From the Department Chair

It’s a new year and we’ve already gotten off to a great (and busy) start. We welcomed seven new undergraduate majors and eight new graduate students into the department. From all accounts all the students have adapted to the pace of the quarter system and are already busily involved in performances, research, and extra-curricular activities. Our faculty have been making headlines as well. As you’ll read in this issue of P.S., Professor Mary Zimmerman’s opera debut at the Metropolitan Opera in New York opened to much fanfare and Professor Stern’s co-authored book on Arthur Symons was published.

Our lecture series, “What is Performance Studies?” initiated by our undergraduates, is perhaps the highlight of the fall quarter. Alums from three eras have been invited back to ponder this question. While their answers vary according to their own research and professional career trajectories, they have all been enlightening and provocative.

In this, our second volume of P.S., you’ll note that the faculty, students, and staff continue to demonstrate why Northwestern continues to be the vanguard of what Dwight Conquergood called the three “a’s” of performance: artistry, analysis, and activism.

P. S. Stay tuned for exiting news about our move back to Annie Mae Swift.

—E. Patrick Johnson

Mary Zimmerman directs
Lucia di Lammermoor at the Metropolitan Opera in New York

Professor Mary Zimmerman directed Gaetano Donizetti’s opera Lucia di Lammermoor at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. The production opened the Met’s 2007-08 season on September 24, 2007, and was shown simultaneously on closed-circuit television outdoors on Lincoln Center Plaza and in Times Square.

In her rendering of the opera, which tells the tale of a Scottish girl from a noble family who is forced by her manipulative brother to abandon her true love and marry another man, Professor Zimmerman transposed the action from the close of the 16th century to the latter half of the 19th, making the story feel disturbingly nearer our time and also suggesting the collapsing British Empire through a depiction of a mind, a family, and a social system falling into ruin. The show’s sets, designed by Mary’s frequent artistic collaborator and Northwestern University faculty member Dan Ostling, were inspired by Mary’s visit to Culzean Castle on Scotland’s west coast, which she says, “felt like a place haunted by madness, the setting for a ghostly Victorian tale.”

Among Mary’s goals was to bring the same emotional immediacy to opera that she strives for in her theatrical work, eliciting expressive performances from the singers. In a New York Times interview she commented, “You still have to prioritize the voice. But for me the question is: Is the singer present in what he or she is saying? It’s not possible to engage an audience if the performer is unengaged, no matter how much scenery you have around. The show will have a dead center. People deserve the total experience that opera has advertised itself as providing, a union of all the arts.”
Judith Hamera, Professor and Chair of the Department of Performance Studies at Texas A&M University, will give the Fourth Annual Wallace A. Bacon Memorial Lecture on Wednesday, November 14, at noon, in Room 207 of Norris University Center. Professor Hamera’s talk is titled “Dancing Communities: Two Studies of Aesthetics, Technique, and Connection in Los Angeles Performance.”

Judith Hamera received her MA (1982) and PhD (1987) in Interpretation and Performance Studies, respectively, from Northwestern University. She is the author of Dancing Communities: Performance and Culture in the Global City, published by Palgrave Macmillan (2007); editor of Opening Acts: Performance In/As Communication and Cultural Studies (Sage, 2005); co-editor of the Sage Handbook of Performance Studies (Sage, 2005); and co-editor of the Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing (forthcoming). She has served as editor of Text and Performance Quarterly, the performance studies journal of the National Communication Association. Her essays have appeared in Cultural Studies, TDR: The Drama Review, Modern Drama, Text and Performance Quarterly, Theatre Topics, and Women and Language. She is the recipient of the National Communication Association’s Lilla Heston Award for Outstanding Scholarship in Performance Studies. Dr. Hamera’s research examines relationships between performance and the construction of culturally diverse communities.

Fall Quarter Lecture Series

The department’s fall quarter lecture series will feature talks by scholars and artists who received their PhD in Performance Studies at Northwestern University. The overarching topic for the lectures is: What is Performance Studies?

Shannon Jackson
Professor and Chair,
Department of Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies
University of California-Berkeley
Wednesday, October 10, 4:30 pm

Ruth Laurion Bowman
Associate Professor, Communication Studies/Performance Studies
Louisiana State University
Wednesday, October 17, noon

Derek Goldman
Associate Professor, Theatre and Performance Studies
Georgetown University
Wednesday, November 7, noon

Eric Rosen, Artistic Director, About Face Theatre
Jessica Thebus, Artistic Associate, Steppenwolf Theatre and About Face Theatre; Lecturer, Northwestern Department of Theatre
Wednesday, November 28, noon

All lectures take place in the Department of Performance Studies, 1800 Sherman Avenue, Suite 401

Arthur Symons was a poet, essayist, critic and devote of 19th-century music halls. He introduced the Symbolist Movement, begun in France, to the British. His work influenced such literary luminaries as T. S. Eliot, William Butler Yeats, and Ezra Pound. In the 1890s, he and Aubrey Beardsley founded and edited the literary-artistic magazine *The Savoy*.

