

Review

The Journal of Dramaturgy

Published by
*Literary Managers and
Dramaturgs of the Americas*

Volume XXVI • Issue I
Summer 2020

- 3 **Zachary A. Dorsey**
When Fierceness and Kindness Collide:
The Dramaturgy of a Drag Storytime*
- 12 **Christina Hurtado-Pierson & Anaïs Gonzalez Nyberg**
Trauma-Informed Approaches to Dramaturgy and
Rehearsal: An Exploration of *Daphne's Dive* in the
Time of COVID-19
- 22 **Janna Segal**
Reframing Shakespeare's *Taming* to Rally for
Political Change*
- 34 **Lisa Aikman & Jennifer Roberts-Smith**
With Contributing Authors: Kate Crozier, Jessica
Hutchison, Carin Lowerison, Signy Lynch, May
Nemat Allah, Julie Thompson, Hannah Watts, &
Matt White
Relational Audience Engagement in *Guarded
Girls*: A Critical Reflection

*Peer-reviewed articles



LITERARY MANAGERS
& DRAMATURGS
OF THE AMERICAS

Review

Editors

Kristin Leahey • *Boston University*

Elizabeth Coen • *Seattle Children's Theatre*

Associate Editor

Michael Valladares • *Boston University*

Layout Editor

Marisa Iliakis • iliakism.com

Assistant Layout Editor

Jonas Hayes

Editorial Board

Eleanor Owicki • *Indiana University*

Geoff Proehl • *University of Puget Sound*

Diego Villada • *New College of Florida*

Review is published annually by Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas. Articles should conform to MLA format, but we are less concerned about reviews, manifestoes, interviews, and other short-form submissions. A link to previous issues of *Review* can be found online LMDA's [website](#).

Inquiries from prospective contributors are welcome. All inquiries should be directed to editor@lmda.org.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution NonCommercial NoDerivatives 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this license, visit the Creative Commons [website](#).

The LMDA HQ

PO Box 586

New York, NY 10108

800.680.2148

LMDA Canada

35 Rosethorn Avenue

Toronto, ON M6N 3K7

416.214.1992

Editors' Note:

On reflection of the 2020 issue of *Review*, it is evident how our original curatorial interests evolved to acknowledge a year of uncertainty across the globe and how our authors and their projects all aspire for a different future. The essays in this issue highlight the ways in which dramaturgical work can motivate change to the status quo and inspire new possibilities for political action and social justice. While the field of dramaturgy is often associated with expertly rendering a theatre of the past, the authors in this issue demonstrate how dramaturgs can disrupt commonly held beliefs and offer unique strategies for fostering community through the arts. Zachary Dorsey's essay "When Fierceness and Kindness Collide: The Dramaturgy of Drag Storytime" examines the role of dramaturg in curating inclusive participatory events for children and families, while navigating contentious and often polarizing public discourse. Additionally, Janna Segal's "Reframing Shakespeare's *Taming* to Rally for Political Change" explores how dramaturgical practices framed the politics of a U.S. election season in an against-the-grain feminist reading of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Efforts to acknowledge and dismantle inequity in institutions and remedy disparities across communities are especially critical in this year's essays. In their article, "Trauma-Informed Approaches to Dramaturgy and Rehearsal: An Exploration of *Daphne's Dive* in the Time of COVID-19," Christina Hurtado-Pierson and Anaïs Gonzalez Nyberg consider how preparations for a trauma-informed rehearsal process that focused on the wellbeing of BIPOC actors assumed a new significance when their academic institution quickly closed in March of 2020 due to the pandemic. In "Relational Audience Engagement in *Guarded Girls: A Critical Reflection*," dramaturgs and researchers Lisa Aikman and Jennifer Roberts-Smith unpack their work with audiences on the mistreatment of women in prisons and the public's nescience on the need to reform Canada's correctional system. These four articles—in their individuality and now appended together—demonstrate that the world before COVID-19 was neither "normal" nor equitable. We believe that these dramaturgical methodologies and radical acts, performed by dramaturgs, provide glimpses of a time to come that is daring, imaginative, and compassionate.

Kristin Leahey & Elizabeth Coen

When Fierceness and Kindness Collide: The Dramaturgy of a Drag Storytime

by Zachary A. Dorsey¹



Figure 1: Dreama Belle poses in full costume in the Children's Room of the Jefferson-Madison Regional Library in September of 2019. Photo by Zachary A. Dorsey.

I teach students in my dramaturgy classes to explore the parameters of any job before they accept it. However, when I was invited in the Fall of 2017 to serve as the dramaturg for a drag storytime—the kind of event growing in popularity in which drag performers read to children in public libraries and other spaces—I leapt before I looked, giddily accepting the new role with very little clue what I had gotten myself into. Logan Thomas, a talented former student of mine who performs in drag as Dreama Belle (*fig. 1*), created the quarterly “Queens Who Read” drag storytime in Charlottesville, Virginia.² They had learned about dramaturgy in my freshman-level performance analysis class at James Madison University, and they were savvy in invoking the term when soliciting my assistance for their new program. Logan explained that other than providing help in choosing the books to be read to children, they didn’t know what exactly I would do as their dramaturg, but they sensed the need for a “plus-one” of sorts to plan and carry out these events. The question I immediately had for Logan is precisely the question that I’ll explore throughout this article: What can a dramaturg for a drag storytime performance do? From the moment I accepted the position, much of my work has been just trying to catch up with the wave of drag storytimes around the United States and internationally, figuring out what they are and the diverse possibilities for how they might function.

In writing this essay, I will archive and explore the work of Queens Who Read, and I will grapple with the dramaturgy of drag storytimes: how the disparate parts fit together at these curious, quirky, quotidian, world-making public performances to make meaning. I explore my own contributions as dramaturg to the program throughout this essay, but I will also highlight the labor of the performer as well as the sponsoring librarian.

¹ This article was supported by the James Madison University Program of Grants for Faculty Educational Leaves.

² Logan’s pronouns are they/them and Dreama Belle’s pronouns are she/hers.

All of our preparations, discussions, and choices constitute an intentional, collective dramaturgical practice.

DRAG STORYTIMES, IN GENERAL

Some quick research online helped me understand drag storytimes as something between an organized movement and a global phenomenon. Author Michelle Tea and queer literary-arts organization RADAR Productions of San Francisco created “Drag Queen Story Hour.” They staged the earliest event in 2015, and “Drag Queen Story Hour” is now a global network of local chapters, each self-managed and self-financed. Drag Queen Story Hour has expanded to have chapters in cities and towns across the United States and in other countries, such as Mexico, Germany, Japan, and Sweden. In the popular press and online, “Drag Queen Story Hour” is often invoked to refer to all events where drag performers read to children. However, not everyone involved in drag storytimes chooses to follow the Drag Queen Story Hour model. In creating Queens Who Read, Logan was inspired by what they had heard and read about Drag Queen Story Hour performances but didn’t feel the need to affiliate. I choose to use the term “drag storytime” for these events, both to create some clarity around organizational structures but also to acknowledge the wider range of performers (e.g., drag queens, drag kings, non-binary drag performers, and so forth) and their collaborators who create these events.

The introduction on the Drag Queen Story Hour [website](#) does a solid job of encapsulating most drag storytime performances:

Drag Queen Story Hour (DQSH) is just what it sounds like—drag queens reading stories to children in libraries, schools, and bookstores. DQSH captures the imagination and play of the gender fluidity of childhood and gives kids glamorous, positive, and unabashedly queer role models. In spaces like this, kids are able to see people who defy rigid gender restrictions and imagine a world where people can present as they wish, where dress up is real.

Drag storytimes serve as diverse, inclusive programming at the libraries, bookstores, and other venues where they take place. They aim to provide children in the audience with stories that have characters with different ways of being and moving through the world. The degree to which drag storytimes are about drag or challenging gender

normativity varies widely; many are structured just to provide a fun environment for all children to hear stories being read by someone who, in most cases, doesn’t look or sound like their parents, teachers, or librarians.

In addition to stories, these events may feature other elements, largely aimed at catching and holding the children’s attention. Drag performers often lead their young audiences in familiar songs like “Old McDonald Had a Farm,” or invite them to get on their feet to sing and dance “The Hokey Pokey.” Sometimes songs are altered to suit the event. Lil Miss Hot Mess rewrote “The Wheels on the

What is the role of the dramaturg in a place of protest and in a time of political and social polarization?

Bus” song to include lyrics like “The hips on the drag queen go swish, swish, swish.”³ Events often conclude with the opportunity for children (and their families) to meet with the drag performer and to ask questions, as well as to pose for photographs. Sometimes a craft project follows the reading. Drag Queen Story Hour events in particular often involve the introduction of The Dragtivity Book (co-created by Drag Queen Story Hour NYC and Sez Me, a multidisciplinary educational program for all ages), a coloring book that teaches children about drag. Sometimes there is face painting, sometimes a dance party. Depending on the drag queen or king who is leading the event, there might also be a lip sync performance to “My Favorite Things,” “Baby Shark,” or some other song.

Even as Queens Who Read was beginning in late 2017, there were many articles in local and national papers reporting on drag storytimes.⁴ I learned that these events

3 Lil Miss Hot Mess has since adapted her song into a children’s book, *The Hips on the Drag Queen Go Swish, Swish, Swish*. It was published in May of 2020, with illustrations by Olga de Dios.

4 Most of my early information came from Marisa Meltzer’s article in *The New Yorker*, “Kids Attend Drag Queen Story Hour,” and Una Lamarche’s article from *The New York Times*, “Drag Queen Story Hour Puts the Rainbow in Reading.” I suspect these articles helped introduce the public to storytimes at the national level. I also benefited from scouring the Drag Queen Story Hour website.

were often aimed at children between the ages of three and eight, and I could see from pictures that they tended to sit on the floor at the feet of the reader, similar to other read-aloud events. Multiple articles highlighted that audiences of children tend to be talkative and unpredictable, providing opportunities for drag performers to interact with them rather than just read to or lecture them. In that moment, at least in the reporting I encountered, there was little indication that these events were controversial.

QUEENS WHO READ

The Queens Who Read program continues today and has the distinction of being the state of Virginia's first ongoing drag storytime series. Part of the success of the Queens Who Read program can be traced directly to community demand. Libraries are more likely to be challenged by critics or protesters if they impose event programming, rather than help facilitate programming once members of the community request it. In the summer of 2017, members of Charlottesville Pride approached Logan with the idea for a

Dreama Belle read Todd Parr's *Be Who You Are* and Leo Lionni's *A Color of His Own*, both of which are books about fitting in, standing out, being yourself, and making friends. These inclusive titles made sense for the Pride Week setting, but also resonated because of where and when this drag storytime took place. Directly across the street from the Children's Room of the Jefferson-Madison Regional Library in Charlottesville is the Market Street Park (formerly Emancipation Park) that contains a now-infamous bronze statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee (*fig. II*). The February 2017 City Council decision to rename the park and to remove the statue sparked a Ku Klux Klan rally that July. A "Unite the Right" rally followed that August which led to the death of counter-protester Heather Heyer and the injury of others. Angela later reported to us that in a painful moment for the city of Charlottesville, Dreama Belle's "Queens Who Read" appearance was the first time that some families had returned downtown to the library.

Like Drag Queen Story Hour (and, presumably, most other drag storytimes), Queens Who Read aims to spotlight books that center on loving yourself, textual celebrations of curiosity, imagination, inclusivity, and playfulness. The three of us (performer, librarian, and dramaturg) achieve these goals by organizing each event around a broad theme, such as "Be Who You Are," "Love is All Around Us," or "Everything and Everyone is Beautiful," and then we select books that support the theme from a variety of angles and approaches. As one of my primary duties, I've been spending hours in bookstores and libraries (re)acquainting myself with children's literature and trying to keep up with the newest releases. I compare notes on my findings with Angela (who also recommends titles) and, as early as possible, I share a list of finalists with Logan. The two of us make decisions based on which books seem to work together. We mix prose and poetry, for example, and we try to select some books for each reading that feature human characters and also some books at each reading that feature animal or monster protagonists. We also aim for stories that feature characters of different races and ethnicities, with the desire that all audience members have the potential to see themselves in these stories. Drag storytimes attract families with younger children, and so complexity and length are often major concerns for us. For our February of 2018 "Love is Love" reading, the children laughed and nodded along with two worms getting married in J. J. Austrian's *Worm Loves Worm*, and their attention was clearly captured by Kobi Yamada's evocative *What Do You Do*



Figure II: Dreama Belle stands defiant in front of the Confederate General Robert E. Lee statue in Charlottesville Market Street Park. Photo by Zachary A. Dorsey.

drag storytime event, and together, they were able to win the support of the Jefferson-Madison Regional Library. The Children's Services Manager, Angela Critics, became a key collaborator for the Queens Who Read program. The first reading took place on September 11, 2017, during Pride Week in Charlottesville, and it drew the largest audience for an evening storytime that the library had ever seen.

With an Idea? I was obsessed with Kai Cheng Thom's *From the Stars in the Sky to the Fish in the Sea*, a gorgeous book about a mother's love for her shapeshifting child, but despite how perfectly it fit with the "Love is Love" theme, it proved too long (nearly fifteen minutes, easily double the length of each of the other stories) for the children's attention spans.

We've loved to see the increased publication in recent years of children's books with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender characters, themes, and aesthetics, but for our drag storytime events, we've made the intentional choice not to focus exclusively on these titles. We were thrilled to share Jessica Love's *Julián is a Mermaid*, for example, which is about a young boy whose desire to dress like a mermaid is lovingly supported by his abuela, and we're suckers for the clearly camp aesthetics of stories like Aaron Blabey's *Thelma the Unicorn* or Angela DiTerlizzi's

Figure III: Dreama Belle takes a break from rehearsal in Angela Critics' office to snap a selfie with Grace Byers' book, *I Am Enough*. Photo by Logan Thomas.



Just Add Glitter. We have considered sharing deeply important stories that have received acclaim for their positive representations, such as Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell's and *Tango Makes Three*; Lesléa Newman's *Heather Has Two Mommies*; and Christine Baldacchino's *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress*. But time and time again, we have also gravitated toward stories that might just be more generally described as queer—those that champion seeing the world a different way, like F. Isabel Campoy and Theresa Howell's *Maybe Something Beautiful: How Art Transformed a Neighborhood*, or those that explore difference more broadly, such as Smriti Prasadam-Halls's *T-Veg: The Tale of a Carrot-Crunching Dinosaur*.

Angela has helped both Logan and me to understand the challenges specific to reading aloud to a young audience. She has encouraged us to invite dialogue whenever possible, pausing to ask children what they feel and think so as to draw them into the story and help them reflect on it. Some children's books feature relatively few words on a page but might include important images that keep the story moving forward or that help support the themes of the book. As Angela trained us (and as she trains her children's librarians for other storytimes), she indicated the need to get the children in the audience to describe what they see so as to hold their attention, and also to get a sense of their comprehension. Therefore, at the end of each story, Dreama Belle asks questions of the children. In our earliest storytimes, those questions didn't typically push much deeper than "Did you like that story?" or "What did you think?" Now, her questions are much more specific to each book and the theme of the day. As dramaturg, I have begun taking notes on each book for Dreama Belle, leaving Post-it notes in the books with questions that she might ask, or indicating places where it is important to stop and comment on the book's illustrations. This has helped prepare Dreama Belle for *reading with* the children as opposed to just *reading to* them. We've found it beneficial to give Dreama Belle as much lead time as possible to think about the books selected and rehearse reading them out loud (*fig. III*). Complicated and conflicting schedules have sometimes only allowed us to rehearse in the frenzied hour right before the scheduled storytimes, which is not ideal, but is certainly better than nothing.

Rehearsals can't fully prepare one for an audience of rowdy children, though. They weigh in on the books whether asked or not, and sometimes wander the room,

or dance spontaneously, or hug their parents or one another. Sometimes they'll ask Dreama Belle questions mid-story, or take time to comment on her outfit. Dreama Belle warmly responds and then gently guides everyone back into the story. At the earliest "Queens Who Read" storytimes, Dreama Belle sped through the books, not wanting the story or theme to be lost with distractions. As she has gained experience improvising with a young audience, she has become more comfortable embracing the children's interruptions (rather than just ignoring them), finding ways to translate these unexpected contributions into discussions about the stories and themes.

At "Queens Who Read"—and other drag storytimes as well—the stories themselves are central to the event, but they are by no means the only way the program achieves its goals of inclusivity, positivity, and providing children with role models who love to read. In addition to stories, "Queens Who Read" features songs and moments of movement led by Angela. These provide Dreama Belle the chance to catch a breath, take a sip of water, and prepare for the next story, though often she participates as well. These breaks give the audience an opportunity to wiggle and be silly before being asked to sit down again. The children gain agency through songs like "If You're Ready for a Book, Stomp Your Feet," and they eagerly count down to the next imaginative journey with songs like "Zoom Zoom Zoom, We're Going to the Moon." Some parents join in too with both their bodies and voices, which serves to further reinforce an active community of all ages that loves reading. While some other storytimes feature the drag performer leading these moments between the stories, I really enjoy that children and their families can see Angela and Dreama Belle singing and dancing together. Audiences witness collaboration between the drag performer and the librarian, and they comprehend that the values being taught (about gender, identity, community, and education) aren't just those coming from the drag performer, but that they're held by the library as well.⁵

A "Queens Who Read" storytime, start to finish, usually takes 30-45 minutes. The event is typically opened with a speech by Angela that welcomes everyone to the library and (back)



Figure IV: Dreama Belle reads My Magic Breath: Finding Calm Through Mindful Breathing to children who are sitting in front of her at the Jefferson-Madison Regional Library in June of 2019. Photo by Jennifer Freeman.

to storytime. She'll say a few words about the theme, which Dreama will then also briefly expand on before beginning the first book. Once Dreama Belle finishes the last book, she introduces me (the dramaturg) in order to say a few words. Typically, I introduce myself to the children as having been Dreama Belle's teacher and that we share a love of reading and stories, which is why we come to the library. I then address the parents directly, offer a few brief words about the theme, and then encourage parents to keep the conversation going with their children, particularly as they read to them at home. Often, I'll thank Angela and the staff at the library for working with us, and I'll ask the parents to keep coming back to the library and supporting the librarians however and whenever they can. Occasionally, we've closed the storytimes with a communal craft project, a "doing together," but often we just wrap up so as to leave the children time to meet Dreama Belle and talk with her. There is always a long table of books that Angela has selected for children and parents to bring down to the circulation desk to check out as they leave the storytime; we want the children to walk away from the program with memories, treasures, and even new friends.

