



# *Newsletter*

**December 2021**



**Rachana Pandey**

*Newsletter Co-Editor*

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## From the ICWP President

Greetings All,

The year is rapidly coming to an end as all things will in proper time. But 2021 has been an exciting journey of challenges, of creative pursuits, and of questions proposed—some answered and some not. As President of ICWP, I am grateful that we practice parity and support social justice and each other in all spaces as an organization that lives its mission and vision. I often read both statements and would like to share them with you if you have not recently read them on our website.

## THE MISSION OF ICWP

To connect, inspire, and empower women playwrights to achieve equality on the world stages.

## THE VISION OF ICWP

Equal presentation, compensation, and recognition for plays by women around the world.

The Board of Directors and Communication Manager want to thank ICWP member **Lisa Randall**, our former second Vice President, for her 2 years of superb leadership, commitment, and service to the Board of Directors, ICWP organization members, and Connect List. We congratulate Lisa on her new position and look forward to her continued support as an active member.

The ICWP Board of Directors is excited and happy to welcome and introduce you to our new second Vice President, ICWP member **Tavi Juárez**. Many of you know Tavi through her outstanding work with social media platforms, script-writing groups, and watch-night events. We look forward to her bringing new thoughts to the executive branch of the Board, the Board as a whole, the membership, and the Connect List in her new leadership role as the second VP.

Our fundraiser began November 26. Its focus is in honor of ICWP member **Amy Oestreicher**, who died this year, as we present The Amy Oestreicher Grant for Women Playwrights. What better way to close the year than by supporting women playwrights.

**Sharon Wallace, PhD**

President, ICWP

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## From the Editor's Desk: Ecology and Theatre



From ICWP member **Rachana Pandey**

Theatre serves as a mirror for the world. It informs, enlightens, and plays a pivotal role in bringing awareness to society. Hence, the urgency of ecological challenges and threats that the world is facing at present is not disregarded by theatre practitioners, especially women playwrights. This quarter's newsletter covers various ecologically conscious impressions and unique performances by women playwrights across the globe who work in varying climates to bring ecology and sustainability to the centre stage.

ICWP believes in securing women's fundamental human rights. Environmental justice and peace are intertwined in that mission. On that note, our theme of this issue on theatre and ecology is aimed at mainstreaming the environmental conversation through theatre, weaving together ecology and women, and acknowledging the contributions made by women playwrights in the world.

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### Featured Articles

From ICWP member **Amy Drake**

#### *Climate Change and Theater*

The Climate Change Theatre Action (CCTA) encompasses worldwide performance art dedicated to bringing attention to the crisis of climate change. CCTA was founded in 2015 to coincide with the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP15). Three remarkable CCTA playwrights share their views.

ICWP member **Paula Cizmar:**

When you frame the issue [of climate change] as environmental justice, suddenly

it becomes easier to get people to recognize the human rights violations happening in their own backyard—polluted air that schoolchildren breathe, streams tainted with industrial toxins, oil wells that cause health problems because they've been placed too close to residences, badly eroding infrastructure that exposes citizens to chemicals. And this happens most blatantly in low-income neighborhoods, often neighborhoods where most of the residents are people of color. Suddenly, as a playwright with a conscience, I can't let this topic pass me by.

Wren Brian:

It is crucial for us to collectively re-learn how to care for our natural environment not only to survive, but to more deeply care for each other. I was very fortunate to grow up on the territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation & Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. Comparing my experiences living in the north to my experiences living down south significantly influences my writing and my views on how humans interact with nature and each other.

Nicole Pschetz:

I wrote [a piece for CCTA] to talk about what we will lose if we continue to relate to our planet as consumers. I focus particularly on the conservation of the Brazilian Cerrado. It is important not only for the existence of its unique fauna and flora but also to human existence. Unfortunately, its devastation has been accelerated. In my ideal future, Half-Earth and rewilding could be a solution to stop mass extinction in this area. This would help sustain biodiversity, as well as allow native people to continue living in harmony with these ecosystems.

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From ICWP member **Joan Appell Lipkin**

Producing Artistic Director, That Uppity Theatre Company

*Bringing Plays about Climate Change to New Audiences*

For several years now and with growing urgency, I have produced theatre events about climate change. Last fall, in St. Louis' historic Central West End, our most recent event, Climate Change Theatre Action St. Louis 2021, was part of an international ecology movement representing more than 250 events and 30 countries using the arts to call attention to the most pressing issue of our time.

But the question of how to safely produce a theatre event in the midst of a pandemic posed serious challenges. We chose to partner with four art galleries, including Duane Reed, Houska, Phillip Slein, and Projects +, to require masking

by audiences that were limited to approximately 20 people. The plays, from the Climate Change Theatre Action collections that ran simultaneously, were repeated several times in each space so people could see all of them.

The plays included “About that Chocolate Bar” by Joan Lipkin, “Brackendale” by Elaine Ávila, “El Toro Sagrado at the Car Repair Shop” by Mindi Dickstein, “Homo Sapiens” by Chantal Bilodeau, “The Reason” by Stephen Sewell, “Single Use” by Marcia Johnson, and “Six Polar Bears Fell from the Sky This Morning” by Alister Emerson.

