

Manifestations of Development at New Play Festivals

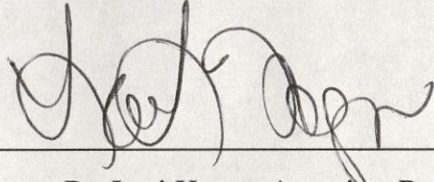
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Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lori Hager", written over a horizontal line.

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Thank you all.

For Grampy.

Abstract

This project is a qualitative exploration of how *development* is made manifest through current activities and practices at new play festivals. Through the use of a collective case study, this project aims to investigate aspects of development through three arenas within new play festivals: submission and selection policies, formalized feedback systems, and informal feedback systems encountered through new play festival participation. Sites for exploration include three leaders among new play development in the United States—the Colorado New Play Summit (Denver, CO), the Pacific Playwrights Festival (Costa Mesa, CA), and JAW (Portland, OR). The research concludes that successful new play development is evidenced in several manifestations, including: reinforcement and legitimization of playwriting as a profession; playwright-driven artistic growth; fiscal capital for new plays; growth of professional networks for new plays and playwrights; learning communities created around new play development; and stronger continuity for new plays moving from development to production.

KEY DEFINITIONS:

Development: This research explores various manifestations of “development” as it relates to new play development. However, it is important to note that this research does *not* look at development as related to fiscal growth.

New play: For the purposes of this research, a “new play” is considered to be an unproduced, unpublished, full-length stage play or musical written by an individual or small group—not devised by an ensemble. New plays are considered to be drafts-in-process and may be edited; however, a new play is a *complete* work unto itself.

New play development: Any collaborative process, public or private, between a play’s drafting and full-scale production. The two most common forms of new play development are readings and workshops.

New play festival: New play festivals, in this context, are gatherings taking place over the course of several days during which a professional theatre organization hosts a series of readings of new plays. It is important to note that the new play festivals included in this research focus on *readings* rather than productions.

Reading: An un-memorized, un-staged presentation of a play script. Readings generally employ minimal movement, lighting cues, sound effects, props, and/or set pieces. While readings may be private events, the readings at festivals addressed in this research are rehearsed, public events using professional actors.

KEYWORDS/PHRASES: development, theatre, new plays, play festival, playwright

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I. Introduction

I.1 Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore how *development* is made manifest at some of the nation's leading new play festivals. Through the use of a collective case study, this research will examine three major processes associated with the major aspects of script and playwright development: submission and selection processes for featured works, mechanisms for providing playwrights with feedback on in-process works, and other resources provided to playwrights through festival participation. The resulting study will provide an overview of ideas of development actively supported through new play festivals and may point to system gaps and/or suggested actions for closing the gap between administrator-determined structures and artist needs.

Questions central to this study include: How are new play festivals defining development? What definitions of development are made manifest in practice? If there are gaps between artists and the administrative structures of these festivals, what are the gaps? Are there any apparent ways to address these gaps?

I.2 Problem Statement

New play festivals are central systems for new play development. Insofar as there is no singular, streamlined system to carry plays from initial script drafting to complete staging, festivals are the clearest structures for the growth of new scripts prior to full-scale production. New play festivals bring together artists, administrators, and audiences from across the nation to create opportunities for dialogue regarding new works. How these festivals bring *development* to life defines the nature of the festivals, informs ideas of what development means for theatre, and identifies the usefulness of the development process for the field.

Over the last 50 years, new play development has become an integral part of the growth of plays and playwrights in American theatre. New play development includes any of a variety of collaborations, readings, and workshop productions on the way to full-scale production. Yet, despite the growing popularity of new play development festivals and new play development-centric theatre organizations, a debate has raged among scholars and artists regarding the apparent benefits of this practice (DesRochers, 2008; London, Pesner, & Voss, 2009). Few plays proceeding through the development process become commercially viable works seen on major for-profit stages. However, restricting “development” to a definition driven by a new play’s commercialization leaves no room for the many types of development in new play development processes.

In order to better understand the page-to-stage process, it is vital to examine the central issue of debate: *development*. Aside from its application in reference to the growth of fiscal resources, development also refers to: the growth of a particular new play; increasing an artist’s public profile; deepening audience investment and participation; increasing artist connections within a professional network; and more. By examining the applications and manifestations of development, we may be able to better understand the nature of debates around new play development and more clearly define both intended and achieved goals in development processes.

I.3 Conceptual Framework¹

Development remains a concept within the theatre field that is widely used and broadly defined. Economic expansion, increased public visibility, network strengthening, and improved quality are among the assortment of phrases considered synonymous with development. These words and phrases seem interchangeable because each represents an engagement in the pursuit of a shared objective: ensuring the longevity of theatre arts.

For the purposes of this research, *development* is understood as any artistic, collaborative process occurring after a playwright has completely drafted a new script but prior to a play's premiere production.² In order to better understand how ideas of development manifest in practice, this research will explore a process whose self-proclaimed purpose is to support development: new play festivals.

Readings at new play festivals are central to a play's journey from private work to professional production in modern America. Play festival readings are an embodied, public presentation (for an audience) of the playwright's artistic process beyond the script s/he completes in isolation. Perhaps more important than an audience's response, however, are the ways in which new play development festivals present opportunities for growth of plays, playwrights, and the theatrical field as a whole.

In order to better understand how development is brought to light in practice, this research will explore several facets of new play festival practices. First, an organization's submission & selection policies guide the festival framework and set the tone for what can be expected at a given festival. Included in these policies are submission requirements for plays

¹ See Appendix A: Research Conceptual Framework

² For the purposes of this research, I have refrained from examining uses of *development* as a financial term. However, finances do play a part in artistic development; see Chapter 4: Data Analysis for more information.

such as who may submit, expectations regarding length and content, submission formatting, and more (Theatre Communications Group, 2010; see also Denver Center, 2012c; Portland Center Stage, 2013c).

Secondly, mechanisms for providing playwrights with feedback on their work must be examined as crucial aspects of new play festivals. Public readings provide playwrights with critical information about how audiences react to/interact with a script (Rush, 2000; Wright 2005). Formalized, structured feedback opportunities with artistic collaborators are key to some of the more tangible development opportunities for playwrights. The ways in which playwrights receive feedback affect their perception of their work and their role in the development process.

Finally, new play festivals provide development opportunities for playwrights outside of readings and beyond script edits. Festival participation offers playwrights many resources, including opportunities to receive informal feedback, exposure to a greater network of theatre professionals, and a chance to witness fellow playwrights at work in their own development processes. Events and informal activities between readings at new play festivals allow playwrights to also make contact with peers and individuals who influence programming at various theatre organizations (K. Tyler, personal communication, March 17, 2013). The amount of unstructured or informal time spent by participants at new play festivals affects the playwright's festival experience—an effect different from that of formalized feedback mechanisms.

I.4 Methodology and Research Design

Examining development at new play festivals requires examining the festival experience, so participant observation is a major component of this research. Interaction with participants in key leadership and artistic positions at new play festivals helps provide a more complete

illustration of how development manifests at new play festivals. To that end, interviews are central to this research. Other important research methods include: document analysis of festival materials; a literature review of conceptual areas influencing new play development, including studies, instructional books, and interviews; and organization website analysis.

Case study selection criteria. The festivals selected as collective case study sites were selected based on criteria that establish a basis for comparison among the festivals. Included in these criteria:

- The festival is hosted by a regional-size, non-profit, professional theatre organization registered as a member of Theatre Communications Group (TCG) and the League of Regional Theatres (LORT).
- The hosting organization has been cited by other professionals in the field as a national leader in new play development.
- The festival focuses on public readings of complete, full-length plays written for adult audiences.
- The festival is less than one month in length.
- Festival attendance is open to the public.

Selecting a limited number of festival sites limited the size and scope of this research.

Case study sites. With the above criteria in mind, as well as thought given to locations that could be accessed within the allotted research period, the following festivals were selected as collective case study sites:

JAW: A Playwrights Festival at Portland Center Stage (Portland, OR): PCS hosted their thirteenth annual play festival in 2012. The festival began its life as “Just Add Water/West,” a collaborative effort with the New York Theater Workshop named after the Workshop’s own

festival of the same name in New York City. Following the growth of the Portland festival, inclusion of festival plays in the regular PCS season, and recognition on the national level, the festival name was streamlined to JAW. The event currently takes place over the course of 1-2 weeks in July of each year.