One key difference between Queens Who Read and many of the Drag Queen Story Hour events that I've attended is that Dreama Belle intentionally doesn't focus on drag during the reading. She chooses not to take time to ask the children if they know what a drag queen is, and she

⁵ In official Drag Queen Story Hour events I have attended, sometimes an organizer or spokesperson also speaks to the audience or facilitates craft projects. While probably not unprecedented, I'd suggest that Angela's centrality to Queens Who Read as a librarian, is one of the features that makes this storytime distinct from many others.

does not contextualize her appearance or speak to her own identity. She is simply Dreama Belle, and she dives into the reading with very little prologue beyond her words on that storytime's theme. As the need arises from the stories and from the young audience members' queries, she may offer up her own experiences and thoughts (e.g., on family, community, bullying, friendship, and joy) in brief, child-friendly fashion. As the dramaturg, I've shared with Logan what I've seen at other drag storytimes, where drag is either talked about (or sung about, or joked about) explicitly, or where the drag performer lip syncs, or where face painting, dress-up, or a dance party follows the reading. From my vantage point, all of these other approaches have been fun and successful for those performers at those storytimes, but they haven't appealed to Logan or seemed necessary as we have developed the Queens Who Read program. Visually, Dreama Belle scans as a drag queen to those who know what a drag queen is. There is a larger-than-life and out-of-the-ordinary quality to her costume and makeup choices, none of which are aimed at "passing" as biologically female. But she is educating her audience while in drag, rather than teaching explicitly about drag. For the uninitiated, she is entirely content to be someone with fun clothes who reads books and exemplifies kindness. She makes extensive use of



Figure V: The Queens Who Read team assembles for a post-performance photograph in September of 2019: Angela Critics, Logan Thomas (Dreama Belle), and Zachary A. Dorsey.

Shutting down a drag storytime is tantamount to saying that the public library is not for all people.

smiles and eye contact. She provides compliments to the children, is quick to laugh, and encourages everyone to love themselves and one another. Dreama Belle is present to everyone, she is endlessly kind, and she loves to share her love of reading. This is as close to a summary dramaturgical statement or "brand" of Queens Who Read that I can manage.

THE FIERCEST OF US ALL

In 2018, more and more of these drag storytime events around the country began being protested, and in some cases, shut down.⁶ In September of 2018, Angela wrote to

us to let us know that a few complaints had been made to the library and to the library board (along with a number of e-mails of support), and that some board members were beginning to express concern. Angela didn't anticipate any protesters or any major pushback, but she wanted us to feel supported by the Jefferson-Madison Regional Library and its staff. Angela noted that the program would almost certainly be allowed to continue, reminding us that it directly fulfilled a need coming from the community (rather than being an event just imposed by the library). She also noted that it always takes place in a large third-floor meeting room with clear signage, rather than in the middle of the Children's Room. No one can claim that they or their children were ambushed or accidentally exposed to "Queens Who Read," which was a complaint that had surfaced elsewhere.

Angela did want to warn us that the Library Board could limit what events the librarians could support, though she indicated to me in an e-mail: "Should it come to that, I

⁶ A full description and analysis of the many complicated issues (local and national) that have led to the cancellation of various drag storytimes is outside the scope of this article. Those interested in a few key examples might dive into the many accounts of programs that were cancelled in Lafayette, LA, Houston, TX, Pittsburgh, PA, Louisville, KY, and Dublin, Ireland, to name just a few. Events in Spokane, WA, Vancouver, WA, Chula Vista, CA, Haverford, PA, and Evansville, IN (among a great many others) went on despite protests. Be intentional about whether you choose to read the comments.

guarantee that there will be staff who walk. And I will be at the front of the line.” Perhaps naively, I fired off an e-mail to her, thanking her for the support but encouraging her and her colleagues not to quit their hard-earned jobs should Queens Who Read get the axe, suggesting that we could just move down the street, but that we needed our “fabulous library allies” to keep up the important work from within. Her beautiful reply helped me understand the bigger picture and reevaluate what I thought I knew about libraries and those called to serve there:

I realize you really don’t understand what the underlying issue is here for librarians. For us, this is about Intellectual Freedom and is the equivalent of censorship of books. This is a foundational value of librarianship and a big part of our ethics, right up there with privacy.

For Angela and other librarians in Charlottesville—and presumably elsewhere—shutting down a drag storytime is tantamount to saying that the public library is not for all people. Angela helped me understand that drag storytimes aren’t just housed in public libraries, but rather that they have a home there. They are tenaciously nurtured, supported, and protected by librarians, board members,



Figure VI: Dreama Belle with dramaturg Zachary A. Dorsey.

patrons, local government officials, and even the American Library Association. The term “fierce” gets deployed frequently to describe drag performers exhibiting or possessing courageous, stylish exuberance and skill. I have come to recognize librarians like Angela and other champions of libraries as every bit as fierce as any drag queen one might encounter.

Logan explained to me that they’re happy to undertake this labor (alongside all of their other performing and producing gigs) in order to give back to the community. They believe in the importance of the project: reading to children, but also the larger movement of drag storytimes. Despite a recent relocation to New York City, Logan intends to keep traveling back to Virginia quarterly for “Queens Who Read” performances, so long as there is continued support from the library, desire expressed from the community, and the feeling that a safe environment for the event can be maintained for all involved.⁷

FRONTLINE DRAMATURGY

I’m still a little disoriented every time I walk into a “Queens Who Read” event. As a queer man with no desire for children of my own and no experience performing drag, and as a university professor with little idea of how to teach or entertain the very young, I often wonder how I landed on such foreign soil, or what I’m meant to do there. I teach in a public university, but to be carrying out my duties in a public library feels somehow different—strangely, more public, as university teaching and arts practice often feels insulated from the outside world. And in a moment where similar programs are being shut down and artists who are doing this work are on the receiving end of hate speech and death threats, the stakes feel incredibly high. I’ve now attended dozens of drag storytime events, but I’m still surprised by the animosity that some people (who are rarely at the events themselves or even knowledgeable about them) possess for these small and very gentle performances that are creativity-positive and educational. Drag storytimes have become lightning rods for social and political discourse, especially because of the way they directly engage with issues related to identity politics (primarily sex, gender, and sexuality but also race, class, and disability, among other intersections). In the theatre, the scripts and productions I have worked on have often been more experimental, more antagonistic, and more radical than Queens Who Read. However, the institutional structures I have worked in have acted as a barrier that has likely protected these productions from a wider public critique. Now that drag storytimes have afforded me a new

⁷ The previously scheduled June 2020 “Queens Who Read” performance at the Jefferson-Madison Regional Library was cancelled because of the Coronavirus pandemic. We are currently discussing ways that we might follow in the footsteps of other drag storytime performers who quickly transitioned their storytimes online.

home outside of the theatre, I'm newly moved to wonder: what is the role of the dramaturg in a place of protest and in a time of incredible political and social polarization? I suspect this question will be one a lot of dramaturgs will need to (continue to) grapple with in the years ahead. It seems to me that when drafted into community engagement and activist settings, one major task that a dramaturg (or anyone able and willing to "do dramaturgy,") can be responsible for is what Geoffrey S. Proehl describes in nuanced ways as "listening." In "Dramaturgy and Silence," he writes:

The central significance of having someone called a dramaturg work on a production is that attaching this name to a living presence encourages everyone involved in a production to attend more carefully to what is ever present but often under examined: the inner workings of a play. [...] For a play's dramaturgy is not so much a simple given as a range of possibilities waiting to interact with the sensibilities of its creators. (27)

In hiring me, Logan gained a collaborator providing research and analysis on the larger drag storytime phenomenon, as well as someone poised to serve as a listener as they brought Queens Who Read into being, alternately borrowing from existing models and innovating when it served the work. Particularly in contested spaces and turbulent times, the ability to listen, and to be able to attend to both what a performance or a movement is and what it might yet become, is essential.

While I still carry out specific tasks as a drag storytime dramaturg (selecting books, suggesting themes, readying the performer), it is through the broader act of listening that I'm able to support my collaborators and our program, doing so in ways that best serve each exact moment of this drag storytime phenomenon. I attend other drag storytime events, and I read (and watch) everything I can that is written on them. I am taking time to listen to other drag storytime performers and their librarians and other collaborators, and at performances, I am listening to how the children engage with the performer. I am also listening to those raising critiques about drag storytime, not to learn how to "win the war" but instead to truly evaluate how others might see and understand what we are doing and why we are doing it. Listening has helped me come to three main conclusions about the dramaturgy of drag storytime.

First, drag storytime works (when it works) in large part because the drag performers themselves embody the messages and themes of the books that are read. This is accomplished visually, gesturally, and tonally, through costume, song, and dance, and through unscripted interactions with children. With Dreama Belle, this involves consistent acts of kindness; with other drag performers, such messages might be more focused on loving yourself, or respecting others, or celebrating gender fluidity, or being bold and playful and fearless. Regardless of the message, it lives in and through the drag performer, which is a characteristic of drag storytime perhaps distinct from other kinds of storytimes.

Second, drag storytime necessitates repetition. Its young audiences need ideas repeated during the performance, and the stories need to be read again by other adults and eventually by the children themselves. Drag storytime performers are asynchronously partnering with authors and illustrators, as well as with librarians, teachers, and bookstore owners and employees. And Drag storytime performers are also modeling reading strategies and best practices for parents and other adults who will later reintroduce these books to the children and continue to make connections to the drag storytime performance. Of course, creating more regular drag storytime events aids with the learning by repetition.

Third, drag storytime audiences are always multiple. Although children are the main focus for the events, the parents (and family members and friends) in attendance are key audience members and collaborators as well. Particularly because of the current digital moment and the scrutiny that drag storytime performances are receiving, there is a larger set of audience members outside of the event who will hear about it (or watch recordings of it) after the fact. Because drag performers are involved, and because children are present, and because the idea is kooky and incendiary, the photos and stories and videos will be broadcast instantly, far and wide.

I assume that other dramaturgs will find the act of listening to be similarly revealing about their specific extra-theatrical contexts. In the midst of any polarized moment or situation, listening might be the most efficacious and revolutionary thing a dramaturg can do. ♦

ZACHARY A. DORSEY is an Assistant Professor in the School of Theatre and Dance at James Madison University, where he teaches classes in performance analysis, dramaturgy, and the history of dance, theatre, and musical theatre. He has also taught in both the Performance and Communication Arts department and the Gender and Sexuality Studies program at St. Lawrence University. His Ph.D. is in Performance as Public Practice from the University of Texas at Austin, and his writing appears in *Studies in Musical Theatre*, *RiDE*, *Theatre Journal*, *Theatre Topics*, *Theatre Annual*, *E-misferica*, and *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*. As he describes in this article, he is the dramaturg for “Queens Who Read,” Virginia State’s first regularly scheduled Drag Storytime series at the Jefferson-Madison Regional Library in Charlottesville, Virginia.

WORKS CITED

- Critics, Angela. “Angela From the Library re: Drag Queen Storytime.” Received by Zachary A. Dorsey, 18 Sep, 2018.
- . “Re: Angela from the Library re: Drag Queen Storytime.” Received by Zachary A. Dorsey, 10 Oct. 2018.
- Dorsey, Zachary A. “Re: Angela from the Library re: Drag Queen Storytime.” Received by Angela Critics, 24 Sept. 2018.
- Drag Queen Story Hour. Drag Queen Story Hour, 2018, dragqueenstoryhour.org, Accessed 5 Oct. 2019.
- Lamarche, Una. “Drag Queen Story Hour Puts the Rainbow in Reading.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times Company, 19 May 2017. Accessed 22 Aug. 2018.
- Meltzer, Marisa. “Kids Attend Drag Queen Story Hour.” *The New Yorker*, Condé Nast, 21 Nov. 2016. Accessed 22 Aug. 2018.
- Proehl, Geoffrey S. “Dramaturgy and Silence.” *Theatre Topics*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2003, pp. 25-33.

Trauma-Informed Approaches to Dramaturgy and Rehearsal: An Exploration of *Daphne's Dive* in the Time of COVID-19

by Christina Hurtado-Pierson & Anaïs Gonzalez Nyberg¹

When we first proposed this article in October of 2019, our goal was to raise awareness about a growing number of trauma-informed theatre practices and apply those methodologies specifically to production dramaturgy. By considering our recent work on a production of Quiara Alegría Hudes' *Daphne's Dive*, we, Anaïs Gonzalez Nyberg (director) and Christina Hurtado-Pierson (faculty mentor and dramaturgical supervisor), will offer practical strategies for integrating a trauma-informed approach into dramaturgical practices and the rehearsal process. *Daphne's Dive* tells the story of a Puerto Rican dive bar owner in North Philly, Daphne, who goes about each day just working to survive after a lifetime of pain. Despite all the safeguards she creates, a group of dedicated patrons and friends who frequent the bar and an eleven-year-old girl who literally falls into her life, become her family and her hope. Over the course of the show, members of the family experience violence, racism, physical and sexual abuse, and despair, but they find strength and love in their community at the bar.

Anaïs proposed *Daphne's Dive* for her senior project in directing at Pomona College, a member of the Claremont Colleges in Claremont, California. As a LatinX college student, Anaïs was excited by the prospect of telling a story that mirrored many of her experiences growing up. Opportunities for culturally specific plays are fairly limited at the Claremont Colleges, and Anaïs felt *Daphne's Dive* could simultaneously offer both culturally and racially specific acting opportunities to students who rarely see themselves represented onstage. In addition, by staging this play in the primarily White and affluent Claremont

¹ The authors would like to acknowledge the contributions and support of Dr. Joyce Lu, who provided us with valuable guidance on this project.

community, she anticipated the opportunity for the audience to engage with characters from a BIPOC, working-class community with the goal of narrowing the distance between these distinct walks of life, if even just for the duration of the play itself. We recognized the emotional demands of the play and the additional toll audience engagement might take on the cast, so we prepared research materials and rehearsal techniques to encourage safe mental health practices. Despite our preparation, the project was disrupted in March 2020 by the emergence of COVID-19.

Virtually every human on the planet has been affected by COVID-19 in some way. The United States has one of the highest COVID-19 infection and death rates in the world, and racial and ethnic minority groups have been disproportionately affected, since systemic racism has limited health care access for generations and limited housing options to dense urban communities, both of which contribute to a higher likelihood of contracting COVID-19 and suffering serious health complications and death. Tens of millions of individuals have lost their jobs and worry for their families and homes, and again the BIPOC community has been disproportionately affected since they are more often employed in low wage positions that cannot be performed remotely, and lack the safety nets needed to prevent hazardous workplace conditions (Kochhar). Moreover, in the midst of a major health and economic crisis, several incidents of extreme police brutality occurred in rapid succession. On May 27th, protests began in Minneapolis and spread to other major cities across the United States in reaction to the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and too many other Black people at the hands of police.

The theatre community in particular has experienced extreme economic distress as a result of COVID-19. Shutdowns and social distance requirements have closed virtually all theatrical venues, and the vast majority of artists have lost major sources of income. Even as treatments and vaccines become available, the impact of COVID-19 will be acutely felt in the theatre community for years to come; live events will be tainted by concerns about safety and social distancing. The momentum of the police brutality protests has also spurred a movement within the theatre community to address the prevalence of White culture and White supremacist structures that hamper the careers of, and even harm, BIPOC artists ([We See You W.A.T.](#)). In our social circles, we have yet to come across a theatre artist

who has not experienced either individual or collective trauma caused by concerns over physical health, economic distress, and racial injustice, and these traumas will affect rehearsals and performances when theatres are finally able to reopen. As we explore the concepts of trauma-informed rehearsals and dramaturgy, it is imperative to remember that while we will all return to the rehearsal room suffering from trauma related to COVID-19, BIPOC artists have experienced, and continue to experience, inordinate amounts of trauma. This disproportionate level of trauma will be our primary focus in this essay.

Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, a psychiatrist and researcher in the field of trauma and post-traumatic stress, defines trauma as an event that overwhelms the nervous system and

We cannot separate an individual's treatment from their traumatic experiences, both must be addressed together.

alters the way one processes and recalls memories (2). No individual is immune to trauma, although some populations are more likely to encounter trauma than others. The effects of trauma continue long after the traumatic event has ended (or in some cases, such as systemic racism, may be ongoing events). Those who suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can find themselves triggered by reminders of past trauma, which can cause a person to shut down and withdraw from situations as a defense mechanism to avoid incurring more trauma.

COVID-19 is unusual in that it is an event that creates collective trauma, i.e., trauma experienced by a large group where the consequences are so severe that they upend the entire fabric of a community. In a recent *Psychology Today* article, Danielle Render Turmaud reminds us of how the single event of the September 11th attacks completely transformed not only America's global perspective but also changed the laws impacting air travel. Almost 20 years later, we are reminded of the trauma of that day every time we remove our shoes to go through airport security. Render

Turmaud explains how even those relatively unimpacted by COVID-19 exhibit traumatic responses, using the example of Erik, who has experienced few concrete disruptions in his life, yet still demonstrates signs of traumatic stress (e.g., exhaustion, headaches, body aches). The implication is clear—we will not be returning to our rehearsal spaces unscathed and some will bear more trauma than others, so what can we do?

