Celebrating the Scholarship and Activism of Dwight Conquergood with *Cultural Struggles*

This two-day symposium featured lectures on performance theory, ethnography and praxis, including a keynote address by Joseph Roach, Sterling Professor of Theater and English, chair of the Theater Studies Advisory Committee and director of Theater at Yale University, and a Wallace Bacon presentation by L.M. Bogad, Director of the Center for Artistic Activism, West Coast. Attendees were also invited to attend “She Crosses the Road. . . .” a Reader’s Theater adaptation based on the life and works of Dwight Conquergood.

Conquergood, a former associate professor of performance studies at Northwestern University, died in Fall 2004. He was known for his groundbreaking research in performance studies, critical ethnography and cultural studies. Conquergood conducted much of his research living with the people he was studying, including in refugee camps in Thailand and the Gaza Strip and in immigrant and impoverished neighborhoods in Chicago. His work in all these settings extended far beyond scholarship into advocacy and activism.

The symposium began Friday, May 16th at 8pm in the Alvina Krause Studio, and concluded with closing remarks by Renee Alexander Craft of University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill on Saturday, May 17th at the John Evans Alumni Center.

Summer Institute on Creative Ethnography
July 7-11, 2014

The Center for Global Culture and Communication and the Department of Performance Studies are hosting a five-day institute on creative ethnography as inspired by the work of performance scholar and ethnographer, Dwight Conquergood.

The seminar will examine ethnographic praxis through the lens of performance on several different registers, including documentary film, dance, oral history and staged performance.

Seminar participants will work with distinguished scholars and artists in workshop, seminar, and lecture formats. These scholars include John L. Jackson (York University), D. Soyini Madison (Northwestern), E. Patrick Johnson (Northwestern) and Ramón Rivera-Servera (Northwestern).
This year Professor D. Soyini Madison steps down from her position as Department Chair in Performance Studies. In a conversation with Rae Langes, a graduate student in the department, Professor Madison reflects on the projects and relationships developed during her appointment as Chair.

RL: So I am curious about how you’ve managed to direct and produce a large scale performance each year, publish a book and several essays, and teach both graduate and undergraduate courses during your appointment—labor that’s not necessarily associated with the position of Department Chair. What are some of the strategies and tactics you used to maintain a balance amongst so many different projects?

DSM: I see directing performances—whether at the Block Museum or at TIC [Theater and Interpretation Center] and teaching graduate seminars as well as building the GEN CMN 203 class as a reflection on the progress of our department. I don’t see my role as Department Chair as separate from those other things. Moreover, being Department Chair for me has always been more about facilitating the work of my colleagues and, as importantly, the graduate students so that their efforts are successful, their work is supported, and they get what they need. This is, first and foremost, what a department chair should do: have a vision for the department where everyone feels supported, inspired, and ultimately committed to the relevance and strength of the department. Yes, you must make sure the time sheets are submitted; you must report to the Dean; you must represent your department at administrative meetings and so forth. Those things are expected, but what makes it all worth it are those moments when I can say, “Yes. I can grant funds for the graduate student project; or, Yes. I will support the time and space needed for a colleague’s written research and/or performance work.” I have always seen my role as the Department Chair as helping others to get done the good work that needs to be done, and to imagine ways they can create other kinds of possibilities for themselves—whether it’s a graduate conference, a public performance, an award winning book, a new teaching curriculum—as Department Chair you can help make all this happen. So, these other things that I’m doing: teaching, developing courses, directing, and publishing my own work are related. If I weren’t also active as a scholar, teacher, and artist I think I would have less empathy for my colleagues whose productivity requires particular kinds of support. I would also be a poor representative for our Department.

RL: It sounds like part of what fuels you and gives you the energy to do your own work is this feedback loop that happens between you and your colleagues and you and your students, through the duties you execute as Chair. So, in a way it’s energizing—one thing is energizing the other.

DSM: Absolutely. One thing is energizing the other and making the other thing possible. If I weren’t devoted to teaching, or engaging with my students, or didn’t care about my colleagues—I’d be a mess of a department chair. Being a department chair means you care about your students, you’re committed to your advisees, you respect your colleagues, and you’re aware of the work they’re doing. I suppose there has been some ethnographic practice on my part in terms of what’s happening in the department at varying levels. Like you were saying today, you got this award, you got this good news…all of these bits and pieces of good news that facilitate our work, all of these varying opportunities that enhance our research and performance interests, all of these conversations that are going on in the department that fuel our performance studies agendas, all of this is an admixture that I must pay attention to and be aware of as it circulates in the department. This is what makes a good department chair. Not just reporting to the Dean, but facilitating this interpretive performance community, to do what it needs to do individually and collectively, to have the support and the resources of the Chair, to make good things happen. So if I have a junior faculty that’s concerned with what’s going on in a seminar, I’m going to be concerned too. Just like a good ethnographer, as a chair, I’m also a co-performative witness, I do what you do with you. We’re in this together performing what it means to be the Department of Performance Studies at Northwestern. I teach, I publish, I read, I worry about the next article, the student in class. I’m in that mix with all of you here, even though I’m Chair, because we’re all part of this greater whole. This other thing, this administrative labor, is always in the service of the performance activity that is...
going on in these halls, and making sure that everybody’s feeling supported.

RL: That reminds me of this quote that’s been circulating since Maya Angelou’s death: “people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” Small moments of enthusiasm and interest from others go a really long way and definitely help to fuel my work. Those are the moments that help me pull through when I’m losing steam…In a sense the administrative work not only helps everyone else but it makes a space and support to continue your own work, either directly or indirectly. Initially, the question for me was, how do you manage all of this, because it’s a lot of work, so I was thinking more about practicality in terms of strategies and tactics.

