

BROADSIDE

a news digest of



THEATRE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Issue 2: September 21, 2014-February 13, 2015

December 24th, 2014 | [President's Blog](#)



TLA in 2014

TLA IS LOOKING BACK ON A FANTASTIC 2014

- We co-sponsored the SIBMAS TLA Conference in New York City.
- TLA launched the new website in July.
- We published PAR 30 -

Holding Up the

Mirror: Authenticity and Adaptation in Shakespeare Today Symposium Proceedings.

- Our October Event celebrated all of the TLA Awards including the return of the Book Awards.
- We sponsored an engaging panel entitled *Women in Film*.
- TLA had a strong presence at the ASTR TLA Conference in Baltimore. We organized a dynamic plenary and tours of the Hippodrome Theatre and the Everyman Theatre.

TLA IN 2015—WHAT ARE WE PLANNING?

- Future PAR volumes
- Symposium to be held in 2016
- Book Awards and our October Event
- ASTR-TLA Conference in Portland
- Tours

Nancy Friedland
President, Theatre Library Association

February 4th, 2015 | [Events](#)

Join the Wikipedia edit-a-thon!

Artists! Archivists! Scholars! Students! Join us on February 17, 2015 (4 – 7:30pm) for a Wikipedia edit-a-thon. New and experienced Wikipedians are invited to come together to create, edit, and expand Wikipedia articles on under- or unsung theatre artists—with a focus on artists who are queer, women, of color, or otherwise underrepresented—as part of a worldwide Wikiturgy Edit-a-Thon. Participating in this event is a way to support artists whose work you know, admire, and feel should have a more publicly visible space online—or to discover new artists and new histories of performance in the Americas. This event is open to all, but RSVP is required. And please bring your own laptop.

Don't worry if you've never edited Wikipedia before! Experienced Wikipedians will be on hand to help you set up an account and learn the ins and outs of Wiki editing.

Location: Columbia University's Butler Library, Room 208. (Directions: <http://library.columbia.edu/locations/butler/directions.html>)

More details here: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Meetup/NYC/WikiturgyNYC>

BROADSIDE Editorial Information and Publication Guidelines

TLA WEBSITE PUBLICATION GUIDELINES

The Theatre Library Association (TLA) website is the principal medium through which the Theatre Library Association communicates news, activities, policies, and procedures. TLA has long published a newsletter, *BROADSIDE*, which served as the primary medium through which the activities of the TLA were documented. Effective September 2014, *BROADSIDE* will continue as a digest of postings from the TLA website. TLA will continue to provide historical information about the organization and the profession of performing arts librarianship through its website and now the *BROADSIDE Digest*.

The website has no ambition to serve as scholarly publications. Scholarly and other articles or monographs may be considered for TLA's other principal publication, *Performing Arts Resources*.

The TLA website will serve as a means for the exchange among members of information that advances the mission of the organization. Examples of this include short news items about recent activities of both individual and institutional members; short reviews of relevant books and other resources; news of relevant exhibits, conferences, and other developments in performing arts librarianship, collections, and scholarship.

In keeping with the aims of documenting the record of activities of the TLA, the Website Editorial Committee supports the guidelines established by the Publications Committee and has added guidelines to support publishing to the website.

Revised Guidelines

President's Blog provides the President with a platform to discuss the activities of the Theatre Library Association and issues and trends related to performing arts librarianship.

Committee chairs will be responsible for reporting to the website on the activities of their respective committees.

Priority in the publication of articles will be given to the Association's officers, members of the Board, and chairs of committees. These articles provide the most important means by which the leadership of the Association communicates recent Board decisions, upcoming TLA- sponsored events, appeals for member involvement, etc.

TLA members in good standing are encouraged to submit news items that are in keeping with the statement above. All submissions are subject to editing for length, clarity, and factual confirmation.

Ideas for articles—other than brief news items, book reviews, or submissions from officers and committee chairs—should be submitted to the Website Editorial Committee in advance in order to allow sufficient time to plan layout, provide constructive suggestions, and occasionally seek guidance

from the Publications Committee. Articles should relate to performing arts libraries, library resources, or related topics in performing arts scholarship, rather than to general performing arts topics.

Reviews of books or other resources are an excellent way for members to contribute to TLA and the profession. Reviews should include a concise summary of the resource, a comparison of it to similar resources, and a brief evaluation. Suggestions and unsolicited reviews should be sent to the Book Review Editor.

The copyright of all articles published to the TLA website will be owned by TLA. Permission to republish an article may be requested from the Editor.

BROADSIDE (ISSN: 0068-2748)

BROADSIDE will be published at least three times a year but is no longer limited to three times a year publishing cycle. *BROADSIDE* (archive) and *BROADSIDE Digest* are open access—no login required—and available via *BROADSIDE* online at <http://www.tla-online.org/news/broadsidenews/>

Contents ©Theatre Library Association

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Editor's Note

Starting with this issue, *BROADSIDE* is transitioning from a newsletter to a digest of TLA's online content. With the integration of items that were published first in *BROADSIDE* into the new TLA website, current issues of the digested version will serve as an archive of both the website and TLA activities since the previously published issue.

About TLA

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TLA website: <http://www.tla-online.org/>

TLA on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/theatrelibraryassociation>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/theatrelibassn>

MISSION STATEMENT

Founded in 1937, the Theatre Library Association supports librarians and archivists affiliated with theatre, dance, performance studies, popular entertainment, motion picture and broadcasting collections. TLA promotes professional best practices in acquisition, organization, access and preservation of performing arts resources in libraries, archives, museums, private collections, and the digital environment. By producing publications, conferences, panels, and public events, TLA fosters creative and ethical use of performing arts materials to enhance research, live performance, and scholarly communication.



JOIN US!

