Over the Transom
A Guide to Getting Your Play Published

#MeToo
Facing (and Fixing) the Problem of Sexual Harassment in Theatre

Moving
Getchell Winner Explores Choices

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Cover
Hoon Lee is Chef Harry in Seared, a new comedy by Theresa Rebeck, directed by Moritz von Stuelpnagel and produced by Williamstown Theatre Festival, Mandy Greenfield, Artistic Director, from July 25 to August 4, 2018. The play’s set includes an onstage kitchen where Chef Harry, whose restaurant has become the hot new place for foodies to dine, struggles with the conflict between art and commerce. This photo was one of numerous submissions Southern Theatre received from its call for photos of new plays presented over the last year. (Photo by Daniel Rader; cover design by Deanna Thompson)
It's now? I thought I had more time.” These are the first words of Will Eno’s play *Wakey, Wakey* (newly licensable from Samuel French). And they are the words on my mind as I write my final installment of “Hot Off the Press.” Let’s use this last moment together to look at the future through the eyes of America’s playwrights! The following recommendations all represent newly licensable plays that are set in some version of the years to come. With each play, you’ll find the cast breakdown and a referral to the publisher who holds the rights.

**Is God Is,** **by Aleshea Harris**

Winner of the 2016 Relentless Award, Aleshea Harris collides the ancient, the modern, the tragic, the Spaghetti Western, and Afropunk in this darkly funny and unapologetic modern myth about twin sisters who journey from the Dirty South to the California desert to exact righteous revenge.

*Cast breakdown:* 4 females; 4 males  
*Publisher:* Samuel French  
[www.samuelfrench.com](http://www.samuelfrench.com)

**Blue Wizard/Black Wizard,** **book & lyrics by Eliza Bent,** **music by Dave Malloy** and **Eliza Bent**

Is it a philosophical musical fantasia or a ritualistic sporting event? It’s both of these and more, as the Black and Blue Wizards battle to save themselves and humanity from the Great Mediocrity. Bent and Malloy combine the conventions of musical theatre and classical art song with the sensibilities of electronic music in a pop-culture smash-up of fantasy language and contemporary parlance.

*Cast breakdown:* 8 performers (any gender mix). Two of them will ideally be able to perform in languages other than English.  
*Publisher:* Samuel French  
[www.samuelfrench.com](http://www.samuelfrench.com)

**The Children,** **by Lucy Kirkwood**

Two former nuclear scientists live in near-isolation after a series of climate-related catastrophes shut down the power plant where they once worked. The arrival of a colleague from the distant past brings radioactive secrets, both old and new, to light. As *Variety* wrote, “Pack your bags, people – the apocalypse is coming.”

*Cast breakdown:* 2 females; 1 male  
*Publisher:* Dramatists Play Service  
[www.dramatists.com](http://www.dramatists.com)

**Distance,** **by Jerre Dye**

The *Chicago Tribune* praised this new play for “[going] the distance with heart and smarts,” while the *Windy City Times* noted that it “departs from popular ageist tropes ... on a domestic crisis becoming increasingly common in our society.” Alzheimer’s Disease is taking Irene Radford further and further away from the small, rag-tag universe of people who inhabit her ever-devolving world where the past becomes the present, the present becomes the past, and the future remains a terrifying mystery.

*Cast breakdown:* 3 females; 2 males  
*Publisher:* Dramatic Publishing  
[www.dramaticpublishing.com](http://www.dramaticpublishing.com)

**Hype Hero (King Patch),** **by Dominic Taylor**

In the not-too-distant future, in an urban center in America, welfare has been privatized. Society is divided into those who must wear the patches of corporations, and the elite celebrities and politicians who keep their autonomy. Rick, a citizen with a patch, comes to the mayor’s office with the temerity to ask a question, and finds himself face-to-face with the architect of the whole patch system. That’s when the trouble really begins.

*Cast breakdown:* 5 females; 5 males  
*Publisher:* Playscripts, Inc.  
[www.playscripts.com](http://www.playscripts.com)

Megan Monaghan Rivas is an associate professor of dramaturgy in the School of Drama at Carnegie Mellon University. Recipient of the Elliott Hayes Prize in Dramaturgy, she served as literary manager of South Coast Repertory Theatre in Costa Mesa, CA; the Alliance Theatre in Atlanta; and Frontera@Hyde Park Theatre in Austin, TX. She is a former member of the Southern Theatre Editorial Board.
If there’s one issue that has captured the attention of the theatre world this year, it’s the uncovering of multiple cases of sexual harassment and abuse in our industry. This issue of Southern Theatre takes an in-depth look at that troubling topic.

In a major report, Stefanie Maiya Lehmann examines the issue of sexual harassment from multiple angles, looking at the overall picture and the many questions raised as the #MeToo movement has gained steam. She shares what SETC professionals and member organizations say about their experiences with sexual harassment, what organizations and unions suggest can and should be done to protect everyone in theatre, and a summary of some of the important resources available to individuals, theatres and universities.

Elsewhere in this issue, the play’s the thing. We celebrate the work of the playwright with an excerpt from the winning play in SETC’s annual Charles M. Getchell New Play Award competition, Moving, which explores the happenings over 30 years in one apartment, where couples move in, move out and move on through life. The entire play is published online at www.setc.org/moving. Darren Michael also interviews the winning playwright, Sean Michael McCord, about his work and the development of Moving.

If you’ve ever wondered how to get a play published yourself, you will welcome the insights contained in a story by Megan Monaghan Rivas, which provides valuable information on navigating the road to publication and licensing based on interviews with five published playwrights and five publishing representatives.

Maybe instead you’re looking for new plays to produce in upcoming seasons? You’ll want to peruse Rivas’ column on newly licensed plays, “Hot off the Press,” which focuses in this issue on plays set in the future.

Finally, we turn to more technical matters in our regular “Outside the Box” column, featuring innovative, cost-effective design-tech solutions. David Glenn shares techniques he used to transform architectural lamps into torches that mimic live flame on stage.

Southern Theatre seeks to provide ideas and tools that are current and meaningful to you and your organization. From timely and important industry perspectives to usable information for playwrights and theatre makers, I think you will find this edition has something for everyone. I hope you enjoy!

Jeff Gibson, SETC President
New Lamps for Onstage Fire
Create Realistic Flame Effects

by David Glenn

As long as there has been live theatre, there has been the desire to include live flame on stage. With its warm glow and dancing quality, flame can add so much to the artistic vision of the play. It can also burn the venue to the ground – causing, at worst, grave injuries and death or, at best, lawsuits and firings.

For a recent production of Children of Eden at Samford University, I was asked to provide 10 realistic torches that would need to be on stage for about 15 minutes. I thought back to my first show as a graduate student when, as deck chief, I was asked to oversee the preparation and use of two live-flame torches in an indoor venue. The torches had a layer of lathe-embedded concrete, a cotton wrap several layers thick and a wrap of flameproof material. They were soaked in camping fuel and were very similar to torches I had used the previous two summers at an outdoor drama. Despite my reservations, I was instructed to use them by my faculty.

The problem with live flame is that unexpected things can happen. Someone could trip. Someone could get closer to the flame than they should. In this case, a torch-holding actor who was blocked on the outside of the front row found an audience member in a wheelchair in his spot and adjusted his position to within a few inches of the wall. The director rushed down and moved the actor before the flame could ignite the wooden architecture, but it was without a doubt a close call.

Innovation in theatre has produced safer alternatives to live flame on stage, and as a result of several incidents – including, most notably, the 2003 nightclub fire in Rhode Island – the use of pyrotechnics and live flame in performance venues has become strictly regulated. State fire marshals across the country have safeguards and procedures in place to ensure that venue and audience safety is a priority.

A New Source for a ‘Live’ Flame

While conceiving the torches for Children of Eden, I discovered a new option for creating the look of real flame on stage: a new type of architectural lamp that mimics real flame. It uses a grid of LED lights and a circuit board that fires the LEDs in a flame-like pattern. The lamps have a flame-like 1500K color temperature and produce 700 lumens with just 7 watts of electricity.

My first challenge in adapting the lamp for our use onstage was to find a way to convert battery power over to the AC current necessary for the lamps. I purchased 12V DC female plugs with leads, the smallest DC-to-AC inverters that I could find, and the correct size PVC pipe to contain the eight D-size batteries that would create the 12V DC. While this approach worked, the inverter pulled a phantom load that depleted the batteries very quickly. I later found that the same type of lamps could be purchased in a 12V DC model that was made to work with solar-powered exterior lighting systems. At that point, I purchased the DC lamps and eliminated the need for the inverters. The lamps I chose have a gravity chip that reverses the LED flame when the light bulb is inverted, making the torches look even more realistic.

Turning Lamps into Torches

Our next step was to create a cage to obscure the parts of the lamp that give away the source of the effect. While the flicker of
Do you have a design/tech solution that would make a great Outside the Box column?

Send a brief summary of your idea to Outside the Box Editor F. Randy deCelle at rdecelle@ua.edu.

David Glenn, the director of technology and design at Samford University in Birmingham, AL, has worked professionally as a technical director for 27 years.