Colorado New Play Summit at Denver Center Theatre Company (Denver, CO): Now just past its eighth year, the Summit makes its home in the Helen G. Bonfils Theatre Complex for three days of readings, performances, and events. Denver Center Theatre Company habitually mounts several of each festival's readings as full-scale productions during the following year's regular season. Denver Center Theatre Company's Colorado New Play Summit takes place during one weekend in February each year.

Pacific Playwrights Festival at South Coast Repertory (Costa Mesa, CA): South Coast Repertory has built a reputation as a safe haven for playwrights over the last several decades. Its annual Pacific Playwrights Festival has become a major draw on a national scale for artists and administrators, and the company has become known for its long-term commitment to individual artists (Anderson, 1988). The Pacific Playwrights Festival is held during one weekend in April each year. Like the Denver Center Theatre Company and Portland Center Stage, South Coast Repertory regularly selects between one and three scripts from each year's festival for inclusion in the following year's regular season of productions.

Administrators and curators at new play festivals directly influence the experiences of participants at a number of levels. Therefore, interviews with new play development leadership served to reveal the framework of how development is made manifest at new play festivals and illuminated the intended goals of new play festivals in regards to development.

Recruitment was done by email and telephone.³ Through a survey of publicly available website information regarding staff at each festival, I identified individuals to contact whose roles within the festival are most specific to the aforementioned aspects of development. Individuals contacted included festival directors, literary managers, and curators. I conducted a similar overview of playwrights who participated in the case study festivals over the last five years (as listed online) and attempted to make contact with a broad sampling of those individuals, particularly any who have participated multiple times and/or at multiple festivals among identified research sites.

I conducted three interviews lasting 60 minutes each: two with festival administrators, and one with a festival playwright/dramaturg. An on-site interview was not possible for one of the research participants; the interview was, instead, conducted via email. Interviewees were limited to individuals who have actively participated in at least one of the selected festivals within the last five years. These limitations were meant to ensure that data gathered were as up-to-date as possible. All interviewees are adults; no vulnerable populations were involved in this study.

Confidentiality was a possible risk for those participants selected for interviews. In order to minimize risk, member checks were done to ensure participants had ample opportunity to review how their perspectives were presented within my research.⁴

No festival attendees observed were part of vulnerable populations, and all observed attendees were adults. The number of persons observed was subject to attendance rates at various festival-related events. Participant observation was limited to attitudes and experiences informally shared by festival attendees on the whole; no identifying markers were used in

³ See Appendix B: Sample Recruitment Letter

⁴ See Appendix C: Interview Consent Form

observing individual participants. Notes regarding participant observation were kept in a field notebook. My role as a researcher was fully disclosed at every site.

Data collection and analysis. Data collection occurred at multiple locations, including on-site at play festival locations in Denver, CO, Portland, OR, and Costa Mesa, CA. Activities involving human subjects included participant observation and interviews. On-site participant observation was limited to the duration of the festival, approximately four days per event. Further data collection took place via phone and email correspondence based in Eugene, OR.

Data was recorded through: field notes, data collection forms,⁵ audio recordings of interviews, photographs, and computer entries. Collected materials and websites from individual festivals were also part of the analyzed data.⁶

I used a grounded theory approach in analyzing this data. Coding and theories emerging from this analysis were derived from the gathered data rather than working from a predetermined hypothesis, thereby grounding the data's meaning in the experiences and perceptions of participants.

Methodological paradigm. This research is based in a post-positivist, social constructivist paradigm. The post-positivist perspective takes into account the importance of objectivity and generalizability, but researchers modify their claims to understandings of truth based on probability rather than certainty (Mertens, 2010). Instead of examining this research topic through the lens of a hypothesis, this research was conducted in an exploratory manner, leaving room for discoveries that may otherwise be left out of a positivist examination. Furthermore, the exploration of how participants at new play festivals help to create working definitions of development lends itself directly to a social constructivist paradigm—a theory

⁵ See Appendices D and E: Interview Cover Form and Sample Interview Questions

⁶ See Appendix F: Website and Document Analysis Form

“that emphasize[s] that the world is constructed by human beings as they interact and engage in interpretation” (O’Leary, 2010, p. 6).

Complex adaptive systems theory, sometimes referred to as complexity theory, is also applicable to my research process. The theory posits that processes can be stable, yet dynamic, fluctuating regularly due to the actions of autonomous agents (Dooley, 1997). Furthermore, complex adaptive systems constantly experiment with how to react to agent choices because of the networked nature of the systems (Dooley, 1997). The field of new play development is very much a complex adaptive system: new play development processes are stable systems, but each development process fluctuates depending upon the artists involved and the needs of the playwright. Similarly, each new play development system makes independent choices regarding how to pursue development, but choices made by any festival may influence choices made at other new play festivals.

Limitations. The first and foremost limit in the scope of this research is its generalizability. While this study may uncover themes, questions, and findings similar to other new play development festivals, the research does not represent universally applicable truths. Similarly, the views and experiences of participants are not representative of all festival attendees and participants at these or other festivals.

Research interviews were limited to those professionals directly involved in the festival process; any staff members working for the organization but not directly directed by their organization to work on the festival itself were excluded from the list of possible interviewees.

Assumptions and biases. An active theatre practitioner with a history in many aspects of production, design, and performance, I am biased by my personal experiences. My history with literary management and programming has shaped my aesthetic. My current position on staff at a

professional non-profit theatre informs and is informed by my aesthetic, particularly as I work on tasks regarding literary management, dramaturgy, programming, and marketing.

I believe that good dramaturgical work—when done well by a dramaturg, literary manager, director, or otherwise—can have a significant, beneficial impact on the creative process, including a playwright’s work. The role of dramaturg is also a point of contention in the field of new play development. This informs my research, particularly because dramaturgs are, by nature of their jobs, researchers.

I assume new play festivals and other developmental settings are more of a boon to the field than they are a burden. Through looking to explore the development process, I assume that these festivals are providing some benefits to playwrights and the field of theatre. I believe that there is something for theatre practitioners to gain through new play festival participation, though what is gained and how will not be clear until the completion of this research.

I.5 Organization of Study

This first chapter serves as an introduction to the foundational elements of this research. Chapter Two: Literature Review will outline and discuss influential resources and writings regarding playwrights and new play development. In Chapter Three: Presentation of Data, I will present narratives of the data I discovered in the course of my research. This leads into Chapter Four: Data Analysis, in which I will discuss the connections and conversations developed across these data. Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions provides a summary of my findings, notes on the implications of this research, and suggestions for further research to benefit the field in regards to new play development. Included beyond this research’s primary content are several appendices for the illumination of my research and data collection processes.

I.6 Significance of Study

This research could be of significance in the theatre community, particularly to playwrights and theatre administrators. By identifying how development manifests at new play festivals, administrators may be able to better clarify and align goals of participating playwrights and those of development festival hosts. Administrators may also find opportunities to further improve upon the new play development experience for participating writers. As an arts administrator, I hope this research will influence my work with playwrights, identifying gaps in the development process and guiding me toward administrative decisions that will serve playwrights and further the field of new play development.

Playwrights and other theater practitioners may benefit from this research as well. This research exposes some of the underpinnings of new play development processes, which could help playwrights better understand and navigate development processes. Moreover, identifying several manifestations of development could encourage theatre administrators, practitioners, and scholars to become more specific in their discourse regarding new play development, enabling a similarly specific approach to solving problems within the culture of new play festival development practices.

II. Literature Review

The culture that informs new play development has brought with it many challenges and complexities, not the least of which are the perceived threats to artistic vision faced by playwrights in the development process. Through this literature review, I will illuminate some of the ideas surrounding development as its own culture within the theatrical field. I will also describe some of the common practices in development and present some of the arguments creating gaps between development culture and playwrights. Finally, I will address some challenges relevant to both development and the theatre as a whole that help explain why playwrights may feel so helpless to alter the developmental culture surrounding them.

II.1 A Culture of Development

Before being fully produced with costumes, lights, sound and sets, new plays usually go through a process during which the playwright can hear his/her script read aloud, have discussions with other theatre artists regarding the script, and make edits (Sambuchino, 2009). The events and activities that take place between a script's initial drafting and its full production—the “to” in “page-to-stage”—is referred to broadly as *development*. Here, a playwright first brings other theatre collaborators into his/her otherwise individual writing process.

