

## PLAYWRIGHTS AND COMPOSERS IN RESIDENCE

Commissioned by the company to write a new script, Solis proposed to the Festival's Artistic Director Libby Appel that he experiment with a collaborative way of developing a script with actors. He proposed also a basic question for exploration: Why do people react so differently to the end of a romantic relationship—some with equanimity and some with violence?

In January of this year, Solis first met with the chosen group of actors. He presented each participant with a gift: a 1942 book on birds of the Pacific Northwest; ragtime song sheets from the 1920s; a Thelonious Monk CD; fading stereoscopic slides. These tokens served as starting points for email conversations between Solis and the actors—correspondence that extended until August when an intense series of developmental workshops began.

The first sessions were spent mostly in group conversation, but eventually Solis began introducing exploratory exercises. In the first major experiment, he distributed various quotations gleaned from the previous months' emails, then had the actors memorize these phrases. Next the participants were blindfolded and asked to search for their "partners" by groping with their hands while whispering the memorized phrases to one another. The exercise progressed for an hour and a half, with actors trying out, rejecting and eventually accepting partners. Meanwhile, the actors' patterns of movement were tracked by interns and assistant stage managers. These movement maps were later handed back to the actors to use in the development of their characters.

Solis is not afraid to admit that he has invented much of the developmental project as it unfolds: "The process shapes itself day by day. I didn't know what I was going to do Wednesday until I did the work Sunday.... It is really like walking blindly and trusting that you're not going to fall off the cliff—that there will be a step there for you to land on."

While Solis makes it clear that he's not asking the actors to write a play script for him, he believes that their investment in this project will be strong. "I'm not inventing characters out of the ether," he says.

Solis has received support from the Festival for his innovations. Says dramaturg Douglas Langworthy, who has monitored the improvisatory sessions: "Our institution—which as a repertory company has a structure with an inherent degree of inflexibility—has had to bend and flex in ways that can only benefit us in the future."

### POSITIVE COMPROMISE

Artists as well as theatres have gained something by being flexible. Soon after Kari Margolis began her residency at The Children's Theatre Company in Minneapolis, she realized that she would not be able



Jon Richardson as young Galileo in CTC's *Starry Messenger*.

to work in her usual manner. The play she was developing was *Starry Messenger: A Fantasia on the Life of Galileo*, a multi-media collaboration between the writer's own Margolis Brown Company and CTC.

"In our company, when we make work, we make it in the studio with the actors. Normally, I'll go into a rehearsal with a concept, subject matter, improv structures, limitations, bits and pieces of text, problems to solve. And the piece really gets built over a long period of time, which is one thing that's very difficult for a large institution.... We did several workshops, which was really fabulous... but what it really came down to was I realized I needed to write a script... sit down and get something on paper, so that the dramaturg and the artistic director could hold something in their hands that was a little bit more familiar [to them]."

Still, Margolis felt free to make changes in the script, up to the opening performance of *Starry Messenger*. In fact, she would have liked to continue the experimentations during the run of the production, after the show was frozen—something that was impossible for financial reasons. "That was the most difficult

thing for the performers from our company, because they're used to getting the show up, opening it, and then really getting to work on it." Margolis claims that the collaboration between the two companies "became a really interesting experiment in positive compromise."

"People often ask me, do I think the show was better because of that collaboration. My answer is, I think that it was *different*. And since I think the intention of all parties was to do something different, then that means that it was successful."

### CONTINUING PARTNERSHIPS

Though the NTARP residencies for new work all eventually come to an end, they tend to nurture ongoing relationships between artists and theatres. Once a bond is made between a company and a writer, it can have a natural extension beyond the formal terms of the residency. As Janice Paran of the McCarter says of the residency model: "I think it's the only way to pursue relationships with artists in ways that are more than just 'one-off' opportunities."

Polly Pen puts it even more succinctly: "I'm frankly a bit terrified to be released upon the world again..." she says. "I don't know if they're going to be able to get rid of me when the grant ends."