Trauma-informed theatre practices offer us an approach to address potential sources of distress in the rehearsal and performance process. The phrase “trauma-informed theatre practice” is relatively new, yet our research highlights that the underlying concepts are not. We first heard the term “Trauma-Informed Creative Practice” through [Momentum Stage](#), an organization that champions a more accessible, decolonized theatre practice by empowering theatre artists and educators. Anaïs proposed the need for a specific directorial “trauma-informed rehearsal

Our agenda, as dramaturgs, must be to support and not to hinder.

process” in her thesis, and Christina began exploring ways of integrating a trauma-informed approach to production dramaturgy to support Anaïs’ directorial work. The term “trauma-informed” was popularized by the Substances and Mental Health Services Administration to create a baseline approach to care that takes into account an individual’s lived experiences outside of the direct impact of mental health/substance abuse. Essentially, we cannot separate an individual’s treatment from their traumatic experiences, both must be addressed together. Trauma-informed theatre practices, then, are those practices which take into account the existence of trauma in the participants (e.g., actors, directors, designers, audiences). As Anaïs’ research posits, a trauma-informed rehearsal process is one that acknowledges the potential for trauma to surface in the theatrical journey and supports all members of the team.

In a trauma-informed rehearsal room, the production dramaturg takes on an extra responsibility of not only supporting the explicit demands for history and context

of the text but also of combating the implicit biases of an artistic team, which might invoke trauma. We define trauma-informed dramaturgy as an added awareness and recontextualization of the dramaturgical process to champion openness and awareness of trauma-informed theatre practices as the baseline for the contextual and historical insight we provide the team. If our responsibility is to help flesh out the world of the play, then we need to start from a place of understanding what that world is, especially when dealing with racially or culturally specific work.

We began our dramaturgical exploration of *Daphne’s Dive* in September 2019 with the question, “How do you tell an important story about lived trauma in a POC community without traumatizing the performers who are telling the story?” We noted all of the obvious sources of trauma in the text and asked ourselves how the text answered our question. The importance of community is vital in the play, and the intentional diversity of the characters highlights the special significance of spaces for People of Color and not Whiteness. We probed the importance of North Philly as a Puerto Rican neighborhood, and Hudes’ own words about her youth and the importance of community in her artistry. We reached out to a Puerto Rican colleague, Sara Acevedo, to help us identify elements that were purely Puerto Rican from broader LatinX cultural conventions.

Our decision to bring Sara into our dramaturgical discussions arose as we interrogated our own relationships to the culturally specific needs of the text. We are both of LatinX descent, but neither of us are Puerto Rican, and we have very different relationships with our diasporic communities. In her essay for Howlround Theatre Commons, “Playwrights of Color, White Directors, and Exposing Racist Policy,” Nicole Brewer describes the ways that even the most well-intentioned White directors working on productions by playwrights of color can create an atmosphere that prevents open and honest discussion about important topics like racism or cultural erasure. The inability to speak up and the lack of cultural sensitivity among privileged White directors are more likely to induce trauma for actors of color. Brewer also highlights the disparity in professional opportunities that face artists of color, specifically that White directors may direct plays by White writers or BIPOC writers, but BIPOC directors are rarely offered opportunities to direct plays outside of their race or ethnicity, especially on major stages. The Asian American Performers Action Coalition’s report, “Ethnic Representation on New York City Stages,”

confirms Brewer's observations with the following statistics. In the 2016/2017 season, 86.8% of all plays in New York City were written by White playwrights, and 87.1% of works were helmed by White directors. The numbers are even more staggering when we look at Broadway productions, with 95% of all plays being written and directed by White artists.

A trauma-informed production dramaturg should be aware of these statistics and make a conscious choice about whether they are the best collaborator for a racially or culturally specific—or otherwise sensitive—work. While we pride ourselves on our abilities to research, contextualize, and understand, we must be honest with ourselves about the limitations of our experiences and the impact of our presence in the development process or rehearsal room. If we are not right for the play, we should be willing to suggest a colleague with more relevant lived experience, if it is appropriate. In the cases of institutional dramaturgs, where hiring a more culturally appropriate replacement may not be possible, the responsibility of the dramaturg is simply to ask the relevant parties (e.g., playwrights, directors, actors, designers) what they need, and be content to step away if the answer is “nothing.” Our agenda, as dramaturgs, must be to support and not to hinder.

If a dramaturg does choose to participate in a project, then it is essential to understand the definition and potential impact of trauma, and to develop methods to support a trauma-informed rehearsal process. Facilitating early discussions about potentially triggering subjects in a way that empowers BIPOC artists (and other trauma survivors) is important. As Nicole Brewer reminds us, rehearsal rooms where actors of color do not feel comfortable speaking about important issues can cause traumatic reactions, including emotional withdrawal and even dissociation from the process. In addition to preparing factual material about the history and culture of the piece, the dramaturg might provide additional reading and materials to remind the director and production team (if appropriate) about anti-racist and trauma-informed approaches, especially for productions with diverse casts and White directors. If such a practice becomes standardized for production dramaturgs, it can serve as a helpful reminder to a director as they craft their approach, rather than a rebuke.

We also explored the background and arcs of each character in *Daphne's Dive* to prepare Anaïs for character work with her actors. We thought that if Anaïs had a strong

dramaturgical understanding of each of the characters, she would be able to help the actors avoid self-identification with them, which could lead to unsafe acting techniques. This was especially useful in exploring the character of Jenn, who is based on the real-life activist Kathy Chang(e). Jenn's arc results in self-immolation, similar to Kathy Change, who was also a performance artist and peaceful political activist. It would be easy to explain Jenn's actions as someone suffering from mental illness, a subject the play never explicitly confronts, but to do so would be to diminish Kathy's legacy. Our dramaturgical research into the life and activist work of Kathy Change gave Anaïs and the actress playing Jenn the tools to elevate the character's journey, and the actress found that separating Jenn's actions from a discussion of mental illness allowed her to engage with the role while protecting her own mental health.

Once we believed that we had a strong understanding of the text and an awareness of potential triggers, we began discussions about the ethos Anaïs wanted to create in the rehearsal room, with our primary focus being actor safety. The need for physical safety has long been accepted in theatre (staged fights have been a staple of live performance for centuries), but the focus on a performer's emotional and mental safety is a relatively new concern. Tonia Sina, one of the founders of Intimacy Directors International, first posited the idea of intimacy direction in theatre back in 2006, in response to her own experiences and observations on the staging of sexual material in her early career. She noted that physical and emotional boundaries were often blurred in the context of staging sexual and romantic scenes, leading to discomfort for the performers, as well as the possibility for physical violation (1). Sina proposed approaching intimate material with the physical precision of movement direction, combined with psychological exercises to allow actors to convey intimacy without triggering unwanted attractions or reminders of past sexual trauma.

Trauma-informed rehearsals expand upon these notions of actor protection. Beyond table work, it is useful to have a basic understanding of popular modern acting techniques and how they can trigger trauma. The rise of playwriting's psychological realism in the late 1800s demanded new acting techniques such as Stanislavski's popularized “affective memory.” Affective memory is an acting technique by which the actor calls upon their own memories to relive associated feelings that may be similar to what their character

is feeling, thus fueling their performance of that character's circumstances or what later became known as "method acting" (Crossley 150).

The method approach does not allow the performer to protect themselves from trauma by creating distance. Instead, it relies on self-identification with the character and an intentional exploitation of personal trauma to produce a genuine reaction, without any regard to the effects on the performers. Some acting teachers like Sanford Meisner recognized the potential for psychic harm in method acting, instead advocating for acting techniques that allowed for a level of distancing for the actor to evoke an emotional reaction. However, the use of affective memory continues to be taught in many Western acting classes and is often one of the earliest tools a young actor learns. Regardless of the stimuli, both approaches rely on the actor's emotional state, which may be especially fragile in plays with sensitive subject matter.

Our dramaturgical investigation of the text allowed us to recognize that the types of trauma present in *Daphne's Dive*, especially racial and sexual trauma, had the potential to destabilize performers if they approached their characters using affective memory-based techniques. We found inspiration in physical acting approaches, initially inspired by non-Western theatrical traditions that have adopted a very different approach to acting techniques, focusing on external replication and discipline, rather than psychological realism. Japanese theatre forms like Kabuki and Noh require decades of physical and vocal training to allow for precise replications of gesture and voice to convey character and emotion to the audience. Part of the preparation for the performance is a period of meditation to allow the actor to mentally prepare for the role.

Japanese director Tadashi Suzuki's "avant-garde" theatre work caught the attention of American theatre artists in the 1980s, many of whom sought out his teachings. His method disciplines actors physically by emphasizing whole body preparation for grounded performance and stamina. Physical preparation balances the emotional and mental strain of a role, focusing on holistic sustainability to support the actor.

Suzuki's method is promising due to his emphasis on international exchange and cross-cultural approaches to performance. He intends for his physical training to complement Western techniques of emotional and

intellectual preparation, which connects with the artistic philosophies of fellow director and collaborator Anne Bogart: "Both believe in a physical approach to the art of acting as theatre's cornerstone, both want to battle the corrupt state of the art under capitalism, and both endorse theatre's responsibility in larger cultural and political matters" (Lampe 147).

In 1992, Suzuki and Bogart co-founded the Saratoga International Theatre Institute (SITI) program, prioritizing the belief that "international interconnectedness is vital to the creation of the new approaches to acting" (Lampe 148). Their collaboration prompts consideration of how international methods like Suzuki's can continue to be synthesized with Western theories to give actors a strong foundation from which to safely generate and sustain the performance of a character by mitigating trauma. Dramaturgs familiar with Suzuki's acting methods and Bogart's work in *Viewpoints* (which are taught together as complementary techniques at SITI) can develop an alternative vocabulary to help actors navigate character exploration. Rather than focusing dramaturgy on informational and psychological exploration, dramaturgs can encourage performers and directors to explore the movement of the scene through precise physical representations of emotion—inspired from Suzuki—and an analysis of the storytelling through time, space, and sound—inspired from *Viewpoints*.

To challenge the Eurocentric conventions of the Western theatre industry, some Western artists strive to establish educational spaces that are accessible and conscious of the under-recognized cultures and individuals that continue to influence performance theory. Dr. Sharrell D. Luckett is the founding director of the Black Acting Methods Studio. She established it in 2017 to create a home for the performance methodologies espoused in her book *Black Acting Methods* that are grounded in Black culture and aesthetics.

Black Acting Methods seeks to: (1) honor and rightfully identify Blacks as central co-creators of acting and directing theory by filling the perceived void of Black acting theorists, (2) uplift, honor, and provide culturally relevant frameworks for Black people who are pursuing careers in acting, (3) provide diverse methodologies for actors and teachers of all races and cultures to utilize, and (4) highlight

performance practitioners' labor in social justice
issues and activism. (Luckett and Shaffer 2)

One of the key methodologies Luckett employs to empower her film and theatre actors is the Hendricks Method, which she learned under the mentorship of African American theatre director Freddie Hendricks. The Hendricks Method nurtures “culturally grounded” artists through “empowered authorship, musical bravado, spirituality, ensemble building, activism, effuse reverence of Black culture, and devising... sans script” (20). While many Western theories focus on the preparation of voice and breath, the Hendricks Method takes an integrated approach by also prioritizing the body, confidence, mental health, and imagination. Hendricks and Luckett’s approach recognizes and legitimizes the marginalized identities of many artists of color by enabling their students to build themselves a strong foundation of physical, emotional, and cultural support, while equipping themselves with psychological tools of cultural affirmation and resilience. Hendricks would stoke the “Hyper-Ego” in his (often) Black adolescent students, because he knew that “a hyper-egotistical performer feels like she can learn and accomplish any and everything of what is being asked of her in a production” (30). This emphasis on resilience and sustainability combats that Black actors must assimilate to a Eurocentric or White model of performance.

To stay true to her initial mission of offering culturally conscious roles to underrepresented student actors in the Pomona College theatre department, Anaïs honored Hudes’ culturally specific casting, and chose to cast the two non-ethnically specific roles with BIPOC performers. She drew inspiration from the Hendricks Method to encourage her performers to use their heritage in crafting an intentional approach to their characters, empowering them with the truth that no other performer would be able to play the character the way they would in this production. She wanted to stoke their “Hyper-Ego” by reminding them that their contribution to the character was both singular and profound. It was in this setting that she and the performers tackled the potentially triggering aspects of *Daphne’s Dive*. Below is an excerpt from Anaïs’ director’s journal.

I reminded them that while I wanted them to be brave and connect with the experiences of their characters, I did not want them to take on that trauma... I emphasized that it did not matter to me whether or not they referred to

their characters in first or third person. I have been in classrooms and productions where instructors and directors insist that actors must refer to themselves as the character... I wanted my actors to take ownership of their decision, and to know that I was available to explore that distinction with them if they were ever unsure.

While expanding an actor’s toolbox can certainly help them acquire skills to protect themselves, the atmosphere of the rehearsal room is also a critical component. In his essay, “Does Staging Historical Trauma Re-enact It?,” Tavia Nyong’o draws from psychoanalytic theory to provide insight into rehearsal dynamics. In a vertical hierarchy, a director is in a position of power in the rehearsal space. It is crucial that the casting of actors to achieve the directorial vision does not compromise the director’s responsibility in enabling actors to safely produce their best work. Without proper prioritization of the actors’ needs by the director, the very hierarchy of the theatre which upholds the director as the primary authority can be the system that most threatens performers vulnerable to trauma. Instead, Nyong’o suggests a “good enough caretaker” might lead the rehearsal process, relying more on collaboration and exploration than a dictatorial vision.

Nyong’o asserts that the director is the optimal figure to be that “good enough caretaker,” although the role of a production dramaturg as a font of knowledge positions them to share this role through the integration of resources to bring awareness of trauma in the space. Nyong’o reminds us that just as caring too little can cause trauma to arise in the rehearsal room, attempts to remove any and all triggers is impossible (note: Nyong’o uses the analogy of a helicopter parent to characterize his point), and that the rehearsal space must be a space of care and understanding to support performers through the process. He argues that the rehearsal room can serve as a holding environment, which is “a space where they can move around freely, at risk of surprise and even injury, but it must not be a terrifying, hostile or wholly alien environment” (204). In this space, actors can explore the material freely, knowing the director and dramaturg are present as safety nets. The more actors can prepare within the boundaries of their holding environment, the more prepared they will be to leave it when performances begin.

Anaïs cast her performers in November of 2019. Although

official rehearsals would not begin until March 9, 2020, Anaïs and the cast used winter and early spring to slowly build trust and engage in extended table work. Anaïs' goal with the prolonged rehearsal process was to give the actors

...they were all together for a reason, to tell a very special story.

space and time to work through potential trauma that might surface. In the first December read-through, Anaïs laid the groundwork for her “good enough” holding space. She emphasized that they were all together for a reason, to tell a very special story. She assured them that she had no set expectations for the read-through and that they would have months to prepare together. One of the tangible impacts of this approach was a leveling of the playing field. As noted earlier, a traditional rehearsal room is hierarchical, with the director in a position of power. Anaïs' approach emphasized the collaborative nature of the rehearsal process, and she positioned herself as someone who prioritizes the needs of her actors. The “good enough” holding space extended outside the rehearsal room to Christina's office, where we moved away from the faculty-student relationship to one of artistic collaboration to allow Anaïs the space to safely navigate her own dramaturgical and directorial choices with Christina as her safety net.

Another method we employed in our process was the Alexander Technique. The Alexander Technique, a popular physical training program for actors, offers a different method for addressing trauma and reinforcing the boundaries of the “good enough” holding space. Alexander Technique instructor Betsy Polatin, who teaches somatic experiencing in performance, emphasizes the physical need to process symptoms of trauma that linger in the body. Polatin focuses on the ways in which trauma can be remembered by and stored in the body (75). Unprocessed trauma, even unrecognized by the person as such, often leads to future physical symptoms of stress that will affect that person's day-to-day life. For performers, this trauma can be re-triggered and potentially re-experienced once they return to the inciting action.

Polatin shares tools through which anyone can locate and process physically stored trauma. Just as actors are encouraged to learn from the Alexander Technique, her process enables performers to check in with themselves and respond to trauma. This reinforces the agency of the actor in their choice to engage with triggering material, inspiring positive self-exploration, acceptance, and healing post-trauma. Polatin promises that “trauma work opens new avenues for deep change” (84). She encourages the use of breathing and routine to help process and protect oneself from trauma, practicing Breathing Coordination and Somatic Experiencing as a way of fully recovering from the event of trauma and identifying habit patterns to encourage “something else to occur” in future situations. To process trauma, Polatin gives four exercises: one for tracking sensations, another to explore boundaries, an exercise in self-regulation or “being with” potentially trauma-associated sensations, and one for exploring a “stuck place.” Polatin's approach offered Anaïs a method (through both individual and partner work) for physically exploring the interpersonal relationships between the characters of the play, which had the most potential to trigger emotional responses. In the unofficial rehearsal period, Anaïs introduced the basics of Alexander Technique to prepare her actors for the more demanding exercises suggested by Polatin, but the campus closure never allowed her to move beyond basic implementation.

Another technique that Anaïs referenced in her first group rehearsal but never got to implement is Alba Emoting, a method developed by psychologist Susana Bloch who used her research on how certain breathing and physical effector patterns produce specific emotions. Alba Emoting is a technique that can be learned by theatre educators and even directors to guide students and performers to a neutral state from which they can then be introduced to effector patterns and their corresponding emotions. Bloch introduces breathing techniques as a way of preparing the actor to leave the role at the end of rehearsal or performance. The mastering of the technique, together with the strict “step-out” procedure, allows the actor not only to start and end an emotional state at will but to monitor the degree of subjective involvement as well. This approach strengthens the usefulness of the proposed technique for the work of actors, who often have difficulties “leaving” their roles, especially their emotional states, which are sometimes called “emotional hangovers” (Bloch 129). Anaïs' awareness of the difficulties in leaving a performance role arose from her own acting experience two years prior when she was

cast as Marisol in José Rivera's *Marisol*, where she found herself struggling to shed the emotional weight of her role after rehearsals. Her experiences shaped her directorial approach and drove her to provide a method for her actors to prevent similarly debilitating experiences.