Reflecting an age span of performers of over 50 years, the event included "How Dare You?" an adaptation I wrote of teenage activist Greta Thunberg’s address to the UN, as well as theatre students from the Webster University Conservatory of Theatre Arts and well-known local theatre artists and performances by two dance companies, Ashleyliane Dance Company and Karlovsky and Company.



Additionally, there was outdoor tabling by environmental groups including Great Rivers Greenway, US Green Building Council Missouri Gateway Chapter, Missouri Coalition for the Environment, Project Animal Freedom, World Bird Sanctuary, Metropolitan Congregations United, Earth Dance Organic Farm School, St Louis Voter Registration Group, 365 STL, and more.





Audience members said it was especially exciting to see a play by Elaine Avila about two bald eagles in “Brackendale” and then be able to walk across the street and see real live raptors on display with representatives from the Wild Bird Sanctuary.

Our collaboration with galleries and environmental organizations was also essential in drawing new audiences as was the choice to stage the work within a single block in multiple venues on a weekend afternoon.

The issues facing us are real, but so are the opportunities to change the direction of this global crisis. The arts are a pathway to illuminate the issues in an engaging way and to promote hope, joy, and engagement. It was both meaningful and important that St. Louis take part in this international arts and ecology movement, and we want to encourage other communities throughout the US and internationally to adapt or do their own version of our event, which was free.

Produced under the auspices of That Uppity Theatre Company, our event was part of a worldwide series of readings and performances of short plays about the climate crisis and environmental justice. CCTA 2021 takes place from September 19 to December 18 to coincide with the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 26).



The last iteration of CCTA, in 2019, included more than 220 events in nearly 25 countries. For more details, the list of participating playwrights, and remaining performances by groups worldwide, visit the [CCTA](#).



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From ICWP member **Dana L. Hall**

Co-Founder [This Moment Productions](#), Playwright/Actor, Chicago, USA



## *A Marriage of Principles*

Theatre and ecology are a marriage of principles brought together by shifting paradigms. Ecology can refer to the organic composition of where performative art takes place, such as a stage, theatre house, or virtual setting. The works created for these venues are influenced by another form of ecology: the ecology of scientific discoveries, especially those that threaten global sustainability. The urgency created by global warming, COVID-19 pandemic, and wildlife and plant extinction have forced a clash in which theatre must adapt to both forms of ecology to be a sustainable industry.

We have a duty to be mindful of the expenditure of organic resources. The emergence of virtual theatre may challenge our historical roots and is an excellent example of evolution in the face of peril. Now that we have opened the door to greater accessibility, how can technology continue to be of service to theatre (e.g., rehearsals, casting, readings, and performance)? We must move forward and not retreat while we continue to examine our carbon-based as well as value-based footprint.

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From ICWP member **R. Johns**  
Playwright, Melbourne, Australia

On 26 October 2021, after 245 days in lockdown, the world's longest, Melbourne reopened. This pandemic followed the tragedy in 2018 of La Mama burning down.

La Mama is by definition, a continuous production house for Australian playwrights/actors and for new Australian performance work. It is a democratic, welcoming, and open organization that gives enormous support to actors, directors, performers, and creatives, from LGBTQIA+, linguistically and culturally diverse communities, with strong support for the female voice, for First Nations and emerging artists. Many established artists also return over and over to "our home," which is La Mama.

It is also both financially and artistically a haven. Having a theatre venue where there is no need to pay rent is a gift to all of its artists, most of whom have low incomes.



There are so many of us attached to La Mama as artists or audiences over 53 years (when La Mama was created from an old garment factory on Faraday Street) and yet over these past 3 years of difficulty, the artistic family, local community, government, and philanthropists have come together to rebuild out of the ashes, La Mama. The War/Rak Banksia Festival, for 4 days in December, will celebrate rebirth and return to our theatre home.

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From ICWP member **Carolyn Gage**

### *Theatre and Ecology*

In my experience, the pandemic brought a much-needed reset to the world of academic theatre. In my career as a playwright, it was not unusual for a university to fly the playwright out for a production of their work. This might include classroom visits, an opening night talkback, and possibly a master class. In light of the massive carbon footprint from flying, is this practice really justifiable? Can't the playwright "Skype" or "Zoom" in, saving the university thousands of dollars in travel, housing, and expenses (sometimes more than the playwright's fee!), saving the playwright days of travel logistics, and—oh, yeah—saving the planet?

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## Going Green on Stage

"Somewhere" by Marisela Treviño Orta is a play about climate collapse—and its premiere was sustainably produced at the University of Pittsburgh, USA.

In "Adelaide," an eco-theatrical company is producing and reinterpreting Shakespeare from an ecological perspective.

The Broadway Green Alliance is an industry-wide initiative to make theater a more sustainable art form.

The National Youth Theatre and University of Hull performed "On The Edge" live at COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland.

Climate Change Theater Action is a worldwide performance series encouraging global action on climate change.

