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2013 SETC Young Scholar’s Award Winners
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Experience Real Life with Those Who Pay the Bills

If you’re working toward a professional acting career, do yourself a favor. Attend the board of directors meeting at a nearby theatre. Better yet, visit several. Most are open to the public. Attending costs nothing and Repays the observer with something he or she cannot learn in a classroom – real-life experience with those who pay the bills.

For board members, the fiscal cliff never ends and budgets are made with the sword of Damocles hanging over their heads. A single mistake in show selection or misguided financial analysis has brought the extermination of many a cherished theatre.

Many actors and technicians eventually become theatre managers or board members themselves. I remember when two actors wanted to start a production company and attended the board meeting of a long-established theatre. The dialogue was bluntly about money and they learned their lesson well, ultimately opening a successful theatre in a major Southern city.

While actors are advised to have a passion for their work, it pales in comparison to the quiet drama of watching several board members of ordinary means, each giving $10,000 during a meeting to keep their theatre afloat. When I was on the board of Jenny Wiley Theatre, nearly 100 jobs were spared when three board members dramatized their commitment to the community and theatre in this way. Such experiences can’t be taught from a textbook. They can only be appreciated in real time.

Why do theatres have lawyers, accountants, contractors and business people on their boards? Observe almost any meeting and you’ll quickly find out. Theatres are responsible for unimaginable minutiae. Committees are an integral part of most boards. The personnel committee may deal with countless laws regarding health and safety. An ever-changing parade of labor, payroll, insurance, taxes and worker’s comp regulations may be the province of the financial committee. The show selection committee might oversee negotiations with literary agencies, including copyright considerations with playwrights and composers. Housing, transportation and special events also require specialized groups.

Of course, theatres have different needs, but the basic requirement to do good performances within a sound financial framework is common to all. So, go! Observe a board meeting. Learn the business end of theatre. Appreciate the efforts of dedicated people who provide you with a stage.

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.
… And they’re out of the starting gate! When SETC members gathered recently in Louisville, it was hard to believe that it had been 17 years since we last met in this city known for the running of the Kentucky Derby. Our own “run for the roses” came to the wire a huge success! In this issue, we take a look back at the 2013 SETC Convention and the speakers who inspired us with their humility, their talent and their creativity.

Doug Schutte takes you behind the scenes with playwright Ken Ludwig, SETC’s Distinguished Career Award winner and the Saturday keynote speaker, sharing the twists and turns of Ludwig’s career as well as advice from this master of the farce.

Can you imagine singing a duet with Broadway star Norm Lewis? The Tony Award nominee with the spectacular voice was amazingly down-to-earth during his time at the SETC Convention, accepting a student’s challenge to sing a duet, answering audience questions and wowing SETC listeners with two songs sung a capella. Paul Crook shares the story of Friday’s keynote speaker.

There’s no way to describe the art of David Gonzalez, Thursday’s keynote speaker, other than mesmerizing. Bill Gelber shares the story behind this artist, who takes performance in new directions with his blend of myth, music, rhyme and syncopated sound.

Are you an I-shaped artist or a T-shaped artist? Eric Booth, Wednesday night’s keynote speaker, pegs the future of theatre on our becoming the latter. George Hillow shares why Booth says artists must develop “tools of artistic agency” to become T-shaped artists, connecting with audiences in new ways.

If you are a teacher and you missed Stephen Wangh’s master classes at the SETC Convention, be sure to take a few minutes to read Dawn Larsen’s story exploring Wangh’s work in movement and arts education. Hoping to make it in musical theatre? Check out Matthew Edwards’ story sharing the top 10 tips from VP Boyle’s amazing workshop on nailing your pop/rock musical audition.

Also at the SETC Convention in Louisville, we surprised SETC Administrative Vice-President Steve Bayless with the Suzanne M. Davis Memorial Award, our most prestigious award for one of SETC’s own. Read about the powerful ways that Steve has made a difference in students’ lives and in SETC on Page 31.

Even been to a theatre board meeting? In our regular “400 Words” opinion column, Bill Forsyth outlines the reasons that performers should take time to learn about the business side of running a theatre. We close out the magazine with abstracts from this year’s winners of SETC’s Young Scholar’s Award.

Please enjoy your ride through these pages as we look back on SETC’s 2013 Convention in Louisville, KY. Tally ho!

Jack Benjamin, SETC President
Ken Ludwig, Master of the Farce, Passes ‘the Torch’ of Inspiration

by Doug Schutte

It is not every day you find yourself in the same room with one of the most accomplished American playwrights of our time. And yet here I am, in a rather cavernous Galt House Hotel suite in Louisville, conversing with Ken Ludwig. Ken Ludwig! Crazy for You, Lend Me a Tenor, 20th Century, Fox on the Fairway. This comedy savant is a Broadway and West End legend. You wouldn’t know it from our conversation, though. Ludwig has just finished giving a keynote address at the SETC Convention, then signed copies of his plays for a long line of excited attendees, and now sits snacking on chicken salad and veggies and – if I didn’t know better – I’d swear I were simply speaking to another theatre friend, another artist madly in love with the world of theatre and playwriting.

So there we sit, going back and forth about our own personal idiosyncrasies when working on new plays. I mention my habit of extensive note-taking, always on a yellow legal pad. Ludwig laughs, then mentions that he always works in pencil (“It must be soft lead,” he adds), and he always works on a legal pad – a longer one, though, so that he can see more of the work at once. Without even the slightest bit of pomp, he notes, “You know who taught me that? Neil Simon.” Apparently, the stage comedy legends club is a tight bunch.
Ken Ludwig’s accomplishments in the playwriting world are, in a word, staggering. Six shows on Broadway. Six in the West End. Two Laurence Olivier Awards, three Tony Award nominations, two Helen Hayes Awards and the Edgar Award. His work has been commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company and has been performed in 30 countries in over 20 languages. He is a personified theatre encyclopedia.

And yet, as our Galt House interview continues, one would have a difficult time finding any stains from that success on display. He’s grounded. Humble. Reflective. The man doesn’t even watch his own plays. He will tell you stories about his experiences with Andrew Lloyd Weber, Neil Simon, former Prime Ministers … and not once will you find him narcissistic. After only three minutes, two definitive realizations are clear: (1) Ken Ludwig did not become such a tremendous success by accident, and (2) Anyone who wants to succeed in the theatre could learn a thing … or 50 … from Ken Ludwig.

