

WOMEN IN THEATRE MAGAZINE

INTERNATIONAL EDITION 2014

WOMEN TOGETHER ACROSS THE GLOBE

LEAGUE OF PROFESSIONAL
**THEATRE
WOMEN**

Women in Theatre International Edition 2014 is a publication of the League of Professional Theatre Women.

THE LEAGUE OF PROFESSIONAL
THEATRE WOMEN

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*article appears in the WIT2014 online edition
<http://theatrewomen.org/WIT2014>

Please turn to page 33 for more information.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

We are dedicating this International Issue of WOMEN IN THEATRE (WIT) to the vision of expanding our horizons and bridging the borders of the world's theaters. This WIT edition focuses on innovative theatre women (LPTW members, affiliates, and non-members) who create, produce, and/or perform work that gives voice and substance to issues affecting women in different parts of the world. With the exception of international festivals, we in the U.S. may not be fully aware of the breadth and magnitude of international theatre being created by women. We believe that this issue of Women in Theatre provides a unique perspective of the astounding range of opportunities women theatre professionals have to collaborate, recognize and support one another around the globe.

As women interacting internationally, we benefit from differences in aesthetics and historical perspectives, homogenous values, and storytelling traditions of our various cultures. We also share a common interest in examining social and political issues affecting the civil rights, safety and legal status of women around the world. Women theatre professionals in most if not all countries are acutely aware that they still do not stand on equal footing with their male counterparts in terms of visibility, work opportunities, and material support. Some of the work highlighted in this issue bears witness to threats to women's independence and freedom ranging from illiteracy and arranged marriage to genital mutilation, rape, honor killing, imprisonment and assassination. Others share their experiences of building work through inter-global collaborations and/or touring work abroad. These artists employ theatre as an indispensable conduit through which women's voices and cultures are expressed. Once a live performance plants the seeds of empowerment, a transformation can begin in the minds and hearts of performers and audience alike.

This WIT International edition is the first magazine of its kind to celebrate theatre women across the world. Due to the breadth of submissions we received, we have included additional features on the LPTW website. We hope all of this work inspires its readers to learn more and get involved.

In solidarity,

Carolyn Balducci (*Editor in Chief*), Maxine Kern, Joyce Maio and Lorca Peress



Carolyn Balducci



Maxine Kern



Joyce Maio

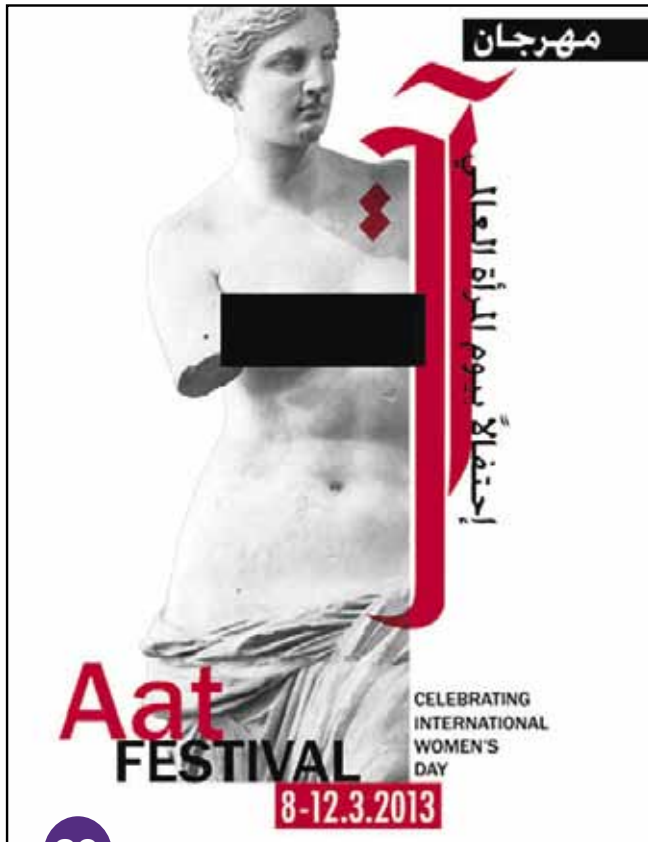


Lorca Peress

WOMEN IN THEATRE (WIT) is a magazine publication of the League of Professional Theatre Women. WIT examines the issues and challenges facing women theatre leaders and artists through interviews, profiles and conversations penned by women writers. It highlights women's roles in theatre and the work women create, produce, and perform with special coverage of League events, programs, and noteworthy activities of its members. WIT ONLINE is an extension of the printed magazine, with separate features and blog responses, and can be seen at www.witonline.org.

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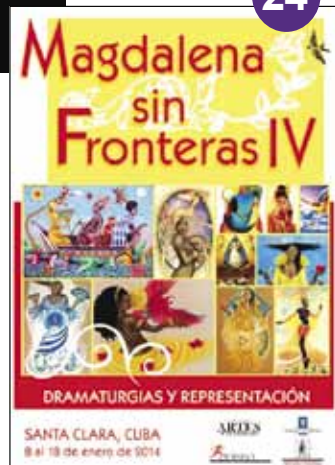
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100 FEMMES

One Hundred Women on Stage [from your town]

By Àngels Aymar

One hundred women arrive for rehearsal. While changing clothes, they get out of their daily lives. I point out to them the importance of being aware of this and to integrate it as part of the process.

They are ordinary women from different backgrounds and professions, with no theatrical experience; all living in the same city.

They have come here to participate in an unknown play which they will build together and write in their own language based on responses to a questionnaire prepared just for them about their city, their world view and their personal stories.

In the rehearsal room there is an atmosphere of discipline, dedication and enthusiasm. The participants range from 18 to 84 years old. Even when it is hot and they are tired, or have a hard time continuing or feel thwarted when encountering resistance, no one complains. Little by little, as boundaries get

blurred, others become more obvious, and when they detect an obstacle it becomes a challenge.

All of them are aware that they are part of a team. They get used to a new language that brings them closer to perceiving the essence of the artistic creation. They assume their responsibility towards the group and the public. They know that as spectators, they often choose a character to identify with, but this time, the characters are themselves.

These women also know that their group is only a part of a larger project, formed by other groups, other women, other cultures and languages. This ephemeral experience results in a documentary film. Each of them will have contributed to it adding their particular form of expression. While each performance contains the same elements, each one will be as unique as the woman performing.



© Jordi Angrill 2013

For certain women who have faced or are in the process of facing a difficult circumstance, because their story can help other people, I ask them if they would agree to share their experience with the public. Often their emotion dominates them and their voice breaks up. I tell them if they are not able to express the emotion, another woman in the group can do it instead. But they are usually brave and accept the challenge.

I'm touched by them.

I find these heartfelt, truthful reactions to be very powerful and moving experiences for both the performer and audience.

None of these women is aware of the result of the work viewed from the outside. They have not seen the play, do not know how it looks, or what it speaks to as a whole. They do not consider the possible impact it may have on the viewer, because they have been living inside their own play and viewing the world from the inside.

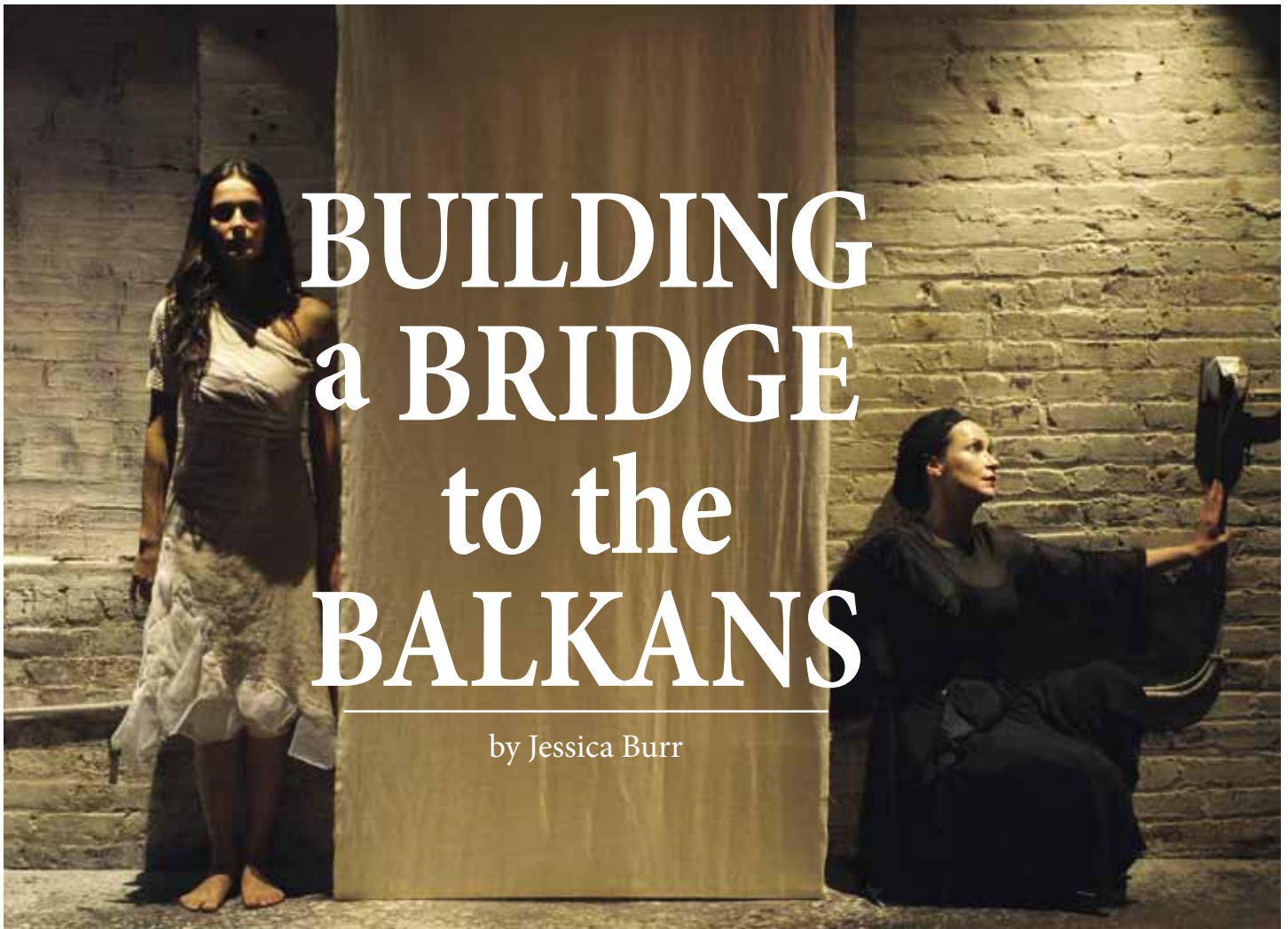
I heard about 100FEMMES on the radio and I said to myself, a project with a hundred women? I have to be one of them!

For most participants, answering the call on the radio was intuitive, a move that marked the beginning of a shared personal process onstage, with its own dialogue, and where the word “I” explores new horizons. Everything was already within the 100 women when they arrived; they just needed a common channel to manifest it. Following the project, they then need to assimilate and incorporate what they have experienced into their daily lives.

We realize that we have evolved very little through history as human beings. We do not pretend we can change anyone's life or have an effect on the world. We are merely a team working together on an artistic project but we believe invisible actions can move things. Through our curiosity, our desire to understand the world and ourselves, and the need to shape our fictions, we are propelled to discover another 100FEMMES around the planet. The path remains open and we hope to cross it with you. With admiration and gratitude to all women who are seeking to overcome. 🍷



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BUILDING a BRIDGE to the BALKANS

by Jessica Burr



For as long as I can remember, I've dreamed of having my own theatre company that travels the world. In 1999, I co-founded Blessed Unrest, an ensemble-based experimental theatre company that generates new work in New York City and collaborates with international partners.

