

■ PRESIDENTS' LETTER

AS WE WIND UP OUR TWO year term as Co-Presidents, we look back with pride at the cooperative alliances we have made within the organization and with outside professional organizations, all with the view to gaining greater visibility for women in theatre.

Many of our League officers are also moving on. We would like to acknowledge Lauren Scott for her fine contribution to our monthly newsletter, *The Flash*. The baton will now be passed to Debra Ann Byrd, who has ably assisted us in the website updates. Mimi Turque and her loyal membership committee have done a terrific job in introducing new talent and vitality into the League. Lenore DeKoven, who has served on the Membership Committee will be replacing her. Elsa Rael and Alison Harper have been keepers of the minutes as Recording Secretaries, with an able assist from board member, Patt Dale. Rachel Reiner will be taking Elsa's place. The quiet work behind the scenes of keeping the books and our financial lives in order has been Louise Bayer, a jewel in the crown, and we thank her for providing budgets for the organization, especially at grant-writing time. Anne Fitzroy, who has served as Treasurer previously, will once again step up to the plate and we gratefully welcome her. For the departing board members, we thank you for your service and hope you will continue to work with us in important ways.

Our committees continue to thrive—the number of hours required in time and preparation to make events successful can never be underestimated. Our international committee, under the tutelage of Martha Coigney and Marion Simon, has maintained an essential and rewarding relationship with our international members and their work. Hats off to the Lucille Lortel Committee who always find a hidden gem each year to recognize and this past year was no exception with the 3Graces Theater Company. The Travel Committee has outdone itself this year with our special trip to Prague and Budapest with our fearless group leader, Mary Miko; our day trip to Princeton; our trip to London, all artfully arranged by the indomitable trio: Dorothy Olim, Lauren Scott and Mary Miko. Rachel Reiner has given us an opportunity to develop more profound relationships with her Networking Committee meetings and panel discussions. Happily, the inventive and devoted Linda Kline will maintain her position as Vice President for Programs.

Our contact with Paul King at the New York City Department of Education enabled us to donate our WOMEN IN THEATRE DVDs for use in the school system's Blueprint for the Arts, providing a wonderful incentive and role model for young women who viewed the tapes.

Look for the article noting the enthusiastic comments from some of the participating teachers within this issue. We will

continue to provide mentoring opportunities for members in the public school system as needs arise.

Theatre Communications Group has been a wonderful partner in the distribution of our WOMEN IN THEATRE DVDs. CUNY-TV has provided us a home for five years for our WOMEN IN THEATRE 13-week television series with host, Linda Winer. Alas, this series will not continue this coming year, but the previous programs will be in reruns on Channel 75.

Joan has helped us maintain an active role in the New York Women's Agenda, serving as Vice-President of Government Affairs, engaged in advocating for many of the same issues as the League, e.g., pay equity and greater visibility for women. Melanie Sutherland, now a League board member, has included our members in many of the stimulating forums and networking activities that she conducts as co-president of the Coalition of Professional Women in the Arts and Media. Harriet has retired from the League of American Theatres and Producers and we would be remiss in not thanking them for giving our League a place to hang our hats for numerous board meetings over these many years.

We turn over the leadership to Lynne Rogers and Lynda Sturner with great expectations and a pledge to support your initiatives.

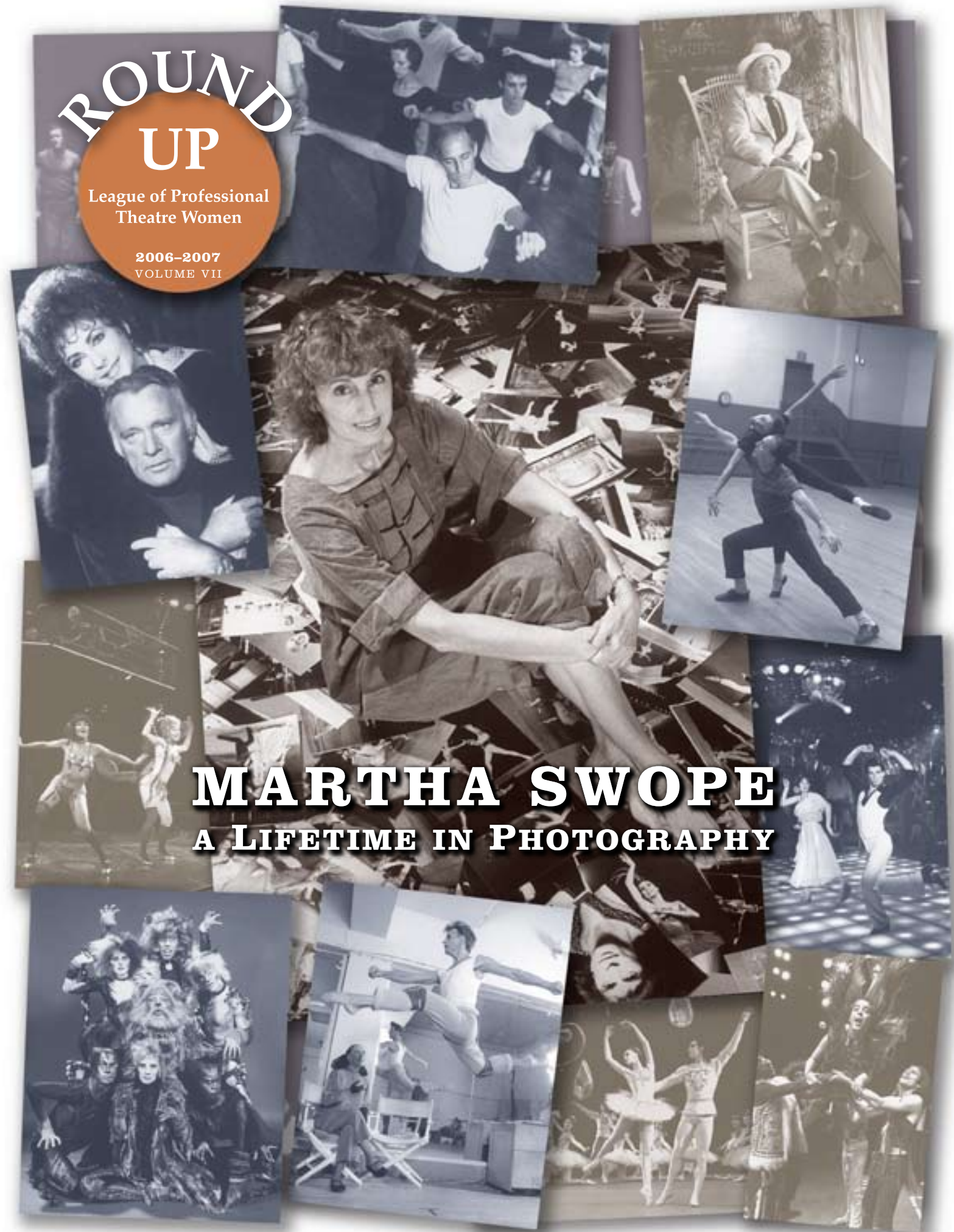
It's been a good run!

JOAN AND HARRIET

IN MEMORIAM

ELINOR JONES

LOIS WYSE



WELCOME TO ROUNDUP VII

THIS SEVENTH ISSUE of ROUNDUP continues annual coverage of League programs and activities for 2006-07. Among notable events: *Women at the Barricades: Playwrights' Political Visions*; *Representing Women Playwrights*, a panel with four women agents; *Health: A Vital Issue*, a presentation by the entertainment industry's top authorities on the need for health care information for women in the performing arts. This season's Oral History program presented two League members in dialog: Betty Corwin interviewed by Harriet Slaughter. The first Leadership Lunch introduced the new executive director of the League of American Theatres and Producers; the second featured a remarkable address (which we print in its entirety) by Virginia Louloudes, long-time leader of ART/New York. A fascinating feature by costume designer Carrie Robbins documents her process in designing *Death in Venice* at Glimmerglass Opera two seasons ago. A book excerpt, *Dead in the Business: Anne Revere and the Committee*, from Milly Barranger's *Unfriendly Witnesses: Gender, Politics, Theater, and Film in the McCarthy Era*.

Gigi Bolt, late of the National Endowment for the Arts, and photographer-extraordinaire Martha Swope were honored at the Holiday Party with, respectively, the Lee Reynolds and the Lifetime Achievement awards. The Ruth Morley and the Lucille Lortel awards were given at the annual designer award luncheon in June.

There was a new focus on things international with a panel, *Women Across Borders* (a part of the NOPASSPORT conference); a feature by Roberta Levitow on her Senior Fulbright spent at Makerere University in Uganda (East Africa); and the League's own international travel to London and—a first—to Prague to attend the Quadrennial, an international exhibition and competition of theatre architecture and design, and to enjoy the glories of that beautiful city. Closer to home the League visited the McCarter Theatre in Princeton to attend a performance of a new play, *Mrs. Packard*, by McCarter artistic director and League member Emily Mann.

And finally, we bring you interviewee quotes from the fifth and, regrettably, the last series of WOMEN IN THEATRE, which was aired by CUNY-TV in spring of 2007. For the present time WIT will continue in reruns on CUNY-TV (Channel 75).

Thanks to our Editorial Committee: Associate Editor, Alexis Greene; Photography Editor, Harriet Slaughter; and contributors Helaine Feldman, Rachel Reiner, Anne Hamilton, Roberta Levitow, Milly Barranger, Lenore DeKoven. We look forward to the 2007-08 season with new programs, interesting events, and planning for a major exhibition, *100 Years of Women in Stage Design*.

Ruth Mayleas



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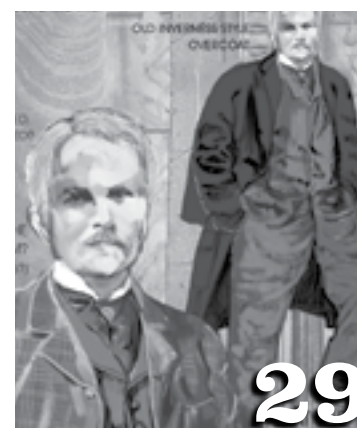
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Women at the Barricades

On October 16, 2006, a panel discussion, **WOMEN AT THE BARRICADES: PLAYWRIGHTS' POLITICAL VISIONS**, took place at Marymount Manhattan College's Theresa Lang Theatre. The event, sponsored by the League of Professional Theatre Women in association with Marymount Manhattan College, was composed of panelists **JESSICA BLANK** (*The Exonerated*), **CINDY COOPER** (*Words of Choice*), **QUIARA ALEGRÍA HUDES** (*Elliot, a Soldier's Fugue*), League members **SHIRLEY LAURO** (*All Through the Night*) and **EMILY MANN** (*Mrs. Packard*), and **DAEL ORLANDERSMITH** (*Yellowman*). The moderator was League board member **ALEXIS GREENE**.



Panelists gather before the program.

ALEXIS GREENE: When Shirley Lauro came to me with the idea for this panel, I said "yes" immediately. We realized that political actions and attitudes here and throughout the world were frightening us and making us angry. We wondered how women who write plays were responding through their work to a variety of urgent social and political issues. How were these women using plays to fight for what they believe in? What obstacles were they encountering and how were they overcoming them? And why weren't more political plays, by men as well as women, being produced by regional theatres. So: "Women at the Barricades."



Alexis Greene

Jessica, what have you fought for in one of your plays?

JESSICA BLANK: Most of the work I've done has been documentary theatre. *The Exonerated* was based on interviews that my husband, Erik Jensen, and I conducted with forty-eight exonerated men and women who had



Jessica Blank

been on death row. Erik and I are both primarily actors and were inspired by a workshop where we had contact through a cell phone hook-up to a wrongly convicted person who was in prison. We were so moved by that interaction, we decided to make a play about it. Neither of us had ever written a play, so we set off across the country interviewing exonerated death row inmates, all of whom changed our lives completely.

When we first started writing, we thought that maybe we'd do the play in a ninety-nine-seat theatre downtown for a week for some of our friends. But the play became something much bigger than either of us expected. A lot

of people came on board in very big ways; we had readings with Susan Sarandon, Tim Robbins, Richard Dreyfuss, and other actors of that ilk. The reason we wrote the play, however, was because of the real people

we interviewed. We wanted to use the special power of documentary theatre to make audiences empathize with human beings whose stories were very different from their own. During the life of our play we have fought for the real people whose stories it's based on. This has resulted in nearly a million dollars being raised for the six people whose stories we present. For me, if that's all the play ever does, that's enough.



Cindy Cooper

AG: Cindy, what have you fought for in one of your plays?

CINDY COOPER: Right now I'm fighting the airlines to get to South Dakota, because on Thursday I'm hoping to take a group of actors there to present a play called *Words of Choice*, which, with a collaborator, Suzanne Bennett, we wove together from the work of about twelve writers whose voices are diverse.

This play has now been performed around the country, and I consider it to be social activism as well as theatre. What it brings from the theatre is the

opening of people's hearts and minds by allowing them to empathize. What it brings from activism is a call for people to wake up and understand how the Right Wing has eviscerated reproductive freedom, taking away a right we believe is essential but is slipping away. I didn't see anybody else doing what I felt I could do, and I was tired with the messaging coming out of the major reproductive rights organizations. I felt the need to go to people, involve them, and get them to engage in this issue, and break open a log jam of rhetoric that has coated the country with a lot of Right Wing blather. Theatre is a magnificent way to do this. It has combined my interests in justice and writing, and in finding a way to bring them together in one form.

AG: Quiara, what has your fight been?

QUIARA ALEGRÍA HUDES: My politics have always been incredibly personal. I think that's why I ended up going the playwriting route as opposed to a more political route. Growing up I knew I was an activist but I couldn't be eloquent on a large and analytical level. It just always came down to a very personal and passionate argument for me. So I found out that playwriting was a better channel.

The issue that I've been grappling with in my last three plays, leading up to *Elliot, A Soldier's Fugue*, is visibility. One of the things I experienced growing up—I'm half Puerto Rican and half Jewish—was seeing a huge dichotomy between my Jewish family and my Puerto Rican family, and trying to come to terms with that. I felt at a certain point in my life that a good deal of my Puerto Rican family was completely invisible. So I think that conundrum ended up being the main issue I started fighting for in my writing. Creatively, I could make someone who I loved, who felt invisible, more visible.

Elliot, A Soldier's Fugue is based on my cousin, who enlisted in the Marines right after he graduated from North Philly High, when he was seventeen. He got shipped off to Iraq. At that time, whenever I visited my family, I was seeing young men and women just out of high school walking around in uniform in North Philly, which is the

Puerto Rican neighborhood—El Barrio. Why would these people, who I felt were invisible, enlist? Why would my cousin enlist? Our family is pacifist; we have some Quaker roots, and my cousin's father had been to Vietnam and had a very negative experience. Then his son enlisted in the Marines? There were a lot of contradictions. I had a lot of questions.

AG: Shirley, your fight?

SHIRLEY LAURO: What I have fought for in a recent play, *All Through the Night*, is an acceptance by producers and artistic directors that people come to the theatre to think rather than be entertained. That's probably been my struggle ever since I started writing. I was drawn to creating *All Through the Night* because it deals with the stripping away of women's civil rights in Germany, as an authoritarian government takes power. The play deals with the true stories of five German, Christian women. Set during Hitler's reign, the play asks why, in a civilized society, do ordinary people do nothing as their civil rights are taken from them.



Shirley Lauro

The play has great relevance for today.

These women have the right to abortion stripped away. The right to birth control stripped away. Their handicapped children deemed unworthy of life and killed.

Although the play has been produced in Chicago and received an award, a play about the loss of civil rights is always a tough sell.

So that is my current struggle. A previous political play, *A Piece of My Heart*, about six women's experiences in Vietnam, was also a tough sell. By the time I had finished that play, everyone said, "We've had Vietnam already. We're not interested." The addendum to this story is that the play has now had over a thousand productions around the world. It has just been named the most enduring play in the nation dealing with the Vietnam era by the WA Veteran, the



Quiara Alegría Hudes

official voice of the Vietnam Veterans of America. Some fights are worth fighting for, and I'll keep on fighting.

AG: Emily, where are your fights?

EMILY MANN: I feel like I'm a synthesis of all of my colleagues. Every one has brought up something and I think, "Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes." So maybe what I should talk about is what I'm writing right now: *Mrs. Packard*, about Elizabeth Parsons Ware Packard, a nineteenth-century woman who, like many women, accomplished extraordinary things, but was nearly erased from history. In 1861, in Illinois, she disagreed publicly with the conservative theology preached by her husband, a Calvinist minister. One day, up her garden path come her husband, a sheriff, two doctors, and two strong-men. The doctors take her pulse, say 'her pulse is very quick,' declare her insane and pack her off to the lunatic asylum. There, she looks around the ward in which she is locked up and realizes that all the other women are just as sane as she is. But like her, they've all been put in the madhouse to keep them from speaking their thoughts.

The good news is that Elizabeth Packard fought hard and got out of the asylum, became an extraordinary activist and heroine, and though we rarely hear about her in the history books, she partnered with the Abolitionists to work for the emancipation of married women and the rights of the mentally ill and changed the laws in thirty-four legislatures. For me, the story has incredible contemporary resonance. And I have always fought to give voice to the voiceless. In this play, I am interested in what makes a society need to keep women from speaking out. In *Mrs. Packard* it's fear and shame. Male shame is very interesting to examine, especially at this moment in human existence.

AG: Dael, I know you are a fighter.

DAEL ORLANDERSMITH: I feel like such a chump with these chicks. So... it's what I fight. What's important for me is: it's a given

BARRICADES continued on page 35



Dael Orlandersmith



Emily Mann



Panelists Jim Brown, Dr. Jim Spears, Renata Mariano, Carol Mannes and Barbara Pedersen

HEALTH A Vital Issue

BY HARRIET SLAUGHTER

RECOGNIZING the urgent need for health care information and the importance of women informing themselves about long term planning, the League joined forces with the New York Coalition of Professional Women in the Arts and Media in presenting several experts in the field who addressed a myriad of issues on these topics. The panel was comprised of some of the entertainment industry's top authorities on the scope of health care for freelancers, special issues surrounding women's health, caregiving, and legal aspects of elder care planning for loved ones and oneself.

Jim Brown, Director of Health Services at the Actors' Fund described the need to assess options for health insurance. He described various alternatives for freelancers who make a living as self-employed women in the business. The Freelancers Union offers coverage for the self-employed, along with Healthy New York and Child Health Plus. The Health Savings Account (enacted in 2003) is becoming a popular choice. Basically, an HSA is a bank account into which you deposit pre-tax dollars. By law, you must carry a "high deductible" health plan to qualify for an HSA; you pay one hundred percent of your medical expenses of your health savings account until you satisfy the deductible.

Long-term care insurance was touched upon as an important planning tool for the future. Currently nursing homes average \$89,000 a year and long-term care insurance purchased at an early age might alleviate this burden, as monthly premiums increase with age. It was suggested that an elder care

attorney might be useful in weighing one's options before the need arises. Jim advised that he was always willing to be of assistance to those seeking information about health care.

He brought several colleagues from the Actors' Fund who touched on other aspects of health care. Dr. Jim Spears who heads the free health clinic at the Aurora (the Actors' Fund living facility in Manhattan), stressed the importance of prevention of disease by the early development of such life styles as good diet, exercise, controlling blood pressure, and vigilantly monitoring cholesterol. The doctor today needs to learn listening skills in order to treat a patient holistically; he urged women to develop a relationship with a primary care physician, if possible, rather than a series of specialists.

Renata Mariano discussed the role of the caregiver and the ways to navigate the health system. She emphasized the importance of structuring fun into the caregiver's life, otherwise there will be burnout. Coping with the caregiver role can be stressful and advocacy groups should be sought to relieve tensions. She emphasized, "don't be afraid to ask for help and be specific in what you need in terms of assistance." Knowing when to call 911, learning the language of health care advocacy, and asking persistent questions were some of the topics she raised.

