



Creating worlds through theatre
www.ista.co.uk

scene

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS THEATRE ASSOCIATION

2009-10 DECEMBER ISSUE 2



In this Issue: New York, New York



ISTA – A Who's Who

Board of Trustees

David Lightbody – President

Independent Producer, UK
Based in the UK

Dinos Aristidou

Development Officer for Education and Learning,
Arts Council South East
Freelance writer/director/consultant
Based in the UK

Alex Clifton

Theatre Director
Senior Acting Teacher – RADA
Based in the UK

Anthony Cunningham

High School Theatre Teacher at American School of the
Hague, The Netherlands

Susan Davenport

Development Consultant
Currently Interior Design Student
Based in the UK

Ian Pike

Freelance Script Writer
Based in the UK

Jen Tickle

Arts Coordinator at the International School of Azerbaijan

Honorary Life Members

Dinos Aristidou – UK

Doug Bishop – Taiwan

Ted Miltenberger – France

Mike Pasternak – Switzerland

Global Patrons

American School of the Hague, The Netherlands

Encore! Ensemble Theatre Workshop, USA

International School of Azerbaijan

International School of Geneva, La Chataigneraie, Switzerland

International School of Geneva, LGB, Switzerland

International School of Hamburg, Germany

International School of Luxembourg

Regent's School Pattaya, Thailand

Shanghai American School – Puxi Campus, China

St Julian's School, Portugal

Taipei American School International Thespian Society

Personnel

Sally Robertson – Chief Executive Officer
sallyr@ista.co.uk

Del Hayton – Operations Manager
delh@ista.co.uk

Jo Webb – Finance and Admin Manager
jow@ista.co.uk

Contents

2 On The Threshold: The Calhoun Laramie Project

By Marjorie Duffield

4 Theatre Group Dzieci and an Interview with Matt Mitler

12 A Practitioner's Pathway

By Matt Mitler

13 ISTA and the American Museum of Natural History

15 Sound and Music in Theatre

By Greg Pliska

17 Interview with Kate Wetherhead: A New York based actor

18 Interview with Randy Ellen Lutterman of SpringboardNYC

20 Student Scene: Introducing Broadway Space

By Carla Weiss

Editor: Sally Robertson

Artwork: Jo Doidge

Print: Headland Printers, Penzance

Cover photo: By Beth Griffin of Sarah Feinstein, a consumer at Cerebral Palsey, New York.

Back page photos: From Encore! archives provided by Susan Burke.



To submit material or comments for future issues please email Sally Robertson on sallyr@ista.co.uk

© International Schools Theatre Association (ISTA) 2009-10

ISTA and its editors accept no liability for the views, opinions and advice contained in this journal. The editors reserve the right to edit any materials submitted for publication.

ISTA Contact Information

International Schools Theatre Association (ISTA)

Watchbell, Old Hill, Helston

TR13 8HT Cornwall, UK

Email: enquiries@ista.co.uk

Website: www.ista.co.uk

Telephone: + 44 (0) 1326 560 398



Editorial

2009-10 December Issue 2



While ISTA has no time for the occasional romantic dalliance, its 30-year history has nevertheless been marked by passionate affairs with a few special places. Stratford-upon-Avon was our first love – where else than the home of William Shakespeare would a theatre organisation first fan the flames of passion? Like many first encounters, those embers are now dead and dormant, with ISTA turning more to a marriage of convenience in London while the RSC theatres have been closed for renovation. Can love be rekindled next year with their re-opening?

Bali began as a holiday fling in 1997, but soon became a yearly assignation for TaPS and teacher workshops, until newspaper headlines and the spotlight of international attention forced us from public view. After letting things cool for a few years, and despite assurances that “we’re just friends,” ISTA has been sniffing ‘round Bali’s door yet again in hopes of reviving the yearly TaPS, if only for the sake of the children.

But the real story is one of new love, young love – October 2009 and for the first time New York. This one we had to shout from the rooftops. With wonderful opportunities for students (both from the U.S. and Europe) to explore incredible theatre, encounter a new world of practitioners and experience the sheer presence of the Big Apple as a backdrop – we are planning a very long engagement indeed, with New York TaPS every year and IB Theatre training for teachers.

All metaphors aside, as an organization that literally takes place across the globe, we have been indelibly marked by our geography. Stratford seemed such a part of ISTA in the early years – defining our work, reinforcing our commitment to teacher conferences and TaPS, the quiet calm of the place lending itself to wonderful intimate student work. And yet, there was always the canonical question looming – did we want ISTA placing Shakespeare so emphatically at the centre of its programming? Perhaps we’d outgrown Stratford as an organization – in any case, the intervening time away has allowed us to develop and explore a number of alternatives, ones that just may allow us to return to Stratford as a very specific tradition, rather than as a model for IB curriculum.

Bali was one such alternative that came to embody a new direction for ISTA, away from the West, and in search of other traditions. ‘The real stuff’ as Rucina Ballinger said when I first met her – not the tourist traps, but observing morning ceremonies, eating in the homes of puppet makers, visiting and working with mask makers. A highlight for me was the year Rucina promised to give us the Kecak group that had just won the prize for best Kecak on Bali: the ISTA group gathered in the gardens of our hotel and in came three vans with hoards of people on each – she had literally shipped in the whole village to perform for us. It is a tremendous boon to ISTA to have Bali back on its map.

More recently, with our strong IB push into North America, it seems entirely appropriate that we turn our attention to New York, every bit London’s rival and peer as centre of world (and world-class) theatre. But if London’s West End has come through for ISTA and TaPS in the past few years, can we see different possibilities in New York? What about models outside the commercial and subsidised theatre? Rob Warren (Atlanta International School) indicated early on that if we did TaPS anywhere in the U.S., it should be New York. Surprisingly, a number of European schools this year opted for New York TaPS over the typically popular London venue.

To celebrate young love, we are dedicating this issue to New York, New York. In it, we have compiled a collection of interviews with artists working in the industry, an in-depth look at a cutting-edge theatre company and a pair of resource packs from the New York TaPS. We also offer some insight into one of our most recent and unique partnerships – with a beloved institution, the American Museum of Natural History on Central Park West.

[With thanks to DG for help with the metaphor.]

Sally Robertson

Editor, sallyr@ista.co.uk

Snippets from our two New York events - October 2009

From Tim Reid, Clarkstown High School North, USA

I wanted to thank you for the tremendous TaPS my students and I experienced in New York. What a wonderful first for ISTA and for us. The ensemble sessions were great, the theatre performances thought provoking, and the master classes were inspirational. I marveled at the way that all the ensemble work, master classes, and theatre experiences fitted together with the IB Theatre curriculum and the goals set forth by the ensemble leaders. Sherri included a Macbeth scene in her ensemble work, which the students watched that evening and then experienced physical theatre with members of the cast the following day. Incredible! The students were abuzz with ideas and enthusiasm when they returned to school. Even as a chaperone I was able to garner some great ideas from the workshops and the informal sessions Rob was kind enough to provide to share ideas and address questions and concerns.

From Greg Varner, Director of Upper Arlington Community of Theatre (UACTION)

I recognize that there will be a follow-up survey coming, but I wanted to drop you a line to tell you that the Level 3 training was, hands down, the best conference I've attended in 21 years of teaching. What a brilliant, practical, motivational, relevant, etc. etc. experience we had with Dinos and each other. And the context of the museum was miles beyond the experience we would have had in a theatre.

Rob Steiner generously provided vouchers for those of us who were able to return to the museum on Sunday for a leisurely visit. I would urge future participants to plan on the extra day specifically for this purpose. It was good to have quiet time to process and to dream.

So thanks to all who put this training together. It was remarkable!

ON THE THRESHOLD: THE CALHOUN LARAMIE PROJECT

■ By Marjorie Duffield

This fall marks the “revival” production of *The Laramie Project* at The Calhoun School on the upper west side of Manhattan. *The Laramie Project* originally opened off-Broadway in 2000 and the show really made a name for the company that created it: Tectonic Theatre Project. I was fascinated by the documentary/ ensemble style of the piece and by the way it was devised. The Tectonic company collected interviews from the townspeople and then edited/dramatized them in various ways – including finding the central “moment” of the piece.

I first directed this play in 2003 during my first year as the theatre teacher at Calhoun. I knew a few of the original cast members which created an opportunity for my students to dialogue with them about the play and the devising of new work. In addition, the story of the play – a community’s response to the hate crime and murder of Matthew Shepard, a 21 year old gay University of Wyoming student – created an important teaching moment around issues of hate in society. Also, there are over 60 roles in *The Laramie Project*. Frankly, what theatre teacher doesn’t need lots of roles for lots of kids?

There are a number of reasons I wanted to produce the piece again this year. Last spring I heard that there was a good chance we were going to bring Judy Shepard to Calhoun to speak. Mrs. Shepard (Matthew’s mother) had been making the rounds recently to speak about the “Matthew Shepard and James

Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act,” a bill she has been championing for years. (This measure expands the 1969 United States federal hate-crime law to include crimes motivated by a victim’s actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability and was just passed on October 28, 2009 after years and years of effort.) In addition, Calhoun’s LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, queer/questioning) population has become really active, so the subject of the play once again creates an incredibly relevant teaching moment for our school. Finally, the Tectonic Theatre Project returned to Laramie last year and they re-interviewed a number of the original subjects of the piece. This new play *The Laramie Project: 10 Years Later* premiered at Lincoln Center on October 12th, 2009 – 11 years after Matthew’s death. 150 theatres from New York to Los Angeles to Madrid to Hong Kong simultaneously hosted staged readings of the piece. Without losing any of its former power, *The Laramie Project* became relevant in a new way. It was back in the news and that gave me another excellent reason to produce it again.

And of course, I needed a play with lots of roles for lots of kids.

Actually, having all those roles is great. But, there is a real secret to the piece and why it is a terrific piece for high school students. The kids feel it. It requires real empathy and offers terrific acting moments for everyone in the ensemble. They care about the play, and

Matthew, and the characters in this town. They connect with the idea that this could be them, or their town, or a dilemma they could face – to stand up to something or to look away. Of all the plays I have directed at Calhoun, this one is the most “desire” based. Since students connect to it on a deep and individual level, their empathy for certain characters really serves the truth and nuance the play requires. With both this production and the one in 2003, I explored that connection and had the students choose their roles. I asked them to write about their choices; explain who they felt most strongly about playing and why; discuss which roles would be the greatest challenge to them and which character would be the most difficult to play. After they submitted their choices, the math worked – both times! With 24 students I found I was able to give them one of their first choices, and often their second and third choice as well. (Most students have between two and four roles in this play.)

This “revival” production showed me that there is something particularly poignant about high school students performing this play. They are just at that threshold, that moment before – before they leave the nest, go to college, go out into the world. They still exist in that precious time where it seems we can protect them. Their being on this threshold creates an even more moving portrait of the town of Laramie and its inhabitants.

I think it is important that theatre teachers create opportunities for the hard



In rehearsal for the current production...



Calhoun Laramie 2003 production



In rehearsal

discussions – in this case about hate and difference and hate of difference. This play can be a powerful teaching tool for an entire school community. Recently I discovered that Matthew Shepard was an international school student, and a theatre kid. (He finished his primary education at The American School in Switzerland in 1995.) I already sympathized with this story and play on so many levels but this truly brought it home. Matthew was one of ours.

From the *Tectonic Theatre Project* website: "In October 1998 Matthew Shepard was kidnapped, severely beaten and left to die, tied to a fence on the outskirts of Laramie, Wyoming. Five weeks later, Moisés Kaufman and fellow members of the *Tectonic Theatre Project* went to Laramie, and over the course of

the next year, conducted more than 200 interviews with people of the town. From these interviews they wrote the play *The Laramie Project*, a chronicle of the life of the town of Laramie in the year after the

murder *THE LARAMIE PROJECT* is one of the most performed plays in America today."

With thanks to Carla Weiss for her editing work on this article.



Marjorie Duffield is a librettist, playwright, director and theatre educator. She is currently the Upper School Theatre Director at The Calhoun School in New York City and has worked as a theatre educator for 20 years with many organizations including the Metropolitan Opera Guild, the Women's Project, BETA and ISTA. Her play *ICE ISLAND: THE WAIT FOR SHACKLETON* was produced off-Broadway by The Melting Pot Theatre Company. Marjorie's other credits include *SIT-IN AT THE FIVE & DIME* (developmental residencies from the New Harmony Project, Voice & Vision and a presentation at Barrington Stage – music by Janice Lowe), *IN A LAKE OF FIRE* (Williamstheatre – music by Greg Pliska), winner of the Moss Hart Award and Finalist for the Richard Rodgers Awards, *LUCKY HANS* (White Bird Productions – music by Danny Ashkenasi), and *CYBER-ALICE* (Lincoln Center Directors Lab at HERE – music by Sunmee Cho). Marjorie is a graduate of Williams College and NYU's Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program.

