

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

July 23rd-27th, 2025



CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

WEDNESDAY, JULY 23

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
12:00 pm - 3:00 pm	<p><u>Master Class A:</u> Viva La Puppet: The Art & Science of Puppetry! (Pre-Purchase is required)</p>	Stanhopea (7 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
5:00 pm - 7:00 pm	Registration	Orchid Ballroom West (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
7:00 pm - 8:00 pm	New Guard Gathering!	Orchid Ballroom West (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
8:00 pm - 10:00 pm	Welcome to Cleveland!	Orchid Ballroom West (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown

THURSDAY, JULY 24

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
8:00 am - 5:00 pm	Registration	Orchid Ballroom West (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
8:30 am - 9:30 am	<p>Conference Orientation (First Timers & Returning Attendees)</p>	Orchid Ballroom East (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
8:30 am - 11:00 am	Coffee	Orchid Ballroom: Pre-Function Space (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
9:45 am - 11:00 am	<p>Session Block #1 (Open to Everyone)</p>	The Westin Cleveland Downtown (Various Rooms – 6 th & 7 th Floor)
11:00 am - 7:00 pm	Exhibitor Hall Open	Orchid Ballroom West (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
11:15 am - 12:15 pm	<p>Affinity Groups/Group Check-Ins (Open to Everyone)</p>	Orchid Ballroom East (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
12:30 pm - 2:30 pm	<p>Lunch (Dine Around) (Sign-Up Required)</p>	Various Locations Meet at The Westin Cleveland Downtown: Orchid West Ballroom: 6 th Floor

1:00 pm - 4:00 pm	<p><u>Master Class B:</u></p> <p>Theatre and Community Voices; Tackling ACES and Strengthening Communities Through Their Own Stories</p> <p>(Pre-Purchase is required)</p>	Isabella (7 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
2:45 pm - 3:45 pm	<p>Network Meetings (Open to Everyone)</p> <p>Applied Theatre College/University High School K-8 Professional Theatre</p>	The Westin Cleveland Downtown AT: Stenia – 7 th Floor CU: Stelis – 7 th Floor HS: Disa – 7 th Floor K8: Caladenia – 7 th Floor PT: Laelia – 7 th Floor
3:50 pm - 4:10 pm	<p>Check Out Our Vendors (Open to Everyone)</p>	Orchid Ballroom West (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
4:15 pm - 5:45 pm	<p><u>Welcome/Opening Keynote:</u></p> <p>Nina Domingue (Open to Everyone)</p>	Orchid Ballroom East (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
6:00 pm - 7:00 pm	<p>Exhibitor Meet & Greet/ Meet the Leadership (Open to Everyone)</p>	Orchid Ballroom West (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
6:00 pm - 8:00 pm	<p>Theatre Excursion: <i>Ista and Her Garden</i> (Pre-Purchase is required)</p>	Meeting Location: The Westin Cleveland Downtown Orchid West Ballroom - 6 th Floor
7:00 pm - 7:45 pm	<p>Play Reading Circle: TND Musicals</p>	Orchid Ballroom East (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
8:00 pm - 10:00pm	<p>Playwriting Slam</p>	Orchid Ballroom West (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown

FRIDAY, JULY 25

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
8:00 am - 8:45 am	Past President/Chair Breakfast	Presidential Suite – Room 2301 The Westin Cleveland Downtown
8:30 am - 11:00 am	Coffee	Orchid Ballroom: Pre-Function Space (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown

9:00 am – 10:00 am	<p>Network Meetings (Open to Everyone)</p> <p>New Guard Playwriting Research/Scholarship Youth Theatre</p>	<p>The Westin Cleveland Downtown NG: Stanhopea – 7th Floor P: Disa – 7th Floor RS: Laelia – 7th Floor YT: Orchis – 7th Floor</p>
9:00 am - 4:00 pm	<p>Registration</p>	<p>Orchid Ballroom West (6th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown</p>
9:45 am - 3:45 pm	<p>Exhibitor Hall Open</p>	<p>Orchid Ballroom West (6th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown</p>
10:15 am - 11:30 am	<p>Session Block #2 (Open to Everyone)</p>	<p>The Westin Cleveland Downtown (Various Rooms – 6th & 7th Floor)</p>
11:45 am - 12:30 pm	<p>Play Reading Circle: Dramatic Publishing</p>	<p>Orchid Ballroom West (6th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown</p>
11:45 am - 12:30 pm	<p>Lunch (On Your Own)</p>	<p>On Your Own!</p>
12:45 pm – 2:00 pm	<p>Session Block #3 (Open to Everyone)</p>	<p>The Westin Cleveland Downtown (Various Rooms – 6th & 7th Floor)</p>
12:45 pm - 3:45 pm	<p><u>Master Class C:</u></p> <p>Breaking, Bridging, and Building: Uncovering Histories to Progress the Field</p> <p>(Pre-Purchase is required)</p>	<p>Stenia (7th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown</p>
2:30 pm - 3:45 pm	<p>Session Block #4 (Open to Everyone)</p>	<p>The Westin Cleveland Downtown (Various Rooms – 6th & 7th Floor)</p>
4:00 pm - 5:00 pm	<p>Games Exchange (Open to Everyone)</p>	<p>Orchid Ballroom West (6th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown</p>
4:00 pm - 6:00 pm	<p>Excursion: Playhouse Square Tour (Pre-purchase is required)</p>	<p>Meeting Location: The Westin Cleveland Downtown Orchid West Ballroom - 6th Floor</p>
5:00 pm - 7:00 pm	<p>Excursion: Rock & Roll Hall of Fame (Pre-purchase is required)</p>	<p>Meeting Location: The Westin Cleveland Downtown Orchid West Ballroom - 6th Floor</p>
6:45 pm - 8:00 pm	<p>Dinner (Dine Around) (Sign-Up Required)</p>	<p>Various Locations</p> <p>Meet at The Westin Cleveland Downtown: Orchid West Ballroom: 6th Floor</p>

8:30 pm - 9:30 pm	Play Reading Circle: YouthPLAYS	Orchid Ballroom West (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
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SATURDAY, JULY 26

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
8:30 am - 9:30 am	Doyle Breakfast (For Doyle Fellows)	Presidential Suite – Room 2301 The Westin Cleveland Downtown
8:30 am - 9:30 am	Youth Theatre Journal Meeting (Open to All)	Caladenia (7 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
9:00 am - 5:00 pm	Exhibitor Hall Open	Orchid Ballroom West (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
9:30 am - 11:00 am	Coffee	Orchid Ballroom: Pre-Function Space (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
9:30 am - 4:00 pm	Registration	Orchid Ballroom West (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
9:45 am - 11:00 am	Performances: TaleSpinner Children’s Theater Dobama Theatre Cleveland Play House (Open to Everyone)	Orchid Ballroom East (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
11:15 am - 11:30 am	Check Out Our Vendors (Open to Everyone)	Orchid Ballroom West (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
11:45 am - 1:00 pm	Annual Meeting (Open to Everyone)	Orchid Ballroom East (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
1:15 pm - 2:30 pm	Session Block #5 (Open to Everyone)	The Westin Cleveland Downtown (Various Rooms – 6 th & 7 th Floor)
2:45 pm - 4:00 pm	Session Block #6 (Open to Everyone)	The Westin Cleveland Downtown (Various Rooms – 6 th & 7 th Floor)
4:15 pm - 4:45 pm	Exhibitor Lotto (Open to Everyone)	Orchid Ballroom West (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
5:00 pm - 6:00 pm	Affinity Groups/Group Check-Ins (Open to Everyone)	Orchid Ballroom East (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
6:45 pm - 8:15 pm	AATE Award's Ceremony (Open to Everyone)	Orchid Ballroom East (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown

8:30 pm - 10:30 pm	Closing Night Party (Open to Everyone)	Orchid Ballroom West (6 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
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SUNDAY, JULY 27

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
10:00 am - 11:00 am	Board Meeting	Caladenia (7 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown
12:00 pm - 3:00 pm	Excursion: Join the workshop of <i>The Throwaways</i> and tour the campus of the Cleveland Play House (Pre-Purchase is required)	Meeting Location: The Westin Cleveland Downtown Orchid West Ballroom - 6 th Floor
12:00 pm - 3:00 pm	Master Class D: Accessibility Design: A Hands-on, Artistic Approach Toward a More Inclusive and Accessible Theatre (Pre-Purchase is required)	Caladenia (7 th Floor) The Westin Cleveland Downtown

THE SESSIONS

SESSION BLOCK 1
Thursday, 9:45am-11:00am

Beyond the Blueprint: Conceptual Set Design with/for Neurodivergent Minds

Track: High School

Presenters: Bekah LaCoste

Location: Stanhopea (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

This workshop encourages theatre professionals to think beyond technical specifications and dimensions to create more meaningful and interesting spaces that encourage creativity and accommodate the performers within it. This approach is especially impactful for neurodivergent students, providing them with a creative and flexible platform to explore, express, and connect with the production in ways that feel authentic and inclusive.

