FROM THE DIRECTOR

It has been an unusually robust year in the Program in Educational Theatre. As we near the end of 2008, I reflect back on the creative and academic journeys of my colleagues and students with awe. As is demonstrated in this overflowing newsletter, much has been accomplished and should be celebrated.

This summer, our three study abroad programs in London, Dublin and Brazil presented extremely varied learning experiences representing the breadth of the educational theatre field: from active classroom teaching in London schools and visits to the professional theatre; to community engaged theatre and the devising of original works in Dublin; and finally to an in depth study of Rainbow of Desire and Forum Theatre in the exuberant and diverse Brazilian culture.

Back on campus many dynamic courses were offered under the inspired teaching of David Montgomery, Christina Marin, Edie Demas, Russell Granet, and Kevin Bott. I taught a Character Study class that was filled with teachers from all over the country. Guided by David Montgomery and Nancy Swortzell, The New Plays for Young Audiences Series produced three staged readings by Y York, Lois Lowry and R.N. Sandberg. The Looking for Shakespeare youth ensemble produced a wonderfully creative interpretation of A Midsummer Night’s Dream as a radio play, directed by alumna Sharon Counts.

The fall semester began with an exciting production series beginning with the 24 Hour Play Festival, where a variety of provocative new continued on page 2

Study Abroad: Reflections on Three Abroad Programs

By Jennifer Pytleski

Airplane coffee had never tasted so good! Settling into my seat, buckling up, ready for the Heathrow Airport landing, I exhaled and laughed at myself, letting go of the weeks of worry, financial aid paperwork, visa

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FROM THE DIRECTOR continued on page 2

PHOTO COURTESY OF JENNIFER PYTLESKI

Robert Keith brings to life a character in The Class Project while James Webb watches.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DAPHNIE SICRE

NYU students at the Samuel Beckett Theatre on Trinity College’s campus in Dublin, Ireland

| ON STAGE | Voices in The Class Project |

By Karl C. Leone

Usually, it takes one or two days after your show closes to get used to having free time again, wipe away your tears, and respond to thoughtful emails from friends praising your job in the play. Since closing The Class continued on page 8
FROM THE DIRECTOR

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works were created, directed and performed. I had the privilege of trying out my character acting in this festival, which was at once challenging, stimulating and inspiring! The Educational Theatre community turned out en masse to exuberantly support the work of the artists.

In the meantime, the ensemble of The Class Project, under the direction of Joe Salvatore, was hard at work developing an in depth interview theatre piece on class and socioeconomic status. The group engaged in research, studied the necessary techniques, did the interviews, developed the intensive choreography which framed their work, and brought real individuals to life on stage. All this sounds so fluid, but indeed it required many hours of enormous dedication and creative input from the ensemble, and the director and his energetic staff of assistant director, dramaturge, stage managers and designers. The result was an amazing production that was compelling, moving and wonderfully visual.

We then experienced Theatrix! in a new action packed weekend manifestation, beginning on Friday night with a panel of professional producers who talked extensively about the nitty gritty of bringing theatrical works to the stage, moderated by doctoral student Leslie Smith. This was followed on Saturday by readings of six new ten-minute plays, wherein experts in the field mentored student playwrights in developing their work. The entire weekend was expertly produced by doctoral candidates Teresa Fisher and Amy Cordileone, whose inspirational leadership made the weekend feel like a creative explosion.

Our Shakespeare to Go Ensemble is booked for the year in NYC schools, performing their new rendition of Twelfth Night, directed by Erica Giglio (EDTA) and Sarah Jo Wylie (ETED). Our Prison Theatre Initiative has been dynamically engaged in a Physical Comedy and Clowning workshop at Woodbourne (led by me, with Erin Kaplan and Brady Ovsan, both EDTC), as inmates create a performance collage replete with slapstick and red noses, indeed incongruous images in a correctional facility.

As I prepare for the upcoming Puerto Rico Intersession course, Theatre Practices, I look back at the year and try to catch my breath — and then look forward to many more experiences — such as our upcoming Forum on Theatre Pedagogy: Teaching the Art Form from April 23rd to 26th 2009. Mark your calendars!

Many thanks to our team of dynamic doctoral students who work in the office this year — Amy Cordileone, Teresa Fisher, Jennifer Holmes, Desiree Hamburger, Daphnie Sicre, and Kevin Bott. And thanks to all of you in the Educational Theatre community for your insight, inspiration and dedication to our field.

Study Abroad: Reflections on Three Study Abroad: Reflections on Three Study Abroad: Reflections on Three Study Abroad: Reflections on Three Study

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application, passport misplacement, packing for three different climates (England, Ireland & Brazil) and making my way through the incredible list of course books that were stuffed into my bag in the overhead compartment.

London June 22-July 11, 2008

Classroom Drama in Education I & II

Sitting in the Welsh House, my eyes taking in the dark old wood, English paintings displaying the history of the building and people, the smell of wonderful sweets, tiny biscuit-like meat pies, plush green upholstery chairs, and all of the students, staff, and teachers listening to Nan Smithner, NYU Director of London Study Abroad 2008, warmly welcome us, my heart could barely take it all in! Desiree Hamburger, NYU academic advisor and adjunct instructor for the program, caught my eye and we both smiled and acknowledged the excitement that was in the air.

My classroom placement, along with three other NYU students, was in the Friars Primary Foundation School under the classroom teacher Damian McBeath and his year 5 students. Desiree was our tutor and between her and Damian, we received incredible individual and group support. The lessons that we created, all inspired from the story by Shaun Tan, The Rabbits). The power of education and encouraged imagination transformed that classroom setting beyond what even the best lesson plan could envision. I was overwhelmed by possibilities.

On top of the remarkable classroom experiences, we had workshops led by Dorothy Heathcote, Gavin Bolton, Fiona Lesley, Jonathan Neelands, Dan O’Neill, Rebecca Patterson, and the team of Nan, Desiree, Martin Heaney and Jonathan Heron, which filled my journal with tangible ways to approach a significant assortment of drama classroom tools. Workshops were set up to allow us to participate as student, teacher, artist and observer, so that we could reflect on the complete process and methods being present-

NYU Steinhardt Revue

News from the Program in Educational Theatre, Department of Music and Performing Arts Professions

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Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development

Joseph and Violet Pless Hall, 82 Washington Square East, New York, NY 10003
Abroad Programs
ed. We discussed with these educational theatre icons what they had written and dialogued about the differences in American and English school systems. Our individual academic and tutor meetings provided very personal reflection moments, processing of goals, new challenges and risks to think about, and that luxury of TIME with our faculty to share our experiences.

On most evenings we would gather outside our flats and head toward different theatre venues, via the tube, bus or walking. Such an experience to be in the National Theatre, the Barbican, the Royal Court, the Donmar Warehouse, the Courtyard (in Stratford Upon Avon) and, my personal favorite, The Globe. While watching The Merry Wives of Windsor, seeing the sky above me, standing in mygroundling seat, RSC actors running, dancing and singing so close to me, I could see their costume stitching, I connected intensely with what had brought me to theatre in the first place and why I continued to want to work with and in it! In that small rehearsal space in the Samuel Beckett Theatre, there was an object, representing each of us, a story behind it and three weeks for all of us to take in the telling, listening and discovery of those stories and the ones around us. With that and our opening reception where we met our faculty, Jerry Maria, Joanna Parkes, Chrissie Poulter and Declan Gorman, we jumped into a journey of engagement with our community.

