

# IMTAL INSIGHTS

International Museum Theatre Alliance

Summer 2017 - Volume 27, Issue 3

## Navigating the Seas of Change

**IMTAL 2017 Annual Conference**

**September 10-14, 2017**

**Museum of America and the Seas - Mystic, Connecticut**

## PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

In May at the AAM Conference in St. Louis, twenty five IMTAL members and guests gathered in a surprisingly spacious “dining room” to present our annual IMTY and Lipsky awards. (You can read about them elsewhere in this issue.) What was heartening about that gathering, aside from honoring fellow museum theatre practitioners, was the sense that we all belonged there. This was, even more than a meal together to celebrate our award recipients, a tribal gathering.

We practice our craft in institutions of varying sizes, and for some of us, the team that creates and presents the work is the only contact we have with like-minded folks for most of the year. We are all isolated in our own ways, but we are a tribe.

That’s why we offer our Annual Conference. It is an opportunity to come together with your fellow creators, presenters, performers, interpreters, actors, writers, interactors, actor-interpreters...the members of our tribe. We are fortunate to have had

some memorable conferences these past years. Atlanta, Washington D.C., Chicago, St. Louis, Denver. What makes them memorable is the participation of such a varied assortment of attendees, the breath-taking display of talent, the techniques and ideas, the many different styles and forms that our tribe uses to communicate the human experience. I urge you to register today for our September Conference at Mystic Seaport. Your tribe is expecting you.

I also want to take this opportunity to welcome (in print) our newest members of the Board of Directors, Publications Officer Ilana Gustafson, Secretary Elysia Segal, and Membership Officer Mark Wehlage. They join Past President Elizabeth Pickard, Treasurer Annie Johnson, and Vice President Todd Norris to form a strong and hard-working team. I am excited to work with them.

I look forward to seeing you in Connecticut!

- Douglas Coler  
*IMTAL President*

Douglas Coler, IMTAL President



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Isn't it a wonderfully odd niche we fill, us museum theater professionals? I was so happy to discover that IMTAL existed last year, a group of passionate and creative people doing theater in museums, just like me! Who knew there were so many of us? I attended the conference in Denver last year where I met people who use the power of story to transform lives, enrich minds, and humanize often dry museum content. It was a glorious assemblage of storytellers, puppeteers, performers, writers, and teachers, and usually some combination of all of these. I am excited to begin my tenure as Editor of the *Insights* newsletter because it gives me an excuse to reach out to each of

you and ask all of the questions burning inside of me—mostly beginning with “how did you come up with THAT?” I know the more we can share about our process the more our field can grow and we simply don't have to feel as alone in our curious and unusual careers! And if you haven't made it out to a conference yet, I highly recommend you register right now for the September conference in Mystic, CT. You really won't regret it. You can find the info in this newsletter and online at [imtal-us.org](http://imtal-us.org). Meanwhile, I hope you get inspired reading about the winners of the Lipsky and IMTY Awards in this issue of *Insights*!

- Ilana Gustafson



Ilana Gustafson, *Insights* Editor

### Want to write for Insights?

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

Submission guidelines are now online: <http://imtal-us.org/publications>.

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

## 2017 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

### Navigating the Seas of Change: IMTAL 2017 (Sept 10-14)

The 2017 Annual Conference is upon us once again...

Book your spot today and join the nation's museum theatre practitioners at Mystic Seaport!

#### KEYNOTE SPEAKER

**Jen Brown of The Engaging Educator**

Jen will also conduct a workshop for all participants!

**SESSIONS** Featuring topics such as bringing historical documents to life, storytelling, using primary sources, and more!

**FIELD TRIPS** Mark Twain House, Gillette Castle State Park (2017 IMTY Award recipient), and a local winery tasting!

**Plus a private reception aboard a steamboat!**

**REGISTER TODAY at [www.imtal-us.org](http://www.imtal-us.org)**

Member - \$275.00

Non-Member - \$330.00 (includes IMTAL membership)

Single Day - \$135.00

Student - \$175.00

## GETTING THERE

#### Hotel: Hyatt Place Mystic

Mention the IMTAL Conference for our group rate! Block closes August 10.

