

President's Welcome

Hello IMTAL!

I am honored to be serving as your president for the next two years. IMTAL has meant so much to me as my career in museum theatre has grown, and I am excited to see what the next two years bring. Stephanie Long has done such an outstanding job as president, I know I have big shoes to fill. I am especially grateful to her and to all of our board members for their hard work on behalf of our organization.

AAM in Atlanta was an exciting time to take over as president. At our sold-out luncheon, we honored outstanding museum theatre professionals who support and further our field with the IMTY leadership award and the Lipsky award for excellence in museum theatre playwriting. Our members presented how they use theatre to train staff around institutional, technological and social change in their work with visitors. IMTAL members also took part in a session about using storytelling technique to deepen visitor interactions with and understanding of our collections.

We'll have an opportunity to all meet again for the 2015 IMTAL workshop, *Once More With Feeling*. The conference will be held September 25–27, and it is shaping up to be a tour-de-force of museum theatre practice, management, and skill building. Workshop participants will have the chance to view two new and very popular exhibits here at the Missouri History Museum. *History Clubhouse* is a gallery aimed at children and their parents, which links our regional history to learning through play. *A Walk in 1875 St. Louis* combines a graphic novel aesthetic with large scale blow ups of a pictorial



Elizabeth Pickard, President

map of the city made in that year. The map itself is a marvel, but the exhibit takes it even further, focusing on daily life in the city—including the first professional baseball game ever played and a visit from actress extraordinaire, Charlotte Cushman.

I know you will enjoy the summer issue of *Insights*, and I hope to see all of you in St. Louis! (Register at imtal-us.org)

Sincerely,

Elizabeth

Editor's Corner

July is the in-between month.

In between the end of spring semester and the beginning of fall. In between last Christmas and next. In between the massive AAM conference last April and the amazing IMTAL conference coming up in September.

Fourth of July, Independence Day for those of us in the United States, always feels like a tipping point to me. It's in between the lull of post-ski season and the lull of school-is-about-to-start-but-hasn't-yet.

Where I live, on the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains—we call it the Front Range—tourists begin trickling into town at the end of May. By July, they flood the mountains and trails, campgrounds and heritage sites and yes, museums and other cultural institutions. We swell, our towns swell, with festivals and events and all manner of entertainment and exploration.

I'd like to tell you that along with this excitement comes a tremendous amount of museum theatre, but here in Fort Collins, Colorado, despite our excellent reputation as a City of the Arts, with an active and vibrant theatre scene, there's very little museum theatre. The best guides and docents use theatrical techniques as they develop and present interpretive programming (even when they don't know that those techniques have their roots in theatre), but I've yet to see high-caliber museum theatre here. This lack is something I hope to change.

I'm a freelance writer, a small business owner, a playwright. I'm in between the museum—its people, mission, and ideas—and the finished program, whether that's a staged show or a display panel.



T. L. Brenneman

Judy Fort Brenneman, Publications Officer

To be effective, I can't simply be between; I have to understand and collaborate with all sides. I have to know how all the parts of this miraculous thing we call theatre works, and how it works in museum and other nonformal educational settings, and how to get a program up and running, and how to convince a board that it's worth the effort.

To change my world, I need to be more than in-between. That's why I'm a volunteer with IMTAL. It's why I will be at the September conference.

I hope to see you there, too!

Judy

Want to write for *Insights*?

Short, long, article, essay, opinion piece, announcement, photo—if it has to do with Museum Theatre, we're probably interested! New **submission guidelines** and the 2015-16 editorial schedule are now online: <http://imtal-us.org/publications>

Visit IMTAL On-line: imtal-us.org

Register for the September IMTAL-Americas conference, too!

Drop us a note—board member email addresses are listed on the last page of the newsletter.

IMTAL Awards: 2015 IMTY and Lipsky Winners Announced

by Elizabeth Pickard

IMTAL supports excellence and best practices in Museum Theatre by offering two awards each year. The awards are presented at the IMTAL luncheon at AAM.

