DEAR FRIENDS OF THE TUFTS PHD IN THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE STUDIES:

Change is afoot in the Aidekman Arts Center as the PhD in Drama changes its name to the PhD in Theatre and Performance Studies. The transformation marks the evolving interests of our students and faculty as we welcomed Mellon Bridge Professor Kareem Khubchandani who holds a joint appointment in Women’s Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Additionally, we are joined this year by Tasha Oren, who specializes in television studies.

The graduate program will continue to expand our core faculty in the coming year through a search for an Assistant Professor specializing in race and theatre/performance studies. Immediate results of these modifications have led to the largest graduate application pool in the history of the program and we are anxious to see what the coming year brings.

In keeping with the spirit of change, this year’s graduate newsletter is taking on a slightly modified form, adding photographs and interviews that will give you a closer look at some of our faculty and alumni.

During the past academic year, I’ve learned about so many of you through your bios. Through this process I’ve become increasingly familiar with the different careers and life trajectories of our Ph.D.s. working inside and outside of the professoriate. Heather Nathans and I are in the process of engaging in accumulating data about the academic and alt-academic job markets. The department is training and supporting students who wish to pursue careers that do not lead to teaching position. In order to expand the program in this way, the PhD program has incorporated an internship in artmaking, arts activism, or arts advocacy that will encourage our students to engage in work with an organization outside of Tufts. This is supported with a $15,000 grant from the Tufts Innovates program. This year also sees the creation of a proseminar in Pedagogy, Curriculum, and Professional Development.

Continuing our current contributions to the fields of theatre and performance studies, the 2016-2017 academic year saw alumna Daphne Lei continue in her role as President of the American Society for Theatre Research, overseeing an organization where dozens of our current faculty, students, and alumni presented their recent scholarship. Laurence Senelick was inducted into the College of Fellows of the American Theatre and the department awarded three Ph.Ds. The 2017-2018 year promises continued success with newly-released books from me and Laurence Senelick, several dissertation defenses, and an incoming class of doctoral students who are diverse in their backgrounds and academic interests.

Noe Montez
Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies
**FACULTY UPDATES**

Professor **Barbara Wallace Grossman** began her 11th year of service as Vice Chair of the Massachusetts Cultural Council where she is active on its Executive, Advocacy, and Grants Committees and has a strong interest in its Creative Youth Development program. She continues as a member of the American Repertory Theater’s Board of Advisors and the Anti-Defamation League’s New England Regional Board. She also serves on the Artistic Advisory Board of JArts (the Jewish Arts Collaborative) in Boston and appeared in a JArts staged reading of Renée Calarco’s God’s Honest Truth, directed by DJ Komisar, in June. That same month Bloomsbury Methuen Drama published The Disney Musical on Stage and Screen: Critical Approaches from ‘Snow White’ to ‘Frozen’, which includes her chapter “The Lion King: A ‘Blockbuster Feline’ on Broadway and Beyond.” She also contributed a chapter, “Cabaret, The People in the Picture, and the Paradox of Holocaust Musicals” to a book on George Tabori and the theatre of the Holocaust, forthcoming from University of Michigan Press. Over the summer Professor Grossman taught a 5-week course, “Telling American Stories: Pulitzer Prize-Winning Musicals from Of Thee I Sing to Hamilton,” to more than 50 engaged adult learners at NewBridge on the Charles, a senior living community in Dedham. That is the subject of her next book, the project she plans to focus on during her spring 2018 sabbatical. This semester she is happy to be teaching the First-Year Showcase once again and directing Bathsheba Doran’s Kin (2011) as the department’s fall production. At a historical moment when we hear daily rants about building walls to divide people, Kin illuminates the strong bonds between them. The emotional relationships it delineates with humor and compassion show how empowering and transformational the bonds of kinship and community can be.

**Kareem Khubchandani** has published two new essays, one on race, desire, and performance in post 9/11 film in The Journal of Asian American Studies, and another on dance, gender, and queer origins in Queer Dance: Meanings and Makings. In the last year, he has performed at the Bronx Academy of Art and Dance, the Queens Museum, Jack NY, and has given talks at Williams College, Bowdoin College, Cornell University, and Recess Gallery NY. His performance at the “Explode! Queer Dance Festival” was featured in the New York Times. Kareem’s essay, “Snakes on the Dance Floor: Gender, Gesture, and Bollywood” won the 2017 Gertrude Lippincott Award for best English language essay from the Dance Studies Association.

for Theatre Journal. Since 2006 he has been the co-editor of the University of Michigan Press’s series, Theatre: Theory / Text / Performance. He wrote the Forward to Peter Zazzali’s Acting in the Academy: The History of Professional Actor Training in US Higher Education (Routledge, 2016), and the essay “Drama in the 1960s,” forthcoming in The Cambridge Companion to American Literature in the 60s. He has adjudicated applications for numerous organization, including the American Council of Learned Society and The American Academy in Berlin. He is a member of SAG, AFTRA, and Actors Equity. His current project is A History of Modern Acting: From Garrick to the Present. He is thrilled and honored to return to Tufts, his doctorate alma mater, for a second time to teach African American Theatre.

Noe Montez was promoted to Associate Professor of Drama and Dance with tenure in May. Prior to tenure, he was the recipient of the 2017 Mid-America Theatre Conference’s Robert A. Schanke Award for Best Conference Paper Presented by an Untenured Scholar. He has spent much of the year finalizing revisions and reviewing galley copies for his forthcoming monograph Memory, Transitional Justice, and Theatre in Postdictatorship Argentina, which will be published by Southern Illinois University Press’s Theatre in the Americas series this November. Noe also published the article, “Decolonizing Wikipedia through Advocacy and Activism: The Latina/o Theatre Wikipedia Project” in Theatre Topics and in addition to writing an article on the history of Latinx theatre in the United States for American Theatre magazine. He has presented new research at several conferences and is currently working on a collection of translations by Argentine playwright Santiago Loza, a monograph on the performance of Black activism in U.S. sports, and a book on Latinx Theatre History. Professor Montez continues to serve on the executive committee for the American Society for Theatre Research and as Focus Group Representative for the Association of Theatre in Higher Education’s Latinx, Indigenous, and the Americas group. Noe has also accepted a position as co-editor of Theatre Topics, ATHE’s journal on pedagogy, performance practices, and theatrical production. He welcomes your submissions.

Heather Nathans is thrilled at the debut of her new book, Hideous Characters and Beautiful Pagans: Performing Jewish Identity on the Antebellum American Stage (Michigan 2017); She also published, “Re-presenting Race, Slavery, and Alexander Hamilton Onstage” in The Journal of the Early Republic. Heather is grateful to have received FRAC research support from Tufts this past summer to pursue a new research project on the representations of slavery in French theatre. She and Noe Montez also received a Tufts Innovates Grant to support the creation of an internship project in the PhD program. Heather was delighted to direct Desire Under the Elms this past spring and is so grateful to Emma Futhey for all her hard work as Dramaturg and Assistant Director and Katie Swimm as our intrepid Music Director. She presented at both ASTR and ATHE this past year, and was honored to collaborate with colleagues from across the US as well as Tufts’ own Noe Montez on an ongoing research project related to graduate education, contingent labor, and the job market. Heather continues her work as Editor for the Studies in Theatre History and Culture series with the University of Iowa Press. She thanks her right-hand, Dan Ciba, for all his input on the series. Heather was elected to the Board of the American Theatre and Drama Society (which she served as Vice President and President several years ago).
**Tasha Oren's** co-edited collection, *Global Asian American Popular Cultures* was published in 2016 (New York University Press). The collection highlights new approaches to modern culture, with essays that explore everything from music, performance, film, and television to comics, fashion, food, and sports. The collection has received enthusiastically positive reviews in academic journals like *the International Journal of Communications* and popular publications like *The Los Angeles Review of Books*.

Fletcher Professor of Oratory **Laurence Senelick** was granted leave for the 2016-2017 academic year. He attended the ASTR Conference in Minneapolis and delivered the plenary paper “‘Wake Me Up When Kirby Dies’ or The Art of Dying on Stage.” He also published a position paper “Odysseus in Academe” in *Theatre Survey*. Broadway Play Publishing issued two of his translations: Sophocles’s *Oedipus the King* and *From Marriage to Divorce: Five One-Act Farces of Marital Discord* by Georges Feydeau. He served on the selection committee for candidates in music and performing arts for the American Academy of Art and Sciences, and was appointed to the advisory board of Poets’ Theatre of Cambridge. During the spring semester, Professor Senelick adjudicated proposals for the National Endowment for the Humanities. He also spoke on “Cross-Dressing at the Opera” for the Boston Lyric Opera at the Boston Athenaeum. May saw Laurence invested as a Fellow of the College of American Theatre at the Kennedy Center, and at month’s end back in Boston, he spoke on “The Ugly American as Villain in Cold-War Soviet Drama” at the ALA conference. His translation of *The Madwoman of Chaillot* was used as a text at Suffolk University, and his translation of *The Cherry Orchard* was staged by Glendale Community College (May). His narrative for Henry Purcell’s *The Fairy Queen* was performed by the Connecticut Early Music Society (June) and for Purcell’s King Arthur by the American Bach Soloists Academy (Aug.). Professor Senelick also vetted a new translation of Griboedov’s *Gore ot uma* for Columbia University Press and an article for *Popular Entertainment Studies*. His latest book, *Jacques Offenbach and the Making of Modern Culture* (Cambridge University Press) should be out on Halloween.
Q & A WITH KAREEM KHUBCHANDANI

Prof. Khuchandani joined the faculty in the 2016-2017 academic year.
Compiled by Jennifer Herron

Jennifer Herron: Tell me about your first year!
Kareem Khubchandani: It’s been nice to be on a 1:1 schedule so I’ve been able to ease into the position and understand how the department works as well as the campus works. Teaching for WGS has given me a better perspective on how a program functions versus a department. Being part of the CHAT Seminar has allowed me to meet people from different parts of campus. And then teaching our grad students has been a really great pleasure, to foster projects and to, especially because it’s all first years, see their ideas develop. And then also both my undergrad and grad classes have had at least four if not five SMFA students in them, being part of that bridge and incorporation has been really fantastic. I’m invested in practice as scholarship, and so being able to evidence to Tufts students that that’s what happens when people make art is that they’re making scholarship, because those folks are in the classroom, that’s been really great.