Carole Mannes has managed women's issues in the field for several years through the Phyllis Newman Women's Health Initiative at the Actors' Fund. She urged women not to be in denial about their health and to seek help

when it's needed. Several centers in Manhattan such as Ryan Chelsea, St. Vincent's Hospital, and the Ralph Lauren Center in Harlem offer low rates geared toward people in the arts. Her rule of thumb is "take care of yourself and put yourself first."

Attorney Barbara Pedersen reminded the audience that women still outlive men and are the major caregivers. For that reason, living wills and health care proxies were discussed as important tools in directing your wishes as to who will make the decisions in times of emergency. Be sure to identify the person who will carry out your wishes. Too often the person designated can act against your wishes. She stressed that the HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act enacted in 1996) requirements for privacy can withhold important exchanges of records if the proper informed consent designations are not made in advance. Also, executing the proper kind of power of attorney, whether it is a durable power of attorney (effective from the minute you sign) or a springing power of attorney (effective when you become incapacitated), should be carefully considered so that your wishes can be carried out properly. The importance of estate planning should be a top priority and she would urge that these documents be reviewed and updated every two years.

A question and answer period followed, with participants going away more cognizant of the importance of dealing with these decisions now, rather than procrastinating. Going online to www.actorsfund.org can offer further research on health care issues. ●

The Agents Panel

Representing Women Playwrights BY MILLY S. BARRANGER

IN ANSWER TO THE QUESTION "What does an Agent do?," Arthur Kopit's character Audrey West in *End of the World with Symposium to Follow* replies that in theory an agent's supposed to find her client work. "Now, while this has certainly been known to happen," she continues, "fortunately for all concerned, we do much, much more."

Four theatrical agents appeared as panelists at New Dramatists on April 12th to discuss their representation of women playwrights and spoke in terms of the multi-tasked relationships among agents and clients. In general, their counsel to clients turned less on issues of gender than on *relationships* among writers and directors, writers and theatres. Two words (*advocacy* and *relationships*) reverberated throughout the hour-long discussion of a changing theatre that has shifted for playwrights from commercial venues to the resident theatres and the whole not-for-profit world.

In conversation with forty-plus League members, Beth Blickers of Abrams Artists Agency, Val Day of the William Morris Agency, Sarah Douglas of Douglas-Kopelman (Abrams Artists), and Peregrine Whittlesey of Peregrine Whittlesey Agency were introduced by League Co-President Joan Firestone and moderator

Melanie Sutherland, President of the New York Coalition of Professional Women in the Arts and Media. The four panelists shared their diverse backgrounds that led to careers as agents. In an age of e-mails and text messaging, they described in personal terms the task of agenting as "multi-armed outreach"—as outreach to playwrights, directors, designers, producers, theatres, and other agents. Moreover, they pointed to the need for candor with the writer about the readiness of a script for submission to a theatre and, concomitantly, the amount of dramaturgical work that agents undertake today.

There was general agreement among the group that they preferred clients who could advocate successfully for themselves and negotiate well with others. "Everything is about relationships," they agreed. Crafting a universal metaphor, they described how the writer had to be at the dance so she or he could be asked to dance. The agreed upon premise was that there could be no "wall-flowers" in the business of promoting the work, getting scripts looked at, and cultivating directors and theatre managers for future productions.

In answer to the writer's perennial question, "How do I get an agent?" the shared response was "self-advocation" and the demonstration of an "original voice" in the writing. ●



Joan Firestone welcomes the audience to the Agents Panel Discussion

In general, the panelists' viewpoints applied to both male and female writers but when pressed about gender differences they agreed that the singular drawback for women playwrights was a hesitancy to "advocate" skillfully and aggressively for themselves and their work. Despite differences in style and approaches to representation of clients, the conversation circled around and around and always arrived at a common endpoint: the need for playwrights to develop relationships with other professionals.

When pressed to give statistics on the percentage of male-to-female writers they represented, the consistent answer among the four was that, on average, fifty per cent of their clients were women. The League members spontaneously applauded in recognition that the playing field had been leveled since the days when another pioneering woman, slyly referenced in Kopit's play, first announced the Audrey Wood Agency in the thirties that became famously the Liebling-Wood Agency. ●

COALITION NEWS Collaboration Awards BY SONDR A GORNEY

THE CHERRY LANE Theatre bristled with excitement as women and a smattering of their male guests filled the 179-seat theatre for the first-ever New York Coalition of Professional Women in the Arts & Media (NYCWAM) Collaboration Awards, which took place on the evening of September 18, 2006.

A brainchild of Coalition board member, Cindy Cooper (DG), the awards recognize new works and works-in-progress by women working collaboratively with women across the Coalition's member organizations. The event was produced by board member Cat Parker (SSDC). Sherry Eaker, Editor-at-Large, *Backstage* (Special Advisor) and Leslie

Shreve (Past President/Special Advisor) presented the grand prize to Jennifer Maisel and her colleague, Wendy McClellan, and honored four finalists.

Birds, a collaboration between writer Jennifer Maisel (DG) and director, Wendy McClellan (SSDC), is a full-length play that merges reality and fantasy in contemporary New York against a backdrop of 9/11. The enthusiastic crowd was treated to an excerpt before Eaker and Shreve presented a giant replica of the \$500 check to Maisel and McClellan.

The evening's program began with a filmed excerpt from *Fleeting Thoughts*, created by Jane Comfort (AEA, SAG, AFTRA) and Joan La Barbara (SSDC). Introduced wittily by costumed dancers,

the piece was composed by La Barbara, who sang the score live with the performers. Writer-director-choreographer Comfort is artistic director of her own downtown dance theatre, Jane Comfort and Company.

Sharon Talbot (AEA, AFTRA, SAG), book writer and actor and Janet Gari (DG), composer and lyricist, presented an excerpt of their musical collaboration. Inspired by the life of Ms. Gari's sister, Margie, the first-born of show business icon Eddie Cantor's five daughters, *First Born* was performed by Talbot with Kelly Taylor.

Sharon Sharth (DG, AEA, SAG, AFTRA) and Pamela Dunlap (AEA, SAG, AFTRA) **Coalition continued on page 17**

Networking

BY RACHEL REINER

FOR THE SECOND YEAR in a row, the League of Professional Theatre Women's Networking Committee presented two sessions that gave members opportunities to get to know one another, and make connections for potential future collaborations.

On November 15, 2006, the committee held its Connecting Event at the Women's Project offices on West 62nd Street. Twenty attendees participated in this structured networking initiative, which was modeled on the "Blatant Self-Interest" event of the New York Coalition of Professional Women in the Arts & Media. This was an opportunity for League 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 others in the room might help them reach their goals, be they producers, directors or other theater professionals. After everyone had spoken, many taking careful notes, members mingled over food and wine, sharing information. Attendees' feedback was positive. The committee plans to repeat the event annually, perhaps in

conjunction with the fall membership meeting.

Since the fall meeting was designed for all members, regardless of profession, the committee sought to engage the interests of a subset for the spring event. Last year's focus was women directors; this year featured women producers. Broadway producer Elizabeth Williams (*Bombay Dreams*, *Gypsy*) and Julie Crosby, producing artistic director of the Women's Project, were invited to be guest speakers for the April 25, 2007, event.

Elizabeth and Julie were asked to address the following questions: In what ways is producing creative and artful? How can we as women improve our chances for employment and get a foot in the door on both commercial and non-profit projects? Why aren't more women playwrights being produced? Elizabeth shared the fascinating journey of creating and developing *Crazy for You* and spoke of how some of her projects identified creative teams. Julie talked about the economic viability of projects initiated by women and her experiences in both the commercial theater and the not-for-profit sector. Both producers encouraged attendees to see more productions produced and directed by women. The National Theatre in London was cited as a company known to hire female directors and produce

women's plays. The Cherry Lane Mentor Project and the Fund for Women Artists were also mentioned as organizations supporting work by women.

Some ideas that were explored included mentoring each other; encouraging women to attend the Commercial Theater Institute (held in New York by Theatre Development Fund and the League of American Theatres and Producers) and other producer-training programs; collaborating with women artists; using quotes from female critics' reviews in advertisements and press releases; and subscribing to women's organizations and theatres. It was also noted that women face obstacles to advancing their careers in many fields, not only in theatre.

The eighteen League members attending the event included designers, directors, playwrights, and dramaturgs, and those simply seeking more information about producing. The discussion was spirited, and there was many an impassioned statement about the need for women to be recognized in our industry. ●

The Networking Committee is chaired by Rachel Reiner and includes Julie Crosby, Stephanie Klapper, Gail Kriegel, and Dorothy Olim. Special thanks to Julie Crosby for graciously offering the use of the Women's Project offices for the first event and to the League of American Theatres and Producers for providing space for the second.



Melanie Sutherland as make-up subject

Spa Treatment

BY ALEXIS GREENE

I CRAVED A MANICURE. SO on Tuesday evening, September 12th, I wended my way through the rush-hour to the halls of Georgette Klinger Spa and Salon, at 501 Madison Avenue, to partake of beauty tips arranged for a smattering of League members, courtesy of Smith Barney.

In fact, manicures were not on the complimentary menu (I ended up paying for my own: \$25—not bad for Mad Ave., but not as good as my Upper Westside nail spa). Still, there were offerings to tempt one's inner goddess, if she yearned for replenishment: a back and neck massage, paraffin treatment for the hands. And the chance to watch one of Georgette Klinger's resi-

dent make-up artists ply his creams and brushes.

League board member Melanie Sutherland, perhaps feeling some autumnal New York urge of her own, sat on a stool beneath soft lighting and graciously gave herself over to the make-up artist's ministrations. Several of us watched while he explained the ins and outs of cheekbones, cellular revitalization, and glossy lip therapy, and delicately emphasized Melanie's already striking appearance.

I don't know if I'm ready (financially or otherwise) for all the peels, paraffin masks, and SkinState diagnoses in which Georgette Klinger has specialized for sixty years. But for a couple of care-less hours, it was total fun. ●

Black History Month A Celebration

BY HELAINE FELDMAN

THE LEAGUE joined forces with Equity's Eastern Equal Employment Opportunity Committee (EEOC) and its Advisory Committee on Chorus Affairs (ACCA) to present *The Gypsy Robe—In Our Time* in celebration of Black History Month 2007. The program, which honored African-American recipients of Equity's legendary Gypsy Robe, was presented on February 12 at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center, and drew a crowd of more than one-hundred-and-fifty.

Staged by A. Wellington Perkins (*It's So Nice to be Civilized*—1980, *Dreamgirls*—1981) and written by Pi Douglass (*Jesus Christ Superstar*—1971, *Selling of the President*—1972, *The Wiz*—1975) and Perkins, the script

was narrated by Equity's Christine Toy Johnson, Julia Breanetta Simpson and Thomas Jay Miller. It detailed the history of the Gypsy Robe and the ceremony that has evolved with its presentation, defined the role of the Broadway Gypsy, and traced the history of African-American performers and shows on Broadway. The script juxtaposed narrative about the Robe with tales of the African-American theatre experience:

"At precisely one hour before curtain, a most important ceremony is performed. Created by and for actors, it is an intimate ritual, almost unknown to those outside the theatre. The doors are locked. The entire company—actors, crew, administrators, creative staff, anyone connected to the production—is gathered on the stage. The ceremony asks the Spirits of the Theatre to bestow their blessing, their best wishes, on the production. For some, this is their first experience; for others, it is a ritual they have performed many times. Everyone listens, anxious to hear the name of the chorus actor who has the most Broadway chorus credits, the Gypsy, honored as



Actor models Gypsy Robe for Black History Month program

the embodiment of that spirit. It is the Presentation of the Gypsy Robe."

"People of color have entertained Broadway audiences since 1898," the script continued. "Accepted cautiously at first, the 'Colored' musical soon became a staple of Broadway audiences, who were for the first time, introduced to the top black performers of their age: Bert Williams, George Walker, Coles and Johnson. With the deaths of these innovative performers, blacks virtually vanished from Broadway. But up in Harlem, a Renaissance was occurring. Broadway audiences had to travel to Harlem to enjoy performers no longer available on the 'Great White Way.' Flo Ziegfeld had to come 'uptown' to purchase segments of Harlem revues for his *Follies* productions."

The narrative continued: "Colored performers returned to Broadway in greater numbers with the triumph of Sissle and Blake's *Shuffle Along* in 1920. The success of those musicals helped open the door for dramatic plays, almost all written by whites. In the Great Depression performers—black

and white—suffered, though many received work with the Federal Theatre Project and the 'WPA.' Black musical performers found work on the 'Chitlin' Circuit' or TOBA (Theatre Owners Booking Agency) or [as it was called] 'Tough on Black Asses.' After World War II, black theatre revived, serious dramas began to tackle the real problems of black life in America; nothing musical about that, the beginning of a new era not exactly in our time."

Jumping ahead, the pageant noted that "Black theatre exploded in the sixties with renewed interest in African-American history and culture. The roots of black music were explored, race relations, disenfranchisement, anger at the past, and hope in the future." The explosion continued in the seventies. And then, "Broadway got a new

rhythm, the risk and cost of producing a Broadway show forced producer and director to look anywhere and everywhere for their next big hit. Off-Broadway, Off-Off-Broadway, regional showcase, Canada. More were called; fewer were chosen. Directors required more from the chorus. Choreographers pushed the limits of technical ability and the audience demanded deeper substance, greater flash. To keep time the Gypsy had to develop new skills, become the triple threat that grabbed the spotlight and wouldn't let go. Black performers were not only a feature, but a vital part of the American musical scene, infusing the Great White Way with a different rhythm, our rhythm in 'our' time."

During the program, there was a parade of former African-American Robe recipients, including Brynn Williams, who received the Robe at age twelve, the youngest chorus member ever to be so honored, for *In My Life* in 2005.

Equity thanked the League, along with Co-President Harriet Slaughter, Lee Hunkins, and K. Kevyne Baar, for their support and assistance with this event. ●

ORAL HISTORY: Harriet Slaughter interviews BETTY CORWIN

TWO THOUSAND AND SIX was the seventy-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Theatre Collection of the New York Public Library. It was an appropriate year to interview Betty Corwin, who founded an important component of that Collection: the Theatre on Film and Tape (TOFT) Archive which was inaugurated in 1970. Betty was interviewed on October 26, 2006 by League Co-President Harriet Slaughter as part of the League's Oral History project. Harriet introduced her subject by asking how it felt to be in front of the camera for a change? "Scary," said Betty, who then proceeded to act as if it was the most natural thing in the world.

Betty related the genesis of TOFT. In the late sixties, she was working as a volunteer at Jacoby Hospital in the Bronx in the psychiatric emergency ward. The hospital was offering a training program for paraprofessional psychiatric social workers and she applied for it; in the course of applying she had to write an autobiography, in which she said that the most exciting time of her life was spent working as a production assistant in the theatre. This exercise in autobiography brought the realization that what she most wanted to do—more than anything—was work in the theatre. The idea of filming theatre came from her sister-in-law at the time, the agent Helen Harvey, who observed that everybody talks about filming theatre but nobody does it. Betty spoke with the Library's executive director, Thor Wood, who asked her to write a proposal and gave her a desk and three months to develop her ideas.

Then ensued the laborious task of getting permissions from eight unions. Starting with Actors Equity which was "not so bad," it took two and a half years to work out agreements—all with complex qualifications—with the others. Equity wanted viewing periods set first at ten, then five, years after filming, and finally agreed to no time lapse. The stagehands were, in a word, "impossible." Visiting the union's television office, she was greeted by the stereotypical guy with a cigar who called out, "Dick, pretty lady here to see you," and sent her right in (she had been trying to see him for months);

subsequently Dick Nimmo spoke to Local One of IATSE and, ultimately, an agreement was reached. The musicians union, concerned with piracy, wouldn't even talk to her. A friend, who knew someone close to the union head and had a favor to collect from him, got her to Hal David,



Betty Corwin is interviewed by Harriet Slaughter

the musician's union head, and there too an agreement was reached.

At the outset, the project used only film which was exceedingly expensive; the much cheaper tape took over later. The first show filmed was *The Golden Bat* at the Sheridan Square Theatre, using the cheapest cameraman around who, thoroughly stoned, shot it with one camera for \$200. The National Endowment for the Arts, in the person of Theater Program Director Ruth Mayleas, viewing both *Bat* and *The Trial of the Catonsville Nine* must have sensed the potential of the project, for the Endowment made a grant of \$167,00, saying: "We know you can do better if you get money." It was the first of a number of NEA grants. [It cannot have hurt that producer Hal Prince, who was solidly behind the film project, was at that time also Chairman of the Endowment's Theater Panel.]

Betty called *A Chorus Line* the most exciting of all tapings. It was made into a very special event by Michael Bennett who brought companies from all over the world—330 dancers with all companies speaking in their own languages. TOFT now records productions country-wide, including plays that encompass minority

and social concerns, as well as the work of notable performers and major playwrights.

The first Broadway production filmed by TOFT was *Liza* [Minnelli] at the *Winter Garden*. At the filming of *The Royal Family*, a stagehand, not knowing

it was being recorded, accidentally pulled a plug—it was the sound, and the explosion blew all the lights. The cameras (and the live audience) had to wait until repairs were made; later a studio was rented to record the lost portion of the film which was lip synced. George C. Scott wouldn't allow a taping of *Death of a Salesman* because he had received poor reviews as the director. The same Mr. Scott was accused of assaulting a girl in *Inherit the Wind* which was then taped with Tony Randall in his place. With *Short Eyes* at the Public Theatre there was so much background subway noise that the show had to be retaped at Lincoln Center.

In addition to recording productions, TOFT acquires already filmed or taped productions, interviews, television versions of shows it has taped, and such priceless items as George Gershwin's home movies with the extraordinary stars of that time. Through an agreement with the League of Resident Theatres (LORT), regional theatres may, if they wish, contribute their own tapings to the Archive.

The taping is today a fairly complex operation with a large video truck, director, sound man, and cameramen who see

Corwin continued on page 17

LEADERSHIP LUNCH: CHARLOTTE ST. MARTIN

BY BARBARA JANOWITZ

THE LEAGUE OF AMERICAN Theatres and Producers' first-ever woman executive director top-lined the LPTW Leadership Luncheon on September 26th at Sardi's. At the standing-room-only event, Charlotte St. Martin—barely six weeks in her new position—spoke about her prior professional experience in the hotel industry, her love of Broadway theatre, and the excitement with which she is greeting her new responsibilities. Describing the reception she has received since taking the job at the League in early August, St. Martin referred to the "warm and welcoming experience" on Broadway as being very similar to the feeling she had when she ran a four-star hotel in Dallas, Texas.

Hailing from the Lone Star State and having served for twenty-eight years as an executive with Loews Hotels in Dallas and New York, St. Martin was tapped by the League of American Theatres and Producers' search committee to bring both her

hospitality industry savvy and association experience to the helm of the Broadway trade group. St. Martin has served on the Board of Directors of the American Society of Association Executives, the Professional Convention Management Association, and Meeting Planners International, in addition to many years on the Board and Executive Committee of NYC & Company.



Charlotte St. Martin speaks at Leadership Lunch

Her new charge at the League—to keep a complex and challenging trade association running efficiently and effectively for its 600-plus members—brings St. Martin directly to the center of the Broadway industry that she has been passionately interested in as an audience member. With a membership that consists of Broadway producers, general managers, theatre owners and operators, and producers and presenters of touring Broadway across North America, St. Martin leads a team that negotiates collective bargaining agreements with all theatrical unions and guilds; coordinates industry-wide public relations, marketing initiatives and corporate sponsorships; oversees government relations for the Broadway industry; maintains relevant research archives and databases; and, perhaps most visibly, co-presents the annual Tony Awards.