Membership

(Annual dues: \$30 personal, \$40 institutional; \$20 student/non-salaried members. In order to defray the rising costs of international postage, members with non-U.S. mailing addresses are now required to pay a \$10 surcharge.) Includes *Performing Arts Resources*, published occasionally. Dues can now be paid online using PayPal.

For availability and prices of past issues of *PAR* and *BROADSIDE*, contact

TheatreLibraryAssociation@gmail.com

TLA listserv: To Subscribe:

1) Send email (nothing in the subject) to:

LISTSERV@listserv.illinois.edu

2) in the body of the email message type the following line:

SUBSCRIBE TLA-L your name

TLA Business

January 9th, 2015 | [President's Blog](#)

TLA Executive Board in 2015!

Congratulations to Tanisha Jones, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, and Joseph Tally, American Conservatory Theater, on their election to the TLA Executive Board. Warm welcome to you both!

Congratulations to Diana King and Doug Reside on their re-election to the TLA Executive Board. Angela Weaver and I are both delighted to continue to serve TLA.

Thank you to our membership for your interest and support.

In 2015, we will continue planning for future PAR volumes, begin work on our fourth symposium, plan for our October event, and move forward with our committee work.

The TLA Board will meet in February, May and October.

I welcome hearing from our membership – please do not hesitate to reach out to me or any of our Board members.

Best wishes for 2015!

November 5th, 2014 | [Membership](#), [President's Blog](#)

Membership Rates

Dear TLA Members,

Congratulations to TLA on a terrific year! The SIBMAS TLA Conference in New York City was a great success. We had more than 100 delegates in attendance and a week of dynamic presentations and discussion. We launched our new website in July and have received wonderful feedback on its design, layout and our commitment to bring you news of our activities and the profession on a more timely schedule. Congratulations to Stephen Kuehler for his work on publishing PAR 30, *Holding Up the*

Mirror: Authenticity and Adaptation in Shakespeare Today: Symposium Proceedings. We sponsored an engaging October event which celebrated the return of the Book Awards honoring outstanding works on performance and recorded performance. The evening also featured a panel discussion on *Women in Film.*

In order to sustain these wonderful activities, the TLA Executive Board voted to increase our dues this coming year. This is the first increase in membership rates in more than 15 years. In these past 15 years, TLA has incurred new and increased expenses. New expenses include the website design. We are videotaping our October events in order for all of our members to enjoy our programming. Routine expenses have experienced a significant increase including the cost of publishing our PAR volumes and the subsequent cost of mailing the volumes to our members. In order to bring back the Book Awards, the Book Awards Committee implemented a new procedure to accommodate the terrific work of our jurors and to ensure that they receive books in a timely manner. This has resulted in higher costs to the association.

Effective with the next renewal—our new membership rates are:

Students/Non-salaried	\$25
Personal Members	\$50
Institutional Members	\$75
TLA @ 75	\$75
TLA Sustaining Membership	\$150

Your support is deeply appreciated. It is your support and membership that enables us to continue the vital work of this association.

Sincerely,

Nancy Friedland
President, Theatre Library Association

TLA Survey Provides Guidelines for the Future

January 14th, 2015 | [Members](#), [Membership](#)

In an effort to “take the pulse” of our membership and to continually improve the organization, the TLA Membership Committee sent out a survey in September.

Some highlights of the survey results are:

- Most of our respondents are employed full time at
- academic research institutions.
- More than half of our survey respondents have been members of TLA for more than five years.
- While most are satisfied with their TLA membership, a significant number of respondents indicated a desire for TLA to move away from the New York centric model.
- Our respondents noted that *Performing Arts Resources* and networking opportunities were the two most valuable things offered by TLA, followed by professional development, conferences and public events, and the listserv.
- An overwhelming majority indicated that they use *Performing Arts Resource* to support their teaching and/or research.
- Our respondents have a desire for more online sessions and remote ways to participate.
- The new TLA web site received good ratings among those who have visited.

Thanks go out to Laurie Murphy who distributed the survey and compiled the results and to Megan Wacha who put together a results summary.

The Board will use these results to influence program planning and to guide the future of the organization. Discussions have already begun on how to work on the areas of opportunity highlighted by the survey.

As always, we value our members’ input and hope that you will continue to forward ideas and suggestions to us throughout the year. No need to wait for a survey to let us know how we can best serve you!

[Beth Kattelman](#)
Membership Committee Chair



TLA Awards Ceremony, 2014;
David Nochimson, photographer.

TLA in October—New York City

November 5, 2014 | [Events](#), [President's Blog](#)

On Friday, October 17th, at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, TLA hosted a wonderful evening of celebration and discussion. We celebrated the recipients of our multiple awards and enjoyed a panel presentation entitled *Women in Film*.

The evening began with our Annual Business Meeting. I had a chance to report on the activities of the association. It was a wonderful year for TLA. A few of the highlights—the SIBMAS TLA Conference was a great success, our new website launched in July to outstanding reviews, and the PAR 30 volume entitled *Holding Up the Mirror: Authenticity and Adaptation in Shakespeare Today Symposium Proceedings* was published.



Jacqueline Davis and Doug Reside, TLA Awards Ceremony, 2014; David Nochimson, photographer.

Following the Annual Business Meeting, we honored the recipients of the TLA Awards. Selena Chau, MLIS student at San Jose State University, received the Brooks McNamara Performing Arts Librarian Award. Selena noted that the process of writing the essay for consideration allowed her to “reflect on the uniqueness of performing artists and performing arts scholars that use library services.” Selena was unable to join us in New York City for the event but we look forward to her becoming an active member of TLA. Congratulations to Selena! The Louis Rachow

Distinguished Service Award honored Jacqueline Davis from New York Public Library for the Performing Arts (LPA). Jackie delivered a wonderful note of thanks and reflected on her continued work at LPA. With this award, TLA acknowledged her outstanding record of leading LPA through many new initiatives and challenges. LPA continues to be the preeminent performing arts library.