Teatri Oda of Prishtina, Kosova (the Albanian spelling of Kosovo) was formed immediately after the Balkan wars, its founders believing in the importance of culture in the assertion of a new nation's identity. They are a passionate, inspiring group of artists who are actively defining what it means to be an independent arts organization in a region where they were the first.

We met and decided to work together in 2005, while my partner Matt Opatrny and I were on a research journey through the Balkans. In 2006, we brought our play *Lying* to Kosova, reinventing it to include a bilingual Oda actor as a character/translator. In 2008, we hosted five Oda artists

in New York for the first-ever US/Kosovar theatre collaboration in the US. We created and performed *Doruntine*, based on an Albanian legend of family loyalty and the power of an unbreakable vow, which I co-directed with Florent Mehmeti and Matt co-wrote with Lirak Çelaj. The run attracted both American and Albanian-American audiences and it remains the highest attended New York production in Blessed Unrest's history.

In 2009, we toured *Doruntine* across the Balkans to packed houses.

In December 2012, we created *The Sworn Virgin*, performed at Teatri Oda, and toured through Kosova, Macedonia, and Albania. Our play explores the tradition, the ways it is repressive and liberating, why it is fading and what that says about Albanian women and their struggle for equality. Again, Matt and Lirak co-wrote the script and Florent and I co-directed a cast of eight actors, four from each company. It is performed without subtitles, structured so that an audience member who understands only Albanian or only English is able to follow the story, and at times is immersed in a foreign language. The play's themes are serious and probing, while the circumstances become quite comedic with

*'Doruntine
is inventive
exciting theatre
that crosses
artistic
as well as
national
and cultural
boundaries...
the story feels
both ancient
and cutting-edge'
- www.offoffoff.com*




For our next collaboration, we focused on the often-overlooked experiences of Albanian women. Kosovar and Albanian society tends to be very male-centric, and the women, especially the poor, face obstacles ranging from the threat of human trafficking to holding down jobs while still doing all the domestic work for their families.

And then there are the sworn virgins. This is an ancient Albanian tradition now beginning to vanish, in which women take an oath of lifelong celibacy in exchange for the rights and responsibilities of living as men. The burrneshat, or sworn virgins, take the oath (or are forced to take it) for many reasons including to replace a family's patriarch if no other males are living, to avoid an arranged marriage, to gain independence in the male dominated society, or because they feel more comfortable as men. They cut their hair, dress, work, and are accepted as men, though the community knows the sworn virgins are women. However, despite their social and financial independence, sworn virgins are denied sexual relations on penalty of death.

gender confusion and linguistic misunderstanding. It was very well received by sold out houses during our Balkan tour, and now we are bringing *The Sworn Virgin* to New York in early 2015.

Collaborating with Oda is chaotic, terrifying, hysterical, multi-lingual magic. There is a depth and groundedness to Oda's work, perhaps drawing on the strength and closeness of their community and the adversity they have overcome. This is coupled with a sense of humor, openness, and relaxation throughout rehearsal and performance. Our experience with their creative process has changed the way Blessed Unrest works.

Our collaboration demonstrates a respect for and interest in Albanian culture by Americans, and gives our artists and audiences a direct connection to the history, traditions, and language of the Albanian people.

As a company, we love creating abroad, getting to know people by working together, studying new languages, and engaging with new stories and cultures. As we continue to work with Teatri Oda, Blessed Unrest is also seeking to build relationships with new international partners in other parts of the world. 

At the Heart of

THEATRE WITHOUT BORDERS

Based on a Conversation with Roberta Levitow

By Elaine Avila

Theatre Without Borders kept the door open for artists to converse across politically sensitive borders, thus demonstrating that through person-to-person, artist-to-artist diplomacy real change can take place.

- Elaine Avila



FOR 10 YEARS, Roberta Levitow has been the director and co-director of Theatre Without Borders (TWB). Co-founded with Erik Ehn, Deborah Brevoort, and Catherine Filloux, TWB operates without traditional infrastructure (no grants, no salaries, no fees), in order to facilitate person-to-person, artist-to-artist exchange, free from any agenda except that of the personal, individual desire to connect. Like their namesake, Doctors Without Borders, TWB does not discriminate in terms of race, religion or politics. Like Amnesty International, they help those in life-threatening situations—in TWB’s case, performing artists—and they do not affiliate with any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion. Since its members are dedicated to values of generosity, accessibility and hospitality, TWB is a unique mechanism for international exchanges in over forty countries.

Theatre Without Borders has hosted numerous gatherings and conferences, including a seminal NYC event on theatre and peace building with over 400 artists from over 30 countries. It partners with human rights organizations to respond rapidly to theatre artists in life-threatening situations, and sends donated theatre books to artists in Iraq and other regions of the world. With Brandeis University TWB co-launched the *Acting Together* project, a two-volume anthology and documentary, with case studies “from every continent (except Antarctica!)” as Dr. Cynthia E. Cohen writes in her Introduction.

TWB members use quirky metaphors like ‘a reading club’, ‘a rave’ or ‘a clubhouse’ to help others grasp their unusual form of non-organization. Their emphasis on friendly person-to-person diplomacy allows them to manage the complexities of doing theatre within the context of international politics.

At the heart of their work, TWB employs three key concepts:

- *Without Funding*
- *Person-To-Person, Artist-To-Artist*
- *Thoughtful Engagement*

WITHOUT FUNDING

TWB is an all-volunteer network, allowing members to be flexible, mobile, unattached from agendas. TWB artists may work on grants or have institutional affiliations, but TWB itself does not. Theatre is particularly suited for peace building. It accesses knowledge held in the body. It can take an open-ended, exploratory approach. It allows multiple truths to exist, side by side. As Daniel Banks, a long-time core member and a co-director of TWB writes, theatre can be a “space where everyone is allowed his or her own truth [yet] two individuals’ truths do not need to be the same for them to live, create, and work well together.” Operating without funding builds trust and makes it possible to operate without a goal-oriented agenda in complex contexts like war or post-colonial legacy. TWB’s all-volunteer approach allows artists to meet each other on more equal footing. In situations where people are paid, member artists sometimes negotiate economic disparities in a variety of ways. For example, Catherine Filloux, in a gesture she describes in *Acting Together: Volume 1*, responded to the request from her Cambodian collaborators for a raise by paying them out of her own stipend.


PERSON-TO-PERSON, ARTIST-TO-ARTIST

TWB has been operating in the decade after 9/11, when U.S. foreign policy began to close down. Regulations in the original Patriot Act explicitly prohibited the translation of writing, including plays, from so-called “Axis of Evil” countries, making all U.S.-based foundations funding cultural or civic projects in the region accountable for the end-use of their funds (such as expressing anti-American sentiments) or face closure. Yet in person-to-person conversations, individual Americans had and still have protected rights. For its growing global community, TWB has become a powerful antidote to despair and silence by keeping the door open for citizen-to-citizen dialogue and artistic conversation across politically sensitive borders.

THOUGHTFUL ENGAGEMENT

When working with people in regimes where things cannot be stated overtly, symbols take on great importance. Stories take on different meanings. For this reason, it is essential to consider the danger a collaborator may be in, and to avoid putting him or her in harm’s way by your actions. *Acting Together Vol. 2* includes short videos and a digital toolkit designed to inform and support those working in the field of peacebuilding performance.

Everything means something. We take that to heart, and reflect on even the obvious, the habitual, the unexamined, as we seek intercultural conversation.

By adhering to its principles of Without Funding, Person-to-Person, Artist-to-Artist and Thoughtful Engagement, Theatre Without Borders is able to continue to serve as a resource and exchange point for all those who do international work. The success of this philosophy is shown in the way TWB members are making intercultural practise an integral part of theatre training at such universities and institutions as Brandeis (Cynthia Cohen), University of San Francisco (Roberto Varea), The Masters Degree in Applied Theatre at CUNY and DNAWORKS Workshops (Daniel Banks), Naropa (Jessica Litwak), Brown (Erik Ehn), LaMama E.T.C. in New York and in touring workshops (David Diamond and Jessica Litwak). 

DUST TO DUST

By Elizabeth Hess

DUST TO DUST, written, performed and directed by Elizabeth Hess, digs beneath the devastation of systematic wartime rape to uncover a transcendent inner grace.

This is the brief synopsis an audience reads before seeing this 'play in e-motion' based on the traumatic events of women during the Balkan War. It took me some time to recognize how the repression of these Muslim women was resonant with my own Mennonite roots, but, by embodying their experience, I came to empathize with their alienation and ostracism in a way that led to a deeply personal and profound recognition.

New York is filled with many outsiders, who, like myself, have sought refuge here for personal and/or political reasons. It was my dear friend and neighbor's story of escape from war-torn Bosnia that became the primary source material for this play, which I then fleshed out with factual accounts of systematic rape during the war and transformed into the fictional story of an Everywoman.

The story begins with the Outsider who wants to go home - to create a safe distance from the witness of the Everywoman who has suffered violent sexual objectification - but finds that shame and humiliation travel with her in her veins. She cannot escape her inner landscape and is compelled to empathize with the traumatic world of the Everywoman who was repeatedly raped as a tactic of war. The recognition of their unspoken bond allows the Outsider to eventually break through the boundaries of the psyche that no longer allow her to view another's human cry from a safe distance.

Through a heartfelt identification with the Everywoman, the Outsider comes to a visceral understanding of their shared humanity, of what it means to move beyond cultural boundaries to encounter the universality of man's inhumanity to man, of how the demonization of the 'other' impacts us individually as well as collectively, of why we need to dispel secrets in order to truly release the bonds of captivity.

In creating a dramatic work based on systematic rape, I wanted to find a way to explore the intertwined complexity of the words *rape* and *rapture*, which share the same root word *rapere*, meaning 'to seize'. To be seized means to be 'taken from oneself' and in rape this is experienced as being split off from the body; in rapture, as being transported by bliss.



I chose moments throughout the piece where the 'Everywoman' escapes to an idealized inner landscape that conjures up memories of innocence and longing. The language is poetic - crystallized and concrete - as a way of creating something tangible to hang on to in the midst of being ripped apart physically and psychically.

Trauma research reveals the need for the mind to escape to another realm in order to survive an impossible ordeal. At times, this escape has the feel of ecstasy as it counters the agony from which it seeks release. There is also an attempt to revert to a time of innocence, before the traumatic event changed the psychic landscape forever. One may also try to re-script the devastating story so as to feel empowered rather than helpless, thus trying to turn the tables, psychologically, in order to gain a much needed sense of control.


THE WORLD AS HOME



By Caridad Svich

With these insights in mind, I chose moments throughout the piece where the Everywoman escapes to an idealized inner landscape that conjures up memories of innocence and longing. The language is poetic - crystallized and concrete - as a way of creating something tangible to hang on to in the midst of being ripped apart physically and psychically.

It is all too easy for those of us who have not sustained a traumatic blow to feel a kind of *shadenfreude* - an almost voyeuristic or pornographic response to another's pain. Through the eyes of the Outsider, I explore the character's attempt to sublimate her own sexual objectification by identifying with the Everywoman. But the Outsider avoids her own painful story at the expense of greater self-awareness and autonomy. The ritualized invocation of innocence and longing eventually penetrates her defenses allowing fragments of her own wounding to resurface. Hers is a subtler invasion and thus one that is much easier to suppress, but with its release comes greater recognition and integration with self and other.

DUST TO DUST addresses its politics obliquely rather than overtly to keep the dialogue alive and the borders open, metaphorically as well as literally. It welcomes the exploration of unknown territory within where one encounters a complex response to terror and tenderness, to cruelty and compassion, to abandonment and acceptance. It attempts to repair borderline behavior by reclaiming one's truth, including one's darkness as well as light, one's woundedness as well as wonder, one's fear as well as love. It seeks to find a liminal space where we, as one, can embrace non-duality with wonder and grace. 


