From the Department Chair

The winter quarter has been as busy as ever. We kicked off the new year and the quarter with the first of our “Issues in U.S. Latina/o Performance Studies” lecture by Professor Alberto Sandoval from Mt. Holyoke College. Professors Barbara Browning and Deborah Peredez in the series provided even more stimulating thought. Professor Alicia Arrizon, winner of MLA Prize in United States Latina and Latino and Chicana and Chicano Literary and Cultural Studies, will bookend the series.

This quarter is also marked by our presence on the stage, affirming our commitment to practice. In January, Nancy Cheryll Davis, co-founder of Town Street Theater in Los Angeles, performed Nella Larson’s novella, Passing, and was a tour-de-force. And, of course, all of us are looking forward to Spunk, directed by our own Tony Horne. This production highlights the talents of our graduate students, including Tamara Roberts, who served as sound designer, and Chloe Johnston who served as dramaturge. Following on the heels of Spunk is Mei Hsieh’s production of “Enemies of the People” and Paul Edwards’s “To Pieces: Tales for Cut-Ups,” both appearing in the Struble. Articles on these productions, in addition to interviews with alum Lydia Diamond and Visiting Assistant Professor Tony Horne, are featured in this issue of P.S.

I’m also excited to share that our move back to Annie May Swift is on schedule for June. While we’ll certainly miss the corporate feel and proximity to good eats of 1800 Sherman, that will pale in comparison to having our own black box studio! We’ll be working on several inaugural performances in that space for the next academic year.

P.S. Mark your calendars for the Black and Latino Queer Performance Festival, April 17-20 in the Wallis.

—E. Patrick Johnson

Alumna Lydia Diamond’s play Harriet Jacobs premieres at Steppenwolf Theatre

This month Performance Studies alumna Lydia Diamond’s play Harriet Jacobs premieres at Steppenwolf Theatre. Workshopped and presented at The Kennedy Center’s New Visions New Voices Festival, the play is the third Lydia Diamond work commissioned by Steppenwolf, following Voyeurs de Venus and her highly acclaimed adaptation of Toni Morrison’s The Bluest Eye, which won the Black Arts Alliance Image Award for Best New Play. Her work also has appeared at the Goodman Theatre (The Gift Horse), Congo Square Theatre Company (Stick Fly), and elsewhere. The Gift Horse is anthologized in 7 Black Plays, edited by Chuck Smith, Northwestern University Press.

Harriet Jacobs, based on the autobiographical narrative Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, by Harriet Ann Jacobs (1813-1897), tells the story of a woman who endures the hardships of slavery and who, in order to preserve the safety of her family and her dignity, decides to take her children and run. Hiding in the small attic of a storage shed for seven years, she must watch her children grow from a distance, living in the care of her grandmother, until Harriet escapes by boat to Philadelphia in 1842.

Lydia Diamond has taught playwriting at Columbia College, DePaul University, Loyola University, and is currently on the faculty at Boston University. She lives in Cambridge with her husband John Diamond, a sociology professor at Harvard, and their son Baylor.

Lydia graduated from Northwestern in 1992 with a major in Performance Studies. Originally a theatre major intent on becoming an actress, her plans changed after taking playwriting courses with Theatre faculty member Charles Smith and Performances Studies courses with Paul Edwards, Dwight Conquergood, and Carol Simpson Stern. Lydia cites the (continued on page 3)
The Department of Performance Studies presented *Passing Solo*, a one-woman performance by Nancy Cheryll Davis, on January 17, 2008, in the Wallis Theater. *Passing Solo* is based on the Towne Street Theatre play *Passing*, adapted by Davis from Nella Larsen’s 1927 novel. A memory play, it explores the conflicting demands of race and friendship, and the slippery line between trust and deception. In this solo performance, Nancy Cheryll Davis portrays the novel’s two central characters, Irene Westover Redfield and Clare Kendry Bellew, childhood friends who encounter one another as adults in 1920s Harlem, and who share a secret: their birth certificates read “Negro” but both can—and do—pass as white. In fact, Clare’s been married to a wealthy white racist for twenty years. Now she’s sought out Irene as she flirts with her roots, flirts with the danger of discovery… flirts with her life, making Irene the unwitting witness to her willful game of hide and seek.

