



PERFORMANCE STUDIES ALUMNI NEWSLETTER
May 2005

Dear Performance Studies Alumni,

If you would like to contribute to the June edition of the alumni e-newsletter, please email performance.studies@nyu.edu with your submissions by June 15, 2005. We look forward to hearing from you!

This e-newsletter contains the following listings:

***ALUMNI REUNION NOTES**

Letter from Jason Beckerman, Administrative Director

***DEPARTMENTAL NEWS**

Richard Schechner Reads Ramayana; Join Coles and Support Performance Studies

***ALUMNI NEWS**

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***ALUMNI ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Call for Artists: Cynthia Oliver (PhD '03); Discover Performance Studies in Paris: Liz Claire (PhD '04)

***REFLECTIONS**

David Sternbach (MA '84)

A L U M N I R E U N I O N N O T E S

***LETTER FROM JASON BECKERMAN, ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR**

Dear Alums,

I would like to thank all of you who made this year's alumni reunion celebrating 25 years of the Department a success. We had a nice crowd on hand with lots of people representing different time periods of the Department. I would like to thank Richard Schechner, Lenora Champagne, Marti LoMonaco, Mark Sussman, Barbara Browning, BKG, and all of our wonderful panelists for sharing their stories and their views on the Department, the field and their fellow students. The event was videotaped from beginning to end, and we hope to have clips up on the website for you to view yourself some time soon.

I would also like to thank our Alumni Advisory Board for helping us plan the event, contacting fellow alums, and assisting the day of the event to make it the success it is. I

would also like to thank Masi Asare for all of her work as well. We could not have had this event without her involvement. Thanks Masi!

We look forward to working further with you to enhance your alumni experience. If you have any ideas on how you would like to best be served as an alum of Performance Studies, I urge you to contact me directly, or better yet, become a part of the Alumni Advisory Board and we can make it happen together.

Best wishes for a great summer, and here's to the next 25!

Best Regards,
Jason Beckerman
Administrative Director
jason.beckerman@nyu.edu

D E P A R T M E N T A L N E W S

*RICHARD SCHECHNER READS RAMAYANA

As part of his sabbatical (devoted to writing a book on the Ramlila of Ramnagar) Richard will publicly read aloud Valmiki's *Ramayana* and Tulsida's Hindi version of the *Ramayana*, the *Ramcharitmanas*. The reading is in English, and includes breaks for commentary and discussion. A section of the *Ramayana* will be read and then the same narrative as told in the *Ramcharitmanas*. In this way, the two versions of the same narrative can be actively compared. "This is not a lecture series. It is a reading of two great texts – and an exploration of where those texts may take me and anyone who wants to listen; and perhaps discuss." ~RS The readings take place every Saturday morning from 10am-12pm, at 721 Broadway, 12th floor, in the Dean's Conference Room.

* JOIN COLES AND SUPPORT PERFORMANCE STUDIES

Alumna Judy Levine (MA '85, PhD '93) notes:

Those of us who are Coles alumni members know that in addition to the gym membership fee, there is a required NYU donation (around 150 dollars). Every year I have tried to allocate that to the Performance Studies Department, and sometimes it's worked. This year, the money seems to have been directed to the Brooks McNamara Fund, which means that it gets used in ways the Performance Studies Department has control over instead of being tossed into the vast overall NYU budget.

A suggestion: if people are joining Coles and want to support the Department, how about designating your contribution towards the Performance Studies Department? It isn't one of the check-off options but it seems to work if you write it in and insist that it go there! Since we have to make a mandated contribution anyway, how nice to make it to the Department.

A L U M N I N E W S

*NARUMOL BARTONE (PhD '00)

Narumol is currently working on a feature length documentary project. The film portrays the struggles of young villages and hill tribe women living with HIV/AIDS in Thailand. The stories show how the women maintain a sense of self worth and find the dignity to meet the challenge of living with HIV/AIDS in a society that often shuns them, and how they use the creative arts as a path toward healing.

*HENRY BIAL (MA '96, PhD '01)

Congratulations to Henry on his new position as Assistant Professor of Theater and Film at the University of Kansas.

*JAN COHEN-CRUZ (MA '83, PhD '94)

Congratulations to Jan on the recent publication of her book LOCAL ACTS: COMMUNITY-BASED PERFORMANCE IN THE U.S.(Rutgers University Press).

*BRENDA DIXON-GOTTSCHILD (MA '77, PhD '81)

Brenda is preparing her fourth and most recent book, THE BLACK DANCING BODY-A GEOGRAPHY FROM COON TO COOL (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2003) for paperback release in September. She continues to perform with her husband, choreographer-dancer Hellmut Gottschild, in their "movement theater discourse" on gender and race, titled TONGUE SMELL COLOR. Her previous book, WALTZING IN THE DARK: AFRICAN AMERICAN VAUDEVILLE AND RACE POLITICS IN THE SWING ERA (Palgrave-St. Martin's- cloth, 2000; paper 2002) received the Congress on Research in Dance 2001 Award for Outstanding Scholarly Dance Publication.

*LEAH GARLAND (PhD '03)

Congratulations to Leah, who will be beginning a tenure-track Assistant Professorship at SUNY Geneseo in the fall of 2005, teaching acting and theater history.