The air is humid as a breeze gently drifts through the trees. I am standing on the balcony of an elegant hotel in the suburb of Pinares in the city of San Jose in Costa Rica. In a few weeks' time, my play *The House of the Spirits* (winner of the 2011 American Theatre Critics Association Primus Prize), based on the novel by Isabel Allende, will receive its area premiere at Teatro Espresso under the direction of Jose Zayas and Jody Steiger. It's not the first time this play has travelled. It's already had productions in New York City, Denver, Minneapolis, Houston, Albuquerque, Tempe, St. Louis, Miami, Washington D.C., and Santiago de Chile (S.A.), and soon it will be seen in Mexico City. Each experience has taught me something about how the play works, the manner in which its politics of power and family strike a chord with audiences, and how its painful lessons of survival and forgiveness offer a healing balm for troubled times. Writ along decidedly classical lines, *The House of the Spirits* has become something of a signature play in my repertoire. This is not something I could have ever predicted when I first started working on it. The fact that it even ran for three consecutive commercial engagements in Chile, the beating heart of its history and Allende's country, was to me a minor miracle in and of itself. That it has travelled at all since then has been a fascinating lesson in what being a writer in this mad business can be like.

You may think your tribe is here, when actually your theatre tribe is somewhere else. After all, theatrical kinship is about metaphorical blood-lines, not figurative ones.

Writing the world is what so many of the greatest dramatists have taught us. I cannot think only of my neighborhood when writing without considering the multi-

national stories that live and breathe in my neighborhood, and the multi-national corporate and economic interests that play a sometimes hidden role in many of the transactions of my daily life. It'd be jejune to think that in this day and age, even outside of New York City or Los Angeles (two of my adopted cities), that our lives are not led under a magnified global lens.

'What is American about your work?' is a question asked of me when I am abroad. I am always slightly flummoxed by this question. Should someone's writing bear the burden of representation? Is there, after all, only one way to write from an "American" lens? Wrestling with identity or even, shall we say, nationhood as a playwright has been a constant for me within the US theatre field - US and US Latina - and beyond it.

I like to think my homes as an artist are many and that I can travel to or be inside many of them at once, should I choose. Writing, after all, is about freedom. You can be anything, write any story! I have been, in my plays, queer British filmmaker Derek Jarman, a transsexual Latin American prostitute, a Louisiana fisherman, a soldier from North Carolina, a Quebecois bounty hunter, a Florida Panhandle gambler, a Hungarian mathematician, Shakespeare's Ophelia, a murdered woman from Ciudad Juarez, 19th century's Edwin, Junius and John Wilkes Booth, a West Texas soccer player, a Dominican DJ, a Cuban rafter, a suburban office worker, Medea, Antigone, a ravenous banker in a dystopic metropolis, JFK, Bob Dylan, Salvador Dali, and more. As I stand here overlooking the verdant blossoms outside the balcony in Pinares, Costa Rica, readying for the next rehearsal of *The House of the Spirits*, I wonder how the international - the wondrous, strange, beautiful, complex, multilingual, plurality of the world itself - lives inside all of us and makes of this world: home. 

SEVEN THEATRE & PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

by Hedda Krausz Sjögren and Tove Eriksson

Theatre and performance can have any number of purposes and effects. One is to spark a conversation and open a door to a new room. This is exactly what Seven does; it takes the audience into a new room, a space where a conversation about the global oppression of women and the activism that has arisen as a response is sparked.

The documentary play SEVEN tells the stories of seven women's rights activists. Each one conveys to us a different story; the struggles faced by the woman who set up the first domestic violence hotline in Russia, a young woman's fight against the Taliban rule in Afghanistan, the tireless work of an activist to end sex trafficking in Cambodia, how a woman in the Guatemalan parliament deals with corruption and sexism; the effects of the political assassination of her parents on a Nigerian woman's life; the life of a trade union worker demanding social justice in Ireland; the story of the survivor of a gang rape in Pakistan. SEVEN different stories, that, in fact, tell just one, and it's a tale of power, oppression, change and activism.

The Seven-concept makes the play a change maker on several levels. Perhaps most crucially, it comes down to the way the text, the organizers, the audience and the ensemble interact. Through SEVEN, the stories and messages of the seven activists are told to a new audience, and by a new ensemble with every performance. The audience, in turn, take in stories, react and relate them to their own experiences. The reaction often leads to action, not least in the form of a new reading of SEVEN being organized. This is in fact how SEVEN spreads. The ensemble often consists of a mix of active local women's rights activists, NGO members, politicians, and other members of the community. The individuals in the ensemble are empowered in their community through the interaction between the organizers of the event, (usually stakeholders of the issues on several societal levels), the reading of the text, and through taking part in discussions, representing and portraying a strong woman fighting for a social issue. SEVEN is a project that grows as it spreads.





To illustrate, cut to Novi Pazar, southern Serbia, November 2013. Novi Pazar is a community of 100,000 people, it is a polarized town, tradition and patriarchy has a strong influence. Anyone questioning the status quo runs the risk of being demonized by formal and informal community leaders.

Project owners/organizers: the Swedish Embassy, the Swedish Institute, the producer Hedda Krausz Sjögren, Serbian director Anja Susa and the local Serbian organisation Youth Initiative for Human Rights. On stage: journalists, politicians, actresses and local activist Aida Corovic, who has spoken out on behalf of vulnerable groups of women in her society for years. In the audience: the mayor, activists, local staff from the mayor's office, students, young people, police. After the performance: a panel discussion. The final statement of one panellist is a call for another meeting like this one within two months. At the end of the evening, a person in the audience tells me: "A public conversation between these groups has never happened here before. We have taken a step towards real change for the situation of women who suffer abuse in Novi Pazar".

It is clear that the SEVEN-concept makes things happen and we as organizers often discuss the effects of our work. One question that has come up is if there can be negative effects when SEVEN gives a platform to individuals and organizations. So far, our experience is overwhelmingly positive. Those on stage are empowered and strengthened in their position, and their political aims are confirmed by the testimonies in SEVEN and the production concept. We as organizers however have to keep paying attention. SEVEN can never become a tool for individuals to self-promote or for party politics.


SEVEN is turning into a global movement. With the support primarily by the Swedish Institute, the play has travelled to 23 countries in the past 4 years, from Mazar-e-Sharif in Afghanistan to the NATO head quarters where seven male generals portrayed the activists in SEVEN.

SEVEN shows that theatre has the power to change the world. We want the play to leverage its full global potential in the fight for equality and women's human rights.

SEVEN/background

The documentary play SEVEN is a collaborative piece, written by seven playwrights in 2006 in collaboration with Vital Voices Global Network. Each playwright interviewed a women's rights activist and created a role based on her.

- **Ruth Margraff** interviewed and wrote the part for Farida Azizi
- **Catherine Filloux** interviewed and wrote the part for Mu Sochua
- **Susan Yankowitz** interviewed and wrote the part for Mukhtar Mai
- **Paula Cizmar** interviewed and wrote the part for Marina Pisklakova-Parker
- **Gail Kriegel** interviewed and wrote the part for Anabella de Leon
- **Carol K Mack** interviewed and wrote the part for Inez McCormack,
- **Anna Deveare Smith** interviewed and wrote the part for Hafsat Abiola.

The Swedish and international tour of SEVEN, described above, is produced and based on a concept developed by Swedish director/producer Hedda Krausz Sjögren. SEVEN is performed as a reading, with prominent members of the community reading the parts of the women portrayed. The play has so far been performed in 23 countries, and has been translated into 19 languages. It has reached well over 25,000 people. 

AN EYE-OPENER FOR WOMEN IN SECLUSION

By Riho Mitachi

In 1975, as a guest speaker for the conference in Boston celebrating the first International Women's Year, I gave a speech on my country, Japan, titled "The World of Men First." Nearly forty years have passed, but Japan still remains a world of Men First.

Women in Japan had been energetically fighting to acquire equal rights. Ironically, when the Basic Act for Gender-Equal Society went into effect in 1999, Japanese women seemed to cease fighting and start seeking ways to become accepted members of the "real" world, with 2600-years of tradition overruling the modern laws of equality.

Once Japanese women step into the "real" world, they painfully realize it is still the world of Men First. To remain as its active member, women are expected to maintain their so-called tradition of harmony. When a woman speaks out, wanting to be different, she is silently ignored, excluded, and eventually forced out.

Eventually, women shift their focus from fighting against tradition to going along with it, and many choose to settle into the seclusion of mind and emotion.

It is getting more and more difficult to hear true voices of women lately, especially in public offices. The data provided by the Inter-Parliamentary in 2013, ranked Japan 122nd out of 188 countries, having only 39 women MPs out of 480.¹ Professor Misako Iwamoto of Mie University commented, "The Japanese political parties have been using women candidates as vote-drawing idols. The political parties should select the candidates who have policymaking abilities."² But how do you urge women who chose to retreat into seclusion to see beyond the world of Men First?

SEVEN, a documentary drama based on the lives of seven women leaders from all over the world, proved that theatre can serve as a spark to evoke interest and need in Japanese women of all generations to open their eyes and see what is happening outside Japan. Three elements embedded in SEVEN serve as eye-openers for women audience members and a few men, as well. SEVEN depicts the life story of each leader in three different stages: the first stage introduces an early experience with a specific situation or confrontation; the second shows the turning point when a decision was made to confront or speak out against the oppressor; and the third reveals the outcome of their battle.

First, what appeals most to women audience members is the first stage which illustrates that these seven women were ordinary human beings just like themselves. Keeping this in mind, the audience follows these seven through their challenges and battles and comes to believe it might be feasible for them to do the same.

The **second** and probably the most effective element is the collaborative work the seven playwrights have done by combining the seven lives into a single stream of consciousness. Having the seven leaders on stage the entire time gives wider perspective to the seven characters themselves, and results in expanding the view of the audience.

SEVEN



Each leader on stage witnesses the other six women's struggle, listens, reacts, supports, and walks along the road with her. Thus, the audience sees the seven lives taking place all at once, watches the women fighting their own issue with others in sight and is enlightened that their struggles are not limited to their own country, but exists in each and every country.

Finally, presenting this documentary drama in "dramatic reading style" helps newcomers to theatre to open their hearts to the characters on stage. The actresses performing with script in hand attest that the lines spoken are the actual words of the leaders. Hearing the words delivered "live" by actresses empowered by their own sensibilities, enables us to reach deeper into the hearts of the audience.

SEVEN may only be a spark unable to last long enough to make anyone speak up, but it is a beginning. The 2012 premier of SEVEN led to its remounting in 2013. The 2013 production won an invitation to perform for the members of Japan Christian Woman's Organization and UN Women National Committee Japan/Tokyo in November, 2014. What next? It is not an easy road. But as Inez McCormack says in SEVEN, *It's a lonely road, but you meet great people along the way.*ⁱⁱⁱ

i <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

ii <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/komachi/news/20121227-OYT8T00360.htm>

iii Mack, Carol K. SEVEN: SEEING ANOTHER COUNTRY, 2008, p.89.

FOUNDING THE LPTW INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

By Joanne Pottlitzer

AT AN LPTW BOARD MEETING in early 2003, it was suggested that we expand our membership to theatre women abroad since the work of several League members had already taken us well beyond North American borders. The idea was met with enthusiasm, and Joan Firestone said, "Why don't you take it on, Joanne, and establish an international component?" My producing career had been geared to introducing Latin American theatre to New York audiences, and as I had chaired the League's Membership Committee for four years, I knew the membership criteria well. In March 2003 we held our first meeting as a subcommittee of the League's Membership Committee. Our mission was to enhance awareness among theatre women of the value of international bonds. Within our first year we had accepted 25 affiliates from 18 countries.

In 2008, we became a permanent and autonomous LPTW committee promoting contacts with women internationally, broadening awareness of other cultures and opportunities here and abroad, and advocating for women in theatre across national borders. We now have 103 affiliates from 34 countries.

The activities of the International Committee have included taking visiting international affiliates to lunch, hosting receptions for them, offering them complimentary theatre tickets, accompanying them on city excursions, connecting them with other theater professionals, even putting them up for a few days. In turn, League members have benefited from affiliates' hospitality when we visit their countries. Some highlights: receptions where women theatre professionals from various parts of the world spoke to LPTW members about their own work and women's roles in their respective countries, special awards, visits to Yale School of Drama and other universities, and special events featuring women directors and playwrights from Korea, Croatia, China, Iran, Serbia, Austria, Czech republic and Chile. And in 2011, we established the prestigious Gilder/Coigney International Theater Award. On behalf of the international committee and our international affiliates, we are honored that WIT 2014 is dedicated to the international work and women of the League.