DSM: Oh…I don’t know. I just do it.

RL: I suppose you have to adapt to each situation, so there is no one strategy, there is no one tactic.

DSM: I suppose if there is, it’s not so much a strategy and a tactic, as it is a philosophy. And the philosophy is that when I’m making performances, I’m making performances about those social and intellectual questions that are a part of my research. And the performances clarify the questions, and the questions clarify the performances. So if that’s a tactic, the tactic is making sure that I’m not over here talking about oranges and over there talking about elephants, over here talking about highways and over there talking about trees. It doesn’t mean that your focus is narrow, it just means that you have a commitment to a discipline, a particular range of knowledge—the questions may take different forms, different iterations, different mobilities and logics. But they are overarching.

RL: So you’re saying the prolific-ness of your work is in part made possible by your commitment to a question that you explore through all of these different avenues…

DSM: That’s right.

RL: As Department Chair, you had the opportunity to interact with colleagues and students, and artists and activists, from various disciplines and institutions. As a result, have you developed any lasting collaborative relationships? Can you talk about any new relationships that emerged for you?

DSM: I realized there are people on this campus who I didn’t know about before who work very hard to make this school and this campus go. Whether it’s the people developing the diversity requirement, or helping us establish our new courses, those in The Graduate School working tirelessly to make sure the graduate students are supported. There’s people in the Dean’s Office that are really thinking through programs and opportunities for our undergraduates, graduates, and our faculty to be more effective in the classroom…There are people behind the scenes making so much happen and available for all of us. For example, in Dialogue, which is a publication from the School of Communication, we were represented this month in this beautiful issue put together by Lori Rader-Day and an amazing group of staff behind the scenes. Much of what goes well in the classroom, in our research, in the opportunities that the university offers, is a result of the labor and care of very special administrators and staff. These things don’t fall down from the sky.

RL: There’s been several events during your time as Chair and you’ve accomplished a lot of work as Chair. Are there any things in particular that you hope will have a lasting effect on the department, or will continue to be talked about and reflected upon, remembered?

DSM: One that I am so proud of is the graduate student conference, [In Bodies We Trust], you guys presented in October. That was extraordinary. You raised this really important question around performance and political economy, and emotion and the senses. That’s probably one of the most important questions that we’re grappling with in performance scholarship. You all took that up and gave it a name, and then sought out junior scholars, and students, and faculty and senior scholars to come around and have a conversation that was clear and vastly relevant. To do that was extraordinary to me because you’re not only grappling with these urgent questions and these ideas, but you were really building friendships, and you were building comradeship, and you were also building these critical international communities. There were many young scholars whose work expanded issues beyond these borders. It was so wonderful to see all of you doing this work as professionals that could build institutions. The institution of the conference. And I do not want to use the word institution lightly. The conference was structured, where people had their
duties and responsibilities, a distribution of labor that was substantiated by very clear actions, a common space and vision for a future that is going to take you, not only into the shared work of being a graduate student, but that will resonate into your careers. I saw that happening, in the way that introductions were made, people were made aware of other people’s intellectual and artistic passions—that just didn’t stand still. I don’t think any of that ended when the conference ended.

RL: We still have a live Facebook page where people continue to post for other events.

DSM: I was so proud of that conference. I was so proud that you brought us together—brought relationships into fruition. All of you created something that appears everlasting.

RL: Thank you. It was a great experience, to help organize and participate in. A lot of people who organized also presented work. And then also to see different students at different levels in the program, and this is a little bit off the topic of you being Chair, but take Jasmine Mahmoud, for example, I’m constantly learning from her. On the one hand, we’re equal, we’re both students, but on the other hand, she, and other students like Meiver de la Cruz, are ahead of me in the program, and I’m constantly learning through them as well as the faculty and people who have their PhDs already. That was a pretty powerful aspect of the collaboration for me.

You already articulated, in a way, how being the Chair has influenced how you view your research and pedagogy in significant ways...

DSM: Sometimes it makes me miss it more [laughs]. Being Department Chair also means that you have a responsibility, and you think about that responsibility. Did I turn in that form, or that information to that person when I was supposed to? Or did I respond to that email, or did I respond to this inquiry? There’s a lot of responsibility that is wonderful and pleasurable, where you help people flourish in their work. But you also have the responsibility for the bureaucratic deadlines, for the administrative demands, and you want to make sure you don’t drop the ball. I will support my colleagues now in different ways as a faculty member free of those administrative demands, but all the wiser for them. I can support my advisees, graduate students, and undergraduates without the split attention and concern about dropping an administrative ball. I can be more fully engaged, more fully connected. Lovely!

RL: So it gave you a renewed sense of appreciation for your research and pedagogy outside of being Chair.

DSM: Mmm hmmm.

RL: In a way that answers the last question I have for you, which is what are some of the most valuable things you learned in your time as Department Chair, but it seems as though a lot of the interview has been you articulating just that.

DSM: I can tell you some of the things I’m most proud of as Chair. I am so very proud of establishing [GEN CMN] 203, “Performance, Culture, and Communication.” I think it is a vastly important addition to our undergraduate curriculum. I’m proud of Shayna Silverstein being on board as a new faculty member. I’m also very proud of our new undergraduate curriculum under Josh [Chambers-Letson] and how we’re revamping our curriculum in a way that’s expansive of what performance studies is and does as well as providing even more opportunities for our undergraduate students to work with more of our faculty. I’m proud of the new module, “Performance, Activism and Human Rights” that we incorporated into the undergraduate curriculum. I’m proud of the range and varieties of public performance on campus and throughout the Chicagoland area by our students and faculty. And, finally, I’m proud of the brilliance of our undergraduate majors and the ethnographic work—locally and globally—where our graduate students are so deeply and ethically engaged. I feel like all these things matter.