We were delighted to have the return of the Book Awards recognizing outstanding achievement for works published in 2013. The Freedley Award for scholarship on performance was awarded to Alisa Solomon for her book entitled *Wonder of Wonders: A Cultural History of Fiddler on the Roof*. The Wall Award for scholarship on recorded performance was awarded to Glenn Frankel for his book *The Searchers: The Making of an American Legend*.

We were delighted to have both authors in attendance. Rachel Shteir, a former Freedley winner and now juror for the Freedley Award, provided a lovely introduction for Alisa. John Calhoun, a Wall juror, was delighted to introduce Glenn. Both authors expressed how honored they were to receive this recognition and spoke passionately about their countless hours working in archives. They both acknowledged the work of archivists, curators and librarians as essential to their research and scholarship.

The two Special Jury Prizes were also recognized: *Fosse* by Sam Wasson and *Still: American Silent Motion Picture Photography* by David Shields.

Congratulations to Alisa, Glenn, Sam and David!

The next event was a panel discussion on a topic related to the work of TLA and performing arts libraries and archives. This year we focused on *Women in Film*. Our panelists included Kathryn Hearst, Mark Newton and Bette Gordon. Kathryn discussed the absence of the women film pioneers in the curriculum. She profiled several of the many women who worked in the film industry during the silent era—not just in the United States.

December 3rd, 2014 | [ASTR](#), [Events](#), [President's Blog](#)

She argued that they are systematically left out of the teaching of early cinema. At the college level, early cinema classes generally include the developments in filmmaking by Edison, Porter, D.W. Griffith, among others, but rarely, if ever, mention the women pioneers who dynamically contributed to the industry both in front of and behind the camera. Drawing on this topic, Mark Newton gave us the background on the open access digital resource *Women Film Pioneers Project*. He discussed how the project came into being as a scholarly work. The WFPP documents the lives and contributions of women working in the film industry during the silent era—the women who worked behind the camera in every capacity of filmmaking. Bette Gordon discussed women filmmakers today and acknowledged it is still a difficult industry for them. The statistics identifying the number of women in the industry are distressing. Bette called for women filmmakers to be activists—essentially to be strong and forceful. She also called for those women in the industry to support each other through networking and other activities. By working together, they can build the necessary support — even through efforts to drive up box office receipts during the first weekend release by coordinating attendance en masse!

The panel on *Women in Film* highlighted that after more than 100 years, women still face challenges in this industry. Their contributions, however, as documented by the *Women Film Pioneers Project* and by the successes and persistence of women filmmakers today, are significant and essential.

The panel discussion was followed by sparkling wine, small bites (thank you to Granddaisy Bakery for donating such delicious food!)—and discussion. I am delighted that most folks remained to continue the conversation.

Nancy Friedland



The Hippodrome Theatre, 2014.

The ASTR TLA Conference was held November 20 – 23 in Baltimore, Maryland. The conference hotel was situated on the Inner Harbor a few blocks from the historic neighborhood of Fells Point. The conference theme focused on the simple question—What Performs?—encouraging discussion on the stuff of theatre such as props and costumes, and at the same time explored the debates on “new materialism” and “post-humanism.” The conference offered a dynamic program with a mix of plenaries, career sessions, working sessions and the exciting “PerformASTR” events. Non-humans, machines and humans, cyborgs, robotics, virtual presences, environmental actors, puppetry, new media onstage and off—this is just a sampling of what it was all about.

TLA’s Plenary, “The Paradox of the Post-human: Archival Subjects, Systems and Sites,” was held early Saturday morning. Colleen Reilly and Lisbeth Wells-Pratt served as co-chairs. I joined Norah Zuniga Shaw, Ohio State University, and Doug Reside, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, on the panel. Norah discussed the digital, animations and choreography. Doug presented on preserving digital designs. I focused on researching structured and unstructured digital content. We had a great reception to our presentations—more detail on the plenary is forthcoming in a blog post from Lisbeth.

American Theatre Archive Project (ATAP) had a strong presence with a training workshop on

Thursday morning and a terrific session on Saturday afternoon entitled “What Makes an Archive Perform?”

The TLA sponsored tour of the Hippodrome Theatre and the Everyman Theatre was a fabulous event. Our group met at the Hippodrome where we were greeted by Bob Gist and Karen Eske. Bob took us on a tour through the theatre, brought us onstage, backstage, through the dressing rooms, the green room and the loading dock! All the while, he told us about the history through stories and anecdotes. Designed by the architect Thomas Lamb, this renovated theatre is now known as the Hippodrome Theatre at the France-Merrick Performing Arts Center. We were there just a few days shy of the 100th anniversary of the theatre’s opening. It is one of the majestic American theatres and simply magnificent. Today, the theatre hosts touring shows. No cameras were allowed in the theatre—to get a glimpse—take a look at the [website](#) for images, a bit of history and their current programming.

Just a block from the Hippodrome sits the Everyman Theatre. Once the Empire Theatre, this performance space was gutted for a parking garage several decades ago. The facade was salvaged and the interior smartly transformed into an intimate performance space, rehearsal space, and administrative offices. A smaller venue than the Hippodrome with a very different mission, Everyman supports a resident company performing classics and contemporary works. Ian Tresslet, Artistic Director, gave us a warm reception and took us behind the scenes.

It was a great afternoon. Our enthusiastic group of more than 20 people enjoyed learning about the dynamic and thriving theatre community in Baltimore.

There were many highlights to the ASTR TLA Conference—it was a wonderful experience.