American theatre has embraced structured development processes as a part of the professional field, and playwrights will inevitably participate in development during their careers. Books abound providing instructions for up-and-coming playwrights, the majority of which are style guides on story structure, dramatic plots, and character building (Dunne, 2009; Jensen, 2007; Pike & Dunn, 1996; Spencer, 2002). Such guidebooks usually include a chapter or more on development opportunities as a regular part of a play's journey to production. Others

discuss development as a part of a professional playwright's business, focusing on development as it relates to contracts, expectations, and other legalities (Singer, 1997; Toscan, 2011). Theatre Communications Group (2010) includes dozens of listings of development opportunities in their *Dramatist's Sourcebook*, arguably the largest and most popular resource for opportunities for stage writers. The literature for playwrights presents development as a fixture in professional theatre in which playwrights should expect to take part.

Dozens of development groups and programs have been created over the course of the decades-long history of development in American theatre (Anderson, 1988; Wright, 2005). The proliferation of organizations and events dedicated to the pre-production aspects of new plays has created what playwright R. Nelson (2007), former chairman of the playwriting program at the Yale School of Drama, refers to as “a culture of readings and workshops, one unimaginable when I was a young playwright thirty years ago. A culture of ‘development.’ And this culture, more than being an activity, a process—is a mindset” (p. 62). Development has become so deeply ingrained in American theatre that it has created its own culture of ideas, ideals, and approaches that differ from traditional rehearsal processes.

II.2 Development: Variations on a Theme

Readings and workshops are among the most common developmental practices. Readings are not staged; the actors do not memorize their scripts and do not move about the stage. Instead, actors sit in chairs or stand with scripts on music stands. “Workshop productions,” on the other hand, “go a step beyond readings, allowing the actors get up on their feet to perform the work, occasionally with scripts in hand, with minimal set, costumes, props, choreography and other production values” (La Jolla Playhouse, 2013). Both readings and workshops can be presented with various levels of complexity, featuring any number of production elements—any of which

are used minimally in comparison to a full production. Also, readings and workshops may be presented for privately invited audiences or public audiences, professional theatre practitioners or a broad community. Individuals and organizations hosting readings and/or workshops may choose to charge audiences to watch the presentation(s).

Residencies and commissions are industry practices directly related to development. When a playwright agrees to a commission, s/he is paid—generally in three stages—to create a play specifically for the commissioning organization (Nelson, 2007). Residency programs contract playwrights to work with a theatre organization for an extended period of time, referred to as the playwright’s time “in residence,” in exchange for a salary (Hall, 1998). Timelines and specific requirements of residencies and commissions are determined by contractual agreement between the theatre organization and the playwright with whom they are working.

Variations on development practices exist across a wide spectrum of amateur, professional/amateur⁷, and professional theatre groups. Some of the oldest and most well-known organizations in the theatrical field have nationally-known programs dedicated to new play development. Both The Eugene O’Neill Theatre Center and The Sundance Institute are recognized for their excellence in new play development along with their work in the areas of research, publishing, education, and film (Wright, 2005). New Dramatists has become a popular center for new work due to their playwright residency program that supports playwrights-in-residence for seven years at a time (New Dramatists, 2013; Wright, 2005). Other development programs found at all sizes and types of theatre organizations include community-centered programs, programs for emerging voices, and groups dedicated to developing new works year-

⁷ Leadbetter & Miller (2004) describe professional/amateur organizations, or “Pro-Am” organizations, as serious and committed amateurs and quasi-professionals who participate at a level—in time, money, and knowledge—just below professionals.

round (Anderson, 1988; Cohen, 1997; Wright, 2005). Each organization's development process differs based on the approach, needs, goals, and abilities of the hosting theatre.

An unpublished dissertation by Dr. B. P. Haimbach (2006) entitled *Contemporary New Play Development: Process, Environment, and Leadership* distills the myriad new play development program approaches down to three of the most common models of development: "The O'Neill," "The Artistic Home," and "Ensemble Creation". The O'Neill is based on the system employed at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center's National Playwrights Conference. Invited playwrights each participate in a week-long rehearsal process at the O'Neill, culminating in a public reading. Organizations using The Artistic Home approach to development host retreats during which playwrights are meant to explore their individual writing process. This model, in general, does not culminate in a singular reading presentation, though readings and workshops may take place over the course of the retreat. Ensemble Creation involves collective creation of a work by a small ensemble, resulting in full production. Due to its experimental nature and casting specificity—scripts created for the creators themselves to perform—Ensemble Creation is "the least likely to produce plays that will become part of the canon" (Haimbach, 2006, p. 36).

II.3 Problems and Complexities

New play development is riddled with tensions that can make development processes both difficult for playwrights to navigate and dangerous for playwrights to approach. Among the many complexities in the field, playwrights are challenged by the various goals of development participants and development process structures that can threaten artistic vision. Stagnating disconnects—between development process and artistic vision, and between development processes and production—can lead to a trying, endless cycle of development. The development

process can be taken over by a director or dramaturg, and playwrights may find themselves fighting for control of their vision in what was supposed to be a collaborative process.

Distilling new play development into categories based on the model presented by Haimbach (2006) provides a solid base from which to explore some of the deeper complexities of new play development. J. Megel (2000), a playwright who has participated in several development processes, created a typology for readings based, instead, on the intended beneficiaries of the reading: “developmental readings,” “backer readings,” and “entertainment readings” (p. 36). Developmental readings are meant for the benefit of the play and the playwright, who will leave the experience with a better product and a greater understanding of his/her work. Backer readings attempt to present “an impression of what *the experience of [the playwright’s] play* can be” (Megel, 2000, p. 36) for possible producers. The goal of the development process in this case is creation of a play for commercial consumption over the playwright’s artistic sensibilities. Entertainment readings allow theatres to “produce” a new play at minimal cost, bringing in patron funds without expending the time, energy, or materials required for a full-scale production.

One of the greatest dangers for playwrights participating in play readings is that the writer’s goals may not be the same goals as those of the hosting theatre. Organizations may have any number of reasons for holding new play readings. Earmarked funding drives some new play development programs. Theatre organizations will sometimes host public readings to keep their actors engaged and working with the hosting company. Others readings are dedicated to simply improving the quality of a playwright’s work. Megel (2000) suggests that, by identifying the intentions behind a play reading, playwrights may be able to combat disappointment and increase their likelihood of “emerging relatively unscathed” (p. 36) from the development process.

Another danger of development—particularly in regard to readings and workshops—is the stifling of the playwright’s artistic vision by the structure of a development process. Concern has been expressed that playwrights are being trained to write for readings rather than writing the plays they intend to write (Dietz, 1987). *Process* structure could be determining *product* structure, robbing playwrights of the freedom to play with formats and content that may not fit well with the un-memorized, un-staged nature of the traditional play reading. Writers may also feel compelled to write to fit the needs of play festivals, such as limiting the number of people in a play’s cast, in order to increase their success at a new play reading. If writers stop experimenting, creating only plays that would work well at a reading (i.e. little movement, small casts, minimal technical requirements), the American theatre could stagnate. As Dietz (1987) notes, “The stage most certainly has limits, but our writers should be grappling with the limits of *production*, not of *development*” (p. 43).

Further stagnation is caused by the lack of new plays transitioning from the development process to the stage. The number of new plays being written dramatically exceeds the number of new plays that producing organizations are willing to support through development, let alone through production. New plays that are produced often fail to receive production beyond a world premiere. Playwright S. Dietz explained his argument over the lack of support of new plays beyond premieres: “There are more new plays on the boards in my hometown each year. But how many of them will be remembered next year? In 10 years? Twenty? More important, how many will have a *life* instead of just a premiere?” (1987, p. 42). Without production, plays are shelved and become forgotten—as do their playwrights.

And where do new plays go if they aren’t produced after going through a development process? Among other possibilities, plays often reenter development several times over,

proceeding through developmental cycles until they are either picked up for production or forgotten entirely.⁸ Participating in a series of development processes can take years and, still, development is no guarantee of production. Those plays and playwrights caught in the rabbit hole of development processes become stuck in what Megel (2000) referred to as “development hell” (p. 36).

The overwhelming number of theatre professionals participating in the development process, including directors and dramaturgs, can make development even more hellish. Directors often have first contact with playwrights as key participants in development, and a director’s attitude toward a playwright can make or break the development process (Kahn & Breed, 1995). Outside of new play development, directors rarely work with a playwright in the rehearsal room, and the production rehearsal process is usually driven by the director’s vision. Due to the playwright-less habit of rehearsing, directors may be “under the impression that it is *they* alone who are to have the creative vision of the piece . . . one day, we will wake up in a world where the lone author’s voice is no longer respected” (Cryer, 1999, p. 30). Locating sole control of the development process in the hands of directors can make playwrights feel distanced from their own work, discarded, and ignored in the collaborative process.

