D. Soyini Madison to Join Department

The Department of Performance Studies is pleased to announce the appointment of D. Soyini Madison as professor of Performance Studies, starting September 2007. Professor Madison, who is currently professor of Communication Studies at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, has been visiting professor in the department during 2006-07.

Professor Madison’s published works focus on performance practices and the intersections between global economy and local activism in West Africa. Her teaching centers on critical performance ethnography, social movements, and the political economy of performance. She is a Fulbright Scholar and lectured at the University of Ghana from 1998-2000. Her current book project, Acts of Activism: Rights and Radical Performances, is an examination of local Ghanaian activists and their performance tactics in the defense of human rights and social justice as these performances are influenced by globality and national development. Her other publications include Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance (2005), Sage Handbook of Performance Studies, co-edited with Judith Hamera (2005), and The Woman That I Am: The Literature and Culture of Contemporary Women of Color (1997).

From the Department Chair

Since the inaugural issue of P.S., many wonderful things have happened in the department. Namely, we successfully recruited D. Soyini Madison to join our faculty; we placed ninety percent of our PhD graduates in tenure-track positions and postdoctoral fellowships; and, we are graduating our largest class of seniors in over a decade. In addition, we successfully recruited six incoming PhD students and two MA students. All of these exciting events are covered in this issue. Indeed, it is a clear sign that the department is growing stronger and that our presence continues to be felt throughout the university and the country. Next year will be another exciting one with the addition of our new faculty and with the implementation of more lecture series, performances, community collaborations, and social events. For now, we simply relish in the astoundingly successful year that we have had and look to rejuvenating over the summer. Congratulations to all of the graduating seniors and newly minted Ph.D.s, on reaching this milestone. I hope that your time with us has enriched your life as much as it has enriched ours.

E. Patrick Johnson

P.S. Don’t forget to give back to the department when you become famous!

Celebration held for Frank Galati and Virgil Johnson

The School of Communication held a celebration at Va Pensiero Restaurant on May 7, 2007, honoring Performance Studies faculty member Frank Galati and Theatre Department faculty member Virgil Johnson, marking their retirement and celebrating their years at Northwestern. Faculty and staff from the two departments attended, as well as friends and family, with toasts and well-wishes all around. Professors Galati and Johnson were each presented with a plaque that will be placed on a designated seat of honor in the Ethel M. Barber Theater.
Retirement celebration honoring Virgil Johnson and Frank Galati

Department of Performance Studies
Northwestern University
1800 Sherman Avenue, Suite 401
Evanston, IL 60201
Paul Edwards receives McCormick Teaching Excellence Award

Northwestern University has awarded Associate Professor Paul Edwards a Charles Deering McCormick Professorship of Teaching Excellence. He will be presented with the award at a ceremony in the Guild Lounge, Scott Hall, June 4, 2007.

The Charles Deering McCormick Professorship of Teaching Excellence was established to recognize individual faculty members who have consistently demonstrated outstanding performance in classroom teaching or who have developed significant innovations that have also influenced the methods and teaching effectiveness of other faculty. McCormick Professorships are appointed for three year terms, and include a salary supplement and a research grant for activities that enhance undergraduate education. Each holder of a McCormick appointment is also designated a Fellow of the Searle Center for Teaching Excellence.

Faculty members are nominated for a McCormick award by the Deans of the schools or colleges in which they have their principal appointments. The nominations are reviewed by a committee chaired by the Provost and made up of senior faculty members and administrators, along with a student representative. The selection committee submits its recommendations to the President. Appointments are made by the President, subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees. The appointments are made without regard to the school affiliation of the faculty member.

Gretchen Case receives Mellon Fellowship at Duke

Postdoctoral fellow Gretchen Case has been awarded a Mellon Fellowship at Duke University starting in fall 2007. During 2006-07, Gretchen has held a postdoctoral fellowship at Northwestern working with the Medical Humanities and Bioethics Program at the Feinberg School of Medicine and the Department of Performance Studies. In connection with the fellowship at Northwestern, she has taught graduate seminars and given talks for both programs, including the presentation “Wishing on Scars: Meaning, Memory, and Misdirection of Scarred Bodies,” on May 2, 2007, in the Performance Studies Department.