Nancy Cheryll Davis is a critically acclaimed actress, director, and producer, who is a graduate of the American Conservatory Theatre of San Francisco and founding Artistic/Producing Director of the Towne Street Theatre, Los Angeles’s premier African American Theatre Company. She received the NAACP Best Actress Award for her portrayal of Clare Kendry Bellew in *Passing*.

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Winter Quarter Lecture Series: Issues in U.S. Latina/o Performance

This quarter the department presents the Issues in U.S. Latina/o Performance lecture series featuring talks that range from theoretical explorations of monstrosity in U.S. Latina/o theatre and sensuality in Latina/o popular performance to the queer receptions of Tejana pop icon Selena and an introduction to the study of Brazilian performance cultures, the series seeks to showcase new works in this growing area of research for Performance Studies.

**Alberto Sandoval-Sánchez**  
Professor, Department of Spanish, Mt. Holyoke College  
“Performing Abjection: The ‘Nearly Unwatchable’ in Latina/o Theatre”  
Wednesday, January 9, noon, 1800 Sherman Avenue, Suite 401

**Barbara Browning**  
Associate Professor, Department of Performance Studies, New York University  
“O Herói: The Ambivalent Heroism of Black Popular Culture in Brazil”  
Wednesday, January 23, noon, 1800 Sherman Avenue, Suite 401

**Deborah Paredez**  
Assistant Professor, Department of Theatre & Dance, University of Texas-Austin  
“Que Viva Selena, Queer Diva Selena”  
Wednesday, February 6, 5:00 p.m., 1800 Sherman Avenue, Suite 401

**Alicia Arrizon**  
Professor and Chair, Department of Women’s Studies, University of California-Riverside  
“Transcultural/Transnational Imaginar ies: Gender and Sexuality in Latina/o American Performance.”  
Wednesday, February 20, noon, 1800 Sherman Avenue, Suite 401

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Nancy Cheryll Davis performs *Passing Solo*
(continued from page 1) coursework in the department as having a significant impact on her later work as a playwright, though she says, “I didn’t really have a way to know when I was in the middle of it what an effect it was having on me, but clearly on some level I did because I gravitated towards those classes, and found myself engaged on a level that I was thirsting to be engaged on. And I have now come to realize that so much of my aesthetic was influenced by the work that I did in the department.”

After graduating, Lydia remained in Chicago and continued writing and trying to get her work seen. She was able to mount a few small-scale productions, but she acknowledges she questioned the path she was on. “It seems to me that for about 8 years, at least every week, I would weigh: Is this a way to live? Not being able to eat, versus the making of art? But while I was asking these questions I kept doing it, and I would work my waitess job and then get a credit card and use the credit card to put up a play and then call home and say I need a hundred dollars because I used my credit card to put up a play…” Yet at the same time she didn’t really question the validity of what she was doing. “I had maybe an inflated sense of my own abilities…but in a good way. It didn’t occur to me that I didn’t have something worthwhile to say and that I shouldn’t be trying to put those things on stage. And I think I think that’s something I can give credit to Performance Studies for.”

*Harriet Jacobs* runs at the Steppenwolf Upstairs theatre through March 2, 2008.