After St. Martin's introductory remarks at the Leadership Luncheon, she entertained a series of challenging questions from LPTW members. ●

International Report BY MARION SIMON

IN 2003, League member Joanne Pottlitzer introduced the idea of an international adjunct to the League of Professional Theatre Women. She and a small committee together researched and sought recommendations of women abroad who might qualify and might be interested in participating as Affiliate Members. Letters of invitation were sent to one hundred and twenty potential candidates. Today there are over fifty members from twenty-one countries (see Directory for specifics).

In lieu of dues, the League asks international affiliates to send periodic reports of theatre activities in their respective countries (see website for reprints). We also ask that they alert us to events that our members might wish to attend. In return, they receive our News Flashes and ROUNDUP. The Travel Committee contacts members in countries and cities to which the League tours—London and Prague in 2007—and enjoys receiving information and hospitality offered by resident affiliates.

A major aspect of our relationship with international members is welcoming

them to New York when they visit. Over the past several years, we have entertained and been enlightened by a number of outstanding theatre women, among them Sodja Zupanc Lotker of the Czech Republic, Farah Yegeneh Tabrizi of Iran, Jung-Soon Shim of Korea, Malgorzata Semil-Jakubowicz of Poland, Dijana Milosevic of Serbia, Zdenka Becker of Austria, Hedda Sjrogen of Sweden and Angelina Llongueras of Spain.

In 2005 the committee decided that two people were needed to continue Joanne's work as the spearhead of international activity. The 2005–2006 committee leadership went to Rena Elisha and Maxine Kern and in 2006–2007 to Martha Coigney and Marion Simon. During these years, the committee supported the work of the NoPassport Conference at the CUNY Graduate Center's Martin Segal Theatre Center in February 2007, where Carol Mack, Susan Yankowitz, Linda Chapman, Caridad Svich, Saviana Stanesco, Ruth Margraff, Catherine Filloux and Joanne participated on a League of Professional Theatre Women panel called "Women Across Borders" (see article page 25).

The Committee also supported and followed the development of Carol Mack's "Vital Voices" project, which is creating a theatrical presentation by women playwrights—mostly League members—who interviewed women in other countries who have overcome extraordinary hardships committed by abusive regimes (see article page 26). Committee members attended internationally-oriented presentations in New York and informed the membership of their existence; the most recent such presentation was the Ninth Annual Otto René Castillo awards for political theatre which recognized theatre artists from around the world who are creating innovative political theatre. Among the honorees was the Dah Theatre of Belgrade and its co-founder, League affiliate Dijana Milosevic.

League members Roberta Levitow and Catherine Filloux will take over as co-chairs of the International Committee in the fall of 2007. We look forward to 2007–2008 and invite members with international interests to contact Martha, Marion, Roberta or Catherine to talk about joining us in future projects. ●

Women in Theatre

WOMEN IN THEATRE was taped in the fall and winter of 2006 and 2007 and premiered in the spring of 2007, shown on CUNY-TV (Channel 75 in New York City), April 6th through July 1st. Each interview on WIT V was seen on Fridays at 10:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m., and 8:30 p.m. and repeated the following Sunday

In their own words:

CYNTHIA NIXON Actress



On Jean Brody: “I mean, she’s very dangerous. I don’t usually play dangerous people much. So it was one of the main things that appealed to me...I mean other than the fact that it’s a great role and I really wanted to work with Scott Elliott...I thought if someone is really going to push me to be dangerous, Scott Elliott is the person...There are so few roles that are bravura roles like that role...Great roles are always hard to find, but the nice thing about theatre roles is once you have a great one, it stays around...everyone will try and do it in every generation.”

JO BONNEY Director



On “Fifth of July”: “Actually I loved working on that play because it’s...beautifully structured. And each character is a fully realized character, and he does a wonderful thing...he holds all the balls in the air. So it behooves you to do likewise. And essentially you have to choreograph the whole thing so it runs forever, coming in and out of doors and up and down stairs, and stories are left off and disappear, but they come back in the next moment and finally it reveals itself for the secret...at the heart of this group of people. It was a pleasure.”

CAROLE ROTHMAN Artistic Director, Director



On Second Stage’s new space: “I mean, we’re right in the heart of things. We’re just in the thick of it. And we get other plays that we wouldn’t have ordinarily gotten because we have 300 seats and it’s a beautiful theatre, and people want to work there. And when you can create your own theatre, you can make it so that there’s wing space and fly space, and all kinds of things that...we didn’t have before. So I think it’s made a huge difference to us because the plays that can fit into our theatre can also fit into Broadway theatres...When we moved *Spelling Bee* or *Little Dog Laughed*, the set didn’t have to be redesigned.”

Season V

Linda Winer



at 12 Noon. Reruns in the Friday and Sunday time slot will be seen in the fall of 2007. Linda Winer, theatre critic of *Newsday*, continues in her role as host. What follows are quotes from the thirteen interviews, leading off with Cynthia Nixon and concluding with LaChanze.

ANNE CATTANEO Dramaturg



On Stoppard’s “Coast of Utopia”: “And I think our philosophy... it’s really been borne out and when you see this production you’ll see, is to treat this play as it is, written by a master writer. Not to ask for revisions. We were anxious at the beginning that the play was long. It’s turned out to be not so long. And our approach to the production...Jack O’Brien, who’s our director, has really elucidated it in a way that clarifies things. So when we sat down to meet, and he’s been working with Tom on this for years...the question was really how can we clarify this emotionally? How can we make it accessible? And Tom has done a little work and there’ve been things asked of him, but it’s not a major revision.”

DAPHNE RUBIN-VEGA Actress



Linda: Is it hard for a Latino actress, or is it irrelevant?: “You know it’s as relevant as you make it. I’ve had this conversation with lots of Latinas who [are] sick and tired of playing the nurse, the hooker, the junkie. And I’m thinking, you know, junkie, hooker -- if it weren’t for those roles, I wouldn’t be here. And...I’m not saying that to be flip. It’s really the quality of roles. We always reach for that which is just a little beyond our grasp...there was one point I guess through the insane success of *Rent*, I realized that those limitations...have also served to be my strengths...but I don’t think that I’d be less successful or more successful if I were...white or black or Asian.”

continued on next page

Women in Theatre Season V

In their own words:

BLANKA ZIZKA Artistic Director, Director



“When I was growing up in Czechoslovakia, after the Russians came in 1968, really theatre was the only place where you could get together with the audience and other artists and in some way communicate some ideas, really through subtext, because everything else was censored...They had those big shredding machines that shred all the novels by Kundera and novels from the 1920s that were finally allowed at the end of the sixties...suddenly we were discovering writers from the 1920s, 1930s and 1950s...It was all Prague Spring in 1968. And then the Russians came...”

NANCY FORD Composer, & GRETCHEN CRYER Lyricist



LW: *Getting My Act Together...* was done in how many countries?



NF & GC: “Around the world, fifty, a hundred...It was done all over...the show was a culmination of a long journey, which actually both Nancy and I had gone through coming out of a sensibility of the fifties, and then coming through what was happening to women in the seventies...We wanted to write something about the journey of women...and we had started writing songs that were a scrapbook of our lives, writing about things that had happened to us and people we know...and setting them to music.”

FLORIA LASKY Attorney



“You know, they say that people argue about billing all the time and credit and what kind of credit. And I myself love words and I objected when somebody said Robbins’ choreography was ‘created by’...I said no, it wasn’t created by...Robbins’ choreography was ‘reproduced by,’ because it was not an idle difference...When somebody creates a work of genius, it’s always copied somewhere. You see a lot of *West Side* finger snapping...”

LIZ SWADOS Composer



“Since I was very little, no matter what happened in my life, no matter what was bad or what was good or what was scary or what was grief stricken...I’d always make things...I’d sit at the piano...because making things and the arts saved my life...I always knew to look for something that was somewhat political and that was somewhat artistic, that if I could speak to other people, if I could join together with other people to bring things, then I could forget myself or whatever was troubling me...and I could go somewhere else.”

NATASHA KATZ Lighting Designer



About the diversity of her work: “I have a great love of Broadway...I can say it out loud. I do really love working on Broadway. And in a funny way, that love is so strong that I felt like I really needed to branch out away from that to keep myself rounded and rounded and rounded. So, you know, each art form informs the other all the time. So the first ballet I did, I felt like I was rejuvenated. The first opera I did, the same thing. They each inform the other...I like to do many different things. I did a big show out in Las Vegas, and even that, believe it or not, is fulfilling.”

Women in Theatre Season V

In their own words:

MARTHA CLARKE Choreographer, Director



On the genesis of "Vienna Lusthaus": "And I said, oh, I'll go to the bookshelf. I literally did, and I pulled out a book on Vienna at the turn of the century. I had been to Venice the summer before and seen a great show, the first time I was exposed to Egon Schiele. It was at a great palazzo in Venice, and I had been an artists model. My ex-husband is a sculptor and my ex-boyfriend is a painter...and Schiele's nudes felt very much like my own body. I identified with the physicality, the twistedness, the angularity of them. Anyway, I said to Dick [composer Richard Peasley], why don't we do a show about Vienna at the turn of the century?"

MARGO LION Producer



"But you know, Broadway theatre is very intractable. It really is a business, sort of business, art, commercial field, that is resistant to a...cookie-cutter approach. And I don't know why this is...There's something about the spirit of what's onstage, live, that I feel magically needs the kind of impulse of an individual behind it...[even] if you look at something like Disney—Tom Schumacher is a very passionate producer, and he was in the theatre before he started working for Disney. And I think that it just takes that kind of passion. I always say it's passion and persistence and patience."

LACHANZE Actress



On "Once on this Island": "I played a dark-skinned girl from the Caribbean who came from a poor family—we were considered the peasants—who fell in love with someone from the other side of the island, the fairer-skinned blacks who considered themselves...better. So it really was a comment on race in [the] African-American community...how the color issue plays out...and all the complexities and conflicts that exist...yet it was also based on Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid*...You know, a girl from the sea can't be with a man from the land, just two people from two different worlds coming together and falling love."

WIT in the Schools

BY JOAN D. FIRESTONE

KUDOS TO THE ARTS Division at the New York City Department of Education under the direction of Dr. Sharon Dunn, Senior Instructional Manager, and to Paul King, Director of Theatre. I learned from John DeCicco, an enthusiastic drama teacher, that the WOMEN IN THEATRE DVD was a reward, or as he referred to it, a bonus or gift, following year-long professional development workshops devoted to curriculum planning based on the NYC Blueprint for Theatre. Two-hundred copies of the DVD were donated to the Department of Education at the beginning of the 2006-07 school year

Mr. DeCicco's students ranged in age from kindergarten through the eighth grade. He focused on the interview with Julie Taymor since his students, of all ages, had attended performances of *The Lion King*. He highlighted the fact that it was directed by a woman and he focused their attention on the rhythm of the piece since his bilingual students, in a school where the ethnic composition was ninety percent Hispanic, had no experiences outside their culture. He also used the Audra McDonald interview, sharing stories about non-traditional casting and posing questions to provoke discussion,

such as—why should I learn to speak differently—why should I learn to dance or to waltz?

Mr. DeCicco was excited about his assignment next year when he will be teaching scene and costume design in the Theatre Arts Production Company School in the Bronx. He looks forward to working with the interviews of Heidi Ettinger and Jennifer Tipton.

Drama teachers from every grade level attended the professional development workshops. Kathy Cooley teaches drama and dance in a Queens middle school. Julie Taymor was again a featured artist, particularly appropriate to Ms. Cooley's theatrical unit because of the insights and experiences she expressed. Ms. Cooley joined with a chorus teacher to partner some dances with her songs. She was excited about the connection to real live theatre that the interview gave to her classes. She also accesses the New York Times Video Archive and has a relationship with the Encore Project at City Center. The faculty and parent population of her school are very supportive of theatre. Ms. Cooley suggested that in the future there be a brief bio of each artist, and her particular theatrical orientation, distributed with the tape.

Mayna Bragdon teaches at the Humanities and the Arts High School, also in Queens. She previewed the entire tape at home and chose sections that she thought best illustrated her teaching goals. She conducts acting classes, classes in technical theatre and theatre production and directs six shows a year and a major musical every other year. The interview with Graciela Daniele was most useful in her directing class where the students were responsible for directing a five-to-seven-minute piece, and Heidi Ettinger's segment was invaluable in providing the technical vocabulary for a design show she initiated and for use in student portfolios. Because of Ms. Bragdon's commitment to theatre and support from the school, her course was introduced as a major two years ago.

The League has reason to be proud of the WOMEN IN THEATRE program and gratified by the creative use made of the DVD in many New York City Public Schools. This has been a wonderful example of the extraordinary progress being made in the schools under the Department of Education's current leadership which is committed to realize the instructional and motivational elements within the Blueprint for the Arts. ●

Coalition continued from page 7

presented two scenes from *Grace*, a comic play about a woman "hurtling toward forty and desperately single." Sharth, an actor for twenty years, and Dunlap, joined by actor Steve Bassett, performed in the piece. Dunlap directed.

Deepa Purohit (AEA, SAG) and Nardita Sheno (SSDC, AEA, AFTRA) were honored for *Sahana*, a theatre performance piece incorporating text, music and movement. Deepa, who produced it, is co-founder/artistic director of the Rising

Circle Theater Collective. *Sahana* depicts three women of different generations who reunite for a weekend and discover their collective family legacy. Gita Reddy directed; Purohit and Reddy were joined in performance by Sunita S. Mukhi.

Following the performances, board members Cooper and Aixa Kendrick (AFTRA) questioned the awardees about their experiences in collaborating. They described their growth and development, emphasizing the feelings of trust and respect they had for each other. They explained

that they had come together as women seeking more control of their work.

Inside Restaurant generously provided food and drink for the reception that followed the award presentations. Special thanks are due to the Cherry Lane Theatre, pianist Sheree Sano, photographer Rod Goodman, The Fund for Women Artists' Martha Richards, Joan Firestone and Angelina Fiordellisi for welcoming the Coalition to the Cherry Lane, and to the twenty Coalition board members who helped with the event—and kudos to all honorees. ●

Corwin continued from page 10

all shows in advance. Both National Endowment and Ford Foundation funds (which came later) continue to support the taping of regional and other not-for-profit theatre productions.

Betty explained the criteria and process for viewing TOFT tapes which are made available to researchers, theatre profes-

sionals, and scholars. Asked for her favorites, Betty named a few: *A Chorus Line*, *Equus*, O'Neill and Miller plays, early Meryl Streep like *27 Wagons Full of Cotton*, *Taming of the Shrew* in Central Park, and later, *Mother Courage* in the Park as well.

In her present "retired" position as Director of Special Projects for TOFT

Betty is involved in such projects as a co-production with the American Theatre Wing of the series, "A Guide to Careers in Theatre," which contains interviews with all categories of front and back stage personnel, those who make a production happen. And, of course, she is co-producer of the League's own WOMEN IN THEATRE. ●

LEADERSHIP LUNCH: VIRGINIA LOULOUDES

AT SARDI'S ON FEBRUARY 22, 2007
Joan Firestone introduced Virginia Loulouides
with the following words:

"You can read some biographical details about Virginia Loulouides, affectionately known as Ginny, in your program notes but they won't give you a clue about the impact of her dynamic leadership on the entire theatre industry—most particularly the not-for-profit theatres which she has accepted the responsibility of protecting and for which she has created artistic and political legitimacy.

It is quite remarkable that Ginny has managed to triple the budget of Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York since 1991 when she was appointed Executive Director, but it is even more remarkable that the community of not-for-profit theatres grew to 400 from 150. That's just the beginning—Ginny's negotiating talents went into action to overcome one of the most difficult challenges: finding affordable spaces for not-for-profit theatres to work. Partnering with Paul Wolf and his real estate consulting firm they negotiated the purchase of real estate in bulk—as she called it, a kind of COSTCO for real estate. Two major projects were born out of that collaboration, South Oxford Space in Brooklyn and 520 Eighth Avenue in Manhattan, each with its particular set of challenges and setbacks—that now provide affordable space for multiple theatre companies and service organizations.

It was at the beginning of the development of 520 Eighth Avenue that the devastating effect of 9/11 was felt within the entire cultural community, especially the schools and institutions in downtown New York. The response of A.R.T./New York was immediate. A.R.T./New York designed a study revealing the impact on non-profit theatres and with the help of the Mellon Foundation developed a program of bridge loans, providing up to \$25,000 to small and mid-sized theatres and facilitating the cultural community's participation in restoring equilibrium to the children and schools within the affected areas. As Vice Chair of the New York City Arts Coalition, along with her dogged and gifted partner and Chair, Norma Munn, and their lively and pro-active board, they have for decades protected the livelihood of artists and the budgets of all not-for-profit arts organizations from the vicissitudes of government funding.

Former Mayor Giuliani has entered the field of candidates running for President of the United States, depending largely, if not exclusively, on his extraordinary response to the 9/11 terrorist attack. I would hazard a guess that Ginny doesn't have major political ambitions for any office—but if she did, her ability to build consensus is the kind of leadership that would triumph over any rival.

I give you our colleague and friend... "



THANK YOU JOAN; YOU truly are my "personal press agent."

I also want to thank my board members who have taken the time to be here today, and my incredible staff. It is the staff which creates and lovingly monitors our programs, manages our facilities, raises funds, and holds events. They are the true heroes of A.R.T./New York. Last, but not least, I'd like to acknowledge my husband, John Harrison, who came here knowing he'd be outnumbered, and who has truly made it possible for me to work in this very demanding industry.

When Joan called to ask me to speak at a League Leadership Lunch, I was deeply honored. As the date got closer I asked Joan if I could take this opportunity to speak to my primarily female colleagues about some of the issues I've been grappling with as a woman in the theatre.

So I beg your indulgence. If you've come seeking some insights into producing, trends in the not-for-profit theatre, or information on A.R.T./New York, feel free to take our Annual Report and return to your very busy lives. Believe me, I won't be offended. Time is money.

But if you are feeling as if the world is changing and you don't quite understand how you and the industry you love fit in; if you are feeling that no matter how hard you work you can't get it all done; or if you feel as if you have to make a daily choice between time spent on your job and time spent for yourself or with others you care for and love, then maybe you'll find some of what I'm about to say of interest.

Last June I turned fifty. Now, when I turned forty I didn't go through the depression that the media taught us accompanies leaving thirty-nine; I was in my fifth year at A.R.T./New York, pregnant with my first child and the world seemed full of opportunities. But when I turned fifty, my world was different. I had everything I wanted: a stimulating job serving a membership of some of the most dynamic and talented artists in the country, a loving husband, and a bright and challenging child. I had just moved into a beautiful home and I was fortunate

THE HANDLESS MAIDEN

to have a supportive staff and board that allowed me the luxury of working from home when I needed to, and respected the demands that come with parenting.

Yet just as A.R.T./New York was about to begin its most dynamic and challenging project (taking over the construction and management of two theatres in the Clinton-Green Development, at the request of the Department of Cultural Affairs), I sadly came to realize that the excitement and energy that carried me through previous (and less demanding) projects was lacking. What is more, little things (which normally wouldn't bother me) seemed to set me off.

After speaking with friends and colleagues I came to realize that I had burn-out. And, on my fifteenth anniversary at A.R.T./New York I asked the Executive Committee of the Board if I could have a one-month sabbatical—with pay. Fortunately, they very kindly obliged.

Now being a Type A -Type A, I figured that in thirty days I could not only get the rest I needed; but bond with our new neighbors; take Salsa classes with my husband; undergo an intensive immersion in yoga, Pilates and therapy, and get my son settled in school. In short, I set nearly impossible goals for myself; the type of goals which resulted in the very burnout I was seeking to cure.

During my thirty day sabbatical I did get my son Zachary settled into school; immersed myself in Pilates and yoga and some therapy (well a lot of therapy if you include shopping). All of this served as a great foundation for the spiritual journey on which I was about to embark.

Truth be told, I am still in the midst of this journey. I have only just begun to realize that ultimately, what I am seeking is not just rest and a balanced schedule, but deeper meaning in my personal life.