Gretchen Case’s research focuses on theories of the body, cultures of medicine, trauma studies, disability studies, performance ethnography, and oral history. She received her BA in History and Speech Communication and her MA in Communication Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and her PhD in Performance Studies from the University of California, Berkeley. Before commencing her graduate study, Case enjoyed a career as a public historian, specializing in oral history interviews and the history of science and medicine.

E. Patrick Johnson receives Ver Steeg Award

The Graduate School of Northwestern University has awarded E. Patrick Johnson the 2007 Clarence L. Ver Steeg Award. The Clarence L. Ver Steeg Graduate Faculty Award offers recognition to outstanding Northwestern faculty who have given tirelessly of their time to mentor graduate students and develop outstanding programs, and whose efforts are essential to upholding the University’s reputation for excellence in graduate education.

Each year, students in The Graduate School may nominate one faculty and one staff member per department or program for the Ver Steeg Award. A committee comprised of faculty, students, and staff then decides upon the final award recipients, each of whom receives a $3000 award. The award will be given at the Ph.D hooding ceremony on June 15, 2007.
Department hosts Black Performance Theory conference

The Northwestern University Department of Performance Studies and the Alice Kaplan Humanities Institute, along with SLIP-PAGE: Performance, Culture, Technology at MIT; and The Black Performance Theory Working Group, present Black Performance Theory 2007: Theory in Motion, a conference May 18-20, 2007. Hosted by professors Jennifer Brody, E. Patrick Johnson, and Harvey Young, and convened with MIT professor Thomas DeFrantz, the conference will meet in Annenberg Hall G02 on Friday, May 18 and Louis Hall 119 on Saturday, May 19, 2007.

The Black Performance Theory working group is an interdisciplinary colloquium and discussion group that assembles a small group of scholar/practitioners working with and through performance to investigate and articulate black performance theory. The establishment of this working group presents us with a unique opportunity to gather and discuss issues, paradigms, and approaches to theorizing black performance. As we make valuable connections as a community of scholars, we will work towards addressing questions, such as: What is a black sensibility? What is black performance? What is black music? What is black dance? What is black oratory? In the 21st century, what is a black aesthetic? This working group continues a conversation begun in 1998 at Duke University, at the one-day conference “Reading, Writing, and Representin’: Performance and the Subjects of Race” curated by Richard C. Green. The bulk of the working group time is devoted to discussion, with the aim of raising more questions and hopefully establishing frames for black performance critique and analysis.

Conference Schedule

Friday, May 18, Annenberg Hall, Room G02
8:30 – 9:00 Breakast and Welcome
9:00 – 9:30 Opening Remarks
Tommy DeFrantz, MIT
E. Patrick Johnson, Northwestern University
9:30 – 10:15 “How Quare is Noah’s Arc?”
Brandi Catanesi, UC Berkeley
Jeffrey Q. McCune, University of Rochester
10:30 – 11:15 In the Break
Tommy DeFrantz, MIT
Omi Osum Olomo, University of Texas-Austin
11:15 – 12:00 Getting Mother’s Body
Rashida Braggs, Stanford University
Soyica Diggs, Stanford University
12:15 – 1:00 Globalization and Race
Nicole Castor, Duke University
Xavior Livermon, UNC-Chapel Hill
1:00 – 2:30 Lunch
3:00 – 3:45 Bodies in Dissent
Jennifer Brody, Northwestern University
Tavia Nyong’o, New York University
Koritha Mitchell, Ohio State University
3:45 – 4:30 Losing My Mother
Hershini Young, SUNY Buffalo
4:30 – 5:00 Witnesses Respond
7:00 – 9:30 Dinner with Works in Progress Gio Restaurant
10:00 Cabaret Performance

