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Richard B. Watson appears as Long John Silver in the March 2013 world premiere of *Treasure Island, A New Musical* at Arkansas Repertory Theatre, the state’s largest nonprofit professional theatre. The show was directed and choreographed by Brett Smock, with book by Brett Smock and Carla Vitale, music and lyrics by Corinne Aquilina, and costume design by Rafael Colon Castanera. (Photography and photo illustration by Justin Bolle, ThinkDero Photography; cover design by Deanna Thompson)
When I was in the initial stages of my training as a theatre artist – back when dinosaurs roamed the Earth and actors sometimes had to pull their own costumes – a common title was “theatre generalist.” The idea was similar to a general practitioner in medicine: someone who had been thoroughly grounded in all aspects of the art form, and who would then create brilliance in multiple realms of the craft. A sweet idea, right? Have you seen your GP lately? Or, do you go to an internist or a cardiologist?

In our craft, too, though we love to use the phrase “total theatre artist,” we seem increasingly to be training and valuing “specialists.” There are good reasons: A BFA increasingly to be training and valuing the phrase “total theatre artist.” What we need is a more competitive, more highly polished, more focused theatre artist. Ta-da!

But what of the total theatre artist? Our collaborative and human art is rewarding because it encompasses so much. Our job is to incorporate music, visual art, movement, philosophy, psychology, anthropology, sociology, spirituality, athleticism, literature, physics, geometry, biology and mythology into vibrant, cohesive and original expressions of a collective psyche. Our goal in every artistic endeavor must be to connect with others. On a practical level, if my actor cannot even understand the specific goals and challenges of the running crew who are working with him, then what hope does that actor have of inhabiting the specific thoughts and aspirations of a character or an audience? Our job in the theatre is to remind each other what it is to be human. Therefore, we must create and train not just polished show ponies, but fuller human beings who can understand and express both the interior and exterior worlds.

The greatest strengths of a true theatre artist are strong collaboration and empathy, and the ability to create them in others. We need every tool, every skill, every inspiration and scrap of knowledge to accomplish this. We need not a narrow focus, but an encompassing vision. We need the total theatre artist.

Have an opinion you would like to share on a topic related to theatre? Send your column of 400 words or less to deanna@setc.org.
Theatre is a collaborative art form. In this edition of Southern Theatre, we celebrate where it all begins, with the playwright and his or her printed words on the page. Were it not for the playwright, the rest of us in theatre would be waiting in the wings for a cue that never comes. But even as we recognize the importance of the playwright, many of us are violating his or her trust – as well as copyright law – by making changes to scripts. Gary Garrison of the Dramatists Guild of America explains what you can and can’t change when you produce a play – and several playwrights add their voices to the chorus.

If you’re a regular reader, you probably have noticed something missing from this issue. For the first time since 1995, your fall Southern Theatre doesn’t include the winning play in SETC’s annual Charles M. Getchell Award competition. After the unexpected death of contest chair Chris Hardin, the 2013 contest was cancelled. We honor the memory of Chris, taken entirely too soon from our presence, with a look back at the plays and playwrights that have won this award since we began publishing the winners in this magazine. Jimmy Bickerstaff provides the updates. Also in this issue, we spotlight young playwrights – and explore some innovative partnerships between professional theatres and educators that clearly demonstrate the important role of theatre in 21st century learning. Shelly Elman describes how these programs help students develop critical thinking and writing skills while also exposing a new generation to the magic of theatre. She also outlines a program aimed at the youngest of audiences: baby theatre.

Our regular book column, “Words, Words, Words” features a review by Michael Howley of a book by Timothy Mooney, known across the country for Moliere than Thou and other one-man shows. In Acting at the Speed of Life, Mooney shares techniques, advice and exercises that will benefit actors at all levels.

Whether you work in design-tech or another area, you’ll want to read our regular “Outside the Box” column if you have an interest in recycling. Ashleigh Poteat shares an easy way to make your own recycled paper from leftover fabric and paper from the costume shop.

Finally, in our “400 Words” column, Gay Hammond calls for a move away from specialist training and toward a resurgence of the “total theatre artist.” There is nothing more exhilarating than the collaboration between theatre artists at any level. I hope that you enjoy all that you find in the following pages as we celebrate theatre and those who create.
A costume shop – whether in an academic, a professional or a community theatre setting – can produce a surprising amount of waste materials. Recycling can alleviate much of the plastic waste, but fabric scraps and paper are a little trickier. Paper can, of course, be recycled, but the bleaching processes used to turn recycled paper into recycled paper are damaging to the environment. Fabric, whether it is made from synthetic or natural fibers, is not readily recyclable.

In order to eliminate the waste generated by fabric and paper – both of which make up the majority of waste in my costume shop – I investigated ways to create my own recycled paper. I am fortunate to have a patient and generous art department staff next door, and I was able to beg lessons on papermaking from Marcia Brown, a colleague who specializes in printmaking. The real way to make paper out of fabric scraps involves a process called retting, which breaks down cellulose fibers (like natural-fiber fabrics and paper). This process, which creates a very fine pulp, is not readily available to those of us who don’t work in a large-scale textile facility. So the real way, as we find so often in theatre, was out of my reach. Instead, we developed the next best way to make functional recycled paper.

At left is a list of the materials you will need. Below is an outline of the process you will follow to make your recycled paper.

### Materials Needed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MATERIAL</th>
<th>COST/UNIT</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scrap paper</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scrap fabric</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blender or food processor*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papermaking kit **</td>
<td>$150</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponges (included in most kits - ideally, rectangular)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couch sheets (included in most kits)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large container at least 8&quot; deep, large enough to hold mold and deckle (I use a plastic storage bin that, once empty, holds all my supplies)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or more pieces of 3/4” plywood (from shop)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage weights or other heavy items (from shop)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL START-UP COST: $150 (using kit)**

* I use the same one we keep on hand for props and maskmaking. This does not have to be a top-of-the-line piece of equipment and should be one you don’t mind getting dirty.

** I purchased my kit (Arnold Grummer’s Papermill Pro, $150) from Dick Blick, but most craft and art supply stores carry similar kits, or you can make your own. The kit consists of the mold and deckle. This is the rectangular frame and screen that shapes your piece of paper. Depending on the size of your frame, you can make various-sized sheets of paper. The kit I purchased has an 8 ½” x 11” frame, ideal for making usable recycled paper. The couch sheets, which are included in most kits, are another key element. If you plan to build your own frames and assemble the kit on your own, you will need to purchase the couch sheets separately ($12 for 20 sheets from Blick). The kit also comes with a myriad of plastic screens, which are helpful but not integral to the process. If you are assembling your own kit, these are $12 per screen from Blick.
2. You will use far more paper scraps than fabric scraps when you make these sheets. Too much fabric results in heavier sheets of paper that, while attractive in appearance, don’t have as much function as sheets made from a majority of scrap paper. The fabric scraps should be dime-sized, as shown below. Make them larger if you want them to be more visible, smaller if you want a finished product with less texture.