Letters from Jakarta and Bangalore...

Each TaPS event is a unique experience for students and teachers alike; and often one that sits firmly within a wider cultural context. I was delighted that ISTA returned to Bali this year. Just as we hope to return to New York in October 2010; we will, for sure, be returning to Bali in October 2011... A date for your diary?

From Tom Schulz and students at Jakarta International School (JIS)

Dear Kindred Spirits,

For the JIS contingent this event was a reaffirmation of the magic of Bali. Jaded by too many trips to Kuta, many had lost the feeling that Bali is 'special'. Thanks to Rucina and her husband, and the incredible support of the wonderful people they drew together to host us, we returned to Jakarta feeling blessed to live in such an incredible country. Many of my students are Indonesians, and I have already heard from appreciative parents, thanking ISTA for providing their students with this amazing, important experience. The range of Balinese performances and workshops were of the highest quality I have experienced in my 16 years in the country.

I echo the sentiments of the teachers and ISTA staff who found deep and meaningful Professional Development in those four days, thanks to Jeff Aitken and the collegiality of all involved. I came back to school not only with a greater understanding of the design and delivery of the IB curriculum, but a vast array of practical approaches and exercises I can put into immediate use with my students. My students got the same from their work with the ensemble leaders.

I am so energized and inspired that I immediately launched into detailed planning for when JIS hosts TaPS in November of

2010. We are not going to even try to focus on the performing arts of the region after Bali...that would be an exercise in futility! Instead I am bringing in an eclectic range of artists to focus on 'the cutting edge of contemporary theatre... from a more western perspective'. So I hope to see many of you here in Jakarta next year to continue those incredible discussions we have been having over the years...more to follow on that soon.

A huge round of applause and standing ovation to Rucina and to ISTA staff Liane, Jeff, Moira, Joachim, Darren and Maggie!

With heartfelt thanks.

From students at The International School of Bangalore

For the TISB students our recent experience at the ISTA TaPS workshop was one that will remain etched in our memories forever. Often associated with beaches, trends, zest and fun we felt it time to discover the artistic side of Bali, and this workshop was the ideal platform. From Kecak, Topeng, and Gamelan to Shadow Puppetry, each event outshined the other. The heavy influence of culture, music and dance in theatre was intriguing to us students. After this trip we understood our approach to the Theatre Arts more uniquely and believe that the workshop was of tremendous inspiration for our future assignments. Each one of us has returned rejuvenated and having gained a better understanding of various aspects of theatre important for the IB curriculum. We would like to thank ISTA for organising this workshop and providing an amazing insight into Balinese culture.

We would also like to offer our sincere thanks to Rucina and to ISTA staff Maggie, Lianne, Darren, Jeff, Moira and Joachim! Their constant support made this experience impeccably smooth.

THEATRE GROUP DZIECI

AND AN INTERVIEW WITH MATT MITLER

Dzieci presented master classes and their performance of Makbet at both the student TaPS and at the Level 3 IB Theatre (Diploma) teacher workshop in New York in October this year. The company has previously worked with students at Atlanta International School and sincere thanks to Rob Warren for introducing us!

Dzieci (dzyeh-chee) is an international experimental theatre ensemble dedicated to a search for the “sacred” through the medium of theatre.

Using techniques garnered from such theatre masters as Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba and Peter Brook, ritual forms derived from Native American and Eastern spiritual disciplines, and an ethic based securely in Humanistic Psychology, Dzieci aims to create a theatre that is as equally engaged with personal transformation as it is with public presentation.

Towards this aim, the ensemble balances its work on performance with work of service, through creative and therapeutic interaction in hospitals and a variety of institutional settings. Dzieci believes helping others generates a profound healing effect that not only serves the patient but also strengthens the ensemble’s work.

Dzieci is firmly dedicated to process. Our theatrical creations come organically over a long period of time, and a relationship with the world around us is essential. Therefore, public demonstrations of the work in progress are offered along the way, along with para-theatrical workshops, which invite participants to experience the work underlying our most current investigations.

“Dzieci” is the Polish word for “Children”.

Taken from Dzieci website – <http://www.dziecitheatre.org/>

name, Dzieci, but they couldn’t come up with anything better. We had one Polish actress in the company at the time, she liked the name.

Later, while Dzieci was going through its initial agonizing growing pains, I regretted the choice myself, as it seemed I was cursed to work with a company that would be eternally childlike and never mature. Fortunately, that didn’t last forever.

Dzieci’s performances in hospitals have been described as the ‘marrow’ of your work. How did this work begin? How has it evolved?

The element of service in Dzieci predates my earliest interest in theatre. I need to emphasize that this work we do in hospitals is in no way altruistic, we do it because it has a purifying effect on ourselves; it helps us find the way to approach our craft as an act of service. That people are comforted, or empowered, or even healed, is a most welcome result, but it is not the aim.

I began working with disadvantaged communities in my adolescence; summer programmes, camps, etc. I had an aptitude for fine art, so much of the work I did at first fell under the category of Art Therapy, but there was a whole social aspect to the interactions. In High School, I began to study Psychology, which presented a clearer perspective of what I was engaged with and what might be the potential. I began to experiment, being drawn to “difficult” personalities, and found that empowerment was key to growth and integration. At this time, such work was highly fulfilling for me, and I was keenly aware of its personal therapeutic value.

I am suspicious of what motivates people, including myself, and

group together herself.

We agreed to begin by offering an open all day workshop and see who might want to continue after such an experience. I think almost twenty participants came at first, many from other countries, and by the following week we were down to twelve. A week or so after that, we had six and then I brought in a few of my own contacts to put us at nine.

This was in the early part of 1997. We started taking the group seriously sometime in the spring and began to search for a name. I wanted something evocative and because of my theatrical lineage, Polish, I proposed, “Dzieci.” It means, “children”, conveying innocence, play, creativity, not simply in describing ourselves, but also a way in which we wished to engage others. And it conveys the notion of beginning anew, always being a novice. There is no mastery; there are only new levels to begin at.

Anyhow, no one seemed to like the

When was Dzieci created and how did it come about?

I was teaching a series of master classes at the Michael Chekhov Studio in NY, and one of the

students, Yvonne Brecht, came up to me at the end of the sessions and said, “I want to work like this all the time.” And I said, “So do I.” She asked me how that might be possible and I told her that it wasn’t. I said that I’d had a group once in Europe, but that Europeans have an entirely different orientation, and I didn’t think a group like that could be created here in the states. Yvonne, a Swiss immigrant, asked how many people would I need for a group. I told her at least six but it would be best to start with ten or twelve, and that she’d have to put the





Cabrini Medical Centre

particularly so of artists. There is something about depriving the usual gratification due to the performer, applause, laughter, adulation; that calls into question what I wish to serve, what I make my God. This is a process of negation; first I must see what I do serve, what I automatically, perhaps even pathologically serve. I must make it conscious. Is it a need? A need for attention? A need to exhibit myself? Am I lacking some inner quality that I must desperately fill from outside? Do I have any choice in the matter? And am I willing to suffer the truth?

The hospital work is an unrelenting, unsparing battleground. It is the basic training for Dzieci and it is the prerequisite for all our other work. It separates those who truly wish to dedicate themselves to this practice and those who may only think that's what they want.

The patients we interact with (there is no "performance" per se) are naked, without artifice. They may be suffering in some form or other but their essence is manifest. Any mask I may have is magnified in their presence, so I am called to drop that mask. I am called to be authentic, to be naked as well. As we work in a group, there is then a process of blending amongst ourselves, moving more deeply towards something essential. Listening.

This is a process of sensitizing. At the same time, it is a study in energy management. If we spend six hours in a hospital, singing, healing, going from bed to bed, we have many opportunities to see how our own energy ebbs and flows. So, there is a work on attention beneath everything. A self-study. This is the key to all of our work and it is this, which begins to guide us. I see that if I am attentive, there is an energy in myself, which can become more refined throughout the day. In fact, I may even be left at the end with more energy, with a finer energy, than what I came in with. And that is a blessing.



Hospital work

I think our hospital work (in fact, all of our work) has become more intuitive over the years. I've engaged with every population there is: blind, deaf, schizophrenic, geriatric, children with aids, prisoners, you name it. Part of my aim in Dzieci is to offer such experiences to the members of the company, for them to find for themselves what is necessary under these conditions. Again, the first step is often finding out what is not necessary. But one of things I've witnessed is that we become less and less muscular, more trusting of the unknown, allowing something new to unfold, and this something new is often initiated by the patient/client. It is important to note that this is not so different from our work with other populations, actors included.

Which leads us to the next question(s).

What are the main differences and similarities between your work in hospitals and your performance work; with reference to

a. Content and material

b. Relationship to audience

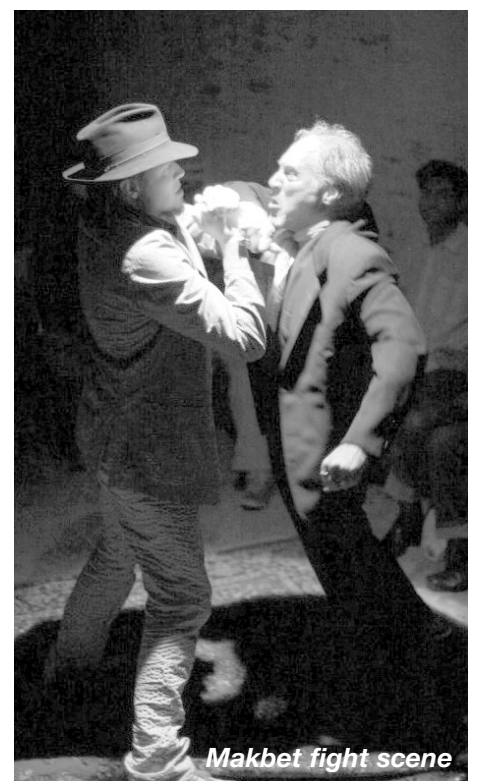
Well, I've just said that there is not much difference between Dzieci's hospital work and performance work with respect to the relationship with our audience. As far as content of material is concerned, there can be many elements that are dissimilar, just as from hospital to hospital, and community to community there are differences. It is the similarities, which interest me the most, but I can say that in a hospice situation or with the elderly, we will go from bed to bed, and sing hymns and chants. We will sing even if the person is in a coma. With children in a psychiatric hospital, let's say, we will create an environment where we can initiate some sort of tribal rite, which can then transform into trust exercises. At a certain point, these trust exercises might lead to role reversals, where we have staff leaping off of tables into children's arms. This becomes an

absolutely boisterous high-energy encounter, whereas the bed to work is very delicate, very subtle.

None of this is alien to our process; the hospital work is the same work that we do amongst ourselves in building and strengthening the ensemble. Some of these elements may be glimpsed within our public performances; certainly the level of encounter, between ourselves and the patients we serve, is identical to the level at which we meet a public audience. The effort is to retain the purity of the interactions of the service work in order to approach the public work with that same integrity, to make performance an act of service.

There is this back and forth, this beginning again and again and again. Work in hospitals, stillness, work on the street, stillness, work in the theatre, stillness, working silly, working rationally, in daylight, in darkness, in workshops, in private, stillness, stillness, stillness. Always returning, circling back, and every time we return, there is something new gained, something deepened, there are revelations and moments of grace that are almost impossible to describe.

We have returned to *Fools Mass* annually for eleven years now. Can you imagine living with a production in that way, eternally rehearsing? And beyond this, there are our own relationships to each other in the group, sharing a history of experience as varied as if we were daring adventurers.



Makbet fight scene



In rehearsal

This is why it is sometimes hard to use the word *theatre*; we are really engaged in something else. Some may do theatre for the sake of theatre; we do theatre for the sake of our selves, for our salvation.

Your brief spans that of:

- Working with the elderly, ill or dying
- Working with staff in institutions
- Working with religious institutions
- Workshops
- Performances

How comfortably do these different facets of Dzieci's work sit with each other?

More and more the work becomes basically the same. The different kinds of populations, from dying patients to clergy to young actors, all become simply human beings. And by "simply", I mean what's at the core of being human, the essence. Not that I know what that is, but that I embrace the mystery. And as I approach the work in this way, I find that elusive element within myself, which corresponds.

We are non-verbal in our hospital work as a way of meeting on this very basic level. We are also non-verbal in our workshops for the same reason. Our typical rehearsal day is equally stripped of superficial behavior.

Years ago, I was teaching at an institute for schizophrenia in Poland, and during a workshop with staff and patients, I was shocked to see the staff express themselves negatively, even violently, during certain improvisations. It took some time to accept that these

are the conditions and that change comes slowly and that the best I can do is work equally with everyone from a place of non-judgment.