Building a Thriving Theater Program from the Ground Up

Track: High School, K-8, Youth Theatre

Presenters: Emily Garven

Location: Disa (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

Launching and sustaining a theater program in an under-resourced public school presents unique challenges—especially when funding, space, and administrative buy-in are limited. This hands-on workshop equips educators with practical strategies, a take-home toolkit, and templates to develop a thriving program

that serves their students and communities. With a strong emphasis on culturally responsive pedagogy and trauma-informed practices, this session explores how to create an inclusive, student-centered program that fosters creativity, engagement, and belonging. Participants will gain actionable insights on: Maximizing Limited Resources: Finding creative solutions for space, materials, and production needs. Sustaining Funding & Partnerships: Budgeting strategies, grant-writing tips, and building partnerships with local organizations, including universities. Using Data for Advocacy & Growth: Collecting qualitative and quantitative data to secure administrative buy-in, attract grants, and expand resources. Student Engagement & Program Culture: Trauma-informed strategies to build a program that students invest in and take ownership of. Marketing & Branding Your Program: Creating an identity and leveraging community outreach to boost participation and support. This highly interactive, solution-oriented session ensures that participants leave with concrete tools, strategies, and next steps to develop and sustain theater programs in any environment.

Creating Theatre across Generations: Undergraduates and Older Adults with Dementia

Track: Applied Theatre, College/University, High School, Professional Theatre

Presenters: Norah Swiney

Location: Orchid Ballroom East (6th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

Applied theatre seeks to promote dialogue and connection among people groups. One underserved population is older adults, including those living with physical and cognitive decline, and those living in long term care facilities. This workshop asks us to consider, what if older adults experiencing dementia and age-related disabilities reconnected with their creative abilities? What can we discover when undergraduate theatre students create collaborative theatre pieces with them? How can theatre create connections between residents in a long-term care facility and young people? What might cross-generational original theatre contribute to our communities? In recent years various applied theatre models have emerged to serve older adults. This workshop will explore the Timeslips method, a collaborative creative storytelling method developed by MacArthur fellow and former theatre professor Anne Basting. Professor Norah Swiney discovered Timeslips during her training to become a drama therapist. She developed a program to bring undergraduate students together with older adults to devise theatre pieces through a series of collaborative storytelling workshops. The workshop series culminated in performances for the community in which the students enacted the original works they created together. In this experiential workshop, participants will receive a brief introduction to applied theatre and drama therapy interventions for older adult populations. Next, the presenter will lead a brief exploration of the current research in this area. Then the presenter will share experiences of implementing cross-generational theatre programming and offer lessons learned. Then participants will learn the Timeslips method of collaborative creative storytelling, and how to use it to devise original theatre pieces with artists living with memory loss and cognitive decline. The workshop will culminate with a devised piece from stories created by the group.

Creating Theatre Curriculum that Opens Dialogue and Facilitates Change

Track: Applied Theatre

Presenters: Thomas Kazmierczak & Jenna Messina

Location: Isabella (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

The Teaching Artists at the Cleveland Play House (CPH) use the principles of trauma-informed care and culturally relevant teaching as the cornerstone of their four-pillar theatre education model. This approach deepens artistic understanding and social and emotional competencies in safe and constructive environments. They have found that by creating community-friendly theatrical events and programs that gently start dialogues between children and their family members, you can open multi-generational conversations and begin to shift the burden of change from individual solutions to community solutions. Using examples from CPH Family Theatre Productions and the CARE Theatre Education Program, you will walk through the steps of creating an engaging and impactful curriculum for your performances and programs that can be shared with schools, families, and community members as a catalyst for community development and social change.

New Guard Panel**Track:** New Guard**Facilitators:** Sam Briggs & Alexa Nastasi**Location:** Caladenia (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown***Feelings Forecast: Social and Emotional Learning In-Practice for the K-8 Drama Classroom*****Presenter:** Victoria Yordt

This session focuses on integrating social and emotional learning (SEL) practices in K-8 drama classrooms. Participants will explore how theater educators can foster emotional intelligence, empathy, and self-awareness through drama activities, supporting students' social and emotional development alongside their artistic growth.

The 2025 Courageous Cadence: Performing Justice Through Spoken Word Poetry**Presenter:** Annase Raji

This session explores the Courageous Cadence project, which uses spoken word poetry, devised theater, and personal storytelling to empower youth to address social injustices, including racial, gender, and climate justice. Attendees will learn how youth-led arts-based research can promote justice-centered dialogue, activism, and leadership through performance. The session will include best practices for integrating justice-oriented performance into educational and community settings, and strategies for empowering young people as leaders in advocacy and social change.

The Pandemic, Precarity, and a Pedagogy of Hope: Learning from Public High School Theatre Teachers' Experiences of the COVID-19 Pandemic**Presenter:** Devin Klugh

This research-based session presents findings from interviews with public high school theater teachers about their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. The discussion focuses on how teachers adapted their practices, curriculum, and performances to continue providing theater education in virtual, hybrid, and socially distanced formats. Attendees will reflect on the resilience of teachers and discuss how these adaptations can inspire future theater education practices in an ever-changing educational landscape.

Playwriting Workshop: Adapting Classic Literature to Script for Theater**Track:** Applied Theatre, College/University, Playwriting**Presenters:** Laura Gordon & Marie Kohler**Location:** Eria (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

This interactive workshop will guide participants through the process of adapting classic literature for the stage, focusing on the transformation of classic texts into engaging, dynamic scripts for modern audiences. By analyzing source material, exploring scriptwriting techniques, and collaborating on adaptation exercises, participants will walk away with practical skills for adapting classic works while honoring both their historical significance and theatrical possibilities.

So You Wannabe a Scholar: How to turn your conference presentation into a journal article**Track:** Research/Scholarship**Presenters:** Jonathan P. Jones**Location:** Ida (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

How can theatre artists, educators, and administrators contribute to research and scholarship in theatre education? In this panel discussion and workshop, journal editors, editorial board members, and/or scholars will share insights about how they have turned a conference session into an article for publication—and will engage participants by facilitating writing strategies to begin drafting the outline for an article. As this conference is meant to embrace progress and tradition, this session will be facilitated by members of the research and scholarship network and we encourage participants from all other networks who are curious

about how to document and share their work—whether from this conference or beyond—to attend this writing workshop in order to amplify and ignite new voices in research and scholarship.

Stages of Freedom: Jewish Narratives in American Theatre

Track: College/University

Presenters: Alevia R-Plyam

Location: Stelis (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

This panel explores the evolving representation of Jewish identity and liberation in American theatre, examining how playwrights balance cultural tradition with progressive storytelling. Through dramaturgical analysis, we will discuss key plays such as *Awake and Sing!* by Clifford Odets and *Angels in America* by Tony Kushner, assessing how these works reflect and challenge Jewish assimilation, resilience, and activism. The session will consider how theatre serves as a space for negotiating cultural identity, showcasing both historical perspectives and contemporary shifts. Presenters will analyze the impact of staging choices, audience reception, and evolving dramaturgical frameworks that shape Jewish storytelling today. By addressing the duality of progress and tradition, this discussion aligns with AATE's 2025 theme, "Stages of Change," illustrating how Jewish narratives navigate continuity and transformation. Attendees will gain insights into how theatre can both honor heritage and embrace innovation, creating meaningful spaces for cultural expression.

Using Drama as a way of Processing Grief

Track: High School, K-8, Research/Scholarship, Youth Theatre

Presenters: Lexi Bresnan

Location: Orchis (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

grief

noun

/ˈgrēf/

1: deep and poignant distress caused by or as if by bereavement

Grief shows up in a number of ways besides death: moving, friendships, relationships, change, etc. Especially in young people, it can be difficult to understand the full breadth of when they are experiencing grief because we cannot seem to understand how often it can happen. Through creative drama, theatre, playwriting, etc., we can help others process grief through the creative arts. Together we can discuss how to make this morbid topic more prominent in our discussions so that everyone feels comfortable grieving when they need to—and using theatre to process.

