Department of Performance Studies Welcomes New Faculty and Affiliates

Prof. Marcela Fuentes (Ph.D., NYU Performance Studies) joins the program as an Assistant Professor of Performance Studies. Interview with Marcela Fuentes is on page 5 of this newsletter.

Prof. C. Riley Snorton (Ph.D., UPenn Communication) joined Northwestern as an Assistant Professor of Communication Studies in Fall 2011. C. Riley Snorton’s book The Glass Closet: Black Sexuality and the Panoptical Imagination is currently under contract with the University of Minnesota Press.

Prof. Elizabeth Son (Ph.D., Yale American Studies) joins Northwestern as an Assistant Professor of Theatre. Her book manuscript, The Performance of Redress: Transpacific Acts of Remembering Gender Violence, explores the political and cultural significances of performances—from protests, tribunals, theatre, and dance to testimonial acts—for the transnational processes of reckoning with the history of Japanese military sexual slavery.

Dr. Jade Huell, an NU Summer Institute Alumna who recently completed her doctoral degree in Performance Studies at Louisiana State University, joins us as the Post-doctoral Fellow in Black Performing Arts.


Dr. Jose Luis Reinoso joins us as the Mellon Post-doctoral Fellow in Dance Studies. He received his doctoral degree from UCLA and will be housed at the Kaplan Humanities Institute.

To

I write this poem in celebration of the infinitive,

To praise the diminutive verb to be,
in which truly nothing happens
(between you and me)
and in the context of which a poem is epic
though it travel no distance,
create no being.
is nothing becoming,
which for the I that I am
can be finally becalming.

By Alan Shefsky

Alan Shefsky was Administrative Coordinator for the Department of Performance Studies at Northwestern, a position he held since 1985 until 2012. Alan received his B.A. in English/Creative Writing from Northwestern in 2008. His poetry has been published in literary journals and has been adapted for performance at Northwestern and at a number of venues in Chicago. Alan was a guest artist at the Illinois Summer High School for the Arts, and in 1999 he was the recipient of the Illinois Arts Council Award for poetry. His books What Emily (2011) and Glee (2012) have been published by Magnolia Press Collective. Alan’s books are available at www.magnoliapresscollective.com.

P.S.:
Prof. Derek Goldman Presents
Wallace Bacon Lecture

Derek Goldman presented the Wallace A. Bacon Memorial Lecture on Wednesday, October 24, 2012 at noon in the Alvina Krause Studio. His talk was titled “Performance Studies as Life-Practice: Cultivating “The Both/And.’”

His talk explored Performance Studies as life-practice, a way of being in the world, building on the notion of the “both/and” espoused so indelibly by Performance Studies pioneers such as Wallace Bacon and Dwight Conquergood. As practitioners toiling in the “interdiscipline” of Performance Studies, we are called upon to position ourselves, often simultaneously, as artist/scholar, citizen/activist, teacher/learner, creator/adaptor, parent/descendant, advocate/critic, administrator/innovator as practitioners of an art form and members of a community that is at once intimately embodied and intensely local, and yet also profoundly cross-cultural and global. The talk offered Goldman’s personal reflections on how we in Performance Studies may be uniquely equipped to navigate and embrace these myriad and often paradoxical roles and investments, and to claim “the Both/And” as an empowering foundation that unites us in our diversity.

Derek Goldman is Artistic Director of the Davis Performing Arts Center and Professor of Theater and Performance Studies at Georgetown University. He is an award-winning stage director, playwright, adapter, developer of new work, teacher, and published scholar, whose artistic work has been seen around the country, Off-Broadway and at numerous major regional theaters, as well as internationally. He is also Founding Artistic Director of the StreetSigns Center for Literature and Performance, an award-winning socially-engaged professional theatre founded in Chicago, devoted to new adaptations of literature for the stage, re-imagined classics, and ensemble-devised performance.

He received his Ph.D. in Performance Studies from Northwestern University. At Georgetown, he is a member of the Affiliated Faculty in the American Studies and the Film and Media Studies Programs.

P.S.: The Newsletter of the Department of Performance Studies is also available online at http://www.communication.northwestern.edu/departments/performingarts/newsletter/index.php
In fall 2012, the Department of Performance Studies joined the Hemispheric Institute for Performance and Politics, an international network of academics, artists, and activists devoted to the research and practice of political performance across the Americas. Founded in 1998 by Professors Diana Taylor (New York University), Zeca Ligíero (Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), Javier Serna (Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, Mexico) and Luis Peirano (Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú), the organization now counts with 42 member institutions from Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Peru, Puerto Rico, and the United States.

The Hemispheric Institute members join efforts to develop digital archives documenting political performance and theatre in the Americas (accessible to member institutions for research and teaching purposes). They collaborate on pedagogy projects incorporating on-line student and scholar exchange platforms. As well, the institute organizes research and artistic exchanges, congresses, and performance festivals, including the biannual Encuentro, a ten-day gathering where participants share research, practical knowledge, and fully developed artistic projects. One of the most important endeavors undertaken by the Institute is the publication of a peer-reviewed online journal, emisférica, and other digital publications.