#### Airports:

Hartford, CT      BDL      (43 miles)

New Haven, CT      HVN      (45 miles)

Providence, RI      PVD      (46 miles)

We suggest seeing which airport has the best flights from your city. Check the forums on the website if you would like to arrange ride sharing to Mystic.

#### Amtrak:

Mystic Station - Northeast Regional line

## Bringing Artwork to Life!

### An interview with this year's Lipsky Award Winners

— By Ilana Gustafson, Insights Editor —



Mitch Slevc and Jess Robblee in *Art Emergency: Code Red*

During last year's IMTAL Conference, I had the pleasure of catching a performance of *Art Emergency: Code Red*, the winning play for this year's Lipsky award at the Denver Art Museum. The show was co-created by Lindsay Genshaft, Jess Robblee, Mitch Slevc, and Mike Kasper. It is a show filled with witty humor, whip-smart performances, and illuminating lore about the museum's collections.

The script opens with this premise: *the audience (in role as the Board of Directors of the DAM) enter Sharp Auditorium. Onstage is a table on wheels with a mini version of a gallery with teeny tiny artworks in it, and a GoPro camera. Projected is a giant whiteboard for the "meeting."*

What ensues is a delightful journey, guided by performers Jess and Mitch, as they portray several characters and easelessly slide into a variety of genres. We learn some

of the stories behind three pieces of artwork in DAM's collection. By the end of the show, the audience, in the role of the Board of Directors, chooses which of the three will go on the blank space left in the new exhibit design.

I spoke on the phone with three of the four creators of the show to hear a little bit more about how

this collaboration came to be, the inspiration behind *Art Emergency*, and to learn about some of the other museum theater projects they have going on over at DAM.

#### Can you talk about the origins of your collaboration?

**JESS** Mitch and I do the family programming at the Buntport Theater. I had approached the museum about doing theater for kids and families. It was kind of a tough sell at the time. I think I hit them in a weird spot in terms of timing. We did a maiden voyage, a little play in the gallery, it went great and then nothing happened.

Then Lindsay arrived at the museum! Once she was on the scene, we had this incredible advocate in their staff. All of a sudden, things were easier, so much easier. She was

a believer in theater and that's a big deal. We started a monthly program for families and kids on Sunday mornings. From there, Lindsay just kept dreaming big and pushing gently, creatively, excitedly. I think her enthusiasm makes a big difference. It's grown from a monthly program to things like *Art Emergency: Code Red*, a play based on our permanent collections.

#### Can you talk about the process of developing *Code Red*?

**MITCH** We had done several shows about touring exhibitions. We wanted to celebrate the works that lived at the art museum all the time. Since we're doing theater to tell stories, we wanted to find the pieces in the collection that had the best stories. Lindsey reached out to Interpretation Specialists and Curators and everyone to see who had a story about a piece of art in our museum that they were really excited about. We got back all these stories and we chose some of our favorites. Then

*"Since we're doing theater to tell stories, we wanted to find the pieces in the collection that had the best stories."*

we divided it up between the three of us to write our sections. We brought them together and read them. At that point, we had a rough draft with wonderful parts that didn't really flow into each other terribly well. That's when it was time to have someone edit the whole thing, and make it work.

**LINDSAY** Yeah, it worked out that there's three stories in *Art Emergency: Code Red*. Now we've created a sequel called *Art Emergency 2: Code Redder*. It's been this really easy formula for us to each take on a story and then adapt the frame to what we need it to be. I thought the process for *Art Emergency 2* was even easier because we have this template in place.

**JESS** Mike, our technical director, came in terms of making this piece visually beautiful. He's been a really huge asset to us. Mike is not a naysayer at all, which was the perfect thing. We're in this auditorium. It's an intimate space because the stage is very close, but there's a huge screen behind you. What we decided to do was embrace the screen and really use it, which meant animating a painting, and also using lights and sounds and a disco ball in some cases.

**MITCH** A part of the inspiration was when you walk through the offices of the Denver Museum, they have those tiny models of the galleries with tiny, little models of the artwork on

there. We were like, "That's so cool," and that's something the public usually doesn't get to see. When you're back there, they also have these walls that are all whiteboard with tons of notes on them and also things taped to them. The process of choosing which painting goes where in the gallery is a really fascinating thing.