Nancy Friedland

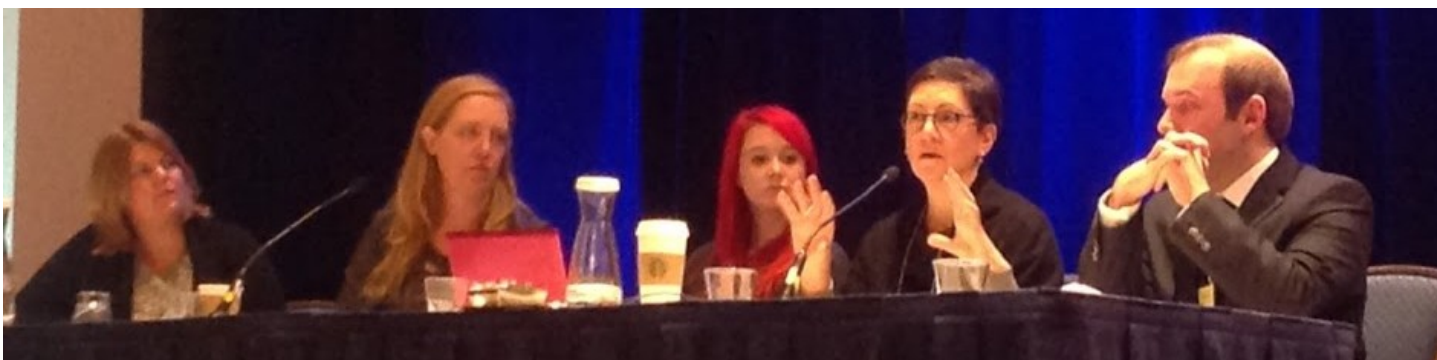
TLA Plenary—ASTR-TLA Conference 2014

The 2014 TLA Plenary at ASTR 2014 was a roaring success. Not only did the conference spark dynamic conversations around the topic of the “post-human” and the broadening spectrum of archival subjects, systems, and sites, over 60 attendees were present at the TLA plenary. Focusing on the role information professionals can play in the ever-evolving relationship between art and technology, the plenary touched on issues of ephemerality, surrogacy and big data. Together with plenary co-chair and TLA Treasurer Colleen Reilly, we posed several questions to the panelists in the original Call for Proposals:

- What do archival subjects tell us about human culture?
- How are archival sites constructed in the digital age?
- What new challenges and opportunities are posed by multimedia, digital content and information systems? How do these information systems operate?
- Where do individual or institutional memories reside, and what technologies can best support them

The panel tackled these questions and more in our attempt to locate “post-humanity” within the libraries and archives.

Norah Zuniga Shaw, Associate Professor and Director of Dance and Technology at The Ohio State University, presented on her recent work “Synchronous Objects”. This work examines the organizational structure underlying William Forsythe’s dance “One Last Thing” and the ways in which “digital traces” can subvert the traditional notion of the archive. Zuniga Shaw’s rethinking of the role dance visualization can play in knowledge exchange between artists, scholars, and information professionals was an integral part the TLA plenary’s attempt to situate the “post-human” in our libraries and archives. Her research on screen-based interactive media is exemplary in that it engages artists and archivists in a similar process of meaning-making through metadata creation and dissemination. Norah Zuniga Shaw’s



Colleen Reilly, Norah Zuniga Shaw, Lisbeth Wells-Pratt, Nancy Friedland, and Doug Reside, TLA Plenary, 2014; Beth Kattelman, photographer.

collaboration with choreographers, dancers, librarians, and archivists is indicative of trends in digital humanities. This radical recentering of the role humans play in the generation of data and location of meaning within data was echoed by all members of the plenary.

Doug Reside, TLA Board Member and Curator for the Billy Rose Theatre Division at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, discussed “Preserving Digital Designs.” Focusing on Vectorworks and data comprising saved Vectorworks files, Reside highlighted unique facets of “born digital” creative works and the importance of acknowledging the presence and performance of data in works with no analog representation. The use of proprietary software to create set designs poses challenges for librarians and archivists in the performing arts, including issues with lossy file formats, unpredictable performances of software scripts across programs, and software emulators. Doug ultimately demonstrated various ways that traces of a scenic artist’s creativity can be found in the data of a Vectorworks file, and how that data can be turned into valuable metadata for a performing arts library.

Nancy Friedland, TLA President and Librarian for Butler Media, Film Studies and Performing Arts at Columbia University presented the talk “Digging into Data.” “Digging into Data” brought up many important historical issues that could be overlooked in an initial assessment of “post-humanity” within theatre libraries and archives.

Situating the roots of “post-human” phenomena in post-Vietnam disillusionment and its contemporaneous science fiction literature, Friedland stressed that “big data” is the current manifestation of the “post-human” in libraries and archives. The focus of her talk was on the structured and unstructured data available through proprietary resources and the open web. Though hyperlinks and enhanced searching techniques employed by search engines like Google Scholar “empower” searchers digging for data, Friedland noted that not all information on the web is available to every researcher – there is extraordinary indexed content that makes up the dark web. Therefore, a truly “post-human” library or archive would depend greatly on open access. In order to contextualize what algorithms (evidenced as part of a “post-humanity”) say about human creativity and culture, Friedland suggests that libraries push publishers to open their data for greater analysis by more researchers.

Again, a big thank you to our dynamic plenary speakers and to our audience for an engaging TLA plenary at ASTR 2014! At first it seemed a potentially insurmountable task to situate the “post-human” within theatre libraries and archives but with the help of TLA members and ASTR attendees it was a fruitful and dynamic endeavor that highlighted the increasingly complex relationship between technology and the performing arts. I look forward to continuing similar conversations with TLA members in the upcoming year and at future TLA plenaries!

Lisbeth Wells-Pratt

Member Profile

February 13th, 2015 | [Members](#), [President's Blog](#)



A Conversation with James Fisher

Congratulations to James Fisher on the publication of his new work entitled **Historical Dictionary of American Theater: Beginnings (Historical Dictionaries of Literature and the Arts), 2015.**

James, can you tell us more about the thinking behind this volume?