The workshops in this program delved into the stories of our environments, heritage, places we call home, cultures within a community, choices, options and expression through language, plays, literature, pictures and paintings. We traveled to Dundalk and created environment inspired texts, lead by Declan Gorman and members from the Upstage Theatre, on the sea shore and sand dunes that immigrants arriving to Ireland would have first seen. A bus tour through Belfast, lead by Jonathan Harden from Queen's University, challenged our lenses as artists and sightseers. How do you engage with a new place, people, and the stories that live in that space?

Also in Belfast, we worked with Tom Magill and his team from the Educational Shakespeare Company Ltd. In this workshop, we participated in a condensed course of creating films of our own stories using the facility. Surrounded by the ornamented walls featuring the paintings created by the prison groups that Tom does workshops with, we listened to the men who have embraced and felt liberated by this therapeutic work.

Joe challenged us to connect with how we engaged with the work, to reflect on what came up for us, and to push ourselves while listening to our resistance. He emphasized the importance of taking care of our community and presented a strong example of what gifted guidance is to me.

While in Dublin we worked with Joanna Parkes, using Brian Friel’s play, Translations, to develop pre-show and post-show workshops using group generated themes geared towards specific community groups. Joanna’s passion for what she does, the children she works with and importance of theatre as an education tool, was hugely motivating.

Our group also had the pleasure of spending the afternoon with NYU alumnus Nora O. Stillman, currently the Education Director for TEAM Educational Theatre Company. We were again stimulated by the theatre “games” most of us had long ago learned, but reexperienced through participating in them ourselves, and engaging with the themes of immigration, home and family.

From the restaurants or pubs we ate in, to the people we had as our tutors, from the community centers we visited, to the group tours, to the written assignments, each event in the program had a communal goal and insight into the country of Ireland and the complex options and views of the population that live there. The incredible organization of Joe and Jerry allowed me to relax into the hectic program schedule and breathe into all the elements that were being introduced. Our final devised pieces brought all we had been taking in to full circle and they continue to create new ones for me to process.

Running around the thick, green, chalk outlined grass track, on my last morning at Trinity College, I felt ready for my next step and clear about my presence within Educational Theatre. Joe kept us focused on our next goal, and asked us to clearly articulate how we planned to engage with what we were learning. Thinking about what happens when I allow myself to be fully engaged created goose bumps on my arms as I completed my final lap.

Brazil August 2-15, 2008
Augusto Boal’s Rainbow of Desire
“Say what you need to say. Say whatcha need to say.” John Mayer’s song, which had followed me and my NYU colleague, from the airport in Ireland, to the layover in Newark, NJ, now was greeting us as we touched down in Rio De Janeiro, inviting exhausted travel laughts from the both of us. My final destination of the summer was happening. I had reached Brazil — the thick humid heat, bright orange and yellow colors, gasoline street smell, large cashew tree leaves on the sidewalks, a language completely foreign to my ear. As my eyes took in this new city, country, and world, through the window of my taxi, quickly merging continued on page 14
The Art of Adaptation

Beyond the Book: A Practical Symposium on Adapting the Young Adult Novel for the Stage

By Jonathan Schmidt

Often the most successful and evocative theatre for young audiences is adapted from popular children’s literature. This genre of theatre allows young people to experience the stories they have read and the characters they cherish in a completely new way. Bringing children’s and young adults’ literature to life on the stage can be incredibly rewarding when successful, but the process of adaptation provides a challenging task for the artistic team. Through the adaptation, the artists must stay true to source material while at the same time shed new artistic light on the piece. This delicate balance provided the launching point for Beyond the Book: A Practical Symposium on Adapting the Young Adult Novel for the Stage, hosted by NYU Steinhardt as a fitting close to the New Plays for Young Audiences Series.

The series featured staged readings of two popular young adult novel adaptations: Eggs by Y. York (based on the novel by Jerry Spinelli), and Gossamer by Lois Lowry. These works represented two sides of the coin in adaptation. York, a playwright, worked with another author’s original source material by adapting Eggs. Gossamer was adapted for the stage by the original author, Lois Lowry. At the symposium, drama specialist Dr. Cecily O’Neill, director Stan Foote (artistic director, Oregon Children’s Theatre), middle school teacher John McEneny, and Lois Lowry sat on a panel to discuss the challenges and rewards of adaptation.

Each panelist provided a very different viewpoint on the process. Lowry and O’Neill discussed the importance of honoring the world created by the author, while embracing the capabilities of the stage. O’Neill discussed the difficulty in creating new art out of familiar work. She explained the delicate balance of retaining the essence of the original work while at the same time bringing artistry to the page. She argued that it is essential that the staged work becomes a new piece of art that enhances, if not reinvents, the original written story. Otherwise, there is no reason to recreate the work in theatrical form. As the artistic director of a theatre that produces new work for children, Foote discussed the process of identifying a successfully adapted script and mounting a professional production of the work, while McEneny focused on the process of adapting and producing works of literature for the stage with students as an exercise in playwriting.

Following the panel discussion, O’Neill led the participants in an active exploration of the process of adaptation. Provided with the source material of a popular ghost story from a current British children’s book, participants explored several different challenges in adaptation, including the reasons a company may decide to produce a work, and the ways in which text can be brought to life. O’Neill demonstrated devised adaptation through dramatic activities and process drama techniques which were used to activate sections of the text and the story.

Finally, participants were able to watch the staged reading of Gossamer, and witness the realization of a staged adapted work. During a post-performance talkback, Lowry, O’Neill and Foote shared the specific ways in which they were able to work together to bring Gossamer to life. In order to fill out the characters and create a successful script, Lowry relied on the help of a dramaturg (in this case, O’Neill). She discussed the challenge in converting the narrative of a novel into active dialogue. As dramaturg, O’Neill focused on the emotional journey of each character in the story over the course of the play, and the stakes of their obstacles along the way. Upon her suggestions, Lowry changed around the order of certain sections, and added or changed specific dialogue. Director Foote supported this technique and helped the adaptation along by allowing the team to actually watch each character’s arc through the play. During several rehearsals he asked the actors to run the scenes by character, rather than sequentially, in order to highlight the success of these changes to the script. This proved to be extremely helpful in tracking the shape of the characters’ journeys through the play.

The Beyond the Book symposium allowed teachers, teaching artists, and theatre professionals to explore the tools necessary to create successful adaptations for the stage. Whether the process occurs in the classroom or on the professional stage, the art of adaptation must first and foremost rely on the power of theatre to reinvent the story on the page. Rather than creating an experience in which the child is able to say “This is exactly how I remember it,” a successful adaptation offers new viewpoints and artistic interpretations that launch the young adult audience into a dialogue about the adaptation itself.
EDUCATIONAL THEATRE PROFILES

International Students:
Working Together ... Building Community through Applied Theatre

By Anne Richie S. Garcia

“Take care of yourself!” “Keep in touch!” “Stay warm!” “Send pictures!” “Be careful!” These are many of the things I heard as I embarked on my journey to New York City. Touching down in the Big Apple, I headed to the doorstep of New York University. I was excited for my first class in the Masters Program in Educational Theatre. It soon became a nerve-wracking game of survival in this concrete jungle. I got lost on campus searching for my classes. I got lost in the subway more times than I can remember. In class I felt lost every time I didn’t understand the humor used by my classmates. Everybody around me seemed to get things that I did not. All sorts of anxieties and insecurities crawled into bed with me and my early morning homesickness was unbearable.