The actors dispersed for approximately a month for winter break, then regrouped at the beginning of spring semester. Upon returning, Anaïs slowly began implementing elements of her plan for trauma-informed rehearsals. Since the department-sanctioned rehearsal process would not begin for another six weeks, these early rehearsals were sporadic and designed for ensemble-building and preparation for the intense work that would occur once "official" rehearsals began. The early rehearsals always began with a group warm-up, a combination of Linklater voice, Alexander Technique inspired by Betsy Polatin, yoga, and meditation. While physical and vocal warm-ups are standard, Anaïs included the meditations to help the actors transition from the pressures of their outside lives into the space. After the first few rehearsals, the actors began to take turns leading the warm-ups, and also created their own individual closing rituals, inspired by Bloch's "step out" procedure to help them mentally separate from the work before heading home. The content of these early rehearsals focused on table work and the implementation of the dramaturgical research we had created in the fall. Throughout these explorations, actors were reminded that they had the freedom to find the best ways to safely engage with the work and that their respect for each other held primacy.

In March, the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic shattered our community. As Anaïs prepared for the first official rehearsal on March 9th, we received email after email of canceled events on campus. The morning of the first rehearsal, we were informed that off-campus visitors (including the team's family), would not be allowed on campus, and on-campus audiences for special events would be extremely limited. We recognized that these directives were a sign that our show could be canceled or performed on a significantly smaller scale than anticipated. Anaïs opened rehearsal that night by asking her cast what they needed to do to take care of themselves in the midst of the chaos. The cast unanimously decided they wanted to rehearse. Anaïs' focus on the emotional health of her actors over the previous months meant that the actors felt safe and in control in the rehearsal room, in contrast to their outside lives. Two days

later, however, we were finally informed that campus would be closing, and we said our farewells to each other and to our work on *Daphne's Dive*.

The irony of performing a play about the importance of a communal gathering space over Zoom during a pandemic [...] was not lost on us.

After much deliberation with the faculty and Anaïs, the Pomona College Theatre Department decided to support Anaïs in mounting a Zoom reading of *Daphne's Dive* just one month after students were sent home. Before she proposed the idea to the department, she asked the cast what they thought they needed to achieve closure despite the cancelation of the production. The ensemble opted to do a virtual reading, so that the story of *Daphne's Dive* could be shared with as many individuals as possible amidst the communal disconnect experienced during quarantine. The irony of performing a play about the importance of a communal gathering space over Zoom during a pandemic that confined most of the country to their homes was not lost on us. Since many of the cast were first-generation, low income students, they had not all been able to leave campus for stable living situations. Safety, mental health, and internet access were concerns in reuniting the cast.

The rehearsal process only consisted of a dress rehearsal to work out the technical complications and have the actors re-familiarize themselves with the language, as it was paramount to Anaïs that the process be as minimal and accommodating to the stress of the pandemic as possible. To best support them, Anaïs decided to emphasize the dramaturgical process and their early character development, so the actors could reconnect with the cultural specificity of the play. In this way, they were able to humanize their characters and tap into their inner motivations for needing to share their story with the audience. She also returned to Hendricks' teachings of the "Hyper-Ego" by reminding the actors that only this particular ensemble would be able to tell this particular and

special version of *Daphne's Dive*. By prioritizing their personal needs and emotional limits, she reestablished the “good enough” holding environment in this new virtual rehearsal space.

The feedback from the audience was overwhelmingly positive, especially in response to the emotional authenticity of the acting. Anaïs intentionally stayed away from affective memory-based techniques in rehearsal, choosing to rely on dramaturgical exploration to create authenticity, rather than exploiting the lived experiences of performers currently enduring trauma. Although we never got to see our production of *Daphne's Dive* fully realized, the impact of trauma-informed practices on our cast was evident. Because they knew they were cared for in the space and they knew they were supported in the process and discovery of the play, the cast trusted that going back and telling the story could be uplifting and empowering in a time when so much was destroying the BIPOC community. ♦

CHRISTINA HURTADO-PIERSON is a dramaturg and lecturer at Pomona College, where she teaches dramaturgy, theatre history, and playwriting. She has worked extensively in both commercial and non-for-profit theaters including Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, Martian Entertainment, Classic Stage Company and the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester, for over a decade as a dramaturg and arts administrator. She holds an MFA in Dramaturgy from Columbia University.

ANAÏS GONZALEZ NYBERG is the Education Apprentice and Fellow at Steppenwolf Theatre Company. She dedicated her undergraduate years to studying directing and performance, and she aspires to lead as an arts administrator in development and education. Her directorial credits include *Daphne's Dive* (Director), *Tabletop Rejects Club* (Director), *Metamorphoses* (Associate Director), and *Cabaret* (Assistant Director). She has a BA in theatre from Pomona College.

WORKS CITED

- Bloch, Susana. "ALBA EMOTING: A Psychophysiological Technique to Help Actors Create and Control Real Emotions." *Theatre Topics*, 2nd ed., vol. 3, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, pp. 121–138.
- Brewer, Nicole. "Playwrights of Color, White Directors, and Exposing Racist Policy." Howlround Theatre Commons, 29 August 2019. howlround.com/playwrights-color-white-directors-and-exposing-racist-policy. Accessed 20 May 2020.
- Crossley, Tracy. "Active Experiencing in Postdramatic Performance: Affective Memory and Quarantine Theatre's Wallflower: NTQ." *New Theatre Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2018, pp. 145-159.
- "Ethnic Representations on New York City Stages." *Asian American Performers Action Coalition*, 2019. aapacnyc.org/uploads/1/1/9/4/11949532_aapac_2016-2017_report.pdf. Accessed 20 May 2020.
- Kochhar, Rakesh. "Unemployment Rose Higher in Three Months of COVID-19 than It Did in Two Years of the Great Recession." *Pew Research Center*, Pew Research Center, 30 June 2020, pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/06/11/unemployment-rose-higher-in-three-months-of-covid-19-than-it-did-in-two-years-of-the-great-recession/. Accessed 15 July 2020.
- Lampe, Eelka. "Collaboration and Cultural Clashing: Anne Bogart and Tadashi Suzuki's Saratoga International Theatre Institute." *TDR: The Drama Review*, vol.37, Spring 1993, pp. 147–156. EBSCOhost, doi:10.2307/1146275.
- Lockett, Sharrell D, and Tia M Shaffer, editors. *Black Acting Methods: Critical Approaches*. Routledge, 2017.
- Nyong'o, Tavia. "Does Staging Historical Trauma Re-Enact It?" *Thinking Through Theatre and Performance*, Methuen Drama, an Imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2019, pp. 200–209.
- Polatin, Betsy. *The Actor's Secret*. North Atlantic Books, 2013.
- Render Turmaud, Danielle. "What Is Collective Trauma?". *Psychology Today*, 23 May 2020. psychologytoday.com/us/blog/lifting-the-veil-trauma/202005/what-is-collective-trauma. Accessed 24 May 2020.
- Sina Campenella, Tonia. "Intimate Encounters; Staging Intimacy and Sensuality" (2006). Virginia Commonwealth University. scholarscompass.vcu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2070&context=etd. Accessed 27 May 2020.
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. *SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach*. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014.
- "Trauma-Informed Creative Practice Tip Sheet." *Momentum Stage*, Momentum Stage Education, momentumstage.org/arts-education/free-trauma-informed-creative-practice-tip-sheet. Accessed 5 June 2020.
- van der Kolk, Bessel A. "In Terror's Grip: Healing the Ravages of Trauma." *The Trauma Center*, traumacenter.org/products/pdf_files/terrors_grip.pdf. Accessed 17 November 2020.
- Various Artists. *We See You W.A.T.*, weseeyouwat.com. Accessed 15 July 2020.

Reframing Shakespeare's *Taming* to Rally for Political Change

by Janna Segal

On a late night in February 2018, I got a call from Dr. J. Ariadne Calvano, my colleague in the Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Louisville, Kentucky. A deadline for play proposals for our department's 2018-2019 production season was fast approaching, and she was eager to submit a proposal for a Shakespearean play. She asked, "Which Shakespeare play do you think is most resonant now and would be most impactful to produce in November 2018?" My immediate response was *The Taming of the Shrew*. She exclaimed, "That's what I thought, too!" Surprised that we both gravitated towards a play whose patriarchal prescriptions have been documented by feminist scholars,¹ and excited that we were literally on the exact same page of the Shakespearean canon, we burned the proverbial midnight oil and submitted a proposal for an adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*.²

Perhaps it was unsurprising that *The Taming of the Shrew* was the first Shakespearean text we both felt was best suited to speak to the Fall 2018 midterm election campaign season, which we believed would focus on issues of gender inequality that were at the forefront of the 2016 presidential election."³ The play's long production history

1 See, for instance, Boose and Orlin.

2 Shakespeare's play may itself be an adaptation of a similarly-titled Elizabethan comedy. Neither the exact date of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* nor its relationship to the anonymously-authored *The Taming of a Shrew* can be determined. A 1594 Stationers' Register reference to a play titled *The Taming of a Shrew* and the 1594 publication of that play dates this as an Elizabethan work (Dolan 6; Hodgdon 9; Mowat and Werstine xlv; Wells 25). Although Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* was not published until the 1623 First Folio, it may have been written and produced long before. In her Introduction to Shakespeare's play, Arden editor Barbara Hodgdon argues that Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* likely "post-dates *A Shrew* and came into being after 1594" (35). All quotes from Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* are from the Arden edition (2010).

3 When Hillary Clinton became the first female candidate for president nominated by a major political party, gender parity became an even more central concern of the 2016 Democratic platform. Gender issues were especially front and center on the 2016... [cont'd on next page]

includes textual adaptations and stagings that have re-shaped Shakespeare's script in response to shifting attitudes toward gender.⁴ Even in Shakespeare's lifetime, the Elizabethan comedy was subject to revisions that offered alternatives to Katherine's final monologue's prescription onto women to accept a "husband" as "thy lord, thy life, thy keeper, / Thy head, thy sovereign" (5.2.152-53). For instance, John Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize; or, The Tamer Tamed* (c. 1611) reimagined the widowed Petruchio tamed by his new wife, Maria. In Barbara Hodgdon's estimation, Fletcher's Jacobean comedy championed "marriage as a companionate undertaking" and offered a "critique of *The Shrew's* marital politics" (74). While Fletcher's "sequel" to *Taming* "suggests that not all Shakespeare's contemporaries assumed that Petruchio had triumphed decisively" (Dolan 37), more contemporary productions have radically unsettled the play's patriarchal vision, disrupting Petruchio's successful taming of his wife. Margaret Loftus Ranald (322) and Elizabeth Schafer (36-38) both address the impact of the 1960s feminist movement on the theatrical reception of Shakespeare's comedy. Ranald contends that the 1967 Zeffirelli film starring Elizabeth Taylor as Katherine and Richard Burton as Petruchio was a turning point, after which "it has been impossible to see *The Taming of the Shrew* as the wife-beating farce it was once considered" (322). Produced almost thirty years after this landmark film and on the cusp of the new millennium, Gale Edwards's 1995 production at the RSC re-imagined *Taming* as a patriarchal fantasy giving way at the end of the twentieth century. Edwards's staging was celebrated in *The Evening Standard's* review for having successfully "claimed for today" the play's gender politics (de Jongh 332), and has since been described by Schafer as "a feminist rewriting" that

offers "a gender parable for the 1990s" (59). Hodgdon also identifies Edwards's production as indicative of the late-twentieth-century "sea-change" toward more feminist approaches to *Taming* (127-28); however, she stresses that "angry *Shrews* bent on serving up patriarchal tyranny as a main course were still being staged throughout the twenty-first century's first decade" (128).

Our bookend frame for *Taming* was designed to be responsive to the 2018 midterm election season.

On board with this "sea-change" to producing Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, Dr. Calvano and I sought to adapt Shakespeare's comedy so as to critically intervene in the patriarchal discourse in circulation in Shakespeare's text and in the production's target culture. Our proposal for a feminist re-imagining of *Taming* was approved by the department, and our production ran at the University of Louisville's Playhouse Theatre from November 8–18, 2018, immediately after the midterm elections that flipped the House of Representatives from red to blue, and two years after a divisive presidential election. Ahead of our six-week rehearsal process, Dr. Calvano and I spent roughly five months co-adapting *The Taming of the Shrew* for this context. Inspired by Dario Fo and Franca Rame's approach to crafting political theatre responsive to the moment, we pulled material from early modern English plays and contemporary political sources to create a bookended frame for the Paduan action of Shakespeare's comedy. Our primary sources for this framing device were: Shakespeare's play's Induction, which refers to the prefatory scenes to *Taming* that situate the comedy as a play-within-a-play staged to trick the drunken tinker Christopher Sly into believing that he is a Lord; the similarly-plotted and metatheatrical Christopher Sly sections in the anonymously-authored *The Taming of a Shrew*, which include a Sly finale scene absent from Shakespeare's *Taming*; and slogans, soundtracks, and soundbites from 2016 presidential campaign rallies. Our bookended frame for *Taming* was designed to be

[cont'd from previous page] ...campaign trail when, two days before the second presidential debate, candidate Trump's misogynistic remarks while filming an episode of *Access Hollywood* in 2005 were made public. On October 7, 2016, *The Washington Post* published the *Access Hollywood* "hot mic" recording of Trump bragging about groping women. Soon after, candidate Trump released a statement justifying his remarks as "locker room banter." On October 8, 2016, he released a videotaped apology for his "wrong" words on the recording, and dismissed the publication of the *Access Hollywood* tape as "nothing more than a distraction." The second presidential debate was held on October 9, 2016. Details about the *Access Hollywood* tape and Trump's responses can be found in Burns, Haberman, and Martin.

4 Elizabeth Schafer provides a detailed production history in her edition of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Schafer's edition also features a list of productions from 1594 to 2001 (xv-xxvii) and a survey of adaptations (238-40). Barbara Hodgdon's Introduction to the Arden edition of *Taming* likewise includes a production history (71-131).

responsive to the 2018 midterm election season in which our production ran. The outlines of this metadramatic frame, its dialogic relationship to the 1960s setting of our adaptation of the Paduan marriage plot, and the paratheatrical materials developed in support of this politically-driven staging are herein provided as a resource for theatre practitioners seeking to produce Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* in a future campaign year.

“THIS DOTH FIT THE TIME” (4.3.71)

In our initial production proposal, Dr. Calvano and I sketched the contours of what would become our Induction, or metadramatic frame, for a version of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* set in the early 1960s. We wanted to compare this pivotal moment in American history to that in which we were living by locating the action inside a Trump-like campaign rally that would invoke similar rallies held in and around our city in the last election cycle, and which we anticipated would happen again in the run-up to the November 2018 midterm election. In keeping with the Christopher Sly metatheatrics found in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Taming of a Shrew*, our production opened and closed in a Trumpian campaign rally, thereby framing Shakespeare's comedy as a play-within-a-campaign-rally. The production's campaign rally frame sought to encourage the Louisville, Kentucky target audience to consider the following: How their participation in the midterms and in forthcoming elections might impact the ways in which narratives about women are shaped and circulated; how their vote and other overtly political activities could affect the state regulation of women's bodies; and how the audience's daily lives were informed by the political theatre that surrounds us all in a 24-hour-news cycle culture saturated with social media editorials. The political rally frame also sought to expose the ways in which the reproduction of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, and other such canonized plays, have trained American audiences to laugh at the idea of an autonomous woman and to interpret self-assurance in a female as something to be muted with mockery. Framing the play's primary Paduan plot concerning the marriages of Bianca and Lucentio and Katherine and Petruchio as a play-within-a-political-rally-play would remind our University of Louisville target audience that elections are a form of political theatre that call upon familiar tropes to sway voters. It would also suggest that the familiar gender constructions routinely evoked by the Trump administration and its cronies in state

offices fuel the fantasy of a “great” post-WWII America that can be revived “again.” By adapting Shakespeare's *Taming* to speak directly to our contemporary political landscape, our production would also disclose the means by which these patriarchal constructions are re-inscribed through, among other strategies, recourse to plays in the Shakespearean canon. The overt theatricality of our *Taming*-within-a-campaign-rally held in the Playhouse Theatre would highlight the constructed basis of gender fictions presented as fact in Shakespeare's text and in our present political sphere. In so doing, it would reveal our current political reality for what it is: an ideologically-driven production that, like a Shakespeare play, is open to revision.

The comedy's Induction was crucial to our theatrical adaptation, as we hoped that it would serve to convey spectators into the world of our production and establish a relationship between our target audience's lived experience and that of the play's characters. The Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew* has also been crucial to debates concerning Shakespeare's comedy's relationship to the anonymously-authored *The Taming of a Shrew*. Unlike the 1594 *Taming of a Shrew*, which opens with the drunken tinker Christopher Sly at an inn run by a Tapster, closes with Sly at the inn, and intermittently slips him into the action of the comedy's primary Paduan plot, the 1623 First Folio's *Taming of the Shrew* features only the first two Induction scenes with Sly that are set in a Hostess's inn, and an Act 1 interruption by the tinker. Because *The Shrew* of 1623 is generally considered the more conclusively “Shakespearean,”⁵ the Sly interpolations and epilogue in *A Shrew* are typically not included in published

5 Although Barbara Hodgdon writes in her Introduction to *The Taming of the Shrew* that the two comedies should be seen as inter-texts in dialogue during the period, collectively “representing different stages of an ongoing theatrical ‘commodity’ that was formed at some point in the early 1590s” (36), other editors are more dismissive of *A Shrew*. For instance, Folger editors Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine argue in their Introduction that since the two works bear little resemblance to each other, *A Shrew* can be largely neglected by editors: “Because of the large and important differences between the two plays, this edition of *The Taming of the Shrew* almost entirely ignores” the 1594 *A Shrew* (xlv). In his Introduction, Oxford editor Stanley Wells also dismisses the value of *A Shrew*. He asserts that “Shakespeare's play was written first, not necessarily on the foundation of an earlier play, and *A Shrew* is an anonymous imitation, written in the hopes of capitalizing on the success of Shakespeare's play” (25). Wells does not offer evidence that Shakespeare's play was a “success” by the 1594 publication date of *A Shrew*.

versions of *The Shrew*;⁶ or, when provided, they are an appendix.⁷ The disposal of the Sly stuff from *A Shrew* or its positioning as supplemental in Shakespeare's *The Shrew* signals its status among scholars as bits of script to be discarded or, at best, rummaged through for scraps.

