

# HOW DO WE TELL DIFFICULT STORIES IN OUR INSTITUTIONS?

## PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

*"How far you go in life depends on you being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and the strong. Because someday in life, you will have been all of these."*

- George Washington Carver

I was fortunate to be among the conference attendees who saw the team from Colonial Williamsburg present *The Road to Redemption* at last year's gathering in Denver. The performances, the script, the commitment to truth, were all achingly powerful, deeply moving, and wholly necessary. It was one of the most extraordinary presentations I've ever seen, period. A year and some months on, I still think about it and I'm still inspired by it.

I'm also inspired by what Laura Perez has to say in this issue about the current state of affairs and how her institution in the DC Metro area is addressing them. I'm inspired by Elizabeth Pickard and her team of ACTivists in St. Louis.

I'm inspired by each of us who take a stand, who speak up and speak out, who offer a hand, shine a light, tell a story; who change a mind, change a heart, change a life.

We all have a role (or several roles) to play, and as in any theatrical endeavor, listening is a good start. Hearing what's being said is better. Only then will you know your cue. How you perform the part is up to you, but remember, there is an audience. They're listening, they're hearing, they're watching. They learn. Give them something to remember.

- Douglas Coler  
*IMTAL President*

Douglas Coler, IMTAL President



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I am very honored to share this edition Insights with you. I recently heard an author say, "All we have are our stories." If this is true, then what happens when we stop telling our stories? Or what does it say about the people whose stories were never told, whose voices are not heard?

Fall is an opportunity for reflection as the evenings grow longer and the weather draws us indoors. In this Fall edition of the newsletter, I approached some colleagues with the question, "How do we tell 'difficult'

stories in our institutions?" I purposely kept it vague. "Difficult" is up to interpretation - but that's what we do best as museum people, isn't it - interpret? The authors answered that question with their thoughtful perspective on how they approach the telling the stories of the historically underrepresented. It is my hope that these articles will challenge us, inspire us, and that they will provoke dialogue about our role as museum theatre practitioners, as storytellers.

- Ilana Gustafson



Ilana Gustafson, Insights Editor

### NEW! ARTICLES ONLINE

Did you know that IMTAL *Insights* is interactive? Not only can you click on links and emails, but now you can also comment on and share the articles by clicking on their titles in this issue! You will be taken to the new [ARTICLES ONLINE](#) section of the IMTAL website, where we encourage you to explore and interact with the new format: leave a comment, start a dialogue, and spread the word about museum theatre!

## LOOKING AHEAD...

### SAVE THESE DATES!

#### Deadlines for the Lipsky and IMTY Awards are approaching!

Submit your play or nomination by **January 15, 2018** to be considered.

**2018 IMTAL  
GLOBAL CONFERENCE  
Los Angeles, CA  
Week of Sept 10, 2018**

Exact dates and details to be announced.  
Stay tuned for more!

### ABOUT THE AWARDS

#### Jon Lipsky Award for Excellence in Playwriting

IMTAL awards the Lipsky Award to the play that best exemplifies standards of excellence and best practices in Museum Theatre. For criteria and submission guidelines, visit:

[www.imtal-us.org/lipsky](http://www.imtal-us.org/lipsky).

#### IMTY Award

IMTAL recognizes the importance of decision makers to the future of museum theatre. The IMTY Award was established to recognize Senior Staff members who have demonstrated strong support for museum theatre. For more, visit:

[www.imtal-us.org/imty](http://www.imtal-us.org/imty).

## HOW DO WE TELL DIFFICULT STORIES?

(Left to right) Merlin Bell, Erin Renee Roberts, Linda Kennedy, Peggy Harris, and Gregory Jenkins



Photos courtesy of the Missouri History Museum

## Open Mind, Willing Heart, Listening Ear

**How the ACTIVISTS Project at the Missouri History Museum has approached the telling of the struggle for equality in St. Louis.**

— By Elizabeth Pickard —

How do we tell “difficult” or “painful” stories in the museum? How do we represent people who are “historically underrepresented?” We do it best when we start seeing those stories not as difficult but as necessary. When we see underrepresentation as doing bad work, we stop underrepresenting – we start telling more and more of the story.

