

■ LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENTS

INTO OUR SECOND TERM AS CO-PRESIDENTS, we are delighted to report on the many achievements of the League over the past year through the voices of our members and constituents in this well documented publication. We are enormously grateful for the support we have gotten in our collective efforts to make a difference in the lives of women in theatre.

WOMEN IN THEATRE, our televised collaboration with CUNY-TV (Channel 75) of interviews by the “unique” and talented theatre critic Linda Winer with celebrated women of the theatre, has put us front and center in national recognition. The launch of our WIT Series One DVD through the auspices of TCG certainly confirmed that. If you haven’t yet purchased one for your personal or professional library, they are available online at www.tcg.org or www.amazon.com, which offers competitive prices. We are enormously grateful to the Education Foundation of America which underwrote the DVD production and to the many foundations including the Lucille Lortel Foundation and the Grisham Foundation which made the entire project possible. Particular thanks also to our members: Nina Lannan, Enid Nemy, Carol Hall, Sheilah Rae, Joanne Jacobson and others who donated funds to match the Ford Foundation grant for our television series.

We initiated a major thrust to support the newly designed theatre curriculum in the New York City Public Schools. Our members were introduced to the principal authors of the *Blue-*

print for the Arts: Theatre, Paul King, Director of Theater, NYC Department of Education and Marianna Houston, Education Director, TDF, at a meeting last fall to discuss ways in which we might productively assist this initiative. Paul King was a speaker at our WIT DVD launch, accepting a donation of 220 DVDs, for distribution in middle and high schools throughout the city.

Continuing our popular Oral History program at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center, this year’s program was an interesting and provocative panel discussion about the political implications of Blacklisting in Hollywood with the attendant repercussions. Sondra Gorney and Madeline Gilford shared their experiences with moderator Lee Grant. The audience participation was particularly lively. The program was underwritten by the New York State Council on the Arts and the Edith Meiser Foundation.

In reading the details of the League’s many activities and those of the industry-at-large that affect the professional lives of women in theatre, we hope you have become motivated to participate actively in our programs and in promoting our goals. Grateful thanks to the many contributors to ROUNDUP but special kudos to the talented and indefatigable editor, Ruth Mayleas.

We look forward to seeing you and working with you!!

JOAN FIRESTONE AND HARRIET SLAUGHTER
CO-PRESIDENTS

ROUND UP

League of Professional Theatre Women



Joan Allen



Wendy Wasserstein



Suzan-Lori Parks



Julie Taymor



Graciela Daniele



Audra McDonald



Elizabeth McCann



Jennifer Tipton



Anna Deavere Smith



Carey Perloff



Lois Smith



Rosemary Harris



Ruby Dee



Martha Lavey



Heidi Ettinger

Women in Theatre

Dialogues with Notable Women in American Theatre

HOSTED BY LINDA WINER
SERIES ONE

A thirteen episode series produced by
THE LEAGUE OF PROFESSIONAL THEATRE WOMEN & CITY UNIVERSITY TELEVISION
Distributed by Theatre Communications Group



Short Plays Festival

Women in Theatre IV

Lunch with Kate Levin

First WIT DVD Released

Blacklisting Era Revisited

WELCOME TO **ROUNDUP VI**

THIS SIXTH ISSUE of ROUNDUP continues our annual recording of League activities and programs into 2005-06. The past season saw the launching of WOMEN IN THEATRE's first DVD, Series One. The fourth WOMEN IN THEATRE program was broadcast by CUNY-TV in the spring of 2006. Other programs and events included an Oral History on the Blacklist; Leadership Lunches with Rachel Sheinkin and Kate Levin; a Short Plays Festival; a new Networking program; announcement of the New York City Department of Education *Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Theater*; and presentations of the Lee Reynolds, Lifetime Achievement, Ruth Morley, and Lucille Lortel awards.

Book excerpts include *Women Writing Plays: Three Decades of the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize* by Alexis Greene and *Changing Direction — A Practical Approach to Directing Actors in Film and Theatre* by Lenore DeKoven. Articles feature a look at age discrimination (*Invisible Women*) and trips to London and Bristol PA, the latter to attend the premiere of a play by former League President, Sheilah Rae.

Thanks to our Editorial Committee: Photography Editor, Harriet Slaughter; Associate Editor, Alexis Greene; and contributors Helaine Feldman, Jennifer S. Jones, Cailin Heffernan, Elsa Rael, Dolores Sutton, Rachel Reiner. We look forward to the 2006-07 season with new programs, interesting events, and the launching of WOMEN IN THEATRE DVD, Series Two.

Ruth Mayleas



What's Inside

■ PROGRAMS

- WOMEN IN THEATRE DVD & Fourth Season **3**
- ORAL HISTORY Blacklisting **8**
- LEADERSHIP LUNCH Rachel Sheinkin **9**
- INTERNATIONAL REPORT **9**
- LEADERSHIP LUNCH Kate Levin **10**
- SHORT PLAYS FESTIVAL **11**

■ EVENTS

- NETWORKING **12**
- PLAYWRIGHTS LAB **12**
- MEMBERSHIP MEETING & BLUEPRINT FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE THEATER **13**
- BLACK HISTORY MONTH **14**
- TUESDAYS AT TISA'S **15**

■ AWARDS

- HOLIDAY PARTY Lee Reynolds Award & Lifetime Achievement Award **16**
- RUTH MORLEY AWARD Natasha Katz **17**
- LORTEL AWARD Looking Glass Theatre **17**

■ FEATURES

- BOOK EXCERPT Changing Direction **20**
- KANSAS ABDUCTION **23**
- BOOK EXCERPT
An Interview with Playwright Rukhsana Ahmad **24**
- INVISIBLE WOMEN **27**
- WOMEN STUDYING FOR THEATRE CAREERS **28**

■ TRAVEL

- BRISTOL, PA TO SEE *I MARRIED WYATT EARP* **33**
- LONDON TRIP **34**

■ PICTORIAL SUMMARY **18**

■ MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENTS **Back Cover**

League Launches First DVD

WOMEN IN THEATRE's first DVD series was launched on April 27, following months of work in selecting the thirteen interviews — drawn from WIT's past three television seasons — clearing rights, editing, and transforming the tapes into DVD format with appropriate accompanying material. The DVD was formally launched at a reception, attended by more than fifty League members and WIT supporters, held at Theatre Communications Group. League board member and TCG Deputy Director Joan Channick welcomed more than fifty guests and introduced League Co-Presidents Joan Firestone and Harriet Slaughter.



Paul King from NYC Department of Education thanks League for donation of 220 DVDs



WIT co-producer Ruth Mayleas introduced CUNY-TV Program Development Officer Leonard Fleischer who spoke about the beginnings of WOMEN IN THEATRE four years ago when the idea of an interview program focusing on dialogues with notable women in American theatre was first brought to CUNY by its three producers; it fit well within the cable station's cultural program guidelines, and the word from CUNY to the League was "You raise the money [for television production costs] and we'll air it." So the necessary funds were sought, miraculously found (thanks to the Ford Foundation), and WOMEN IN THEATRE was born.

Co-President Joan Firestone introduced Paul King, Director, Theater Program,

New York City Department of Education who talked about the DVD—220 copies of which have been donated to the Department—and its value as a teaching tool under the Department's new *Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Theater*. He was followed by *Newsday* theatre critic and WIT host, Linda Winer, who reflected on her experience during four years of interviewing the extraordinary array of theatre women represented by WOMEN IN THEATRE.

WOMEN IN THEATRE Series I includes on DVD I: Suzan-Lori Parks, playwright; Rosemary Harris, actress; Carey Perloff, artistic director; Anna Deavere Smith, playwright, actress, director; Jennifer Tipton, lighting designer. DVD II: Wendy Wasserstein, playwright; Heidi Ettinger,

set designer; Ruby Dee, actress; Graciela Daniele, choreographer, director. DVD III: Audra McDonald, actress; Elizabeth McCann, producer; Julie Taymor, director, designer; Steppenwolf Theatre Company; Martha Lavey, artistic director; Joan Allen, actress; Lois Smith, actress.

WOMEN IN THEATRE DVDs are distributed by Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for the American theatre. The Series I three-set DVD is priced at \$69.99 and can be ordered from TCG's online bookstore at www.tcg.org.

This first WIT DVD is made possible through a generous grant from the Educational Foundation of America, with additional support from the Lucille Lortel Foundation and the Grisham Foundation.

Women in Theatre

WOMEN IN THEATRE had a busy year. Its fourth season was taped in the fall and winter of 2005 and premiered in the spring of 2006, shown on CUNY-TV (Channel 75 in New York City), April 7th through July 2nd. Each interview on WIT IV was seen on Fridays at 10:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m., and 8:30 and repeated the following

In their own words:

PATTI LUPONE Actress



On her success: “And I guess it’s because I was born with a voice. I thank God every day I can sing...I started singing fairly early. But the voice revealed itself I think in my teens...and I knew in my teens that it was a Broadway voice, because I wanted to be a rock and roll singer. Who didn’t? AM transistor radio...That was my influence. But I knew that it was a Broadway voice, and I knew I would end up on the Broadway stage. It’s not necessarily where I wanted to go, but I knew that that was my destiny, at fifteen, sixteen years old....”

S. EPATHA MERKERSON Actress



On her early theatre experience: “I could rehearse a play, open it and start rehearsal for another play. And as an actor, I found that so valuable because of the people that I had the opportunity to work with—Mary Alice, Morgan Freeman. I did a musical with Morgan Freeman. I did a Toni Morrison musical. No one knows that Toni Morrison wrote a musical ...And just all these wonderful actors....And I had the opportunity to stand onstage with them—Earle Hyman...Gloria Foster. It was an incredible time for black theatre here...I think I was very very lucky when I came to this city.”

EDWARD ALBEE Playwright



On writing women: “Look, there are several things I’ve never been. I’ve never been a woman. I’ve never been Afro-American. Until recently, I’d never been elderly. When I wrote *All Over* I was in my forties? Probably. And these women are in their late sixties, early seventies. It’s what we’re supposed to do. We’re supposed to use our imagination and everything we’ve looked at and thought about, project, and be able to become that which is physically impossible for us to become. That’s a writer’s job. That’s what a writer is supposed to do.”

Season IV

Linda Winer



Sunday at 12 Noon. Reruns in the Friday time slot can be seen during the fall of 2006, beginning September 8th. Linda Winer, theatre critic of *Newsday*, continues in her stellar role as host. What follows are quotes from the thirteen interviews, leading off with Patti LuPone and concluding with Zoe Caldwell.

TINA PACKER Artistic Director, Actress



LW: “And *The Women of Will* series that you’ve written?”

TP: “Well “*The Women of Will* series takes all of Shakespeare’s women characters and looks at them in the order in which they were written and asks the question, ‘Did Shakespeare’s relationship to women change?’ And the answer is yes it changed radically over the plays. And then I said, ‘What is Shakespeare’s relationship to these women?’ And what it feels to me in the end is that he uses the women to actually say what he wants to say. So if you want to hear where Shakespeare’s radical voice is, listen to what the women are saying. And if I can just do a generalization about it, you know, in the beginning they’re warrior women, like women who are either killing or they’re virgins on the pedestal. So what else is new? Then in the middle plays, they all endeavor to tell the truth. ...Then in the late plays, the daughters start redeeming the old men...”

LYNN AHRENS Lyricist



LW: “How important is it to find another person whose sensibilities you can share?”

LA: “ If you’re out there, call me up. It’s very important, and it’s very hard. Lyricists are in a very, very tricky position because playwrights aren’t always good book writers and don’t always want to write the book. So to find someone like a Terence McNally who is so generous and will write these magnificent scenes and monologues, and then I just take his work and turn it into a lyric and kind of steal his thunder. It’s fabulous when you can find someone like that.”

continued on next page

Women in Theatre Season IV

In their own words:

ROSEMARIE TICHLER Casting Director



On the power of the casting director: “You know, I took it seriously. I realized it was...a job with a great responsibility and I just was very aware of not misusing that trust...But I realized that my taste was very important and was going to show—because a casting director...bring[s] in the talent whom then the director chooses and the producer chooses...I open the door.”

MARGOT HARLEY Producer



LW: “And at the end of the fourth year, John Houseman and you said...”

MH: “They’re wonderful, they’re enormously talented, they’ve had very good training, but they haven’t had enough performance experience...Let’s try to keep them together and give them the next step, which is to perform over a long period of time. And so we did. We were very lucky. All the pieces came together—we found a theatre in Saratoga...And it had been a theatre really, and then it was turned into a movie theatre and then they turned it back into a theatre for us...And we were able to book a tour following the Saratoga season and a short New York season in a church, right next to Juilliard. And that was the beginning [of The Acting Company].”

CARRIE ROBBINS Costume Designer



On using the computer in drawing: “Well, you know, my goal is to be able to draw clearly enough, instead of just making a scribble, so that if I show him [the director] and I say, ‘this is the leading man, here’s the cloth.’ I actually scan this cloth in there so that it looks accurate, and I spend enough time [so] I think that I’m communicating with him clearly. So it’s very rare where I hear any director that I’ve worked with say, ‘Oh I didn’t know it would look like that.’ Because, you know, we’re spending a lot of money. We’re custom tailoring suits. These are big numbers. These are expensive dresses. And I think this is the only promise that I have to the director...”

EMILY MANN Artistic Director, Playwright



LW: “You did find this wonderful play from 1971 called *All Over...*”

EM: “...as soon as I got the job as artistic director at McCarter, I called Edward Albee and said, ‘Will you give me a play, and will you come here, and what can I do?’ ...It was about the same time he gave *Three Tall Women* to Larry Sacharow, he gave me *Marriage Play*. And we did *Marriage Play*, and he directed it and it was a great experience together. And then I just remembered a play that I had read in graduate school that I thought was the most brilliant play about death I’d ever...read, but didn’t feel mature enough to do it justice. And I went back and read it, and having gone through the losses I’ve gone through, suddenly it just made utter sense. And I called him and said, ‘Would you let me do this?’ and he said, ‘Well, of course.’ So I did it. He was part of the whole thing...”

KIA CORTHRON Playwright



On a commission from The Children’s Theatre Company (Minneapolis):

“...I wanted to know what children in the Twin Cities would be interested in. And Peter Brosius there threw out a lot of ideas and the one I latched onto, because I’d been wanting to write an immigrants play for a while, was that there’d be a huge Somali immigrant refugee population. So I wrote a play about the relationship between a twelve-year old African American girl and a twelve-year old Somali girl, because there have also been tensions between the communities.”

ESTELLE PARSONS Actress, Director



“But I think it’s fair to say that everybody in America would be a lot better off... if classics were taught properly from the first grade on, as they are in England. I mean, classics, dramatic literature, great dramatic literature in the English language. Shakespeare... O’Neill...Tennessee... And they’re simply not taught here the same way they are in England. I don’t mean to show England up. I just mean it’s too bad that we don’t have a sense of the importance of the nourishment of theatre for people living in a civilized society. And you see theatres growing smaller and smaller...So the idea of...people falling down dead to see Eleanora Duse or Sarah Bernhardt ...or anybody else in the world, has gone by.”

continued on page 35

ORAL HISTORY: BLACKLISTING

The Entertainment Industry in the McCarthy Era

BY ALEXIS GREENE

THE BRUNO WALTER Auditorium, at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, was filled on the evening of November 1, 2005, when the League hosted a panel “Blacklisting in the Entertainment Industry during the McCarthy Era,” as part of its Oral History program.

Aside from the provocative topic, what drew the attentive and involved audience were the women sitting behind a table onstage: Sondra K. Gorney, Madeline Lee Gilford, and Lee Grant. Each had experienced the U.S. government’s anti-Communist fervor during the late 1940s and well into the 1950s. Each had been blacklisted by the film, television and radio industries and had seen their husbands blacklisted as well.

As K. Kevyne Baar, a historian of the period and a League member, noted in a program insert, the “McCarthy Era” is a phrase often used to describe a phenomenon that actually began before Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy arrived on the national scene. “In 1938,” writes Baar, “Congressman Martin Dies would convene the committee which would eventually be [the House Un-American Activities Committee].”