**Ramon Rivera-Servera Presents at ASA**

Ramón H. Rivera-Servera presented “(Re)membering the Body in Coco Fusco’s Feminist Performances” at the 2007 Annual Meeting of the American Studies Association in Philadelphia and “Saving Esperanza: The Public Life of Latina/o Queer Legal Struggles” at the 17th National Latina/o Law Student Association at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He will offer a “state of the profession” address at the American Society for Theatre Research annual meeting in Phoenix, Arizona in November.

Shannon Jackson speaks with E. Patrick Johnson prior to her October 10th lecture. The lecture, “Tech Support: Visual, Social, & Theatrical Infrastructures in the Work of ‘The Builders Association,’” focused on the work of this performance/media company that exploits contemporary technologies, and a blend of text, sound, architecture, video and stage performances that explore the impact of technology on human presence.

**Leslie Buxbaum Danzig** has successfully defended her dissertation and will receive her degree in December 2007. Also, Leslie is directing Redmoon Theatre’s production *Hunchback*, which opens December 4, 2007, and she will bring *500 Clown Frankenstein* and *500 Clown Christmas* to New York’s PS 122 in December 2007.

**Esailama Diouf** presented her paper “Staging the African: Trans-Atlantic Performances of Mandinka Dance” at the Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora in Barbados, West Indies, October 10, 2007.

**Christine Dunford** is facilitating teacher workshops and post-show discussions for Lookingglass Theatre’s current production of Nilaja Sun’s one-woman show *No Child*, in which the actress embodies multiple characters in her exploration of the public school system seen through the eyes of a young and idealistic teaching artist. The production runs through mid-November.

**Victoria Fortuna** will present at the Congress on Research in Dance’s 40th Anniversary Conference, Choreographies of Migration: Patterns of Global Mobility at Barnard College in New York City, November 8-11, 2007. Her paper is titled “José Limón: La Malinche and His Bodies (Of Work).”


**Hsiao-Mei Hsieh** will present her paper “Staging the Regional/National: Taiwanese Opera Performances in Beijing” at the Performance Studies International conference in New York City in November, 2007.

**Greg Mitchell** will chair and present at a panel at the American Anthropology Association’s annual meeting in Washington, DC. The paper is titled “Selling Sex in the City: Male Sex Workers and the Navigation of Queer Space in Bahia, Brazil.” Greg will also be giving a guest lecture at the University of Chicago on Issues of Ethnographic Ethics in Fieldwork.

**James Moreno** will present his paper “Limón’s Chaconne: Marked and Unmarked” at the Congress on Research in Dance’s Choreographies of Migration: Patterns of Global Mobility, in New York City, City, November 8-11, 2007.

**Tamara Roberts** presented her paper, “Musical Racial Triangulation: An Historical Perspective” at the annual convention of the Society for Ethnomusicology, October 5-8, 2007.

**Jennifer Tyburczy** will present her paper “Pervertibles, or How My Spatula Brought Sexy Back” at the Performance Studies International conference in New York City; and “Queer Burlesque” at NCA, both in November, 2007.

**Chris Van Houten** presented a paper at the Fall Quarter Graduate Student Symposium, October 6, 2007, hosted by the Department of Performance Studies, the Interdisciplinary PhD in Theatre and Drama, the Department of Communication Studies, and the Department of African American Studies.
Fall Quarter Production: Subway to Grey Polestar

Subway to a Grey Polestar: The Geography of Globalism

Performance Studies sophomore Alex Knell developed and is directing this quarter’s performance hour. Subway to a Grey Polestar: The Geography of Globalism is an audience-participation performance art piece seeking to dramatize vividly the individual’s heightened response to globalization, in particular the fear of global catastrophe and the pressure of global competition. Beginning in a city based on the infamous Payatas, where in 2000 a 100 foot mountain of garbage collapsed and buried hundreds of scavengers living at its base, Subway to a Grey Polestar follows a clownish ensemble through a fable-like story of access, mobility, and the meaning of home in an ever-migrant world. Performances are Friday, November 16, at 8:00 p.m. and Saturday, November 17, at 2:00 and 8:00 p.m. in the Mussetter-Struble Theatre, 1949 Campus Drive. Tickets, available at the door, are five dollars.

Performance Studies Majors Direct, Assistant Direct, Perform

Performance Studies senior Sophie Angelson will perform in The Space Between: My Story, which she developed as part of an Independent Study completed in spring quarter 2007. The production is directed by Alex Brown and will be presented Thursday, November 1 at 8:00 p.m.; Friday, November 2 at 2:00 and 8:00 p.m.; and Sunday, November 4 at 3:00 p.m. at the John Evans Center, 1800 Sheridan Road.