But spring came, and with it Applied Theatre, taught by Dr. Christina Marín, a life-changing experience. Our main assignment for this class involved employing applied theatre activities in schools, institutions, or organizations throughout New York City with diverse populations. I was inspired to develop a project intended to incorporate applied theatre through the OISS. From the end of the spring to the start of the Fall 2008 semester, Dr. Marín never gave up on the possibility that the international students in the Educational Theatre Program could work on the project proposal and hope for its implementation in partnership with the OISS.

We found ourselves spending long hours together over potluck dinners and bottomless fruit juice. We verbalized the importance of applied theatre to international students coming to NYU while also considering the proposal’s potential relevance to U.S. students at NYU attending the study abroad programs. Additionally, we brainstormed a list of activities we believed would cultivate dialogue on issues like homesickness, belonging, academic pressure, anxieties, differences, and culture shock. Most importantly, we held on to the ultimate goal of the proposal — to provide a safe space where students could come together face-to-face, speak up about their feelings, listen to each other with open minds, and acknowledge the fact that no international student is lost in the subway, confused during classes, awake until late at night, and feeling homesick on a Sunday morning alone.

We are so happy to have found new people in the group. Dr. Marín’s emails about when and where to meet up and finalize the project proposal never fail to warm our inboxes. Even Fan, who has graduated and is now in Taiwan, gets them and always sends us his encouragement. Colin from Taiwan, Min-Jung Lee from Korea, Delia Meyer from South Africa, and Karl Williams from Jamaica, all first year Educational Theatre graduate students, have joined us. We feel sad that we might not become part of this project’s implementation, because many of us will return to our home countries after graduating, but we are more than thankful that people who trust in the power of theatre to open dialogues will take over. As our program director, Dr. Philip Taylor, affirms — Applied Theatre is ART, which stands for Action, Reflection, and Transformation.

The quote in the Applied Theatre syllabus, which is from an aboriginal activist group in Queensland, reads, “If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.” Yes, as international students, we are working on this proposal to end the struggles of international students who have come to study on foreign soil. But beyond that, we strongly believe the common challenge of leaving our own corners of the world to study at NYU reinforces that there is a safe space for us where we can bring our experiences together and understand the relevance to where we came from and where we are now.

Our strengthened commitment to share what has become of our lives through the study of Educational Theatre echoes the words of Filipino hero, Andres Bonifacio, Father of the Revolution (Ama ng Katipunan) who said, “If not here, where? If not now, when? If not us, who?”
LEAD FOR CHANGE: THE CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITY

By Manuel Simons

“This victory alone is not the change we seek—it is only the chance for us to make that change.” At the climactic moment of his historic campaign, speaking before a crowd gathered in Chicago’s Grant Park, President-elect Obama acknowledged voters’ mandate for change and heralded the start of a transformational journey. His victory speech suggested that effective leaders help amplify all voices—youth, senior citizens, women, people of color, queer people, people with disabilities, and others too often forced into the margins—while they bridge racial, economic, political, and religious divides. Echoing Gandhi’s words, Obama reminded us that he is not the change we seek, but that we must be the change we seek.

As theatre educators and practitioners, how do we lead for change? Which great divides might be bridged by educational theatre? In remarkable efforts throughout the country and abroad, Educational Theatre students and faculty are engaging in conferences and community organizing efforts that speak to the capacity of our work to conquer divides and ignite change. Our research presentations, workshops, and panels address real and perceived divisions in the arts and education, drama and the curriculum, culture and identity, nation and individual.

Visiting Assistant Professor David Montgomery demonstrated this agency for change in his dissertation at AATE; Manuel Simons, right, reading part of David Montgomery’s dissertation

David Montgomery, left, presenting his dissertation at AATE; Manuel Simons, right, reading part of David Montgomery’s dissertation

at its Research Awards last July. His presentation at the AATE Conference summarized extensive case studies of English, Science, and Social Studies teachers working with teaching artists in middle school drama residencies. As conference participants read excerpts from the transcripts in which teachers expressed their individual perspectives within drama residency experiences, a spectrum of views emerged that characterized teachers’ intrepid journeys from discomfort and anxiety to ease and ownership of arts-integrated curricula.

At the 2008 AATE Conference, Educational Theatre students and alumni highlighted the synergy between dramatic and academic material, and the transformative and educative power inherent in this combination. Alumni Jennifer Nario and Scott Anthony Lupi each chaired workshops that capitalized upon arts-integrated models.

Jennifer’s workshop, “Inspire, Get ED! Arts Integrated Learning in Community Partnerships,” showcased a project spearheaded by Hartford Stage, which united urban and suburban students in ensemble-building, theatre literacy, and storytelling activities designed to foster a greater understanding of multiculturalism. The lessons were anchored to literature, such as Toni Morrison’s The Bluest Eye, as a catalyst for the development of student-devised work, exploring the intersections of literature and multiculturalism.

...Effective leaders help amplify all voices—youth, senior citizens, women, people of color, queer people, people with disabilities, and others too often forced into the margins—while they bridge racial, economic, political, and religious divides.

Scott Lupi’s panel, “Beyond the Stage: Methods of Study Guide Writing,” invited several Educational Theatre professionals, including Jennifer Nario, to discuss multiple approaches to study guide writing. Examples from established theatre companies were deconstructed as compelling enrichment tools that bridge performances with educational goals and learning standards.

Leading for change by example, Assistant Professor Christina Marin has consistently supported and encouraged her colleagues and students to seize opportunities to propose research presentations, panels, and workshops at academic conferences. She is also co-chair of the 2009 AATE/ATHE Conference Committee. Ph.D. student Daphnie Sicre commented, “I was actually really intimidated to propose anything for a conference, but thanks to Christina Marin’s encouragement, I went ahead and tried it. I just thought, what the heck, the worst that can happen is that I don’t get selected. But to my surprise, I did, and I was able to travel to Atlanta to present an ethnodrama at the AATE conference.” Sicre’s presentation, “Sak Pase? Nap Boule,” illuminated the experience of seven first-generation Haitian-American college students.

Locating its investigation at the continued on page 14
A Midsummer Night’s Radio Play: Looking for Shakespeare

By Teresa Fisher

This past July, a group of eighteen adolescent actors descended upon the Provincetown Playhouse with one goal in mind — to perform a Shakespeare play. For some, it was their first experience performing the Bard’s work. For one actor, it was her first time performing in any play. Others were veteran Shakespearean performers. All were participating in the annual Looking for Shakespeare Program. Artistic Director Joe Salvatore had put together an impressive team of theatre artist educators to work with the youth ensemble. Director and Educational Theatre alumna Sharon Counts led the group. While this was her second time with the LFS program, it was her first at the helm. Alumna, Sarah Bellantoni, who had also worked with LFS in the past, assisted her. Dramaturg and adjunct professor, Jenni Werner, a veteran of the LFS program, joined them. Graduate student, Jackie Donnaruma, joined the program for her first time as an intern assisting Sharon, Sarah, and Jenni, in working with the actors as well as helping out backstage during performances. On the design side, we were joined by Kate Ashton as Lighting Designer, alumna and adjunct faculty Daryl Embry as Set Designer, adjunct music faculty Tom Beyer as Sound Designer, and Marion Talan as Costume Designer. With the exception of Tom, the rest of the design team had worked with LFS in the past. Recent alumna, Katie Pelkey, returned for her final summer with LFS to whip everyone into shape as the Production Stage Manager, while I had the pleasure of producing the show for the first time.