SESSION BLOCK 2
Friday, 10:15am-11:30am

Becoming Change Agents and Community Builders

Track: Professional Theatre

Presenters: Tia Powell Harris & Seth Laidlaw

Location: Isabella (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

New York City Center, home of the Tony-honored Encores! series and the Fall for Dance Festival, has played a defining role in the cultural life of the city since 1943. For the past three years, City Center has purposefully expanded its programming in Education & Community Engagement, more than doubling its reach to over 500 classrooms, 50 community sites, and 25,000 learners of all ages. During this session we will shine a light on City Center's approach to serving historically underrepresented communities, building deep and sustainable partnerships, and how leading as internal change agents propelled our successful growth. City Center's guiding values of curiosity, accessibility, inclusivity, and collaboration will serve as a backdrop for how we might all better serve our communities and create broader impact in learning and engagement work. And the

excavated best practices, surprising discoveries, and unexpected setbacks we encountered will set the stage for an in-depth, hands-on experience focused on the journey of your performing arts center, classrooms and community spaces as you chart your own path toward successful expansion of the good work you do.

Change Your Practice, Change Your World: Activism in Action

Track: Applied Theatre, K-8, Professional Theatre

Presenters: Jake Chen & Christopher Totten

Location: Disa (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

This 75-minute will explore how to embed social justice practices meaningfully into arts organizations whose mission doesn't specifically include social justice. Centering care, agency, and identity, this interactive session invites participants to consider how theater and performing arts can serve as pathways for community change-making. New Victory Education has been working to embed equity practices more deeply in its core values. Inspired by drafted language: "We are dedicated to honoring and uplifting identity, fostering joyful resistance, and empowering kids, families, and teachers to take positive action through the arts"—as a foundation, this session will examine how to move beyond reactive approaches to create proactive, sustainable frameworks for addressing societal challenges. Participants will explore how to share power in learning and art-making spaces, diminish hierarchical structures, and center collaboration, collective care, and joy. The session will highlight New Victory's "Speak Up, Act Out" program, which empowers young people to examine activism and artivism, identify hyperlocal issues, and create advocacy works through performing arts. Drawing from this model, the facilitators will showcase strategies for co-creating messaging around timely social issues and fostering impactful action plans that can directly benefit the local community. Participants will engage in meaningful dialogue and reflection while considering theater-based techniques to facilitate social justice-based conversations in their own communities. Whether you're an educator, administrator, or artist, you'll leave with actionable tools to embed equity and justice into your practice. Now is the time to meet the moment, transforming arts organizations into catalysts for change. This session offers vital insights for advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion while ensuring the arts remain a powerful force for social transformation.

Educational Strategies for Teaching Artists: Keeping Teaching Artistry Sustainable

Track: Applied Theatre, Early Childhood, High School, K-8, Youth Theatre

Presenters: Will Potts

Location: Stenia (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

Build and/or expand your teaching toolbox! With degrees in both performance and special education and over 12,000 learners taught, Burcher will help teaching artists unpack over a dozen educational teaching strategies for a variety of classroom environments. Explore classroom management strategies, behavior management strategies, educational models, learning models, assessment types, and more through theoretical and practical lenses. As a group we will briefly examine our practices for burnout triggers and learn strategies to avoid flaming out of the industry. Participants can expect to leave the session with applicable tools for their students, for their teaching, and for themselves.

Fostering the Wisdom & Guidance of Emerging Writers of Color: A Workshop and Discussion

Track: College/University, High School, Research/Scholarship

Presenters: Dana Edell, Jo Beth Gonzalez, Nigel Semaj & Ansley Valentine

Location: Eria (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

The field of theatre education is growing in rich soil, thanks to the expanding influence of voices traditionally marginalized or silenced. Scholar/practitioners such as David Valdez (Beyond "Decolonizing the Syllabus") and Sherrell D. Luckett et. al. (Training theatre students of colour in the United States), among others, are adept at transforming personal experiences into reflections that illuminate links between theory and practice, links that make us think. AATE's Youth Theatre Journal and a new book comprised of chapters written solely by K - 12 classroom theatre educators and teaching artists (tentatively titled The Teachers of Color Writers' Collective and co-edited Jo Beth Gonzalez and Martin Rodriguez) seek more new voices. This writing workshop engages

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representatives of the global majority who want support and guidance in crafting narratives into writing that profiles aspects of theatre education from their unique, and too often excluded, vantage points. This session is devoted to generating ideas for the Teachers of Color Writers' Collective book chapter topics and YTJ submissions and building connections between new writing partners. Examples of writing partnerships (among other possibilities) include pairings such as a classroom practitioner with scholar, an experienced practitioner/scholar with a classroom practitioner, two classroom practitioners with a scholar/advisor.

From Spiderman to Spotify: Connecting Teens Across the World Through Theatre and Twinning

Track: Applied Theatre

Presenters: Yasemin Eti, Elyse Orecchio & Megan Raab

Location: Ida (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

The practice of Twinning engages two groups in a theatrical collaboration. Through the magic of modern technology, twin teen groups in Brooklyn and Turkey created cross-cultural connections from across the world. Their exploration of topics from Spiderman and Spotify to dating and family culminated in shared theatre pieces—and even a shared meal! In this session, you'll have the chance to try out twinning, hear from project participants, and plan your own twinning experience.

Implementing Holistic and Effective DEI&A Strategies in Theatre Leadership and Higher Education Theatre Classrooms

Track: College/University

Presenters: Noelle Diane Johnson

Location: Orchid Ballroom East (6th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

As theatre institutions continue to grapple with racial and social justice movements educators of higher learning and administrators on college campuses are tasked with integrating Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEI&A) into their organizational culture in a way that is sustainable, effective, and trauma informed. This interactive workshop introduces The Artists Heal® Method—a groundbreaking framework that supports DEI&A implementation through a holistic, trauma-informed, and anti-racist approach. Using a four-pillar structure—Self & Selfhood, Trauma-Informed Practices, Creativity, Collaboration & Communion, and Practical Tools & Pathways—this session offers a path for theatre educators, college administrators, and students to foster healing-centered classrooms strategically dismantling harmful institutional systems. Participants will explore the concepts of DIS-functionality (disorganized systems) vs. DYS-functionality (dysregulated systems) to identify patterns within their own organizations that perpetuate inequity and harm. Through guided exercises and facilitated discussion, attendees will gain practical tools for navigating classroom management, setting boundaries, and leading DEI&A work in higher education spaces. This workshop is designed for theatre educators, administrators, and those committed to DEI&A work looking to create lasting change in their organizations. Attendees will leave with tangible strategies for implementing DEI&A efforts with integrity, fostering classroom cultures that center psychological safety, and addressing institutional resistance with confidence.

Kindergarten Playwrights: Monologue Writing with Kinders (and Older Students, too)

Track: Suzanne Katz

Presenters: K-8

Location: Stelis (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

Early childhood drama rightly includes many games, open dramatic play, and creative dramatics, among other activities; however, engaging very young children in actual script writing is often overlooked. After all, at this age, children are learning the basics of language and still building the fine motor skills to physically put words on paper. This session will give drama educators/directors a manageable process to transform very young actors into script writers capable of composing their own monologues. Using a modified sentence frame format, young actors combine growing skills in ELA, academic language, performance sensibilities, and

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imagination to create a written monologue that they can perform or that can be performed by others. In addition, the session will include extensions of this project that help children build on their vocal and movement skills, as well as a number of ways for teachers and directors to differentiate the process for all actors' talents and abilities.

Making Theatre for Six Senses: Seesaw Theatre's Sensory Theatre Workshop

Track: Youth Theatre

Presenters: Madeleine Bagnall & Kaitlyn Fields

Location: Stanhopea (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

Seesaw Theatre Company creates original, sensory theatre for neurodivergent and disabled audiences. During this session we will introduce what sensory theatre is and why it is so vital to the theatre community. We will discuss how we devise and create sensory theatre and then gear it towards our intended audience. At Seesaw we create theatre that is accessible to all audiences from the very beginning instead of tacking accessibility on at the end. Theatre is a tool for creating connections and this can only be done when all audiences are included. Our shows subvert the notion that theatre is something to watch from afar, bringing the show to the participants and allowing them to interact with our cast on a personal level. The kids who come in as audience members create the shows as much as the cast does. We incorporate improvisational techniques, props, music and personalized interactions to engage our audience and help accommodate them on an individual level, providing an equitable theatre experience. After presenting about what it is we do we will take session participants through typical seesaw training, exploring the type of theatre we create. As we create sensory theatre a hands-on experience is much more effective, and we encourage participants to explore what sensory theatre might mean to them. We will provide Seesaw sensory props and tools to help create sensory theatre as well as have participants explore what it is like to be a kid interacting with these props. We will end the session by talking about how our inclusive theatre can be incorporated into all types of theatre work.