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### 2021 Development Fundraiser Launch

This year's Development Fund is focussed partly on playwrights with disabilities and is intended as a tribute to ICWP member **Amy Oestreicher**, who struggled heroically with multiple severe health issues to achieve her ambitions. Tragically, Amy passed away in May this year at age 34. We know our grants make a real difference to the grantees. Our target is \$5,000 by the end of 2021. To donate, please click [here](#).

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### Grant Recipients

In 2020, we gave nine members who were black or were playwrights of color a Development Fund grant. Most have now provided a report on how the grant helped them to flourish as playwrights—getting productions, getting an agent, getting a new writing contract in TV, forging new creative alliances, and more. Read about these exciting stories [here](#).

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From ICWP member **Joanna Pickering**

*From NY to LA to Paris — A Passion Pandemic Project becomes a dream production*

After being displaced from my home in NYC in the pandemic, when theatre went dark, I was miraculously awarded a one-year writing residency in Los Angeles. In July, when the residency ended, I decided to travel to Europe to see my family after almost 2 years of separation. I knew, as a Brit and European living in the USA, with the borders still closed, I would be locking myself out of my work and life in the US, as an immigrant.

However, spending time with family was my priority. It was therefore, with incredible delight, that I was taken under the wing of leading literary agent Wendy Goldman Rohm, who had awarded one of my one-act plays a scholarship in Paris, in 2019. Wendy, kindly, invited me to her summer retreat workshops in Paris and Biarritz, offering to be my agent on my screenplay, and to work on a novel. In this way, I met so many literary artistic souls, who encouraged me to read my plays in salons at Wendy's house. Wendy suggested I bring them to stage in Paris.

This is how this passion pandemic project began. I started to put the word out, and soon, fabulously, experienced thespians and directors, from the Paris literary theater community were reading my work. They were praising the writing and wanted to be involved, despite the logistics and unusual circumstances. In the same way, my finance arrived. Then we had a church. Then a rehearsal space. Then an apartment to live in. Then I was upgraded to theater space in the heart of Paris. Then I had my amazing actors. It just kept growing from there ... My dream to write and perform in Paris was coming true.

Discover how this story unfolds on the [ICWP Blog](#).



From ICWP member **Julia Pascal**

*DANCING, TALKING, TABOO! Bloomsbury Festival October 2021*

With dramaturgy and direction by Julia Pascal

Fragments from women's lives were the text for "[Dancing, Talking Taboo!](#)" The texts were danced, sung, and spoken in the 19th century St Pancras Church.

Performers were second year students from London Contemporary Dance School, keen to move from pure dance to dance-theatre. Over lockdown, the *Giving Voice Project* had recorded memory shots from the lives of 30 women. Stories came from Jewish Polish and French girls taught to hide from the Nazis as remembered by their older selves. From a sexually abused Englishwoman with learning difficulties. From an Irish Catholic who instinctively knew that she should never be alone with a manipulative priest. From a woman with one breast herb-foraging London for her gin and tonic.

The 20-year-olds were terrified of using their voices. Eventually they learned to sing, to shout, to howl. To inhabit the Church with its altar, its crosses, its Mary. The Lady Chapel represented Pétainist France. Stained glass windows housed grotesque, human gargoyles. A baptismal font with moving human statues was the set for the confession of a stigmatized Roma. The altar, as the audience platform, subverted hierarchical structures. Never were women's voices heard in such a way and in such a space.

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## Podcast and Social Media



# Fall Follies

An online reading of short works  
by the ICWP Script Feedback  
Group

Friday,  
December 10th



# Keep up with ICWP!



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If you enjoy our organization, please review us and like our stuff!



<https://twitter.com/ICWP>

Get on our Twitter Member List:

<http://twitter.com/i/lists/196925921>



<https://www.instagram.com/icwplaywrights/>

We re-post member events, publications, and awards! DM us.



<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/2590623/>

Join our LinkedIn group to add your press, articles, and other noteworthy news.



<https://www.youtube.com/user/ICWomenPlaywrights>

Add your YouTube videos to our playlist.

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# Have a success to share with our social media team?

We want to promote your work! Please provide details on our "Share Your Success" form.

<https://forms.gle/kUrTgM4WMet84VV9A>

If available to be featured, one of our team members will follow up for more information within five business days.

You can also direct message us posts to share, re-tweet, or re-post. To add a video to our YouTube playlist, please use the "Share Your Success" form.

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The ICWP podcast is up and running! Be sure to check it out [here](#).

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## Welcome to New Members



Marjorie Bicknell, Pennsylvania, USA

Susan Cinoman, Connecticut, USA

Valerie Ellis, Pennsylvania, USA

Rosemary Johns, Victoria, Australia

Irene Kowal, Massachusetts, USA

Phylis Mack, Ohio, USA

Bella Panciocco, Virginia, USA

Carrie Ann Quinn, New York, USA

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**ICWP is a 501-c-3 Non Profit Organization, incorporated in the state of Ohio, USA**

For general questions, contact Margaret McSeveney, Communications Manager:

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