**Paying His Dues**

The path to the playwright’s life began very early for Ludwig. His mother, a former actress, would take her sons on an annual trek from their home in York, PA, to Broadway. At only 6 years of age, while watching Gore Vidal’s *Visit to a Small Planet*, Ludwig knew: He was going to be a playwright. “This is it,” he remembers saying to himself that night. “This is all I want to do.”

And do was exactly what he did. In high school, Ludwig was in every play possible. In college, he added directing and writing to his repertoire. As his college career came to a close, Ludwig had some tough choices to make. He knew his love was writing plays, but – as he says bluntly – “I had to earn a living.” So, following in his brother’s footsteps, Ludwig applied to law school and was accepted to Harvard Law. The decision to go was simple, as Ludwig recalls his parents’ “supportive” words: “Do what you want, but if you don’t go, we’ll kill you.”

After law school, Ludwig began earning the aforementioned “living” as an attorney. He is quick to point out, though, that he never lost sight of his goal or his passion. Every day for a number of years, he would wake up at 4 a.m., and write from 4:30 to 8:30 before heading off to work. On more than one occasion during our interview, Ludwig remarks about the power of tenacity, of working toward one’s goal. “People who are overnight successes,” he notes, “aren’t overnight successes.”

And so for four hours every morning, Ken would write. And write. And write. He soon realized one problem, though: “I didn’t know anybody.”

With no theatre connections to speak of, Ludwig showed once more that he had a solution to the roadblocks on his path to playwriting success. He went to his local library, got a copy of *Writer’s Market*, and began sending out manuscripts to any theatre that would accept them. A production in a church basement here, a hall there. Ludwig was paying his dues. Ludwig was also forming professional relationships and friendships that would last a lifetime.

“I used to hang out at the Kennedy Center a good bit and got to know (Kennedy Center founder) Roger Stevens,” Ludwig said. “He would tell me his wonderful stories about producing plays on Broadway, and he’d give me advice about my writing. He asked to read my plays, and I had just written *Sullivan and Gilbert*. He read it and decided to produce it and ended up co-producing it with the National Theatre of Canada. After picking up a Best Play of the Year award in Ottawa, *Sullivan and Gilbert* made its way to the Kennedy Center to great acclaim.

Then, Ludwig recalls, “I met a director by chance.” This London director, David Gilmore (now the executive artistic director of London’s St. James...
Theatre), had just seen Ludwig’s Sullivan and Gilbert at the Kennedy Center and liked it so much he asked Ludwig for his most recent play. That play, Ludwig’s now-acclaimed Lend Me a Tenor, went from the hands of Gilmore to the hands of Andrew Lloyd Webber, and within a matter of months Ken Ludwig was a produced playwright on London’s West End. His Broadway debut followed shortly thereafter, along with a Tony nomination.

“The moral of the story,” Ludwig says, “is you’ve got to pay your dues.”

Ludwig paid them, and his success was building as a direct result of his early morning writing sessions, relentless submissions, developing meaningful relationships, and never losing sight of the goal.

Opening the Door to New Possibilities

With Lend Me a Tenor a Broadway hit, Ludwig soon received a visit from legendary Broadway producer Roger Horchow, who wanted him to write the book for a new musical called Crazy for You. On more than one occasion, Ludwig declined.

“I turned it down,” he said, “simply because I thought I couldn’t write it.”

He loved musicals, but Ken Ludwig – now a Broadway playwright – was doubting himself. Horchow was persistent, however (“Thank God he was,” Ludwig notes), and finally Ludwig signed on. And oh, was he capable. Crazy for You went on to win the Tony, Drama Desk, Olivier and Helen Hayes awards for best musical. What’s more, Ludwig learned a very valuable lesson about believing in oneself and venturing into the unknown.

What followed seems like a whirlwind of success. Moon Over Buffalo with Carol Burnett. Be My Baby with Hal Holbrook and Dixie Carter. The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. Ludwig, though – ever the student of the art form he loves so dearly – refused to be content...
with his previous successes and continued to learn, continued to read.

As he is apt to do, Ludwig sat in his office one morning pondering what play he would work on next. Staring at his bookcase, one book in particular caught his eye, a book he recognized all too well. It was a book of plays and screenplays by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur given to him many years earlier by his friend and mentor Roger Stevens. Among these stories was the manuscript made into the 1934 film *20th Century*. With the support of Charles MacArthur’s son, Ludwig adapted his newest play, *20th Century*, and found tremendous success with Alec Baldwin and Anne Heche on Broadway.

**Passing the Torch**

“ Theatre people are a breed apart,” Ludwig tells a packed room at the SETC Convention in March. “ Theatre people really don’t think like other people.”

Noting the ways in which collaboration and mentoring occur in theatre at such a higher rate than in most fields, Ludwig espouses, “The theatre is a great place where the torch gets passed.”

Never is this clearer than Ludwig’s own *20th Century* — the early 1900s works of Hecht and MacArthur, passed on to Ludwig via his friend, mentor and producer Roger Stevens, culminating in one of Ludwig’s many Broadway successes. From Hecht and MacArthur to Stevens to Ludwig … to you. To me. To all who sat in the Grand Ballroom at the SETC Convention.

In passing the torch on, Ludwig offers up these gems of advice: (1) Read. You can’t be a writer if you are not a voracious reader. (2) Take a chance on yourself. Invest in yourself. (3) If you wake up every morning and you don’t love what you do, fix it. And (4) Choose the adventure.

From 4 a.m. writing sessions and countless *Writer’s Market* submissions, to venturing into the unknown to write *Crazy for You*, Ludwig has learned the craft, has received the torch and is passing it along to you, to the next generation of artists in love with the craft of playwriting.
When the doors into the Grand Ballroom at the Galt House opened for the Friday keynote speech at the SETC Convention in Louisville, a wave of humanity rolled into the ballroom, each person intent on grabbing the best seat available. The anticipation of the crowd, already at a level usually reserved for rock concerts and political rallies, ratcheted up further as Patrick Gagliano, Newberry College theatre chair, took to the stage to introduce his old friend and former community college classmate, “Norman.”