I had previously worked on two “Historical Dictionaries” – the first, co-authored by Felicia Hardison Londré, covered “Modernism (1880-1930),” was published in 2007. Following that, I went for it alone on “Contemporary (1930-2010),” which was a huge project – two volumes long and published in 2011. The publisher (Rowman and Littlefield) invited me to do “Beginnings (American Theatre prior to 1880)” and I jumped at the chance for a number of reasons, not least because it was the era I felt least comfortable with as far as my own knowledge is concerned, so I knew I stood to learn a great deal preparing for and working on the project. On a more important level, when Felicia and I signed on to do “Modernism,” I relished the idea that limiting the time period to a

fifty year window meant we could go much more broadly and deeply than similar works are usually able to do, since so many are single volumes covering the entirety of theatre in America. I also have great admiration for Felicia Londré, whose work as a scholar was a real model for me when I began my career. When we finally met, we hit it off and became fast friends. And that led inevitably to a desire to collaborate. In addition, I learned so much from her working together. She has an extraordinary knowledge of the American stage in the modernist era. And the good news is that Rowman and Littlefield has just asked us to expand and revise the “Modernism” book, so we’ll get to continue what was, for me, a very happy collaboration.

Would you tell us about the research process and types of resources you consulted?

Well, of course, there’s so much out there and I went into this having my own very good library of sources on the American theatre (and it has grown enormously during the time in which I’ve worked on these books), but I wanted, as much as possible, to dig very deeply. The internet, of course, is wonderfully helpful. I spent many afternoons reading some little-known early 19th century American plays conveniently available on-line. Digging in old newspapers and periodicals, old stage memoirs and biographies, historical and critical studies, you name it, but as yet the internet remains only a beginning – a useful tool, but many hours were spent in the library. My own personal goal was to try even with the most familiar entry on an individual or play or theatre space or term, to provide something unique and, perhaps, previously unavailable in prior reference works. Which, of course, meant a great deal of digging. It was also a great challenge to decide who and what to include – certain entries would be obvious inclusions, while it was also a goal to include obscure and little-known entries in hopes of providing through those choices a glimpse of a certain moment in the history of the American stage. On “Beginnings,” for example, I really loved the opportunity to read a lot of Irish-American plays from the first half of the 19th century and I had similar pleasure exploring the Yiddish theatre for the “Modernism” volume. These are just examples and one of the pitfalls of working on a project like this –

Member Profile

and I fell into it frequently – was getting fascinated by a particular person or play and spending an enormous amount of time on what turned out to be an entry of only a few lines. However, I have no regrets – those tangents were great fun and very revealing. There is such a rich and diverse tapestry in a study of American theatre history and I truly hope these books point interested students and young scholars toward some very exciting corners of the history of the American stage. If a user of the dictionary could be encouraged to find such excitement or at least to find the book useful, I would feel very good.

Will there be a digital version?

Yes, there will be – the publisher hasn't indicated when it will be offered, but there will be a Kindle version.

James Fisher is Professor of Theatre at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, where he served as Head of Theatre from 2007-2014. His books include *The Historical Dictionary of American Theater: Beginnings*, *The Historical Dictionary of Contemporary American Theater*, *Understanding Tony Kushner*, *The Historical Dictionary of American Theater: Modernism* (co-author: Felicia Hardison Londré), bio-bibliographies of Spencer Tracy, Al Jolson, and Eddie Cantor, *The Theatre of Tony Kushner: Living Past Hope*, *The Theatre of Yesterday and Tomorrow: Commedia dell'arte on the Modern Stage*, four "In an Hour" books on Eugene O'Neill, Thornton Wilder, Arthur Miller, and Tony Kushner, and he has contributed essays to many publications on theatre and film. Fisher edited *To Have or Have Not: Essays on Commerce and Capital in Modernist Theatre*, *"We Will Be Citizens": New Essays on Gay and Lesbian Theatre*, and *Tony Kushner: New Essays on the Art and Politics of the Plays*. Also an actor/director, he acted in and/or directed over 150 productions. A long-time member of the Theatre Library Association and other professional organizations, he is the recipient of the 2007 Betty Jean Jones Award for Excellence in the Teaching of American Theatre from the American Theatre and Drama Society. In 2010, he was elected to membership in the National Theatre Conference.

TLA Publications: Call for Papers

November 5th, 2014 | [Performing Arts Resources](#), [Publications](#)

State of the Profession: Performing Arts Librarianship in the 21st Century Performing Arts Resources: Volume 32



A file of photographs of the actress Joan Bennett. Reproduced courtesy of The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

This volume of [Performing Arts Resources](#) will consider the current status of performing arts librarians and archivists—as well as performing arts libraries in general. It will reflect on issues of professional preparation and training, sustainability of the profession, consolidation of performing arts libraries nationwide, challenges of digitization and technological transformation, and service to our unique communities of users. In particular—it will focus on the following three framing questions:

- Is the performing arts librarian a vanishing species?
- Will the convergence of libraries, archives, and museums—not to mention digitization—advance or inhibit our profession?
- Do these new models offer dynamic synergies for collections—or is our unique identity being lost?

While in some respects threatening—the current landscape offers opportunities for unexpected collaborations, innovation of traditional professional practices—and possibly new paradigms for promoting our collections and mission to the public.

In this reconfigured constellation—do we despair, cling to our eternal verities—or proactively embrace these new challenges to create historically-rich and technological interventions for a truly 21st century crucible of performing arts documentation?

