

# WOMEN AND THEATRE

Spring 2013



Photo by Daniel Nussbaum

## Letter from the President

What a thrill and privilege it is to step into the role of President of the Women and Theatre Program. I still recall my first preconference, participating as a reader in the Student Jane Chambers Reading at the precon in Toronto at the Buddies in Bad Times Theatre. I follow in the footsteps of so many feminist scholars and activists I admire: **Jennifer Brody**, **Lisa Merrill**, **Sara Warner**, **Ashley Lucas** and my predecessor and collaborator over the past two years, **Cici Aragon**. I am fresh from the ATHE mid-year meeting, which I was fortunate to attend along with other focus groups reps, which served as a reminder to me of what a unique organization WTP is within the ATHE structure. Along with VASTA, we boast among the largest membership of both scholars and practitioners. We are recognized for an impressive track record of vibrant multi-disciplinary

preconferences co-sponsored with other focus groups as well as solo ones. Our 2012 preconference in DC was a great example of WTP's commitment to community involvement and diversified programming that engages feminist scholarship and performance practices. We owe our thanks to the generous support from **Maya Roth** and her colleagues at the Davis Performing Arts Center as well as the collaboration with the Latino/a Focus Group and [History Matters/Back to the Future](#). In addition to a day of panels and performances by our WTP members as well as a keynote address by **Gay Gibson Cima**, winner of the WTP Lifetime Achievement Award for Scholarly Contributions, we were able to feature a performance by **Violeta Luna**, cosponsored by LFG, as well as an "Evening of Scenes by Historic Women Playwrights" featuring celebrity performers, which was open to the public

(standing room only!) and followed by a lovely reception.

As our new VP of conference planning, **Lisa Hall-Hagen** points out in her article, this year's ATHE conference location—The Hyatt Grand Cypress in Orlando FL—presents some unique logistical challenges for our preconference. Indeed, many of our past collaborators, such as LGBTQ, BTA, and LFG are forgoing a full precon this year. However, plans are afoot to collaborate with them on a cabaret. Nonetheless, we see the precon as an opportunity to continue to shape our organization as it evolves and grows, an opportunity to revisit our mission and assess our values and priorities. As always, the precon offers us essential space for the dynamic artists, scholars, and activists who are WTP to connect with one another.

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## President's letter continued

We are working to hold everyone's needs equally and to bring you a vibrant preconference with meaningful programming and opportunities for engagement with our WTP community.

During my time at the helm I will strive to continue and grow the important work of our organization. WTP is such a valuable resource for feminist scholars, artists, and activists. I hope, along with our incoming Graduate Student Rep, **Kristen Ann Rogers**, to continue the work of outgoing GSR, **Heidi Schmidt** (now our treasurer!) in growing our graduate student membership and making sure they take advantage of the support and informal mentoring that our membership offers. I also hope to bring even more energy and financial support to the Jane Chambers Award. The feminist playwrights that we recognize, and the plays that the JC Award honors, are one of the most significant legacies of WTP. Equal

representation of female playwrights on all of our stages is one of the most measurable goals of our feminist mission, and yet we are still not there. The Jane Chambers Award makes a crucial contribution to that mission. Over the years JC has supported countless up-and-coming, as well as established playwrights, to get their work out there and take it to the next level. Unfortunately, it is an increasing challenge to maintain WTP's values of inclusiveness—submission to the contest is free—and offer a fair and meaningful award to the winning playwrights and the actors who give their time to bring the plays to life in the staged readings at the conference. I put out a humble plea to all of us to think creatively about how we can continue to fund this important work. Perhaps your university offers grants or you are aware of supporters we can reach out to. Please reach out to me or the Main Contest Coordinator, Maya Roth if you can help or have suggestions. [jenscottmob@gmail.com](mailto:jenscottmob@gmail.com)  
[mer46@georgetown.edu](mailto:mer46@georgetown.edu)

I close with thanks to our newsletter editors, **Summer Moshy** and **Jessica Del Vecchio** for their work on this edition as well as to **Maria Beach**, our Archivist Historian, who continues to quietly work to collect and corral WTP materials for future generations. I also extend thanks to **Rose Malague** our ATHE conference planner, who vetted and coordinated a slew of WTP sponsored proposals for the main conference. We were pleased with our acceptance rate and I am looking forward to hearing everyone's work in August!

Have a great Spring Semester!

**Jen-Scott Mobley**

President, Women and Theatre Program of ATHE

Visiting Professor, Rollins College,  
Department of Theatre Arts and Dance



"[T]he precon offers us essential space for the dynamic artists, scholars, and activists who are WTP to connect with one another."

**Jen-Scott Mobley**



"We do not need to work toward freedom. We need to work toward long-term commitments and a fierce interdependence with all women. We need to stage a real state of emergency, to perform interventionist history and memory, with the equally flawed feminists who paved our way and who stand not just with us, but within us."

**Gay Gibson Cima**

## Highlights from the 2012 Preconference

By Maya Roth

The range of perspectives and communities who interacted in the context of our "Staging Dissent, Performing Patriotism: Feminist Engagement in Social/Civic Dialogues" conference was invigorating, creating a multi-vocal vitality and sense of significance. Kudos to Jen-Scott, especially, for creating a flexible, complex structure, imagined in concert with the Executive Board, for engaging WTP's community and activist alliances via diverse forums—roundtables, workshops, performances, conference papers, and the keynote.