The LPTW International Committee is co-chaired by Joyce Maio and Sophia Romma and has over 90 LPTW members and 103 international member affiliates. In 2013, the International Committee celebrated its 10th Anniversary.

THE GILDER/COIGNEY INTERNATIONAL THEATRE AWARD

The Award will be presented on October 27, 2014 in New York City

The Award was established in 2011 in honor of Rosamond Gilder and Martha Coigney, two legendary theatre women whose work on the international stage proved that theatre knows no boundaries. Presented every three years by the LPTW International Committee, this Award acknowledges the exceptional work of theatre women around the world and aims to make a difference in the life and career of an international woman theatre artist.

The 2014 Gilder/Coigney International Award has been awarded to Colombian theatre artist Patricia Ariza for her work as a social reformer, her achievement in building bridges that connect theatre and society, theatre and politics, theatre and gender, and for the powerful impact the work has in her own community and upon the international community at large. Patricia is one of 21 women theatre artists from 19 countries nominated on the basis of work that inspires and educates across cultures, has a visible impact in their home country and abroad, and which demonstrates not only artistic excellence but a support of women's work and issues.

Awardee PATRICIA ARIZA A POLYPHONIC WOMAN

Interviewed by Carlos Satizábal, Associate Professor, National University of Colombia & Director of Tramaluna Theatre.

Translated from Spanish by Juanita Lara

Edited by Joyce Maio and Ludovica Villar-Hauser

...we can achieve solidarity between art and politics by learning from women. I would add that the singular is also political, that art is political and the political can be examined through the personal -- Patricia Ariza



Who is Patricia Ariza? I've been a theater artist, feminist and political activist for a long time, in search of peace for Colombia through art and culture. It's a great utopia and I have worked in support of victims and marginalized populations. Events led me to invent new artistic forms, bringing together trained artists with the displaced.

Colombia suffers the largest human and humanitarian disaster of the western hemisphere with the most displaced and exiled in the world. It ranks third from the bottom in equality and has the longest internal conflict in world history. The voice of the victims gives me my own voice to tell their story and struggle.

I co-founded Theatre La Candelaria (Teatro La Candelaria) and the Colombian Theater Corporation where I manage two theater festivals. Women on Stage, an annual festival running for 22 consecutive years, originally

had few women dramatists and directors. The most recent festival had 60. The Alternative Theater, a biannual festival parallel to the Ibero-American Theater Festival, a festival of high visibility supported by institutions, private corporations and media networks.

Why create a parallel festival to the Ibero-American Theater? Our festival is a theater of the people and of resistance, an important movement both socially and artistically.

You're one of the founders of Teatro La Candelaria alongside Maestro Santiago Garcia, one of the most renowned contemporary Group Theaters of Latin America, boasting 47 years of uninterrupted work! What is the Group doing now? I am now responsible for the artistic direction of the group, which has always been directed by the Maestro, a great

master of Colombian and Latin American Theater. We are working on a piece about Camilo Torres, a priest dedicated to liberation theology. I just produced and directed, Soma Mnemosine: the body of memory, in homage to victims of violence and disappearance. Through Butho dance and popular music, we create a laboratory and explore the body in joy and in pain - we mingle the memory of the victims with our own. The houses of our theater are filled mainly with young people.

In La Candelaria we work in collective creation. It's a methodology, an attitude in believing you can create together even though this process is complicated. The piece about Camilo combines individual and collective creation.

What have you found in your long creative investigation about the relationship between art, politics and conflict in Colombia?

We've explored massive theater performance, working with trained artists alongside victims and have been in the streets and plazas more than twenty times in the last few years. We ask: Where are the dead? Where are the disappeared? Linking politics and art is crucial because in Colombia we hunger for peace. It is what our country and our world need above all. The protection of humanity is an ethical imperative. We women have a lot to say. We are crucial to the economy; we embody the morals and are the mediators par excellence.

An important aspect of my work is to raise awareness: we need to get used to the idea of peace. We just completed an Art and Culture Forum for Peace with international guests joining artists, academics and intellectuals from all over Colombia. We plan to publish a book to memorialize our first Forum and to mobilize a "Global Meeting of Artists and Intellectuals for Peace in Colombia"

How do you organize your time?

La Candelaria is a laboratory, a theater of invention. We rehearse every morning and this time is sacred. I allow no distraction - not activism, not economic temptation, nothing.

Everything else, I do in the afternoons at the Colombian Theater Corporation with Carlos Satizábal. We work with other trained artists and with victims, youth and women who make art from their personal stories. Also organizing the Art and Culture Forum for Peace and other, ongoing Festivals.

Tell us about "Women on Stage for Peace Festival" and your relationship with the women's social movement and Feminist Philosophy. As an artist I need to engage with other women theater artists. Women on Stage for Peace Festival celebrates women in theater. Patriarchy dominates. Art can't be passive. We need women to be assertive.

The Colombian and Latin American theaters are predominantly male. Men are in charge. The heroes and antiheroes are almost always men. Works address events the patriarchy finds important.

Women's theater is amazingly interesting. In spite of a lack of political gender awareness in their work, many still connect the private with the political. Feminist philosophers taught us that both the personal and the private are political. Women have a strong relationship with the private and now, in this time of liberation, we also assert the political.

In general our patriarchal society separates the political and the private. There is the political



life on the street, and life in the home. Women's theater looks deeper into that dichotomy and shows what the victim experiences; that victim is not merely a statistic but a human being with a life story; that the dead are also not just statistics but individuals who had a way of being and thinking that was priceless.

Please expand on the relationship you weave between theater and politics.

I think political and artistic practices are different but not opposed. The political looks for a broad consensus, an ideology. Art focuses on the particular, something very personal. Although art and politics are distinct disciplines every human act is political. We can achieve solidarity between art and politics by learning from women. We have staged enormous events and created massive artistic rallies where art and the political come together.

Do you think art can influence the spectator and in what way? The greatest challenge is to convince people to believe that art can influence public perception.

You are polyphonic: a playwright, actress, director, cultural and political leader, a feminist and a poet. You are the recipient of the national poetry prize for unpublished work for your "Sheets of Flying Paper" (Hojas de Papel Volando). Talk to us about being a poet and writer. Writing is a refuge for me. Poetry has been my foundation for writing in theater. I write outlines for scenes, the public brings the rest - this is when true theater happens, not on the dramatist's desk.

Writing poetry has become increasingly difficult because it requires the world to be reduced to its essence. That is why I write very short poems. For me, it's also a refuge for intuition. Intuition in a dedicated artist is

culturally informed. When I look at my poems they seem strange and I do not always recognize them. Poetry is a place I need to explore.

You are also a designer and a visual artist- Tell us about your relationship with these other crafts.

I prefer to think of myself as a polyphonic woman. Polyphony looks at life as a symphony: musical instruments playing together resemble a person, her story, her memories with all contradictions and conflicts.

I studied drawing and painting at university and art history with the great teacher, Marta Traba. Design and visual arts help me shape my "eye" for theater.

I enjoy looking at the relationship between content and the way the work finds its own style, color and texture. You must surrender to the work.

You have just received an important international award in the United States, from the League of Professional Theater Women. What does this mean to you?

The United States is the largest empire the world has known. Although I have been critical of it, I understand that it has dichotomies, conflicts, oppression of women and alternative cultures, like in every society. Because it comes from the League of Professional Theater Women, this award has touched me deeply. I believe the connection between art and alternative culture in the United States and Latin America is a fundamental global issue. So for me, this award is very significant and I am very moved.

Patricia, what is next for you?

LIFE, as it wishes to be. 🇨🇴

GILDER/COIGNEY INTERNATIONAL THEATRE AWARD - 2014 Finalists



Dalia Basiouny – Egypt
www.daliabasiouny.com
Writer

My artwork and my life's work are dedicated to promoting understanding, harboring justice, developing balance and creating connections. The focus of my writing and theatre making is women, and I deeply believe that the advancement of women is organically connected

to total advancement of peace and justice in society at large. I believe that I was given these opportunities to deeply connect to people from different professions, backgrounds and cultures in order to fulfill my role as a BRIDGE artistically, intellectually, culturally, spiritually and politically.

Jill Greenhalgh – Wales

www.themagdalenaproject.org
Playwright, filmmaker,
founder of the Magdalena Project
Recipient of the "Certificate of
Extraordinary Achievement" as a two-
time Nominee for the Gilder-Coigney
International Theatre Award



After 27 years of continuous global activity the Magdalena Project has a strong and autonomous identity in the cultural landscape. My commitment is to protect and sustain the horizontal structure that has organically emerged as the natural model of interrelation between the artists networked around the world and who are creating events under the umbrella name. In my own performance work as a director I am currently attempting to evoke the languages of quietude and silence and to slow down and mould the essentials of theatre – space, image, text, action and sound – to recover the resonances of silence. I want to create a refuge from the bombardment of noise, information overload and escapist trivia that satiates contemporary living and I want to engage performance as a place of contemplation



Jung-Soon Shim – South Korea
Academic for drama & theatre, feminist

As a Korean woman of theatre my life's work has been to introduce Korean Theatre (and my culture through Theatre) to the rest of the world. As a feminist in a patriarchal system, I have also had to be a strong pioneer for other

women theatre artists. I remain committed to pushing open the doors of opportunity for women everywhere.



Lana Nasser – Jordan
www.lananasser.com
Performing artist, playwright, actress, dancer
& choreographer

The feminine and masculine are out of balance. In this I see the roots of wars and violence: Against women, mother earth and nature. My mission is to restore the balance between the two, within myself and in the world around me, the best way

I know how. Giving voice to the unvoiced, awakening imagination, building bridges between people, transcending boundaries of language, culture, and punctuation, being a catalyst for change and a vehicle for peace ... living free, with joy and integrity ... this is what I aim to do.



Hedda Krausz Sjogren – Sweden
www.hedda.nu
Producer, playwright, actor, director
Recipient of the "Certificate of Extraordinary
Achievement" as a two-time Nominee for the
Gilder-Coigney International Theatre Award

I want to be a part of a movement to reinsert the power of the theatrical experience into society by taking the theatre out of known territories. By inviting audiences to witness the moment when a powerful person on stage (a politician for instance) begins to identify with the powerless or marginalized, I want to bring us to a point where the theatre can reclaim its place as catalyst for social change, and reassert itself as the most vital arena to meet, discuss and understand our society's challenges and devise its future.



Maya Zbib – Lebanon
www.zoukak.org
Theater performer, director, writer, educator

I make professional theater in a country where theater is not a profession as I translate my political and social involvement in my own context; striving to push beyond discourse through direct theater interventions within marginalized communities, focusing on women and gender issues which are problematic topics on social and juridical levels in Lebanon. I work with five theater makers in Zoukak, a non-hierarchical structure, with faith in collectivity as a means of addressing issues within marginalizing systems combined with an understanding of theatre as the collective creation of diverse individuals. My work always springs from a personal desire towards more global issues; as for myself, theater making should remain connected to the real world while aspiring to be timeless.