Dramaturgs are also frequently identified as possible dangers to a playwright’s artistic vision of a play (Cryer, 1999; Dietz, 1987; McNally, 1986). The word *dramaturg* has come to mean many things, but the term most often refers to one who acts as a “scholarly expert or resource, as an observer and critic of the rehearsal process, or [as a] consult with the playwright while he is writing” (Borreca, 1994, p.157). Negative playwright/dramaturg interactions have led to decades of arguments over the inclusion of dramaturgs in new play development (Anderson,

⁸ See Appendix G: Conceptual Framework of Development

1988; Copelin, 1989; Hay, 1983). In the eyes of one playwright, “A dramaturg is a critic who is on the playwright’s side. He reviews his play before the critics do” (McNally, 1986, p. H26). However, the criticism dramaturgs offer to playwrights can become controlling and destructive, causing “more harm than good” (McNally, 1986, p. H26). For McNally (1986), “A good dramaturg should find a script he believes in, recommend it to his theater, fight for it and then buzz off” (p. H26).

R. Nelson (2007) suggests that the development process itself has created the impression that playwrights are not able—not *trusted*—to create a script without the help of others:

Of course playwrights have needs—money, productions, support, encouragement. So do actors, directors, designers, artistic directors. But THIS mindset is different, because what is meant here is . . . They can’t do their work themselves. . . . I am *not* saying a playwright shouldn’t listen to notes, be open to discussions and so forth—because this is what a playwright does. What I am saying is that the given mindset should not be that the playwright cannot be trusted to lead this process, cannot be trusted to know how to work within the collaboration of theatre (p. 62).

The lack of trust of playwrights can lead to the playwright’s alienation from the very individuals who are meant to act as collaborators in development of new plays (Nelson, 2007).

After navigating all of the complexities examined here, it seems little wonder that playwrights may feel as though they are left with no control over their own plays. Continuous cycles of development with no end in sight—collaborative processes saturated with individual motivations—can leave little for the playwright at development’s end.

II.4 “Slings and Arrows”

Professional playwrights experienced with new play development have offered suggestions

to help playwrights take control of their own new play development processes (Cohen, 1997; Garrison, 2000; Kushner, 2010). However, playwrights' ability to alter their own experiences with development can be hindered by two major factors: a disconnect between a new play's development and its production, and the absence of long-term financial support available to fund playwrights' work.

On behalf of the Theatre Development Fund, London, Pesner, & Voss (2009) penned the only comprehensive study to date regarding the state of playwrights in the United States.

Outrageous Fortune: The Life and Times of the New American Play asked questions of playwrights regarding their perceptions and experiences in theatre, how they make a living, and what sort of a living there is to be made as a playwright. London, Pesner, & Voss (2009) gathered information through group and individual interviews with playwrights and assorted artistic administrators (directors, literary managers, artistic directors, and others) in hopes to identify perceptions, misconceptions, and gaps in understanding that have created “a collaboration in crisis . . . a *system of theatrical production* that has become increasingly alienating to individual artists and inhospitable to the cultivation of new work for the stage, despite an apparent dedication to it” (p. 2).

One major misconception that *Outrageous Fortune* combats is that developmental activities do not organically lead to production (London et al, 2009). Few new plays receive a single professional production, let alone several major commercial productions, and untold numbers of plays read in development are never seen beyond a public reading (London et al, 2009). London, Pesner, & Voss (2009) estimate that less than one in three new plays that receive a public reading go on to receive world premieres; far fewer are produced three or more times. The idea that development completes a clean, streamlined process through which a play can

move from the writer's page to a fully-produced stage production is an over-simplification at best.

Development has come to be seen by some as a cheap alternative to the cost of fully produced programming; the minimal short-term investment in new play development is followed by lack of long-term investment by producers in the field. Explained one artistic director, "Everybody now has a new-play festival, and that new-play festival is their new work, but they have no intention of producing anything that comes out of that, or if you're lucky, one thing" (as cited in London et al, 2009, p. 139-140).

The failure of the field to invest in new plays—particularly the lack of investment in new plays beyond a premiere production—has left playwrights in a financial lurch. Financial support for playwrights at all levels—emerging, established, and veteran writers—is incredibly difficult to come by. Sadly, the report painted a grim picture of the financial state of playwrights, finding it "uncommon for a working professional playwright in America to earn even \$20,000 a year from writing for the theatre" (London et al, 2009, p. 51). Furthermore, money available for playwrights through development is generally focused on emerging *playwrights* rather than simply new *plays*, causing some playwrights to avoid participating in new play development lest they appear "emerged" and, therefore, no longer eligible for development funding (London et al, 2009). Without long-term financial or artistic support for playwrights, the future of new plays in the United States appears bleak.

In the pursuit of production, playwrights must navigate a gamut of complexities of new play development. The field has not created a supportive atmosphere for playwrights in artistic development, and the lack of control playwrights have artistically is echoed in the limited financial investment in playwrights by the greater theatre culture. In the next chapter, I will

examine the policies and practices at three new play festivals with attention to how new play festivals are addressing some of the aforementioned tensions and issues.

III. Presentation of Data

The following chapter is a documentation of three case studies in new play development festivals. Each festival schedule follows a common format. Playwrights and artists arrive a number of days prior to public presentation of staged readings. Time prior to readings involves rehearsals and social activities that include participating playwrights, dramaturgs, actors, directors, and festival staff. The festival culminates in a series of public readings of each play, presented by professional actors reading from scripts (un-memorized) at music stands.

Each section of this chapter provides a case study of one of three new play festivals: the Colorado New Play Summit, JAW: A Playwrights Festival, and the Pacific Playwrights Festival. The sections are further broken down to provide information regarding different aspects of the festival and its hosting organization. First, a brief overview addresses the organization's location and history pertinent to new play development, situating my research within the organization's culture and history. Subsequent sections address areas identified in my conceptual framework as relevant to the creation of definitions of development in the context of a new play festival; included among these areas are festival submission policies, selection practices, and the reading rehearsal process.

Each case study concludes with a narrative of the festival's weekend of public readings. Informing each description are my experiences and observations as an attendee at each of the new play festivals, and interactions and interviews with festival participants and attendees. My role as a researcher was fully disclosed at every site, and no observed or interviewed individuals are herein identified without express permission. Further data was gathered from publicly available resources, including organizational websites and blog postings, publicity materials, and published works.

Throughout my data collection, I focused on the following questions: How is this new play festival defining development? What definitions of development are made manifest in practice at this festival? How does the organization of the festival experience lend itself to enabling and embodying ideas of development for artists? How are audiences involved in the development process? Is there anything happening at this festival that may be considered a manifestation of development outside of commonly used definitions?

III.1 The Colorado New Play Summit

A brief overview of Denver Center Theatre Company, Denver, CO. In the middle of downtown Denver, CO, the Denver Center Theatre Company (DCTC) makes its home as the primary producing organization in the Helen G. Bonfils Theatre Complex. The complex is one of several interconnected performance spaces taking up several city blocks in Denver's city center. Several theatres make up the Denver Performing Arts Complex (DPAC), which is "the largest performing arts complex under one roof, and the second-largest center of its kind [in the United States] in terms of number of venues and seating capacity" (City and County of Denver, 2013); DPAC is second in size only to the Lincoln Center in New York City.

The immense Bonfils Complex houses four performance spaces, each with different seating structures and stage architecture: the Ricketson Theatre, a proscenium stage and former cinema seating 250; the Jones Theatre, a three-quarter thrust stage with 200 seats in the house (with more chairs added to the stage floor for readings); the Space Theatre, a 550-seat theatre-in-the-round; and the Stage Theatre, a 778-seat space with a thrust apron (Denver Center, 2012b). Additionally, the Complex includes meeting rooms, event spaces, offices for the DCTC's administrative arm, and areas dedicated to the creation and storage of DCTC sets, props, and costumes.

New play development at the Denver Center. New play development has long been a part of the Denver Center Theatre Company's history. Since the company's inception in 1979, DCTC production seasons have regularly included as many as seven world premiere productions in addition to Shakespeare, American classics, musicals, and more (2013c). Readings and workshop productions have played a major part in the company's history, particularly as a part of an early new play program called *TheatreFest* that ended in 2002 (Jones, 2005).