If we are not members of the underrepresented communities we are seeking to include, it means committing to listen, amplify, and get out of the way until we are telling history from multiple perspectives, honoring a complex past, and telling stories that have been too long ignored.

We need to start with an open mind, willing heart, and listening ear. We must quickly move on to committing resources – time, money, and attention to asking what our communities *actually* need and want from us, rather than what we *think* they need or want. We need to take a good hard look at our staff, hiring practices, volunteer networks, and our partnerships to ensure that the right voices are at the table and on the floor of the museum.

For museum theatre practitioners and educators none of this should be a stretch. After all, we go into exhibits looking for what’s missing – for the stories not fully told by our objects, images, documents, and labels. We look for new takes

on tired galleries and approaches that take well-known stories in new directions. We are looking for the human, the conflict, the pain, the joy. We know (or we should) that it takes a very shallow scratch on the surface of history to find those things and bring them to light. We have the skillset to do this work.

Like many of us in museum theatre, for many years that was just where our interpretive work lay – in finding the missing or overlooked story and bringing it to the museum gallery or stage through theatre. These were women’s stories, immigrant stories, African American stories, and working class stories. Because Teens Make History, our work-based learning program for teens, is



Merlin Bell and Peggy Harris, two of the Missouri History Museum's ACTivists

majority African American, we had been facilitating teens writing plays about African American history and their own experiences for the last decade. We built relationships with colleagues and historians who were expert in these fields, recruited actors where necessary, and did a hefty amount of original primary source synthesis where secondary sources were not available.

This groundwork meant that when the Missouri History Museum opened an exhibit dedicated to the African American Freedom Struggle in St. Louis in March of 2017, that many of the elements that enable and support inclusive history were already in place in the theatre program – or at least it meant that we knew who to ask for the right resources. We had certainly hosted touring exhibits about African American history and Civil Rights, and we always have worked hard to insure that African American and other experiences that are often overlooked or excluded from the historical narrative were not excluded from our in-house exhibits, whether about the Louisiana

Purchase or Route 66. But there was no doubt that #1 in *Civil Rights, The African American Freedom Struggle in St. Louis* was an opportunity to explore, commemorate, and celebrate this rich history like never before.

One of the big challenges for the 6,000 square foot exhibition was that most of our original

materials were documents and images, rather than the three dimensional artifacts that most exhibits are built around. We had dozens if not hundreds of stories to tell and fewer than 20 objects to do it with. We decided to address the dearth of artifacts in part by employing the arts. We commissioned four local African American artists to create portraits, murals, landscapes and collages and we hired four part time ACTivist actor interpreters to populate the galleries and visit local schools.

Both the exhibition and the ACTivists Project seek to explode the idea that the Civil Rights Movement began with *Brown v. Board* in 1954 and ended with the

steps in 1819 to oppose the idea of the Missouri Compromise, which allowed Missouri to enter the union as a slave owning state and end the exhibit with questions about the 2014 Ferguson uprisings and their place in history. We portray a living, breathing movement – and so what could be more suitable than doing so with living, breathing, people?

The ACTivists Project received major funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (MA-10-16-0231-16.) The funding was critically important to making the project work because it included the salaries of the four ACTivists who each work 20 hours per week. They perform every hour (just about) that the gallery is open for general visitors and for field trip groups. They also travel free of charge to local schools, delivering an introductory civil rights lesson plan in classroom settings – a lesson plan that includes a 20 minute one person performance. The original idea was that the classroom visit would be a pre-field trip activity, and for some schools that has been the case. For others in our area, however, there is exactly no field trip funding and the ACTivist program is the only opportunity that teachers have to bring this vital content to their students.

**“We portray a living, breathing movement – and so what could be more suitable than doing so with living, breathing, people?”**

passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1968. Instead we talk about a continuum of struggle and action in the work for equality. We begin the story with a protest on the courthouse

Each of the ACTivists has gone through training with the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, and developed a dialogic arc to use following their

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performances for adult groups and the general public. They also cross train with our museum educators, as they deliver one of three gallery stops on the gallery + classroom program for the exhibit.