### Searle Center presents Seminar on Embodied Knowledge

The Searle Center for Teaching Excellence presented a seminar on “Embodied Knowledge: The Place of ‘Liveness’ in the Humanities Classroom,” on February 8, 2008. The discussion was led by Paul Edwards, Associate Professor of Performance Studies and Charles Dearing McCormick Professor of Teaching Excellence, as well as by D. Soyini Madison, Professor of Performance Studies, and Michael Rohd, Visiting Lecturer in Theatre. Professor Edwards discussed the School of Communication’s tradition of using performance methods to study literary and dramatic texts, and situated W. B. Worthen’s essay “Performing Shakespeare in Digital Culture” (Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Popular Culture, 2007) concerning how the rise of digital technology troubles the traditional “text versus performance” dichotomy in theater and performance coursework. Michael Rohd, theater artist and founding artistic director of Sojourn Theatre, talked about *bodies that matter* in the teaching of devised theater and activist theater. D. Soyini Madison discussed the use of performance in the teaching of ethnography and critical theory, and her own performances of ethnographic fieldwork. Discussion focused on how living presence continues to shape the teaching of humanities coursework. How do we as teachers see and articulate an ongoing need for face-to-face interaction with students? How does the ubiquity of digital communication technology, in the daily life of our students, begin to transform this need?
**PhD Program News**

**Tamara Roberts** received a Presidential Fellowship (2008-09, 2009-10), Northwestern University’s most prestigious fellowship, awarded to candidates “who combine outstanding intellectual or creative ability with the capacity to play an active part in the life of Northwestern University’s Society of Fellows, which meets twice per quarter and enables stellar students from across the university to have interdisciplinary interactions with their peers in other fields.” Tamara’s research investigates black/Asian musical collaboration in order to illuminate a broader history of interracial musical and political interaction between blacks and Asian/Americans in the U.S. Her dissertation project is focused on ethnographic case studies of three Afro Asian “fusion” bands in Chicago and New York City.

**Teju Adesida** is presenting a talk on “Mastering Ceremonies: A Case Study of a Yoruba Emcee in Chicago” at the Graduate Student Symposium on Saturday, February 16, 2008.

**Jyoti Argade** has been awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to conduct research in Bangalore, India, focusing on the “Touch and Feel” method of teaching blind students the South Indian classical dance forms Bharata Natyam and Kuchipudi. Jyoti will also develop performance workshops at the Ramana Maharishi School for the Blind, as well as introduce the “Touch and Feel” technique and the workshops developed in Bangalore to the ASHA Deepa School for the Blind in Bidar district, an underserved rural area in the northeast corner of Karnataka state. In conjunction with the performance workshops, Jyoti will make a short documentary film and develop an article from the ethnographic work conducted there.

**Edwin Emilio Corbin** will be performing an adaptation of Gloria Anzaldúa and Quique Áviles’s poetry at the National Association of Chicano and Chicana Studies conference and the Northern Plains Festival at the end of March.

**Christine Dunford** is currently working at The Field Museum, helping to plan and implement their New Allies for Nature and Culture program.

**Greg Mitchell** will present a paper entitled “Going Down in the Global South: Gay Travel Publications and the Manufacture of Racialized Desire” at the Annual Queer Studies Easter Symposium in Mexico City, the American/Popular Culture Association in San Francisco, and at Northwestern’s own Center for International and Comparative Studies.

**Mshai Mwangola** has successfully defended her dissertation and will receive the Ph.D. degree in June 2008.

**Oyku Potuoglu-Cook** has successfully defended her dissertation and will receive the Ph.D. degree in June 2008.

**Undergraduate Program News**

The 2008 Dolphin Show, Carousel, was directed by Performance Studies major **Tyler Beattie** and assistant directed by **Anakin Morris**, with costume design by **Chelsea Slaven**. Chelsea also is designing costumes for Paul Edwards’s production “To Pieces: Tales for Cut-Ups.”

**Lyssa Deehan** is performing in “To Pieces: Tales for Cut-Ups” and developing an adaptation called “The Quickening,” that she will be directing in the Wallis Theater next quarter. She is also co-producing Vagina Monologues, which runs February 29-March 1 in Ryan Auditorium.