Why direct a radio play? According to our director, she chose a radio play format for a couple of reasons. One, she enjoys radio and radio theatre. Two, she likes experimenting and exploring the theatrical possibilities in voice and sound that occur in radio plays which open up different areas of one’s imagination. Unlike live theatre or television and movies, which create the visual world of the story, radio allows the listener to create their own view of the world. The performers and producers of radio plays provide the dialogue, sound effects, and music to tell the story. For example, the sound effect of a door opening and closing and the sound of footsteps approaching or receding let the audience imagine someone entering or leaving a room.

Perhaps the best-known radio drama was Orson Welles’ War of the Worlds, which caused widespread panic when it aired in 1938. It was so realistic that people tuning in that night feared that aliens were really attacking the world. In New York City, one can visit the Paley Center for Media (formerly the Museum of TV and Radio) to both learn about the history of radio and listen to old radio programs. While radio drama is rare today, due to the strong presence of television and movies, the recent innovation of podcasts that are downloaded onto iPods and similar devices are reminiscent of those days of radio drama. Perhaps the best-known contemporary radio drama is Garrison Keillor’s A Prairie Home Companion.

Why produce a radio play with adolescent actors today? From a practical perspective, there are generally less costs involved in a radio play, even one staged in a theatre. If one is creative, sound effects are relatively easy to produce. Costume and set costs are minimal since the focus is on the audio. Actors can also play multiple parts more easily through disguising their voices; hence a smaller cast can be utilized. Actors can also do all of the sound effects, thus creating more opportunities to be on stage. Radio plays also allow actors to explore their voices, expand their creativity to create sound effects, and understand better a medium that has changed significantly since its inception. In a fun and exciting way, actors can learn about the history of radio and radio drama. They are challenged to use their imaginations in ways they generally are not asked to do in our very visual society. This tapping into another part of their creativity can help them broaden their minds and their understanding of themselves and their world. They also learned a different style of acting.

In this production, the ensemble of actors had three tasks. The first task was learning the Shakespearean text. For this, they were led in various exercises by their director, assistant director, dramaturg, graduate student intern, and their Artistic Director. The second task was to learn about radio drama so they could create advertising commercials with jingles to be placed between acts of the play. The third task occurred in conjunction with the other two tasks and was that of forming a cohesive ensemble.

The youth split into five groups and created five separate commercial jingles. They were created in the style and vein of the radio commercials of the 1930s and 1940s, but with a fantastical twist, as befitting the theme of the play. The main sponsor of the show was “Titania’s Bower” where one could buy bouquets of flowers for that special someone. Other sponsors included Moonshine Timepieces, a pocket watch that both tells the time and answers questions; Box O’ Tricks, a box of magical tricks to help get even with practical jokers; Goddess Products, skincare products to make any woman look divine; and Globosphere, a handy pocket map that keeps the user from getting lost. Each commercial was introduced by an announcer (who also introduced each act of the play) and included text and music written and arranged by the ensemble. The commercials were clever, creative, and lots of fun. They helped ground the play in the time period of the 1940s, gave the youth an opportunity to showcase their ingenuity and creativity, and helped keep the audience engaged in the concept of the radio play.

The actors invested themselves fully in the production through their commercials, their creation of sound effects, and their acting. For having only twenty days to rehearse, their ability to memorize their lines, create and memorize their sound cues, and develop compelling characters was a tribute to their hard work and the work of the educators working with them. This production of A Midsummer Night’s Radio Play was an entertaining and unique production of one of Shakespeare’s most produced plays, A Midsummer Night’s Dream. It provided its actors with an opportunity to explore parts of their imagination little tapped elsewhere, as well as reminded both actors and audience members of the importance of entertainment value in radio drama as a powerful theatrical form.
Project a few days ago, I still cannot find myself thinking about anything else besides the production. I cannot stop thinking about my fellow company members/friends, the process we took as a company to create the play, and especially the impact. The Class Project has had on the NYU community and beyond. I’ve come to realize that this play has a life of its own, which is still very well alive and present for those who were both a part of the production and those who witnessed the production. The Class Project is not just an interview theatre piece about class and socio-economic status, but has opened many eyes to these issues that affect each American everyday. The Class Project presents personal topics, ideas and issues that most of us have dealt with.

The process in creating this production from scratch was short and demanding. With less then two months to develop a play that would raise questions and get audiences thinking, it was important to forge ahead in our experimentation. Our first rehearsal was unlike any first play rehearsal I’d experienced. Instead of receiving a fresh script the company received a book entitled Class Matters, a collection of New York Times essays about the class issues plaguing American life. We would use selected stories from Class Matters as inspiration for movement pieces and research specific class issues. The company was also informed that we would not just be actors in this process, but researchers too. Our research would consist of conducting interviews with people who live and/or work in NYC, who had a desire to discuss their issues with class and socio-economic status. The company had to pass an online Human Subjects Tutorial in order to conduct interviews. The Human Subjects Tutorial was a guide to conducting fair, safe and productive interview sessions. Director Joe Salvatore gave us a final warning that in order for this production to work that we would have to be dedicated and passionate about the process. Not one of us backed down at the offer to create The Class Project, and from there a group of nine actors became a company.

In order to become more familiar with the form of interview theatre we read and screened Anna Deavere Smith’s exemplary interview theatre play Fires in the Mirror, which she both wrote and performed. Fires in the Mirror is a solo interview theatre piece that examines the rivaling relationship between the black and Jewish communities of Crown Heights, Brooklyn, after a series of incidents led to the deaths of one young black child and a young Jewish man. Fires in the Mirror was particularly important for us to both read and watch because it laid the framework for our production.

One of the more difficult parts of the rehearsal process was revealing our own personal issues with class and socioeconomics in rehearsal exercises. Coming from a predominantly white and wealthy community where discussing your own socio-economic status was impolite made it extremely difficult for me to open up about my own issues with class and socio-economic status. As rehearsals went on, my comfort in revealing my own personal experiences loosened. I found myself being able to dig deeper into the work and developing a very individual perspective in my company. The beauty about our company is that it was comprised of very diverse actors/researchers who each brought a different perspective into rehearsals, which made experimentation fun and progressive. We were a combination of different educational levels and backgrounds, ethnicities, shapes, and sizes thus creating different perspectives and ideas on our work. Getting to know and accept each other’s individual standpoints was our first form of research and allowed us as researchers/actors to have compassion and understanding for those we interviewed. Without this, we would have never made the voices and stories of our interview subjects come to life and reach our audience members. If we did not believe or sympathize with the stories of our interviewees, who would?

It is bizarre referring to our interviewees as “characters,” especially after knowing so much about their histories and lives from their interviews. As actors, we are taught to create our character’s purpose, going through the “who, what, when, where and why” of the character. So what do you do as an actor when the “character” you are playing has already given you all of that information through an interview? You spend hours upon hours listening to the tape recorded interviews memorizing speech patterns and deciphering the subtext of what your “character” is really trying to say. You take the process in developing your character a step further and, in my eyes, psychoanalyze them. While studying your
“character’s” speech pattern, it is astounding to find how telling a single “um,” “like,” or slight pause in conversation can be of your interview participant. That pause could be all it takes for me to decide how my interviewee feels toward a certain topic or issue. Only when you can discover the reason why your interviewee decided to say “like” three times before admitting that he was in fact gay, can you perform your interviewee as a character. This seems to be the difference between performances on Saturday Night Live and those in an ethnodrama. The difference being that SNL renders caricatures of individuals for pure entertainment where as in an ethnodrama, the performance is rooted in character development based on an individual’s speech pattern, subtext of a conversation, and capturing your character’s “essence” to give a perspective on a specific topic. The latter is made to dramatize data in order to present certain topics or issues. In our case, director Salvatore was passionate about presenting and raising questions about the issues that surround class and socioeconomic status in America.