Three of the most vivid examples of engaging allies unfolded by tapping DC artists for the Jane Chambers reading of *Agnes' Baby*, working with the Latino Theater Focus Group to co-present **Violeta Luna's** haunting performance art "ritual of memory" *NK603: Action for Performer & e-Maíz* which so vividly enacted the degradation to bodies, Mexican culture, farm communities and the earth wrought by genetically-engineered corn and agribusiness, and [History Matters/Back to the Future](#), the NYC-based initiative culminating in

the evening's highly successful celebrity reading of historic scenes by American women playwrights.

Certainly it was a high to experience the WTP community, and our allies, animating the university and theatrical hub we've cultivated at Georgetown. In turn, gifting our space of the Davis Center and contacts with WTP and others felt like a kind of advocacy and activism that shifted the university's boundaries and DC theatrical ecology, as well as conference reach, if only for a day. I loved how the day cycled through a range of encounters, moving from ones most closely centered in WTP's community, over coffee and in seminar rooms, to the day's finale—the highly-successful celebrity reading orchestrated by **Joan Vail Thorne** for the premiere event by her [History Matters/Back to the Future](#) initiative—that successfully drew a full-house audience (and reception) of ATHE friends, DC professional theatre artists, Georgetown folks, and DC audience members. It was exhilarating to have a WTP Conference end with such excitement among our friends, not only ourselves, no doubt enhanced by the press we garnered through hosting the formidable talent of **Kathy Chalfant**, **Tamara Tunie**, and **Maryanne Plunkett**, and tapping our Davis Center publicity engine; that in turn enabled us to place public attention on gender disparities in production as well as works by

"forgotten" women playwrights, such as **Zoë Akins**, **Jane Bowles**, **Alice Childress**, **Rachel Crothers**, **Angelina Grimké**, **Lillian Hellman**, **Georgia Douglas Johnson**, **Fay Kanin**, and **Maurine Watkins**. While the exceptional staged reading proved the stage-worthiness of rarely-produced women's plays, the project's multicultural casting and scene selections invited ripples of conversation about current and past representations of gender, race and class onstage. To host that in the same day as **Violeta Luna's** work, which left so many reeling, was a coup, particularly when presented in tandem with the critical and creative framing of our other forums.

For me, as I sensed for many in our membership, one of the most profound moments of the conference included honoring **Gay Gibson Cima** and **Aileen Hendricks**, both of who have helped us to tune into issues of race, class, and activist community for decades, albeit in very different spheres. Hearing Cima, who won our Career Achievement Award in recognition of Exceptional Accomplishments and Scholarly Contributions, deliver her keynote speech was revelatory. Like so much of her work in recent years, the keynote fused theoretical acuity and historical rigor seamlessly, using performance studies to activate our

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## Preconference continued

heightened sense of social responsibility and ongoing investment, as she drew on the “ghosts” and lessons of the past.

Cima drew parallels between many of the “practices of the nineteenth-century abolitionists” and “the present-day anti-trafficking movement,” including “the evangelical, Christianized practice of hailing the spread of democracy” and rescue, for instance. “The trafficked, in contrast, across the centuries,” she wrote, “represent themselves as intelligent equals or superiors, fighting brilliantly and collaboratively against local as well as global forces all the while living lives beyond the fact of their having been trafficked. These radical activists from the past remind us to develop broad-based, fluid feminist performance practices that unveil our blind spots and help us end the commodification of human beings—partly by letting go of the very idea of women’s ‘liberation.’ We do not need to work toward freedom.

We need to work toward long-term commitments and a fierce interdependence with all women. We need to stage a real state of emergency, to perform interventionist history and memory, with the equally flawed feminists who paved our way and who stand not just with us, but within us.” Certainly, too, one of the most rewarding aspects for me was hearing testimonies from colleagues and past students on Cima’s influence on their lives, scholarship, teaching, and activism.

My last highlight to single out—with apologies to those I missed due to hosting!— was the History Matters Roundtable, moderated by **Jill Dolan**. The roundtable was overflowing, filled with panelists and participants whose relationship to history and (women in) theater varies significantly. All felt some sense of immediacy that there remains work to be done, whether from the professional standpoint or the university one, which Cima reminded us will always be so, requiring sustained, multi-pronged investment.

The forum fostered cross-fertilization, punctuated by several moments when presentations ricocheted into cross-generational conversation across the room. Topics included online databases of early plays by women; (student) actresses of color; the politics of university season planning and the role of activism to influence seasons on and off campuses; and examples of feminist infusions, such as at the Mint Theatre, or as supported by the UMBC Provost, when framed as an equal education concern. The conversation expanded most when **Heather Nathans** sparked our curricular imagination by talking about how she engages students in collaborative archival history, together delving into a single town’s people and performances. This roundtable, like Cima’s keynote, connected to so many of the through-lines of the day.

It was an exceptional conference— thanks to all who helped us to delve deep, to engage diversity, to activate feminism, to connect allies and spheres of focus.