Performance Studies major **Nikki Zaleski** is adapting and directing WAVE’s production of Feed the Birds, an adaptation of P. L. Travers’ Mary Poppins. Other collaborating Performance Studies majors include **Alex Knell** on set design, **Britt Lower** on graphic design, and **Matthew Alfonso** on sound design and music composition. The production goes up in the Louis Room on Thursday, February 21 at 8:00 p.m., Friday, February 22 at 8:00 and 11:00 p.m., and Saturday, February 23 at 8:00 and 11:00 p.m.

**Jacob Watson** is performing in the Lovers and Madmen production of King Lear, as well as in the production of “Nochebuena,” presented by Mezcla, which is part of Northwestern’s Latino Student Alliance. “Nochebuena” is written, produced, directed, designed, and performed by students, and it explores family dynamics, identity and cultural self-acceptance by sharing one night in the life of an eclectic Latino family in Miami, Florida. It goes up Tuesday, March 11, in McCormick Auditorium.
Spunk, directed by Visiting Assistant Professor of Performance Studies Tony Horne, opens in the Barber Theater on Friday, February 15, 2008. The play is an adaptation of three short stories by the American writer and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston. Created by director and playwright George C. Wolfe at the New York Shakespeare Festival, the play weaves together Hurston’s words with the blues music of the 1920s and 1930s, cutting back and forth between the two worlds Hurston knew best: rural Florida and Harlem. As the narrator, Blues Speak Woman tells the audience at the top of the show, “The three tales we are about to perform celebrate the laughin’ kind of lovin’ kind of hurtin’ kind of pain that comes from bein’ human. Tales of survival…(singing) told in the key of the blues.”

Zora Neale Hurston was born in 1891 and grew up in Eatonville, Florida, one of the first Black towns to be incorporated following the Civil War. She attended Howard University in Washington, D.C., before she arrived in New York in 1925 to study anthropology at Barnard College. She soon became an active participant in the Harlem Renaissance, winning literary awards and befriending local luminaries like Langston Hughes. As part of her academic research, she returned to Florida to gather the folklore that would eventually be published in her book, Mules and Men. Her ethnographic work is cited by some as foundational to the field of Performance Studies. She continued to publish fiction and non-fiction through the 1940s, but she ran into money problems by the end of the 1950s and died in obscurity in 1960. In 1975, the novelist Alice Walker revived interest in Hurston when she published “In Search of Zora Neale Hurston,” an account of her travels through Florida to gather information on the forgotten writer and place a marker on her grave. Hurston’s popularity has continued to grow over the past 30 years.

On the eve of the technical rehearsal for the production, Professor Horne sat for an interview with dramaturg and Performance Studies graduate student Chloe Johnston.

CJ: I know you did a lot of research before rehearsals started for this show. What was the most surprising thing about the process once you started?

TH: On the surface, the show is deceptively simple. In rehearsal, it became more clear that the method of storytelling is complex. The acting work was really challenging because Zora was so careful and conscious in each of her choices. There’s so much more than meets the eye. At the very beginning, I was taken aback by how multi-talented the student actors are. I wasn’t surprised by their intelligence, I expected that, but I was by their willingness to try new things.

CJ: Talk a little bit about your concept for this production. You’ve decided to set it in a Black vaudeville theatre.

TH: It goes back to what the stories are about. It’s about unlocking their meaning through the lyric from the opening song [“How do you get to the get? With some pain n’ some spit n’ some spunk.”] It’s about expressing ourselves through performance to release the pain so that we can move forward. The blues are about release. I wanted to make theatrical aspects more obvious to heighten that. I’m imagining these people as performers on the TOBY circuit [Theatre Owner’s Booking Association—the white-owned vaudeville circuit for Black performers.] We use different kinds of blues music to cross genres of popular Black entertainment.

CJ: What kind of exposure did you have to Hurston’s work before this project? Her texts can be difficult as she uses so much slang and local vernacular.