RL: Yeah. And I think that other students might agree with me in saying that we’re proud of those accomplishments in the department also, and are excited for them not only in that they exist but in that they also pave the way for us to do more nuanced, experimental work in the field now and in the future. All of those things that you listed break open new pathways for us to explore as future professors, scholars, and artists continuing to make performance. So thank you.
Faculty Updates

Joshua Takano Chambers-Letson


Paul Edwards

Prof. Paul Edwards won a Non-Equity Joseph Jefferson Award for his adaptation of *Peyton Place* for CityLitTheater in 2013 and was nominated again in 2014 in the category of New Adaptation for the script of *A Study in Scarlet*, produced in 2013 by Promethean Theatre Ensemble.

Marcela A. Fuentes

Prof. Marcela A. Fuentes is completing her book manuscript *In the Event of Performance: Bodies, Digital Media, and Activism in the Americas*. She presented work from this project, “Performance Constellations: Memory and Activism in Digital Culture” and “#performance: New Technologies and Political Praxis. A Hemispheric Perspective,” at PSi and the Latin American Studies Association International Congress. Prof. Fuentes performed her solo show “Sujeto Transnacional” in Buenos Aires at the “My Documents” Biodrama Series and the Arts at the Crossroads Conference organized by Universidad de Buenos Aires.

E. Patrick Johnson


*Prof. Johnson with Jomama Jones at the Otto Rene Castillo Awards ceremony. Photo Credit: Ronald L. Glassman*
D. Soyini Madison

Prof. D. Soyini Madison developed the new general education course, Performance, Culture and Communication and the new performance studies undergraduate module, Performance, Activism and Human Rights. In June 2013 she received the Alice Kaplan Digital Humanities Award and in November 2013 the Leslie Irene Coger NCA Award for Distinguished Performance. Prof. Madison directed three performances: Labor Rites at Theatre and Interpretation Center (May 2012), Never A City So Real at Block Museum for One Book One Northwestern (June 2013), and The Left Front: Radical Art in the 1930s at Block Museum (February 2013). In March 2013, she wrote a poetic script based on the history of the Braceros Program for Brazos y Abrazos, choreographed by Joel Valentin-Martinez. Prof. Madison also co-edited African Dress: Fashion, Agency, Performance with Karen T. Hansen (Bloombsy Academic 2013), and wrote the Forwards to Black Performance Theory, edited by Thomas F. De Frantz and Anita Gonzalez (Duke University Press 2014), and solo/black/woman: scripts, interviews, essays, edited by E. Patrick Johnson and Ramón Rivera-Servera (Northwestern University Press 2013).

Ramón H. Rivera-Servera

Prof. Ramón H. Rivera-Servera received the Lambda Literary Book Award in LGBTQ Studies, the Latino Studies Book Award from the Latin American Studies Association, the Outstanding Publication Award from the Congress on Research in Dance, and a special citation for the de la Torre Bueno Book Prize from the Society of Dance History Scholars for Performing Queer Latinidad: Dance, Sexuality, Politics (University of Michigan Press, 2012). He published solo/black/woman: scripts, interviews and essays (co-edited with Prof. E. Patrick Johnson) and The Goodman Theatre’s Festival Latino: Six Plays (co-edited with Prof. Henry Godinez), both with Northwestern University Press. He also published "Moving from Realism to Hip-Hop Real: Choreographing Transnational Aesthetics in Canadian Latina/o Performance," in Latina/o Canadian Theatre: A Critical Reader (Playwrights Canada Press, 2013). That volume, edited by Natalie Alvarez, won the Patrick O’Neill Award for best edited collection from the Canadian Association for Theatre Research.

Carol Simpson Stern

Prof. Carol Simpson Stern served as an expert-witness in Mootry vs. Bethune at Cookman University earlier this academic year and recently served as an outside evaluator for Ryerson University in Canada for a fascinating dissertation by Emma Doran entitled "Feeling" in Modern Dance Print Media: Loïe Fuller, Isadora Duncan, and Maud Allan. Also, she sponsored Nathan Lamp's essay which was submitted for the Galati Prize which he won, and recently lectured on Academic Freedom and Due Process and other related matters in Dr. Dobroski's graduate seminar in Northwestern University’s School of Music. And, of course, Prof. Simpson Stern continued serving on the Executive Committee of Northwestern University's Faculty Appeal Panel, which has handled a number of appeals this year.

Mary Zimmerman

Prof. Mary A. Zimmerman directed her Metropolitan Opera production of Donizetti's Lucia di Lammermoor at La Scala opera house in Milan, Italy January-February 2014, as well as a revival of Vincenzo Bellini's La Sonnambula at the Metropolitan Opera in February 2014. Her play, The White Snake, which is currently in production at the Goodman Theatre, will also be published by Northwestern University Press and was staged at the McCarter Theatre Center in Princeton in Fall 2013. Prof. Zimmerman was the honoree of the benefit Gala Spotlight Spectacular at the Huntington Theatre in Boston in April 2014 and was the Keynote Speaker at the Kennedy Center for the annual Theatre for a Young Audience Conference in May 2014. The Jungle Book, which Prof. Zimmerman adapted and directed, was nominated for ten Independent Reviews of New England Awards, won four Boston Norton Awards and won for Best Musical. It was staged at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago in Summer 2013 and at the Huntington Theatre in Boston in May 2014 at Goodman Theatre.