*Mark Dundas Wood writes frequently for American Theatre and Back Stage and is the editor of this newsletter. A public reading of his play A Flaw in the Flue will be given by Broad Horizons in Manhattan later this year.*

**THE WOOSTER GROUP** will present work-in-progress showings of *To You, The Birdie* at the **Performance Garage** in New York City during dates from January through March 2002. Based on Paul Schmidt's translation of Jean Racine's *Phedre*, the production is a soap opera of confessions and confrontations set in a modernist gymnasium world of exhibitionism and voyeurism. The lighting is by **JENNIFER TIPTON** who is collaborating with the company at home and on tour, as the piece evolves. For further information about the showings, call (212) 966-9796.

## THE NATIONAL THEATRE ARTIST RESIDENCY PROGRAM

NTARP

WE are pleased to send you this second issue of the NTARP Newsletter. Inside, you will find articles about past and present residency accomplishments. We are proud of the range and quality of work supported by the program and of the strong artistic partnerships that have been fostered.

The next application round is the final one for the National Theatre Artist Residency Program. For 10 years, this program has been helping to build more robust theatres by encouraging and supporting expanded roles for artists and fostering artistic excellence by providing the resources for collaborative work and extended development activities. We are deeply grateful to The Pew Charitable Trusts for their generous support of this program and to Marian A. Godfrey, Director of the Culture Program at the Trusts, for her unwavering commitment over the years.

There's one more chance for gifted artists of considerable experience and for exemplary theatres to join the truly impressive roster of program participants. \$650,000 will be awarded early next spring. The Intent to Apply deadline is December 3, 2001. Please encourage qualified applicants to request guidelines and applications from Theatre Communications Group, 355 Lexington Avenue, New York, New York 10017-6603. We also can be reached at 212-697-5230 or [grants@tcg.org](mailto:grants@tcg.org). Applicants with access to the World Wide Web can visit [www.tcg.org](http://www.tcg.org) to download the guidelines.

Fran Kumin

Director, National Theatre Artist Residency Program

ADMINISTERED BY THEATRE COMMUNICATIONS GROUP  
AND FUNDED BY THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS



## WHAT THEY'RE ABOUT: 2001 NTARP GRANT RECIPIENTS SHARE THEIR PLANS



MARY GEARHART

The Wooster Group's *To You, the Birdie* (*Phedre*) at the Performing Garage. (l-r) Dominique Bousquet, Koosil-Ja Hwang, Willem Dafoe.

In the spring of this year, 15 leading American theatre companies were selected to receive grants totaling \$775,000 in the ninth round of the National Theatre Artist Residency Program. In the previous edition of this newsletter, we announced the names of the recipients and promised to follow up with more detailed descriptions of the partnerships in this issue. Here, then, are details of these new—and newly extended—residencies.

The following four residencies will be supported by grants of \$50,000 or \$100,000.

**Cleveland Public Theatre (CPT)** will collaborate with director **Raymond Bobgan** and composer **Halim El-Dabh** to create an original large-scale theatrical production of *Blue Sky Transmission: A Tibetan Book of the Dead*. The two artists also will teach in CPT's extensive education program for at-risk youth.

New York City's **Manhattan Theatre Club** will support playwright **Tina Howe** with workshops and readings as she creates new translations of two classics by Eugene Ionesco, *The Bald Soprano* and *The Lesson*. Also, Howe will serve as mentor for emerging playwrights who received fellowships from the theatre and she will curate an evening of their work.

**The Salt Lake Acting Company** will help playwright **Julie Jensen** to develop a new play about struggles between Mormon settlers and the

Goshute Indians, the original inhabitants of what is now northern and northwestern Utah. She also will offer playwriting workshops.

**Vineyard Theatre** in New York City will support the development of a new theatre piece by poet and playwright **Cornelius Eady**, dealing with the vision of the black man in white imagination. Eady also will lead an ongoing after-school playwriting session, conduct a series of music-theatre workshops for early-career writers and help establish a music-theatre writer's group at the Vineyard.

Theatres that previously received support from the program were eligible for matching grants of \$25,000 or \$50,000. The following residencies were supported in that category:

Director **Jonathan Wilson** will help **Hartford Stage Company** to reflect its multi-cultural community through artistic and educational programming, community outreach efforts and the recruitment of diverse artistic talent and administrative personnel. In addition, he will direct at least one fully staged production and will oversee the theatre's play reading series.