Finally, to applause, a performer appeared. His smile bright and his eyes twinkling, the man crossed confidently to the microphone and, knowing his audience well, began singing, *a capella*, the familiar opening strains of “Lullaby of Broadway.” Before, the ballroom had been alive with an almost visible hum of energy. Now, silence fell over the captivated crowd. The glorious voice of the performer clutched at every heart in the room, and he held them all in his hands. Then those hands began snapping with the rhythm of the song. And hundreds of hands joined in, all in time with the words of that fantastic ode to the pinnacle of theatre. And when the performer’s smooth voice closed out the final lines of the song, a momentary hush fell over the room, leading to as explosive a standing ovation as I’ve ever seen or heard.

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is the way Norm Lewis taught the Southeastern Theatre Conference how to make an entrance.

‘Wherever you get a place to perform, you are blessed’

Broadway Actor Norm Lewis ‘Blesses’ SETC with His Glorious Voice and Gracious Advice

by Paul B. Crook
In a career that began on a cruise ship and has stretched to regional theatres around the country, Broadway, the West End, television and the big screen, Norm Lewis has become one of the most recognizable faces (and voices) performing today. Although his Broadway career began in *The Who’s Tommy* in 1993, Lewis’ fame recently ramped up with his appearance as Sen. Edison Davis on the hit TV series *Scandal*.

**A Star Who is Gracious and Grateful**

During his keynote address in Louisville and in a Q&A session afterward, Lewis entertained, shared his story and challenged his audience to “never, ever stop learning,” and to always “be grateful.”

The theme of gratitude wound through Norm Lewis’ address to convention-goers. In fact, it was even part of the introduction given by Gagliano, who brought Lewis to the stage as a man who is “always gracious, always humble and has never forgotten his friends.” After his spellbinding opening performance, Lewis began his talk by saying that “Broadway is considered by many to be the pinnacle of performance ... I am so blessed to do it [but] wherever you get a place to perform, you are blessed.” He also noted that the work of the performer would not be possible without the work of so many others, as he singled out directors, house managers, technicians, stage managers and others whose work an audience may not see.

In his talk, Lewis noted that “everyone’s journey is different. There’s no set formula to being a performer.” His path began in choir and show choir while in high school in Eatonville, FL. He received an opportunity to perform in England his senior year, which led to roles in *Purlie* and *The Wiz* (which featured Wesley Snipes as the Scarecrow) at Theatre on Park in Winter Park, FL. Although his career didn’t exactly skyrocket from that point, it proved a beginning for him – and soon he was on a quest to do more and learn more.

He credits his sense of gratitude for the success he enjoys to his parents. Gagliano had mentioned in his introduction that he and Lewis were in a production of *Grease* together while at Lake City Community College in Florida, and Lewis said that was the first time his parents had seen him sing. They didn’t live to see their son achieve Broadway success and receive a Tony Award nomination. Lewis’ father passed away when Lewis was 25, and his mother when he was 31. “Going through tragedy early helps develop [gratitude],” Lewis said. He went on to add that a line from *Les Miserables* has always spoken to him: “To love another person is to see the face of God.”

Norm Lewis (right) was nominated for a Tony Award for his portrayal of Porgy in The Gershwins’ *Porgy and Bess* on Broadway. As the musical was ending its run in September, Lewis became a TV sensation playing the role of Sen. Edison Davis on ABC’s *Scandal*. Learn more about Lewis at normlewis.com.

‘Success is where preparation, opportunity and luck all meet.’
Les Mis and Live Performance

Les Misérables is the reason most theatre audiences knew and loved Norm Lewis prior to his gaining wider recognition this past year with Scandal. Playing Javert in the 2006 revival on Broadway, in the West End and again for the 25th anniversary concert, Lewis electrified audiences around the world. That super-charged connection with an audience is one of the main reasons Lewis keeps coming back to the theatre, even as he is cast more in TV and film roles.

“I love the live reaction,” Lewis said. “I had a friend and his wife in the front row at Porgy and Bess and I could see that they had a visceral reaction.”

The electricity of Javert reappeared in Lewis’ talk, as a brash young man (the kind one can only find at a convention filled with 4,000 theatre people) challenged him to sing Javert’s and Valjean’s “The Confrontation” from Les Mis. Lewis complied, making the day for the student, Luke Powell. (See story below.) Lewis’ humility and graciousness remained on display throughout the day. After his keynote speech, Lewis spent some time walking around the convention, even popping into a musical theatre workshop and working hands-on with one of the actors.

Casting Becomes More Color-Blind

During his keynote address, Lewis talked about his role in Les Mis, and how thankful he was that producer Cameron Mackintosh was “color-blind” when casting him in the role of Javert. This led to a discussion of the opportunities in theatre for...

Broadway Wannabe Luke Powell Gets His Wish ... A Duet with Norm Lewis

During the Q&A session after Norm Lewis’ keynote speech, Luke Powell, a freshman at Greensboro College in Greensboro, NC, asked the star to sing a song from Les Misérables with him. Still shocked weeks later that Lewis agreed, Powell shares below how his request came about and what his experience has meant in his quest to be an actor. It all started, he says, when he saw a poster about the 2013 SETC Convention at school:

I read that Norm was going to be there and knew I had to go. I think it was back then that I started joking that I would sing with him. When I got to the conference, I told my friends that I was going to ask him to sing “The Confrontation” from Les Misérables. In my mind, I thought that there might be a time he would greet people and I could ask him then. When I realized there was a Q&A, I figured that was my chance. When it came time for the Q&A, I wanted to chicken out. However, I couldn’t do that. After all, he had just delivered a speech on “going for it.” I thought that he would probably laugh when I asked him and move on to the next question, so there wasn’t much to lose either.

I can’t think of a time where I was so nervous as when I asked him. And it certainly threw me off when I realized what was getting ready to happen in a crowd full of people. But the incredible happened! It was my first time meeting a star and it was horrifying, exhilarating and shocking all at once. I was shaking for about an hour after it happened.

I had played Javert in high school and so being able to perform a piece with one of the great Javerts of all time was incredible. I ran out of the room and told my professors from school and then called my Mom (Norm is her favorite Javert ... next to me). As silly as it sounds, it really changed my life in a crazy way. It’s on my résumé now as a special vocal performance!