Shayna Silverstein: An Interview
by Rae Langes

After completing a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Pennsylvania’s Humanities Forum, Shayna Silverstein will join the program in Fall 2014 as an Assistant Professor in Performance Studies. Her work explores embodiment, sound, personhood, modernity and politics and focuses on the contemporary Middle East, primarily Syria. She is currently working on a book manuscript that demonstrates how Syrian popular dance music mediates the formation of public life in an authoritarian state in ways that paradoxically foster relations between local actors and non-state networks while performing nationhood. Her work has been published in journals, edited volumes, and reference books and she is currently an editor at Norient Academic Journal. Shayna received her Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology from the University of Chicago in 2012 and has previously taught at Dartmouth College, Northwestern University, University of Chicago, and University of Pennsylvania. This coming year she will be offering ‘Sounding Bodies’ (Fall 2014) and ‘Ethnographic Methods’ (Spring 2015) in the department.

RL: So, perhaps we could begin with you sharing some of the things that excite you the most about your new faculty position in the Department of Performance Studies?

SS: I’m excited to see how performance studies may soften disciplinary boundaries that I’ve taken for granted. Something fairly new to me is employing performance as a mode of critical analysis. Coming from a department of music and the discipline of ethnomusicology…we often perform and we always engage music making in our research. But, we don’t tend to present our analyses as staged performances. So, I’m intrigued by how performance can inform our understandings of the efficacy of music and sound. And maybe there are ways to incorporate more music, sound installations, or sound-based projects into what the department produces and presents. I really look forward to working with students and faculty here to enrich the dialogue between performance studies and ethnomusicology.

RL: That sounds so relevant to a lot of student projects emerging in the department right now. I find it very exciting that you’re looking to bring a tighter focus to sound in performance studies. So, in ethnomusicology, which I’m not particularly familiar with, there’s a practice-based element that informs the research, maybe more in terms of technical skills?

SS: In terms of interactions. Largely in terms of social interactions. Such as being an instrumentalist and joining a band or joining some sort of community ensemble…perhaps singing in a church choir in Uganda, like one of my colleagues has done, and through that participating in the musical lives of the people that you are doing your research with.

My primary research focus is Syrian popular dance music—looking at questions of popular culture, popular music, and the relationship between dance and music. When I was conducting doctoral fieldwork over in Syria, a couple years before the war, I started to realize even more acutely how much our assumptions or categorical frameworks for what is music and what is dance might be challenged by considering how Syrians perceive of such things. I intended to research the social significance of dabke, which I assumed was a popular folk music like bluegrass or French chanson. But when I began to ask around about dabke, people answered back with the assumption that it was a dance, a traditional dance performed on national TV and at stadium events, all sorts of state-sponsored productions. Speaking of dabke in and of itself didn’t lead to, say, a roster of recording artists or a particular genre of recorded music that you might find in a CD stall. Rather, people really saw it as a codified form of movement with a very particular kind of history attached to self and community and identity. It was then that I realized this performance tradition is a popular music with an associated dance culture, much like salsa in New York or hip-hop in L.A.

What I’m trying to suggest by asking whether to call something music or dance is more a question of for whom does that matter? The question, then, is an anthropological concern, in the sense that questions asked in one place are not necessarily the same questions asked in another. We might learn something by shifting our perspective.
ontological frameworks. For example, is dancing an act of listening? In other words, I suggest that when people dabke, they respond to music through their movements. This approach could offer a new way of understanding dabke, among other dance musics. So I gathered ethnographic data at a large number of social events, from weddings to nightclub parties and found that while dabke beats generally correspond to a duple meter, dancers align themselves with a triple meter feel. I think of this discrepancy as similar to a hemiola, or a rhythmic tension between the duple and triple meters of the musicians and dancers, respectively. This tension is, arguably, what makes dabke so infectious and it emerges from the intersection of music-making, listening, and dancing. I think that performance theory will help to more broadly explore these intersections.

RL: I see how that also gets to your question about how one comes to define dance and music as different things because it seems as if you’re saying that they inform one another in these live contexts, and then, correct me if I’m wrong, in a sense the dance is also composing the music in a way?

SS: Yeah, the dance certainly shapes or affects the music. Composing is an inscriptional act, as opposed to a performative act, so I think in the context of live, in situ events that are improvised, I might use a different word. Definitely, the sense that one impacts the other is there. It’s certainly not particular to dabke but can be applied to many genres of dance music. In my work, what I’m trying to look at is how embodiment structures ontologies of music and dance. In ethnomusicology, there has been a substantial body of work on embodiment, but it’s relatively recent. What I’d like to contribute to that conversation is a consideration of how performance practices are a mode of collective action, and this approach emerges from populist politics in Syria, a mode of collective action through which we form all sorts of attachments, particularly embodied attachments, to histories of belonging. In the course of focusing more on embodiment I came to realize that performance studies offers a lot of tools and that these open up more possibilities than what I was able to find in ethnomusicology. I do think that if we can expand the conversation between performance studies and ethnomusicology in order to really consider what kinds of questions embodiment can engender then we can really go somewhere. The challenge is that while thinking about the world of the body you don’t want to reify the body as an object of analysis.

RL: So, when you were first introduced to dabke, you understood it to be a musical tradition, and then your fieldwork brought you to the understanding, that in the context of Syria, it is a dance. Is that the point at which you began to engage performance theory, or what brought you to the field of performance studies as crucial to your project? Or had you encountered it before then and were already thinking about it?