INTERNATIONAL AWARD NOMINEES

Tiffany Barton – Australia - Playwright, performer, producer, story teller

Doruntina Basha – Serbia - Playwright, screenwriter

Zdenka Becker – Austria - Actor, dramaturg, director, journalist, translator

Sabina Berman – Mexico - Playwright, director, novelist, journalist, screenwriter

Ayca Damgaci – Turkey- Actress, Screenwriter

Mary Ann DeVlieg – Belgium - Arts advocate for women's artists

Lara Foot - South Africa - Playwright, Director/CEO at Baxter Theatre Centre at the University of Cape Town, South Africa

Elena Gremina – Russia - Playwright, Scriptwriter, Creator & Director of the "Documentary Theater" project (TEATR. DOC)

Jude Kelly – England - Artistic Director, Theatre Director

Ioana Ieronim –Romania - Playwright, translator, poet

Susie McKenna – England - Producer, artistic director, actress, playwright, lyricist

Yelena Romanova – Russia - Actress

Adelheid Roosen – Netherlands - writer, director, performer-Theatrical documentaries & installations

Malgorzata Semil – Poland - Theatre Critic, Dramaturge, Translator, Editor, Educator



Seated: Frank Hentschker, Martha Coigney, Standing (l) Odile Katese (2011 International Award Winner), and Anne Catteneco, LCT Dramaturg

An Interview With FRANK HENTSCHKER

By Marcy Arlin

I have been privileged to work with Frank Hentschker and the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center, since 2006. What has always impressed me has been Frank's complete support, integrity and amazing ability to trust the artists who participate in the Segal Center programs.

Dr. Frank Hentschker, the Executive Director and Director of programs at the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center at the CUNY Graduate Center, will host the 2014 Gilder/Coigney LPTW International Award event on October 27, 2014.

MA: Frank, how do you feel the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center has grown and changed over the past 10 years?

FH: Our audience has grown. Events are more complex. I think we inspired a new kind of international dialogue between artists and academics about process and performing, theory and practice, success and failure. For example, we presented the first performance of a female Japanese Bunraku puppet player in the Americas.

MA: Why do you feel that the Segal Center has been so interested in highlighting international theatre?

FH: There is an increased interest in international work in America, perhaps as a reaction to our post 9/11 tunnel vision. I agree with Paul Auster and Salmon Rushdie, who created the PEN World Voices Festival, that a global exchange is vital. Musicians listen to and are influenced by music from all over the world. This should be true for the theatre.

We need to hear international voices, especially of women artists. For example at the Segal Center we are now presenting established playwrights from North Africa, East Asia, South East Asia, Australia, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean. As far as I know, this is the only festival of its kind. We have been described as the United Nations of Theatre.

MA: In 2011, you gave a great deal of time and support by hosting the first Gilder/Coigney International Theatre Award of The League of Professional Theatre Women at the Segal Center. Under your auspices, the Segal Center will be hosting our second Award in the Fall of 2014. Why do you feel it is especially important to support the work of women in theatre?

FH: Most of the people on Earth are female. Their voices should be heard equally, especially in theatre. Stunningly, this is not the case. Often women seem to work in the shadows and the wings, making things run, while men, as in the business world, are visible and in charge. If I understand correctly from a TCG conference meeting, the number of female directors, playwrights and artistic leaders at leading theatres are declining in the US. This is a real loss of energy, creativity and talent. Any female artist who is making a valuable contribution to the field, needs to be supported and encouraged.

I feel that the Gilder/Coigney International Theatre Award is a brilliant way to recognize women in theatre, to encourage their work and to present role models we can look up to.

I see this award as a Nobel Prize for women in theatre in which political and social engagement is rewarded. It is a true honor for the Segal Center to be associated with this award. In an ideal world, we would not need to focus on such a gender specific award – I wish this would be the case.

Martha Coigney is a living legend and testimony to how one woman can change the world. No wonder the LPTW Gilder/Coigney International Theatre Award was created in New York. The introduction to America of the work of Odile Katese from Rwanda was sponsored by Sundance and presented by The Segal Center. She became the first recipient of the Gilder/Coigney International Award.

People from the UN came to our Rwanda evening and invited Odile back to read her work when the UN General Assembly marked the tenth anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda. The U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, spoke at that event. I'd like to personally acknowledge the International Committee who worked very hard to bring the first Gilder/Coigney Award to the Segal Center.

MA: How can the Segal Center continue to support the work of women in international theatre and in NYC?

FH: There were many New York women writers and directors who were shown early at the Segal Center. We make sure we hear female voices from all over the world, and from all backgrounds. There are so many women that I could mention! 🍷

The full article can be read online at <http://theatrewomen.org/wit2014/>



AFGHAN GIRLS FIND THEIR VOICE



by Joanna Sherman

LATIFA stepped in front of the row of girls. She fidgeted a little, then lifted her head and opened her mouth. A small sound came out... "Latifa." Admittedly, it's hard to declare your name loudly to the world. It was almost impossible for Latifa, and yet she ended up playing the raucous and rude husband in our play about educating girls.

We have been creating all-women's theatre groups in Afghanistan since 2003, training young women to perform before crowds of women who have never before seen a play or a woman on stage. Donning the garb and demeanor of a man, Latifa portrays the abusive husband. The women in the audience know this scene all too well and cheer at the end in recognition. The message is clear: girls are kept from their dreams at the whim of uneducated fathers or families.

It's taboo for women to appear on stage in Afghanistan but they can perform for other women—and now they are reaching women in prisons and shelters where the women have little access to news about their rights.

Bond Street has been using theatre as a voice for social justice for more than 30 years. Just after September 11th, 2001, we went to Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan to entertain children. There we met a theatre group, Exile Theatre, comprised of the best actors, playwrights and directors from Afghanistan who had fled over decades of war and Taliban rule. We worked with this talented group for eight years, the first-ever US-Afghan professional theatre collaboration.

After the Taliban, dozens of theatre groups sprang up in towns and villages all over Afghanistan, yet most of these actors had never seen theatre before. What inspired them? They had no model. To me, this verifies that theatre is intrinsic to human nature. We can't help ourselves – humans make theatre.

We also couldn't help but notice that there were no women in these groups. Men were playing all the roles, often laughably. Put on a burqa and *voila*, you're a woman, even if you walk like a linebacker. In the 60's and 70's, the golden age of Afghan theatre, women had excelled on stage. We were determined to return women to their rightful role!


The women we gathered for our theatre groups had absolutely no training to start and, like Latifa, they had to learn to be brave, to hold their heads up and to speak out with passion. Now they play their parts boldly, and the male roles with scary accuracy. They write their own plays based on their issues: they know what an abusive husband is like. They know the dismissive policeman. It's all very real.

The first time they present their plays in public and see the impact they have on the audience of women, they are forever changed. Once they find their power, there's no going back.

In one of their plays, a 13-year old girl from a poor family is happily going to school until her father decides to give her away to an older man for \$10,000, an enormous sum for a poor family. The girl's teacher entreats the father to no avail. The mother, desperate, goes to the mullah to plead for the young girl. The mullah is moved and informs the husband that it is forbidden in Islam to sell your daughter. She must agree to marry. The father didn't know this. How would he know? Even if he could read, he couldn't read the Quran. It's in Arabic, not his language. Through the play, the audience learns that their religion forbids forced marriage – that is crucial information in a country where religion is the primary guide.

In fact, we invite the mullahs to see the plays first to gain their approval. When they see the plays have a good message, they encourage the girls to continue. One even invited them to present their play for women in the mosque.

After each performance, the actors interact with the audience so that audience members can come on stage and act out their solutions to the issues. In one case, a woman immediately countered, "The mullah would never say don't sell your daughter. He'd say \$10,000 is a lot of money and you can always get another daughter."

Most important, these plays are initiating discussions about topics that perhaps have never before been discussed in certain communities. As a result, Afghan women and girls are discovering that theatre can be a powerful yet socially acceptable means of exploring questions of social justice and women's rights. 





I first met Joan Kane when she directed my play SAFE at The Planet Connections Theater Festivity where it won best new dramatic writing. Joan's company Ego Actus produced SAFE at The Edinburgh Festival Fringe and is returning again this summer to Edinburgh with a comedy "what do you mean?" by Bruce A. Kraemer.

Joan Kane is the founding artistic director of Ego Actus Theater Company and was awarded Indie Person of the Year by nytheatre.com. Joan's work has been seen at Theater for The New City, Ensemble Studio Theater, The Samuel French Short Play Festival, 59E59 Theater, and others. She has an MFA in Directing from The New School for Drama, and is a member of the Dramatists Guild, League of Professional Theatre Women and the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers.

EAST to EDINBURGH: An Interview With Artistic Director JOAN KANE

By Penny Jackson

What interested you in The Edinburgh Festival Fringe? I loved the international flavor of the greatest arts festival in the world. It was amazing that all these artists from all over the globe were telling stories, be it one man shows or huge companies I'm interested in cross-cultural collaboration. The whole town of Edinburgh is taken over by artists creating theater in many different styles and mediums; from very simple one set locations to multi-media environments. It is a hub of creativity where people are willing to share ideas. We could speak about theater with people from Saudi Arabia to South Korea, and see shows from ten in the morning to midnight. We also were grateful to Paul Levy of The Fringe Review, who published your twice-weekly blog "Safe Landing" about our American company's experience in Scotland.

Can you explain the changes you had to make in transferring SAFE from 59E59 to the festival? We simplified the set since we needed it to be compact and fit into a suitcase. We also pared down the script from 80 minutes to 60 minutes in order to fit into the schedule of the theater. Changes lead to a completely different show that altered the storytelling so we had to spend more time in rehearsal.

What challenges did your company face in Edinburgh? There were over three thousand shows. The competition was insanely fierce. There was also a very popular comedy venue at the same time, filled with mainly male comics that attracted a large audience. Flyering was very difficult. You would have to hand out flyers on the streets along with what seemed like hundreds of other people handing out flyers which is completely exhausting. Our British audience was different from their American counterparts in that they were a bit more reserved. Still, they listened very attentively to the show, and afterwards enjoyed discussing SAFE with the cast and me.

When we were interviewed [at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival] people were not sympathetic to the fact that the lead characters were from wealthy, upper class backgrounds... Though they were interested in the topic they could not always root for upper class teenagers having a hard time with their lives.

Can you mention several of the wonderful artists we met at the festival? We met extraordinary women – Maisah Sophia from Saudi Arabia, who had sought us out in New York before our trip, and a remarkable group of young actresses from London who performed in a wonderful play about immigrants from Sierra Leone. Although we were from different cultures and countries, they supported SAFE and we supported their work.

What is the best kind of play to bring to the festival? Comedy with a lot of physical humor.

Finally, any words of advice for American artists bringing their work for the first time to Edinburgh? Be open to different points of view and be patient if someone does not understand what you are doing. SLOW DOWN. Have conversations with folks. Don't be so driven by having to accomplish your goals. Drink in the atmosphere of the city of Edinburgh. Do not perform seven days a week. Be healthy. Take a day off and travel. We had an extraordinary day in St. Andrews. Creating theater is hard work but it is also lots of fun. Remember to have this fun and enjoy the process. 🍷

AAT

AAT was named after the suffix -aat (Arabic), representing the plural feminine.

AAT, as a verb (from Aatin) means he is on the way, will be arriving.

AAT also means you (said to a female, in Hebrew).

*AAT could thus mean:
You - the collective feminine, are on your way.*



By Lana Nasser

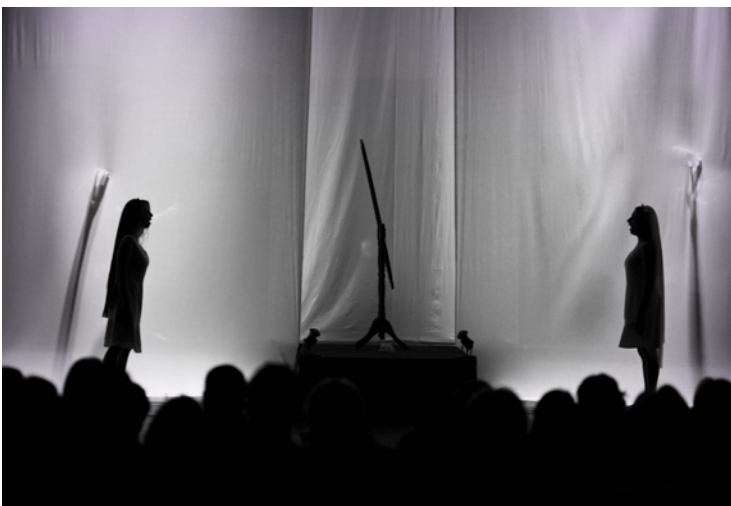
AAT was born on International Women's Day 2010 during a small but diverse festival that included a promenade performance at a curated art exhibit, a children's mural project, a community workshop, and the premiere of *Taman Banaat*. (Eight Girls, or the Price of Girls). A multi-disciplinary play with two sopranos, a pianist, two actresses, a dancer, and an eight year old girl, *Taman Banat* took Amman by storm. For the Arab World, *Taman Banat* was bold. The girls talked about everything from obsessive hair waxing, to marriage and birthing, to not wanting to conform; they talked about love and aging, heart-break and vanity, and most importantly, about reclaiming autonomy. From robust media and press coverage, to funders knocking on the door to offer support, the time was ripe for Aat.

