From the Department Chair

After two glorious years of being located in downtown Evanston at 1800 Sherman, we have moved back into the newly renovated Annie May Swift. And although we are located in the garden level, our offices are beautiful, and more importantly, we now have our own flexible teaching studio. The performance of Sugar, by performance artist Robbie McCauley, will serve as our inaugural production in the 50-seat space. It will mark the beginning of a new era in the department as we finally have at least one performance space to call our own.

As in years past, our faculty and students continue to shine. Our faculty have won prestigious fellowships, been tapped to lead programs, and are touring and directing shows around the country. Our graduate students have also received fellowships and travel grants and are defending their dissertations in record numbers. The graduate students are also planning their first national conference for the spring. The undergrads continue to amaze us with their creativity and intellect. They, too, are writing honors theses and directing shows inside and outside the department.

In addition to our performances, we have a wonderful lineup of guest lectures scheduled throughout the year, including our “Issues in Asian/Asian American Performance” lecture series in winter quarter. Professors Josephine Lee, Eng-Bing Lim, and Karen Shimakawa will all visit our campus throughout January and February. And, in spring, Professor Tracy Davis will lead a faculty/student seminar on current issues in performance studies. That seminar will also host guest speakers from the U.S. as well as from the U.K. We are very excited about all the programming scheduled this year.

As I enter my third year as chair (just two more to go!), I am very pleased by the productivity of our faculty and students. It is a testament to our commitment to not only what we do, but also how we do it.

E. Patrick Johnson

P.S. For any alums who happen to be in town, please stop by and see the new Annie May!

Performance Studies welcomes Holly Hughes

Performance artist and University of Michigan faculty member Holly Hughes is visiting associate professor of Performance Studies and Gender Studies during fall quarter. She is teaching PERF ST 330-0 Performing the Self, in which students are exploring solo performance from a historical, theoretical and creative perspective; a variety of voices from the comic to the confessional, from the rant to the recollection, as well as looking at how questions of authenticity and identity politics have informed the work. The class will present a final performance on Monday, December 8th, at 8:00 p.m. in the Alvina Krause Studio. In Gender Studies, Hughes is teaching 372-0-20: Gender, Sexuality, and Performance: Throw like a girl, examining how gender and sexuality are performed in contemporary culture, using the lens of performance and gender theory to read contemporary performances “from the multiplex to the margins.”

Hughes, two-time Obie Award winner, has performed at venues across North America, Great Britain and Australia, including the Walker Art Center, the Wexner Center for the Arts, the Guggenheim Museum, the Yale Repertory, the Drill Hall in London, and numerous universities. She is the author Clit Notes: A Sapphic Sampler and O Solo Homo: The New Queer Performance.

Holly Hughes will present the Kreeger Wolf Lecture on November 20, 2008.
Guest Artist Robbie McCauley performs Sugar

Robbie McCauley performed her one-woman show Sugar on Friday, October 31, 2008, in the Alvina Krause Studio. Sugar examines McCauley’s own struggle and survival with diabetes as connected to slavery, war, work, romance and food. Written in a circular, historical style, Sugar is the latest installment in a series of performance theater works by McCauley that refer to her family’s survival since the 19th century as part of the African-American working class.

Robbie McCauley has been an active presence in American avant-garde theater for more than three decades. Her early work in New York included performances in plays by Lanford Wilson at Cafe Cino and by Adrienne Kennedy at the New York Shakespeare Festival. On Broadway, she appeared in the original cast of For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf by Ntozake Shange. In the 1990s, she received both an OBIE Award (Best Play) and a New York Dance and Performance (BESSIE) Award for Sally’s Rape, which she wrote, directed and performed in many locations nationally and internationally. Among the many other important works she has written and directed are a number of community-based theater productions exploring issues of race and class in the U.S. and in the Czech Republic. She is currently associate professor of theater at Emerson College in Boston.

Faculty News

E. Patrick Johnson will serve as co-principal investigator for an $818,000 Mellon Grant for a Northwestern University Press initiative entitled “Global Encounters.” The initiative will enable the Press to collaborate with faculty in African Studies, Performance Studies, and Theatre. In African Studies the grant will allow the Press to bridge the scholarly publishing gap between western and African scholars, while in the Performance Studies and Theatre it will allow faculty to document -- in print and online -- performances, scripts, and scholarly and community conversations around three themes: “Festival Latino,” “Solo/Black/Woman” and “Black Theatre Is Black Life,” a history of black theatre in Chicago since 1930.


D. Soyini Madison is serving as Interim Director of Northwestern’s Program of African Studies. Professor Madison is also serving as chair of the PAS 60th anniversary planning committee, she will lead Afrisem (the graduate student seminar), participate in the search for a permanent director, and continue to foster new initiatives at PAS.

Professor Madison’s current research project focuses on local Ghanaian activists and their performance tactics in the defense of human rights and social justice as these performances are influenced by political economy, cultural tradition, and modernism. Her forthcoming book is entitled, Acts of Activism: An Ethnography of Human Rights as Radical Performance under contract with Cambridge University Press.

