early fall, 24 one-act plays arrived from young playwrights under the age of 18 from all over the East coast. Five of these plays were selected for performance. Amy Cordileone, the producer of Theatrix!, explained that plays were chosen based on “content/source material, lucidity, genre, and potential for further development.” Five one-acts were selected:

Native Son: Aftermath by Natalie Coley; directed by Carolyn Burke

The Art of Interrogation by Lydia Gracey, Fallon Schlossman, and Rebecca Van Voorhees; directed by Jamie Mayer

Pleated by Mariel Kennedy; directed by Kristin Stadelmann

Me Name-O Eduardo by Isabel Ramos; directed by Karl Williams

Untitled by Jack Slattery; directed by Stacy Horowitz

On November 14, 2009, the young playwrights attended a day-long rehearsal for their play with a director and actors from the Program in Educational Theatre. This creative team worked with the playwrights, asking questions and making suggestions about the plays. This not only provided an opportunity for the cast to further explore their characters, but also allowed the playwrights to see and hear new perspectives on their work. The playwrights were then able to make adjustments to the script prior to the afternoon reading, if necessary.

Requiem, a full-length play by Samantha Berstler, a high school student from New Jersey, preceded the one-acts on the evening’s bill. Requiem was a winner in the 2009 New Jersey Young Playwrights Festival, a program that I coordinate for Playwrights Theatre of New Jersey. (The Art of Interrogation was also a winner in this festival). Inspired by seeing her work on stage and by the feedback from the NJ festival creative team and audience, Samantha embarked upon a series of revisions to what was originally a one-act play. By the end of August, Requiem had grown from one-act to a three-act, full-length script. Teaching artists from Playwrights Theatre and I gave Samantha feedback throughout the fall as she continued to revise the play. It was impressive to see Samantha’s progress with each draft, especially as I remembered her work from a playwriting residency that I taught at her elementary school. These developments were on display when an excerpt from one of Samantha’s first plays was presented with an excerpt from Requiem at the Educating the Creative Mind conference at Kean University on March 4, 2010.

The evening of one-act plays on November 14 was the first time that Theatrix! presented new work by young playwrights under the age of 18. New plays will again be the focus in the Program in Educational Theatre this June when the New Plays for Young Audiences Series (NPYA) returns to the stage. In this series, the new works are by professional playwrights and are intended for child audiences. The plays in the upcoming series include:

Where in the World Is Frank Sparrow? by Angela Betzien; directed by Emilie FitzGibbon; June 12-13

Mighty Miracle Saves the World by José Cruz González; directed by Emily Petkewich Kohring; June 19-20

Grotesque Arabesque by Ric Averill; directed by Deidre Kelly Lavrakas; June 26-27

Cecily O’Neill will be the dramaturge for each production. Discussions with the playwright and director follow each Sunday matinee. Please keep an eye out for the audition notice for NPYA and join us for these exciting productions in June. Please visit the following website for further details: http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/music/edtheatre/programs/summer/newplays.

NYU students may register for E17.2152-001 Theatre Practices: Problems in Play Production for 3 credits. For further information, please contact the instructor, Joe Salvatore, at js1655@nyu.edu
Reinvigorated Creativity

By Melinna Bobadilla (EDTC)

Last April, as I was anxiously awaiting to hear back about my acceptance to the EDTC Master’s program, I found myself in Minneapolis experiencing one of the most transformative events in my educational and creative journey. I was at my first Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed (PTO) Conference where I attended workshops, learned, spect- acted, engaged in critical discourse with leading Freireian educators, activists, and Theater of the Oppressed practitioners from around the U.S. and the rest of the world.

At that time, I was acting and coordinating Educational Theater programming for El Teatro Campesino (The Farmworker’s Theater) in California, and found myself at a crossroads in terms of my career move, although I was already certain that my life would not be complete without the presence of theater and social justice work.

The 2009 PTO Conference, hosted by Augsburg College and the PTO Board, “Mad as Hell? Now Move, or Draw or Act: Organizing for Social Justice,” not only served to further solidify my desire to pursue a career combining popular education, political activism and theater, but also reinvigorated my creativity and aided me in preparation for entering the EDTC program at NYU.