In the years that followed, the festival evolved with more shows and more international artists participating. New partnerships were forged and wider-reaching community projects were designed. Over four years, the festival varied in size and budget, but continued to push the envelope, daring to go a bit further each time. The Aatets produced several shows that premiered at their festivals. Dima Bawab's "*Ma Voie et moi*" was hailed as the most daring performance known to Jordan and the region, while Lana Nasser's

"In the Lost and Found: *Hakeeba Hamraa*" became an award winning play that toured internationally.

But theatre of this kind is limited to a privileged few in the capital Amman, and a woman on stage is still a taboo in the majority of the country. Thus, Aat carried its mission to villages and camps through workshops, like mask-making and storytelling.

Aat had formed organically, which was liberating. However, with no structure or budget, organizing an annual festival became a burden. Thus, in 2014, Aat decided to take a year to reflect on its future. It had become a platform from which young artists could extend their wings and fly free of censorship and it had become known in cultural circles around Jordan and the region. However, public opinion wavered in the spring of 2013 when Lana Nasser led a women's peace journey to Jerusalem. This project was misinterpreted and condemned, with some calling for a boycott. This is not enough to make one stop, rather, it is an opportunity to return to the vision behind Aat: Women and artists restoring the world, uniting the sexes and nations in harmony with nature. Aat is about is about You-us, the collective feminine, and the animus that can move things to new places. *You are on your way!* 🇳🇵





THE MAGDALENA PROJECT

By Jill Greenhalgh



THE MAGDALENA PROJECT, International Network of Women in Contemporary Theatre was founded in Wales in 1986 and is active all over the globe. It has been nurtured by a network of self-selecting women who make theatre. It has become a space where women artists create ongoing international events to network, collaborate, show work, share training and strategies of creating work, engage in critical debate, and is a haven where the contagion of feminine artistic isolation has been defied.

One concern I wanted to address from the outset was that much of the focus of the struggle of women in theatre and performance was wedded to winning a place within existing structures rather than in questioning the efficacy and utility of the traditional, artistic and educational constructs. In proposing and building contexts for our own work I observed that we might flirt with alternative forms but we often return to the essentially patriarchal edifices that we are used to and even comfortable with.

Hierarchies of vertical ascendance dominate our economic, political, educational and cultural institutions. These institutions determine the funding, commissioning, staging, housing and dissemination of performance works. Higher educational institutions are dominated at the highest levels to serve male vision and perpetuate the male canon. These constructs determine how or even if we are allowed to co-operate. There are understood rules of engagement, codes of behaviour, and deeply held and protected beliefs that map the paths to 'so-called' success. If we play by the rules we may achieve position at the heights of these constructs, but these environments protect under challenged masculist assumptions regarding aesthetic, form, delivery, structure, duration, and viable content.

As I began to examine and question these presiding assumptions it was clear that they were inappropriate to my aesthetic aspirations or compatible with my personal and political priorities as a woman. Much was not useful to me or offered tokenistic support as I developed and made my own distinct works, and for the duration of Magdalena events I organized in the early years, I decided not to play. I put the ball down and attempted to invent new rules of engagement.

To quote Germaine Greer, "The opposite of patriarchy is not matriarchy but fraternity and I think it's women who are going to have to break the spiral of power and find the trick of co-operation."

I think what we have achieved in the Magdalena is a horizontal structure and strategy for organisation and survival. *A trick of co-operation* has managed, as Germaine Greer suggested, 'to make



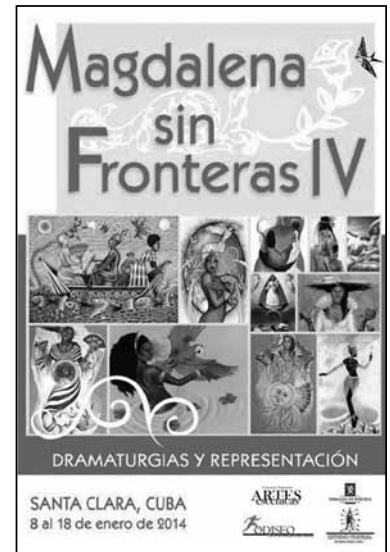
certain patriarchal politics irrelevant.' The horizontal working structure allows the spread of the Project like water to flow across the surfaces – perhaps almost invisibly – seeping into the fabric of the cultural landscape, soil, and psyche as opposed to erecting clearly visible monumental vertical structures of organisation.

...much of the focus of the struggle of women in theatre and performance was wedded to winning a place within existing structures rather than in questioning the efficacy and utility of the traditional, artistic and educational constructs.

The vertical, traditional structures are projectiles that go up and up and up, layer upon layer, and eventually topple. It is that fear of toppling that creates the need to sustain/maintain power – to build the walls of defense, which separate as opposed to link. I believe that the idea and wisdom of a horizontal structure despite its egalitarianism, has been universally evaded, and true democracy (*"a form of governance in which the supreme power is vested in the people collectively"*)

distorted and appropriated by the greed of ego's scrambling for personal power and status on the vertical ascendancy. It is permeation as opposed to proclamation that has fertilized the growth of The Magdalena Project; and it's uncannily extensive horizontal and invisible root system seems to have pervaded theatre culture across four continents. I am not sure how, except perhaps that need breeds.

The skills of networking, inter-relationship, notions of non-ownership and horizontal structure are some of the legacy we can acknowledge. These are strategies that have developed organically and served us very well. These are perhaps useful signposts for future generations to build on if they so desire to continue the Magdalena Project. 🍷



The Magdalena Project is a dynamic cross-cultural network of women's theatre and performance, facilitating critical discussion, support and training. It is a nexus for diverse performance groups and individuals whose common interest lies in a commitment to ensuring the visibility of women's artistic endeavour. The branches of the Magdalena Project extend far and wide: over international borders and across generations. Groups meet in real time and place as well as online to share, engender and promulgate work and ideas. Largely surviving on the goodwill of its members and sponsors, it is a testimony to what we can achieve together in spirit of community and unity. For further information and to join the project: www.themagdalenaproject.org

WOMEN IN ACTION

– Parity or Duality?

By Joyce Maio

Erbil, Iraqi-Kurdistan
November 2011

Women, I salute your strength to forge forward and speak your fragile truth.

*Your hidden voice echoes in all of us
Silence became the loudest dialogue I
encountered in Women in Action and
some women manifested that silence
loud and clear.*



PART I

Women of Iraqi-Kurdistan, where are you, what and who are you?

I spent three days listening to your stories of violence, injustice and pain
Of deceit and silence, of muted words and accused lies.

I left your country with open-ended questions:

Where does truth and reality really reside?

How much and who should I believe?

How powerful, impactful and effective are we, as women in bringing change?

My brains scrambled, I looked for a tunnel of truth behind the veneer of hope
and camaraderie.

My questions were further challenged, not from the exchange of ideas spoken
at the conference, the first one in Erbil that examined women's human rights
through arts, culture and education, but in the silence of a painting found
hanging on the wall of a poorly lit room, part of a group show entitled "Women's
Hidden Voices." The small exhibit featured some Iraqi-Kurdistan women who
are either physically challenged, living in a shelter, or serving prison terms.

I don't know who the artist is, there is only a date scribbled at the corner, the
name is scratched out. She could be behind bars, battered or unable to speak.
The watercolor shows a blue candle in the center of a bare orange landscape, the
wax emulating a long dress imprisoning a stoic body with fish scales and warts.
She has no arms. The wick is barely connected to the flame, holding inside
half a woman's face. A floating, smiling face entrapped in a torch, framed in a
short black hairdo, one kohl-lined eye looking straight at me. Her other side is
invisible, mirroring her half-self, lost and erased in the blindness of the light.
Today, the cardboard painting hangs on my wall.

Duality or parity?

A mirage in a blind full brightness of solitude, women of Iraqi-Kurdistan, where
are you, who and what are you?

PART II

My questions were later answered in the silence of a masked parade, a workshop in one of the back rooms of the U.S. Consulate General in Ainkawa, the Christian suburb of Erbil. It was the last evening reception of the three day conference before I returned home to New York.

Americans, Iraqi, Iraqi-Kurds and other international guests were present. My colleague, Margo Lee Sherman, an international solo-drama performer and invited guest from NY was leading the workshop and encouraging everyone to put on one of the dozen larger than life-size papier-mâché heads she had brought with her. Each one had been created by Peter Schumann, director of Bread and Puppet, a 50 year-old theater company that uses masks as a voice, bringing to mind the power of street theater. Margo explained how to embody a character while wearing a mask. Many guests looked on, at first uncomfortable and shy.

I put my chosen mask on and soon forgot that I was in a room surrounded by uniformed men with rifles. A stern Iraqi woman from Baghdad... was behind and inside one of the masks.... When she removed the mask, her eyes and smile were as bright as a full moon. It was as if she had reconnected to her soul.

Guests joined in and slowly surrendered to their inner space. A stern Iraqi woman from Baghdad, one of the participating guests with us who wore a full head scarf during the conference was now sitting on a chair, relaxed, one shoe kicked off her feet, her body arched, arms swung by her side. She was behind and inside one of the masks. Soon all eyes were upon her. 🌙

Photos by Joyce Maio

Within minutes, her body posture had changed. The disguise allowed no one to see her “true face” and gave her freedom to explore her inner self without the need to articulate any words. She let go of time and space and rid herself of herself in order to truly encounter the other side of the mask. Our Iraqi woman had transformed from a post of vigilance to one of abandon. When she removed the mask, her eyes and smile were as bright as a full moon. It was as if she had reconnected to her soul.



An Interview With NEHAD SELAIHA: ON THEATRE AFTER THE REVOLUTION

By Anwaar Abdalla



The 25th January revolution and the political events that followed have certainly affected the theatrical movement by bringing theatre artists on the streets with performances that reflected the anger of the nation, its hopes and dreams, and contributed to the raising and sustaining of the demonstrators' morale.
-- Nehad Selaiha



Dr. Nehad Selaiha, one of the most prominent theatre critics in Egypt and a professor of drama and criticism, discusses the beginning of a new arts era, and what the future of theatre looks like after the revolution.

Since the Egyptian revolution of January, 25, 2011, a new era of arts has erupted in Egypt. The public started a new socio/political environment to embody the dreams and aspirations of a nation which has longed for freedom and democracy. Through the revolution, a new public culture was born in which artists played a pivotal role in the protests. Likewise, many genres of arts emerged such as “street art” in order to document the spirit of the revolution. Young enthusiastic artists spread their art through political songs as well as theatrical performances. During the last two years, a new street theatre, or “verbatim theater” was born. According to Dr. Nehad Selaiha, one of the most prominent theatre critics in Egypt and a professor of drama and criticism who won the Egyptian State Award for Superior Achievement in Literary Studies 2013, theatre played a vital role in the revolution. Dr. Selaiha discussed the future of theatre after the revolution:

Anwaar Abdalla: Do you think that the political unrest has affected the theatrical movement after January 25th, 2011?