**Yeah, absolutely. Working at a natural history museum, I know our behind the scenes tours of the process is very interesting to people. I thought it was great that you allowed children in that process. We might normally think that's above them, but you really brought them into the adult world in a really fun way.**

**LINDSAY** I like to kid with some of the curators, "Oh you guys, just play doll houses all day!" A step of their process is to mull around this little model, and hang up little paintings or place objects and then seating,

and then change it, and it's just funny. Actually, it worked out well to open that up to kids.

**What has been the response?**

**LINDSAY** The whole reason we do this is to get families and young people excited about art.

It really is amazing to give them those little hints about fun things that you can see in a painting like a thumbprint, or kids splashing around in the river and they're so tiny that they can't really see them if you

*"If they haven't had the experience of this play, they may not have that excitement about the art, so that's the big reward for doing this work."*

don't look closely. We use a projection and zoom in, and then they can see it, and they get so excited to go see the real thing that they go right up to galleries afterwards to find it. If they haven't had the experience of this play, they may not have that excitement about the art, so that's the big reward for doing this work.

It's been nice to get these e-mails talking about how they got really excited to actually see the thumbprint in a Thomas Moran painting, or they have this great discussion with the gallery staff. They have this shared knowledge now about this work of art. To generate this response has been great.

I've really actually heard one negative thing and it was this very older gentleman and he decided it was nonsense. We get a little silly in this play. He did not appreciate the humor.

What's also exciting is that when we did it in the spring, we were able to share it with school groups. It was exciting to see schools and teachers getting really excited about this type of experience.

**JESS** The school groups were really eager to speak.



Mitch Slevc and Jess Robblee as curators in *Art Emergency: Code Red*

## AWARD WINNER INTERVIEWS

**Do you do any prep for them, some pre-visit templates or anything like that for school groups?**

**MITCH** The hope is that this is the pre-visit pamphlet for their experience in the art museum. We hope, not only those particular paintings, but hopefully we give them tricks and skills to find more things in any painting.

**Absolutely, as an audience member, that definitely came through. It made me want to ask more questions about paintings. You made the painting a mystery that I wanted to solve. I can imagine it would definitely take that cue and run with it.**

**LINDSAY** Actually the director of our museum came to see it and he brought his kids. After it, he said, "I learned so much about our collection."

**How do you measure the success of your program internally and externally? Aside from anecdotal feedback, I'm wondering if you do quantitative evaluation?**

**LINDSAY** Well, quantitatively we count every single person that comes in and make sure that we report adults and kids. Now we have a section for grandparents just to get that information too. Success is measured on the raw numbers and qualitative observation. Basically for each run of the play we had, an average of about a thousand people, so that was pretty successful, but the observations of visitor reactions give us even more information.

We were lucky enough to have this intern who was way more experienced than any of us. She

## What is the Lipsky Award?

In 2014, IMTAL established an annual award dedicated to the memory of playwright Jon Lipsky. Jon was Professor of Acting and Playwriting at Boston University's School of Theater, and he created many wonderful short plays on science themes for Boston's Museum of Science. The winner of the Lipsky award will have written the play that most exemplifies standards of excellence in Museum Theatre.

### Criteria:

- The resulting production is engaging and "not boring."
- Factual content is embedded within the play so it is "shown" and not "told."
- Plot contains conflict and/or story arc.
- The characters are well developed (unless the style requires otherwise.)
- Dialogue achieves goals and is consistent with style of play.
- Script and presentations evoke emotion and encourage audiences to make personal connections with the content and/or characters.
- Script aligns with an institution's priorities, and augments, expands, or fulfills a need that is not being addressed elsewhere in the institution

was just so great at evaluation, and analyzing, and observing how audiences reacted to museum theater.

**JESS** The things that she would record were physical reactions or vocalizations from the audience during the show, but you really have to have an extra person to notice all of that and document it. For instance, we did the show *Art Court* where we had a modern painting versus a traditional painting. We were playing the parts of paintings and their lawyer is trying to justify who is better, a modern painting or a traditional painting, and it was a Jackson Pollock versus a guy on a horse, I don't know...