In 1947 HUAC’s right-wing chairman, Congressman J. Parnell Thomas, aimed his search for Communists at Hollywood’s motion picture industry and, among those who appeared before HUAC, were ten producers, directors and screenwriters who refused to divulge their political affiliations, went to jail for contempt of Congress, and became known as “the Hollywood Ten.” Those ten were unable to find work in the American film industry except by using pseudonyms and, as Baar states, “the seeds of the blacklist were planted.” McCarthy, who was first elected senator in 1946, would begin to conduct his own hearings in 1950, but they would be separate from those of HUAC.

Lee Grant, who moderated the discussion, first elicited memories of the period from Sondra K. Gorney, who in 1947 was living in Hollywood with her husband, the composer Jay Gorney (*Brother Can You Spare a Dime?*). She described the film community as “a house divided,”



Sandra Gorney, Madeline Gilford and Lee Grant

a place where one either was an intellectual and probably an activist, or a career-monger with safe political affiliations (or none at all). In Gorney’s view, those who appeared before HUAC and named names did so out of professional jealousy and the desire to protect their careers at any cost.

Gorney and her husband left Hollywood in 1947, driving East. Arriving in New York, they learned they had been named—in Sondra’s case by a press agent who cited articles she had once written for *The People’s Weekly World*, a leftist newspaper. Gorney was not called before HUAC until 1953, however, and her lawyer, Bella Abzug, one of the few attorneys willing to fight HUAC, got the committee to withdraw its subpoena.

Jay Gorney was not so fortunate. But he dealt with the committee’s questions in the best way he knew, by singing a rendition of the Bill of Rights.

Describing her own experiences as a victim of blacklisting, Madeline Lee Gilford held up a copy of *Red Channels: The Report of Communist Influence in Radio and Television*, the publication that, by listing people suspected of being “red,” ended many careers in live television.

At least the theatre proved welcoming. Writes Baar: “An anti-blacklisting motion had passed at a membership meeting of Actors’ Equity in September of 1951. It went before Equity Council and was approved. In 1952, with the cooperation

of the League of New York Theatres, anti-blacklisting language entered Equity’s employment agreements, where it remains to this day.”

That did not prevent certain theatre artists from naming names, however. In 1953, choreographer Jerome Robbins went before HUAC, admitted to being a member of the Communist Party, and named Madeline Lee Gilford and seven others as fellow travelers. “If I’m going to be named,” Gilford told the audience at the NYPL with her customary panache, “I’d rather be named by a genius than a schmuck.” The day that Robbins spoke before the committee, Gilford and her husband, who had also been blacklisted, went to Sardi’s for dinner. Jack Gilford did not work again in television or film for ten years. Robbins never apologized to Madeline Lee.

“Were we courageous?” Grant asked her fellow panelists. “We weren’t courageous,” said Gilford. “We were simply pushed into that position.”

“Take a stand, and you were finished,” said Grant. “That was the insanity of the time.”

Toward the end of the evening, Grant and Gilford read an excerpt from Gilford’s testimony before HUAC. Later the women took questions from the audience.

Do you think this could happen today? Someone asked. Answer: “Yes.”

Do you ever regret the stands you took? “Never,” said the women. ●

LEADERSHIP LUNCH with RACHEL SHEINKIN

RACHEL SHEINKIN, BOOK writer of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, the 2005 Tony Award-winning musical with music and lyrics by William Finn and direction by James Lapine, was our guest at the fall Leadership Lunch on October 11th at the Angus McAndoe restaurant.

Rachel began her remarks with an expression of gratitude to the women who had helped her in her writing career, noting particularly the inspiration received at Brown University from Paula Vogel; Paula also introduced her to the New York University Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program, and it was there that she met Finn who was instrumental in working with her to develop *Bee*. Before it became a musical *Bee* was first a writing workshop and then a production at Barrington Stage Company in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. A production at Second Stage in New York followed and then Broadway. (Both Barrington Stage and Second Stage are led by women: League member Julianne Boyd and Carole Rothman, and both theatres are listed among *Bee*'s

Broadway producers.) Though Finn was the impetus in the development of *Bee*, Sheinkin credits "a great idea" (conceived by Rebecca Feldman) and "great performers" for its success. The NYU experience was especially important as it fed her knowledge of how to engage in a collaborative process in the creation of a musical. As she talked further about her career, Sheinkin noted that her first job in New York was at the Women's Project.

Asked if she was engaged in a new project, Sheinkin replied that she was working at the new Baryshnykov arts center on West 38th Street, supported there by a Baryshnykov Dance Foundation fellowship which set her up in a collaborative project with New York City Ballet choreographer Benjamin Millepied and a Norwegian composer, Nils Olaf Dolven.

In response to other questions, Sheinkin said that one of the hardest problems, brought on in part by success, is finding uninterrupted time for work. She often writes at "Donna's house" (her friend and fellow playwright, Donna di Novelli). As



Rachel Sheinkin, Bookwriter for *Spelling Bee*

JOAN FIRESTONE

to her writing process, she remains "deadline oriented." How has her life changed? "More calls and more cabs."

In her not so spare time Sheinkin is an adjunct faculty member at the NYU Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program and a member of the New Dramatists. ●

International Report BY MAXINE KERN AND CAROL MACK

THE INTERNATIONAL Committee, under co-chairs Maxine Kern and Rina Elisha, continued this past year to meet regularly on a bi-monthly basis, to provide hospitality for visiting international affiliates, to work toward increasing the number of affiliates, to define procedures for becoming a New York City-based or international affiliate member of the committee. The committee's invitation letter was reaffirmed in a template signed by the League co-presidents, as was a new template to welcome affiliates.

A request for summaries of the state of theatre in their various countries was elicited from affiliates in lieu of dues and posted on the League website. Martha Coigney drafted a statement to define the International Committee's mission. Additionally, the committee has established connections with Theater Without Borders (TWB) and with Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Amer-

icas (LMDA), linking our international affiliation information with theirs via the League website.

At the committee's January meeting, Ruth Margraff, now a playwright member of the League and at that time a founding member of Theater Without Borders, came to tell us about a two-week series of playwriting workshops that she led in Calcutta. She was sponsored by the U.S. Department of State and hosted by a major Calcutta cultural organization, the Seagull Foundation for the Arts, which organized workshop activity with the following four groups: Swayam, a women's collective dealing with domestic abuse and torture; PeaceWorks, which works with youth groups to utilize the arts and other media to develop socially relevant messages; KALAM: Margin Write, a collective of marginalized youth from slums and shelters; and the Calcutta International School. In the workshops she dealt with such subjects as how playwriting can

be used to educate and bring together communities in conflict as well as tools of writing character, narrative and theme in the interests of reconciliation and coexistence.

At the same meeting committee member Carol K. Mack described the origins of a new international evening of theatre in which the following playwrights—Carol K. Mack, Susan Yankowitz, Anna Deavere Smith, Ruth Margraff, Gail Kriegel, Paula Cismar and Catherine Filloux—have formed a not-for-profit organization which is creating a theatre piece involving stories of seven remarkable women from around the globe. The piece will benefit the international work of Vital Voices, an organization which helps women worldwide.

In September a reception and talk by Ruth Tonn-Mendelson, Artistic Associate Director of the Habimah National Theatre of Israel, was held at the offices of the League of American Theatres and

Int'l Report continued on next page

LEADERSHIP LUNCH with KATE LEVIN

BY HARRIET SLAUGHTER

IF YOU BELIEVE THE HEART of New York City resides in its artistic voices, take heart. Kate Levin, Commissioner for the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) is an eloquent advocate for visionary artistic growth, as witnessed by her remarks at the League's Leadership Luncheon in February at the Angus McIndoe restaurant. She related, from a historical perspective, the role of city arts funding dating back to the 1860s, with the initial funding for the Museum of Natural History to the current support of 600 organizations, including 150 theatres, which receive support from the Department of Cultural Affairs.

DCA gives support to arts institutions and projects spanning the five boroughs. According to Levin, it is at the forefront of arts funding as the largest arts funder in the country, including the federal government. She described the various cultural activities within the department, which expanded greatly in scope when it took over activities that the Parks Department had administered for years under the controlling and watchful eye of Robert Moses.

DCA works in preservation projects, such as the successful rescue and restoration of Carnegie Hall and the Brooklyn Academy of Music. It has also entered into capital building projects, the Biltmore Theatre being one of the most recent examples. Cultural real estate development with city-owned spaces has catalyzed changes to benefit the city in such places as East Fourth

Street, which houses LaMaMa and other nonprofits.

Levin credited the Port Authority's economic impact study as a major tool for quantifying the importance of the arts as an economic engine which is essential to the vitality of the city. This study demonstrated to skeptics the importance of using taxpayer dollars to fund arts projects since arts activity generates billions of dollars every year.



JOAN FIRESTONE

Kate Levin, Commissioner of DCA

She enumerated the services DCA provides, including materials for the arts; public art projects; planning cultural district initiatives such as the Heart of Brooklyn; creating venues for artist housing and rehearsal spaces; creating such spaces as Clinton Green on 51st Street and Eighth Avenue which will house three theatres.

DCA is also developing bond initiatives for creating funding pools for arts organizations to spread the risks, and employs tax incentives for "made in New York" films and television.

Concluding, she focused on the importance of arts in public education in the New York City schools and lamented the loss of two generations which were bereft of any exposure to the arts in the school curriculum. To fill that gap, an ambitious curriculum has been developed from K through 12. Called *Blueprint for the Arts*, it is a model for teachers to fashion courses of study for music, art, theatre, and dance. The Department of Education is beginning the theatre program this year.

In the question and answer session following Levin's remarks, League members responded with curiosity about the concepts of the bonding initiative, tax incentives and the educational *Blueprint*.

Kate Levin expressed her desire to impart the message that the arts not be perceived as elitist. "How do you get New Yorkers to have ownership in the arts? How do we make them stakeholders?" she queried.

These are challenging questions. If anyone can find the answers, Kate Levin is committed to the task. ●

A NOTE FROM ROUNDUP'S EDITOR: *Since I go back a long way in the area of public funding, I have known all of Kate's predecessors. It's a pretty distinguished group — but for my money, Kate tops the list.* RM

Int'l Report continued from page 9
Producers. In February, Martha Coigney hosted a reception at her home for international affiliate Zdenka Becker, whose one-act play was part of the League's Short Plays Festival. Several affiliates had readings in New York: Candace Chong at New Georges, Saviana Stanescu at the Lark Theatre, Zdenka Becker at Access Theatre. The committee involved itself as well in establishing contact with such women's projects as Clean Break in London. League members who were in London this past January visited Clean Break, a group which helps women who are or have been incarcerated, to receive theatre training

and explore career possibilities.

**AFFILIATE JUNG-SOON SHIM
REPORTS FROM KOREA:**

"On the occasion of its 19th anniversary in January 2006, the Korea Association of Women in Theatre (KAWT) announced the establishment of Korea Professional Theater Women Award, and its four winners in different theatre genres. They were: Playwright and Korea Academy of Arts member Kang, Sung-Hee; Director Han, Tae-Sook, who directed the plays *The Train to Shien* and *The Bog of Cat*; and Actor Yeh, Su-jong, who played in *Green Bench* and *The Sea and the*

Parasol. A special award was given to the late Director Kang, Yu-Jung, who formed the first women's theatre group in Korea: Women's Theatre Group and [was] a mother figure for Korean women directors."

New international affiliates this year are: Jackie Elliman from Independent Theatre Council (ITC) London and Linda Ben Zvi from Tel Aviv University. New League members added to the committee include Linda Chapman, Caridad Svich, Catherine Filloux, Carol Hall, Carol Flemming, Melanie Sutherland and Elsa Rael. ●

Short Plays Festival

BY JENNIFER S. JONES

ON A RAINY MONDAY evening, November 21, the League presented its sixth Short Plays Festival at the Goldman-Sonnenfeldt Auditorium of the Jewish Community Center on the Upper West Side. Produced by League members Joan Firestone and Pam Koslow the evening was, to no one's surprise, filled with insightful and comedic writing, talented acting and direction, and a packed house. Using a bare stage with minimum props, eight different worlds were created—five short plays, two monologues, and one musical—skillfully lit by League member Natasha Katz.

After a stringent selection process by the League's reading committee, eight short pieces were selected. As any dramatist knows, trying to pack a full story, with character development and a dramatic arc into ten minutes or less can be a challenge, to say the least. Each of the evening's pieces proved that, with a little skill and a good cast and solid director, anything can be done.

The evening opened with Deborah Zoe Laufer's play *63 Years*, directed by League member Deborah Savadge. Though it seems a day like any other for Earl, after sixty plus years of missed anniversaries, including today, Mabel has had it. An intimate look at an elderly married couple living in the Midwest, Laufer examines one partner's reaction when enough becomes enough.

Next in the lineup was *Odysseus Never Returned* by Zdenka Becker, an international member from Austria, directed by League member Edie Cowan. A poignant monologue, translated by Eugene Sampson and performed by Zoe Caldwell, Zdenka's work travels well across borders. Born in a socialist country, Slovakia, where free speech and artistic expression was curtailed, and living for the past thirty years in Austria, Zdenka believes that "Theatre is a good medium to tell stories. The audience looks at the actors on the stage, laughs and cries with them and... recognizes that the play was about

themselves. Theatre is a mirror of the present."

And speaking of holding up a mirror to society, League member P.J. Gibson's play *Jesse*, which followed, did precisely that. Directed by Marie Thomas, the story opens on a loving couple who, with each successive birthday, try to outdo each other with bigger and more surprising celebrations. But laughter and love soon turn to potential disaster when Tauna, well played by Linda Powell, decides to return secretly from a business trip and surprise her husband Gareth. As she sneaks into the house, Gareth,

twists expertly as it explores the plunges we take when faced with new potential relationships.

Next in the lineup was *Blood Cord* by League member Lee Hunkins. As a mother stands grieving over her son's coffin, her other son, Jason, estranged for the past few years, shows up unannounced to pay his respects. What follows is a beautiful and at times hurtful reconciliation, expertly directed by seasoned League member Micki Grant, as mother and son struggle to understand and accept one another.

Following, on a strong dramatic note, was League member Joan Vail Thorne's *Vanity of Vanities* directed by League member Bryna Wortman. In a doctor's waiting room, Mrs. Roberts and a heavily veiled woman sit waiting. Mrs. Roberts, well played by Leslie Lyles, chatters on extolling the virtues of the good doctor and the wonders of plastic surgery, while the veiled woman sits silent. In a final dramatic moment, she reveals herself as the victim of a suicide bomber attack. Again a mirror is held up to



What Goes Around, a 12 minute musical

fearing he hears an intruder, grabs his gun "Jesse" and nearly shoots his wife.

Following Gibson's cautionary tale, *What Goes Around*, with lyrics by League member Sheilah Rae and music by Michele Brouman, was directed by League member Pamela Hunt. Based on a short story by Louise Bagshawe, the "twelve and a half minute musical" tells the story of a middle-aged couple Emma and John, played by veteran actors Sally Mayes and Peter Friedman. John, a Hollywood producer brings his wife Emma to a chic LA restaurant only to tell her that he's through and wants a separation. But, through the presence (on stage) of their alter egos, Emma is able to reverse their situations.

In a similar vein of comedy and empowerment came *Just Desserts* by League member Deborah Savadge, directed by fellow League member Kathryn Long. As three women, played with comic flair by Charlotte Booker, Julia Gibson, and Melissa Hurt, discuss their lives, the plot

the values of our society.

Rounding out the evening was League member Carol Hall's *River Jordan Lamp*. Actress Sally Mayes tells a tale of an enticing lamp in whose glow she basks. As the story weaves along, she reminisces about a young boy in whom she takes an interest and with whom she has an affair. When she discovers that the boy and his family are moving, she gives him the lamp—something to remember her by. On a bittersweet note life returns to how it was.

The evening seemed to end too soon—which is often the case with short plays. As soon as we are intrigued by one character and set of circumstances, another follows, drawing another enchanting world, and we are forced to move on. But the laughter we shared will be remembered for a long time. The performance was followed by a reception where audience members met and congratulated the gifted artists who were kind enough to share their work. ●

NETWORKING **A New Initiative** BY RACHEL REINER

THIS YEAR, THE League of Professional Theatre Women began a new initiative to engage its diverse membership. The new Networking Committee held its inaugural Connecting Event on October 18, 2005 at HERE Arts Center.

