

Interdisciplinary PhD in Theatre and Drama (IPTD)
Northwestern University
2022-23 End-of-Year Newsletter
September 13, 2023

Note from the Director of Graduate Studies, Susan Manning:

It has been a great pleasure to take on the role of directing the Interdisciplinary PhD in Theatre and Drama, since teaching and mentoring within the program has been so central to my work at Northwestern over the last thirty-five years. Much has changed over time--course requirements, exam structure, students' teaching--but interdisciplinarity remains at the core of IPTD. This newsletter documents the research of many, but not all, current students and faculty.

In particular, I want to single out the many IPTD students who have won interdisciplinary graduate assistantships, allowing them to accrue a sixth year of funding. Rachel Russell served as the graduate assistant for the Black Arts Consortium before winning a Presidential Fellowship. In 2022-23 Ana Diaz Barriga held an Advanced Cognitive Science Fellowship and Heather Grimm a graduate assistantship (GA) at The Writing Place. This year Alex Baines will serve as GA for the English Languages Program in The Graduate School, and Claudia Kinahan as a GA for the Public Humanities Program at the Kaplan Humanities Institute.

As you will see, we celebrated six recent graduates at an end-of-the-year party in June 2023. It was good to hug one another again and to toast our graduates' many accomplishments!

All best, Susan

Meet the Incoming Class of IPTDers



Will Bixby holds a BFA in Theatre and Dance from Missouri State University and an MA in English from the George Washington University. Will is a puppetry practitioner and scholar whose current research interests focus on puppet performance, materialism, affect studies, and gender. Will is also a trained actor and has performed and directed for a number of companies.

Suzi Elnaggar is an Egyptian-American performance scholar, freelance dramaturg, and theatre-maker. She was a 2021 Kennedy Center Dramaturgy Intensive Fellow and works as both a developmental and production dramaturg. She holds an M.A. in Theatre Studies from Baylor University, where she researched the work of Heather Raffo through the lens of trauma studies. She has been published in Asian Theatre Journal, Arab Stages, and Theatre Times. Her research interests include recontextualizing Greek tragedy, post-colonial theatre contexts, theatre of social change, the intersection of trauma and performance, and work that centers around SWA/MENA (Southwest Asian/Middle Eastern and North African) experiences. Her scholarship and practice center community, collaboration, and context.



An arts writer, curator and photographer from New Delhi, India, **Raunak Ghosh**'s writing and research is situated in the overlap between Indian expressionist performance(-filmography) and pop-culture(s) with reference to critical studies of communalism, caste, queerness and race. They hold a Bachelor's degree in English Literature from St. Stephen's College, University of Delhi, and an M.Phil in Film and Screen Studies from the University of Cambridge — where they were the recipient of the Joan Simms Prize for Academic Excellence. As a doctoral study of Interdisciplinary Theatre and Drama at Northwestern, Raunak will also be affiliated to the Gender and Sexuality Studies Program as a Mellon Foundation Interdisciplinary Cluster Fellow.

Sierra Rosetta Tumbleson received her BA from Northwestern College (Orange City, Iowa) in 2023 where she graduated summa cum laude as an outstanding senior with faculty and academic honors. An award-winning dramaturg, Sierra worked at the O'Neill Theater Center in Connecticut on their literary team as a dramaturg as well as the Kennedy Center. In 2022, she completed a Summer Research Opportunity Program through Northwestern University where she received an Early Admission Decision into IPTD. Her research includes South Asian Aesthetic Theory with an emphasis in Drama Therapy Methods. A member of the Lac Courte Oreilles Chippewa Nation, Sierra also studies Indigenous oral history traditions. With a heart for diversity, travel, and food, Sierra can say the phrase "I lost my taco truck" in 12 languages.



Rebecca Turner holds a BA in English (Drama and Theatre) and Jewish Studies from McGill University. Her research focuses on Yiddish women dramatists with the goal to document, understand, and uplift their writings from marginalized genres such as children's theatre and shund [trash] musicals as well as "high art" and political dramas. Her research interests also include conceptions of Yiddishkeit, Jewish female immigrant identity, and "radical" political alignment on and off the pre-WWII Yiddish stage. Rebecca is affiliated with the Jewish Studies Interdisciplinary Cluster and is the recipient of a Mellon Cluster Fellowship. She is also a director, playwright, and translator.

Updates from Current IPTD Students and Faculty

This year **Heather Grimm** had the pleasure of presenting her research at four conferences, including a well-received talk at the String Band Summit in February, where her research (technically) got a stamp of approval from Grammy-winning country legend Marty Stuart (ask Heather about this, it's a great story). In addition, she had a fulfilling professionalization experience as the GA for Northwestern's Graduate Writing Place. Heather also hit a big milestone—she has completed rough drafts of all my dissertation chapters. She looks forward to spending the next year revising as she searches for the next stop on my career path after the defense.