Maya E. Roth holds the Della Rosa Distinguished Professorship in Theater at Georgetown University, where she serves as Chair of the Department of Performing Arts and was the founding Artistic Director of the Davis Performing Arts Center. She is an active scholar, director and dramaturg, with expertise on the work of Timberlake Wertenbaker, feminist performance and cross-cultural adaptations to stage. Since 2007, she has stewarded WTP's Jane Chambers Contest for Women Playwrights and has in recent years worked closely with international-attuned playwrights such as Wertenbaker, Heather Raffo, and Christine Evans. Her essays appear in numerous anthologies and journals. As director-dramaturg she has worked extensively on ensemble theater and professional readings of new and classic works, including at DC venues including the Kennedy Center Page to Stage Festival, National Museum for Women in the Arts, and Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater.

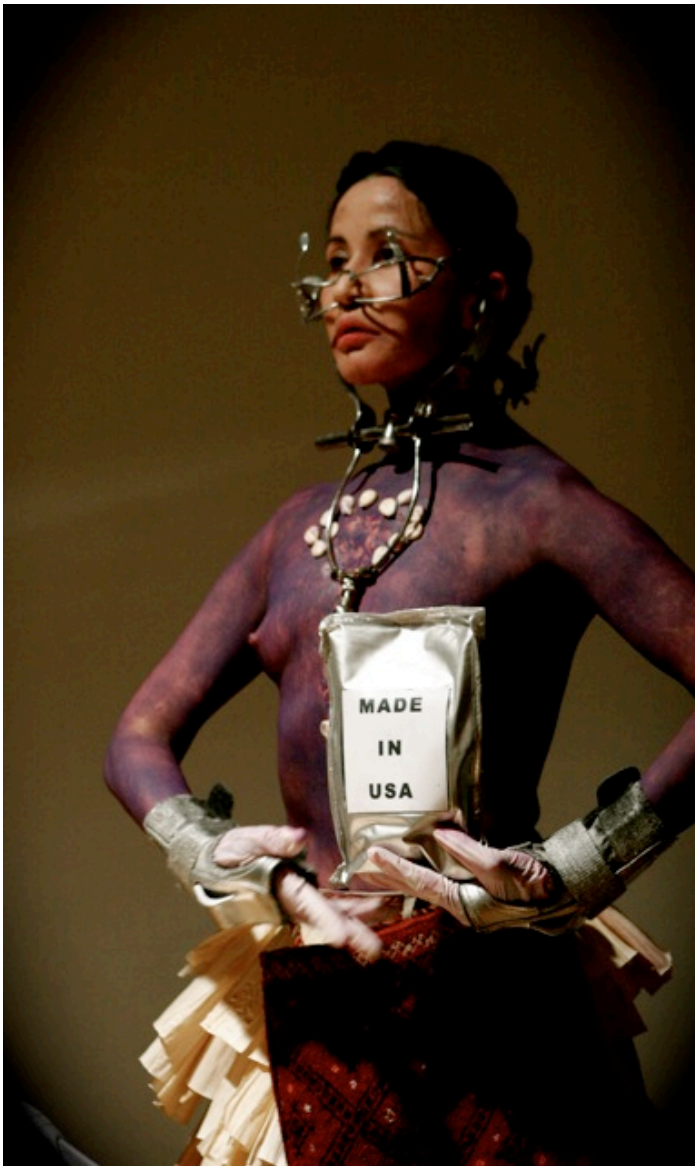


Photo by Greg Crane

"Violeta Luna's haunting performance art "ritual of memory" . . . so vividly enacted the degradation to bodies, Mexican culture, farm communities and the earth wrought by genetically-engineered corn and agribusiness."

**Maya Roth**



Photo by Nikolay Khalezin

## Violeta Luna

### NK 603: Action for Performer and e-Maíz

This performance work has been conceived as a reflection on the reality of genetically engineered corn, and its devastating consequences on life. For Mexicans and many other Latin Americans, maíz nurtures the body, and also the soul, as native sacred texts tell the story of how our first people were made out of maize. As such, it plays a symbolic role in rituals, and it is also one of our key traditional food sources, from the American Southwest, to Patagonia. NK 603 is the name of one of the many genetically modified corn seeds available in the market. *NK 603: Action for Performer and e-Maíz* is

an interactive piece. Live performance is punctuated by the active intervention of video. Electronic music by Luna's collaborator David Molina, sustains the narrative through the mixing of recorded texts. Throughout its 45 minutes of duration, physical sequences and actions are clashed with violent and subversive imagery, as a kind of ritual of memory and resistance to the constant invasion of technology and market forces that threaten the way of life of entire communities.