Over thirty women participated in this structured networking initiative which was modeled after the “Blatant Self-Interest Networking Event” of the New York Coalition of Professional Women in the Arts and Media. In the style of “speed dating” and “Match.com,” this was “Women Seeking Other Women,” an opportunity for new and veteran members to introduce themselves to their colleagues and share information about their projects in a welcoming, relaxed environment.

After general introductions, attendees talked about their career paths, discussed their recent/current/upcoming projects and explained how other women might help them in the process of realizing their goals. Many had such specific needs as looking for a dramaturg or a co-producer or a project director. After each woman had an opportunity to speak, a reception afforded time for information sharing over food and wine. Attendees wore nametags and were urged to take notes as each person spoke in order to facilitate conversations during the reception. Feedback from attendees was so positive that the

Committee has decided to make this an annual October event.

Since the fall meeting was planned for the general membership, the Committee decided that its next event in the spring should be focused on the specific interests of a subset of that membership. Inspired by a December *New York Times* feature article about women directors on Broadway, the Committee planned



Pamela Berlin, Director

the next event around that most timely topic. Pamela Berlin, director of the original off-Broadway *Steel Magnolias* and *The Cemetary Club* on Broadway, as well as current President of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers (SSDC) Executive Board, was invited to be the guest speaker for the March 20, 2006 event.

Ms. Berlin spoke about her experi-

ences working in theatre and opera and discussed the challenges of balancing her profession with family life. Topics she touched upon included dramaturgical work done by a director of new plays, getting the most out of rehearsals, and her process for choosing material. She shared some startling SSDC statistics on the number of working female directors and choreographers. Most notably, only roughly a quarter of the contracts filed with the union for LORT theatres in the last five to ten years were for women directors and choreographers and only two percent of Broadway or Touring Broadway productions were directed by women. Another interesting finding: Currently women are artistic directors of only sixteen out of the seventy-five LORT theatres.

The fifteen women attending this networking event included directors as well as those interested in learning more about the discipline. General discussion about opportunities and challenges for women directors was followed by a wine and cheese reception.

The Networking Committee is chaired by Rachel Reiner, and includes Julie Crosby, Gail Kriegel, and Dorothy Olim. Special thanks to League member Kristin Marting for graciously offering the use of HERE for the first event and to the League of American Theatres and Producers for providing space for the second. ●

The Playwrights' Lab Goes Public BY DOLORES SUTTON

ON FEBRUARY 28th, an event celebrating both Black History Month (February) and Women's History Month (March) succeeded in its mission with a presentation at the Lambs Club of selected readings from the plays of four League playwrights. Deftly moderated by dramaturg Maxine Kern, the four panelists—Clare Coss (dramatist, therapist), P.J. Gibson (dramatist, poet, educator), Lee Hunkins (dramatist, screen writer), and Elsa Rael (author, dramatist, librettist, lyricist)—treated League members and guests to readings from their plays dealing with women's issues. And a treat it was.

Clare Coss read an excerpt from *Lillian Wald at Home on Henry Street*, about the

nurse who, in 1895 founded the Henry Street Settlement to help assuage urban poverty. Next, P.J. Gibson read a scene between Chloe and Willa from *Blood on the Streets*, inspired by a discussion with her students about African Americans who, putting aside their origins, must be accountable for their actions. The third playwright, Lee Hunkins commented that while the Coss and Gibson plays were “socially motivated,” her writing is more personal, generally about something that happened to her or someone she knows. She read two monologues from *Place Settings*, one of which was nominated for an Emmy. Elsa Rael, at whose home the Playwrights Lab meets, read a selection from her play about

Thomas Jefferson's relationship with Sally Hemmings, the slave with whom he was thought to have fathered four children (a hypothesis that the subsequent discovery of DNA confirmed).

The readings were followed by a stimulating exchange between writers and audience on the creative process, the difficulties women have in placing their work, the problems that exist in acquiring agents, and the trauma that can occur in the course of actual production.

Thanks to Lynne Rogers, who conceived this event, the evening proved once again that the League's sponsorship of member events can enlighten, entertain and strengthen the bonds of trust and friendship among its members. ●

General Membership Meeting

AT THE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP Meeting, held in the library of Washington Irving High School on September 29, 2005 a new initiative for the League—a mentoring project with drama teachers in the New York City public schools—was announced. Co-Presidents Joan Firestone and Harriet Slaughter introduced Paul King, Director of Theater Programs, Office of the Arts and Special Projects of the New York City Department of Education, who addressed the group.

Mr. King explained that a mentoring project for drama teachers is particularly appropriate now that Albany has, for the first time, begun to license drama teachers for Grades 2 through 12. He

noted that a *Blueprint* for Grades 2, 5, 8 and 12 involving the following five sub-headings—1) Theatre Making; 2) Theatre Literacy; 3) Connections (among visual art, music, dance, social studies, history, and cultures); 4) Community and Cultural Resources; 5) Training for Careers—has been drawn up and can be downloaded from the Internet. Mr. King went on to describe the present situation regarding drama teaching in New York City public schools. There are 250 drama teachers, of whom only 100 are certified, and there are some 100 theatres with school programs. Arts budgets include all disciplines and, since the preponderance of certified teachers are in the visual arts, most of the funding goes to that field.

Mr. King introduced Marianna Houston,

Director of Education for the Theatre Development Fund, who gave her ideas about how a mentoring program could evolve and the potential value it held for drama teachers. Such a program would at the outset involve teachers and mentors only. Need assessments would come from the teachers and would be responded to through a coordinator from the League, followed by introductions and the fostering of relationships between teachers and mentors; areas of theatre work to be considered might be acting, directing, management and audience development.

The meeting concluded with general discussion about this project and other plans for League activity in the coming season. ●

Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Theater

A Potential Role for League Members BY JOAN FIRESTONE, CO-PRESIDENT

ALTHOUGH IT HAS NOT yet registered on the public consciousness, the arts are alive and getting better in the New York City public schools. With little fanfare and even less publicity, the austere 21 years without any systematic teaching of the arts in the public schools is over.

THE RECENT PAST

EXCELLENT examples of instruction in all art forms: visual arts, music, dance and drama selectively worked their way into the curriculum supported by private non-profit funding during those 21 years. The consistent active involvement of the cultural and philanthropic communities can be credited for the realization of the essential role that the arts play in education at all age levels, from pre-kindergarten through high school. Growing evidence of the gains in communication skills, self expression and motivation could no longer be denied.

Project Arts, initiated during the Giuliani administration was the beginning

of a system-wide approach to funding the arts. It provided resources to be chosen at the discretion of the then Superintendents to support the hiring of licensed

collaboration of arts education experts in the cultural community and the public school community. Curriculum committees were formed chaired by the director of each art form within the New York City Department of Education and co-chaired by an expert colleague in the cultural community. The committees were constituted to take advantage of experts from within the school system and from a broad range of the cultural community. As



New York City Department of Education

Blueprint Arts

For Teaching and Learning in the

Theater ■ Grades PreK - 12

arts teachers or to contract with independent non-profit arts providers. Universal access was the major handicap during this time—too many schools were still unable to provide any arts instruction.

THE PRESENT

THE COMMITMENT of the Bloomberg administration to improving education was especially sensitive to the value of the arts. A sophisticated approach to curriculum development in each of the arts disciplines: visual arts and music, followed by dance and theatre was developed by a

theatre person and a former Special Advisor to the Chancellor for the Arts, I had a front row seat in the process.

The result of this remarkable process was the development, publication and distribution of *Blueprint for the Arts: Curriculum Guidelines for Teaching and Learning in the Arts* (Visual Arts, Music, Dance and Theater). In the words of Mayor Bloomberg: “The *Blueprint for the Arts* defines a course of excellence in arts education that begins in early childhood and follows students up

Blueprint continued on next page

Black History Month

BY HELAINE FELDMAN

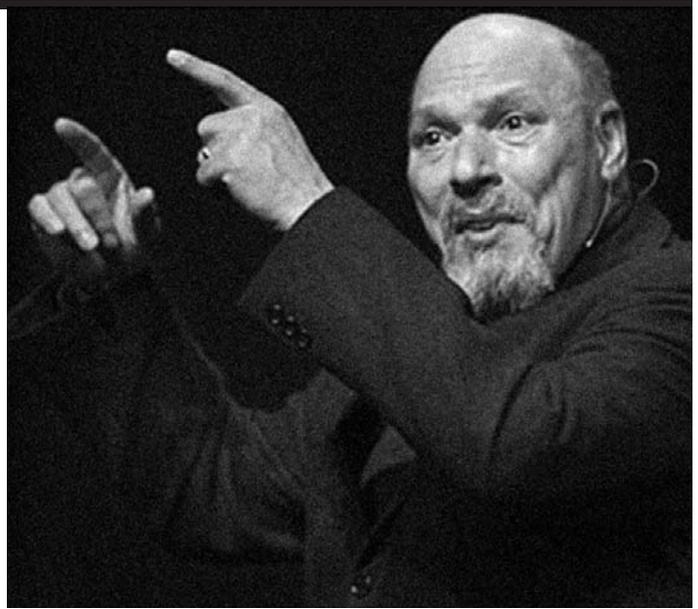
ON FEBRUARY 27 ACTORS Equity's Eastern Equal Opportunity Committee, in conjunction with the League, presented a tribute to August Wilson as its commemoration of Black History Month. Mr. Wilson died on October 2, 2005 at age 60, leaving an extraordinary body of work.

His ten-play cycle, each play set in Pittsburgh in a different decade, depicts the African-American experience in the United States during the past century. A scene from each play, in order of the decade represented was performed by a cast of Equity members, many of whom had performed their roles in productions in New York and around the country. Julia Breanetta Simpson, who co-chairs the committee with Christine Toy Johnson, greeted the audience and introduced the program. The evening was directed and the script coordinated by Shauneille Perry.

Joan Valentina, who played in *Fences* at Swine Palace in Baton Rouge, and Kim Sullivan, who had performed in five of Mr. Wilson's plays, provided an overview of his *Gem of the Ocean*. Mike Hodge, who had appeared on Broadway in *Fences* and *King Hedley II*, and Mr. Sullivan read from *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*. Cary Gant, who provided piano accompani-

ment for the evening, and Julia Breanetta Simpson performed a scene from *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* and Ms. Simpson gave an a capella rendering of *God Bless the Child*. Mr. Sullivan and Ms. Simpson did a reading from *Piano Lesson*.

Jasper R. McGruder, who had been in *Fences* at the Weston Playhouse; Jerome Preston Bates, who had performed in several of Mr. Wilson's plays, including *Seven Guitars* on Broadway, and received an Audelco Award as best actor for *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* at the New Federal Theatre; and Mr. Sullivan read from *Seven Guitars*. Mary Alice recreated her Tony Award-winning role from *Fences* with Charles Turner. Joan Valentina and Jerome Preston Bates returned to do a scene from *Two Trains Running*, while Jasper R. McGruder played harmonica and read from *Jitney*. Mike Hodge read from *King Hedley II*. The final production saw Jasper R. McGruder and Charles Turner in Mr.



August Wilson

Wilson's final play, *Radio Golf*.

Joan Valentina closed out the evening reading from one of Mr. Wilson's poems, *To a Sister Who Can't Conceive of Her Beauty*.

"The hardness of life was the theme that echoed throughout Mr. Wilson's plays with the rhythm of the blues the underlying beat. He makes us laugh and he makes us cry and his plays provide actors with the opportunity to work and to grow that was not available before him. I am very proud to have been a part of this special tribute to him and his work," said Ms. Simpson. ●

Blueprint continued from page 13

through the grades to a conversant level of achievement in art, music, dance and theatre...that can lead to a vocation or avocation, a source of lifelong enjoyment as active participants."

We devoted the League's general meeting on September 29th to an introduction to Paul King, Director of the Theater Program at the NYC Department of Education and Marianna Houston, Director of Education at Theatre Development Fund (TDF), authors of the *Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Theater*. This amazing document provides a guide to instructional benchmarks for each age group encompassing the making of theatre—playwriting, designing and technical theatre, and directing. Emphasis is also given to the value of theatre in making social and historical connections, creative linking to other arts disciplines, linking to the

professional theatre community and becoming knowledgeable advocates and audiences.

THE FUTURE?

MY GOAL IN MAKING the introduction to Paul and Marianna was twofold: 1) To familiarize ourselves with the *Blueprint* and the progress being made within the NYC public schools, but most urgently, 2) To interest League members in helping to implement it. With the very recent licensing of theatre teachers, there are only about 150 throughout the NYC public schools, compared with thousands of visual arts and music teachers. I had met on several occasions with Paul and Marianna and submitted a proposal that would engage professional theatre women to apply their expertise in multiple theatrical disciplines to mentoring teachers of drama, and possibly speech and English teachers. If

ever access was a problem, it is in the theatre field—it is almost impossible to realize a system-wide teaching of theatre without a larger and better prepared staff. I am aware that many of our members are already actively involved in teaching in classrooms throughout the city. This request is not in any way a duplication or replacement of those very gifted and devoted efforts.

With a new school year approaching in September, I would like to encourage League members to consider devoting only a few hours each semester to working with a teacher who has limited classroom knowledge of the field. That one-on-one or small group experience, coordinated with the *Blueprint*, will translate into an advantage for thousands of students.

A CALL TO LEAGUE MEMBERS: PLEASE EMAIL me directly if you have any interest: JDF248@aol.com ●

Tuesdays at Tisa's

BY CAILIN HEFFERNAN

THE FIRST OF TWO MEMBER presentations sponsored by the Membership and Program Committees took place on Tuesday, May 16th at Pan Asian Repertory's theatre at 86th Street and West End Avenue. Ten League members showcased works that ranged from Cabaret to Mime, Monologues to Musical Libretto scenes, an upcoming world premiere of a Play to Short Play format. Along with ten participating members, the talents of eighteen non-League members were integral to the event. Patt Dale stage-managed the evening along with Abigail Felder of Pan Asian; Mimi Turque was the evening's emcee.

Opening the program was a scene from an upcoming musical written and directed by Cailin Heffernan (music and lyrics by Henry Aronson) called *Loveless Texas*, a loose adaptation of *Love's Labours Lost*, set in depression-era Texas and performed by Broadway veterans Rob Evan and Brandon Wardell along with Cortnie Loren Miller and Jennifer Larkin. Shirley Lauro wrote and directed the second offering, *All Through the*

Night, which had its world premiere in Chicago this past June and received the 2006 Joseph Jefferson Award. Based on true anecdotal interviews of Christian girls in Nazi Germany, it was performed by Julie Leeds and Candace Thompson. A third writer-director presentation was made by Yvette Heyliger with her monologue, *What Would Jesus Do?*, featuring Betty Neals. Marjorie Appleman wrote and performed (along with Philip Appleman) in her complete short play, *The Red Dress. The Dressing Room*, a musical by Mimi Scott (book and lyrics) and Matt Gandolfo (composer), offered up three songs which were performed by Mimi Scott, Matt Gandolfo and Paula Newman.

At the top of the program's second half was director Melanie Sutherland's submission of Thomas Coash's monologue, *Thin Air*, performed by Alice King. Cabaret next had a turn with five songs by Mira Spektor, sung by Magda Fishman with accompanist Matt Cvetic. Mime and Beethoven were the basis for director Alexa Kelly's delightful "Dear

John" pantomime piece performed by Brian Richardson and entitled *Kiss of Life*. Music concluded the evening with two offerings: *Not Quite an Ingenue* by Neva Small and *Recipe for Rhythm* by Ellen Swartz. The former, a taste of Neva's cabaret style concert, served up new and reimagined songs performed by Neva under the musical direction of Jay Kerr; the latter was a live presentation of two pieces from a CD by lyricist Swartz and composer-musician Luis Simas.