A Versatile Tool for Special Effects

These lamps could be used in wall sconces or chandeliers, or even to create a realistic fireplace if placed strategically within a pile of logs.

The visual of the flickering LEDs is striking, and the light quality that they emit is both bright and stunning. Except for their milk plastic dome giving away their effect, they are near perfect for stage usage. With a little creative masking, these lamps will leave your audience wondering whether you risked using live flame on stage.

MATERIALS AND COSTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LED flame-effect flickering fire light bulb (12VDC)</td>
<td>$16.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light bulb fixture socket</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft foam, 12” x 18” sheet</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-size batteries (cost for 8)</td>
<td>12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1¼” PVC pipe, 4-ft. length</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous components</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Estimated cost per torch: $39.00

David Glenn, the director of technology and design at Samford University in Birmingham, AL, has worked professionally as a technical director for 27 years.

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Facing (and Fixing) the Problem of Sexual Harassment in Theatre
In the last year, stories of sexual harassment and abuse have taken center stage across the U.S., including allegations against major Hollywood stars, media personalities, industry moguls – and significant players in the theatre industry. These reports of sexual harassment in the theatre, coming from those who work onstage, backstage, in management and in creative areas, have caused shock waves across the industry, from university theatres to small professional theatres to community theatres to LORT theatres to Broadway. At theatres across the country, a wake-up call is being sounded and changes are being proposed as the reverberations from the #MeToo movement continue to be felt. In an online survey of SETC member professional theatres and university programs conducted in spring 2018, 36 percent said their organization had been impacted by a sexual harassment claim or claims. In a second online survey of SETC member professional artists, a third of those responding said they had been sexually harassed themselves, while 43 percent said they had witnessed it happening to someone else.

**SEXUAL HARASSMENT: AN ISSUE OF POWER IN THEATRE**

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) defines sexual harassment as “unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature … when submission to or rejection of this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual’s employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual’s work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.” Gender or sexuality does not matter: both victim and harasser can be a woman or a man. Sexual harassment can be verbal (making sexual comments, innuendos, jokes or advances), non-verbal (making gestures, facial expressions, blocking paths or following a person), or physical (touching, brushing or grabbing). In the theatre, it can occur onstage as well as offstage.

“The root of this harassment, unsurprisingly, is power,” says Chelsea Pace, one of the co-founders of Theatrical Intimacy Education, an organization whose mission is to empower artists “with the tools to ethically, efficiently and effectively stage intimacy and sexual violence in educational theatre.”

The hierarchical nature of the theatre industry – specifically, the disparity in power between well-seated producers, directors or designers and lower-ranking subordinates – provides an environment where that power dynamic can be abused. In a January industry panel, “Sexual Harassment in the Theatre,” hosted by New York City’s Artist Co-Op, Musical Theatre Factory Artistic Director Shakina Nayfack warned, “In the theatre, we have this deeply entrenched hierarchy of roles … I’ve seen those power relationships become imbalanced, problematic and then abusive.”

Changing the hierarchical structure requires education – and a change in mindset, according to Pace: “Training, conversation and technique can work to address power imbalance, but hiring people with institutionally and historically less power – and letting them have the power – can change the industry.”

One of the organizations working to effect change in the theatre industry is Not in Our House, a nonprofit organization founded by actors Lori Myers and Laura T. Fisher in 2015 in response to issues with sexual harassment in the Chicago theatre community, including alleged abuse at the now-closed Profiles Theatre that was detailed in a published report. Their nonprofit group, originally designed to provide a support net for survivors in the Chicago theatre community, has created a document called the Chicago Theatre Standards which includes a code of conduct, policies, processes and procedures, and various forms
that can be used by theatres on a national level to create their own standards.

Another advocacy group working to combat sexual harassment in theatres is Let Us Work, which was founded by Rachel Dart, a New York-based director. She notes that personal and professional lines blur much more often in theatre than other career fields. Those working in other industries could not fathom a work environment where staged intimacy or physical violence might be required with a coworker eight times a week. Also, going out for post-show drinks and attending cast parties is often considered “part of the job” and the close friendships that develop through a production are often one of the reasons so many theatre artists love what they do for a living.

“Many of us work in theatre because it provides such a loving and supportive environment,” Dart says. “We work incredibly closely together, and the rehearsal process can be intimate. Also, in many cases there’s not a defined workplace. You meet an agent or director or writer for coffee or a drink and they make you feel uncomfortable – are you ‘at work? You’re rehearsing in somebody’s basement – to whom can you report?”

New York’s Public Theater chose to directly address these concerns in a recently re-developed Code of Conduct, stating, “Theatre is an art form. The work can and should be challenging, experimental, exploratory and bold. Artistic freedom of expression is essential. For these things to happen, though, the creative space must be a safe space. And because the spaces in which we work are broad, encompassing administration, auditions, rehearsals, technical work, late nights, parties, public-facing frontline work and more, we must acknowledge, and not exploit, the blurred boundaries between work and social spaces.”

ARTISTS: TIME TO MOVE BEYOND DEVELOPING ‘A THICK SKIN’

When dealing with harassment in the not so distant past, theatre professionals would often be told that “to be in this business, you have to have a thick skin,” hearing entreaties to “suck it up” and “nobody likes a whiner,” which wasn’t simply about dealing with artistic rejection, but also verbal abuse and sometimes physical abuse. Beliefs like this are a major contributing factor to the large number of unreported sexual harassment incidents.

In Southern Theatre’s survey of professional artists, theatre companies and college/university theatre departments regarding sexual harassment, more than 4 in 10 artists had witnessed an incident and a full third of the artists said they had personally experienced sexual harassment – most commonly in the form of suggestive comments or jokes. The perpetrators were identified most often as a cast member, followed by the director, a crew member and the producer.

Just over 80 percent of those who experienced or saw harassment said they had not reported it. Top reasons for not doing so were that the artist “felt I might be over-reacting,” “didn’t want to negatively affect the production,” “didn’t think anything could be done,” or was “worried about professional repercussions.”

But other theatre artists who responded to the survey urged their fellow artists to get past their fears about reporting such incidents.

“Young professionals who may find themselves dealing with sexual harassment in the theatre environment have to realize that it is never their fault, and by them making it known to the proper colleagues, they are in no way ‘making a scene,’ or creating a problem,” one artist said. “By reporting sexual harassment, you are in fact solving the problem.”

Another artist noted, “No job is worth a lifetime of therapy (or worse). If speaking up might cause you to lose the job, you don’t want to work there anyway.”

Another survey respondent stated simply, “Report, report, report. Never be ashamed or think reporting
an event will damage your career.”

Individual artists may sometimes feel as if they are on their own, at the “bottom of the food chain,” or that there is no way to have their voices heard. However, everyone has the right to a workplace free of harassment regardless of age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, identity, experience, union status or contract type. All artists have a right to a safe place to work and collaborate.

Artists should not have to deal with such issues to have a job, notes Not in Our House’s Lori Myers: “Know that there are mechanisms in motion that are there to protect you so that you can confidently enter a theatre building knowing that it is a workplace, not a dating service of convenience.”

Many working theatre professionals do not feel they have been properly prepared to navigate issues of sexual harassment in their workplace. Of the 235 theatre artists who responded to the Southern Theatre survey, 48 percent said they did not believe they had received adequate training to recognize and respond to sexual harassment in a theatre workplace.

**Take Action, Document Harassment**

Dart, who was sexually harassed herself while working at a theatre and subsequently was asked to work again with the same man at the same theatre, says she felt “very angry and very alone and spent a lot of time wondering what action I could take to try to effect some change in policy and culture for other theatre artists, especially those who are non-union.”

She wants those who work in theatre to know that inappropriate behavior does not have to be tolerated. “If someone is speaking to you in a way that you don’t want to be spoken to, if you feel empowered to do so, address it with them directly,” she recommends. She suggests saying, for example, “Please don’t touch me or talk to me like that” or “If you want to hug me/touch me/etc., please ask my permission first.” When inappropriate behavior occurs, Dart says, “If you feel comfortable reporting it, report it. If you don’t, document it in great detail and tell other people about it.”

As one respondent from a professional theatre company commented in the Southern Theatre survey on sexual harassment, “Shouting into the void of Facebook might be cathartic and a good way to garner support and outrage but won’t often allow actual progress to be made. Make sure you have evidence, proof of action/inaction, time lines and dates. This is a tricky, sticky issue and if you don’t have more than he said/she said, you will ultimately undermine your goal and any progress toward fixing the issue.”

Human Resources for the Arts (HR4A) recommends that individuals who experience harassment document everything that occurred, stating, “This is

### How would you describe the form(s) of harassment you have experienced personally (select all that apply)?:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of Harassment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suggestive comments or jokes</td>
<td>96%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unwelcome physical familiarity</td>
<td>73%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staring or leering</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrusive questions about your private life</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive language or physical interactions</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stalking or unwelcome nonworkplace communication</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual coercion (quid pro quo)</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual assault</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indecent exposure</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1%</td>
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*Spring 2018 Southern Theatre Survey of SETC Member Professional Artists*

### Did you report the incident?

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<tr>
<th>Response</th>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>81%</td>
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*Spring 2018 Southern Theatre Survey of SETC Member Professional Artists*
the best thing you can do, period.” This can be accomplished simply by keeping a detailed diary entry or through more systematic tracking worksheets, such as the downloadable templates provided in the League of Independent Theater’s “Anti-Sexual Harassment Toolkit.” When considering how to speak up when faced with a situation that makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, HR4A advises the format, “Say what you see, say how you feel, say what you want, and walk away.” An example would be: “You just made a comment about my body. I didn’t like that. Don’t do that again.” Then, directly leave, exiting safely, not continuing the conversation.