Description taken from: [www.violetaluna.com](http://www.violetaluna.com)



## 2012 Jane Chambers Award

### A Note from the Coordinators

By Maya Roth

WTP proudly recognized **Jen Silverman** as the 2012 Jane Chambers Contest Winner for her boldly creative and profound new play *Still*— which has more recently also been honored as a 2012 National Playwrights Conference Finalist. Called “fierce,” “poetic” and “risky” by Jane Chambers Contest judges, Silverman’s indelible play, *Still*, rose from 140 entries and three rounds of adjudication by 15 feminist scholars and artists (more than half coming from our membership). The play excavates a distinctive cluster of ruptures and relationships that arise when forty-one-year old Morgan’s baby is born dead. The play’s striking images—a pumpkin cradled like a baby, a masked midwife, an adult-sized dead baby who roams the world, a punk and pregnant dominatrix—create a highly original dramatic journey of mothering and mortality, love and loss. The profound heartbreak, surprising humor, and desire that ripple across this play,

combined with the freshness of the language, and the risks *Still* takes to map unsentimental representations of women’s experiences rarely staged, give this play powerful theatrical force—and cultural power. WTP presented a professional reading of *Still* (featuring our own **Marietta Hedges** in the lead, alongside DC actors, which I directed) at the ATHE Conference in Washington, DC August 3<sup>rd</sup>, the day after Silverman was honored at the ATHE Awards Ceremony. For interviews with the playwright, see the video clips posted on ATHE’s website and a [web-published interview](#) between Silverman and the woman whose experience inspired the play.

Silverman studied at Brown University and received her MFA from the Iowa Playwrights Workshop. An Affiliated Artist with New Georges as well as a member of Youngblood, she has developed her plays with The Lark, NY Stage & Film, the Bay Area Playwrights Festival, hotINK (NYC), The Brick (Brooklyn), Leviathan Lab (NYC), and



Photo by Marilu Snyders

“I am fascinated by characters whose search for intimacy, buried truths, or the dead leads them across established borders—of nationality, gender, sexuality. I’m compelled by communities or cultures struggling with the dynamic energy—and the danger—of globalization. I want to hear voices onstage that are often effectively silenced. I want to see characters who act in opposition to the expectations of their genders. I want to see transgender characters, and characters in the process of transformations of all kinds.”

Jen Silverman

the Seven Devils Playwrights Conference. *Still*, which is harrowing and irreverent, has received selected readings in recent months. Silverman’s *Crane Story* premiered off-Broadway in 2011 with The Playwrights Realm and *The Education of Macoloco* won the 2009 Samuel French Off-Off Broadway Play Festival. In 2012 her new play *Akarui* premiered at Cleveland Public Theatre and she wrote *The Dangerous House of Pretty Mbane*, commissioned by InterAct Theatre and the National New Play Network. In addition to extensive travel/artist residencies in Asia, [\(continued on the next page\)](#)



Bethany Wood graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in December 2012 with a PhD in Theatre and Drama. She is currently coordinating the 2013 Jane Chambers Student Competition and will be chairing the ATHE panel “All in Good Fun?: Tracing the Commodification of Race in American Musicals 1879-1927.”

## 2012 Jane Chambers Student Award

By Bethany Wood

The 2012 Jane Chambers Student Competition award went to *Agnes’ Baby* by **Olivia Briggs**, a dramatic writing student at NYU Tisch School of the Arts Asia. WTP members **Lynn Deboeck** from the University of Kansas, **Eleanor Speer Owicki** of the University of Texas-Austin, and **Bethany Wood** from the University of Wisconsin-Madison served as judges for the competition. *Agnes’ Baby* explores issues of sex trafficking, politics, and

privilege through the relationship between Agnes, a Republican congresswoman, and a Korean prostitute working under the name Baby. The play unfolds as Agnes attempts to control her relationship with Baby and maintain her public image while her colleagues and constituents work to control her. Through Briggs’s intriguing characters, the play confronts boundaries between nationality and privilege, the personal and the political, as well as love and power. WTP presented a staged reading of *Agnes’ Baby* at the 2012 preconference at Georgetown University. DC actress **Rachel Bridges** played the role of Agnes, [\(continued on the next page\)](#)

## JC Award continued

she has enjoyed residencies at the MacDowell Colony, the Millay Colony and New Harmony writer's retreat.

Details on all of the plays honored by the 2012 Jane Chambers Contest – and the playwright bios—are posted on [WTP's website](#), as are our [archives](#). Very briefly, our runner up for the 2012 Jane Chambers Contest went to **Meryl Cohn** (the 2009 Jane Chambers Winner) for her comedy-drama *The Final Say*, a moving and at times madcap cross-generational play about who has the right to stage a Holocaust story—questioning whether any story can truly be owned. We named four honorable mention citations: **Nastaran Ahmadi** for her play *Exile*; **Susan Ferrara** for her play *Buzz*; **Patricia Montley** for *Kali Dances*; and **Tammy Ryan** for *Tar Beach*. The Student Jane Chambers

Winner was *Agnes' Baby* by **Olivia Briggs** (of Tisch NYU, Singapore) with a student Runner-Up, going to *Samsara* by **Lauren Yee**, (UC San Diego). All the plays are striking, with significant roles for women, rendered in diversity, with topics ranging from global identities to a working-class coming-of-age family drama, from a multiracial (multi-religious) mystery play to a highly-intertextual rendering of the working life and complex death of charismatic Shakespearean director **Buzz Goodbody**. All present the potential to generate significant feminist dialogues and theatrical excitement.

Please help us to create buzz—and to advocate for the production of these, and other, new works by women for the stage. All of the works honored struck us as feminist and artistically vital, ripe for staging. Our 2012 honorees can serve an array of production venues, cast sizes, and feminist politics, and the playwrights

ranged from established writers with many productions or publications to emergent writers seeking to break the workshop/reading cycle. They are all writers of creativity, conscience, and feminist relevance. Keep them on your radars . . . recommend their works for productions seasons.