Thanks to Tisa Chang's generosity in making her theatre available, the presentation enjoyed a full and enthusiastic house. Immediately following the performance, many attendees repaired to The Parlour, a local eatery, for a casual reception. ●



DOROTHY OLIM

A reading at Tuesday at Tisa's

Tisa's Second Tuesday

BY ELSA RAEL

WHEN LYNNE ROGERS, the League's Program Committee Chair called to invite the Writer's Lab to present its work at the West End Theatre as Tisa's Second Tuesday event, we were naturally delighted. Until very recently, we felt we were a secret cabal, although that had never been the intention. For some unexplained reason, even most board members were unaware that we'd been meeting for several years.

Our initial response was to discuss the possibility of finding actors to read ten minute scenes from the work of each writer. The alternative was to read the work ourselves. Our final decision was the latter—the purpose being to share with the audience an example of how we conduct our monthly meetings. Each writer brings several copies of her new work to the meeting and asks others to read the roles.

In this way we get to hear the work and are given the opportunity to discuss, to get feedback, always positive—for changes, cuts and re-writes. The result: The seven members of the group have grown to

trust each other and regard ourselves as a special family—and that we have become. *Thank you, thank you, thank you Tisa, for offering us the time, the place—and the dare to share our work.*

In preparation for this article, I asked each of the Lab members to write a line or two to share her feelings about this most special event. Here they are:

"Thanks to Tisa Chang et al for two evenings of play readings at the West End Theatre. My colleagues and I found it a splendid opportunity to present excerpts from our current work to League members and friends. The feedback and conviviality was much appreciated." *Clare Coss*

"The Playwriting Lab has been an inspiring aspect of League membership and my play never would have been completed without the support and advice of its participants. The League-sponsored reading offered us a little milestone by inviting us to share our voices and visions with the general membership of professional women in theatre." *Glenda Frank*

"This session opened our Lab process to the greater membership, and the responses

were beneficial, the evening enjoyable. The work got what all playwrights need—an audience. Now, a festival of fully mounted productions?...Hmmm. That would be good. The League has all the necessary components." *P.J. Gibson*

I compare a new work being read to salmon swimming upstream...the journey can be rough, but you keep going, and when you finally reach your destination, you know the struggle was worth the trip. With the next writing project, you start swimming upstream all over again." *Lee Hunkins*

"Here's a 'shortie': Having a ten-minute excerpt from a play I'm writing performed in front of an audience encouraged me to finish the full-length [play]." *Ellie Jones*

"We've got a productive, nurturing and deeply informing playwrights roundtable. I'm even finishing my play, *Emily*, based on the life of a Victorian woman, Emily Carr. While our round table is full, we welcome visitors to check us out as a model for other roundtables in the League." *Maxine Kern* ●

Holiday Party A Time to Celebrate and Honor our Own

THE NATIONAL ARTS Club with its tall windows framing Gramercy Park provided a new and festive scene for this season's Holiday Party on December 6, 2005. The party's high point, as always, was the recognition of two outstanding women of achievement the presentations of the Lee Reynolds Award and the Lifetime Achievement Award.

LEE REYNOLDS AWARD

MARCIA SALVATORE, the Lee Reynolds recipient, is one of the League's Philadelphia members. Many of us know her for the two horizon-widening trips she arranged to that city to meet women theatre leaders and to view women's dramatic work produced by the Wilma Theatre. Sheilah Rae, in presenting the award, told us the rest of the story:

"We are here tonight to honor Marcia Salvatore with the Lee Reynolds Award. Lee Reynolds was a producer and served on the League's board. She was a mentor to young writing talent and an activist for the working woman in the theatre. The award is given to a woman whose work through the medium of theatre has helped to illuminate the possibilities for social, cultural and/or political change. Tonight Marcia joins such esteemed women as Phyllis Newman, Estelle Parsons, Joanne Woodward, Marlo Thomas, Ruby Dee, Ruth Mayleas, and Lynne Meadow, to name only a few of the award's recipients.

"I met Marcia nine years ago when I was vice president of membership for our organization. Marcia jumped right in to help bring Philadelphia's stellar theatre women into our fold, not to mention expanding our own membership horizons nationally. She brought her unique brand of energy to the League's board, serving with me during my presidency. Her work for the Philadelphia Theater Initiative is renowned. The panels, educational policies, mentoring of talent, and travel initiatives brought new perspectives to the role of grant-giving organizations. The PTI not only supported its member theatres financially, but brought an array of new talent into the Philadelphia region in all areas of theatre, from creative teams to business experts."

A colleague, Harriet Power, theatre director and associate professor at Villanova University, says of Marcia "There is no single name, no single individual... in the greater Philadelphia region who inspires such instantaneous recognition and appreciation in the theatre community...The Philadelphia Theater Initiative, launched by the Pew Charitable Trusts and directed by Marcia has invested more than eight million dollars in the artistic development of the region's professional theatres and artists...Marcia made Philadelphia a lively, connected, and healthy place to create theatre."



Honorees Marcia Salvatore and Ellen Stewart

Another Philadelphia colleague, Naomi Grabel, executive director of the Kimmel Center, spoke these words, read by Sheilah: "Marcia was a fierce champion of the theatre community for many years in her capacity as director of the Philadelphia Theater Initiative. Her work ranged from organizing community forums for discussions about artistic and management issues to subsidizing national theatre consultants' visits to Philadelphia to benefit local theatres. The major annual funding program which she managed enabled numerous ground-breaking productions to grace Philadelphia's stages. Her advocacy was profound among others in the funding community, and her respect for and interaction with artists is legendary. One of her most popular initiatives was the annual theatre trip for which she secured funding to send local artists and

administrators to see theatre around the country and around the world in the hope that best practices and new relationships would follow us back to Philadelphia. (My personal favorite was the Edinburgh Festival trip in 2001.) She is also to be credited with connecting the women of Philadelphia theatre to this great organization [the League]...Generosity is the stock and trade of those in the grantmaking business. But Marcia's generosity of spirit equaled the generosity of her grantmaking program."

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

ELLEN STEWART, who quite literally needs no introduction, was this year's recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award. Most appropriately, for their careers and connections with world artists have intersected on many occasions, Margaret Croyden spoke about Ellen. She began by remarking on the difficulty of speaking of her "dear friend" Ellen Stewart, LaMaMa's founder, because of the sheer enormity of her accomplishments. Saying that it is "so fitting that she should receive the League's Lifetime Achievement Award," Margaret went on to say that "more than any other woman in the theatre Ellen has had an astonishing and remarkable 50-year career.

"Every theatrical company in Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Central Europe knows LaMaMa. Her name, her reputation, her image is almost mythic. Here is this woman of color operating virtually by herself who founded a theatre in a cellar on East Fourth Street, almost went to jail to keep it going, was ostracized in the neighborhood at the beginning because she was black, and through the years, has produced, directed and sponsored endless productions and artists from all over the world. And despite age, sickness, and the vicissitudes of life she kept to her vision of a theatre. Only yesterday, she told me she would expand the repertory of Greek myths that she has been directing all over the world, that she would keep it going no matter what.

"I met Ellen in the 1950s when she was instrumental in bringing over

Holiday Party *continued on page 32*

June Awards Celebration

RUTH MORLEY AWARD

ON A LOVELY JUNE DAY, the well-named Trattoria Dopo Teatro, jammed to the rafters with 80 women and a few men, was the setting for two major League annual awards: the Ruth Morley Designing Woman Award and the Lucille Lortel Award. These honors, given on the same day, complement each other; the first recognizes an already accomplished professional with a distinguished body of work, and the second is given to a young woman who shows creative promise. Co-presidents Harriet Slaughter and Joan Firestone chaired the proceedings between luncheon courses.

The Ruth Morley Designing Woman Award was established in 1998 to honor costume designer Ruth Morley, one of our profession's leading designers in theatre and film. This year the awardee is lighting designer Natasha Katz, a 2006 Tony nominee and a Tony winner in 2000, who has designed extensively in theatre (Broadway, off-Broadway and regional), opera (Metropolitan Opera's *Cyrano*), and dance (American Ballet Theatre's *Don Quixote*). Natasha's many Broadway credits include *Urban Cowboy*, *Flower Drum Song*, *Twelfth Night*, *Gypsy*, *Breaking the Code*, and the worldwide productions of *Aida* and *Beauty and the Beast*.

Speaking about Natasha, Paul Libin, Producing Director of Jujamcyn Theaters, who knew her during summers as a child in Springs, Easthampton, gave Natasha her first summer job: in the subscription department of Circle-in-the-Square. When she later asked him for a job in lighting, Paul (then producing director at Circle) advised working with a senior designer in the field and arranged for her to work with the Broadway designer Roger Morgan. "Bravo to her," said Paul. "It was an honor to participate in blessing her career."

Legendary lawyer Floria Lasky, Natasha's lawyer and friend, paid tribute to her by quoting eminent essayists and poets. She spoke of the "magic of her work" and the perfect description of her nature and character as "sweetness and light" (pun intended). She went on, "Natasha is

an artist. Natasha is intelligent. Natasha is lovable...and of all the people I have met in theatre in sixty years she is a beautiful embodiment of sweetness and light...The words of some old masters do always sound better..." Then to Matthew Arnold who said "The pursuit of perfection...then is the pursuit of sweetness and light..." And finally "Natasha is the lady of light, to use Swinburne's phrase, who gives luster and sweetness to her family, her colleagues, her friends and her art..."



Natasha Katz

Tom Schumacher of the Disney organization, for which Natasha designed *Aida* and *Beauty and the Beast* and this year's *Tarzan* talked about her "muscular, big lighting," which sometimes requires a "massive amount of electronics."

Arthur Laurents said he became friends with Natasha because, unlike anyone he's ever known in the theatre, she has "good manners." He offered Natasha her first Broadway show (*La Cage aux Folles*) and took her to Australia to light it. Calling this grown woman a "girl," he explained that the term isn't pejorative (by contrast "boy" is), but praised that quality of being a girl which she has never lost, that quality of being open to experience.

In accepting the Ruth Morley Award Natasha said simply that all she ever wanted to do was work in the theatre and that it was at Oberlin College that she chose lighting. She thanked all those who had come to honor her—her husband, her parents (mentioning as well her children who were not there, but in school), Bob Crowley, and Paul, Tom, Floria, and Arthur who spoke such wonderful words about her.

In summing up, Harriet acknowledged Ruth Morley's daughters—Melissa Morley and Emily Hackett—and their presence here which helped continue their mother's legacy in this eighth Ruth Morley Award. She closed by naming past recipients: Jane Greenwood, Jennifer Tipton, Willa Kim, Marjorie Bradley Kellogg, Tharon Musser, Carrie Robbins, and Heidi Ettinger—all women of distinction in the American theatre.

LUCILLE LORTEL AWARD BY ELSA RAEL

AT THE JUNE LUNCHEON Co-President Harriet Slaughter presented the League's 2006 Lucille Lortel Award, established with a bequest from Ms. Lortel, to Justine Lambert, Artistic Director of the Looking Glass Theatre. The award comes with an honorarium of \$2,500.

Ms. Lambert and her two company co-founders were League guests at the event, and the trio was visibly delighted with this recognition of its small theatre, given, as stated on the framed scroll: "For the consistent inventiveness and excellence of their theatre work."

The preface to Looking Glass's mission statement reads: "Reflecting life on the stage with truth and theatricality while exploring a female vision" and closes with: "We stage the work of history's women, productions of the classics envisioned by modern women directors and new works by female playwrights."

Plans for the theatre's coming season include an original children's theatre



Justine Lambert accepts Lucille Lortel Award from Co-Presidents

production; a late-night project for "the young contingent"; the Forum, a bi-annual project to introduce writers and directors to each other and to new artists; a full production of a classic; and a previously unproduced play.

Call for a Fall schedule: 212-307-9467. The theatre is located at 422 West 57th Street, and well worth investigation. This writer's recent visit finds the League's framed scroll in a special place of honor. ●

PICTORIAL SUMMARY



JOAN FIRESTONE

WIT Producers Betty Corwin, Harriet Slaughter and Ruth Mayleas



HARRIET SLAUGHTER

Jackson Gay and Laurie McCants



JOAN FIRESTONE

Angelina Fiordellisi and DCA Commissioner, Kate Levin



HARRIET SLAUGHTER

Carolyn Balducci, Sheilah Rae and Dorothy Olim



JOAN FIRESTONE

Former President Billie Allen with Carrie Robbins



JOAN FIRESTONE

Veronica Claypool and Lynne Rogers



JOAN FIRESTONE

Francesca Blumenthal



Edward Albee on the WOMEN IN THEATRE set



Lynne Rogers and DeVida Jenkins



Susan Myerberg and Victoria Bailey



Sharon Fallon and Elizabeth Lucas



Joanne Jacobson



Rina Elisha, Dawn Chiang, Martha Coigny and Crystal Field



Pam Koslow and Sheilah Rae

A chapter excerpted from **CHANGING DIRECTION**

**FILM AND THEATRE—
SIMILARITIES AND
DIFFERENCES**

THE GENERAL MISCONCEPTION held by most lay people and some professionals seems to be that there must be a difference between the crafts of directing and acting in theatre and those in film. The belief is that there are stage actors and screen actors, film directors and theatre directors. I don't agree with this. It is true that some actors and directors have more experience in one or the other form and thus have to make adjustments or add to their awareness of certain elements in crossing over. But it is my contention that the basics of the crafts remain the same. However, it is true that the skilled actor does not necessarily automatically become the skilled director nor should one assume that the skilled director can also act.

**THE LANGUAGE—
A SIMILARITY**

WHAT IS CERTAINLY THE SAME, at least in my approach, is the language of communication. Although the director's work calls for an overview of the material and an awareness of the through-line and outlines for each character as opposed to the actor who simply has to focus on his/her own role, the means of communication by which the actor and director collaborate to lift the words off the page and breathe life into them can be the same. My workshops which always

include actors, directors and, yes also writers, all work together with the same approach. The results are testament to the fact that this can be done successfully.

The realities of economic survival demand that both actors and directors be capable of moving with ease from theatre to film or television if they have the desire for a roof over their heads and food on their tables. It is well known among members of our industry that working in the theatre is a luxury ill-afforded if it means taking time from the much more lucrative remuneration offered by film and television. There is frequent mourning by the theatre community over the apparent loss of talented playwrights who have opted for the good life by writing screenplays and who have seemingly deserted the theatre. In the days of what is lovingly called the 'golden age' of theatre (the forties, fifties and sixties), the motion picture industry derived much of its material and talent from the theatre. Plays were purchased from successful runs on Broadway and adapted into films. Actors were 'discovered' in Off Broadway plays and quickly became stars. As I write this book, it seems the worm is turning: Work initiated in film is adapted for the stage. Actors known entirely for their film work are appearing for the first time on the boards and even directors, some of whom began in the theatre, are either returning to the fold or trying on the experience of directing theatre for the

first time. And this is all happening with varying degrees of success or failure.

SIZE — A DIFFERENCE

THERE ARE SOME DIFFERENCES that must be taken into consideration and addressed in the course of the work. The first and most obvious of these is the question of size. We've examined the issue of size of screen in the chapter about the actor and the camera, particularly in the use of close-ups, but here I am referring to another aspect that is almost the opposite concern. It is that in theatre the presence of a proscenium, or whatever separates the live audience from the actors, demands a certain level of projection. It is not only necessary to be seen and to clearly project the actions and activities, the actors must also be heard and understood in the upper reaches of the balcony. The actors' training therefore must include the ability to retain the truth of their characters while finding a level, often slightly larger than life, that will project that reality to the large watching audience. The camera, conversely, is like a microscope, examining the actor's every move, the slightest twitch. But the quick wink of an eye, so telling on the screen, might be lost to an audience of more than twenty five in a theatre environment.