Southern Theatre’s survey found that 81 percent of those who were witness to or a victim of sexual harassment did not feel the perpetrators of the sexual harassment faced appropriate consequences. Know that if you feel like a theatre company is not taking a report of harassment seriously or you feel uncomfortable reporting an incident of harassment to the company, outside help can be found. Advocacy organizations, third-party mediators, union representatives, a lawyer or, when dealing with criminal assault, the police, are all outside sources of help.

### In your experience, do you feel the perpetrators of sexual harassment have faced appropriate consequences?

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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Spring 2018 Southern Theatre Survey of SETC Member Professional Artists

When Southern Theatre asked theatre professionals how often they were made aware of sexual harassment policies and/or reporting processes when beginning work with a theatre, only 17 percent said they always were. Another 39 percent said sometimes, 27 percent said rarely, and 17 percent said they had never been made aware of policies or processes. HR4A reminds individual artists, “If your employer has not posted their policy or guidelines and has not made a first rehearsal speech or something similar, ask why not. Ask to see the employer’s sexual harassment policy. You are within your rights.”

**Speak Out About Harassment**

Theatre artists must watch out for each other and encourage others to speak out. Even if you have only witnessed sexual harassment, you have still experienced a hostile workplace and are indirectly being victimized by the behavior. This means you have the right to report on your own behalf.

In addition, many abusers are repeat offenders, so when you report an incident, you are not just doing it for yourself, but also for the countless others following you, noted one professional theatre representative who responded to the Southern Theatre survey.

“Living with the guilt of silence when you find out that others suffered because of your silence is a deafening and humbling experience,” the theatre representative wrote. “Even if you don’t feel comfortable saying something for yourself – say something for the next guy or gal that will endure the same treatment.”

Although recent cases of sexual harassment can sound scary, Myers reminds individuals that they are not the norm in the theatre world.

“There are so many incredible folks out there that are not ‘out to get you,’” she says. “Rather, they want desperately for you to succeed. Truly.”

**THE COMPANY PERSPECTIVE: WHAT CAN AND SHOULD BE DONE**

With the increased public awareness and discourse on sexual harassment, many major players in the theatre industry have felt compelled not only to respond but also to focus on improving the state of the industry – and not only because many of them view it as the right thing to do. From a legal standpoint, it also is critical.

The EEOC states that “an employer is always responsible for harassment by a supervisor that culminated in a tangible employment action. If the harassment did not lead to a tangible employment action, the employer is liable unless it proves that: 1) it exercised reasonable care to prevent and promptly correct any harassment; and 2) the employee unreasonably failed to complain to management or to avoid harm otherwise.” The EEOC also advises that prevention is the best tool to eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace, encouraging employers to take the initiative to prevent sexual harassment.

Dart from Let Us Work points to three common points of failure at the theatre company level: “First of all, many theatre companies begin by failing to create
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“Although we had a harassment policy in place prior to the revision, it became evident that we needed to create a more clearly defined reporting path.”
- Kelly Duyn, Venice Theatre

Kelly Duyn, Venice Theatre’s assistant director of education and outreach. “This would make it so that, for anyone who felt they were experiencing harassment of any kind, the process for reporting it would be as easy and clearly defined for them as possible.”

Not all of the tenets of the Chicago Theatre Standards applied to Venice’s operations, so the theatre selected appropriate parts and built on them to create its own policies.

“The [Chicago Theatre Standards] document is meant to cover all aspects of production from start to finish and was initially created by professional theatres, so, as a community theatre, not all standards were going to be applicable,” Duyn said. “We wanted [our final version] to be one that was not just revised from a larger prominent document, but one we could stand behind as an organization to make sure everyone working with us felt supported.”

Another valuable resource for any practitioner aiming to create a healthier workplace environment and practices is the “Anti-Sexual Harassment Toolkit,” developed by the League of Independent Theaters in partnership with Let Us Work. It is a 15-page document available for free download on the League’s website at www.litny.org/antisexual-harassment-toolkit. As the toolkit’s overview states, “Absolutely anyone can use this document. The concepts of communication and consent, along with the guidelines, tools and templates provided, can be applied to any practitioner of any discipline related to the performing arts.”

A third resource is the website Human Resources for the Arts (HR4A) at http://hrforthearts.org. It was created after a series of meetings about inadequate access and implementation of human resources procedures in the New York theatre community. HR4A outlines four starting places for theatre managers:

- create an accountable and transparent sexual harassment policy,
- develop a grievance procedure process,
- clearly identify to whom and how to report any complaint,
- and have the highest-ranking figurehead make a speech to the entire company on day one of rehearsals that makes it clear that there is zero tolerance for sexual harassment.

Help from the Unions

Some of the major theatrical unions also have programs to help theatres deal with this issue. In 2016, Actors’ Equity Association (AEA) partnered with the

an environment that makes it clear that sexual harassment is not tolerated. Secondly, many companies, especially small ones, are already stretched very thin in terms of resources and haven’t devoted the time and energy it takes to develop a sexual harassment policy and a complaint path. Third, when incidents do happen, it can be painful for people to have to acknowledge that their collaborators – who are often also their very close friends – are perpetrating harassment or assault. So, rather than trying to grapple with that idea, they dismiss the incidents as fabricated, or sweep them under the rug.”

In many of the recent cases of sexual harassment, the theatres involved created new policies and procedures only after sexual harassment had occurred. Instead theatre companies should “front-load the work,” Not in Our House’s Myers says.

“Define your policy, let folks know prior to hiring them exactly what you expect of everyone, and follow through with what happens when the policy is broken,” she says. “By not outlining a clear conflict resolution path that consists of routing complaints of sexual harassment to objective third parties (that are not just the artistic director and the director), companies set themselves up as an insulated unit that is impervious to serious wrongdoing.”

Resources for Developing Policies

There are several sources of guidance available for theatre leaders. One of the best resources is the Chicago Theatre Standards, available for free download from the Not in Our House website (www.notinourhouse.org). The document was the result of a year of roundtable discussions and pilot testing across 20 participating theatre companies. The document shares specific goals and standards for numerous activities, such as auditions, dressing rooms and the choreography of nudity and violence. It also offers several sample templates for agreements, company forms and language.

Florida’s Venice Theatre, one of the largest community theatres in the U.S., used the Chicago Theatre Standards as the jumping off point for the new organizational policies and standards related to harassment that it developed this year. The move to revise its policies followed accusations of sexual harassment against a guest director during a 2015 production of the musical Hair.

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- Kelly Duyn, Venice Theatre

Kelly Duyn, Venice Theatre’s assistant director of education and outreach. “This would make it so that, for anyone who felt they were experiencing harassment of any kind, the process for reporting it would be as easy and clearly defined for them as possible.”

Not all of the tenets of the Chicago Theatre Standards applied to Venice’s operations, so the theatre selected appropriate parts and built on them to create its own policies.

“The [Chicago Theatre Standards] document is meant to cover all aspects of production from start to finish and was initially created by professional theatres, so, as a community theatre, not all standards were going to be applicable,” Duyn said. “We wanted [our final version] to be one that was not just revised from a larger prominent document, but one we could stand behind as an organization to make sure everyone working with us felt supported.”

Another valuable resource for any practitioner aiming to create a healthier workplace environment and practices is the “Anti-Sexual Harassment Toolkit,” developed by the League of Independent Theaters in partnership with Let Us Work. It is a 15-page document available for free download on the League’s website at www.litny.org/antisexual-harassment-toolkit. As the toolkit’s overview states, “Absolutely anyone can use this document. The concepts of communication and consent, along with the guidelines, tools and templates provided, can be applied to any practitioner of any discipline related to the performing arts.”

A third resource is the website Human Resources for the Arts (HR4A) at http://hrforthearts.org. It was created after a series of meetings about inadequate access and implementation of human resources procedures in the New York theatre community. HR4A outlines four starting places for theatre managers:

- create an accountable and transparent sexual harassment policy,
- develop a grievance procedure process,
- clearly identify to whom and how to report any complaint,
- and have the highest-ranking figurehead make a speech to the entire company on day one of rehearsals that makes it clear that there is zero tolerance for sexual harassment.

Help from the Unions

Some of the major theatrical unions also have programs to help theatres deal with this issue. In 2016, Actors’ Equity Association (AEA) partnered with the

an environment that makes it clear that sexual harassment is not tolerated. Secondly, many companies, especially small ones, are already stretched very thin in terms of resources and haven’t devoted the time and energy it takes to develop a sexual harassment policy and a complaint path. Third, when incidents do happen, it can be painful for people to have to acknowledge that their collaborators – who are often also their very close friends – are perpetrating harassment or assault. So, rather than trying to grapple with that idea, they dismiss the incidents as fabricated, or sweep them under the rug.”