3. After you have prepared your paper and fabric scraps, mix them together in a blender (or, preferably, in a food processor) and add 1 cup of water. Blend these together until they form a pulp.

In preparation for the next step, add enough water to your large container that the paper frame can be almost entirely submerged in the water.

4. Place your frame in the water so that the bottom screen is submerged. Then add your pulp, mixing it with your fingers so that it floats evenly across the surface. Once you have that, lift the screen — as evenly and level as possible — out of the water. Ideally, the pulp should completely cover the surface screen. You do not want this mixture to be too thick or too thin. If it is either, re-submerge the frame and add or subtract pulp as needed.

5. Place your new and very wet sheet of paper onto a couch sheet. (If you purchased a kit, there are added steps of placing this on a screen to absorb water. You can skip this or not, depending on preference.) Using a sponge, press down on the sheets several times to absorb extra water. (I add this water back into the container for the next pieces of paper.) Once the sheet is flatter — still soaking wet — add a top couch sheet and carefully flip these over so that you can replace the initial couch sheet.

6. Place onto a hard, flat and dry surface. Add your sheet of ¾” plywood and the stage weight. Allow your sheet to remain like this for 2 to 3 days before checking it. If you are located in the Southeast, where humidity never dies, it likely will still be wet. Switch out your couch sheets and allow to sit for another 2 to 3 days. Your final sheet should be flat and dry.

A final note
Your recycled paper can be run through a printer or written on with ink pens – pencils are a bit trickier. This paper also works well for drawing and, if made with less texture and more even in color, can be interesting, without being distracting, for renderings and sketches. I would recommend Gouache – or even acrylic – over watercolor with this paper because too much water will weaken it. In addition, the opacity of Gouache will make any underlying textures a little less distracting. Ink also works quite well, as do markers. Lastly, don’t forget to recycle your new recycled paper! You can break this down and keep the scraps in the consumer cycle for nearly infinite use.

Ashleigh Poteat is an assistant professor and the resident costume designer at LaGrange College in LaGrange, GA.
There are some secrets you hope you will carry to your grave – or at least take to your final resting place without too much exposure. I have one of those secrets. Admittedly, I was careless about it for years, letting my secret slip out if I was desperate to amuse someone connected to the theatre. But when I became the executive director of creative affairs for the Dramatists Guild of America (our country’s national organization of playwrights, lyricists, librettists and composers), I knew I’d better get wise and bury that secret so deep you’d need heavy-duty dynamite and a determined bulldozer to blast or dig it out. Now, for your education (and a little enjoyment), I’ve decided to free myself of my secret once and for all.
It’s hard to imagine, then or now, that no one blinked an eye when I proposed to my undergraduate theatre faculty that they allow me to direct a music-less version of Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice’s *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

What?!

Yep. Somehow I’d convinced myself, my actor friends and ultimately the faculty, that the music, the score, got in the way of the storytelling; that if we took the music away, we’d be left with gorgeous dramatic poetry that told a clearer story and demanded more meaningful, theatrical staging. Instead of being caught up in the haunting, poignant melody of “I Don’t Know How to Love Him,” we’d be treated (?) to an actress, standing center stage, acting the hell out of the lyrics:

I … don’t know how to … LOVE him.
What to DO (big gesture)
HOW (bigger gesture) to MOVE him.

Can you imagine? I did … and on a grand scale. And so it happened on a stage in southeast Texas that I directed and produced (if we’re all lucky) the world’s only music-less version of *Jesus Christ Superstar* – a kind of choral reading, if you will. Forgive me, Msrs. Webber and Rice. All lightness aside, I sincerely didn’t know I was violating copyright law. I didn’t know I was infringing on another artist’s well-conceived art. I didn’t know I was violating whole sections of a licensing agreement. Maybe more importantly, no one around me did either.

And that’s why I’m finally sharing my secret. Infringement of this kind happens day in and day out in our high schools, colleges, universities and community theatres for any number of reasons: The music in a song is seemingly too complicated for the talent level of the cast. There’s not a large enough group of men or women to stage a particular song. The soprano doesn’t have the high notes for the last 18 bars. A scene is too risqué. Profanity abounds. Sexual situations are intimated. The performance hall is rented from 7 to 10 p.m., and the show has to clock in under two hours so whole scenes or songs are cut.

And it’s not just musicals that get the hatchet job. Whole sections of text are systematically cut from Mamet, Kushner, Nottage, Auburn, Parks, Silver and Neil Simon to escape the scrutiny of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) or the conservative eye of certain members in the community. Gender in characterization becomes fluid; race is often ignored; lines of dialogue are deleted that don’t suit the cultural or educational climate because of hot button topics like abortion, gay rights, sexual promiscuity, drug addiction or religion.

**A Problem on Multiple Levels**

There are a lot of theories that circulate as to why the slash-and-trash syndrome has become so commonplace and prevalent in high schools and colleges: Shakespeare (the greatest dramatist of all time) appears to be free fodder for the would-be dramatic editor. Acting competitions require a rigid time-frame for scene work and monologues. Students see earnest, adult teachers slash-and-trash for any of the reasons described above, and when they in turn become teachers, they propagate the trend. Fear is rampant of political repercussions from school boards, community leaders and university boards of trustees.

Regardless of the reason it happens, the slashing-and-trashing of text not only violates copyright law but it also chips away at why a lot of writers are drawn to the theatre in the first place. Playwright Doug Wright, who won the Pulitzer Prize for *I Am My Own Wife* and was book writer for *Grey Gardens*, *The Little Mermaid* and *Hands On a Hard Body*, explains: “Write for television and film, and the production company or studio that commissions the work owns..."
the copyright. They pay you a fortune, because they know they’ll have ownership of every idea you commit to paper. Writers like me return to the theatre to pen plays for one primary reason: Despite low commission fees, increasingly few production opportunities and the theatres’ ever-dwinding status as a cultural force, we know that we will always own what we write. No director, actor or producer may alter our text without written permission from the author; true professionals know this, and respect it. To fabricate lines for a Tennessee Williams play is the aesthetic equivalent of painting over a Van Gogh sunset because you’ve a different shade of pink in mind. To use Beckett as a springboard for improvisation is like pounding randomly on the piano and calling it a Beethoven sonata. Plays are not suits that can be cut to fit. They are absolute works of art, subject (of course) to the interpretive skills of those who realize them, but the words therein should be shown the same respect you’d show a Kandinsky brush stroke or a string of notes by Gershwin. When you work on my play, you’re a guest in my figurative house, and I kindly ask that you don’t rearrange the furniture.”

- Doug Wright, Playwright

And for the record, the problem isn’t contained to educational institutions. Sadly, community theatres across the country are mounting productions of Angels in America: The Millennium Approaches and cutting the sex-in-the-park scene. Ballets are added or subtracted from musicals because there’s everyone or no one to dance them. An entire scene is lopped off the end of an act so patrons won’t be late leaving the theatre and driving through bad parts of town after-hours.