D.H. Lawrence said:

"Men (change that word to women) are not free when they are doing what they like. Women are only free when they are doing what their deepest self likes. And there is getting down to the deepest self! It takes some diving!"

My diving not only involved yoga and meditation but an immersion in spiritual texts: from Buddhism to Jungian psychologists, mythology and even the Shabbat service of a reform Jewish temple I visited in Florida. I soon came to realize that each, in its own way, held a universal desire to heal the soul.

The psychologist Abraham Maslow says that our needs range in a hierarchy from basic biological drives (to eat, sleep, keep warm and be safe from harm) to higher, more spiritual yearnings such as love, compassion, and human connection. *Meeting these needs gives us satisfaction and pleasure; denying them makes us feel frustrated and incomplete.*

Throughout my sabbatical and my journey I never doubted that I wanted to continue to work at A.R.T./New York. But one of the problems with having a job that I truly love is that I have used it as a buffer between my outer and deeper self. In other words, after years of using this demanding job as a substitute from some of my deeper desires and feelings, I was beginning to feel frustrated and out of touch with myself and those around me.

Today it is far too easy for us to substitute human contact with electronic e-mail and cell-phones and literally tune ourselves out by wearing an iPod. What is more, these very inventions that were designed to "save us time and travel" have instead infringed upon our personal space, making it literally impossible for us to leave our work at the office. (And while I appreciate having a home computer which allows me the luxury of working from home, this "luxury" makes it equally hard for me to put an end to a workload that by definition is never done.)

The challenge I struggled with is how to satisfy my spiritual yearnings given the demands of my job, my role as a wife and mother, and as a woman? I cannot tell you how much wisdom and comfort I've gained from the books I've read; the comfort I found in the Shabbat service I attended, or the sense of calm I've gained from meditation or a really good yoga session. But I'd be lying if I

told you that I've found the answers to all of my questions. I still find it impossible to balance the demands of home and work and until I am able to reduce my unrealistic expectations on both ends of the spectrum, I'll continue to be frustrated. And yet, how can I lighten my workload, when the demands of the job and the influences of the market work against us?

In preparation for today I was looking for a book by a Jungian analyst, Robert Johnson called *She*, which described how the Psyche myth is the archetypal myth for women. Instead, I found another book by Johnson called *The Fisher King and the Handless Maiden* which coincidentally deals with this feeling of spiritual yearning that takes place in men and women during the course of their adult lives.

The Handless Maiden particularly resonated with me (not only because he viewed it as the myth more applicable to women) but because, although it originated in the fourteenth century, it truly speaks to us today.

According to the story, a Miller toils each day to grind wheat and turn it into flour. One day the Devil appears and makes him an offer: He will teach the Miller how to make more wheat using less effort in exchange for what the Miller owns that is "out back." The Miller, tempted by the prospect of greater wealth and free time, and assuming that the Devil is referring to his large tree says, "yes."

The Devil connects the millstone to a waterwheel, so that the force of the stream running by the mill turns the stone effortlessly. (Think of this as the metaphor for industrialization, but also for the earliest documentation of mechanization replacing human effort; and the diminishment of human contact by a "substitute.") The Miller becomes rich, his wife is busy spending their newly acquired money and all is right with the world until the Devil comes to collect his due.

The foolish Miller takes the Devil into his back yard to give him his tree, only to find his daughter standing

Loulouides continued on page 38



Julia Breanetta Simpson, Christine Toy Johnson, Harriet Slaughter and Lee Hunkins join Black History Month reception hosted by the League



Susan Whiddington hosts panel discussion at Society of London Theatres with Bruce Wall, Samantha Rowe-Beddoe, and Stella Barnes



Leila Martin, Lynne Rogers and Edie Cowan



Fellow Travelers, Sondra Gorney and Mary Miko



Linda Winer on the set with WIT co-producers, Ruth Mayleas and Betty Corwin



We gathered for a photo at Heroes' Square in Budapest



Lynda Sturner toasts her casino winnings at Frankfurt Airport



Jan Stenzel wins a beauty prize!



Honey Waldman and Isobel Robins



Daphne Rubin-Vega prepares for her WIT interview



Debra Ann Byrd, Dorothy Olim and Melanie Sutherland



New members Elyse Singer and Ruth Magraff



Julia Miles, Billie Allen, Alexis Greene and Sheilah Rae



Lenore DeKoven and Carol Mack arrive in London

Holiday Party BY RUTH MAYLEAS

THE LEAGUE CELEBRATED the December holidays amid the book-lined walls of the Players Club on Gramercy Park. Augmenting the old portraits that adorn the second-floor library were priceless photographs loaned by Martha Swope, the 2006 Lifetime Achievement Award honoree. The Holiday Party is the occasion for recognizing some of our gifted colleagues in the theatre who have made singular contributions to our field. After welcoming words from co-president Harriet Slaughter, co-president Joan Firestone introduced the first awardee with the following words:

“The Lee Reynolds Award was established in memory of a cherished League board member. It is given annually to a woman—active in any aspect of theatre—whose work for, in, about, or through the medium of theatre has helped to illuminate the possibilities for social, cultural, or political change. This award has gone to many distinguished theatre professionals over the years, but none more qualified than today’s recipient, Gigi Bolt.

“As a colleague of Gigi’s at the New York State Council on the Arts, I have experienced first hand her unique ability to target an action plan that will enhance the possibilities within the field of theatre for all of its participants—those who create, produce, administer, and critique as well as their audiences in hamlets and major cities throughout the country—and tactfully but forcefully make them a reality.

“Gigi’s familiarity with every aspect of the theatre began at the University of Kansas, where she participated in several international programs including performing in a production that toured East Asia and spending a year studying at National Theatre academies in Eastern Europe. She not only honed her acting skills but learned the value of theatre and its impact on the culture and well-being of a community.

“After many successes, Gigi’s acting career took her to New York, where she accepted what she expected to be a temporary career change by joining the staff of the New York State Council on the Arts as an associate in the theatre department. That temporary move turned into twenty years and the directorship

of NYSCA’s theatre department, where she found professional challenges that offered limitless possibilities. Tentative about an invitation to join the staff of the National Endowment for the Arts, Gigi started slowly and then gave in—becoming director of the theatre program and widening her impact on the field.

“It’s hard to be brief in introducing my friend and esteemed colleague—who now after ten years as director of theatre at the NEA is acting director at Theatre Communications Group. There are lots of surprises yet to come from Gigi—please welcome her.”

In accepting the Lee Reynolds award Gigi spoke of many cherished friends present on this occasion and how touched she was to receive this honor. She referred particularly to the “remarkable movement of theatre over a span of forty years” that she and many of us were witness to. And of the dramatic effect that the field today has on so many—and of its potential to “transform the nation.”

The Josephine Abady Award honors the memory of another League member. It is given annually to a woman who best exemplifies an emerging director working for cultural diversity in the theatre. Elsa Rael presented the Abady Award to Debra Ann Byrd, the founder and director of “Take Wing and Soar,” an organization devoted to supporting grass roots theatre for women and youth and classical actors of color. Debra Ann thanked her many mentors, singling out Roni Claypool and her newest mentor Dorothy Olim, as well as paying tribute to some mentors of long standing like Barbara Ann Teer.

Patt Dale spoke eloquently about the extraordinary Martha Swope in these words:

“Martha Swope. M.S. are her initials—Ms, and she was one of the first. In the late fifties, I remember my mother, who did PR for the American Scandinavian Foundation, talking about this extraordinary woman who photographed the Royal Danish Ballet.

“Martha came to New York City from Waco, Texas to be a dancer. Jerome Robbins saw her fiddling around with her camera and offered her the use of his darkroom. He showed her photos



Gigi Bolt and Debra Ann Byrd

to Lincoln Kirstein, whose enthusiasm led to her shooting photos of *West Side Story*, which were published in TIME magazine. And a legend was born.

“Martha went on to shoot over 800 Broadway shows. And she did it under adverse conditions at something called “the photo call”—the two-to-four hours allowed by the unions after a dress rehearsal, when actors and crew were exhausted. Fashion photographers get eight hours to get one perfect shot of a rested model.

“Martha got dozens of extraordinary pictures at photo calls. First, she and the press agent would make a shot list to give to the stage manager. Often the shots had to be done backwards—from the end of the show to the top. With a bunch of very tired actors. But there was Martha, saying, ‘Oh, please sing that lovely song about “Home” for me,’ and, suddenly, exhausted, self-conscious actors were performing at their best. And then there was Martha, saying, ‘Oh, now we have to do it again in color. Please sing that song again,’ and they would. And then she might see something not on the shot list and grab it; it might become an iconic photo.

“Martha soon earned the respect of all the stagehands, who helped her with lighting or moved a set piece or tweaked a costume. Because they learned that this soft-spoken, slim woman could provide images that would be printed everywhere, making audiences want to see the show.

“The demands were great—solos, doubles, group shots that would fit into the one, two, and three columns of the publications. Vertical and horizontal shots for the front-of-the-house. And, oh yes, the advertising agency wants this special shot. And, oh yes, we need to shoot the understudies. And time is

moving faster than the ticking clock on *60 Minutes*.

“Martha’s frequent-flyer miles to get these photos when a show was out of town must have been enormous! But as long as she and her assistants got a great meal before going to the theatre, she could work like the Energizer Bunny into the night.

“And then there were the ‘make something out of nothing’ photos, shot during rehearsals of a show at Martha’s studio in time to satisfy those pesky press deadlines. Make-up and hair styling were available in her studios, first on West 72nd Street and, later, at Manhattan Plaza. Again, Martha would ask the actors to perform their favorite scenes. The actors were always made to feel comfortable, even though there was little context, while Martha worked her magic.

“The very next day, the press agent received contact sheets. Photos were selected and printed in hours. And if an actor or an actress of “a certain age” appeared in photos that needed some retouching, Martha would work magic on their features.

“As you know, Martha doesn’t feel well enough to be here to see you. As she said to me, ‘I am enjoying my Garbo phase.’ But she wants to see and hear from you. So please, find our videographer, David, who will tape your congratulations. Martha can’t wait to see you on tape. She told me that watching you will give her a great lift during the holiday season.”

Martha Swope sent the following message:

“Unfortunately, illness prevents me from being with you tonight—So many old friends and co-workers! What wonderful times we shared in our epic era of theatre! I am on the road to recovery and hope to see you all soon!

“What an exciting moment this is—what an honor to receive this Lifetime Achievement award from the League of Professional Theatre Women. Thank you Harriet Slaughter and Joan Firestone and members of the League. I will treasure this award always.

“Thank you from my heart!”

An evening rich in memory and recollection ended, as in past years, with League members gathered at the piano to listen and sing along as Nancy Ford played old and new favorites. ●



Unfortunately, illness prevents me from being with you tonight — so many old friends and co-workers! What wonderful times we shared in an epic era of theatre! I’m on the road to recovery and hope to see you all soon.

What an exciting moment this — What an honor to receive this Lifetime Achievement Award from the League of Professional Theatre Women! Thank you Harriet Slaughter and Joan Firestone and members of the League. I will treasure it always.

Thank you from my heart!

Morley and Lortel Awards

BY ALEXIS GREENE

THE RUTH MORLEY Design Award luncheon at Sardi's on June 12th capped an active year for the League. A tradition since 1998, when the League established the award in honor of a preeminent costume designer, the Ruth Morley Design Award this year celebrated the work of pioneering projections designer Wendall K. Harrington. Harrington's colorful video installations adorned the pillars of Sardi's second-floor dining room.

Even before the presentation of the award, however, the luncheon began on an affectionate note, as dramatist Elsa Rael presented the League's gift of a crystal star to outgoing co-president Harriet Slaughter, whom Elsa thanked for her dedicated, unstinting service to the League. Later Elsa would also present a crystal star, and the League's deep appreciation, to outgoing co-president Joan Firestone, who announced

mainly to Japanese wristwatches, it was obvious I would need major technical help. Consulting with our lighting designer, Tharon Musser, she suggested I call this graphic designer who had recently contacted her for advice. 'Here's Wendall Harrington's phone number,' she said. So I called. When the phone picked up, I experienced the first of many surprises and revelations in my subsequent thirty-year association with

ing her "dogged pursuit of those two elusive intangibles: truth and beauty."

Accepting the Ruth Morley Design Award, Harrington called this a "no mascara" day, as she described how moved she felt listening to her mentor, a man who "taught me how to look." Noting that she was always "very aware of being a woman in a man's world," she said that "my name got me in the door, but when they found there was a little



LEFT: Set Designer Doug Schmidt poses with Wendall K. Harrington, recipient of the Ruth Morley Design Award. RIGHT: Elsa Rael, Awards Chair presents Co-President Harriet Slaughter with a star of appreciation from the League. Co-President Joan Firestone received a star as well.



FAR LEFT: HARRIET SLAUGHTER, LEFT: DOROTHY OLIM

that the League was collaborating with the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center to organize an exhibit in 2008 celebrating the American theatre's women scenic, costume, and lighting designers.

A sizeable crowd that included Morley's daughter, Melissa, then listened appreciatively as set designer Douglas Schmidt, who had flown from San Francisco for the event, spoke warmly about the artist whom he first met in 1978. He was designing the musical *They're Playing Our Song*, and he and director Bob Moore were envisioning a production composed of fluid projected images rather than solid, static sets. Reading from a prepared speech ("to minimize moments of panic-induced dead air," as he put it), Schmidt recalled that "at a time when the word 'digital' pertained

Wendall. Wendall was a woman."

The association would prove enlightening and rewarding—for Schmidt, Harrington, and the American theatre. Schmidt went on to talk about Harrington's exceptional work in ventures such as the Peter Allen concert show *Up in One*—"I will always remember the row of palm trees she made samba for the song 'I Go to Rio'"—and in 1993 *The Who's Tommy*, which, said Schmidt, "allowed Wendall the vast canvas to exercise her imaginative and editorial gifts. This hugely successful show displayed in one indelible stage picture after another what a true collaboration of scenic design, directorial invention, and projected images could accomplish, to drive and clarify a convoluted story line." He concluded by saying that "we honor Wendall today for perfecting a new dramatic visual language" and praising

Italian girl at the end of it, weren't they surprised." From Tharon Musser she heard that, as a female designer, "you have to be able to drink at least as much as the stagehands"; by herself she soon realized that "there are things women know about multi-tasking that men will never know." Theatre, she said, had not been on her list of "things to do," but had ended up enriching both her art and her life

The luncheon concluded with playwright and League member Shirley Lauro presenting the League's Lucille Lortel Award to the 3Graces Theater Company—founded in New York in 2004, according to their mission, "to stage women's stories, deliver solid dramaturgy, build a strong ensemble, and give back to the community." Their

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WOMEN ACROSS BORDERS

BY RUTH MAYLEAS

The League's international committee sponsored a panel titled "Women Across Borders" as part of the two-day NOPASSPORT CONFERENCE, held at CUNY's Martin E. Segal Theatre Center on February 2nd and 3rd. Initiated by playwright Caridad Svich, the conference bore the subtitle, "Dreaming the Americas: Diversity and Difference in Performance." It explored issues of language, translation, identity, gender, exchange, site-specific theatre against a background of the United States and Latin America.

Caridad, in her introductory address to the entire conference, said "We're all travelers now: cyborgs expert at multi-tasking and multi-tracking our lives. We move through multiple time zones in virtual spaces that have become a substitute for the real, and time-travel imaginatively through different historical epochs while we become more and more alienated from the chaos of our present."

She queried, "How often do we see plays from Canada in the U.S.? How often from Central and South America...from the Caribbean? And how often stories written from the perspectives of not only North and South, but the hemisphere itself? And who gets to tell the stories?"

And she concluded: "The choices we have as artists and presenters are vast. As vast as desire itself. If we can brace ourselves to stare good, long and hard at the chaos, tragedy and farce in which we live, then we will truly be travelers in our increasingly mobile world. But it's up to us if we want to continue to live in the bordered spaces that govern the divide between US and THEM, or take the glorious and perhaps confounding risk of living and making art without a passport."

THE PANEL'S MODERATOR Carol Martin led off by calling on Joanne Pottlitzer to describe the League's recent entry into the international realm by establishing an international affiliates program which now numbers over fifty members from twenty-one countries. She also described her own involvement in things international and Latin American, beginning with student and teaching residencies in Mexico, Brazil and Chile, leading her in 1968 to establish TOLA (Theatre of Latin America) which, by bringing Latin American theatre and music to this country, aimed to correct largely inaccurate images and stereotypes of Latin American life and culture. Among the notable companies TOLA brought was Augusto Boal's Arena Theatre of Sao Paulo in 1969 and 1970. Boal's work continues to have world-wide ramifications (see African theatre piece by Roberta Levitow on page 27).

Playwright Catherine Filloux talked of her own mixed background: As a child of a French-Algerian father and an American mother she was brought up to live "in the world," thus as an "outsider." Though initially difficult for her, this heritage creatively informs her view of the conflicts and contrasts of our world and influences her choice of subject matter. Now she is writing about the Cambodian genocide.

Martin asked for panel comments on how such a world view changes one's aesthetics, to which playwright Ruth Margraff responded that in her case it has made her impatient with the American theatre's preoccupation with "realism," which she believes has little to do with truth. In her work she looks for what is beyond; is her "protagonist beyond her?"

Susan Yankowitz, as a child of the ground-breaking Open Theatre in the sixties, with its highly-stylized approach, found that she had virtually nowhere to go for non-naturalistically-based work. One of the few places turned out to be Japan, and particularly Bunraku puppet theatre. She received an NEA/Japan Friendship Commission grant expressly for the purpose of studying this theatre in an effort to explore non-naturalistic, stylized work. However, on her return she had no subject that lent itself to those or

similar theatrical conventions. Her search led, eventually, to a discovery of the animal trials of the Middle Ages, a little-known phenomenon in which domestic animals were literally put on trial, convicted, and imprisoned. This material immediately suggested the use of puppets in the Bunraku mode and others, and gave her an opportunity finally to explore this aesthetic. At this time, the play is half written.

Martin asked if, in all the travel and exchange now going on, there was a political agenda.

Saviana Stanescu, from Romania, related her own experience of writing in non-conventional forms and then having to learn to write naturalistically when she came here. It was a long process to integrate her background into our realism. Now her own writing is a mixture; she cited her relationship with the Lark Theatre, and with the fact that Doug Wright's *I Am My Own Wife* is now being produced in Romania. She herself is open to different aesthetics. Right now she is writing on the immigrant experience.

Linda Chapman spent many of her early years with the Wooster Group, touring a good deal because its work is so popular in Europe. With the New York Theatre Workshop since 1995, she has traveled extensively to the Netherlands and Eastern Europe. NYTW has in the last several years made a connection with the Belgian director Ivo Van Hove and has done four productions with him. In the last two years NYTW has regularly taken American theatre artists abroad to see art in other countries, to introduce them to new ways of thinking about theatre-making.

Martin commented on the isolation of U.S. theatre, which she believes should be shaken up. "American theatre is hobbled by realism." It is interesting that the Wooster Group's work has found a home in Europe with people like Ivo, whose work is mainstream there. [An editorial comment: the Wooster Group has an avid following in New York and other parts of the U.S., not your average theatergoer, perhaps, but a following nonetheless.]

Svich injected a bit of reality into the discussion. "This realism thing keeps coming up," she said. "It is a misreading of realism." Just, for example look at film and television: This year's films *Babel* and *Pan's Labyrinth* and television's *Deadwood* and *Six Feet Under*. And Williams was breaking out of realism—and now he's realism. She also commented on the negative effects of U.S. popular culture in its invasion of parts of Latin America, citing Colombia as an example of pop culture taking over indigenous cultures. When asked about the prevalence of violence in what comes from Latin America, she is told from Mexico that "what sells is violence and folkloric."