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THE PLACE WHERE RIGOROUS ACTOR TRAINING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE MEET.

BLACK ARTS THEATER WINTER IMMERSION
January 22-26, 2019
Led by a world-class faculty including Stephen McKinley Henderson, Ruben Santiago-Hudson, Michelle Shay and Phylicia Rashad, the Black Arts Theater Winter Immersion is a week-long comprehensive exploration of the history of the contemporary black theater tradition.

MUSICAL THEATRE WINTER IMMERSION
January 14-26, 2019
The Musical Theatre Winter Immersion is an effective two-week training program that prepares actors for the 2019 Summer Stock Audition Circuit and upcoming professional auditions.
Actors Fund to create a training program to assist Equity staff in responding to questions, complaints or reports of harassment. In November 2017, AEA reached out to 1,500 producers and theatre companies, urging them to develop clear policies against harassment and announce them on every first day of a production. In March 2018, AEA announced the formation of the “President’s Committee to Prevent Harassment” in theatre to “help the organization develop additional forward-looking strategies to eradicate harassment and bullying in the theatre.”

The Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC) has also made efforts to address sexual harassment in the theatre industry. In 2017, SDC revised and updated its “Rights and Responsibilities for Members.” The union has developed new resources for members, explored ways to collaborate with other unions and guilds, provided guides to discrimination statutes, developed systems of reporting and record-keeping, and is developing a training program for SDC members, its Executive Board and the staff. In a 2018 letter to its membership, SDC outlined three goals: to unite, empower and protect its membership, noting the following: “SDC believes the American theatre must unite to create a safe and healthy workplace, one that reflects the great diversity of the theatre community and fully embraces shared values, which at their core, are intolerant of discrimination and harassment in any form. SDC empowers our members to promote a safe and healthy workplace through rigorous, ongoing education and training, which enables them to stand up to inappropriate workplace conduct while cultivating a supportive, upstanding network of SDC members and staff. SDC protects its members who are involved in wrongful workplace conduct situations through the establishment of clear protocols for reporting, effective inquiries and utilization of dispute mechanisms for addressing complaints.”

**Workshops and Panels Promote Discussion**

Industry panels are also becoming common, both domestically and internationally, to address this issue. In November 2017, The Public Theater held a “[Mis] Conduct” town hall meeting to discuss sexual harassment and abuse in New York’s theatre community. The following month, and over 1,500 miles away, a similar town hall was hosted to address the same concerns, but for the theatre community in North Texas. In February of this year, the same type of event was held for the San Francisco Bay Area theatre community and, in March, Orlando Shakespeare Theater, the University of Central Florida (UCF), Theatre UCF, Mad Cow Theatre and Orlando Repertory Theatre hosted two workshops on sexual harassment issues and prevention, led by Fisher of Not in Our House, developer of the Chicago Theatre Standards. One of the largest town hall events was hosted by the Royal Court Theatre in London in October 2017 and concluded with a curated event where, over a period of five hours, 150 testimonies of sexual abuse were read, 126 of which were directly related to the theatre industry.

These panels have not only encouraged important conversations on sexual harassment, but also have provided tangible results such as new action plans, the development and publication of new codes of behavior, and even new tools like help lines and reporting systems to support theatre professionals and combat toxic work environments.

**Input from Companies on What Works**

Several companies that responded to *Southern Theatre*’s online survey pegged success in dealing with this issue to having clear policies and procedures in place that assure employees they can report incidents – and providing those employees with detailed information on the chain of communication, repercussions and resources that are available.

“[Our] open door policy and whistle-blower policy allow our employees to feel safe about reporting any issues,” said one company representative, adding that it is key to have a commitment from senior management and a comprehensive policy in place, as well as to offer annual and ongoing training.

One company representative noted that his theatre spells out exactly what constitutes harassment in the employee handbook, which also includes “an explicitly outlined complaint procedure which

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**When inappropriate behavior occurs, ‘if you feel comfortable reporting it, report it. If you don’t, document it in great detail and tell other people about it.’**

- Rachel Dart, Let Us Work

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**Has your organization (professional theatre company or university theatre department) been impacted by a sexual harassment claim or claims?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>36%</th>
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*Spring 2018 Southern Theatre Survey of SETC Professional Theatre and University Theatre Department Members*
includes a protection from retaliation clause.” The handbook also details how to create an appropriate and safe work environment for minors. In addition, the theatre representative said, “all department heads and employees are expected to attend a mandated seminar conducted by an attorney associated with sexual harassment cases.”

Two company representatives mentioned having “No Tolerance” policies at their theatres. One said: “Once a report is made, it is researched and if [the allegations are found] to be true and intentional, the guilty party is fired and a mark is on their record.”

Another company representative said their theatre has “a written sexual harassment policy that must be read and signed by each employee upon commencement of employment.”

In crafting a sexual harassment policy, Dart says company leaders need to make sure they understand the issue from all sides: “Develop your policy with compassion, not just with the desire to cover yourself if you get sued,” she says. “Seek to understand why people report sexual harassment and understand how difficult it is to do so. Talk to people who have experienced it. Ask them how they would have liked the situation to have been handled. And reach out if you need help.”

**COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES: BUILDING A FOUNDATION**

College is often where artists begin their theatre journey – and where they learn lessons about sexual harassment that they carry forward into their careers. When Dart surveyed artists about their encounters with sexual harassment before launching the Let Us Work project, she discovered that many had their first sexual harassment experience while in school.

“So, so many of the respondents to my survey described being sexually harassed, assaulted or exploited by their teachers or professors,” Dart says. “If they’re taught that that behavior is normal and to be expected while they’re students, how will they know not to tolerate it when they’re in the professional world?”

She urges undergraduate and graduate training programs to create environments where young
people are treated with respect, to model appropriate employer/employee behavior, and to teach students specifically what to look out for once they go out into the professional world. As they help students build a foundation for their careers, academic institutions have the ability to establish clear expectations of behavior that can eventually change the culture of the industry at large.

One of the areas where university faculty and staff can have an impact is in helping students define sexual harassment. Students are often confused about what they should report. Does unwanted flirting and attention from a fellow cast member or a faculty member constitute harassment? Does the costume designer’s remark about letting out a waistband of a costume become body shaming? Does the choreographer demonstrating a lift become unnecessary touching? Sometimes misconduct is blatant, ugly and obvious, but many times it can be more of a gray area.

Students also need to understand the system for reporting harassment and misconduct, as well as the course of action that must be followed if they make a formal complaint. They need to know that if they bring an accusation of misconduct to the faculty or staff, that faculty or staff member is required by university policy to report it.

**It Starts with Title IX**

Sexual harassment at most universities falls under Title IX, the federal civil rights law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex at institutions receiving federal financial assistance, which was passed as part of the Education Amendments of 1972. Each educational institution typically has a Title IX coordinator whose sole responsibility is managing policies (Continued on Page 20)
Theatrical Intimacy: Creating a Safe Process and a Common Vocabulary in the #MeToo Era

Intimacy direction or choreography is an emerging field that is becoming more prominent in the wake of recent sexual harassment allegations in theatre. “This movement toward creating safe spaces for performers to do their work is growing exponentially because of the #MeToo movement and, more specifically, Not in Our House in Chicago,” says Jenny McKnight, a theatre professor at Indiana University who was appointed recently to serve as the intimacy choreographer for any IU production that contains moments of noncombat physical contact.

Like fight choreographers, intimacy choreographers or directors look to determine not only the best way to interpret and stage a scene but also how to do so in a respectful professional manner adhering to the highest standards of artistry and safety. Put simply by the motto of Intimacy Directors International, the work of intimacy directors aims to “create safe places for dangerous work.”

While 74 percent of the colleges, universities and theatres that responded to the Southern Theatre survey said they do not have intimacy policies, several indicated they now offer or plan to offer intimacy training. Some also plan to develop intimacy policies in the near future.

“We are looking to adopt intimacy-specific policies – all have been handled on a case-by-case situation,” said one respondent.

Another noted that “as a faith-based institution, we typically don’t do intimate scenes on stage. However, the program director is currently pursuing further training in intimacy education to stay ahead of the curve.”

Intimacy Directors International, one of the organizations that offers training in this area as well as providing certified intimacy directors for productions, recently presented a workshop, led by its founder Tonia Sina, for faculty and students at IU.

“The perspective that Tonia brought was eye-opening, and the students were eager to learn all she could teach in the short time she spent on our campus,” McKnight said. “We learned that just as a production has a fight choreographer to design and safely teach simulated intimacy (which also keeps everyone safe), especially for students, it is very important to establish clear boundaries and an expectation of consistency by having an outside eye (the intimacy choreographer) to help shape the moments of intimacy and create a choreography that remains consistent through every performance.”

McKnight notes that intimacy training gives performers a common vocabulary that allows them to communicate with each other about the work they are doing and to define boundaries. “There’s a process, a codified set of guidelines that makes the whole process less intimidating, less potentially harmful, and gives artists more agency in their own work. We have to be better at those things for our industry to thrive, and I believe that giving students this information is vital to a healthy future for performers.”