I have made a point over the years not to find out any background on who I'm working with. I don't want to know a patient's diagnosis. I don't even want to know who's a patient and who's staff. Or who is a lay minister, and who is a Roman Catholic priest. Or who is in High School and who is a film star. When someone new comes to work with Dzieci, I don't ask for his or her resume. I don't want to know anything about their history at all. Who they are in the present moment is all that concerns me, and from that place of meeting, anything is possible.

Dzieci has attracted certain communities who request our services. We seem to spend a great deal of time working with clergy and religious institutions. Work of this nature is immensely gratifying. The people we make contact with are deeply questioning, there is little or no superficiality, something is at risk. The demand for us to be present and responsible, to reveal ourselves, is all the greater and the rewards commensurate.

We move easily among religious and spiritual institutions. Because Dzieci is essentially non-denominational, and inter-spiritual, with the group seeking out and participating in a wide array of ceremonies and rituals, we can be accepted, even embraced by communities as diverse as Benedictine nuns, Kabalistic Jews, and Peruvian shamans. Again, the commonality is what is of primary interest.

For hospitals and healing centers, the work with staff is a practical matter. How can change have any continuity without empowerment? But staff rarely volunteer for our creative encounters, so we have to be clever about it, altering the group dynamic almost invisibly, until they are drawn in or until they just can't say, No. I wish that Dzieci could work more directly with staff in the helping professions, from my earliest days of studying psychotherapy; I have been a major proponent of institutional reform. The best reform is initiated from the seeds of human encounter.

Within this spectrum of workshops, performances, hospital work, specialized trainings and retreats, there is a possibility of seeing what in myself

can be constant. Interestingly enough, the more I pay attention to that, the more constant that becomes.

In your performance of Makbet you take inspiration from the gypsies of Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. How did this come about?

This is a perfect illustration of our process in general. *Makbet* is a steppingstone for Dzieci. We have an area of inquiry and as we delve into this area, we begin to pave a pathway. We find that certain tools become necessary, but we need to create those tools sometimes. The initial investigation began with an exploration of "Trickster", the trickster myth. We felt a need to find a way to inhabit such qualities in ourselves, both in performance and in our personal lives (the two are never disjointed in Dzieci anyhow). We had spent so much time with our Fools characters from *Fools Mass*, which are so innocent and vulnerable. We needed a complement to that.

We focused at first on Loki of the Nordic mythologies. This led to a study of the ancient saga of, *Ragnarok*. We felt that Gypsies could be a representation of trickster in human form, so we became Gypsies telling the story of *Ragnarok*. *Ragnarok* is Nordic, so we began to learn hymns and chants from Scandinavia. But the fantasy Gypsies that we were creating were Eastern European, so we also learned music from that geography.

And then we hit an impasse. *Ragnarok* was too sprawling a tale, too epic. We had started with the fable of Loki and the death of Baldur, but the deeper we went into *Ragnarok*, the more we felt the need to encompass its entirety. And more. Especially after 9/11, when we decided that we needed to take the story through to the end, the complete destruction of the world, and beyond into the birth of the new age. But now we had a concrete theme to work with: Holy Destruction.

All the while, we were creating interactions as Gypsies, in hospitals, on the street, finding the freedom in that role. We had been studying healing and intuitive work for some time as well, and this now took on a Gypsy flavor. But if we were going to create *Ragnarok* from scratch, through improvisation (as was the plan), then we needed a preliminary project to get us into shape. *Fools Mass* had served a similar purpose in developing our adaptation of *The Devils of Loudun*. *Fools Mass* ended up with a life of its



Fools Mass

own, (in fact a longer life than *Devils*). At any rate, we were familiar with creating projects in order to serve more distant projects.

But we needed a piece that involved text. Since working on *Devils*, everyone was in agreement that if we were to work with text, the text had to be of the highest value, beyond our measure. Something out of reach, that we would have to rise up to meet. *Devils* used a collage of classical and sacred sources, and Shakespeare fit this category perfectly. With the idea of Holy Destruction in mind, and Gypsies singing Eastern European and Scandinavian chants and folk songs, I proposed *Macbeth*. I had worked on *Macbeth* at various times in my life, (traditionally, comically, and in one case with a cast of children), and had already created a number of scaled down versions of the text.

We all agreed and began with one of my adaptations, subtracting and adding as needed. This process alone took the better part of two years, during which time we learned all of the lines by heart through a process of oral transmission. No one was given scripts until they had learned the lines from someone else's lips. This is the same way we learn all of our music, but we hadn't taken on the practice with text before.

I spoke earlier of the need for a complement. Complementarity is crucial for Dzieci. We have periods of intense effort, but these are counter balanced by being still. We created *Fools Mass*, which was highly improvisational, with no text, and followed that with *Devils of Loudun*, which had densely layered text and every single moment on stage meticulously choreographed. (There is no "off stage" with Dzieci anyhow.)

Makbet is wildly spontaneous, but the text anchors us. I would be foolish to predict what *Ragnarok* will be, I never predetermine the outcome of my work, but I know that it will follow certain themes, certain laws, which



govern the process. And that process is a source of transformation.

I feel now, six years from our initial foray, that we are just beginning to bring this production of *Makbet* to life, and that more and more, it is fulfilling its original objective. Projects chosen in Dzieci must be able to lend themselves to unending investigation. We know that if we take a project on, it is a marriage.

You are based in New York – are your actors mostly North American or do they hail from different places? How important is an international approach/perspective to your work?

My aesthetic is international, cross-cultural, inter-spiritual. It is important to me that the work has enough richness to be appreciated by audiences that speak other languages, or no language; that the work resonates equally for the blind as for the deaf. Our approach is classically related to the experimental theatre of Europe in the 60's and 70's but also has influences that range as far back as the ancient Hindu tutelary deity, Bharata.

My personal development is most informed by international theatre, particularly Polish theatre, and I aspire to participate in this realm. From its inception, Dzieci has attracted participants from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Company membership changes over the years but has always remained diverse. This applies as much to geographic origin as it does to individual spiritual discipline.

We do not actively seek this arrangement, but the company began in this fashion and has continued to attract in such a manner, though the current makeup is predominantly North American.

I wouldn't say that an international approach or perspective is important in the work, because it is the work. It can't be otherwise. It is my own orientation; it is what interests me, what gives me pleasure, and what

nurtures my growth.

As Dzieci has developed have you taken Grotowski's work in any new directions? Have his original ideas been adapted/developed in any way? Or is it important for you to stay as 'true' as possible to his original ideas?

One aspect must be made clear: the work is a continuum; it is a path, a direction, an aim. Even to speak about Grotowski in terms of "new direction", there is only *the direction*. If we talk about Grotowski's efforts in the 60's, it is the plasticity of the body, the Holy Actor. If we speak about the 70's, it is something more communal, the Paratheatrical experiments. The 80's brought The Theatre of Sources. If we isolate any period of experimentation, we are the fabled blind men describing the elephant. There is then a problem that is of equal concern, regarding transmission: teachers bringing a frozen moment of history. No moment can exist frozen in time. Even as our richest memories are perceived only through the haze of history, no teaching can truly live without the relationship to what has preceded it. And what is to follow.

If you were to represent me by presenting one of my workshops from thirty years ago, I would be made a fool. Yet, within that past workshop would be the seeds of what I am doing today, and without that prior exploration, I would not be here now. Both the work of 1979 and the work of 2009 are needed to begin to understand where the next steps may lead. It is the continuum that defines the path, and it is the path that is the real teaching.

So, do I take Grotowski's work in new directions? I am not Grotowski. I appreciate and honor Grotowski. I am influenced by Grotowski. I also disagree with him and that disagreement has in no small part fueled the direction that Dzieci has taken. But I feel there is an aim, which

Grotowski stayed faithful to, and I believe I have been faithful to a similar aim. And there are principles in Grotowski's work, which are sacred principles. These principles have been around for millennia, and I am an adherent to these principles.

There are also practical matters where I find myself synonymous with Grotowski. Certainly my studies with his company, and in particular, with his lead actor, Ryszard Cieslak, have left me with forms that have been useful to follow. I have adopted the term *paratheatrical* to describe Dzieci's workshops and those workshops are always non-verbal. We offer marathon sessions that are similar in nature to the Tree of People Project, we practice *beehives*. We also make direct contact with each other when exercising, work on acrobatics and yoga. We use candles a lot. In performance, we are the quintessentially *Poor Theatre*. There is rarely a set or a lighting design, there is no proscenium, no curtains, barely any props, and we gravitate towards intimate and, when possible, sacred spaces. Or take a pedestrian space and make it sacrosanct.

Most of these forms came out of my own explorations, not as an effort to emulate The Polish Theatre Laboratory. Some were in my domain before I ever went to Poland, and some I came to organically, as I followed my own line of inquiry.

People witness Dzieci's work and find parallels to Grotowski. I realize that even in using the word, "witness", I am following Grotowski. How much of what I do is influenced in this manner? How much am I not even aware of? Certainly Grotowski is not my only influence, but when it comes to theatre, his name is the one that reverberates. Am I true to Grotowski? I can't answer that nor do I really care to. I am true to myself. And if I am sincere, I have to thank Grotowski, in large part, for that.

I must make mention of one radical difference with Grotowski, but in keeping with our idea of complementarity. That is that Dzieci also performs on subways and street corners, and we move quite comfortably from cathedrals to burlesque houses, and from drama to slapstick. We dare to practice Holy Theatre under the guise of fools and idiots, and have made a serious study of comedy.

What are your views on the New

York Theatre scene?

I like movies. Honestly, I find most theatre painful to experience. I have seen some glorious productions in New York, don't get me wrong. Even on Broadway, *The Seagull* last summer, Steppenwolf's *Grape's of Wrath* some years ago. Or at BAM, Peter Brook's *Hamlet*. But for the most part, I am unmoved. I have no interest in multimedia, or cleverness, or showcasing. There are actors who I have followed, who I have found worthwhile, and playwrights, sometimes set designers, but the whole package rarely comes together for me. I am interested in questions, in the work that evolves from a question, not the work that postulates an answer.

Grotowski said that he wasn't interested in making plays to teach others what he already knew. I saw a great deal of theatre in Poland when I was living there in the late 70's and early 80's, not only Grotowski's astonishing work, and a great deal of what I saw then still lives within me today. Perhaps I am spoiled by those experiences. In fact, I know I am.

From our experiences of working with your company at TaPS recently, your workshops are more experiential than overtly instructional. Why is this approach most suitable for the content do you think?

Again it's as much a matter of personal choice as anything else. It's what worked for me, what still works for me. I can analyze the approach and say that experience is the only teacher. That more than skills, what we wish to impart is a way of learning, a way of being with others. But the truth of the matter is that the process has evolved intuitively, with understanding being an after effect. Now I know that the key element is to provide conditions for seeing oneself. That real study is self-study. But what will I say ten years from now?

I was initiated into this form of theatre, the *Holy Theatre*, as Brook describes it. This was my catechism, though I didn't know that at the time. All I knew was that some part of me was benefitting from working in this way and that some part of me was being changed forever.

In referencing change, there are two forms of change we discuss: change of state and change of being. The latter is what we value in Dzieci. The methodologies we use have proven to



Cirkus

support that. Ideally, we are seeking transformation, an arising. Authenticity. Freedom. We find that working in a group is a great help in this process, and that placing ourselves under certain conditions (sometimes creating those conditions), allows for the possibility of being *acted upon*. Something is still required from us, certainly, but the aim is to be acted upon.

What are the key elements of Grotowski's work for, say, 17 year olds learning about theatre today?

Again, I can only speak about myself. I didn't become interested in theatre until I was seventeen and it was a revelation for me. I was particularly taken by the expressionistic, existential, and absurdist playwrights, but it was all a wonder. A year later, I encountered acting as an experimental process. The people I initially trained with all had a relationship to Grotowski and his teachings, (some had studied with him personally), and I had read Peter Brook's, *The Empty Space*, so I had some reference myself. I moved on to *Towards a Poor Theatre* and then, three years later, I moved on to Poland for the direct experience.

Just as the student of painting studies Realism, Impressionism, Cubism, Modernism, and the student of religion studies Catholicism, Judaism, Islam, Hindu, Buddhism, and more, so should the student of theatre have as large a platter as possible from which to feast off of. That Grotowski represents (and not only for me), a lineage that represents theatre as a sacred practice, places all the more importance on his inclusion in the canon.

When I first journeyed to the Polish Theatre Laboratory, they were calling their method of training, *Actor's Therapy*. What is most vital about this approach is that it proves to be of value for the non-actor as well as the actor, or more pertinently, it is valuable whether or not one ever even becomes an actor.