Each ACTivist plays three roles. The women portray Lucy Delaney in the classroom. Mrs. Delaney spent 17 months in jail as a young teen waiting for her freedom suit to be resolved (enslaved people suing for freedom were often made to live in the jail during the time their suit was pending so that if they were unsuccessful, they could be returned to the people who enslaved them.) She was ultimately victorious, and lived out her life in St. Louis and becoming a leader in African American women’s masonic orders and a member of the emerging black working and middle class before the American Civil War. The men portray Charlton Tandy, who was born free in Kentucky before the Civil War, worked in that time to help fleeing enslaved people to safety, and later served in the Union army. Tandy led a series of court actions, boycotts and direct action to force St. Louis’s streetcars to desegregate in the late 1860’s and early 1870’s. He ultimately succeeded – 80 years before Rosa Parks.

Every ACTivist also learns what is termed the “Imagine Play” – a play that encourages field trip students to imagine themselves as part of the protest movement for equal employment in the city in the 1960’s. Part of this program is teaching students the songs we knew were sung here in 1963, and to talk about the importance of music to the Civil Rights Movement of the 20th century. We spend a lot of time



talking about the mental, physical, and spiritual preparation for going into a situation in which you knew you would be arrested in order to oppose injustice.

(Above)  
A word cloud drawn from teacher evaluations of the ACTivists classroom visit.

Finally, each ACTivist performs a pop up piece about another leader in St. Louis's struggle. Pearl Maddox, who led lunch counter sit

group left off, leading lunch counter protests from 1948 to 1961 when the city finally passed a public accommodations act.

*"The success of the program and of the #1 in Civil Rights exhibit show that there is not just a need for this history, but a hunger for it... it is a history that has not been told in this way before."*

ins in 1944 in St. Louis department stores. Margaret Bush Wilson, a civil rights attorney who in the 1980's became the first black woman to lead the NAACP. George L. Vaughn, who argued the Shelley v. Kraemer housing segregation case in the US Supreme Court and won in 1948. David Grant another attorney who was very active in the March on Washington Movement of the 1940's, pushing for equal employment opportunities for African Americans. When none of the four regular ACTivists are available for whatever reason, we do have one white actor who performs the Imagine Play and portrays Billie Teneau, one of the founding members of the interracial Committee on Racial Equality, who picked up where Pearl Maddox's

The response to the program and to the exhibit has been the most positive response we have ever had to a museum theatre offering. It has already expanded the reach of our museum theatre program from about 13,000 visitors served in a good year to over 100,000 served in six and a half months. The success of the program and of the #1 in Civil Rights exhibit show that there is not just a need for this history, but a hunger for it. Partly, this is because it is a history that has not been told in this way before. The power of representing these leaders is tangible. People burst into tears. Some say I had no idea this was going on in my city, others find friends and family members honored that they were never expecting to see represented. Many

are demanding to know how we will keep the exhibit and its content alive after the exhibit closes in April of 2018.

My favorite exchange was one I had with a student on a field trip one day.

"All of this happened in history?" he asked quietly.

"Yes," I said, "but not only that, all of this happened in St. Louis."

He was in disbelief, "In St. Louis? For real?" His face lit up, his demeanor changed and his sense of pride was palpable. "I'm going to have to come back." ❖



Elizabeth Pickard

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

**Elizabeth Pickard** is Director of Education and Interpretation at the Missouri History Museum where she has worked since 2005. She is a past president of IMTAL and wrote IMTALers a lot of ridiculous emails during her term. Now in the twilight of her IMTAL board career, she spends a lot of time in a rocking chair starting sentences with, "In my day..." That said, she is very seriously excited about this article and about the fact that the project it describes would not have succeeded without many intense text exchanges, late night conference conversations, and general inspiration and support from IMTAL.

## Road to Redemption:

Reflections on the creation and impact of "Journey to Redemption"

— By Antoinette Brennan and Jamar Jones —

At Colonial Williamsburg, our daily charge is to bring 18th century Virginia to life. We explore the intricacies of our nation's history to see how the past continues to inform our present. As Actor Interpreters, we portray numerous historical figures on stage and in historic sites with the hope of spotlighting the lives of individuals often overlooked or unnoticed in our study of history. History is extremely complex. Over half of Williamsburg's population during the 18th century were people of African descent, and the majority of those people were enslaved.