Dr. Nehad Selaiha: The 25th January revolution and the political events that followed have certainly affected the theatrical movement by bringing theatre artists on the streets with performances that reflected the anger of the nation, its hopes and dreams, and contributed to the raising and sustaining of the demonstrators' morale. These performances which can be grouped together under the general rubric of revolutionary street theatre, drew on the arts of dance, music, poetry, graffiti, storytelling, parody and satire and also introduced a new form of documentary theatre which may be classed as verbatim theatre- meaning a theatre that documents historical events as they happen through the testimonies of active participants and eye-witnesses. Such performances however are generally put together through improvisation on the spur of the moment and are of necessity closely attached to the events that immediately inspired them. Many of them, therefore, may not survive the events which inspired them in terms of impact on the

audience. It may be that we have to wait until things have settled down a bit before we can hope to see a drama that deals with the events of these two turbulent years in depth and with profound insight into the human side behind them.

Anwaar Abdalla: Can we define the new theatre phenomenon that emerged after the revolution?

Dr. Nehad Selaiha: As I mentioned above, verbatim theatre or a theatre of the real in Carol Martin's definition, can rank as a new theatre phenomenon that emerged during and after the revolution.

Anwaar Abdalla: You once commented that the street theatre is an old phenomenon. Why do you think it is suitable now?

Dr. Nehad Selaiha: Culture and art in Egypt have been long denied by the masses. To reach them, we need all varieties of street theatre, including the type developed by Augusto Boal, which he called “theatre of the oppressed” and which aims at raising consciousness, training the audience in democratic practice, and motivating them to tackle their social and political problems in a peaceful but effective way.

Anwaar Abdalla: How do you see the future of Theatre in Egypt?

Dr. Nehad Selaiha: Right now I am optimistic about the future and hope that through close cooperation between the ministry of culture, the mass culture organization, civil societies and the independent theatre movement theatre will spread to all corners of the country, so that every village, small town, or district in a big city will have its community theatre, or resident local theatre troupe, and every school will introduce theatre as part of its regular, extracurricular activities.

Art and creativity are the fuel of a revolution, but “theatricalizing” a revolution is a different story. Hence, a revolutionary theatre protects the dreams of a nation which pursue democracy and freedom. 🎭

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International Women Stage Directors: CHRONICLING SUCCESS AND STRUGGLE

by Anne Flotsos and Wendy Vierow

WOMEN STAGE DIRECTORS

face cultural and political challenges unique to their own countries. In Egypt, for example, a 2013 study done by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women found that 99.3 percent of women and girls were harassed (<http://www.peacewomen.org>). Egyptian director and playwright Laila Soliman stresses that the problems of surviving as an artist pale in comparison to surviving as a woman everyday on the streets of Egypt, where women are subjected to violence, strip searches, and virginity checks. Soliman, one of the new generations of Egyptian women directors, works with other artists to give a voice to the people of Egypt. In 2011 she co-created and directed two new works of documentary theatre: *Lessons in Revolting* and *No Time for Art*, “to confront...audiences with the realities of living under a brutal military junta” (notimeforart.com). In 2013, she introduced *Here, there and everywhere/Hopes*, offering individual perspectives regarding the State Security Apparatus. Pushed to react with no time for reflection, in her blog Soliman ponders the responsibility of the artist to ask questions and make statements in turbulence.

Egyptian artists continue to provide a voice for the people. Author and director Dalia Basiouny stopped rehearsals of her play *Solitaire* when the Egyptian revolution erupted in 2010. “I started a blog to collect some of the amazing stories of heroism I was hearing all around Tahrir Square. In February 2011, my theatre group, Sabeel, presented ... a ritual performance with verbatim testimonies of rebels honoring the names of the martyrs.” When she returned to rehearsing *Solitaire*, she interwove memories of the aftermath of 9/11 with footage from Cairo into her multimedia production. She explains, “I felt obliged to perform it myself, as I carry the visceral memory of these unique moments that I personally experienced The response to this timely performance, weaving major political events to a personal story of growth and empowerment, has been overwhelming.” Around the world, women like Soliman and Basiouny have remarkable tales to tell about their struggles and successes as theatre directors, yet for the most part, these stories remain unheard.

My co-author and I wondered about the status of women directors outside the United States. Now in publication from the University of Illinois Press, *International Women Stage Directors* pays tribute to the careers of more than one hundred women directors in twenty-four countries.

Where are women's directing careers flourishing? Where are women competing for the most prestigious positions?

In most countries few statistics exist on the number of women directing. We found a few relevant numbers. Of those reporting, Ireland provided the highest percentage of women directing where 33.3 percent of productions at Dublin's Abbey Theatre were directed by women in the 2010-11 season. In contrast, from 1964 to 2010, only 7 percent of the directors at Germany's Theatertreffen, a prestigious Annual theatre festival in Berlin, were women. In Egypt, women directors have no opportunities at commercial theatres, only at fringe and independent theatres where shows are often self-funded. In the United States, only 22 percent of the directors in the SDC are women, the same number found ten years ago. Statistics suggest that women comprise no more than 25 percent of the work force as directors.



Ursula Neuerburg

is especially severe in theatre because of evening and out-of-town work. Many societies have considered theatrical work inappropriate for women, making it difficult for them to take leadership positions.

...I received an email from a director in Iraq. I asked her what other women were directing there, and she admitted that she was the only one to her knowledge. She directed in a university, the sole venue available to her.

Fortunately, the late twentieth century saw the effects of the feminist movement and an increasing number of women earning college and graduate degrees. In developing countries,

studying abroad has helped young women return home with new perspectives about gender and society that change their worldview.



Dalia Basiouny

The glass ceiling remains a global issue for women. Directors find most opportunities at small to mid-sized theatres, by founding their own companies, in universities, and at theatre festivals. Grants and government funding particularly for festival work, help directors gain



Laila Solimon

a foothold in countries with few opportunities. Women make their way into the field of directing often against tremendous odds though the struggle for parity with men continues. We celebrate the stories of those who have created a path for our newest generation of women directors. 🎭

ON TALKING TO KATE LOEWALD ABOUT THE PLAY COMPANY

by Maxine Kern

In NYC we have a theatre called the *Play Company* in which two thirds of their plays are International Playwrights. In choosing the most interesting plays “that matter” and that present “the most ambitious ideas” about our larger world, Play Company, a NYC based US theater company has crossed a barrier from the “inward looking” American perspective to a more “outward looking” selection of plays characterized by a “world context.”

This season is not an exception in its presentation of one play by an American playwright, one by a Japanese playwright, and another which comes from Sweden.

By not having a space of their own, *Play Company* is rewarded for its flexible and adventurous approach to plays that require different venues and techniques for production. On the other hand, the Company is contemplating the effects of lack-of-name recognition for a theater which has its own space.

When a play arrives from Japan, the Japanese Company is rewarded by seeing its play not only through the eyes of an American audience, but as it is handled creatively by American actors. The exchange is always rich.

The great struggle for US based theaters is so often based on finding a venue that is flexible for innovation, recognizable for audiences, and in NYC particularly, available. Never wanting to be driven by “filling a particular slot” or fitting a play into the limits of a venue, this adventurous theater project is examining the pro’s and con’s of dealing with venues.

Right now Kate Loewald and I are talking in the great lobby of The Signature Theatre Company at Pershing Square. This is the sort of space that is available to theatres abroad, with art galleries, and places for movies and music that exist as “gathering places” which can foster intimate, huge, and innovative plays according to the needs of the piece.

State Funding for theaters and availability of venues is a dream that US theaters can only find rarely, and the *Play Company* looks for a way to emulate these possibilities without limiting its scope and its range.

Because our magazine is generated by the League of Professional Theatre Women, I ask Kate about gender equality in her playmaking. “Quite unconsciously and naturally” her company is run by women. However, there are not many women playwrights to choose from in work from abroad. In talking to Kate about the issues of lack of support for women playwrights abroad, I realize that this problem is not solved by patriarchal state funding which is even a greater barrier than the “all-male team mentality” of our playwrights’ marketplace in the States.

If you got to see the *Play Company’s* production of “Working on a Special Day,” you experienced an imaginative piece that grew from a *Play Company’s* co-production with a theatre company in Mexico City. The piece was adapted into English by the two actors who originally performed it and then given over to two actors who were fluent enough in English to bring it to the States. Directed by the actors, the piece was work-shopped by the *Play Company* and presented at 59 East 59th Street in NYC. It will now be a Play Company co-production that will travel to The Edinburgh Festival in Scotland, to Adelaide, and then to Prague.

With the world as its venue and the “States” as its base, the *Play Company* is not only a successful example of international exchange, but a model for theatergoing that lives in an enlightened global context with all the advantages and disadvantages of our worlds’ ability to make valuable and exciting theatre. 🌍



Kate Loewald (left), Founding Producer and Lauren Weigel (right), Executive Producer of Play Company.

Anwaar Abdalla earned her Ph.D. at Ain Shams University (1999) and lectures on Civilization and Cultural Affairs for Helwan University. Dr. Abdalla Kahlik Ibrahim also works as an official coordinator for the cultural exchange program between Helwan Uni and TSU in the USA entitled "Cultural Immersion 2011-2014." Additionally, she is a member of the Egyptian and Arab women's writer's union and the Cairo Women Association. She is also the translator of several books published by the Ministry of Culture including *Shadows on the Grass*, *Impossible Peace* and *The Secret Rapture*. Dr. Ibrahim is also an accomplished author and essayist in both Arabic and English publications.

Marcy Arlin is a writer, translator, scholar and director who founded the OBIE-winning Immigrants Theatre Project in 1966. She has directed numerous works at Soho Rep, La MaMa, 59E59, HERE, New Dramatists, Vineyard, New York Fringe, Dublin Fringe, The Public, Tenement Theatre, Artheater/Koln, Teatrul Imposibil/Romania, and the Yiddish Book Center. Her extensive list of publications include *Czech Plays: 7 New Works*, *Oldish Woman Leaves Earth Man*, and *Conversations on the Prague Quadrenniale* with Maxine Kern. An original member of the Lincoln Center Theater Directors Lab, she is also a member of the League of Professional Theatre Women, Fulbright Peer Review, Core Member of Theatre without Borders, and No Passport. In addition, she is the Fulbright Senior Specialist 2005-09 to Babes Bolyai University, Romania, and Masaryk University, Czech Republic.

Àngels Aymar is an actress, playwright, director and former resident playwright at the Catalonia National Theater, Barcelona (2006 - 2009). In 1990, she founded her own company, *L'unranl'altre* (The One between the Other). She has written more than twenty award-winning plays that have been presented in Europe, Latin America and the United States, as well as translated and published in several languages. Her plays include *SOLAVAYA* which was presented by The Martin E. Segal Theatre at the Prelude Festival 2010 and at the Repertorio Español Theater in NYC. Her most recent production, *100Femmes* has been performed in Lyons, France, Barcelona and Korea.

Elaine Avila is an award winning playwright and screenwriter whose works include: *Jane Austen*, *Action Figure*, *Quality: The Shoe Play*, *Strike!*, *At Water's Edge*, *Burn Gloom*, *Lieutenant Nun*, *Naked Singularity*, *Step Right Up!*, *Good Fooling* and *Made in China*. Her

plays have been produced around the world. Ever since she earned an MFA from The California Institute of the Arts, she has received numerous awards and distinctions and has taught in universities from British Columbia to Tasmania, China to Panamá. Her professional associations include The Playwrights Guild of Canada, Playwright's Center, Playwright's Theatre Centre, CAEA/UBCP/ACTRA, the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas, and NoPassport. She is currently the Robert Hartung Endowed Chair and Head of the MFA Dramatic Writing Program at the University of New Mexico and Producing Artistic Director of the Words Afire! Festival of New Plays.

Jessica Burr is a director, writer and performance artist who graduated from Bard College in 1996 then went abroad, becoming a traveling street performer from Scotland to Morocco. After a year spent teaching in Poland, she returned to New York City and founded *Blessed Unrest* with Matt Opatrny, her co-producer and partner. She wears many hats: director; adaptor of established texts; choreographer; media designer; mentor, instructor, fundraiser, etc. She has directed numerous innovative new works such as "The Storm" and "ArtCamp SexyTime Football" as well as re-imagined classics. In 2011 she received the Lucille Lortel Award from the League of Professional Theatre Women in recognition of her work as a director, as well as the body of work that *Blessed Unrest* has created under her leadership as Artistic Director.