**Honolulu Theatre for Youth** and playwright **Y York** will explore the history of December 7, 1941, as remembered by the survivors of bombings in the neighborhood near Wheeler Army Air Field. After collecting oral histories with students at a local elementary school, she will help the stu-

After a sold-out showing last spring, **Arena Stage** in Washington, D.C. will present the latest version of **The Southwest Project** on November 2 and 3. This commissioned work examines the impact of urban redevelopment efforts on the neighborhood surrounding Arena Stage. Utilizing the stories, histories and ideas of Southwest residents, Resident Artist **REBECCA RICE** weaves an authentic tale that reflects the Southwest community. Tickets may be purchased by calling (202) 488-3300 or by visiting [www.arenastage.org](http://www.arenastage.org).

dents create performances based on their findings. Using the same source material, she will herself write a script on the themes of memory and history.

**Indiana Repertory Theatre** in Indianapolis and playwright **James Still** plan to build on the success achieved during the first two-year residency. Their focus will be on development and production of two new plays: one in process and the other just commissioned. Still will remain Artistic Director Janet Allen's primary artistic collaborator and play a key role in the continued revision and development of the theatre's educational programs and outreach services.

Theatre designer **Julie Archer** will put into practice the techniques she developed during her first residency at **Mabou Mines** in New York City. During the second residency, she will develop her own new work, *Lacuna*, inspired by the process of photography from image, to exposure, to development, to print/projection. She will create theatrical projections for two other Mabou Mines productions and act as mentor for an emerging artist in the theatre's Resident Artist Program.

**The Magic Theatre** in San Francisco will collaborate with playwright **Charles Mee** and director **Kenn Watt** on *Wintertime*, a companion piece to *Summertime*, which the theatre presented last year. During the residency, they expect to conceive, develop, workshop and complete the play. The artists also will participate in artistic staff meetings and discussion groups for audience members.

**At Perseverance Theatre** in Douglas, Alaska, teacher/director/playwright **Kevin Kuhlke** will lead intensive acting workshops for company members and develop and direct a new stage adaptation of Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*. By uniting elements of performance training with resident theatre production, the collaborators hope to create a stronger acting company and a new model for production.

During a second residency at **San Diego Repertory Theatre**, playwright and director **Luis Valdez** will research, write, workshop and ultimately direct the premiere of a multilingual work, *Earthquake Sun*.

He will continue to serve as an advisor and provocateur for



RICHAUD TERNIERE

Julie Archer's artistry, on display in Mabou Mines' *Peter and Wendy*.

**Peter and Wendy**, Mabou Mines' innovative adaptation of the classic J.M. Barrie novel, will be on view at the New Victory Theater in New York City, February 1-24.

This production, which features sets, costumes and puppets by Resident Artist **JULIE ARCHER**, has thrilled audiences around the country with its magic since 1997. For tickets, visit the New Victory Box Office or call Telecharge at (212) 239-6200.

the theatre's Calafia Initiative, which seeks to create regionally voiced new work that reflects the multicultural wealth of the theatre's surrounding community.

**At Seattle Children's Theatre**, director and designer **Onny Huisink** and playwright and designer **Saskia Janse** will expand on the work they began in 1997. The artists will collaborate on a reworking of *Nicky Somewhere Else*, a play originally produced by their own company; they will also collaborate on an entirely new piece. The artists will have opportunities to speak and conduct workshops for Seattle-area audiences and artists.

During the continuation of director **Joseph Chaikin's** residency at **7 Stages** in Atlanta, he will direct three productions by writers he admires. He also will participate in long-range planning at the theatre and take part in community meetings and presentations, including a panel discussion about new work in the context of the Open Theatre.

**The Wilma Theater** in Philadelphia will help playwright **Douglas Wright** to nurture a new play through ongoing meetings, readings and workshops involving the theatre staff. Mr. Wright will serve as a talent scout for the theatre, helping the organization to identify artists for a new presenting series and for possible commissions.

Lighting designer **Jennifer Tipton** will resume a residency at **The Wooster Group** in New York City, collaborating with the company at home and on tour as they develop a new theatre piece based on Jean Racine's *Phedre*. She also will participate in preliminary discussions for the Group's subsequent project, an adaptation of William Faulkner's novel, *As I Lay Dying*. In addition, she will serve as a master artist and mentor for the young technical artists in the Group's apprentice program.