**"The director of our museum came to see it and he brought his kids. After it, he said 'I learned so much about our collection.'"**

**LINDSAY** Charles Deas.

**JESS** While we were busy changing

costumes and moving set out of the space, she was watching and observing the family afterwards re-enacting the argument. That post-behavior observation stuff is really helpful. She also would record quotes from people afterwards.

**LINDSAY** She created these beautiful reports for us. We took that experience and came up with a set practices for Museum Theater and we put into a document. We use it all the time.

**I know you do lots of other programs in the museum as well. I'm wondering if you could describe some of the other things you do and offer some advice for other museums that are interested in incorporating theater into their galleries?**

**MITCH** Well, one of our other programs is called *Foxy and Shmoxy Art Detectives* where two foxes from a piece of art that belongs to the museum would go around solving art mysteries in different paintings.

In the front lobby, where people come in, there's a mailbox that says "Fox Box" on it. They find a little poem written by the foxes that tells them where to go in the museum to find us. They follow little paw prints that are set up every time to go and find us. Every time we do that it's in a different place in the gallery.

**JESS** The gallery pieces are shorter to allow for traffic flow. *Foxes* is ten or twelve minutes tops. It's more like a bit of flash theater that you experience. If anyone else in the gallery is not happy to have noise in their experience, it's not going to last very long. It happens, it's over, everyone goes on with their lives.

**What is the next project, your dream for the evolution of your program?**

**LINDSAY** I'm so glad you asked that. We are now at a place where the institution is really supporting us. It took a few years to get there, to be quite honest with you. Having *Foxes* and then our Family Museum Theater and now in this award, has helped legitimize us. We are so thankful for being honored with the award. Our next step is to add another level of being multicultural. We're looking to tell more stories. We're trying to extend our reaches and add in different narratives of different cultures. So that means getting more actors of diversity involved, getting people on staff that have specialties in those types of artwork to help us tell those stories. That's really our goal for the next immediate future of this program. We're going to be around for as long as all of us want to do this work.

We are thinking about doing a third installment of *Art Emergency* because it has been successful. We may focus on this exhibition called "Stampede," which is taking all of the animals in our different collections and putting them all together. It might be *Art Emergency: Stampede*.

**Well, I'm excited to see where you keep continuing to go and hope to come visit again and see what you're up to!**

**LINDSAY** Thanks for talking to us! ❖

**You mentioned earlier the importance of advocacy, so I'm wondering what advice you have on communicating to executive level staff to encourage them to take what they might perceive as a risk?**

**LINDSAY** Well, I think it might seem like a risk but it's actually doesn't end up being a risk because the response is so powerful. I think the advice that I would give to someone would be to take a look at the programs already happening. What you can do sometimes is add a layer of theater to that, and then you're not starting a whole new program. Try to see if you can leverage what you already have going so you don't have to fight to start something new.

The other advice I would have is to really reach out to your community and find wonderful

local theater companies who would be thrilled to collaborate. I think the three of us couldn't do this work without each other. It's never too much burden on any one person. When you share the challenge together with partners, that also helps to sell it to your museum. There is this great example of community collaboration.

**LINDSAY** I think the advice we would give is you don't have to have this beautiful shiny theater space to do this work at all. I think the important things are just making sure you have room for a crowd to gather, and just making sure that the general museum rules can be followed. Other than that, you can really do theater anywhere in a museum.



Douglas Coler presenting the Lipsky Award to Lindsay Genshaft at the IMTAL Luncheon



East Haddam Stage Company's production of *William Gillette: Senator's Son to Super Sleuth!* at Gillette Castle State Park

## A State Park Supervisor Becomes a Theatre Advocate

**Kandie Carle, Producing Artistic Director of East Haddam Stage Company, on why she nominated IMTY award-winner Philip Yuris**

— By Ilana Gustafson, *Insights* Editor —

**G**illette Castle looks like “a medieval fortress, but a step inside the stone castle reveals the built-in couches, table trackway, and woodcarvings that all point to the creative genius that was William Gillette,” as it is described on the State Park’s website. So how did this State Park come to partner with a theater company?