JH: So, you have your feet in a lot of different ponds, which is great! Have you been able to facilitate crossover between WGS or CHAT?
KK: Yeah, specifically with CHAT, I organized a seminar on black queer dance, because I would always talk about performance theory within the seminar and it felt like people weren’t reading the same things as I was. So this was an opportunity to say “Here are the things that I work with that inform my scholarship, and that I think are useful.” And there’s been some recent scholarship that I thought was really productive and that I wanted to read, and it was nice to read it with other people. So that was really exciting to open up that space for myself and to be able to offer some of my expertise, to learn how other people use performance in ways beyond my own discipline. With the queer studies class, I didn’t necessarily use drama and dance but I incorporated a lot of creative exercises into the class to help students understand that theory is art is scholarship, they’re all implicated in each other, and to break up the theory/practice divide that I think informs a lot of people’s approach to what they end up studying or majoring in or think of as valuable. I actually incorporated Instagram into the class, so instead of a weekly response they had a weekly Instagram.

JH: I love that!
KK: It was great! Some of them who love memes already were just making them like that, and others really found a voice slowly of like “here’s my style, here’s my visual aesthetic.” And one of the things I told them was that even ugly is an aesthetic, so if you’re bad at graphics, make that your thing and use that to make the argument you want to make about what you’ve read. So that was really nice as well. And I think in the coming year I’ll have more opportunities to make those collaborations. Through the annual Queer Studies Lecture we’re going to be bringing a performance studies scholar, so collaborating with WGS and the LGBT Center. The Race, Colonialism, and Diaspora Annual Consortium is going to be focused on queer of color performance and criticism. So people are invested in the kinds of bridges I can make between departments and programs, so that feels really good.

JH: On a similar topic, right off the bat this year you worked with Noe on After Orlando, which touched on a lot of the subjects and departments you were just talking about. Can you talk about that a little bit?
KK: Yeah, it felt a little daunting to just land on campus and produce a show, but because the Orlando shootings happened in the summer I thought it was important to give space to folks on this campus who just hadn’t had the time or the community to feel or debrief or any of those things. And it’s interesting, I’m mentoring a student’s thesis project and one of the arguments he makes is that Orlando is his 9/11. It got him to see the pure brutality that lives in the world, that feels irrational even if it may not be, or it may be grounded in a logic that he just can’t grapple with emotionally or otherwise. So it was important, and I thought it was important to integrate the After Orlando script with more localized theorizations. So having students produce their own work. And that’s what I like to do is I like to devise work, and workshop things that are not already manifest. And so, someone came in with poetry, someone came in with prose and I just worked with them one on one to stage it. I worked with an a capella group on what they would sing, how they would sing it, how they would invoke the names of the people who died. It was a real pleasure and it was an opportunity for me to meet some students one-on-one. Even to this day, the only undergrads I
know are the 20 people in my queer studies class and a handful of others. So having that contact with them, with other students, was really valuable, and I want to find other opportunities to do that. And I think performance has always been a way of mourning, and I think that After Orlando showcased that. Performance is ritual is social practice, it’s not just theatre that’s made at a distance from our lives.

**JH**: So you are also a performer in addition to a scholar, and you’ve been talking a lot about how you don’t see those things as separate. Could you talk about your performance work, and how it flows into your scholarship and vice versa?

**KK**: So I work in drag and storytelling and durational art and making YouTube videos. My drag persona, LaWhore Vagistan, came to be because of my research. I was trying to get involved with South Asian communities in Chicago when I started my research. I was asked to put on a party and I wanted there to be a drag queen, but I couldn’t find one so I did it myself. And because the party kept happening I kept doing this, and people kept expecting performances. And you know, the stories people tell me about what they see when I perform is in fact information that I think about. If they tell me where they first heard the song that I performed, that tells me a story about what kind of knowledge they bring with them into the night club. So I invoke my own story about what kind of knowledge they bring with them into the night club. So I invoke my own data, or I provoke my own data, I guess, by staging my body in those ways. But also just the way people approach me differently when I am in drag, my own friends, is just a reminder about how gender works, right? How we come to see gender is performative. It’s not just that people see a different set of symbols, but then they have to interact differently with those sets of symbols as they’ve assembled on someone’s body. People know that my stuffed boobs are fake, but they still want to grab them, and there’s permission to grab them. It’s like, having a body shaped this way produces this effect on the world. And that’s what performativity is - repetition produces effect. So this is one of the ways that theory comes to manifest through my own performance. It’s like, “Oh, yeah, Butler was right,” along with many other theorists. So, being known as my everyday self and another self produces these effects in the world. And it’s also given my scholarship and audience. People want to know what I think about South Asian communities and queer nightlife because they know that I participate in it. I’ve been invited to two campuses to do talks and performances, so my drag actually has an academic home as much as it does in nightclubs.

**JH**: Do you think the reverse is true as well, that your academic work then has a home outside of the academic world?

**KK**: Yeah, when I do drag I always make sure that there’s some critical element to it. So I have a piece where I’m doing Nicki Minaj but I also mix in her feminist rant that went on YouTube as a way of saying “These are my investments in doing drag. It’s not about the naturalization of gender but about understanding gender and power as always constitutive.”

**JH**: So you are also a performer in addition to a scholar, and you’ve been talking a lot about how you don’t see those things as separate. Could you talk about your performance work, and how it flows into your scholarship and vice versa?

**KK**: Yeah, when we think public humanities and performance, we think of the talkback. But what does it mean to make performance that is beautiful, and not didactic, but still opens up conversation and makes room for people to be with each other in critical ways. I’m not sure I fit within the frame of what we call public humanities, but it is a public display of my humanities training. And I’ve given lectures also to the people who I researched in Bangalore. Taking the research back to the folks who are in it, or the people to whom it might matter and making sure it’s accessible not necessarily as a paper but as a conversation or a roundtable.

**JH**: Do you find it to be a collaborative process, between you and the people that you’re writing about and working with? And if you do, how do you set that up?

**KK**: It’s complicated because I don’t love everything they tell me, but we are collaborators which means that I do have to hold them accountable. And they have to hold me accountable to my coming and going from Chicago and from Bangalore. I have a different life from theirs, but when I’m there I invest. So when I’m in Bangalore, I’ve choreographed for a dance group because they asked me to. They were like, “Oh, you dance? Can you do this?” And now they sustain the dance group themselves while I’m not there. But I don’t say no when I’m asked to do things, because I think it’s important. I’m asking people to do things for me, to sit down and offer their time and do an interview with me, or to let me watch them and be a part of their world, and
it becomes my world too. But when they ask me to do these other things I say “of course,” because it’s fun. This dance group called The Pink Divas, we had the best time, and they keep performing every year at this annual festival. I have a little short documentary about them on YouTube. And then I made that documentary and sent it to them, and they were like “This is a great gift.” So, to make sure that reciprocity is always happening, that they’re giving me things and I’m giving them things that aren’t material but that are affective, that are creative, that are tools for doing critical thinking and performance. And the performances they make now, initially in performing we were critiquing standardized notions of masculinity and femininity. Now they’re critiquing the government and law through really campy dances and performances. It’s fantastic, and it’s that sharing that produces that possibility.

JH: Okay, last question: What are you looking forward to at Tufts and in your own work?

KK: I’m looking forward to finishing a book manuscript and sending it to editors. I’ve been working on this project for 10 years now, and I have a couple of publications out about it this year as well, but I think that the larger story that I’d like to tell about transnational migrants and desire and performance and the nightclub needs to happen, needs to come out into the world. So I want to send that to editors. I’m looking forward to other possible collaborations for the next year, with the Center for the Study of Race, Colonialism, and Diaspora, this workshop. And also to be able to bring in a bunch of wonderful scholars, whose work I’m reading all the time, to campus, to foster a different conversation. I would really like to offer that to the campus, to our students and faculty and the larger Boston community. I’m really excited to teach in the spring a class on drag and femininity for undergrads, in which they create their own drag personas and perform. I’m excited to direct at some point. There’s a lot of things I want to do including particular plays by Cao Yu and Tarell Alvin McCraney that I’m really excited about, and also devised work that adapts literature to performance or that takes current issues or oral histories or research that the students do themselves and turns that into a show. I think it will be a new adventure for the department that people seem to be excited about. It feels risky but to me it’s not, to me it’s how theatre is made, so I’m excited for that. I’m really excited for what I’m doing now, and what will continue happening, which is getting graduate students to perform and to make performances. The folks in my performance studies class are doing a show called Real Camels. They made performances over the last five weeks of the semester and we’re staging all of them together. And I just think it’s great that, again, they’re bridging this theory/practice gap, and they’re literally making performances out of the theory that they’ve read. That was the prompt they were given. It’s weird stuff, it’s totally strange, but it’s really lovely. Several of them are performances about performance, because it’s a performance studies seminar, but it’s sort of these meta takes on what happens in performance. They’re really lovely, and I think they’re relatable but also strange at the same time. So also for the queer, trans, and feminist class we’ll be making performances there too. And I think, actually, I’m looking forward to getting to mentor more individual projects, both with graduate students and undergrads. In one year you can’t see a project grow. I mean, I have mentored one undergraduate’s senior thesis in Women’s and Gender Studies, and that’s been fantastic. He works on queer Vietnamese American identity, and so that’s actually been wonderful. But to supervise a dissertation, it’s work, but it’s really nice to see people come into their own through the process of getting feedback. So, the long-term experience of mentoring is actually really valuable to me as well.
**Ginny Anderson** continues her work as Assistant Professor of Theater at Connecticut College. This year she taught courses in theater history, Musical Theater in American Culture, and Theater of the AIDS Epidemic. She serves as core faculty for the Public Health pathway, part of the new general education curriculum and serves on the steering committee for the college’s Holleran Center for Community Action and Public Policy. In the spring of 2017, she directed Mark Blitzstein’s *The Cradle Will Rock* for the mainstage. Her essay, “Hyping Clyde Beatty and His Wild Animal Show” appears in *Showing Off, Showing Up: Studies of Hype, Heightened Performance, and Cultural Power*, edited by Laurie Frederik, Kim Marra, and Catherine Schuler for University of Michigan Press. She presented “‘Something Bad is Happening’: *Falsettos* and the Unspoken Record of the AIDS Epidemic” at ASTR and “A Spectacle Lost: Michael Bennett’s *Scandal*” at ATHE. Ginny chairs ASTR’s committee for Grants for Researchers with Heavy Teaching Loads and co-chairs ASTR’s Membership Committee with Noe Montez. In her community, she volunteers with Alliance for Living, New London’s AIDS Service Organization.

