



# Newsletter

September 2022



**Rachana Pandey**

*Director, Newsletter Co-Editor*

**Kim Duvall**

*Newsletter Co-Editor*

## From the ICWP President

Hi Women Playwrights,

The world is going through it right now. Flooding in Pakistan, earthquakes in Mexico, the recent Roe v. Wade decision, the death of Queen Elizabeth II, typhoons in Alaska, devastating storms in the Gulf of Mexico, Mahsa Amini's death in Iran.

Wherever you are and whatever you are dealing with at the moment as a woman in this world, I want you to know that our hearts are with you. We at the International Centre for Women Playwrights (ICWP) function to empower you to share your story and your voice as a woman playwright. I want to encourage you to reach out to us if there is anything we can do to support you as a woman playwright.

Our mission at the ICWP is to connect, inspire, and empower women playwrights to achieve equality on the world stages. It is now Autumn 2022, and I want to share with you some of the things on which we at ICWP are working to meet our mission.

- ConnectList Opportunities
- Script Feedback Group
  - Ongoing Weekly Read emails sharing members works with one another
  - Upcoming Pages Incubator Sessions (Sunday, October 23rd)

- 5-year Plan
  - The Board is hard at work to get our 5-year plan finalized by the end of the year.
- Masterclass Grants
  - We are proud to announce that we have partnered with MasterClass to bring 300 free year-long grants to our qualifying members! To learn how to apply for a grant, please check your email.
- 2022-2023 ICWP Development Grants
  - The Development Grant Committee will be opening up applications for qualifying members in early November. Please keep your eyes peeled for that announcement and details on how you can apply for an ICWP Development Grant.
- Centre Stage Podcast and Blog
  - Led by ICWP member **Jenni Munday**, our podcast features interviews and excerpts from our members.
  - Edited by ICWP Operations Manager **Mags McSeveney**, our blog showcases articles by members about their work and travels.

There are places we can go and things that we can do together. Thank you for your continued support of our mission. If you are interested in getting involved with the work we do at ICWP, please don't be a stranger. You can email me anytime at [President@WomenPlaywrights.Org](mailto:President@WomenPlaywrights.Org).

Peace + Love + Playwriting,

**Tavi**

**Tavi Rebecca Juárez**

President, ICWP

From ICWP Director **Rachana Pandey**

### *Theatre and Marginality*

Once Charles Lamb said, "We do not go to the theater like our ancestors, to escape from the pressure of reality, so much as to confirm our experience of it." Theatre, which stages and represents human realities, emotions, experiences, and practices, can no longer remain silent about the multiple voices coming from the periphery in present times. Changes can be seen as theatre becomes more and more inclusive by mobilizing, voicing, and representing marginalized people through performance, creating a larger impact on society. And certainly "if we don't center the voices of marginalized people, we're doing the wrong work" as the famous American activist Tarana Burke emphasized.

This issue of the newsletter focuses on the theme Theatre and Marginality and tries to bring the discourse of women and gender, disability (specifically autism), racism, and other marginalities on centre stage through articles in which practitioners and writers share their first-hand experiences of theatre.

Happy reading!

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## Featured Articles

From **Elana Gartner**

### *Centering People with Disabilities as Protagonists*

It has been rare that a person with a disability has been a protagonist in theater. This is partly because playwrights with disabilities have not been produced and partly because (and this is an opinion) theater has been afraid to put disability center stage.

Historically, characters with disabilities were small roles, the butts of jokes or portrayed as dangerous. Themes of people with disabilities needing to be saved, killed or dying communicated to audience members that the characters had no agency, values or life of their own. It upheld the social narrative of people with disabilities being outcasts of society.

After the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, there was a slow shift in attitude towards individuals with disabilities in the U.S. In the past ten years, theater began to shift as well, and many more scripts have started to center characters with disabilities. The storylines often incorporate other aspects of the characters' lives: sex, adventure, independence, grief, etc. Theaters, programs and grants (including ICWP) have started to emerge to support playwrights with disabilities to tell their stories. It is not over; there are still many more barriers, but it is the first step in a long conversation.



Left to right, foreground, Robin Kakolyris and Anita Torrance. Photo by Darren Gill.

From **Rosemary Johns**

*Birthday Book of Storms, Theatre and Marginality*

I wanted to share with ICWP playwrights the themes of marginality in my recently produced play *Birthday Book of Storms* at La Mama in Melbourne, Australia.

I use a framework of magic realism as a device to recall repressed memories and traumatic events, bringing to the foreground those who have been marginalised in the dominant narrative of Ted Hughes' (married to Sylvia Plath) life. Hughes was British Poet laureate from 1984 to 1998.

I decided upon a fictional telling, rather than attempting a biographical one, and to find an imaginative way to explore the silenced voices of Ted's lover, Assia Wevill, and daughter, Shura. The play's narrative transitions between the real and the fantastical, with the thread of a selkie woman entwined in the text.