Kandie Carle, the Producing Artistic Director of the East Haddam Stage Company, describes how they gained Resident Theater Company status at Gillette Castle and what role Philip Yuris, Park Supervisor, had in this successful collaboration.

**How did the East Haddam Stage Company come to the Gillette Castle State Park? Tell us about the origins.**

I had been up to Gillette Castle and I wondered why they didn’t have theater there. I did more research on William Gillette, and he was basically a rockstar Victorian actor. I went to the office of the then supervisor at Gillette Castle and there was a secretary at the front desk, and I said, “I want to talk to the supervisor about potentially doing theater here.” I quote, she said, “That will never work.” I had two choices, turn around and walk away or, instead, I took a breath and I

looked at her and I said, “Well, I think I have some interesting ideas, and I’d like to talk to the supervisor about them.” She said, “Okay.”

We launched the East Haddam Stage Company in 2002, so by 2008 I thought, you know what, we’ve got a few years under our belt now. I pitched my idea of doing William Gillette-specific theater on-site. What I wanted to say was, “Could this possibly be more of a no-brainer?” The man was an actor, and there’s never been any live theater there. I said, “Let me take one of his plays and let me see if I can get something that would work in an outdoor

setting.” He looked at me and said, “Okay. Is it going to cost me anything?” I said, “No. I’ll do it out of my own pocket.” We’ll do a test run. We’ll see what the public has to say and we’ll take it from there.

It was incredibly popular. I adapted William Gillette’s farce, *All the Comforts of Home*. It was a five-act play that I whittled down to 30 minutes. We worked in the dirt and the grass and ran around the building, and had our “backstage” at the back part of the building, outside.

### **How did Philip Yuris enter the scene?**

Behind the scenes as part of the maintenance and groundskeeping crew was Philip Yuris. He had been there for years, and years, and years. He spent his entire career there at Gillette Castle. Suddenly, the original supervisor decided that he was going to go to a different park. In the hierarchy there’s an interim. The interim was Phil Yuris, and that’s when he came down and introduced himself that third year.

He said, “I’ve noticed that you guys are doing really great things. People are talking on the trails about the theater here. What can I do for you?” I was like, “Oh, my God.” The other supervisor hadn’t even come down to see the shows let alone asked what could be helpful. I said, “Well, we’re working here in the dirt and we’ve got to

## **Philip Yuris Never Imagined He’d Win a Theater Award**

The IMTY winner talks about his collaboration with the East Haddam Stage Company and how their work enhances the guest experience at Gillette Castle State Park.

### **What is your background with and relationship to theater?**

Theater has become a part of my life here at the park, and I have enjoyed getting to know the world of performing better at Gillette Castle. Though I have never acted in a show myself, I found myself donating time assisting in construction of stage props. Having an acting troupe at the park has shown me how engaging acting and theatre can be. I now find myself looking forward to attending shows at one of the many local theaters.

### **Why have you been an advocate for theater at the Park? What does the East Haddam Stage Company bring to the guest experience at Gillette Castle?**

Having theatre at the Park brings to life the experience we are offering at Gillette Castle. In the museum, visitors can look at William Gillette’s personal letters, view his art collection, and look out the same windows he looked out to watch the boats float down the Connecticut River; but during the show visitors can really interact with the actor’s stories themselves. The East Haddam Stage Company has brought William Gillette’s legacy to life.

### **What have you learned from your experience working with a theater company and incorporating theater at your site?**

From my experience working with a theater company and incorporating theater into the park, I have learned both the benefits and challenges of collaboration. We have worked hard to ensure the East Haddam Stage Company feels welcome and celebrated in our park, and with that comes some trial and error as we figure out timing and space for the show that coincides with the needs of



Kandie Carle presenting the IMTY Award to Philip Yuris, Park Supervisor and theater advocate at Gillette Castle State Park



## Philip Yuris Never Imagined He'd Win a Theater Award *(continued)*

our visitors. Overall, though, having a theater company at the park has been a positive experience, and I look forward to the continued partnership.