The first, the IMTY, recognizes that museum theatre as a practice—no matter how effective or popular—cannot survive without support from outstanding museum leaders who recognize it as important to the museum and support its use.

The second, the Lipsky Award for Excellence in Museum Theatre Playwriting is in its second year. This award recognizes excellence—grounded in IMTAL's best practices of creating engaging work with developed characters that evokes emotional connection to the content of the museum. Winning submissions support the mission and augment, expand, or fulfil a need that is not being addressed elsewhere in the exhibit.

The 2015 IMTY Award: Melanie Adams

Past President Stephanie Long presented the IMTY award for outstanding leadership in support of museum theatre to Melanie Adams, Managing Director for Community Education and Events at the Missouri History Museum.

Over the last 10 years, Melanie has supported the growth of the museum theatre program at the Missouri History Museum from a few farfetched ideas to a program that is recognized nationally for its innovative approach—particularly the Teens Make History Program, which won the 2014 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award and is the nation's highest honor for out of school youth programs in the arts and humanities.

Perhaps more importantly, Melanie understands the need to connect emotionally with content. She is not afraid to support programs that tackle tough issues and is also courageous enough to allow experimentation and risk-taking in the museum. Support like hers is integral to the growth and success of any museum theatre program and also is what keeps museum practice grounded in the community and addressing relevant, pressing current issues.

Her staff say, “Perhaps one of the best parts of working with Melanie is that she trusts her staff to do their work—she supports it, helps us improve it, and champions it even in difficult times. There are very few supervisors even in our field who are this remarkable.”

More information about the Missouri History Museum: <http://www.mohistory.org/>.



Amber Davis Parham

IMTY award winner Melanie Adams

The Lipsky Award for Excellence in Museum Theatre Playwriting

2015 marked the second year that IMTAL has given the Lipsky Award for Excellence in Museum Theatre Playwriting. The panel was again impressed by the quality of the submissions for the award, and particularly with the strength of the winner, *Living Beyond Bollywood*, written by Alexandra Miller in collaboration with the SAPAN Institute and commissioned by Masum Momaya, curator for the Smithsonian Institution's Beyond Bollywood Exhibition. The play was performed by the SAPAN performance company at the National Museum of Natural History in May of 2014.

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This play exemplified the best practices that the Lipsky is set up to honor. Beyond Bollywood was a fairly “flat” exhibit, and the play created a three dimensional, emotional experience within it and also moved through the exhibit from one scene to the next. The structure of the play was episodic, but within those episodes it reflected clear relationships, conflicts, and emotions that deepened the audience’s experience of the content. The characters made us feel with them, illuminating the realities of living the Indian-American experience over time. The play made innovative use of a red sari to create a unifying element in a play that moved throughout both space and time: it served as an indicator that it was time to move from one place to another; it also served at times as a prop, at others a costume, and still others as a set piece. Finally, the fact that the play had been developed collaboratively provided a strong model for working with communities in developing museum theatre.

Beyond Bollywood: Indian Americans Shape the Nation exhibit runs through August 16, 2015 at the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH). The exhibition explores the heritage, daily experience and numerous, diverse contributions that Indian immigrants and Indian Americans have made to shaping the United States. A digital version of the exhibit is online: <http://tinyurl.com/qjhkd7o>.



Amber Davis Parham

Lipsky award winner Alexandra Miller (1) with curator Masum Momaya

How can you win an award?

Just like every award, the IMTY and the Lipsky are only as strong as the quality of the submissions we receive. That means we need your ideas, your scripts, your leaders to be nominated. To nominate an outstanding museum executive who supports museum theatre, contact Elizabeth Pickard at president@imtal-us.org. Submissions for the Lipsky are generally collected in January of each year; contact Doug Coler at vicepresident@imtal-us.org for more information.