I am studying acting with the intention of working professionally. I actually had my first professional audition about two weeks after the SETC Convention: for Cunningham in The Book of Mormon on Broadway. Between that and singing with Norm, getting on Broadway seems a step closer.
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African-American actors. When asked if he sees himself as leaving a legacy for black actors, Lewis said that early on he did not but that he does feel more that way now. “There’s an innate respect when you see someone like you” on the stage, Lewis said. He reminisced about his audition for *The Little Mermaid* and his assumption that he would be auditioning for Sebastian – a role voiced by African-American actor Samuel E. Wright in the film and played by past SETC keynote speaker Titus Burgess on Broadway. Lewis was surprised and pleased to be cast as King Triton.

**Study to Succeed**

While *Mermaid* certainly had its physical challenges (singing and roller skating!), they paled in comparison to Lewis’ work in *The Gershwins’ Porgy and Bess*, where he played the title role with such a difficult and contorted posture (which he demonstrated for the audience) that he had to have a chiropractor work on him each night after performing.

When asked by an audience member about his keys to success, Lewis exhorted his listeners to “study, study, study. Success is where preparation, opportunity and luck all meet.” A large part of his studying, Lewis said, has come in rehearsals, where he observes the work of fellow actors. Returning to his theme of gratitude, he noted that he is grateful to actors such as Toni Collette and Audra McDonald (with whom he worked in *The Wild Party* and *Porgy and Bess*, respectively) for inspiring him to try new things in rehearsals.

Lewis encouraged those in attendance to “find the core of who you are, and that will translate to all of your characters. Don’t use your gift as validation of who you are.” During his time at the SETC Convention, he showed that those aren’t merely inspirational words for him; they are defining ones.

As the afternoon drew to a close, Norm took one final question from the crowd, a request to sing a non-theatre song. He complied with the classic hymn, “Give Me a Clean Heart,” and in doing so, closed his keynote the same way he began it – leaving his audience spellbound.

Paul B. Crook is an associate professor of acting and directing at Louisiana Tech University and the vice-chair of SETC’s College and University Theatre Division. He is a frequent contributor to *Southern Theatre*.

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Vivian Majkowski is a professor in the performing arts department at the Savannah College of Art and Design and chair of SETC’s Voice and Speech Committee.
SETC celebrated the 64th anniversary of its founding at the 2013 SETC Convention in Louisville, KY. At Saturday’s business meeting, SETC President Jack Benjamin and other officers were elected. On these pages, we revisit scenes from the annual convention, which was attended by about 4,000 theatre artists, managers, teachers, students and volunteers. The convention provided members with an opportunity to audition, find a job, perform, hear keynote speakers, learn new techniques, network, view exhibits, hire employees, watch top-notch theatre and much more.

Photos by David Humber
64th in Louisville
David Gonzalez Uses Sound and Stories to Jolt Us into Alertness

by Bill Gelber

When David Gonzalez tells you a story, it feels the way it might if you were a kid being tucked into bed by your parents. He doesn’t say that a “boy plunged into the water.” He gives you the whooshing sound of the landing, his words becoming syncopated as the swimming begins. “No-kid-could-swim-like-himmmm.” The tale of the Oven Bird becomes beat poetry: it reminds you of the way Bill Cosby uses the microphone, or of Lenny Bruce’s recordings. His voice is hushed, then booms out, deep and resonant, catching you off guard with its rhythms, punching out a rapid series of beats or bringing you up short into silence. Gonzalez’ timing is impeccable. He has the audience right where he wants them – just like when we were kids.

It’s no surprise then that he mesmerized the crowd at his Thursday SETC Convention keynote speech, titled “The Warrior and the Fool: Being an Artist in These Hard Times.” Gonzalez makes it his mission to connect strongly with those in the room. He checks with the audience periodically to see if they have had the same experience by asking, “Do you know what I’m talking about?”

Whether it’s an audience of theatre practitioners at the SETC Convention or a roomful of children at Lincoln Center, the answer from most is a resounding “yes.”
From Music Therapy to Performance

A music therapist by training, Gonzalez now is a full-time performing artist who blends storytelling, music, theatre and poetry into his performances for children and adults. He won the 2011 International Performing Arts for Youth “Lifetime Achievement Award for Sustained Excellence” and in 2006 was nominated for a Drama Desk Award for “Unique Theatrical Experience” for his production of The Frog Bride at Broadway’s New Victory Theatre.

Gonzalez’s degrees, including a doctorate, are all in music therapy. He found that when those who were traumatized or in pain could not express themselves in words, they could create sounds that would express what they felt. “A large part of therapy for me is about presence and awareness: having consciousness about what one is feeling and what is happening around you and being able to react in conscious ways and to be an agent of that kind of consciousness,” he says.

Gonzalez came from a tumultuous background himself. He is originally from the Bronx, a child of white and Puerto Rican parents who divorced when he was very young. It was the power of art that saved him. His uncle built him a puppet theatre that he could use to imagine, to play, to create characters. “The curative power of performing arts led me on this journey,” he says.

As he grew older, the events of the late 1960s saddened and frustrated Gonzalez. He wanted to make a difference. When he was 17, he watched as Geraldo Rivera, then an investigative television reporter, infiltrated the infamous Willowbrook School to expose its corruption. Gonzalez immediately volunteered to work there, bringing his guitar, maracas and tambourine. “It was the first time I felt that things lined up: ‘the safety of intimacy,’ and the impact on people’s lives,” he says.

One day, he saw an ad for a course in music therapy at New York University (NYU) and signed up. “That period was a soul-orienting time of my life,” he says. In music therapy he saw the value of storytelling. “I started bringing stories into my practice, working with kids to provide other aesthetic objects: characters, dynamics, places, animals, whatever it was, and started playing with that,” he says. The stories could lead to song, which could lead to expression.

When he, years later, created a piece about the Underground Railroad for the Cincinnati Playhouse, he felt that he had realized his desire to respond to the politics that so affected him as a young man.

“Opening night, the theatre was sold out,” he says. “It was all the black, artistic and intellectual and political community of Cincinnati. There I was, this white Puerto Rican rock-and-roll hippie kid. I was giving this talk after the show and I realized, ‘Oh my god, this is the circle coming around’ to address the civil rights movement as I saw it at the time.”