**How were you able to accomplish building a stage and seating at your site as an interim supervisor? What was that process like?**

We were fortunate enough to acquire another piece of property through the state that allowed us to re-use some materials for the stage and seating area. Our seasonal crew constructed the stage itself, and also created children's benches that sit in front of the bleachers. All of the work was done on-site as a part of the normal work day, and is maintained every summer by seasonal staff. We also allow the EHSCO to utilize a small stone building for storage and changing room.

**What do you hope to accomplish in regards to using theater as an interpretive tool? Future plans for the East Haddam Stage Company collaboration?**

Theater as an interpretive tool is a new frontier for me. Having the East Haddam Stage Company at the park has brought in more visitors and has kept them in the park longer, which means they are able to really sink into the educational experiences we are offering. The theater group does not replace but instead positively enhances the information we offer in the museum. It is a wonderful working relationship and the positive

feedback we have received from families coming to the park supports the fact that this has been a worthwhile partnership.

**What advice would you give museum or park professionals who may want to incorporate theater into their programming?**

The best advice I could give to museum or park professionals who may want to incorporate theater into their programming is to start local. I have learned that many towns have theater companies, and partnering with the groups in your area makes a good hometown connection that celebrates local talent. Remaining flexible during the process is also essential, and dedicating time and resources where needed will also support a successful theater partnership. We have world travelers who are impressed with what we offer, especially the live theatre.

**Any last thoughts or comments?**

I would like to thank Kandie Carle and the East Haddam Stage Company again for their presence at Gillette Castle State Park. I am thankful for their energy and talent, and for our continued working relationship. This program would not be successful without the actors and directors of the EHSCO. I look forward to many more years of supporting them as our resident theatre company and enhancing the amphitheater. ❖

*The IMTY Award recognizes leadership in support of museum theatre and is awarded yearly at the AAM Conference.*

rake it and do all that kind of stuff.” He said, “You know what, I’m going to build you a stage and I’m going to put in the seating, and I’m going to make you benches, and here’s the key to the building.” This is from a guy who doesn’t know arts. The man has never been on a stage. He doesn’t want to be in a spotlight.

Here’s the thing, he knew that the place that he loves more than anyplace else, Gillette Castle State Park, was only benefiting from the East Haddam Stage Company productions. To the best of his ability, he was going to try to do as much as he could to make it better for us, which ultimately of course makes it better for the public. Instead of everyone having to sit on the ground in the grass, he put in bleacher seating that had come from another park that was not being used. He put his staff to work and built four, sturdy, 10-foot-long benches to supplement the seating, and he built the stage. I was over the moon.

Then the other supervisor came back, and said, “So, what’s been going on?” He didn’t come in and say, “You’ve got to stop doing that. That’s too much.” He just basically said, “If it ain’t broke don’t fix it.” Then that supervisor struggled and he left again. Philip was finally in a position to apply for the supervisorship. I literally begged him to apply. Not just self-serving for the theater company, but he had a vested interest in the success of the park and in satisfying each and every person who came up there. It’s the second most visited park in the state, and in excess of 300,000 people come to the park every year.

**Can you talk a little bit about the importance of having an advocate like Philip Yuris for Museum or Park Theater to be a success?**

I can't even put the words to how fundamentally important that is. What a beautiful thing it can be when people who are from astronomically different points of view and life experience and career can work together to make something happen because they both believe in it for different reasons. To him it's added value. It's making his park alive.

He came to me, Phil, and said, "Hopefully you guys won't go anywhere." I said, "I will be here as long as you want me to be here." That's when he gave us the resident theater status. The thing that he understood was that people were indeed coming to the castle to be surrounded by this gothic house and these beautiful trails and get historically significant live theater.

**I'm wondering what you see for the future of your company. Any new plans on the horizon?**

Absolutely. When Phil was into the position of Supervisor, we actually sat down and had a lengthy conversation about the vibrant potential things. I told him I wanted to build on the success of what we had done a couple of years ago with the Connecticut premiere of the newly found and restored silent film with William Gillette in it as Sherlock Holmes. It was found in Paris. Long story short, the San Francisco Silent Film Festival along with Flicker Alley and some others paid to get it restored. They had the national, the United States premiere of it at their

May 2016 silent film festival. There was no way that this silent film was going to come anywhere in Connecticut before Gillette Castle. It had to launch from Gillette Castle.