**THE NATIONAL THEATRE ARTIST RESIDENCY PROGRAM** is happy to announce a bit of good news. We recently received the following postcard from Chris Carter, co-artistic director of Seattle's Northwest Puppet Center, announcing the birth of a child to Dmitri Carter and Jen Yang. Since the father is an artist with the Center and the mother is the daughter of Yang Feng—an NTARP resident artist at the theatre—we at NTARP feel as though we can take some small credit for helping to foster one more creative partnership.

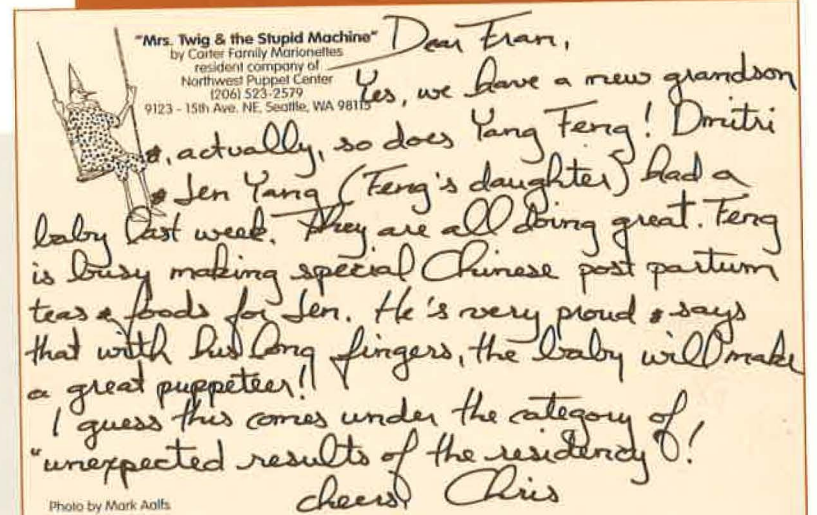


Photo by Mark Aalls



## EXPERIENCING THE AUDIENCE:

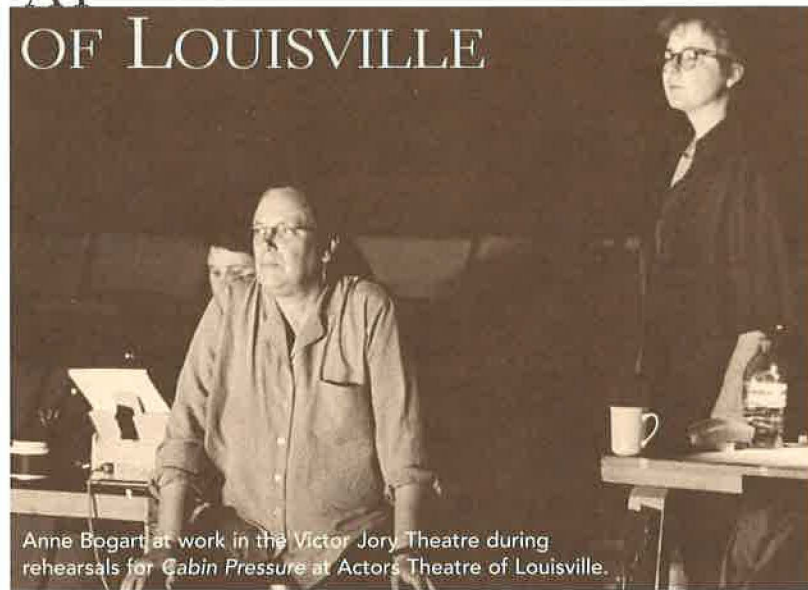
# ANNE BOGART'S AUDIENCE PROJECT AT ACTORS THEATRE OF LOUISVILLE

BY AMY WEGENER

"I really do like sitting down front.  
On the stage if you let me. The closer the better.  
I wanna feel the vibes.  
I wanna feel the heat off the actors."

"I go because it's otherworldly and  
it's festive and I like the way people smell,  
and I like what they wear and it's a lot better than  
seeing a play on television."

"I was a member of Actors Theatre when it was at  
the old railroad station. And I was the only little  
black girl in the audience. I'm a social worker with  
kids who have parental rights terminated...I believe  
that theatre is another way to exist."