Foolsbread

The practice of finding trust by facing fears, of breaking down personal barriers, of nourishing that within ourselves which is related to essence. Training in this lineage (and I include Dzieci here), is a rite of passage. What better age to begin such a practice than seventeen?

How do you view Grotowski's 'tradition' of theatre within its historical context?

I've mentioned a lineage. I am not versed well enough in history or anthropology to present a fully educated commentary, but I believe that the *tradition* we refer to here is the source of sacred ceremony. When we use the word, *theatre* in this context, we are talking solely about the *Holy Theatre*. Grotowski is not alone here, he himself cites Stanislavski. We know the influence Grotowski has had on Peter Brook and Eugenio Barba. But the real tradition goes back to the sacred dances of the Essenes, it goes back to Bharata and the ancient Vedic practices, it goes back to the first time somebody made a fire and chanted to the stars.

What was theatre in its origin? What did Stanislavski search for at the end of his life? What is a Catholic Mass? A Sufi Zikr? A Native American Sweat Lodge? Grotowski was steeped in philosophic, religious, and spiritual studies. This informed his theatrical research more than anything. He stripped away all that was unessential, the *Via Negativa*, to find what remains. Under the charred crust of a lifeless form, he found a burning ember. Again, this ember is not the property of Grotowski, you could say that it belongs to all of us; it is our birthright. But we rarely consider its existence, let alone seek it out. And from this ember

it is possible to create a blaze.

So, you won't find *Apocalypsis Cum Figuris* in the *The Best New Plays of 1969*. You won't find Grotowski getting an OBIE Award. But if you have an interest in theatre as a discipline with a potential for the evolutionary development of humankind, then Grotowski must be given his due. And the fact that I, and others like me, continue on this path as a direct result of our encounters with his work, and that we have had our own influence on countless younger practitioners, proves that the line of transmission which Grotowski was a part of, remains unbroken.

What are your goals for Dzieci for the foreseeable future?

When I think back to what I imagined Dzieci becoming when we first began, it isn't what it is now. What it is now is not simply beyond my expectations, it is in a wholly different sphere than I could have ever imagined. Yet, the present incarnation of Dzieci comes as no surprise. It all seems rightful. In the beginning, I thought we'd have a production up and running in a year. That took two, and it wasn't even the production I was aiming for. I thought *The Devils of Loudun* would be ready in two years, that we'd bring it Off-Broadway, and become instant international sensations. It took six years; we brought it Off-Broadway, and barely made a ripple. I imagined Dzieci touring many world theatre festivals; we have been to none. We have participated in one international event, The Parliament of the World's Religions in Barcelona. It wasn't a theatre festival, and we were the only theatre company invited to perform.

At this point, when other theatre companies proudly announce that they are playing Edinburgh or Lincoln Center, I find myself glowing about an engagement at The Cathedral of Saint John the Divine or The Abbey of Regina Laudis. When someone flashes a New York Times review, I pull out our mention in The Encyclopedia of Religion. But it would still be nice to get a review in The Times, and tour a few festivals, and have funding and answer those particularly pressing material concerns.

At the same time, I continue to be nourished by this process we have undertaken and have seen the steady growth not just in the work itself but also in the individual practitioners who

have made up our ensemble. Along with this progress is a delicate movement of interest in what we are doing, an amassing of attention, from select communities and individuals who possess a certain special quality of introspection. From this, a larger community is beginning to become manifest along with a feeling of increasing support, of affirmation.

I have faith that we will continue to evolve and that the future of Dzieci will be completely unpredictable and absolutely perfect.

An appendix...

From the Theatre of Bharata
And account of the First Founding
of the Theatre

According to Divine Transmission
4th or 5th Century B.C.

Having produced the
knowledge of the theatre, the great
father said to Indra, the powerful:

"These myths which I have
generated within myself must be
transmitted to the gods.

"You must communicate this
sacred knowledge called the
theatre to skillful beings, beyond
the fire of knowledge, who walk
with daring, and who have
conquered inertia."

To these words uttered by
Brahma, Indra, the powerful,
joining his hands and bowing,
replied to the great father:

"The undisguised truth is that,
the gods, O blessed one, are not
capable of grasping, retaining,
understanding, and animating this
science. They cannot be entrusted
with the tasks of the theatre.

"But there are prophets who
know the mysteries of knowledge,
who have perfected their bows;
they will be able to grasp, apply,
and keep this teaching in their
memories."

Further articles/reading on Dzieci:

- Profile Dzieci Theatre by Elizabeth Cawns
In *Ecumenica*, a journal of theatre and performance. In Volume 2.1, Spring 2009
<http://www.dziecitheatre.org/dzfiles/dzieciecumenica.pdf>
- Essay on Grotowski, 'the total act', and Dzieci's work by Vanessa Boss
Student at Atlanta International School, USA. May 2010
<http://www.dziecitheatre.org/dzfiles/boss.pdf>

TaPS MASTER CLASS – New York, October 2009

“I and Thou – A Paratheatrical Exploration with Theatre Group Dzieci” Resource Pack

Dzieci Paratheatrical workshops are essentially non-verbal and improvisational experiences, with guidance gently provided by the ensemble through sound and gesture. Employing elements of ensemble theatre, meditation, psychotherapy, and ritual, the event flows in accordance with the nature of the participants and leads towards a heightening of consciousness and deepening of community.

Each workshop begins with a theme based on a current inquiry for Dzieci. Past themes have included: *In the Country of the Blind*, where blind and seeing participants worked together in absolute darkness; *The Hero's Journey*, employing tribal rites and archetypal narrative; *Circle of Fire*, exploring Native American ritual; and *Maraton*, a 24 hour total immersion in ritual creation which Dzieci offers annually each winter.

After decades of investigation and practice, company director, Matt Mitler, has developed a methodology that allows for both primal and spiritual interaction, forsaking the masks of habit and personality. With a background in experimental theatre and psychology, and an intensive spiritual training, Mr. Mitler communicates to the core of being through direct transmission.

Along with his company, Mitler brings this work into hospitals and institutions that serve marginalized and disadvantaged communities who have deep therapeutic needs. He also works with professionals and students in the fields of religion, psychology, art therapy, and theatre, serving all who seek a creative communal environment that is challenging and inspiring.

Dzieci has been hired to create specially designed workshops for such diverse clientele as: arts therapists, theology students, psychiatric staff, youth in crisis, clergy, and actors.

For participants, the workshop is a chance to work intimately with the company, while exploring the essence of Holy Theatre, a line of transmission, which includes the evolutionary investigations of Jerzy Grotowski and The Polish Theatre Laboratory. The workshop also serves as an entry for

potential members who may wish to join the work.

Dzieci was the only theatre group chosen to present at the 2003 Parliament of the World's Religions in Barcelona, and is profiled in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. Mr. Mitler and Dzieci are also featured in the anthology, *Working on the Inside: The Spiritual Life Through the Eyes of Actors*.

The following is an excerpt from a lyrical essay by a past workshop participant:

It wasn't the words, words were meaningless. It was all in the eyes, round, clear, deep pools. It was a coaxing out of my humanity, a breaking apart of the robot of me.

The small and plain room, empty except for cushions on the floor. It was dark. She led me to a cushion, with her hand, she suggested I sit, in silence, opposite me, she began to breathe. Matching my breath to hers in meditation, she raised a V with her fingers, directing my gaze to hers. I stared straight into them and we continued to breathe, breath was the only thing. I fell in and out of narrow focus on her eyes; noticing the impossibility of staring into both at once. I got lost in the shifting focus from one eye to the next. She looked so sad to me, I felt as if her gaze was filled with pity for me. I felt bad, I felt sorry for her having to stare into my pain. I began to feel a panic. I took a deep breath refocused my attention to her physical eye. I tried to stop thinking, just be a breath wave, I could hold it for only a glimpse then I would lose attention and fall back into thoughts, most of them a body fear, a silent sadness forming a stone between my shoulder blades. So it was breath; clear, focus, sadness, self awareness, self consciousness, fear, panic, deep breath, breathe, clear, focus, again and again, the same circular stumbling dance of mind. The limitations of contact between two people, between two minds, insurmountable; through this lens my heart was breaking. My shyness came to mind, my inability to open, just be human creature, without pretense. The urge to talk wasn't there, in fact, words were against the rules. The rules, who told me the rules? I read up on the workshop before I went, I knew the name of Jerzy Grotowski, I knew something, I thought I knew something.

There were others in the room, they were engaged in the same meditation. I felt their presence; as well, I felt the presence of the clock, and my creeping relentless panic. The knowledge of the clock, and by extension, the time, it was hanging on my shoulders. I was dizzy when the first one stood up.

Through some signal, a breath sound started, she was making a noise at the end of each breath. Then a forceful pushing of breath, three for each exhale, pushing out the lung in three hard bursts, reaching farther into the room for air on each inhale. The humming inhalation that began to my left, maybe, by others, the humming a trigger for the uncurling of legs, the taking of feet, we did it each in our time, seemingly guided, but without any signal that there was a charge directing us, directing, it was me alone standing and feeling the prickling light of blood rushing down. And then there was a circle. We were a circle, looking and breathing into the blank shape between us. We stepped to the right, then the left, taking steps forward and back, the side and the center, we moved together in our spot, each in his own spot, breathing.

I kept moving, fighting for the right steps, and wondering whether this had been a mistake. And there was a man suddenly in the center, adding notes to the breathing adding a song to the steps, a song like a prayer to the wind or a god with most unusual ears. He stalked the circle with wild eyes, open and howling. He was reaching out around the circle, reaching and grabbing with his eyes, searching for someone to join him. His song was fierce and strong, it bellowed and boasted, it asserted itself; it was a thing in the air, a form in the room. He took the hands of a woman, her eyes seemed very far away, she shook her head forcefully holding her eyes on him, passing the cup, but he refused to let her flee, she entered the circle and met his howl with a soft high note that played out like line from a kite, tight and urgently moving upward, out. She was there alone, and we all kept moving and breathing into her circle as the note climbed on its current.

There was a thunder over her note, a joining in, she turned toward it, she embraced it, that high reaching became harmony, became lightening in another sky, she came near to him, her lips almost against his, only the

vibration of song between them. Hand to hand, fingers entwined, they moved out of the circle and into the center. His voice was a deep baritone but fleet and agile it waved and spun long notes. Each sound caressed his face; his stare was a thousand polished river pebbles.

A perfect work, a confluence, the love of pure light, simple gain and simple surrender; it doesn't take into account audience just raw completion; a solitary madness. It sings about itself. He washed over me; his gold coral tree and I pulled into it, waved and fluttered around it I broke over his baritone with a quavering banshee moan. I was an old woman, my voice palsied and crying, I was my grandmother with nothing left to do but wait for god, but I wasn't waiting. It was not my lungs, a trembling washed over my hands, my legs, a twisted, twisted, twisted willow shimmering within, and my voice was fire and wet smoke, all the waters of the earth. I opened my eyes, I was in the center and I was scared, I reached out for help, I reached around the circle at the eye repeated, curly hair and young face, drawn and pale woman with cheep yarn hair, bull with face stubble vainglorious and sympathetic. I looked away and cried again, vomiting sound.

A porcelain and blond voice next to the flames, was reaching into the circle into old worried woman me. I smiled into her, taken by the throat of her hands and turning sweetly, spinning gently, greeting grace with my own humble offering. She was lifted, each foot on steady grounded point, dipping her whirl of gosling feather intoning, drifting on a bubble beach. She was dancing. Palms spread upward

drawing in the air of gold and copper breasts which beat together their thumping exhalations using us as spandrels she built a tower to heaven.

I was breathing, pulling lustfully at the rope of air, stomach against spine with each exhalation, the stone in my shoulders becoming a current, I was a melted gun, dumb and blind and my legs carried me around, carried the circle as it rattled and shook, expanding to entropy and we were not getting old, we were dancing on each other, reaching out with our eyes lighting candles of touch. My wrist passed over forearm, breast and back, the back of my hand over cheeks, salt hair tangled in my fingertips. I spun and slid among and around, meeting eyes, staring into the hollow of collarbones, soaking in sweet and rhythm. But there was no music, just breathing. Hell is chattering, the shedding of words like blood. The murder of meaning. The drum beat wore a beard, she touched her shoulder to my chest, the drumbeat stroked my open throat, she grabbed me underarm and tossed into the air, I hung and spun, she smiled, the drum beat spoke, she swore, she sang, the drumbeat charged around the room, she offered both hands to me, we spun around the fulcrum of the heart.