Another organization offering training in this area, as well as intimacy choreographers for productions, is Theatrical Intimacy Education, co-founded by Chelsea Pace, Laura Rikard and Kate Busselle.

“Organizations like Theatrical Intimacy Education can train the people in charge in the room (e.g., the director) how to have a process that takes care of the actor without sacrificing a creative process,” says Rikard.

Busselle notes that such training not only benefits the artists, but also the work that they are producing. “Intimacy training is fundamental in today’s theatre industry because we need to restructure the way that we create theatre,” says Busselle. “Working from a place of seeking mutual consent, establishing boundaries, and allowing an avenue for dialogue about the work can only improve the work.”

In addition to having policies and procedures related to intimacy, Pace notes that schools and theatres need to “work towards a culture of affirmative consent in classrooms and productions. And it’s work. It takes a lot of effort and time to change deeply ingrained attitudes and practices around physical contact.” She suggests teaching students to ask, “May I touch you? ” when they are working together in class. And, she adds, “If you are the person in power in the room, you need to ask, too. And remind them, often, that they are always allowed to say no.”

- Stefanie Maiya Lehmann

Jenny McKnight, Indiana University

Laura Rikard, Theatrical Intimacy Education

Kate Busselle, Theatrical Intimacy Education
and investigating Title IX complaints. The federal guidelines are relatively vague, so institutions are responsible for defining their individual policies and processes regarding investigations and disciplinary measures. University faculty and staff have a responsibility to educate themselves on institutional policies and to openly share that information with students.

Most of the college and university respondents to the *Southern Theatre* survey on sexual harassment specified Title IX and university-wide programs related to this topic as the policies they use to protect against sexual harassment. However, the complex world of the theatre department often presents special challenges for those seeking to prevent or deal with sexual harassment. Unlike students in science or English departments, theatre students and faculty spend long hours working together in very personal, intimate environments. Many theatre artists and students say they have experienced or even engaged in the EEOC’s examples of behavior that contribute to an unlawful hostile environment (such as off-color jokes, crude language, comments on physical attributes and unnecessary touching) within a prior theatre environment. For some, these behaviors may have once been considered “normal” in the workplace, but are no longer acceptable. So, in educating students, educators must first evaluate and, if necessary, change their own behavior. Knowing that any of these offenses can lead to disciplinary action should keep faculty and staff members ever-mindful of the way they interact with students and colleagues.

**Guidelines Specific to Theatre Departments**

Some theatre programs have taken the time to, outside of existing university policy, develop handbooks or guidelines covering topics such as roles in the theatre, curriculum expectations, shared goal and belief statements, and ethics/codes of conduct. The idea of the documents is to protect student-to-student relationships as well as student-to-educator relationships and to outline the expectations for a respectful, safe work environment. Indiana University (IU) is one such university program. The Department of Theatre, Drama and Contemporary Dance goes so far as to post its policies on sexual harassment and open and safe auditions on the department’s website.

“We have regularly had our campus’ Title IX office come and talk to us at faculty meetings about situ-

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(Continued from Page 18)
lections and procedures,” says Jonathan Michaelsen, professor, director of graduate studies and former department chair. “We have also had discussions about instructors in voice, movement, dance and acting courses and what is appropriate contact with students.”

In addition, the IU theatre department has developed policies regarding costume fittings, such as specifying that faculty should never be alone with a student in a fitting and establishing strict protocol regarding fitting photos, requiring every student to fill out a photo policy form for every show, according to Linda Pisano, a professor of costume design and the current department chair.

She says the focused efforts of the department have “provided us with the knowledge of not only what to do in a situation but how to be confident in our preparation to handle crisis. Our students know this, and they know we won’t stand by and allow a toxic culture to permeate.”

As a result, she said, “more students are not afraid to speak up when issues first occur or where changes still need to occur... [They] are willing to come forward to faculty knowing they have access to confidentiality, and overall there seems to be more awareness of how people need to respect one another.”

Pisano notes that initiatives to combat sexual harassment present universities with an opportunity to make a difference in the future of theatre.

“Universities train the emerging generation of artists, scholars and makers,” Pisano said. “What better way to change the industry and the systemic problems than by addressing them at this level? This is a powerful moment for training programs to not only affect what we produce but the process and culture in which we produce work.”

The University of Central Florida (UCF) School of Performing Arts also has taken extra steps to address sexual harassment, after a theatre technical director there was the subject of a Title IX investigation following an accusation of sexual harassment by a student. Orlando TV station WFTV-TV reported that the faculty member was reprimanded and given sexual harassment training but kept his job.

Efforts at UCF include a university-wide campaign called “Let’s Be Clear,” which provides options and information for students on reporting sexual misconduct and getting help (including a 24/7 text help line),

UCF’s School of Performing Arts has taken steps to ensure ‘no confusion about what is and what is not acceptable behavior.’
- Michael Wainstein, school director

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Connecting Qualified Candidates with the Top Theatre Graduate Programs
with details posted throughout campus, including in every bathroom. This allows “students to come forward more easily and sends a strong message that the university has the well-being of its students and faculty foremost in mind,” says Michael Wainstein, director of UCF’s School of Performing Arts.

The UCF School of Performing Arts also has taken steps on its own, recently bringing in Not in Our House to provide workshops on how the Chicago Theatre Standards could be applied to the needs of the theatre department.

“We thought that this set of standards

SETC’s Sexual Harassment Policy

SETC is an equal opportunity organization. The right to employment, membership, to hold office, and to participate in SETC activities, including (but not limited to) conventions, meetings, auditions and performances shall not be abridged because of age, color, disability, gender, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, military veteran’s status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation or any other characteristic protected by law.

The prohibition against harassment not only applies to SETC employees, but also to vendors, service representatives and all other persons doing business with SETC. Persons reporting such activity will not be retaliated against for doing so. The hiring organizations of SETC sign registration documents agreeing to these terms.

What to Do If You Are Harassed at SETC’s Auditions or Job Fair

Any SETC participant who believes that he or she is being harassed or discriminated against for any reason has the responsibility to bring the matter to the attention of the SETC Auditions Chair, the Professional Theatre Services Director, the serving Auditions Team or Job Squad, or any board or staff member of SETC.

All such matters will be then directed to the Auditions Committee for research and action. The Auditions Committee shall take appropriate action with regard to offending party(ies) and shall report to the victim the action taken. Should action of any legal nature be required, matters will then be referred to the Executive Committee for additional treatment.

Callback and Interview Recommendations

For the purposes of callbacks or follow-up interviews, the following recommendations are for the safety and protection of both the auditionee/job candidate and the hiring representatives:

1. Hiring companies may hold callbacks/interviews in only those spaces approved by SETC. This includes hotel rooms in specified hotels.

2. When hosting callbacks, try to avoid having a single representative and a single actor/candidate in the space. If the hiring company has only one rep, ask another actor/candidate to come in as a third party.

3. Do not shut doors on hotel rooms. Either prop them standing open, or at minimum, place the security bar between the door and the door jamb to prevent it from closing.

4. In any space rented for the purpose of callbacks or interviews, doors may not be locked when occupied.

5. Hiring theatres may not ask auditionees to dance. (All dancing is done during the SETC Dance Call.)

6. Auditionees/candidates should not go to any “callback” or “interview” location which does not have materials bearing the SETC logo on the door or beside the door.
would translate well into our educational theatre community here at UCF and have decided to adopt them,” Wainstein says. “A committee of students and professors has adapted the standards to our environment.”

He says the School of Performing Arts specifically addresses harassment from the first day of classes and with each production, with students reading the developed standards and the school providing a university specialist to speak with students, “so there is no confusion about what is and what is not acceptable behavior.” The school also is providing special training for stage managers, recognizing that they are often the first to hear from a student who is being harassed.

“As educators, we are bound to prepare our students for all facets of the world and business they have chosen and unfortunately, like any business, there are some dark sides,” Wainstein said. “But, if they are prepared as students to understand how to handle situations like this, they will be more likely to avoid them entirely. And when they can’t avoid them, they will have a toolkit that they draw upon to deal with the situations that might arise.”

**LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: A SAFER THEATRE**

As schools, theatres and artists seek ways to deal with the current environment, initiatives that not only create more awareness of the problem but also help shift the culture are important steps on the road to creating theatre that is safe for artists as they continue to explore new territory in art.

“For the sexual harassment in the industry to change, we have to go beyond reporting the problems,” says Theatrical Intimacy Education’s Rikard. “There has to be an effort to educate everyone in the work environment on the value of boundaries and respect for each other’s bodies and minds in order to have boundless creativity. The industry is gathering the courage to finally call out inappropriate behavior but they have to go beyond this. It is time for education and cultural change and removing any stigmas that keep people from standing up for the safety of their instruments (i.e., the body and mind) and also creating a place where someone can say, ‘Hey, I may have some old school ideas around this – I need to learn and change.’”

**Educating Guest Artists**

One area where some theatre programs see a need to take extra action is in guest artist arrangements. Guest artists can be valuable sources of mentorship, but as outsiders to the university system, they sometimes look on the students as peers. However, what might be thought of as appropriate in a professional theatre (asking a co-worker out for drinks, innocent flirting), is a different scenario in a college setting. Students are also more likely to feel star-struck by guest artists and resistant to reporting incidences of misconduct.