**Natka Bianchini** began her 8th year at Loyola University Maryland and her first full year in her new, hybrid role as faculty-administrator. She taught Theatre History and Directing II and was the class dean for students in the class of 2019. She enjoyed catching up with Tufts colleagues at both ASTR in Minneapolis and ATHE in Las Vegas where she presented papers on Fun Home and Edward Albee, respectively. She continues as vice president and conference planner for the Edward Albee Society. Last year she organized panels and events at four different conferences for the society (MATC, CDC, ALA, ATHE). She also directed a staged reading of The Vagina Monologues on campus in February with over 35 students, faculty, and staff members performing and an audience of almost 600.

**Ibby Cizmar** recently joined Franklin & Marshall College’s Theatre, Dance & Film faculty as a Visiting Assistant Professor teaching Acting and Foundations of World Theatre. This spring she will be directing TDF’s mainstage production of Jordan Hamison’s *Act A Lady*. She is also an Associate Faculty member of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York where she teaches acting, acting for musical theatre, audition technique, and the advanced Encore track. Her forthcoming article, “Emie McClintock’s Jazz Acting: A Theatre of Common Sense,” will be published in *The Routledge Companion to African American Theatre and Performance*. As part of ASTR’s TLA plenary, she presented “From Private Basements to Public Archives: Emie McClintock’s Jazz Acting Collection” in November 2016. She looks forward to returning to ASTR and taking part in the (Re)presenting Muslim Bodies of Performance working group. She continues to coach professional actors and rising MFA students in New York City and abroad.

**Mark Cosdon** was promoted to full professor at Allegheny College, where his teaching assignments include courses in theatre history, the contemporary American musical, and acting. In March 2017, he directed Rebecca Gilman’s *Luna Gale* for Allegheny’s Playshop Theatre. This past May/June, Cosdon taught a travel
course in Italy on renaissance art, culture, and theatricality—his sixth time. At the Tony-honored Drama Book Shop, Cosdon hosted the seventh annual Brilliance of the American Theatre event, bringing authors Chrystyna Dail, Peter Zazzali, and Tufts’ Heather Nathans to New York’s Times Square to discuss their new books. At the Association for Theatre in Higher Education’s conference in Las Vegas, Cosdon presented two papers, chaired a session, participated in a staged reading, and discussed his insights into the tenure and promotion process with graduate students and early-career professionals. Cosdon served on the American Theatre and Drama Society’s John W. Frick Award committee, honoring the best book on theatre of/in the Americas. He recently concluded eight consecutive years as an elected officer/board member of the American Theatre and Drama Society. As an external reader, he reviewed three tenure files for colleagues coming up for tenure and commented for several university presses on manuscripts under consideration for publication. In August, Cosdon flew to London to film a segment for Australian television’s “Who Do You Think You Are?” The episode will air in January 2018.

**Rev. Albert J. DeGiacomo**, was interviewed by Nancy Gall-Clayton in November 2016 for the Louisville regional column of *The Dramatist*, published by The Dramatist Guild of America, of which he is a member. The interview, which appeared in February and March issue, detailed the body of his seven plays dealing with religious themes. The interview was reprinted with permission in Crossroads, the newspaper of the Catholic Diocese of Lexington (KY). In September he was interviewed by Bill McCann, president of the Kentucky Playwrights Association, for an online television program, “Kentucky Plays Today,” for Kentucky Educational Television (KET). In the past year, he completed a two act play on the Jesuit priest poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, *Kingfisher, Catch Fire*. He continues as pastor of St. Andrew Catholic Church, Harrodsburg, Kentucky.

**Matt DiCintio** works in assessment and curriculum development at Boston University. Last fall he taught at Emerson College and was a guest dramaturg at Bucknell University (Marisol). He is a member of ATDS’s fundraising committee and the executive committee of the Theatre Library Association, for which he co-chaired the 2016 symposium “Fringe Festivals: Live Theatre on the Edge.” He reviewed Elizabeth Maddock Dillon’s *New World Drama* for *TRI* and Peter Davis’s *From Androboros to the First Amendment* for the *New England Theatre Journal* and contributed to *TDR*’s “More Books.” He continues to be a feature writer for Park Square Theatre and an evaluator for The Playwright’s Center, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, and other development organizations.

**Ann-Marie Dittmann** is the Assistant Director of the Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts (BCPA) in Bloomington, Illinois. Since March she has served as the Acting Programming Director at the BCPA. In May she was appointed to the Board of the Area Arts Round Table, an arts advocacy organization for Mclean County. This summer she produced the Miller Park Summer Theater production of *Once Upon A Mattress*. 
Q & A WITH NOREEN BARNES
Director of Graduate Studies, Theatre Department, Virginia Commonwealth University

Noreen, an alumna of great standing in the field, retired this past academic year from VCU.

Compiled by Jennifer Herron

Jennifer Herron: You work not only as a Theatre Historian, Associate Professor, and Director of Graduate Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University, but also as a member of the VCU Graduate School’s Preparing Future Faculty program. Could you describe this program and your role in it?

Noreen Barnes: For the PFF program, I taught a specialty seminar for School of the Arts MFA students, and served on the Advisory Board as the Arts representative. The VCU PFF is based on the national model, and consists of a half dozen one to two credit courses that cover various issues, from trends in higher education, instruction in teaching methods appropriate to one’s discipline, how to assemble an application and otherwise prepare for academic employment. For the Arts students, I adapted some of the material from my Theatre Pedagogy course, such as the components of an application, sample syllabi, and planning curricula, and also expanded from the Theatre-specific readings to include articles about issues that all of the Arts (both visual and performing) face in higher education. Many of the students encountered the lack of knowledge that there was a degree in their field (such as painting), or lack of recognition (by colleges/universities) that the MFA is a terminal degree.

I also taught in the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Media, Art & Text (MATX), co-teaching Text and Textuality, created a seminar in Celebrity and Visual Culture (a course that I would like to revisit in the context of the American theatre), and directed three dissertations. It’s been important for me to stay involved with doctoral students.

JH: In your opinion, what should pedagogical training ideally look like at the graduate level? How can graduate programs in theatre, drama, and/or performance studies most effectively prepare their students to serve not just as researchers but as educators? Feel free to share general philosophies, best practices, etc.

NB: The Theatre Pedagogy program that I have taught in at VCU since 1999 has evolved to include:

- Required teaching practica - grad students are in all levels of undergraduate classes as assistants to senior faculty beginning with their first semester in the program. For these classes, they write observation papers - reflections on the teaching style/classroom management of the faculty. This gives me a sense of their pedagogical perspective (which may be developing, or may be quite fully formed, depending on how much teaching experience they already have). These are not shared with the faculty, so students are free to be critical. These critiques reveal what they think goes well (or not) in the classroom, what choices they might have made, and what they learn from the practice of that teacher that might apply to their own efforts in the classroom. When they teach their own classes as adjunct instructors, the senior faculty observe their work with the undergraduates (we also sit in on their sessions for productions, when they serve as voice and speech or movement coaches).

- For the full semester course in Theatre Pedagogy, I include a range of assignments:
  - Articles on issues in higher education, from bell hooks to Martha Nussbaum; reviews of books about teaching in various aspects of theatre. Knowledge of current trends in higher education that could have an impact upon their work, such as: what is happening at both national and state levels in terms of education funding, as well as topics influencing campus climate (race/ethnicity, gender, free speech).
  - Teaching philosophies - crafting a coherent statement of values and teaching approaches, for both general theatre practice as well as in area of concentration.
  - Syllabi: students develop syllabi in specialized area, and also create an introduction to theatre course.
  - Review of how most departmental structures/faculty appointments work: what the process is in hiring, initial position, advance through ranks; the tenure and promotion dossier and other documentation.
  - Design of an entire undergraduate curriculum. This is the creation of what would be advertised for a Theatre/Drama program on a college website or brochure, and include the location, size and mission of the program, sample four-year course plan, description of faculty, facilities and production program. The ability of our students to discuss the nuts and bolts of curriculum and to
have an understanding of how an entire program works (not just one's own area), has really made the difference when they interview, especially when they are up for jobs at departments that are in transition and revising their programs. What makes sense in the education (BA or BFA) of a theatre major? What courses should be offered - in what order? How do they build on each other in a logical way? What is the experience that you want an undergraduate to have in their four years, both in terms of curricular structure and in production opportunities?

-Teaching demonstrations: students may teach in their area of specialty, or try something in an area in which they may have less experience (a performance teacher working on a lecture; a dramatic literature teacher developing a performance session). Students are critiques by their peers.

-Preparing for job applications/creating an application portfolio: How to read a job advertisement is crucial. Students assemble materials, both hard copy and electronic; in addition to sample syllabi, several versions of teaching philosophy, CV (in both long and resume format), and cover letter are included. Other faculty are brought in to conduct mock interviews (which we continue to do with the students when they apply for jobs).