Ramón Rivera-Servera co-organized the international board meeting of the Hemispheric Institute for Performance and Politics, as well as the schedule of public events held in conjunction with the meeting. The meeting and events were co-hosted by Northwestern University, The University of Chicago, and the University of Illinois-Chicago Friday, October 24 and Saturday, October 25, 2008. See details on page 6.
Joseph Roach delivered the 2008-09 Wallace A. Bacon Memorial Lecture on October 8th, the first to take place in the remodeled Annie May Swift Hall.

The lecture, “Remembering Where We’re Coming From: The Efficacy of Oral Interpretation,” was a “personal memoir of the department... in tribute to the teachers of [his] teachers,” offering a genealogy that hearkened back to nineteenth-century courses in elocution, but that focused primarily on Charlotte Lee, Robert Breen, and Wallace Bacon, before connecting to Dwight Conquergood and our current faculty. His departmental history painted a starkly different geography of the university, in physical landscape and architecture as well as in landscapes of learning. However, then, as now, departmental members were involved in the community. In particular, Roach described “Charlotte’s Angels” and their unflagging work to install the arts into local public school curricula. His public address was not nostalgia, however, and in asking “where are those who came before us?” he responds—aptly using a Performance Studies paradigm—that they and their work are embodied and given materiality in our own present work.

The lecture, the first to take place in the remodeled Annie May Swift Hall, was held in the department’s seminar room, before an overflow crowd necessitated a change in venue, to the AMS Auditorium.

Joseph Roach is the Sterling Professor of Theater Studies at Yale University. His most recent book is titled It, a study of charismatic celebrity. His other books include Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance and The Player’s Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting.


Also, Lori (and husband Fernando) are the proud new parents of Sebastian David Barcliff Baptista, born October 24, 2008.

Derek Barton and Munjulika Rahman are directing the performance hour “The Submarine Mare, and Other Hindoo Tales,” November 21 and 22, 2008, in the Struble Theater.

Hilary Cooperman (with co-author Relli Shechter, Ben Gurion University) has published the essay “Branding the Riders: ‘Marlboro Country’ and the Formation of a New Middle Class in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey,” in New Global Studies (Vol. 2 : Iss. 3; http://www.bepress.com/ngs/vol2/iss3/art1).

Christine Dunford will participate in a roundtable session at the National Communication Association Convention on November 22, 2008, as part of a session titled “Co-performative Witnessing: Moving a Legacy.” This roundtable session will develop Dwight Conquergood’s idea of “co-performative witnessing” as Christine and a number of Dwight Conquergood’s former students explore the possibilities and limits of co-performative witnessing in their current performance research and practice.

Habib Iddrisu has been awarded a Presidential Fellowship at SUNY-Brockport for the 2008-09 academic year.

Greg Mitchell will present a paper entitled “TurboConsumers™ in Paradise: The Role of Neoliberal Civil Rights Discourse in Sex Tourism” at the American Anthropological Association meeting in San Francisco.

Sage Morgan-Hubbard will be part of the Just Like a Girl: A Manifesta! book reading at Women and Children First bookstore on Friday, November 7th. She will also perform her poem “Chicago be red, black and green” at Leave No Child Inside: The Chicago Wilderness Congress on Thursday, November 13, 2008 at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Sage previously performed the poem this summer at the Field Museum and at the Kennedy Center as part of Robert Redford’s Sundance Preserve and “Brave New Voices: Youth Speaks’ 11th International Youth Poetry Slam.

Munjulika Rahman presented a paper “Beauty Like Rudra’s Thunder: Masculinity and Femininity in Tagore’s Chitrangada” at the Texas Asia Conference at the University of Texas-Austin, October 10-11, 2008.
This fall the Department of Performance Studies returned to Annie May Swift Hall after two years of residence off campus in the 1800 Sherman Building. In the completely renovated Annie May, the Department now occupies the “garden level” and shares the building with the Department of Radio/Television/Film and the Rhetoric Program. The garden level suite is comprised of the departmental office, faculty offices, and a graduate student study/lounge, while on the first floor are the department’s seminar room and, by way of the building’s north entrance, the newly created Alvina Krause Theater/Flexible Teaching Lab.

The return to Annie May Swift Hall is doubly a return for the department, which, as the Department of Interpretation, was housed in the building—along with the other departments that comprised the early School of Speech—until 1954. At that time it moved to Dennis Hall, at 1820 Sheridan Road (on the site of the present-day Jones Residential College) which it shared with the Department of Communication Studies. Then, in 1980, the peripatetic department moved to the newly constructed Theatre & Interpretation Center (which retained the “interpretation” portion of its name even after the changing of the department’s name to Performance Studies in 1984-85). In September of 2001, the Department of Performance Studies moved to Annie May Swift Hall, following the move of the dean’s offices to the Frances Searle Building. And in the summer of 2006, the department packed up for the 1800 Sherman Building in order to allow for the gutting and renovating of Annie May Swift. The building we returned to is greatly improved and rejuvenated, with modern updates (imagine: an elevator!) though also with careful restoration of woodwork, the staircase, and the exterior facade.