Essays or opinion pieces between 2500-5000 words will be welcomed on a variety of topics:

Emerging Practices

- Moving away from subject specialists to generalists
- New models for instruction and public services
- Integrating primary source documents into the curriculum
- Access to specific needs of practitioners as well as scholars
- Recruiting a new generation into the profession and restructuring library science-archival curricula

Professional Landscape

- Convergence of libraries, archives, and museums
- Consolidation of multi-discipline collections into Arts Libraries
- Expanding institutional collection policies to include alternative and multi-ethnic companies
- Transition in research from performing arts to viewing culture in broader social-political contexts

Technological Transformation

- Digitization access, opportunities, and challenges—and related training issues
- Multimedia preservation and migration of digital content

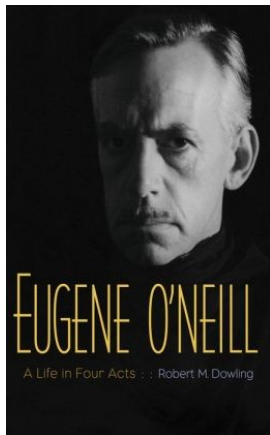
Ultimately, we're seeking contributions that are inventive, controversial, and thought-provoking.

Please submit a one-page proposal by December 15, 2014 to:

[Kenneth Schlesinger](#)
Chief Librarian, Lehman College

Book/Media Reviews

January 20th, 2015 | [Book/Media Reviews](#)



Eugene O'Neill: A Life in Four Acts

Robert M. Dowling
New Haven, CT: Yale
University Press, 2014
ISBN: 9780300170337
584 pp.

“Tragic. Bitter. Pessimistic. Fatalistic. Gloomy. Take your pick from the run of adjectives trotted out to describe Eugene Gladstone O’Neill, the Irish American ‘master of the misbegotten,’ ‘dean of dysfunction,’ ‘black magician,’ ‘apostle of woe,’ ‘poet laureate of gloom’ ” (p. 9), writes Robert M. Dowling of his subject. Dowling points out that O’Neill, as the dramatist himself claimed, was not a pessimist. O’Neill “embraced suffering as an avenue toward exaltation” in his work and described himself a “tragic optimist” (p. 10). Dowling’s copiously researched book unravels this seemingly antithetical description, while nakedly examining O’Neill in all his glory and baseness, revealing a man of vast talent and heartbreaking failings. Those acquainted with O’Neill are most familiar with his stripped-down, massively dense late career dramas drawn from his family life and personal experiences; however, as Dowling demonstrates, O’Neill was a daringly experimental playwright critical of America’s failure to live up to its own exalted ideals. Aggressively capitalistic and imperialistic, bigoted, and prudish, America, in O’Neill’s view, wandered away from its ideals in its attraction to false idols, leaving his troubled characters in search, often in vain, for transcendence and meaning.

During decades of post-mortem scholarship on O’Neill, beginning in the aftermath of the first productions (Swedish and American) of his posthumous masterpiece, *Long Day’s Journey Into Night* (1956), some things have become clear. First, sixty years on, scholars still have

much to discover and the plays continue to offer considerable riches for critics and theatrical producers, not to mention audiences. Dowling’s biography benefits from prior scholarship (most particularly biographies by Arthur and Barbara Gelb [1962] and Louis Shaeffer [2000]), but also from his own dogged research on this elusive, brilliant, and contradictory genius of American drama. Dowling succeeds as a biographer, eschewing excessive analysis of O’Neill’s dramatic works, presuming, it would seem, that mountains of criticism have already plumbed those depths. He only delves into plays especially revealing of O’Neill’s life experiences—or those, like his race-themed plays, *The Emperor Jones* (1920) and *All God’s Chillun Got Wings* (1923)—that provide rich anecdotes (in these cases on censorship and racism).

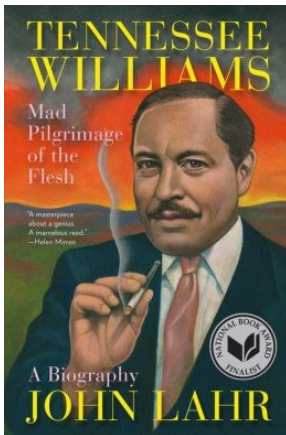
The result is a biography that equals its predecessors and, in the eye of this reader, supersedes them, at least insofar as reevaluating and knitting together the complex threads of O’Neill’s turbulent life. Failed marriages, alienation from his children (two sons committed suicide), financial woes, persistent health problems, strains of an ambitious workload, and, of course, the complex bond with his parents and brother memorably drawn in *Long Day’s Journey Into Night*, are explored with insight supported by concrete research. Dowling peels away hearsay in favor of proven accuracy and the result is a memorable portrait of his subject.

Dowling’s penetrating text is accompanied by multiple illustrations, refreshingly crisp reproductions unlike the usual blurry black masses too often seen in current publications, and the book is an important addition to O’Neill scholarship. Though his life was rife with tragedy, much he himself caused, Dowling leaves the reader impressed with the life and accomplishments of this tragic optimist.

James Fisher
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

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*Tennessee Williams:
Mad Pilgrimage of the
Flesh*
John Lahr
New York: W. W. Norton
& Company, 2014
736 pp.

John Lahr's much-anticipated and long-awaited biography of Tennessee Williams is also long overdue. In 1995, Lyle Leverich published a massive and copiously researched work, *Tom: The Unknown Tennessee Williams*, covering Williams's life from birth to the triumph of his first important play, *The Glass Menagerie*, in 1944. *Tom* was a labor of love for Leverich, but it could only be published after the 1994 death of Maria St. Just, Williams's mercurial friend and literary executor, who persistently blocked Leverich and others from access to Williams's writings. Leverich's 1999 death sadly prevented a *Tom* follow-up, thus paving the way for Lahr to reconstruct Williams's remarkable achievement as a dramatist and the complexities and contradictions of his turbulent life. Lahr wisely makes his book a stand-alone study covering Williams's entire life, cleverly using *The Glass Menagerie's* autobiographical elements to double back and sketch in Williams's early life. More importantly, this superb book is exceedingly well researched and elegantly written, superior as a result of Lahr's talents as a drama critic and writer of profiles for *The New Yorker*. The reader will find *Tennessee Williams: Mad Pilgrimage of the Flesh* a profoundly engaging journey into Williams's life and a masterful analysis of his dramatic accomplishments.