Educate Others on Copyright Law

What can we do? We’ve got to educate everyone – leaving no drama teacher, director, artistic director, producer, administrator or community leader unturned. We have to make sure that all well-intentioned artists (actors included) know that it is NOT okay to edit, rewrite, re-configure, delete, change gender, change race or ethnicity, change order of songs or change locations of whole events to accommodate scene shifts without the dramatist’s permission because it violates a dramatist’s copyright – and that this prohibition is enforced by the licensing agreements with all the major publishing houses.

Craig Pospisil, director of non-professional licensing for Dramatists Play Service, observes, “A
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lot of people don’t read what’s in the front of every script – they just skip past it to get to the text. But we spell it [authorial rights] out pretty clearly, I think: ‘The play(s) must be presented only as published in the Dramatists Play Service, Inc. authorized acting edition, without any changes, additions, alterations or deletions to the text and title. These restrictions shall include, without limitation, not altering, updating or amending the time, locales or settings of the play(s) in any way. The gender of the characters may not be changed or altered in any way, e.g., by costume or physical change. The play(s) must be performed with women playing the roles intended for women and men playing the roles intended for men, unless the author has specified flexible casting possibilities.’”

The licensing agreement from Samuel French also couldn’t be more clear: “No one shall make any changes in this play for the purpose of production.” Violating the text, story, music or composition in any way is actionable – meaning, your production can be shut down cold before it ever opens. And in this day and age of the Internet, it’s easy to discover infringements through reviews, pre-production publicity, season announcements, website interviews with directors and the like.

“It’s so much worse (for the producer) when we find out that changes were made with no consent,” says Pospisil. “At the very least, you’ll be asked to restore the original text. And at the worst, we’ll take action to shut the production down.”

Straight Answers on Common Questions

Because there is so much misinformation out there, and because a lot of “he did this, and we saw them do that, and we thought this, and they thought that” circles this topic anytime it’s broached, let me set the record straight about some things you can and cannot do when producing a play or musical:

1. **You cannot change the title of the play.**
   If you can’t put *The Vagina Monologues* – as a title – up on your marquee outside for everyone to see, then either don’t post it on the marquee or reconsider doing the play. Believe it or not, there have been more infringements on this title than we care to count.

Ragtime is a show that gets done fairly often around the country. My collaborators, Terrence McNally and Stephen Flaherty, and I always enjoy hearing about new and interesting productions – like the gender- and race-bending *Ragtime*, with a female Booker T. Washington and an African-American grandfather; the *Ragtime* with six actors and hand puppets; and the *Ragtime* with a cast of over 100 community members. These wildly different and well-received productions were all done without changing, cutting or adding one word or note, and we were consulted in advance about the concepts.

We’re proud that theatres and schools are willing to take on the challenge of a musical with some serious social themes, willing to say on a stage what we felt was so important to write. Admittedly, certain characters say certain words which some might find objectionable – racial epithets commonly heard at the turn of the century, but quite unacceptable now. We understood that such language might offend some, and might keep the show from being done everywhere. Nevertheless, we felt that such language gave the show a sense of historical authenticity as well as a power we didn’t want to soft-pedal.

Since *Ragtime* was first produced on Broadway in 1998, there have been quite a few instances when productions have tried to cut or change these specific words. Sometimes we’ve been asked for permission (which we’ve politely withheld), and sometimes changes have been made without our permission. In one case, a high school teacher went head-to-head with school officials, refusing to violate our copyright by changing the language. The students demonstrated, the production went on, and it was a triumph. The point is, we authors make choices about every word, every note, every square inch of our shows. We think carefully about what we write, and we care deeply. Of course we welcome fresh production ideas. But please don’t change our copyrighted material. Not only is it a violation of the author’s rights, but the show will simply not be as good.
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What are the Rules on Using a Scene for an Audition?

It is widely understood that material that’s shaped for an audition (say, with monologues or scene work) generally must fit within a restricted time frame and is not meant for public performance. And while there are no specified restrictions (editing, cutting, substituting words/phrases) when using material to audition, as opposed to a full production, recognize how easy it is to alter the playwright’s intent by simply omitting words, phrases, whole sentences or sections of the text.

- Gary Garrison
You cannot alter a single word in the dialogue of a play without permission of the dramatist (through the licensing house/publisher, his/her agent or directly from the writer).

I know it’s sometimes hard to understand why a writer constructs a character that drops the “F” bomb eight times in a single sentence. I can only tell you from my personal experience that the writer is making a conscious effort to fully flesh out a character that he sees in his dramatic imagination, and for any number of reasons legitimate to his story, constructs a character that uses a lot of hard profanity. So, no, you can’t substitute ‘friggin.’ When you make a change like this (aside from infringing on the writer’s copyright), you’re altering the cadence of the language and/or a carefully thought-out construction of a character.

Does that mean you have to agree with all the choices a writer makes? Of course not. But if you produce her play, you have to produce ALL of her play or musical – not just the parts you respond well to, your audience will respond well to, your actors have time to memorize, or the musical director and chorus have time to rehearse.

When you produce a play or musical, you’re borrowing someone else’s artwork (the play or musical) to put up on your wall (a stage). Either you hang the painting – as it’s painted – or you don’t. By hanging the painting on your wall, you’re demonstrating to all who see it: “This is something that intrigues me; something I want to ponder. This is something I want you to ponder as well. You might not like it or even understand parts of it. But we thought you should see it because there’s something of real value here.”

You cannot alter the gender of a character, no matter how large or small, no matter how dramatically or thematically interesting or out of necessity it might be.

Unless you have a substantive discussion with the dramatist, you may never fully understand why she chose to construct a young woman that delivers pizza to the front door as opposed to a young

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man. BUT that’s what the writer wrote, and when you agreed to license that play, you agreed to license the play intact, not the parts that suit your casting pool.

**Stage Directions: Copyrighted or Not?**

Ahhh, some see this as a real sticky-wicket, no? In truth, there’s nothing sticky about it. If in the description of the interior of the house, a red sofa is specified, then … yes, there has to be a red sofa. Hopefully the writer has made that choice apparent and integrated into the story in some obvious way. But even if the color of the sofa isn’t textual (meaning there’s no obvious reference to it in the script), that doesn’t mean it’s not thematic in some way. And with all specifics in stage directions, if you don’t think you can accomplish what’s specified, need clarity or an explanation, ask: Ask the dramatist, the licensing house or the writer’s agent. We need to educate everyone that in this day and age of the Internet, most living dramatists can be found and engaged in a discussion about their plays or musicals, and that permissions can be granted to accommodate unusual requests.

The discussion of stage directions can often bog down into questions of: “It says she moves stage right and sits. Do I have to do that?” Ask yourself this: What action is relevant to the story (“He slams the door hard. The mirror falls and shatters to pieces”), and what is blocking that doesn’t appear relevant to the storytelling. Use that to make an informed decision, because we do know that what appears in print was often, once upon a time, the stage manager’s transcription of some of the blocking that appeared on a professional stage. (The idea was that it made it easier for amateur groups to produce the play. Generations of theatre people got used to the idea that virtually all the stage directions were not the author’s and could and even should be crossed out.)