*"What is it like interpreting slavery?"*

**Difficult. Sensitive.  
Unpleasant. Complex.  
Necessary.**

In 2016, members of our ensemble had the pleasure of travelling to Denver, Colorado to present our original piece *Journey to Redemption* at the IMTAL conference. *Journey to Redemption* is a 35 minute theatrical piece and departure from the usual style of dramatic presentations at Colonial Williamsburg. It serves as a refreshing vehicle to examine 18th century slavery as well as its affects on our present day. The production is a devised theatre

piece; a collaboration between the six ensemble members (Antoinette Brennan, David Catanese, Corinne E. Dame, Jamar Jones, Katrinah Carol Lewis, and Jeremy V. Morris) and two creative facilitators (Mary Carter and Lucinda McDermott).

*"Now, on this journey you may encounter a few bumps in the road, perhaps a detour or two, but you won't be alone."*

— Antoinette Brennan as Ann Wager in *Journey*

When we began crafting *Journey to Redemption* all we had was a title. Lucinda McDermott, then Manager of Dramatic Arts, wanted to explore

the challenges and successes that Actor Interpreters face portraying and interpreting the lives of enslaved people and slave owners. It was imperative to spotlight and explore people of Williamsburg, both enslaved and free during the American Revolution, and how their stories could be presented in a fresh and new way. Our ensemble is a part of a larger collective called the Actor Interpreter unit, and the six of us were chosen to develop this new theatrical presentation because of our creative interest and past experiences. There was a desire to have many perspectives represented in this piece, and our ensemble reflects diversity in race, sex, and age.



(From left) Jeremy V. Morris, Corinne E. Dame, Jamar Jones, Antoinette Brennan, David Catanese and Katrinah Carol Lewis in *Journey to Redemption*.

Our first task as a group was getting to know one another. This required cooperation and respect in order to solidify our ensemble. It was essential that we trust each other, not only to feel safe to share our inner feelings, but to also feel free to explore our creativity without being fearful of criticism or judgement. One ground rule was that all ideas needed to be considered before they could be rejected. One does not laugh at a baby learning to walk, so we were to give each suggestion its due consideration.

In order to help establish guidelines for creative collaboration we participated in exercises all designed to get the creative juices flowing. We utilized a myriad of brainstorming and creative exercises once we began the process. Sometimes a member of the ensemble would share a story about past interpretive successes or challenges. Sometimes we revealed painful truths through our personal poetry or told a funny story. At times, we used no words. We moved individually and as a unit. Movement is something crucial and essential to the power of *Journey to Redemption*. Guests have often commented that the entire piece appears as a well-orchestrated dance, and it is to some degree. We are a moving unit, and have interwoven several different stories and character narratives to tell one overarching story. The first half of the play is all in-character. As an ensemble we weave together our 18th century character narratives for roughly 15 minutes, and then a shift happens. Our ensemble breaks character in order to be in the ‘now’

with the audience, and throughout the second half we share our personal experiences and thoughts about working as actors and interpreters of slavery and history.

Central to our creative process was establishing our Major Dramatic Question (MDQ). The MDQ that fuels our piece is “Who is responsible for this mess?” The “mess” is the current state of race relations, the ramifications of slavery still embedded within our nation, and the healing from historical trauma still needed in our country. Our answer is that **we are all responsible**. With this in mind our script began to evolve and it was, indeed, a creative process, a true communal effort. Woven throughout the performance is our dealing with and answering the MDQ. The audience must be made aware not only of the question, but also the answer.

*“Why do you work there? Why?”*

– **Jeremy V. Morris in *Journey***

This is a question not only presented in *Journey to Redemption*, but asked to us frequently by guests, friends, and family. Developing this show furthered our exploration into why each one of us continues to take on these challenging personas. Some days are harder than others, but it truly is a calling. Presenting the piece is rewarding as we share emotions of hurt and joy through anecdotes of our own experiences and those of the historical figures we portray. Additionally, our hope is to give voice to the voiceless, so that they can be remembered. It is

an honor to represent these people, and we are committed to sharing their stories and experiences as fully as possible.