In the previous chapter I've referred to the case where, when working with talented trained actors who have had extensive background in theatre but little or no

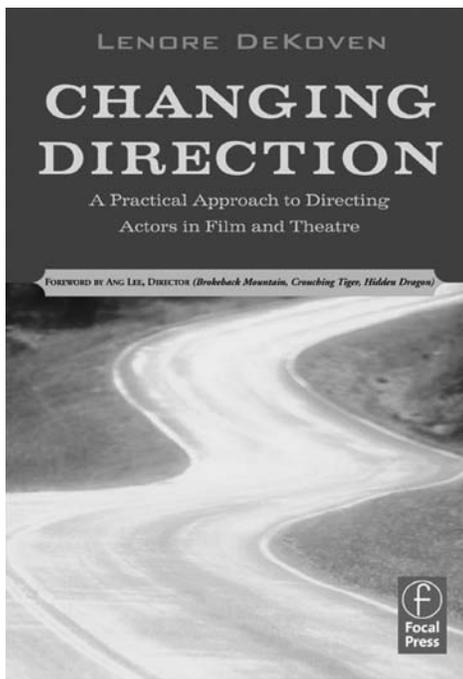
The following quotes are found in Chapter 11, "What Do the Actors Say?" which contains excerpts of interviews conducted by

SIR BEN KINGSLEY:

"What can the director give you that allows you to do your best work? Help me whittle it down. The less I can act the more will come out of the collective subconscious. If you see me doing seven things ask for five, if five ask for three. Help me whittle it down, pare it away."

MERYL STREEP:

"I don't want to be boss. I want to know that the director has that architectural form and the structure is going to hold and I can hurl my entire body into it and it won't break. Actors can't give it to people they don't trust."



A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO DIRECTING ACTORS IN FILM AND THEATRE

BY LENORE DEKOVEN

film experience, my film students have, on viewing their dailies, had a rude surprise. What seemed so right in the protected intimacy of the rehearsal hall, suddenly leaps from the screen seeming 'pushed' or indicated. What happens is that the actor goes into performance mode in front of the camera, and reflexively projects in the manner customary to the theatrical experience. Without realizing the effect that this seemingly slight change might have on the balance between actors, the choice of actions, etc. the team presses blithely on. It is a sad moment in the editing room when the director realizes that the lack of attention to even the most subtle of changes in the actor's performance might make it necessary to reshoot, or even worse, to settle for something less than desirable.

ADJUSTMENTS

BY THE SAME TOKEN, when an actor who has come from an exclusively filmic

background attempts to do a play, there are several new challenges: There is the necessity to adjust to the fact that there is no microphone hovering an inch away to catch every nuance, that there is no ability to call "cut!" and stop when something goes awry, that the entire script has to be memorized and that the actor has to project the life of the character in every moment on stage, speaking or not, and for everyone in the audience. The introduction of film and TV stars into Broadway and Off Broadway productions has been increasingly prevalent for obvious economic reasons, making it necessary for directors to be very aware of the necessity of attending to and assisting the actors in making these adjustments.

The text in a theatre piece is usually much fatter; there is more dialogue. In film so much can be communicated visually. Silence can be illuminated by the visual shot and in high action films there is even less talk. A filmic scene is usually much shorter than a scene in a play. Thus in theatre the vocal demand greatly increases. Those actors who have had theatre training have usually studied voice production, speech, movement and, in some acting programs, even 'circus' which might include juggling and balance exercises. (Everyone was startled recently when Glenn Close attempted to show off her juggling ability on Jay Leno's TONIGHT show). It is tacitly understood that the whole instrument

must be ready and able to deliver whatever might be demanded of it. An actor who may have jumped into film work shortly after 'being discovered', having left limited college or community theatre training to build an auspicious career as a film star, might find the adjustment extremely difficult. Those who have attempted the cross-over often come down with that dreaded affliction of actors and singers known as laryngitis. The vocal chords are simply not used to the demand and they protest.

Memory muscles, which haven't been required to recall much more than a beat or two at a time for the camera, struggle with the obligation to learn page after page of dialogue. And sometimes the performance is so subtle that it can't be 'read' past the sixth row. The wise director who is confronted with the necessity of casting an actor in this category should insist that the actor do several months of pre-production classes in both scene study and voice production in preparation for the theatre experience.

The actors' speech patterns and quirks, as well as dialects, present other difficulties to which the director must attend. Here again, film tends to magnify the sibilant or lisping 's' sound and other speech impediments. They can become a comedy device, but if the material is not essentially comedic, it might require significant time devoted to looping or dubbing. Although there is a growing use

Annette Insdorf during her 92nd Street Y series, "Reel Pieces."

KEVIN KLINE:

"There are directors in the theatre as well as directors in film who are auteurs, who make the play or film about their vision. And there are others who collaborate and are interested in the actors' vision as well. And then there are those in between who are auteurs but who bring aboard actors whose vision is malleable enough to fit theirs or whose vision is in sync with theirs. We work with all of those but I always prefer collaboration."

■ FEATURES

of amplification in theatre to accommodate actors' inability to project, (much to the dismay of the old guard), those small speech difficulties are usually not quite so noticeable.

In the old days, theatre actors were expected to learn what was referred to as 'standard stage English'. But with the advent of playwrights like O'Neill, Odets, Williams, Mamet, Rabe, etc. it has become more about the vernacular and/or 'street' dialect and there is no longer any standard. Mainly it is a matter of clarity, of being understood by the audience. In this instance the amazing technology of film has an advantage; the soundtrack can be cleaned up so the demand on the actor becomes less critical. But the careful director, whether casting for film or theatre, should keep a sharp ear out for anything in the speech that might become a future problem, weighing its importance depending on the medium in which the director is working.

For actors there is also the question of preparation for the needs and emotional state of the character before an entrance or before a shot. In the theatre an actor can prepare in the relative privacy of the dressing room or in the darkness of the wings. In film the actor is often faced with the necessity of preparing amidst an assemblage of busy crew members or on a crowded and noisy thoroughfare. Contrary to popular opinion, not everyone can rate a personal trailer. Particularly in film, the director must be sensitive to the needs of the actor and the necessity of preparing.

Another difference between the two pursuits is the number of people involved in the realization of the project. In both instances, for however long, the team becomes a closely knit family until the

show closes or the film is wrapped. In theatre that family is relatively small in size—with the possible exception of the recently imported mega-musical trend. But the number of people overall who are involved in the making of a film is much greater and demands a special skill on the part of the director to act as a unifying force. Many actors appear and disappear from the shoot, often having a shooting schedule lasting two weeks out of a total of perhaps 26 weeks of production.

TIME FACTOR

IN THEATRE the actors see each other every night and twice on matinee days for the length of the run, and the director is long gone, leaving the stage manager to maintain the level of the work. This allows for fluidity in the work and often there will be ongoing development and experimentation with a stage manager keeping a hopefully watchful eye on the over-all result. The wise director will check in on the performance periodically to make sure the integrity of the original production is preserved.

With a film the director prevails until the work is ready for distribution and whatever is in the can or on the tape is preserved, hopefully, forever with all its artistry and/or errors intact. This might be one of the reasons that many stage directors yearn to do film. (Aside from the difference in financial remuneration of course!) It is disheartening to put your energies and talent into a project that at best has such a limited life and then disappears from view except perhaps for an archival tape stored in the Lincoln Center Library Theatre Collection in New York City.

But balance this with the fact that theatre offers instant gratification, while a director might have to wait for a year or more to get a response to a film. There is nothing more satisfying and fulfilling than standing in the darkened rear of a theatre and listening to a packed house laugh and cry exactly where you wanted them to. And this can happen as soon as six weeks after the start of rehearsal.

AUDIENCE

THERE IS ANOTHER CONSIDERATION when examining the differences between theatre and film. Since we as directors are essentially communicators and it is assumed that in our work we have something to say, it is worth noting the difference in size of a potential audience. A successful film, with the possibility of world-wide distribution and its continued life on VHS and DVD, reaches an infinitely larger number of viewers than the longest running play, which even with the possibility of periodic revival and touring is limited in comparison.

In any case, an established director will no doubt find him/herself eventually working in theatre, film and television during the course of a career and it is my contention that the approach to working with actors, including the vocabulary of communication and the steps in the preparation process, is basically the same. The actors' craft, regardless of the form, is also basically the same.

As a pioneer in this area, it is heartening to note that the concept of teaching Directing Actors as a separate discipline seems to be proliferating in Academia and Conservatory training programs. If you learn to become fluent in the approach to the task, you will be able to move with ease amongst the various forms as far as the actors are concerned, leaving yourself the time and energy to deal with the technical differences inherent in each. ●



Lenore DeKoven

LIV ULLMAN:

"I am too impatient to work with bad directors who are doing their homework on you or don't know what they're doing. It's boring. You must make the actors feel really safe so they can do their best work."

KANSAS ABDUCTION

Catherine Filloux, a new League member, recently was a playwright in residence at the William Inge Center for the Arts in Independence, Kansas. During the two-month residency she lived and wrote in Inge's boyhood home. Her play, *Lemkin's House*, won the 2006 PeaceWriting Award from the Omni Center for Peace. It will be remounted at the McGinn-Cazale Theatre in New York in September-October 2006, a co-production with Vital Theatre and Body Politic Theater. The opera for which Ms. Filloux wrote the libretto, *Where Elephant's Weep* (Composer Him Sophy), will be workshopped in Cambodia in November and in Lowell, Massachusetts in April 2007. Ms. Filloux is currently working on a play about Hurricane Katrina; playwright Joe Sutton is her collaborator on this project, which will premiere at Southern Rep in New Orleans in 2007.

ON A 90-DEGREE DAY in April 2006, I'm invited to speak to the Rotary Club of Independence, Kansas, about my playwright's residency at the William Inge House. When I get to my lunch table I shake hands with a Rotary Club member who is retired from the electricity business. He tells me I have a painfully strong handshake. I must add that this man's hand is probably twice the size of mine. My handshake is, according to him, "a New York City handshake." I ask the men at my table what they think of New York and the one who suggested I hurt his hand says that when he did business in New York City the attitude was cutthroat and distrustful. Another man, who worked in the computer business in Boston, tells the group that Boston was luckily much better than New York. Originally from Kansas, the man in the computer business saw "the sunflower state" as the perfect place to retire. He came home and foresees peaceful years ahead. I can see the restfulness in his eyes as I turn to look out at the golf course. Also at the table is the first African-American member of the Rotary Club in Independence. He is retired from work in postal services and has been active in civil rights in the region.

Soon after we start to eat, everyone stands suddenly to pledge allegiance to the flag, which is to the left of the podium. We then join in a Christian prayer, thanking God for Easter. The electricity man asks me if I pledge allegiance in New York and I say, no I haven't done it since high school. Still I believe in "Liberty and Justice for all." He laughs. One of the only two female

members in the Rotary Club introduces the three women scheduled to speak: a young actress, and two female playwrights, including myself. When the young actress rises, the older gentleman who led us in the pledge and the Easter prayer calls out with delight to the group that the actress really livened up their table. The whole room laughs heartily. The actress speaks of a large federal grant she is writing to fund theatre education in the Kansas public schools.

Next up at the podium I say that I came to Kansas to acknowledge the divide between my state and this one. I've made my home in New York City for the past twenty years, surrounded by mostly like-minded liberals. I've felt, after writing plays about Cambodia, Turkey, Bosnia, Rwanda and my parents' homelands of France and Algeria, that the world, *abroad*, is better known to me than Kansas. I'm not proud of this. Teaching a playwriting workshop at the high school in Coffeyville, eighteen miles from Independence, I've learned that all my students are against the war in Iraq, so I've instantly found the exception to the stereotype. Teaching theatre in the public schools is one of the most important goals I can endorse, having had quite a long playwriting career and love affair with the theatre. Remarkably, besides his name, William Inge, the city's hero has only one beautiful word emblazoned on his tombstone in the local cemetery: "Playwright." In addition, theatre subscribers in New York City seem to be getting older and older so education for the young can only help my field. As I say goodbye to the electricity man he tells me I have "a great personality."

At the high school in Coffeyville when

we talk about the war in Iraq one of my female students looks at me with her face scrunched up and asks, "Why are we at war again? Terrorism?" This young woman is writing a play about herself and her father, whom she hasn't seen in years. Though she remembers watching him slash her mother's arm to the bone, she still dreams of going to see him in prison, because they share a bond. When I ask the students to bring in photos, which inspire them for their plays, she brings in photos of her whole family in a scrapbook. Another young man, who is painfully shy and soft-spoken, lives in foster care. The picture he chooses is of a man carrying a large bundle of wood on his back into a slum in Nairobi. Actually the photo is of a woman carrying wood, but he's changed it to a man for his play. The man has his back to the camera. There's something about this young man that catches my attention. He has an obvious interest in lumber; he's a theatre *techie* who likes to work backstage. When I suggest that he look for research on the Internet, he tells me he doubts his mother will let him get on her computer. His foster family is so large he seems to lose track of his siblings, except for one sister. She threw away her copy of Inge's *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*. She always does things to bug him. Later he informs me that she didn't actually throw it away. Anyway, he shows me the keys he now has to lock his bedroom door. A few weeks into the class he waves his hand passionately to read one of the roles in a play we're studying. He reads well and everyone can hear him.

The landscape around Independence
Kansas continued on page 32

An Interview with

The following interview is excerpted from *Women Writing Plays: Three Decades of the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize*, a collection of essays, conversations and memoirs by and about women who have been writing plays for the English-speaking theatre since the feminist movement of the 1970s. The book, which includes an introduction by Marsha Norman and was edited by Alexis Greene, was published by University of Texas Press in April 2006.

Rukhsana Ahmad is a playwright, short story writer, novelist, and translator. She was born in Karachi, Pakistan, where she studied English literature and later taught at Karachi University; in 1973, she moved to London with her husband. Her plays include *Song for a Sanctuary* (1991); an adaptation of S.H. Manto's story *Black Shalwar* (1997); *River on Fire* (1997), which was a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize in 2001–02; and *The Man Who Refused to be God* (2001). This interview took place in London in June 2004.



Pakistani Writer Rukhsana Ahmad

LINDA BROWNLEE. COURTESY OF RENAISSANCE ONE, 2004

ALEXIS GREENE: Would you talk about your background?

RUKHSANA AHMAD: My father was an engineer. He was a very dynamic and powerful, energetic man. They were complete opposites, my father and mother. He was much more rural in his culture than my mother; my mother was from Delhi. She was very inhibited, very graceful, very elegant. A beautiful woman. And my father was a right womanizer. He remarried when my youngest brothers were due to be born. His marriage with my mother was very unhappy.

AG: Did they divorce?

RA: No, because she could not. She kept going back to her family to say “I want to take a divorce,” and they would say, “Who’s going to support seven kids?” There was no way she could support us and manage, because all of us were under ten years old. It was an impossible situation. There were four girls and three boys, and then one of my brothers died in a flying accident at the age of twenty. A short story I wrote recently, *First Love* (2004), is based on his story. That was the first time I dealt with it, thirty years on. He was the guy who was going to

salvage life for the family, especially my mother—it had a terrible impact on her.

My political knowledge and intelligence comes partly from those early experiences. Here was a country which was at war with itself—the Bangladesh War of Independence. My brother was the only person in the family who kept saying, “The Bengalis are right, we should be giving them more autonomy.” And ironically, he was the one whose plane got hijacked, and he had to crash himself to not suffer the disgrace of becoming the guy who got hijacked. It was his first solo flight. That short story is a retelling of his story, and it was the first time I had written something so directly autobiographical. It was very painful to write. As in the story, I had been anti-war, and my brother and I used to have arguments. My sister and I, we’d both pick on him, and he’d defend his militarism, which came from the army people in the family.

My eldest sister never got on with my father. She would defy him and invite a beating. My father was quite abusive verbally and occasionally physically; he would get violent. I never remembered all of this very clearly, and when I wrote

Song for a Sanctuary, which takes place in a refuge for women who have been abused, I thought, “Why the hell did I do this play?” But every play you do, you’re exploring something for yourself, and I think that play was revisiting the trauma of domestic violence, what it does to you. I believe that feminism for women is an experiential thing.

AG: When did you first realize you were a writer?

RA: I really wanted to be a writer at nine or ten. I started writing a novel then—a very romantic novel, too, it was. Fortunately for humanity it wasn’t saved. The interesting thing about it is that it was in Urdu, and I do feel the biggest loss in my writing has been the loss of language, because so many of my characters think in a different language. I’m able to convey that, but only partially. There is a silence that is enclosed by language or the absence of it. If I could write a completely bilingual play, which would be understood in Pakistan, that play would be much more powerful, because both languages would be understood there. But because I’m in England, and my audience is white and largely without Urdu, I cannot do that.