James Chris Fields 2009

Resources and Follow Up Material Reading List (in no particular order)

How Can I Help? – Ram Dass & Paul Gorman
Practical Intuition – Laura Day
The Mystic in the Theatre: Eleonora Dusa – Eva Le Gallienne
Stanislavsky in Rehearsal: The Final Years - Vasily Torporkov

Towards a Poor Theatre (last chapter – 'Statement of Principles') – Jerzy Grotowski

The Theatre of Grotowski – Jennifer Kumiega

Between Two Silences: Talking With Peter Brook – Dale Moffitt & Peter Brook

Liberating Rites: Understanding the Transformative Power of Ritual – Tom F. Driver

The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic

Life of Property – Lewis Hyde

The Art of War – Sun Tzu

The Gospel of Thomas (from The Nag Hammadi Library)

Films

My Dinner with Andre – Louis Malle

Resurrection – Daniel Petrie

Meetings with Remarkable Men (the last 15 minutes) – Peter Brook

Links

On Makbet:

I'm Seeing Green: The Unnamable Play at the Old Stone House

<http://dziecitheatre.org/dzfiles/foodcooparticle-april2008.pdf>

Rockaway Artists Alliance Hosts

Dzieci's Makbet I www.rockawave.com

I Wave of Long Island

On Fools Mass:

<http://www.dziecitheatre.org/dzfiles/enyclopedia2.html>

On Dzieci:

http://owendaly.com/jeff/Sacrifice_Dzieci.pdf

KadmusArts - where culture speaks »

Blog Archive » Interview: Matt Mitler

<http://www.wnyc.org/shows/soundcheck/episodes/2003/01/07>

On Grotowski-

<http://owendaly.com/jeff/grotows2.htm>

http://www.rtjournal.org/vol_4/no_2/lavy2.html



Quotes from Atlanta International School students attending the New York TaPS:

"ISTA New York was an amazing experience. I will go back to the classroom with a better understanding of IB Theatre. Awesome!"

Jonathan Winston

"A different, enriching and motivating trip which I know will help me further my IB Theatre career. I loved all the different experiences and liked how the three days were so varied from seeing performances, to performing, to listening, to experiencing the theatre of New York."

Anastasia Owen

"The ISTA TaPS New York was an unbelievably phenomenal experience for a developing theatre artist. I have been greatly influenced and inspired."

Vanessa Boss

"A motivating, inspiring, and enriching programme that gave me experiences that I could never have gotten in the classroom!"

Amy O'Halloran

A PRACTITIONER'S PATHWAY

■ By **Matt Mitler**

I have often said, the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, but it's not very interesting. I will attempt to encapsulate a life that remains in process, sketching a trajectory as a stone skips over the surface of a pond. For any deeper resonances, one will have to submerge without my assistance.

I was not a still child and asked those classically uncomfortable questions about God and life and death and infinity that bring silence to the lips of most adults. For some reason, I seemed to show an aptitude for fine art and, at the age of five, was placed in a private course for children much older than myself. This training continued far into my teens and left me with a visceral appreciation for creativity, which eventually yielded an understanding of the transformative power of art.

And more questions. Why do we create? What is served? Who am I? Fine art crossed paths with psychology and I began to work with disadvantaged communities as a junior art therapist. Psychology, at this time, was not a key toward some deeper understanding of myself. I was not so clear of thought and deed. I was erratic and troubled, treading water without knowing how to swim. Psychology was a lifeline. At the age of sixteen, I was chosen to be a participant in a model program for peer counselors in High Schools. Training was provided by a two psychologists and a counselor from Day Top Village (a 'hard love' drug rehab program). Encounter group techniques provided the basic building blocks. I was not to come across this sort of process again until I discovered experimental ensemble theatre three years later.

But I did discover theatre before that. I'd been exposed to performance throughout my childhood; plays, concerts, comedy. This too had its influence and the art world often congregated with the theatre world and when it did, I was there. I was terrified and thrilled by acting, but if the world was a stage, I always kept one foot in the wings.

I found a University program for Psychology majors who would design their own programs and was accepted with a concurrent study of art, film, video, and theatre, and a thesis: *Sanity, Madness, and Creativity*. Then, a month or so before beginning my freshman year, I almost died in a car accident.

It is impossible to weigh the joys and sorrows of life and know where the balance lies. All I know is that I was in a hospital, conscious enough to hear that I would likely die. And I know that my recovery, which was slow and painful, has given me a rather personal view of what being disabled is like, and also that the service work which I have dedicated myself to, even to this day, is no accident. But the shock had its consequences, questions that had furrowed my juvenile brow returned with a vengeance. I was adrift and alone. I sought salvation but had no idea where to look. I happened upon a notice in the local free paper, an audition for a new theatre company. Two words stood out: Gestalt and Holy.

I was the youngest in the company. We worked for five or six hours straight, two or three nights a week in the open sanctuary of an old church. I was brought to the brink of my abilities, the precipice of my fears, and yet I stuck with it. This time I understood that I needed this work. I needed it for my survival. In six months, something broke free in me, or maybe something broke that contained that which had been free all along. Whatever it was, I became dedicated to the process. The process of self-discovery.

When the theatre company disbanded, instead of applying myself to further studies at university, I dropped out and began to audition for plays. Classical, experimental, it didn't matter. I joined another company and was trained in mime and in a year I was directing and designing programs for disadvantaged populations in hospitals and other institutions, formulating the initial methodology for a creative, non-verbal therapy.

There is something about facing the frontier; once faced it no longer exists, it becomes known. A new frontier must be approached. Near death had its allure, so did the far-reaching realms of creativity. I applied for a grant to study theatre in Poland. I'd worked with people who had studied with Grotowski, I'd read *Towards a Poor Theatre*, and I needed to go to the source. The program included studies throughout Poland and I took advantage of contacts I'd made at theatres and government agencies to set up performances when I got there. I also squeezed my performing partner onto the

ticket.

We went to Poland in 1977. It was still Soviet ruled. It was grey and dismal and oppressed and the creative spirit soared. I had never before seen art of this level, or witnessed a people so downtrodden, behaving so compassionately. We performed, we worked in hospitals, we became national figures. And we studied with Grotowski. More specifically, with his lead actor, Ryszard Cieslak. I have had the good fortune to study with many masters: Eugenio Barba, Jean Huston, Elizabeth Coghurn, Michel de Salzmann, Carl Rogers, R. D. Laing, but Cieslak was my first, and I returned to him before his death.

Work in Poland led me to a guest position teaching at the University of Psychology of Warsaw and many contacts in the more humanistic and radical realms of psychotherapy. My dream had been to join Grotowski's company, The Polish Theatre Laboratory, but when the offer came a year later, I already had my own company in Amsterdam and was leading workshops across Europe. I had also seen behind the curtain at the Theatre Lab. It seemed that, though the company members were ostensibly perfected beings in the shelter of the theatre, they were somewhat less so in their daily lives. I found this to be endemic in many circles, and began to wish for a process that would inform the personal life as much as the creative one. Perhaps even utilize the creative life to inform the personal.

This led me to one the fathers of Humanistic Psychology, Carl Rogers, who took me on a more internalized journey, a way of being rather than doing. And for a time, this took me away from theatre. What followed were searches that brought me in touch with more mystical practices, with Shamanism, meditation, sacred dance. Enough adventures for a volume of essays. I have swung back and forth periodically since then, between inner and outer study, between therapy and theatre. Self-study is not a school one graduates from. In the winter of 1997, Theatre Group Dzieci came into being, and with it, a confluence of all the themes of my life, and a work on the self within community that utilizes art as a vehicle, not an aim. But the path has not yet come to an end.



ISTA and the American Museum of Natural History

October 15-17 2009 at the AMNH saw a new collaboration for ISTA and our first Level 3 IB Theatre (Diploma) workshop. This workshop came about having met Rob Steiner at an IB Americas Workshop Providers meeting two years ago. We talked about the possibility of collaboration and of holding a Level 3 workshop at the museum. A year later I visited the museum to spend the day with Rob and talk further about how the collaboration might work; and what the Level 3 workshop might look like. Further dialogue took place with Dinos Aristidou, workshop leader, about goals and session outlines; and finally all our plans and ideas came to fruition as 20 teachers gathered on the steps of the museum...

INSIGHTS, INSPIRATIONS AND RESOURCES...

The workshop focused on using the museum as a stimulus for creating units of work, resources and models of practice.

Dinos approached the museum as a resource, an inspiration and a building.



Session Notes (from Dinos)

1. Introductions and Purpose – Theatre and the Museum

Focussed on clarifying purpose and dealing with expectations. Exercises to build ensemble and to get the participants to reflect on themselves and their programmes and their work.

2. Tour: Museum Highlights

Offered by the museum. This

focussed on how the museum deals with different types of audience from the 'flash' visitor to the one really interested.

3. The Individual and the Museum: Collections, Collectors, Stories and independent inspirations

Working in the *Margaret Mead Hall of Pacific Peoples*. Looked at working with objects of individual interest and the importance of independent work and working with your interest. Then looked at the objects as part of a collection and looked at the story of the anthropologist. Focussed on context and how this relates to world theatre practice, independent project and how we organise ideas to tell a story.

4. Museum as Centre of Learning: Identifying Approaches to Research

3 groups had to work on a research project – one group focussed on 'The Building', another group on 'The People' and the third group on 'The Museum's Purpose'. They had to develop a research strategy and present their findings. This was related to RI and to TPPP as well as looking at IP and the challenges of working as a group with different individuals looking into different areas. Opened up the types of research that you could do – observation, survey, interview, documents etc. *The entire museum was the site for this and groups had to choose their location.*

5. The Museum as Performance & Approaches to Reading Performance

Worked on approaches to looking at external productions focussing on the piece 'Makbet' we had seen the night before and on ways we read objects and collections. Strategies for linking performances to all aspects of the course and for individual inspiration. Did a lot of reflection on each participants

'manifesto' for their teaching and for their practice of theatre.

6. Site Responsive Work: Exploring Space

This took place in a very old fashioned museum space – *The Northwest Coast Indians Room* – and we looked at messages of space, how we move through space and how 'flow' of audience is created. Looked at physical theatre devices. Each person chose random exhibits or points and we looked at connecting them to create a through line. Introduction to approaching TPPP as a series of disconnected experiences that need a connecting thread. Concept of TPPP as curation.

7. MC: Behind the Scenes: Producing Museum Installations and Exhibitions

(see above)

8. Site Specific Work: Devising Theatre

This took place in the very atmospheric Mexico and Central America Room. The participants discussed and looked at physical representations of the purpose of theatre. They then worked with a stimulus and worked on a concept. They then explored the space and looked at ways of responding to the stimulus and the space and staging a piece of theatre in this space. Pieces were staged and discussed. This was linked to IP – collective creation- and PPP, developing a concept from a stimulus.

9. Curating Experiences: Finding a Reflective Narrative

We returned to self reflection and the way we narrate experience, bring together random aspects, talk about ourselves and our experiences. Each participant designed a TPPP with the images viewed as objects and anchors of meaning in a collection. The presentation focussed on how a listener is guided through a

collection of experiences and how the images are used to construct a *narrative of experience* rather than a *narrative of the course*.

10. Gathering, Identifying and Closing

Sharing resources and activities, answering questions, identifying learning and discussing aspects of the programme.

[This schedule also acted as a model for the participants on how to use a range of museums in their own locality.]

The AMNH and IB

By Rob Steiner

Since its founding in 1869, New York City's American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) has advanced its global mission to discover, interpret and disseminate information about human cultures, the natural world and the universe. Long celebrated for the depth of its collections and the scope and beauty of its exhibition halls, the Museum has continually been at the forefront of scientific research, sharing its discoveries with the public through a wide-reaching program of education and exhibition. Approximately five million visitors come to the Museum each year to explore 25 buildings and 45 permanent halls, on a journey from the outer edges of the observable universe to the inner core of Earth to the great diversity of life on our planet.

The Museum was founded by Albert Smith Bickmore (1839-1914), after his proposal for a natural history museum in New York City won the support of prominent New Yorkers who shared with Bickmore the vision of a great center for research and teaching in the natural sciences and anthropology, an institution where both scientists and the general public could come to learn. The Museum currently employs more than 200 scientists in vertebrate and invertebrate zoology, anthropology, paleontology as well as in earth science, astrophysics and cosmology. These scientists participate in more than 100 research expeditions each year and are the stewards for the museum's 32 million specimens and cultural artifacts.

From the day the Museum was founded, education has been central to its mission. With dynamic on-site programs, increased partnerships with schools, and the efforts of the Gottesman Center for Science Teaching and Learning, the Museum is

dramatically expanding its leadership and thinking about science literacy and museum learning experiences in a whole new way.