SS: I turned to phenomenology as a means to rethink
RL: So are you talking about not foregrounding the body over say, sound, or the sonic qualities of the music?

SS: Right. So I’m teaching a course this Fall in the department called Sounding Bodies. The course is designed to introduce students to sound studies with attention to the role that bodies play in shaping our understandings of sound and music. Oftentimes studies of music making tend to focus on lyrics, melodies, and stylistic idioms - what we might call the ‘text’ - rather than what mediates these formal attributes. Or, they describe the social significance of particular musical traditions in terms of their historical and cultural contexts. They leave open the question of how bodies are instrumental to the creation, transmission, and reception of music and sound. I’m looking forward to breaking this ground with students.

RL: I can already see the ways your work is going to speak to a lot of different students, I can think of a couple right off the top of my head—Arif Smith is doing work African Diasporic music and dance, Justin Zullo is doing an ethnography of hip-hop communities in Chicago. What’s interesting to me, especially in some of my conversations with Justin, is that he’s constantly trying to figure out how to work in and theorize sound, so it feels like there’s a lot of space to develop that in relation to performance studies projects, and that’s something people are trying to pave the way for right now, so it feels very on the pulse, that you’re arriving at this time.

SS: Somebody had foresight. I think we can credit the fantastic faculty for that.

RL: Yeah, and your fantastic work.

This fall, Prof. Silverstein will be teaching PERF_ST 330-0-20: Sounding Bodies.

This course explores the intersection of sound, embodiment, and movement. Asking how bodies articulate sounding practices, we consider performance practices in which bodies are instrumental to the creation, transmission, and reception of music. These draw on a broad range of case studies across time and space that explore how embodiment shapes listening, kinesthetic, and musical subjectivities. We also engage with the sounding body as an object of analysis by critiquing epistemologies of sound and examining technological mediation in terms of that which receives, transforms, stores, and produces sound. Finally, we address the role of the body in sound studies and performance studies by relating these discussions to broader disciplinary frameworks and their possible intersections.

This course is open to both graduate and undergraduate students.
Also being offered this fall:

GEN_CMN 203: Performance, Culture, and Communication

Course Description:

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

The course is highly interactive and performance focused from the idea that it is through embodied learning that the dynamics of communication and culture can more effectively be learned and experienced. The unifying thread and overarching question for the course is: How does human performance and creative communication help us better understand and transform our world and the world of others (e.g., identity, family, community, nation, social relations, political institutions, and economic orders)?

Instructor Testimonies:

Teaching “Performance, Culture, and Communication” in Winter Quarter of 2013 was an experience filled with invaluable lessons about performance pedagogy in the undergraduate classroom that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. The road wasn't always easy, but I will never forget my students' final performances on Transnational Civic Engagement. From monumentalizing the self-immolations of protesting monks in Tibet, to re-voicing the dissenting parties of the Yo Soy 132 movement in Mexico, those performances gave testimony to how studying and doing performance enlargens hearts and minds. – Colleen Daniher

During an in-class workshop day, I witnessed a group of four students passionately debating how to best represent and acknowledge the testimonies from victims of military sexual assault (their own idea!) that they had found online and would use in their final performance. They discussed this for almost an hour, each side wanting to be respectful of the experiences of these individuals, but with different ideas of what that meant for them. I intervened only a little, and by the end of class they had come up with a compromise solution that everyone felt was respectful to the people whose words they would be borrowing for their performance. Watching these students take this issue so seriously, and witnessing the beautiful performance that resulted, was the highlight of my 203 experience. – Margaret Lebron

Secondary source histories and founding documents highlights often serve as source materials for courses on democracy. More than a textual engagement with these sources, democracy requires a citizenry who critically perform through actions: sharing stories, performing empathy, wrestling with ideas of others, challenging and being challenged, and imagining a better space for all to share. Although Performance, Culture, and Communication was not, in particular, a course on democracy, the assignments—telling the story of oneself alongside the story of another, adapting a text, and using performance to imagine a creative transformation of conflict—attended to what is most often missing in pedagogies of democracy: a critical, embodied, and felt way of engaging and enacting a better public. – Jasmine J. Mahmoud

It was a great learning experience for me to teach Performance, Culture, and Communication in the Winter of 2013 and the Spring of 2014. My favorite part was the oral history unit, because in general students reported that they learned a lot by conducting ethnographic interviews and having to stage that material. A few of them told me how different they felt about their interlocutor's story after they had to embody it, and how that offered them a more nuanced insight into that person's experiences and dilemmas. I actually had a student who interviewed his father and reported that he felt that in doing the oral history he got to understand certain aspects of his father’s life like he has never had a chance to in his entire life. I also had students who come from a science background report that the class has helped them think creatively and work with others in creative processes in ways that are completely new for them. – Andreea Micu
Graduate Student Updates

Kelly I. Chung

Kelly presented at two conferences this year: International Food Studies Conference at University of Texas at Austin and In Bodies We Trust Conference at Northwestern University. She is currently the Managing Editor for the Critical Ethnic Studies Association (CESA) Journal for 2014-2015.

Colleen Kim Daniher

Through the 2013-2014 academic calendar, Colleen is honored to have received financial support for her dissertation research through a number of grants: the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Doctoral Fellowship, the American Society for Theatre Research (ASTR) Helen Krich Chinoy Dissertation Research Fellowship, and the Northwestern School of Communication’s Ignition Grant. Her first full-length article, ”The Pose as Interventionist Gesture: Erica Lord and Decolonizing the Proper Subject of Memory,” will be appearing shortly in the forthcoming issue of e-misférica. In October, Colleen Kim Daniher presented her solo multimedia performance piece, Durian Series, Pts. 1-3, at our very own "In Bodies We Trust" Northwestern Performance Studies Graduate Student Conference. Finally, Colleen is looking forward to participating in and presenting her work at The Hemispheric Institute's Encuentro: Manifest! in Montréal this June!