Professors Marcela Fuentes, former managing editor of emisférica, and Ramón H. Rivera-Servera serve in the organization’s international board of directors. They are currently working to develop collaborative course experiences for Northwestern University students, undergraduate and graduate alike, with their peers at institutions throughout the Hemisphere. They are also crafting course syllabi at Northwestern that will integrate the vast digital archive available at the Institute’s member site online.

For more information please visit the Institute’s website at http://hemisphericinstitute.org.

Ramón H. Rivera-Servera
Assistant Professor and Director of Graduate Studies
Department of Performance Studies
Northwestern University

Toni Perucci to Speak at Alumni Lecture Series

Toni Perucci gave a talk on Wednesday, October 31, 2012 at noon in the Alvina Krause Studio. His talk was titled “The Complex and the Rupture: Paul Robeson and the Politics of Cold War Performance.”

Actor and singer Paul Robeson’s performance in Othello, Show Boat, and The Emperor Jones made him famous, but his midcentury appearances in support of causes ranging from labor and civil rights to antilynching and American warmongering made him notorious. When Robeson announced at the 1949 Paris Peace Conference that it was “unthinkable” for blacks to go to war against the Soviet Union, the mainstream American press declared him insane.

Notions of Communism, blackness, and insanity were interchangeably deployed during the Cold War to discount activism such as Robeson’s, just a part of an array of social and cultural practices that Toni Perucci calls the Cold War performance complex. Focusing on two key Robeson performances – the concerts in Peekskill, New York, in 1949 and his appearance before the House Committee on Un-American Activities in 1956 – Perucci demonstrated how these performances and the government’s response to them are central to understanding the history of Cold War culture in the United States.

Tony Perucci is Assistant Professor of Performance Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is the author of Paul Robeson and the Cold War Performance Complex (University of Michigan Press, 2012). His writings on the politics and aesthetics of performance have appeared in the journals Text and Performance Quarterly, TDR: The Drama Review and Liminalities, as well as the books Iraq War Cultures, Violence Performed, and Performing Adaptations.
The Department of Performance Studies
presents
The 2012-2013 Alumni Lecture Series
In the Alvina Krause Studio, Annie May Swift Hall

The Wallace A. Bacon Memorial Lecture

Derek Goldman, Georgetown University
Performance Studies as Life-Practice: Cultivating "The Both/And"
Wednesday, October 24th, 12 p.m.

Tony Perucci, UNC Chapel Hill
The Complex and the Rupture: Paul Robeson and the Politics of Cold War Performance
Wednesday, October 31st, 12 p.m.

Renee Alexander Craft, UNC Chapel Hill
The Portobelo Digital Oral History Project: Critical Ethnography, New Media, and the Unfinished Business of Co-performative Witnessing
Wednesday, February 20th, 12 p.m.

David Donkor, Texas A&M University
Dance of a Savior King: Statecraft, Stagecraft and the Grand Durbar of Ghanaian Independence
Wednesday, March 6th, 12 p.m.

Amber Day, Bryant University
Shifting the Conversation: Stephen Colbert’s Super PAC and the Problem of Satirical Efficacy
Wednesday, February 27, 12 p.m.

Tamara Roberts, UC Berkeley
Inextricably Bound: Performing Sonic Identity Politics and Radical Multiculturalism
Wednesday, May 15th, 12 p.m.

Support for this series provided by the Northwestern University’s Black Arts Initiative.
For more information contact the Department of Performance Studies: 847-491-3171, or dinac@northwestern.edu
Upcoming Performances

**Performance Studies M.A. Recitals**
Solo performances created and performed by Performance Studies M.A. students Kelly Chung, Luis Morales, and Patricia Nguyen.
7:00 p.m. Friday, March 15 and 7:00 p.m. Saturday, March 16, Theatre and Interpretation Center Struble Theater. Admission free.

**The Extinction Project**
Created by Derek Barton. 7:30 p.m. Thursday, May 24, Annie May Swift Hall Alvina Krause Studio.

**Performance Studies Ph.D. Recitals**
Solo performances created and performed by Performance Studies Ph.D. students Andreea Micu and Leila Tayeb.
7:00 p.m. Friday, June 7 and 7:00 p.m. Saturday, June 8, Theatre and Interpretation Center Struble Theater. Admission free.

**A City So Real**
The Department of Performance Studies will present *A City So Real*, a staged adaptation of *Never a City So Real* by Alex Kotlowitz at the Block Museum as part of the One Book/One Northwestern at the following dates and times:
7:00 p.m. Saturday, June 8
2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Sunday, June 9

Mary Zimmerman Presents *The Jungle Book*

*The Jungle Book*
A New Musical Based on the Disney Animated Film and the Stories by Rudyard Kipling
Adapted and Directed by Mary Zimmerman
June 21 - July 28, 2013

“From the imagination of Tony Award winner Mary Zimmerman comes a dazzling new musical adaptation of a timeless favorite that’s sure to enchant and delight. The jungle springs to life in a kaleidoscopic song-and-dance-filled spectacle that chronicles young Mowgli’s adventures growing up in the animal kingdom, based on Rudyard Kipling’s time-honored children’s tales and featuring music from the classic Disney film.”
(Courtesy of the Goodman Theatre)

Course News

The Department of Performance Studies offers a new course:

**GEN COMM 203 Performance Communication and Culture**
The course explores how live performance and dramatic forms of communication are methods used to examine social behavior and cultural expressions ranging from family storytelling to social media as well as the creative transformation of conflict zones across specific local and global contexts, e.g., sites within Latin America, South Asia, South Saharan Africa, and North America. The assignments will examine how storytelling, narration, cultural rituals, and performances of civic engagement are integral to human identity, belonging, and citizenship.