In a world increasingly shaped by technology, the Museum recognizes that teachers and students must have access to scientific knowledge in order to actively contribute in the 21st century. The Museum sees this mission as not just an opportunity, but also its unique responsibility to encourage community and civic engagement. The Museum's National Center for Science Literacy, Education and Technology has, for more than a decade, been creating online resources and web-based experiences for students, teachers and the general public.

Through a unique partnership between IB and the Museum, one of these programs, Seminars on Science, provides online professional development to IB teachers customized to the needs of IB and its teachers. In addition, the Museum provides opportunities for IB to take advantage of its physical setting in New York City for IB professional development workshops – including the recent ISTA workshop.

Seminars on Science: Online Professional Development

Seminars on Science, the online teacher professional development program of the American Museum of Natural History, is currently completing its first decade of operation. Begun in 1998 and supported by two consecutive grants from The Atlantic Philanthropies, the program has broken new ground in the leveraging of museum-based expertise and resources for scientific research and education through online education to support professional development for science educators. There are currently eleven online courses in the life, earth and physical sciences. Each course is six weeks in duration and provides flexible access for K-12 teachers across the globe. The courses include original essays by Museum scientists, compelling imagery, powerful videos, interactive simulations and rich discussion that provide educators with both scientific content and classroom application. Each course is co-authored by a Museum scientist and a team of professional developers and educational technologists within the Museum's National Center for Science Literacy, Education and Technology. The courses provide teachers with a

unique opportunity to deepen their content knowledge, to learn authentic science, to interact with working scientists and master science educators and to gain valuable resources for use in the classroom.

In this manner, *Seminars on Science* is leveraging one of the world's preeminent scientific, cultural and educational institutions – an institution that includes 45 permanent exhibition halls, a scientific staff of over 200 and 32 million specimens and cultural artifacts – and making its expertise and resources available to an audience well beyond the physical walls of the Museum.

The measured, thoughtful development of the program, coupled with its careful national evaluation, has allowed a process of trial and revision to occur over several years, resulting in a program that has consistently been well-received by its participants and that has garnered several awards from professional organizations. The evaluation of the program, by Inverness Research Associates, indicates that teachers overwhelmingly learn significant new science content, gain insight into the process of real science, gain valuable teaching resources and prefer Seminars on Science to other professional development programs. The full evaluation is available at <http://www.inverness-research.org>.

Partnerships with eight higher education institutions, the National Science Teachers Association and the International Baccalaureate Organization are enabling the program to leverage other institutional strengths and to disseminate these offerings to a national and international audience of current and future teachers.

More information on Seminars on Science – including course syllabi, partnerships, sample resources and correlations to the National Science Education Standards – can be found at <http://learn.amnh.org>.

Portions of the description of the American Museum of Natural History appearing here have been excerpted or adapted from its Official Guide.



Robert V. Steiner, Ph.D. is Director of the Online Teacher Education Programs at the American Museum of Natural History

Sound and Music in Theatre

■ By **Greg Pliska**

The following Resource Pack was produced to support and extend the master class delivered by Greg at the New York student TaPS.

OBJECTIVES

- To introduce students to the art and process of sound design and composition for the theatre, specifically with regard to the use of music and sound in dramatic works (i.e., not musicals).
- To deepen students' understanding of the elements that inform the creative decision-making process of the sound designer and composer.
- To broaden students' understanding of the work of all theatrical design by analogy with the work of the sound designer.
- To enhance students' appreciation for the way effective sound design, in conjunction with the director's concept and the work of the rest of the design team, can help inform the audience's understanding and experience of a play.

WORKSHOP PROCESS

I – Introduction

Listening to opening music from a variety of productions, we will discuss the intent of the sound designer (and by extension, the director) in each case.

Key questions include:

- What does the music suggest about period, style and location?
- What expectations does the music give to the audience about the piece they are about to see?
- Music sets up an emotional world, a mood, but it also helps establish character – what does this piece of music suggest about the characters we are going to see? Knowing the play it opens, what character do you think the music most connects to?
- What would you expect the set to look like? The lights? The costumes? What do you think the director's concept for this play is?

II – The Sound Design Process

Using recorded music from two different productions of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, we will discuss the various stages of the sound design process and, by extension, the elements

that inform the designer's work.

The stages of the sound design process align closely with those of the other designers, as well as those of the production as a whole. They are:

- Reading the play.
- Meeting with the director (and producer).
- Determining technical (and financial) resources.
- Research (period, location, style, etc.).
- Creating and presenting rough drafts and sketches.
- Ongoing production meetings (designers, director, producer).
- Meet-and-greet (entire company); presentation of musical sketches.
- Rehearsal process: providing necessary elements for actors to rehearse with; completing cues; revising cues based upon rehearsal discoveries (timing, additions/cuts, etc.).
- Load-in and sound tech, including cue-to-cue rehearsal.
- Technical rehearsal with actors (enormous practical considerations; revisions).
- Previews (ongoing revisions).
- Opening (show is frozen).

We will focus primarily on the first portion of this process and the kinds of questions the designer must ask as he or she develops the sound and music:

Reading the Text: Designers, like all other participants in the production, must first read the play and form their own impressions of it. Each designer sees the play through his or her particular lens, but they are all asking the same questions: What is this play about? How can I help tell this story? How can I focus the audience's experience of the play?

Working with the Director:

Designers must collaborate closely with the director in crafting a vision of the play. Sometimes directors bring a very specific vision regarding period, place, emotion, concept; at other times the director has only a general feeling about the play and its meaning. In either case, the designer needs to buy into the director's vision, bringing to it his or her

own particular point of view.

Practical Considerations and

Resources: Where will the production take place? What kind of physical space is involved? Will the sound and music be produced live or be pre-recorded, or both? What technical resources (speaker, mics, sound board, computer, etc.) are available? What instrumentation? Where will the sound effects be produced or gathered? These and many other questions are as crucial to the designer's work as the conceptual and creative work s/he and the director will undertake. A great vision that cannot be realised is perhaps more ineffective than a bland design that is, at least, practical.

Research: Designers must research the play, as written, as well as the world of the play as envisioned by the director. If, for example, there is a phone ringing, the sound designer needs to learn what kind of phone it is and how it would sound in the context of the period and place of the play. Is there a musical world suggested by the location or time period?

Rough Drafts: Composers – like costume, set and lighting designers – typically present rough drafts of their work to the director well in advance of the beginning of rehearsals. These sketches help crystallize the vision of the play and will not only inform the director's work but also that of the other designers and, ultimately, the actors.

III – Practical Work

Having looked at the process of two different sound design/ composition approaches to *Twelfth Night*, we will use the first five short scenes of the play *Vigil*, by Morris Panych (which the students are seeing in the evening) as raw material for the students to engage in their own creative process.

After reading the scenes, students will break into small groups to discuss and develop music and sound choices for these five scenes. Students will be given some practical parameters (performance space, technical resources) but will be asked to develop their own directorial concept and approach to the play (based only upon

the limited understanding they have via the five scenes).

Once they've determined a directorial vision, concept and emotional approach, they will then brainstorm possible music and sound approaches to these scenes. Specific questions to ask include:

- What does the text itself call for?
- What does it actually *require*?
- When will music and sound be used in these scenes?
- How will it be used?
- What sound and music is diegetic (within the world of the play) and what is non-diegetic (external to the characters' experience, informing the audience)?
- How will the sound design reflect this distinction?

Students will fill in a cue sheet, listing the sound and music cues, the scene/page they are in, the cue line for the beginning (and ending) of the cue, specific placement of the sound in the space, source for the actual cue and any other notes about the character of the cue. (If time and resources permit, students will be able to select specific sound cues from a sound library.)

The entire group will reconvene and students will share their work, discussing the various approaches to the play and how their concepts affected the choices they made regarding sound and music. We will also broaden the discussion to investigate how each designer – costume, lights, set, make-up – must go through a similar process.

CONCLUSION

I will present some artifacts of my creative process for this play, including early drafts of the music, the cues used for the scenes studied by the students, and cue sheets and other notes. I hope also to present a sample of the opening theme from an earlier (and very different) production. Finally, students will see the play itself, followed by a talkback with me, the director, and perhaps the actors.

RESOURCES

Books:

Bracewell, John L., *Sound Design in the Theatre*. New York: Prentice Hall College Division, 1993.

Kaye, Deena, and LeBrecht, James, *Sound and Music for the Theatre, Third Edition: The Art & Technique of Design*. Burlington, MA, and Oxford, UK: Focal Press, 2009.

Leonard, John A., *Theatre Sound*. New York: Theatre Arts Books/Routledge, 2001.

Web Resources:

<http://www.slideshare.net/jsamarro/sound-design-for-the-theatre>

General overview of the sound design process.

<http://www.richmondsounddesign.com/index.html>

Includes extensive "Community" section with bibliographies, articles and other resources.

http://www.jjlee.com/tsound_ring.html

Theatrical sound webring.

<http://www.sounddogs.com/default.asp>

<http://www.hollywoodedge.com/>

<http://www.sound-ideas.com/>

Downloadable sound effects and royalty-free music.

<http://www.stageresearch.com/products/SFX6/SFX6.aspx>

Stage Research's SFX software, the industry standard in computer playback.

<http://figure53.com/qclab/>

Mac-based multimedia software, with an array of pricing options.

Practitioner's Pathway

My path into sound design and composition for theatre began in elementary school, when an inspiring piano teacher of mine encouraged me to try writing music. A number of compositions, performed by classmates, followed, and I continued playing and creating music up until high school, when I discovered acting. I spent my high school years on stage, and arrived at Williams College expecting to continue.

While I had some opportunity to act while at Williams, I discovered that there were many others more gifted on stage than I. I also discovered that my love of music – and skills as a pianist and composer – could be wedded to my love of theatre, and I began composing musicals and incidental music for plays. I had the good fortune to work with some excellent theatrical practitioners, and was given great leeway to create and explore as a composer while working on plays such as *Tom Paine*, *Tales from the Vienna Woods*, and original work of my own.

Out of college, I continued working in musical theatre, and came to New York where I began having work produced. I was ready to do just about anything, and found myself jumping between readings of new musicals, cabaret performances, avant-garde and experimental theatre and off-Broadway plays. I had an opera commissioned by a company in Philadelphia, learned on the job about the pleasures and pitfalls of orchestration, and landed a teaching job at NYU in the Musical Theatre

Writing Program.

That education work, along with extensive experience working with students of all ages creating work with companies like the Metropolitan Opera, helped me hone my understanding of the craft of composition for the stage. The breadth of styles and genres in which I worked also gave me a great appreciation for the many ways music and drama can work together.

My work at NYU led me in 1999 to a band, Hem, for whom I became the arranger and orchestrator. Hem's work can be heard on their many albums, as well as on Liberty Mutual TV commercials. We were asked in 2009 to write music for the Shakespeare in the Park production of *Twelfth Night*, a CD of which is due to be released shortly.

My work scoring and music-directing also led naturally to work writing incidental music for plays. These included new work such as *Ice Island*, a story of the Shackleton expedition to Antarctica, scored for solo double bass, and *Oy!*, a comedy based upon Yiddish words, scored for klezmer clarinet and cello. I twice returned to Williams College as visiting professor, and additionally as artist in residence, producing scores for Euripides' *Bacchae*, Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, an evening of Beckett plays, and Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.

In 2007 Juilliard hired me to write music for two Shakespeare plays in repertory: *Twelfth Night*, to be performed live entirely by a cast of semi-musical actors (plus one classical guitarist), and *Winter's Tale*, mostly pre-recorded MIDI orchestral tracks. Both shows also required a number of sound cues, so I became de facto sound designer.

At the same time, I'd moved my compositional focus to film and television, seeking new opportunities to explore my craft in a very different field. I built a modest home studio where I produce mock-ups of all my live scores, and MIDI/sample compositions for lower-budget TV, film and theatre scores. I've had to teach myself new software, new hardware, new technical skills, and understand an enormous amount about the mechanics of sound generation.

My work today combines all these skills and knowledge: compositional craft, orchestration technique, sensitivity to character and drama, theatrical practice, computer audio technology, and more. And each new project brings with it new skills to learn, new challenges to meet. The journey continues.



INTERVIEW WITH KATE WETHERHEAD: A NEW YORK BASED ACTOR



At what age did you realize that you wanted to be an actor?

I was six years old. My mother informed me after school one day that we would be seeing a production of “West Side Story” that evening (a community theatre production). I remember being skeptical when she described the plot to me – I thought it sounded boring! – but once I was sitting in the theatre, it took all the restraint I could muster not to leap onto the stage and join the cast as they danced and sang. I’d been bitten hard by the acting bug, and from then on there was little else that captivated me in the same way.

What was your journey from school into the profession?