Saturday, May 19, Louis Hall, Room 119
9:00 – 9:30 Breakfast
9:30 – 10:15 The Fabulous Sylvester
E. Patrick Johnson, Northwestern University
Jason King, New York University
10:30 – 11:15 Cultural Formations of Urban Dance in Rize
Marlon Bailey, UC-Berkeley
Stephanie Batiste, Carnegie Mellon University
11:15 - 12:00 Dreamgirls
Tamara Roberts, Northwestern University
Nia Witherspoon, Stanford University
Anna Bean, Williams College
Nadine George, UC-San Diego
12:45 – 2:00 Lunch (Graduate Student Networking)
2:00 – 2:45 “Queering the Absent Potential & Desire in the Bodies of August Wilson and Jessye Norman”
Pam Booker, Parsons School of Design
Venus Opal Reese, University of Texas-Dallas
2:45 – 3:30 “Volatile Bodies”
Melissa Blanco, UC Riverside; Richard Green, New York University; Anna Scott, UC Riverside
3:30 – 4:00 Witnesses Respond
4:15 – 5:00 Discussion Session: Tenure, Promotion, Publishing

Sunday, May 20, Orrington Hotel Globe Café
9:30 – 11:00 Buffet Breakfast/Book Project Discussion
David Donkor has accepted a tenure-track position as assistant professor of Performance Studies at Texas A & M University, to start in fall 2007.

Jeffrey Q. McCune will receive a June degree and has accepted a tenure-track position in American Studies and Women’s Studies at the University of Maryland-College Park, to start in fall 2007.

Kathryn Farley has received the Marion L. Brittain Post-Doctoral Fellowship in the School of Literature, Communication and Culture at the Georgia Institute of Technology.

Kamran Afary has completed his dissertation “Performing and Communicating Social Drama: (Re)presenting the Los Angeles Rebellion of 1992,” under the direction of Margaret Thompson Drewal and will receive a June degree.

Amber Day has completed her dissertation “Prankly Speaking: Performative Satire and Political Dialogue” under the direction of Susan Manning and will receive a June degree. In addition, Amber has accepted a tenure-track position in Literary and Cultural Studies Department at Bryant University in Providence, R.I., to start in fall 2007.

Meida McNeal has been awarded a two-year Mellon-sponsored Postdoctoral Fellowship in International Dance Studies at Brown University, jointly appointed in the Department of Theatre, Speech and Dance, the Cogut Center for the Humanities and in association with the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America. The appointment starts in fall 2007.

Amber Day has completed her DFI (Diversifying Higher Education Faculty in Illinois) Fellowship from the State of Illinois. She also served as dramaturg for Lookingglass Theatre Company’s production of Black Diamond.

PhD candidate Priscilla Renta received a scholarship from the Hispanic Scholarship Fund and also a Dissertation Year Fellowship from the Graduate School at Northwestern. Priscilla also presented a paper at the International Conference on Music and Identity in the Caribbean in the Dominican Republic, in April 2007.


Second year PhD student Mario LaMothe and PhD candidate Lori Baptista will each present a paper at the Hemispheric Institute’s 6th annual conference “Corporate / Body Politics in the Americas: Formations of Race, Class and Gender,” June 8-17, 2007, in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

PhD candidate Jennifer Tyburczy was awarded a Graduate Research Grant and a Center for International and Comparative Studies Summer Travel Grant to conduct research at sex museums in the United States and Mexico. Locally, she has presented her research at the Gerber/Hart Library in Chicago and at Columbia College. She also presented her work at the Third Global Conference on Sex and Sexuality Critical Issues in Krakow, Poland.

The Department of Performance Studies and the School of Communication host the Summer Seminar on Performance and Excess, June 25 through June 29, African-American Studies Conference Room, Kresge 2-425. Presenters and topics include:

- Shane Vogel, Indiana University, “The Scene of Harlem Cabaret.”
- Scott Herring, Indiana University, “Rural Stylistics, or Unfashionability.”
- Kathleen LeBesco, Marymount Manhattan College, “Flabulous: Fatness, Panic, Morality and Health.”
- Tavia Nyong’o, New York University, “‘Rip it Up’: Excess and Ecstasy in Little Richard’s Sound.”
- Francesca Royster, DePaul University, “‘Feeling Like a Woman, Looking like Man, Sounding like a No-No’: Grace Jones, Queer Sexuality and the Performance of ‘Strange’ in the Post-Soul Moment.”