Students will present solo and collaborative performances that draw from three main themes or units of the course: (1) Storytelling and Narration; (2) Ethics, Transnational Performance, and Peace Building; (3) Adaptation of Literature: Staging Narration and Civic Engagement in “Never A City So Real.”

The course is highly interactive and performance focused from the idea that it is through embodied learning where the dynamic of communication and culture can more effectively be learned and experienced. The unifying thread and overarching question for the course is: *How does human performance and creative communication help us better understand and transform our world and the world of others, e.g., identity, family, community, nation, social relations, political institutions and economic orders?*
Interview with Marcela Fuentes
Assistant Professor, Department of Performance Studies

Prof. Marcela Fuentes (Ph.D., NYU Performance Studies) joined the program in Fall 2012 as an Assistant Professor of Performance Studies after spending some years as a post-doctoral fellow at the University of California-Los Angeles and the University of Southern California. She teaches our PERF ST 410: Studies in Performance course and will oversee the recital season this year. Her work explores contemporary performances and appropriations of technology for social change. Fuentes was a postdoctoral fellow of the Andrew W. Mellon program “Cultures in Transnational Perspective” at the University of California, Los Angeles where she taught in the School of Theater, and in the Departments of Spanish and Women’s Studies. Fuentes has published her work in theatre journals, edited volumes, and reference books. She is working on a digital book investigating performance practices through the lens and methodologies of the digital humanities (Interviewed by Performance Studies graduate student Kantara Souffrant).

KS: I’d be interested to hear how you pursue performance through the site of fun and pleasure in terms of your own practice, because that is something that I’ve been thinking about quite often and I’ve been finding it quite difficult to even begin performance through fun and pleasure as the lens.

MF: Well, the first thing that comes into my mind is that I grew up under a dictatorship. And, as a kid—you can see the tendency there, right?—I was always making jokes. We had this literature professor teaching us the dictatorship agenda, teaching literature from the Spanish Golden Age and not [Julio] Cortázar’s work, for example. So we were not engaged in our classes. She would make a dictation and say, “Pull up quotations marks” and I would go like this [gestures towards picking up a quotation mark from the floor with her body] and all my classmates would laugh. So we had all these jokes and with one of my professors we—my benchmate and I—even had a picnic. The class was so boring (I think it was a pedagogy class) that we would bring food and even placemats and do a whole simulated picnic (food was merely almonds and little else, but the placemats were really colorful). Put in the context of the dictatorship, I see this today as a sort of survival tactics. I struggled with the seriousness of the educational project of those years. I developed gastritis and grew my first white hairs back then.

I think that generally what I like from performance—and this is sort of my work, it has become my work—are these sorts of soft disruptions: how can you, through very witty actions or acts, disrupt bigger, serious systems? And, well, you have the example of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo who were not making fun or [doing] anything comedic but you see the power of disrupting bigger systems through very simple acts: the way they appeared to others, how they presented themselves from being loose mothers in search of their children to being an organized group without looking confrontational, in a way. [But] they were confrontational and they were taken by the military as confrontational (they staged a public protest when groups of more than two people were considered threatening to the government) but to the public they appeared as non-political old ladies who drew attention to the fact that political dissidents were being kidnapped and disappeared by the government. So I am interested in this issue of different levels of politics and ways of doing things that contest dominant orders. And this touches on pedagogy, the way you teach a class, knowledge production, what is considered knowledge, etc. I pay a lot of attention to what we now know from performance studies’ investigation in terms of epistemology. I usually incorporate exercises in my classes so that we learn from doing things and this also touches on my practice now in the digital humanities. I have my students do things on the digital platform I am working with, and getting frustrated at first but I’m like, “Okay, this is a tool to experiment with, and now that you have the media and the platform, how can you write and how do you write, knowing that your reader is going to be able to watch the clip that you are referencing in your text.”

KS: You just mentioned the digital humanities, could you provide us with a brief definition of what that is?

MF: There are my digital humanities and “the” digital humanities. How can you, in a digital culture, use these tools in tandem with your research to help your scholarship? How can you write in multimedia? It is not just that you are referencing digital work, you are writing with those media. I’m actually developing the digital component of my book project with this platform called “Scalar” that was created at the University of Southern California. Scalar is soon going to be open source and for everyone to use. So digital humanities is how you do humanities with digital tools. Usually it involves data, big data, so some people analyze the works of Shakespeare because there are a lot of his texts digitized now and they just search [for example], “stuffed animals” to see how many times this word appears and what it means. [The digital humanities] really brings us to a scale of information that we didn’t have before. I’m not that kind of a person who runs those big data programs. But, for example, you have very simple, even popular tools like “Word Cloud” where you can input text and you get a constellation of words that visualizes the terms that have been used a lot in a bigger size. I have done this with Obama’s speeches and Romney’s speeches and you can see where the emphasis is. You hear it when you watch the speech, you hear “jobs” and “good jobs” all the time, but this allows you to visualize what is emphasized, such as “Americans.” These are tools that help visualize things that weren’t legible before, or help visualize patterns. Or, historians use digital tools to introduce older cities in 3D to help people understand ancient cities.

