

February 2020

Mid-America Theatre Conference Newsletter

Vol 41 Number 2

Message from the President, Beth Osborne

MATC 2020 is almost here! I'm looking forward to seeing many of you in just a few weeks on the breezy highways and byways of Chicago. If you haven't yet registered for the conference, be sure to do so at <http://matc.us/2018/registration/1639>. Pre-registration helps us out enormously! A huge thank-you to our conference planner, Shawna Mefferd Kelty, our associate conference planner, La Donna Forsgren, and all of our symposium co-chairs for their hard work in putting this year's program together.

Our President-Elect, Chris Woodworth, and our Nominations & Appointments Committee, have been hard at work making sure that our elections run smoothly. Please take a look at the slate of fabulous candidates we have below and plan to vote at the business meeting after the all-conference luncheon Saturday!

As we look toward our time together, I hope you will also consider submitting your work for one of our two journals – Theatre History Studies (<http://matc.us/theatre-history-studies-4/theatre-history-studies-cfp>) and Theatre/Practice (<http://matc.us/theatre-history-studies-4/theatrepractice>). These are great opportunities to take the work that you present at the conference through to that next step for the CV!

And don't forget, if you would like to donate to MATC so that this organization can continue to bring opportunities to educators, practitioners, and scholars in the future, please check out our donation page at <http://matc.us/donations> or reach out to Beth Osborne at president@matc.us.

The Summit 2.0, Beth Osborne

In January 2019, Josh Abrams, then-president-elect of ATHE, spearheaded a gathering of presidents of theatre organizations from across the globe. His goal was to start a conversation, and to see whether there were places of overlap in terms of advocacy, labor, organizational challenges, etc., so that we could share resources, institutional knowledge and experience, and reduce duplication of efforts. The gathering achieved this and more.

Since then, I have been connected to nearly two dozen organizations in nations across the Americas, Europe, Africa, and Asia. We have brainstormed solutions to last-minute conference problems, created inter-organizational awards committees and programming,

and collectively advocated for the fair treatment of students and scholars (see our Statement Regarding Attacks on Indian Universities –

<http://dancestudiesassociation.org/news/2020/international-statement-from-a-coalition-of-dance-performance-and-theatre-associations-regarding-attacks-on-indian-universities>).

This year, I am pleased to say that MATC will be hosting the second Summit of theatre organization leaders immediately after our conference ends on March 8th. I look forward to continuing the work that we've started in the past year and to showing them how special our organization is. If you have ideas about topics that you think should be discussed at this meeting, please send them to Beth Osborne (president@matc.us).



Stuart Hecht to be our 2020 Theatre History Respondent

Dr. Hecht shared that in addition to “learning new things from my colleagues,” he is “hoping to be able to develop that larger snapshot of who we are as theatre scholars at this particular point in time and place, and what that has to say about our field as a whole.”

He credits his repeated participation in MATC to “an atmosphere that is simultaneously personable and professional, open to new ideas and a variety of ways of working and

thinking. It is translucent rather than opaque, making scholarship and the making of scholarship something doable and attainable—which in my opinion it ought to be.”

Of the host city’s offerings, the scholar of Chicago theatre mentioned the city’s over 300 professional companies, explaining that, “Unlike most American cities, the bulk of Chicago’s theatres have been founded by groups of friends and operate as ensembles, rather than each individual artist pursuing work on their own; hence many develop as a group. One thing remarkable about Chicago is that almost all the homegrown stages do good work; there tends to be something for everyone.” Also recommended: Chicago-style hotdogs, pizza, and good Greek restaurants!

Visit Dr. Hecht’s bio: <http://matc.us/the-conference/conference-respondent>.



Ruth Margraff to be our 2020 Playwriting Respondent

The Playwriting Symposium respondent is a dynamic presence at the core of the symposium. As an accomplished playwright, the respondent offers insight into each of the scripts that get a reading. The respondent begins each discussion by concisely offering their insights into the material based on reading the text pre-conference and attending the reading.

Our respondent this year is Ruth Margraff. Ruth is a leader in the American avant garde for her “audaciously original” (Moscow Times) use of lyric language that provides “layer after

layer of richly textured emotion...and imminent danger" (Dallas Morning News). Critically acclaimed for writing martial arts operas DEADLY SHE-WOLF ASSASSIN AT ARMAGEDDAN and a VOICE OF THE DRAGON trilogy for the Apollo, Guggenheim Museum, LaMama, Brooklyn Academy of Music and a commercially successful national tour.