Mapping Environmental (In)justice with Youth Through Applied Theatre

Track: Applied Theatre, K-8

Presenters: Walker Zupan

Location: Orchis (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

As the climate crisis intensifies, impacting Global Majority and other marginalized communities "first and worst," how might we initiate critical conversations about Environmental (In)justice with the young people we teach and create with and for? How might our tools as theatre artists be uniquely equipped to help us make sense of our current reality, trace the histories and systems of power that brought us to this point, and envision radically just and thriving futures? This 75-minute workshop, based on an arts-integrated lesson originally developed for a 7th Grade Social Studies classroom in Austin, TX grapples with these very questions. You'll be invited to experience the workshop as well as brainstorm how you might adapt it for the communities and contexts in which you work. Through Theatre of the Oppressed activities, collaborative analysis of maps and other artifacts, and visual arts expression, we'll explore one potential creative entry point into these conversations about Environmental (In)justice and the climate crisis with the young people in our lives.

Yardsticks: Defining Evaluation and Success

Track: College/University, High School, K-8

Presenters: Sara Berliner

Location: Laelia (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

Join a dynamic exploration of how we define, measure, and evaluate success in youth and community-based arts programs. This session invites participants to grapple with the tensions between funder expectations, artistic goals, participant impact, and community engagement. Through guided discussion, we'll examine what outcomes we can and should measure, the importance of clarity versus flexibility in project design, and how to assess whether our work is truly effective. Designed for educators, artists, and administrators, this session

offers a collaborative space to reflect on the complexities of evaluation and develop more meaningful and equitable approaches to measuring impact.

SESSION BLOCK 3 Friday, 12:45pm-2:00pm

Beyond the Stage: Devised Theater, Visual Art, and Multidisciplinary Storytelling with Precipice Theater Team

Track: Youth Theatre

Presenters: Josh Bickford, Ashley Forman & Chloe Lanyi Lari

Location: Ida (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

Engage in a hands-on workshop exploring how devised theater combined with movement, writing, and visual art can expand storytelling, deepen ensemble-building, and connect communities—both onstage and through creative artifacts like zines and illustrated books.

Bridging Old and New: Rebuilding Relationships in the Drama Classroom

Track: High School

Presenters: Matt Webster

Location: Eria (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

The connection between teacher and student was severed during the pandemic and has not been fully restored in the years that followed. This damage is even more profound in the drama classroom, because the work done in Theatre classes requires a relationship between teacher and students that is based on mutual respect and trust. Those relationships need to be rebuilt to bring stability and enjoyment back to the classroom. This workshop will examine the importance of relationships in educational settings and explore ways to restore the relationship between teacher and student, as well as between students, in the drama classroom.

Cultivating Healthy Practices in 2025 - The Early Stages of Community Building (Artist-Educators working with K-12 and Undergraduates)

Track: College/University, High School, K-8, Youth Theatre

Presenters: Rachel Hoey

Location: Stanhopea (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

Objective: To offer educators and practitioners the opportunity to concentrate on how we craft the first session(s) of working with young people (K-12 and Undergraduates) in the classroom and rehearsal room. This workshop will focus on healthy communication, guidelines, and practice toward through community building on the front end of ensemble practices. Tailored community building has the lasting effect of creating a safe environment where best practices are honored, met, and sustained. Through experiential learning methods, attendees embrace these inclusive concepts and generate workable solution-based ideas through a 75-minute workshop of engagement, play, small group laboratory-style collaborations, and a shared collective closure process. **Abstract:** Artmaking with others impacts our lives, purpose, and a sense of community. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access remain at the forefront of the spaces we want to maintain, encourage, and expand. Artmaking, ensembleship, and community building are intertwined. What we do with and for the students has the potential to impact their social-emotional growth and perspectives on the human condition through modes of expression, agency, and guided peer interactions.

Dragon's Breath: Igniting SEL Through a Magical Children's Theater Piece

Track: Applied Theatre, College/University, Professional Theatre

Presenters: Evan Mack

Location: Orchid Ballroom East (6th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

Dr. Morgan Soja and Dr. Evan Mack present a dynamic session on *Dragon's Breath*, an award-winning children's opera by composer Evan Mack and librettist Joshua McGuire. Winner of the American Prize, this charming and impactful show explores themes of coping with anger and the emotional challenges young people face. The story follows Alan, a young boy who learns to navigate his emotions and discover healthy ways to respond to life's difficulties. Rooted in Social Emotional Learning (SEL), *Dragon's Breath* is designed to not only entertain but also to serve as a catalyst for meaningful discussions about emotions. The presentation will delve into how the opera fosters emotional intelligence through interactive audience engagement. Participants will experience exercises used in the performance, such as acting out emotions and guided meditative breathing, which allow young audiences to explore emotional self-regulation in an accessible and creative way. Additionally, attendees will get a behind-the-scenes look at the world premiere of *Dragon's Breath* through clips from the production, showcasing the opera's engaging storytelling, music, and interactive elements in action. Dr. Soja and Dr. Mack will also discuss the power of art as a conversation piece, emphasizing how *Dragon's Breath* bridges performance and education to spark important discussions about emotional growth. They will outline plans to bring this production to wider audiences through touring, aiming to reach schools, community centers, and theaters nationwide. This session invites educators, theater practitioners, and advocates for SEL to discover how *Dragon's Breath* can inspire creativity, foster emotional awareness, and build connections with young audiences and their families. Join us to explore how this work transforms art into an interactive tool for growth and understanding.

Generating The Matrix: Creating a Publishing Guide for AATE

Track: Research/Scholarship

Presenters: Jonathan P. Jones

Location: Isabella (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

An important part of AATE's mission and core values is to foster scholarship. To do that effectively, the Research & Scholarship Network have committed to create a publishing guide for AATE that will serve members and the wider field of theatre education. In this working session, members of the Research & Scholarship Network and anyone else who is interested will collaborate on generating an initial draft of the publishing guide. Participants will contribute to one of the following groups: [1] Steps to Publish, [2] Database of Journals or other outlets & style guides for each, [3] Database of extant work - categorized with abstracts, or [4] Other contributions yet to be imagined. When the publishing guide is up and running, members will be able to update, expand, and comment or interact with material. All participants will be asked to contribute their CV to a database to be included in the guide.

If all the World's a Stage...Let's Go Global!

Track: College/University

Presenters: Veronica Rodriguez Ballesteros & Alberto Iozzia

Location: Laelia (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

All the World's a stage, and all the men and women global players! We come from different cultures that can sometimes clash, but misunderstandings open opportunities to learn from each other and understand our different perspectives. In this praxis-based workshop, you will explore the uses of theatre in the classroom to negotiate cultural differences, build bridges of intercultural understanding and promote cross-cultural communication. Participants will be exposed to a variety of drama exercises (improv., masks, clown and puppetry) aimed at developing cultural awareness, intercultural understanding and cross-cultural communication. Participants will be immersed in the experience of acting and role-playing in the theatre of everyday life: *The Global Stage*. You will leave the workshop with a solid new way of integrating mistakes and misunderstanding as opportunities to learn and grow, using cultural conflict as a catalyst for transformational

understanding, acceptance and belonging. We all want our students to become genuine citizens of the world, so... Let's Go Global! This session explores cultural differences as a lens to explore each other's culture and play "cross-culturing" roles to promote intercultural understanding. The theatre provides us with a privileged space to champion diversity, to promote inclusion and to create a sense of belonging. Understanding each other is essential: putting ourselves in someone else's skin opens the possibility of deep connection and understanding. It might seem that cultural barriers divide us, but the stage gives us the opportunity to bring them down, experiencing community and belongingness through the recognition of our shared humanity.