The hiring of new play supporters in key leadership positions has evidenced DCTC's deep investment in new works. First, the hiring of Kent Thompson as DCTC's Producing Artistic Director in 2005 marked a renewal of the Denver Center's commitment to new plays and new playwrights. In the announcement of his hiring, Thompson committed to "a major expansion of DCTC's new play program" (as cited in Jones, 2004), the Colorado New Play Summit [CNPS]. Shortly thereafter, Thompson announced the return of Bruce K. Sevy to DCTC from Alabama Shakespeare Festival (Jones, 2005). Sevy had been responsible for the Denver Center's *TheatreFest* from 1996 until its budget-driven demise in 2002; he returned to the company as Associate Artistic Director and Director of New Play Development (Jones, 2005). A statement from DCTC called Sevy's appointment "Thompson's first major move to return the Denver Center Theatre Company's new play development program to national prominence and to commission what he hopes will become the next collection of great American plays" (as cited in Jones, 2005).

Support of new play development at DCTC has also been demonstrated through the number of new plays DCTC has commissioned and/or produced. Jason Grote's *1001* was DCTC's first commissioned script, presented first as a reading at the inaugural CNPS and later as a fully-produced world premiere (Denver Center, 2013b). DCTC has since produced more than

20 commissioned new plays, produced dozens of world premieres, and participated in the development of several other new works (Denver Center, 2013c).

The Summit has steadily increased in attendance, moving from several dozen attendees to hundreds of audience members and sold out readings (Denver Center Blog, 2012c; BWW News Desk, 2013). Though the early years of the Summit may have seen only a few dozen industry participants, the 2013 listing of Industry Guests⁹ included 80 self-identified playwrights, directors, dramaturgs, and other industry professionals from across the nation. Greater industry attention on the Summit has been accompanied by increased public attention for the festival. Each Summit hosts a series of readings for Industry Pass holders as well as a simultaneous reading series for the general public, who may purchase tickets to individual readings or in packages (Denver Center, 2013a).

Submission policies. The Denver Center website with information on script submissions for the Colorado New Play Summit invites “professional playwrights to send us their work” (2012c). The invitation is the first mention of one of DCTC’s core application requirements: participants should be playwrights by profession. DCTC insists on hard copy submissions of plays only, “without prior synopsis or dialogue sample” (2012c). DCTC further requests only complete, “original, full-length, unproduced plays” (2012c) aimed at adult audiences be submitted for inclusion within the festival. New plays submitted to DCTC are expected to be independent creative endeavors; adaptations may be accepted only if any necessary rights have been acquired—and the acquisition documented—prior to submission (Denver Center, 2012c). Reinforcing the idea of the professional playwright is an additional requirement: scripts must be submitted through an agent (Denver Center, 2012c).

⁹ See Appendix H: CNPS 2013 Industry Guest List

One notable exception to the submission requirements regards regional residents. Playwrights who reside in one of the Rocky Mountain states—Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Arizona, New Mexico, or Utah—may send in script submissions themselves, no agent required (Denver Center, 2012c). While this exception for regional residents may provide some opportunities to playwrights lacking professional representation, the opportunity is unlikely to provide any major advantage to regional submissions. DCTC’s website does not provide an estimate of submissions received. However, DCTC forewarns playwrights and agents that responses to submissions may take “up to six months” (Denver Center, 2012c), suggesting a busy literary staff team and a large number of CNPS applications.

Selection practices. DCTC’s script selection practices are not made public, but the website contains some indications of the kinds of new plays most likely to be selected as a part of the festival. DCTC’s Summit has become known for “wildly divergent and often brilliant original thinking” (Denver Center, 2012a) that has emerged from the theatrical readings presented each year. Scripts featuring especially creative content, design opportunities, mixed media, and/or nontraditional literary structures are among those most likely to be selected for the Summit.

Diversity is a factor in the selection process, as the company clearly identifies its “special interest in African-American and Latino plays, as well as plays by women” (Denver Center, 2012c). In an online interview in 2012, Artistic Director Kent Thompson addressed the DCTC commitment to producing plays by female playwrights, noting that the company had only produced approximately 10 plays by women in their history of 260 productions prior to his arrival. Female and minority voices are often identified as under-represented in the field (Chinoy, 2006; Farfan & Ferris, 2010; Jonas & Bennett, 2002), and these writers provide unique

perspectives into the Summit's core theme of "what it means to be an American in the 21st century" (Denver Center, 2012a).

New works by DCTC commissioned playwrights are the first among those to be placed in the running for public reading at the Summit, according to DCTC Literary Manager D. Langworthy. "We first look to our commissioned plays and see which of them might be developmentally ready for a public reading in the Summit," explained Langworthy, "then we fill in the empty slots with work that has been submitted by agents" (personal communication, March 29, 2013). New plays by regional playwrights are then examined along with agent-submitted scripts for possible festival inclusion.

DCTC-commissioned writers were responsible for all but one of the scripts included in the 2013 New Play Summit. (According to playbills from the 2013 Summit, Matthew Lopez was the only exception in 2013 with *The Legend of Georgia McBride*.) Continuity of writer support throughout the creative process is important to DCTC, supporting writers through commission, readings, and into production. D. Langworthy reinforced this in a personal communication: "It is critical to us that there be a pathway from the Summit to the season . . . we are deeply committed to producing a high percentage of the plays we read" (personal communication, March 29, 2013).

The reading rehearsal process. Prior to the Summit's public presentations, more than 100 participating playwrights, directors, dramaturgs, stage managers, actors, and staff are gathered together for opening remarks and introductions as the kick-off to several days of rehearsals (Denver Center Blog, 2012a). The amount of preparation time varies depending on the needs of a production; in 2013, "two of the plays were given two weeks of rehearsal due to their size and scope, while the other three plays were given one week" (D. Langworthy, personal

communication, March 29, 2013).

Up to eight hours each day, four days per week are dedicated to rehearsals for the weekend's public and industry readings (D. Langworthy, personal communication, March 29, 2013). The Denver Center Blog provides this insight into a day of new play reading rehearsals:

The second day of the Colorado New Play Summit had our 100 artistic team members actively engaged in five hours of rehearsal . . . in The Jones and The Ricketson theatres... [and] in our cleverly named (and painted) Yellow, Purple and Orange rehearsal studios. (2012b)

During the course of the rehearsal process, playwrights have an opportunity to interact with directors, actors, and dramaturgs. Work done in this collaborative setting often results in rewrites, which are compiled and disseminated by festival stage management at each rehearsal (D. Langworthy, personal communication, March 29, 2013).

Evenings during the rehearsal period are reserved for socializing and relaxation. Participants are invited "to see plays that went through this same process last year and are now being fully produced" (Denver Center, 2012b). A casual Wednesday evening reception for staff and participating artists serves as a wrap-up to rehearsals and a kick-off to the Summit weekend of readings (D. Langworthy, personal communication, March 29, 2013).

The Summit weekend. A small interior alcove of the Helen G. Bonfils Theatre Complex fills quickly at the beginning of the three-day Summit. Registered participants from across the nation check in next to the stocked coffee and tea service, which is available throughout the weekend. Included with each Industry Pass holder's registration: a large name tag noting the participant's affiliation with the industry; a schedule for the weekend's events; a list of names of Industry Guests; a general admission ticket for each meal, reading, and event; a reserved ticket to

each of the two DCTC productions that began at the previous year's Summit; some CNPS memorabilia; and a book containing the scripts for each of the Summit-premiered shows that DCTC included as full productions in their current season.

Other conference-related materials are made available to attendees and other patrons in the lobby of the Bonfils Complex. Handbills promoting the DCTC season can be found on tables and in displays throughout the space. Copies of *Inside Out*, the study guide series published in-house by the Marketing Department of the Denver Center, are available next to each box office window. An edition of *Inside Out* is created for each DCTC production of the regular season, including those scheduled during the Summit.

After registration, participants are welcomed to a catered lunch in the expansive lobby area connecting the entrances of the Bonfils complex's two largest performance spaces. Seating is open, and participants are encouraged to mingle. Among friends, greetings of "Where have you been?" and "Good to see you again!" echo through the space. More frequently, attendees can be seen asking, "What's your name and where are you from?" amid flashes of smiles and glimpses of nametags.

Near the end of the opening day's lunch, a fifteen-minute warning is given to remind patrons of the first reading. The crowd dutifully ushers itself to the first of the weekend's five readings. Ushers disseminate small programs and pencils to reading attendees. Each program includes credits for the artists involved in the reading, brief biographies for the playwright, director, and dramaturg (if applicable), and a separate, short questionnaire.

Prior to the beginning of the reading, a member of the DCTC staff gives an introductory speech. The speaker asks audience members to ensure all cell phones and electronic devices are off, reminds members of the press that the play is still in-process and is not to be reviewed, and

thanks the Summit's sponsors. Finally, the speaker asks that audience members fill out the response forms and return them to the ushers following the reading; questions for the audience have been compiled by the playwright, director, and dramaturg to help with further development of the playwright's work.