Carpenter Science Theatre Seeks Science Theatre Scripts

This year, Carpenter Science Theatre (CSTC) is presenting quarterly staged readings of “science theatre” scripts at the museum’s popular Lunch Box Science event on Wednesdays. Each reading is followed by a discussion of the script. Artistic director Larry Gard invites any playwrights in the IMTAL community to submit a script to be considered for one of these staged readings. Of course, the script must focus on a science related topic or person. In addition, scripts should be 20–45 minutes in length, and require no more than two actors. The script may have been produced before. Submissions are accepted on an ongoing basis (i.e., no deadline). Playwrights whose scripts are chosen for inclusion will receive a royalty payment of \$50.00 for the single staged reading performance.

E-copies of scripts may be sent to lgard@smv.org, and hard copies may be mailed to: Larry Gard, 4716 Scouters Pl, Chesterfield, VA 23832, or to Larry Gard, Science Museum of Virginia, 2500 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23220.

Program Line-up: Once More with Feeling

IMTAL Americas Conference

September 25–27, 2015, Missouri History Museum, St. Louis MO

Wondering how you can get your fill of IMTAL this year? Ready to renew your practice, push your boundaries, aim to get better, and challenge your definitions of museum theatre?

We couldn't go a whole 'nother year without seeing your faces, so we're holding a workshop at the Missouri History Museum (MHM) in St. Louis! It will be short, sweet, and wonderful: mid-day Friday, September 25 through mid-day Sunday, September 27.

Here's a quick overview of the great programming we have lined up as of press time. (There will be cookies, too. And a trip to City Museum for anyone who wants to go. Not to mention time to explore the wonderful NEW exhibits that have JUST opened at the Missouri History Museum.)

So get yourself over to the IMTAL website and register now. Yes, even if you haven't read all the program descriptions yet—you know it's going to be a great conference, with lots of excellent info, cool performances, stimulating conversations, and stuff you can steal, I mean Apply To Your Own Site, and it's really inexpensive, too—only \$150 for members. Remember to reserve your discounted hotel room, too!

Take a peek at MHM's new History clubhouse:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/mohistory/sets/72157652897171824>

And MHM's Walk in 1875:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/mohistory/sets/72157650731947089>



The new Walk in 1875 exhibit at the Missouri History Museum

Friday, Sept. 25, 2015

9:30–10:30am **IMTAL Board Meeting**—all members welcome!

10:30am–12:30pm **Conference registration opens** (including on-site registration if space is available)

12:30pm–1:00pm Conference begins! **Welcoming remarks**, presented by Elizabeth Pickard

1:00–2:45pm **Workshop 1: Using Improv to Build Emotion and Enhance Programs**: Empower actors, facilitators, and volunteers to explore and heighten emotion, presented by Heather Barnes, MSI.

3:00–5:00pm **Showcase 1: Performances** by conference participants

5:00pm **Dinner** on your own

Saturday, Sept. 26, 2015

9:00–10:45am **Workshop 2: The Promise of a Good Story**: three techniques for playwriting, presented by Judy Fort Brenneman, Greenfire Creative, LLC

10:55–11:25am **Paper: Veracity, Verbatim Text and Viewer Response**, presented by Kirk German, NYU

11:30–11:45am **MHM Performance: Glory the Gargoyle Finds a Home**, performed by Elizabeth Pickard

1:00–2:00pm **Session: The Good, The Bad, The Ugly: Elements of Show**: Explore the elements that create extraordinary museum theatre experiences, presented by Todd Norris, TCM Indianapolis

2:00–2:25pm **MHM Performance: The 1875 Show**, presented by Elizabeth Pickard

2:30–3:15pm **Session: Implement STEM In Your Institution**: See Science Live performances and learn how to implement STEM into non traditional sites, presented by Stephanie Long, Science Museum of Minnesota

3:30–4:30pm **Session: Project Planning Checklist**: Seal the deal with your senior team through solid planning tools, presented by Douglas Coler, Discovery Place, Inc.