After numerous sold out performances it was clear that our play had really hit home for the NYU community. If the number of tickets sold did not prove that our show had been a success in reaching our audiences, the post performance talk-backs did. After a select number of performances, the company engaged in talk-backs led by dramaturg Daphnie Sicre and Joe Salvatore. With a show like The Class Project, that is designed around different perspectives, it was interesting to hear the comments, questions and ideas put forth by our audience members. The reactions to the play proved it got the audience thinking about the issues presented and even about the form of interview theatre itself. One of the more interesting talk-backs was after a student matinee where the response to the play was strong. Thanks to the ideas, questions, and new perspectives articulated by our audience members during the talk-backs, individually and as a company, we found new discoveries in our performances each night, allowing the play to ascend to greater heights than what it had been a night earlier. Maybe the ideas expressed in The Class Project are lingering for people because of the elections, but this play goes far beyond politics and deep into culture, identity, history, and the people we sit next to everyday on the subway. Whether you enjoyed it or not, this play in particular packs a very personal punch, a punch that will force you to question how class and socioeconomic status issues affect you and those around you. One thing I have learned from both researching and acting in The Class Project is the power of an individual voice. My only hope for those who witnessed the production would be to feel empowered to have their own voices and stories heard, as well as listening to those around them. Only then will the issues we care about, such as the ones that surround class and socioeconomic status in America, begin to be addressed.
Instant Gratification

By Guleraana Mir

Merely a month after my epic move to New York City, still homeless and overloaded with graduate studies, I decided to let loose and take part in a 24 hour play festival! Why ever not? That’s the beauty of NYU; being able to take advantage of wonderful opportunities such as this. Little did I know that it would result in my rolling around on the floor of Bobst Library at 4 am on a Friday night, being awake for 30 hours straight and actually managing to write a play in 12 of those hours. However, I loved every moment.

The whole process started at 7 pm Friday when the writers met with directors. We were paired up and the challenge began. All the directors had brought objects along with them that had to be implemented in the scripts and could prove to be inspirational for some. Next, we were assigned actors and their descriptions; these would be essential in providing characters for the plays. Everything was potluck, which in a way made it easier. When someone takes away the necessity to make decisions your brain just goes into auto-pilot, working with what you have. Along with my director, I picked a voodoo doll, three female actors, two of whom were teenagers and another who could be aged 35. As every woman who has suffered heartbreak knows, the only way you can put a voodoo doll and teenagers together is with some story about a man and rejection. Thus I had the basic plot of my play.

What ensued next is about 12 hours of coffee, a large number of cigarettes and two writers finding solidarity in the library. What is most frustrating about trying to write a piece of drama so quickly is that often the dialogue or any movement you may be describing seems forced and the only way to remedy this is by actually saying it out loud, or physically blocking the movement yourself. I think if anyone had seen David, one of the other writers that night, and me, we would have made a wonderful scene in our own play. He was on the floor with an umbrella and I was pacing around talking to myself. But there was of course a method to our madness and around 6 am my piece was finished. What joy and euphoria at having completed a mini masterpiece (debatable) in such little time. The scripts would now be handed to the directors and actors for the following 12 hours and true to its name, 24 hours later at 7 pm on Saturday night, Theatrix! introduced our new plays in the Black Box Theatre.

Finding the Intentions Behind the Words on the Page

By David Altman

This past November, I was excited to be one of seven playwrights in the Theatrix! Writers’ Workshop produced by the Program in Educational Theatre. I had submitted a script that was birthed from the Theatrix! 24-hour Instant Gratification Festival in September of 2008. In the bowels of Bobst library, I pounded out a draft armed only with a handful of prompts and vending machine coffee. When my script was accepted in the Theatrix! Writers’ Workshop, I got to face it again.

To be clear, I am a novice playwright. I only began writing at the beginning of the fall semester. Artistically, my background is in the visual and performing arts. Photography and sculpture have been a part of my life since I was a child. And for the last thirteen years, my main connection to the-atre has been through acting. I love the stage and the entire collaborative process. For a number of years, I had been writing down ideas for plays but I had never done anything with them. Then Theatrix! came along.

In the workshop, every playwright was teamed up with a mentor playwright. I was paired with Leslie Smith who skillfully guided me away from my usual perspective of actor towards that of a playwright. Leslie helped me set aside my crutch of dwelling on the physicality in my script so that I could study the intentions behind the actions. At first, I was resistant mainly because it was a new way of thinking. I just wanted to do the script as opposed to revise it.

It was the first time I had ever been a part of a theatre workshop in which I was the author of the script. In addition to Leslie and myself, Jennifer Pytleski also participated. She played the Woman in the script. As the three of us worked together, I felt a part of the team as much as I have when I assumed the role of an actor. However, I was responsible for the words on the page. Getting an outside perspective is essential with written works, but since I am new to this, the workshop helped me begin to steer and navigate as well hold the reigns.

The workshop was a fresh and new experience. Creativity is the same in all forms of expression. The key is how to get there. Beware the guises of ‘no.’ ‘No’ has quite the wardrobe of convincing exteriors that conceal its true nature of holiness, however comfortable they may be. Successful theatre is not comfortable. I know this as an actor. How do I learn this as a playwright?

Ideally, everyone is communicating with honesty and humility — key elements in creativity. And that’s where it got interesting. Leslie assisted me in dismantling the script line by line. What did I mean by this line and that moment? Why does the character take action or not? I was feeling vulnerable and exposed as I began to take responsibility for what I had written. Leslie was like a geologist leading me to the substrata of my script. He may as well have been yelling out, “Excavate! Find the layers! Confront them!” Now, I didn’t have some breakthrough in the workshop. But I began to understand how vital it is to ask and answer the essential questions about what I write.

One of the challenges is staying away from the digressions, or staying away from the avoiding. The one-day workshop gave me a jolt of what it means to ask and answer a question immediately, to look at everything that I write and take responsibility for it.
No single process better exemplifies or bookends my experience as a Master’s candidate in the program in Educational Theatre at New York University than Professor Joe Salvatore’s play III, a project supported by a 2006 Steinhardt Research Challenge Grant in Arts and Culture. The play “explores the fifteen-year relationship between the photographer George Platt Lynes, the writer Glenway Wescott, and the MoMA curator and publisher, Monroe Wheeler” (www.thethreethesplay.com).

One of my first courses in the program (Spring 2007) was Professor Salvatore’s Styles of Acting & Directing II. Toward the end of this course I was introduced to two things that have since shaped my life in tremendously positive and inspirational ways.

The first was when Professor Salvatore bravely exposed his unfinished, letter-based, work to the class as an opportunity for students to gain insight into a collaborative theatrical project, mid-process. The cast, which included, in addition to Joe Salvatore, Educational Theatre graduates John Del Vecchio and Daryl Embry, presented 15 minutes of the early stages of III. Secondly, Professor Salvatore also brought dramaturg and collaborator Jenni Werner (adjunct instructor in the Program in Educational Theatre) with him, who introduced and facilitated Liz Lerman’s Critical Response Process.

The exposure to these processes instantly instilled a passion as both an educator and an artist to create interview/text-based theatre and protect artists in the creative process through artist-centered feedback.