The stage set for the reading consists only of chairs at the top of the stage with music stands grouped to suggest different locations identified in the script. A music stand and seat in a far corner of the stage separates the narrator (reading stage directions) from the characters. The lights dim in the house and brighten onstage as the cast of the reading files in with script binders and water bottles in-hand. Though technical design is virtually absent, staging is minor, and the lines are not memorized, the reading is very much akin to a performance in the relationship between the actors and the audience. And, just like at a full performance, the audience stands to chat and stretch at intermission, returns to their seats as house lights dim for the second half of the show, and applauds at the end of each act.

Following the reading, several audience members remain in their seats to fill out response forms. Others have filled out their questionnaires at intermission and take the opportunity to beat the crowd out of the space. Some head for the guest green room, set up with comfortable furniture as well as another full coffee and tea service. Approximately 40 minutes later, the next reading is scheduled to begin in another theatre, just a few hundred feet away. Each reading throughout the weekend follows a similar process with programs, a pre-show speech, minimally staged reading with only chairs and music stands, and audience members filling response forms during and after the reading.

After a dinner break—a communal, catered meal on the first evening, and a long break for dinner downtown on the second evening—industry pass holders return for the evening's

production. Seating is pre-assigned, encouraging further discussion and networking among attendees. The show is a full-scale production of a script read at the previous year's Summit, and many of the previous year's attendees can be heard discussing changes from the script as they had heard it months previous. Such is the case with both of the productions included with the Industry Pass. DCTC makes a point of programming and promoting these two scripts in tandem, including printing a singular playbill with information on both productions.

The crowd moves from space to space en masse, and communities quickly form among strangers. Bonds are further solidified during the more casual events of the weekend following each evening's production, including Friday's Playwrights Slam and Saturday's Summit Reception. Presented on the set of the DCTC's improvisation show, the Slam provides an opportunity for any playwrights in attendance to read a short selection from any of their works, and attendees can enjoy the readings while snacking on complimentary drinks and popcorn. Attendees don slightly less casual clothing for the celebratory reception, but the tone of the evening is distinctly light-hearted, featuring a live disc jockey, space for dancing, complimentary refreshments, and a catered late-night meal.

The second day of the Summit continues much like the first: two readings and a production, with time before and between performances for meals, coffee, and networking. Sunday's final industry reading is presented in the complex's largest space, the aptly named Stage Theatre, following a morning brunch. The reading usually features the largest cast and the most complex staging elements seen over the course of the Summit, though even these are not complete versions of what would be seen in a full production. 2012's Summit, for example, featured a workshop of a musical adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility* as the final presentation (Denver Center, 2012d).

III.2 JAW: A Playwrights Festivals

A brief overview of Portland Center Stage, Portland, OR. The northwest quarter of Portland, Oregon, is home to the city's Pearl District, a center of arts, entertainment, culture, and commerce. In the middle of this area stands The Armory, a historical building restored and renovated by Portland Center Stage after its purchase in 2002 (Portland Center Stage [PCS], 2013b). The move by Portland Center Stage (PCS) into the Armory from their former home at the Portland Center for the Performing Arts (PCPA) saved the Armory from destruction while also providing the company with far more space—*customizable* space—than they had as a resident company in the PCPA's shared theatres. The renovation of the building preserved the historic landmark as the Gerding Theater at the Armory (opened in 2006) and turned the space's interior into a state-of-the-art, LEED Platinum-certified facility (PCS, 2013b). PCS houses two theatres: the 599-seat proscenium Gerding Theatre, and the 200-seat black box Ellyn Bye Studio (2013b).

Initially established in 1988 as an extension of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, PCS became an independent company in 1994 (PCS, 2013b). Artistic Director Chris Coleman took the reigns in May 2000 and quickly launched artistic initiatives within the company, including producing the company's first musical and adding a second-stage show to complement the organization's main stage offerings (PCS, 2013b). Since that time, PCS has consistently produced world premieres every season and has continued to present their annual playwrights' festival, JAW (PCS, 2013e).

History of JAW: A Playwrights Festival. In 1999, members of the New York Theatre Workshop (NYTW) traveled to Portland to help PCS launch a development effort named *Just Add Water/West*, a West Coast compliment to the NYTW's own *Just Add Water* program in their

home state (PCS, 2013d). NYTW had already created a reputation for themselves as the birthplace of several plays in the modern canon of American theatre, including *Quills*, *Angels in America*, and *Rent* (New York Theatre Workshop, 2012). Efforts focused on bringing new playwrights to light through the four-play reading series over the course of two days (McGrath, 1999). Associate Artistic Director Rose Riordan led the charge, and she continues to serve as the JAW Festival Director (PCS, 2013d).

NYTW stopped producing the *Just Add Water* after fall of 1999 as the group moved on to other theatrical pursuits and developmental programming (New York Theatre Workshop, 2012b).¹⁰ With the disintegration of the counterpoint festival, PCS dropped “/West” from the event name, eventually adopting JAW: A Playwrights Festival as the official festival name in the late 2000s (PCS, 2013d; K. Tyler, personal communication, March 17, 2013).

Over the course of its 14-year history, JAW has presented 65 public readings of full-length works during its “Big Weekend” in addition to dozens of devised works, short play readings, and several iterations of their *Made in Oregon* series (PCS, 2013c). More than a dozen full-length plays presented at JAW have received productions at Portland Center Stage, many of which have been world premieres; PCS will add yet another title to the list of JAW plays it has produced in 2014, producing Elizabeth Heffron’s *Bo-Nita* from the 2012 JAW Festival (2013a).

Submission policies and selection practices. JAW accepts play submissions from the beginning of November until February 1 of each year, announcing the opening and closing of the submission period on their website and via social media outlets (Portland Center Stage, 2013c; K. Tyler, personal communication, March 17, 2013). Playwrights may be solicited for

¹⁰ New York Theatre Workshop [NYTW] has continued their work as a major center of new play development along with producing a full season of plays each year. NYTW’s developmental programs include residencies for individuals, residencies for companies, weekly readings, and more (New York Theatre Workshop, 2012a).

submissions based on any number of factors, including: writers who may have worked with PCS before, those whose work have caught the attention of JAW staff, PCS-commissioned playwrights, and more (K. Tyler, personal communication, March 17, 2013). In an effort to bring more focus to local artists, JAW accepts unsolicited scripts from any Oregon playwrights (2013c). Annual submissions total approximately 200 scripts including solicited and unsolicited works (PCS, 2013c).

Eligible plays must be full-length, and the festival does accept musicals. PCS is clear that “submissions [to JAW] may have had a previous reading or workshop, but not a full production” (2013c). Furthermore, the opening of submissions in November 2012 brought another push for environmentally friendly practices at PCS: JAW now only accepts digital submissions of scripts (2013c).

JAW requests that submissions follow some formatting requirements in regards to digital submissions. With festival curators moving to the use of technological means for disseminating, sorting, and reading the 200+ submissions, JAW asks scripts to be provided in a .pdf format (2013c). Playwrights are also asked to submit the “title page as a separate document” and “remove your name and the play’s title from all other script pages” (PCS, 2013c) to ensure anonymity in the curation process.

Tyler did reinforce JAW’s desire to select scripts that can benefit from development time: “Sometimes I feel so bad because [playwrights] are in workshop limbo, and we really try to avoid working on plays that need to be produced . . . We’re looking at that, we’re keeping our eyes open . . . To make sure there’s work to be done” (personal communication, March 17, 2013).

No direct information regarding the selection process is publicly available on the JAW

website. However, the request that all identifying markers—the playwright’s name and play title, in particular—be removed from script before submission suggest an attempt to select plays based on merit over any other factor. In an interview, JAW Festival Producer K. Tyler confirmed that the effort to maintain “blind readings” is meant to keep any preconceived notions of a writer’s name or play title from influencing the selection process (personal communication, March 17, 2013).

A reading committee consisting of a combination of PCS staff, artists, community members, and JAW producers is responsible for selecting the plays for each JAW festival; the committee includes 7-10 people in any given year (K. Tyler, personal communication, March 17, 2013). Tyler explained that all submissions are read at least twice, and reader reactions are compiled via a blind response system—being “able to see on the database other people’s responses to the work . . . you could be influenced by that” (personal communication, March 17, 2013). The compiled ratings from committee members narrow the list to 10-20 scripts that are read and discussed by the entire committee (K. Tyler, personal communication, March 17, 2013). Between four and six plays are ultimately chosen from the finalist list; the selected plays will be rehearsed and presented in a series of staged readings called “The Big Weekend” (PCS, 2013c).