RUKHSANA AHMAD

BY ALEXIS GREENE

Language is a very complex subject. In Pakistan, as elsewhere, language and power are so connected. That I went to a convent meant that Urdu was taken away quite early—and Urdu was not my mother tongue anyway; my parents were Punjabi. But Urdu is the language of the powerful elite, and there is a great sense of inferiority about Punjabi among Punjabis. So my parents had never taught us Punjabi; we grew up speaking Urdu, and I only acquired my Punjabi after I married into a Punjabi household based in Lahore. I can speak decent Punjabi now, but I can't write in it, and I can just about read it. With Urdu, my style is not evolved enough to write in it now, but I think I could write scripts. I could manage dialogue quite easily.

AG: When did you learn to speak English?

RA: Very early, because it was the medium of education in the convents where I studied (it was a privileged education). I am very comfortable in English; I think in it and dream in it. But I am also very divided in my consciousness of the world. You know how you have an understanding of certain concepts and notions in one language, and you don't know the exact equivalents in another? In that sense, I feel language is an inhibition here.

I didn't start writing in English formally until I studied English literature at university in Pakistan, and even so, I thought, "Well, to be able to write you must be in London." There was this idea of "I'm not good enough" for a very long time. I started teaching literature before my marriage, but my mother said, "You have to get married now." And actually, life had come to a kind of cul-de-sac. I'd never have the money to move out of my mother's house if I remained teaching at the university, which paid something like five hundred rupees, which would not get you a week's living anywhere. So I decided to get married, and I lost my job in 1973 because my husband was based in London.

I couldn't get even a school-teaching

job here. I did my masters again in England, and I remember going to a job agency and them telling me, "The only job we can offer you is charring." So I thought, "Well, I might as well find out about this motherhood lark" and decided to have the kids, and had them very quickly. All three of them by the end of the '70s. I thought, "I'll take five years to raise them," which was a completely foolish idea. I had them very close together and was completely overwhelmed. That was the time I got very politicized, because I realized how disempowered I'd become in that process. I'd also gotten totally de-skilled by being in a country which did not recognize my qualifications. I started writing in order to survive. I wrote about the status of women in Pakistan, and then I was invited by Ravi Randhawa to join the Asian Women Writers Workshop, later the Asian Women Writers Collective. Suddenly I was with a group of women who were of Asian extraction, knew the languages, knew the culture, knew what I was talking about, and the first story I wrote went down very well and got me a theatre job.

AG: Do you consider yourself a feminist?

RA: Yes. I do. I have no embarrassment about saying that anywhere. I'm less rigid a feminist than I was. I used to be austere. But the Women's Movement was like that.

AG: You write in your introductory notes to the published version of *Song for a Sanctuary* that you based the play on an actual incident, which in turn reminded you of personal events.

RA: That's right. The play didn't start with a personal story at all, but the emotion came from a memory. Actually, two incidents inspired the play. There was a murder of a Sikh woman in a refuge for abused women, and a friend of mine, Rahila Gupta, wrote a poem in response, and we all went on a march protesting violence against women. I felt quite envious of her being able to write something, but I just couldn't think of

what to write. Then I heard about a dispute at a refuge where the workers got locked out by the residents, and I started researching that story, and the class and culture differences. The first version of that play had the lock-out in it, but I worked with a director who said the lock-out had to go—it didn't work dramatically—so I took it out. The cultural conflict stayed.

AG: There's a great deal in that play: abuse of women, the faults of the refuge system, the racism of one of the women who runs it.

RA: That character is very politically driven. I was satirizing that feminism of the '80s which saw everything in black and white, which believed that if ideas were not pure enough, they had to be thrown out. I see the extremism of that position, its dangers, and the character is based on that type of person. You see that kind of person always in a refuge, the kind who is completely driven by political motives and can never see the humanity of other, more complex, positions.

AG: The play is quite disturbing, and the ending is brutal—bleak and shocking. You cannot help but draw the conclusion that, no matter how painful a woman's position in relation to her abuser, if her only alternative is poverty, she really has no choice.

RA: Well, my mother's position was similar, and the character of the woman who is eventually killed by her husband is quite closely based on my mother.

AG: What has it been like as a woman of Pakistani birth living in London and working in the theatre here?

RA: Things have evolved hugely in the last fifteen or eighteen years. But it's not been easy. I don't want to complain about it, because on the whole I haven't done badly. I don't feel unsuccessful. I feel unacknowledged at times, and I feel marginalized at times, because I'm not integrated into the theatre culture enough: circles of actors and writers, and drama parties, where people hang out. People do all their socializing in pubs

here, their networking happens in pubs. And a pub is not necessarily a charming place to meet. I don't drink enough to be interested in hanging out there. I think my age was probably not a good thing, and I made a political decision to continue to wear the kameez shalwar [a combination of tunic and trousers often worn by Indian and Pakistani women], which I think held me back. If I had appeared to be more integrated than I seemed to be on the surface, then I might have done better.

It might also have to do with the fact that my work is not easy. I am very politically motivated as a writer, my ideas are usually quite layered and complex, and I try to say too many things in one piece of writing. So I'm not my best friend as a playwright, probably. Others are better at offering a product that fulfills expectations. In *River on Fire*, for example, I was writing a more complex piece of theatre than I was ready to write at that time. Not having a visible audience has been a problem. After three or four years of writing and rewriting and struggle, I finally put the play on myself with the Kali Theatre Company, which Rita Wolf and I had formed to produce *Song for a Sanctuary*. I did not want to do that; I did not want to be the producer for *River on Fire*. But I found it very difficult to place the play. Nobody would touch it—they didn't know what it was saying. Fortunately, Kali Theatre colleagues wanted it. Helena Uren, the director, was wonderfully supportive. And when it was finally put on, it was perfectly accessible; audiences loved it.

In *River on Fire* the theme is minorities and their treatment. It's a very big issue for me. You judge a society by its treatment of its minorities. And the worse the treatment is, the more primitive a society is in my mind. Sometimes a society is able to change its government and it won't, and sometimes it can't. I'm not entirely a believer of the dictum "You get the government you deserve," because it doesn't apply to totalitarian government. You get somebody like Saddam Hussein and you're stuck with him for thirty years. You get him out and what do you have? A mess. But I know that our treatment of minorities in Pakistan has been horrible, too, and I feel very ashamed of that. And we should be ashamed. Every time I see a horrible

racist thing happen here and I think, "I wish we weren't here," I then think, "My God, if I was in Pakistan, I would hate things much more."

I recognized finally that actually I have the audience that I want. I would know how to raise an audience for a play of mine, and that audience would come—not in such vast numbers as they do for *Bombay Dreams*, but then I wouldn't want to write *Bombay Dreams*, so I'm not worried. There is now a reasonably large Asian audience. I think this is the trap actually. The fact that you're perceived as Asian, that in itself is a problem for Asian writers. People assume that you can only write for Asian audiences. Once they recognize that your work can sell to a larger audience, then there won't be a problem. Once you're successful, your Asianness is less of a problem. I think people are beginning to recognize this though, as the brown pound [the buying power of Asian people in the United Kingdom] is getting more powerful.

Rita Wolf eventually got married and moved to New York, and I was left with the Kali company, and I ended up leading writing workshops, feeling very much that there weren't enough Asians in the theatre. That has been a problem, that I am a bit of an activist and a bit of a dogooder. Why I'm guilty of that altruism, I don't know. It comes from a Puritan streak in my mother, I think. It's as if everything has to be justified. Your time needs to be justified, in terms of the good value it has produced. Everything you do has to be worthy. Unfortunately, my work suffers from that sense of worthiness. I hope this will change, as I have recently started enjoying telling stories much more, and realizing that telling stories is a valuable thing to do per se. You should be allowed to tell them for pleasure, too.

AG: It's an ancient mechanism.

RA: My grandmother was a great storyteller. She had no education, so she remembered each and every story she ever heard. She was a repository of stories from the Bible to the Koran, of stories from all over the world. They used to go to storytellers in the marketplace; people would have sessions of storytelling. I think that instinct in me, the ability to tell a story, was the first skill I recognized as a writer, but I also have this problem of wanting to have something of value

in the story, something that justifies it. Also, I think my writing suffers from my literariness. When I first produce a draft, it is elaborate and suffers from an excess of writing. Which is the problem of a literary background; you come with a lot of verbiage.

Kali soaked up a lot of time and ended up being a whole lot of educational training and workshops for people. But in the end the Arts Council gave us Revenue Funding, and at that point I had to make a decision: do I want to be a writer and prioritize my life in that direction? So I resigned.

You haven't asked much about theatrical influences. I'm very much a theatre person; I go to see plays a great deal. My training was in literature, but my theatre influences are people like Arthur Miller, people whose politics might be different from mine in some ways, but in some ways not. I love Alice Childress's *Wine in the Wilderness* (1969). I admire August Wilson's work. I love *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (1984). That's the kind of writing I like.

AG: You spoke earlier about the theme of minorities in *River on Fire*. Another theme in your work, which I particularly noticed in *Black Shalwar*, is the contrast between materialism and spirituality.

RA: In *Black Shalwar*, the prostitute's materialism becomes emblematic of survival. It's actually about selfhood. But I don't argue for spiritualism, which is the direction of the man with whom the prostitute moves to Delhi. I argue for a kind of rounded humanity that includes love, sexual love, and that's one of the things that I hope emerges in my play *The Man Who Refused to be God* about the Indian philosophical teacher Jiddu Krishnamurti. The search for God in a sterile way is not a useful route. If there is going to be a kind of godliness, it is going to be a godliness about loving other human beings. If there is a kind of religion that I ever might return to, it would be that mystical notion that there is a god in other human beings. I would hope that would be my message: of extreme humanism rather than any extreme form of religion. ●

Copyright 2006 Rukhsana Ahmad. This work was originally published in Women Writing Plays: Three Decades of the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize.



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY TONY WARREN PHOTOGRAPHY

LEFT TO RIGHT: Gail Sheehy moderates panel; Susan Valdes, filmmaker, and Patricia Clarkson, actress

Invisible Women Makes a Visible Impression

BY PAULETTE ATTIE
AND HARRIET SLAUGHTER

A TWENTY-EIGHTMINUTE documentary was the cause for elation and feelings of camaraderie and empowerment by the packed house at New York City's New World Stages this past spring. The film, a short gem called *Invisible Women*, was produced by Susan Davis, Susan Valdes and Debbie Wheaton; it focused on the disappearance of women over forty in film, television and commercials and included interviews with Susan Sarandon, Christine Lahti, Julie Carmen, Susan Davis, Michele Richards and Deborah Harmon attesting to their experiences as maturing women.

The panel that followed started with high voltage introductions by Leslie Shreve: Moderator Gail Sheehy, writer; Peggy Northrop, Editor-in-Chief, MORE magazine; Tiffany Warren Ekawu, Director Multicultural Programs & Community Outreach, Arnold Worldwide; Susan Seidelman, Director, *Desperately Seeking Susan*, *Sex and the City*, *Boytnton Beach Club*; Lee Grant, multi-award-winning actress and director; Susan Davis, actress and the film's co-producer; Patricia Clarkson, actress, *Far from Heaven*, *Good Night, and Good Luck*, *Six Feet Under*; and Angel Rivera, National Director of SAG's Affirmative Action/Diversity Department. All were well versed in the subject.

Gail Sheehy, the panel moderator, was an ideal choice to lead the discussion, as her latest book *Sex and the Seasoned Woman* explores the topic of age, a follow-up to her earlier, *Passages*. Peggy Northrop of MORE magazine noted the success of the magazine's increased sales as good example of how underserved

forty-plus women are in our society. Her publication demonstrates the benefits of these women's accomplishments. However, she remarked, "There are always exceptions to the rule. Some actresses manage to survive ageism, and find they're working even more in their later years. Panelist Patricia Clarkson is one such example, but what happens to everyone else?"

Lee Grant, actress and director, described how she saw the writing on the wall, and was able to segue from acting to a film directing career. We're doubly blessed because this path-setter continues to do stunning work in both fields. Her memorable performances in *Detective Story* and *Shampoo* won her two Academy Awards, and *Down and Out in America*, an HBO documentary, earned her still another award as director.

Susan Seidelman bolstered the idea for *Boytnton Beach Club* a film where "older folks" were sexy and demonstrated their ageless desires on the screen. In the film, no one sees herself as getting older, and doesn't act it either. As director and co-writer of the project, Seidelman met with resistance from major film studio heads. Though her impressive cast included Sally Kellerman, Len Cariou, Dyan Cannon, and Michael Nouri, the studios were reluctant to finance the film. When she realized there would be no funding from the customary sources, Seidelman approached a successful woman on Wall Street who helped her fund the project.

One of the strong messages of *Invisible Women* is directed toward the advertisers and executives who determine what we see on our screens: Everyone is going to be an older American. "It cuts across all

ethnicities and backgrounds, so we might as well face it," said the documentary's co-producer, Susan Valdes. "By 2010, women between the ages of forty and sixty-four will comprise the largest age demographic in America. Ignore that fact at your own peril," is a quote from the film by Professor Martha Lauves.

Tiffany Warren Ekawu from Arnold Worldwide likes working for an advertising agency that fosters diversity. Her company specifically targets the fifty-and-over age demographics for five of its approximately forty-four clients. This is good news for commercial actresses, and also for the general public, which gets to see a few more mature women on its screens.

The genesis of the film emanated from co-producer Susan Valdes, former student of League member Lenore DeKoven who ultimately brought this to the attention of the Coalition. The producers did an amazing job on a limited budget, calling upon the kindness of strangers to complete the project. The Screen Actors Guild Foundation was so impressed with the ten-minute version that it offered to fund the expanded film. This event was a testimony to the importance of women supporting the work of other women in their pursuits.

The world premiere of *Invisible Women* was arranged by the Screen Actors Guild's Affirmative Action/Diversity Department and its New York Women's Committee, National Co-Chair of the Women's Committee Leslie Shreve, with the New York Coalition of Professional Women in the Arts and Media, President, Melanie Sutherland. Jennifer Jones, League Coalition member, arranged the venue at New World Stages. ●

THE LEAGUE OF UP-AND-COMING

INTRODUCTION

AT LEAGUE OF Professional Theatre Women gatherings, we've often discussed how the League can attract early career theatre women to our membership. Are younger women unaware of our network or are their needs so different from those of previous generations that they don't find relevance in what we currently offer?

The future direction of the League depends largely on the answer to this question, so I thought it might be useful and interesting to get a group of younger colleagues to talk about their own career trajectories, the role of women in the theatre world, and their perceptions of the state of the theatre field. The ten women I interviewed, ranging in age from twenty-three to thirty-five, are an unscientific sample drawn from theatre artists working at Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national service organization for nonprofit professional theatres, as their "day jobs" and current and former Yale School of Drama theatre management students.

ARTISTS

"I'M THIRTY-FIVE AND I'm still starting my career, and it's exhausting," says actor **Connie Hall**.

After graduating from Columbia's MFA program, Hall lived with members of the International WOW ensemble in a warehouse space that included five bedrooms, a kitchen, and two rehearsal spaces. They created their own work, tried out material in their own space, and produced a series of plays at HERE. She still works with a number of the people she met in that warehouse.

"For me, 'artistic excellence' begins with inquiry, and I have been fortunate enough to develop lasting relationships with theatre artists who possess unrelenting curiosity, who have an urgent need to communicate with the audience, who are comfortable going to precarious

places in their work and who have abundant appreciation for all things fun." An international sensibility pervades her work: "My favorite thing to do is to go to other countries and make plays with people." She's worked in Thailand, Cambodia and France, and Argentina is next on her itinerary.

"Something has to change in the structure of the way theatre is made," she says. "Existing structures don't quite support the kind of work that people want to make today, which has to be crafted and created over a long period of time. It's not just producible." People aren't necessarily divided into the conventional categories of playwright, director, actor, designer, or producer. "Text is just one tool in your toolbox," she says; other components such as a physical score or a soundscape can be equally important. Accordingly, Hall and her collaborators are "people who can't be authors alone. I am an actor, but if you get me in a room with a director who doesn't want to hear from me, I'm not going to be very happy."