What I do, in this project [with Scalar], is to address concerns about embodiment, liveness, performance documentation and see how, now that we have the multimedia and digital tools, performance studies joins those conversations. Because my research focuses on how activists perform online and how the internet becomes a site of protest as well, I think that this tool helps me address these issues from the space itself, rather than writing a paper and performing about something that happens online. I don’t know if that clarifies very much [laughs] but I think that everyone shapes the digital humanities in different ways.
KS: Northwestern has a lot of students who come in as practitioners and who have a little bit of the anxieties that you touched upon elsewhere; such as, “I’ve never really written about my work in a scholarly manner, I’m not sure how to represent it that way.” I am working as a writer or not you’ve noticed a shift in your performance work as a result of entering into Performance Studies? Because I think those shifts are inseparable both ways. The art gets affected by the theory and the theory gets affected by the art work also.

MF: Also, it has been great for me because I am older now and I am at a stage where I look at my life and I go, “Oh, I have done this and that,” to see, how I was doing Performance Studies before. I did a radio show when the internet was not there (in Buenos Aires) yet, it was called “Waiting for Cyberspace,” and we were talking about virtual reality in an expanded way, within politics….It was a moment when the government had pegged the peso to the dollar so we were supposed to have entered the first world because our currency was pegged to the dollar, but it was totally false. There was this virtual condition that this peso-dollar-thing showed, that we were getting there, first-world status. So for me it was interesting to talk about this appearance of things through the idea of cyberspace, of fabricated realities. And we were just a group of friends having a space in what they call “pirate radio,” a clandestine or easy access radio. So in a way, Performance Studies for me, has provided a sort of frame to look at the past and see how I was naturally doing it in a way. How it could be read that way. It is interesting because E. Patrick Johnson once asked me, “But what are you? Are you a director or a performer?” And I am now performing more, right? And I think that is the influence of Performance Studies. I am performing my research or being more reflexive about critical issues related to my life. I have a show about maintaining immigration status in the U.S and all that happened with it. That was because I was coming out of the post-doc in Transnational Culture [Andrew W. Mellon program “Cultures in Transnational Perspective” at the University of California, Los Angeles] with a lot of praising of being transnational and having to deal with my immigration standing was really very…a different version of being transnational. And I thought, “This really has to be engaged critically so I can make good use of the six-months when I had to focus on my visa status.” And so, I think that now there is even, yes, an academic and scholarly value to what I do as performance that perhaps before I saw just as art, as something I did on the side. Now it is more integrated and I think that is a factor of the culture here at Northwestern.

MF: Meaningfulness, right. That’s for me and I think you can put it in my work as well. I want people to read my work and say, “Oh I didn’t know that this existed or this connection [was possible].” So in a way, as a performer, and Diana Taylor told me this because I think at first at NYU I was suffering from not performing and only doing the PhD—I thought it was a different thing—and she said, “You know? You can think about papers in a dramaturgical way. You can start with a scene that depicts the situation that you are looking at and then do the analysis.” And so, I think that I want people to feel inside of the paper to get affected, to have fun, be mad about it, and understand later that we could take it this way. And perhaps, what I want to do with technology—I’m not a technology person but I want to put things together, and I notice that people usually write….There are the “technology people,” and there are the “other people,” especially in performance studies and in this department as well. I want to have an impact in this department in thinking about technology as this other form of embodiment that is not divorced. So I would say for my work, [it is about] this integration of things—I don’t know how that can become an adjective—“to integrate things,” like even in the sense of the U.S., the Americas, linking North and South, thinking hemispherically, being affected, and being mobilized.

KS: What has been the most surprising thing about being at Northwestern and being on faculty here?

MF: The most surprising, huh? Well, you know, I like the diversity of the department. I think it’s this idea that everyone has a strong engagement with performance and also a very strong engagement with critical theory. People are doing very important things. But I think that in a way, honestly, the most surprising thing is this merging—which would be the word?—this contact between Northwestern and NYU (because two of the recently hired professors graduated from there and many doctoral students obtained their Master’s at NYU). This is definitely the most surprising thing. I think that it’s super smart and I think it gives the whole group the opportunity to really create this dialogue between different trajectories of how performance studies was constituted as a field and how it is changing; what can the Northwesterners learn from the NYUers and vice-a-versa, and how can we become something else? So it is not hybridization in terms of you are mixing this entity with that entity. I’m assigned to teach 410 [Studies in Performance], so I was interested in learning the history of 410 at Northwestern and the whole performance of literature, oral interpretation, ethnography, performing research. But I was thinking, “this is not my trajectory,” so I cannot pretend we’re doing this and I am teaching this, because if that is the case, my colleagues are better prepared to do it. So I think the opportunity here is to think towards the future, what we want to create that is new in a way, that comes from that trajectory to push it in a new direction perhaps….A small task right? But yeah, I’m not an ethnographer so I was like, “Okay, what can I give this course that is a new addition?” We have the literature, we have the ethnography, but is it theory? Are we trying to embody theory? It didn’t go smoothly at first (as it’s always the case with theory, right?) but I really believe in it, because there are many artists who tell you they have worked with our stuff and created pieces out of that, using theory as a kind of “found object.” [For example,] Jérôme Bel works with Peggy Phelan’s Unmarked.