Children’s Stories, Not Childish Work

In addition to hearing his keynote, I had the opportunity to speak to Gonzalez shortly before his address at the SETC Convention in Louisville. He stressed the ritualistic nature of the telling, and reception, of fable. Although he may be recounting an ancient fairy tale or fable, he quickly dispels any idea that his work is childish. “These are not fairy tales and myths,” he says. “They are sacred liturgy. They hold knowledge and wisdom.”

In one of his newest works, he takes the story of Sleeping Beauty and makes it a dark tale of bitterness caused by thoughtlessness. A thirteenth fairy vows revenge on Beauty’s father because the latter has not invited him to the wedding. This leads to all of the harrowing events that follow.

Sleeping Beauty is a new direction for him. He had previously avoided the more famous fairy tales – and then one day his agent asked him to “do something I can sell.” After reading Dr. Seuss’s The Lorax to a friend’s 3-year-old, he found what he was looking for: “The child’s excitement was based on the rhymes and the anticipation of knowing the story.” The Sleeping Beauty piece he performs now also has a wonderful playfulness. He pauses for audience members to finish his rhymed verse, and they do.

Gonzalez’s work is grounded in mythological study. He cites Joseph Campbell and The Hero of a Thousand Faces as an influence, as is the work of Robert Johnson, a student of Carl Jung’s. “Robert’s books take fairy tales and open them up for us,” Gonzalez says. “These myths are storehouses of psychic energy: not knowledge, energy.” His favorite piece involves the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, also the subject of his dissertation.

The stories he tells suggest deeper, more basic truths about all of us, but he doesn’t see himself as an agent of change. “I’m not so interested in changing the world as sustaining an engagement with it,” he says. “Changing the world is overwhelming. It’s lip service to an impossibility.”

Instead, he wants to jolt us into alertness, to rouse us from the deadening forces of the modern world.

‘These are not fairy tales and myths. They are sacred liturgy. They hold knowledge and wisdom.’
“Sustaining engagement with the world is a hopeful avenue for me,” he says. “I’m a student of Maxine Green, who talks about ‘wide-awakeness.’ The function of art is to interrupt the banality that existence forces us into.”

Gonzalez’s shows are lively multi-media events, with music an essential element. His musical sensibilities constantly inform his work. “I come out of jazz,” he says. “I’m a jazz musician.” He feels his way through performances, responding to what the audience gives him. This lends the form its spontaneity. He sometimes turns to classical work for inspiration. (The Sleeping Beauty tale is set to Bach’s “Goldberg Variations,” for example.)

Gonzalez works with the composer Daniel Kelly (“he is unfathomably creative”) and the director David Schechter, who has “brilliantly nuanced sensitivity about text for solo pieces.” Videos often serve as a backdrop to performances. He is currently working on an autobiographical piece about his father, The Man of the House. It has its fantastical elements. In the story, the father is secretly a spy and he “ends up having quite a swashbuckling life,” Gonzalez says. It will play at the Kennedy Center.

For a man with no theatre training, Gonzalez has played some great venues, including three performances at the Royal National Theatre of Great Britain. “I was struck by how gritty and all-encompassing the place was,” he says. “The scope and the size and the tradition of it was palpable. I was always treated so wonderfully, and I had great audiences.”

Ultimately his performing has been a kind of therapy for himself. “So much of my life is about running away from difficulty,” he says. “It’s been a long journey to have confidence, a long, long arduous journey to own a voice, to accept my vulnerability, to accept my gift.”

Being a man who practices what he “preaches,” he gives us his stories, literally. “Any stories you hear today you have my blessing to take them,” he told his SETC audience. “The more you give, the more you’ve got.”

Bill Gelber is an associate professor and director of theatre at Texas Tech University, where he teaches acting and directing at the graduate and undergraduate levels. He recently received the university’s President’s Excellence in Teaching Award.
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Eric Booth Challenges You to Move from I-Shaped to T-Shaped Artist

by George Hillow

Eric Booth was a successful professional actor for more than a decade, but his passion for the arts in general morphed his career away from the Broadway stage and onto a much larger national stage where he now plays the roles of teacher, writer, speaker and advocate for the arts. He created programs at Juilliard, Tanglewood, the Kennedy Center and Lincoln Center, to name a few, and he has become a consultant to, and keynote speaker for, major arts organizations across the country. On March 6, he led SETC’s all-day Teachers Institute and then addressed attendees at the 2013 SETC Convention in Louisville as the Wednesday night keynote speaker. He did more than just speak to his audience of 400. He challenged them.

Challenge is nothing new to Booth. His very perception of art can be a challenge to whatever audience is before him. He prefers to see art – whether it is on the stage, in a concert hall or in a gallery – not as a noun, but as a verb. According to Booth, “Verbs are alive, nouns are dead.” He prefers not to think of a work of art but of the work of art. For him, a work of art, whether a painting, a performance or a work of literature or music, is an inert object that has no meaning until the work of art is done, which makes a connection between the artist and the artist’s audience with the work, itself, as the medium. “Paintings,” he says, “are like tombstones that mark a location where a significant act of life took place, and they invite us to revive them by bringing the attention of fresh verbs.”
Entertainment or Art?

In his keynote address, Booth expanded on this verb philosophy in a way that not only challenged his audience but charged them to become not just artists, but agents of art. His talk made clear that he was speaking primarily to the young artists in the audience, those who would continue on to shape the arts for the entire 21st century. He began by making a very clear distinction between entertainment and art. Entertainment, as Booth defined it, happens within what its audience already knows; it verifies their knowledge and perceptions. It may surprise or move or amuse, but entertainment does not push any of its audience’s boundaries beyond what is already known. Art, as he describes it, happens outside what is already known and pushes beyond known boundaries. Art, then, is found not so much in the actual object, or noun, that is being looked at, listened to or experienced, but in the verb of the individual’s experience of it, in what the work of art inspires or generates within the audience, in the connection that it makes between the artist and his or her audience.

Within this context, Booth’s Louisville address demonstrated the work of an artist as he hammered home his ultimate point: that it is not enough just to make art, but that artists today must recognize that they are also charged with the vital obligation to become “agents of artistic experience.” To paraphrase Booth, what good is art if nobody connects with it? In addition to creating works of art, Booth charged his audience of rising artists to develop the “tools of artistic agency” that will help them expand their audience’s abilities to perceive the value of the artist’s work.