One university that has recognized this issue is the University of North Georgia/ Gainesville Theatre Alliance. With the help of the university Title IX office, the theatre program is in the process of developing a Guest Artist Handbook that will clearly define expectations of interactions between guest professionals and students, describe the reporting process, and outline possible consequences. One of the respondents to the Southern Theatre survey also noted plans at his institution to provide “a guest artist workshop in intimacy training for [the 2018-19 academic year].”

Stefanie Maiya Lehmann is business manager of Lincoln Center Concert Halls and Production in New York City and a member of the Southern Theatre Editorial Board.

Celeste Morris contributed content for the university section of the article. She is resident designer and an associate professor at the University of North Georgia / Gainesville Theatre Alliance.
OVER THE TRANSOM AND THROUGH THE WOODS:
A Map to Play Publishing

by Megan Monaghan Rivas
A play is undeniably a performance event. The greatest thrill that playwrights enjoy may be seeing their works performed, embodying the theatre’s oldest transaction of story carried by live actors to a live audience.

But there can be as great a thrill in seeing the play published, offered in official print form to readers and producers around the world. A published play is dramatically more visible, reaching far more readers than individual script submissions ever could. That increased reach typically results in more productions in the U.S. and internationally, netting greater income for the playwright over time. Further, as playwright Arlene Hutton notes, “It’s kind of a stamp of approval that it’s been published. And it feels good, as a playwright, to actually hold that physical book in your hand.”

This article aims to illuminate the publishing landscape created by those specialized firms that both produce the physical book containing a script, and license the play for productions thereafter. Drawing on interviews with five published playwrights and five representatives from play publishing and licensing houses, we hope to offer new and useful information to Southern Theatre’s playwright readers.

Where to Begin

Playwright Chisa Hutchinson advocates for beginning with production, not with publishing. “I strongly recommend waiting till you’ve had a production,” she says. She notes that, “if there is a need for rewrites, it’ll probably present itself during the production process – often during tech week when everything is put together and you think you’re done, but you get the most rewriting done because you’re really figuring out what works on its feet and what doesn’t.” A production also is a plus with publishers, she adds, because they “feel like, ‘Ok, they’ve done a test drive of this.’”

Playwright Stephen Gregg concurs, noting: “You hear this all the time, but I can’t overstate the importance of having your play produced before publication. Production tells you where the script can be misunderstood and where it’s, you know, kind of boring. You get to work with experts – in costumes, set, props, lighting – all of whom give you ideas that can become part of the play.” These advantages are imperative for a play’s successful journey to publication.

The publishers back the playwrights up on the necessity of production predating publication. This is quite different from the publishing process for novels and nonfiction works, which typically are exposed to very little (if any) public view before they appear in print. Most publishing and licensing houses require that a play has had at least one production before it can be considered for their catalogues. Those publishing houses that accept direct author submissions (and not all of them do) specify the production requirements for their individual companies. For example, Dramatic Publishing accepts unsolicited author submissions of “original full-length, one-act and 10-minute plays and musicals of every genre … [which have] had at least two fully staged Equity or amateur productions within the past five years.” Original Works Publishing requires that any full-length play submitted “have received eight (8) or more performances in a production run and have been reviewed,” while any non-full-length works “do not need 8 performances or reviews, but still must have been fully produced.” Dramatists Play Service’s website states specifically that if your play has not yet been produced in “a notable venue, you might be better served to put your time and energy into pursuing a production” before sending the script.

Timing Is Everything

Following the initial production(s) of a work, it’s up to the playwright to determine the right time for publication of the play. Gregg, whose work has been published by Dramatic Publishing and Playscripts, Inc., notes that “publishing a play forces you to declare it finished, which is a good thing. You’ll always find things about your published play that you wish you’d done differently. You just have to

ARLENE HUTTON
Playwright

‘It’s kind of a stamp of approval that it’s been published. And it feels good, as a playwright, to actually hold that physical book in your hand.’
move on. *(He laughs.)* There are plenty of regrets in your future.”

Playwright Elaine Romero adds, “Perfectionism can get in the way – the impulse to ‘hide’ or ‘protect’ the play. Let it be seen in its *imperfection*. The beauty of the play is so much more important than the wart on the play.”

Hutton notes that “some playwrights want to get a play published before it’s ready. Before it’s gotten some reviews. And so they’re disappointed when it’s not picked up for publication. Thinking that the play isn’t good enough, when actually they don’t have the credibility yet with the play.”

“A play gets its own resume,” Hutton says. “It might be a finalist for this and a semi-finalist for that. It might have a reading at this high-end theatre ... And once it’s been produced, it starts getting some reviews. Once you have those kind of things, then there’s something for the publisher to actually market. You can help your play build its resume.”

When the time is right, most publishing and licensing houses accept direct submissions from playwrights, whether or not those writers are working with agents.

**Putting Your (Play’s) Best Foot Forward**

When introducing your play to a publisher, attention to detail is the name of the game. Each publisher offers guidelines – similar to submission guidelines at theatres – detailing the forms of submission they welcome. Most publishers describe their submission requirements somewhere on their websites: Dramatists Play Service puts it under “FAQs,” while Playscripts, Inc., has a “Playwrights” tab on its homepage that offers “Submissions” as the first drop-down menu item. When submitting a work, it’s important to follow these guidelines exactly.

Jason Aaron Goldberg, president of Original Works Publishing (OWP), stresses, “Take the time to follow the guidelines and rules. No matter where you learn about OWP – if you see our link somewhere or the submission department email – go to the website and follow the directions. This goes for any publisher or theatre company. Too often, playwrights do not follow directions, and that only lessens your chances.”

It is equally important to send only the materials that are requested in the initial submission. “We don’t ask for production photos, and most [submitted plays] do not have media reviews,” says Linda Habjan, vice president of acquisitions for Dramatic Publishing. “We’re interested more in the production history ... It’s also helpful to include a reference letter provided from someone in the producing organization involved with the production of the play. This letter should not be a reference for the author; instead, it should provide information on their experience producing the play.”

Haleh Roshan Stilwell, editorial director of Dramatists Play Service, writes that when playwrights are sending material for the firm to consider, “we want to see full reviews. We are adept at reading pull quotes – we know when a quote from a review has most likely been manipulated to sound more positive than the review intended! So, select the best full reviews to send. We also acquire *scripts*, not productions, so if a review lauds your leading actor or compliments your set but is critical of the play itself,
that’s probably not a good review to send. Production photos are not helpful (again, because we acquire the scripts, not the production elements), unless you feel there is something the production photos explain about your play that the script alone does not. If you have some sort of hugely theatrical set piece written into your script, say, but your original production created it with only a chair and lighting, that might be helpful for us to see. However, even in that example, better to have the explanation of staging written into the script as a note or in stage directions, because assuming we do acquire the play, future licensees will only have the script.”

Certain choices on the part of playwrights establish insurmountable barriers to publishing. Stilwell describes one she sees frequently. “The biggest issue that arises (and this surprises authors at every stage of career, not just first-time writers) is the use of copyrighted material in plays. Writers (again, from first-time to many-award-winning) very, very often incorporate third-party material into their scripts without having secured permission to do so from the copyright holders. This material includes everything from a stage direction that indicates a specific song plays – e.g., ‘Elvis’s Love Me Tender plays over a boom box at the party’ – to having characters read from literature/poetry, to the playing of specific TV shows on a television in the scene, to projecting trademarks from brands – such as ‘Lights up on a TED Talk. The logo is projected on a screen at rise.’ All of these elements are infringement upon intellectual property rights and must be removed from the script before we will begin the publication process. There is no ‘acceptable’ amount of copyrighted/trademarked material that can be used without permission. Writers often think that 30 seconds of a song can play, or an excerpt of a longer text may be used because it’s being ‘credited’ by having the title of the novel said out loud. This is not the case, and DPS explicitly states in our publication contracts that the author warrants they own all material in the play. If it’s discovered in the manuscript that this third-party material exists, it can drastically hold up the publication process, as we will not publish nor license the play with that material included.”

The open submission process does not typically result in an enormous number of publications per year. Goldberg offers the following statistics from Original Works: “Because we accept unsolicited submissions, if you count all lengths, including single 10-minute plays and one-acts, we receive over 1,000 submissions a year. Acceptance rate fluctuates annually. If we received 500 amazing submissions in a year and they all fit our needs, we’d publish them all. But it is usually only about 3-5 percent, maybe even less.”

The numbers at Dramatic Publishing play out similarly. “Of those authors who are submitting unsolicited scripts for the first time and are not affiliated with a theatre or another publishing company, we publish four or five,” Habjan says.

Dramatists Play Service, receives “upwards of a hundred unsolicited submissions per year,” Stilwell says, and acquires “probably fewer than 3 of those per year, if at all … Unsolicited submission inquiries are reviewed by the president’s office and, as stated in our guidelines, if we are interested in reading a full
script we will be in touch.”