Sylvia and Assia – and Assia's child – reclaim the space and tell the Sylvia/Ted/Assia story from a feminist, non-Anglo perspective, as the conflicted relationships that form the framework of the play, play out. Actors who are of Anglo-Indian, Greek, and Italian-Maltese ancestry play the female characters. It is extraordinarily powerful.

*I write on the traditional land of the people of the Kulin Nation. I give my respect to the Elders of these traditional lands and to all First Nations people past, present and future. I acknowledge all events take place on stolen lands and that sovereignty was never ceded.*

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From **Julia Pascal**

Women are marginalised in British theatre. Within the state-subsidised area, they

are clumped in a category of "diversity." Making women a part of "diversity" suggests that patriarchy is the unquestionable norm. Women are also described as a "protected category," marginalising them further as if they were Victorian heroines in a romantic novel.

Studies show that more women than men buy theatre tickets. Women also pay taxes, which provides financial support for our national theatres, where men are over-represented. On those stages, women rarely see their complex lives revealed. There has never been a female artistic director of the National Theatre or the Royal Shakespeare Company.

My work foregrounding women's experiences after decades of production still remains – as most creative women's work does – on the underfunded fringe. We all slog at fundraising without the support of the administrative staff needed to underpin this process. Women are 51% of the British population – hardly a minority. However, the Arts Council refuses to mandate for gender equality; its own leadership is headed by men. Power is never shared. It has to be taken. We do not need protection. We need equal access to mainstages and to earn as much as men.

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From **Jennifer Brooks**

When people think of marginalized communities, they often think of racial minorities or perhaps LGBTQ+. Many don't think of people with autism as being marginalized, yet in theater they certainly have been. How many plays can you name with an identifiably autistic protagonist? I can name precisely one: *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* about an autistic teen who investigates the death of a neighbor's dog. The play *King Charles III* may feature an autistic protagonist if my suspicions about the title character are correct. Additionally, this contributor wrote a play about an autistic sixth-grader that she is trying to get into production. Altogether that makes a grand total of three. That is three more than existed 15 years ago but still a very low number compared to the number of successful plays featuring African-American or LGBTQ+ protagonists. What will it take to bring representation of the autistic community in theater up to the level of representation of the African-American and LGBTQ+ communities?

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From **Amy Drake**

*Overcoming Marginality in Theater*

Marginality in theater may be defined in terms of playwrights who self-identify as marginalized based on sexuality, queerness, displacement, immigration, race, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, disability, and unconventional work. As the works from these groups are recognized by theaters and sought after for festivals, barriers to performance are replaced by opportunities. A perusal of play

submission listings demonstrates that some theaters are seeking new works specifically from marginalized populations. This is a global movement to bring to the stage characters and topics formerly hinted at and subtly expressed. Staging the conflicts, challenges, and joys of these groups gives us, as a community, a platform for understanding and identifying our similarities. There is a place for all voices in theater.

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From **Sharon Wallace**

*Theatre and Marginality*

Inclusion is indispensable in the eradication of marginality in the theatre. Access to resources and opportunities for marginalized communities to enter the theatre industry at every level would bring about equity for authentic representation throughout the theatre community. The Arts Consulting Group, in the article [\*Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access: Why Now in the Arts and Culture Section?\*](#) reports that “Despite...major changes in age, gender, and ethnicity in the United States and Canada, arts and culture organizations are struggling to appeal to this massive wave of potential new audiences, donors, board members, and employees.”

Therefore, a new way of thinking about engagement and theatre audiences is on the call today. It goes beyond filling seats but filling all positions with diverse individuals at all facets of theatre development throughout the industry. Diversity must be at the foundation of the business and creative sides of the industry. In addition, it represents an authentic portrait of the population worldwide.

By doing so, theatre in all aspects opens the door to inclusion at every level. For example, "the National Endowment for the Arts states that 'changes in United States demographic composition appear to have contributed to the overall declines in performing arts attendance.' Arts and culture organizations need to take active steps now to attract more diverse audiences, donors, employees, and other key stakeholders if they want to achieve programmatic, financial, and operational success in the very near future" (Arts Consulting Group). That is one way to do away with past practices and abolish theatre marginality for more inclusivity in theatre.

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From **Jeanmarie Simpson**

Over the decades since turning 40, I have been pushed to the margin, clinging to that threshold as I look backward. I now stand outside what was once my genre. In a new direction, I turn and break new ground. With the witness or without, I will make art until the fragments of my old bones scatter in the wind. There is everything to be done. Still.



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## Podcast and Social Media

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

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# Keep up with ICWP!



Follow & engage with us on social media.



<https://www.facebook.com/womenplaywrights>

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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## Welcome to New Members



**Jennifer Brooks**, California, USA  
**Beth Harpaz**, New York, USA  
**Deena Ronayne**, South Dakota, USA  
**Satu Runa**, California, USA  
**Judy Stadt**, 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, Operations Manager:

[admin@womenplaywrights.org](mailto:admin@womenplaywrights.org)

For the Board of Directors, contact Board President:

[board@womenplaywrights.org](mailto:board@womenplaywrights.org)

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