Rounding out the panel, playwright Carol Mack briefly described the "Vital Voices Global Partnership." The article that follows contains a detailed description of two exciting and interrelated projects. ●

VITAL VOICES and MANY SHINING LIGHTS

BY CAROL MACK

"VITAL VOICES" IS AN NGO (NON-GOVERNMENTAL organization) established six years ago. It originated as a project of the Clinton administration under the auspices of Hillary Clinton. At present Melanne Verveer is chair of the NGO which is based in Washington D.C. with a reach literally around the world. Its mission is to empower women in eighty-five countries (there are five thousand participants thus far) to become leaders in their own countries and increase economic opportunity for women, strengthen democracy, and fight human rights abuses. "Vital Voices" believes in the transformative value of women's participation in society and invests in training these emerging women leaders, building connections for them, and supporting their causes.

The effort is as vast as the territory and includes recent seminars and conferences in 2007—one at New York University on sex-trafficking, a conference at the Asia Society to support Dr. Gao Yaojie who was under house arrest in China, and a large conference of South American women leaders. In March "Vital Voices" hosted a large event of awards to women from around the world. To see the magnitude of the organization's work from Africa to Guatemala, readers are referred to its website www.vitalvoices.org.

In an effort to contribute to and support the work of "Vital Voices," seven American playwrights have come together to create a theatre piece composed of verbatim extracts of interviews with seven women selected by "Vital Voices"; the seven playwrights illuminate the journeys of these heroic women, from Cambodia to Northern Ireland. The common theme is one of extraordinary courage, of saying no to human rights abuses and risking lives to lead others to a vision of peace and justice. Each of the seven women tackled a different issue, ranging from domestic violence to honor killing, to sex-trafficking. The individual narratives created by the seven playwrights will be woven together as a documentary theatre piece of "direct address" in the manner of *The Exonerated* or *Vagina Monologues*.

The group of seven playwrights is incorporated as a nonprofit corporation called "Many Shining Lights, Inc." and "Vital Voices Global Partnership" is its fiscal partner and 501(c)(3). By creating a powerful theatrical event called *Seven*, "Many Shining Lights" hopes to illuminate their extraordinary acts and community in the face of injustice and violence and to inspire audiences throughout the United States and abroad. The seven playwrights, most of whom are League members, are: Paula Cizmar, Catherine Filloux, Gail Kriegel, Carol K. Mack, Ruth Margraff, Anna Deavere Smith, and Susan Yankowitz.

As of this writing (June 2007) all narratives have been written and edited and Paula Cizmar has created a first draft that weaves them together. The group has been invited to a retreat at Voice and Vision ENVISION at Bard College from July 15th to the 28th where they will work together with actresses and dramaturg and collaborator Gerda Stevenson from Scotland who will join them in further development. A reading open to the public will be held at Bard on July 28, and further readings will occur during the fall in New York. *Seven* will be performed at the 92nd Street Y on Martin Luther King Day, January 21, 2008, and will be launched as a production at LaMaMa in the spring of 2008. ●

A FULBRIGHT IN AFRICA

BY ROBERTA LEVITOW

I'M A FULBRIGHT SENIOR Specialist in U.S. Studies/Theatre, along with other wonderful American theatre colleagues. On the roster for the past five years, I've been assigned to teach for six weeks at a time in three remarkable international settings: Chinese University of Hong Kong, the National University of Theatre and Cinematography in Bucharest and, most recently, Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. Each assignment has been unique and rich. ROUNDUP has asked me to write about my most recent Fulbright experience—in Uganda.

Fascination with Africa ebbs and flows, but it seems that the continent is back on the radar of many Americans thanks to highly publicized adventures by American celebrities like Angelina Jolie and Madonna, along with philanthropic efforts by notables like Bill and Melinda Gates and Bill Clinton. Then, of course, there are the tragedies of Africa, like the 1994 genocide in Rwanda or the present genocide destroying Darfur, the ravages of the Lords Resistance Army in Northern Uganda, and relentless civil wars, famines and diseases that capture media coverage.

That is not entirely the Africa I found on what was to be my third trip to East African nations. (East Africa is comprised of Anglophone countries Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, with the recent addition of formerly Francophone countries Rwanda and Burundi.) The Africa I found was full of the pictures we don't see, the voices we don't hear, the realities we don't imagine.

First stop was Kigali, Rwanda, so that I could join a group of theatre students, faculty and Dean of the Theatre School, Erik Ehn, primarily from the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, outside of Los Angeles. We were all staying at Centre Christos, a Jesuit retreat on the outskirts of the city. Our purpose was to study the Rwandan genocide along with the relationship between art-making and contexts of violence. Our guide was the remarkable Jean-Pierre Karegeye, who

is slowly creating an Interdisciplinary Studies Center where artists, scholars, human rights activists and students from various disciplines whose practice engages questions of testimony, reconciliation, peace building, human rights, and dignity from all over the world can come and share their understanding of this most pernicious phenomenon. (Mr.



The group from CalArts with Rwandan President Paul Kagame (back row, center). Roberta Levitow is seated at extreme lower left.

Karegeye is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of California at Berkeley and visiting scholar at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris.)

Everyday for almost two weeks, we sojourned together—sleeping in humble rooms, eating group meals in the dining hall, traveling to genocide memorial sites, meeting with philosophers, religious leaders, government ministers, journalists, and finally with President Paul Kagame himself. (Yes, in Rwanda, the visit of some twenty-five young American artists is an occasion of national importance.) Our group included a number of young Rwandans, most of them genocide survivors themselves, who were learning to be artists or priests or lawyers. And each afternoon we would break up into small groups to make theatre—reading scenes from plays, performing those scenes for each other, devising short choreographic responses, transcending language barriers (French? English? Kinyarwanda?).

My colleague Cynthia Cohen, from Coexistence International at Brandeis University, says that one of the principal powers of art in conflict transformation is the capacity of artists for "deep listening." Surrounded by young artists who listened deeply (and emotionally), our Rwandan colleagues shared their

survival stories, many for the first time, and embraced our invitations to enter the joy and release available in the powerful transformation of pain into art. Their breathtaking smiles sanctified the intense sense of kinship that we all experienced.

As the CalArts group dispersed, I traveled on, landing eventually at the infamous Entebbe Airport, a forty-five minute drive outside Uganda's capital city, Kampala. Having been to Uganda twice before (in 2001 and, thanks to Philip Arnoult's Center for International Theatre Development and the Ford Foundation East Africa Office, a second time), I had the strong sense of homecoming that Africa willingly provides to all of us who believe that this was the birthplace of human beings. Uganda is called "The Pearl of Africa" and the road from Entebbe

is only a hint of that lush green, red-dirt fertility that abounds in the countryside. On my first trip coffin-making shops lined this two-lane road, but President Museveni's efforts have happily transformed that macabre welcome route—the AIDS problem in Uganda has been greatly reduced by effective public education.

Fulbright is managed by the U.S. Department of State, so my pick-up was in an Embassy SUV. Driven directly to the campus, I met an Embassy Public Affairs Officer, who provided keys and a quick trip to a shopping mall for some initial groceries. My housing was provided on the Makerere campus in the EC Flats—a solid building painted bright orange hosting six separate apartments only a ten minute walk to my classes. I had enough space for a family of five, a working kitchen and two bathrooms! It was quite luxurious for only one person with only one suitcase. In fact, they were royal accommodations compared to the living arrangements for most of the students and surely most of the some two million inhabitants of Kampala.

When I first went to Africa, experienced people told me to prepare to encounter another sense of Time, and given the fact that Uganda sits on the equator, it makes sense that people don't wear watches; after all, the sun *always* rises at seven a.m. and

always sets at seven p.m. and everything else can be calculated by looking up at the sun. But this time I was struck more by the social class division. Our much-touted American middle class is completely absent in Uganda—the society is virtually feudal. There is a very wealthy community in Kampala; they drive Range Rovers and Mercedes, shop at the Garden City shopping Mall, eat at lovely restaurants that speckle the city and even enjoy the occasional massage at a local spa. This community includes expatriates and NGO workers and diplomatic officers with their families, but it also includes successful African business people and politicians. The problem for much of Africa is that this group is simply too small, and the drop is too precipitous, far far down to the level of poverty endured by the great majority of the population.

Makerere University is considered by many to be the premier university in East Africa and certainly it is the national university of Uganda. The students are the cream of the crop, when—as in our own elite universities—they are not accepted solely on the basis of family connections. And the students I met were of a remarkably high caliber, intellectually and personally.

One of the many contradictions any visitor quickly discovers in Africa is our stereotypes about personal conduct. It's not just that East African countries were once British colonies and that they continue to educate the young in a relatively strict British school system where students wear starched white shirts and accompanying blue blazers over gray pleated skirts or slacks. African traditional culture is also very hierarchical and socially conscious—manners matter! Most Ugandans are genuinely well-mannered, but my students often demonstrated the respect and dedication to study that we American teachers can only dream about.

The campus itself was a model in the 1940s and remained well-maintained into the 1970s and 80s. But physically, now it's a hodge-podge. A new Food Sciences building on the other side of campus (recently constructed by a consortium of several American foundations including Rockefeller, Ford and Mellon for their new initiative to support higher education in Africa) is absolutely world-class. But my path to the Music, Dance and Drama program required me to leave paved roads and sidewalks to travel down a dirt path to a dilapidated old house—as I told

my colleagues, “just like many American campuses—you can always find the Drama Department by looking for the old gym locker-room!” (Which is actually the case at the School of Theatre at USC.)

Music, Dance and Drama at Makerere is deservedly famous in Africa, as is the leadership for many years of the highly regarded and deeply beloved Rose Mbowa. It has produced some of the most important East African theatre artists—then and now. For many years MDD professors helped to create a theatre not only benefiting from what is called “Conventional” (or Western) theatre techniques, but fundamentally based in traditional African performance. It is still possible to follow that path at Makerere, and students (or teachers) seeking to learn about African theatre and to practice its performance methods would find Makerere's MDD a rich source. Certainly I'm not the first American to drink at this well—likewise lighting designer Kathy Perkins, director Daniel Banks, scholar Laura Edmondson, choreographer Jill Pribyl and many others.

My primary function was to teach third-year playwriting students, an experience perfectly suited to my own passions and experience. I profoundly believe that new writing is crucial to the development of both the Ugandan theatre and the society. Together we created a short booklet of their first writings called FRESH STARTS. But, I also got to work directly with Acting Department Chair Dr. Jessica Kaahwa in her Theatre for Development Class, along with numerous other opportunities to interact with faculty, students and Ugandan theatre professionals.

Theatre for Development grew out of the theatre techniques developed by Augusto Boal and the Theatre of the Oppressed which he developed, while working in Brazil. In Africa, theatre artists began to use traditional theatre techniques to travel into villages and share “education” about various topics—from AIDS to dental hygiene to gender issues. It's been a mixed blessing to be sure. Jobs from donor organizations wanting to spread their messages through Theatre for Development entice artists in an environment where few individuals can make any sort of “living” working in the theatre. Good work is being done in the sharing of crucial public service information and many artists prefer to use their skills to this purpose. But for others, the

overwhelming commitment to Theatre for Development projects means that there is little or no financial and logistical support for artistic expression that verges towards pure creativity, that lacks overt social or educational purpose.

My own reservations aside, I joined Dr. Kaahwa and her small group of graduate students to learn about Theatre for Development and to create a piece. One of my greatest satisfactions was discovering a fellow Fulbright neighbor—Dr. Tom Fontaine, a hydro-engineer from the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology—and connecting him to the class. Our topic: WATER. As we discussed over the six weeks, the lack of available clean drinking water in countries like Uganda (and throughout the poor countries around the globe) is a looming crisis. Together, we discussed global, regional and local perspectives. Together, we committed to creating The Water Project. And, hopefully, a Theatre for Development project about clean water will be traveling to villages in Uganda over the coming year.

Meeting so many dear colleagues at Makerere and in Kampala's diverse theatre community made it difficult to say goodbye at the end of September. I felt I had just begun to build the friendships and learning relationships that make for a true cultural exchange. Happily as I passed through Nairobi for my flights home, I was able to spend a day with League International Affiliate Mumbi Kaigwa and with the remarkable Joy Mboya, the managing director of Nairobi's Go Down Centre—a Ford Foundation-sponsored complex of studios and performance spaces where Kenyan visual, media and performing artists can safely and supportively meet and interact daily.

There are virtues to “parachuting in” as a foreign artist, and there are virtues to an ongoing collaborative relationship. My relationship with East Africa, Rwanda and Uganda is still evolving, I trust. But already there are individuals, projects and possibilities:

- Playwright Deborah Asimwe is completing her first year towards an MFA at Cal Arts
- Playwright Charles Mulekwa is completing his third year towards a PhD at Brown University
- Dartmouth Professor Laura Edmondson
Fulbright continued on page 40

ABOUT DEATH IN VENICE

BY CARRIE ROBBINS

The story...

DEATH IN VENICE, THE 1972 opera created by Benjamin Britten, is based on Thomas Mann's novella, which itself was based on other writers' fascination with the “special melancholia” associated with Venice. It is a sad tale of homoerotic love, aging, and obsession.

Set in 1911, the opera tells the story of Aschenbach, an eminent aging writer who leaves his home in Munich, uneasy and suffering from a debilitating creative block. He travels to Venice to the Hotel des Bains, Lido, where elegant European families, many accompanied by their children, play on the beach and stroll the byways of the enchanting city.

Aschenbach sees an extraordinarily beautiful young man walking with his lovely mother and two rather plain sisters. He is enthralled with the boy's beauty and becomes so obsessed that he follows the family around the city; in the latter stages of his obsession he goes so far as to dye his hair and rouge his face and lips. Eventually he is completely smitten. Ultimately, he comes to a realization of his hitherto hidden homosexuality.

At the same time, there are warnings that a cholera epidemic is moving across the continent and headed toward Venice. Cholera is a water-borne disease, and this city of canals is doomed. Pamphlets warning vacationers to leave Venice are dropped from above. The train stations are crowded with fearful people trying to escape. Staying in Venice is tantamount to a death sentence. Aschenbach seeks to warn the beautiful family to leave, but he cannot save himself. As in the novella, Aschenbach dies at the opera's end.

Water, air, and images of Venice...

THROUGHOUT THE LIBRETTO BY Myfanwy Piper, water, sea, winds, and sky are important reference points. The text mentions “where water is married to stone,” and this phrase led me to pore over my collection of pictures of Venice and to create a “wallpaper” of the city for the



The character of Aschenbach, sung by William Burden, wore a fine wool three-piece suit of soft blue-gray Prince Albert plaid. The sketch also shows a dark Inverness and a homburg (center in the sketch) which he wore at the top of the show in the scene set in a graveyard in Germany. The sketch also shows (top right corner) make-up which was applied by The Traveler onstage and was Aschenbach's attempt to make himself younger and more appealing to Tadzio. The top-center sketch shows how the make-up looked as it smeared from the feverish illness which kills Aschenbach at the end of the opera.

The director and the set and lighting designers...

I WAS FORTUNATE TO WORK with the splendid Tazewell Thompson, one of the rare directors who can conceptualize visual as well as aural images. Taz observes and studies period photographs of people, and his sense of composition for the stage is exceptional. Early on, the set designer Donald Eastman and Taz conceived of a grand hotel lobby, with shuttered French doors across the upstage back. The room was dark but almost glowing, gleaming like pewter. (Perhaps the designer had put graphite in the paint?) It might be a space in the mind of Aschenbach, not a real hotel lobby. When the scenes needed to shift to “outdoors”/ “the beach,” the shutters were opened and the room was flooded with light. So I knew that my characters would be seen against a dark “ground.” Having worked with lighting designer Robert Wertzel before, I knew that he is one of the true colorists in the lighting world, capable of actually painting with light. In the few photographs shown the images are close to a John Singer Sargent painting. And Tazewell's sensitive, poetic groupings are critical in achieving these images.

Basic approach and early choices... Color and fabric...

ON THE MOST BASIC LEVEL, Tazewell and I wanted the clothes of *Death in Venice* to establish the sense of a summer retreat populated by wealthy Europeans around the turn of the century. From the beginning, Taz saw these figures as pale. (He never said “ghosts” or “souls,” but those words came to me as I developed the clothes.) Choosing very pale colors, fine gauzes, thin silks or muslins, cream linens, and summer-weight wools established the summer climate of a seaside place. Color choice was the easy part.

Silhouette...

THANKFULLY, TAZ WAS NOT INTERESTED in setting this piece in that quagmire called “timeless,” but rather in its actual

period, early twentieth century. Trickier for me was the choice of *exactly which* silhouette to pick from that era. Though the opera was based on a story set in 1911 (the “Hobble Skirt” period, a narrow columnar silhouette that generally looks best on tall thin women), I moved back five or six years, and chose an earlier silhouette that I knew would look beautiful on *all* the women, regardless of their size. This earlier period has a sinuous curve from bosom to slightly padded posterior (the organic Art Nouveau “S”), a corset for further whittling of the waist; with its languorous



A moment near the end of the opera. The wealthy patrons of the Venetian hotel fleeing the disease enter, and carefully put on their large black hats and black traveling gloves. They pull their black hat-veiling over their faces. It's my hope that this gesture has the resonance of mourning.

train, the shape flatters short ladies and ample ladies as well as those in the middle of the bell-shaped curve. This choice solved most potential problems, given the unpredictable nature of the ensemble's sizes.

Sex and Metaphor in clothing...

IN MY WORK I ALSO LOOK FOR opportunities to use clothing in a more subtle, almost subliminal way—a deeper layer—the middle notes in a chord. Obviously, sexuality is one of the pivotal points in the piece. It was easy to create bathing suits for the young boys playing beach games in somewhat naturally revealing period bathing suits: Simply select the appropriate weight of knit and jersey. The ladies' trains provided me with another opportunity for metaphor. We made shaped petticoats for all the dresses out of layered gauzes instead of the standard heavier percale so that light could penetrate them and reveal a bit of the women's bodies underneath. But I was after another metaphoric use. Leaving these slips very soft, and having the dresses as soft on top as possible, I was able to make the long training skirts “puddle” around the feet of the women; it was this watery image that I hoped might have resonance throughout the piece. At one point, when all the ladies arrived at the beach to watch the boys' games, they took off their dresses, and appeared in their corsets and slips. This gave us a view of skin, of bosom, and

the petticoats which we had painted with dripping watery blue tones, hopefully evocative of those wet walls on so many stone buildings in Venice. Men in this scene took off their jackets, rolled up their sleeves, loosened or removed their ties, set their hats back on their heads, and helped quickly create the outdoor warmth of a beach even though the walls of the space did not change. When the ensemble gathered on the back lawn of Glimmerglass to warm up before the show, the men were partially dressed exactly like this, some women were fully dressed, some still in corsets. I loved seeing this natural behavior, so similar to their groupings onstage.

Contribution of accessories and detailing...

ELABORATE PERIOD DETAILING ON the clothes—and many were genuine pieces—gloves, hats, the appropriate jewelry, proper shoes, good tailoring, coordinated vests, elegant children's clothes, with nothing exaggerated, nothing out of scale, nothing over-the-top, all quickly established the period and a level of wealth. But the hats gave me a further opportunity to use accessories metaphorically as well. In the 1900s, no lady went out without her hat, even while sitting on the beach. In this period, the hats, especially of the rich, were large confections of straw and silk and organza and feathers. The women in period photos look to me like exotic pampered birds. The skilled millinery depart-

ment at Glimmerglass produced beautiful pale hats, all lovingly made to be as diaphanous as possible with wire and gauze and organza flowers and ribbons. But I had two more sets of hats made—the second in a watery blue range. These were worn at the end of Act One, the scene on the beach—a visual foreshadowing of the fog of cholera which would be rolling in. The third set of hats, made in black gauzes, with additional veils, along with black gloves, were worn only at the end, when the hotel guests were leaving. They came into the grand room,

moved to the large mirror, pulled the veils over their faces, finished putting on their gloves, and slowly left the space. I hope the symbol of these veils as shrouds was clear.