When the project received the opportunity to perform in Pless Hall’s Black Box Theatre, I was asked to come on board as a Production Stage Manager and join the collaborative team: Troy Hourie (Set Design), Emily Stork (Lighting/Projections Design), Benjamin Johnson (Sound Design), Traci DiGesu (Costume Design), Katie Pelkey (Co-Production Stage Manager), and Amy Turner (Sound/Projections Operator).

After a successful run at NYU, III was honored by an invitation to perform in the famous Cherry Lane Theatre for the 2008 New York International Fringe Festival, bringing with it an extended family and support system: Blake McCarty (Sound/Projections Operator), Heather Heels (Light Operator), and Derek Collard (Company Manager), where it received yet another honor: the Overall Excellence Award for Outstanding Play.

Not only was each and every step of the process incredibly edifying, it was equally fulfilling to be part of a theatrical process that exemplifies its potential: collaborative, creative, provocative, thought provoking, and family-forming, it was everything one could ever dream of in an educational and theatrical career. I could not have been more fortunate to be part of one of the most incredible teams with which I’ve ever had the pleasure and honor to work — all of whom I now consider family.

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**Student, Faculty and Alumni Achievements and Awards**

**ALUMNI**

**Jamie Boileau** (ETED 2008) teaches Theatre and English at Brooklyn Democracy Academy, a new transfer high school for “overage, under-credited” students in the city. For this first trimester, her students are working on creating original character and identity pieces, which will culminate in collaborative dramatic works.

**Annette Cortés** (EDTA 2006) recently left her full-time position as Education Director for the Society of the Educational Arts, Inc. (Teatro SEA) after 3 years, to turn her focus back to performance and to consult for arts education organizations on a freelance basis. She continues to work with Teatro SEA as a performer and education consultant. This past year, she served as the Training Director for AMIGOS de las Americas, where she trained and prepared 41 high school and college age tri-state area volunteers for a summer of immersive community service in Latin America. She was also honored to have received the HOLA Award (Hispanic Organization of Latino Actors) for Outstanding Performance by a Featured Female Actor for her performance in Teatro SEA’s brand new production: La Muela del Rey Farfán/The Toothache of King Farfán. There she performed a song from the show at the HOLA Awards gala on the evening of September 15th where the guest of honor was actor and HOLA Awardee John Leguizamo. La Muela del Rey Farfán/The Toothache of King Farfán won 4 additional HOLA awards and has recently been invited to perform as part of the 2009 National Puppet Festival in Atlanta, GA (July 2009). As she sent this information, she was in Atlanta, GA with Teatro SEA performing La Cucarachita Martina/Martina the Little Roach at the Center for Puppetry Arts for 18 performances.

**Dr. Edie Demas** (PhD 2006) Director of Education at New Vic, received the Brooklyn Arts Exchange Award. Additionally, the Americans for the Arts will present their 2008 Arts Education Award to the New Victory Theatre.

**Enza Giannone** (EDTA 2005) is currently teaching at The Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts in Hartford, CT.

**Honey Goodenough** (EDTC 2006) presented a lesson entitled “Shadow Puppetry in the Classroom” at the 2008 Puppeteers of America Regional Festival at the University of Maryland. She currently performs at the Swedish Cottage Marionette Theater in Central Park and is featured as the voices of Wendy and Nana in their new production of “Peter Pan.”

**Catherine Hanna** (EDTC 2008) and Simnia Singer-Sayada (EDTC 2008) met in the EDTC program at NYU in the fall of 2006 and developed the performance Shalom Sahbity—a dialogue and movement piece about their personal experiences of the Middle East. Most recently, they were accepted to present their performance along with a workshop at the Performing the World 2008 Conference. To learn more or contact them visit: www.shalom-sahbity.com

**Thomas Ferlisi** (ETDC 2007) has currently relocated to the Maryland/DC Metro Area, where he teaches kindergarten in Takoma Park Elementary School. He is also acting as a substitute teaching artist at the Imagination Stage in Bethesda Maryland.

**Julian Lazarus** (EDTC) presented at the AATE conference in July. His topic dealt with “Empowering Students with Power Tools,” and talked about how to create a tech theatre program in a High School.

**Scott Anthony Lupi** (ETHR 2008), currently the Assistant Director of Education for Periwinkle Theater for Youth, presented Road to Carnival: A Cultural Celebration at the Face to Face conference this past October.

**Dr. David Montgomery** (PhD 2007), Visiting Assistant Professor, received the Brooklyn Arts Exchange “Passing It On Award” for excellence in arts education.

**Monique Peaslee** (EDTC 2006) currently works as the Arts Education Coordinator at the Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College in Hanover, NH. In her position she partners with local K-12 students and teachers to bring world-renowned theater artists to their classrooms. She also leads workshops educating teachers on benefits of incorporating the arts into their curriculum.

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**Alumni Profile: Teach the Play, and Get Out of the Way**

By Michael Yurchak

Recently, I was assigned a routine pre-show workshop for seventh graders preparing to see Macbeth. Two months earlier at their school, a student shot and killed a classmate because of his sexual orientation. Preparing for the workshop, I couldn’t avoid correlating the play’s bloody events with the recent tragedy.

I was nervous. My job was to prepare the students by exploring Macbeth’s characters, plot points, and themes. With only a single class period to work with, I was in no position to responsibly explore the students’ personal connections or reactions. But how could I ignore them?

I taught my usual lesson, pausing occasionally to ask questions: Had anyone ever felt ambitious, jealous, vengeful, betrayed, different, alone? This would have been appropriate inquiry for any group of middle-schoolers. There was no mention of the school’s tragedy.

However, afterward, a teary-eyed teacher approached, thanking me for making a difference with this special group. I have never been more proud of what I do.

Our work in the classroom affects people in whatever way they want or need or are ready for—just as our work as actors can provoke one night’s audience to respond so differently than the last. Jonathan Neelands said, “Our goal as teaching artists is to provide access, not excellence.” We offer a way in; from there, the experience should be largely self-directed. In this case, I didn’t have to impose an agenda or manufacture some cathartic experience. All I needed to do was use sound educational theatre praxis: teach the play, and get out of the way.

To find NYU’s best-kept secret, wander into the basement of the Education Building, follow a long corridor, turn left through the doorway, and walk down a ramp, straight into the hot, cramped scene shop to find Ralph Lee and his Mask and Puppetry class. In this makeshift classroom, students learn to make plaster casts of their faces, sculpt alter egos, and learn to breathe life into glue and paper mache. As described by Chris Hartmann (EDTC), “There is a wonderful sense of camaraderie...as we hesitantly show off our latest creations. We are...talking and discussing and creating in a wonderfully safe environment created and hosted by Ralph Lee.” Lee not only teaches mask and puppet making, but he also shares his artistic techniques and skills which fuel his broad theatrical style.

Ralph Lee first created puppets as a child growing up in Middlebury, Vermont. He graduated from Amherst College in 1957, and studied dance and theatre in Europe for two years on a Fulbright Scholarship. Upon returning to the United States, Lee acted on Broadway, off-Broadway, and in regional theatres. He has built masks for the New York Shakespeare Festival, Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre, The Living Theatre, the Erick Hawkins Dance Company, and created the “land shark” for NBC’s Saturday Night Live. Lee is perhaps best known for pioneering many theatrical traditions such as the outdoor performances of The Mettawee Theatre Company, the Greenwich Village Halloween Parade, the Halloween Celebration at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, and the Holiday performance of “The Little Engine that Could” at the New York Botanical Gardens.