Misty DeBerry

This past fall Misty was invited to present a performance installation on bodies in transit, migration and community building by The Chicago Architecture Foundation. In the spring she presented little sister: a Black Speculative Solo-Performance at Reimagining the Black Fantastic and was awarded Best Paper.

Meiver De la Cruz

In April 2014 Meiver was a respondent to Dr. C. Riley Snorton's paper “From the Down Low to the First Gay Rapper, Tracing the Trajectory from Glass to Plastic” at “Desiring Categories: Predicaments of Binaries, Boundaries, and Classifications in Sexuality Studies,” a workshop by the Sexualities Project at Northwestern (SPAN). Also in April 2014, Meiver was an invited speaker at “Affective Labor in Dance: South Asia and Beyond,” a symposium organized by the Committee on Southern Asian Studies and the Department of Music at the University of Chicago, where she presented “Identities in Motion: Performance and Affect at the Middle Eastern Night Club.” Meiver also presented “Migration Moves: Dance in the US Diaspora after the US Invasion of Iraq” at “Decentering Dance Studies: Moving in New Global Orders,” the Congress for Research in Dance and the Society for Dance History Scholars Joint Meeting, at the University of California, Riverside last November. Meiver was also recently named a 2014 Humanities Without Walls Global Midwest Initiative Seed Funds Recipient for her project “Mid-East in the Midwest: Arab American Dance and Performance, Transnational Embodiment, Archives and Repertoires.”
Eddie Gamboa
This year Eddie gave conference presentations at Queertopia 7.0 and the International Conference of Qualitative Inquiry. He also continues being a guest lecturer and coach in public speaking and oral interpretation to various forensics programs across the country, while working especially close to Northwestern University’s own Individual Events team.

Roy Gómez-Cruz
On April 15th, Roy presented a paper titled “Gender Inflections: Risk and Failure in Two Circus Schools in Chicago” at Urban Acrobatics, a Circus and Graffiti Spectacular, which is a project that explores the shared histories of contemporary circus and graffiti in New York and Chicago. Last January, in collaboration with the 2014 Chicago Contemporary Circus Festival (CCCF) and the Quebec Government Office in Chicago, he organized “Circus Intersections: Emerging Circus Thought in the Academy,” a panel aiming to integrate the circus arts into academic thinking. As part of the Chicago Contemporary Circus Festival, Roy moderated the panels: “Chicago Circus: A Case Study in Developing Circus Thought” and “Practice and Breaking Out: New Circus Genres.”

Kareem Khubchandani
Kareem directed the short play Imperfectly Frank for A-Squared’s “My Asian Mom” series at Chicago Dramatists this May. He is the incoming Embry Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow in the Center for Women’s and Gender Studies at the University of Texas at Austin.

Elias Krell
Elias successfully defended his dissertation in December 2013 and graduates in June 2014 with a Ph.D. in Performance Studies, and two Graduate Certificates in Gender & Sexuality Studies and in Teaching. He recently published in the Queer/Trans Special Issue of the Journal of Popular Music Studies, in an edited volume entitled Trans Bodies/Trans Selves (Oxford UP), and has essays forthcoming in Feminist Formations journal, and in The Oxford Handbook of Voice Studies (Oxford UP). Eli presented work at the Cultural Studies Association Conference, New York University Music Department's "At the Limits of Hearing" Conference, the BDSM/Fetish/Kink Studies Group of the American Popular Culture Association Conference in March 2014, among others, and he co-chaired the Engendering Change 2014 Conference, hosted at Northwestern. Eli’s music project, which recently released their third album, "Elias Krell & the No Good", was selected to perform in the national "Trans 100" event in May, hosted by Laverne Cox. In Fall 2014, he joins the faculty of the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program at Vassar College for a two-year postdoctoral fellowship via the Consortium for Faculty Diversity.
Rae Langes
Last year Rae performed *Ruminations on the Lower Strata* at So Very Alive: Performing Feminist and Queer Utopias, Dreams, Desires at Rumble Arts, Chicago and In Bodies We Trust: Performance, Affect, and Political Economy, an interdisciplinary graduate conference held at Northwestern University. In November 2013, Rae presented “Aberrant Desires: Searching for the Monstrously Queer in/through José Hernandez’ *Redemption of Ishtar Bukkake*” for the Top Debut Papers Panel at the 99th Annual National Communication Association Convention and “Monstrous Futures: Transitioning Discourses of Queer Reproduction” at the Midwest Modern Language Association Convention. Recently, Rae was awarded a Summer Research Grant from the Sexualities Project at Northwestern (SPAN).

Margaret Lebron
This year Margaret served as dramaturg for Prologue Theatre Company's *Saturday Night/Sunday Morning*, produced at Steppenwolf's Garage Rep, and Deluge Theatre Collective's *RAW*. She also presented a paper at the Comparative Drama Conference in Baltimore and will be part of a working group at the Hemispheric Institute's Encuentro in Montreal this summer.