I-shaped Artist vs. T-shaped Artist

To make his ideas about tools of artistic agency clear to his audience, Booth describes two types of artists: “I-shaped” artists and “T-shaped” artists. I-shaped artists fit into the traditional mold of artists – whether painter, musician, actor or something else – who simply go about the business of creating a work of art without focused regard either for their potential audience, or for the potential of their audience. I-shaped artists may be tremendously adept in their areas of expertise, but if the typical artist of the 21st century is I-shaped, Booth says, “We’re sunk.”

In contrast, T-shaped artists not only produce the work of their I-shaped counterparts, but also forge connections with the world and with individuals around them such that their audience is enjoined to experience their work in meaningful ways, to participate with them in the work of art. In other words, the T-shaped artist crosses the “I” with tools of agency, making an intersection with the T wherein the circuit of connection and meaning is completed between artist and audience. For Booth, the distinction between the “I” and the “T” is crucial in all the arts if they are to flourish in the brave new world: “Where artists are thriving around the country is where artists have the most tools of agency.”

Making Connections

Inherent in the role of T-shaped artists is their ability to apply themselves beyond the specifics of their own art and to cross cultural boundaries and make new connections. To be clear, this is not a new concept; it has simply become more of an imperative and will only become more so. For instance, the terms outreach and audience development have been in widespread use for decades, and one can only imagine the state of box offices everywhere if theatre managers were not continuously cultivating new audiences and actively developing the ones that already exist. But Booth does not want to rely on administrators and managers as the sole agents of artistic agency. For Booth, this agency is a continuum that extends from the individual artist, on the one hand, to entire arts organizations, on the other.

As Booth described an assignment for a class he taught at Juilliard, students were told to ride public transportation and to strike up conversations with complete strangers about classical music with the goal of making a personal connection with another individual, using this topic as a bridge. At the other end of the continuum, Booth described how a national symphony orchestra’s telemarketing organization made follow-up phone calls to customers who had bought tickets to a performance to see how they liked it. The idea with this follow-up step, of course, was not just to sell tickets but to cultivate the connection with the customer, to complete the circuit between the artist and the audience. If this bridge of meaning is firmly established at both ends, the circuit will not only survive but also prosper.

Booth also described how August Carnegie Hall actively reaches out to senior centers, juvenile detention centers and home-
According to Booth, young artists must recognize that crossing the ‘I’ of creation with tools of engagement is a rewarding and meaningful experience in its own right.

less shelters. Why? Because Carnegie Hall managers are trying to take what they know and do – their “I” – and open it to a wider, larger audience, crossing the “T.” On the other end of the continuum from this example, Booth described a conversation with a public bus driver who claimed not to have any connection with the arts. However, he said he played music with his family whenever they got together. Helping him to understand how playing music at home reflects the artistic experience is a basic act of artistic agency. Between Carnegie Hall and the bus driver exist many other examples of the tools of agency for individual artists and arts organizations. Talk-backs after plays between actors and audience are wonderful examples of this. Gallery openings, which have been around for centuries, give the clientele a chance to chat with artists about their work. And opera companies, symphonies and theatre companies routinely offer pre-show lectures and discussions on what the audience is about to see.

Reaching out to Younger Artists

Although Booth’s audience in Louisville comprised students, faculty and professionals of every age and ilk, his talk was clearly geared to the younger crowd, and with good reason. Their careers will have the greatest impact in the decades ahead. Reaching out to them as he did in Louisville in the early stages of their careers with insight about the difference between an I-shaped artist and a T-shaped one was clearly meant to encourage them to develop the tools of agency that will not only help their careers, but also help their audiences, thus helping everyone.

According to Booth, young artists must recognize that crossing the “I” of creation with tools of engagement is a rewarding and meaningful experience in its own right. And helping them learn this must then become part of their teachers’ role in training the artist. Artists must make connections with their audience with their art. This is a lesson that English novelist E.M. Forster had undoubtedly already learned by 1908 when he wrote his famous epigraph to Howard’s End, “Only connect…”

George Hillow is a member of United Scenic Artists Local 829, the union of professional theatrical designers. Since 1991, he has taught, designed and directed at Christopher Newport University in Newport News, VA. He is a regular contributor to Southern Theatre.

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WORLD-CLASS TRAINING IN THE HEART OF NEW YORK CITY
Dream of Singing on Broadway in a Pop/Rock Musical?
VP Boyle Shares 10 Tips to Get You There

by Matthew Edwards

When VP Boyle walks into a room to talk about singing pop/rock, you can’t help but stop, listen and write down every jewel that comes out of his mouth. Boyle is not the typical teacher - “I’m a rule breaker,” he says - but his success speaks volumes about his techniques. He has clients in every current Broadway show.

Boyle began his career as a performer working the audition circuit in New York City. Early in his career, he snuck a look at his audition card during a callback in a major U.S. casting office. He saw a page full of great notes with one negative quote at the bottom which struck him to the core – “Can’t Sing Pop/Rock.” Boyle closed the binder and put it back on the shelf. He went back to his apartment, pulled out a recording of Rent and started imitating Adam Pascal. Soon he was walking into pop/rock auditions with his “Adam Pascal voice,” landing callbacks. Within a few months, he found himself being considered as an understudy for Adam himself.

While continuing to perform, Boyle started Clemmons Casting with Dave Clemmons and began spending time on both sides of the table. In 1997, he began running a workshop in New York City that gained rapid popularity by bringing in top casting people to teach up-and-coming performers how to get cast. Through those workshops, he quickly gained a reputation – and a following – in the industry.

Attempting to consolidate Boyle’s wealth of knowledge into an article is impossible. To do his work justice, one would need to write an entire book. (Boyle has published a book on the mental side of the audition process, Audition Freedom, available on Amazon.com.) The best way to get his performance guidance is by being in the room with him. At this year’s SETC Convention in Louisville, Boyle presented his legendary workshop, Auditioning for Pop/Rock Musicals. Below I’ll highlight what I think stand out as the 10 tips that every teacher and singer can apply to their work when auditioning for pop/rock musicals.