**By speaking their names, they are remembered.**

The historical figures represented in *Journey to Redemption*:

**Ann Wager**, a school mistress for Negro children

**Jack Booker**, an enslaved printer

**Roger**, an enslaved footman

**Mingo**, an enslaved carpenter

**Elizabeth Wythe**, mistress of a gentry household

**Lydia**, an enslaved housekeeper

**Jenny**, an enslaved field worker

**Joseph Prentis**, lawyer and politician

We strive to honor them in the telling of their stories.

*“When we open our minds and our hearts to the pain of our past some healing can happen.”*

– **Katrinah Carol Lewis in *Journey***

Audience members are often very emotional after viewing the play and it is obvious that they are deeply moved. Many people give us a simple but sincere “thank you.” We never could have anticipated the impact of the piece. As artists and interpreters of history, our desire is that people find meaning and hope from the work that we create and that we represent our historical figures and colleagues in the best manner possible. We are grateful for the response to our work. It has provoked people to think and



# HOW DO WE TELL DIFFICULT STORIES?

challenge what is happening right now in our country. The emotions range from tears to laughter after every performance. A question often asked afterward is, "What can I do?" We do not profess to have the answers. Hopefully *Journey to Redemption* encourages our audiences to initiate work in their own communities to help heal

and repair the damage the legacy of slavery has on race relations in this country. It is long overdue to have these difficult conversations. Perhaps *Journey to Redemption* can serve as a vehicle for those who struggle to find the appropriate words to begin.

*Journey to Redemption* is a piece that is uniquely us and yet we are

a reflection of our whole country. As we share our stories perhaps others will be inspired to share theirs. Somehow we need to open the conversation which can lead to better understanding of each other and to make our country a place where people work together without hatred and division. This is – our hope for the future. ❖



Antoinette Brennan

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

**Antoinette Brennan** (Ann Wager) is an actor-interpreter with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. She began her interpretative career in as a volunteer for the National Park Service at Yorktown, Virginia, and her next step was a role in an 18th-century theater production with Colonial Williamsburg. Her work portraying Ann Wager, the mistress of the city's charitable Bray School for African-American children, facilitates discussions on education, religion, enslavement and the role of women, eliciting a range of opinions and views from guests and audiences of various backgrounds. Brennan finds it a privilege to touch people's lives and raise their awareness about the injustices and repercussions of enslavement. She has also performed with the local Wedgewood Renaissance Theatre Co. with major roles in "A Delicate Balance," "Long Day's Journey into Night," "Three Tall Women" and "Retreat from Moscow." A favorite role was that of Mrs. Malaprop in Colonial Williamsburg's production of "The Rivals."

**Jamar Jones** (Mingo, Roger) is an actor-interpreter with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. A native of Richmond, he began work with Colonial Williamsburg in summer 2013 as an intern for African-American research and interpretation. In April 2014, he joined the actor-interpreter unit and has had the pleasure of participating in several compelling new works as a performer and a playwright detailing the lives of free and enslaved people of the 18th century, in addition to serving as a historical interpreter. Jones views his work as both a great challenge and an extraordinary honor. It is not easy telling stories of enslavement - nor was it easy for those who endured it - but they did, and Jones believes their voices must be heard. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in theater and sociology from the College of William & Mary and has been working as a professional actor since graduating in 2013. His credits include: "Slave Spy" (Yorktown Victory Center), "I Have a Dream" (Theatre IV National Tour), and an original one-man production entitled "To Arrive and Conquer: My Rites of Passage," as well as Season 2 of "Mercy Street" (PBS) and "Loving" (Focus Features).



Jamar Jones

# On Hip-Hop, Identity, and Disrupting Museum Spaces

— By Laura Perez —

**A**s Director of Education and Programs for Prince George's African American Museum and Cultural Center (PGAAMCC) – a community-based institution that celebrates Black art, history, and culture in Prince George's County, Maryland and makes connections regionally, nationally, and internationally/Diasporically – I have the opportunity to incorporate the arts into a museum space via PGAAMCC's public and education programs. I'm fortunate to work at an institution that centers identity and intersectionality and is intentional in the language that we use and the stories that we tell. With this foundation, we have been able to create successful arts-based and arts-integrated programs that are both timely and relevant to our audience.