The editorial erasure or displacement of these materials raises a production question: Should one tinker with the Christopher Sly frame in *The Shrew* or *A Shrew*, or dump the Induction altogether? Hodgdon argues that following the Folio text by retaining Sly but allowing him to slip out of view as the Paduan action takes over directly confronts audiences with the play's gender politics (105). She also notes, though, that launching with *The Shrew*'s frame and ending with *A Shrew*'s return to the beginning at the Hostess's inn has a potentially denaturalizing effect: it "encloses and distances the taming story," such that audiences can "dissolve *The Shrew*'s gender politics into a ludic space where social roles slide into theatrical ones" (105). Hodgdon asserts that in either case, the tinker unlocks the production's point of view: "Sly, once so detachable, has become the key to re-viewing and re-staging the scene of taming and a site for its critique" (105).

Director Dr. Calvano and I likewise found Sly to be "key" to our Fall 2018 University of Louisville production of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Informed by Gale Edwards's 1995 use of the Induction to situate the interior plot as Sly/Petruchio's male fantasy (Hodgdon 127-28; Schafer 37; 59-60), we sought to use the framing device to posit the Paduan plot as a narrative devised by a male-dominated political apparatus. While Hodgdon argues that opening and closing with Sly "encloses and distances the taming story" (105), our Sly Induction also closed the gap between the target audience's frame of reference and *Taming*'s plot, emphasizing the resonance of the play's patriarchal discourse in our historical moment. Borrowing from the Induction scenes in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and the Sly interpolations and concluding Sly scene from the anonymous *The Taming of a Shrew*, our bookended Induction was in dialogue with its

Shakespearean and Shakespeare-adjacent sources, even while radically departing from those early modern English texts.

Drawing upon the dramaturgical conventions of Trump rallies and inspired by Dario Fo and Franca Rame's "throwaway" theatre, our adaptation of *Taming*'s Induction was also crafted as a disposable piece of political theatre. Fo and Rame sought to provoke resistance to oppressive social structures in Italy from the 1970s to the early 21st century. Abandoning literary merit in favor of creating a theatre for social change, they quickly assembled scripts in response to immediate events, and quickly discarded or reassembled their texts when new issues arose. In a 1974 interview, Fo described their theatre as purposefully disposable: "'Our theatre is a throwaway theatre [*un teatro da bruciare*]. A theatre which won't go down in bourgeois history, but which is useful, like a newspaper article, a debate or a political action'" (qtd. in Mitchell 101). Similarly, we wanted to assemble a bookended frame that was "useful" and akin to "a political action" in this particular time and place; therefore, it could and perhaps *should* be thrown away if cultural tides were to shift. This was not an Induction to "go down in bourgeois history"; rather, like "a newspaper article," it would be relevant in the present, dated in the future, and perhaps discarded like yesterday's fake news.

The setting of our "throwaway" Induction was a form of political theatre that in November 2018 was—and still is—imagined by many as indispensable in an election year: a Trump rally. Our opening, closing, and interluding Sly scenes positioned Shakespeare's matrimonial plot as a play-within-a-play staged for a drunken Sly attending a "Make Padua [Pennsylvania] Great Again" rally that was being broadcast live by two reporters from Brightsmart News. With the help of the Patriots of Padua Performers, the Brightsmart news anchors plotted to stage Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* for Sly, whom they had convinced was not the steel mill worker Christopher Sly, but rather a "Sly strategist" for the Patriots of Padua Political Action Committee (Calvano and Segal 4). For the Brightsmart news team, the Shakespearean-production-within-the-"Make Padua Great Again"-rally would, to quote our Brightsmart reporters, "give" Sly and those like him watching the show "back [their] manhood, put him [and other men] back in charge" by allowing Sly to "experience a little of the good ole days when Padua was great, so he can see that it can be great again" (Calvano and Segal 4).

6 Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine's Folger edition does not provide these materials (1992).

7 For instance, Barbara Hodgdon's Arden edition reproduces a facsimile of *A Shrew* as the third of five appendices (Arden, 2010). Elizabeth Scharfer's Cambridge edition also includes the Sly sections from *A Shrew* as an appendix (2002). The concluding Sly scene from *A Shrew* is among the excerpted works included after David Bevington's edition of Shakespeare's comedy in *The Taming of the Shrew: Texts and Contexts*, edited by Dolan (St. Martin's P, 1996).

In this production, the “good ole days when Padua was great” were the days of 1963, the year President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* was published, and the cultural landscape was shifting in ways that resonate with the sea-changes of today. Friedan’s landmark book, which by August 1963 was a bestseller (Isserman and Kazin 115-16; McWilliams 9; Reilly 12-13), featured prominently in our production’s design and staging. For instance, in her first scene with Bianca and later with Petruchio, Katherine read Friedan’s iconic work while costumed in a poppy-colored top that matched the original hardcover jacket, a design chosen to highlight the book in her hands. Her conflicts with each character were staged around their attempts to whisk the bright-colored book away in an effort to capture her attention. When first published, Friedan’s text revealed the malaise then (and likely now) experienced by many middle-class, white women who were socially-prescribed the domestic roles of wife, mother, and homemaker and who had sublimated their desires and professional aspirations through a “taming” process reinforced through cultural forms that had been circulating since the post-WWII years. The post-War years in which women were so “tamed” are also those which Trump identified as the time when America was supposedly “great.” When asked by a reporter from the *New York Times* when “the United States had the right balance, either in terms of defense footprint or in terms of trade,” Trump identified two eras: “a period of time when we were developing at the turn of the century”; and the “late ‘40s and ‘50s,” when “we were not pushed around, we were respected by everybody, we had just won a war, we were pretty much doing what we had to do” (qtd. in Krieg).

As evident by the popularity of Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*, 1963 was an inflection point in American history partly because it was the moment when women started to become awakened to the demoralizing effects of maintaining post-WWII, socially-prescribed gender roles. These patriarchal gender constructions were circulating in 1963’s popular media, and they still resound today. As documented in my dramaturgical resource packet, which I shared with the production team to help us collectively shape the play-within-the-play’s world, among the number one hit pop singles of 1963 were Steve Lawrence’s “Go Away Little Girl” and Peggy March’s “I Will Follow Him” (McWilliams xxi), both of which position women as inferior to and dependent upon men, whom women, according to the logic of the lyrics, routinely stalk. Television comedies

featuring housewife characters happily circumscribed to the domestic sphere, like *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* (1952-66) and *Leave it to Beaver* (1957-63), were also still popular. Friedan notes in *The Feminine Mystique* that American women in the 1950s and early 1960s were also trained by women’s magazines to aspire to be “young and frivolous, almost childlike; fluffy and feminine; passive,” “content” and ideal wives and mothers who live in a perfect “world of bedroom and kitchen, sex, babies, and home” (36). As indicated by the November 1963 *Glamour* cover’s promise to share the “do’s and don’ts” of “11 Attractive men,” these magazines allowed women “only” one “goal”: “to get and keep a man” (Friedan 36). Magazines targeting men also circulated conceptions of masculinity that reconsolidated a patriarchal structure. *Life* magazine’s February 2, 1962 cover featured astronaut John Glenn’s personal process to stellar manhood, titled “Making of a Brave Man.” The January 7, 1963 edition of *Sports Illustrated* celebrated “Sportsman of the Year,” Terry Baker. These publications’ constructions of masculinity aligned with the period’s conception of men as the innately more dominant of the only two allotted-for genders. Since they were imagined as naturally superior, men were expected to be the breadwinner of the family, or, in the words Katherine espouses toward the end of *The Taming of the Shrew*, the “lord,” “life,” “keeper,” and “head” of the household (5.2.152-53) who was afforded, by virtue of his manly superiority, more prerogatives than women.

Set in an American middle-class milieu of 1963, but launched with an Induction set fifty-five years later, our *Taming of the Shrew* created a dialogue between past and present. The present-tense framing device invoked offstage events in what is now another historic moment: the 2018 midterm elections. Jostling between a 2018 present and a 1963 past, this *Taming* strove to encourage a target audience of Louisville, Kentucky university students, faculty, staff, and community members to consider how these patriarchal gender constructions reverberate today and inform their contemporary consciousness. This reverberation is felt in Trump’s vision of America in the “late ‘40s and ‘50s” as a utopian place and time when an empowered “we” implicitly defined as white cis straight men were “not pushed around” and were “respected by everybody” (qtd. in Krieg). It was also echoed during the gaslighting testimony given by Judge Brett Kavanaugh during his Supreme Court confirmation hearings in mid-to-late September 2018, during which he fashioned himself as a sportsman of the

year who “was very focused on doing as well as [he] could in school,” and “very focused on trying to be the best basketball player,” so therefore could not have sexually assaulted any woman in high school or college (September 25, 2018, Transcript 15). Similarly, Judge Kavanaugh invalidated Dr. Christine Blasey Ford’s account of being sexually assaulted on the basis of his superior memory and his “hard” work ethic. According to him, “Maybe something happened to Ms. Ford by someone else at some time in high school, but I know I did not do this. I’m a sitting judge with a lifetime of public service and hard work. I’ve lived a good life” (September 17, 2018, Transcript 16). His insistence that his memory of events superseded that of Dr. Ford’s at least in part because of his “good” background, and the doubt he cast on her experience with the phrase, “maybe something happened,” resounds with post-war patriarchal gender constructions that are deeply ingrained in dominant American culture.

When we initially proposed the adaptation to be produced in our department’s November 2018 production slot, Dr. Calvano and I could not have predicted that the controversies around the confirmation hearings for Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh would happen, let alone conclude roughly a week and a half before we opened.⁸ We sought the coveted early to mid-November slot so that the production would coincide with the 2018 midterm elections in which an unprecedented number of women (257 to be exact) ran for the House and Senate (“Women”). We were in the midst of rehearsals as Dr. Ford and Judge Kavanaugh testified before the nation in a political drama that recalled that which many of us had witnessed during the 1991 confirmation hearings of Justice Clarence Thomas. Kavanaugh’s and Ford’s testimony, and Kavanaugh’s ensuing Supreme Court appointment, were at that time an unfolding chapter in the history our production sought to trace. This chapter gave further credence to our proposal that the patriarchal discourse in Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* is still in circulation, or rather, to quote Katherine’s description of the cap Petruchio ordered for her, it “doth fit the time” (4.3.71).

INDUCTING AUDIENCES INTO “A KIND OF HISTORY” (INDUCTION 2.136)

In order to help establish the political rally frame that would induct audiences into the production’s two worlds—the present tense of a November 2018 Trumpian rally and the 1963 setting of our play-within-the-play—the director and I devised an experiential lobby display that cast spectators as participants in the “Make Padua Great Again” rally. In collaboration with scenic designer Kevin Gawley, the lobby of the University of Louisville’s Playhouse Theatre was refashioned to look like the lobby of a site for a political rally. The space was decorated with balloons and “Make Padua Great Again” posters and signage. The actual soundtrack from a Trump rally played in the background. As audiences entered the rally-themed lobby and were greeted with songs such as “Music of the Night” from *Phantom of the Opera* and Twisted Sister’s “We’re Not Gonna Take It” (Tani), they encountered a bar where they could get free soda and red, white, and blue campaign buttons that read, “Made Padua Great Again! Rally at the Playhouse.” The bar was tended by our version of the Hostess of the inn featured in Shakespeare’s Induction: a female Bartender serving and fending off an already inebriated Christopher Sly, who donned an iconic MAGA red baseball cap. As the audience milled around the lobby, drink in hand and campaign button on or off, they were immersed in improvised interactions between the Bartender and Sly that continued as the house opened and the show started. The performers playing the Bartender and Sly were asked by the director to interact both with each other and with the audience members so as to provoke spectators to actively engage with the space as that of a political rally.

This experiential lobby display encouraged the audience to adopt an active role in a politically-charged, theatricalized environment. This was intended to remind audiences of their part in the offstage political drama of the 2018 midterm elections. Consistent with Miriam Weisfeld’s definition of an “interactive” rather than passive lobby display as that which offers “two-way communication instead of a one-way delivery of information” (472), our lobby display encouraged “two-way communication” through the performers’ improvised interactions with audiences in the lobby, and by the spectators’ elected responses to the conflict between the Bartender and Sly happening in their midst. Upon entrance into the lobby, audience members were also confronted with a critical choice: they could take and wear

⁸ The Kavanaugh hearings were held on September 17, 25, and 26, 2018. Our production opened on November 8, 2018.

a free “Make Padua Great Again!” button that would visibly pronounce their role as participants in a Trump-like rally.

Once the house opened, audiences were handed a ballot-themed program that I designed with the help of our department’s marketing guru, Blair Potter, to mimic that used in the midterm elections. Envisioned as a ballot for the Padua, Pennsylvania 2018 election, the program framed each entry as a set of choices for the audience. For instance (Fig. 1), the first page instructed audiences to “vote for your choice in each contest” by “mark[ing] the box provided to the left of your choice,” and then listed the members of the production team, who were framed as running for “Representative in Congress 2018 District.” The cast was similarly framed as a set of candidates for the audience to elect, with characters grouped by “Districts” demarcating the setting of the action in which they appear in the production’s two worlds: “2018 District” or “1963 District” (Fig. 2). This, coupled with accompanying

character descriptions, helped the audience navigate the complex web of characters and subplots in *Taming* while also serving to remind spectators of another set of selections to make: with whom would they align themselves in a play where the female characters’ lives are dictated by the actions of the male characters? For example, audiences could elect either the actor playing Lucentio or the actor playing Hortensio in the “State Executive 1963 District” campaign for Bianca, the winner of which would become a “State Executive” of Baptista’s fortune (Fig. 2). All of the offices up for election were intended to invoke the characters’ status in the production’s two historically male-dominated social spheres. Hence, the actors playing the patriarchs Baptista, Vincentio, and the Merchant were running for “State Treasurer of the 1963 District.” The actresses playing Katherine, Bianca, and the Widow, all of whom are objects of men’s desires in the play-within-the-play, were running for “State Delegate 1963 District” because

Figure I: The *Taming of the Shrew* program design detail.

The Taming of the Shrew

By William Shakespeare
Directed by Dr. J. Ariadne Calvano

General Election
County of Padua, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
November 8-10 and November 15-18, 2018

Instructions: To vote for your choice in each contest, mark the box provided to the left of your choice.

REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS 2018 DISTRICT

☐ Dr. J. Ariadne Calvano, Sound Designer, Fight Director, Adapter

☐ Dr. Janna Segal, Dramaturg and Adapter

☐ Zach Stone, Assistant Director

☐ Professor Kevin D. Gawley, Scenic Designer

☐ Professor Zhanna Goldentul, Costume, Hair, Makeup Designer

☐ Professor Rachel Carter, Voice Director

☐ Tyler Hieb, Lighting Designer

☐ Megan Meyer, Stage Manager

Figure II: The *Taming of the Shrew* program design detail.

General Election
County of Padua, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
November 8-10 and November 15-18, 2018

Instructions: To vote for your choice in each contest, mark the box provided to the left of your choice.

INDUCTIONEER 2018 DISTRICT

☐ Alex Gordon as Christopher Sly, citizen of Padua

☐ Fiona Blackburn as Bartender, citizen of Padua

☐ Lee Stein as Josh, Brightsmart reporter

☐ Bailey Story as Matt, Brightsmart cameraman

☐ Mutiyat Ade-Salu, Jordan Lyons, Terry Tocantins, Jordan Tudor, Anthony David Ward, and Manuel Viveros as Padua Performers

STATE TREASURER 1963 DISTRICT

☐ J. Scott Tatum as Baptista, father of Katherine and Bianca


☐ Jordan Lyons as Vincentio, father of Lucentio

☐ Anthony David Ward as a Merchant who disguises as Vincentio

STATE EXECUTIVE 1963 DISTRICT

☐ Bailey Story as Lucentio, Vincentio’s son and a suitor to Bianca who disguises as the tutor Cambio

☐ Terry Tocantins as Hortensio, a suitor to Bianca who disguises as the tutor Lutio

CONTINUE VOTING ON NEXT PAGE 

<input type="checkbox"/> Manuel Viveros as Gremio, a suitor to Bianca <input type="checkbox"/> Lee Stein as Petruchio, a suitor to Katherine
STATE DELEGATE 1963 DISTRICT <input type="checkbox"/> Kala Ross as Katherine, eldest daughter of Baptista <input type="checkbox"/> Chasidy Moore as Bianca, youngest daughter of Baptista <input type="checkbox"/> Mutiyat Ade-Salu as a Widow courted by Hortensio
SECRETARY OF THE STATE EXECUTIVE 1963 DISTRICT <input type="checkbox"/> Lauren Dobbs as Tronia, Lucentio's secretary who disguises as her boss, and Fight Captain <input type="checkbox"/> Jordan Tudor as Guilia, Petruchio's secretary
REPRESENTATIVE IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY 1963 DISTRICT <input type="checkbox"/> Fiona Blackburn as Biondella, Lucentio's maid <input type="checkbox"/> Mutiyat Ade-Salu as Nicolette, Petruchio's maid and tailor <input type="checkbox"/> Fiona Blackburn as Petra, Petruchio's maid <input type="checkbox"/> Jordan Lyons as a Priest

Figure III: The Taming of the Shrew program design detail.

they were delegated to the domestic sphere by state apparatuses (Fig. 3).