1. The first “Kiss of Death” when singing pop/rock is vibrato. Vibrato belongs in legit singing, but even legit singing isn’t the same any more. There are only two truly legit soprano roles on Broadway right now, “Carlotta” and “Christine” in The Phantom of the Opera. Shows that used to be cast with legit voices are now being cast with mix belters (for instance, compare the 1957 cast of Cinderella to the most recent cast featuring Laura Osnes). Don’t be afraid to change the key of a pop/rock song in order to achieve your desired vocal quality. The difference of a half step or a step can be huge for a singer, and the panel won’t mind. Boyle says that he changes the key of the songs he gives his clients 80 percent of the time.

2. The second “Kiss of Death” is diction. In pop/rock there are no percussive T’s. The percussive T’s are replaced with D’s or they’re dropped off at the end. In most cases, pop/rock singers were never taught to sing with proper diction. So be very careful not to carry your musical theatre diction training into this repertoire. Otherwise you will come off as “too trained” in the audition room.

3. Breathy tone qualities and unique vocal textures are not only beneficial to your pop/rock singing, they are expected. There are a lot of great pop/rock songs out there, but the one you choose needs to fit your vocal capabilities. Some voices work better with songs by certain artists, so by all means allow your voice to live where it wants to live within the pop/rock spectrum. Some voices are more Gavin DeGraw while others are more James Blunt. Find people who sound like you and start there when picking songs. If you sound like Christina Perry you are probably not going to sing Christina Aguilera. All of this attention to pop/rock singing does not mean that you should abandon your legit technique. In order to show the panel that you are maintaining your vocal health, you must be prepared to jump from pop/rock to legit in the audition room whenever asked. You don’t have to perform your legit repertoire to operatic perfection, but you must be able to show that the voice is undamaged and you can sustain a pitch for more than a split second.

4. A perfectly clear legato line does not belong in your pop/rock repertoire. Legato lines do not convey the depth of emotion needed for pop/rock. Experiment with breaking up the vocal lines and trying out different styles of vocal delivery (for example, breathy, belty, mixy, rhythmic and smooth).

5. Use your entire body. Don’t be afraid to turn away from the panel, to use your arms, to close your eyes or to bend your legs. You need to own the space in the same way an authentic pop/rock performer owns the stage in a concert.

6. Pop/rock music is not about pretty singing. Expression of your intention and your point of view is everything. You must think of the psychological landscape of the song. What
You need to take a song because you love it and have to sing it. Don’t take a song just because your teacher or coach told you to do it. People in NYC won’t hold a song against you just because it’s overdone. Would they prefer not to hear “Alone” by Heart 10 times a day? Absolutely. But if you can rock it out and totally own it, sing it anyway.

Some final words of advice from Boyle: “Don’t go into that room to impress them or get the job. Say to yourself, ‘This is who I am, this is what I love, this is what I do. (And you can take it or leave it.)’ ... The audition process is about earning the trust of those in charge of casting.”

As the SETC Convention concluded, Boyle made his way back to New York City and finished packing for a new adventure and a new home in Los Angeles. This fall keep an eye out for Boyle in a new reality TV show, DramaMamas, which according to its Facebook page is “a television show that will document the journey of young aspiring Broadway hopefuls, encouraged by their DramaMamas, as Broadway veterans workshop an original musical with hopes to bring it to The Great White Way.”

For more information on that and other upcoming projects, follow Boyle on Twitter @VPBoyle.
In a workshop room at the 2013 SETC Convention, participants twist and turn. Then they balance, face down, on their fingertips and toes while attempting to undulate their bodies forward and backward in a wave-like progression. Though each student begins the same way, the exercise progresses according to what the student is experiencing at the time – through a progression of kicks, undulations and hip rotations, headstands, shoulder stands, handstands, forward rolls and a tiger leap.

Demonstrating, then facilitating their arduous progression through the exercise, is master teacher Stephen Wangh, who uses seemingly impossible physical exercises, like “the cat” above, to bring out physicalized emotions.

Wangh’s emphasis in his master classes is on movement as a basis for discovering emotions on stage. In an interview, he described how he uses – as Grotowski did – the plastiques exercises, of which “the cat” is an example, as a tool for questioning and discovering. “It’s not about the movement, it’s a way of asking questions,” he said. Wangh also notes that “being afraid [to attempt the difficult maneuvers] is okay because it’s not about the completion of the exercise, it’s about the doing of it.” By giving your ego something to do that is so difficult, keeping it busy, you free your body to access, and then express, emotions that the ego would otherwise stifle.

He has recently applied this theory to the art of teaching. In his new book, The Heart of Teaching, he questions traditional arts teaching techniques and offers alternative methods. He believes the teacher’s job is “un-teaching things that get in the way” of the creative process, in order to make a “safe space where people can rediscover what is there.” Academia is linear, with rules and curriculums. The arts are not.

The crux of Grotowski’s methods, or as he called it, the via negativa, is to remove resistance and obstacles that get in the way of an actor’s creative task. Wangh applies the same techniques to teaching students in the arts. He thinks that academic rules and fostering creativity are often at odds. He believes what actors need is “not the learning of a brand new skill. What they need is to unlearn an inhibition to a skill they’ve always had.” What we traditionally, as teachers, consider a mistake is actually what is interesting and workable, he says.

His principal goal is to “turn everything into something useful.” In his book, he describes how to accomplish that by:

- **Listening to students.** Foster an environment where students give themselves permission to make a mistake. By listening, you will know what environment each student needs.
- **Listening to space.** Bodies listen on an emotional level as they move through space. Encourage students to listen to the space their bodies are in.
- **Listening to bodies.** By careful observation (listening), teachers can discover where a student is blocked and suggest ways to unblock the area.

Stephen Wangh Shares Strategies for Unleashing Creativity

by Dawn Larsen

In a workshop room at the 2013 SETC Convention, participants twist and turn. Then they balance, face down, on their fingertips and toes while attempting to undulate their bodies forward and backward in a wave-like progression. Though each student begins the same way, the exercise progresses according to what the student is experiencing at the time – through a progression of kicks, undulations and hip rotations, headstands, shoulder stands, handstands, forward rolls and a tiger leap.