As fate would have it, amidst the workshops with TO legends Julian Boal, Doug Patterson, Chris Vine, Brent Blair and Hip Hop theater pioneer Mark Bamuthi Joseph, I actually received my official acceptance email from Dr. Christina Marin, head of the EDTC track. As if the invaluable training and joyful news of my acceptance to NYU weren’t enough, I was also humbled and honored with a nomination to become a PTO Board Member! After being an active and vocal participant in exciting workshops like "Hip Hop as an Organizing Tool", "Nightmare Joker Moments: Advanced TO facilitation" and "TO’s Response to Collective Trauma", I was nominated by a current Board Member to run for a position.

On the final day of the conference, the yearly PTO Members Meeting took place where I, amongst a few other nominees, spoke about my background and my work and then, after a quick vote, was elected to a 3-year term as a PTO Board Member.

The PTO Board, headed by President and MA-EDTC Alum Alex Santiago-Jirau, is made up of 16 diverse members from around the country and includes professors, graduate students, community organizers and teaching artists. One of the most important and exciting tasks that a PTO board member participates in is the organization and planning of the yearly PTO conference, which is a convening of educators, activists, artists, organizers and students who are committed to creating social change through the vehicles of popular education and Theater of the Oppressed.

This year’s conference will take place at the University of Austin at Texas and is being hosted by The Department of Theatre and Dance with co-sponsorship from the university’s Center for Mexican American Studies (CMAS). The designated theme for the conference is “Flex and Flexibility: When to Bend? When To Stretch? When to Engage?” and it refers to the ongoing discourse around the various ways that Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed can be modified, expanded and re-invented in order to remain current and relevant to the changing needs of different communities. It runs from June 3-6 with an exciting pre-conference on Forum and Jokering with Julian Boal and post-conference Rainbow of Desire workshop. The conference is open to non-members, non-members, students, and organizations. Anyone can become a member of the Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed, Inc. by paying the $150 standard fee or $20 open access/student fee and signing up on the website. You can also receive updates by joining or Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed, Inc. fanpage.

This conference is a life changing experience and I highly recommend it to artists and educators with any level of familiarity with Pedagogy/Theatre of the Oppressed. If you want to create change in your community or in your classroom though innovative and creative avenues while promoting justice and equality, this is the conference for you. See you in Austin!
Everything to Choose, or I Finished My Degree — Now What?

By Kali DiPippo (EDTC, ’09)

Several years ago, I bought a book by Colleen Kinder called Delaying the Real World: A Twentysomething’s Guide to Seeking Adventure. Chock full of volunteer opportunities, study abroad programs, and suggestions for road trips, it seemed the perfect way to avoid attaining the title of “Grown Up.” With an affinity for academia, I was drawn to the suggestions about higher education. I revel in the adrenaline rush of thumbing through a fresh stack of syllabi, catching the ideas my peers and professors sling across a classroom, and building a bookcase of knowledge that I will one day internalize as wisdom.

In attending the Master’s Program in Educational Theatre at NYU, my classes introduced me to Robert Landy, Paulo Freire, and Dorothy Heathcote and furthered my knowledge of Augusto Boal, Bertolt Brecht, and Samuel Beckett. I caught ideas (and slung a few of my own) as far away as Dublin. My bookcase holds nearly fifty books more than it did a year ago and a half ago. After many years of believing I was suited only for calling cues as a stage manager, I began to think of myself as an artist and learned to balance my knack for organization with my passion for creativity.

But time flies when you’re self-discovering and here I am, only weeks away from finding a diploma in my mailbox, and word on the street is that I finally have to get a job (or a Ph.D., but that’s another story for another article). My degree may be done, but my life is still littered with questions: Will I find a job? Should I take an internship? Is it time to leave New York? Can I afford to renew my lease in May? Fortunately, at NYU, I have learned to embrace questions. Education is not about concocting answers to choose.

With questions, we highlight the incomplete. Taking a cue from Freire, I see my queries not as insurmountable obstacles, but rather as unfinished aspects of my life I have the power to change. I do not seek predetermined answers (the state of the economy does not necessarily determine whether I will find a job), but rather investigate the possibilities for my future. I can cast out cover letters and make choices about bites I get. If no one takes the bait, I can opt for internships, sampling the cultures of multiple New York theaters, as I continue to seek full-time employment. Nothing to lose; everything to choose.