Jonathan Magat

Patricia Nguyen
Patricia received a Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans, performed “Tro Ve Nuoc: Between Home and Memory” at the Mission Cultural Center in San Francisco and Affective Labor in Dance: South Asian and Beyond and “Tro Ve | Return” at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Patricia facilitated the “Embodyes Storytelling: Vietnamese Diaspora Narratives” Workshop at Oberlin College and presented her paper “Waterscapes: Between Biopolitical and Necropolitical Spaces of Vietnamese Refugee Exodus” at the Inaugural Colloquium for Comparative Race and Diaspora Paper Workshop. As well, Patricia presented at the Asian American Studies Conference and In Bodies We Trust: Performance, Affect, and Political Economy NU Graduate Student Conference, and performed “She Crosses the Road...” at the Dwight Conquergood Symposium.

Patricia Nguyen and Natalia Duong perform Tro Ve Nuoc at Alvina Krause Studio. Photo Credit: Jasmine Mahmoud.

Shoniqua Roach
Shoniqua presented two papers in the fall: "'Pink Wig, Thick Ass, Give 'em Whiplash': Critically Considering Performances of the 'thick' Black Female Body" at The University of Chicago's Invisible Designs: New Perspectives of Race and American Consumer Capitalism Conference and "'Fuck[ing] With the Grays': Black Female Respectability Politics and Contemporary Performances of Black Female Sexuality" at the Midwest
Popular Culture/American Culture Association's Annual Conference. With Jade Huell's performance troupe, MetaPhysique, Shoniqua performed *Fiber of Time* (dir. Jade Huell) at the 2014 Patti Pace Performance Festival held at Georgia Regents University.

**Ashlie Sandoval**


**Kantara Souffrant**

In the fall Kantara successfully presented performance-papers at KOSANBA and The Scholarly Study for the Haitian Vodou, held at Harvard University and the Haitian Studies Association in Port-Au-Prince. She also participated in the 3rd Ghetto Biennale where she developed and performed a new piece titled, "Think.Love.Haiti." The piece traces “love” as a concept and action in Haiti through a series of embodied performances based on conversations/interviews in the Grand Rue area of Port-Au-Prince. Most recently she’s been awarded seed money from the Kaplan Institute to host a symposium on the Haitian Diaspora in the Mid-West, received honorable mention for the Ford Dissertation Fellowship, and will be a contributing writer in the U.S. Biennale/Prospect New Orleans, Prospect 3 Catalogue.

**Rhaisa Williams**

In November 2013, Rhaisa presented work at the American Society for Theater Research (ASTR). In March 2014, she presented a working chapter draft, “Whose Mammy Now?: Black Female Alterity, Self-Interest, and Racial Disloyalty,” at the Women and Gender Seminar sponsored and organized by the Newberry Library. And, in April, Rhaisa was awarded the 2014 Mellon Travel and Research Grant Award.

**Justin Zullo**

Between 2013 and 2014, Justin presented three conference papers: “Human Sampler Effect: Mapping the Body's Technology and the Technologized Body in Human Beatboxing,” at Performance Studies International #19, accompanied by an interactive performance entitled, “What a Body Can Do”; “Lending Sugar, Stylin’ Out: Queer Pimp Aesthetics and Hip Hop Dandyism,” at Tulane University’s Gender, Sexuality, and Hip Hop Conference; and “Moments of Capture: Embodying Hip Hop Preservation through Performance Pedagogy,” at Northwestern University’s interdisciplinary graduate student conference, In Bodies We Trust: Performance, Affect, & Political Economy, which Justin helped coordinate as the Faculty Liaison. The last paper was accompanied by an audio installation entitled “Soundscapes of Kuumba Lynx.” He developed the sonic elements of this installation to produce an original “sonic ethnography” piece, which was broadcasted on WNUR in May for a special one-hour aural storytelling program. This summer Justin will facilitate beatboxing workshops for the Chicago Field Museum's 2014 Sound Design Summer Camp.
From October 11-13, 2013, Performance Studies graduate students held In Bodies We Trust: Performance, Affect, and Political Economy, an interdisciplinary graduate student conference.

Exploring the relationship between affect and political economies, or what role performance might play in negotiating conditions of bodies, affects, political economies and spaces, this enormously successful conference invited graduate students, artists, and activists to generate new understandings within those themes.

Each panel and each performance was paired with a Northwestern University or Chicago-area faculty member who acted as a discussant, including Profs. Joshua Chambers-Letson, Nick Davis, Tracy Davis, Hannah Feldman, Marcela Fuentes, Barnor Hesse, Richard Iton, Chloe Johnston, D. Soyini Madison, Susan Manning, Kaley Mason, Coya Paz, Janice Radway, Ramón Rivera-Servera, C. Riley Snorton, Elizabeth Son, and Harvey Young. The three-day conference also included a keynote address by Judith Hamera, a collaborative plenary with Northwestern and Chicago-area faculty, and movement workshops.
Update with Jade C. Huell, the 2012-2014 Black Performing Arts Postdoctoral Fellow in Performance Studies and African American Studies

Performed Scholarship

*She Crosses the Road…. A Performance Based on the Life and Works of Dwight Conquergood.* Co-director. Collaboration with D. Soyini Madison. Department of Performance Studies, Northwestern University, May 2014.


Conference Presentations


Lectures and Workshops


“Troubling Trauma: Trauma and Nostalgia in Black Diaspora.” Invited lecture. AFAM Studies seminar taught by Michelle Wright, May 2014.


Awards and Honors

Research and Travel Grant for Interdisciplinary Student Project, Northwestern University, January 2014.

