

From the Department Chair

Winter is supposed to be the time of year when we bury ourselves in creature comforts and hibernate. Not in Performance Studies! I cannot remember a busier winter quarter. At the pace we're going, I don't know how much steam we'll have left for spring. Alas, we press forward.

Besides the typical researching, teaching, and service that we're always engaged in, we have been creating new and exciting venues for the presentation of new work. This has mostly come from the initiative of our graduate students who created not one, but two outlets to showcase performance and to engage the broader Northwestern community. The "On Our Feet" workshops, created and led by graduate students, have been very popular and provide our graduate students a place to share their areas of expertise in performance. Also, the Performance Salon: Co-P, also the brainchild of our graduate cohort, harkens back to the department's roots when it held annual faculty performance hours. The current iteration continues that tradition, but also showcases the work of students and faculty alike. The energy and commitment of our graduate students continues to mark why our department is one of the best in the world.

I'm also excited about the guest artists who will present in the department this quarter. Lenelle Moïse and Aishah Simmons are two extraordinarily gifted artists whose creative work is inspired by their commitments to social justice and equality. In addition to guest performances, we're also continuing our faculty lecture series with Ramón Rivera-Servera on March 3.

We also have lots to celebrate: D. Soyini Madison's new book, *Acts of Activism*, is out (see p. 3), Mary Zimmerman is directing her third opera at the Met in NYC (see p. 5), and our students are winning all kinds of awards (see p. 4).

No, we're not hibernating this winter. Instead, we're continuing to produce scholarship and artistry at a feverish pitch. And that's a good thing. I can only imagine what we'll do in spring!

—E. Patrick Johnson, Chair

P.S. Don't forget to come see the MA recitals on March 13 at 7:00 p.m.

Visiting Artist Lenelle Moïse performs



Visiting artist Lenelle Moïse performs her acclaimed one-woman show **Womb-Words, Thirsting**, February 19-20, 2010, in the Alvina Krause Studio, as part of the Mellon Foundation-funded **solo/black/woman** series. A discussion will follow each night's performance, led by Wesleyan University Professor Gina Ulysse.

Womb-Words, Thirsting fuses spoken word, storytelling and song in a high-energy event that mixes "a brew full of womanist Vodou jazz, queer theory hip-hop, spoken word, song and movement, an interactive performance of patchwork poetic storytelling delivered—slam-style—from the gut." The performance "re-conceives memory, dances revolution, reclaims F-words and boldly speaks out about growing up immigrant, working-class, politicized and queer(ed)."

Haitian-American artist-activist Lenelle Moïse is an award-winning poet, playwright, screenwriter, essayist, college lecturer and nationally-touring performance artist. She creates intimate, fiery, politicized texts about the intersection of race, class, gender, sexuality, culture and resistance. Fueled by the motto "Words rouse worlds," she regularly presents interactive performances and workshops that empower diverse groups of people to creatively speak up and act for civil rights and social change. Her body of work addresses feminism, poetry, the spoken word movement, LGBTQ identities, urban theatre aesthetics, immigration and

(continued on p. 2)

Aishah Simmons lecture and film screening

Filmmaker Aishah Shahidah Simmons will screen and discuss her film *No! The Rape Documentary* on Thursday, March 11, 2010 at 5:30 p.m. in the Annie May Swift Hall Auditorium. Produced and directed over a period of eleven years by Aishah Shahidah Simmons, an incest and rape survivor, the groundbreaking documentary features testimonials from African-American women rape survivors who defy victimization. Additionally, violence prevention advocates, theologians, sociologists, historians, anthropologists, and other leading scholars and human rights activists provide an interdisciplinary context with which to examine sexual violence in African-American communities. They also explore how rape is used as a weapon of homophobia.