**JH:** How have you been able to implement the ideas you described above into your practice as a professor teaching future professors? Can you give some examples from your practice that demonstrate these ideas in action?

**NB:** In all of the classes that the graduate students take, they consider how they would teach the material at an undergraduate level (when appropriate). In my theatre history/dramatic literature and historiography courses, I provide opportunities for students to present their research (and teach each other), whether in a mock theatre history conference/panel presentation format, as facilitators for discussions, or in group performance projects.

At the undergraduate level, I've developed several assignments that incorporate as much performance/production as possible. If they perform (or attempt to!) the material that they are studying, theatre history is an activity (not just a list of events and dates) that they will remember - it is in their bodies, a way to demonstrate scholarship/research.

I try to impress upon the graduate students, that although it has certainly become the common practice to use technology (esp. slide show/powerpoint) in our teaching and conference presentations, it is also important to learn how to teach **without** it. Can you rely on the strength of the story you are presenting if the technology fails? I've seen so many at a loss and wasting crucial time both in class and at conferences, and who don't even have a hard-copy handout as a backup. When you do use it, be selective in choice of visuals - most make the mistake of putting too much text in - difficult and time-consuming for class/audience to read.

**JH:** Finally, what advice do you have for new theatre, drama, and/or performance studies professors, or to anyone in this field looking to improve their teaching practice, on how to grow as an educator?

**NB:** Work on presentation skills - not all of us have them - learn how to know the material until it's in your body. My initial mistake as a teacher was trying to be my professors - but I could not be Kal Burnim or Peter Amott because I did not have the knowledge in me the way they did - that comes with time.

- Learn how to keep yourself on track in class and in presentations - what prompts or bullet points can keep you focused (and minimize the tangents)?
- Connect with people from other departments - try to work across disciplinary boundaries on developing courses or projects.
- Stay informed about current events in higher education, not just in your field or in your discrete area of specialty.
ALUMNI UPDATES, CON’T.

**Sean F. Edgecomb** is entering his fourth year as Assistant Professor of Drama at CUNY: The College of Staten Island and as consortial faculty at The Graduate Center. In July his first monograph, Charles Ludlam Lives!: Charles Busch, Bradford Louryk, Taylor Mac and the Queer Legacy of the Ridiculous Theatrical Company, was published as the most recent volume of the Triangulation Series at the University of Michigan Press. He also published a book chapter, “Architecting Queer Space: Charles Ludlam’s Bluebeard in the West Village” in Cultural Performance: Ethnographic Approaches to Performance Studies (Palgrave Macmillan). He published a book review in PAJ, a performance review of Taylor Mac’s 24 Decade History of Popular Music in PARTake Journal and was commissioned to write a piece on Taylor Mac and Penny Arcade which appeared in Stanford Live over the summer. One of his current projects, an edited collection on Mac’s concert, was featured in a story in the Arts Section of the New York Times in January. Over the past academic year Sean earned several awards, including an FFPP Diversity Writing Fellowship, an RF CUNY course design award for excellence and innovation in performing arts pedagogy, a PSC CUNY research grant for travel to Santa Fe, New Mexico and a Book Completion Award from the Graduate Center. In addition to participating in the “Transfigured Performance” working group through ASTR, Sean was invited to speak at The Edwin Booth Award Ceremony honoring Taylor Mac in Manhattan and a month later giving an academic address celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Ridiculous Theatre at the Segal Center. He also moderated an event celebrating Queer artist Rommi Smith at the Graduate Center.

**Iris Fanger** continues to work as a dance and theater critic and historian. She contributes reviews and articles regularly from Boston on the local arts companies and visiting troupes, and occasionally writes about productions in New York for two Boston area dailies: Metro West Daily News and the Patriot Ledger; the online web publication theatremania.com; the New England web-based journal, The Arts Fuse; and Dancing Times, published in London. As a long-time member of the Boston Theater Critics Association, she continues as a voter and presenter of the annual Elliot Norton Awards. She is an honorary director of the Woods Hole Research Center, after 19 years on the board of directors.

**Eunice S. Ferreira** is an assistant professor in the Theater Department at Skidmore College where she directs and teaches courses on Black Theater, Theater & Culture, Directing, Translation & Performance, and American Musical Theater. This year she developed and taught a new course on Mixed Race on Stage & Film. In the fall, Eunice directed a multilingual premiere of The Orphan Sea by Caridad Svich. The multilingual version was created throughout the rehearsal process with a cast of seventeen students, representing ten languages. Obie-winning playwright Svich came to Skidmore for a two-part residency thanks to funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and a program Eunice arranged with the Tang Teaching Museum. Her busy fall included a guest lecture at the University of Connecticut at the invitation of Tufts alumna Adrienne Macki, as part of a program celebrating a Shakespeare First Folio Tour exhibition. Eunice delivered the talk “Crioulo Shakespeare at the Crossroads of Africa and Europe,” to two hundred of Adrienne’s students. Eunice also wrote the essay “Race, Art and Social Justice,” in response to Ta-Nehisi Coates’ book Between the World and Me, for Skidmore’s First Year Experience program. She chaired a session panel and presented at ATHE for
which she also served on a subcommittee for diversity and inclusion. In the spring she was invited to be a founding member of DNAWorks Ensemble, a new international collective of theater artists. Community engagement informs Eunice’s research and she continues to serve various academic and social sectors of the Cape Verdean diasporic community in New England.

Dr. Gary Genard delivered his "Public Speaking for Diplomats” workshop on August 29, 2017 at the Permanent Mission of the State of Kuwait to the United Nations. The workshop was sponsored by UNITAR, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research.

Kyna Hamill was promoted to Senior Lecturer in fall 2016 and continues to serve as Assistant Director of BU's Core Curriculum and teach in the School of Theatre. For the 2016/17 season, she was the Humanities Lead Scholar at the New Repertory Theatre. In October 2016, she remounted her play “Letters to Medford” directed by fellow alum, Wanda Strukus with their company, Two Roads Performance Projects. In response to staging stories of local history, she co-wrote “Staging Local, Staying Small” for Howlround.com with one of her students from BU. Kyna also continues her early modern research on the legacy of the print artist Jacques Callot and attended a paleography seminar at the Medici Archive Project in Florence, Italy in January 2017. She presented some of her research entitled “Omnipotent Views: ‘Cosmo Magno’ and La Fiera in Print and Performance” at the Renaissance Society of America in Chicago in March 2017. Her interests in American Studies keep her busy and in May 2017, Kyna presented her paper "'Nothing But A Tiger': The Portraits of Lydia Maria Child” at the American Literature Association Conference in Boston. After many months in process, her article “A Story I must Tell: Jingle Bells in the Minstrel Repertoire” came out in Theatre Survey in September 2017. She currently serves on the ASTR Mentoring Committee.

Danielle Herget (recently took on the role of Liberal Arts Program Director (in addition to being Honors Program Director) at Fisher College in Boston. She developed a new seminar course for senior Liberal Arts students, entitled, “Hope and Fear in Apocalyptic Times.” In addition, Danielle directed a One Act Festival in the fall of 2016, The Sound of Music, in the spring of 2017, and is currently directing The Crucible for Fisher's fall production. Outside of Fisher, Danielle is in rehearsals for an upcoming, summer 2018 production run of Patrick Marber’s Closer (Heathen Island Productions) in Portland, ME, Portsmouth, NH, and Boston, MA.

Jenna L. Kubly contributed several entries to Reforming America: A Thematic Encyclopedia and Document Collection of the Progressive Era, edited by Jeffrey A. Johnson, (ABC-CLIO, 2017) and co-convened the "Theater and War" working group at ASTR (November 2016) with Dr. DeAnna Toten Beard

Kevin Landis continues as Associate Professor and Director of the Theatre and Dance Program at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. Courses taught include, Manifestos of the Avant-Garde, Physical Theatre and Clown, The Nordic Legacy and Nationalism, Romanticism and Melodrama. Landis co-authored “The Public Theater’s Mobile Unit: Lean and Mean Shakespeare” in American Theater (March 2017) and the
Q & A WITH MICHAEL LUEGER
Lecturer, Emerson College and Boston College; Host, Theatre History Podcast
Michael graduated from the program in 2014.
Compiled by Emma Futhey

EF: Why did you want to start your podcast?
ML: I wanted to start the podcast because I'd been experimenting with sharing the knowledge and research skills that I'd learned at Tufts with a broader audience. I operate social media accounts focused on theatre history (@theaterhistory on Twitter and @theatrehistory on Facebook) and I've done some blogging and freelance writing on topics related to theatre and performance history. I got into podcasting because I'd been doing some written interviews with theatre archivists and other people doing work related to theatrical history, but I didn't always feel like I was giving my interviewees the best platform from which to share their expertise. I felt like I should try recording direct conversations with guests, which is how the podcast started.

EF: What has your experience been like with the podcast?
ML: The experience has been overwhelmingly positive. It's great to get to talk with so many different people - scholars, artists, even archaeologists - who work with theatre history in so many different ways. The technical side has been the most difficult: you have to learn a little about recording equipment and software, as well as how to make an interview sound decent. I'm still learning, and I had to take some time off at one point to deal with technical problems. I've been really lucky that my editors at HowlRound have given the podcast a home, both because they give me great feedback and because I haven't had to worry about the practical aspects of hosting and distributing the audio files. Talking with the guests and learning more about their particular artistic or scholarly endeavors is easily the best part. It's helped me reorient some of my teaching, such as when a recent interview inspired me to incorporate modern Chinese theatre into a survey course that I was teaching.

EF: How do you feel your subject works in the podcast form? How have you enhanced it?
ML: Audio recordings alone aren't always sufficient as a means of introducing listeners to a given subject, so I've been fortunate that HowlRound also hosts the shownotes, as well as images that...
accompany those notes. As with my work on social media, the idea is to give people an introduction to a given topic, then inspire them to go out and learn more about it. To that end, I try as much as possible to provide links to primary and secondary resources - books, archives, recordings of performances, etc. - in the shownotes. In the future, I may experiment with video as a means of supplementing the auditory experience, and it might be interesting to try doing live shows from performances or conferences.

