PRESIDENT’S WELCOME

Orlando is a city of contradictions. Thanks to aggressive marketing, it stands predominantly as a place where fantasies come to life. Over here, a wizarding world awaits the adventurous spirit eager to encounter a dragon or cast a spell. Over there, princesses stand ready to share stories of battles with evil witches. Every night, fireworks illuminate the skyline.

Arguably the happiest place on earth, this region has served as the backdrop to heart-breaking tragedy. It is here that the US government waged war against and forcibly relocated the Seminole Nation. Not far away, Trayvon Martin was killed because a neighbor did not believe that a black teenager could or should live nearby. A few miles down Interstate 4, an act of terror at a LGBTQ nightclub serving a majority Latinx clientele claimed forty-nine lives. Unspeakable sorrow and suffering are a part of the history and present of Orlando.

I ask you to consider how these historical scenes overlap: to see checked possibilities in those spaces where dreams are being fulfilled; to think of families separated by military force and violence when you see kinfolk wearing family reunion t-shirts; to hear the sorrow songs beneath the gleeful soundtrack of the theme park.

I also ask you to attend to the wonder and awe-inspiring power of performance in this spectacular city. Every year, more than one hundred million people travel to Orlando to experience the parades, dances, theatrical reenactments, circus arts and more that abound here. Theatre and the live arts drive the region.

This conference marks the end of my presidency and, coincidentally, twenty years since my first ATHE conference. I would like to thank our members for granting me the privilege of serving this dynamic association. Thank you.

Harvey Young
ATHE President
Our work in theatre is made up of characters, from the dramatis personæ to the practitioners and scholars who have shaped our discipline. Characters on stage are ephemeral, disappearing once the stage lights dim, but the traces of those performances - whose bodies, whose stories, and how they are told, the character of our craft - shape and define our current moment. Home to the Steppenwolf, Lookingglass, and the Goodman as well as more than 200 small theatre companies, Chicago has a long history of introducing new characters to the stage. An international hub of commerce, technology, and transportation, yet the Windy City is not without its challenges: an incredible history of political corruption and organized crime and its current gun violence crisis. Yet, Chicago is a hopeful city and is home to incredible public art, architecture, and monuments that speak to its enduring and evolving character.

For our 2020 conference in Chicago, MATC invites proposals for presentations, discussions, workshops, and scripts around our theme of “Character.” How do we define character and how do we impart that in our classrooms, our process, our research? How can character illuminate or revise our understanding of theatre history? How can our practices resist representation or illuminate the complexity and intersectionality of identities? What characters have we chosen to remember and which have we chosen to forget? In what ways have the characteristics of our theatre practices inscribed themselves upon the bodies of theatre practitioners? How do current perspectives and representations challenge the character of past practices? We invite proposals that analyze, challenge, and interact with the sense of character. Join us in Chicago to explore the many characters who build the character of our discipline.

Visit the MATC website at http://www.matc.us to find individual Calls for Papers for the Pedagogy Symposium • Playwriting Symposium Practice/Production Symposium • Theatre History Symposium Emerging Scholars Panels Articles-in-Progress and Pitch-Your-Book Workshops

Join our Facebook group to receive updates, CFPs, and other MATC information.
The 2019 Conference Committee welcomes you to Orlando!

A glance at a calendar tells us it’s been only six years since we were last onstage here in the City Beautiful. And yet, after all the changes we’ve experienced during the intermission, it cannot help but feel like our second act curtain has risen on a scene from someone else’s play.

So be it. No one can embrace a disjointed narrative like a theatre audience! For proof of that, we need look no further than the wealth of concurrent sessions listed in this program – each in its own way an innovative, creative, intelligent response to our changing scenery. A number of all-conference events complement our members’ exciting work.

Keynote speaker Bill Rauch, in addition to delivering our opening address, has agreed to take part in our plenary series, an interwoven chain of discussions and workshops intended to build upon the urgent calls for change issued by last year’s plenaries.

Two all-conference performances remind us of the past and present of both our field and our location. That Uppity Theatre Company and Orlando’s Mad Cow Theatre bring us a presentation of After Orlando, on the eve of the third anniversary of the Pulse Nightclub shootings. A screening of The Rest I Make Up gives us the opportunity to celebrate the life and work of Cuban American playwright María Irene Fornés, who left us nearly one year ago.

Fornés’ legacy lives through her teaching, a pedagogy shared with us in this year’s Workshop series. Other workshops demonstrate techniques developed by Intimacy Directors International and the Tectonic Theater Project.

Three “Change of Scene” excursions, inspired by the successful PLAYdates of the 2013 conference, provide an opportunity for members to explore the performative horizons of our host city. For ATHE members accompanied by youthful colleagues, a free series of All-Ages Programming will be offered by artists from the University of Central Florida and Orlando Repertory Theatre.

I’ve always felt that the genius of ATHE lies in the coming together of its constituent communities in a spirit of generosity. I’ve witnessed that special quality in the selfless labors of the Conference Committee, the Focus Group Conference Planners, the session coordinators, and our management partners. I cannot express how grateful I am for their initiative, patience, and dedication.

The curtain is up on our second act. Let us take the stage and reset the future of our field.

Andrew Gibb
Vice President for Conference 2019