Anne Bogart at work in the Victor Jory Theatre during rehearsals for *Cabin Pressure* at Actors Theatre of Louisville.

RICHARD TRIGG

Oddly enough, some of the first words I ever heard spoken in a theatre space at Actors Theatre of Louisville were uttered by members of our audience. One November afternoon in 1997, I took a break from apartment hunting to attend my first Actors Theatre meeting—and arrived to find director Anne Bogart conducting a lively conversation with a group of about 43 "civilians" and a handful of ATL staff members. Bogart was asking us why we went to the theatre (or why we didn't), and the various thoughtful answers to this question were so compelling that I quickly forgot my housing dilemma. With this most unusual exchange between artist and audience members, Bogart embarked on a two-year adventure that became known as the Audience Project—a process, made possible by the National Theatre Artist Residency Program, which set out to explore "the vital link between the actor and the audience" at the start of the 21st Century.

"It sounds simple," says Bogart, "but I was really just curious about what the creative role of the audience is and wanted to spend a couple of years thinking about it. What's the difference between going to a movie and going to see a play, and what is the audience's job?" Michael Dixon of the Guthrie Theater, then the Literary Manager at ATL and the project's staff mastermind, adds that this questioning was not limited to the actor-spectator dynamic: "It became about exploring concentric circles of relationship to the audience, looking not only at the actor-audience relationship, but also at the audience's connection to production and institution. We made a plan to involve as many people in the theatre as possible." In order to address these issues, the theatre's staff became responsible for recruiting the members of an experimental

"control" group—Bogart's Audience Project participants. Together, the staff collected a group of people diverse in every way imaginable—in age, race, class, religion and theatre-going experience. The idea was not only to begin a conversation with these individuals, but also to involve them in the process of making theatre over the course of time—to see what might happen. Provided with journals to record their reactions, members of the group were asked to attend several rehearsals (including the technical rehearsal) and a performance of Bogart's upcoming production of Noel Coward's *Private Lives*—performed by The SITI Company, a renowned, ensemble-based company that has been working with Bogart for a decade. "I wanted to see if being more a part of the creative process affected the way the audience took ownership," says Bogart. "And it actually did. Those who sat in rehearsals felt, perhaps, like people who go to sporting events and watch their favorite athletes."

This sense of ownership was demonstrated by another experiment: The Audience Project members were the featured, on-stage participants in post-show discussions for *Private Lives*. Dixon recalls, "There wasn't one project member in that post-show discussion that didn't think their experience of the performance wasn't enhanced by having seen some rehearsals. And the audience members who stayed for the discussion were interested in what our 'control' audience had to say." These post-show discussions were among the best-attended in ATL's history.

Following *Private Lives*, Bogart conducted a series of one-on-one interviews with each of the participants. Aside from pure curiosity, all of these opportunities for exchange—journals, discussions, interviews—served another purpose as well: the participants' transcribed thoughts would be sampled to create text for a new theatre piece, titled *Cabin Pressure*, which Bogart and the SITI Company would present in the 1999 Humana Festival of New American Plays.

On December 19, **Vineyard Theatre** in New York City will present the first performance of *Brutal Imagination* by **CORNELIUS EADY**. Based on his stunning poetry, this powerful new theatrical piece was inspired by the tragic events of the Susan Smith case. What happens when the imaginary African-American man she invented to cover up the murder of her two small children comes to life to tell his side of the story? For tickets and the complete performance schedule, call (212) 353-0303 or visit [www.vineyardtheatre.org](http://www.vineyardtheatre.org).

In preparation for the development of *Cabin Pressure*, those of us in ATL's literary department also conducted extensive research on audiences and theatrical conventions throughout history; we collected excerpts from plays, theory and criticism. Scott Cummings, a theatre scholar at Boston College, and cultural critic Porter Anderson, of CNN-International, were commissioned to write articles for the project, providing additional food for thought. Sampling from all of these sources—and from SITI's production of *Private Lives*—the new play was structured as a delightfully eclectic series of dramatizations of the actor-audience dynamic throughout the history of theatre.