**EF: What are your top-five favorite episodes of the podcast so far?**

**ML:** Obviously I have to mention Episodes 1 and 15, which I recorded with fellow Tufts alums Max Shulman and Fiona Coffey, respectively. Max talked about drugs and a famous melodrama involving Sarah Bernhardt, while Fiona focused on how women have played a much greater role in Northern Irish drama than is commonly acknowledged.

Episode 16 was a fun one: it featured Kyna Hamill, who taught a course that I took at Tufts, and her research into the dark origins of the Christmas song "Jingle Bells" (minstrel shows were involved). Episode 5, with Joel Berkowitz of UW-Milwaukee, was an early example of how we could use the podcast form to provide an introduction to a specific topic, in this case the world of Yiddish theatre, for those who might not know anything about it. Finally, Episode 25, with Siyuan Liu of the University of British Columbia, was great on a number of levels. We talked about modern Chinese drama, or huaju, and what he told me led me to reorient a syllabus for a class that I was teaching; the transcript of that interview will also appear in an upcoming issue of *American Theatre*.

**EF: Are there other podcasts that do what you do that you enjoy?**

**ML:** Two good examples are Research in Action, which is hosted by Dr. Katie Linder of Oregon State University and focuses more broadly on the process of doing academic research across all fields. There’s also Ben Franklin's World, which is hosted by Dr. Liz Covart. It focuses on the historical period around the American Revolution, and it’s a really good example of how to discuss a particular field in a way that’s still fun and accessible for people.

**Daphne Lei** continues her advocacy for diversity and transnationalism as the president for the American Society for Theatre Research. She has been invited to present her research in various international and domestic conferences. She has also been awarded by the Medical Humanities initiatives at UC Irvine for her interdisciplinary project on “difference.” She served as the dramaturg for *I Dream of Chang and Eng* by Philip Kan Gotanda at UC Irvine.

**Hugh K. Long** is in his sixth year as the tenured Assistant Professor of Drama & English at Athens State University in Athens, AL. This past year, as the head of the Drama & Theatre Arts program and Artistic Director of the Athenian Players, Hugh opened the brand new Studio Theatre at the Alabama Center for the Arts in Decatur, AL. For the inaugural 2016-17 season, he chose to direct *Verdigris* by Jim Beaver, *Geek!* by Crystal Skillman, and *The Fantasticks*, for his first ever directorial foray in musicals. Perhaps the most exciting aspect was that Hugh was able to bring both Jim Beaver and Crystal Skillman to the Alabama Center of the Arts for the opening night of their respective plays. This visit by accomplished playwrights offered his students and greater community a chance to meet these amazing artists through talk backs, playwriting workshops, and lectures. Hugh was also fortunate to teach his usual course load of Dramatic Literature (3 semesters), Drama Production, Theatre for Young Audiences, Acting I, Acting II, and Film: History, Development, Evaluation.
Perhaps Hugh’s greatest accomplishment this past year was becoming a father, thanks to his wife, Leslie, who gave birth to their son, Finnegan Hugh Long, one week before his first show, *Verdigris*, opened.

**Scott Malia** was awarded tenure and promotion to Associate Professor at the College of the Holy Cross where he taught a yearlong seminar entitled, “Gender & Sexuality in Film & Media” as well as “Honor Films, Sex & Gender.” At Holy Cross, he directed a production of Will Eno’s *Middletown* and co-chaired Outfront, a GLBTQIA alliance of faculty and staff. Scott serves as a board member of NETC and as Book Reviews Editor for *New England Theatre Journal*.

**Rae Mansfield** was appointed Faculty-in-Residence of the UMass Lowell Honors College First Year Living Learning Community, where they are also the thesis and fellowship coordinator, and continues their double life as a technician at the Oberon and Somerville Theatre.

After receiving his doctorate from Tufts in 2016, **Paul Masters** is now an Assistant Professor of Theatre at the Boston Conservatory at Berklee, teaching both Theatre History and Modern Drama.

**Paul Mroczka**, who serves the Music, Theatre and Dance Department at Plymouth State University as Director of Theatre and Professor of Playwriting and Directing. Paul and 11 of his colleagues received certificates in Standardized Patient Training this summer from the University of Illinois, Chicago Medical School. He is currently working across disciplines at PSU with those in Nursing, Physical Therapy and Counseling, as well as those in Theatre and Dance, to develop the SSPTA Program, which is the first in the country. This past year, he co-directed his musical *Cowboys!* which he co-authored with John Briggs, at PSU; directed Wittenberg for Advice to the Players; and directed his adaptation of Franz Kafka’s *The Trial*, which was entitled *The Trial: A Cautionary American Drama*, for PSU. Last September, he co-created with five other colleagues the highly innovative theatrical piece *Brilliant Being*, which was featured on NH Chronicle. *Brilliant Being* combined dance, music, sounds, movement, acting, and technology-driven design that included projections of light, images, and patterns that follow the motions and sounds made by the performers. In August, excerpts from *Brilliant Being* were performed at an outdoor venue at Canterbury Shaker Village. The production premiered at PSU’s Homecoming & Family Celebration on September 22, 2016, and ran for five performances in the Studio Theatre in the Silver Center for the Arts. Over the past year, Paul created and ran the first PSU Playwrights Lab, in which over a dozen different student plays were developed with eight receiving either staged readings or productions. Upcoming projects include editing a series of blogs for Broadway Educators on the use of theatre across disciplines in the classroom and the creation of a blog series for that same company on recycling and green theatre in collaboration with the Broadway show *Wicked*.

Over the past year, **Sasha Perugini** has presented several public talks to a wide variety of audiences. In October 2016 and March 2017 she led interactive discussions about women’s leadership for the non-profit cultural association Consonanze and the business school Scuola di Scienze Aziendali, both in Florence. She partnered with two prominent study-abroad colleagues to give a lecture on “A Flipped Perspective on Pedagogy” at the annual Association of International Education Administrators in Washington in February 2017. The following month, she presented on “The larger
context of student mobility and a comparison of US and EU systems” at the conference Borders, Walls and Fences organized by Syracuse University Florence, where she continues to serve as the director and teach a course on international education: EDU400 “The Industry of Knowledge”. Finally, she gave a talk comparing internationalization models for students at the University of Florence in May 2017.

**Nancy Taylor Porter** is a Professor of Theatre, having just been promoted this year, and Chair of the Department of Theatre at Illinois College. She oversees the improv program and coaches the longform team. Last year, they won their preliminary round at the Midwest Open Regional competition of the College Improv Tournament. This past spring she directed Angels in America: Millennium Approaches. She also serves as Academic Director of the First-Year Experience Program. For the past two years she has been a fellow with the Society for Values in Higher Education and traveled to China, teaching Chinese college professors about using more active and engaged pedagogies in the classroom.

**Dassia N. Posner** teaches in the Department of Theatre at Northwestern University, where she directs the Interdisciplinary PhD in Theatre and Drama program and teaches MFA, PhD, and undergraduate classes on History of Directing, Dramaturgy, Russian Theatre, Text and Performance Analysis, and Puppetry. This year she was awarded tenure and promoted to Associate Professor! Her work as dramaturgical translator for Tracy Letts’s version of Chekhov’s Three Sisters was published in two editions, by Samuel French and by TCG. She also published a chapter in a Russian book on the Moscow Kamenny Theatre and gave conference presentations at the American Society for Theatre Research, a Stanislavski conference at DAMU in Prague, and at Yale University. She is on the Interdisciplinary PhD Executive, Study Abroad, and Graduate School Research Grant Committees at Northwestern. Highlights of the year were experiencing the Giants of Royal de Luxe in Montreal, making twenty-four jars of sour cherry jam, and witnessing the total solar eclipse.

**Tiffany Pounds-Williams** graduated with her PhD in Drama in Spring 2017, where her dissertation was “Forgotten Figures: The Rhetorical Function of Tecmessa, Chrysothemis, and Ismene in Tragedies of Sophocles and Selected Adaptations.” Since then, she has been hired as an Associate Lecturer of Theatre Arts at the University of Massachusetts Boston where she teaches “Theatre History: Origins-1660” and as an Image Researcher for Harvard University’s HarvardX program. She also owns the children’s theatre, “Let’s Pretend: Tiny Tots Theatre” (ages 2-7), which is now in its 3rd year and has partnered with The Center for Arts at the Armory to provide them with a new Theatre Explorers program. Additionally, she taught multiple courses for CAA’s Youth Arts Arise and Arts Discovery Week, for instance, “Shadow Puppetry” and “Mask-Making & Mime.” Tiffany presented her paper on “Chrysothemis: Rhetoric and Scholarly Ramifications” at the 2017 Mid-America Theatre Conference’s Theatre History Symposium, which she won a $500 grant for after placing second in the 2nd Annual Doctoral Student Poster Competition for Travel Fellowships at Tufts University. She is also the Philanthropy, Fundraising, and Event Coordinator for the Moms of Camberville, an organization which supports mothers of young children, their families, and their
communities through donation drives, birth and grief support baskets, and supporting small businesses, marriage equality, minorities, immigrants, and working women.

In September, following a two-week residency, Luannen Rosenfeld’s Cardboard Castles (book and lyrics by Luanne Aronen Rosenfeld/music by Kristen Rosenfeld) was presented in a workshop performance at SUNY-Cortland. She has completed the screenplay and Cardboard Castles is currently in development as a feature film by Rubic House. Her musical, Divided, was presented by a Broadway cast in concert at Feinstein’s/54 Below in November.