NO! is a Black feminist educational organizing tool, which is being used in the global movement to end violence against women and children. Since its official release in 2006, *NO!* has been screened and distributed to racially and ethnically diverse audiences at film festivals, community centers, universities, high schools, correctional facilities, rape crisis centers, battered women's shelters, and conferences throughout the United States, in Canada, Italy, Spain, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Rwanda, Kenya, Nepal, South Africa, Jordan, Burkina Faso, Peru, Colombia, Guadeloupe, Venezuela, Brazil, India, France, England, and Mexico.



Riot Acts film screening

The department sponsored a screening, organized by PhD student Elias Krell, of the new film *Riot Acts: Flaunting Gender Deviance in Music Performance*, on January 7th, in Louis Hall. The film, directed by independent filmmaker Madsen Minax, was released in November of 2009, and is a “transfabulous rockumentary representing the whole lives of transgender and gender variant musicians, through a first-hand perspective of the intersections between gender performance and stage performance, culminating with the notions that identities and bodies are undeniably political, and the trans experience isn’t always one of tragedy, but one of creativity and joy.” The event was co-sponsored by the Gender Studies Program, the Graduate School, and the Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities. The screening was a great success, with more than 55 people in attendance, from the Northwestern community and beyond, and was followed by an engaging talk-back session with the director and co-producer.

Lenelle Moïse (cont.)

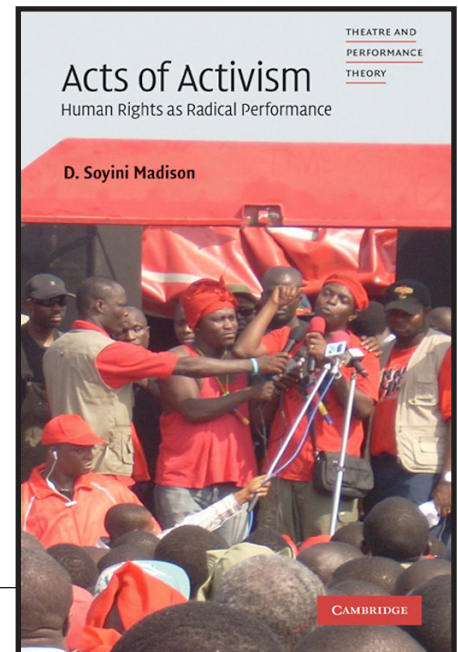
Haitian-American culture.

Moïse holds a B.A. from Ithaca college and an MFA in playwriting from Smith College. She has been a guest artist at the United Nations General Assembly Hall, the Culture Project, the Omega Institute and dozens of colleges and universities including Brown, Carleton, Colby, Cornell, Dartmouth, Evergreen State, Louisiana State, Mount Holyoke, Oberlin, Ohio State, Skidmore, Smith, Wesleyan, Williams and Yale. She is a recipient of the 2008 Black Women Playwrights Group Award and the 2004 James Baldwin Memorial Award in Playwriting, among others. Her writing is published in a number of anthologies, including *Word Warriors: 35 Women Leaders in the Spoken Word Revolution* and *We Don't Need Another Wave: Dispatches from the Next Generation of Feminists*. Her debut spoken word CD *Madivinez* won the 2007 Patchwork Majority Radio Award for best solo album. At age 20, she co-wrote Bolivian director Rodrigo Bellot's film *Sexual Dependency*.



D. Soyini Madison's *Acts of Activism* published

Acts of Activism: Human Rights as Radical Performance, by Professor D. Soyini Madison, published by Cambridge University Press, presents the neglected yet compelling and necessary story of local activists in South Saharan Africa who employ modes of performance as tactics of resistance and intervention in their day-to-day struggles for human rights and social justice. The dynamic relationships between performance and activism are illustrated in three case studies. Act One presents a battle between tradition and modernity as the bodies of African women are caught in the cross-fire. Act Two focuses on Water democracy as activists fight for safe, accessible public water as a human right. Act Three examines the efficacy of street performance and Theatre for Development in the oral histories of Ghanaian gender activists committed to the well-being of women and children. Local activism is illuminated and extended as the experiences are translated for the public stage. Unique to this book is the continuing juxtaposition between the everyday performances on the ground of local activism and their staged enactments before theatre audiences in Ghana and the U.S.A. *Acts of Activism* demonstrates how these disparate sites of performance cohere in the service of rights, justice, and activism.