TH: I had produced this show before but never directed it. I had tried to read Their Eyes Were Watching God [Hurston’s most famous novel] but couldn’t get through it. This has been a great experience because I’m working on Hurston through the medium I know best. I was really able to connect with her this time. Her use of slang can make her books difficult to read, but I was due for my Hurston experience. Once we shut down the show, I’m going to read that book.

CJ: Talk a little bit about the casting. The show was originally produced with an all Black cast, but this version is multi-racial.

TH: I didn’t necessarily plan on having a multi-racial cast. But in Performance Studies we talk a lot about dialogic performance—what better way to put these theories to test? What better way to practice what we preach? If we can’t tell stories together, we won’t survive. That was my lesson as an artist working on this project. Hurston is a great American writer—we have to tell her stories however we can.
“To Pieces: Tales for Cut-Ups,” a Performance Hour sponsored by the Performance Studies Department, will be presented on Friday, March 7, at 8 p.m., and Saturday, March 8, at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m., in the Struble Theatre. Adapted and directed by Performance Studies faculty member Paul Edwards, “To Pieces” features a cast of nine: Sophie Angelson, Lyssa Deehan, Reggie Gowland, Nina Kanin, Stephanie Kent, Maggie Killacky, Kate McGroarty, Audrey Meshulam, and Brian Rady.

“To Pieces” is an anthology of short stories about cutting things up, hacking things up, ripping things up: bodies and body parts, pieces of clothing, personal relationships, the fragile egos of human beings. The first two stories are very short, and very contemporary. They begin in American high schools, and examine the aftermath of sudden, almost inexplicable acts of violence that fail to resolve the conflicts from which these acts arise. The longer concluding section, compiled from various sources, tells the story of the real-life Lizzie Borden, the woman tried for the 1892 murder of her father and stepmother. “Shocking Crime,” read the headline in the Fall River Daily Herald: “A Venerable Citizen and His Aged Wife Hacked to Pieces at Their Home.” The phrase “to pieces” recurs in the source stories for all three sections, and provides an apt title for the performance.

On a cold Sunday in February, P.S. correspondent “Eddie Porter” caught up with Lizzie Borden at the Oak Grove Cemetery in Fall River, Massachusetts. With some reluctance, Fall River’s most famous resident consented to a brief interview.

P.S. Can I call you Lizzie?
L.B. I was so christened.
P.S. Lizzie or Elizabeth?
L.B. Lizzie Andrew Borden.
P.S. And how long have you been here?
L.B. I was born in Fall River. Oh. Do you mean right here? Since my death in 1927. Before that, in my lovely house on French Street in Fall River, where my sister and I moved after the . . .
P.S. Murders.
L.B. Yes, sir. Just after the trial. And before that, in the house on Second Street, where the . . .
P.S. Murders.
L.B. Took place. Yes, sir.
P.S. On Wikipedia it says that the jury found you not guilty of the murders of your father and mother.
L.B. She was not my mother, sir. She was my stepmother. My mother died when I was a child.
P.S. Where were you when the murders took place?
L.B. I was in the barn behind the house.
P.S. And what made you go back inside?
L.B. I heard a groan . . .
P.S. And then you went in and found your father all chopped up, right? Where was he?
L.B. On the sofa. Lying down.
P.S. Did you notice anything else?
L.B. I did not notice anything else. I was so frightened and horrified . . .
P.S. Did you see blood all over the floor?
L.B. No, sir.
P.S. Well, the way you tell it, it’s kind of dull. I mean, it doesn’t make much of a story. C’mon, I bet you saw more than that. I’ve read that the bodies were totally hacked up, like Saw 4. Your mother--
L.B. My stepmother.
P.S. Your stepmother had been chopped in the head eighteen times, and your father, like, ten or eleven.
L.B. I didn’t count.
P.S. So who do you think did it?
L.B. I am innocent. I know I am innocent. A person unknown came in through the side door . . .
P.S. How did you get along with your parents?
L.B. I decline to answer.
P.S. Why?
L.B. Because I do not know what to say.
P.S. Well, even though they found you innocent, I don’t think your story is very convincing at all. I’d have to say that you look good for it.
L.B. Look good?
P.S. That’s what they say on the cop shows.
L.B. Cop shows?
P.S. Oh, that’s right, you’ve been dead for a while. Wow, you’ve missed so much.
L.B. What have I missed?
L.B. I don’t think I missed any of that.
P.S. No?
L.B. I was born in 1860.
P.S. Oh. Right. Of course . . . Getting back to you. What did you do again? Oh, that’s right, you chopped up a bunch of people.
L.B. I suffered the vile reports of a slanderous press and an unkind public. But I was vindicated.