How to accomplish the plan within the constraints of the budget....

BUDGET LIMITATIONS ARE A MAJOR challenge for a costume designer. If one has a budget which allows one to buy the best of materials and use the best professional shops and craftspeople, one would have to work very hard indeed to *not* make beautiful clothes. The best craftspeople are so skilled, they'll generally “fix” whatever mistakes a designer may make. Sometimes the approach to a piece becomes driven by economics. It's the designer's job to make the budgetary constraints work *for* the design, not drive it.

For Glimmerglass's modest budget, I dealt first with the large groups. The company's ensemble consists of twenty-five men and women. Tazewell decided early on that the ensemble would not need to change clothes as long as I could provide some variation in them. And we still had many other costumes to create. There were seven children. The little boys needed proper arrival/departure clothes and beachwear. The beautiful family included two plain sisters and a governess, plus of course the beautiful boy, Tazio, and his exquisite mother, called Lady with Pearls in the text. And there was a group of players who come to perform

at the hotel in the second act. We were not sure how many players we could afford at the beginning (only two actually sing), but I drew nine or ten. We ended up with seven. So, without even considering the principals, I was already obligated to over fifty elegant costumes for wealthy characters, set in a design period that's complicated—especially for the women.

Taz and I also agreed early on that the principal character, Aschenbach, would wear a single elegant suit, again with components that could give him different looks and moods. The suit needed to be three-piece, and I added a heavy coat and hat for the initial scenes in the cold of Germany. Tougher design-wise for me was to make the young, handsome, well-postured and splendid singer William Burden, playing Aschenbach, into a sad and aging figure. A slight belly, stooped shoulders, a wig with receding hairline, and “corrective” makeup solved this. The clothes were fitted over his “new” body.

The second principal is called The Traveler. He plays seven different characters that appear and re-appear in various guises throughout the text, and he serves throughout the piece as the mechanism to propel the opera forward, to advance the story. I felt each character should have a different look, and it's crucial to make such changes fast and minimal for the singer who already has a tough assignment just in singing the various parts and creating the characters; he doesn't need his job complicated by worry over costume changes. And I wanted the changes to be as clear as possible! I was lucky here to have the riveting performer, David Pittsinger, to dress, a man with impeccable carriage and an inherent sense of how to wear clothes. In this case, I included wig and make-up changes; the Glimmerglass hair and makeup staff helped facilitate these quick changes.

Creating period dresses from scratch is very expensive, especially in the New York City area. Not every draper makes them beau-



The ladies of the ensemble, once dressed, relaxed on the back lawn of the Glimmerglass Opera until the Chorus Master was ready for their warm-up. The children frolicked, waiting for their cues. I loved the look of these beautiful “Victorian” ladies in their melange of authentic pieces from the period. Against the brilliant green of the Glimmerglass grass and trees, it was quite a wonderful sight.

tifully, and I knew they must be beautiful. I also didn't want them to look like “costumes”—with the exaggerated kind of detailing one often sees. Glimmerglass's costume shop had two drapers assigned to this show, a small team for such a large number of elaborate clothes. Neither draper was a traditional men's tailor. I knew the budget couldn't support custom-making at a New York City shop, with many of the kind of turn-of-the-century gowns I had in mind, with delicate fabrics, pin-tucking, embroidery, cutwork, lace inserts, French knots, etc. I also knew that no two drapers could handle this amount of elaborate work. I decided to have two good tailors in New York handle the two principal men. I had one costume shop handle the single gown for the Lady with Pearls, and another the two little girls' dresses. Even with the quantity reduced somewhat, I was still afraid that it was impossible to create the ladies' ensemble gowns from scratch.

Solution...

BUT I DID KNOW IT WAS POSSIBLE to find beautiful summer clothing from the start of the twentieth century. The dresses would be delicate and require reinforcement. They would generally be too small, and would have to be carefully “grown” to fit. They would likely be fragments, not complete outfits. But each and every piece would be covered with the kind of incredible detail that we can no longer afford.

However, all the “negatives” seemed surmountable, and preferable to starting from scratch. The head of the costume shop and I took a few exploratory antiquing trips to confirm my hypothesis that what we needed was “out there.” It was. And we began buying.

The ladies were thus cobbled together out of the many bits we found, not in today's deconstructed manner (where the different bits show), but with an eye to resurrect these pieces from the past, give them new strength, new size, and new unity. When

we finished, it was to appear as if each dress were made completely whole, with no “joins” showing. This is *not* an easy thing to accomplish, and drapers and dyers have to be devoted to the idea of what I was trying to achieve. Luckily for me, the Glimmerglass costume shop understood the idea, took up the challenge, and developed it with me, inventively, creatively, and with great diligence!

Sketches...

I SHOULD SAY THAT ALL THE sketches were done directly in the computer, using the Wacom tablet and stylus, as part of my continuing attempt to improve my drawing with this tool, and in my belief that using the computer allows more flexibility to the artist and her collaborators, faster flow of ideas, more malleability, and so on. The main program was *Painter*. Most of the notes were done in Photoshop, as was the background. ●

“About Death in Venice” was written by Carrie Robbins to accompany her sketches and photographs of the opera which she designed for the 2005 season at Glimmerglass Opera in Cooperstown, New York. The sketches and photographs were submitted by USITT Design USA 2007 Exhibit Catalogue for the 40th Prague Quadrennial, a ten-day international exhibition and competition of theatre architecture and scenic design, in which sixty countries were represented.

“DEAD IN THE BUSINESS”

This excerpt is taken from Milly S. Barranger’s book *Unfriendly Witnesses: Gender, Politics, Theater, and Film in the McCarthy Era* scheduled for publication by Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, in 2008.

BETWEEN 1946 AND 1951, BROADWAY HAD appeared too insignificant for the attention of the secular blacklists and the congressional investigative committees. Unlike film, radio, and television, the theater did not reach large numbers of people that translated into millions of dollars for sponsors, advertisers, broadcast networks, and film studios. Moreover, Broadway producers were *independent* in the sense that they created their funding, chose the plays to be produced, approved their casts. No sponsors dictated their wares or controlled their markets. Nonetheless, in May of 1951, the House Committee on Un-American Activities announced in *Variety* that it was preparing to switch its emphasis from Hollywood to Broadway. In truth, most of Hollywood’s luminaries had been exhaustively showcased in the earlier hearings, including Martin Dies’s Un-American Committee, State Senator Jack Tenney’s California Joint Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities, and J. Parnell Thomas’ House Committee on Un-American Activities that jailed the Hollywood Ten.

Once attention shifted to Broadway in 1951, the Committee subpoenaed over a period of three years such double headliners of stage and film as Lee J. Cobb, José Ferrer, Lillian Hellman, Elia Kazan, Clifford Odets, Larry Parks, Edward G. Robinson, Jerome Robbins, and Anne Revere. In addition, Joseph McCarthy was determined to root out Communism and its sympathizers from the U. S. State Department’s teacher exchange programs and its overseas information centers and libraries. In the first category, he subpoenaed stage director Margaret Webster and composer Aaron Copland, and, in the second, authors Dashiell Hammett, Langston Hughes, Eslanda Robeson, Arnold d’Usseau and journalists Cedric Belfrage and James A. Weschler. Pat McCarran, in turn, subpoenaed his own cadre of celebrities principally of East European background to support his pending legislation to limit immigration. In effect, the trio of committees laid waste to the cultural landscape as they turned up a very small number of current CP members, ex-Communists, and Cold War radicals.

As an unfriendly witness, Anne Revere, celebrated as a supporting actress for Elizabeth Taylor, Gregory Peck, John Garfield, and Montgomery Clift in *National Velvet*, *Gentleman’s Agreement*, *Body and Soul*, and *A Place in the Sun*, stands out as a singular artist representing those who spoke up for their Constitutional rights and were branded uncooperative and un-American as well. When Frank S. Tavenner, chief counsel for the House Un-American Activities Committee, asked actress Anne Revere about her associations with the Actors’ Laboratory in Hollywood, she asserted her

rights under the First and Fifth Amendments. By doing so, she effectively cast a shadow over her career for the next seven years.

A proud descendant of the revolutionary Paul Revere and Constitutional signatory John Adams, she was at the peak of her film career when she was named in 1951 by actor Larry Parks as part of a Communist Party cell in Los Angeles. Subsequently, the award-winning actress was investigated by government agents, subpoenaed by HUAC, and blacklisted by Hollywood studios.

Refusing to cooperate with the Committee, the reserved New Yorker was effectively shut out of work in Hollywood. The previous year she was made “controversial” by her listing in *Red Channels: The Report of Communist Influence in Radio and Television* and subsequently denied work in radio and television. In the late fifties, Revere returned to New York, the scene of her Broadway triumph in Lillian Hellman’s *The Children’s Hour* and struggled for seven years to reclaim her stage career. She triumphed over the decade of adversity as Anna Berniers in Hellman’s *Toys in the Attic*. Hellman’s last original play vindicated Broadway’s producers and audiences who valued talent and serious artistry over mediocrity and political rectitude.

DRESSED IN A FASHIONABLE LONG-sleeved silk dress with matching gloves, the tall, dark-haired Anne Revere with a stern expression that belied her sense of humor entered the great chamber of the U. S. House of Representatives where Chairman John Wood’s Committee held its hearings. The descendent of distinguished forebears had one of the shortest hearings in the history of the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Anne Revere testified for ten minutes.

Chief counsel Frank S. Tavenner, Jr. began the questioning for the Committee. After swearing to tell the truth, she gave her name, place of birth, current place of residence, her profession, and her educational background. When Tavenner asked where she was born, her reply injected some levity into the occasion. “Thank you for not asking me *when*,” she replied. “I was born in New York City. Occasionally I play grandmothers, and it might jeopardize my professional standing.”

Tavenner was not amused. He wanted to know about her record of engagements as an actress. “Spotty, like all actresses,” she answered. He turned next to her employment record. “Are you just interested in motion pictures,” she asked, “or would you like my theater history?” Tavenner



Anne Revere, c. 1951

wanted to begin with her theater credits for reasons that became quickly apparent.

MISS REVERE. I began in the theater many years ago. I presume that my most successful plays were *Double Door* and *The Children’s Hour*, in which I had an extended engagement. I also established or helped to establish a theater, which I owned and operated, in Surrey, Maine. Subsequently, in 1934, I first came to Hollywood to do the picture version of *Double Door*, and then went back to New York. I have for approximately eleven years, I would say, been a resident of California, and during a great portion of that time employed in the studios. (from *HUAC Testimony of Anne Revere*, April 17, 1951)

The actress was prepared for questions about her actor-training with her Russian friends Richard Boleslavski and Maria Ouspenskaya who started the American Laboratory Theater in New York City in 1923. Nonetheless, it was another studio altogether that was of interest to the Committee.

Tavenner asked if, while in Hollywood, had she been a member of the Actors’ Laboratory, Inc., a non-profit theatrical school founded in 1941. Was she “affiliated with it in any way?” he wanted to know.

Founded by actor Roman Bohnen and others, the Actors’ Laboratory was a loose association of some 250 members who volunteered as professional artists to pass along their

ANNE REVERE AND THE COMMITTEE

training and experience to younger artists in an effort to elevate the standards of the craft and to serve the theater community. With the advent of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Lab’s mission expanded to include sending troupes to entertain military servicemen. In the post-war years, the Lab added a workshop to re-train and showcase veteran-actors under the G. I. bill. Productions performed by casts of veteran-actors were *A Bell for Adano*, directed by John Garfield; *Volpone*, directed by Morris Carnovsky; and *Awake and Sing*, directed by J. Edward Bromberg.

In 1947, the Actors’ Lab came under the scrutiny of Senator Jack B. Tenney who headed California’s Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities (known as the Tenney committee) authorized by the legislature to investigate subversive activities. Tenney converted his committee into a HUAC clone and produced a committee report, bound in iconic red, containing hundreds of names of subversives in the film industry. At the time, the majority of the Lab’s executive board had been cornerstones of the Group Theater and three were featured in *Red Channels*—J. Edward Bromberg, Morris Carnovsky, and Rose Hobart.

That year, Tenney’s committee subpoenaed the entire board of the so-called “communist-front organization.” A fire storm erupted. Insisting that the Actors’ Lab was a craft organization and not a political organization, the board sent a memorandum to the film industry notifying them of the subpoenas and saying, “We will not enter into a mud-slinging contest with Jack Tenney. . . However, we stand on our record as a free theater and an acting school approved for veterans. . . For the record, Jack Tenney is out to stifle free theater and smear its proponents.” The memo invited members of the industry to join as signatories in support of the Actors’ Lab.

Sixty-five artists signed an advertisement supporting the Lab against the smear campaign and intimidation tactics of the Tenney committee. The ad appeared in Los Angeles newspapers and pointed with some irony to the fact that the committee’s investigators had uncovered “evidence” that the Lab had produced two plays (*The Bear* and *The Evils of Tobacco*) by a Russian named Anton Chekhov. Anne Revere’s name was among the sixty-five signatures.

Sometime later, she remarked without explanation that “the Actors’ Lab and I were at odds for years”; nevertheless, she took the Fifth to avoid answering questions about the other sixty-four signatories or those artists associated with the Actors’ Laboratory. Revere had worked in films with at least four—Roman Bohnen, Morris Carnovsky, Lee J. Cobb, and John Garfield.

MARCUS BLECHMAN, COURTESY OF THE BILLY ROSE THEATRE DIVISION, THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, ASTOR, LENOX AND TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

Like all witnesses appearing before the Committee, Anne Revere arrived with a prepared statement. Nine questions into the hearing Tavenner queried her about the Actors' Laboratory and she delivered her statement:

ANNE REVERE. Mr. Tavenner and gentlemen, this would seem to me, based upon my observation in the course of the week in which I have listened to these testimonies, to be the first in a possible series of questions which would attempt in some manner to link me with subversive organizations; and as the Communist Party is a political party—legal political party—in this country today, and as I consider any questioning regarding one's political views or religious views as a violation of the rights of a citizen under our Constitution, and as I would consider myself, therefore, contributing to the overthrow of our form of government as I understand it if I were to assist you in violating this privilege of mine and other citizens of this country, I respectfully decline to answer this question on the basis of the fifth amendment, possible self-incrimination, and also the first amendment.

Tavenner was not to be deterred. "Miss Revere," he said, "the committee is in possession of information to the effect that you were the holder of a Communist Party registration card for the year 1945, bearing the number 47346, and that you also held a card for the year 1944, which bore the number 46947. Is that correct?"

Anne Revere asked to see one of the cards. Tavenner handed a card to her, saying, "Do you recognize that card?" She studied the card, conferred with her attorney, and returned the card without comment. Although she would have known that the card number did not belong to her and that the card was, therefore, bogus, she remained silent to avoid self-incrimination. Instead, she resorted to an *unfriendly* reply,

As this would in effect constitute an answer to a question which I have already declined to answer for the reasons given, namely, that it is an invasion of the privileges and rights of a citizen, I would respectfully decline to answer this question on the basis of possible self-incrimination. However, I do not—.

Chairman Wood interrupted, "Do you refuse to answer for that reason?" When Revere replied in the affirmative, her lawyer asked to consult with his client. After a pause in the proceedings, Tavenner once more addressed her membership in the Communist Party. "Miss Revere, the Committee also has information in the form of sworn testimony [Larry Parks's statement] that you were a member of the Communist Party in Hollywood. Do you desire to either affirm or deny that statement?" Again, she declined to answer. Wood intervened to assess the basis upon which she was refusing to answer. She re-affirmed that she was refusing to answer on the basis

of possible self-incrimination and her Fifth Amendment rights. Tavenner was not to be deflected.

MR. TAVENNER. Have you at any time been a member of the Communist Party?

MISS REVERE. It would seem to me, Mr. Tavenner, that that is another—.

MR. WOOD. Just answer or decline to answer.

MISS REVERE. I decline again, on the grounds previously stated.

MR. TAVENNER. Are you a member of the Communist Party at this time?

MISS REVERE. That I also respectfully decline to answer, for the same reasons.

Tavenner tried another line of pursuit that added her husband's name to the record. "The name Ann [sic] Revere is your professional name, is it not?" Tavenner asked. "It is my professional name," she replied. "It is also the name which I was baptized with in the Presbyterian Church of Westfield, New Jersey," she added.

MR. TAVENNER. Have you been married?

MISS REVERE. I am at present married: yes.

MR. TAVENNER. What is your husband's name?

MISS REVERE. Samuel Rossen [sic].

MR. TAVENNER. When were you married?

MISS REVERE. 1935; April 11.

Having documented that the couple was married during the years of her presumed membership in the Communist Party and also during the period of her likely association with the Actors' Laboratory, Tavenner ended the hearing. She tried to add to her testimony but Chairman Wood excused her in mid-sentence.

Newspaper headlines on April 18, 1951 effectively changed Revere's situation in Hollywood. "Ann Revere, 2 Writers Refuse Red Query Reply" blared the headline in the New York *Daily News*. The article continued, "Character actress Ann Revere and two Hollywood writers today refused to tell the House Un-American Activities Committee whether they have been Communists."

YEARS LATER, ANNE REVERE, THE DOWN-to-earth actress who wore her hair combed into a practical bun, complained to a reporter: "Nobody went to jail because they were Communists. They went to jail for contempt. But the awful thing about the whole bloody era was that whether you answered or didn't, cooperated or not, you were dead in the business." ●

"As artists we have a responsibility to be engaged..."

JESSICA BLANK

Barricades *continued from page 5*
that I'm black and female. But I think there are other people's interpretations of what that means. I want to be able to write plays about all kinds of people. For instance, I wrote *Yellowman*, and some people said, "Well, this is a black play." And I said, "No, this is a play about these individual black people." I've come across black people who've said, "I know we've lived this, but it never happened to me." And I said, "Yes, it has. But this is not all that defines you."

I'm working on a play now called *Bones*, but the play I wrote prior to *Bones* was a play called *Raw Boys*. *Raw Boys* is about a Celt family. Again, not an entire Celt family. It's about particular individuals. The reviews were mixed. One review was really, to be honest, quite racist. The person had the right not to like the play, but to attack me racially was wrong. This was this person's take on race and what I should be writing and what I should not be writing. So that's the stuff that I fight for. I hang out in the world, I breathe, I hang out with everybody, I'm listening to all kinds of music, I interact. I'm not a spokesperson. I'm hoping that women and women of color will not hold each other down, because the purpose of me writing a play like *Yellowman* was also to look at the way we—certain black people—have taken on that very racism and perpetuated it.

The new piece, *Bones* is about female incest. We were talking about the people who have no voice or the things that we're afraid to look at. That's the stuff that interests me as well. Work that makes me uncomfortable, because that way I'm learning about myself, I'm learning about humankind. And sometimes it's not pretty, and it's not supposed to be pretty. I want to be a mental and emotional traveler as a writer and as an actor, and I don't want gender issues put in my way, I don't want racial issues put in my way. I'm going to do what I want to do, the way I want to do it.

AG: What are the obstacles to writing and doing political theatre, and what do you have to do to overcome them? Cindy, how did you get from writing *Words of Choice* to taking it around the country?

CC: Let me not talk about the obstacles,

let me talk about passion. I was determined that people needed to hear this piece. It's good, it's transformational for people, it supports people who are doing important work, it has an intellectual quality and it has comedy. But at a certain point I decided that, if it was going to get done, I was the one who had to do it. I had the passion and was the one that connected with the people in communities who needed to hear these words.

So I went out on a limb and agreed to do a tour of Virginia, thinking a certain man was going to support it. He had promised many times. Now I realize he had had a lot of drinks first. This tour of Virginia was organized by Virginia NOW and the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice and a bunch of other groups, and we already had the actors. But the man never came up with the money. So I got out my credit card, determined the actors were going to be paid.