It sold out all eight showings. Would I like there to be a film festival every year? Yes. Would he like that? Yes. Is that going to happen? Yes.

We also want to do a children's theater festival over a weekend where kids get exposed to theater. We want to do different kinds of puppetry, shadow puppetry, and

*"People were indeed coming to the castle to be surrounded by this gothic house and these beautiful trails and get historically significant live theatre."*

have workshops on how kids can do that themselves. The first part of the day you learn how to not upstage yourself and not fall off the stage, the simple stuff. Then you're given a criteria of a storytelling opportunity. The kids have to fill it in with their imagination. Then there's a box of just simple costume pieces: a hat, an apron, a this, a that, or the other, and have them create theater.

I would like to have at least four or five, eventually, three to five "events" of different sizes throughout the year that are based on participation, on the arts. Something that is in the back of my brain that I haven't even shared with Phil yet is have a poetry festival where the poets come in, in the morning, they tour the grounds, they tour the house, they workshop, and then they present. Performance poetry, a poetry slam.

There are those kinds of things that are so much of a potential of what we can do that is not outside the

interpretative goals of the museum and the site itself. Phil is very accepting of nine out of ten things that I bring to the table. He doesn't understand yet just how we can pull these things off, but we have built up—

**He trusts you.**

Exactly. That's exactly what I was going to say. You took the words right out of my mouth. We have a really great advocacy on both sides of the street for the work that we do. That's why I nominated him for this award. That's why I made sure that his boss and his boss' boss knew. Sure enough, his boss showed up to the awards ceremony here. The more that we can robustly

show the relevance of live theater and participatory events at a place that wouldn't exist had it not been for an actor, director, producer, the more that we are taken seriously in the world at large. And specifically for the legislators and the people who have the drawstrings to the bag of money.

Included in this (and I didn't know this was going to happen), the state legislator of this district, the representative, Melissa Ziobron, actually got a certificate written up for Phil for his work at the park with the East Haddam Stage Company. She came and presented it to him on the day of the awards ceremony. He was over the moon about that too. It's through the work that he did with a theater company, that got the spotlight on a state park.

**What a great success story. The Insights readers are going to be inspired by this story, so thank you.**

It is a success story! ❖

# AAM LUNCHEON PHOTOS

## A Gathering of Museum Theatre Minds!

**IMTAL Luncheon @ the American Alliance of Museums Conference**  
St. Louis, Missouri - May 9th, 2017

IMTAL hosted a luncheon at the AAM Conference: new board members were introduced, the outgoing president, Elizabeth Pickard, was recognized for her outstanding service, and the IMTY and Lipsky Awards were presented.



Kandie Carle accepting the IMTY award on behalf of Philip Yuris



The incoming IMTAL Board of Directors (from left to right): Annie Johnson, Elysia Segal, Todd D. Norris, Ilana Gustafson, Douglas Coler, with outgoing President, Elizabeth Pickard



Todd Norris and Douglas Coler present Elizabeth Pickard with a token of recognition for her years of service with the Board



Lindsay Genshaft beaming next to Douglas Coler after receiving the Lipsky Award for the show *Art Emergency: Code Red* at the Denver Art Museum



The "lunch" part of the luncheon. See you next year!



Incoming IMTAL Secretary, Elysia Segal



IMTAL Treasurer, Annie Johnson

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

**Want to get involved with IMTAL but aren't sure how?**  
*Summer is a great time to dive right in!*

**Some ways to get your feet wet...**

- 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 take the plunge?**

- Become an At-Large IMTAL Board Member
- Submit a script for the 2017 Jon Lipsky Award for Excellence in Playwriting  
 For more information, visit: <http://imtal-us.org/lipsky-award>
- Nominate your leader for the IMTY Award  
 For more information, visit: <http://imtal-us.org/IMTY-award>

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

Send your article, photo, or news to [publications@imtal-us.org](mailto:publications@imtal-us.org) by **October 10, 2017** for the Fall 2017 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)
- 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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