Noah Marcus has completed his first year of coursework for his Interdisciplinary PhD in Theatre and Drama and is looking forwards to his upcoming second year's courses. Beyond his coursework, Noah has begun narrowing down his dissertation topic and is eager to continue to do so. For now, his research interests can be defined broadly as the performance of Jewishness both on and off stage in America in the 20th and 21st centuries. In addition to his coursework, Noah had the honour of participating in the First Annual Jewish Studies Cluster Symposium where he presented a course paper on the phenomenon of *Fiddler on the Roof*'s popularity in Japan. At the Wirtz Center, Noah was the dramaturg for the nearly completely sold out production of Paula Vogel's *Indecent* and he is looking forwards to dramaturging again for the Wirtz Center with next season's production of Kate Hamill's *Dracula*.



Left: Rising second-year IPTDers at 1815.



Right: Rising second-year IPTDers at the Goodman.

This year, first-year IPTD student **Emry Sottile** was the co-dramaturg, alongside Heather Grimm, on Wirtz's production of *Violet*. They also presented the paper "Playing Critical Roles: Tabletop Role-Playing Game 'Actual Play' as Accessible Devised Theatre" at the Mid-America Theatre Conference and the paper "Paranoid Mapping and the Political Conscious of Starkid's Hatchetfield Universe" at the University of Chicago's Cause/Effect conference. He additionally has a forthcoming publication on intratextual usage of social media in contemporary teen musicals that's been accepted into *The Journal of Popular Culture* and is in revisions for an article on *Allegiance* for *Studies in Musical Theatre*.

From Cologne **Elena Weber** sends the news of her daughter Linnea's birth on May 30, 2023. She writes, "We are having so much fun getting to know each other, making the early trials and tribulations of parenthood so worth it."



Dassia N. Posner has kept herself busy this year working on the first archival English-language history of the Moscow Kamerny Theatre, for which she was awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship and a Franklin Grant from the American Philosophical Society. Her 2021 book, *Three Loves for Three Oranges: Gozzi, Meyerhold, Prokofiev*, co-edited with Kevin Bartig & Maria De Simone, was named Winner of the 2022 ASTR Translation Award. She has missed IPTD students and faculty this year and looks forward to returning to teaching this fall.



Jooyoung Cho, in October 2022, finished her first IPTD dramaturgy in *Imagine U: Me...Jane: The Dreams and Adventures of Young Jane Goodall* and has participated in workshops for her second dramaturgy, *How to Know Wildflowers*, scheduled for May 2024. During this summer, Jooyoung attended the Animal Liberation Conference in Berkeley (CA) in June, including participating in activism, and an Animal & Vegan Advocacy Summit in LA in July. In September, she took part in the [six!] summer institute in Cologne, where she gave a poster presentation, sharing her preliminary ideas on the performance historiography of the animal liberation movement and veg(etari)anism.



Melissa Blanco Borelli's "Bodies, Theories, Performance" Spring 2023 graduate seminar, with students from IPTD and Performance Studies.

Over the summer, **Masi Asare** convened the Northwestern Performance Studies Summer Institute on the topic “Conjuring Popular Voice,” jointly sponsored by the Department of Performance Studies and the SoC Center for Global Culture and Communication (CGCC). She also presented on “Mythologizing the Musical-Theatrical Global South” at the International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR) conference in Accra, Ghana. In creative life, she signed with music publisher Concord Theatricals, became a new member of the Recording Academy (the organization behind the Grammys), headlined at Manhattan cabaret venue 54 Below, saw her off-Broadway musical *Monsoon Wedding* complete an extended run, and contributed original songs to the play *Odyssey*, directed/adapted by Lisa Peterson, for The Acting Company/Marin Theatre Company. A retelling of the epic from the perspective of four young women at a refugee center in the Greek islands, *Odyssey* is currently playing in the San Francisco Bay Area through September 24 before embarking on a national tour.

Pictured below is the Northwestern Performance Studies Summer Institute group.



Phoenix Gonzalez presented at ASTR and ICMS for the first time last year, developing her research at the nexus of environmental catastrophe and medieval drama. She spearheaded Northwestern’s successful application to host the 23rd Annual Vagantes Conference on Medieval Studies. Over Spring Break in 2024, Northwestern will host this traveling graduate-run conference for the first time. She was the dramaturg for MFA director Katie Lupica’s Wirtz production of “Everybody,” Branden Jacobs Jenkins’ modern-day adaptation of the late medieval play Everyman, and is currently working with Jooyoung Cho to workshop an event that will bring together Northwestern’s undergraduate and graduate communities involved in environmental activism and research.