In the course of the tour, an amazing thing happened: one woman came to a performance who saw things the way I saw them and called me up and said, "How much would it cost to do three tours throughout the country before the election?" So the obstacles are the traditional obstacles that those of us in theatre face: getting our things produced, getting out there. I spend a lot of time now raising money. I just decided that the issue was too important, and the times too perilous, not to do it. I have made it a cause of my own.

JB: I don't really believe in obstacles. For myself at least, I feel like I have so much agency. There are so many stories of people who have real obstacles. So I work seventeen-hour days sometimes and I spend time doing PR counterattacks against crazy right-wing people who are waging media war on my work. I consider that part of my job. I actually think that it's interesting to find ways around all of those things. If obstacles come up for me in the process of doing my work, it's interesting for me to figure out how to engage with the problems so that they actually provide new creative directions for my work, give me limitations that make my work develop in directions that it wouldn't develop in otherwise. I like challenges.

AG: Why isn't there more political theatre in the regional, not-for-profit theatre? In New York, within the last several months, one of our best Off-Broadway, not-for-profit theatres reneged on a politically themed play, *My Name is Rachel Corrie*, reportedly because the political situation dramatized in the play was potentially offensive to a segment of the company's audience. Ultimately, commercial producers came along and presented it.

SL: I would just say one thing: I don't think you can be politically correct and write political theatre. I think once you can settle your mind about that as a playwright, you know what theatres to go to. There are many theatres and many producers that want you to be politically correct, because they believe that's how they're going to sell tickets. I look for theatres that don't care about whether you're politically correct or not. In fact, they want you to take a stand. They're interested in doing something controversial that will stir people up. I go after the theatres that are willing to take a chance.

EM: I'm the artistic director of the McCarter Theater, a not-for-profit theatre outside of New York. We do a lot of politically explosive work. There are theatres all around the country that do challenging, provocative new work. But it's very rare that art and commerce come together, or that a controversial point of view hits financial gold. That's just the way it is.

DO: *Bones* the new piece, is about female incest. It's out there. I'll be honest with you: I'm quite frightened, because I'm looking at women in a way that we've never looked at women before, because we've never looked at women in a predatory way. That's new ground. I've written it in a way that anybody of any race can do it. The actors just have to be female. There has to be the mother and a set of twins.

I guess all of us in our own ways are disturbers of the peace. But I don't set out to be a disturber of the peace; that's just basically what my DNA is. It's a matter I guess of writing what's natural. But sometimes what's natural is also quite spooky, too, because as I write this, and as I do re-writes, I'm writing a lot about myself. I don't know what's going

to happen with *Bones*. I don't know whether there's going to be a whole bunch of producers saying, "Hey, we've got this incest piece, let's put some money into this." But it's probably not going to work like that. I'm sure it's not.

AG: Emily, Shirley, Jessica, Cindy—you have created your plays by using the words of others. Why is that?

JB: Telling a good story is telling a good story. But who you ask your audience to put themselves in the shoes of, is an extremely political choice always. Something special happens when you ask your audience to put themselves in the shoes of people who are not ordinarily identified with or listened to. I've seen over and over something really amazing happen with *The Exonerated*: audience members—privileged, comfortable, conservative—living in Texas and working for the Houston prosecutor's office enter into these stories. If they met these people on the street, they would hate them or be afraid of them or whatever. But in the theatre they're able to enter into those stories and suddenly see the ways in which these people are like them and the ways in which they're connected.

In documentary theatre we know that what we're seeing and hearing is real. There is a political weight—if it's not done in a heavy-handed or lazy way, where the playwright says, "Oh, well, these people's words are so interesting, I'm just going to let them speak for themselves." There is political weight if you are rigorous with the narrative. So, yes, that's why I do documentary theatre.

SL: My approach is very different from Jessica's, because I don't really do straight documentary. I do a character that becomes my own—a created character with a fictional name, drawn from people's actual experiences. *All Through the Night*, about the German women, was taken from twenty-eight interviews, and I have created five characters. *A Piece of My Heart* was drawn from thirty interviews, from which I imagined six characters. I didn't want to meet any of the people. The last thing I wanted to do was come in contact with them because I was afraid I would be influenced. I'm interested in how I, empathically as a writer, respond to these characters, feel into them, and make them mine. It's then I'm able to create characters in a play that hopefully will draw the audience in.

In *All Through the Night*, I began to look at these German women and wonder what they had in common. What was their communal experience that I could identify with? Certainly the issue of children became very large to me, because I am a mother—the idea that, if I had a handicapped child, that child would be killed or taken to an institution. The issue of children then began to do something to my creative process that allowed me to empathize with the real women in Germany at that time who had children like that. The same thing with the mothers in Germany who had to keep producing children for the Reich, were not allowed birth control. Ten or twelve children by the age of forty. I began to empathize, and out of that I created my characters. So it's exactly the opposite of what Jessica is talking about, but I think with somewhat similar results.

CC: I don't write documentary theatre, because I work as a journalist and I deal with documentary things all the time—fact checking—and the theatre is a relief for me. So when I write my own plays, I feel like Shirley in terms of creating a character.

When I was looking at this issue of reproductive freedom, I didn't think that I was personally capable of covering it—it's such a vast issue. I wanted as many points of view as possible, and I looked for beautiful pieces, pieces that spoke to me, pieces that were funny. I came up with voices that, by their range, show that this is an issue which affects every woman—and man. It's more a stitching together of other people's voices.

AG: Emily, would you talk about documentary theatre in relation to your plays?

EM: I've done a lot of documentary theatre in the last thirty years. I call it theatre of testimony, because it is about people bearing witness to what they know. In all my theatre of testimony work, people may not be telling the truth mind you, although most of the people I have talked to I think believe they are telling the truth at the time, or at least the truth as they remember it. Or if they're lying, as I think the Klansman in my play *Greensboro: a Requiem* was doing—he was lying to me a lot—I knew he was lying, and how I constructed the play makes this clear. Though real people constantly contradict themselves,

and that's always interesting, what I like about documentary theatre is the sense of authenticity one gains through hearing from those who have lived through the event of the play and are willing to bear witness to it.

AG: Quiara, do you consider *Elliot, A Soldier's Fugue* to be an anti-war play?

QAH: Well, as I said before, I write very personally. The conundrum my cousin was facing was that his mom had cancer, and the family had no resources, and he wasn't about to get a free ride to college or anything. So he enlisted. And it was good money. This was right after the President had declared war. The family was flipping out because he was there, but he was so excited to get paid so much and send home money and help pay for his mom's medical bills.

He was in Iraq for about four or five months, until he got a serious leg injury and was flown back to his base in California. I went out to visit him. He still retained his boyishness, but there was definitely something forever changed in him. As I talked to him, I started to figure out a little bit more what that was: killing other human beings at close range and dealing with that for the rest of his life. Getting injured and facing his mortality.

I knew after that visit that I had to write about it. But I was terrified—I don't know anything about war and military experience for one thing. I was against the war, but I didn't feel that was going to make for a very interesting play. I put it in a drawer for a year and then ultimately found this very personal way into it.

The result of taking that personal angle is that a lot of theatres have been able to bill it as a play that deals with a very contemporary issue but not in a political way. People who are subscribers or ticket buyers can say, "Okay, okay, we can pay for a ticket and we're not going to be preached at all night." But the play was just done by the Alliance Theatre in Atlanta, and someone wrote on a blog, "The theatre billed this as a play that doesn't really deal with politics, but, let's be honest: this is an incredibly anti-war play." And it was a really great feeling for me to read that. Because it is an anti-war play. Audiences laugh—the play is very funny—but it upsets people. I had the experience of a lot of middle-aged women saying, "I just see my son going off to war in this play."

"I don't think you can be politically correct and write political theatre." SHIRLEY LAURO

One of the things I was very worried about in writing about this war was that there are people in worse situations than my cousin or my family, because their homes are being bombed, they're having much greater casualties. I didn't know how to do the Iraqi side of the story justice, so I tried in my own way to deal with that in the play, too. I had done a lot of interviews, and one of the things that soldiers consistently talk about is the first person they've killed that they see up close. So I deal with that in the play. When the war started, my only connection to it was reading the New York Times. That's so abstract to me, so generalized, so vague, that I found the personal was a way to get people to engage with it on an immediate level.

EM: But isn't that what the theatre is? I think that's the whole point. In fact, when you talk about the personal being political, the theatre is personal. It's about human beings engaged in a particular situation at a particular point in time, with conflicts and obstacles and resolutions. We're talking about the complexity of being alive amidst war's complexities.

JB: It's very hard to ask people to connect with an abstraction. I could have written a play about the issue of the death penalty and I would have had an audience full of anti-death penalty people, who might have gone "yeah" for a minute. Instead, once you're really in an individual's story, you can see how it reflects on many other stories.

AG: All of you have been talking about how the real worlds of the people you interview help audiences connect with characters and issues. My concern always with theatre, whether political theatre or not, is that playwrights so often are preaching to the choir. How do you reach audiences with diverse points of view? And do you want to?

CC: I get asked this all the time. Are political pieces reaching like-minded people only? When we took *Words of Choice* to Kansas, we were reaching people that might not have heard this. But I think also there's nothing wrong with preaching to the converted. That's what they do in churches. That's how

the Republicans got the presidency. I think that people need to hear affirming, validating messages as progressives as well.

DO: I think if you have a beginning, a middle, an end, a story, a conflict, a resolution, if you know how to use language, know how to delineate a character, it will happen. My play *Yellowman* has been at this point all over the place. It was done in England. Someone did a reading of it in Italy. They got it. I did my solo play *The Gimmick* in Galway, and people came up to me and said, "I'm not black, I'm not from Harlem or the South Bronx, but this applies to me." A lot of times, when we beat people across the head with messages we end up doing a lot of alienating. But by the honesty of conviction, and also using language as a tool, plays go beyond race, beyond ethnicity, and beyond sex.

QAH: Politically, it was fantastic to have *Elliot, a Soldier's Fugue* at the Culture Project here in New York, and have these savvy theatre audiences come and be willing to laugh even in the serious moments. But I'm writing plays because there are things I've never heard on a stage before, so I'm trying to create a choir.

The Alliance Theatre Company in Atlanta said they were going to do *Elliot*, and they don't have a Latino audience at all. They have an African-American audience and a white audience. So we went down to Atlanta, and I wondered how is the audience going to respond? And it was fantastic. They were really vocal. There are some really sexy moments in the play, and the women were cat-calling and stuff. It was great to have a totally different audience, a totally different energy. I didn't feel that I was preaching to the choir. I felt that, okay, I'm stirring things up a bit.

When we did *Elliot* at the Miracle Theatre, which is a Latino company in Portland, Oregon, they decided there would be post-play discussions led by a veteran. All of a sudden the veterans' community was half the audience. Then, not only veterans came but also people whose fathers had died in war, whose sons or daughters were in the war. That

might have been preaching to the choir, because these were people to whom the issue was already important but who weren't normally theatregoers, but I don't think so.

EM: Theatre is local, theatre is live. You have to bring in that audience. And if you want a diverse audience, you go out there and you get it. And out of that incredible communication between the audience and the stage you get electrifying theatre.

AG: You have all written political plays. In this time of fear and anger, and war, do you believe that playwrights have a responsibility to address what is going on?

JB: I think everybody has a responsibility to address what's going on. Playwrights are included.

SL: I think playwrights have the responsibility to be the best playwrights they can be. I don't think you can say that a playwright has a responsibility to address what's going on in these times any more than a doctor does or a lawyer. That you become the best playwright you can be is your responsibility, that you grow in your craft, that you be able to create better characters, better situations, that your reach becomes bigger and more universal. That finally you're looking for universality. Why is it that *Ghosts*, Ibsen's play of so long ago with Mrs. Alving sitting there in the Norwegian countryside with her son—why is that a masterpiece? Why do we keep doing it? Because underneath that story there's some kind of universality that is still grabbing us. I think that's the primary responsibility of the playwright.

JB: But also, I think as artists we have a responsibility to be engaged and to be engaged outside the boundaries of identification that are comfortable for us. I think in all times, but especially in times such as these, the more you engage and the more you push beyond your comfort zone in terms of who you identify with, who you empathize with, whose stories you listen to, whose stories you tell, the more vital your work becomes. That's where the hope is for us as human beings: to be able to do that with each other.

AG: Thank you all. ●

Loulouides continued from page 19 there. The price the Devil demands is not the tree, but the Miller's daughter. The Miller is desolate, but he doesn't want to return to his former life and lose his wealth. He speaks with his wife and she concurs. The daughter willingly goes with the devil and he chops off her hands.

This is no subtle myth. One makes a Devil's bargain believing we can get something for nothing, but Johnson claims that the reverse is true: "when one gets something for nothing, he is very likely to get nothing for something in the feeling world. This "nothing" is the source of emptiness that has become characteristic of our age...To buy material comfort at the cost of feeling values is the Devil's bargain...psychologically speaking, whenever you trick, you amputate the hands of your most tender feeling function, a price far too great for any outer advantage.

So what happens to the Miller's daughter? Well, her now rich family cares for her and doesn't quite understand why she's so upset by the loss of her hands, since they now have servants who can give her everything she needs. Finally, she begins to cry uncontrollably, which puts her "in touch" with her instinctive urge to be alone; she goes into the forest. Johnson tells us, "when the woman is faced with conflict, it is her nature to search out the opposing forces that have collided and put an end to the battle between them. A man wants to fight, a woman wants to reconcile."

Once in the forest, the daughter finds herself passing an orchard filled with beautiful pear trees. Each day she posi-

tions herself in such a way that she can eat one of the ripe pears, drooping from a tree. When the King hears of this, he goes into the orchard and finds this poor Handless Maiden eating a pear. Since this is a myth, he falls immediately in love with her, takes her to the castle, marries her and makes her his Queen. *Happy ending? Not quite.*

Again, the Handless Maiden/Queen is given every type of material good she could need, including servants to help her. The King even has a pair of silver hands made for her, so that she can give the appearance of "normalcy" but just imagine how uncomfortable and useless they must be; they look nice, but really, what can you do with them but knock someone out?

Eventually the Queen gives birth to a baby boy, and again she finds herself feeling lost and helpless since she cannot provide even the basic care for their son. The King, although well-meaning, still doesn't understand the source of her pain, particularly since she has so many nurses and servants to provide for the baby's needs! He is at a loss as to how to help her.

I'm sure you can guess what happens next; the Queen takes the baby and returns to the forest. She lives there with her baby and lives a simple and solitary existence. But what she is actually doing is storing her healing energy.

As Robert Johnson tells us, "It is genius to store energy because accumulated energy is having power within us. We live with our psychic energy in modern times much as we do with our money—mortgaged into the next decade. Most people are exhausted nearly all the time and never catch up

Awards continued from page 24 inaugural production had been a revival of Lauro's drama *A Piece of My Heart*, about women serving in Vietnam during the war, and Lauro praised the group's dedication. "Women do not have to prove themselves but they need to share their art," she said, adding that 3Graces "moves as an ensemble forward."

Accepting a plaque and a check for \$2,500, the company's executive director, Chelsea Silverman, described the company as "thrilled beyond belief" for the League's recognition and asked everyone attending to acknowledge the trio of

co-artistic directors Annie McGovern and Elizabeth Bunnell, and managing director Kelli Lynn Harrison.

"In much the same way as the League promotes the visibility of women theater professionals," said Silverman, reading energetically and feelingly from prepared remarks, "3Graces promotes the visibility of real women's stories through the plays we choose to produce and our signature Immersion process that allows the artist and the audience to explore the world of the play outside the script."

"The award comes at a time," said Silverman, "when support and encour-

to equilibrium of energy, let alone have a store of energy behind them. With no energy in store, one cannot meet opportunity."

One day, the Queen takes the baby outdoors and he accidentally falls into a stream. This is when her stored energy comes to her aid: she plunges her useless silver hands into the stream to rescue the child and when she pulls him up a miracle has occurred and her hands are restored. She returns to the King and we have our happy ending.

Dr. Jung was once asked the question, "Will we make it?" to which he replied, "If enough individuals do their inner work." *There seem to be no collective solutions to this problem of wounded feelings, just individuals brave enough to take the problem personally. This is the new heroism.*

It is my hope that everyone here, male and female takes away from this story the need for solitude, and rest, so that you can continue to face your daily challenges and opportunities. I also hope that you gain a true sense and appreciation of yourselves for all that you do to produce theatre. Our playwrights—be they Shakespeare, Shaw, Wasserstein, Wilson or Miller as well as our living writers are creating their versions of our current mythology. By producing them, you are sharing and documenting these very important stories for the audiences of today and tomorrow. You are helping us to gain a better understanding of the human condition and, therefore, you are my heroes.

And that is why being here today at a League of Professional Theatre Women Leadership Lunch means so very much to me. Thank you. ●

agement are invaluable—starting and running a not-for-profit company can be both daunting and exhausting, and to have fellow professionals acknowledge our time and efforts and the quality of our work is both a great motivation and validation."

Adding that she wouldn't be a good executive director if she didn't mention the company's October production, she invited everyone at the luncheon to the world premiere of Sharyn Rothstein's *The Good Farmer* (www.threegracetheater.org), and on that communal note, the luncheon ended. ●

■ TRAVEL

Visiting MRS. PACKARD in Princeton

BY ANNE M. HAMILTON

ON A BEAUTIFUL SUNNY day in early June, thirty-three League members took the short train ride to Princeton, New Jersey to view Emily Mann's newest play *Mrs. Packard*. Our annual trip to a significant production outside New York City allowed us to share in our fellow League member's latest playwrighting and directing endeavor, as well as to enjoy a thirty-minute discussion with her afterward.

Based on the true story of Elizabeth Parsons Ware Packard, Mann's play is a fascinating account of one woman's determination to right a system gone terribly wrong. In 1861, Mrs. Packard's husband, a minister, had her abducted from their home and taken to an asylum after she questioned his religious beliefs. Once there, she met Superintendent McFarland, a charming and formidable opponent. Inevitable clashes with both her husband and her doctor proved to be surprising and devastating for them both.

At that time a wife was considered "a legal non-entity," and property of her husband. Given the consent of the superintendent, it was legal in the state of Illinois for a husband to commit his wife to an asylum without proof of insanity. Packard not only survived her stay, but also used her three years there to record and report abuses to inmates.

The play received a strong review in the *New York Times* as "a work that illuminates one well-educated and insightful woman's battle to resist incarceration for daring to disagree" (Naomi Siegel, in the May 27, 2007 Regional Edition, New Jersey Section).

Mrs. Packard's serious subject matter notwithstanding, the outing offered pleasant, relaxed social time during a luncheon in the theatre's expansive atrium next to its older main stage, followed by the play in its newer 384-seat Roger S. Berlind Theatre, opened in 2003.

MANN AND McCARTER

LONG HERALDED NATIONALLY as a major American theatre, McCarter has a long history of pre-Broadway tryouts, as well as for originating a long list of plays that have moved to Broad-

way. McCarter is one of the very few organizations in this country that is both a professional producing theater and a major presenter of the performing arts. Emily Mann's sixteen-season tenure has been notable for its emphasis on the creation and development of new work, marked especially by an ongoing program of commissions and the fostering of long-term relationships with established and emerging playwrights. Nilo Cruz's *Anna in the Tropics* opened the 2003-04 season and inaugurated the Berlind Theatre. The drama, which had won the 2003 Pulitzer Prize in May, enjoyed popular support and transferred to Broadway later that Fall.

A long-time member of the League, Mann is the Artistic Director and Resident Playwright at McCarter, and has won many national awards. She is a past recipient of the League's Lee Reynolds Award, given annually to a woman whose theatre work has helped to illuminate the possibilities for social, cultural, or political change.