4:30–5:30pm **Showcase 2: Performances** by conference participants

5:30pm **dinner and optional trip to City Museum**

Sunday, September 27, 2015

9:00–10:45am **Workshop 3: Put Your Visitors Into Role**
Best practices for putting guests into a well defined role that allows for meaningful participation, presented by Catherine Hughes

11:00–11:45am **Session: Murder at the Museum**
Creating and performing a murder mystery in the museum setting, presented by Stephanie Long, Science Museum of Minnesota

11:45am–12:15pm **Closing remarks** and thanks, presented by Elizabeth Pickard

History's Most Misunderstood Character Competition

Application deadline for competitors: July 31, 2015

Event: 7:30–9:30 p.m., November 11, 2015, Virginia Beach, VA

History's Most Misunderstood Character competition is a special event of the National Association for Interpretation's annual conference, hosted by Cultural Interpretation and Living History (CILH). This year's competition will be Wednesday evening, November 11, 2015, in Virginia Beach, VA. The event is free to all NAI conference attendees.

About Auditions/Applications to compete: If you have a strong character portrayal which you can perform in a 7–10 minute presentation, please apply to compete in this year's contest. Presentations aren't restricted to human characters! One of our most popular contestants in 2014 was Octavia Octopus, played by IMTAL's own Simone Mortan! So if you or a colleague have a dynamite character portrayal, whether from human or natural history, **submit your application before July 31, 2015!** Download the application: <http://tinyurl.com/nqchuyh> (scroll down to "History's Most Misunderstood"; the link to the form is near the end of the program description). Questions? Contact Bill Weldon, CILH Director, at billweldonhistory1@gmail.com.

The event: Join us for this year's installment of the "History's Most Misunderstood" contest. Discover the truths behind the myths as historical characters (human and otherwise) attempt to set the record straight and convince us that they deserve the coveted crown. Learn how they were shaped by their cultures, environments, and periods in history. Why do they dress, speak/sound, appear, and behave as they do? Why do they hold their particular views of the world from which they have come? What supports their claim as "Most Misunderstood"? And then, when the contestants have made their cases, cast your vote for the character that most deserves the title of: History's Most Misunderstood Character!

Following the contest and crowning, CILH will hold a Social Hour. Please join us to meet the contestants and CILH leadership. Cost: included with NAI conference registration. Cash bar.



Simone Mortan as Olivia Octopus

Gail Bareis

Scenes from an event: 2015 AAM



Amber Davis Parham

Todd Norris, IMTAL membership officer, and Tara McGowan, IMTAL luncheon, AAM



Elizabeth Pickard (r), IMTAL's new president, presents thank-you gift to outgoing president Stephanie Long (l), 2015 IMTAL luncheon, AAM



Amber Davis Parham



Newly elected IMTAL vice president Douglas Coler (r) chats with members at the luncheon



Amber Davis Parham

Announcements & Calls for Submissions & Auditions

Auditions and Cool Events for Museum Theatre

Approaching deadline: July 31, 2015

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Calls for Submissions

Scripts on a science-related topic or person, 20–45 minutes in length, no more than 2 actors, for Carpenter Science Theatre Company's quarterly staged readings of "science theatre" scripts at Science Museum of Virginia's Lunch Box Science events. Submissions are accepted on an ongoing basis; royalty payment of \$50.00 for single staged reading performance of accepted scripts.

Email copy of your script to lgard@smv.org OR submit hard copy to:

Larry Gard
4716 Scouters Pl
Chesterfield, VA 23832

OR to

Larry Gard
Science Museum of Virginia
2500 West Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23220

Be Included on a Map of Conservation Theaters

Bricken Sparacino is creating a map of Conservation Theaters to share with teachers, community leaders, and others who bring groups on field trips or have tours visit their facilities. Conservation Theater uses theatre as a teaching tool to inspire young people and their families to love wild things and wild places, helping to create the next generation of conservationists. Here is what the map looks like so far.