“Many people tell me of acting teachers or directors who would tell their actors ‘Just cross out all the stage directions,’” Pospisil notes. “But for the last 30 to 40 years, the standard practice with the play publishers and licensors is to get the script from the author. It’s the author’s version and the author’s vision of the play. And most playwrights won’t write, ‘Jane crosses downstage right.”

I don’t think any writer would argue that blocking notes have to be incorporated; action relevant to the story line, on the other hand, is a completely other matter. If you look at the Dramatists Play Service website, it makes it even more clear: “You’ll note that nothing is said about the actual staging of the play. A certain amount of flexibility is obviously necessary because theatres and set designs vary from production to production. It may not be possible, for instance, for a character to enter stage left, even if that’s indicated by a stage direction, if the physical limitations of space or design prevent it. For the most part it’s safe to assume, for example, that a stage direction like ‘Jane crosses downstage left to the flowers’ is not something you need to slavishly adhere to. Unless it’s followed by ‘Jane picks up the flowers and throws them at Paul.’ Any stage directions that are germane to the plot of the play or illustrate something about a character should certainly be followed.”

What do you do, then, when you’re passionate about producing a play or musical but know that your community won’t embrace, say, a character that incessantly drops the “F” bomb, or you can’t find enough men to audition for the one male, minor role in the play?

“Ask,” says Pospisil. “Just ask. If you want or need to make a change to a script, for whatever reason, contact us and ask. The answer might be no, but it could be yes as well.’

-Craig Pospisil, Dramatists Play Service

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Gary Garrison is the executive director for creative affairs for the Dramatists Guild of America, a playwright, an author and a frequent presenter and attendee at SETC conventions.
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The social media craze is causing theatre companies everywhere to evaluate how they interest young people in live theatre. However, three Southeastern professional theatre companies have found ways to develop young people’s interest in the theatre without resorting to constant tweeting or status updates. They are doing it the old-fashioned way – by tapping into the young people’s imaginations – and in the process they are creating vital links between theatre and educators for 21st century learning.
These innovative ways of introducing theatre to the young include Florida Studio Theatre’s Write a Play program, which brings students to the theatre and then provides curriculum-based materials for teachers to use in the classroom in helping the students write plays, and Actors Theatre of Louisville’s New Voices playwriting program, which brings theatre artists into classrooms to help students develop plays. In both cases, a number of plays are selected for production. Equally inventive is the Alliance Theatre Company’s Dramaturgy by Students program, which engages students in researching a play and then developing study guides, program notes, posters and other materials to educate cast and audiences about the production. Even the youngest of the young are getting increased opportunities to learn through theatre. See sidebar, Page 24, about a Charlotte-based program, PlayPlay! Theatre, that is tapping imaginations of babies and toddlers via Theatre for the Very Young.

**Florida Studio Theatre: Write a Play Encourages K-12 Students’ Creativity, Critical Thinking**

Florida Studio Theatre, founded in 1973 in Sarasota, FL, is dedicated to producing new, contemporary work. So it’s fitting that one of FST’s major programs, Write a Play, was developed to encourage young playwrights and inspire an interest in theatre among young audiences. The program dates to 1991 when it occurred to the artistic staff that there might be talented writers who didn’t identify themselves as playwrights. Their first step was to create Florida Shorts, a playwriting festival for adults. After that came Write a Play, which is focused on getting students in kindergarten through 12th grade involved in playwriting. Since its founding, Write a Play has grown exponentially and now is part of the curriculum at numerous schools. Today it is a three-step subscription series.

The first phase brings approximately 13,000 students to FST to view and participate in a professional production of a children’s play (in 2012-2013, The Frog Prince). This experience gives the students an example of a play and how a production can affect the audience.

The second part of the subscription series is the Playmakers’ Tour. A team of four FST apprentice actors tours the schools and performs snippets from plays that have been written by students in previous years. When this is over, the four actors take suggestions from the student audiences for the four major elements of the play: setting, character, the Big Want (conflict) and ideas for dialogue. The actors then improvise a play from the four suggestions. This exercise helps students understand that their plays must consist of the four elements – and that these four elements must include action.

The third and last phase of the subscription series involves students working in classes with their teachers to write plays and eventually submit them to FST. Over 3,000 plays were submitted in 2012-13. The plays are split into two divisions: the Under Six division, which is kindergarten through sixth grade; and the Seven Up division, which is seventh through 12th grades.

The guidelines for the plays are broad and don’t necessarily dictate to the students how or what they should write. Beth Duda, FST’s director of education, says that the readers are “looking for unique voices and plays that only a child would write. The plays can be about anything they want to write about. No prompts are given.”

Each play is read by at least two FST staff members. The readers want to hear what children think, how the world appears to them, what their flights of fancy might be. “The work that we receive encompasses all genres and styles from absurdist to romantic comedy,” Duda says. “It’s always interesting to see what the children invent and come up with.”

The payoff for young writers? If their plays are chosen as winners, they are presented with other winners’ plays in a production by FST’s acting apprentice company. More than 12,000 students are bused to FST to view Under Six, featuring the students’ work.

One of the winners in this year’s contest was McNeal Elementary 4th grader Clay Barone. His play, Pressed, is about an elderly man who presses two flowers, attaches them to a card and sends them to the nurse who took care of him when he was a soldier at war. Ten-year-old Clay wrote about war “because war is a violent act and it is a huge deal for someone to know another person who was side by side when you are in that act.” Clay says writing plays helps him in his other classes: “I like making my ideas come to life. [Playwriting] inspires me to be creative and try new things.”

There’s a huge payoff for all of the students – not just the winners – from participating in an arts-based classroom project like this, according to Sandy Waite, who teaches 3rd grade at Phillippi Shores International Baccalaureate World School.

**One of the attractions for teachers is that Write a Play is a very easy program to incorporate into the state school curriculum because it addresses an important learning outcome for all students in the area of literacy – helping students express thoughts and feelings through the written word.**
“I believe that students all learn in different ways, and I have found that integrating the arts into routine classroom learning is a key to helping every student achieve success,” Waite says. “When we open up the doors to creativity and artistic expression, students will blossom and grow. Increased comprehension, deeper thinking and stronger acceptance and appreciation of others and their unique gifts and talents are fostered.”

One of the attractions for teachers is that Write a Play is a very easy program to incorporate into the state school curriculum because it addresses an important learning outcome for all students in the area of literacy – helping students express thoughts and feelings through the written word.

Teachers often make Write a Play an integral part of their curriculums. One reason the program has grown over the years is because, as teachers change schools, they want to bring the program with them. Freda Williams, who used Write a Play in her previous school before moving to Phillippi Shores IB School in Sarasota County, was eager to implement the program at her new school, even though the school couldn’t financially support the cost – which is $12 per student. Working with Duda, she was able to secure a $5,000 grant through the Community Foundation – enough to pay for Write a Play and some improv workshops for the 120 students in 4th grade at the school.