*LUCIAN GOMOLL (MA '04)

Lucian will continue his graduate work as a PhD candidate at UC-Santa Cruz, in the History of Consciousness Department, as Eugene Cota-Robles fellow. In the meantime, his article "Objects of Dis/order," written at NYU, will be published in Small Shrines & Halls of Fame: Local Museums and Local History," edited by Amy Levin. He is currently doing activist work, university teaching, and social justice speaking at the University of Michigan. He is also a featured personality in Johanna Schuster-Craig's book: SUPERQUEERS, a networking resource for TBLGQ youth (2005). Feel free to contact him at: lgomoll@ucsc.edu

*CONSTANCE VALIS HILL (PhD '98)

Tap historian Conance Valis Hill of the American Tap Dance Foundation recently hosted a celebration of the Gregory Hines Collection of American Tap Dance at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Founded by the American Tap Dance Foundation, and dedicated to preserving the history of tap dance, America's oldest vernacular dance form, The Gregory Hines Collection of American Tap Dance (atdfhinescollection.org) was organized to provide a broad introduction to the history of

tap dance in America that will assist anyone interested in researching tap dance in the Dance Division and in libraries internationally. www.atdf.org

*ONG KENG SEN (MA '95)

Ong Keng Sen (Artistic Director, Theatreworks and The Flying Circus Project, Singapore) directs a multidisciplinary program exploring the relationships between ancient technologies, dramaturgy, and game at an intense three-week laboratory sponsored by Sarah Lawrence College and the Kitchen, July 11-29, 2005.

*LYNN SALLY (PhD '04)

Congratulations to Lynn on the acceptance of her dissertation (THE SPECTACULAR PERFORMANCE OF FIRE AT CONEY ISLAND) for publication by Routledge in their Literary Criticism and Cultural Theory Series.

A L U M N I A N N O U N C E M E N T S

*CALL FOR ARTISTS: CYNTHIA OLIVER (PhD '03)

Cynthia is a choreographer looking for a couple of dancer/performance artists from the UK, Toronto, and any of the Anglophone Caribbean islands (or Caribbean centers in the U.S.) to work with her on a project on transnationalism as it relates to calypso dance and music. Her work is dance-based and includes a heavy dose of text and performance art practices to weave story in mostly evening-length works. She has been making work like this for the past 12 years and is launching this new project with the aim to begin workshopping by next summer, premiering and touring thereafter. If you are interested or know of someone who might be interested in participating in this project, please contact her directly at coliver@uiuc.edu. Please also visit cynthiaoliver.com for more information about Cynthia and her work.

*DISCOVER PERFORMANCE STUDIES IN PARIS: LIZ CLAIRE (PhD '04)

Friday, May 27 at 5pm, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme Paris Nord (www.mshparisnord.org): Liz, currently a post-doc at the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme Paris Nord (Laboratory of Ethnoscenology, Univ. Paris 8) will lecture on the history of Performance Studies in the USA, looking specifically at the discipline, the work of Richard Schechner, the convergence of thought "between theater and anthropology." She will also discuss the debates about the definition of "performance," giving particular attention to the place of Performance Studies in the francophone context.

R E F L E C T I O N S

*DAVID STERNBACH (MA '84)

I'm sorry to miss the PS reunion on May 14, but I'll be out of the country. Since I can't be there I thought I'd send this note, although a little long for the newsletter.

In late '81 I was making and studying performance art and getting a BA in cultural anthropology at UCSD. I'd taken classes and crashed seminars with Eleanor Antin, Jerome Rothenberg, Allan Kaprow, David Antin, Moira Roth, and other conceptual and performance artists. The anthro department was good, too, and I had one foot and both sides of my brain in each camp. I told Jerry Rothenberg that I wanted to go to graduate school but didn't know any place where I could focus on both cultural study and art. He said, "Well, there's an interesting program at NYU...."

I got to New York in the summer of '82 and within months, in the name of study, was seeing shows at the Performing Garage, spending nights at Purim celebrations in Williamsburg, riding the subway with then-underground graffiti artists, viewing films of early Richard Foreman performances, and so on. The creative energy in the city and the department at the time was, I thought, incredible. For my own reasons, I decided to keep my research and writing in the vein of urban ethnography rather than the vein of art (or cultural) history or criticism. I can see now that these weren't really separate veins, but it seemed to some of us then that they represented separate positions or camps. I took every class I could with BKG and meanwhile kept my own creative practice (and life in the East Village) separate, not a formal part of my graduate work. But who could resist taking classes with Richard, Brooks, Michael Kirby, Marcia Siegel, Kate Davy, and others? It was a candy store.

I wrote about break dancing and rap at the cusp of commercialization (that time seems impossibly remote now) and then decided to go to work (beyond bartending for caterers and working part time in the Schubert Archive, that is) instead of staying on for more study. For almost ten years I worked as a non-fiction editor for leading leftist publishers where I commissioned and acquired books on art and history and politics and the emerging culture wars. Knowing what I knew from PS and the art world made a big difference, even if PS always had to be explained on the resumé. In my mid-30s I went to law school (also at NYU). I'm now intellectual property counsel for a media company with five television networks and active "new media" ventures. I've also been for many years president of the board of the performance company The Builders Association (www.thebuildersassociation.org). I keep up my own creative work (writing and visual art) when and where I can.

From the outside this path might look erratic: PS to publishing to law. To me it's clear: I've always cared about and worked in cultural production. PS helped me formalize and extend my understanding of the meanings in performed behavior of all sorts, and that understanding has always helped me do my job. True, I sometimes feel like a field worker in the boardroom or a performer in a negotiation. But I am, as I always remember, in it and of it, never above it.

Best wishes to all of my teachers and classmates. ~DS

...JUNE ISSUE: Again, please email announcements or listings for inclusion in the June 2005 e-newsletter to: performance.studies@nyu.edu by June 15, 2005. Also, if you have any questions, comments, or suggestions about the newsletter, please feel free to email either Masi Asare (masi@nyu.edu) or Jason Beckerman (jason.beckerman@nyu.edu), PS-ALUM List Managers.