It hardly need be said that Williams, one of America's greatest playwrights, drew on his personal life for his dramas, whether fictionalizing essences of his mother and sister (and himself) in

The Glass Menagerie or returning to his early days as a budding playwright in *Something Cloudy, Something Clear* (1981), one of his final plays. Other Williams works feature a range of recurring themes: including the human desire for transcendence and spiritual fulfillment; the complex nexus of spiritual love and sex; ambivalence regarding homosexuality (his own and that of others); the collision of illusion and reality; and the need for compassion for the sensitive or damaged beings among us struggling to survive the harsh realities of existence.

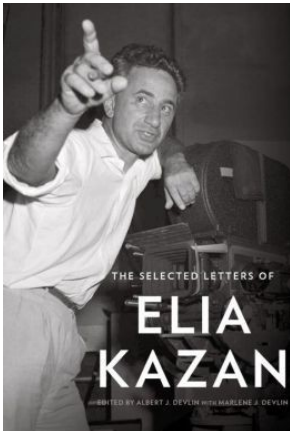
Lahr does not shy away from Williams's personal problems, addictions and health issues, promiscuity, and his occasionally troubled relationships with family, lovers, and collaborators. Lahr astutely weaves these into an uncommonly engrossing portrait of a tortured artist sometimes victimized by his own demons and by vicious critical attacks (some that were thinly veiled assaults on his homosexuality and others pointing out the undeniable decline in Williams's achievements after 1960). However, Lahr also makes a compelling case for the power of Williams's late plays, offering a fresh look at works retaining Williams's peerless lyricism and noting his bold experimentation with form, another hallmark of this most searching of dramatists.

Containing over six-hundred pages of text with nearly two-hundred additional pages of notes, bibliography, and chronology, Lahr's book is also filled with photos, many previously unpublished. *Tennessee Williams: Mad Pilgrimage of the Flesh* sets a high bar for future biographers and critics in its remarkable illumination of a tortured artist's life and work. For either the previously uninitiated or the sophisticated reader of Williams's work, this book is essential.

James Fisher
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

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The Selected Letters of Elia Kazan
Kazan, Elia
Edited by Albert J. Devlin ; with Marlene J. Devlin
Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2014
ISBN: 978-0307267160
649 pp.

Albert and Marlene Devlin's *The Selected Letters of Elia Kazan* paints a vivid portrait of the legendary director's life and times that is frequently at odds with the tightly controlled persona presented in his autobiography, *Elia Kazan: A Life*. The letters of Kazan take the reader behind the scenes of the Group Theatre, the world premieres of *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Death of A Salesman*, the film *East of Eden*, and a short lived attempt to found a national repertory theatre, with a candor that comes from private correspondence (some of it composed but never sent).

Kazan masterfully used the epistolary form to facilitate theatrical collaborations with writers Tennessee Williams, John Steinbeck, and Arthur Miller. One gets a sense of his technique of analyzing a script and directing rewrites on *Cat On A Hot Tin Roof*, *Viva Zapata*, and *On the Waterfront*. The greatest American playwrights of his era depended so much on his contributions that he had to discuss with Eric Bentley why he shouldn't be credited as a co-writer.

Kazan also maintained collaborative relationships with the finest actors of his day. Letters to James Dean, Marlon Brando, and Robert De Niro give insight into his technique of crafting finely controlled and emotionally spontaneous performances that became exemplars of a modern tradition of acting.

The letters also demonstrate Kazan's mastery of the film medium in all of its varied aspects through

his correspondence to studio heads, cameramen, scriptwriters and producers. He proved savvy in every element of the process, from developing the screenplay to marketing the final product. His detailed instructions on publicity and film release strategy show a side of his expertise previously unknown to all but his colleagues.

Perhaps most fascinating are the projects that never came to fruition. His letters to Richard Burton on a proposed Broadway production of "King Lear" (it was scuttled because Burton refused to perform the demanding role seven times a week), and descriptions of a Robert Bolt scripted adaptation of *The Oresteia* to be performed at Lincoln Center, simultaneously tantalize and frustrate with the prospect of theatrical gold never to be mined.

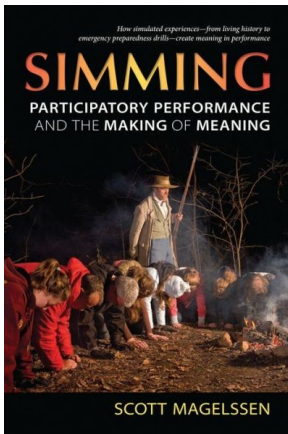
His controversial decision to name names to the House Un-American Activities Committee is documented more sparsely than would be desired. However, that may be a function of Kazan not referring to his testimony in his correspondence. The footnotes give an impartial account of the incident and more telling are the oblique references to the reaction of various colleagues and his unapologetic defense of his actions throughout the rest of his career.

Kazan's journey from his membership in the Group Theatre, where he was more renowned for the production of props than acting or directing, through his involvement with many classics of Postwar American Drama, his reign as the pre-eminent film maker of the fifties, and his later life rebirth as a novelist, is presented with a welcome lack of self-consciousness. We encounter Kazan not as a raconteur, but a working artist in constant motion. This volume is highly recommended for all theatre collections.

John Frank
Los Angeles Public Library

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Simming: Participatory Performance and the Making of Meaning
Scott Magelssen
Ann Arbor, MI:
University of Michigan Press, 2014.
ISBN: 9780472072149
249 pp.