Performance Studies freshman Lauren Coffaro is assistant directing the Purple Crayon Players fall mainstage production Still Life with Iris, a children’s show set in the magical land of Nocturno, where everything seen in the day is made at night. Flowers are painted, the moon is roped in, and the wind learns to whistle. There, a young girl, Iris, sets out on a quest to find her identity after she is stripped of her past.

Performance Studies senior Chelsea Slaven directs The Curious Case of Caroline for Vertigo Productions. The play follows Caroline’s exploits as a conniving little con artist who spends her days making up lies about her miserable life as an orphan with three brothers suffering from bizarre illnesses. All is fine and fictitious until the day Caroline Crane encounters a witch who places a spell on her that makes all her lies come true and all her fictions become fact, leading her into a fantastical nightmare. Narrated by an eccentric author who speaks in Seuss-like rhyme, The Curious Case of Caroline Crane is a dark fairy tale that is based on true events but filled entirely with lies. Performances are November 15, 16, and 17 in Shanley Pavilion.

Performance Studies senior Audrey Meshulan will perform in the Theatre and Interpretation Center mainstage production Marisol, by José Rivera, directed by MFA directing student and Lookingglass Theatre member David Kersnar. Performances are October 26 through November 4 in the Barber Theater.
Performance Studies Department Fall Reception

P.S.: The Newsletter of the Department of Performance Studies
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Tracy Davis
Micaela di Leonardo
Susan Manning
Angela Ray
Sandra L. Richards
Jeffrey Sconce
Mary Weismantel
Harvey Young

Visiting Faculty
Tony Horne
Jason Martin

Top: Performance Studies Majors Ian Epstein, Alex Knell, Anna Morris.

Middle: PhD students Lisa Biggs, Munulika Rahman, Javon Johnson.

Bottom: MA student Ashley Black, MA/PhD student Victoria Fortuna
Beary, one of my best September friends and a dog, grew to love tree-lined West 65th Street, meandering on the corner, watching Juilliard bassists lug home their instruments, ballerinas pas de chat to class, and young vocalists contorting their faces. Maybe they hoped some day to wind up where we were on our way to — the Metropolitan Opera House where our Performance Studies friend and Professor Mary Zimmerman directed the smash hit season opener, Lucia di Lammermoor. Beary is Mary’s dog, I was her assistant on the production, and we were the luckiest pair of creatures in New York.

The stage door functioned the way airport security did about thirty years ago. Without a Met photo I.D. ready, the long arm of the law may have come tumbling down. Beyond the entrance gate, to the left, a red carpet hallway led to the house of the theatre, and to the right, a concrete stairwell led to the stage. Beary and I veered right, walking down a flight of stairs, down a narrow concrete hallway with five and a half foot ceilings and down two more flights of stairs, past mammoth drums, bells and wind machines, the occasional ancient Egyptian set piece and a plethora of mysterious crates labeled with the name of one of the dozens of operas in rep at the Met.

Down far below amid the autumnal gold and red of chandeliers and fresh-preened carpets, in one of the largest rehearsal rooms I’ve ever seen, Mary sat before a handful of the world’s finest opera singers who had just begun singing the famous Act 2 finale for the first time. I kept Beary on a short leash because dogs hear high pitches up to five times as loudly as humans do, and this was bound to be a lot. Lucia, her lover, her betrothed and her brother had all been betrayed in the scene and the entire cast simultaneously laments the situation. As we sat a few feet in front of the loudly singing group, not only was it a challenge to keep our tears inside our faces, but it was really difficult to keep our hair attached to our skin.

When the singing ended, the room shifted from air-thickening sound to utter silence, and all the singers, conductors, assistants, music staff and Beary and I looked to Mary: “What’s next?” Yes, the job included just a little bit of pressure. The environment at the Met was completely different than the environment of a theatre. What Mary accomplished in that room shed new light on adaptation, a word that was so integral to my Performance Studies education, which luckily continues for me as I watch each performance of Lucia. Every audience member could see that Mary had adapted the setting from the 17th to the 19th century, and that she had adapted the iconic gestures of the Met’s stagnant production into effective storytelling, but Beary and I, or as I like to call us, “the entourage,” were privileged to see Mary adapt her way of working in the theatre to accommodate one of the world’s chief opera houses with grace, daring and smarts. We all had quite an adventure.

**E. Patrick Johnson performs *Pouring Tea* at ASA**

**E. Patrick Johnson** performed *Pouring Tea: Black Gay Men of the South Tell Their Tales* at the annual convention of the American Studies Association, October 12, 2007, in Philadelphia. The performance is based on excerpts from his forthcoming book, *Sweet Tea: An Oral History of the South*, to be published by the University of North Carolina Press. The narratives were collected between 2004 and 2006 from black gay men who were born, raised, and continue to live in the South. They hail from fifteen different states and range in age from 19 to 94. Patrick will be touring the show around the country during the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years.

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Photo by E. Patrick Johnson