“I made it my mission to introduce this program to my fellow teachers because the program is literally a part of my lesson planning strategies for writing and language arts,” Williams says.

ACTORS THEATRE OF LOUISVILLE:
New Voices Provides Artists-in-Residence to Schools, Helps Develop Student Plays

Middle and high school students are the focus of New Voices, a program developed at Actors Theatre of Louisville (KY) to inspire a new generation of playwrights and theatre-goers. ATL modeled New Voices on its acclaimed Humana Festival of New Plays.

“There is a tremendous amount of energy at ATL for new play development,” says Steven Rahe, ATL’s education director. “This seemed like a natural progression and a way to turn students on to the idea of writing for the theatre.”

Key components of New Voices are an artist-in-residence program, which provides an artist from ATL to interested schools, and a playwriting competition.

“The artists-in-residence teach the students how to write a 10-minute play and those students later submit their plays to our New Voices Young Playwrights Festival,” says Rahe.

Cost of a New Voices residency is $1,000. Rahe notes that ATL works closely “with our United Arts Fund, as well as foundations and corporations that help cover some of the cost” for schools.

Stacy McKinley, an English teacher at The Academy at Shawnee, part of the Jefferson County Public Schools in Kentucky, has involved her students in New Voices for three years. She says the program makes her students enthusiastic about writing.

“My collaboration with New Voices has been one of the most meaningful writing assignments in English II,” she says. “I keep pushing it closer to the beginning of the year because it’s the first assignment that students actually want to edit and perfect. At the beginning of New Voices, students are asked if they identify as writers. Usually I’ll have two or three kids that do. ... By the end of the nine-day residency, half the class or more will tell us, ‘I AM a writer.’”

At the end of the residency, students submit their scripts to the New Voices Playwriting Festival. The festival, which also accepts outside submissions, had 512 entries last year. All submissions are read by someone on the ATL staff, who also gives feedback. The staff selects eight plays to be produced and published in an anthology. Two to three other plays are given honorable mention designations. They are not produced but are published in the same anthology.

Whether their plays are selected or not, students benefit from the residency and from the experience of writing a play, McKinley says.
“I feel like this residency helps my students develop a more abstract writing process because they think a lot about character motivation ...,” she says. “Their drafts usually go from pretty wordy to less dialogue and more action. ... They also have a better understanding of how a plot chart works once the project is over ... how climax and resolution solve conflict.”

She also sees a major impact on student motivation and performance in reading and writing areas.

“I had an ESL student tutor with me for one hour a day every afternoon during New Voices, all because he wanted to write an amazing play about immigration,” McKinley says. “Not only did he write a great script, he became a better reader and writer. His test scores went up by a huge leap after just two weeks of intensive tutoring. I don’t think he would have come to tutoring if he didn’t want to write that play. So, in a sense, New Voices changes that child’s life for the better.”

The festival winners receive opportunities for intense mentoring. They are invited for a series of workshops where the winning plays are read and discussed, and feedback is offered from the full group. All playwrights are assigned a dramaturg, who works with them in deciding what, if anything, will change in the script. Playwrights attend rehearsals and have a strong voice in how their plays are produced.

Their plays are performed by ATL’s Apprentice-Intern Company with full sets. In addition to evening performances open to the public, an afternoon matinee is presented for students and teachers from the schools of each of the playwrights so that their peers can see the finished product of their work.

Playwrights also attend a pre-performance Funders Reception, which ATL throws to thank the sponsors. Playwrights mingle with the “major players” in Louisville, thanking them for their sponsorship and talking about their experiences with New Voices. Lastly, there is an after-production “wrap-up,” in which playwrights, dramaturges and directors meet for dinner and discuss their experiences and ideas for future New Voices festivals.

ALLIANCE THEATRE: Dramaturgy by Students Introduces Grades 2-12 to Research, Writing for Theatre

Rather than focusing on playwriting, the Alliance Theatre in Atlanta, GA, uses dramaturgy to teach new skills to students in grades 2-12 while also inspiring a greater appreciation for theatre. The Dramaturgy

At the beginning of New Voices, students are asked if they identify as writers. Usually I’ll have two or three kids that do. ... By the end of the nine-day residency, half the class or more will tell us, ‘I AM a writer.’”

- Stacy McKinley, English teacher
by Students program, the website notes, “is a ‘real-world’ project in which an Alliance Theatre teaching artist partners with a classroom teacher and students to serve as dramaturges for an actual Alliance stage production.”

The program began in the early 1990s when Carol Jones, then director of the Alliance Theatre Institute for Educators and Teaching Artists, looked for a way to help students make deeper connections to the artistic work that was happening on the Alliance stages. According to Kim Bowers-Rheay-Baran, who currently helps run this program, Jones wondered, “How can we connect students seeing shows to the artistry that encompasses the work? How can we bring the students’ work to the artistry?”

The first year, the Institute partnered with one 5th grade classroom for gifted students. The students worked on Anansi the Spider and produced a research notebook for the director and actors to use during rehearsals. Over the last five years, Dramaturgy by Students has expanded its reach and is now in classrooms in elementary, middle and high schools. Last year, for the Theatre for Young Audience’s production of Charlotte’s Web, approximately 120 students – from six classrooms at four schools – participated.

The program, currently funded through a grant to the Institute, also has evolved in scope. Now the student work is not only for the actors and director, but also for the audience. Students still produce research books, but last year 5 of the 11 Alliance Theatre productions were served with products ranging from dramaturgy boards for lobby display to audience study guides to program notes that appeared in the Alliance Theatre playbill.

Dramaturgy by Students will expand further in the 2013-2014 season, with students producing the audience guides for every production at the Alliance. Approximately 220-250 students worked on the five productions last year. Because the workload will double next season, the number of students involved will also double.

Students are often pleasantly surprised that theatre work is more than performing and that their work creating research books for the actors and production...
staff, plus putting together display materials about the play or its history for the audience, are key elements in the overall production of a play.

Teachers say that students write more complex and creative sentence structures than before their participation in the program. Nik Philmon, an intervention teacher for the gifted at Clairemont Elementary in Decatur, GA, is one of those who has seen the dramaturgy program open new doors for students.

“My first year at Clairemont, I was bowled over during the student reflection session at the depth a student was able to comfortably discuss its impact,” Philmon says. “She was a student receiving both gifted services and intensive reading/writing intervention due to dyslexia. She told the interviewer that she thought she would always be worse than her peers in using words. By connecting her writing to a passionate appreciation for the theatre and reading the script deeply to find evidence to support her opinions, she was able to see past the text and find the meaning. She felt that acting would still never be an option for her because of the reading, but she could see dramaturgy or playwriting as an option because of the writing connection.”

Another result of the program is that students realize that they are doing something important. “They become intensely invested in the work that they are doing and they begin to understand the importance of theatre and arts in society,” says Bowers-Rheay-Baran. “They are fascinated that dramaturgy work is a ‘real’ job. The discovery that theatre is more than just acting, that one writes and reads and discusses the work, allows the students to understand the greater scale of theatre.”