Additional information is available on the Performance Studies website:

www.communication.northwestern.edu/performancestudies.
A Room of One’s Own was published, the play explores Virginia Woolf’s interaction with a narrator character that the real-life Virginia created. The play traces Virginia’s childhood through her evolution as a woman and a writer in the context of her relationship with and eventual love for the character Mary. The production utilizes fanciful, movement-oriented images, as well as a constructed river in the performance space.

The Child of Sand
Adapted and directed by Georgette Kelly
Crowe Plaza
May 10-13 at 7:30 p.m.
Based on the novel *L’enfant de sable* by Tahar Ben Jelloun, “The Child of Sand” is set on the *Djemma el-Fna* plaza of Marrakech, Morocco, where *halqa* street performers gather an audience each evening. The storyteller brings us the story of Ahmed, eighth daughter of a Moroccan family, who is raised as a son to keep the family wealth intact. “The Child of Sand” celebrates the rich Moroccan tradition of storytelling, while exploring questions of gender and cultural identity.

The Essential Evita: Performing Politics, Performing Gender
Documentary Film Screening by Barrak Alzaid
Program of African Studies
May 11, 2007
Pieter-Dirk Uys is a South African satirist and playwright who produced a critical commentary of Apartheid in the 1980s. Uys conveyed his critiques using a fictional female persona, Evita Bezuidenhout, and depicted her in newspaper columns and onstage political revues throughout the 1980s. Evita represented a parody of conservative Apartheid norms that regulated morality and sexual purity. In addition to functioning as a critical mouthpiece for Uys, Evita has attained a status in contemporary South Africa that exceeds Uys’ portrayal of her. She accepts awards for her contributions to peace, hosts dinners for Nelson Mandela, and has published biographies on her life. This brief documentary explores the artist’s relationship to the character, and their relationship to South African history and politics.

(continued on page 6)
Performance Studies Majors productions

Peter/Wendy
Directed and adapted by Jeremy Bloom
WAVE Garage, behind 617 Noyes Street
May 15-17 at 8:00 p.m., and May 23-24 at 8:00 p.m. Special 11:59 p.m. performance on the night of May 22.
“There were odd stories about him, as that when children died he went part of the way with them, so that they should not be frightened”
— J.M. Barrie on Peter.
The performers in this production take Wendy’s famous window departure very seriously, the splendor and agony of having to go. The show is performed against the actual twilight, with actual fake flying. “Ought not to be written in ink but in a golden splash.”

Choose Your Own Adventure
Directed and adapted by Jared Kling
Kresge Hall, 1-370
May 25 and 26, 8:00 p.m.
Inspired by the “Choose Your Own Adventure” series of children’s books, this play allows the audience to vote at key points, making every show a unique experience. Will these friends find the hidden secrets of the mansion? Escape by the skin of their teeth? Or die trying...?
Jared Kling is a senior Performance Studies major with an adjunct major in Animate Arts and a minor in Computing and Information Systems. As his senior project in the Animate Arts program, a multidisciplinary art program through the School of Communication, he plans to combine art and technology to allow audience members to control the path of a live performance. Every audience member will receive a xylophone (yes, a xylophone) and, at key points, be asked to hit a note corresponding to a vote displayed on a projection screen. The resulting votes will be analyzed by a computer and the choice receiving the most votes—that is, the loudest tone—will be chosen.

An Interview with “A Room Embodied” director Atley Loughridge

Producer Zora Senat interviews director Atley Loughridge about their production of “A Room Embodied.”

What drew you to Virginia woolf:
Do you want the honest answer? Well, the first thing I read of Virginia Woolf was A Room of One’s Own. When I was fifteen, my mom went away and I didn’t hear from her for a long time. Then, out of the blue, she mailed me that book—just that book—and I read it all day. And that was my first introduction to Virginia Woolf.