Danielle Rosvally works as a project coordinator with the Folger Shakespeare Library supporting digital initiatives in humanities scholarship. She is excited about her chapter in the brand new book from Palgrave The Shakespeare User (Danielle’s chapter: “The Haunted Network: Shakespeare’s Digital Ghost”). This past year, she taught Theatre History 201: Origins to 1600 at the university of Massachusetts at Boston. She also presented work as part of a group panel assessing the state of the academic job market at the 2017 Association for Theatre in Higher Education conference, as well as part of a workshop at the 2017 Shakespeare Association of America Conference supporting digital initiatives with the Folger. Danielle works as a fight director in the Boston theatre community, and this year her fight work was seen in: Bad Hamlet, Seacoast Fringe Festival; Brilliant Adventures, Apollinaire Theatre; Creature, Merrimack College; and She Kills Monsters, Windsor Girls School. Danielle is a member of the Shakespeare Association of America, the American Society for Theatre Research, and the Society of American Fight Directors. She recently accepted a position as a clinical assistant professor at the State University of New York at Buffalo’s department of theatre and dance, where she now teaches.

Q & A WITH MAX SHULMAN
Assistant Professor of Theatre, University of Colorado – Colorado Springs
Max graduated in the spring of 2015.
Compiled by Emma Futhey

EF: How did you find the job application process?
MS: The actual application process is stressful, but the more you do it, the easier it gets as you start to recognize your strengths and build up a body of submission letters that you can pull from.

EF: What were some challenges in your first jobs in the field beyond your experiences at Tufts, and how did you plan for them?
MS: My earliest jobs were as an adjunct at a number of different universities. There is, of course, a struggle working without the security of knowing your status the next semester. There is also a discomfort dealing with any problems that might arise with students if you are new to the institution or if you don’t have the support of a department. Adjuncts are often ghosts, teaching and disappearing. I do think there is great value in seeking out other faculty, chairs, and directors as guides, who are often more willing than you would expect.

It is also a challenge to keep your research and writing apace once you are out of coursework, which supplies a structure and a deadline for work. New classes take time and you have to prioritize your own work. A friend of mine reserves a single day each week (often Fridays) where he is only allowed to write and must avoid any coursework.

EF: What were some rewarding experiences in your first few years out?
MS: I took a job teaching expository writing at Rutgers University – usually a bit of a drag. But the tools, exercises, and techniques that I developed there are still part of my theatre history courses today. That was an invaluable time for my
teaching. Teaching writing is now an intrinsic part of my pedagogy. I will say that I turned down a full time job in that position in order to stay focused on the work I wanted to do – thus, saying “no” is rewarding as well.

EF: How are you approaching the job at this time in your career? Any specific goals? Do you already have plans set?
MS: I am focusing on the meat and potatoes – I am trying to publish.

EF: What advice would you give those of us at Tufts who are just about to enter the market?
MS: Use what is available – propose to the Ex-College to boost your teaching experience and to develop more interesting courses. Download the CVs of people you respect and use their formats (to be honest, I have the CVs of most of the Tufts faculty on my computer). Stay on top of how we talk about the field. And find your friends – I was lucky. I would exchange job letters with a Tufts friend and we would critique each other. We talked through interviews and prepped each other for questions that might get asked. When I received a job offer, I contacted professors at Tufts and they were kind enough to guide me through the process and my options.

ALUMNI UPDATES, CON’T.

Chris Scully directed the premier of Boston playwright William Donnelly’s “No Fault” at the 19th Boston Theatre Marathon. He also designed lights for Suffolk University’s Twenty-Fifth Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee and Bridgewater State University’s Family Performing Arts Center’s Mary Poppins. Chris is entering his sixth year as the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction for the Taunton Public Schools, and was recently named to the Old Colony History Museum’s Board of Trustees.

Megan Stahl is honored to be back at Tufts this year as a Visiting Lecturer teaching Modern and Postmodern Drama and Early Modern Theater, and she also continues to teach at Boston College as a Lecturer in Theatre Studies. She presented two papers at the recent ATHE conference in Las Vegas: “A Woman of Dangerous Independence: Hedda Gabler and the Spectacle of Celebrity” and “Nevertheless, She Persisted: ElizabethRobins, Votes for Women, and the Actresses’ Franchise League.” Megan currently serves on the Emerging Scholars Award Committee for the American Theatre and Drama Society.

Arnold Wengrow launched his book The Designs of Santo Loquasto at the March 2017 United States Institute of Theatre Technology (USITT) Conference and Stage Expo in St. Louis, followed by a book signing with Santo Loquasto at the Drama Book Shop in New York on April 27. The book is the eleventh in USITT’s series documenting the work of America’s best theatrical designers. Loquasto is a Tony Award-winning designer of settings and costumes for Broadway, Off Broadway, regional theatre, opera, and dance. He is a production designer for films that include Desperately Seeking Susan, Big, and thirty movies by Woody Allen.

Timothy Wutrich enters his tenth year at Case Western Reserve University in the Department of Classics where he is Senior Instructor of Classics. As a full-time faculty member in Classics, he taught three courses in the fall 2016: Latin Prose Authors (Caesar and Cicero – in Latin), Beginning Latin, and Gods and Heroes in Greek Literature. In spring 2017, he taught three courses: Vergil (in Latin), Beginning Latin, and Heroes and Hustlers in Latin Literature. Timothy was an invited participant (colleague Dr. Rachel Stemberg) in the Public Affairs Discussion Group sponsored by the Department of Political Science at Case Western Reserve University, and spoke on the topic “Democracy and Demagogues: Lessons from Ancient Greece and Rome,” on in February 2017. In October 2016, he directed selected scenes from Aeschylus’s, Agamemnon with a Meetup group whose members included CWRU faculty and students and members of the general public. In fall semester
2016, he was an inaugural member of the university’s Learning Fellows 2.0, a group of faculty selected to meet weekly to read, write about, and discuss pedagogy. He has also continued his membership in the Archaeological Institute of America in anticipation of another study tour in Transalpine Gaul, a.k.a., France, which he and his wife Annie Pécastaings (Tufts English alumna, M.A. ’85, Ph.D. ’99) hope to lead sometime in the future.

Michael Zampelli, the Paul L. Locatelli, SJ University Professor in the Department of Theatre and Dance at Santa Clara University, spent the 2016-2017 academic year as the Loyola Chair in Fordham University’s Theatre Program (“Chairs, chairs everywhere, but not a one to sit in!”). In addition to teaching in the theatre history sequence, he delivered the following Loyola Lectures at Fordham: “‘Strutting and Fretting’ on the Seams: Jesuit Performance in the United States” (November 2016) and “You are to be living actors in...the theatre of the world’: The Role and Significance of the Performing Arts in 19th- and 20th-Century Jesuit Education” (March 2016). In collaboration with George Drance, Artistic Director of New York’s Magis Theatre Company, he presented “The True, the Good and the Beautiful: Calderón’s Two Dreams” at the Sheen Center for Thought and Culture in New York City (December 2016). At the Comparative Drama Conference he delivered a paper entitled “‘Behind Thucydides Stands Aristophanes’: Jesuit Performance in the United States” (April 2017). Michael was also fortunate enough to journey to Europe to present his current research. At the ATINER Visual and Performing Arts Conference he delivered “Hecuba in Massachusetts: Classical Theatre and US Jesuit Education” (May 2017) and at the Catholicism, Literature and the Arts Conference at Durham University, UK he spoke on Jesuit performance and Catholicism in 19th century US (July 2017). He contributed four entries ("Performing Arts," "Dance," "Theatre," and "Vocation") to the recently published Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Jesuits edited by Thomas Worcester (2017). Michael was invited to give the keynote address at Georgetown University’s Lavender Graduation sponsored by the LGBTQ Resource Center (May 2017).

Q & A WITH TIFFANY POUNDS-WILLIAMS

Associate Lecturer, Department of Theatre, University of Massachusetts Boston
Tiffany graduated in Spring 2017.
Compiled by Emma Futhey

Emma Futhey: What was your dissertation topic?
Tiffany Pounds-Williams: Forgotten Figures: The Rhetorical Function of Tecmessa, Chrysothemis, and Ismene in Tragedies of Sophocles and Selected Adaptations

EF: What are some research questions you found most interesting in connection with your dissertation?
TPW: Why are Ismene, Chrysothemis, and Tecmessa silenced well before the conclusion of their plays (two are removed from the stage and one is turned mute)? Is this silencing perpetuated in adaptations of Sophocles’ Ajax, Electra, and Antigone?

What can this silencing indicate about the play, the playwrights’ societies, and the tragic form?

EF: Where do you see your research in the broader scope of the field? What do you see as the stakes of your dissertation research in connection to the field?
TPW: It is a question of theatre historiography. The silences of these characters did not just occur in Sophocles’ tragedies but were repeated in so many adaptations of them. This silencing is also mirrored by the lack of notice critics and theorists give to these characters. Though often seen as having ineffectual arguments with “stronger” or “braver” tragic heroes, studying these women reveals the possibilities for quiet activism- the kind where something as small as being kind to everyone or befriending someone who has been
marginalized, can cause others to react the same way and together the world can be changed for the better.

**EF:** What are the next steps for your project? Is there anything on the horizon?

**TPW:** The next step is to publish a few articles based on this project. In the meantime, I’ll be focusing on turning my preschool theatre, “Let’s Pretend: Tiny Tots Theatre,” into a nonprofit so that more children can benefit from the art.

---

**GRADUATE STUDENT UPDATES**

**Bárbara Casseb** joins the PhD program and Theatre and Performance from Albuquerque, where she studied at the University of New Mexico. There, she worked as an actor for a devised immersive horror show called Quarantine produced by Blackout Company in New Mexico. Following this production, she worked with Tricklock Theatre Company on their 17th Annual Revolutions International Theatre festival in various capacities. This event drew performers of working in diverse media, bringing artists from all over the world to the city. The festival hosted Dakha Brakha from Ukraine, Pussy Riot from Russia, Engine from Buenos Aires, Ndere Troupe from Uganda, among many others. Casseb took part in several short workshops led by the artists affiliated with the festival. Additionally, she performed in a original show called Mother of Exiles. During the summer, Casseb was a staff member of the National Hispanic Cultural Center summer institute’s Circo Latino program for the third consecutive year. She worked with sixty young artists ranging from eight to thirteen years old who trained under professional circus artists on their preferred skills culminating in a performance at the program’s end.