These three programs are having a major impact in their communities. Not only are they helping children achieve, but they also are creating new links between educators and theatre at a crucial time. Computer technology might be moving at lightning speed, but Facebook and Twitter aren’t the only—or even necessarily the best—ways to lead young folks to the theatre.

‘The discovery that theatre is more than just acting, that one writes and reads and discusses the work, allows the students to understand the greater scale of theatre.’
- Kim Bowers-Rheay-Baran

Rochelle Elman is a professor of theatre at the University of West Georgia and a former chair of the SETC Publications Committee. She is the Immediate past chair for Region 4 of the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival.

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In addition to programs reaching out to elementary, middle and high school students, another theatre movement is gaining force that focuses on babies and toddlers. Theatre for the Very Young is a new trend in theatre in the United States, but it has been around for about 20 years in Europe, where it is called Baby Theatre.

TVY’s audience age demographic is from birth to five years old. One of the theatres involved in the movement is the Charlotte, NC-based PlayPlay! Theatre, which has been serving children from birth to three years old (and their parents) for four years.

Mark Sutton, co-founder and artistic director of PlayPlay!, says the theatre grew out of his frustration with productions marketed to toddlers. “I didn’t feel that the pieces were speaking to the young kids,” he says. “They spoke more to the adults rather than the children.”

Then he picked up an issue of TYA Today magazine, the national publication of Theatre for Young Audiences, and read about Baby Theatre companies in Europe. He was energized. He took the article home and discussed it with his wife, Meredith. “We have to do this!” was her reaction.

Sutton, who has worked as an actor and a director with Children’s Theatre of Charlotte, soon created a partnership with that theatre. Children’s Theatre of Charlotte gives PlayPlay! a space to perform and marketing assistance, and PlayPlay! provides Children’s Theatre with visibility to parents of very young children.

The primary emphasis of PlayPlay! is to allow the babies and toddlers to discover. Events include a pre-show, a performance and an after-show encompassing about an hour. The pre-show begins 15 minutes before the performance in the lobby. One or two actors come out and engage the babies and toddlers in activities using play objects. Then another actor enters the lobby area and wordlessly guides the children and adults into the theatre. This is a common element throughout the event: The stories and playtime occur mostly through nonverbal communication. “You need to focus on one element at a time when producing this genre of theatre,” says Sutton. “The idea of not being verbal, of creating a quiet environment, can be difficult, but the babies are spellbound by watching one element occur at a time,” says Sutton.

Nicia Carla, a regular attendee who worked in children’s theatre for 13 years, was skeptical before she went to her first PlayPlay! performance.

“I went with my son when he was about six months old and he was absolutely mesmerized,” she says. “And we haven’t missed one since then. The difference with this type of theatre [compared to traditional children’s theatre] was that I felt it directly affected the way I interacted with my son, the way I played with him. The performance reminded me to think of how he was discovering the world and how I could play and discover it with him.”

The performance part of the event lasts about 35 minutes and requires audience participation. In Psshh, a play about water, the children are invited onto the stage to play with water. In another production, actors go into the audience with mirrors to show the children their faces. Children aren’t in “seats”; they sit onstage on the floor.

The “after-show” segment also takes place in the theatre. Instead of a curtain call, an actor invites the children and parents to come “play” on the set or with the stage props.

Jen Bourne, a mother and educator whose family participates in Theatre for the Very Young notes that the onstage world reflects the environment of the very young and “invites caregivers to participate in that magical playground.”

That one-on-one interaction, which educators see declining in our computer age, can aid babies and toddlers in socialization.

“Much of the feedback we’ve received from parents centers on the idea of adults who saw play time for their kids as frivolous,” Sutton says. “Finding a way for parents to interact with their children allows them to re-envision playtime with their child and how it affects that child’s way of approaching life.”

- Rochelle Elman
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The Second Act: Where Are SETC’s Getchell Award Winners Today?

by Jimmy Bickerstaff

Many of them were published for the first time in the pages of Southern Theatre. From there, the winners of SETC’s Charles M. Getchell Playwriting Award have traveled in many directions – a few seeing their plays published by Samuel French or other houses, some becoming finalists for other major competitions, such as the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival’s David Mark Cohen Playwriting Competition, and still more seeing productions of their plays in locales from off-off-Broadway to Iceland.

Southern Theatre began regularly publishing the winning play in the Getchell Playwriting Award contest in fall 1995, with Jason Milligan’s Walking on the Moon. Although publication of the winning play is not guaranteed as part of the award – plays must still be recommended for publication by the Playwriting Committee and approved for publication by the Publications Committee – this is the first year since 1995 that the fall issue does not include the winning play. This year’s Charles M. Getchell Award competition was cancelled due to the unexpected death of contest chair Chris Hardin.

In place of the Getchell play, Southern Theatre focuses in this issue on the playwrights who have debuted work in this space – and where their writing has taken them since then. We were able to contact 14 of the 19 winning playwrights since 1995. Besides playwriting, some of the winners also write for other forms of media – including television and movies. Only two of those who responded said they were no longer writing plays. And one of them – Bill Hayes (Going South with Phil and Margaret, 2002) – notes that he continues to encourage the development of new plays as the producing artistic director of Palm Beach Dramaworks in West Palm Beach, FL. “Next season,” he says, “I will be launching The Dramaworkshop in my second studio space … where new plays are to be developed.”

We asked those who are still writing to update us on their writing careers in general and on what has happened to their Getchell plays since they appeared in this space. Read Act Two of their stories below.

Day job: Senior Writer, Walt Disney Parks and Resorts
Getchell play: Walking on the Moon was published by Samuel French, Inc., and has been produced numerous times in this country and abroad.
Other plays: Thirty-four of Milligan’s full-length and one-act plays, including Southern Exposures, Cross Country and The Prettiest Girl in Lafayette County, have been published by Samuel French, Inc. His one-acts are popular with high school and college students. Men in Suits received a world premiere at the Westport County Playhouse starring Charles Durning, Dan Lauria and James Handy. Milligan was recently commissioned by the William Inge Theatre Festival to create a one-act play inspired by the works of Inge, which was published in a collection titled The William Inge Variations.
Related successes: Milligan’s work is a popular audition choice. He is the author or co-author of seven collections of original audition monologues for Samuel French. He has also written and produced for film and television, including the screenplay for Museum of Love, directed by Christian Slater for Showtime. He collaborated with playwright Mary Hanes to create, write and produce an award-winning television series, Hope Island. In his job at Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, he creates live entertainment for Disney parks around the world.
Where to find his plays: Many of his plays are available at www.samuelfrench.com. More info is available on his website: www.jasonmilligan.org.