Finding plays of great talent is the obvious joy to this process, providing a window into excellent new works for the stage by women writers. Participating in dialogue about what constitutes feminist playwriting is another reward, and education, for those of us who read the works. Thank you to all of last year's readers/judges including **Maria Beach, Sara Chambers, Kim Dark, Jyl Felman, Sarah Ferguson, Sara Freeman, Lisa Hagen, Susan Lynskey, Jen-Scott Mobley, Jojo Ruf, Sarah Sexton, Deb Sivigny, Christine Woodworth**, and **Christine Young** who joined me in adjudication last year.

## JC Student Award continued

and **KyoSin**, a recent graduate of The Theatre Lab of the Dramatic Arts, played the role of Baby. The location of the conference in Washington DC served to underscore several themes in the play, which takes place during Baby's visits to Agnes's DC apartment as Agnes works to navigate the political fallout from her attempt to cosponsor a pro-choice bill. As Agnes discusses reproductive rights with Baby, her legislative crisis raises uncomfortable questions regarding Baby's status as an illegal immigrant forced into the sex trade and working in Agnes's home. While Agnes encourages Baby to report her traffickers, Baby's eventual decision to testify against them forces Agnes to confront her role as an economically and politically privileged woman employing Baby's body.

Briggs's play contains several compelling scenes, including Baby's performance of the classic Korean song "Arirang," which she sings in order to comfort Agnes after the congresswoman's party forces her to withdraw sponsorship from the pro-choice bill. KyoSin's beautiful rendition of this song served as one of the most moving moments of the WTP reading. The play also portrays several dramatic moments, such as Agnes's agonizing decision to send Baby to the hospital alone in a cab after discovering Baby's injuries from an attack by a previous customer. Baby's penultimate confrontation with Agnes, in which she threatens to expose Agnes if the congresswoman refuses to serve as a witness against the men controlling the sex workers, works to resist reductive understandings of American altruism in relation to women's rights and foregrounds the sacrifices of power and comfort required to challenge the status quo. Panglossian Productions of

Williamsburg, Virginia will present a reading of *Agnes' Baby* in March as part of their developmental online reading series.



Baby [reciting a translation of "Arirang"]:  
"Just as there are many stars in the sky,  
There are many dreams in our heart. I am  
crossing over Arirang pass. There, over  
there, that mountain is Baekdu Mountain,  
Where, even in the middle of winter,  
flowers bloom." (*To Agnes*) It is for hope.

**Olivia Briggs, *Agnes' Baby***

## Joan Lipkin

# Sticks and Stones: Sluts Talk Back

At the WTP conference in Washington DC last summer, long time theater artist, activist and WTP member **Joan Lipkin** shared excerpts and an overview of her exciting latest project, *Sticks and Stones: Sluts Talk Back* and discussed possible models for implementation in other communities and institutions. Named the Arts and Education Council's 2012 Arts Innovator of the Year, Lipkin conceived *Sluts Talk Back* as a flexible collective of women and men to respond creatively to the escalating war on women. Across the political spectrum, there has been a rise in defamatory language against women, as well as an increased introduction in legislation policing women's rights to privacy and health care. According to Lipkin, "We are elected officials, performers, writers, musicians, activists, and social service administrators who believe it is time to say, 'STOP!' to the recent rush of misogyny."

For their inaugural event, they partnered with Left Bank Books, Missouri's oldest independent book store and a precious community asset that is committed to freedom of expression. In an interesting tweak of timing, the standing room only event took place on the same day that a bust of conservative talk show host Rush Limbaugh was interned in Jefferson City, the state capital of Missouri, despite public protests.

*Sluts Talk Back* received widespread coverage in St Louis press and on NPR as an artistic response to Limbaugh. Consequently, Lipkin has staged several events exploring the relationship between pejorative language, societal attitudes, and repressive legislation in a variety of settings. She has produced *Sluts Talk Back* performances for [MOLLI's List](#), a PAC that is committed to raising money to support progressive women legislators throughout the state of Missouri. Other recent *Sluts Talk Back* events have including leading a workshop at an International Theatre Symposium at Washington and Lee University with faculty members, students and conference attendees and then devising and presenting a performance based on their work. In March, in honor of Women's History Month, she presented an interactive performance that showcased both dance and monologues and then provided opportunities for the students to discuss their own experiences and create material. "I am very interested in looking at language," says Lipkin. "I like to think that *Sluts Talk Back* might build on the groundbreaking work that Eve Ensler has

"So Miss Fluke, and the rest of you Feminazis, here's the deal: If we are going to pay for your contraceptives, and thus pay for you to have sex, we want something for it. We want you post the videos online so we can all watch."

**Rush Limbaugh, 3/1/12**



done with the Vagina Monologues and it is a great project for theater, women and gender studies classes." Currently, she is working on a compilation of monologues and seeking contributions.

In other recent projects this year, Lipkin co-produced *Briefs*, St Louis's first festival of short LGBT plays (see page 9 of the newsletter for more information), continues to direct the DisAbility Project and the *Big, Fat, LGBT Show* and spent a month as the guest artist in residence for the new Mosaic Theatre Company at Auburn University in Alabama teaching and developing a theater piece. In August, she will return to Yale University to develop and direct *Kaleidoscope*, an original piece about diversity on campus featuring upper classmen.