"I have always felt that the best way to serve an audience is by first serving the needs of the artist. Those needs are often profoundly, frustratingly simple: enough time and a space to work. I would go so far as to say that there is a new demographic ballooning among resourceful individual artists making new plays, experimenting with methods and forms, producing their own work and starting up not-for-profits. I feel very strongly that theatre institutions and organizational structures need to evolve to meet these artists on new terms, with a more horizontal power dynamic. I am deeply interested in creating a sustainable, hospitable environment in which theatre artists can share resources, build a body of work over time and show their best work to presenters." To help make that possible, she envisions creating a new

kind of service organization, "something like Fractured Atlas, ART/NY, Soho Rep, HERE, LaMaMa, and New Dramatists all rolled into one."

Playwright **Young Jean Lee**, thirty-two, grew up in a small town, where her initial theatrical ambitions were squelched by a drama teacher who refused to cast her in the school musical, saying that there were "no Asians in *Oklahoma*." She found more receptive teachers at Berkeley, where she spent six years in a Ph.D. program, working on an uncompleted dissertation about *King Lear*. Unhappy in academia, during a psychotherapy session the idea of becoming a playwright "popped into [her] head," says Lee, who was "deeply embarrassed" to admit a desire to be an artist.

Living in New Haven, where her then-husband was a law student, Lee looked up the names of Yale playwriting faculty, read their plays, and contacted the one whose work interested her most: Jeff Jones. Jones agreed to meet with her and gave her a list of people and theatres in New York she should get to know, including Mac Wellman, Soho Rep, P.S. 122, Radiohole, Richard Maxwell, Richard Foreman, John Jesurun, and others. The list was perfect, she says, "a ready-made community for me" that provides "tons of support." In addition to these older mentors, her circle includes contemporaries: men and women—playwrights, directors, and designers—in their thirties. She has "an abundance of resources that will support everything from rehearsal space to photocopying to development of work."

Lee produces and directs her own plays. "I'm really independent. All I need is a place to do the show." She's a member of 13P, the collective of thirteen young playwrights, mostly female, who "hope to be the instigators of a new producing culture" and whose motto is, "We don't develop plays. We do them." She's now

PROFESSIONAL THEATRE WOMEN

BY JOAN CHANNICK

getting productions, significant grants and residencies, a commissioning offer from the Guthrie, has co-edited with Mac Wellman a just-published volume of plays entitled *New Downtown Now*, and her work will tour this year to the Walker Art Center. The downside of this burst of success, “the honeymoon period,” she calls it, is that “administrative demands come with every opportunity.” She now feels that she needs a managing director or producer to take on these responsibilities and is trying to figure out how to get to the point where she can pay someone. Although she doesn’t want to sound “ungrateful,” she notes that none of her three playwriting residencies—at HERE, Brooklyn Arts Exchange, and New Dramatists—can provide all that she wants and she still has to figure out a producing model for herself.

Lee has “no doubt” that her whole career will be as a playwright. Her work, which is non-narrative, is “too weird for film and television.” Nevertheless, she acknowledges a need for financial security and stability, is concerned about retirement, and feels that, although she’d like to have children, “it might not happen.”

As an Asian-American woman, she says, “I’ve always had this really dubious strategy of out-white-male-ing the white males. If they say things that are chauvinistic, I’ll say things that are ten times worse. I have the biggest penis in the group. It’s very effective.” This strategy extends to her playwriting, in which she “appears to align myself with the dominant patriarchal structure while undermining it,” and she is mulling about writing “one of these white guy plays,” like Adam Rapp or Neil LaBute’s, “but way worse.”

Lee is concerned about theatre’s disconnection from its audience. Theatre has “tremendous potential to appeal to wider audiences. It would be great if we

could figure out how to make theatre as popular and accessible as other genres, like film.” She notes that Shakespeare was “completely a popular writer yet making high art. Amazing things would happen if theatre artists could open their minds about the kinds of people who could be interested....A huge audience of diverse people from all social classes doesn’t exist.” Always self-aware, Lee acknowledges that “I’m not exempt from the criticisms I’m leveling at others. I write for a very small experimental theatre community and that’s why I have no money. I play a part in it. Supply and demand. Your work is influenced by the audience you have in mind.”

Kate Walat, thirty-two, also a playwright, studied creative writing at Brown and was deeply influenced by Paula Vogel and by graduate students like Nilo Cruz and Alice Tuan, “young, cool people doing far-out work.” During several post-college years in New York, where her jobs included working in the literary office at the Public Theater, she met Susan Bernfield, Artistic Director of New Georges, who made her an affiliated playwright and introduced her to a community of writers and directors. Her first production was self-produced, with friends from Brown, for the New York Fringe Festival.

In New York she met other playwrights like Diana Son and Ruth Margraff, who became friends. She and Son exchanged scripts and gave each other notes on their work. Son also invited Walat to sit in on rehearsals for *Stop Kiss* at the Public, where she was able to observe the playwright’s interactions with director Jo Bonney.

When Walat decided to focus seriously on playwriting, she went to Yale. It was always clear to the playwrights there, she says, that they could never make a living in playwriting, something she already knew from Margraff, who teaches, and

Son, who now writes mostly for television. Walat is beginning to think about teaching and television as ways to earn a better living.

Walat feels “really supported” by two organizations, the Writers’ Lab at the Women’s Project and New Georges, which help “open doors and hook people up.” “It’s no coincidence,” she thinks, “that both are women-oriented.” The challenge now is getting her work produced, which is beginning to happen at theatres like Salvage Vanguard in Austin, Perishable Theatre in Providence, and the Women’s Project in New York, but getting produced “takes someone really championing your work,” which is difficult to find. She has an agent, who has been helpful. Although she does find support among theatres’ literary managers, many of whom are women, the artistic directors who have the final say on play selection are mostly men and, she feels, are inclined to produce plays that they feel a connection to, more often male stories.

The biggest challenge for women playwrights now is the press, which she finds inhospitable toward new work and especially so toward work by women. Newspapers send their “third-string critics” to review plays written by women, and theatres with a focus on women in their mission statements feel stigmatized.

Going forward, Walat hopes that there will be more women in positions of artistic leadership. “Theatres have to get over this idea that women’s work is different and the idea that their audiences are not going to be interested in the work of women playwrights.” But “theatres are really cautious. There is an incredible wealth of work being written by diverse young writers, but theatres seem scared to take that next step and produce your work.”

Melissa Fendell, twenty-six, a graduate of the University of Massachusetts, was a literary associate at Trinity Rep

and worked with a theatre company in Spain before coming to New York two years ago. She's worked consistently on one show after another during that time, as playwright, director, stage manager, dramaturg, and production manager. She's still trying to figure out, she says, "how to make the shift from saying yes to everything just to get credits and get your name out there" to doing what she really wants to do, which is to write and direct.

Her play *When Santo Domingo Isn't Enough* was presented this spring at the Cherry Lane Theatre as part of the Downtown Urban Theater Festival, where it won the Best Play award. After it was accepted for the festival, she had to raise the money and produce it herself. She "got a lot of people to work for free" and took advantage of TCG's willingness to let staff members use their rehearsal room at no cost after office hours. Juggling two jobs and her usually unpaid theatre work, it's "sometimes hard to convince yourself that you're worth it, when you spend so much time not being paid."

Getting her plays produced or working as a director in regional theatres seems remote at this point, and she feels that her best options are to work with new companies or to form her own. Fendell is full of questions but, unlike some of the other young playwrights with just a few years' more experience, she hasn't yet found a solid support network. "I have so much to learn, but I feel that in the circles I'm moving in now, I'm not learning what I need to know."

Although she observes that there are a significant number of theatres devoted to work by women, she sees that there are "not so many women" working in the larger theatres and Broadway. "But that's another generation," she says, optimistically. "Things are changing, and it takes a natural progression of time."

PRODUCERS AND MANAGERS

Rosey Strub, thirty, is Director of Development at the Summer Play Festival in New York City and is also an independent producer. Another recent Yale graduate, Strub has led an international life, growing up in El Paso, Texas, where she did volunteer work in Mexico, attending college in England, and working for a year in Greece.



Joan Channick, New Managing Director of Long Wharf

On a visit to Peru, she encountered Grupo Cultural Yuyachkami, a company whose name means, "I am Thinking, I am Remembering." Strub was moved by their work, particularly by a piece entitled *Remember the Struggles*, created from interviews with mothers of the disappeared and others affected by violence. Wanting to use theatre as a forum for addressing international human rights issues, she brought Yuyachkami to Yale for a two-week residency that included performances, workshops, and a symposium and involved partnerships with departments across the university.

Her next project is a Los Angeles production of a script called *Truth and Reconciliation*, by Etan Frankel, based on the proceedings of the Guatemalan Truth Commission. Strub says that the play "in a really intelligent way addresses notions of whether truth commissions help rectify what has been done."

If I could do that kind of work [theatre that addresses international human rights] for the rest of my life, I would," says Strub, who intends to try. "My future is really up to me. I know enough people that I know where to go when I don't know the answer. I can make this happen. All I need is money and a long-term commitment."

Beth Morrison, thirty-four, produces new opera and music-theatre works and also teaches voice at Pace University. As a trained singer interested in opera and classical music, she was unhappy in her first months at Yale until Ben Mordecai,

who headed the theatre management program, arranged for her to meet with Joe Melillo at BAM. Melillo described his job—traveling, choosing work, and working with artists—and encouraged her to meet female producers. Her meeting with Lisa Brumbach of Pomegranate Arts was "love at first sight" and led Morrison to spend a semester-long fellowship at Pomegranate. Seeing a "powerful, smart, interesting woman" producer who ably managed the "tricky life-work balance of being an entrepreneur, a leader, and a mother," convinced Morrison that she could start her own company.

She hopes that opera directed in a contemporary theatrical way will "resonate with younger audiences and audiences that may not have seen opera before." Her company progressed faster in its first year than she had imagined. Last season included a production at P.S. 122 of *HELL*, a new multimedia opera written by a punk poet, and a contemporary version of medieval mystery plays performed on the streets of Orvieto, Italy, directed by Karin Coonrod. Upcoming projects include a new adaptation of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, entitled *Don Juan in Prague*, co-produced with the Czech National Theatre, to be presented at BAM's Next Wave Festival. She has also commissioned new music-theatre works from young playwrights, her colleagues from Yale.

Morrison has consciously fashioned her own role as a producer, combining artistic and managerial functions. She now needs to engage in the kind of strategic thinking about issues that she knows is essential to her company's future: creating an infrastructure that will allow the company to grow, whether to incorporate as a not-for-profit, and raising money. The environment feels precarious and she suggests that funding is an issue her generation of performing arts leaders must confront as an industry. She worries that small companies, in particular, are most vulnerable, and sees many companies turning to safer programming, although "the most interesting work involves risk."

Shira Beckerman, 27, is the General Manager of the Pearl Theatre in New

York City, her first job after Yale. Eventually, Beckerman would like to run her own theatre company. Although she can't quite describe yet what such a company would look like, saying that she's "not sure which of my crazy ideas is viable," she suggests that her company will be nothing like any theatre she's ever come across before, either in structure or in the nature of the work it produces. She and friends with whom she went to school are already beginning to talk about first steps, about projects they might work on together.

Although she characterizes a couple of her Yale teachers, both women, as mentors, the strongest support network is her graduate school classmates, who remain in frequent touch as they all struggle with the challenges of their new jobs or, in some cases, of finding a job.

Beckerman has never regarded gender as a factor in her career, other than a feeling that the commercial theatre world is somewhat less hospitable to women than the not-for-profit world. Indeed, she notes, thus far she has never worked directly for a male manager.

Karyn Lyman, twenty-seven, is Managing Director of Philadelphia's Lantern Theater Company. One year out of Yale, she generally feels grounded and confident as the theatre's primary decision-maker, but the responsibilities sometimes make her "head spin." Former teachers, Philadelphia colleagues, and Lantern board members are helpful advisors.

While she's challenged by and learning from this job, functioning as the theatre's sole administrator is tiring and stressful. She wonders whether the theatre can grow quickly enough to provide the kind of financial stability and family life she wants to have. Although she expects to be at this theatre for a while, she can imagine eventually working as a general manager in a larger theatre or starting her own consulting business, which would provide more flexibility and, she hopes, less anxiety about finances.

Deeksha Gaur, twenty-three, was born in India, spent her adolescence in London, was educated at Cambridge, and is now a theatre management student at Yale. She plans to return to London or go to Singapore, where her family now lives and where there is an exciting theatre scene.

When she came to the U.S., she knew

little about the different theatre sectors in this country. Although the not-for-profit regional theatre, based on a dream of accessibility to everyone, sounded exciting, after two years here, she now finds the reality somewhat disappointing. "There is nothing wholly new or innovative coming out of the regional theatres, nothing that defines in any significant way the theatre for this time," she says. The field should be looking inward, she suggests, rather than blaming the external environment. "The model is breaking down somewhere."

Gaur's hope for the future is fringe theatre, which is where the work is "meaningful, really saying something, exploring ideas, especially political ideas. Not family drama." The Tricycle Theatre in London is the best example that comes to mind of the kind of theatre that excites her, theatre that involves "constant questioning" and exists for a "deeper purpose, not just entertainment."

When asked about the role of women in theatre, she noted that she'd "never thought of anything I've done in terms of being a woman." While she understands that female artists still "struggle" and that gender was an issue for her mother's generation, she believes that "for us, it's not anymore."

She has considerable faith in the resourcefulness of her peers. "Everyone is considering new models for theatre as a sustainable art form. I'm surrounded by people who want to do something new and different and meaningful. That's what the field needs."

Carrie Van Deest, twenty-nine, who graduated from Yale in May, is the Managing Director of Milwaukee Shakespeare. Just a few months into her new job, she is grappling with the need for long-range planning. She says she's trying to take time to think things through and not to make decisions too fast. One big change from her student life is that now she's so caught up in the daily tasks of running a theatre, it's "hard right now to gain perspective."

Although Milwaukee is a familiar place (she worked at Milwaukee Repertory Theater after college), she misses the ready-made group of peers she had in graduate school with whom she could talk about issues. She finds support from classmates in similar positions,

her former teachers, colleagues she has met at conferences, and board members. Tim Shields, Managing Director of Milwaukee Rep, remains a mentor.

Coincidentally, Milwaukee Shakespeare's staff is entirely women under forty. They have created a working culture that is flexible and adapted to family life. The theatre is still small enough that everyone takes turns cleaning the bathroom, and Van Deest wonders whether that attitude of "pitching in without question" reflects a nonprofit mentality or female collegiality.

SUMMARY

Several key themes were evident:

- Many of these young women, particularly the artists, have difficulty seeing a place for themselves in the current structures of the theatre field and feel an imperative to create their own ways of producing theatre.

- Everyone needs support networks and, while almost all of them have teachers or older mentors of some kind, most also look to their peers as their core source of advice and help.

- Many expressed concern about balancing work and family life, and some are convinced that they will have to make either professional or personal sacrifices.

- Many don't think about themselves as women in theatre and see gender issues as largely generational. Young women theatre artists perceive gender-related differences and obstacles more strongly than do young women managers, perhaps because female managers have achieved more equality. (TCG data, for example, indicates that half of regional theatre managing directors are women, while only a quarter of artistic directors are women and only about a fifth of plays produced in regional theatres are written or directed by women.)

Hopefully, the reflections of these thoughtful and ambitious young artists and managers will be useful to the League as it considers how to be most effective in attracting and serving the next generation of theatre women. ●

Joan Channick, formerly the Managing Director of Theatre Communications Group, will become Managing Director of the Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven, CT, in September.

Holiday Party *continued from page 16*
that remarkable theatre genius, Jerzy Grotowski, from communist Poland. It was an amazing time, the sixties were in full swing and the counterculture was on the rise. Ellen was part of that. So was I, incidentally. My own journalistic career began when Grotowski arrived in New York and I wrote the lead piece on him for the New York Times. From that time on, I was a carrier of the avant-garde. But Ellen was the leader. Through the years when I was in Europe traveling with Ellen and Martha Coigney and the ITI, I learned why she was revered. Ellen is a woman of enormous inner strength, unparalleled determination and energy. Nothing has ever stopped her from bringing her troupes to Africa, Asia, India...she was there not only with her own work but setting up LaMaMa companies.