Welcome New Symposium Co-chairs!

Congratulations to the following folx who were selected as incoming co-chairs! We had a robust pool of candidates and the Nominations and Appointments Committee had some difficult decisions to make.

Articles-in-Progress / Pitch Your Book: Angela Ahlgren

Emerging Scholars: Sean Bartley

Pedagogy: Deborah Kochman

Playwriting: Rachel Bauer

Practice / Production: Chloe Whiting Stevenson

Theatre History: Shannon Epplett

Still interested in taking the lead with MATC? Then please nominate yourself for a Member-at-Large position at this year's Business Meeting (read on to find out more) or consider throwing your hat in the ring as a co-chair next year!

Nominations

2020 is a big election year...for MATC! At this year's conference, we will be electing some significant leadership roles. Below, you will find the statements from nominees for the elected positions. You must be present at the Business Meeting (right after the luncheon on Saturday!) to vote for Associate Conference Coordinator, Secretary, and Members-at-Large. Only graduate students may vote for the Graduate Student Liaison and that voting will take place upon check-in at the conference Registration desk.

The list of nominees:

Associate Conference Coordinator (3): **Emily Rollie, Eric Thibodeaux-Thompson, Shannon Walsh**

Secretary (1): **Sarah Campbell**

Graduate Student Liaison (2): **Dan Cullen, Cody Page**

Members-at-Large (?): We can only accept nominations from the floor at the Business Meeting. Could **YOU** be one of our next Members-at-Large?

MATC 2020 Nominee Statements for Associate Conference Coordinator

The Associate Conference Coordinator is the beginning of the officer sequence in MATC, typically moving to Vice President/Conference Coordinator, then President-Elect, eventually President, and then Immediate Past President; this ensures that the incoming President will be familiar with the procedures of the Executive Committee and the organization of the conference itself. For a fuller description of each position within the leadership pipeline, visit: <http://matc.us/general-info/bylaws>. Nominees were asked to send a description (250-300 words) of their qualifications and plans for the office. This is an elected position. Voting will take place at the Business Meeting (right after the luncheon!) of the 2020 Conference in Chicago.

Emily Rollie

Emily Rollie is an assistant professor of theatre at Central Washington University, where she teaches across the BFA, BA, and MA programs in courses such as directing, theatre history, pedagogy, and dramatic literature as well as in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Emily has been a participant and supporter of MATC since 2009. In addition to presenting in all four symposia, she has served as the co-chair for Practice/Production as well as a two year term as the MATC Member-at-Large. Emily also is an active ATHE member, serving as the conference planner and focus group representative for the Directing Program as well as on the ATHE all-conference planning committee for Montreal and Boston. She currently is the ATHE Member-at-Large for Outreach. A freelance director and intimacy choreographer, Emily also is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society and co-edits the *SDC Journal Peer Reviewed Section*, allowing her to connect her interests in both theatre practice and scholarship.

Since first attending in 2009, I have considered MATC one of my scholarly "homes." Serving as associate conference planner would allow me to give back to the organization that has offered me so much. I believe MATC is unique in its active exploration of the rich intersections between theatre practice and theory as well as its membership that includes emerging scholars, professional practitioners, veteran scholar-artists, and more. As associate conference planner, I would strive to continue to make MATC an inclusive, supportive space for scholar-artists of all backgrounds, recognizing the needs of our changing membership and continuing to foster new avenues of growth. I also would seek more opportunities for networking and professional development - both in and outside of the traditional conference - as the hospitality of MATC is one of its great strengths and increased opportunities to share work also enhances the rigor and depth of the conference.