“If this world is badly broken, *Acts of Activism* provides some powerful subtle ways in which everyday humans might hope to mend it. This book transports you to small spectacles of dumbfounding damage then sifts their routine horrors to release whisperings that heal. Unassumingly rigorous, accessibly written, profoundly practical, these *Acts of Activism* are seductively set to inspire a radical intelligence of feeling that could well bring about change, perhaps to what matters most; that murmuring in our hearts”

Baz Kershaw author of *The Politics of Performance*, *The Radical in Performance*, and *Theatre Ecology*



Guest lecture presented by David Román

The Critical Studies in Theatre and Performance Cluster presented a talk by David Román, Professor of English and American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California. Titled “‘The Hydrants are Open’: Latinos, Broadway, and In the Heights,” the talk was given on February 4th in the Performance Studies Seminar Room in Annie May Swift Hall.

David Román’s research focuses on theatre and performance studies, with an emphasis on contemporary U.S. culture; American studies, with an emphasis on race, sexuality, and the performing arts; Latina/o studies, with an emphasis on popular culture; and queer studies, with an emphasis on archival practices, subcultural histories, and artistic production, primarily in twentieth-century America. He has written and edited books about AIDS and the arts, Latino studies, and contemporary US culture and performance. His current projects include a book on the racial politics of American theatre in the 1940s; a study of the memoirs of pre-Stonewall gay and lesbian activists; and a historical project

on AIDS and cultural production in the 1980s and early 1990s.

David Román is the author of *Performance in America: Contemporary US Culture and the Performing Arts* (2005, Duke University Press); *O Solo Homo: The New Queer Performance* (1998, Grove Press); and *Acts of Intervention: Performance, Gay Culture, & AIDS* (1998, Indiana University Press), which received the ATHE Award for Outstanding Book of the Year.

Graduate Student News

Hilary Cooperman was awarded the prize for best Scientific Paper in the competition for Research on the History of Banking and Finance 2008-09, for her co-authored article, “Branding the Riders: ‘Marlboro Country’ and the Formulation of a New Middle Class in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.” The award was organized by the Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Center in collaboration with the European Association for Banking History (EABH) and the History Foundation of Turkey (Tarih Vakfi).

Kareem Khubchandani curated “KalaKranti: An Evening of Queer South Asian Performance,” for Trikone-Chicago in January, at @mosphere Bar in Chicago. He also performed his solo show “Material Boy” at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in February.

Barnaby King will participate in the Ibero-American Theater Festival in Bogotá, Colombia, in March, 2010.

Elias Krell will present his paper entitled “Identity in Process... Voice and the Transvocal Spectrum” at

the University of Southern California’s “Spectrums” Conference, hosted by the School of Cinematic Arts at the end of February. Elias also organized a screening of “Riot Acts: Flaunting Gender Deviance in Music Performance” (see p. 2).

Greg Mitchell received the Kenneth Payne Prize for graduate student research at the American Anthropological Association annual meeting in Philadelphia, where he also presented a paper on a special AAA Presidential Panel focused on the future of queer anthropology. He has been nominated for NU’s Graduate Instructor of the Year for his fall quarter course “Sexual Economies.”

Munjulika Rahman received third prize in the IFTR/FIRT (International Federation for Theatre Research) New Scholars’ Prize competition for her essay “Beauty like Rudra’s Thunder: Masculinity, Femininity, and the Nation in Tagore’s Chitrangada.” The award will be presented at the IFTR 2010 World Conference to be held in Munich, July 26-31, 2010.