KS: If you could give me three words or three adjectives to describe yourself and your work, what would you choose?

KS: You gave me “curiosity,” “witty,” and “meaningful.”
Interview with Dina Marie Walters
Business Coordinator, Department of Performance Studies

In Fall 2012, Dina Marie Walters joined the Department of Performance Studies as the Business Coordinator. Dina comes to the Department from the Center for Innovation and Global Health Technologies at Northwestern, where she worked as the Research Coordinator. Born and raised in Chicago, Dina has worked professionally as an actor since 2001, including as an ensemble member of The Neo-Futurists from 2003 to 2008. Dina is thrilled to be working in Performance Studies, and particularly excited for the recitals this year. Dina will be performing in Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind from March 29th through May 5th (Interviewed by Performance Studies graduate student Jasmine J. Mahmoud).

JMJ: What first brought you to Northwestern?
DMW: I was accepted to the Masters of Arts in Literature Program at the School of Continuing Studies at Northwestern. I was working at Chicago Shakespeare Theater at the time. Tuition was very expensive. I didn't know how I was going to pay for it. One of my co-workers at Chicago Shakes suggested that I try to get a job at Northwestern. So then I started looking at jobs and ended up getting a job in the Biomedical Engineering department and stayed there for just short of five years. While there, I saw the job in Performance Studies. Right away, I wanted to apply.

JMJ: What brought you to the Masters in Literature program?
DMW: I was trying to decide between literature and creative writing and I debated for a long time which one to do. Bill Savage was my thesis advisor and I absolutely love and admire him very much. I think he is an excellent teacher.

JMJ: What was your thesis about?
DMW: The Harlem detective novels of Chester Himes. He did not think that the civil rights issue would ever be resolved. I believe he never felt that there would ever be equality for all Americans. I focused on the religious grotesque in his novels. I really enjoyed writing it. I really enjoyed reading those books. I think it's really kind of a tragedy that he is not a more prominent author in the detective novel genre. Chester Himes was a brilliant writer and I just think that he should be more recognized.

JMJ: Tell me about your theater work in Chicago. What are some of the most favorite shows that you've done?
DMW: Picnic with the Griffin Theatre Company. It was a really amazing experience. We did a lot of Viewpoints sessions. It's an ensemble builder. It encourages connection between performers. Not just emotional connections but physical connections. It really made the show exceptional. It was nominated for several Jeffs. I was nominated for a Jeff citation for supporting actress. I was Millie Owens, Madge's sister.

I was also in a show with the Neo-Futurists called the Last Two Minutes of the Complete Works of Henrik Ibsen. It was a two-hour show of the very end of all his plays and we performed them all differently, much like Too Much Light. Some of them we played straight and others we deconstructed, others we parodied. So it was a lot of fun. We went to the New York Fringe and it got a really good New York Times review.

Another play that I did that I was really proud of was The Glass Menagerie. I did that with the Gift Theatre Company. I was Laura. That was a great show in just a little tiny storefront space. That was an ideal play for that space because it's so intimate and it heightens all the emotions of that play so it was even more tragic than it already was. And then ironically I sprained my ankle really bad with two weeks left in the run. We reblocked the whole show so that I could get up as little as possible. And it actually— that first night when I was injured and we all came together and worked really hard to make the show work—it was the best performance of the whole run. [The character Jim] used to stand there and just kiss me but because I was hurt he picked me up, and he was really tall, and kissed me. It was wonderful. It just gives me chills when I think about it. It was probably one of the most delightful moments I have had on stage.

One of the things I’m super proud of: I directed a staged reading of Cool As Ice, the movie that Vanilla Ice was in. The Neo-Futurists do staged readings of really bad movies. I was Vanilla Ice and I rapped all the songs off book and it was the most fun I ever had. The Onion got wind of the show and the A/V Club contacted me and wanted me to do an interview with Rob Van Winkle, also known as Vanilla Ice. He was nice. He is very proud of that film. If you watch it, it will really make you sympathize with him a lot. He doesn’t know how bad it is.

JMJ: What brought you to The Neo-Futurists?
DMW: When I was at Columbia College, I took a class called Solo Performance with Stephanie Shaw and she was a Neo-Futurist. That was my first experience with storytelling and truth telling on stage. We explored all forms of solo performance like what E. Patrick Johnson does, where you interview people and then embody them on stage. Or you can fictionalize characters and stories. Or you tell personal stories, and that is what I gravitated towards. Really, I still feel that that is the heart of everything I want to do as a performer. It is really where my home is as a performer. I just really like personal storytelling. I went and saw Too Much Light and I was completely blown away by the performers and their ability to write such a broad range of styles. To tackle everything from comedy to political to the very dark, and performance art. I was inspired by it. So I kind of made it my mission in life to become a Neo-Futurist one day. Then they were having auditions in 2003, and I auditioned and it was the hardest audition I ever did. It was really intense.