Eric Thibodeaux-Thompson

What prompts me to vie for the Associate Conference Coordinator position is the opportunity this would give me to "give back" to MATC...or as I believe Chris Woodworth and/or Shawna Mefferd Kelty put it at last year's MATC..."take a turn at doing the dishes" for MATC. It was an MATC fellow, who in 1998, helped me get my first adjunct theatre teaching job by recommending me to her department chair. MATC welcomed me with open arms

when I was starting out as an Assistant Professor of Theatre at the University of Illinois Springfield a few years later. I have presented papers off and on in the Practice/Production or History symposiums, Chaired panels, and (forthcoming) have seen my work published in the Theatre History Studies periodical. Most of my MATC work, however, has been in the Playwriting Symposium, where I have been accepted/worked as an actor for about 17 years now. From 2017-2019, I Co-Chaired the Playwriting Symposium. What keeps me coming back is the perfect blend of significant work with many of our country's elite theatre practitioners, traditional scholars, independent artists, and graduate students together with a friendly, transparent and welcoming atmosphere for everyone who attends/presents at MATC. More than any other theatre conference I've attended, MATC fosters a "You Belong!" vibration, which can be felt (I hope) by all who attend this wonderful conference year after year. If I am lucky enough to get elected as Associate Conference Coordinator, I would strive to help keep MATC as affordable as possible, while helping to keep our financial fitness, and would pass on to everyone with whom I work an energy of inclusion.

Shannon Walsh

I am an Associate Professor of Theatre History at LSU where I teach in both the undergraduate and graduate MFA and PhD programs. I served as Co-Head of the PhD program for several years. In addition to being a scholar, I also direct and act at both my institution and in the community of Baton Rouge. I attended my first MATC in 2007 as a PhD student and presented for the first time in the Theatre History Symposium in 2009. Since then I've been an active and consistent member of this community. I grew up as a scholar here. From 2017-2019 I served as the Theatre History Symposium Co-Chair and had the opportunity to see how the leadership structure and organization works from the inside. I am beyond honored to have the opportunity to run for election as your Associate Conference Coordinator.

MATC provides a unique balance between providing the rock-solid support system artists and scholars of all generations need in uncertain times and pushing the field beyond its comfort zone, fostering and mentoring scholar-artists whose work takes our field in new directions. That kind of innovation requires challenging conversations between colleagues, brave spaces where all scholar-artists feel accepted, and persistent interventions into business-as-usual. I've witnessed this spirit more at MATC than anywhere else. I've never felt like a fraud here, never made to feel like an imposter. As a leader in this organization, I would do the hard work required to maintain that consistency and support, while continuing to drive forward expansions in our scholarship and creative practice: welcoming scholars and artists whose work challenges insular tendencies in theatre history and practice, reconsidering what it means to be a national organization in terms of conference sites and themes, and leaning into the "America" part of our name to think about how we can be more supportive of artist-scholars whose work takes a more hemispheric approach to performance.

MATC 2020 Nominee Statement for Secretary

The **Secretary** is a member of the Executive Committee and will record and maintain the minutes of all business meetings, act as the custodian of all MATC historical documents, and work with the

Webmaster to provide relevant materials for the MATC website and list-serv. This is a two-year position, elected in years ending in even numbers. For a fuller description of this position, visit: <http://matc.us/general-info/bylaws>. Nominees were asked to send a description (250-300 words) of their qualifications and plans for the office. This is an elected position. Voting will take place at the Business Meeting (right after the luncheon!) of the 2020 Conference in Chicago.

Sarah Campbell

The Mid-America Theatre Conference is one of my favorite academic conferences in the field of theatre and performance studies. Since my first conference in 2015 as a graduate student, I was struck by the congenial atmosphere and I found the smaller, intimate setting conducive to conversation and networking. Since that time, I have taken part in a number of different conference activities: the playwriting symposium, the articles-in-progress session, and the theatre history symposium. Each of these experiences have helped to shape my perspective on scholarship, my pedagogy, and my work as a theatre artist. MATC is one of the few conferences where I have received valuable feedback on my work, and I am grateful to the scholarly community that makes the organization so successful. MATC has given so much to me and I am ready to give back to the organization. I see the position of the secretary as a vital piece of the puzzle in creating a healthy scholarly organization. I have previously served as the secretary of the Graduate Student Caucus of the American Society for Theatre Research and have served as the secretary, vice-president, and president of the graduate student organization, Association for Research in Theatre at Indiana University. In these positions I have honed the skills necessary for the position of secretary and I am ready to step up and serve the Mid-America Theatre Conference in this capacity. I value the diverse array of experiences that MATC provides to theatre practitioners and scholars and I believe the continued success of the organization is vital for creating the next generation of theatre artists.