PGAAMCC's education programs, which incorporate visual art, performance art, music, and creative writing, are facilitated in over 70 schools in Prince George's County and the DC Metro Area. Our public programs, which include everything from panel discussions and artist talks to film screenings, festivals, and album release parties – redefine the way in which Museums have traditionally engaged with the art world. We intentionally call into question what is considered “high art” and aim to create a

*“We intentionally call into question what is considered ‘high art’ and aim to create a space that allows for artistic and cultural exchange across genres and disciplines, without the interruption of respectability politics.”*

space that allows for artistic and cultural exchange across genres and disciplines, without the interruption of respectability politics.

For me, this work is also personal. In addition to being a museum professional, I am also an emcee and lifelong lover of hip-hop. Incorporating creative writing, hip-hop, and poetry into museum programs has been, in my experience, an effective method for sharing content in new ways as well as and expanding an institution's audience. Hip-hop is a musical genre steeped in allusions; it's easy to find songs that make reference to a wide range of museum-relevant

*“There is an extreme level of cognitive dissonance needed to know the words to every Rihanna song while also firmly believing that the officers who killed Sandra Bland and Rekia Boyd are guilty.”*

subjects including Black and Latinx history, social justice movements, politics, current events, and works

of literature and art. But even more importantly, hip-hop is an art form that emphasizes the importance of identity and authenticity.

The current reality in America, in which blatant displays of racism, homophobia, xenophobia, Islamophobia, etc. are becoming increasingly socially acceptable, is just a more overt display of what has existed in this country since its founding. The irony is, that in the midst of this increase, the appropriation and consumption of Black culture by mainstream America is at an all-time high. Black culture is consumed for entertainment and profit, while Black lives are criminalized and disregarded. There is an extreme level of cognitive dissonance needed to know the words to every Rihanna song while also firmly believing that the officers who killed Sandra Bland and Rekia Boyd are guilty. But this is the reality that we live in now. As such, it is critical that we emphasize the importance of cultural literacy and intersectional

thinking when discussing the art that we love and the music we celebrate.

# HOW DO WE TELL DIFFICULT STORIES?

For museum and arts professionals, there is no better opportunity to promote healthy identity development and appreciation for, rather than appropriation of, culture. By utilizing the performing arts in museum spaces—whether that be hip-hop, theatre, storytelling, or beyond—we are able to create opportunities for audiences to learn more about

themselves, to interrogate their own identities and belief systems, and to ensure that their love for an art form is parallel to their level of respect for the community or communities that created it. Furthermore, we are able to celebrate the art forms, histories, and stories that are often disregarded due to a privileging of other narratives. Ultimately, when

we acknowledge the origins of museums as colonized spaces and recognize that history can be both beautiful and horrible, it becomes apparent that arts integration in the museum space must be done thoughtfully and holistically to not only tell the full story, but to also ask the right questions. ❖



Laura Perez

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

**Laura Perez** is a lyricist, educator, fundraiser, and advocate for the arts with eleven years of experience working with educational institutions, museums, non-profits, and the Washington, DC hip-hop and poetry communities; she specializes in program design and management, arts integration, and cultural competence. Laura earned a Bachelor of Arts in English and a Master of Arts in African American Literature at Howard University, focusing her research on cultural hybridity and shifting identity within contemporary literary works of racial satire. Following graduation, she designed and led a District of Columbia Public Schools sponsored course that intertwined hip-hop with issues of social justice and identity. She then went on to serve as Program Director of the American Poetry Museum in Washington, DC. Currently, Laura is the Director of Education and Programs at Prince George's African American Museum and Cultural Center in North Brentwood, Maryland and continues to design and implement programs that make connections between the arts, history, culture, social justice, and identity.

## Want to write for Insights?

Short article, essay, opinion piece, announcement, photo...  
if it has to do with Museum Theatre, we're interested!

For more information and next issue's theme, visit  
<http://imtal-us.org/insights>

or contact  
[publications@imtal-us.org!](mailto:publications@imtal-us.org)

Deadline for Winter 2018 issue is  
December 28, 2017.