Lee first became fascinated with outdoor performances while teaching at Bennington College in 1975. He explains, “I did my first outdoor production, and it took place all over the Bennington College campus...It was the first time I saw masks and giant puppets in an outdoor setting. They seemed to take on a powerful vitality in that environment. The juxtaposition of this totally fabricated, artificial object in a natural setting gives the mask or puppet a kind of life it simply does not have indoors. “There are many challenges when performing outdoors.” Lee explains: “Having strong visuals really helps because it gives the audience something compelling to focus on. It encourages actors to use a relatively broad style of acting to reach their audience.”

In 1976, a group of Lee’s Bennington students asked him to be the Artistic Director of the Mettawee River Company. Lee explains, “One of the goals of the company was to bring theatre to a rural area in upstate New York...where there was little access to live theatre. They had produced a season of one-acts, performed in town halls with moderate success, but it was hard to get people to come indoors.” Over time they evolved a form of outdoor theatre which incorporates masks, giant puppets, and live music. Most of the productions are based on myths and legends of the world’s many cultures. Throughout the years, Mettawee has performed in New York City at the Garden of the Cathedral of St John the Divine, La Mama, HERE Art Space, the Jim Henson Puppetry festivals, the Bowery Poetry Club, and many other venues.

One of the results of his gentle nature and passion for storytelling has been an increasingly growing and devoted audience for the company’s work in the many towns where they annually perform. One such devoted fan is Jordan Cardinale, who studied with Lee this past fall and is currently earning BA at Gallatin. She grew up in upstate New York, near where Lee’s theatre company is based. For Cardinale, Ralph Lee was a household name. She says, “I’ve grown up on his work and have respected him since a very young age. Of course, I jumped at the chance to work with him here at NYU.” She admits to being “a little star-struck” in her first few classes.

It is Lee’s creative style that has captured the attention and enthusiasm of many New Yorkers as well. Lee is also known for having started several NYC Halloween traditions, including the Greenwich Village Halloween Parade and the Silent Film/Procession of Ghouls Extravaganza at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. The motivation to start the Halloween Parade was two fold, The Theatre for the New City had been asking Lee to create a Halloween performance. As he explains “I was raising kids in the city at that point, and they didn’t really have a positive way of channeling their Halloween energy. However, I was not only interested in providing something for kids...but for everybody in the community.” This type of community engaged theatre not only benefited the spectators, but as the police reported, it also lowered the crime rate on Halloween. The parade evolved and grew over twelve years, but the crowds eventually became so large they could no longer be accommodated by the small tree lined streets of the West Village. Lee explains, “When it became necessary to move it to a major avenue, I felt the mood of mystery and fantasy I had sought after could no longer be sustained in this new environment and it was time to move on.” New York’s Village Halloween Parade has continued long past Lee’s involvement, and 2008 marks the parade’s 35th year of celebration.

As the Artist-in-Residence of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Lee and his lovely wife, Casey, transform the space into a haven for masked goblins, ghouls, and creatures of all sorts. On Halloween, the Cathedral shows a silent film accompanied by the Cathedral organist. At the end of the film, masked characters emerge out of a cloud of smoke and into the crowd. Dramatic lighting, live music, and creatures of all shapes and sizes, delight the crowd with their spooky mood and comical interactions. Having participated in this year’s festivities, I can attest to its eerie magnificence. The best surprise was finding that this Halloween tradition has also become a sort of annual reunion for Lee’s performers, friends, and students, although

continued on page 14
there were still many like myself who were enjoying the experience for the first time. The atmosphere behind the scenes was jovial and friendly; everyone enjoyed the bewitching spirit of Halloween. Lee has created a fantastic community of committed performers. “Honest, impassioned, and elegant” are just a few words that friends and colleagues use to describe him and his work.

Brian Voelcker, who has performed with Lee for more than 10 years in various productions, describes Lee’s artistic style, “It’s storytelling in its truest form. There’s no smoke and mirrors. There’s nothing high tech that’s happening. It’s a very human experience...he gets right to the essence of what he’s trying to say.” Voelcker also performs in Lee’s annual production of “The Little Engine that Could,” which can be seen at the New York Botanical Gardens in the Bronx. There are three actors in the show dressed as train engineers, who not only conduct the trains, but also conduct the story transitioning from their role as storyteller to puppeteer. Voelcker explains that the puppeteers do not hide from the audience, “but the focus shifts to the toys [the toys] start talking.” This year “The Little Engine that Could” returns for its 13th season.

“We have literally watched families grow up over the years,” Voelcker reminisces, “we recognize them at this point, and they recognize us.”

The Steinhardt School of Education has been fortunate to have Lee, a pioneer of community engaged theatre, as a member of their educational team since 1987. Lee teaches his students the skills they need to create larger than life creatures of their own. Sheila Bandyopadhyay, who is earning an MA from Gallatin, describes the mask and puppetry course as being a true studio class where we work on our own projects, receive feedback from Ralph, and get a lot of artistic freedom.” As for his style of teaching, Kari O’Brian Williams (EDTC) says that Ralph Lee mentors his students “in a manner that makes you still feel ownership of the creative process.” While Lee encourages creativity, Williams states “neither does he hold back on critique that indicates where you may encounter problems. Nothing however is ‘unfixable’ - he meets you at whatever stage of the process you are and guides you to the next step.” Lee’s open and collaborative style makes him an excellent facilitator for students beginning their own artistic journey.

Lee reflects on his 21 years of teaching at NYU, “I must say the quality of students has improved so wonderfully over the years... and the amount of enthusiasm they have, the resources, and the ability to work hard has been very gratifying...” His advice to young artists however is ‘unfixable’ - he meets the challenges homophobia and identity, it examined the process of growing up Haitian-American shapes and is shaped by one’s place within the community.

I, too, was encouraged by Christina Marin to share my work at academic conferences far and wide. She convinced me that I could lead for change through presentations that influence and contribute to the educational theatre field. As a result, I presented “Acting with Conscience and Inspiring Change: Walking in Gandhi’s Footsteps” at AATE. This workshop imagined pivotal moments in Mahatma Gandhi’s campaign of non-violence to end the tyranny of British colonialism in India as a foundation for process drama, image theatre, and other dramatic activities that explored participants’ relationship to change movements.

In October, Educational Theatre alumna Christiana Moore and I co-presented “Acting with Conscience in the Face of Oppression: Queer Voices and Diversity Education in Participatory Democracy,” for an international audience gathered at the Learning Democracy by Doing conference at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, Canada. Performance excerpts of my play, Queer in the U.S.A., directed by Christiana Moore, served as a basis for dramatic activities, which encouraged participants to challenge homophobia and identify...
Abroad Programs

seated on a long table, rice, beans and fruits, water being drunk out of coffee mugs, all different shapes and colors, offering our taste buds new flavors as conversations went from one end to the other. It was a picture I will keep in my heart for a long time. This was a very special group of people.