I moved to New York to attend a 2-year training programme at Circle in the Square Theatre School. Aside from receiving the benefits of rigorous training, I felt that having immediate structure and an established social network (my classmates and teachers) would help ease my transition from college (Wesleyan University, CT) to New York City. At the end of the two years, my class presented a scene night for industry types – it was because of this event that I started working with a manager. Almost immediately, he started sending me out on auditions. The six months following my graduation from Circle in the Square were really challenging - emotionally, financially and professionally. But I managed to secure my first Equity job doing a Theatreworks USA tour of *A Christmas Carol*, and slowly, haltingly, my career as an actor began.

What role are you currently playing? What is the best thing about the role/production? What

are the greatest challenges?

Deb in Adam Gwon’s new musical *Ordinary Days*.

Best thing about the role: She lets me show all of these different colors. I have a clearly defined arc.

Best thing about the production: Adam’s writing. He’s going to be a significant force in musical theatre.

Greatest challenges: maintaining honesty in my performance. We perform in a small blackbox theatre in which there are only 62 seats. Anything false will be detected immediately.

What kind of roles do you normally audition for? In what kind of productions?

I usually audition for teenage characters. Playing Deb is the first time (in New York) that I’ve had the chance to play an adult. Productions range from period to contemporary pieces. And I love to do straight plays, but I end up doing more musicals.

If you could pick out one role that has had a real ‘special’ quality to it – what was that and why was it so important to you?

That’s a tough one. I have to choose three! Deb has definitely joined the ranks of ‘special’ roles. The other two are Anna in *Sarah, Plain and Tall* and Percy in *The Spitfire Grill*. Deb feels the most close to the vest. Anna and Percy are these incredibly damaged characters who have a beautiful strength in them. The way they overcome their pain is truly inspiring to me.

Young people, of course, choose to become actors in every major city in the world. What are the major challenges to being an actor in New York?

New York is the most competitive place to be if you wish to pursue theatre professionally. There are so many talented people, the bar is set so high... It takes a lot of tenacity to stay here.

What would your advice be to a young person wishing to enter the

profession nowadays?

The answer I always give is this: redefine success for yourself. When you first start, it can’t be all about getting the job. That’s not to say you won’t get the job, but it helps if you keep things in perspective as you navigate the dicey waters of the acting biz. Make sure to give ample weight to things like compliments, callbacks and conversations. The people you meet, along with the reinforcement you receive from them, help confirm that you are on the right track.

Most actors spend considerable amounts of time ‘not-acting’ and doing casual work to help pay the bills. Is this typical for yourself? If not how have you managed to secure consistent work and is this atypical in New York?

I catered, I ushered, I hostessed and did coat check at restaurants... Fortunately, I haven’t had to work a survival job in over four years. But I was in the trenches for a long time.

What is your view of the current Theatre scene in the city?

There seem to be two halves of a circle: the commercial, big-budget, celebrity-driven side, and the Little-Engine-That-Could side. The trend of finding celebrities to headline shows is certainly frustrating to the thousands of stage actors who struggle and work so hard to secure decent employment. But then there seems to be a (relatively) steady flow of shows that are just so good, even if their budgets are small and their casts are made up of not-so-famous actors, that they cannot be ignored by the community and end up becoming smash Broadway hits (*In the Heights* comes to mind.)

What production is top of your list as a favourite? And why?

Another tough one. There are many, but I’ll go with a recent favorite because, not only is it wonderful, but it also supports what I said in my previous response. There is a new play

called *Next Fall* which recently premiered Off-Broadway at Playwrights Horizons. A small production, it featured an amazing cast of actors, none of whom would be considered celebrities. The play itself is beautifully written by Jeffrey Nauffts examining religion, family, love, uncertainty and acceptance. The show received fantastic reviews, and will be moving to Broadway in February. A Little Engine That Could!
Who would you love to work with in the future?

Oh, lots of people. People who love the collaborative process. People who think making theatre is fun. People who understand that we're not fighting a war, so let's not take it too seriously. People who want to pay me a lot of money!

What personal challenges do you have for your future work as an actor?

I am a petite, 5'2" actor with a distinct voice and a youthful looking face. But I'm not a kid anymore, and playing kids naturally becomes more challenging as I grow older. Playing Deb is a real blessing, and I wonder if this role will help me to transition into more adult roles or whether it's a temporary gift. I anticipate that the greatest challenge I will face in the next few years is convincing people that I can play real women's roles.



Kate is currently starring in *Ordinary Days* at the Roundabout Underground in New York. Broadway credits include *Legally Blonde: the Musical* and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (original companies.) Off-Broadway: Wood (2008 NYMF Award for Best Performer), *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, *Tatjana in Color*, *Cam Jansen* and *The Summer of the Swans*. Regional: Emmett Otter's *Jugband Christmas* (world premiere, Goodspeed Opera House), *Sarah, Plain and Tall* (Dallas Theatre Center), *Steel Magnolias* (Paper Mill Playhouse), *Almost, Maine*, (Saint Michael's Playhouse) and *The Spitfire Grill* (Skylight Opera Theatre). Kate is also the voice of Nemo on the cast recording of Disney's *Finding Nemo: the Musical*.

INTERVIEW WITH RANDY ELLEN LUTTERMAN FROM SPRINGBOARDNYC

What is SpringboardNYC?

SpringboardNYC is a two-week college-to-career transition program that takes place each June in New York City. Designed for serious students looking to take the plunge into the New York theatre world, SpringboardNYC prepares the next generation of theatre artists for working life in New York. Taught by industry professionals, sessions include audition training with directors and casting directors, and seminars with industry's leading agents and managers, as well as intimate conversations with working actors. Participants have the opportunity to work on-their-feet, training in sessions designed to help them find jobs in the New York theatre community, and introduce them to living in New York. SpringboardNYC also gives hands-on practical guidance on how to survive in New York while pursuing a theatre career. I like to think it is the ideal transitional program, giving emerging artists information and contacts that would otherwise take them years to cobble together on their own.



How did SpringboardNYC come to be?

One of my jobs as Executive Director of Musical Theatre Works was to create and develop programs that would help the emerging young artist in NYC. The theatre was devoted to commissioning and supporting writers of new musical theatre, but in fulfilling that mission we were in contact with new artists of every kind: actors, budding choreographers, beginning directors, dramaturgs, book writers, composers and lyricists. For each project, we worked to provide opportunities for new creative artists to work alongside seasoned professionals. In this way, we thought we would broker new relationships as we created on-the-job learning opportunities in our arts community.

As a result, as we would cast our

readings, we tried to see all sorts of new actors. We had a lot of work to do, and wanted to meet as many new people out there as we could to help make new work happen. After a time, we realized we were seeing hundreds of emerging young artists who were desperate for their five minutes in the audition room, who wanted to work, who had skills,

but for all intents and purposes had fallen out of the sky after college or university into the middle of New York and didn't have a sense of what to do next. SpringboardNYC came to be as a result of seeing a gap between what kids seemed to be learning in college or a conservatory setting and what the theatre world would ultimately expect from them. We started talking – producers, writers, directors, choreographers, dramaturgs – about what was happening in the room. Why weren't these kids able to be the best version of themselves in the five minutes they had in the room with us? One by one, we started talking about all the things that we wished we had when we came out of school and thought surely someone should be able to help make that transition easier. The answer to those questions ultimately evolved into the SpringboardNYC program.

Currently in its eighth year and now a program of the American Theatre Wing, SpringboardNYC continues to teach young actors how to make the choices that will prepare them for a life in the theatre even if they decide to stop acting.

As well as the intensive theatrical component of the program you also help young people "deal" with life in New York. What are the particular challenges here?

Well, we try to address the work on many levels. We want our kids to understand that who you are in the room and what you bring to the room will define the kind of work you get to do.

The point of the program is to help them peel away all of the other stuff to get to who they are as an artist. Someone will come in to audition and all you're getting is the full-on anxiety of life in New York: "Where am I living?", "My roommate's check bounced," and "Why is the tap water brown?" The big message of Springboard is, be clear about what you're trying to do. Certain things will make that more possible, and certain things will impede your progress. You can't control everything in the business, but here are the 10 things that you can control.

Some of it has to do with the uniqueness of the size and pace and expense of New York City. We work with our students to give them the resources they need to help find their first apartments, their first money jobs, even their first theatre internships and jobs. But mostly we give them the tools to begin asking and answering the right questions – so that they start working faster, and better, once they get here.

What journey or transition would you hope young people make while with you for those two weeks?

As Director of the SpringboardNYC program, my goal is to help students be the best version of themselves they can possibly be as an artist. This is a particularly challenging thing to do as an emerging artist in an audition situation when so many other elements are being brought to bear. I am looking for a student to understand the vocabulary and complexion of the business once they leave us. And for that same student to understand the differences between the work they may be doing at school, and what is now expected from them as a working member of this creative business community.

You know, school is a very different animal. There is no sense of how to live by yourself as an artist when you're not working or someone's not calling you into rehearsal or a class. There is no sense of what an audition room in New York is and how it's different from a rehearsal room in college. For some of us who were undergraduate theatre majors, we could work for six weeks on a piece and have two performances. In a real-world audition, you need to know that in three minutes you have to have a grasp of the material, you have to make clear choices, and it helps to have some understanding of what the people across the table are looking for. There is a difference, if nothing else, in the timing of life once you are out of school—in the way that you have to be a self-starter, in the way that you have to set goals. On some level you have to work on yourself as your own best product, which is certainly not the way you're thinking about it when you're coming out of an

undergraduate community. For me the program is a success if a Springboard student starts to think of themselves as having an active role to play in defining who they will be as an artist. And frankly, for some students this means the realization that they are not meant to be a performer. And I think that's great, too. If, as a part of learning about the many wonderful working parts of this creative business, you come to see that there may be a different role for you to play, I say terrific. Good for you! Make a different choice. But whatever choice you make, make it from a place of understanding the expectations and your options.

Obviously there are theatre communities in cities all over the world, what do you think are the unique features of the New York theatre scene?

Certainly every city has a different vibe when it comes to theatre. I come from Montreal where the bilingual theatre scene brings with it some amazing opportunities as well as distinct challenges. New York's theatre scene is amazing in another way. Much like London I suppose, it is truly the center of the work being done around the country. At some point, if you want to do this work at a certain professional level you will likely find your way to New York City.

What is most inspiring to me about the New York theatre community (and I think what is most surprising to my students) is that New York while seemingly big and scary, is actually quite available in many ways. I think New York in every way values excellence, and as a result the theatre community, while large and varied, is also always looking for the next wonderful talented thing. And that means truly talented people are always needed, and embraced. I also think once you step inside it even a little bit, that the New York theatre community is not that mysterious. And that because of the size of the place, there is room for all kinds of different work to be done. At Springboard we spend a lot of time listening to the narrative of our mentors' stories – not just because it's inspiring, but because it's completely and totally varied. You can make several choices, as long as they're clear, and the community is going to say, "What do you have to give us? We're interested in what you have to offer." New York loves talent and isn't afraid of it. If you can do many things well, all the better.

You have had a varied pathway to date, can you provide us with an overview of your theatrical journey from leaving school?

Whew! How much time d'you have? All kidding aside, I can give you a version of the pathway from graduating from Brown University to date. But as I tell my

students, the narrative changes as you begin to retroactively understand the choices you made over time. That's the beauty of a long life in the theatre – you get to reinvent yourself, and to a certain extent your story, as time goes by.

I am a Canadian who went to the United States for university. I graduated from Brown with a double degree in Theatre Arts and Comparative Literature. I moved to Toronto to pursue theatre, and did theatre, film and television. I had the good fortune of being cast as a series regular for television where I got to participate in some story consulting. Through that experience I began to write for television, all the while continuing to act, and also to coach actors. When a few years later I won my Green Card in a lottery(!), I picked up and moved to New York City. I began to work and audition as an actor, but continued to write and then to produce. I kept on producing and writing and coaching, initially as a way to support my life as an actor, but at a certain point some of that work became more compelling to me. When I was offered the opportunity to produce British comic Eddie Izzard's first American show in NYC, I jumped at it. From that point on, producing opportunities became very interesting to me.

I joined Musical Theatre Works as a consultant and then came on full time as Executive Director because they were launching a very ambitious Resident Writers program and I wanted to be a part of making new work happen. It had never been my goal to run a theatre, or to work in the non-profit sector, but I was excited by those challenges as well. Through the process of working at MTW, I launched a series of educational initiatives to help train new artists and SpringboardNYC was one of those efforts. And then bringing SpringboardNYC to the American Theatre Wing has made it possible to grow the program in many important ways. Throughout all of it I have continued to coach actors, through the Springboard program, and independently. And while I imagine my full-time life as a performer is over, I continue to work as a voiceover artist, and sometimes when the project and timing is right, as an actor.