Day job: Theatre Professor, School of the Performing Arts, Louisiana Tech University
Getchell play: Atomic Field was produced in Chicago; Dayton, OH; Goshen, IN; and Ruston, LA. Robbins says the Ohio production “was a direct result of winning the Getchell Award.” The play also was translated and produced in Japanese in Tokyo.
Other plays: His one-act play, The Audition, has been produced in Beirut, Tasmania and Calgary. Other plays include At Sea on the Nile, The Frio Kid and Bar None, which like Atomic Field was influenced by the bombings of Japan.
Related successes: He has written
two screenplays and is at work on his fifth novel. His first novel, *Buttermilk Bottoms*, received the Toni Morrison Award for fiction.

**Where to find his plays:** Three plays are available at www.singlelane.com/proplay, two at www.mindmined.com. Or contact Robbins at krobbins@latech.edu.

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**Day job:** Full-time Playwright; retired Founder and Director of Theatre at Randolph College, Lynchburg, VA

**Getchell play:** *Passing Through* was a finalist for the O’Neill Theatre Center 1995 National Playwright’s Conference.

**Other plays:** *Countdown to the Happy Day*, which explores the relationship between a disturbed Army-veteran street woman and a neglected 15-year-old boy, received a reading at the 2011 Ashland (OR) New Plays Festival, won the Doorway Arts Ensemble’s Playwriting Award, was chosen as a finalist for the O’Neill Center’s National Playwrights Conference and was included in the 2013 Baltimore Playwrights Festival XXXII. *Champagne Sundays* was produced at Renaissance Theatre in Lynchburg, VA, and at the Capital Fringe Festival in Washington, DC. *Paddy’s Pot*, a comedy featuring a family of three old Irish American women in 1930s Buffalo, received a reading at the Kennedy Center’s Page to Stage Festival and was subsequently produced. Stephens is at work on a “serio-humorous exploration of a volatile three-generation family,” *American Idyll*, through workshops at Washington, DC’s Playwrights Forum.

**Where to find his plays:** Copies are available by contacting Stephens at tws901@gmail.com.

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**Day job:** Communication Specialist, Atlanta, GA.

**Getchell play:** *Five Exits*, described by Davis as “five scenes about death,” was produced by First Stage Productions in Dayton, OH, in 1999.

**Other plays:** Davis has had more than 17 scripts produced, including professional productions in Atlanta, Orlando, New York and Hollywood of some of his plays, including *Divergent Illusions and Figures*. His play, *Night of the Hawk*, originally produced by Generic Theatre in Norfolk, VA, has been produced off-off-Broadway twice. He is working on a new play, *No*, that was read in May as part of the Decatur Arts Festival. He is a member of the Dramatists Guild and is active as a member of Working Title Playwrights in Atlanta, GA.

**Where to find his plays:** Excerpts are available through his listing on the Dramatists Guild website. For full copies, contact Davis at daviddad5@charter.net.

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**Day job:** Chair, Department of Theatre Arts, Liberty University; Artistic Director, Alluvion Stage Company

**Getchell play:** *April Morning* went on to become a 2004 semifinalist in the Appalachian Festival of New Plays.

**Other plays:** Since winning the Getchell Award, Cooper has written five musicals and two plays and narrated three musical concerts. Her works have been produced at professional theatres in Virginia, Massachusetts, Georgia, Minnesota and Tennessee, as well as high schools, churches and colleges in a dozen states. Productions of her plays have been chosen three times for the national Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF) in Washington, DC. Her biggest commercial success has been *The Miracle*, which ran for seven years in Pigeon Forge, TN, at a professional theatre owned by Fee Hedrick Entertainment. She says “it ran for over 2,500 performances to over a million attendees, produced an original cast CD, a DVD and a ‘Making of’ documentary as well as tons of merchandise.” She is working on a musical and a new play, *Consensual*, about the pro-life vs. pro-choice issue.

**Related successes:** Her lyrics for *Rebel Cry* were a finalist in the national Lehman Engel Musical Theater Competition in New York City in the fall of 2002. *Rebel Cry* was a national finalist in the 2003 David Mark Cohen Playwriting Competition sponsored by the Kennedy Center.

**Where to find her plays:** Info on licensing is at www.greenbrookproductions.com.

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**What is the Charles M. Getchell Award?**

SETC’s Charles M. Getchell New Play Award recognizes new scripts written by individuals who live or go to school in the SETC region or by SETC members who live in or outside the region. The winner receives a $1,000 prize and a staged reading at the SETC Convention.

**More info:** Visit www.setc.org and click on Scholarships & Awards, New Play Contest.

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**Deadline Soon for High School Play Contest**

High school students in the SETC region are invited to enter SETC’s High School New Play Contest. Submissions are accepted from October 1 to December 1.

**More info:** Visit www.setc.org and click on Scholarships & Awards, High School New Play Contest.
Getchell play: Dogfall, his second full-length play, went on to win the North Carolina New Play and Mark Gilbert New Play Awards, was produced by the Greensboro Playwrights Forum as the North Carolina New Play Project and later in 2011 professionally by the Sanguine Theatre Troupe at North Carolina Stage Co. in Asheville.

Other plays: After winning the Getchell Award, he went on to write seven full-length plays, including one musical, Cubical! The Musical. All except the musical and the most recent (Gadfly, “an ironic comedy with music”) have been fully produced in the U.S. Both Dogfall and the two plays written after it (Purging Mary and Gloria Dei) were social-problem plays dealing with American culture wars. “After exploring different kinds of projects over the years, I am returning to the social drama format for my next play,” he says.

Related successes: Having branched into screenwriting, for which he won an award in 2012, Lahaie has recently adapted Dogfall for the screen and is seeking an option on it.

Where to find his plays: All of his plays are available for free perusal on his website: www.ScotLahaie.com. There is more on Dogfall at http://dogfall.weebly.com/.

Getchell Award with being an important transition in his career: “first time I saw a full-length play of mine in print in the magazine, got a great reading and great response from people at the conference, including Gary Garrison, who ended up my boss when I became regional rep for the Dramatists Guild.”

Other plays: His play, The Albatross, won the John Gassner New Play Award in 2009. Other plays have been produced in California and Pittsburgh, PA (W@ste); Bellevue College in Washington, and the regional KCACTF in Idaho (7 Minutes to Midnight). A 10-minute play, Dog Park or Sexual Perversity in Magnuson, has been produced around the world, including Seattle, Morocco, the UK and Kopavagur, Iceland. It has also been published in Ten 10-Minute Plays, Vol. III. He has a new full-length play, Misfit Hearts, “a dark comedy about two misfit lovers,” along with a new adaptation of Oedipus Rex, which he says are “both set in my hometown of Reno, NV.”

Related successes: He is a screenwriter who has been given a significant award for film production at Steeltown Film Factory, and just finished a short film, My Date with Adam, which will premiere at the Three Rivers Film Festival in November.

Where to find his plays: Schebetta’s plays are available through his website, www.dennisschebetta.com, and some have been published by Original Works Publishing.