Related Work


Introducing Dr. Kashif Powell, the 2014-2015 Black Performing Arts Postdoctoral Fellow in Performance Studies and African American Studies

Dr. Kashif Powell received his doctorate from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in Performance Studies, and will be the 2014 – 2015 Black Performing Arts Postdoctoral Fellow in Performance Studies and African American Studies. Kashif’s dissertation, “Specters and Spooks: Developing a Hauntology of the Performative Black Body,” examines the relationship between the black body and the history of death, particularly as it relates to how the black body performed under the institution of slavery. He is also an accomplished performer, having recently created a solo show titled, “Sketches of a Man,” based on Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Man.
Department Performances, Lectures & Events 2013-2014

Theatre in the Dark, October 18th-19th, 2013: An intimate experience harkening back to the old radio dramas of the early 10th century, this show adapted Ernest Hemingway’s hair-raising story *The Short Happy Life of Francis Maycomber*. Directed by Ben Kemper and Andre Squerra.

Playback Milwaukee Theatre Company, October 23rd, 2013. The group presented and conducted a workshop exploring the process of re-enacting the true-life stories of audience members.

Reverend Billy & The Church of Stop Shopping, October 30th, 2013: Bill Talen, who performs as Reverend Billy, gave a presentation on his New York City-based radical performance community.

Fiber of Time, November 15th-16th, 2013: Directed by Black Performing Arts Postdoctoral Fellow Jade C. Huell, this collaborative performance used classical and contemporary theories of memory as inspiration for exploring the potentially analogous relationship between memory and fiber.

Holding Up A Mirror: Performance and Community in the 21st Century, A Conversation with Ping Chong, January 30th, 2014, and Undesirable Elements: A Performance Workshop with Ping Chong, offered both graduate and undergraduate students opportunities to learn from and work with the renowned artist.


Performance Studies Honors Alan Shefsky with *Glee*

Produced by Performance Studies graduate student Kantara Souffrant, *Glee and Other Works by Alan Shefsky* was a theatrical and multi-media presentation by faculty, staff, students and alumni of Mr. Shefsky’s poetry. The performances took place in the Alvina Krause Studio on March 7th and 8th, 2014.

Mr. Shefsky served as Department Assistant for 25 years. He received his B.A. in English/Creative Writing from Northwestern in 2008, and was a recipient of the Illinois Arts Council Award for poetry. He passed away on July 1, 2014.

Images from left to right: Patricia Nguyen, Olivia Seligman, Mary Iris Loncto and Jorie Goins in Fiber of Time; Playback Theatre; Shoniqua Roach in Fiber of Time (*Fiber photo credits: Jade C. Huell*); left, cover of *Glee and Other Works by Alan Shefsky*. 
Black Arts Chicago: Moves and Movements
May 30 - June 1, 2013

The Black Arts Initiative (BAI) presented its inaugural conference at the end of the spring quarter last year, to great success. Black Arts Chicago: Moves and Movements brought together scholars, artists, performers and Northwestern faculty members for a comprehensive look at black arts in Chicago. Panels focused on such genres as film, music, theatre, visual arts and literature. Presenters and moderators included Northwestern Professors Ivy Wilson (American Studies), Daniel Hale Williams (African American Studies), Jacqueline Stewart (Radio/Television/Film), Huey Copeland (Art History), D. Soyini Madison, E. Patrick Johnson, and Dean of The Graduate School and Associate Provost, Dwight McBride.

The second conference in this series will take place in 2015 and will focus on black arts in the United States, followed by a third conference about international black arts in 2017.

Northwestern’s Black Arts Initiative cultivates an interdisciplinary approach to black arts. Launched in 2012, BAI seeks to engage myriad perspectives, strengthen Northwestern’s involvement with black arts, and connect with a broader community of scholars, practitioners and community members through research, pedagogy, practice, and civic and community engagement.

On March 6, 2014, the department of Performance Studies, Critical Studies in Theater and Performance Graduate Cluster, Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences Program in American Studies, the Black Arts Initiative, the Interdisciplinary Program in Theater and Drama and the Sexualities Project at Northwestern held Queer Nightlife: A Symposium.

The interdisciplinary symposium brought together researchers from across the humanities and social sciences to share and discuss theoretical and methodological approaches to queer nightlife. Scholars in anthropology, literary and cultural studies, performance studies, race and ethnicity studies, gender and sexuality studies, dance communication studies, musicology, sociology, and American studies gathered to explore the ways queer nightlife may invite theoretical and methodological adjustments to research into everyday life.
Performance Studies Department Awards

Book Awards
2014 Recipients: Alexander Bronder, Valeria Rosero, Angellic Ross, Pleshette Strong, Shaina Wagner

Robert S. and Gertrude B. Breen Memorial Award
2014 Recipient: Justin Zullo

Lilla A. Heston Memorial Scholarship
2014 Recipient: Kareem Khubchandani

James L. Lardner Memorial Award
2014 Recipient: Quinn Hegarty

The Frank J. Galati Prize for Undergraduate Essays
2014 Recipient: Nathan Lamp

Dwight Conquergood Award
2014 Recipients: Andrew Brown, Kareem Khubchandani

Charlotte Lee Award
2014 Recipient: Jacobi Alvarez

Zeta Phi Eta Award
2014 Recipient: Joshua Schwartz
In Memorium
Alan Shefsky (June 22, 1959 - July 1, 2014)

Ode to B12

Oh to be 12,
to be like 12 bees buzzing,
12 bees in a hive
alive
to have the verve,
to be as a 12 year old is
busy, blasé
(but was I blasé?)
to be on a bicycle buzzing,
a regular boy as I wasn’t,
or was I?
Oh to have being,
to have been built a string body
12 ways,
to be in all ways
brave as a bee
is brave
to have ever and always
honeyed days.

- from Glee, by Alan Shefsky