Susan Manning has completed the manuscript for *Dancing on the Fault Lines of History: Selected Essays*, scheduled for publication by the University of Michigan Press in fall 2024. Jessica Friedman (IPTD 2023) served as editorial assistant on the volume throughout her time at Northwestern. Now Manning will turn her energies to coediting *Dancing on the Third Coast: Chicago Dance Histories* with Lizzie Leopold (IPTD 2017). The two-volume anthology will feature the research of many Northwestern folks: Jessica Friedman, Megan Geigner (IPTD 2015), Susan Lee, Rebecca Rossen (IPTD 2005), and Rachel Russell from Theatre and Drama; Nadine George-Graves, Mario LaMothe, Meida McNeal, and Shayna Silverstein from Performance Studies; Sam Dorf from Musicology, Pam Krayenbuhl from Screen Cultures, and Queen Zabriskie from Sociology. Another contributor will be John Neumeier, who started his career in Chicago around 1960 and has just completed a fifty-year stint as artistic director of the Hamburg Ballet. Pictured is Susan with John backstage this summer after a performance in Hamburg that included a stunning recreation of works by mid-century Chicago modernist Sybil Shearer.



After completing her first year in IPTD, **Gillian Hemme** had the great joy of traveling to Cologne with four of her cohort members and Prof. Tracy Davis to participate in the [six!] Summer Institute. There, she presented research on performance within Ireland's Magdalene Laundries. While in Europe, she was able to conduct archival research in Ireland. She is looking forward to her second year in IPTD.



Rising second-year IPTDers, and Performance Studies student Malú Machuca Rose, at the [six!] Summer Institute in Cologne, Germany.



Congrats to the 2023 IPTD Graduates!

Describe a notable moment, event, or insight from your experience researching and writing your dissertation. Was there a particular finding that shaped the direction of your argument? Was there a distinctive habit that helped you make it to the end? Was there a person (in real life or in your imagination) that urged you forward?



Hayana Kim, “Embodying Democracies: The Gwangju Uprising, Women, and the Politics of Mourning in South Korea”

The biggest challenge I faced when writing my dissertation had to do with data: I had too many stacks of archival materials and too many audio files of interviews from ethnographic field research, and it was hard for me to decide what stories to include. It was only when I wrote the full first round of an extremely mediocre set of four chapters that I realized that perhaps the most important question I should ask is: what do I want to achieve with my dissertation? This question cleared my direction. I wanted my work to make a feminist intervention in historiography on the Gwangju Uprising. And this led me to shape my dissertation around those extraordinary women I met in Gwangju. With this, I had to do a massive revision, but I could make it to the end because I found the spine of my project.

As for the distinctive habit, I rarely began my morning by jumping right into writing; the thought of having to write as soon as I got up was so daunting. So, I always began my morning by reading books of my favorite authors. This helped me to a lot, invigorating me into writing my own work.

Jessica Friedman, “Hidden in Plain Sight: Women Choreographers of 1940s American Modern Dance”

Two practices helped my dissertation writing process. First, I printed all primary and secondary source materials for each chapter and color-coded them based on the section of each chapter in which I intended to use them. This practice helped me to outline each chapter's argument while organizing my materials. Second, when writing particularly difficult sections, I pretended that I was writing an email to my advisor, Susan, instead of writing a dissertation. This habit made writing feel easy because I couldn't wait to show Susan what I figured out about dance history (AKA my argument).



Chelsea Taylor, “Bringing the Bible to Life: Biblical Adaptations and Christian Nationalism in the Twenty-first-century United States of America”

My dissertation required several research trips to Christian tourist destinations in the US. I was excited for the research aspect of the trips, but I didn't expect them to be fun for me. That is, until I realized almost all my sites had petting zoos or live animal performance acts of some kind. I got to pet a kangaroo, feed a camel, talk to a parrot, and play with a hedgehog. It was delightful, and it also made me realize I vastly underestimated the entertainment value and potential audience impact my sites offered.



Dwayne Mann, “His Grotesque Swagger; or, Morgan Benson, The Black Joke, and the Nineteenth Century Target Parade”

Act I

Years ago, after decimating the concept of there being a precise moment when research projects make themselves known, Professor Davis asked, “Have you done this kind of a research project before?”

I had not.

Still, I maintained, the Judith Pascoe effect was bunk (2011).