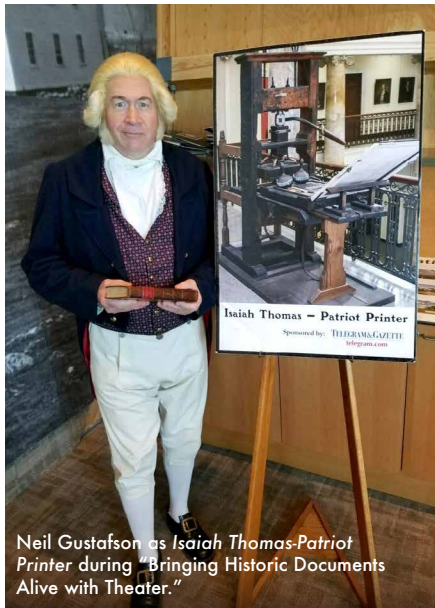
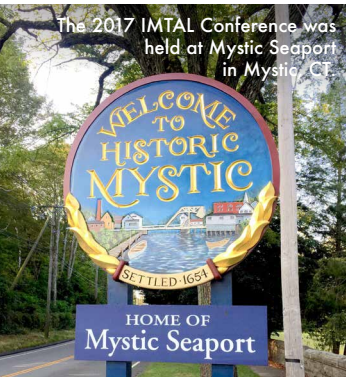
# 2017 CONFERENCE PHOTOS

## Navigating the Seas of Change

### 2017 IMTAL Annual Conference

**IMTAL Conference @ Mystic Seaport**  
Mystic, Connecticut - September 10-14th, 2017

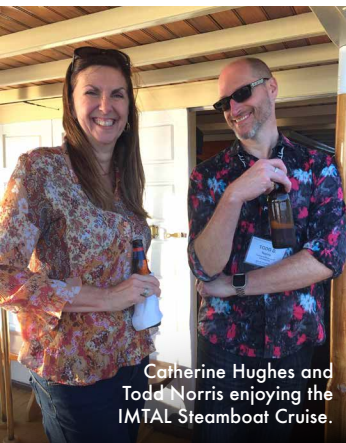
The 2017 Annual Conference was a huge success! Thank you to all of our amazing attendees, as well as Jen Brown of *The Engaging Educator*, and our hosts: Mystic Seaport, the Mark Twain House and Gillette Castle State Park!



Neil Gustafson as Isaiah Thomas-Patriot Printer during "Bringing Historic Documents Alive with Theater."



Conference attendees participated in an improv workshop on the beautiful grounds of Mystic Seaport.



Catherine Hughes and Todd Norris enjoying the IMTAL Steamboat Cruise.



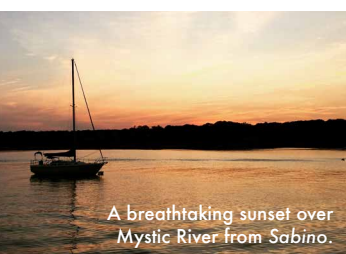
Annie Johnson and Elizabeth Pickard onboard Mystic Seaport's newly restored steamboat, Sabino.



Keynote speaker, Jen Brown of *The Engaging Educator*, encouraged the use of improv-based thinking in daily life.



Workshop participants embraced trust, cooperation, and flexibility during group and partner exercises.



A breathtaking sunset over Mystic River from Sabino.



Sal St. George and Douglas Miner in their storytelling session, "hiSTORY."



Having a blast at the IMTAL Cocktail Reception!



Emma Grahn and Katharine Mead discuss their strategies during "Experimenting at the National Museum of American History."

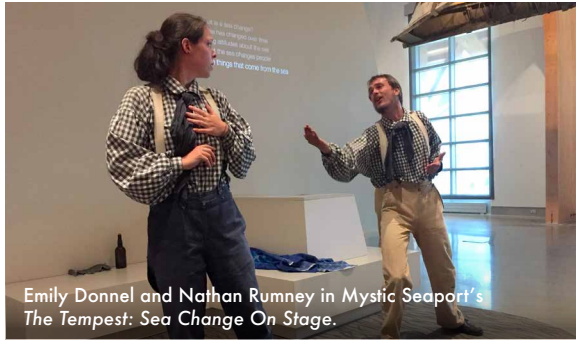


Judy Fort Brenneman teaches in her workshop, "The Shortest Distance Between Two People is a Story."