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*The Academy's alumni have received nominations for these and many other awards.*
Steve Bayless Receives Suzanne Davis Award

Steve Bayless, the executive director of the Florida Theatre Conference and a retired longtime music theatre teacher in St. Petersburg, FL, was honored with SETC’s highest award for one of its own, the Suzanne M. Davis Memorial Award, at the 2013 SETC Awards Banquet. Bayless has been active in SETC for many years. He previously served as SETC State Representative for Florida for five years, on the SETC Executive Committee as State Representative for three years and as co-chair of both the Florida Theatre Conference and the SETC Transfer/Undergraduate Auditions Committees. Currently SETC’s Administrative Vice-President, Bayless previously served as Programming Vice-President, playing a key role in planning workshops, keynotes and other events for the 2011, 2012 and 2013 conventions.

Former colleague Donna White was among those who made remarks at the Awards Banquet to recognize Steve Bayless’ many contributions. Excerpts are below:

My friend and recently my boss (as the executive director of the Florida Theatre Conference) Steve Bayless and I go back a number of years. He got his BA from Florida State University and started teaching in 1970. When I arrived at Gibbs High School in 1974, we became fast friends and artists. Our first musical that year was Dracula Baby, with a very large cast to include lots of “Monsters.” I think after the first 25 years of teaching together, we didn’t have to talk, we just knew what to do. I described Steve as shy and organized. He described me as intense and driven. I am not sure today – Steve is shy, but surely organized, and I am so retired that I’m not often intense about anything except this evening’s presentation. Over these 38-plus years together, we have been known as the “odd couple and/or the dynamic duo.”

As the Pinellas County Teacher of the Year in 1995, Steve had this to say, “The arts are the only outlet kids have to express themselves. For much of the time, they sit in classes and regurgitate what they heard in a lecture. But in music, dance and theatre, they have to study and practice and create. You just can’t cram the night before the exam.”

And now, Steve, here is a tribute from one of your thousands of former students, Michael Vasallo, magnet coordinator and assistant principal for Pinellas County Center for the Arts at Gibbs High School. “Mr. B’s influence has always reached far beyond the four walls of his classroom. If you looked within those walls, you would find students for whom he was advisor, mentor and father figure. His program exposed students to worlds they would have never dreamed of visiting, whether it was backstage at Disney, visiting college campuses or performing for a black-tie affair. Beyond his classroom, his desire to improve educational opportunities for students was never-ending. Steve’s involvement in FTC, and later SETC, was only a natural progression for a teacher who not only preached, but advocated for the post-secondary readiness of his students two decades before it became a catch-phrase attached to school grading. I know my path in life would have been much different, had I not been enrolled in his program at Gibbs High School. Congratulations, Mr. B!”

Also at the Awards Banquet, former student Jason Gillman, a Broadway actor and owner of Gotham Headshots, spoke about Bayless’ influence on him. Excerpts are below:

Steve was one of those teachers who gave heart and soul to see his students succeed. If it were not for Steve’s guidance early on, I might not have had the opportunities that were presented to me. He was instrumental in setting me and my classmates up for success through his foresight to bring us to SETC.

Wangh

(Continued from Page 28)

He raises a significant question in his book. Considering how few actors actually make a living doing stage work, why are we teaching skills that performance students may never use? His responses, as well as being thought-provoking, provide more ammunition for us to utilize in defense of arts programs in these days of dwindling budgets. He notes two key reasons. First, in teaching through questioning, we are nurturing transferable skills that apply not only to other vocations, but also to life: listening, working with space and finding conflict and the emotion to deal with it. Second, we can foster meta-lessons, “not values as concepts or commandments [traditional teaching], but practical ways of living and working,” such as living in the moment, and balancing safety and risk-taking.


Dawn Larsen is an associate professor of theatre at Francis Marion University in Florence, SC and a former secretary of SETC.
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2013 SETC Young Scholar’s Award Winners

Katherine Cornwell McHargue, Pretty on the Outside, Ugly on the Inside: 19th Century Peking Opera

Katherine Cornwell McHargue, the undergraduate winner, expects to received a BA in theatre from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in December 2013. She is interested in pursuing opportunities in theatre, film and television. **Abstract:** Peking Opera was at its height of popularity in the 19th century. Women had been legally banned from acting, so males filled these female or dan roles. This led to young boys being recruited for this purpose, often purchased from poor, uneducated families. They would live with a master tutor or at a school in connection with a troupe and within a year would be performing to earn revenue. Acting was regarded as a lowly occupation so the boys had little protection from the prevalent unfair and arduous treatment. Training and performing were harsh and demanding and the boys would get beatings for the slightest mistakes, which in extreme cases led to death. Exploitation took place by their masters as they were often kept against their will beyond their contracted period, as well as used as male prostitutes by the literati elite. Fortunately on the brighter side, numerous Peking Opera actors had opportunities to perform and become favorites at court which often yielded better treatment. Some also became very popular and well known. Many even praised their teachers and were thankful for their severe and rigid training.

Bradley Stephenson, Reclaiming Wholeness: The Dramaturgy of Disability in D.W. Gregory’s Dirty Pictures

Bradley Stephenson, the graduate winner, is a PhD student in theatre at the University of Missouri. His research interests include dramatic criticism, disability studies, interactive theatre and performance of contemporary ritual in secret societies. **Abstract:** Literary scholars have long noted the use of disability as a metaphor for oppressive power structures, and many theatre practitioners are working with a new “disability aesthetic.” Pulitzer nominee D.W. Gregory’s new play *Dirty Pictures* takes a daring and subversive approach to the portrayal of disability in mainstream theatre that warrants more attention from scholars and producers alike. Using disability studies as a lens for a literary-critical analysis, this project explores how the character of Judy, a feisty bartender and short-order cook with diplegia cerebral palsy, navigates her life in an able-bodied and anxiety-filled culture. Gregory uses dramaturgical techniques such as intersectionality, humor, sexual taboos and photography to emphasize Judy’s agency by re-presenting her disability in a way that challenges an able-bodied aesthetic. Throughout the play, Judy rejects victimization and seeks personal empowerment, not trying to “overcome” her disability, but rather to see herself as a whole agent, and by doing so perhaps to make others see her the same way. In *Dirty Pictures*, Gregory challenges traditional literary uses of disability as mere metaphor without resorting to the didacticism of a “message play,” demonstrating how theatre can do liberating work in reclaiming wholeness from a denaturing cultural gaze.

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