Investigating and celebrating the creative role of the audience, *Cabin Pressure* captured the Audience Project participants' very words and gestures. "Each character was a conglomeration of different people who had been there in the room with us," explains Bogart. "It was a big deal for the actors, and for myself, when the Audience Project members came to see the show. They would hear lines from their own interviews, and it was very personal."

Personal, indeed, for I recognized some of the lines that had been spoken at that very first November meeting. Thirty-eight of the Audience Project participants had made it through the entire process, attending a dozen events over the course of about 17 months—all of which had been recorded, transcribed and made available to Bogart and the actors.

Today, *Cabin Pressure* continues to tour nationally and internationally, but the project's impact has transcended the success of the pro-



*Private Lives* depicted in *Cabin Pressure* at Actors Theatre of Louisville. (l-r) Will Bond, Kelly Maurer, Ellen Lauren and Stephen Webb.

RICHARD TRIGG

**EVERETT QUINTON** has directed an adaptation of P.D. Eastman's family favorite *Go, Dog. Go!* for **Omaha Theater Company for Young People**. From October 12 through November 4 you can journey along with dogs of various hues as they travel by boat, car, scooter and unicycle to get to the best dog party ever. The production has been directed especially for the post-toddler set, but two TCG staff members who are more than a bit older are looking forward to seeing this fourth collaboration between Quinton and the theatre. For reservations, call (402) 345-4849 or visit [www.otcyp.org](http://www.otcyp.org).

During their residency at **New WORLD Theatre** in Amherst, Mass., **STEVEN SAPP** and **MILDRED RUIZ** have been working with youth from the Black, Latino and Southeast Asian communities of Western Massachusetts on Project 2050 Youth. Their goal is to explore such issues as identity, immigration, exploitation and negotiation as we approach 2050, when people of color will be in the majority in the United States. Various works created as part of the project will be presented on November 10 at Bowker Auditorium at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. Sapp and Ruiz also will host an open mike event on November 6. For more information, call (413) 545-1972.

duction. By designing a questionnaire that could measure the "perceptions and changes of behavior in the artists and audience participants," co-dramaturgs Adrien-Alice Hansel and Kae Koger were able to provide illuminating data about audience members—demonstrating, for example, that they continue to think actively about a performance for much longer than artists think they do. Moreover, as Michael Dixon points out, the Audience Project influenced the planning of the Humana Festival for the next several years, by raising questions about how audiences can engage with new work. He explains, "A lot of people with a lot of different interests got involved with a process that affected the art on stage, the thinking about the art and the examination of the institution itself."

This examination of the institution, in fact, will be a part of the next installment in Bogart's long-term relationship with Actors Theatre. Funded by a matching grant from the National Theatre Artist Residency Program, Bogart and ATL will again engage in a long-term meditation on the dynamics of the theatre's community, this time seeking to involve employees from all areas in the creative process. She is preparing to direct a production of Coward's *Hay Fever* here this winter and has already conducted a series of community-building workshops. The timing and focus of the project strike me as particularly synchronistic, given that Actors Theatre has been undergoing a process of self-examination and transition under the new leadership of Artistic Director Marc Masterson.

Says Bogart: "I think that the theatre is, at its best, an active culture. So there's a natural extension of my interest in the community's relationship, to the theatre culture itself. The job of the artist is to provide catharsis—to shed light in dark places. It'll be interesting to me to look at the culture of Actors Theatre, which I've been around for 10 years, and look into the dark corners, to see if I can be part of the process of shedding light."

*Amy Wegener is the Dramaturg/Director of New Play Development at Actors Theatre of Louisville, where she has worked on many Humana Festival premieres and mainstage season shows and has co-edited seven published collections of plays. She did find a habitable apartment back in 1997 and has lived there ever since.*

Anne Bogart and The SITI Company's production of *Hay Fever* will run January 1-26, 2002, in the Pamela Brown Auditorium at Actors Theatre of Louisville. Tickets go on sale December 4; call 1-800-4ATL-TIX (1-800-428-5849).

This fall, the **Goodman Theatre** in Chicago will unveil a completely new production of the holiday entertainment *A Christmas Carol*. Directed by Resident Artist **HENRY GODINEZ**, this new production from an adaptation by Goodman Dramaturg Tom Creamer will take advantage of the state-of-the-art technical capabilities of the new theatre to create a wondrous landscape of Victorian London. For information or reservations for the performances running November 17-December 22, call (312) 443-3800.