JMJ: Are you still active now?
DMW: I’m not an active ensemble member. I’m an alum of the company, but I still participate in shows. I did 44 Plays for 44 Presidents. Our summer festival of staged readings, It Came from the Neo-Futurarium, is my absolute favorite. Rachel Claff created the whole festival. I co-curated it on and off for five years. It is so much fun. It’s ridiculous. We stage these really bad movies and people just love it. They get so much joy from it. I’m going back into Too Much Light in the spring.

JMJ: What are some of the reasons you wanted to work at the Department of Performance Studies?
DMW: Well my very good friend Chloe Johnston was a student here. I saw an opportunity to work in a department and with people who share my passion, which is for theater and for performance and for strong storytelling. Without stories to tell, how do people share an experience?

JMJ: What are some of your favorite things about Chicago?
DMW: I grew up on the Southside before we moved to Oak Forest—I moved there when I was 14. I grew up in Marquette Park, which is now unfortunately a neighborhood known for violence. When I was growing up it was not like that. I feel very fortunate that I had this really diverse childhood experience. It was incredibly ethnically diverse. I went to the same school my dad went to, so I got to have that experience. When you ask what I love about Chicago, that was my first thought: that neighborhood. I just love that neighborhood so much. There is a giant park in it—it’s just huge. And when my dad was a kid, Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke there. There is a beautiful garden called the Rose Garden, there is a lagoon and a golf course. It is a really picturesque park. But now that I live on the Northwest side, it is a whole other experience. And that’s what I love about Chicago. There are just so many pockets of neighborhoods. Small towns in a larger city and I think that’s what makes Chicago so unique.
Faculty News


Peyton Place adapted and directed by Prof. Paul Edwards will open on February 22 at Citi Lit Theater (more information on page 11).


Prof. E. Patrick Johnson delivered the Nicholas Papadopoulos Endowed Lecture in Gay and Lesbian Studies at the University of California, San Diego on January 28. He will also be giving the "Humanities on the Edge” Lecture at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, on February 20. E. Patrick Johnson is currently touring his show "Pouring Tea: Black Gay Men of the South Tell Their Tales” at various universities across the country all winter quarter.

African Dress: Fashion, Agency, Performance (Dress, Body, Culture) (Berg Publisher) edited by Professors D. Soyini Madison and Karen Hansen (Department of Anthropology) will be released in February, 2013. African Dress focuses on the dressed body as a performance site. It explores how ideas and practices of dress contest or legitimize existing power structures through expressions of individual identity and the cultural and political order.

Prof. Ramón H. Rivera-Servera published Performing Queer Latinidad: Dance, Sexuality, Politics (University of Michigan Press) and a bibliographic essay on Latina/o theatre as part of the Oxford Bibliography in Latina/o Studies. Two edited collections to which he contributed this past year received book awards: Transnational Encounters: Music and Performance at the U.S.-Mexico Border (Oxford University Press, 2011) won the 2012 Ruth A. Solie Book Award from the American Musico logical Society and Gay Latino Studies: A Critical Reader won the Lambda Literary Foundation Award for best collection in LGBT Studies. This past year he presented papers before audiences at the University of Iowa, the University of Michigan, Yale University, the Association for Theatre in Higher Education, the American Studies Association, the Society of Dance History Scholars, and the National Latino Arts Council.

A panel devoted to Prof. Carol Simpson Stern in celebration of her seventieth birthday was presented on November 17, 2012 at the National Communication Association. The panel was presented by performers and scholars including Bruce Henderson (Ithaca College), Susan Wilson (DePauw University), Gary L. Balfantz (Lake Superior State University), John Dennis Anderson (Emerson College), Heidi M. Rose (Villanova University), and Ronald E. Shields (Bowling Green State University).

Prof. Mary Zimmerman’s play Metamorphoses ran at Lookingglass Theatre from September 19, 2012 through January 6, 2013. In early February, Metamorphoses will move to the Arena Stage in Washington, DC, where the play will be presented in the round for the first time in its history. Mary Zimmerman’s play The White Snake, based on an old Chinese legend was also presented at Berkeley Repertory Theatre until the end of 2012. Plans are in the works to tour it to China in 2013, and to various theatres in the United States as well. In February, Mary Zimmerman will be presenting her second of two music workshops for her upcoming show The Jungle Book, based on the Disney film and Kipling's stories, using the music of the movie played with Indian instrumentation. The show will open in late June/early July at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago (more information on page 4).
Colleen Daniher presented and workshopped papers at PSi (in June), ASTR (in November), and DePaul's Critical Mixed Race Studies conference (in November) in 2012. She was also awarded the Department of Performance Studies' Lilla A. Heston Memorial Scholarship in May.

Kareem Khubchandani conducted a performance workshop titled Theatres of the Body in Bangalore as part of the city's annual Queer Pride festival in November, 2012.

Elias Krell’s essay, "It's not that 'Black & White': Performing Transvocality in the Music of Kelly Moe" will appear in an edited volume The Trans-Literary Reader in summer 2013. He will also be presenting this article at a conference that he is also on the steering committee for: The International Association of Popular Music Studies-US Branch annual conference in Austin, TX, this March 2013. Elias is also releasing his third full-length record with his band "Eli & the No Good" coming out in Spring 2013. In the fall of 2012, he was awarded the Vince McCoy Honorary Leadership Award by the Northwestern Queer Pride Graduate Student Association for showing excellent leadership skills within the LGBT community, as well as a strong commitment to their academics, campus involvement, and community service.