Few scholarly books open with as enticing a hook as Scott Magelssen's excellent study of participatory performance, *Simming*. Magelssen seemed destined to write this book since his career as a simulator began in infancy when he subbed for an ersatz baby Jesus, stolen from a life-sized Christmas crèche in Wisconsin, to create, to the delight of on-lookers, a living nativity. He reprised his role as Christ, now as an adult, at Bible camps, and then went on to tackle multifarious role simulations as field research for this book, including a runaway African-American slave, illegal Mexican migrant, and the corpse of a Civil War soldier for a demonstration of embalming practices. That Magelssen not only immersed himself as a role-player in these simulated performances but also wrote about them with scholarly and artistic aplomb makes this book both good research and very good reading. It's a rare work of scholarship that is also a page-turner. I couldn't wait to see what outlandish situation he would get himself into next, and equally importantly, how he would contextualize these bizarre experiences within the frames of performance studies and U.S. cultural phenomena of the early twenty-first century.

Magelssen borrows the term "simming" from the online gaming universe, defined here as "deliberate, embodied practice" within "live, three-dimensional, immersive environments" where "spectator-participants engage in the intentionally simulated production of some aspect of real or imagined society, recognized as such by all parties" (5).

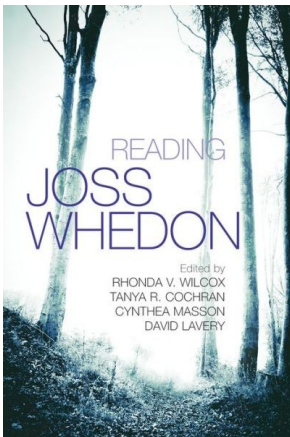
The book is organized into three broad sections that demonstrate how simming can be employed to explore past, present, and future situations, both real and imagined. Part one describes tourist simmings at locations such as Old Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts and Conner Prairie interactive history park in Indiana. Part two delves into learner-driven simming that helps participants bear witness to the present. The participants are given information, invited to role play, presented with dilemmas, and encouraged to make their own choices based on their recently acquired knowledge. This focus on deep learning and the agency afforded the actor-simulators is further expanded in part three, where engagement involves rehearsing for the future. In this section, Magelssen investigates real-life entities—schools, churches, the military—that employ simulations to prepare participants for life-and-death situations. These include bio-chemical attacks, mock drunk-driving car crashes, and war in Iraq and Afghanistan. In each scenario throughout the book, Magelssen tells a compelling story spun from personal involvement and observations, investigates the issues from a multitude of perspectives, and cites prominent theoretical scholarship that supports, critiques, or interrogates the work and its potential efficacy as a tool for learning and/or effective change.

What is most remarkable about this book is not so much its contribution to the growing field of performance studies—and certainly it has a proud place in that literature—but its penetrating study of early twenty-first-century American culture and politics. It is a must for serious graduate collections but is also a fascinating, accessible study for all readers.

Martha S. LoMonaco
Fairfield University

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Reading Joss Whedon
Edited by Rhonda V. Wilcox, Tanya R. Cochran, Cynthia Masson & David Lavery
Syracuse University Press, 2014
ISBN: 9780815633648
461 p.

Beginning with the 1997 premiere of the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Joss Whedon has benefited from a devoted yet critical following. Within a couple of years of the show's premiere, episodes, characters, and even lines of dialogue were voraciously dissected and analyzed in small online communities such as *WHEDONESQUE*, a website solely dedicated to discussions of Whedon's creative work. While it is not uncommon for a television show to generate a passionate following, what is remarkable here is that Whedon's work also piqued the interest of scholars and academics. Just two years after *Buffy* aired, articles appeared in academic journals analyzing the television show. By the time the final episode aired in 2003 "Whedon Studies" had become a small yet fervent discipline spawning articles, conferences and even its own peer-reviewed journal *Slayage*. *Reading Joss Whedon*, a critical anthology edited by some of the architects of Whedon Studies, offers an exciting, engaging snapshot of the work produced by scholars in this growing area of study.

The title suggests this book will examine the entirety of Whedon's oeuvre and for the most part it succeeds in doing so. The book is divided into sections, the first four of which cover Whedon's major television works *Buffy*, *Angel* (a spin-off of *Buffy*), *Firefly* (along with its follow-up film *Serenity*) and *Dollhouse*. Another section touches upon Whedon's work in other media such as film (*Cabin in the Woods*, *The Avengers*), web series (*Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*), and comic books (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer Season 8*), with

the final section devoted to studies examining themes manifested in several works. To aid researchers, the editors have provided a second table of contents that organizes the chapters by topic (narrative and writing, visuals and directing, myth, gender, etc.). Even the film adaptation of *Much Ado about Nothing*, the most recent work completed prior to the book's publication, is accounted for in an excellent introduction by Wilcox, who uses the film to investigate recurring themes and motifs in Whedon's work. While it would have been nice for a chapter to examine Whedon's other work in comics, such as *Sugarshock!* or *Fray*, this is a minor complaint in an otherwise comprehensive work.

Not only is the coverage extensive, the scholarship is universally excellent as well. Of particular interest to theatre scholars may be Cynthia Masson's chapter "What the Hell?: *Angel's* "The Girl in Question," which positions the piece as an existential drama, comparing it to *Waiting for Godot* and *No Exit*. While all the chapters are insightful, the final section offers the most exciting scholarship and draws from all of Whedon's work to investigate concepts of ethics, identity construction and memory. The final section includes Tanya R. Cochran's thorough account of the field of Whedon Studies to date.

The accessible subject matter married with rigorous, well-researched academic writing offers a work that is an ideal entry point for undergraduate researchers in critical studies. This work is highly recommended for libraries supporting programs in television, film or popular culture.

Michael Saar
Lamar University

Calendar of Upcoming Events

February

20

Winter Board Meeting

[The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts](#)

111 Amsterdam Avenue
New York, New York

All [Officers and members of the Executive Board](#), [Ex Officio members](#), and [Committee Chairs](#) are invited to attend Board Meetings, held three times a year.

October

16

Fall Board Meeting

[The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts](#)

111 Amsterdam Avenue
New York, New York

All [Officers and members of the Executive Board](#), [Ex Officio members](#), and [Committee Chairs](#) are invited to attend Board Meetings, held three times a year.