For more info on her work, see [www.uppityco.com](http://www.uppityco.com)



# Member Feature

## That Uppity Theatre Company Finds Exciting New Short LGBT Play Festival

By Joan Lipkin

Back by popular demand with all new material, February 28 - March 3, That Uppity Theatre Company, in partnership with *The Vital VOICE*, produced its second festival of seven short LGBT plays, collectively called *Briefs*. As the founder of the festival and its executive producer, I hope this will be an annual event in St Louis and can serve as a national model for other companies and on college campuses. I think it is very doable.

Last year, *Briefs* sold out all four performances before we even opened, necessitating bringing in additional chairs and rethinking our floor plan. More than a traditional theatrical production, *Briefs* is a community event, bringing together a diverse audience from the LGBT community, straight allies, local businesses, and local artists. Our slogan this year was, "Come for the play, stay for the party!"

The event was staged at La Perla, a

historic downtown bank renovated for events of all kinds with a 150-person capacity. The space stayed open for at least an hour after every performance so people could visit, have a drink and dance, and every show was followed by a short question and answer session. A DJ also spun music between plays, and a cash bar as well as valet parking was available.

Additionally, this year, we had two special community events. On Thursday, February 28, we offered a \$5 preview and pizza party for area youth, reaching out to area Gay Straight Alliances, theatre clubs, and campus LGBT groups. On Sunday, March 3, our final performance matinee honored LGBT seniors from groups including SAGE, Primetimers, and Older Lesbians Advocating for Change (OLAC) and their friends with a complimentary brunch before the show.

The short play format in *Briefs* provides productive opportunities for the multiple perspectives of several directors and playwrights and for the pieces to speak in relation to each other. I also think in this economy it is essential that ticket prices be as affordable as possible in order to attract and welcome a diverse audience, so we had one of the lowest ticket prices in town. We secured a matching grant from the Regional Arts Commission, sold advertising for our program and



solicited underwriting from patrons. Everyone who worked on the show was paid.

We partnered again with *The Vital VOICE*, the leading LGBT publication in Missouri, and this turned out to be fortuitous in terms of social media promotion, drawing on their large readership. "*The Vital VOICE* always strives to create and deliver new and exciting projects for the LGBT community and our straight allies. *Briefs* is a celebration of our community that will leave audiences entertained, informed and uplifted," said Darin Slyman, CEO and Publisher of Vital VOICE Media.

The plays of *Briefs* were selected from playwrights nationwide for the second-annual production that included: **(continued on the next page)**



## Georgia State University's Short LGBTQ Play Festival

By Frank Miller

One of the great things I get out of the ATHE conference each year is inspiration. The meetings and panels and the chance to interact with colleagues from around the world usually fill me with ideas for plays to do, teaching methods and research avenues. And most people will agree that Joan Lipkin is one of the most inspiring people you'll ever meet. So it's no surprise that attending her panel in Washington on producing *Briefs*, her

yearly festival of short LGBTQ plays, got my wheels turning.

At my home school, Georgia State University, I get to do the summer show every other year. Mostly I've used this as my true laboratory, the chance to do plays I've uncovered during my research on gay Canadian theatre. But Joan's presentation got me thinking about the issues of my life as a gay theatre professor and artist in the very red state of Georgia.

Living in Decatur, a suburb of Atlanta, can be like existing within a wonderful cocoon.

**(continued on the next page)**

Frank Miller is head of the theatre program at Georgia State University, where he also lectures. His books on film include *Leading Men and Leading Couples*. As a theatre artist, he has directed productions of *Titus Andronicus*, *Cloud 9* and *How I Learned to Drive*.

## Uppity Theatre continued

"Black Eye" by **Carolyn Gage**, "Are You Married?" written and directed by **Joan Lipkin**; "My Jesus Year," by **Tony Foster**, directed by **Lee Anne Mathews**; "Waiting for the Skell," by **EM Lewis**, directed by **Bonnie Taylor**; "Lady and the Tramp," performed by **Lola van Ella** and **Sammy the Tramp**; "Surprise," by **Ken Haller**, directed by **Michael B. Perkins**; and "Zoo Story 2.0," by **Rich Espey**, directed by **Marty Stanberry**.

We had a reading committee comprised of critics, academics and theater professionals, each independently submitting their top fifteen choices to the festival producers who then selected the final pieces for production.

Part of my interest in founding the festival was to provide more opportunities for work about lesbian representation on stage and to do it within the context of a diverse audience. Consequently, in addition to seasoned theatergoers, we attracted one of the most diverse audiences in St Louis, including people who rarely go to the theater. And from the perspective of community building, it provided an increasingly rare instance of lesbians and gay men, members of the trans

and intersex communities and allies sharing a cultural event together.

"I was delighted to be directing. *Briefs*, a tremendous addition to St Louis theatre, [that] provides a gritty, witty and articulate sampling of LGBT and allied playwrights. This year's festival of 10-minute plays, like last year's, presents a deeply personal and yet universal patchwork of plays. This showcase resonates and delights any theatre goer looking for insightful and powerful new work for the theatre," said **Christopher Limber**, who directed "Black Eye." Limber is also the education director for the Shakespeare Festival St Louis.