In keeping with Michael Mark Chemers's description of the program note as "a critical piece of the artistic pie" (166), I crafted a note baked with a piece of the production's artistic and political goals (Fig. 4). Framed as a "Proposed Amendment to *The Taming of the Shrew*," it featured a plot summary to help spectators navigate through the adaptation's complicated plotlines. It also concluded with a critical question: "Shall the Shakespeare play be amended to prevent the taming pronounced in the title? Yes, or no?" The query prompted the audience to reflect upon how Shakespeare's play participates in the naturalization of gender constructions that they are exposed to inside and outside the theatre. It also asked audience members to determine whether amendments should be made to this and other narratives that serve to "tame" women into subservience to men. Additionally, it asked spectators to elect whether to become active players in a critical intervention in the reception of Shakespeare's play as a comedy. Whether read, answered, or ignored before, during, or after the production, each viewer's response to this "Proposed Amendment" to Shakespeare's *Taming* was their political choice to make, just as it was their decision whether to participate and vote in the 2018 midterm elections.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW*

Led by Brightsmart reporters to believe that he is a political strategist working on a performance for the "Make Padua Great Again" rally, Christopher Sly watches a production set in 1963 of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. At the start of the production, the visiting scholar Lucentio and his secretary Tronia watch unseen as the gentlemen Hortensio and Gremio vie for the hand of Bianca, the younger daughter of rich Baptista. Baptista announces that he will not allow Bianca to marry until Katherine, his elder daughter with a shrewish reputation, is married. He also requests that tutors be found for his daughters. The Baptista family exits, followed by Gremio and Hortensio, who leave in search of a husband for Katherine. Smitten at first sight by Bianca, Lucentio devises a plot to woo her in secret: Tronia will disguise herself as himself in order to plead with Baptista for Bianca's hand in marriage, while he pretends to be the tutor Cambio so as to covertly court Bianca in the Baptista home. After they leave to change identities, Petruchio arrives with his secretary, Guilia, at his friend Hortensio's house in Padua, where he has come to find a wealthy wife. Hortensio tells Petruchio about rich Baptista's shrewish daughter Katherine. Petruchio agrees to present himself to Baptista as a suitor to Katherine, and to present a disguised Hortensio as Lutio, a music tutor for Baptista's daughters. While Lucentio-as-Cambio and Hortensio-as-Lutio court Bianca, and Tronia-as-Lucentio strives to arrange for Lucentio to be chosen as Bianca's groom, Petruchio endeavors to tame Katherine. Shall the Shakespeare play be amended to prevent the taming pronounced in the title?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

Figure IV: The Taming of the Shrew play artistic note in the program.

The final scene of our Shakespearean play-within-the-political-rally-play was consistent with feminist approaches, such as Gale Edwards's 1995 production, that "rescue" the supposed shrew from the taming pronounced in the title (Schafer 36-37). Unlike Edwards's production, which "deliberately left the final moments of the play ambiguous" so that the audience was left to question the possibility of matrimonial reconciliation between the couple (Schafer 37), our ending stressed that the marriage was an ideologically-imbued stage and social convention. Our final Paduan scene featured Petruchio handing a copy of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* to Katherine, who had initially refused to stay on script for her final monologue. At the physical urging of the actor playing Petruchio, the actress reluctantly and through a clenched jaw and fists finished Katherine's infamous Shakespearean speech advising women to "serve, love and obey" their husbands (5.2.170). At the play-within-the-play's conclusion, the performers shed their adopted Shakespearean parts and the 1963 world of *Taming* dissolved into the 2018 "Make Padua Great Again" rally. Now inducted back into the 2018 frame, the audience watched an exchange of capital that often fuels American politics and theatre: the

Brightsmart news team paid the performers for their part in the 1963 version of *The Taming of the Shrew*. The actress playing Katherine (Kala Ross) refused the money proffered for her part in a drama designed to reconsolidate a patriarchal structure by tossing the bills back at the Brightsmart reporters. The play-within-the-play thus ended not with the taming of the supposed shrew, but with the resistance to that role by the woman to whom it was assigned. Her resistance was of no consequence for the play-within-the-play's immediate target audience, Sly, who had watched the entirety of the 1963 *Taming* from a seat in the auditorium, and had occasionally interrupted the proceedings with asides. After giving the cast a standing ovation, Sly took center stage and proclaimed, "I know how to tame a shrew. I've known for years, and now I'm gonna show 'em all who's boss" (Segal and Calvano 87). He then exited the theatre, leaving behind an audience faced with yet another choice to make: they could follow him out through the same aisle and exit doors, and back into the rally-themed lobby; or they could opt to stay for a talkback with the actress playing Katherine, among other members of the cast and production team.

"AND TIME IT IS WHEN RAGING WAR IS DONE" (5.2.2)

Toward the end of the Induction to Shakespeare's script, Bartholomew tells Sly that the players are to perform "a kind of history" (2.136). Similarly, we sought to create a "kind of history" that would respond to a cultural moment when women were hashtagging "me too" and being gaslit by such luminaries as Justice Kavanaugh. It is a "kind of history" that I hope can be discarded, rather than repeated; however, I imagine our "throwaway" adaptation will still be relevant, especially as the next election cycle approaches. Despite Lucentio's pronouncement at the end of *The Taming of the Shrew* that the "time it is when raging war is done" (5.2.1-2), the time has not yet come when the ongoing war for women's rights has been won. The production's framing device and paratheatrical materials are thus offered as potential strategies for those who may plan to enter into the battleground armed with a play from the Shakespearean canon in forthcoming production and election seasons.

Even during a "raging war," time can offer critical distance. I can now look back on our production and see the things we should have done or that we could have done better to use Shakespeare's drama to facilitate political action in this

historic moment. I did not succeed in convincing the scenic designer to provide a ballot box in the lobby, so we were not able to collect evidence of the audience's engagement with this component of the production's paratheatrical material. The absence of any remaining campaign buttons from our stock of 300 evinces only that audience members took them; we have no way of knowing how many audience members actually wore them and therefore publicly announced their participation in the political drama. We had talkbacks with audiences that effectively explored the production's themes; but, partly because they were not well marketed, these talkbacks were not as well attended as we had hoped.

While the talkback audiences were somewhat sparser than anticipated, these conversations provided the production team with feedback useful to those interested in producing such a politically driven version of *Taming* in future election cycles. Talkback participants were generally enthusiastic about the "throwaway" political rally-frame, which was immediately legible to them by the signage, campaign buttons, Sly's MAGA hat, and the rhetoric of the Brightsmart reporters. Some spectators mentioned that switching from the Induction's vernacular dialogue to the language and rhythms of Shakespeare's text was jolting, and it took them some time to adjust to the linguistic shifts. For those unfamiliar with Shakespeare's plot, the time needed for their ear to adjust to the early modern English text inhibited their understanding of the exposition provided in the play's first act. The director and I had hoped this aural change would serve as something of a Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* that emphasized the Shakespearean play as an ideological worldview. We may have been more successful in this endeavor if we eased more gently into the Shakespearean script, perhaps by modernizing the language of Lucentio's Act 1, Scene 1 monologue, and then by steadily weaving the *Taming* text into the play's first act. Talkback attendees familiar with the play routinely told us that they were left wondering why they had for so long accepted the play as a comedy given its treatment of the female characters. These comments suggest that the production successfully led some spectators to question the part Shakespeare's comedy has played in re-inscribing patriarchal constructions, and to consciously or unconsciously respond to the "Proposed Amendment to *The Taming of the Shrew*" in the program.

The hindsight afforded by time also allows those of us

in the blue camp the opportunity to look back at the 2018 midterm elections to determine which battleground strategies elicited engagement, and which strategies might need revamping before the next national election cycle. I live in a state whose 2018 midterm elections produced a U.S. House election map that depicted the city of Louisville as a blue oasis in a large, red desert (“Kentucky Election Results”), and I reside in a state that is barely holding on to its one abortion-providing clinic. As a feminist, dramaturg, and educator living in this time and place, I need to critically re-examine my past production work to know how to better use theatre in the immediate future to intercede in a cultural landscape that feels less like a Shakespearean comedy and more like a revenge tragedy. ♦

DR. JANNA SEGAL is an Assistant Professor of Theatre Arts at the University of Louisville, where she teaches classes in theatre history and literature, Shakespeare, and dramaturgy. Prior to UofL, she was an Assistant Professor of Theatre and Shakespeare and Performance at Mary Baldwin University, and an IHUM Postdoctoral Fellow at Stanford University. She received her Ph.D. in Drama and Theatre from the UC Irvine/UC San Diego joint doctoral program, her MA in Theatre from CSUN, and her BA in Theater Arts from UC Santa Cruz. She has published single- and co-authored works on Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, *Henry V*, *Macbeth*, *Midsummer*, *Othello*, and *Romeo and Juliet*; Dekker and Middleton’s *The Roaring Girl*; Fo and Rame’s *Elisabetta*; Hansberry’s *A Raisin in the Sun*; and Chekhov’s *Three Sisters*. Her scholarly work has appeared in such journals as *SDC Journal*, *JEMCS*, and *Shakespeare*, and in such anthologies as *Performances at Court in Shakespeare’s Era* (Cambridge UP, 2019), *Playing Shakespeare’s Monarchs and Madmen* (Peter Lang, 2020), and *How to Teach a Play* (Bloomsbury, 2020). Dr. Segal is also the Resident Dramaturg of the Comparative Drama Conference, for which she annually dramaturgs two to three new plays, and a dramaturg for ATHE’s annual New Play Development Workshop. In addition to *Taming of the Shrew*, she has dramaturged the UofL productions of Baltimore, *Eurydice*, and *Fires in the Mirror*. Other recent dramaturgical work includes *Henry V* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* at the Commonwealth Theatre Center, and three new plays for StageOne Family Theatre.

WORKS CITED

- Boose, Lynda E. "Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman's Unruly Member" in *Materialist Shakespeare: A History*, edited by Ivo Kamps, Verso, 1995, pp. 239-79.
- Burns, Alexander, Maggie Haberman, and Jonathan Martin. "Donald Trump Apology Caps Day of Outrage Over Lewd Tape," *The New York Times*, 7 Oct. 2016, nytimes.com/2016/10/08/us/politics/donald-trump-women.html. Accessed 14 June 2020.
- Calvano, J. Ariadne, and Janna Segal, adapters. *The Taming of the Shrew*. By William Shakespeare. Unpublished, 2018.
- Chemers, Michael Mark. *Ghost Light: An Introductory Handbook for Dramaturgy*. Southern Illinois UP, 2010.
- De Jongh, Nicholas. "Review of Gale Edwards's *Taming of the Shrew*, Royal Shakespeare Company, *Evening Standard*, April 24, 1995." *The Taming of the Shrew: Critical Essays*, edited by Dana E. Aspinall, Routledge, pp. 331-32.
- Dolan, Frances E. *The Taming of the Shrew: Texts and Contexts*. St. Martin's P, 1996.
- Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. W.W. Norton, 1963.
- "Glamour 1963." *Getty Images*, gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/glamour-cover-with-model-wearing-max-factor-makeup-adolfo-news-photo/918287252#/glamour-cover-with-model-wearing-max-factor-makeup-adolfo-yellow-hair-picture-id918287252. Accessed 15 September 2018.
- Hodgdon, Barbara. Introduction. *Taming of the Shrew*, edited by Hodgdon, Bloomsbury Arden, 2010, pp. 1-131.
- Isserman, Maurice, and Michael Kazin. *American Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s*. Oxford UP, 2000.
- "Judiciary Committee Releases Transcripts of Kavanaugh Interviews." Committee on the Judiciary, judiciary.senate.gov/press/rep/releases/judiciary-committee-releases-transcripts-of-kavanaugh-interviews, September 26, 2018. Accessed 7 June 2019.
- "Kentucky Election Results: Live Updates." *The New York Times*, 15 May 2019, nytimes.com/interactive/2018/11/06/us/elections/results-kentucky-elections.html. Accessed 11 June 2019.
- Krieg, Gregory. "Donald Trump reveals when he thinks America was great." *CNN*, 28 Mar. 2016, cnn.com/2016/03/26/politics/donald-trump-when-america-was-great/index.html. Accessed 6 June 2019.
- Maga, Timothy. *An Eyewitness History: The 1960s*. Facts on File, 2003.
- McWilliams, John C. *The 1960s Cultural Revolution*. Greenwood P, 2000.
- Mitchell, Tony. *Dario Fo: People's Court Jester*. Methuen, 1999.
- Mowat, Barbara A., and Paul Werstine. "Introduction to this Text." *The Taming of the Shrew*, edited by Mowat and Werstine, Folger, 1992, pp. xlv-xlix.
- Orlin, Lena Cowen. "The Performance of Things in *The Taming of the Shrew*," *The Taming of the Shrew: Critical Essays*, edited by Dana E. Aspinall, Routledge, 2002, pp. 187-205.
- Ranald, Margaret Loftus. "The Performance of Feminism in *The Taming of the Shrew*." *The Taming of the Shrew: Critical Essays*, edited by Dana E. Aspinall, Routledge, pp. 318-30.
- Reilly, Edward J. *The 1960s: American Popular Culture Through History*. Greenwood P, 2003.

WORKS CITED CONTINUED

Ronk, Liz, and Olivia B. Waxman. "See John Glenn's Career on the Cover of LIFE Magazine." *TIME LIFE*, 8 December 2016, time.com/4595461/astronaut-john-glenn-dead-life-magazine-covers/. Accessed 15 September 2018.

Schafer, Elizabeth. Introduction. *The Taming of the Shrew*, edited by Schafer, Cambridge UP, 2002, pp. 1-76.

Segal, Janna, and Blair Potter. Program for *The Taming of the Shrew*, directed by J. Ariadne Calvano. Department of Theatre Arts at UofL, 2018.

Shakespeare, William. *The Taming of the Shrew*. Edited by Barbara Hodgdon. Bloomsbury Arden, 2010.

"Sports Illustrated, January 7, 1963—Sportsman of the Year." *Old Life Magazines*, oldlifemagazines.com/sports-illustrated-january-7-1963-sportsman-of-the-year.html. Accessed 15 September 2018.

Tani, Maxwell. "The songs that Donald Trump rallies blast to pump up supporters." *Business Insider*, 9 Jan. 2016, businessinsider.com/donald-trump-rally-songs-2015-12. Accessed 10 June 2019.

Weisfeld, Miriam. "Framing the theatrical experience: Lobby displays." *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy*, edited by Magda Romanska, Routledge, 2015, pp. 472-78.

Wells, Stanley. Introduction. *Taming of the Shrew*, edited by Wells. *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett, and William Montgomery, 2nd edition, Clarendon P, 2005, pp. 25.

"Women Have Won More Primaries Than Ever Before. Will They Set a Record in November?" *The New York Times*, nytimes.com/interactive/2018/09/14/us/women-primaries-house-senate-governor.html. Accessed 18 September 2018.

Relational Audience Engagement in *Guarded Girls*: A Critical Reflection

by Lisa Aikman & Jennifer Roberts-Smith

Contributing authors: Kate Crozier, Jessica Hutchison, Carin Lowerison, Signy Lynch, May Nemat Allah, Julie Thompson, Hannah Watts, & Matt White



Figure 1: One of the lobby stations featuring materials from Community Justice Initiatives (CJI).

GUARDED GIRLS

In May 2019, not-for-profit Kitchener-Waterloo theatre company Green Light Arts ([GLA](#)) presented *Guarded Girls*, an original work commissioned by the company to “humanize women navigating both sides of Canada’s Corrections System.” Set in a women’s prison and following the intersecting storylines of three prisoners, one guard, and their respective daughters, the play explored the intergenerational cycles of trauma that lead to and are perpetuated by imprisonment. The setting held special resonance for local audiences, as the theatre is only a fourteen-minute drive from a federal prison, the Grand Valley Institute for Women (GVI). This prison briefly rose to national attention in 2007, when Ashley Smith died by suicide while under video surveillance and suicide watch. Prior to this incident, GVI had built a public image around its progressive nature, with cottages where incarcerated mothers could live with their young children and no “maximum security.”¹

Though *Guarded Girls* is entirely fictional, the playwright Charlotte Corebeil-Coleman was inspired by Ashley Smith’s story. Corebeil-Coleman interviewed several prison staff and incarcerated women to inform her play, but Smith’s story still shines through via the main character Sid, a young woman who has been transferred across multiple prisons by the time audiences meet her in Act One and who, by the end of the play, has taken her own life. A second-act monologue further strengthens the connection to GVI, as an incarcerated character details all the ways that the prison has changed since she first arrived. She

¹ For more information on the state of Canada’s Mother-Child Program, see Kayilah Miller’s article “Canada’s Mother-Child Program and Incarcerated Aboriginal Mothers” and Arah Brennan’s “Canada’s Mother-Child Program: Examining It’s Emergence, Usage and Current State.”

explicitly references how there used to be cottages and no “maximum security” before reflecting on how funding cuts, combined with the fact that those already in the prison kept getting time added to their sentences, have changed the prison so that “suddenly there are double the women. And the screws start wearing these tough LARGE in CHARGE uniforms [...] and the nice cottages are crammed full and not nice anymore and suddenly they need a maximum and suddenly it’s full of women. Because no one is leaving” (Corbeil-Coleman 52).

...audience engagement may not be about turning patrons into return ticket-buyers so much as it is about connecting patrons with other people...

The production coupled this tragic yet all-too-real narrative with a set design that evoked the monotony and claustrophobia of a life in prison. The set was comprised entirely of white buckets that a prison guard silently re-arranged seemingly at random between scenes, adding more and more to crowd the space, sometimes upturning them to find pieces of contraband ranging from a syringe to a child’s toy. The set mirrored the experience of some of the central characters, who found themselves crammed in and confused by changing rules and expectations where something that would warrant only a warning one day might lead to time added to one’s sentence the next. A leak in the roof dripped slowly and maddeningly into one of these buckets throughout the play.

Green Light Arts often programs plays that tackle challenging topics (for example, the 2018-19 season examined white supremacy and ableism, among other subjects) with a [mandate](#) to “use theatre as the beginning of a conversation to encourage audiences towards positive social change.” To that end, Artistic Director Matt White and Managing Director Carin Lowerison developed what they have branded the “FUEL” series of audience engagement events. These events take place immediately before or after a performance

and aim to engage audiences in conversation, not about artistic merit, but about ways to deepen understanding and intervene regarding the issues staged. Often consisting of post-show programming such as talk-backs, the aim of FUEL is to make the plays and the theatre company itself an essential connection point in a larger community network that, when activated, can create positive social change around pressing community concerns. In order to harness the feelings of frustration and injustice that *Guarded Girls* provoked and to turn the production into an opportunity for Green Light to catalyze community action, White and Lowerison invited researchers from the [qCollaborative](#) to lead the collaborative design of audience engagement programming surrounding the play, and to assess that programming’s impact. The lead authors of this article, as creative researchers, were thus responsible for guiding the collaborative design and assessment of spaces and events for audience engagement, a process that included not only the theatre company but also representatives from local prisoner rights and abolition advocacy groups. In this reflection, we will detail why collaborators were brought in and the important ways they influenced audience engagement. We will further reflect on how we sought to bring audience members into the conversation and what we learned from their feedback. Because the theatre company’s ultimate goal in this collaboration was to re-design how they approached audience engagement events, we will conclude with their recommendations and next steps, which we hope will allow Green Light Arts to continue to facilitate productive public conversations on challenging topics.