Serious Play: Promoting joy and healing through bedside pediatric theatre

Track: Applied Theatre

Presenters: Nicole B. Adkins & Elizabeth Brendel Horn

Location: Disa (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

What do you associate with a hospital? Perhaps the words institutional, sterile, or isolated come to mind. The Jeanette M Gould Traveling Theater, a partnership between University of Central Florida's School of Performing Arts and College of Nursing, aims to reimagine a child's hospital stay, bringing joy and healing through the art form of live theatre. Join us for a participatory workshop exploring how we create bedside performances for pediatric patients ages 2 and up, using purposeful play to inspire imagination and honor the whole child. Participants will learn about the creative process of "Let's Go Camping!," our first bedside play, and will engage in the development of our next show, "Sketch Out!"

Sustaining Funding for School Programs and Retaining Teaching Artists

Track: Professional Theatre

Presenters: Rebecca Pogue Fields

Location: Stelis (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

The Alliance Theatre in Atlanta, Georgia serves 450 schools annually through its in-school programs: teaching artist residencies, one-time student workshops, and professional learning events for teachers. These research-based programs have improved students' literacy skills, transformed educators' teaching practices, and established the Alliance Theatre as a leader in arts integrated and theater-based instruction. Despite its successes, the Alliance Theatre's in-school programs face two major challenges: 1) a lack of funding for arts education programs and 2) teaching artist retention. In this session, learn how the Alliance Theatre has navigated these challenges while honoring established best practices and adapting to a changing landscape. Georgia ranks 50th in the nation in state arts funding, leaving schools and professional theaters with limited resources to support arts-based programming. In this session, the Alliance Theatre will share how it has diversified its funding streams through government support, corporate revenue, earned revenue, additional grants, and more, allowing our programs to evolve and meet schools' needs. As the Alliance Theatre expands its reach, the need for qualified teaching artists grows. Learn about the Alliance's teaching artist retention efforts, including pay increases, complimentary childcare, ongoing training, and health benefits. Participants will leave with strategies and ideas to replicate at their own professional theaters.

The Past Empowers the Present: Democracy and the Performing Arts

Track: College/University, Playwriting, Professional Theatre

Presenters: Gloria Bond Clunie, Rives Collins, Kaitlyn Fields, Dr. Joan Lancourt & Alexandra López

Location: Caladenia (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

This session involves the synergistic collision between our field's history and the full potential of what we can become as a multigenerational panel examines an untold story from our past and considers its compelling applications for our future. Community activist and historical scholar Joan Lancourt (Ph.D.) has done extensive primary-source research on the remarkable Junior Programs, Inc. (1936-1943), one of the most successful pioneering performing arts companies devoted exclusively to touring professional theatre for young audiences. Her research has uncovered dynamic responses to a world not so different from our own in which rising fascism, a climate of fearing the "other," and the shadow of armed conflict threatened the very

foundations of democracy. Junior Programs harnessed the power of the arts in defense of Democratic ideals, recognizing that their work was infinitely more than entertainment. The intentional presentation of restorative narratives, their partnerships with K-12 schools and teachers, their ability to harness an army of local volunteers as their productions of theatre, opera, and ballet crisscrossed the country — these are but a few of the multifaceted strategies employed by the company that introduced four million children to quality arts experiences that celebrated America's rich diversity. Following a presentation, our diverse group of multi-generational respondents will share implications for the future. While some elements of Junior Programs may seem dated after almost a century, we will engage in a dynamic conversation about the underlying principles and practices that contributed to their success and discuss how they may be used to inform our current and future struggles as we prepare children for full participation in a vibrant democracy.

You're Not the Boss of Me!: Collaboration in the Classroom

Track: Applied Theatre, College/University, High School

Presenters: Cyndi LaFrese & Dallas Thomas

Location: Orchis (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

No Script? No Problem! Discover the magic of devised theatre in this fast-paced, interactive workshop designed to spark collaboration and creativity. Participants will learn and apply our Six Principles of Collaboration, practicing skills like sharing power and rotating leadership to develop original scripts from unexpected source material. Whether you're new to devised theatre or an experienced creator, this session offers a fresh approach to collective storytelling. We're all here to learn—what can you contribute? This workshop kicks off by exploring devised theatre in its various forms and unique processes. Participants will engage with scenarios to identify and explore the Six Principles of Collaboration, gaining a deeper understanding of effective teamwork in a devised theatre setting. Participants will engage with scenarios to identify and explore the Six Principles of Collaboration, gaining a deeper understanding of effective teamwork. In the second half, the focus shifts to hands-on application. Working in groups, participants will use their newfound skills to stage an original story from an unconventional source, overcoming challenges such as collaborating with new people, managing time constraints, working with limited resources, and staying true to the story author's intent. The session concludes with a live performance of their collaboratively created stories, celebrating the shared creativity and commitment of the group. Join us for an unforgettable experience where teamwork and storytelling take center stage!

SESSION BLOCK 4
Friday, 2:30pm-3:45pm

Adapting the Rehearsal Process for Students with Sensory Processing and Autism Spectrum Disorders in a Full Inclusion School Production Program

Track: High School

Presenters: Maria Beery

Location: Stanhopea (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

This presentation will provide detailed techniques for modifying and differentiating the rehearsal process for students with Sensory Processing Disorders as well as Autism Spectrum Disorder in a full inclusion-based secondary school production program. The session will begin with a PowerPoint that provides an overview of Sensory Processing Disorders and Autism Spectrum Disorder, as well as both strengths and challenges encountered in the rehearsal process. This will be followed by an examination of specific techniques used to differentiate the rehearsal process for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, including Meisner-based repetition exercises and improvisation activities, as well as specifically creating a space and process that accommodates the needs of all students. Participants will break into groups and take part in a demonstration of these exercises and then reflect on their use and effectiveness in the rehearsal process.

Breaking Down Decision-Making

Track: Applied Theatre, College/University, Professional Theatre

Presenters: Daniel Park

Location: Stelis (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

Whether we are trying to figure out what to have for dinner or our strategic vision for the next 5-years, decision making can be a major source of conflict and discomfort. We all hold internalized values on how decisions should be made, but rarely do we take the time to clarify who will be part of making decisions, what their role will be, how they will make the decisions, and why any of that is the case. When we don't take the time to articulate our process, oppressive cultural norms make their way in, and resentments often build over time. Things work until they don't. But it doesn't have to be this way. In this participatory workshop, participants will gain tools and frameworks to help break down the elements of decision making for more strategic, more equitable, and more transparent processes where everyone's needs can be met. Skills learned will be applicable to educational, administrative, and artistic workspaces, and with both adults and young people. We will discuss what is gained and what is lost when making decisions horizontally and hierarchically, and how even hierarchical decision-making processes can include elements of democratic process.

Establishing Communities of Practice among Drama Educators: Revisiting Learning to Teach Drama - A Case Narrative Approach

Track: Applied Theatre, High School, K-8

Presenters: Jonathan P. Jones

Location: Orchis (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

Communities of practice in drama education have been explored by Anderson & Freebody as sites that emphasize “the importance of integrating theory and practice to support the development of beginning teachers” (2012, p. 359). Professional organizations like the American Alliance for Theatre and Education (AATE), the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable, and the Educational Theatre Association (EDTA) consider their annual gatherings as a locus of professional development and networking, but in their relative infrequency, they provide only limited access to the potentiality of a true community of practice. So, drama educators often find themselves a department of one, set adrift to do whatever it is they do in the classroom without the benefit of a community of peers who can understand and support them in their work. They lack a true community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002; Wenger-Trayner, Fenton-O'Creevy, Hutchinson, Kubiak, & Wenger-Trayner, 2014; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015; Wenger, 2020; and Tummons, 2022). [paragraph break] Through this workshop experience, drama educators will develop a community of practice through the implementation of a case narrative project, based on a format outlined by Norris, McCammon, & Miller in their text, *Learning to Teach Drama: A Case Narrative Approach* (2000). The main intent of the case narrative is to serve as a tool to assist the educator in better understanding their teaching practice and should be drawn from their own experience, offering the educator an opportunity to reflect on and examine a problem, dilemma, or crisis, or frame a new perspective that has occurred in their practice. [paragraph break] This workshop will move us through phases one and two of a three-phase process. In the session, participants will outline their own case narrative, share the outline with two peers, and then get formal feedback from each peer using a response protocol outlined in Norris, McCammon, & Miller's text in which they describe, analyze, and apply (2000, pp. 111-112). [paragraph break]1 - Describe: Read the assigned case narrative. Set a timer for five minutes and write a continuous response without censoring yourself to what you have read.2 -Analyze: Review what you wrote. Respond by uncovering the issues in the original narrative and make connections to educational theory and the teaching of drama.3 -Apply: Review both the initial writing (describe) and your initial analysis. Write concretely what the teacher might do to extend these ideas into practice. This writing could be in the form of a lesson plan, a list of teacher activities, or a general set of statements on the teacher's stance. Application is the goal, so you need to provide the teacher with actionable recommendations grounded in your teaching experience and what you know from research or literature. [paragraph break] In this way, each participant will receive actionable recommendations (interventions) from two peers. This initial workshop will be followed in two months' time with a Zoom check-in where each participant can report back about the intervention(s) they implemented and consider next steps.