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=zYPI9ZckjnWc.k7YnqoF4Gjgk>

If you feel that your work fits under the Conservation Theater umbrella, please fill out this survey and she will add you to the map:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1zDJ8t1tN2Aduo6xBaTO_QL0u5eyYUG5X3KIwcUyVSxI/viewform?usp=send_form

Once it is finished, it will be searchable on a blog and Facebook.

Conferences, Workshops, and Events

AZA Annual Conference

September 17–21.

Salt Lake City, UT

<http://www.aza.org/annualconference/>

Hosted by Hogle Zoo

IMTAL Americas Conference:

Once More with Feeling

Meet us in Missouri!

September 25–27, 2015 (midday Friday to midday Sunday)

Missouri History Museum, St. Louis, MO

Register now: <http://imtal-us.org/event-1930269>

Hotel info: Sheraton Clayton Plaza Hotel:

<http://tinyurl.com/nooezrs>

Better than Broadway: How to use theatre to create and present amazing interpretive programs

November 9–10, 2015

2-day pre-conference session, National Association for Interpretation Annual Conference

Virginia Beach, VA

<http://tinyurl.com/q75hddd>

For two challenging and exhilarating days, experience and experiment with theatrical techniques, from creating and researching stories, characters, and costuming to performance techniques and program assessment. We'll take you through every step of the process, moving you out of your comfort zone without letting you fall into the abyss. By the end of the workshop, you'll have participated in the development, rehearsal, presentation, and critique of a complete performance. Participants are invited to submit ideas for performance development; the instructors will select up to 6 concepts for development during the workshop.

Better than Broadway is presented by six interpreters with extensive experience both in using performing arts in interpretation (including museum theatre, living history, storytelling, play and interpretive writing, research, and assessment) and in teaching others how to use these techniques. All presenters also hold or have held leadership positions in the field.

National Association for Interpretation Annual Conference

November 10–14, 2015

Virginia Beach, VA

<http://interpnet.com>

Grants

Approaching deadline: July 23, 2015

Grant funding initiative to celebrate the arts and national parks deadline July 23, 2015

“Imagine Your Parks” is a new grant initiative created as a partnership between the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Park Service to celebrate the intersections between the two agencies in honor of the NEA’s 50th anniversary in 2015 and the National Park Service’s centennial in 2016. Part of the NEA’s Art Works category, “Imagine Your Parks” will support art projects that encourage the creation of and greater public engagement with art around the National Park System. Deadline is July 23, 2015 for projects beginning no earlier than June 1, 2016. NEA guidelines with further details will be available at www.arts.gov before the end of the year. Email tighet@arts.gov with questions.

Submit articles, news, and ideas for the next issue of Insights!

In the Fall 2015 issue: Once More with Feeling: The Power & Impact of Museum Theatre

Articles and opinion pieces can be from 250 to 2,000 words long; must be in MS Word (.doc preferred, please); and it would be really nice if you could format your file to be double-spaced, first paragraph indented, 11- or 12-point Times new Roman or similar. But the most important thing is to send us your article, opinion, or news to publications@imtal-us.org **no later than October 10, 2015.** *(It doesn't have to be perfect; it just needs to be reasonably coherent. If we have questions, we'll contact you.)*

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The International Museum Theatre Alliance (IMTAL) is a nonprofit, professional membership organization and an affiliate to the American Alliance of Museums. IMTAL's mission is to inspire and support the use of theatre and theatrical technique to cultivate emotional connections, provoke action, and add public value to the museum experience. For more information, to become a member, or to volunteer, please visit our website, <http://imtal-us.org/home>, or contact a board member via email.

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**Doug also continues as IMTAL Website and Social Media guru. Please send questions about such things to him at web@imtal-us.org.*

***Elizabeth is also the 2015 IMTAL Americas conference chair.*