DESIGNING AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT RELATIONALLY

Our goal as creative researchers and collaborators was to center principles of relationality in every phase of the design and programming process. Broadly speaking, relationality posits that humans only make meaning through interaction with each other. If we constitute ourselves and make meaning of our world only through relationships with others, then the theatre itself becomes meaningful insofar as it fosters relationships with the surrounding community. That means audience engagement may not be about turning patrons into return ticket-buyers so much as it is about connecting patrons with other people, and with community organizations and resources they may not be aware of yet. Applying a relational framework to the themes and settings of *Guarded Girls* meant that we

focused the conversation on the promotion of restorative justice. Our understanding of what it means to take a relational approach was shaped by the work of scholars Jennifer J. Llewellyn and Kristina R. Llewellyn, who show that restorative justice and restorative pedagogy are grounded in relational theory. Restorative justice calls us to look at institutions and systems rather than the behavior of individuals. It further defines justice as an equality of respect, concern, and dignity (Llewellyn, “Restorative Justice”; Llewellyn and Llewellyn, “A Restorative Approach”).² By inviting in consultants from the community, and striving for equality in the engagement design process, we hoped to encourage audiences to show one another an equality of respect, concern, and dignity, and to work to make meaning of the show and its surrounding programming relationally through dialogue.

Working relationally meant, in part, making space for substantive input from all members of the research project, including research assistants, artists, and community partners (hence our list of contributing authors); and ultimately, of course, audiences. In practice, this meant reaching out to social justice organizations in the Kitchener-Waterloo area that had a vested interest in joining the conversation about women’s prisons, and then letting those organizations’ expertise significantly shape what our programming would look like. The community groups that were invited to consult on and contribute to the programming—the [Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies](#) (CAEFS), [Community Justice Initiatives](#) (CJI), and the [Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council](#) (WRCPC)—were all included in part because of their community-oriented approach to issues of crime and punishment. Elizabeth Fry is an abolitionist organization; Community Justice Initiatives is a restorative justice advocacy

² Llewellyn and Llewellyn’s feminist critiques of liberal individualism in the justice system and in higher education draw on relational theory to avoid the tendency of some feminist care literature and feminist pedagogy to characterize relationship and collaboration as essentially positive (“A Restorative Approach” 11-12). They argue that a recognition that relationships can “support, or potentially thwart, human flourishing (“A Restorative Approach” 12) helps us to focus on the “the role that context, causes, and circumstances play not only in the creation, but also in the resolution, of social conflict and wrongful conduct” (Llewellyn “Restorative Justice” 98). This understanding is consistent with the guiding principles of the community organizations who became partners in our project (see below); as Jennifer Llewellyn points out, “restorative justice developed in practice on the ground well ahead of the theory explaining and supporting it” (“Restorative Justice” 89). Llewellyn and Llewellyn’s recent anti-racist work with the Nova Scotia Home for Coloured Children Restorative Inquiry ([restorativeinquiry.ca](#)) and the related Digital Oral Histories for Reconciliation project ([dohr.ca](#)) illustrates integrations of theory and practice in the contexts of restorative justice and education.

group that seeks to build social connections for women in prison so that they may better transition back into their communities upon release; and the Crime Prevention Council promotes an “upstream” view of criminality that focuses on the community conditions that lead to criminal behaviour.

The goals of each of these organizations informed how we shaped audience conversations and how we defined success in the project. As mentioned above, GLA seeks to encourage audiences toward positive social change with each play it produces. They are interested in starting conversations that prompt audience members to take measurable physical actions in their communities; actions like volunteering for a local organization or donating money to a progressive cause. Some of our partner organizations, on the other hand, encouraged us to focus on discursive change (e.g., changing the way people talked about women in prison) as a connected and equally valid outcome. Together we came to a central aim of promoting restorative justice by focusing audience engagement on the systemic issues that contribute to dehumanizing prison systems, as a corrective to neoliberal thinking that overly-prioritizes individual solutions to complex systemic problems. By thinking relationally about how we designed programming for *Guarded Girls* our main goal became about shifting audience discussion and focus away from individual deficit or assigning blame for criminalized behaviour and toward a consideration of the systemic issues behind criminalization and recidivism.

Working relationally also meant collaboratively designing spaces and events that welcomed audience input. We wanted to invite audiences not just to provide feedback on the artistic or even political merits of the show, but to use the theatre and lobby as a space to brainstorm better futures and ways that they could intervene in the issues they saw in the play. A traditional Q&A, for example, where audiences asked questions and artists provided answers, may not foster a sense of agency among audience members. A related strategy was to challenge the assumed hierarchies of audience development to privilege the voices of people not usually thought of as experts: women with lived experience of prisons. Our thinking was that this would model some ways of fostering equality of respect, concern, and dignity among our community of audiences, artists, researchers, and speakers with lived experience. Our hope was that this would encourage audience members to think of the

women—and also think of themselves—as experts on their own experience, and agents capable of contributing to social justice and positive change.

WHAT IT LOOKED LIKE

The lobby featured what we called “action stations” from each of our partner organizations. Given GLA’s desired focus on measurable and outward facing actions, we ensured each station included both information from the partner organization and an action that the audience member could take. The information included pamphlets, videos, and posters about the current campaigns that Community Justice Initiatives, the Elizabeth Fry Society, and the Crime Prevention Council were currently undertaking. The possible actions ranged from joining an email list to hear about upcoming volunteer opportunities with the Community Justice Initiatives,³ to filling out a postcard to send as part of the Elizabeth Fry Society’s “#HearMeToo” campaign.⁴ To support community reintegration with their dollars, audience members could purchase refreshments provided by Emily’s Comeback Snacks, a local popcorn business run by formerly incarcerated women.

In order to prime audience members that their input would be solicited and valued, a research assistant at the door of the theatre invited each spectator to draw a slip of paper with a question written on it out of an acrylic box as they entered.⁵ Audience members were told that these questions were something to think about as they watched the performance. Our intention in distributing questions with the programs prior to the show was to prompt spectators to think through how they were already in relationship with the prison system. The questions were focused on directing attention to the systemic, rather than individual, causes

and implications of imprisonment. In this way we sought to complement the work the play and GLA had begun. The play presented how poverty and cycles of abuse connect to criminalized behaviour and how chronic under-funding, inadequate mental health resources for correctional officers, and a dehumanizing prison system contribute to increased sentences and recidivism.⁶ GLA further used their nightly land acknowledgement to highlight how the over representation of Indigenous women in Canadian prisons illustrates how the prison system has been used as a weapon of colonialism. Our questions were:

- What stories do you already know about women in Canadian prisons?
- What stories do you already know about corrections officers in the women’s prison system?
- What stories do you already know about communities with a women’s prison in them?
- How do women’s prisons change prison staff?
- How do women’s prisons change prisoners?
- How do women’s prisons change communities?

The post-performance programming included three traditional talkbacks with the cast, facilitated by the Artistic Director Matt White, as well as four expert led panels. The first, “Rehearsing Intimacy and Consent in the Theatre” featured the cast and intimacy choreographer Siobhan Richardson. The second panel was on “Harm Reduction Strategies” and was a conversation among current and formerly incarcerated women facilitated by Senator Kim Pate, a political advocate for prison reform. The third panel, “Making Space in Our Communities for Women After Prison,” led by a representative from our partner organization Community Justice Initiatives, featured women who volunteered with CJI, visiting the prison and forming supportive networks with women who were transitioning out of the carceral system. The final panel, once again facilitated by Senator Pate, featured Ashley Smith’s mother and sister, who discussed the activism they have spearheaded since Ashley’s death.

Upon exiting the theatre into the lobby (either immediately after watching the play or after staying for one of the post-performance events), audience members were invited to share their reflections—on the question they received at the start of the night and on the experience of

.....
³ CJI runs a volunteer program called Stride. It includes Stride Nights where local women visit Grand Valley Institute for structured social nights, and Stride Circles, where groups of volunteers get to know incarcerated women transitioning out of prison and form a support network to aid in these women’s reintegration.

⁴ This was part of a nation-wide campaign that the Elizabeth Fry Society was leading to educate the general public about the violence and ultimate ineffectiveness of strip searching incarcerated women.

⁵ Qcollaborative hired the following research assistants to help with data collection on this project: May Nemat Allah, an undergraduate theatre student from the University of Waterloo; Signy Lynch, a Ph.D. candidate from York University’s theatre department; and Hannah Watts, a Ph.D. candidate from the University of Waterloo’s English department. They also provided invaluable feedback during the data analysis phase.

⁶ For more information on how the conditions that lead to sentences being extended for those in prison, see Elizabeth Bingham’s article, “Serving More Time.”

the show more broadly—either verbally or in writing. By asking for their answers to their pre-show questions only after performances had ended, we hoped to emphasize that the meaning(s) of the play were created not just by the artistic team but by everyone who came to see it. Our open-ended survey and interview questions were designed to encourage audiences to posit their own solutions to the complex problems discussed. From an activist standpoint, this could foster a sense of responsibility and perhaps help motivate audience members to take up the opportunities for action toward prison reform offered in our lobby, by writing to and calling their political representatives or by volunteering with advocacy groups. Paper surveys and pens were available at a central table in the lobby, and two research assistants from nearby universities were available each night to conduct oral interviews. Developing the pre-show questions and the survey questions in cooperation with our community partners showed us that working relationally meant allowing for different groups to define success in different ways. Balancing GLA's desire to prompt and measure whether audiences intended to take substantive new, outward-facing actions with our community partners' desire to prompt and measure discursive change, the surveys and interviews asked audiences what they might think or say, as well as do differently as a result of their experience in the theatre.⁷ Questions included:

- What question were you asked when you arrived?
- How would you have answered that question before today's event?
- Now that you have participated in today's event, would you answer that question differently? If so, how?
- Thinking back to your perspective before you attended today's events, what, if anything, do you think will change in the ways you will talk with others now?
- Thinking back to your behaviour toward today's events, what, if anything, do you think you will do differently now?

TENSIONS BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

In terms of the post-performance panels, striving for equality of respect, care, and concern must include acknowledging that different people enter the space with vastly different needs. Some people are simply, through their privilege, more accustomed to garnering respect, care and concern. In her essay “‘Argue With Us!’ Audience Co-Creation through Post-Performance Discussions,” Caroline Heim offers a model of audience engagement focused on a non-hierarchical space that fosters open discussion, dismissing “question-and-answer” and what she calls the “expert-driven model” as both perpetuating an “expert agenda” that can tend toward didacticism and disenfranchising audiences (189). At first review, Heim's proposed model makes sense when trying to foster relational audience engagement and encourage audience members to make meaning within each other. Theatre Talks, developed first by Sauter et al. in Stockholm in 1986, but pursued by several researchers and dramaturgs since (see, for example, the work of Matthew Reason or of L.E. Hansen), similarly offers an attractive alternative to the expert-driven model, by putting the audience in direct relationship with the issues staged. It was a model we considered in the early phases, but ultimately discarded because it does not necessarily serve the purpose of connecting to the community.

In the case of the *Guarded Girls* audience programming, several of our panels featured people with lived experiences of prison who, though they were experts on the subject matter of the play, were less likely to be treated as experts in their day-to-day lives. It became important for us, then, *not* to create space that avoided hierarchies of expertise, such as might be facilitated by the Theatre Talks method, but to deliberately model a hierarchy that offered more respect, care, and concern for the panelists by positioning them as the experts to whom others in the space deferred. The panel facilitators (including and especially Senator Pate, the participant who was most well-known to the general public, and carried with her the authority of her public office) modeled the behaviour of deferring to the expertise of the panelists, whether they were volunteers, family members of someone who had died in prison, or people currently incarcerated at Grand Valley Institution for Women (GVI). This had to be taken a step further halfway through the run of the show. Despite our best intentions to position panelists as experts, we found some common audience responses ground conversation to a halt by decentring

7 The “thinking/saying/doing” differently framework was first developed by Roberts-Smith and her colleagues in the Theatre and Performance program at the University of Waterloo as a reflection aid to help student theatre-makers explore the impacts of the program's season of theatrical productions in their communities.

or even openly questioning a panelist’s expertise. Overly personal questions about life in prison, or questions that challenged the validity of the speakers’ experience, for example, did not serve our goal of fostering respect for our speakers. Of course, there were also audience responses that are familiar to many artists and facilitators, responses phrased as “more of a comment than a question.”

Most nights one or more audience members would raise their hands not to ask a question of the panelists or of the other audience members, but to talk about how surprised or disturbed they were by what they just witnessed in the play, and to express sympathy for the panelists. As stated above, we were interested in helping audiences think through how they were already in relationship with prisons and the people that live and work in them. From that standpoint, an audience member expressing how they were personally impacted by the play could be seen as a start to that person seeing themselves in relationship with, and thus partially responsible for, the issues the play presented. In practice, however, these comments could prompt a round of similar comments, all from people we perceived as having more privilege than our speakers, (however unintentionally) making the conversation about themselves. Mid-way through the run, the Artistic Director made the decision to not solicit audience questions, relying instead on the facilitator and the panelists to drive the conversation by having the panelists ask one another questions and having the facilitator posit some of the questions that arose during the previous nights.⁸

The shift in the panel structure made the lobby environment even more important, as it became the main space for audience members to process the issues the play presented. Our hope was that the survey and interview questions

would not serve purely as assessment tools but could, through their open nature, provide a space for audiences to think through their own responses. Our surveys and interviews showed that those who attended panels where actions were suggested by women with lived experience, or by moderator Senator Pate, were more likely to talk about concrete actions they planned on taking toward prison reform; such actions might include calling a political representative or volunteering with one of our community partner groups.⁹ However, very few audience members surveyed proposed new ideas for action. We interpret this to mean that the audience engagement programming

...audiences need a low-stakes, socially-gearred space to feel comfortable offering their own questions and opinions.

succeeded in helping people identify concrete actions they might not have previously thought of, but audiences were perhaps not yet comfortable proposing their own solutions. This was possibly a result of the expert-driven model that did not make as much space as we had originally intended for audiences to engage in dialogue. It may also suggest that it was too soon for many audience members to take action. As our community partners pointed out: thinking and saying differently are sometimes essential steps before doing differently, and some audience members explained they did not want to fill out our post-show survey because they needed more time to process the experience of watching the play.

Ultimately, the lobby space we designed did not create a space for open interaction among audience members that disrupted the hierarchical, expert-driven model of

8 White made this decision without reference to data on audience demographics to support or correct this impression. We collected data on audience demographics only in an online post-show survey using the same questions GLA distributes after each production to help determine the age, postal district, gender identity, culture/ethnicity, highest level of education, employment status, household income, and household composition of audience members. The online survey rate of return was not high enough to be representative of audience demographics at any individual talkback event. What we can confirm about the demographics is that few of our respondents (13 out of 105), when asked what they already knew about prisons and the people in them, offered a perspective based on personal experience. Of those that did, the majority (9 out of 13) offered perspectives from their own volunteer experience, or from a professional experience where their work brought them into contact with GVI (for example, a doctor who sometimes performs physicals at the prison).

9 We collected a total of 105 surveys and interviews. 80 audience members filled out paper surveys immediately following the event, 3 opted to be interviewed by one of our research assistants, and 22 submitted surveys online an average of 7 days after attending the event. All surveys and interviews invited audience members to compare their pre and post-show impressions, through a series of qualitative short-answer questions.

audience engagement, as we initially imagined it would. To the extent that this was intentional, it was successful: the post-performance events did focus attention on women with lived experience of the prison system and on possibilities for addressing systemic causes of criminalization. However, this rarely resulted in conversations between audience members, artists, and community partners in the lobby. This

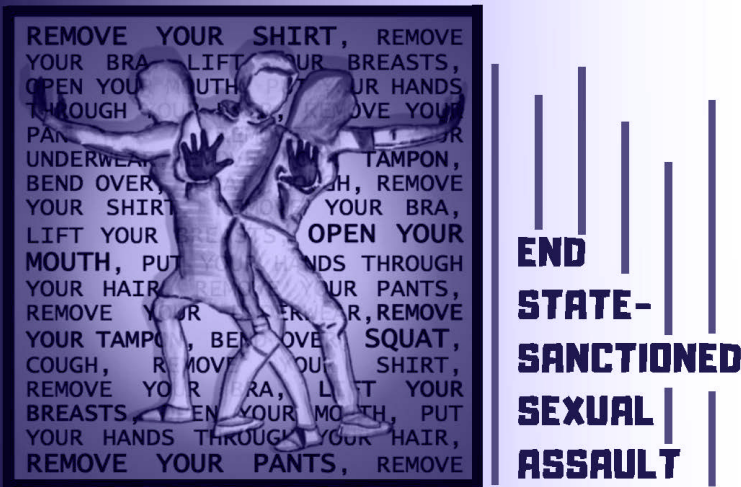


Figure II: Postcard designed by CAEFS for their #HereMeToo campaign to end strip searching.

may be a result of the degree of structure and the emotional labour required for certain kinds of engagement events. After a formal panel addressing a difficult subject, at which audience members were not invited to speak, it is perhaps not surprising that few audience members spoke to one another while filling in our post-survey in the lobby and, indeed that the vast majority of audience members opted to write their responses rather than be interviewed by one of our research assistants. By contrast, the most successful night in terms of facilitating conversation among audience members, artists, and community partners came early in the run, when Emily O'Brien, the founder of Emily's Comeback Snacks, arrived fresh from pitching her business to *Dragon's Den*, a CBC television program where entrepreneurs pitch their business models to a panel of potential investors. That night, instead of selling pre-packaged popcorn, the business owner ran the popcorn machine herself and happily chatted with patrons about her business. The sound and smell of the popcorn machine significantly altered the tone of the usually subdued lobby, and panelists stuck around to chat with audience members. Perhaps especially when dealing with difficult subject matter, audiences need a low-stakes, socially-gearred space to feel

comfortable offering their own questions and opinions. That is not to say that the only way for “relationships marked by equal respect, concern, and dignity” to manifest is through interpersonal interactions; if restorative justice is “contextual and grounded,” it will show up at different times and places in different ways (Llewellyn, “Restorative Justice,” 93). Rather, we are acknowledging that with fuller attention to some of the contextual particulars of our engagement events, we might have achieved a more consistent shift “away from the rational individual learning toward the interactive aspects of learner communities that are essential to socially just education” (Llewellyn and Llewellyn, “A Restorative Approach,” 12).