According to Associate Producer Michael B. Perkins who is also directing, "*Briefs* inspires conversations during the event and long afterward, bringing an audience together that wouldn't otherwise interact. We learn so much not only by doing, but by watching our peers." The directors for the festival had monthly meetings to discuss casting and other production issues and the occasion of the festival is one of the only times that several directors in the area have had this time to meet and brainstorm together.

Bonnie Taylor, a director who also received her PhD in Comparative

Literature and MA in Dramatic Literature from Washington University, returned to direct again this year, another short play by EM Lewis. "*Briefs* is distinctive because the festival was the first of its kind in St Louis last year and it brings together gay and non-gay communities modeled by a diverse group of directors and material written by both gay and lesbian and allied playwrights."

**Frank Miller**, a theater professor at Georgia State University heard me talk about the festival last summer at ATHE and felt inspired to initiate a similar festival of his own at GSU this summer (see his article on page 9 of the newsletter for more information). There are many ways to quantify success. Sold out houses is one way. Providing opportunities for established and emerging writers is another. And encouraging academics around the country to explore this model in their own community is yet another. I hope many more campuses will adapt and consider this idea. It can provide opportunities for many student directors as well as expose students to a variety of writers and issues. While the plays may be brief, the possibilities are endless.

For more info, please see our website at [www.uppityco.com](http://www.uppityco.com).

## GSU continued

I don't hang with people who aren't open to alternative sexualities, nor do I go to many places where I'm going to come face-to-face with homophobia. Yet, I frequently have to face it in the classroom, and I've had students report about their own encounters with homophobia from fellow students and even faculty. The gay Canadian plays I do are from a very different culture than the one I live in. Some may reflect that amorphous thing we call "the gay sensibility" without ever actually touching on gay lives. And others are rooted in a past I'm happy to preserve and share with my students.

But they don't always offer direct representations of the issues we're dealing with today.

So I thought that for this year's show, I'd go with something a little more current. In January we issued a call for ten-minute plays by, for and about LGBTQ peoples. By the deadline in February, we'd received 60. They're currently out with a group of readers assembled from students, colleagues and theatre contacts literally around the globe (I have a Canadian reader currently living in Berlin).

The process is fascinating and also a little frightening. I'm intrigued by the images of LGBTQ lives I've read so far.

But it's also challenging to be putting on a play whose concept and even name I can't determine until the results of our readers' reports are tabulated in April. From what I've read so far, I know that the production we're putting on at the end of July will represent a wide variety of sexualities, issues, genres and styles. I'm hoping it's a valuable tool for starting dialogues about what it is to be gay or lesbian or transsexual or queer today in the heart of Georgia and a tool for reaching out to the larger community outside the few city blocks of our university. Whatever it is, I know it will be a tribute to Joan and her inspirational work.

# Letter from the Vice President

## Balancing Act: Planning the Orlando PreConference

By Lisa Hall Hagen

I'm thrilled to be stepping in to the role of the Vice President of WTP, in charge of preconference planning. Jen-Scott is a tough act to follow, especially given her excellent stewardship of the preconference last year in DC. In the years that I've been involved with WTP, it's become clear that two of the guiding principles of the organization are often expressed through the preconference. First, that we engage meaningfully with the geography and population of the conference city, exploring the theatre companies, universities, and local artists that characterize the area. Second, that we operate activities in a way that is financially respectful to our diverse membership, offering programming that is accessible to our members who are students, artists, unemployed, or underemployed.

Often we've been able to successfully honor both of these principles, such as last year, when we were able to use the space of a WTP member's home university. In other cities it's been possible to explore the space of a local theatre company within a reasonable distance of the conference hotel. In the coming couple of years, ATHE has moved in the direction of

resort hotels that offer amenities, but are located some distance from any downtown area (similar to the last time ATHE visited Los Angeles). As we prepare for our preconference in Orlando, Jen-Scott and I have been faced with some difficulties in meeting the two critical aims of local engagement and cost-effectiveness.

Without belaboring the details, the Orlando Hyatt is a prohibitive distance from theatre companies or universities who might rent us space. Because the drive would likely be 30 minutes or more to reach the location, we factored in bus service to the space rentals. Ultimately, this idea became logistically flawed in terms of cost and transportation. This year, the preconference will be held at the hotel. Although this does create some ease in terms of getting to the events (and even enjoying other events during the day), we do recognize that it will be a goal over the next several years to get us off site once again. The choices for this year are not a trend for the preconference per se, or a failure to recognize the desires of the members. We felt the on site location would hopefully keep the event from being financially or logistically prohibitive for our members.

However, we're working on bringing in a speaker or performer to the hotel



preconference - so that we can still engage with the Florida's vibrant theatre scene. Any suggestions are much appreciated! And it's never too early to start thinking about the Arizona conference, and how we might overcome similar challenges.

All this said, it will come as no surprise to many of you that the services at the hotel are also expensive in their own way. Now's the time for creativity and an adventurous spirit as we find ways to provide food and entertainment at the hotel without necessarily staying in the hotel the whole time. There are some nearby attractions, and it might be time for a WTP night on the town!

Feel free to contact me at [lisahallhagen@gmail.com](mailto:lisahallhagen@gmail.com) with any ideas, for this year or next.