Mrs. Packard, which Mann has worked on for almost three years, follows in her tradition of writing and directing in a way that, in her own words, "gives voice to the voiceless." She has brought Elizabeth Packard to life in this "documentary drama," a form otherwise known as Theatre of Testimony. Mann's other topics have included the civil rights movement (*Greensboro: A Requiem*); gay rights (*Execution of Justice*); the aftermath of the Vietnam conflict (*Still Life*); and the Holocaust (*Annulla, an Autobiography*). *Having our Say: the Delany Sisters First 100 Years* has arguably been her most widely popular play to date. It is easy to see how a reviewer once suggested that Mann, "aspires to reassert theatre's claim on the country's moral conscience," a claim she agrees with.

A HARROWING STORY

THE ASYLUM AT THE ILLINOIS State Hospital at Jacksonville was graphically depicted in *Mrs. Packard* with screams and sounds of violence punctuating the night, descriptions of the overwhelming smell of human waste,



Emily Mann discusses *Mrs. Packard*.

and abuse of patients as a normal and daily occurrence. Industrial-looking sets by Eugene Lee and bleak lighting by Jeff Croiter helped to depict a sense of depression and misery.

Packard's volume *Modern Persecutions or Insane Asylums Unveiled*, reveal Dr. McFarland's less-than-professional overtures, then offered as forms of "treatment":

"For the first four months the Doctor 'laid his hands' very gently upon me, except that the pressure of my hand in his was sometimes quite perceptible, and sometimes, as I thought, longer continued than this healing process demanded! ...

"But after these four months he laid his hands upon me in a different manner, and as I then thought and still do think, far too violently. There was no mistaking the character of these grips—no duplicity after this period, rendered this modern mode of treatment of doubtful interpretation to me."

The Asylum's board of directors released Elizabeth Packard after finding no evidence of insanity. Afterward, Reverend Packer placed her under house arrest and refused to let her see her children, reportedly fearing that her influence would endanger their mortal souls. It was legal then in Illinois for a husband to confine his wife to the house, but only if she was insane. Mrs. Packard managed to send a message to a judge through a neighbor and, through writ of habeas corpus, received a trial, which found her sane and freed her. Her husband

took the children without her knowledge and moved to Massachusetts.

Mrs. Packard, who was making a living from her writing, moved to Chicago and began to petition the state legislature for reforms. Her efforts led to the repeal of the law that had enabled her husband to incarcerate her in the first place.

Because of her abduction and imprisonment, Packard had lost custody of her children. However, after several years, she was able to gather them together and they lived as a family. Theophilus Packard lost several congregations and found it hard to make a living thereafter. Dr. McFarland eventually hung himself.

THE POST-PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION

JUDGING BY THE TONE OF THE discussion, Mrs. Packard left members engaged, stimulated, and excited about the subject matter. Mann began by expressing her gratitude for the League's contribution to her artistic development, and for our presence in Princeton on this occasion.

One of the first questions put to the playwright was how she got the idea for Mrs. Packard. The answer: A friend had been stumped by a clue in a New York Times crossword puzzle. Upon learning the answer the next day, the friend looked up the answer: Elizabeth Parsons Ware Packard and thus learned of Packard's compelling life story. She passed the find on to Mann, who Googled it. "I've been working on it

ever since," Mann admitted. Her process continued with research and what she calls, "tough notes" for polishing and trimming the script from several of her contemporaries, including Christopher Durang.

Because Packard was such a prolific writer during and after her asylum stay, Mann was able to use a lot of primary material. One seminal source was Packard's published transcript of the trial which freed her from house arrest after her release from the asylum. The playwright also quoted from Packard's journal written during her stay in the asylum's dreaded 8th Ward where there was a "screen room" in which women were stripped naked, and often had their heads plunged repeatedly into a bathtub of cold water as "treatment" for misbehaving.

Mann's secondary sources included Phyllis Chesler's *Women in Madness*, first published in the 1970's, a biography of some of Packard's six children, and work by feminist psychologist Carol Gilligan. She also described receiving many moving letters as well as witnessing several arguments in the lobby between husbands and wives.

The day before the June 10th Princeton closing, Mann described herself as tired, but said that she was, "letting [the experience] wash over me [as I'm] hearing from you all. I'm open to hearing, and am enjoying listening to the audience."

NATIONAL ATTENTION ON NPR DURING A LATER "ALL THINGS

Considered," NPR interview with Debbie Elliott (June 24, 2007), Mann talked about why Mrs. Packard's story is relevant to today's society:

"I really did not write the play because I wanted to discuss the mental health system, either historically or today. It's quite more a metaphor about what has happened to women when they are up against religious fanaticism, or when absolute power is given to another human being over another human being. Her husband was an old-school Calvinist, which really was Puritanism. We see all over the world, when there is fundamentalist religious thought or fanatical religious thought, that one of the worst things that happens societally is that women are on some level silenced, imprisoned, or stripped of their personhood. That's really a very key part of the play."

Mrs. Packard was produced with the assistance of the The Kennedy Center Fund for New American Plays and completed the second stage of its premiere run at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC from June 16th to 24th.

We offer many thanks to McCarter for such an enjoyable experience, and we wish Emily Mann all success with her latest endeavor. ●

Fulbright continued from page 28
son is helping to create a Dartmouth College workshop for East African theatre artists in 2008, hopefully in collaboration with Frank Hentscher and the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center at CUNY and Marcy Arlin's Immigrants' Theatre Project

- 651 Arts in Brooklyn is enthusiastic about supporting East African theatre artists in New York City in 2008/9/10, including the possibility of an actual East African performance festival featuring Parapanda Theatre Company from Tanzania, *KigeziNdoto* (Kigezi means hook and Ndoto means dreams), a piece developed by Mumbi Kaigwa's The Theatre Company for an international music theatre festival in the Netherlands in 2006, and work by Rwanda's Hope Azeda

- Discussions are evolving about an anthology of East African plays expressing the African point-of-view about various issues, including the legacy of war
- Cal Arts Theatre School Dean Erik Ehn will host a second annual ARTS IN THE ONE WORLD conference focused on Rwanda at Cal Arts in January
- Cal Arts will bring its annual group of students, faculty and interested individuals to Rwanda in July-August
- Makerere MDD Professor (American) Jill Pribyl is hosting an exchange between MDD students and New York University in Gulu, Uganda in January

This particular journey in my life, clearly just begun, owes endless thanks

to the Fulbright Commission and Dr. Mercy Mirembe Ntangaare from Makerere University—a wonderful playwright and scholar—who struggled with me for some five years to make this proposal work on the Uganda side. As one who has had the honor and joy to engage with colleagues in Africa, I wish that members of the League would consider such a remarkable adventure. We have much to give and gain. Contact me and I can recommend African theatre festivals for the next League trip! (*rlv-itow@folkloreproductions.com*) ●

Roberta Levitow is a director and dramaturg, with particular expertise in developing original writing and new work. She has directed over fifty productions in New York and Los Angeles, and is a recipient of TCG's Alan Schneider Award for directorial excellence.

London Journey

BY LENORE DEKOVEN

ON MONDAY, JANUARY 14th, thirty-eight sleep-deprived but excited travelers—members of the League, spouses, friends, and significant others—marched from Virgin Air at Heathrow to a waiting bus where a man named Nigel stowed our baggage and politely piled us into its comfortable, Greyhound-like seats. The ride to our hotel, the Strand Palace, was accompanied by a tour-guide rap from a charming and informative woman named Maria, who pointed out Westminster and all other places of interest along the way and gave us tips on transportation, currency, etc. After getting settled into our rooms, grabbing a bite of lunch and unpacking, my traveling mate, Chevi Colton, and I decided to have a nap, find a place for a leisurely dinner, and turn in early to try to overcome jet lag. However, some of the more stalwart members of the group, not wishing to waste a single moment, went across the street to the Savoy Theatre and saw *Porgy and Bess*, which some later reported was a bit odd but all-in-all quite good.

The following morning a small, select group of us followed Joan Firestone, braving the rain and the exigencies of the Underground, parts of which were under construction. Joan led us on an expedition to the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) where we were shown around the huge, impressive building, peered into classrooms and saw students at work and plied our guide, Gina Napoli, with questions. It was hard not to be envious of the wonderful work spaces and excellent facilities. Upon return we realized the station was right near the National Gallery, so Joan and I thought we'd try to see the Velasquez exhibit currently drawing crowds. Too many crowds, it turned out, so we bought tickets for the following Friday and walked back to the hotel. (It seemed as though practically everything was within walking distance of the Strand Palace. A great location!)

Tea time found us all gathering at the Society of London Theatre where we met with British women directors and listened to talks by Stella Barnes, Head of Arts in Education; Samantha Rowe-Beddoe, Equal Voice Project Manager,

Pop-Up Theatre; and Bruce Wall, Executive Director, London Shakespeare Workout/LSW Prison Project, as we sipped and munched.

Stella told us about how she has been developing youth arts policy and practice in London for two decades. For ten of those years she has been developing new arts projects and training initiatives at Greenwich and Lewisham Young People's Theatre (GYPT). Her focus over the last five years has been in developing arts materials for young refugees and asylum seekers. The majority of her work



has been in theatre though she has also developed a number of video projects. The video *Safe* made by five young refugees won the London Weekend Television (LWT) "Whose London?" award in 2002 and was screened on LWT. Another short film, *Birthday Boy*, was screened on Channel 4 in summer 2004. Probably motivated by the fact that her parents were refugees, Stella set up the Arts in Education Training Program for exiled artists which she currently heads. This London-wide arts-in-education program provides valuable training in using the arts to help the adjustment of young refugees and asylum seekers.

Samantha (who is called Sam) is a drama therapist and director of the Equal Voice Project for Pop-Up Theatre. The project has a notable reputation within the education and creative sectors for its consultancy and partnership work with young people and is recognized for its usefulness by the mayor's office and the Metropolitan Police. Through a national touring company for young people, issues of self-esteem, conflict, bullying, exclusion, communication, etc. are dealt with using theatre techniques as a means

of reaching young people under the age of twenty-one. The program includes resource materials, support workshops, and teacher training as well as half-hour presentations, twenty-minute videos for the children to watch, and resource handbooks for teachers.

Bruce, an actor who has appeared with British and American notables on both continents since childhood, spoke of his work as the founder of the London Shakespeare Workout Prison Project, which celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2007. Using Shakespeare as a tool to promote confidence and the will to dream amongst the prisoners, Bruce related how inmates, suddenly coming into contact with Shakespeare for the first time, began to read, write, and create impressive poems. It was as though "the Bard had freed their incarcerated minds," he said. One boy, he told us, hadn't spoken in three years and was suddenly awakened and used his voice for the first time in an exercise with an actor. Bruce was a lively and articulate speaker, and his passion for the project was evident and contagious.

A lively Q-and-A session and food and intermingling followed, but because of the late start, Chevi and I had to duck out to find the bus to Islington and the Almeida Theatre, as we had tickets to *There Came a Gypsy Riding* by Frank McGuinness, with Imelda Staunton and Eileen Atkins. (We all agreed eventually that, while Atkins was wonderful, this play and the rest of the cast were disappointing.)

One of the great things about this trip is always the after-theatre opportunity to congregate with other members of the group in the hotel bar, share experiences and exchange critiques of the plays we've seen that day. Over the remaining four days Chevi and I (and most of the others) managed to see *Antony and Cleopatra* (with Patrick Stewart), *Frost-Nixon* (with Frank Langella), *Coram Boy* (at the National), *Don Juan in Soho* by Patrick Marber, *Billy Elliott* (with several enormously gifted young boys), and an all-male *Twelfth Night* at the Old Vic directed by Peter Hall's son Edward. We were in theatre-pig-heaven. In addition,

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The Glories of Prague

BY RUTH MAYLEAS

ATIRED GROUP OF TWENTY-one League members and friends arrived in Prague in the late afternoon of June 15th, after a long layover in Frankfurt during which we ate, drank, and otherwise comported ourselves amid the many diversions of the huge airport. Lynda Sturner found the casino, put some cash into the machines (they take many currencies), won, and treated us to drinks. Linda Kline feasted on her favorite white asparagus. Others shopped. Finally we were in Prague, and a very welcome bus took us to the Hotel William on the Mala Strana.

Though Mala means lesser, there is nothing lesser about this lovely, hilly side of the Vltava River, with its beautiful winding streets, elegant palaces—many now turned into embassies and museums—all overseen by the magnificent Prague Castle and St. Vitus Cathedral at its summit. The Hotel William was quaint—funky and kitsch may be better words—with its lobby/breakfast room adorned with crystal chandeliers and a fancifully painted blue ceiling. The Mala Strana is a beautiful area, with palaces, museums, galleries, shops, cafes, some lovely restaurants, and a lively street scene.

The William's rooms were small, and its amenities few, but these failings were more than made up for by the ambiance of the area, with its lovely streets leading down to the storied Charles Bridge and up to the Petrin tower and the Castle. It was a clear, pleasantly warm evening that provided a fitting introduction to one of Europe's most beautiful cities.

Once freshened we set off in small groupings to discover the culinary scene, which was rewarding—on that first evening, at least two outstanding discoveries: Square on the Square, with a non-Czech menu of tapas and other small plates of a predominantly Italian cast; the other, Hergetova, next to the Kafka Museum under the Charles Bridge, right smack on the Vltava, offered an original and diversified menu, Czech specialties and other gems.

The next four days were spent exploring Prague streets, squares, museums, shops—lots of glass, some art, some not. A few notable sights, events, highlights:

- The Old Town Square with its stunning array of churches and baroque

buildings, which include an astronomical (or is it astrological?) clock from which emerge on the hour twelve figures (apostles) marching across its windows. Radiating from the square are pleasant and busy streets and byways (many of them pedestrian promenades), and one a mini-Madison Avenue or Rodeo Drive housing Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Cartier, and other bastions of style and affluence—and the chic but oddly named Pravda restaurant (excellent food, waiters with attitude).

- The Castle and its surrounding palaces and cathedral, a collection of buildings dating from the 10th century, all linked by an internal courtyard. The Castle may be the oldest structure in Europe that has been a continuous seat of government—in this case, the Czech government under various dynasties, dictatorships, democracies—from its founding to the present

- Kampa Museum, a stunning contemporary building on Kampa Island, on the Vltava, with an amazing collection of contemporary art. Its riverfront has a café and restaurant that look out on an outdoor art installation which incorporates a manmade waterfall and, in the distance, two neon-lit figures in constant motion; in the foreground, a huge chair made of what looks like pieces of burnt wood. (So much for attempting to describe some forms of abstract art.) It is a hypnotic scene that remains in the memory.

- Kafka Museum, which, unlike many writers' museums that consist mainly of hard-to-see manuscripts and small blurred photos, really gives one a sense of the writer's life, his time, his ancestry, his place in society—all well-captioned in English.

- Concerts with excellent musicians, held in notable places all over the city, among them the Spanish Synagogue, built in 1868 on the site of Prague's oldest Jewish house of prayer in a stunning Moorish style; at the magnificent Municipal House, an Art Nouveau structure of uncommon quality—its several restaurants include a grandiose dining room, fit for a king's dinner with prices and waiters to match—and at the beautifully restored Estates Theatre, the site of the premiere of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.

- The Jewish Quarter, with its museums and several synagogues, one of which

(the Pinkas) is inscribed with the names of all Jews from Moravia and Bohemia (the present-day Czech Republic) who perished at the hands of the Nazis. Its poignant cemetery contains 12,000 tombstones; the number buried is much greater, as there are several burial layers superimposed one on top of the other.

- The Archa Theatre, a new post-Velvet Revolution producing and presenting organization whose beginnings date to 1991 when Ondrej Hrab won a city government grant to create a new kind of theatre, one that would be more in tune with the times and theatre developments elsewhere in the world. Archa opened in 1994 in a flexible space carved out of an existing building. It was the place selected for Havel's sixtieth birthday celebration, a fete that apparently lasted through the night. Its two playing spaces can seat between 350 and 500, with considerable expansion possible for rock groups and other standing events. Archa is this year presenting American director Anne Bogart's homage to Robert Wilson and a workshop on the actor, as well as Peter Brook's *The Grand Inquisitor*, inspired by Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. [A personal note: I was in Prague in 1991 at the end of a conference on Central European theatre, and Hrab with his youth and new ideas, was a name on everyone's lips. It is gratifying to come back fifteen years later and find a flourishing theatre that has made a reality of his ideas.]

- The 40th Prague Quadrennial, a ten-day international theatre architecture and scenic design exhibition and competition in which sixty countries were represented, was the scene of a variety of events and performances, among them a panel, "Writing About Scenography," that was attended by several League members. On June 18th most members gathered at the Quadrennial to view and be photographed next to board member Carrie Robbins's designs for the opera *Death in Venice* (see her article page 29), which had been selected by the U.S. Institute for Theatre Technology as part of the United States exhibit.

On June 20th it was off to Budapest on a five-hour train journey that allowed a look at the landscape and an introduction to Hungarian food in a real dining car. ●

Discovering Budapest

BY HARRIET SLAUGHTER

LEAVING THE BEAUTY OF Prague behind, we traveled by train to discover the robust and bustling building boom taking place in Budapest. The city is filled with architectural reminders of its past. Our tour guide Zolli takes us on our own tour bus to view the remnants of 150 years of Turkish mosques dotting the cityscape and voluptuous Baroque structures built by the Hapsburgs. The city's most adventurous flight of architectural fancy is the 691 room Parliament overlooking the Danube, which makes Westminster humble in comparison. We gathered for a group photo in Heroes' Square where soldiers of Budapest's struggles are enshrined above columned arches in a massive open public space. Another photo opportunity arose at Castle Hill, reminiscent of Disneyland, overlooking the Danube, which undulates

gracefully between Buda (the hilly side) and Pest (the flat side).

With modesty forgotten, many of us joined the throngs of Hungarians at the famed Gellert Baths for a thermal bath or massage. Discovering one's way through the labyrinth of stairs and dressing rooms was an adventure unto itself, but once my sore feet felt the healing powers of the mineral waters, I felt fully restored. What better way to soak up the culture of Eastern Europe than to while away a few hours in the warmth of mineral waters.

The remaining day, we all found the special spots we wished to visit, whether it was the Terror House, a museum that traces the history of both Nazi and Communist periods in Hungary; cruising the Danube, an antique shop, the Eiffel market, the Jewish quarter, or a lovely

restaurant around Liszt Square. I rode the subway (circa 1896); languished at the Kiraly Medicinal Baths, visited the lovely Museum of Fine Arts and had an unexpected musical moment when I happened upon a violinmaker's shop near the hotel. The shopkeeper's door was slightly ajar and a sound lured me inside. I recognized the melody of Franz Lehar's *The Merry Widow* waltz and began singing with the double bass player. Two musicians grabbed their violins and we had a spontaneous round of songs.

Such were the impressions of Budapest—a city still reconstituting itself from Communist oppression. It is a city reinventing itself. I think now I'd like to curl up with Ferenc Molnar's *The Play's the Thing* or *Liliom*, just to revisit his words through new eyes. ●



The Quadrennial Design Exhibition in Prague was host to international presentations.



League members gather before Carrie Robbins' costume sketches at the Design Exhibition.

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Joan and I did return to the National Gallery to see the marvelous Velasquez exhibition, after which she introduced me to the (new-to-me) Tate Modern. On our last day I introduced Chevi to the wonderful Courtauld Institute of Art at Somerset House (again, walking distance from the hotel) which contains an unmatched Impressionist collection.

After watching the delightful vista of ice-skaters in the center courtyard of the buildings, we also visited an exhibit called the Triumph of Eros: Art and Seduction in 18th Century France in the Hermitage Rooms. The exhibit explored "themes of love and eroticism" (or classy porno).

As you can imagine, it was a packed and wonderful week. And I have to confess,

there was icing on the cake for me: when we went to the National we had a bit of time to cruise its book store. There, in the On Directing section, I found my book displayed. What a thrill!

Our hunger for theatre temporarily satisfied, Sunday we said goodbye to the lucky few among us who were staying on to go to Paris, piled into the waiting bus, and headed for Virgin Air and home. ●

League of Professional Theatre Women

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