Day job: Communications Coordinator, School of Drama, Carnegie Mellon University

Getchell play: Obscura was a national finalist for the KCACTF David Mark Cohen Award and a semi-finalist for the Princess Grace Award in 2006. Obscura was produced at Adams State College in Colorado and was given a reading in Pittsburgh at Terra Nova Theatre. Schebetta credits the Day job: Full-time Playwright/Novelist

Getchell play: After winning the Getchell Award, Nobody was chosen for development by the Alabama Shakespeare Festival. “I ended up incorporating songs taken from
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original Williams and Walker shows that parallel actual events in the lives of Bert and George,” the historical African American entertainers the play is about, says Aellen. The result was “either a play with music or a book-heavy musical” that was given a premiere at ASF the following year.

Other plays: Aellen was book writer for the musical, Wicked Moon, which premiered last year at the 4th Wall Theatre in New Jersey. His comedy, Baby Daze, had a reading at Abingdon Theatre in New York. He is working on two projects: a dance theatre piece, Liverpool Trading, with director Anita Gonzalez, and a libretto for a musical version of 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea in collaboration with composer Cynthia Wong.

Related successes: He is the author of Ozzy on the Outside, which won the Delacorte Press Prize for Outstanding First Young Adult Novel. Other novels include Redeye; Crix: A Novel; Flashpoint and The Cain Conversion, available in print through Amazon and audio via Brilliance Audio.

Where to find his plays: Copies of his plays are available by contacting him at aellenr@aol.com.

Day job: Professor of Theatre, Greensboro College and Guilford Technical Community College, Greensboro, NC

Getchell play: “In addition to generating a lot of publicity about the play and securing two college teaching jobs,” Trull says the Getchell reading “led to some structural revisions that benefitted the play immensely.” Honeyboy was eventually produced by 3rd Stage Theatre as the 2013 North Carolina New Play Project.

Other plays: Since 2009, Trull has written six full-length plays which have been produced, including a musical, Silent Pictures. Another play, The 27 Club, was published in a “best of” collection as a result of its premiere at the 2012 NYC Fringe Festival. He has also had “a handful of short plays” produced around the country. His one-act comedy, Kids Are Hell, was published in the spring 2013 issue of The Louisville Review.

Related successes: Resident playwright and dramaturg for Fly By Night Theatre in Greensboro, Trull has also written screenplays for the short films Dues of the Heart (2008, Greenpax Films) and Oblivion (2007, General Pictures). His poems have appeared in several literary magazines, including siderality and The Lightning Bell Poetry Journal.

Where to find his plays: His plays can be found at www.indietheaternow.com/Playwright/tommy-trull; or http://tommytrullplays.blogspot.com/ . Or contact him directly at tommy.trull@gmail.com.

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Getchell play: Nicolas the Worm received a staged reading off-Broadway at Repertorio Espanol and was a finalist for the Nuestras Voces 2012 Award.

Other plays: Since winning the Getchell Award, Zipperer has had a number of successes: His play, Credit Check, is included in the new Smith and Kraus anthology, The Best 10-Minute Plays of 2012; Dramatic Publishing has published a collection of his 10-minute plays; and his short play, Melting, has won seven contests and has been produced in three countries. A children’s play, The Reality Show of Prince Absurdly Handsome, written after he won the Getchell, “has already been produced 16 times since it was published at the beginning of 2012.”

Where to find his plays: Zipperer’s plays, “mostly for youth and high school audiences,” are available from Dramatic Publishing Co., Eldridge Plays and Musicals, Pioneer Drama and Brooklyn Publishers.

Day job: Consultant

Getchell play: Following its reading at the SETC Convention, Scrambled was produced by Bluegrass Community and Technical College in Lexington, KY. It also was produced recently in Flint, MI.

Other plays: Kander has written three plays since winning, including Running Mates (or, The Family Party), a comedy “about spouses in a small town who wind up running against each other for mayor,” which won a 2013 Eudora Welty New Play Award. Another play, Unshelved, will be presented by Eclectic Theatre Company in Chicago as part of its 2014 season.

Where to find her plays: Scrambled and an earlier play, See Jane Quit, are represented by Steele Spring Theatrical Leasing (www.steelespring.com). Other scripts and writing updates for Kander can be found at www.bethkander.com or on her Facebook page: www.facebook.com/ByBethKander.
Words, words, words ... [Hamlet II,ii] reviews books on theatre that have a connection to the Southeast or may be of special interest to SETC members. Scott Phillips, associate professor and chair of the Auburn University Department of Theatre, edits this regular column. If you have a book for review, please send to: SETC, Book Editor, 1175 Revolution Mill Drive, Studio 14, Greensboro, NC 27405.

Acting at the Speed of Life
by Timothy Mooney
2011, TMRT Press
www.timothymooney.com
ISBN-10: 0983181209
Pages: 233. Price: $19.95 (paperback)

by Michael P. Howley

Timothy Mooney has become a fixture around the Southeast, regularly presenting workshops at the annual SETC Convention and appearing at countless universities and high schools in Moliere than Thou and Lot o’ Shakespeare, his one-man shows that illustrate his broad knowledge of classical and modern texts and showcase his impressive acting and teaching skills.

His 2011 Acting at the Speed of Life is a gem of a book that demystifies the acting process by mixing common-sense instruction with practical exercises. It ought to have a place on every actor’s and director’s bookshelf. Not that it ought to stay there. Keep it handy for audition preparation, classroom studies, rehearsals and sometimes for simply a good read.

Divided into six parts, this book outlines a method that builds comprehensively from the basics to a final outcome. In presenting a respectful alternative to Stanislavsky and other established actor training guides, Mooney’s accessible approach begins with “the actor’s two most fundamental responsibilities … being seen and being heard … everything else needs to build on top of this.” Although he confesses this might be obvious, being seen and heard are often overlooked by novice actors in their attempts to be “truthful” or “interesting,” to the extent that many actors mumble their words and render themselves invisible.

“Acting,” Mooney says, “happens at the speed of life.” If the actor isn’t seen and heard in every moment, the domino effect is that the audience plays catch-up from then on. So, with exercises drawn from Shakespeare, Moliere and others, Mooney shows how an actor can use his face, eyes, stage position and lighting to be available to the audience. He also details how to make the most of a script’s words and rhetorical forms to move an audience while serving the play. Mooney’s appreciation for dramaturgy is reflected in his deep respect for the text as the actor’s primary tool, and he bemoans the substitution of artificial amplification for proper vocal technique.

Mooney’s guidebook devotes sections to “Playing Fully,” “Playing with Discipline,” “Outwitting Yourself,” and “Putting it Together.” He offers advice and exercises that offer practical scene-work choices, harnessing the impact of vowels, differentiating between objectives and obstacles, and giving permission to “rattle the lights ... be ugly ... and spit” – and most of all, to take risks.

There is much to discover in this book about the freedom that can be achieved through a disciplined approach to the craft and art of acting. It is clear that Mooney is passionate about what he does. He inspires his readers with a clear common-sense approach, eye-opening analyses of familiar texts, and wise advice that encourages newcomers and veteran actors to grow into the best they can be.
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