## DESK LAMPS AND FOLLOW SPOTS:

# PLAYWRIGHTS AND COMPOSERS IN RESIDENCE



*The Night Governess* at the McCarter.  
(l-r) Danielle Ferland, Mary Stout,  
Alma Cuervo, Judith Blazer (center)  
and Erin Hill.

PHOTO BY T. CHARLES ERICKSON.

THE CREATION OF NEW WORK—PLAYS, MUSICALS, OPERAS, performance art—is one of the primary endeavors that the National Theatre Artist Residency Program has fostered over the years.

But no two residencies are exactly alike.

For one thing, the time spent solely on writing varies. Development of new work may only be a part of an artist's participation in a residency: Teaching, mentoring and providing assistance with dramaturgical and administrative activities can round out the package. Also, some residencies have a definite end goal in sight: a public presentation of the newly crafted work. Others focus on the developmental process alone. Some artists find they need to work on their creative projects in solo flight and appreciate the luxury of time, space and creative contemplation that a residency affords. Others prefer to experiment with ways of involving many members of a theatre community as artistic collaborators.

"Every show needs a very individual process," says musical-theatre composer Polly Pen, who has been a resident artist at McCarter Theatre in Princeton, N.J., where she developed a project called *The Night Governess*. "The McCarter knew that this piece had to be grown in a way that was right for it. There was nothing systematic about the thing, like 'This is what we do: You get a two-week workshop, that's it.' It was nothing like that."

Pen went into her residency not even knowing what sort of project she would tackle. She presented the McCarter literary manager, Janice Paran, with a list of "very rangey" subjects for development. In fact, it was Paran who introduced Pen to the Louisa May Alcott thriller *Behind a Mask: A Woman's Power* that was eventually transformed into *The Night Governess*.

The use of a dramaturg as an integral part of the script-building process was relatively new to Pen, who feels she has been "a bit of a lone cannon" as a writer in the past.

"I was very lucky with Janice Paran to find somebody who was so smart, so sympathetic and asked the right questions," Pen says. "I may have driven her a little nutty because I love to rewrite, and so sometimes with every line I'd go, 'What is better? This word or this word?' She asked hard questions and also knew when to just leave me alone to putter it out."

Paran found the process of development to be enjoyable and nearly seamless. "Polly just makes me laugh, more than just about anybody I know," she says. "And I'm always interested in tracking down those peculiar corners of her imagination and teasing them out."

Despite valuable contributions from Paran (and from director Lisa Peterson), much of Pen's work on *The Night Governess* was done alone. The peace and solitude of the McCarter and the Princeton University campus—so different from her usual writing setting in New York City—helped Pen concentrate on those "puttering it out" moments. The usual metropolitan distractions evaporated, and the writer found herself "in a place where I know my job is to do my job."

"The very landscape of the theatre and its environs really provided wonderful food for the piece..." Pen adds. "There were scenes that happened in the show that, had I not been in that location writing it, wouldn't have occurred to me."

For example, Pen notes that there is a strikingly beautiful garden

"Suddenly my creative process  
was going to be...somewhat more public  
than I was used to."

—Richard Wargo

on the Princeton campus that is electrically lit at night. After experiencing the eerie magic of the place, Pen fashioned a scene in which characters embark on a night botany walk.

## SETTING A PACE

Time can be as necessary an element as space for a writer. The ability to work on a project without the pressure of having to complete it entirely and then hurry on to a public performance was extremely important to Richard Wargo, who recently completed a residency at the Skylight Opera Theatre in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Wargo worked as composer, lyricist and librettist—beginning work on an adaptation of Irish playwright John B. Keane's *Sive* as an opera. He appreciated the idea that the residency "was about the work—it wasn't about having the piece ready by such and such a date."

The development of *Sive* was shaped around two workshops: one early in the residency and one at the end. This provided a good compromise position for Wargo. He had long days to work on the piece at a fairly leisurely pace. But he also had a timeline that dictated he produce portions of the work on schedule.