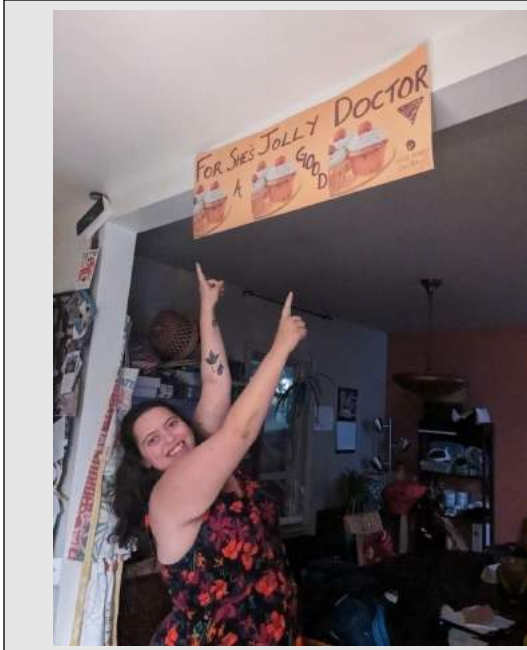
Act II

Years later, as I stood before a statue wondering whether my research subject, Morgan Benson, could still feel his erasure from United States history, it hit:

Benson was here in 1876, standing before this statue not yet built, wondering the same thing then about now.

Act III

“{expletive}, Tracy was right.”

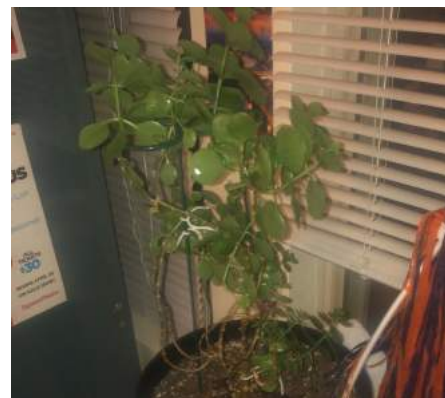


Beka Bryer, “National Acts: Performance, Commemoration, and the Construction of American Public Memory in the Aftermath of the Civil War”

I had two notable moments in researching and drafting my dissertation. First was when I finally got to go see the monuments that I had been researching! Because of the pandemic, I had delays in research trips, so heading to Washington, D.C., Boston, and New York City to see the monuments was incredibly gratifying. Second, I was able to share some of my research to public audiences, which was surreal but made me feel that my research had use beyond the dissertation.

Keary Watts, “Strategic Blackface: Re-deploying American Minstrelsy from Black Arts to #BlackLivesMatter”

I advanced to candidacy just before the IPTD 30th Anniversary Reunion and Symposium. After the event, I took one of the flowers we ordered for the registration table home with me. All the colorful blooms quickly shriveled up and fell off, but the greenery proved more durable. I repotted the greenery and decided that I would try and take care of this plant as I moved through the dissertation process. It grew to 10x its original size. The care that I gave it came to stand in for the work that I put into researching and writing the dissertation. There were some summers where I was away from home, neglecting both the plant and the work. But the plant always grew back, and the work always rebounded. Finally, as I defended my dissertation last month, the plant decided to wither away for the final time. Watching the plant grow and move in and out of good health encouraged me to finish the dissertation and, ultimately, symbolized a poetic end just as I finished the degree. Here’s the only photo I have of the plant, from early 2021 after coming back to life



IPTD Alumni Updates

Rachel Merrill Moss has begun a new position as Visiting Assistant Professor of Theater at Colgate University. For future contact, you can reach her at her Colgate email address: rmoss@colgate.edu.

Dwayne Mann is Theatre Manager at the Gershwin Theatre (currently: *Wicked*) and COO at HudsonMann, LLC (upcoming: *The Wiz/B'way*, Spring 2024).

Keary Watts is a Mellon-Sawyer Postdoctoral Fellow this year at Northwestern for the “On Decolonizing Theatre” seminar.

Matt Randle-Bent has accepted a position as the Assistant Director of the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum.

Laura Ferdinand continues in her position as Postdoctoral Scholar at the Searle Center at Northwestern.

Chelsea Taylor has recently begun a Visiting Assistant Professor position at Skidmore College in the Religious Studies department.

Hayana Kim is an Assistant Professor in the Department of East Asian Languages and Literature at The Ohio State University.

Jessica Friedman has accepted a Lecturer position at University of California, Santa Barbara where she will redevelop the large lecture course introducing students to dance studies and dance history.

Photo Gallery: End-of-Year Gathering at Susan's

Thank you to Susan for hosting and to Gillian Hemme for taking photos.