## WTP Membership and Conference Registration

Need to Circulate Information?

Any WTP member can post to our listserv by emailing:

[WomenAndTheatreList@athe.org](mailto:WomenAndTheatreList@athe.org)

WTP's membership year runs from the first day of September to the last day of August. As a member, you receive two newsletters each year, which include letters from the WTP President, WTP member features, reports on the Jane Chambers competition, ATHE conference news, and programming for WTP conferences. Please support WTP by joining our organization or renewing your membership via our patron pay pal link [here](#).

For more information, visit [WTP's website](#).





## Images from the 2012 WOMEN AND THEATRE Preconference



## From the Editors

At its center, we believe the WTP Newsletter not only serves to disseminate WTP member and program information, but to provide a sense of community and connectivity amongst WTP members.

Join us in this mission by submitting any of the following for our next WTP Newsletter:

- Past President's Column - did you serve as WTP President? Tell us about your experience!
- WTP Member Feature Column - an article that highlights a WTP member's recent or forthcoming project
- WTP News and/or Opportunities - including brief publications announcements, summaries of artistic projects, or calls for collaborators/artists
- Pictures of WTP happenings (including Precon pics)

- Articles on Jane Chambers Student Playwriting Award Contest and/or updates on past winners
- Any Article addressing issues/ideas relevant or of service to WTP members.

If you are interested in submitting any of the above items or any other item that we did not list but that you feel would be of interest to the WTP community, send us an email at the addresses below.

We also welcome any WTP Newsletter related questions, comments, suggestions, or letters to the editors.

Summer Neilson Moshy,  
[sumactriz@aol.com](mailto:sumactriz@aol.com)

Jessica Del Vecchio,



## Call for Participants:

# WOMEN AND THEATRE

## Preconference

## Orlando 2013

### Calling all Artists, Scholars, Activists, Feminists!

The Women in Theatre Program invites proposals for our annual preconference at ATHE.

The theme of this year's preconference is:

### The Labor of Pleasure, and Pleasure of Labor

The preconference will take place on Wednesday, July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013 at the conference hotel. Our culminating event will be a co-sponsored cabaret, FOREPLAY, with the LGBTQ focus group. It promises to be an entertaining and fun evening – look for the separate performance CFP to apply to that event.

We are interested in creatively structured performance, discussion, and activity-based panels as well as traditional papers. We have extended the submission deadline to April 5, 2013. Fill out the form [here](#) to apply.

We envision this preconference theme to interplay with ATHE's general focus: P[LA]Y: Performance, Pleasure, Pedagogy –it might specifically address some of the following issues (although it is by no means limited to them):

- The pleasures of pedagogical labor
- Sharing our pedagogical labors (curriculum and syllabi)
- The role of women's bodies in pleasure and the creation of pleasure
- The dangers and benefits of pleasure and play
- Feminist pleasure and play
- Play as consumption of labor
- The right to leisure and pleasure – what leisure/play is available to which women?
- Play and ethnicity – diverse play
- The labor that creates pleasure and play

If you have ideas or questions, please don't hesitate to contact me by email to discuss:  
[lisahallhagen@gmail.com](mailto:lisahallhagen@gmail.com)



# WOMEN AND THEATRE General Information

## WTP Executive Council 2012-2014

### President:

Jen-Scott Mobley (Rollins College)  
[jenscottmob@gmail.com](mailto:jenscottmob@gmail.com)

### Immediate Past President:

Cecilia Aragon (University of Wyoming)  
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### Vice President of Preconference Planning:

Lisa Hall Hagen  
[lisahallhagen@gmail.com](mailto:lisahallhagen@gmail.com)

### Chair of Outreach and Development:

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### Treasurer:

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Natka Bianchini (Loyola University, Maryland)  
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### Artist Member-at-Large:

Joan Lipkin (That Uppity Theatre Co.)  
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Lisa Hall Hagen

Lindsey Cummings

### Awards Committee:

Rose Malague

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Domnica Radulescu (Washington and Lee University)  
[radulescud@wlu.edu](mailto:radulescud@wlu.edu)

## About WTP

The Women and Theatre Program is a self-incorporated division of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) that began in 1974. At that time, the goal was to bring professional theatre women together with women in academia. In the years since its inception, WTP has sponsored panels and activities at ATHE's annual conference. In 1980, WTP began holding its own annual conference. WTP conferences feature panels, informal discussions, workshops, and performances as a means to foster both research and the

production of feminist theatre activities. WTP conference topics have included the intersection of theory and performance, multicultural theatre, lesbian theory and theatre, and many related aspects of feminist inquiry.

In addition to its conference activity, WTP, in collaboration with ATHE, sponsors the Jane Chambers Playwriting Award. This award is one of the few nationally recognized competitions for women playwrights and attracts over 200 submissions annually. The award-winning play is given a reading at ATHE, and an

annotated list of the top contenders is circulated to the WTP members and over 400 regional theaters. WTP also sponsors the annual Jane Chambers Student Playwriting Award, and the winner is given a staged reading at our annual conference. The continuing goal of WTP is to enable feminist inquiry and to provide opportunities for discussion between those who teach, perform, and theorize about feminism, theatre, and performance.