Ed Theatre Allows Me to Be Myself

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options in terms of class selection (and who does in high school?), Now, our horizons have expanded. We were all going to be studying something we wanted to learn about: theatre, as well as its applications in the classroom and various educational settings.

Our first class of the first semester was Acting Fundamentals with Professor Catherine Russell. Unfortunately, I missed it due to a scheduling error and confused-freshperson-syndrome. So my first class ended up being Writing the Essay — a college-wide introduction-to-writing course which is notorious for seeming unnecessary (perhaps after studying education in the next few years I won’t feel that way).

After the writing course, I finally met all of my classmates in Collegium — a class in which all of the undergraduates in the program discuss general departmental ideas as well as specific applications. Last semester, the course was taught by Professor Jenni Werner who had us collaborate with Second Stage to make a study guide for Anna Deavere Smith’s Let Me Down Easy.

My first class with the Ed Theatre undergrads was overwhelming — not because there are a lot of us (there are only around forty), but because so many of the older students had meaningful things to say. The most intimidating part of Collegium was listening to the upperclassmen talk. Even though I probably could have come up with some comparatively clever things to say in class, listening was less threatening. Getting to know everyone in the program has been incredibly helpful in putting this problem to rest. I have learned that few in Educational Theatre feel superior as many of us were the slightly-eccentric kids in high school. Being in a room with so many non-elitists is empowering and fun because it allowed me to be as weird as I wanted to be. I am, at heart, an odd person, but thankfully, we are aware of our quirks. Ed Theatre allows me to be myself.

Obviously, all of the freshmen came into the program with different expectations and goals, and as the year has progressed, those goals have changed. By now some of us are completely sure that we want to be teachers, or that we never want to step foot into a classroom. Still others may be less sure of career goals now than they were before Acting Fundamentals on our first day of classes. Still, I think we have all come to learn that Ed Theatre is wonderful for an unsure student. I can choose certain classes over others based on my interests and objectives and pursue extracurricular activities and internships outside of the classroom and even the NYU Community. What makes this even easier is that the Ed Theatre professors are just as much a part of the community as the students. In both acting classes my classmates and I have taken this semester, Professor Russell has been incredibly open about meeting before or after class as well as giving career and audition advice. She is just one example on a staff of so many helpful and genuinely caring theatre and education professionals.

Personally, my experience in Ed Theatre has been one of wonderful satisfaction. I grew up in Greenwich Village so the city itself has little to do with this contentment. Instead, it comes from being able to wake up every morning looking forward to the day and knowing that my future career will involve theatre.
CURRENT STUDENTS

Alex Siriani (Ph.D. Student) and wife, Nikki, welcomed Miles Robert and Cadence Mae at Northern Westchester Hospital in Mt. Kisco, NY on January 29, 2010 at 12:33 pm and 12:34 pm respectively. Each weighed 5 lbs. 9 oz.

Gabriela Tejedor (ETHR, ’11) will be spending her senior year as a member of the NYU Abu Dhabi inaugural cohort of RAs for the 2010-2011 academic year. She looks forward to continuing her research in education and the role of theatre in an Islamic Nation.

FACULTY


ALUMNI


Looking For Shakespeare

High school students work with a director and graduate students from NYU to shape an original production of Shakespeare. This program is unique in that the ensemble members will work with director, Nancy Smithner, and a dramaturg to discover how a Shakespearean play resonates for them, within their own personal experiences. Using these connections as a source and inspiration, the ensemble members will rehearse and perform their own version of the play. The production will be supported by designers and stage managers and will be documented by a video artist.

This program will run for four weeks — June 29th through July 25th — FIVE DAYS A WEEK, from 9 am-3 pm. The experience will culminate in three public performances on July 23rd and 24th at 8 pm, and July 25th at 3 pm.

NYU students may register for E17.2982-001 Directing Youth Theatre Productions: Looking for Shakespeare for 3 credits.

For further information, please contact the instructor, Nan Smithner, at: ns23@nyu.edu