The reading rehearsal process. Rehearsals for the public reading series begin a full ten days prior to The Big Weekend (Portland Center Stage, 2013c). After the arrival of all of the participating playwrights, directors, actors, designers, dramaturgs, and staff, JAW kicks off with a large group reading of all of the year’s plays. All 60-80 participants are present for this process, sitting together at a conglomeration of tables. The long day of readings wraps up with a barbeque for all of the participants to socialize at the beginning of what actor Darius Pierce called professional “theatre bootcamp” (PCS, 2009).

Each play rehearses for four hours on the working days of JAW, either in the morning or in the evening (K. Tyler, personal communication, March 17, 2013). Playwrights spend rehearsal times with their director, dramaturg, and actors, and all participate through discussion of the play, its themes, its meanings, and other elements. The overall intent is to get at the core of what the playwright wants to work on, be it working a particular section of a script, an individual character, or focusing on production elements (K. Magaldi, personal communication, March 17, 2013). Whatever the playwright determines is the script's primary need becomes the driving focus of the reading rehearsal process (K. Tyler, personal communication, March 17, 2013).

During whatever portion of the working day playwrights are not in rehearsal, they are encouraged to take time to mull over the rehearsal process, make rewrites, have meetings with the director and/or dramaturg—using the time they have to work on their plays, however each determines will be most effective for his/her own creative process (K. Tyler, personal communication, March 17, 2013).¹¹ Many playwrights use the time for writing, but rewrites are by no means a requirement. For the sake of the festival's schedule, playwrights are asked to provide any rewrites two hours prior to their given rehearsal to allow for copies to be made and dispersed to all relevant artists (K. Tyler, personal communication, March 17, 2013).

JAW factors several times for socializing and cross-pollination among playwrights, artists, and staffers during the days leading up to The Big Weekend. Between each working day's rehearsals, JAW hosts a tea time for all participants to relax, catch up with the day's rehearsal happenings, and socialize (PCS, 2009). Tyler related that at least one full day is designated as a day off from rehearsals so that all of the JAW participants can day-trip to the

¹¹ Restrictions resulting from contracts with Actors' Equity Association and the cross-casting of actors in multiple shows keep playwrights from being able to work with actors outside of the designated work times (K. Tyler, personal communication, March 17, 2013; see also Actors' Equity Association, 2013).

beach at Sauvie's Island (personal communication, March 17, 2013). Evening events such as bowling nights are also planned so that any interested participants have a chance to spend time in one another's company, regardless of what play(s) they may be focused on during the work days (K. Tyler, personal communication, March 17, 2013).

Events and activities. JAW includes a wide variety of presentations and activities aside from the work (and play) scheduled around the playwrights featured during The Big Weekend. Portland Center Stage "brings professional playwrights into public high schools for free, intensive residencies" (2013f) over the course of a year through their Visions & Voices program, teaching students about many of the core elements of theatre and dramatic writing. The end of each year's work culminates in "free, open-to-the-public readings of plays selected from all the residency sites, performed in staged readings by professional actors and presented at the Gerding Theater at the Armory" (PCS, 2013f). A limited number of writers from each Visions & Voices year will be invited to participate in JAW as Promising Playwrights, where they write and have their work presented in staged readings alongside the professionals during The Big Weekend (PCS, 2013c).

JAW will often host a *Made in Oregon* series to highlight local playwrights (PCS, 2013c). As with much of JAW, the *Made in Oregon* series is fluid, shifting from year to year and not necessarily presented every year. Some JAW Festivals have presented full-length, staged readings of *Made in Oregon* plays during the early working days of the festival; the 2012 JAW Festival prompted several Oregon writers to write 8-10 minute plays on the theme "Just Add Water" which resulted in staged readings served as a kick-off event for the JAW Festival (JAW: A Playwrights Festival, 2012).

The program *Devise & Conquer* has become another facet of JAW's event line-up.

Clowns, jugglers, musical groups, performance artists, and ensemble theatre groups are brought in to perform and engage with audiences for the hour or so prior to each JAW Big Weekend reading (PCS, 2013c). Local artists and small arts groups are invited to create a work especially for JAW, and performances take place throughout the two-story Gerding Theater lobby.

Community engagement is further factored into JAW through Community Artist Labs. Artists from across the nation—including participant playwrights and directors, among others—host the labs, covering topics such as directing, playwriting, the business of theatre, and more (PCS, 2013c). In order to ensure the quality of the labs through maintaining a small group setting, Lab attendees are selected by lottery but remain free to the public (PCS, 2013c).

“The Big Weekend.” Audience members gather in the lobby prior to each readings, sharing in conversation, enjoying beverages and snacks from the lobby’s coffee shop. Much of the chatter is about the excitement of the weekend’s readings. Some talk surrounds readings with locally known actors, playwrights, and directors; other discussion covers what is known about a given reading or playwright from previous events held elsewhere.

Following the *Devise & Conquer* performance, a call comes over the intercom to warn audience members of the start of the program, and patrons are ushered into the general seating of the Gerding theatre main stage.

Each reading begins with a brief presentation by one of the JAW staff members, asking patrons to turn off all electronic and noise-making devices, reminding the audience of the post-show discussion, and thanking the weekend’s sponsors. The speech also includes a brief introduction to what is about to take place on stage: a staged reading of a ten-minute play by one of the Promising Playwrights from the Visions & Voices program, followed by a staged reading of a professional playwright’s script. After introducing the titles of the plays and their respective

playwrights and directors, the house lights dim.

Lights come up on the stage to illuminate the minimal stage set for the short play reading. A series of chairs or stools are placed for each actor, and music stands may be used to hold scripts. An additional chair and music stand are placed near the stage's proscenium edge for a JAW participant to read the stage directions. Production elements such as light and sound cues are generally minimal.

Following the short play's reading, JAW staffers and stagehands—identified by their matching “We Play Rough” shirts—make any set alterations required for the full-length reading, placing or removing chairs and music stands as-needed. Once the necessary elements are in place, actors and the individual reading stage directions file on stage. Readers make adjustments to their seats and music stand, and the reading begins with the stage direction reader announcing the play's title, the playwright, and any notes on setting indicated by the playwright.

Again, production elements tend to be minimal. Some sound effects and light changes may be used, but the inclusion of such elements is determined by the playwright's priorities (K. Tyler, personal communication, March 17, 2013). Most readings use little more than stage lights coming up at the start of each act and down at the end of each act. Physical staging also tends toward minimalism; actors will usually remain at music stands while speaking or present, sitting while his/her character is not present in a scene. Chairs and music stands may be arranged to suggest different locales and/or times, but no physical sets pieces are otherwise used.

At the conclusion of the play's reading, actors move off-stage, and the stage is cleared of music stands while the house lights come up. Though some audience members leave, many remain for a feedback session. A JAW staffer arrives onstage to moderate discussion, first asking for a show of hands regarding previous attendance to gauge how experienced the audience may

be with JAW's feedback process. S/he then describes JAW's adapted form of Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process that will provide the format for the discussion and feedback session (K. Tyler, personal communication, March 17, 2013). Central to this process is that responses remain question-based and neutral—opinions, even if they are in praise of a script, are not welcomed to the conversation (K. Magaldi, personal communication, March 17, 2013).

Once the actors, director, dramaturg, and playwright—if s/he decides to participate in the feedback session—arrive, the moderator asks for popcorn responses or “statements of meaning” (Lerman & Borstel, 2003, p.16): 1-2 word responses describing the audience member's emotional or thematic takeaway(s) from the script. Throughout the popcorn responses and the rest of the audience feedback period, the dramaturg takes notes for later review by the playwright and JAW participants.

The moderator then moves into a series of questions for the audience. The list of questions has been created by the playwright, dramaturg, and director over the course of the rehearsal period, and each question is intended to address a point of concern that the writer would like the audience to respond to directly (K. Tyler, personal communication, March 17, 2013). Finally, the moderator calls for questions from the audience. It is important to Lerman & Borstel that feedback be phrased as questions that are as neutral as possible, and moderators try to guide participants away from simply stating opinions (2008). Hard copies of feedback forms are made available to patrons should they care to provide responses after a longer time to process what they have witnessed, returning the form to the box office or mailing the form back to Portland Center Stage.