Winter Quarter Performance Hours

Nervous Conditions

Adapted and directed by Lisa Biggs and Lori Baptista from the novel by Zimbabwean author Tsitsi Dangarembga, “Nervous Conditions” is set in Zimbabwe during the Second Chimurenga (Struggle for Independence), and follows Tambudzai, a teenage girl from Umtali province whose family reluctantly sends her to a Christian missionary school. Following the death of her older brother, responsibility falls upon Tambudzai’s shoulders as the next eldest child to improve the financial situation of her branch of the family. However, interactions with her Westernized cousins and with a vitriolic uncle at the mission set off an avalanche of unexpected consequences. Tambudzai’s story lends insight into the struggle for liberation waged by Zimbabweans against colonial rule, and forefronts questions about the position of women within the struggle and the new and emerging Zimbabwean society. Dangarembga presents Tambudzai’s “coming of age” story without detailed discussion of the struggle for independence waging across the country. Performances were Friday, January 29, at 8:00 p.m., and Saturday, January 30, at 2:00 and 8:00 p.m., in the Annie May Swift Hall Studio.

Happy Families—A “Clown” Show

Directed by Barnaby King and devised by an ensemble of clowns, “Happy Families” offers a light-hearted but critical exploration of our cultural attitudes to animals. How do we look at animals? How do we use them to define ourselves in various ways, both symbolic and material? How can we justify the animal/human distinction?

The performance uses a theatrical approach not often seen in Northwestern’s theatre department, combining physical comedy, intimate clowning, audience interaction, and dramatic spectacle. The actors have been trained and directed in clown techniques by PhD graduate student Barnaby King, and each one has developed a unique animal-inspired character, based on in-depth individual research, and an intensive ensemble creative process. Perhaps best described as an encounter rather than a “show,” this performance intends both to challenge and delight. Performances are Friday, March 5, at 8:00 p.m., and Saturday, March 6, at 3:00 and 8:00 p.m.



Faculty and Staff News

Mary Zimmerman is beginning technical rehearsals at the Metropolitan Opera in New York for *Armida*, a Rossini opera with Renee Fleming. Rehearsals proper start in March, and opera will open April 12, 2010. There will be international movie theatre broadcasting of the show on May 1st.

Mary's play *Metamorphoses*, which originated at Northwestern, was named by *Time* magazine as one of the top 10 Best Plays or Musicals of the Decade.

Ramón Rivera-Servera's article "Musical Trans(actions): Intersections in Reggaetón," appears in the journal *Trans: Transcultural Music Review from the Spanish Society for Ethnomusicology* (www.sibetrans.com/trans/trans13/art11.htm).

He also participated in a round table on Latino aesthetics as part of the National Conversations Project from the National Council of Latino Arts and Culture hosted at the University of Pennsylvania. The conversation will result in a policy white paper on Latino arts and cultures in the United States to be published later in the spring.

E. Patrick Johnson gave the keynote address at the Black Gay Men's Research Group Conference held in Atlanta on January 14th. He also was the convocation speaker at Carleton College on February 5th.

Department Assistant **Alan Shefsky** presented "The Poem's Body/The Body's Poem: On Poetry and Illness," a talk and poetry reading, in Carol Simpson Stern's PERF_ST 210-1 Performance of Poetry class Tuesday, January 12th.

New Course Offerings for Spring Quarter

Two newly developed courses in Performance Studies will be offered this spring quarter:

PERF_ST 335-0 Social Art Tactics, developed and taught by Ramón Rivera-Servera, will explore the historical and theoretical foundations of social art practice and provide students the opportunity to develop performance-based interventions on pressing social issues of their choosing. As a genre, social art practice is concerned with applying the skills of artistic disciplines to the development of activist public interventions. Students will be exposed to artwork focused on social change in a variety of genres from performance and theatre to digital media, relational art, and photography. The goal of the course is to develop historical and theoretical understanding of activist art practices and to rehearse techniques for the development of public art projects. The course will alternate between lecture, discussion, and performance/art workshops.