Rae Langes was the director for Queergasm! 2012, a festival of performances brought together by artists from various disciplines, art communities, and institutions. Queergasm! 2012 featured Andrew Brown’s performance And Now to Honor America, a personal narrative about a “chubby white queer boy who sang soul” finding his place on a high school swim team. Queergasm! 2012 was hosted by Northwestern University’s Queer Pride Graduate Student Association (QPGSA) and supported by the departments of Performance Studies and Radio, Television and Film, and The Graduate School at Northwestern University.

On November 4, 2012, two days before the election, Jasmine Mahmoud produced "LetterToObama: Live From Chicago" at Experimental Station in the Woodlawn neighborhood of Chicago. The event featured poets, musicians, and dancers performing works of artistic citizenship, and included Performance Studies graduate students Lisa Biggs, Margaret Lebron, Patricia Nguyen, and Justin Zullo.

Andreea S. Micu’s review of Kara Reilly’s Automata and Mimesis on the Stage of Theatre History has been included in the Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism’s Fall issue.

Patricia Nguyen presented on a panel on "Parent and Youth Organizing as a Foundation for Civic Engagement for Asian and Pacific Islander Communities" at the 2012 Advancing Justice Conference in Chicago September 28th, 2012. Patricia will be performing and doing a workshop in April at Oberlin College for the Asia America Art Collective. She will also be participating in the Histories of Violence Symposium at Northwestern University in May at a roundtable entitled, “Emerging Work in Histories of Violence: A Roundtable on Methods, Theories, and Interventions.”

Munjulika Rahman has been invited to speak at a symposium titled "Performing the Bengal Borderlands," which is part of University of Chicago's South Asian Sound Interventions Series. The symposium will take place on February 14, 2013 at The Franke Institute for the Humanities at University of Chicago, and will include scholars from Bangladesh, India, France, and the United States.

Soo Ryon Yoon presented her paper at the 9th Bi-annual Crossroads in Cultural Studies conference in Paris, July, 2012. She co-organized “Northwestern University Interdisciplinary Asian Studies Graduate Student Group” for graduate students across disciplines with interests in Asia and Asian Studies.
“Each act of activism ... is a compilation of stories or ‘scenes’ that could not be told without acknowledging the macro forces of a neoliberal political economy that is ingrained in their plots.”

“This is a history carried and felt on the body.”
– Ramón Rivera-Servera, Performing Queer Latinidad: Dance, Sexuality, Politics (2012)

What is the relationship between affect and political economies? What role might performance play in negotiating conditions of bodies, affects, political economies, and spaces? In Bodies We Trust: Performance, Affect, & Political Economy—the 2013 Department of Performance Studies Graduate Student Conference—invites graduate students, artists, and activists to generate new understandings among affect, political economy, and performance.

‘Affect’ and ‘political economy’ have each become integral in elucidating performance. Affect—embodied feelings that circulate—has been used to make sense of minoritarian feelings of otherness such as José Esteban Muñoz’s ‘feeling brown’ or Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s ‘queer performativity,’ and embodied responses to postmodern capitalism such as Michael Hardt’s affective labor. Political economy—the influence of “political ... and economic systems” on “institutions, culture, and human behavior”*—animates how performance operates in frameworks of policy, economies, and political institutions. We invite papers and performances that illuminate, complicate, and challenge relationships across embodied feelings, political and economic systems, and performance.

Each panel and each performance will be paired with a Northwestern University faculty member who will act as a discussant. The three-day conference also includes a collaborate keynote address with Northwestern faculty, movement workshops, and catered receptions to build community with attendees across disciplines and artistic interests.

A year and a half ago, Terry McCabe, the Artistic Director of Edgewater's City Lit Theater, approached me to undertake a stage adaptation of *Peyton Place*, Grace Metalious's steamy page-turner from 1956 about sex, lies, and violence in a small New England town. Terry knew that I used to teach selections from the book in my "Performing the American Fifties" class, as an example of the kind of salacious content that was reaching the best-seller lists in the 1950s with increasing frequency. A few years later, Nabokov's *Lolita* would hit the best-seller lists as well: not, we must assume, for its literary merits, but for the buzz surrounding its frank treatment of a sexual relationship between the middle-aged "Humbert Humbert" and his adolescent stepdaughter. The 1962 U.S. publication of *Naked Lunch* would prompt a famous obscenity trial in the Massachusetts Supreme Court, which declared it "not obscene"--a decision that Burroughs biographer Ted Morgan views as "the end of literary censorship in the United States."

But while the works of Nabokov and Burroughs continue to inspire the fascination of literature scholars, the overripe style of Grace Metalious has few defenders. "Indian summer is like a woman," *Peyton Place* begins, in a tone of unintended hilarity:

Ripe, hotly passionate, but fickle, she comes and goes as she pleases so that one is never sure whether she will come at all, nor for how long she will stay. In northern New England, Indian summer puts up a scarlet-tipped hand to hold winter back for a little while. . . . Those grown old . . . know sorrowfully that Indian summer is a sham to be met with hard-eyed cynicism. But the young wait anxiously, scanning the chill autumn skies for a sign of her coming.