Samuel French, on the other hand, limits submissions directly from playwrights primarily to the company’s very well-known Off Off Broadway Short Play Festival, which invites playwrights to “submit one unpublished play or musical that may be up to 15 pages in length.” Garrett Anderson, literary associate at Samuel French, offers insight into the company’s choice not to accept open submissions for publishing: “If we had open submissions, the amount of reading we would need to do would significantly affect the quality of that work. An open submission policy also often resulted in playwrights submitting drafts that haven’t seen production yet, before the writer knows fully what they’re working with – you often don’t really see the play until you see the play. Open submission sometimes results in missing the thing you do want to work with, because of the sheer volume of submissions.”

Playwright Steve Yockey garnered his first publishing opportunity by sending work to the Off Off Broadway Short Play Festival competition, which offers publication of the winning plays. “My [winning] play was a 10-minute called Bright. Apple. Crush.,” Yockey says. “It’s a very unusual play in both form and content, all overlapping direct address, pitch-black comedy, some pretty intense violence. But it’s one of Samuel French’s most produced shorts … Publication definitely helped give that little play a big life.”

On the Other Side of the Transom

When a publisher receives a submission, what happens to it? In most cases, it is read by multiple readers before any decisions are made.

Describing Original Works’ reading process for submissions, Goldberg says, “We understand this is your art and we want to give every artist the best chance. We have a rotating group of readers on the team … Everyone on the reader team has a degree in theatre (not just playwriting, all fields) and/or spent years in the industry outside of the educational system. Some, but not all, have an MFA. Students/interns are learning, so we don’t have them on the official reader team. I also try to read as many submissions as I can. That said, each play is read by two people first. We get their feedback, and if both are positive it will go to me and the decision makers. If it is split, we will give it to another reader for a third opinion. The final decision often lands with me.”

Anderson of Samuel French offers a similarly detailed description of that company’s process. “As submissions come in, the three-person Literary Department (Samuel French’s Research and Development arm) is their first landing point, as well as keeping an eye out for upcoming readings, productions, etc. Literary discusses the plays internally, then we do research about the playwright and other theatres that are potentially interested in producing the show. If we feel that the play is something we’d like to pursue, we bring it to the Acquisitions Committee, which is mostly composed of senior management. In that room we decide how to move forward – that’s where the Yea or Nay happens.”

The final decision about whether to publish a given play is usually made at the highest level of the publishing organization. Every publishing house pri-
oritizes the quality of the play as the first criterion in the decision whether to publish. Beyond that, numerous factors come into play in that decision. Habjan reflects, “In terms of marketability, we look for plays that have crossover appeal to different types of audiences. Plays that can be cast in diverse ways and have variable cast sizes are more marketable. In terms of plays for high schools, large casts are important.” At Playscripts, Inc., “we look at whether we can serve the best interests of the play — whether we can find a market for the play, how the play would fit within the catalog, if there are multiple adaptations of the work that wouldn’t allow for us to spotlight the play properly, and whether the play addresses relevant social and current issues in the industry,” says Elissa Huang, creative projects manager.

Once the publisher has decided to go forward, the rest of the process can take anywhere from a few weeks to a couple of years. At Samuel French, Anderson explains, “Depending on different factors, the publication and licensing roll-out process can take anywhere from as little as 1-2 months to as much as 18 months. The print process varies in length depending on the proofing, updating with changes, and of course musicals, which are more complex, often take on the longer end of the scale … The process takes as long as it’s going to take; we won’t rush it. Ultimately we are trying to provide the best product and the best service for playwrights.”

The playwright will be asked to provide not just the script, but information about the first production, including its cast list and names of the creative team members, the playwright’s own bio, a working blurb or synopsis, and reviews if they were not included in the original submission. Arlene Hutton adds, “You’re welcome usually to write a little foreword to it. I always dedicate my plays to somebody.” The publisher will typeset the manuscript (what an old-fashioned term for what is now a digital process), and send it to the playwright in the form of a galley proof to check over.

This proofreading process is vital to the quality of the final product. “This probably seems obvious,” Yockey says, “but it’s important to meticulously go through the manuscript of your play and make sure everything, every little thing, is just the way you want it. You are the final authority and quality check on your script.”

On an early publication, Hutton nearly went to press with dialogue missing. This near-miss led her to a discovery about the best way to proofread those galleys. “In a little one-act that was being published, I accidentally discovered that they had left out a few lines,” Hutton says. “I realized, if I was just going through the galleys with a pencil, I might have missed that. So, you always have to compare your script with their script. And the way I do that now is I have the computer read my script [aloud] to me while I’m going through their script. It’s efficient, it keeps me on task, keeps my attention on the page. It’s easy to spot a misspelling or punctuation or something, but it’s only by hearing the play read as I’m reading that I discover if something is missing. And then I usually also have a friend proofread it for me, to have an extra set of eyes.”

While vitally important, proofreading can also be
a bottleneck in the publishing process. Playwright Romero confirms this, noting that some playwrights take many months to return galley proofs with their corrections. Habjan describes the policy to keep things moving at Dramatic Publishing: “The author has two weeks to make any corrections or changes. Then the author emails the corrected file back to our manuscript editor, and the script is finalized and sent to the marketing department for cover design and marketing plan development … We allow up to six months for evaluation [of a submitted play]. Once we acquire a play, it takes from six to eight weeks for processing, proofing and printing.”

The Rising Tide Lifts All Boats

The research process for this article illuminated a very heartening truth: that publishers and playwrights want the very same thing. Both parties want the plays to thrive through many productions for years to come. The playwright-publisher relationship is a partnership, not a conflict or mutual opposition. Playwright Yockey advises, “Love your publisher. If they’ve invested time, money and enthusiasm, trust that they want the play to be successful just as much as you do.” Voicing a similar thought from the publisher’s vantage point, Huang notes, “We operate under the idea that what is good for the playwright is good for Playscripts, Inc.’”

Megan Monaghan Rivas is an associate professor of dramaturgy in the School of Drama at Carnegie Mellon University and the recipient of the Elliott Hayes Prize in Dramaturgy. She is a former member of the Southern Theatre Editorial Board.

ELISSA HUANG
Creative Projects Manager, Broadway Licensing, Playscripts, Inc.

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PAUL: Male, 29 in 1985; character ages over 20 years. A screenwriter.
TERRY: Female, 29 in 2015. An architectural engineer.

SYNOPSIS

Over the span of 30 years in one apartment in the Silver Lake neighborhood of Los Angeles, lovers come together, fall apart and move on through life’s choices.

EXCERPT FROM MOVING

PAUL McCOY is drinking from a beer bottle in one hand and talking on the phone with the other. He’s been packing all day and looks a little worn in his old jeans and t-shirt, certainly not dressed to meet a cute girl.

PAUL: Thanks for checking on me, Barry. I’ll be out of here soon. Penny took all the furniture with her, so most of what I have are LPs, books, my typewriter. She picked most of that stuff anyway, it was her style. I’ve just got an apartment full of boxes now, and several large German guys on their way back to move the last of it. I’m putting my stuff in storage and staying with a friend until I can find a small place in Hollywood somewhere. I just gotta get out of here. (pause) I don’t know. Penny says I wasn’t “mature” enough, that I wasn’t ready to commit. So yeah, she shows how committed she is by taking all her crap and moving out. I’m all alone now, so I’m just going to curl up in a ball and cry my guts out. (pause) No, you dick, I’m kidding. When have you ever known me to cry? I’ll be fine.
There is a knock at the front door.

**PAUL:** Oh good, the movers are back. Paul gets up and goes to open the door, but the phone cord isn’t long enough and there’s no good place to put his beer down. With his back to the door, he calls out.

**PAUL:** Come on in, it’s not locked! The door opens and LAURA PALMETTO enters. In her mid-20s, she is well dressed but not formal, wearing a light, button-down sweater, even though it’s August. She looks nice. Laura steps into the apartment and glances around curiously, not sure what to do next. Paul still hasn’t actually looked at her.

**PAUL:** (over his shoulder) Start with the boxes along the back wall. I just have a few more things to pack up. Did you bring any tape?

**LAURA:** (startled) No.

**PAUL:** Who the hell are you?

**LAURA:** I’m here to look at the apartment. Are you Stan?

**PAUL:** I’m Paul. Stan is my landlord.

**LAURA:** Stan said I should come by and look at it. I didn’t know you were still moving.

**PAUL:** (a little annoyed) Why did you just walk in?

**LAURA:** You told me to.

**PAUL:** I don’t even know you.

**LAURA:** You said “come on in, the door’s not locked”.

**PAUL:** I thought you were the movers.

**LAURA:** This really isn’t my fault.

**PAUL:** Yeah, okay.

**LAURA:** Maybe I should come back later.

**PAUL:** No, it’s okay. Sorry if I was a little short. Can I offer you something to, uh... He trails off as they both look around the room and see nothing but boxes.

**PAUL:** Can I offer you a box?

**LAURA:** She smiles for the first time. She’s good.

**LAURA:** Can I offer you a box? She smiles for the first time.

**LAURA:** I’m good.

**PAUL:** My name is Paul.

**LAURA:** I know.

**PAUL:** How do you know that?

**LAURA:** You told me. You’re Paul. Stan is your landlord.

**PAUL:** Who are you?

**LAURA:** (a little puzzled) I’m the woman who’s here to look at your apartment? Are you okay? Do you have memory problems, or...?