MATC 2020 Nominee Info for Members-At-Large

Members-At-Large serve a two-year term on the Nominations and Appointments Committee. According to the MATC by-laws, the Nominations and Appointments Committee (NA Committee) is responsible for facilitating the orderly and transparent selection, election, and succession of important roles within MATC. The NA Committee is chaired by the President-Elect and includes the senior symposia co-chairs and two elected members-at-large. These are elected positions. Nominations for these positions are from the floor only. Nominations and voting will take place at the Business Meeting (right after the luncheon!) of the 2020 Conference in Chicago.

Could it be YOU?

If you're interested in serving as a Member-at-Large on the Nominations and Appointments Committee, and helping to decide who will be leading MATC in the next few years, be sure to come to the business meeting on Saturday after the luncheon!

MATC 2020 Nominee Statements for Graduate Student Liaison

The **Graduate Student Liaison** coordinates social activities and the Graduate Student Assistance Fund and serves as a point of communication between graduate students and the Executive Committee. This is an elected position, voted on by Graduate Student members only. Voting will take place at the Registration table at the 2020 Conference in Chicago.

Dan Cullen

I am a second year PhD student in the theatre department at Bowling Green State University. At BGSU, I have served the Graduate Student Theatre Organization as Secretary and President. Both positions have required me to be organized, efficient, and committed to service. As President, I am currently acting as liaison between the graduate students and the faculty to organize a guest speaker coming to address our department. Coordinating schedules, space availability, and travel accommodations for our guest are experiences that will translate directly to the tasks of Graduate Student Liaison. I have also served on the web resources committee for the ASTR Graduate Student Caucus. My work on this committee has given me an inside look into the types of initiatives that make a conference welcoming and valuable to graduate students, and I would be excited to apply what I have learned there to maximize MATC's graduate student appeal.

In two years attending MATC, I have come to believe that the conference has a great deal to offer graduate students. Opportunities to share their work and receive direct feedback, engage with senior scholars and see how they conduct themselves, and network with other graduate students with similar interests are available at MATC in ways that other national conferences do not lend themselves to. I would like to see more graduate students take advantage of these opportunities, and in this office I would work toward that goal. I would also make greater use of web resources to solicit input from graduate students regarding what they hope to get out of the MATC experience. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to the opportunity to serve.

Cody Page

I bring my experience in event planning, social interfacing, coordinating projects, and stage management to the table to best serve this position. Throughout my time in my undergraduate and master's programs I had a geared focus towards event planning and have served on numerous committees similar to the Graduate Representative position. During my master's program, at New York University Steinhardt, I served on the planning committee for the Forum on the Teaching Artist, a weekend long symposium devoted to panels and discussions surrounding the field of teaching artistry. Working on this committee, I helped build the schedule of events for the weekend, coordinated technology requests for presenters, and then ran technology for the theatres throughout the weekend. Before starting my PhD program I worked as a Fellowship coordinator for Hospice and Palliative medicine. I planned yearly interview events consisting of welcome dinners, as well as interviews with numerous members of faculty. Additionally, I planned and served as the chair for our annual Celebration of Life event.

At Bowling Green State University, I have assisted in planning The Great Lakes Theatre Symposium in 2018, a one-day symposium of invited scholars, and assisted Dr. Angie Ahlgren with the No-No Boy concert that she brought to campus. Additionally, I am the graduate assistant for publicity and social media for my department. I am eager to begin serving the organization as a graduate student. My experience with stage management and academic coordination will serve me in this position. I plan on using my varied skill sets and experiences to coordinate graduate students, organize and establish social activities for fellow students at MATC, and build upon the legacy of prior graduate student representatives.

Land Acknowledgment ad hoc Committee

Larissa FastHorse was our keynote speaker for the 2018 conference in Milwaukee. At that time, we began taking small steps of Land Acknowledgment. This mostly consisted of signage and some remarks preceding the keynote. Last year, in an effort to continue these steps, there was a, shall we say, abundance of enthusiasm for Land Acknowledgment, which translated to a multitude of differing approaches. We decided to form this committee to make sure we are crafting a clear, consistent, and respectful message, across the conference as a whole. The committee currently consists of Nathan Bowman, Ann Haugo, Bethany Hughes, Christiana Molldrem Harkulich, Heidi L. Nees, and Chris Woodworth. We are working on short term goals such as establishing a Land Acknowledgment statement in conjunction with local Chicago-based Indigenous organizations and determining a protocol for disseminating this statement to conference attendees. We have been exploring how Chicago-area theatres incorporate Land Acknowledgment in their materials, facilities, and practices. We have also begun to look towards future MATC convenings and ways in which we might build more meaningful connections with tribal members in the regions we visit. Overall, we aim to cultivate a meaningful practice for each MATC gathering. *Are you interested in participating in the committee or have ideas or resources you'd like to share? Please email president_elect@matc.us.*