The fact is I learned an important lesson somewhere along the way. New York is a city where many opportunities will present themselves, and the key for me was staying honest and open to what felt the most interesting, what would be the most creative, what would be the biggest new challenge. At some point I realized that it was my job to remain open as an artist and as I constantly tell my students, to "Choose the Next Best Adventure."

How did the different professional roles present themselves to you – was it luck, being in the right place at the right time, or was it through a personal desire to shift focus over time?

I definitely feel that this notion of one job/one profession was not the way for me. Because I was shaped by each experience I had professionally, who I was making the next artistic or business decision changed as well. I feel that our job as actors is to remain open to experiences and feelings, and also to keep ourselves current in whatever way is the most inspiring. So, as I tell our students at Springboard, it's your JOB to continue to learn after school is over. Waiting in a room for the phone to ring is both isolating and also makes for one dull actor with no life experience to draw on, and zero resources. I think the initial forays I made into other artistic fields – coaching, writing, even producing to a certain extent – were all simply ways for me to keep myself alert, intellectually challenged and engaged in the world, and of course to earn some rent money!

Some of the opportunities presented to me resulted from being in the right place at the right time. For example the two years of producing Eddie Izzard came after I shared my opinion of a show I had just seen in Toronto with an Australian who turned out to be a New York producer thinking of introducing Eddie to American audiences. That chance encounter led to the next three years of my producing, as I made a name for myself as someone who could help brand a performer, could raise money for a show, and who could shepherd a project from the stage to a video product for HBO.

And even when I had a desire to consciously shift focus, the stars were not always in alignment. I toyed briefly with making a “permanent” switch from producing theatre to television, but just as I was offered a new job in that exciting field we learned my father was dying of pancreatic cancer. I chose to stay a consultant to a theatre in lieu of taking on an 80 hour a week television gig so that I would be free to spend the remaining time with my dad. And ultimately, when the time was right, I joined that theatre as its full time Executive Director. I think things happen for a reason, and I have never regretted that decision.

I don't think the question should be “What do you want to be when you grow up?” I think the question should be “How do you want to grow up?!” As Ed Kleban might say, “It's in the *doing*.”

You have acted and coached actors, been a writer, creative consultant, producer, project director, educator. Which role has given you the greatest amount of satisfaction?

Each in its own way has been so very satisfying. I love a good story – building it, telling it, helping someone tell it, and finding a better way to share it. I think that while I have had a varied journey to date, what remains constant is my love of making something better, clearer, and more possible. So coaching an actor is so satisfying – you experience the immediacy of the work you are doing. Producing, creative consulting, or directing a project is also satisfying as you create the environment for success. Putting together a project, raising the money for art, helping a non-profit board of directors see and support a unified artistic vision – all of these things are incredibly satisfying to me. And teaching, helping to shape a new generation of artists, and finding ways to bring them closer to their best selves is perhaps the greatest feeling of all. Oh, and being a mom! Who knew? The *best*.



Randy Ellen Lutterman is a Theatre Producer and Educator; and Director, American Theatre Wing's SpringboardNYC.

STUDI

INTRODUCING BROADWAY SPACE

■ By **Carla Weiss**



BroadwaySpace.com is the #1 social networking site for people who love Broadway! Join fans from all over the world just like you at BroadwaySpace.com, where you can:

- Win FREE tickets to *Wicked*, *Jersey Boys*, *Legally Blonde*, and more!
- Message your favorite Broadway stars, like Laura Bell Bundy, Sherie Renee Scott, and more!
- Meet fellow Broadway fans!
- Blog about Broadway!
- Network!
- Post pictures and videos from your own shows!
- And more!

Great for actors, theater companies, students, and everyone who loves theater! Join today!



BroadwaySpace.com is the #1 Place for People Who Love Broadway!

Ken Davenport, the founder of BroadwaySpace, used to spend about 35 minutes driving to his small high school in central Massachusetts. While he was in the car he would blast music like The Complete Symphonic Recording of *Les Miserables*. As he got close to campus, he would hide the show music in his glove compartment and crank up the local Top 40 radio station. Once, when his best friend found his cache of musical theatre recordings, Ken lied and said they were his mom's!

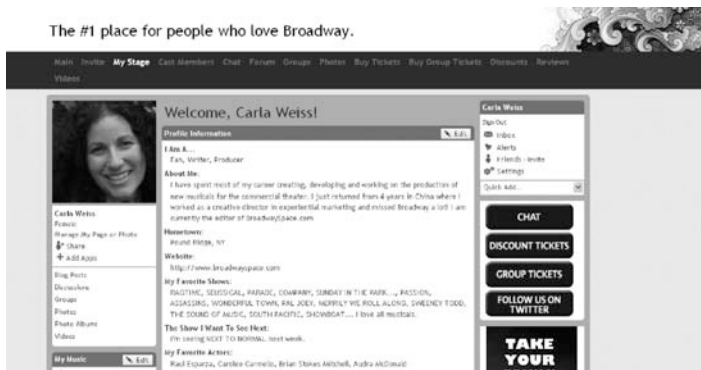
Every once in a while, he was lucky enough to run into a fellow *Falsettos* fan, or someone who knew who Mandy Patinkin was! But that was rare, and it was usually when he was doing a show. Then the show would close, and he'd go back to listening to *Phantom* in his room.

Even as a successful theatre producer, many years later, he still found himself hiding his “musicals” playlist on his Ipod!

All this secrecy made him imagine a place where theatre fans like him hung out all the time. A place where it always felt like you were doing a show, and that show never closed! A place where everyone loved The Complete Symphonic Recording of *Les Miz*!

So, he decided to create BroadwaySpace.com. A place

ENT SCENE



where people from all over the world come to hang out in a virtual Times Square, New York's famous theatre district. A place where you can meet tons of like-minded, passionate theatre-lovers and discuss all your favorite topics no matter where you live or what you do.

BroadwaySpace.com is like MySpace or Facebook for theatre lovers. It is the #1 social networking site for people who love Broadway! After only 2 years on the web, BroadwaySpace already has over 15,000 members. It's a great place for theatre-lovers to meet, interact and hang out without actually moving to New York City and going to *Don't Tell Mama's!*

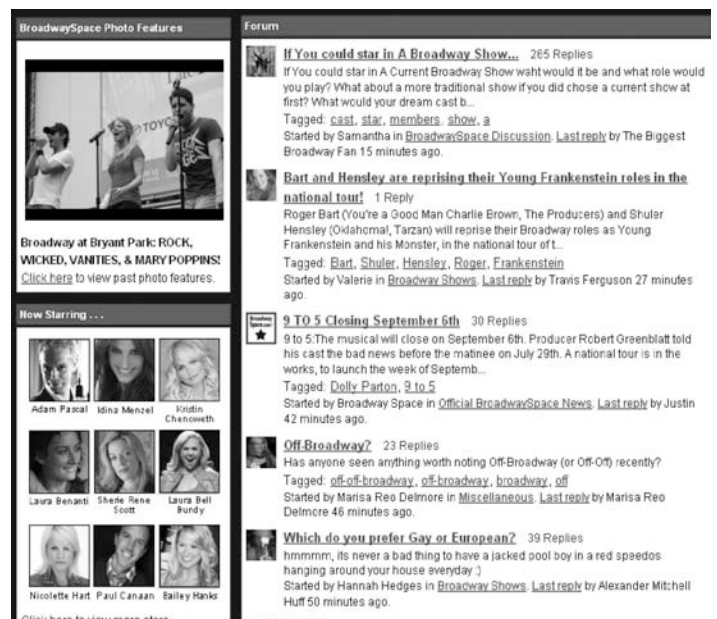
On BroadwaySpace, you can make a customized page for yourself – just like on Facebook or Myspace – upload pictures, videos and weblinks, download widgets, post and respond to forum topics, and chat with other passionate theatre-lovers. BroadwaySpace castmembers start groups for shows and performers they love, and keep each other updated on the latest news. The forum has a wide variety of postings from news and gossip items to specific questions, lively debates and fun games. Castmembers can also chat live at any time with whoever is on-line.

BroadwaySpace is a good resource for young performers and aspiring theatre professionals. The forum is filled with members looking for new shows to suggest to their school directors, asking about good audition songs, and seeking advice about places to study or how to start a performing career. Many of the members are going through the same experiences or have recently been through something similar, so you are guaranteed to have a lively exchange from an equally passionate responder. Reading the Q&A's and longer-form articles gives BroadwaySpace castmembers an inside line on how the theatre business works and what it takes to be a professional creative person in the live entertainment industry.

For those who are able to travel to New York, the site offers many ways to get discount tickets on Broadway shows as well as information about tours around the USA. If you're not traveling to NY, no worries as BroadwaySpace has lots of fun contests and giveaways. There are always photo albums to peruse of what's happening on Broadway – from the Tony Awards to special events to opening nights to first rehearsals. Video Blogger Ryan O'Connor gossips once a week about everything that's going on in the Broadway world, and you can follow the adventures of BroadwaySergey the "Borat of Broadway" as he gets into

trouble stalking Broadway stars and fans! Many Broadway Stars have pages on BroadwaySpace so you can follow their careers and get up-to-the-minute info on their concerts, special events, albums, appearances and latest casting news.

Finally, BroadwaySpace and other social networking sites, are a great way to communicate with other like-minded individuals. Social networking can be used to your advantage as you plan for your future studies or eventual career. Not only can you connect with fellow ISTA members who you may have met at festivals and workshops, but you can also connect with people from around the world who share your specific interests and may have great information for you. Rather than spend all your time joking around on Facebook, join a social networking site like BroadwaySpace and compare notes on your IB project; find out about a killer audition song; download songs from an amazing new musical and volunteer to direct or produce its inaugural production. Next time your parents tell you that you're spending too much time looking at screens and communicating in the cyberworld, you can tell them that you're planning for your future!



ENCORE!

Ensemble Theatre Workshop



Have you ever wished an ISTA Festival would last forever, or at least a week or so longer? How about a month-long intensive theatre training programme where you'll meet lifelong friends, see amazing new places, work with dynamic staff directors. Think of Encore! as the ISTA Festival that never ends. We pack a lifetime into 4 weeks!

If you are an IB Theatre student, Encore! offers experience in a variety of theatre traditions, and the chance to share experiences and viewpoints with students from a range of strong IB programme schools. Mask work, street performance, physical theatre, puppetry, Boal – all are among the rich variety of traditions and skills explored during the month. You'll generate loads of material for your journal and independent work, and log over 150 Creativity and Action CAS hours.

Thinking about a career on the stage (or in the wings)? Encore! is an intensive month-long programme, modeled after ISTA's approach to theatre education, in which students form a professional-calibre performing ensemble. Our approach emphasizes discipline and dedication, pushing beyond the limits of your expectations, building strength and focus. Find out if the theatre is where you should be working – or just come and have the time of your life, making friends you will keep for years, working and learning in the South of France's most beautiful landscapes.

Not much experience with theatre and drama before now? Not to worry – Encore! participants bring a variety of experience and skill-levels to the programme. In addition to actors, singers and dancers, we seek the creativity of poets and musicians, the inspiration of writers and painters, the discipline and leadership of athletes. During our four weeks together everyone strengthens and adds skills – no matter where they started. Participants learn from exceptional staff, from each other, from attending cutting-edge performances in Avignon and from performing themselves.

Do you want to

- **Push your boundaries?**

...during four weeks devoted to theatre, with the freedom and time to try new things.

- **Find your voice?**

...and not just your singing voice; tell your story by creating original work.

- **Work, play, & explore with your peers?**

...by exploring the markets of Antibes, the streets and cafes of Avignon, or pushing the envelope on stage, in the dance studio or in the music room.

- **Strengthen your English?**

...Encore! is taught in English. Many past Encorians for whom English is a second or third language report their working English improved tremendously. Our campus in Valbonne is also an excellent place to put your French to the test.

- **Have a life-changing experience?**

...The intense creativity and discipline required to build a highly proficient performing ensemble and create an original work of musical theatre in one month is an experience like no other you are likely to have in the years to come. The sharing, trust, discoveries, doubts, explorations, adventures, travels, mistakes, joys, fears, disappointments and triumphs you will undergo together will allow you to forge an unforgettable bond with your peers. Encorians! are never the same after their summer in the South of France, making friends and building connections, both intellectual and emotional, for a lifetime.

2010 Dates: Saturday, 1 July - Sunday 1 August
Cost: \$4950 program tuition, housing, meals and scheduled group activities
Ages: 15-18
Location: Valbonne, France
(Nice International Airport)
Centre International de Valbonne

Find out more and apply at:
<http://www.learntheatre.org>.

Questions: Skype or email susanb@learntheatre.org
Phone: +1 941 306 3383.

Recommended by ISTA