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Winter Quarter Performances

**Spunk**
Three tales by Zora Neale Hurston
Adapted by George C. Wolfe, music by Chic Street Man
Directed by Anthony Horne
Spunk blends dance movement with music and the spoken word to bring three iconic stories to life. These folk tales were written by celebrated anthropologist and novelist Zora Neale Hurston. Spunk showcases the rhythms and color of African-American speech and life through the musical narration of Guitar Man and Blues Speak Woman.
February 14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22, 23 at 8:00 pm
February 17 and 24 at 2:00 pm
Ethel M. Barber Theater
Contact the Box Office for ticket information: 491-7282

**Enemies of the People**
Adapted and directed by Hsiao-Mei Hsieh
An American researcher went to China in 1981 to investigate the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-76). She interviewed several Chinese intellectuals and recorded stories of men and women who told of years of loss and of uncertainty. Weaving stories of the prosecutors and the prosecuted, and views of the investigator and the informants, this play embodies the sorrow and horror of the time, and portrays this absurd and tragic event in human history. Music design: Tamara Roberts. Scene design: Carl Johnson. Cast: Jisoo Chung, Raffaele Furno, Alison M. Lynch, Kacin Menendez, Benton Persons, Christopher Strauss, and Joseph Stein
Friday, February 22, 8:00 pm
Saturday, February 23, 2:00 and 8:00 pm
Admission $5

**To Pieces: Tales for Cut-Ups**
Adapted and directed by Paul Edwards
The Lizzie Borden story, in a modern retelling, provides the centerpiece for an evening of short story adaptations about life on the edge.
Assistant director: Andrew Jorczak
Lighting design: Garen Checkley
Costume design: Chelsea Slaven
Audio-visual design by Paul Edwards and Khushbu Shah
Stage manager: Josh Ropiequet
Featuring: Sophie Angelson, Lyssa Deehan, Reggie Gowland, Nina Kanin, Stephanie Kent, Maggie Killacky, Kate McGroarty, Audrey Meshulam, and Brian Rady
Friday, March 7, 8:00 pm
Saturday, March 8, 2:00 and 8:00 pm

**Graduate Recitals**
Individual performances by M.A. students in the Department of Performance Studies. Different performances each night.
Friday, March 14, 8:00 pm
Saturday, March 15, 8:00 pm
Mussetter Struble Theater
Admission free

(continued from page 6)

P.S. Yeah, I guess. But everybody still thinks you did it. How do you feel about all that?
L.B. I am innocent. I leave it to my counsel to speak for me.
P.S. Are you okay with them doing a play about you?
L.B. I have no doubt that it will be a vile misrepresentation of the truth, and yet one more merciless assassination of my character. But I am equally certain that I couldn’t do anything to stop it. I have survived worse.

P.S. Politics of representation, and all that stuff.
L.B. I have no idea what that means.
P.S. Something we studied in class. I don’t know what it means either.
L.B. Are we finished?
P.S. Well, I guess. I wish I could say I enjoyed this.
L.B. The conversation has been exceptionally unpleasant, yes.
P.S. Will you come to see the play, at least?
L.B. No comment.