Tove Eriksson is a recent graduate from the University of Leeds with a strong focus on gender issues. She has a background of participating in gender projects both in England, Sweden and India primarily through direct support to women and girls. In India she volunteered at a women's shelter in Rajasthan. After her return from India, she started as a volunteer at the girls support group *Stjärnjouren* in Stockholm where she mainly facilitates workshops in schools. Tove has been involved in the project *SEVEN* both through organizing readings of the play at the University of Leeds and through working as the project assistant in Sweden.

Anne Fliotsos research is primarily in theatre pedagogy, women directors, and 20th century Broadway. Her books include *Teaching Theatre Today*, *American Women Stage Directors of the Twentieth Century*, *Interpreting the Play Script: Contemplation and Analysis*, and *International Women Stage Directors*. Her essays have appeared in various

journals and reference works. In 2006 she won the George Whatley Award for best article in *Studies in Popular Culture*. She has also created a website chronicling 20th century Broadway theatre. She has won two awards (for direction and play script) from the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival for her work on *Oedipus! A New Musical Comedy*, which was published by Baker's Plays and produced in New York. She is the recipient of the 2011 College of Liberal Arts Fellowship with the Center for Creative Endeavor (Purdue University) for which she is creating a documentary about Amelia Earhart. She has twice been awarded the School of Visual and Performing Arts Excellence in Teaching Award. In 2012 she joined the League of Professional Theatre Women.

Jill Greenhalgh has been a professional theatre maker for over 30 years. Based in Wales, she has traveled and worked extensively in Europe, Australasia and the Americas as a producer, director, performer and teacher. In 1986 she founded the *Magdalena Project - International Network of Women in Contemporary Theatre* and remains its artistic director. Her most recent performance projects include *The Water [war]* in collaboration with women performers across the globe, *Las Sin Tierra 7 - Attempted Crossings of the Straits of Gibraltar* which she directed for *Nomad Theatre of Spain* in collaboration with Mike Brookes and *The Acts - Vigia* a performance project that explores a response to the murders of hundreds of young women near the US-Mexico border town of Juarez. She is Lecturer in Performance Studies at the Aberystwyth University, Wales.

Penny Jackson's plays have been produced at The Space on North Bridge in Edinburgh, 59E59, The Workshop Theater and The Bleecker Street Theater. Recent works include *BITTEN*, a finalist for The Kenneth Branagh Prize for Drama. Her play *SAFE* won best new play at the Planet Connections Theater Festivity at the Bleecker Street theater; it was produced at the Edinburgh Fringe in August of 2013. *I KNOW WHAT BOYS WANT* was produced by Ego Actus at The Workshop Theater. Her distinctions include a MacDowell Colony Fellowship as well as other fellowships and prizes for her creative work, including a Pushcart Prize for her short story, "L.A. Child." Her novel, *Becoming the Butlers* was chosen as one of the best books of the year by the NY Public Library. She is a member of The Dramatists Guild, the League of Professional Theater Women and She Writes.

Maxine Kern is a freelance dramaturg who was recently the resident dramaturg for The Negro Ensemble Theater Company and Diverse City Theater Company. She is also a part-time faculty member at SUNY Stonybrook and most recently a lecturer at Columbia University in the Narrative Medicine Program. Her dramaturgy includes Final Analysis by Ortho Eskins, As It Is In Heaven by Arlene Hutton, Savannah Black and Blue by Raymond Jones, The Book of Lambert by Leslie Lee, and For the Time Being by W.H.Auden. She is working on a play about the social activist Emma Goldman. She has been a Symposium Speaker for The Seventeenth Annual Cairo International Festival for Experimental Theatre, in Cairo Egypt, and dramaturg for The Heart of Prague at the Prague Quadrennial 2003, Czech Republic. As part of the artistic staff of several theaters, she was Artistic Director for Company One Theater, and Producing Associate for the McCarter Theater in Princeton, NJ as well as literary manager for a number of outstanding theatre companies. She has served on the boards of LMDA, Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas, The Judith Shakespeare Theatre Company and The League of Professional Theatre Women where she is presently Co-President.

Hedda Krausz Sjögren is an actor and consultant based in Stockholm who works both in Sweden and internationally (USA & Europe). Her company, Hedda Produktion is responsible for the initiative, concept and project management of SEVEN. Since 2008, she has toured with SEVEN and instructed dozens of people in various nations who participated in the productions. In 2009 she received the National Theatre of Sweden's annual prize for her work with SEVEN. The following year, the play was presented to European Parliament. // has been produced multiple times around the world. Her nomination for LPTW's Gilder Coigney International theatre Award in 2011 demonstrates how widely her work has been recognized and how it has impacted lives all over the world. In 2014 she was nominated once again for LPTW's Gilder Coigney international Theatre Award.

Joyce Maio is a multi-lingual consultant who builds cross-cultural and international collaborations, developing, strategizing and managing projects in the performing arts and promotes contemporary expressions focusing on cultural exchanges. Her previous experiences include affiliations with Laura Pels International Foundation, Queens Theatre in the Park, American Friends of the Ludwig Foundation of

Cuba. Before moving to New York City, she had her own company in casting and production services in Los Angeles, with a special focus on "real people" casting and international productions. As a former editor and translator, she works with writers and recruits translators. She is a core Member of Theatre Without Borders and has been the Co-Chair of the International Committee of the League of Professional Theatre Women for the last 3 years.

Riho Mitachi received her BA, MFA and her professional theatre training in the USA. In 1990, she founded THEATRE CLASSICS in Tokyo and directs and produces modern American plays in Japanese. She is also an award-winning translator of the plays. She directed SEVEN, a documentary drama based on the seven women leaders.

Lana Nasser is a Jordanian playwright, actress, dancer, performing arts instructor, and translator. She has performed her works in Jordan, the USA, and in Europe. Serving as The festival director of Aat since the establishment of the network, she leads empowerment and creative self expression programs for youth and women. Lana holds a Masters in Consciousness Studies, and a BA cum laude in Psychology and fine arts. She has published several academic articles and keeps an active blog. She organizes specialized journeys in Jordan and at sacred sites, leading retreats and doing dreamwork for groups and individuals.

Joanne Pottlitzer, freelance playwright and theater producer/director, has produced countless Latin American plays in New York and has been the winner of many distinctions including a Fulbright, NEA funding and two Obie Awards. In 1966 she founded Theatre of Latin America, Inc (TOLA), a nonprofit arts organization that pioneered artistic exchanges between the US and Latin America. She has written several plays, including Paper Wings, an impressionist piece on Frida Kahlo. She has taught at Yale, NYU, CCNY, Brooklyn College and Ohio University and she is writing Symbols of Resistance, a book about Chilean artists during the Pinochet years.

Carlos Eduardo Satizábal Atehortúa is a theater worker, poet and writer living in Bogota, Colombia. Last year his book, La Llama Inclínada, won the National Prize of Poetry and his play *Ellas y La Muerte* won the City of Bogota Prize for Dramaturgy. He also works directly with displaced communities and survivors of violence in his country, using theater as a tool for healing and education. Together with Patricia Ariza he co-founded

Tramaluna Teatro and Rapsoda Teatro groups whose numerous theatrical works have been presented nationally and internationally. He is an Associate Professor at the National University of Colombia.

Joanna Sherman, director, choreographer, musician and actor for Bond Street Theatre has initiated and participated in humanitarian aid projects in East Asia, South America, Eastern and Western Europe, the Middle East, Pakistan, India and Afghanistan. Under her directorship, the company received a MacArthur Foundation Award in 1990 for its interdisciplinary and intercultural programming. She has won several other distinctions as well. She has been an advocate for the role of the arts in peace building at various conferences around the world, including the United Nations. She has written a forthcoming book, *The Children of Afghanistan*. Ms. Sherman earned a BFA in Fine Arts from Cooper Union, and an MA in Theatre & International Studies from New York University. In addition, Ms. Sherman plays saxophone with the Shinbone Alley Stilt Band.

Caridad Svich is a prolific playwright, songwriter, editor and translator living between many cultures, including inherited ones. Born in the USA of Cuban-Argentine-Spanish-Croatian parents who criss-crossed the country many times, as a child and adolescent, she lived in several states. As a result, her family's nomadic way of life has become an indelible part of her vision wherein wanderlust, dispossession, biculturalism, bilingualism, construction of identity, and its many different emotional terrains form the basis of her plays and other writing projects.

Wendy Vierow is a freelance writer and editor who loves to research topics and enjoys writing about what she has learned. She is also a performance artist who has appeared in her own works as well as those developed by the multimedia artist Toni Dove in association with Bustelamp Productions which have been performed at several international venues including the Whitney Museum, the Rotterdam Film Festival and the Spielart Festival Munich. Having earned a PhD at NYU, she teaches courses in critical thinking and business communication at SUNY New Paltz. As an author with ample experience as a former editor and media consultant at Scholastic, McGraw Hill and Children's Television Workshop, she has written and edited outstanding educational materials in multiple subject areas including social studies, language arts, science, and reading.

LETTER FROM THE LEAGUE OF PROFESSIONAL THEATRE WOMEN CO-PRESIDENTS



The League of Professional Theatre Women was established in 1981 by Julia Miles and a team of fabulous women who wished to recognize the excellent work of women past, present and future via awards and oral histories, and to create new collaborations and connections through the League's exciting programming and ever-growing membership. As advocates for theatre women fighting for equal pay and representation, we pride ourselves in helping lead the way to 50/50 in 2020, and spreading our mission.

Today we recognize our sisters abroad. We reach as far as our imaginations allow when we connect across cultures at home and internationally. This WIT magazine International Edition is our way of highlighting theatre women who are shaping and changing the world today by encouraging our global community to be innovative, creative, and resourceful. We also share the stories and experiences of US women working abroad, and have included an online counterpart at www.theatrewomen.org/WIT2014 with additional features, and listings of resources and organizations to aid us in making more connections overseas.

The work on these pages, replete with clarity, visibility, and our collective intelligence, honors our mutual sense of global community.

Maxine Kern and Lorca Peress

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2013-2014 HIGHLIGHTS

- **LPTW AWARDS CELEBRATION**
ZOE CALDWELL
- The Lifetime Achievement Award
JUDITH DOLAN
- The Ruth Morley Design Award
MEIYIN WANG
- The Josephine Abady Award
JOANNA SHERMAN
- The Lee Reynolds Award
KATHERINE KOVNER
- The Lucille Lortel Award
SONDRA GORNEY
- Special Award for Dedication to the LPTW
- **WOMEN IN THEATRE MAGAZINE:** International Edition, launch and a special presentation of SEVEN at the Cherry Lane Theatre.
- **Dael Orlandersmith** performs her new play, **FOREVER** at HERE Arts Center.
- **Three Oral Histories:** Bebe Neuwirth, Tyne Daly and Mercedes Ruehl, produced by Betty Corwin at the NY Public Library of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center. Made possible by generous grants from the Betty R. and Ralph Sheffer Foundation, the Edith Meiser Foundation, the New York State Council on the Arts, and private donors. The ongoing Oral History Project chronicles and documents the contributions of significant theatre women in many fields.
- **Women Stage the World Advocacy Parade in Times Square**
- **WIT Online:** Monthly. Feature articles and blogs in partnership with and on the Howlround website <http://witonline.org>

2014-15 UPCOMING

- **Oral History:** Monday, September 22, 2014 at 6pm. Billie Allen interviewed by Phylisha Rashad
- **LPTW Gilder/Coigney International Theatre Award:** Monday, October 27, 2014. Award Winner Patricia Ariza, Colombia, South America, will be honored at the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center, CUNY Graduate Center. This award is given to an exceptional woman theatre artist working outside the U.S.

THE LEAGUE OF PROFESSIONAL THEATRE WOMEN

is a not-for-profit advocacy organization created in 1982 to increase opportunities and reinforce the positive image of women in professional theatre through programs and activities that promote visibility and infuse and enrich our culture.

To become a member of the League of Professional Theatre Women, or to support the League as a Corporate Sponsor, Donor or Friend, visit our website at www.theatrewomen.org



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