"I wasn't taught that!": Professional Development and Learning Alongside Your Students

Track: College/University

Presenters: Jimmy Chrismon & Amanda Dawson

Location: Laelia (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

As theatre educators preparing the next generation of theatre teachers, we often find ourselves learning right alongside our students. The field of theatre education has evolved dramatically over the past 15, 20, 25+ years—embracing new pedagogical approaches, technologies, and a more inclusive and responsive curriculum. What happens when we encounter ideas, practices, and methodologies that weren't part of our own training? How do we continue to grow as educators while guiding our students through an ever-changing landscape? This panel will explore the ongoing professional development necessary for theatre educators, addressing challenges and opportunities in adapting to new best practices, diversifying curricula, and integrating contemporary techniques. Join us for a candid discussion on what it means to be both teacher and learner in today's theatre education landscape, and how embracing this dual role can strengthen our teaching and our students' experiences. We will offer our experiences, but we also hope to learn from you! What have you learned alongside your students? Where are your gaps in knowledge which you hope to fill? Let's grow together.

Role Play for Change: Exploring Censorship in Education

Track: High School

Presenters: Sam Briggs

Location: Eria (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

In a time of increasing educational censorship and heightened socio-political tension, educators face significant barriers to addressing critical topics such as identity, power, and privilege in their classrooms and on their stages. This tension highlights the duality of progress and tradition—how do we honor the foundational principles of democratic education while challenging restrictive practices that limit its potential? With a focus on personal and professional growth, this playful, interactive session fosters inclusive dialogue and critical reflection on educational censorship and book banning within our school and larger communities. In it, we will discuss the value of developing an improvisational ethos in contributing to democratic education and will engage in a series of Role Work and Process Drama activities to consider diverse voices and perspectives on educational censorship. Each activity serves the dual purpose of offering teachers adaptable methods for classroom application while also inviting them to reflect on their own beliefs, biases, and approaches to addressing challenging topics. Through these exercises, participants will explore the complex interplay between partisan politics, community stakeholders, and local educational institutions, gaining a deeper understanding of the nuance and varied perspectives that shape educational policy decisions and classroom practices. By inviting participants to step into new roles and viewpoints, the session encourages curiosity, reflection, and dialogue, ultimately equipping teachers with strategies to engage meaningfully with their students and communities, with the goal of fostering a more just and dynamic educational environment.

Scenes from the Revolution

Track: K-8, Youth Theatre

Presenters: Jennifer Hersch

Location: Orchid Ballroom East (6th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

In anticipation of the 2026 Semiquincentennial, this session features a student-led reading and sing-through of *Scenes from the Revolution*, a musical by Aline Shader originally created for the Bicentennial. Geared toward middle school performers, the show explores key events of the American Revolution through ten scenes and songs, aligning with educational standards in arts and history. Participants will learn how this versatile, curriculum-based piece can be used to foster interdisciplinary collaboration and spark deeper conversations about both historical and current struggles for freedom. A sing-along finale invites everyone to raise their voices in celebration.

Stories that Soar!: Creating Collaborative Partnerships to Transform Educational Communities

Track: College/University, Early Childhood, High School

Presenters: Steven James Higginbotham, Cyndi LaFrese, Rosalie Peña & Dallas Thomas

Location: Caladenia (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

Using a unique case study of the national expansion of Stories that Soar! through its recent collaboration with Coastal Carolina University (CCU) as a reference, this panel will discuss and consider ways for university theatre programs to partner with community-centered arts organizations to transform their service area and make a regional impact in building artistic and educational infrastructure in sequential tiers of academia simultaneously. In all, this panel will discuss how a community-focused university theatre program can effectively and positively serve as a connector and agent to ensure that elementary schools, high schools, universities, and professional theatre companies can come together in collaboration to amplify the impact of the arts in their region. Focus will be placed on best practices and effective methods of connecting with local elementary schools to inspire creativity, promote active literacy, and build engaged artistic communities through the creation of devised theatre performances based on original stories written by students at the school – a process perfected by Literacy Connects of Southern Arizona and their Stories that Soar! program. Additional discussions will center on attracting local high schools to participate in the same transformative process with their feeder elementary schools in subsequent academic years to continue to inspire the writing of new stories, the crafting of new performances, and the promotion of literacy through arts-based curricula. Panelists are teaching artists in the theatre discipline who seek to use applied and devised theatre methods to ensure that collaborative creation can inspire the growth of the arts and storytelling in local educational communities. We hope this is more than a case study and panel discussion; we see it as a movement towards a more equitable and creative future as a community through the empowerment of young writers and the celebration of their stories and imaginations.

"Tradition-Change-Progress": Emerging Partner Collaborations Preparing Teaching Artists

Track: Applied Theatre, College/University, Youth Theatre

Presenters: Emilio G. Robles & Justin Wade

Location: Disa (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

Share and embody meanings related to your own teaching artistry, theatre for youth, applied theatre, or partner organization collaborator praxis connected to the conference's thematic inquiries. Explore the "individual" and "collaborative" narratives of tradition, change, and progress from two emerging partners (Indiana University-Indianapolis, represented by Assistant Professor Emilio G Robles and REACT Theatre, represented by Executive Director Justin Wade) who come from divergent contexts and perspectives, yet are united by shared goals. Learn about the serendipitous juncture where both individuals and "partner entities" find themselves related to these key ideas amplified in their stories and yours. Make connections to your own dualities as artist-educators, artist-administrators, or artist-activists and your own unique contexts. Reflect on takeaways, share curiosities, and feedback to foster the creation of informed networks of supportive and reflective praxis around presentation content, led by shared interests in partner collaboration, the development of teaching artists, and youth-centered devised work.

Whose Play Is It?: Culturally Specific Theatre in White Institutions

Track: Professional Theatre

Presenters: Mateo Hernandez

Location: Ida (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

In TYA/USA's 2020 report from participating theatres, "Exploring the Landscape of Live Theatre for Young Audiences in the U.S." it was found that 19% of total productions in the 2018/2019 season were culturally specific "in which POC characters/communities/cultures were essential to the story's narrative." While this percentage is exciting given the history of the predominance of white, Euro-centric stories on TYA stages in the U.S., it also begs the question, who is producing said culturally specific productions? When making work that is

culturally specific, the production can become an affinity space for those inside the culture. But when the producing entity is a predominantly white institution (PWI), what happens to the specificities and care of the affinity space of that production? Whose play does it become? What conversations of translation must be had? Using the experience of directing the Latinx-specific play “Luna” at ZACH Theatre in Austin, TX, TYA practitioner Mateo Hernandez invites participants into a dialogue on what the work of culturally specific theatre-making looks like in PWIs and how we might push for change towards more sustaining practices.

SESSION BLOCK 5 Saturday, 1:15pm-2:30pm

Eating Disorder Prevention in Theatre Education

Track: High School, Youth Theatre

Presenters: Sara Berliner

Location: Stanhopea (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

It is estimated that 22% of children and adolescents struggle with disordered eating. Theatre education environments can inadvertently promote risk factors through our casting, costuming, and classroom practices, and few educators receive training on how to recognize and ameliorate these risks. This evidence-based, solutions-focused session will encourage self-reflection and provide participants with strategies to begin incorporating primary prevention practices into their pedagogy. Topics include addressing implicit and explicit anti-fat bias, supporting positive identity development, and modeling healthy habits and language.

Envisioning the Future of Trans Identity on Stage

Track: College/University, High School, Playwriting, Youth Theatre

Presenters: Katy Early, Jo Beth Gonzalez & Genevieve Simon

Location: Isabella (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

This session invites participants to envision our theatrical future when the voices and bodies of trans characters are represented with full dimension on stage. How do we find, and develop, scripts that: tell honest stories reflective of trans experience provide roles for trans actors and truthful trans characters ask probing questions about the spaces that nurture the wholeness of trans identity thwart the impact of political leanings that threaten trans freedoms. This workshop session is fueled by a facilitated discussion that centers trans experience within the larger LBGQT community. Led by trans playwright Genevieve Simon and Oberlin College theatre undergrads with a reading of their new play *Punch Back*, the session will prompt participants to share and listen to stories that can become the substance of strong scripts. Together, participants will brainstorm play development strategies that will lead to initiatives that have the power to change the status quo.