**PAUL:** No! What’s your name?

**LAURA:** Oh... I’m Laura.

**PAUL:** Pleased to meet you. My name is Paul. Laura looks at him for a moment, now not sure if he’s kidding. He is.

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**Getchell Award Winner Sean Michael McCord Explores the Impact of Life Choices in Moving**

The 2018 Charles M. Getchell New Play Award winner is Sean Michael McCord (above) for the play *Moving*. McCord, who studied film at UCLA, currently works at the University of Virginia Library in Charlottesville and is pursuing his MFA in playwriting as a member of the Playwright’s Lab at Hollins University in Roanoke, VA. His plays have been produced in Virginia, Kentucky, Colorado, California and Stuttgart, Germany. McCord is a founding member of the Charlottesville Playwrights Collective and hosts a monthly radio program on WPVC-FM. At the 2018 SETC Convention in Mobile, AL, McCord’s play was given a staged reading with response by Craig Pospisil from Dramatists Play Service, followed by a Q&A with the audience. The following interview is a compilation of a pre-SETC interview featured on the SETC website and a follow-up with McCord several months later.

**DARREN MICHAEL:** What is the inspiration for writing your play *Moving*?

**SEAN MICHAEL McCORD:** *Moving* takes place in a single apartment in the Silver Lake neighborhood of L.A. over 30 years. Not coincidentally, that was my apartment in the 1980s when I was a young and hungry and unproduced screenwriter. I loved that place, my first bachelor pad in my 20s. The building had been around since the 1930s, and it intrigued me to realize that other people had lived there before me, and others would after me, and they all had their own stories that took place in that same space. The building itself, too, had its own interesting biography, and I tell some of that story in the script.

In 2012, I wrote a short play which took place in that apartment, recounting how, after a breakup, I had met a girl as I was moving out of that apartment and she was moving in. When it came time to write my first full-length play as part of my graduate playwriting program at the Hollins Playwright’s Lab, I turned back to that original story and imagined what might have happened to those characters over several decades if they had stayed in the same place. Their story was not my story; I left L.A. and moved to New York, and then eventually to Virginia. By breaking free of my own biography, I was able to create wholly new characters with whom I shared some DNA, but who
involve the audience. A screenplay can go all over the place but watching a movie is such a passive experience. With a novel, it’s in your head but [on the stage] to see time laid out before you and have characters that are slightly out of time, it’s a living memory. I love being about to depict that on stage. That will get people’s attention.

MICHAEL: What’s your favorite part of playwriting? Your least favorite part?
McCORD: As is true of most writers I know, I have a genuine love/hate relationship with the actual writing. When it’s going well, there’s almost nothing better than watching a great scene develop before your eyes, sometimes almost faster than you can write it. But when it’s not going well, it can be physically painful to continue writing, knowing that everything you’re putting down is dreck that will have to be surgically removed.”

MICHAEL: Other than the passing of time, are there particular themes or ideas that pique your interest more than others? Do you have certain tendencies toward what you write? Certain stories that are more attractive to you?
McCORD: That is the beauty of being in a great program like the Playwright’s Lab at Hollins University: We are encouraged to try new and different things each time we write. As we speak, I am in my fourth summer here in Roanoke, and in these past four years, I have been given the opportunity to write in many different styles. I tend to write comedies, or at least play scripts with some strong comedic elements, but I am also quite proud of a drama that I wrote last year called An Obsession with Death. A few of my fellow theatre folks who’ve seen that script were surprised that I could write something so dark.

I have been told, and I believe it to be true, that I have a gift for writing dialogue. I am interested in the relationships between people, the things they say and also those they don’t say, and how those get revealed through conversation. My stories tend not to be plot-heavy, which means I have to be careful about my tendency to fall into scenes where characters just talk and very little action happens. When I get into a groove, I can just do page after page of witty repartee, but I am self-aware enough to know that a lot of that may have to be thrown out later, or at least recycled.

MICHAEL: Could you talk about your
writing process a bit with Moving?

McCORD: I am still working out my process. I have a family and a full-time job in my hometown of Charlottesville, working in the library at the University of Virginia, so carving out time to write can be a challenge. Here at Hollins, we have a class called First Drafts, in which a writer is given specific prompts and roughly 72 hours to write a full script, and we do that every week for six weeks. It sounds like a crazy way to write, but there’s something to pounding out that initial draft under pressure that works. Both Mystery at Midnight and An Obsession with Death were written in First Drafts last year, and they’re both two of the best pieces I’ve written so far, so I may try that again on my own, locking myself away for a long weekend and just write like hell.

MICHAEL: Do you have any major influences on your writing? Any particular writers?

McCORD: I’ve been writing in theatre only for about seven or eight years, so I’m still figuring out my influences. People have told me that Moving is my Neil Simon script, and I cannot argue with that. Not many people in MFA graduate school might list Neil Simon as an influence, but I am happy to. In my first year at Hollins, I did a presentation on Death of a Salesman, and now Arthur Miller is one of my favorite writers and people. In the broader culture, I greatly admire Aaron Sorkin. I also want to give a shout-out to my fellow playwrights here at Hollins, especially “the other Sean,” my pal Sean Abley. From day one here, he has been one of those writers that I most admire, and I am humbled to follow the trail of success that he has blazed. I could list many more of my Hollins cohorts, but I might get in trouble for inadvertently skipping one, so I’ll just stick with Sean Abley. His is a name that you should all know.

MICHAEL: How was your experience at the Getchell?

McCORD: Let me start by saying how wonderful it is that SETC supports playwrights and new works. I encourage all SETC-eligible playwrights to submit their work to the Getchell New Play Contest. I was treated very well by everyone at SETC. They flew me down, put me up in the hotel and gave me a pass to the entire convention. There were way too many great workshops for me to attend them all, but I did endeavor to go to every writer-centric event, and I saw some great shows. For the reading, I was assigned an experienced director and he selected great actors, some of whom had read my submission and recommended it as a finalist, so they really cared about the text and making it work. The discussion with Craig Pospisil and his critical analysis of the play after the reading was very helpful, especially in that room of fellow playwrights and theatre professionals. That discussion helped identify some elements of the script that I may need to rethink.

MICHAEL: Like what? Anything that you want to reexamine?

McCORD: There are questions that came out during the reading that didn’t happen in later productions. Things about Paul and the apartment that I never intended to have audiences hung up on. One is that it’s Paul’s story. It isn’t. It’s Laura’s story, but at a certain point the audience needs to make that shift. That was a choice on my part, a choice that was meant to be a delightful surprise, not to confuse people. And I think it works better in a production, but in a reading I can see how that confuses people. Even my director in the production identified that early on.

Another issue is that a lot of people think the apartment itself is some sort of metaphor because the apartment has a biography and plays such an important part in the story. It really is just a place. But I told so much about the place and gave it life, people were expecting something. That wasn’t my intention. That is something I now have to think about – how to handle that. I have to somehow address that in the text.

MICHAEL: How are things going with Moving? Has it changed any since the reading?

McCORD: Moving had an unusual path to SETC. The first public reading of the play was at Hollins in 2016 in the Hollins Festival of New Works. It was that reading...
that really helped me with the rewrites that led to the production so I want to give a shout-out to Hollins and to the director, Maura Campbell. At the time that I submitted it for consideration, in the spring of 2017, the script was unproduced. However, that summer I got together with a bunch of my fellow playwrights in Charlottesville and we launched our own theatre for new works, the Charlottesville Playwrights Collective (CPC), and our first production in September of 2017 was *Moving*. Our model at the CPC is that, once their script is selected, the playwright is also the producer of their own show, so I got to build a production of *Moving* from the ground up: selecting a director, auditioning, building the set, etc., all with the help of my fellow playwrights. We had a very successful if limited run, filling our 40-seat theatre for five shows over two weekends, and we actually made money! The playwright, the director, the stage manager, and the actors all got paid (not a lot, but we all got to be a part of the success of the show), and the rest of the box office went back into funding the next show. Since September of 2017, we’ve had two CPC productions, and two more planned before the end of this year, all by different playwrights. I mention all this only to point out that, by the time I brought *Moving* to SETC in March of 2018, we’d already had a production of the show. It was very interesting to then present it again as a staged reading to an esteemed theatre crowd, and to get that level of feedback. Up to that point, honestly, I was ready to put *Moving* behind me, but hearing people respond to the reading re-energized me and inspired me to revisit that kind of play again. I have written an outline for a sequel of sorts to *Moving*, following a few of the principal characters into new chapters of their lives. Because of the format of the original, showing people at pivotal moments over 30 years, I realize there are whole new stories to be told with these characters that have come to mean so much to me. My working title is *Moving 2: Electric Boogaloo*, but that may change.

So, to answer all your questions at once, bringing my script to SETC was an amazing experience, I was treated like a rock star, and I hope that more of my fellow playwrights take advantage of the opportunity.

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Darren V. Michael is a professional actor, a playwright and a professor at Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, TN. He is a former chair of SETC’s Charles M. Getchell New Play Award Committee.
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