Annie May Swift Hall, which dates to 1895, was designed by Evanston architect Charles Ayers in a Venetian Gothic Style. Its exterior is clad in a colorful mixture of brick and terra cotta, has a hipped clay tile roof and original wood windows with a rope-style molding. Originally built for the Northwestern University School of Oratory, Annie May Swift Hall is one of the oldest buildings on the Evanston campus and is an Evanston Historic Landmark.
Performance Studies Seminar Room

Dwight Conquergood
Memorial Library Collection

Alvina Krause Theater/ Flexible Teaching Lab
Northwestern University co-hosted with the University of Chicago and the University of Illinois-Chicago the Hemispheric Institute for Performance and Politics on Friday, October 24 and Saturday, October 25. The events showcased an interdisciplinary network of scholars, artists and activists focused on the theoretical and practical intersections of performance and politics in the Americas. Support at Northwestern came from the Department of Performance Studies (coordinated by Ramón Rivera-Servera) and the School of Communication, The Center for Global Culture and Communication, the Department of Performance Studies, the Department of English, the Interdisciplinary PhD in Theatre and Drama, the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, and the Department of Theater.

Events took place at the University of Chicago on Friday and included a workshop presentation by feminist performance troupe Feel Tank, and a roundtable, Performativity and Politics in the Americas, featuring a distinguished group of scholars that included Silvia Spitta (Dartmouth College); Kathy Buddle-Crowe (University of Manitoba); Soledad Falabella (Universidad Diego Portales, Chile); Susana Friedmann (Universidad Nacional de Colombia) and Antonio Prieto (Universidad Veracruzana, México). The University of Illinois-Chicago hosted a showcase of Chicago performance Friday night that featured nationally and internationally recognized talent such as the Albany Park Theatre Project, Teatro Luna, BeLoW Performance Collective, and Dewayne Slightweight. Northwestern University hosted Saturday programs (at Annie May Swift Hall) including a panel on festivities, religion and politics in the Americas featuring a network of researchers formed out of the Hemispheric Institute’s collaborative scholarship programs. Presenters included Paolo Vignolo (Universidad Nacional de Colombia); Milla Riggio (Trinity College); Zeca Ligiéro (Universidade do Rio de Janeiro). Other events included Smoking Habaneras: Hemispheric Genealogies of Black(face) Performance, a lecture presentation by award winning scholar Jill Lane and a video presentation of Fulana, a New York City-based Latina video performance collective. In addition, E. Patrick Johnson offered a keynote performance of his solo show, “Pouring Tea.”

The Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics is a collaborative, multilingual, and interdisciplinary consortium of institutions, artists, scholars, and activists throughout the Americas. Working at the intersection of scholarship, artistic expression, and politics, the organization explores embodied practice—performance—as a vehicle for the creation of new meaning and the transmission of cultural values, memory, and identity. Anchored in its geographical focus on the Americas (thus “hemispheric”) and in its three working languages (English, Spanish and Portuguese), the Institute seeks to create spaces and opportunities for cross-cultural collaboration and interdisciplinary innovation among researchers and practitioners interested in the relationship between performance, politics and social life in the hemisphere. While its administration is housed at New York University, the Hemispheric Institute is comprised by over twenty-five member universities and cultural institutions throughout the Americas. Institute initiatives include courses, work groups, conference-festivals (Encuentros), a Digital Video Library (HIDVL), archives, an online scholarly journal (e-misférica), a trilingual website, an emerging performers program in New York City (EMERGENYC), and public online forums. In 2008, the Institute inaugurated the Centro Hemisférico, a collaborative research center and performance space in Chiapas, Mexico, in partnership with FOMMA (a Mayan women’s theatre collective).
Fall Quarter Performances

Fall QUARTER 103 PERFORMANCE HOUR
An evening of performances by students in the department’s introductory course The Analysis and Performance of Literature.
Thursday September 25, 8:00 pm, Mussetter-Struble Theater

THE SUBMARINE MARE, AND OTHER HINDOO TALES
Adapted and directed by Derek Barton and Munjulika Rahman
The story of a young British girl in 19th century India, and her encounter with Indian stories and culture. Framed by the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 and the Cawnpore massacre, The Submarine Mare is an original work, loosely grounded in historical accounts, and incorporates Indian dance and music alongside adaptations of Hindu myths in a story about cultural collision and conflict, and also the possibility of reaching beyond it.
Friday, November 21, 8:00 pm
Saturday, November 22, 2:00 and 8:00 pm
Mussetter-Struble Theater

SHANTYTOWN
Adapted and directed by Anakin Morris
A chamber theatre story about a poor boy, a red spade, an Irish cop, a mysterious tramp, and the magic they find together, in hope. It is the magical tale woven of one young boy’s unbreakable faith in goodness and his journey to re-inspire the people around him to change the world with the nothing they own. Small Peter and his friends show the power of believing in something so strongly that it becomes real.
Friday, December 5, 8:00 pm
Saturday, December 6, 2:00 pm and 8:00 pm
Alvina Krause Studio

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Northwestern University
1920 Campus Drive
Evanston, IL 60208
847-491-3171
Editor/Designer: Alan Shefsky
Assistants: Rachel Kopilow, Kalee Danussi, Rachel Pologe

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

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

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