From Breaking to Blooming: Unearthing Hope to Enable Rebuilding

Track: Applied Theatre, Youth Theatre

Presenter: Kanea MacDonald

Location: Orchid Ballroom East (6th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

My personal mantra has evolved into an artistic philosophy: I feel the impact of simultaneous breaking and blooming, both within myself and in the world around me. The systems we've built, both societal and internal, slowly erode over time. What begins as small, unnoticed cracks eventually becomes undeniable—pebbles turning into chunks of stone that threaten to crumble everything we as a people have carefully constructed over time. When the breaking becomes apparent, it's easy to give up, to lie down in the wreckage. But if you sit with it and don't let it be the end, you might find beauty in the ruins. Like the art of kintsugi, where broken pottery is repaired with golden lacquer, the damage becomes a part of the new whole. The scars remain, but a different, stronger beauty emerges. And before you know it, what was once a desolate place is now blooming, as you notice determined vines and flowers poking through cracks and desperately reaching toward the sun. I propose

a digital storytelling workshop that uses photo, creative writing, and personal stories to explore this concept of breaking and blooming, finding or making hope in the seemingly hopeless. This workshop, which I led first with youth in the Rio Grande Valley—a region along the Texas-Mexico border where many are currently feeling justifiably fearful and despaired—helps participants find hope even in the most hopeless of times. I'd love to share this experience working with youth of the Texas borderlands, then guiding the AATE community through a condensed version of the same exercise.

From Stage to Change: Reimagining Theater Education with SEL

Track: K-8

Presenters: Sam Leopold & Camille Simone Thomas

Location: Stelis (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

In this interactive session, participants will explore the "Stages of Change" model as it applies to theater education and social-emotional learning (SEL). Using the dual lens of progress and tradition, we will reflect on how integrating innovative practices like the Student Voice and Engagement (SVE) program can sustain student engagement while honoring the core values of theater education. Participants will engage in hands-on activities, collaborative discussions, and reflective exercises to examine how these principles can be applied to their own settings.

Reimagining Technique: Teaching Theatre Skills in a Changing World

Track: Applied Theatre, College/University, High School, Youth Theatre

Presenters: Nigel Semaj

Location: Disa (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

As we face an uncertain world marked by divisions and transformations, theatre education holds immense potential to bridge gaps, foster connections, and amplify community wisdom. Yet, we find ourselves at a crossroads: How do we teach foundational acting, movement, and voice techniques in ways that resonate with today's learners while staying attuned to the urgent social and cultural concerns of our time? This session invites theatre educators, artists, and scholars to collectively imagine new approaches to teaching theatre skills that are experiential, embodied, and rooted in the realities of our students' lives. How might our classrooms—whether on campus, in community centers, or other shared spaces—serve as places where techniques are not only learned but also practiced as tools for connection, reflection, and change? How do we engage Gen Z learners, who crave immediacy, application, and purpose, while nurturing their artistry and critical awareness? Through facilitated dialogue and collaborative inquiry, we will explore how reimagining the ways we teach and assess technique can better reflect the cultural brilliance found in classrooms, schoolyards, kitchens, and street corners. Together, we will grapple with questions about the role of performing arts education in movements for justice, equity, and community-building. This session is not about presenting answers but about sharing questions, reflecting on challenges, and envisioning possibilities. How can our pedagogical practices foster artistry that both honors tradition and amplifies contemporary concerns? What can we learn from the beautiful failures and inspiring successes in our work as we adapt to meet the needs of this generation and the communities we serve?

(Re) Imagining TYA From a BIPOC Perspective: Confronting Eurocentric Academic Scholarship

Track: Research/Scholarship

Presenters: Quenna Barrett, Jose Casas, Shavonne Coleman, Tiffany Trent & Gustave Weltsek

Location: Eria (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

The panel will explore and discuss issues pertaining to the lack of scholarship in the field of Theatre for Young Audiences; emphasizing the importance of scholarship in the field of TYA, in particular, scholarship that explores youth narratives of color and youth communities that have been historically marginalized and underrepresented. Also, included in this dialogue is the examining the lack of scholarship for these same groups which is practically non-existent and what are the ways that we encourage people/future scholars to

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dedicate themselves to being scholars in the field. As a result, the question will be asked, "how do we, as a collective, change this situation and reimagining possibilities in order to facilitate change in a faster and ethical manner."

So, Your Music Director Bailed... Music Directing for Non-Musicians

Track: High School, K-8, Youth Theatre

Presenters: Lauren Neuwirth

Location: Caladenia (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

Musicals are my favorite, but without a reliable music director they can be extremely daunting. In this session we'll explore vocal health concepts, teaching techniques, and music modifications that will help students feel confident, successful, and empowered. We'll discuss tips and tricks for various skills levels and examine resources available to suit your needs. We'll trouble shoot your worries and think through creative ways to overcome music directing obstacles.

Supporting Early Career Theatre Professionals: Enriching Workforce Development with Theatre Practices

Track: Applied Theatre, Professional Theatre

Presenters: Morganne Evans & Saya Jenks

Location: Orchis (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

Young people who are entering the professional world of theatre for the first time are part of a generation that was severely impacted by the isolation brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic during key developmental years. Morganne Evans and Saya Jenks have developed participatory workshops that use theatre techniques to help these early-career theatre professionals succeed in the workplace and address the unique circumstances they face. As the Senior Manager of Workforce Development at The Public Theatre, Morganne oversees a program that grants fellowships to recent college graduates, primarily from underrepresented communities, of Brooklyn College and Hunter College. The program is designed for Fellows to gain professional experience at The Public. Saya teaches professional development workshops that draw on the world of improvisational theatre. The workshops they created together are designed to give these young professionals embodied opportunities to practice interpersonal skills that are key to succeeding in professional theatre careers. In this session, Saya and Morganne will discuss their process of identifying challenges facing young theatremakers who are entering the professional world for the first time, and how they created these professional development workshops to address those needs. Saya and Morganne will also demonstrate some of the exercises they have used and discuss participants' responses to them.

Theatre Teacher: Wellness in Warm-ups and Welcoming

Track: High School

Presenters: Randy Stewart

Location: Laelia (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

We will be exploring a staple within the drama community- The Warm-Up. Many of us do them; they have become second nature. But are we doing them correctly? Are we doing them the same way we've done them for years? Have we thought to change or enhance them since the pandemic? Do you warm them down as well? Have you encompassed steps of wellness and thought of your students' well-beings while you prep your class? Have you remembered about your wellness while you teach? These are questions we need to ask ourselves as we navigate through our drama process. As a teacher who is old school shifting into new school thinking, I've learned how I need to change my mindset and want to share what has been beneficial and easy to do.

When "Performing For" Becomes "Performing With": Teatro Vivo's Annual Pastorela**Track:** Applied Theatre**Presenters:** Mateo Hernandez & Roxanne Schroeder-Arce**Location:** Ida (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

Teatro Vivo in Austin, Texas has offered the Mexican American cultural tradition of "La Pastorela" semi-annually for over two decades. This interactive session will illustrate how the bilingual theatre company has deepened its community engagement over those years to now include full audience participation in its newest iteration of the enduring story. Roxanne Schroeder-Arce and Mateo Hernandez share insights into this evolution towards the production now serving as a site to build micro-communities with youth and adults.

SESSION BLOCK 6
Saturday, 2:45pm-4:00pm

Case Making for the Arts: How to Lead in Tumultuous Times**Track:** Applied Theatre, College/University, Professional Theatre, Youth Theatre**Presenters:** Shelby Newport & Matthew Tibbs**Location:** Caladenia (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

As a leader, do you find yourself stretched thin, wearing many hats in your organization? Are there elements of your leadership work that you would like to enhance? You are not alone, and we know that leaders in arts organizations are being asked to justify, defend, and represent the work in new ways during this turbulent post-COVID moment. Learn how your personal and organizational values can support a well-rounded strategy as you move your theatre program through tough times. Participants will gain new strategies and tools for supporting teams of any size. Through this interactive workshop, participants will work together, connect, and learn from one another. The session will also provide opportunities for networking and mentorship. The facilitators will make space for shared ideas and stories, as well as brainstorming on specific case studies.