"Coming," indeed. The novel is filled with howlers about the act of sex. The well-used copy of the first edition that I tracked down through ABE has the spine cracked in several notoriously lurid places. The book falls open, for example, to pages 124-25, where a young couple gets into some heavy petting in the back seat of a car, outside the high school hop:

"Is it up, Rod?" she panted, undulating her body under his. "Is it up good and hard?"

"Oh, yes," he whispered, almost unable to speak. . . .

Without another word, Betty . . . was outside of the car.

"Now go shove it into Allison MacKenzie," she screamed at him. "Go get the girl you brought to the dance and get rid of it with her!"

It falls open again to pages 276-77, when the middle-aged Constance rediscovers the joy of sex with an improbable steelworker-turned-school principal:

She could not lie still under his hands.


"I love this fire in you. I love it when you have to move."

"Don't stop." . . .

"Your nipples are as hard as diamonds. . . . Your legs are absolutely wanton, do you know it?"

It falls open again to pages 252-53: delicate Norman Page (a victim of sexual abuse at the hands of his possessive mother) hides behind a hedge and stares, unbelieving, at the "huge, blue-veined growth" of his pregnant neighbor's abdomen, while her husband undresses her and performs oral sex.

A "spine-cracker," then, appreciated equally by those who read the entire novel and those who were content to steal their parents' copy and let it fall open to the nasty bits. Henry James or Virginia Woolf, granted, it's not. What it was, suggests James Hale, was a "must-read" rather than a masterpiece: "more or less the *Fifty Shades of Grey* of its day, and the book that came to define the sordid underside" of American life. "Very racy stuff." But also very silly stuff. Hale comments on a 1957 snapshot (see above) that recently appeared in the Denison University alumni magazine. "What's
this sweet coed doing with the most prurient potboiler of the mid-20th century?" Hale asks. "She appears to be giggling." Approached for comment, the former coed "claims no memory" of "the room, or even the bedspread, but the book? Of course. Everyone was reading it. And yes, I can guarantee there was a lot of giggling."

To paraphrase Oscar Wilde, on the subject of the death of Little Nell: it would take a reader with a heart of stone to read the descriptions of heterosexual passion in Peyton Place and not burst out laughing. I'm sure this had something to do with accepting Terry McCabe's offer to adapt the novel for the stage. Its purple prose and one-darn-thing-after-another construction (to quote the novel's Tom) "can be a lot of different things—even fun."

But as I began to reread the novel, I was surprised by how compelling and sad some of the stories were. The scholars who have returned to Peyton Place in recent decades are likelier to be critics of cultural studies or American studies than critics of literature. Metalious biographer Emily Toth describes the impact of Peyton Place on a generation of teenagers in the year that "Elvis Presley made his national TV debut":

Teenage girls noticed that when Allison MacKenzie goes to the big city, she has sex outside marriage, with a man she doesn't love—and is not punished for it, contrary to advice given in such books as Evelyn Mills Duvall's Facts of Life and Love for Teenagers. Allison's adventures--like Elvis Presley's performances--suggested that adults might not have all the answers. . . . The "good parts" were well-known. . . . But those who read the entire book found a great deal more: an attack on small-town hypocrisy and conformity, on violence against the powerless, and on restricted lives for women—all the traps Grace Metalious hoped to escape by writing a book.

Similarly, Ardis Cameron (in her introduction to the 1999 Northeastern University Press reissue) praises the merits of "the literary landscape of the low" in the 1950s, which "called into question the normative boundaries of middlebrow reading and the literary rules of cultural authorities." Many of the novel's stories were drawn from life, notably the tale of a young woman who murdered her father after years of suffering his sexual abuse; while Metalious's editors made her euphemize the father into a stepfather, the novel's "Selena Cross" subplot is no less horrifying today than it was when the novel was published. While "Peyton Place became a narrative of sexual exposé"--often dismissed by its first readers as a "Small Town Peep Show"--Cameron praises Metalious's "social narrative . . . that would foreshadow the modern feminist movement" by turning "the 'private' into the political." The hook of the novel's pulp, salacious reputation drew readers into a critique "of individual as well as social failure" and "a powerful political commentary on gender relations and class privilege."

When, after some hesitation, I agreed to adapt the book, I went in search of the social critique, and I hope that my two-act play has found it. Although the script continues to provoke plenty of giggles among my fifteen actors, we have no intention of sending a send-up. The rehearsal process has brought us close to the suffering and yearning of the residents of Peyton Place, New Hampshire (population 3675)—especially the women of Peyton Place—and to their acts of rebellion against the restrictiveness of small-town American life.

Peyton Place begins previews on February 22, and runs from March 1 to March 31, on Friday and Saturday evenings at 8 and Sunday afternoons at 3; additional Thursday performances at 8 are on March 21 and March 28. City Lit Theater is located on the second floor of the Edgewater Presbyterian Church at 1020 West Bryn Mawr in Chicago (two blocks east of the CTA "Red Line" Bryn Mawr stop). For ticket information, call the Box Office at 773-293-3682; e-mail boxoffice@citylit.org for information on group sales; or visit the City Lit web site at http://www.citylit.org.