Boal and his crew worked throughout all of Rio (and the world) in prisons, mental institutions, homes, orphanages, political venues, markets, schools, etc. Being able to see these forums happen in Brazil was indescribable. The strength, power and concreteness of working with forums to stimulate dialogue, to expose Brazilian laws that keep whole groups of poor people, depressed and out of work, and to help people move from being a victim into a “rehearsal for the revolution” was in front of me. I saw the transformation of an audience member, once they had jumped into the forum, return to their bench now sitting taller and feeling proud of the change they had just made. All of these forums were in Portuguese with costumes and crude cardboard props. Through the physicalization, and also explore oppression with LGBTQ and straight youth, and they brainstormed ideological divides. “From historical events, as well as personal and communal stories of oppression, participants devised performances as a means to dialogue and plan action around the creation of safe spaces for queer youth. A forum theatre performance developed by the group explored how allies and youth facilitators can begin to dismantle oppressive systems that negatively impact the lives of LGBTQ youth.

Alex reflected on his presentation: “Conference participation helped me continue to develop my work with both youth facilitators and queer youth; I met a colleague from NYU Gallatin and we created the Queer Youth Forum Project, a group devoted to providing NYC queer youth a space for performance and action.” The two are currently facilitating a series of workshops with young people at the NYC LGBT Community Center in preparation for a performance by the youth during the Breaking Walls, Building Bridges: Gender & Social Justice Conference hosted by the Center’s Youth Enrichment Services (Y.E.S.) Program.

Leading for change by reaching across political, social, and religious divides, Simnia Singer-Sayada (Ed Theatre ’08) and Catherine Hanna (Ed Theatre ’08) presented Shalom Sahbity (Peace My Friend), a collage performance of storytelling, dialogue, movement, music, and media, along with a post-performance workshop, at the Performing the World Conference. Shalom Sahbity speaks about Arab/Israeli relations by honing in on the personal stories of its creators. Image theatre techniques and storytelling practices allowed audience/participants to respond to the piece through encounters with their own stories of family. They described a greater appreciation for opportunities such as these, whereby educational theatre practitioners assume the mantle of leadership and become agents for social change. This power and potential were best expressed by the Shalom Sahbity workshop participants, one of whom wrote: “...the audience was comprised of people with many different backgrounds, yet I felt that everyone stood on common ground: feeling alien when you want to feel at home, and trying to reconcile with family and traditions.”

How do we bridge the great divides? How do we lead for change? We might simply look to one another to find our answers.

Through the physicalization, emotion and pantomime, I was overwhelmed with the weight of what Boal and his group worked with every single day.

emotion and pantomime, I was overwhelmed with the weight of what Boal and his group worked with every single day.

Back at CTO, the afternoon session always started with Boal taking any of our questions and he would help clarify the Brazilian rules or cultural norms they were challenging in the forums. Boal used our workshop sessions to outline Rainbow of Desire and also explore possibilities and errors, discoveries and continued challenges, were amazing to hear from Boal and his team. The days with them flew by and soon it was our final dinner where we found ourselves in a massive, ornate, three level samba club where live music and mouth-watering food created a festive feel around us.

Sitting on my bed at home, notebooks, journals, ticket stubs, a four leaf clover alarm clock, random foreign coins, postcards and a camera full of memories, tube pass, Brazilian stones, I am amazed at how blessed I was to be a part of these three NYU Summer Study Abroad programs. I can’t imagine doing it another way. Being a participant in different communities, learning and sharing, and listening to the full lives of the people you are having this experience with. THAT is what I want to continue in my life. The hard lessons in patience, pushing past the my personal resistance, articulating myself as an educator and artist, working with a community of artists, students, leaders from all around the world were opportunities I had always craved. As I settle back into being in New York City, my summer memories overtake my brain, so I have started a new journal and a new list of goals with my colleague Ryan’s insightful phrase, “Be Here Now” at the top.
Victoria Row-Traster (EDTC 2007) the Curriculum and Publications Manager for the New Victory Theater, also presented with Scott Lupi, Road to Carnival.

**CURRENT STUDENTS**


**Jim DeVivo** (Ph.D. student) taught two professional development workshops for teachers this fall. Those workshops were “Playwriting Across the Curriculum,” sponsored by the Speech and Theatre Association of NJ, at the annual NJEA Convention in Atlantic City, and “Process Drama in the Classroom” at Liverpool High School in Liverpool, NY (Jim is a member of the Liverpool HS Class of 1995).

**Christina Devlin** (EDTC) and **Teresa Fisher** (Ph.D. Candidate) presented workshops at Performing the World this past fall. Devlin presented Theatre of the Oppressed techniques and Fisher conducted a roundtable and spoke about theatre in therapy.

**Teresa Fisher**, **Jennifer Holmes** and **John Socs** all passed their candidacy examination this fall.

**Jennifer Holmes** (Ph.D. Candidate) presented a workshop on “Unconventional Techniques to Teach Acting” at the National Communication Association Conference in San Diego.

**Katie Issel** (EDTC), **Jennifer Pytleski** (EDTC), **Rachel Shapiro Cooper** (EDTA), and **Daphnie Sicre** (Ph.D. Student) will be presenting at the Acting and Directing Symposium and the Pedagogy Symposium at the Mid Atlantic Theatre Conference in Chicago in March, 2009.

**Erin Kaplan** (EDTC) presented a paper at the Crossroads Graduate Conference.

**Natasha Y McLeod** (ETHR), **Daphnie Sicre** (Ph.D. student), and **Karl Williams** (EDTC) collaborated with the Museo del Barrio to create an original devise piece for the Three Kings Day Celebration.

**Alexander Santiago-Jirau** (EDTC) was elected President of the Board of Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed, Inc. He presented “Breaking the Silence: Using Theatre of the Oppressed to Explore Issues of Identity and Oppression with LGBTQ and Straight Youth” at the 2008 Performing the World Conference in October. In April 2009, he will be presenting a paper on Latino stereotypes in the play Men on the Verge of His-panic Breakdown by Guillermo Reyes at the National Popular Culture Association Conference in New Orleans. Also along with Gallatin graduate student Leigh Thompson, he has founded the Queer Youth Forum Project (QYFP) a Theatre of the Oppressed group for queer youth through the Y.E.S. Program at the LGBT Community Center in NYC. The young people presented a Forum Theatre performance exploring gender issues at the Breaking Walls, Building Bridges: Gender and Social Justice Conference on December 6th at The Center.

**Sarah Misch** (ETHR) William Vorenburg Memorial Scholarship

**Paula Ohaus** (EDTC) Myoung-Cheul Chung Scholarship

**Jim DeVivo** (EDTC Ph.D.) Lowell S. and Nancy Swortzell Graduate Scholarship

**Daphnie Sicre** (EDTC Ph.D.) Lowell S. and Nancy Swortzell Graduate Scholarship

**James Webb** (Ph.D. student) wrote a full-length play entitled Black Widow. It received a reading at the Black Theatre Network Conference in Orlando, Florida. In January 2009, Black Widow will be staged at Florida A&M University and entered into the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. Also, at the Black Theatre Network Conference, he presented a paper entitled, “Theatre of the Oppressed: Using TO techniques in the acting curriculum of a youth theatre program.” With this paper, he won first place in the Young Scholar’s (graduate division) competition and a $250 cash prize. He presented this paper to a room of 50 academicians and theatre practitioners from around the country.

**AWARDS**

**Sarah Misch** (ETHR) William Vorenburg Memorial Scholarship

**Paula Ohaus** (EDTC) Myoung-Cheul Chung Scholarship

**Jim DeVivo** (EDTC Ph.D.) Lowell S. and Nancy Swortzell Graduate Scholarship

**Daphnie Sicre** (EDTC Ph.D.) Lowell S. and Nancy Swortzell Graduate Scholarship

**James Webb** (EDTC Ph.D.) Lowell S. and Nancy Swortzell Graduate Scholarship