Cultivating Growth: Nurturing Community Roots with Applied Theatre**Track:** Applied Theatre**Presenters:** Maya Shed & Andrew Aaron Valdez**Location:** Ida (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

In the quest for progress and tradition, "Cultivating Growth: Nurturing Community Roots with Applied Theatre" emerges as a pivotal session for educators, practitioners, and advocates eager to intertwine the arts with activism within their localities. This session is dedicated to exploring the fertile ground of applied theatre to empower youth, foster inclusivity, and sow the seeds of change in educational and communal landscapes. Participants will be guided through a 3-step process learning how to cultivate meaningful and lasting relationships that are OF, BY, AND FOR their local community. The session will unfold the layers of creating empathetic and caring environments, where voices are not only heard but are instrumental in leading the change. The heart of this session lies in its interactive activities, designed to mirror the growth process from seed to sapling. Attendees will engage in exercises such as "Relational Care Tag," where they'll articulate and share methods of care, and "Human Bingo," fostering connections through shared experiences and aspirations. These activities are complemented by applied theater techniques aimed at enhancing mindful listening and empathetic engagement. Through role-play scenarios, storytelling workshops, and reflective listening exercises, participants will learn to cultivate an environment where every voice is valued, and every participant feels seen and heard. By embracing the metaphor of a garden, "Cultivating Growth" invites participants to consider how applied theater can be the sunlight and water that nurture the seeds of change in our communities. This session is not just about learning techniques but about embodying the principles of growth, care, and community in our practices. Join us to discover how we can collectively tend to our local ecosystems, ensuring they flourish and sustain the vibrant diversity of voices and stories that make our communities whole.

Devised Theater Process for and with Youth in Foster Care

Track: Applied Theatre, Playwriting, Youth Theatre

Presenters: Abby Thompson

Location: Disa (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

Applied Theater can take many forms and shapes. In this session, learn and interact with some hands-on techniques for approaching devised theater for and with youth in foster care and how to involve community engagement initiatives that lead to advocacy. In 2024- 25, Abby Thompson had the opportunity, through the League of Chicago Theatres' Samuel G. Roberson Jr. Fellowship in Artivism to do just that through a new play development project, Alex in Windyland. As a former foster sibling, Abby is particularly passionate about advocating for the stories and voices of youth in care, holding space for them to be creative, and applying this storytelling to tangible change, advocacy, and awareness for youth in the foster care system. Come play, devise, and create original stories while learning directly from the case study examples developed in Abby's fellowship program, centering voices of youth in foster care.

Exploring Theatrical Interpreting - Creating Equivalent Experiences

Track: College/University, High School, Professional Theatre, Youth Theatre

Presenters: Kristie Farr & Michelle Smiley

Location: Stanhopea (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

Historically, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community have had limited access to equivalent live theatrical experiences. During this workshop participants will be exposed to foundational theater terminology, dramaturgy, character development, movement, script analysis and other skills necessary to interpret on the stage. The most integrated forms of stage interpreting; Zoned and Shadowed; will be the primary focus of this workshop. These styles create the most inclusive forms of shared audience experience. Shadowed and Zoned interpreting necessitate a special form of collaboration between the director, cast, crew and interpreters.

Teacher Leader Cohort (TLC): Creating Growth & Change through Deep Examination of Practice

Track: High School, K-8, Youth Theatre

Presenters: Jeri Hammond & Anika Nayak

Location: Eria (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

In this participatory workshop, Wheelock Family Theatre educators will engage participants in collaborative reflection and dialogue as we examine the dilemmas and discoveries that can be found at the intersection of youth, theatre, and social justice. Over the last year, a group of Wheelock Family Theatre educators met monthly in our Teacher Leader Cohort (TLC) and embarked on a practice of collaborative reflection. Adrienne Maree Brown, in Emergent Strategy, writes that deep, adaptive change happens like a fractal. How we are on the small scale is how we are/will be on the large scale. Though we did not know the outcomes of the work at its onset, we trusted that our work in our small cohort would have ripple effects. The purpose of our TLC was to create a community of practice rooted in accountability as both a quality and a function of the TLC, to gather a group of educators willing to go public with their practice, and to grapple with complex issues of equity, to engage in praxis (an iterative, reflective approach to taking action). Utilizing feedback protocols from the Center for Leadership and Educational Equity (an organization whose mission is to transform systems and empower collaborative leadership to create environments where every child engages in learning that unleashes their unlimited potential and joy), we will model some of the tools we found helpful as together (presenters and participants) we engage around real issues from our collective practice.

The Universal Design for Learning: Individualized Education Strategies Unpacked

Track: College/University, High School, K-8

Presenters: Rebecca Burcher & Will Potts

Location: Orchis (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

Looking for ways to make your teaching practice more accessible? Looking to serve diverse populations of varying needs? The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a research-based framework to optimize learning for all learners, encompassing all the facets of our identities that call for individualized learning. According to CAST, the creators of the UDL, “The guidelines offer a set of concrete suggestions that can be applied to any discipline or domain to ensure that all learners can access and participate in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities.” With the latest version of the UDL released in July of 2024 the UDL is a dynamic framework that continues to reflect a changing society. Unpack this extensive framework, learn about the nine domains of the UDL and how to engage in each to support learners to become purposeful & reflective, resourceful & authentic, and strategic & action oriented. Participants can expect to leave the session with practical strategies to increase the accessibility of their practice for all learners.

Theatre Games for Technical Theatre

Track: High School

Presenters: Donna Seage

Location: Laelia (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

Why should acting have all the fun? Come and explore short, interactive and hands on activities and games geared toward technical theatre. Walk away with several activities that can be implemented right away in the classroom.

Tradition of Youth Playwriting at Cleveland School of the Arts

Track: Playwriting

Presenters: Eric Coble, Ananias Dixon, John Newman & Carl Walton II

Location: Orchid Ballroom East (6th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

This panel discussion will illuminate the approaches of the Cleveland School of the Arts’s young playwrights’ program through which high school students were guided by a variety of voices (teacher, professional playwrights, recent alumni) as they crafted full-length plays for CSA’s New Works Festival. The panel includes Carl Walton and Ananias Dixon, playwrights and graduates of the program, who co-founded D.O.C. Studios in Cleveland to build on the new play approaches of their late mentor, Dr. Scott Miller. The panel includes TYA playwright Eric Coble who serves as a professional mentor for the young writers at CSA, as well as John Newman who depicts the CSA program in his book *Playwriting in Schools*.

Using Verbatim Performance to Disrupt Discrimination in Healthcare Delivery

Track: Research/Scholarship

Presenters: Joe Salvatore

Location: Isabella (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

In this session, participants will engage in a workshop inspired by an intervention designed for the NYC Health Equity Project. The project gathered stories of discrimination in health care delivery, focusing on intersections of race, social class, gender, gender identity, ability, and age. Artist-researchers used these stories to create a verbatim performance intervention, a method that uses the exact speech and gestures of the interviewee for investigation. Ethnoactors used a scored transcript, the original interview recording, and field notes to prepare a performance portrait of an interview participant. Intervention participants then use textual data related to the interviews and the resulting verbatim portraits to explore bias and discrimination in healthcare delivery. The artist-researchers piloted the intervention with healthcare workers in New York City in Spring 2025, and the presenter will share preliminary results of the pilot as part of the session. Participants in this session will engage with a version of the intervention and learn how artist-researchers used ethnodrama and verbatim

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performance techniques to create it. The NYC Health Equity Project is a collaboration between NYU Steinhardt’s Theatre and Health Lab and Verbatim Performance Lab, supported by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. The project sits within a more extensive international collaboration, including Brock University and the Jameel Arts & Health Lab. The project is funded by the New Frontiers in Research Fund, Special Call for COVID-19 Response Research (Canada), which focuses on high-risk, high-reward, and transdisciplinary projects.

Values and Legacy: The Story of You

Track: K-8

Presenters: Anna Lund

Location: Stelis (7th Floor) - The Westin Cleveland Downtown

Explore the value of learning from the past to create a better future. The Skirball Cultural Center is a nonprofit Jewish cultural institution and museum in Los Angeles, CA that uses storytelling as a vehicle to bring people together. Participants will explore the topics of immigration, identity, and values through hands-on activities and build critical thinking, empathy, and collaboration skills by examining real stories of people who immigrated to the United States and connecting them to the present. Participants will be encouraged to reflect on their own stories and core values and how we, too, can leave a legacy in our communities.

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