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

Analyzing the surveys and interviews showed that regardless of whether they attended a post-show event after the play, audiences were more likely to discuss prisons in terms of systemic issues than they were to discuss them in terms of individual incarcerated people or guards. The play, then, was indeed helping reframe the discussion around people and moving the focus away from notions of individual deficit to instead focus on systemic (for example, economic) causes of criminal behaviour. When asked the reason for this shift in their perspective, audience members were more likely to credit the play than a post-show event, even if they attended one, indicating that the themes of the play coupled with the entry questions may be enough to prompt conversation on the structural and communal causes of criminality.

Audience responses to the question about how they would change the way they spoke to others revealed a lot about their assumed circle of influence, or what populations they assumed they could encounter and relate to. People who saw the play but didn't attend a post-show event were more likely to talk about listening to incarcerated women and exercising compassion. People who attended post-show events were likely to give responses about educating their peers and they were the only ones who indicated in their responses that they might speak to people in positions of greater authority than them, indicating that the post-show programming did succeed in fostering a sense of agency among audience members.

In terms of what, if anything, audience members intended to do differently, in addition to our findings discussed

above, we also saw responses wherein audience members expressed that they did not intend to initiate new actions but felt a stronger commitment to the actions they were already pursuing. For many, this included volunteering with one of our partner organizations. For them, then, the show was not necessarily about thinking through new ways to address a social issue, but about reminding themselves why their work was important and feeling motivated by seeing other people engage with the issue.

COMMUNITY PARTNER FEEDBACK

Several weeks after the run of *Guarded Girls*, we reconnected with the project's community partner representatives from the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS), Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council (WRPCPC), and Community Justice Initiatives (CJI) to share the findings of our post-show survey. We wanted to know how they felt about the collaboration and the project's outcomes. Though most of our discussion was about the post-performance panels, both the representatives from the CAEFS and CJI observed that partnering with a theatre company helped with awareness-raising in a way that their more traditional campaigning could not always accomplish. Specifically, CAEFS opposes prison tours, which run the risk of voyeurism and de-humanizing those who are incarcerated, while CJI has mixed feelings about tours, believing that they can raise awareness of the living conditions created by overcrowding and underfunding but only if led by the women who live in the prison. Representatives from both organizations reflected that the play helped recreate the experience of being in prison and highlighted structural violence without the risks of voyeurism perpetuated by initiatives such as prison tours.

Looking back, it is interesting to note how the goals expressed by the theatre company (i.e., substantive, outward facing action) and the community partners (i.e., discursive, potentially inward facing change) were symbiotic, in a sense. The community partners remarked on the play's capacity for generating the kind of empathy that might lead to interpersonal change, while our surveys revealed that the community partners' presence in the form of the panels helped audience members direct that empathy

by engaging in specific community facing actions, like writing to their member of parliament or volunteering in their community.

NEXT STEPS

Despite some of the tensions between theory and practice highlighted above, we have identified some guideposts to assist both the qCollaborative and GLA as they continue to pursue relational audience engagement. In future projects, we will seek out a variety of forms of expertise and let that expertise substantially inform how we define success within the project. We will interrogate our theatre spaces and lobbies to see what inequities already exist in those spaces, and how they may need to be altered in order for our speakers and experts to be greeted with respect, care and concern while still welcoming the audience to work through their own thoughts on the issues presented.

For example, in response to the *Guarded Girls* experience, GLA will be piloting a new approach in their upcoming production of Christopher Morris' *The Runner*.¹⁰ This approach, which requires two facilitators, blends conversation with an opportunity for audiences to reflect individually in writing. Audience members will receive a piece of paper with a prompt on it (such as a question similar to those distributed pre-show in *Guarded Girls* or an invitation to ask a question), so they can make notes while they are waiting for a post-show talk to begin. Audience members who wish to share their thoughts will give their notes to the facilitators, who will in turn frame the conversation in a way that serves the goals of the post-show discussion. In this approach, one facilitator begins the discussion by offering three or four questions designed to get the audience talking for twenty minutes or so; these questions will be structured to serve the aims of the post-show discussion. Then the second facilitator (who by this time will have had an opportunity to look through the written responses) will put the audience's questions to panelists. This new design applies the principles of our structure for *Guarded Girls*—where the survey or interview was designed to give audiences space to reflect—transforming the questions from opportunities for individual reflection into opportunities for structured public conversation.

We will then look for ways to extend that care, respect, and concern to the audiences. For example, our community partners suggested that an additional way of caring

¹⁰ Initially, GLA was to produce *The Runner* in November 2020. At the time of writing, Ontario remains under a state of emergency due to the Covid-19 pandemic and it is unclear if and when this next production will take place.

for future panelists would be to invite them to a dress rehearsal. The partners themselves had access to the script (and in some cases, to workshop events), but noted that seeing the play was emotionally demanding. It was a lot to ask of panelists (who were already volunteering their time) to see the show for the first time, and then to speak in public so shortly after. As a way of extending similar care to audience members when plays deal with difficult subject matter, it may be helpful to adopt some relaxed performance strategies, such as allowing people to leave and re-enter. We did not do this for the entirety of the *Guarded Girls* run but did allow for re-entry during a matinee when GLA was aware that a group from the local women's shelter would be in attendance. During that performance, there were some people that took advantage of the re-entry policy, and others who occasionally talked back at the stage, shouted, or responded physically, showing us that including more relaxed performance practices might help an audience who may be new to the theatre, or particularly affected by the content of a performance, feel comfortable.

Finally, we will strive to maintain relationships. This is the phase GLA is currently grappling with, and it can prove challenging, especially without dedicated funds or staff. This study was funded by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Partnership Engage Grant, which allowed for more time and more people to be dedicated to developing and evaluating our preliminary exploration of a relational approach to audience engagement. We want to acknowledge that it takes time not just to program around a single show, but to maintain a commitment to the community engaged in the show once the run concludes. We have considered how we might take a relational approach in future FUEL events at GLA, but other, related questions have come up. For instance, should we be creating a living activist archive to ensure that the conversations *Guarded Girls* generated are not forgotten once GLA's next season is underway? Each panel was audio recorded for potential publication in GLA's planned podcast series, and the FUEL portion of GLA's website houses the material provided by CAEFS, CJI, and WRPCPC. GLA is further hoping to use this site to archive some of the public discussions as podcasts. The GLA team is also currently thinking through how a physical theatre space may also be of use, for example, as a space for partner organizations to hold meetings

if desired. It appears that, like much of our non-linear, iterative process, the "rules" of how to be a good partner or how to be a positive force in the community are conditional and ever-changing. This is even more evident now as GLA strives to take concrete action in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, even as the COVID-19 pandemic erodes the company's resources to do so, right down to the fundamental modes by which it has communicated with audiences up to now.¹¹ So far, we have been repeating the question: What could a relational approach look like here and now? As we move forward, the most important thing is asking that question and attempting to engage relationally with the community as we try to answer it. ♦



Figure III: Postcard designed by CAEFS for their #HereMeToo campaign to end strip searching.

¹¹ GLA's statement of support for the Black Lives Matter movement can be found on the company's [Instagram account](#).

LISA AIKMAN is a theatre researcher and educational developer, currently working at the University of Western Ontario's Centre for Teaching and Learning. Her theatre research focuses on the working methods and resultant dramaturgies in Canadian documentary theatre. Her work investigates how our dominant dramaturgies shape audience encounters with would-be strangers, and how they cast spectators in relation to one another.

JENNIFER ROBERTS-SMITH is an Associate Professor of Theatre and Performance in the Department of Communication Arts at the University of Waterloo. Her research and creative practice focus on performance and digital media, with particular emphasis on theatre, history, design and pedagogy. As principal investigator of a series of funded design research projects, JRS has been evolving, with her collaborators, a feminist approach to project management. Currently, JRS leads qlab's Theatre for Relationality project, as well as the Virtual Reality Development Cluster of the Digital Oral Histories for Reconciliation (DOHR) project. Her work has been supported by SSHRC, MITACS, and the Canada Council for the Arts, and recognized with an Ontario Early Researcher Award. Jennifer's book, *Shakespeare's Language in Digital Media*, co-edited with Janelle Jenstad and Mark Kaethler, was released by Routledge in 2018.

WORKS CITED

- Bingham, Elizabeth. "Serving More Time: What Goes Wrong When Canadian Courts Sentence Inmates." *Criminal Law Quarterly*. vol. 61, 2014. pp. 398-417.
- Brennan, Sarah. "Canada's Mother-Child Program: Examining Its Emergence, Usage and Current State." *Canadian Graduate Journal of Sociology and Criminology*. vol. 3, no. 1, 2014. pp. 11-33.
- Corbeil-Coleman, Charlotte. *Guarded Girls*. Playwrights Canada P, 2019.
- CJI (Community Justice Initiatives). "About CJI." *CGI: Imagine a Just Community*, <https://cjiwr.com/about-us/>. Accessed June 1 2020.
- Hansen, L.E. "Behaviour and Attitude: The Theatre Talks Method as Audience Development." *International Journal of Cultural Policy*. vol. 21, no. 3, 2015, pp. 344-359.
- Heim, Caroline. "Argue with Us: Audience Co-Creation through Post-Performance Discussions." *National Theatre Quarterly*. vol 28, issue 2, 2012, pp. 189-197.
- Llewellyn, J.J. "Restorative Justice: Thinking Relationally about Justice." *Being Relational: Reflections on Relational Theory & Health Law*, edited by J. Downie and J. Llewellyn. U of British Columbia P, 2011, pp. 89-108.
- Llewellyn, Kristina R. and Jennifer J. Llewellyn. "A Restorative Approach to Learning: Relational Theory as Feminist Pedagogy in Universities." *Feminist Pedagogy in Higher Education*, edited by Tracy Penny Light, Jane Nicholas, and Renee Bondy. Wilfrid Laurier U P, 2015, pp. 11-31.
- Miller, Kaylia. "Canada's Mother-Child Program and Incarcerated Aboriginal Mothers: How and Why the Program is Inaccessible to Aboriginal Female Offenders." *Canadian Family Law Quarterly*. vol. 37, no. 1, 2017, pp. 1-23.
- Reason, Matthew. "Asking the Audience: Audience Research and the Experience of the Theatre." *About Performance*. vol. 10, 2010, pp. 15-34.
- Sauter, Willman. *The Theatrical Event: Dynamics of Performance and Perception*. U of Iowa P, 2000.

About the Editors

KRISTIN LEAHEY is an Assistant Professor at Boston University. She served as the Director of New Works at Seattle Repertory Theatre, the Resident Dramaturg at Northlight Theatre, and the Literary Manager at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company. She has freelanced as an artist with the O'Neill Theater Center, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Trinity Repertory Theatre, Primary Stages, Classical Stage Company, the Playwrights' Center, Dallas Theater Center, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Guthrie Theater, Jungle Theater, Village Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre, Goodman Theatre, The Lark, The Kennedy Center, The Old Globe, the Indiana Repertory Theatre, Cleveland Play House, Victory Gardens Theater, American Theatre Company, Collaboraction, Rivendell Theatre Ensemble, Redmoon, New Repertory Theatre (2019-20 Scholar-in-Residence), Actors' Shakespeare Project, Galway Arts Festival, Teatro Luna, Teatro Vista (artistic associate), Steep Theatre Company (ensemble), and A Red Orchid Theatre, among others. She is a producer with the 2020-22 WP Theater Lab. Her publications include articles in *Theatre Topics*, *Theatre History*, and *Theatre Studies*, and she has taught at Cornish College, DePaul University, the University of Chicago, Columbia College, Loyola University Chicago, The University of Texas at Austin, and Lake Michigan College. Leahey earned her PhD at the University of Texas at Austin in the Performance as Public Practice/Theatre History Program, her MA in Theatre at Northwestern University, and her BA in Drama and History at Tufts University.

ELIZABETH COEN manages the Arts-Based Learning program at Seattle Children's Theatre and plays an integral role in developing new works that focus on teenagers' social-emotional learning. She is also a scholar of theatre history and a professional dramaturg. Publications include articles for *Theatre History Studies* and the *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, educational material for *The Norton Anthology of Drama* and reviews for *The Village Voice* and *Off Off Online*. She has presented her research at ASTR, ATHE, MATC, and Seattle University's Arts Leadership conference among other venues. During 2018-2019, Elizabeth served as an AmeriCorps teaching specialist for Northwest Education Access, a non-profit dedicated to helping students from low-income backgrounds thrive in higher education. Prior to pursuing her doctorate, she worked at Samuel French, Inc. and Premiere Stages at Kean University. Elizabeth received her PhD from the University of Washington and MFA in Dramaturgy from Brooklyn College.

MICHAEL VALLADARES is an undergraduate senior at Boston University pursuing a degree in Theatre Arts. Over the past few years, he has freelanced as a teacher at Boston Children's Theatre and as an artist and technician at Double Edge Theatre. Most recently, he has performed in Double Edge's *Six Feet Apart* and *All Together*, a socially distant outdoor spectacle performance. University credits include *Kamioroshi: the Descent of the Gods*, *The Europeans*, *Sunlight Interior*, *My Fair Lady*, *Angels in America*, *The Wonderful World of Dissocia*, *Ripe Frenzy* (New Repertory Theatre), and *Cabaret*.

LMDA's journal *Review* is currently accepting submissions for the 2021 issue.

The mission of the journal is to provide a venue for exploration of dramaturgy, and for ongoing conversation about the work of the dramaturg and the literary manager and their relationship to all aspects of theatre-making. *Review* publishes peer-reviewed scholarly articles, along with work in other formats such as expanded essays and interviews from the LMDA Newsletter, conference presentations, manifestos, and book reviews. *Review* welcomes submissions by all writers regardless of professional affiliation, as well as submissions on topics at some remove from the primary mission.

Review is an annual publication. This year's deadline for paper submissions and proposals is November 15, 2020.

To submit an article for peer review, please email the following as two separate documents:

1. The full paper submission, double-spaced 4,000-5,000 words as a MS Word file (No PDFs please!), formatted according to MLA style guidelines. Articles can contain footnotes and should include a Works Cited page. To ensure a fair blind-review process, the author's name should be omitted from this document.
2. A title page that includes the author's name, email address, telephone, and institutional affiliation (if applicable), as well as a brief biography.

For alternative submissions:

Please submit a proposal of approximately 500 words as a MS Word file. This document should include the author's name, email address, telephone, and institutional affiliation (if applicable), as well as a brief biography. The editors welcome proposals that engage with practice, process, and scholarship in a variety of formats including but not limited to:

- Excerpts from production archives and rehearsal notebooks
- Travelogues
- Visual forms of storytelling
- Conversations and interviews
- Critical reflections on topics related to the field
- Collaborative methods and other dramaturgical processes

Please send submissions to editor@lmda.org. Editors Kristin Leahey and Elizabeth Coen will directly receive inquiries and submissions from this address. *Review* acknowledges receipt of submission via email in 1 to 2 weeks and response time is 2 to 3 months from the submission deadline.

Previous issues of *Review* can be found [here](#).

***Review*, la revista de LMDA está aceptando propuestas para su edición 2020.**

La misión de *Review* es proporcionar un lugar para la exploración y conversación acerca del trabajo de dramaturgistas (dramaturgs), asesores literarios (literary managers) y su relación con todas las etapas de creación y realización de teatro y artes escénicas.

Review publica artículos académicos arbitrados, junto con trabajos en otros formatos que incluyen ensayos ampliados y entrevistas del LMDA Newsletter, manifiestos, reseñas de libros y una variedad de presentaciones, que se alinean con y expanden la misión actual de *Review*. *Review* agradece las propuestas de escritores independientes, profesionales y afiliados, así como propuestas sobre temas que se desvían de la misión principal de la revista.

Review es una publicación anual. La fecha límite para recibir propuestas para la edición de este año es el 15 de noviembre de 2020.

Para enviar un artículo, por favor envía por correo electrónico los siguientes dos documentos en formatos separados:

1. La propuesta del artículo completo, escrito a doble espacio entre 4.000 y 5.000 palabras como un archivo de MS Word (¡No PDF, por favor!), formateados de acuerdo al estilo de MLA. Los artículos pueden contener notas con pie de página y deben incluir una página de obras citadas. Para garantizar un proceso justo de revisión anónima, nombres de autores deben omitirse de este documento.
2. Una página con título que incluya el nombre del autor, dirección de correo electrónico, teléfono y afiliación institucional (si es aplicable), así como una breve biografía.

Para propuestas alternativas:

Envíe una propuesta de no más de 250 palabras como un archivo de MS Word. Este documento debe incluir

el nombre del autor, dirección de correo electrónico, teléfono y afiliación institucional (si es aplicable), así como una breve biografía. Los editores invitan las propuestas que involucran práctica, proceso, y investigación en una variedad de formatos que incluyen, entre otros:

- Extractos de archivos de producción y cuadernos de ensayo
- Documentales de viaje
- Formas visuales de narración
- Conversaciones y entrevistas
- Reflexiones críticas sobre temas relacionados con el dramaturgismo
- Métodos de colaboración y otros procesos de dramaturgismo

Por favor envía tu propuesta a editor@lmda.org. Kristin Leahey y Elizabeth Coen, editoras de Review, recibirán propuestas y resolverán preguntas directamente en este e-mail. Review confirmará la recepción de las propuestas vía e-mail a 1 ó 2 semanas de haberlas recibido y una respuesta definitiva a 2 ó 3 meses a partir de la fecha límite de la convocatoria.

Puedes encontrar las ediciones anteriores de *Review* [aquí](#).