When I was thinking of doing plays I was just roaming around the book store and I just thought “I should do this.” And it’s totally conditional. It meant a lot to me as an adolescent and I’m doing it now.

How has the personal connection been affecting process?
I’ve actually changed my interpretation. My first interpretation was in light of Virginia Woolf’s suicide. Since then I’ve begun to see the piece more in terms of how Virginia was trying to live rather than in light of her death. Does that make sense? She was saying very controversial statements for the time and in order to make society and literature better.

What do you hope the audience takes away from this experience?
I hope they take away the sexiness of ideas. How an idea can resonate one way in 1929 and resonate another way in 2007. That ideas that form, that are conceived—that’s a sexual word—are like sensual relationships between humans and have creative power, within one’s mind. That creative power within one’s mind is on par with a sensual creative power.

(continued on page 7)
Graduating Seniors in Performance Studies

The Performance Studies class of 2007 is the largest in over a decade, their size a point of pride in the department, their “Senior Performance Festival” a mark of their creative energy, and their graduation a cause for celebration (though not without some mixed emotions, as we anticipate their departure). The graduates are:

- Barrak Alzaid
- Crystal Black
- Jeremy Bloom
- Emily Comisar
- Noelle Ghoussaini
- Nick Giles
- Grant Hetherton
- Jacelyn Intres
- Deborah Kaltman
- Georgette Kelly
- Jared Kling
- Lauren Lindner
- Atley Loughbridge
- Jennifer MacIsaac
- Anne McNamee
- Lindsay Meck
- Julie Ritchey
- Molly Schneider
- Joanna Thapa
- Naliaka Wakhisi
- Dennis Webber

“A Room Embodied” interview, continued

How was your experience of adapting the text?
My turning point in the adaptation was that most of my adaptation has been influenced by criticism of Virginia Woolf: particularly an article that drew a parallel between the hymen, like a woman’s hymen, and the writer’s voice. But how that parallel plays out is kind of long and complicated.

And I chose to... you know, if you were to do a thesis on this performance, I would say that the landscape of the body mirrors the landscape of the mind.

Has Mary Zimmerman been a big influence on you?
Huge. Huge. (laugh) I think her ideas are very sensual. But she is not as explicit and perhaps as clumsy with ideas as I am. Often times she’ll cut through a very complicated idea with the simplest and most perfect way to perform it. So vague and so true! So anyway, that’s sort of her storyteller’s eye, that’s what I hope I’ve been learning from her.

You’ve worked in the professional world. Was it refreshing to return to college theatre?
To be honest, the most refreshing thing is that I would not be able to do this in the professional world. Not for another 10-15 years. I would not be able to get together with this many talented people for this many hours a week with these sort of facilities at our disposal and this sort of time to work on a text for the money that we spend on it.

Also, at school there is a much higher tolerance level for mistakes and sort of experimentation. This script that I’ve written is a pretty bold take on *A Room of One’s Own*. So the fact that it’s not life and death allows for this sort of experimentation that works well for academic institutions and not necessarily other places.

There’s a river in the set. Actual water. What do you anticipate that will be like as a theatrical experience?
Now the river. How did that start? Well, the book starts right by a river bank and the image of river returns again and again throughout. And I just felt like the image of a river provided a social lubricant for these very controversial ideas. The idea that our lives are fleeting and whatever the struggles we encounter as a generation now, the next generation will be beyond them or be re-imagining them in another direction. So it makes it easier to forfeit whatever perspective you think you might know for certain when you are beside the stream of life that is ever flowing and always taking bodies that will be laid down and putting up bodies that are bound to come.

I thought that the sound of the water would be peaceful for the audience. But it also has kind of obvious sensual, physically sensual undertones as well.

You mention many times sensuality and sexiness. What is sexy to you?
Ideas.

Have you had fun doing the play?
Oh yeah. I really have. I don’t mean this in a narcissistic way, but I think that it will turn out much better than I thought it would. I am so pleased that it is 75 minutes. One act. I think it makes sense. I think they’ll get it. It moves very quickly and it is very beautiful.

So you’re happy with the show?
Yeah, I’m very happy.