In spring 2017, **Dan Ciba** was awarded the Kalman A. Burnim Award for Scholarly Excellence in Drama. He presented “Being a memory play...it is not realistic: Rereading Luchino Visconti’s Menagerie as a Symbolic Production” at ATHE and “I Always Wanted to Play that Cracker: Remembering Race in Debbie Allen’s Black Cat” at ASTR. He became the Conference Planner for ATHE’s Theory and Criticism Focus Group. He published “Great Art Has No Nationality: How Ives Adapts,” in Etudes and a book review in New England Theatre Journal. After a lengthy absence, he has finally returned to designing costumes: in March, he designed Boston Collegiate Charter School’s Into the Woods; in April he designed Clytemnestra, a queer adaptation of the Orestia, for which he won the department award for Best Costume Design. He taught Introduction to Acting at Tufts and Modern Drama at Whaton College. He also codirected Stop Kiss with Jenny Herron for the 3Ps orientation show, adapting the memory theories explored in his research into the staging.

**Emma Futhey** continues work on her dissertation. For the department mainstage production of Desire Under the Elms, she was the dramaturg and assistant director to Heather Nathans. She was a GIFT Fellow for the 2016-2017 academic year and had the pleasure of working with Barbara Wallace Grossman on First-Year Showcase. For FYS, she directed a cut of Sarah Ruhl’s Eurydice. Additionally, she was the dramaturg for Stop Kiss, co-directed by her colleagues Dan Ciba and Jenny Herron. She presented at MATC in Houston in March.
After four productive years at ArtsBoston, she moved on from the nonprofit world and took a new position as the Program Assistant for the Office of Scholar Development at Tufts University. She is a Graduate Writing Consultant and a Public Speaking Consultant with Tufts. For the department, she continues as the Assistant Producer of Educational and Arts Programming.

This past year, Jenny Herron successfully completed her oral and written comps and defended her dissertation prospectus, advancing to doctoral candidacy. She presented her paper entitled "The Liberal Art of Theatre: Directing as Pedagogy, Acting as Critical Thought," at the Mid-America Theatre Conference's Pedagogy Symposium. Along with fellow Tufts doctoral candidate Dan Ciba, she directed a talented group of Tufts undergraduates in Stop Kiss by Diana Son. She also started work as the Theatre Director and Arts Coordinator at Boston Collegiate Charter School. During her first year in this role she directed Into the Woods, a production involving 76 students in grades 5-12. She created and served as the coach for Boston Collegiate’s first spoken-word poetry team, who made it to the semi-final round in the competitive, state-wide youth poetry slam Louder Than A Bomb. Additionally, she founded a glee club and a drama club at Boston Collegiate, and expanded BCCS’s after-school arts programming to include chorus, photography, graffiti art, and dance/choreography in addition to studio art. Finally, she organized Boston’s first Inter-School Art Slam, a talent show featuring performances by students from 11 different high schools in the Boston area. For her work, she was awarded the Graduate School of Arts and Science’s Rob Hollister Community Service Award.

Beck Holden saw his first peer-reviewed article, "Signifyin' Sam: Motivated Signifyin(g) and Future Nostalgia in Post-Reconstruction Black Musicals," published in this year’s edition of Text and Presentation. He presented portions of his dissertation research on the Williams and Walker Company and the later careers of company members at the Mid-America Theatre Conference, the Comparative Drama Conference (where he also accepted the 2016 Anthony Ellis Prize for Best Graduate Student Paper for "Signifyin' Sam"), and the Association for Theatre in Higher Education National Conference, and he has book reviews forthcoming in Theatre History Studies and next year’s edition of Text and Presentation. Last December, Beck directed his first collegiate production, an abridged version of Charles Mee’s Wintertime, as part of the Department of Drama and Dance’s First Year Showcase course. Outside of academia, he launched a biweekly column about the storytelling aspects of the popular trading card game Magic: the Gathering for Hipsters of the Coast.

Yizhou Huang passed the Ph.D comprehensive exam and successfully defended her dissertation prospectus. She participated in the seventh summer program in Studies of Asian Arts, Religion, and History, co-sponsored by Fudan University, Princeton University, and Tokyo University. She published a book review on the online portal of Siyi, an open access Chinese journal on arts and culture based in Cardiff University, and presented her dissertation research at the 2017 conference of Association for Asian Performance. She is now working on her dissertation, “Staging Colonial Modernity: Performances for English-Speaking Audience in Shanghai between Two World Wars.”
Javier Hurtado joins the Ph.D. program in Theatre and Performance Studies from the University of California-Riverside. Last year saw the production of his MFA thesis play Hope in the Mission at BRAVE Theatre Center in San Francisco, where it was performed with a cast of seventy-five local youth and a mariachi band. He also serves as Graduate Student Representative to the Association of Theatre in Higher Education’s Latinx, Indigenous, and the Americas Focus Group and the LGBTQ Focus group, where he organized the Doric Wilson Memorial Panel.

Q & A WITH ELIZABETH CIZMAR

Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Theatre, Franklin and Marshall University
Elizabeth graduated in Spring 2017.
Compiled by Emma Futhey

Emma Futhey: What was your dissertation topic?
Elizabeth Cizmar: My dissertation focuses on Ernie McClintock, the founder of the Afro-American Studio for Acting & Speech (est. 1966) in Harlem, Artistic Director of the 127th Street Repertory Ensemble (est. 1968), and the Jazz Actors Theatre in Richmond (est. 1991), preached “The Theatre of Common Sense,” later known as “Jazz Acting Technique: a Common Sense Approach to Acting”.

McClintock’s training continues to influence artists in contemporary film and theatre, both mainstream and on the fringes. This unsung hero of the American theatre became the first African American artist to pioneer a genre of actor training that challenged Black actors to integrate their observations of daily life in the black communities with training in music, dance, voice, and movement that equipped actors to play anything from Baraka to Molière. The technique, rooted in the jazz tradition, starts with the script, or the melody. The actors create a clear character based on improvisation, or the jazz riffs. The tools of the technique allow the actors to explore, research, and respond in the context of an improvisational jazz conversation, the identifying aspect of the ensemble.

EF: What are some research questions you found most interesting in connection with your dissertation?
EC: How do I reconcile my white positionality and actor training from two mainstream institutions (Actors Studio Drama School and NYU/Tisch’s Atlantic Theatre Company)?

Why has such an influential director-actor-producer been overlooked in scholarship?

Why are the Black Arts and Black Power movements mitigated to reductive generalizations?

How does the technique develop over a forty-year period in two distinct contexts (Harlem and Richmond)?

How do I reconcile McClintock’s paradoxical relationship with opposing theories including the Black Aesthetic, womanism, and queer theory?

EF: Where do you see your research in the broader scope of the field? What do you see as the stakes of your dissertation research in connection to the field?
EC: My dissertation offers an interdisciplinary study of theatre, history, politics, and acting theory that explores the intersectionality among race, class, and gender.

As far as broader conversation in Black acting theory scholarship is concerned, McClintock’s acting theory subverts Eurocentric perspectives and paradoxically echoes aspects of traditional western approaches. Therefore, McClintock’s acting theory creates tension with Stanislavsky-based approaches and will add to the rising discourse in Black acting theory in African American Theatre Studies and Performance Studies.

I am troubling current educational institutions and theatres that promote a Eurocentric aesthetic and/or acting theory. People of color’s lived experiences are not acknowledged and they are often asked to conform to a white way of approaching theatre.

EF: What are the next steps for your project? Is there anything on the horizon?
EC: African American Theatre and Performance where my essay “Ernie McClintock’s Jazz Acting: A Theatre of Common Sense” will be published. (Editors: Kathy A. Perkins, Sandra L. Richards, Renée Alexander Craft, and Thomas De Frantz)

By examining the work of hip-hop scholars, future studies can situate McClintock’s students and productions in the 1990s and 2000s as
centering on the spoken word and hip-hop’s conventions.

Late in my writing process I began considering McClintock’s early mentorship of Tupac Shakur and situating McClintock as an early supporter of hip hop. McClintock directed a thirteen-year-old Shakur in his acting debut in a 1984 production of A Raisin in the Sun at an Apollo theatre benefit for Jesse Jackson’s presidential campaign. Prior to Shakur’s passing, he paid homage to his early mentor and attended the Jazz Actors Theatre Richmond production of N.R. Davidson’s El Haj Malik. In terms of future research, I was fortunate to have hip-hop scholar Dr. Nicole Hodges Persley on my defense committee who provided me with guidance and feedback that will inevitably shape the next phases of research.

GRADUATE STUDENT UPDATES, CON’T

Teri Incampo served as a producer for two theatrical productions this past year. In September and October of 2016, her fringe company Exiled Theatre staged the New England premier of Sarah J. Mann’s She Looks Good in Black, which received two Independent Reviewers of New England (IRNE) award nominations. In April 2017, Teri co-produced Jean-Paul Sartre’s No Exit at the Studio Space in Somerville.

Pat King was in residence at the Center for Humanities at Tufts as a dissertation fellow in 2016-17, and presented research from his dissertation at CHAT as well as ASTR. He served as the Vice President to the Student Theatre Association for Graduate Education (STAGE), received the Kalman A. Bumim Award, and will have a dramaturgical article on 19th-century Chicago theatre and Norwegian immigrant communities published by Seattle Repertory Theater this winter.