Wargo notes that his work on any project is usually "painfully slow" in the beginning. Customarily he enters a commissioned project with some of the early planning processes well underway. "Here I just had an idea," he tells. "Not even a note written—not even a libretto begun. It brought some pressure: a self-imposed pressure that suddenly my creative process was going to be...somewhat more public than I was used to."

## IN MEMORIAM

Sadly, composer and musician Genji Ito—a participant in the National Theatre Artist Residency Program—died on April 23, 2001, in New York City. Ito's residency at the National Theatre of the Deaf in Chester, Conn., was awarded in 1998. We asked Will Rhys, then Artistic Director of NTD, to give us some of his memories of his work with this artist.

**ITO AND I FIRST WORKED TOGETHER** in 1997 when I wanted to do an "organic" production of PEER GYNT in which the actors would produce the majority of the sound effects and play the music that would be an inte-

gral part of the production. I envisioned Genji creating all this with a company of deaf actors—the National Theatre of the Deaf. No hesitation on his part, just a few questions to get oriented, and off we went for what turned out to be a wild and glorious production period. He and I continued to explore this pairing of the deaf and music at the end of the run, supported by a TCG/Pew Charitable Trust residency grant.

This was a splendid time for me as I watched Genji and the actors locked in circles of concentration while music of wonderful complexity was created with drums, rain sticks, conch shells, didgeridoos, flutes and other plain and exotic instruments. The actors were enthralled by what had seemed to them, at first,

a rather odd discipline for them to be studying. To Genji, though, it had always made intriguing sense. Indeed, much to his amazement, he found he enjoyed the teaching aspect of the work so much that he enrolled in several university courses to get a further feel for the teacher/student relationship.

Our collaboration stretched over four years. I recall with great warmth and affection the weeks, before illness harnessed Genji, when we worked on one of our last projects. He was, for the first time in his brilliant career, directing as well as leading the creation of sound and music. "I think I ought to try that," he said. I couldn't have agreed more. And by setting out to broaden his own remarkable life, Genji once again enriched mine.

Nevertheless, Wargo felt free to make decisions that might have been frowned on in a more product-oriented commission situation. Before the first workshop, he interpolated into the score an aria based on a poem that John B. Keane had written for his wife. This addition, he thought, would provide a lyrical moment for one of the characters. But after the first workshop presentation, Wargo decided that the aria was not right for the piece after all. He did not hesitate to cut it, even though it had taken the better part of a month to write.

Unlike Polly Pen, Wargo did not work with a dramaturg. But he received valuable feedback from others at Skylight, including Artistic Director Richard Carsey and Stage Director Dorothy Danmer. Their enthusiasm helped him to accelerate the creative process and to continue to work productively on *Sive* after the residency ended.

"I sensed, after the first workshop—on the part of the people who were there—a real energy and excitement. That fuels the creative process. You feel like, OK, I have a lot to do, but it's going in the right direction."

## BENDING AND FLEXING

While Pen and Wargo both drew on other members of their respective host theatres for support, they nevertheless maintained a high level of artistic autonomy. On the other hand, Octavio Solis' still-in-progress residency at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland has relied on a great deal of input from fellow artists. "The reason I became a playwright was to work in the theatre," Solis explains, "not to work on a desktop computer in an office miles away."

Long Wharf Theatre's Education and Humanities Department will tour Connecticut schools through November 16 with the world premiere production of *My Red Hand, My Black Hand* by Resident Artist **DAEL ORLANDERSMITH**. Written in an expressive and poetic style, the play tells the story of one girl's search for belonging in the two different cultures that make up her heritage: Native American and African American. By presenting the play and incorporating it into the school curriculum, the theatre hopes to provide a forum for discussion about racial identity. Educators who would like more information about this tour or the spring 2002 encore presentation should contact Megan Ferrara at (203) 787-4284 x 294 or [megan.ferrara@longwharf.org](mailto:megan.ferrara@longwharf.org).

Indiana Repertory Theatre in Indianapolis is presenting the World Premiere of **JAMES STILL's** *Looking Over the President's Shoulder* from October 30 to December 22. This fascinating play reveals an intimate view of history-in-the-making through the eyes of Indiana native Alonzo Fields, Chief Butler at the White House for four Presidents. Tickets are available online at [www.indianarep.com](http://www.indianarep.com) or by calling (317) 635-5252.