“And in the past years she has directed almost the entire canon of the Greek myths herself. Let us remember that Stewart established LaMaMa in a tiny basement on East Fourth Street (it is

still there) which was later turned into three theatre spaces and an art gallery. LaMaMa practiced multiculturalism before it became fashionable, establishing workshops worldwide. She discovered the talents of young artists like Sam Shepard, Jean Claude Van Itallie, Joseph Chaikin, Harvey Fierstein, Tom O’Horgan, Andre Serban, and Elizabeth Swados. She helped Philip Glass, Mabou Mines, Joanne Akalaitis, not to speak of her season with Peter Brook’s African work and Tadeus Kantor’s gorgeous work from Poland.

“Ellen was the first to back gay plays, put nudity on stage, sponsor cross-dressing, break down the third wall by arranging a different kind of space: a mixture of sound, lights, movement was her signature, as she favored a non-verbal approach to theatre. In a word, she was one of the first experimental producers on or off Broadway. In 1985 when she received the MacArthur genius award, she promptly used it to set up LaMaMa Umbria International in Italy. She purchased an old monastery outside

of Spoleto and redesigned, reconstructed and modernized it into a center of international artists and students to live and work. The center includes bedrooms, a communal kitchen, rehearsal rooms, and a spectacular view of the Umbrian hills. All of which she designed and supervised. Every year international artists do a workshop with students and there is a mini festival at the end. She has spent decades supporting people in the arts, and never limited herself either creatively or geographically. She told me once that ‘without people, without all these people who think I made contributions, I would be a zero. I see myself as fortunate. I have a very rich life. I have no money. I have had hardships. But I have so many people in the world, literally, who are thinking about LaMaMa. And when you have that kind of energy coming out from every corner of the earth, how much more blessed could you be?’

“Ladies and Gentlemen, I give you LaMaMa—the Mother of Us All.”

We all drank to that—and the festivities continued. ●

Kansas *continued from page 23*
is flat yellow hills with black cows. At dusk the trees become very dark and the ground seems to light up. As spring arrives the yellow changes to verdant green and there are purple, star-shaped Cat-Claw Mimosa flowers, rows of soft pink Cobaea Beardtongue blossoms and white bursts of Spider Milkweed. In the neighborhoods where I run I see virtually no people outside. When I hear noises my New York instincts make me turn around: the sounds are falling leaves or American flags blowing in the wind. No one is ever behind me.

On September 11 I remember walking across the Manhattan Bridge in the morning to get home, because I had been teaching in Brooklyn. I thought I saw the towers smoking in front of me but what I found out soon after was that what I’d seen were the towers *gone* in a massive cloud of smoke. People of all ages and races covered in white dust streamed across the bridge in the hot sun. The truth of September 11 has always felt different to me as a New Yorker than it feels in the rest of the nation. It struck me as a horrible and contained event, but there is something uncontained about how it serves as an icon for the nation. Uncontained in the

way it brings ghosts of terrorists sweeping through the flatlands of Kansas. In his Nobel Lecture, “Art, Truth and Politics,” the playwright Harold Pinter says, “We were told that Iraq had a relationship with Al Qaeda and shared responsibility for the atrocity in New York of September 11, 2001. We were assured that this was true. It was not true.”

Days before I went to the Rotary Club, a sixteen-year-old woman was abducted from her home right near the William Inge House. An “Amber-Alert” brought FBI special agents straight to the area, and the news vans lined the usually empty streets. Reports said the woman made a cell phone call to 911 at 6:30AM the day she was kidnapped. She had been forced at gunpoint into a white van after being told to run to a lumberyard. “I don’t know which way I’m going. I can’t see out,” she is heard saying on the 911 audiotape. Fifteen hours later the girl showed up unharmed at a neighbor’s door saying she used glass to hit the male perpetrator in the back, nearby in the woods close to the ball fields. The girl is said to be one of the finest students at Independence High School, involved in sports and cheer-leading. Two days later it was announced at a press conference that the abduction

was a lie. It was confirmed that the girl had made up the whole story.

If the American flags and yellow ribbons in Independence do represent pride in our country and its actions, I wonder about the *truth* of what people believe the war to be about. The “war on terror” in the U.S. has convicted few terrorists, while in Iraq it may have served to recruit and train more than it has stopped. What would it mean if the flags actually represented the opposite of “And Liberty and Justice for all?” Pinter also says, about writers: “You find no shelter, no protection—unless you lie...” and it’s true that I’d be lying if I found shelter at the Inge House. Perhaps the girl’s problem will be explained as a product of her unstable mind. But what then in our country is the measuring stick for truth and sanity?

I know nothing about the *truth* of the woman who lied. “I don’t know where I’m going. I can’t see out.” But I wonder what we are teaching our children to do? Running down the side of a slightly busier boulevard in Independence I have seen a series of wreaths along the side of a house, in memory of a little girl who was killed when she ran unexpectedly into the road. She was killed by a local ambulance. ●

The Wild West a Feminine View

BY JENNIFER S. JONES

THE SUBJECT WAS Wyatt Earp. The tale was the famous shootout at the OK Corral. But the players this time were different.

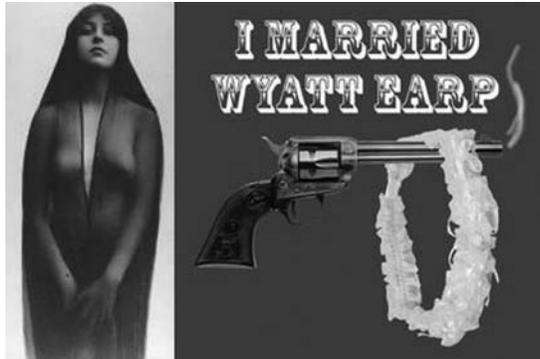
Though the shootout has become classic Americana, when the League traveled down to historic Bristol, Pennsylvania for the world premiere of Sheilah Rae's new musical *I Married Wyatt Earp*, a different voice graced the stage.

It was a sunny mid-October day. After a lovely lunch at the nearby King George II Inn and a surprise parade (it turned out that Saturday, October 15 was Historic Bristol Day) we made our way to the Bristol Riverside Theater, located on an idyllic piece of land overlooking the Delaware River. Originally an old movie theatre, the space was renovated in 1984 through a million dollar grant from the Grundy Foundation; the 300-seat state-of-the-art theatre opened in 1986. As Bucks County's first Equity regional theatre, Bristol Riverside's mission is to "develop new works and new interpretations of established pieces...to enrich, illuminate, inspire, and entertain." What better place to present a new twist on an old American story?

The seed of the project, *I Married Wyatt Earp*, took root when Sheilah Rae was skimming through a book entitled *Pioneer Jews*. She came across a photo of Josie Marcus, a girl from a cultured upper-middle class Jewish family in San Francisco, posing half nude. As she read on she learned that Josie ran away at age eighteen to join a traveling Gilbert and Sullivan show and toured the West performing with it. One of the stops? Tombstone, Arizona. One of the people she met? None other than the already legendary Wyatt Earp. (In actual fact Earp went on to become the true love of Josie's life—the two spent the next fifty years together until he died at the age of eighty.) But why was Josie's character just a footnote in the history books? Why had her story, and the stories of the other women in Earp's life and in Tombstone, never been told? Surely this was the stuff of drama.

Rae asked Thomas Edward West to

co-write the book and then, through a colleague from ASCAP, found Michele Brouman to compose the music. With the team assembled and a compelling story in its hands, the three worked together, often bicoastally, to create the world of Tombstone. In 1879 Tombstone was a thriving mining town with a population of 12,000 men and only 860 women, many of them prostitutes;



a few years later the place was a ghost town. Was one of the reasons the famous shootout at the OK Corral?

Though myriad movies, books, documentaries, and television shows have told the story of Tombstone and the shootout, the action has always been examined through male eyes. But Tombstone had more than just outlaws and lawmen. It had women. Spirited, fearless, gritty, pioneer women. As the play's program notes, the three creators of *I Married Wyatt Earp* hoped that "telling this story from the women's perspective would shed a new light on the contribution of women to the development of the West." And indeed it did.

The musical opens in 1943 when Allie Earp, Wyatt's sister-in-law, pays an unexpected visit to Josie Marcus Earp. Josie, played by League member Leila Martin, tries to prevent Allie from publishing her memoirs in order to suppress a secret she has hidden for the past sixty years (a secret which is possibly linked to the fatal shootout—but I won't spoil the ending). As the two women begin to reminisce about their life choices, the action flips to 1879 Arizona, where the story unfolds. With an all female cast of thirteen, men appear only in the shadows. We see the events through these characters who are based on real women. From an initially idealistic Josie, to Allie's grin and bear it attitude

to Kate, the husky Hungarian, who has seen more than she cares to recall, as the musical unfolds, the audience is treated to the lives and loves, the friendships and the bonds these women shared.

Following the performance, Rae, director Keith Baker (who is also artistic director of Bristol Riverside Theater) and Susan D. Atkinson, founding producing director, led a panel discussion. Rae and Atkinson had first worked together on a previous Rae work, *Funny, You Don't Look Like a Grandmother*, and she was enthusiastic about the new Earp project. Riverside was approaching its 20th anniversary season and this was the kind of new work it was seeking.

Making theatre accessible to the whole community is important to the leaders of Riverside. "We've made a commitment," Atkinson says, "I'm out there every night, every performance, talking to subscribers, making them feel welcome, hearing what they like, what they don't like. This is their theatre and we're here for them." Members of the Philadelphia theatre community originally thought Atkinson and Baker were overly optimistic in trying to build a subscriber-based system so far outside the city. In fact, they said it couldn't be done. But with forty-six percent of its revenue coming from box office sales and the remaining money coming from foundation grants and sponsorships, Bristol Riverside Theater is realizing its aims. Another important element of the theatre is its commitment to educational outreach, sending artists into schools to discuss the plays, provide student access, and teach.

At the panel's close we hastened to our trains filled with warm feelings of a lovely autumn day and a fascinating exploration of women and the West, leaving the theatre to prepare its evening (and closing) performance of *I Married Wyatt Earp*. But while the three-week run at Bristol Riverside Theatre has ended, Earp's adventures are far from over. Sheilah Rae reports that it was performed in concert at Oklahoma City University in April and will have a fully staged reading at Cal State Fullerton in the fall of 2006, leading to a mainstage production with its drama department. ●

London Journey

BY RUTH MAYLEAS AND HARRIET SLAUGHTER

LONDON CONTINUES to rival Broadway on quality theatregoing, so the League travel committee continues to find a very attractive airfare and hotel rates at the Strand Palace each year for our members. This year, in addition to seventeen League members, we enjoyed the company of eighteen others, many of them theatre-connected, who often joined us in theatregoing which ranged from Shakespeare, serious chamber dramas, comedy, thrillers, cutting-edge fringe to the big glitzy musicals. The end of the evening always culminated in a rendezvous at the hotel bar.

Our excellent trip planners—Lauren Scott, Dorothy Olim and Honey Waldman—continued to offer us side trips to unusual, interesting theatre-related organizations. This year those trips included a visit with Clean Break, a country-wide organization that, as its name implies, works with incarcerated women as well as ex-offenders. The women, some of them on released

time, are trained and formed into production units which perform plays written by professional playwrights in various venues in London and on tour around Great Britain to theatres like the Traverse and Birmingham Rep as well as in prisons. Clean Break has relationships with universities and drama schools, so that qualified candidates can be steered in that direction and prepared for professional careers and/or teaching. The organization is funded by the Arts Council (fifty percent) and from local government, the Lottery, and trusts and foundations.

Another day we visited a major theatre school, the London Academy of Musical and Dramatic Art (LAMDA), in its handsome new home, where we heard something of its history and viewed

scenes from Chekhov. LAMDA has a special one-year course for American actors established in 1956 following a request from the Fulbright commission; among the many American actors who have participated in it are John Lithgow, Swoosie Kurtz and Dana Ivey.

The League's relationship with our British colleagues continued with a panel discussion with British women producers, led by freelance producer and arts administrator, Barbara Matthews, formerly of

network with one another, and the League has served as a valuable impetus in that regard. The meeting took place at the most attractive club, Teatro, on Shaftesbury Avenue and Greek Street.

As to the main purpose of our London visit—to see theatre—there was little consensus on “the best,” “most interesting,” etc. Answers ranged from *The History Boys* to *Mary Poppins*; some who saw *History Boys*, among them one of the undersigned, looked forward

to a repeat performance when that remarkable Alan Bennett work opens in New York in the spring. Last minute news of a remarkable new production of *Sunday in the Park with George* met with a scrambling for unavailable tickets in its tiny London theatre; perhaps it too will be New York bound. Other plays seen included Matthew Bourne's *Edward Scissorhands* at Sadler's Wells, Mike Leigh's *Two Thousand Years* and *Coram Boy* at the National Theatre, an adaptation of



Cheek by Jowl. A cross section of young women producers discussed their ascendance into the producer role, which they admitted was easier to attain in England due to the structure of subsidized theatres versus the economic necessities of the commercial theatre which often puts women at a disadvantage. Holly Kendrick of Sound Theatre, Clare Lawrence of Out of the Blue and Zoe Simpson of Plunge Productions offered anecdotes of the events which led them to key positions with their respective theatres. A key question as to why there is not an English equivalent to the League of Professional Theatre Women met the somewhat equivocal answer that some never felt the need for the “gender thing” to form an organization to give them visibility. They did express a desire to

Pirandello's *As You Desire Me*, notable for its stars, Kristen Scott Thomas and Bob Hoskins, and a World War I classic of life in the trenches, *Journey's End*.

About halfway through our week the weather changed from drizzly to bright and sparkling. It's amazing how London changes when sunshine illuminates those stately stones. And, by way of contrast, the area around the Tate Modern and the new Design Museum with its river views, chic shops, interesting restaurants, and new housing is also particularly attractive when enhanced by sunlight.

When homeward bound, after a much too short week, this first-time League London traveler is determined to do it again next year. Undoubtedly, many others will too. ●

League of Professional Theatre Women

PRESIDENTS: Joan D. Firestone, Harriet Slaughter **VICE PRESIDENTS:** Lynne Rogers, Lauren Scott, Mimi Turque
SECRETARIES: Alison Harper, Elsa Rael **TREASURER:** Louise M. Bayer **BOARD OF DIRECTORS:** Veronica Claypool, Martha Coigney, Patt Dale, Linda Kline, Diane Krausz, Ruth Mayleas, Mary Miko, Joanne Pottlitzer, Rachel Reiner, Carrie Robbins, Anita Ross, Deborah Savadge, Sylvia Schwartz, Marion Simon, Melanie Sutherland

In their own words:

GUERRILLA GIRLS ON TOUR **Advocacy Organization**



“...We usually do a workshop or a master class first so that we can talk to the community and get an idea of what their concerns are about discrimination, sexism, and that feeds material for our show...We teach a lot of classes in poster-making and design and how to organize protests, and how to get statistics about what’s happening in their community, and how to form grass roots organizations. Because basically that’s what we are. We’re an all volunteer group...we’ve accomplished a lot in a very short period...with a small base group.”

ZOE CALDWELL **Actress**



On the creative act of producing: “It was one man, usually, i.e. Robert [Whitehead] or sometimes his partner... And they selected a play and then Robert worked with the playwright. And then the playwright and he chose a director and the playwright and the producer chose the company. And so it was very much a hand-made article...if you really want theatre, theatre, theatre, then you’ve really got to make it, like anything else is, hand-made, special.”

LW: “How did *Master Class* come about?”

ZC: “Well, Terence McNally whom I’d met actually in Stratford-on-Avon all those years ago...and then I met him here. And he had said to me that he was going to write a play for me and I thought oh well that’s very nice, but there are plenty of plays out there I can do. And then one day he rang and he said, would you come to Big Fork, Montana and do a reading of a play that I’ve written with you in mind about Maria Callas? I said, about Maria Callas? Big Fork, Montana? No! No, I have to...Thank you. And I said, no, no, no. He said, let me send you the script....”