PERF_ST 330-0 Topics: Theatre for Development in Perspective

The course will examine Theatre for Development (TFD) as a rhetorical and as a performance tool to advance notions of "development." The general purpose of TFD is to draw upon the culture and traditions of the performers and/or audiences involved; oral history, testimony, music, dance, puppetry, parade, festival, carnival, storytelling, clowning, socio-dramas, poetry, prose, everyday symbolic action; to educate, edify, and provide pertinent information regarding an urgent political or social issue thereby enhancing human, political, and social development. TFD takes up such issues as: environmental justice, state and trans-generational violence, water democracy, health and HIV Aids, literacy, and human rights violations. The course will examine specific TFD case studies and see how development discourse is being deployed, its consequences and its benefactors. The course will also examine the critiques of TFD relative to concerns of collaboration, participation, and community involvement as is affects the process of participatory performance practices (PPP). Students will examine TFD case studies across world communities including the United States however there is a particular emphases on south-Saharan Africa. Students will also work in groups to present examples of TFD in action.

Students and faculty gather for Performance Salon

Performance Studies PhD students hosted the inaugural departmental Performance Salon: **Co-P**, on Friday, January 22, 2010, in the Alvina Krause Studio. Co-P was conceived as an informal evening of food, drink, and performances—prepared or spontaneous—by and for undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty. The evening allowed space for any and all to improvise, rehearse, read, sing, act, enact, adapt, direct, dance, move, create, make, alter; an opportunity to perform for and which each other, to revisit our favorite performances from PERF_ST 103 and 410, to try something totally “unlike yourself.”

“On our Feet” Workshops Continue



Students in the department continue the “On Our Feet” skills-sharing workshops begun last quarter. Workshops take place in the Alvina Krause Studio and are open to all free of charge, though registration (at kareem.khubchandani@u.northwestern.edu) is requested.

Say What? A Performance Poetry Workshop

Javon Johnson and Sage Xaxua

Saturday January 30, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

An interactive writing, discussion, and performance workshop about performance/spoken word and slam poetry exploring techniques, styles, politics, aesthetics, and cultural differences. Everyone—all ages, backgrounds and levels of experience—is welcome and encouraged to participate. Javon and Sage are both seasoned poets

and performers. Javon has performed with Def Poetry Jam, and Sage has conducted workshops for numerous Chicago-based non-profits such as Young Chicago Authors.

Original Performance from Non-dramatic Texts

Chloë Johnston (with members of The Laboratory for the Development of Substitute Materials)

Saturday, February 27, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

A workshop exploring a variety of techniques for creating performance from non-dramatic texts, working as solo artists and in collaboration with others. Using autobiographical writing, movement improvisation, and object work, the workshop facilitators will teach participants how to generate a lot of material quickly and then start the process of editing to create a polished performance. Unlike some ensembles, where the artists work closely to create a uniformed performance style, The Laboratory for the Development of Substitute Materials



is committed to experimenting with a variety of methods to create eclectic, provocative performances and are especially interested in the integration of disparate texts and topics. Chloë has worked as an actor, writer, and director in Chicago since 1999 at various theatres including Steppenwolf, Lookingglass, CollaborAction, the Neo-Futurists and Organic.

The Department of Performance Studies Northwestern University

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Core Faculty: Margaret Thompson Drewal, Paul Edwards (Director of Undergraduate Studies), E. Patrick Johnson (Chair), D. Soyini Madison (Director of Graduate Studies), Ramon Rivera-Servera, Carol Simpson Stern, Mary Zimmerman

Courtesy Appointments: Tracy Davis, Micaela di Leonardo, Susan Manning, Jan Radway, Sandra L. Richards, Jeffrey Sconce, Mary Weismantel, Harvey Young

Newsletter Editor/Designer: Alan Shefsky.