Amy Meyer is a PhD candidate. Her dissertation investigates ground acts throughout the history of the western circus and argues that acrobatic bodies have long challenged dominant cultural conceptions of gender. Her review of Montreal Completement Cirque, the 2016 Contemporary Circus Festival in Montreal, was published in the March 2017 issue of Theatre Journal. Last fall, Amy began teaching as a Lecturer in Theatre Studies at Boston College. At Tufts, she taught a course entitled Circus & Society at the Experimental College as part of the Robyn Gittleman Graduate Teaching Fellowship. She continued teaching writing and public speaking for the Academic Resource Center, and led workshops in physical theatre and partner acrobatics at Tufts and in the greater Boston area. She co-convened the working group Transfeminisms: Translating, Transgressing, and Transforming Feminisms at ASTR’s 2016 conference, and presented papers on historical and contemporary circus at ATHE’s 2017 conference. For the 2016-17 season, Amy continued her work as a member of Imaginary Beasts, a Boston-based physical theatre troupe. She performed in the company’s annual winter pantomime, and in a workshop staging of the poetry of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven as part of The Cabinet of Curiosities Festival. In summer 2017, she played Toinette in Soap & Rope Theatre Company’s production of Molière’s The Imaginary Invalid, performed outdoors at the Crane Estate in Ipswich, MA.

Reza Mirsajadi has spent the last year writing his dissertation, tentatively titled, “The Aesthetics of Ambiguity: Contemporary Iranian Directors and their Subversive Discourse.” His work focuses on the stagings and
adaptations of canonical Western plays in Iran since 1997, and considers how tactics for evading censorship have changed in modern cybercultures. In the past year, he has presented pieces of this research at ASTR, MLA, and the Northwestern Summer Institute for Performance Studies. He has also published two book reviews (in Theatre Survey and the Journal for Dramatic Theory and Criticism), and was asked to speak as the School of Arts and Sciences student representative for Tufts’ Graduate Matriculation Ceremony. He is currently beginning his second semester of teaching African American Theatre at Emerson College, and is directing the 3Ps mainstage fall production of Cherríe Moraga’s The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea at Tufts. He recently received the Center for Humanities at Tufts Dissertation Fellowship, a Graduate Institute for Teaching fellowship, and the Tufts Diversity Grant (which will be used to bring a queer Latinx performer-scholar to campus).

Michael L. K. Morris is currently completing his dissertation Theories of Corporate Theatre which suggests how organizational theory can be used to enhance our understanding of theatre companies. Last year, Michael joined the executive team of technology startup WarnerBoothe where he focuses on product management and business development strategy. He also produced the short film, All Aboard, featured on the company’s website at WarnerBoothe.com. Michael remained active in theatre making, serving again on the leadership team of the LDS Church’s Christmas musical theatre production, Savior of the World, with a cast of more than 200 and produced at a theatre on the Church’s headquarters campus.

İrem Seçil Reel Şen published her work as an editor and translator for an anthology of plays, Unofficial Roxelana and Other Plays by Özen Yula, under the umbrella of The University Chicago Press. She has received Dean’s Summer Fellowship to work on her dissertation, which documents the creative labor of Turkish-American women. During the summer, she continued interviewing, transcribing, and analyzing her ethnographic field study with that grant. She currently works on a paper, entitled Worlding Sema in the Turkish Diaspora, that she will present at the ASTR Conference in Atlanta. Meanwhile, she has continued to raise her 4-year old daughter and an infant boy; and, teach in the Turkish school during the weekends.

During the 2016/2017 academic year, Katherine Swimm worked as an adjunct instructor at the Tufts Experimental College, where she taught a course, “The History of Mental Illness on Stage and Screen.” She also taught “Introduction to Performance Studies” at Dean College in Franklin, MA. In November 2016 she directed Big: The Musical at The Footlight Club, America’s oldest continuously running community theatre, where this past summer she also directed and played Lucy in the Club’s production of You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown. This past spring, she was a co-creator and performer in “Nasty Women Sing,” a cabaret to benefit women’s health charities. In March 2017 she presented a paper entitled “‘My senses wandered’: The Lear of Private Life and the Possibility of a Fiction of Bedlam” at the Mid-America Theatre Conference in Houston, Texas. This past August, she began working as Manager of Tutoring Programs for the Academic Resource Center at Tufts.
**Tara Brooke Watkins** spent the last year working on ethnographic research for her dissertation, “Deconstructing the Dreamland: A performance ethnography of Tulsa’s 1921 Black Wall Street Massacre.” For three months, Tara ran theatrical story circles to create dialogue around racial tension in Tulsa, Oklahoma; she created a short play entitled Tulsa ‘21.1 about black high school students’ perceptions of their education in North Tulsa; and taught drama classes to children in North Tulsa focused on creating a “New Black Wall Street.” In addition to these projects, Tara spoke at the Philadelphia Theatre Research Symposium about her play The Bible Women’s Project and at the Sleeping Weazel/Emerson College sponsored colloquium “Robbie n’ Company: A Celebration of Robbie McCauley.” She presented her work on Tulsa’s Black Wall Street at Eastern Nazarene College’s multi-cultural symposium. She has recently partnered with Bethel Social Justice Institute in Boston to run story circle theatre workshops focused on addressing sexual victimization within a Christian church context. Tara also directed The Wiz and The Duck Variations at Eastern Nazarene College. She runs South Shore School of Theatre in Quincy and is the president on the board of Pariah Theatre Company. She is excited about the opportunity to launch a new Theatre for Social Justice program at Eastern Nazarene College, commencing in the fall of 2018.

**Irina Yakubovskaya** is working on her dissertation on the first global theatre company in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia - Il’khom Theatre of Mark Weil, located in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. In the Fall 2016, Irina taught Intro to Acting in the Tufts Department of Drama and Dance. She served as a GIFT teaching fellow in the Fall 2016 in the African-American Theatre and Film course. Irina was selected to be a Robyn Gittleman Graduate Teaching Fellow for 2016-2017 at the Tufts Experimental College, where she successfully taught her interdisciplinary class The Little Prince: The Book and Beyond. In the Summer 2017, Irina taught Acting One at the Tufts Summer School. Irina participated in the 2017 ATHE annual conference with the following presentations: Live Feed Direction: techniques of the late Mark Weil that use live feed video in innovative ways (Directing Focus Group), Focus And Sensory Awareness: Inner And Outer Expressions Of An Emotion (VASTA), Toward A Global Acting Classroom (Acting Focus Group). During the academic year, Irina Yakubovskaya continued her advocacy projects and volunteering in the Graduate Student Government. In April 2016, she went to the Regional conference of National Association of Graduate and Professional Students, where she participated with a presentation on diversity, representation and empathy. Currently she teaches Acting in the Tufts Department of Drama and Dance.

**Q & A WITH CATHERINE VRTIS**

Catherine graduated in Spring 2017. Compiled by Emma Futhey

**EF:** What was your dissertation topic?  
**CV:** My research topic started as an investigation into Langston Hughes’ Communist dramas from the 1930s, a relatively unknown and underappreciated section of his extensive works. Over the course of my research I became interested in what these plays reveal about how Hughes understood his own identity, as Negro (to use the label he preferred), as a worker, and as an individual “apart” from social identifiers, in as much as anyone is ever independent of such descriptors and the hierarchies of power that surround them. Ultimately, my dissertation wound up being an exegesis of what these plays reveal about how Hughes negotiated the forces of the market, his own ideals, and the performed signifiers of social identity to self-consciously create various artistic personae (primarily aligned by race and class) that both
fulfilled his political goals and resulted in sufficient manuscript sales to allow him to fully support himself as a writer.

**EF: What are some of the research questions you found most interesting in connection with your dissertation?**

**CV:** The research questions I found most interesting were about social identity and the creation of self through performance. Just as Judith Butler discussed in regards to gender and sexuality, signifiers of race, class, ability or disability, education level, etc. are constantly and simultaneously performed and read by all people. Hughes did not have the modern vocabulary of performance theory to describe how he crafted his public and artistic personae to meet his changing markets and ideologies, but he still self-consciously manipulated his presentation of self to ensure that his audiences, no matter the makeup, saw him as “one of them.”

**EF: Where do you see your research in the broader scope of the field? What do you see as the stakes of your dissertation research in connection to the field?**

**CV:** When I began this research there was already a trend towards reevaluating the work of the Depression era radicals, as the existing material was largely shaped by either the 1960s and 1970s New Left’s frustration with the Old Left or by the Cold War era’s anticommunism. What I did not predict was the current swing towards Fascism worldwide and the resulting interest in past antifascist writing. In that context, my work has taken on new significance and a resulting increase in interest. Furthermore, the development of the focus on performance of identity has created resonance with current discussions of the topic, including but not limited to the performance of racial identification and “passing” brought on by Rachel Dolezal.

**EF: What are the next steps for your project? Is there anything on the horizon?**

**CV:** At this point I have no firm plans for the further development of this project, and I am taking a bit of a break to clear my head and take care of my health. I plan to revise the dissertation and expand it into a book, but I don’t have a clear timeline yet. I also have several other book ideas, including a study of the Harlem Suitcase Theatre, as it is something that I found myself wishing for while writing my dissertation.

---

Special Thanks to Jennifer Herron, Reza Mirsajadi, and especially Emma Futhey for their work in creating this newsletter.
LAURENCE SENELICK TO RETIRE

This September, Laurence Senelick announced his intention to retire from full-time teaching at the end of the academic year after nearly 50 years of distinguished service to Tufts. Laurence has devoted his time, energy, and remarkable talents to building the graduate program into one of the field’s most esteemed programs. Hundreds of graduate students have taken Laurence’s courses in topics as diverse as History of Directing, Pre-and-Post Revolutionary Russian Theatre, Theatre Iconography, and History of Popular Entertainments.

In the coming months, the Department will celebrate Laurence and thank him for his contributions. Announcements of forthcoming events will be posted on the Department of Drama and Dance’s webpage http://dramadance.tufts.edu/. If you are interested in honoring Laurence’s legacy and supporting Theatre and Performance Studies graduate students, you may make a donation to the Laurence Senelick fund at Tufts University.

Please make checks payable to “Trustees of Tufts College” and write “SENELICK FUND” in the memo line. If giving on-line at https://tuftsgiving.org, please go to the on-line donation form, select “other” and write in “Senelick Fund.”