Spaces Still Available for Goodman Theatre Tour

There are still a few spaces available for the tour of the Goodman Theatre on the morning of Friday, March 6, 2020 at 11am. The tour is limited to 20 people and sign up for the tour is available here: <https://forms.gle/TDH6hE2D8jqQ53ML8>

- The cost for the tour is \$5 (payable to MATC).
- The tour group will leave for the Goodman promptly at 10:30am for an early arrival.
- Options for travel to the Goodman include: 20-minute walk, 10:34am #29 bus (12-minute ride), or your own ride-share/taxi.
- Group will meet tour guide, Chris Smith, in the Goodman lobby.

Chicago Theatre for March 5-8, 2020

- ***Emma* - Chicago Shakespeare Theater on Navy Pier**

Use promo code "CHARACTER" to save 30% on March 5-8 performances of *Emma*. Jane Austen's beloved novel is now a charming musical, created by Tony Award-nominated composer and lyricist Paul Gordon (*Jane Eyre, Sense and Sensibility, Daddy Long Legs*) and staged by Artistic Director Barbara Gaines. Privileged, pampered, and preoccupied with romance, Emma Woodhouse indulges in her pastime of misguided matchmaking, but is clueless when it comes to her own feelings and a gentleman named Mr. Knightley. As our imperfect heroine learns love cannot be predicted or controlled, we are swept away by Paul Gordon's lyrical melodies. Chicago Shakespeare Theater is located at Navy Pier (800 E. Grand Avenue), a 15-minute walk from the conference hotel. Tickets: <http://bit.ly/2MGOLFb>

- ***Her Honor Jane Byrne* - Lookingglass Theatre**

Use promo code "MATC30" to save 30% on tickets to preview performances of *Her Honor Jane Byrne* March 4-6, 2020. Subject to availability.

Chicago is "The City That Works"—but does it work for everybody? It's 1981, the city's simmering pot of neglected problems boils over, and Chicago's first woman mayor is

moving into Cabrini-Green. Is this just a P.R. stunt, or will it bring the City together? For the next three weeks, residents, activists, media, the “Machine,” and the Mayor herself will collide as the City’s raw truths are exposed. Who will come out on top? Lookingglass Ensemble Member J. Nicole Brooks creates this smoldering new take on Her Honor Jane Byrne. This Lookingglass Theatre production is located at Water Tower Water Works (821 N. Michigan Ave), a 15-minute bus ride (66) or 15-minute walk. The Water Tower Water Works in which Lookingglass is located is open to the public every day from 9 AM to 7 PM and definitely worth a visit! Visit lookingglasstheatre.org or contact the Box Office at 312.337.0665 for more information.

- ***Graveyard Shift*** and ***School Girls; Or, the African Mean Girls Play*** - **Goodman Theatre**

Use promo codes for reduced tickets to *Graveyard Shift* (March 5-8) and *School Girls; Or, the African Mean Girls Play* (March 7-8).

Graveyard Shift: type in code [MATCGYS](https://www.goodmantheatre.org/graveyardshift) in the “Have a Code?” section on the play detail page which you’ll see at the following link

<https://www.goodmantheatre.org/graveyardshift>. Tickets range from \$15 to \$40 depending on seating level. *Offer is not valid with previously purchased tickets or in combination with other offers.* Offer: \$5 off all seating levels for the following performances of *Graveyard Shift*:

School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play, The Goodman is offering 50% off the 8 pm performance on 3/7. MATC attendees can access this special offer beginning on January 10, 2020 (the on-sale date) by plugging in code MATCSG in the “Have a Code?” section at the following link: <https://www.goodmantheatre.org/schoolgirls>. *This offer is good for main floor and mezzanine seating excluding Premium or partial view sections; and can't be combined with other offers.*

The Goodman is located at Navy Pier (170 N Dearborn Ave), a 15-minute Red Line ride or 20-minute walk.

Looking forward to seeing each and every one of you characters in Chicago!!

- Shawna Mefferd Kelty and La Donna Forsgren

Questions about the conference? Contact Shawna Mefferd Kelty @ planner@matc.us