# 2017 CONFERENCE PHOTOS



Karyn Dawidowicz performs as suffragist Inez Milholland in Hear Us: Voices from the Past.



Emily Donnel and Nathan Rumney in Mystic Seaport's The Tempest: Sea Change On Stage.



Matt Anderson and Aaron Bonds incorporated some hilarious audience participation in their session, "Evolution of Interaction."



Conference attendees had time to explore the grounds (and waters!) of Mystic Seaport.



Clowning around during "Evolution of Interaction."



Conference participants visited the Mark Twain House and experienced their Living History Tours led by Twain's maids, "Katy Leary" and "Lizzie Wills."



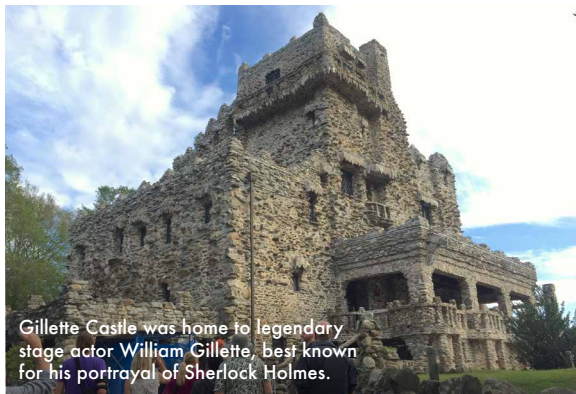
Mystic Seaport is home to a number of landmark ships.



Attendees were treated to a performance of William Gillette: Senator's Son to Super Sleuth by the East Haddam Stage Company followed by a Q&A.



No trip to Mystic is complete without a trip to Mystic Pizza!



Gillette Castle was home to legendary stage actor William Gillette, best known for his portrayal of Sherlock Holmes.



The interior of Gillette Castle featured elaborate woodwork, intricate doors and handmade furnishings.



IMTAL hosted conference attendees to a delicious lunch between offsite excursions.



Douglas Coler, Catherine Hughes, Elysia Segal, and Annie Johnson discuss "Responding to Changing Audiences and Programming Needs."



Paul Taylor and David Wrigley demonstrate some of their adult programs in "Just How 'Adult' Can Adult Programming Be Before We Cross the Line?"

# GET INVOLVED!

## Here's Your Chance to Change the World!

**Want to get involved with IMTAL but aren't sure how?**  
*We're so glad you've FALL-en for us!*

**Turn over a new leaf...**

- Help with next year's conference planning
- Submit articles, news, photos and ideas for *Insights*
- Share IMTAL with friends and colleagues
- Send a photo to post on the IMTAL website
- Write up a blog post for the IMTAL Facebook page

**Ready to rake it all in?**

- Become an At-Large IMTAL Board Member
- Submit a script for the Jon Lipsky Award for Excellence in Playwriting  
 For more information, visit: <http://imtal-us.org/Lipsky>
- Nominate your leader for the IMTY Award  
 For more information, visit: <http://imtal-us.org/IMTY>

**Want to be in the next issue of *Insights*?**

Check out the **submission guidelines** then send your article, photo, or news to [publications@imtal-us.org](mailto:publications@imtal-us.org) by **December 28, 2017** for the Winter 2018 issue!



## KEEP UP

...with IMTAL online and on social media!

Connect with IMTAL Americas on:

- Website** [www.imtal-us.org](http://www.imtal-us.org)
- f Facebook** [www.facebook.com/IMTALAmericas](http://www.facebook.com/IMTALAmericas)
- Twitter** [@IMTALAmericas](https://twitter.com/IMTALAmericas)
- Instagram** [@IMTALAmericas](https://www.instagram.com/IMTALAmericas)

for posts and pictures about IMTAL news and events!

Tag us when sharing your own museum theatre-related posts and tweets so we can help spread the word.

...and don't forget to check out our [online archive](#) for past issues of *Insights*!

The International Museum Theatre Alliance (IMTAL) is a nonprofit, professional membership organization and an affiliate of 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.

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