Post-JAW feedback. Critical Response Process is also used as the framework for feedback following The Big Weekend. After all of the public readings are completed, JAW

participants reconvene as they had at the beginning of the process for a feedback session (K. Tyler, personal communication, March 17, 2013). Participants have then had several opportunities to interact with playwrights and their works in several ways: the initial reading, socializing opportunities, the rehearsal process, and the public reading. With these experiences to inform their understanding of the artists and their respective works, participants have a greater understanding of how to provide feedback to whom and what feedback will be most helpful (K. Tyler, personal communication, March 17, 2013). The very same process is also used to provide feedback to the JAW Festival staff. All festival participants take part in responding to their experiences at JAW, which then influences the build of the next year's festival.

III.3: The Pacific Playwrights Festival

A brief overview of South Coast Repertory, Costa Mesa, CA. South of Disneyland's flagship location in Anaheim, CA, is the bustling urban area of Costa Mesa. From luxury shopping center South Coast Plaza, a cement bridge over the eight-lane Bristol Street leads patrons down a tree-lined path in front of the Westin Hotel that winds toward the glass-doors of South Coast Repertory (SCR). Founded in 1964, South Coast Repertory moved into their home on the Arts Plaza in November of 1978 (Christon, 2009). Several decades at their home location has brought SCR a series of renovations and updates, ultimately resulting in three performance spaces within the Fourth Step Theatre: the 507-seat proscenium Segerstrom Stage; a 336-seat Argyros Stage with seating reminiscent of an opera house; and the 75-seat Nicholas Studio (South Coast Repertory [SCR], 2013c).

History of the Pacific Playwrights Festival. New play development has long been a part of SCR's extensive history. Founders David Emmes and Martin Benson found early success with productions of new plays, programming an entire season of new plays for the first time in 1983

(Christon, 2009; SCR 2013e). “In the early ‘80s an idea percolated up . . . offer commissions to playwrights and bring them to Costa Mesa to house them, offer them workshops and in-house readings, and . . . carry the germination of their ideas to full-blown life onstage” (Christon, 2009). SCR established its first new play development program, Collaboration Laboratory (also known as Colab), in 1985 (SCR, 2013b). Colab laid the foundation for the establishment of the Pacific Playwrights Festival (PPF) in 1998 (SCR, 2013a).

During its 16-year history, PPF has brought a “total number of plays presented in PPF to 105, representing the work of 83 playwrights” (SCR, 2013a). The three-day festival presents a total of seven plays to festival attendees in a 48-hour period, including five new play readings and two full-length productions (SCR, 2013f). Many of the festival’s readings have gone on to productions across the nation and have garnered major awards, such as David Lindsay-Abaire’s Pulitzer Prize-winning *Rabbit Hole* (SCR, 2013a).

Submission policies and selection practices. SCR accepts play submissions year-round as a part of their continued Colab program, which includes commissions, a New Scripts play reading series, and PPF (SCR, 2013b). Submissions are open to playwrights with or without professional representation. SCR invites playwrights without representation to submit “a query letter, brief synopsis, complete list of characters and ten-page dialogue sample” (SCR, 2013b) to the SCR Literary Manager. A member of SCR’s literary department will contact playwrights to inform them whether or not he/she wishes to read the full script following a review of the submission (SCR, 2013b).

Full manuscripts may be sent to SCR via professional representatives at any time. All materials must be sent in hard copy; no digital copies are accepted (SCR, 2013b). Acceptable submissions include “full-length plays, musicals, translations and adaptations and works for

young audiences (approximately fourth grade level)” (SCR, 2013b). Scripts that have not been previously produced are eligible for inclusion in PPF as well as the New SCRipts Reading Series and SCR’s regular season of productions (SCR, 2013b). SCR also pulls “from commissioned work, [and] projects nominated by other theatres” (SCR, 2013c) to create the program for the PPF weekend.

The Festival weekend. Though PPF’s first reading of the weekend begins at 2:00pm on Friday, crowds begin to gather on the steps in front of SCR before noon for industry pass holders to check-in. Public attendees may purchase tickets to individual readings from the box office, but industry members register for packages that include admission tickets to readings, productions, and meals (as specified by the registrant).

Industry guests are handed several items at the check-in table: a souvenir bag, and a packet of materials relevant to the weekend—schedules and maps, tickets to each performance, meal, and reading for which s/he registered, invitations to social events related to the festival, a listing of industry attendees, and contact information for the showcased artists’ professional representation. Also included in the industry pass packet is a black-and-white nametag. Key SCR staff members are identified by blue nametags, while playwrights—45 in total at the 2013 festival according to the guest list¹²—are easily spotted thanks to their fuchsia nametags.

Just beyond the check-in table is a buffet lunch—several meals are included in the cost of the Industry Pass—and several tables with open seating on SCR’s front terrace. While lunch winds down, a recorded bell and announcement warns attendees that the reading will begin in short order. Attendees file in to the main Segerstrom Stage for opening remarks, conversing all the while with friends and chatting about readings people are particularly looking forward to.

¹² See Appendix I: PPF 2013 Industry Guest List

Many discuss the playwrights involved in the year's current festival, especially noting those whose previous work has been seen in production at SCR.

Ushers hand attendees two playbills: one for the weekend, and a separate playbill relevant to each individual reading. Within every playbill is a brief listing of reading credits, a cast list, and short biographies of each actor. Additionally, a half-sheet of paper in the center of the program prompts audiences to respond to the reading in three ways: identifying the most engaging aspects of the play; asking any questions or thoughts regarding story or character; and naming resonant thematic concerns. The paper has information at the bottom for mailing or emailing responses to these questions, should the respondent wish to wait to respond.

Associate Artistic Director John Glore and Literary Manager Kelly L. Miller begin the weekend with a curtain speech at the dimming of the house lights. The speech often begins with a show of hands identifying regular PPF attendees, playwrights, and individuals new to PPF. Some aspects of the weekend are explained, including clarifying that what will be seen are a series of readings with minimal (if any) technical production elements. The idea of the readings is to focus on the playwrights' words; as Glore mentions in each of his speeches, " 'Playwrights' is our middle name." Thanks are expressed for all of the sponsors without whom PPF would not be possible. Each speech also includes a listing of several of the theatre companies with representatives in attendance. The end of the presentation calls for the shutting off of all cell phones and other electronics, and the speaker(s) exit. Glore and/or Miller give similar speeches prior to every reading.

Stage lights illuminate a minimal stage set, consisting only of chairs, music stands, and bottles of water for each reader. One of the chairs and a single music stand are usually slightly apart from the rest for the use of the individual reading stage directions. Music stands may also

be grouped or moved by actors during the course of the reading to suggest different locations. Sound cues are minimal, if used at all. For PPF readings, SCR uses “no set, no costumes, no special lighting—which means you in the audience play a vital role in the event, by imagining how the finished production might look as you listen to the actors read the playwright’s words” (2013f).

Actors and audience members file out of the theatre at the end of each reading. Some attendees remain in the lobby to fill out the response forms provided in the reading playbills, but most leave the building for a meal break and discussion of what they just witnessed. Readings are almost immediately followed by catered industry pass-holder meals on the SCR terrace.

Locations of the weekend’s readings alternate among three primary spaces—the Segerstrom Stage, the Argyros Stage, and the Nicholas Studio—depending on 1) the number of tickets purchased for a given reading and 2) the availability of stages in coordination with ongoing SCR productions. Plays read in the Nicholas Studio receive multiple readings due to the limited seating available in the space. Particularly popular readings, like PPF 2013’s opening reading of Zoe Kazan’s *Trudy and Max in Love*, may be moved to a larger stage (if available) to accommodate all ticket buyers at a single reading. Variation among reading times and locations, as well as multiple production showings over the course of the weekend, results in a varied ratio of industry guests to public attendees in any given PPF audience.

SCR produces at least two world premieres during each season that are in-production during PPF. Industry guest passes include reserved seating at each of these productions, and discussion and interaction among guests continues through this mixture. At least one of the two productions is the result of a previous year’s festival, providing regular attendees the opportunity to see a play grow from early incarnation to complete staging (SCR, 2013d).

Events and activities. Welcome packets for festival attendees include invitations to some of the social events surrounding PPF. After Friday and Saturday evening performances, festival attendees are invited to a late night happy hour. PPF After Hours is hosted at The Westin Hotel, adjacent to SCR, and a festival name badge earns attendees a 20% discount in the hotel lounge. Playwrights, actors, directors, industry members, and festival staff can often be found during these late night events debriefing and discussing the day's readings. The After Hours events are open to the public, though most of those who attend are festival participants or industry attendees.

A private reception for industry guests and participating artists is held on Saturday evening between the 3:00pm reading and 8:00pm performances. An SCR trustee hosts the catered cocktail party annually at her waterfront home on Lido Island; many regular PPF attendees can be heard referring to the engagement as the best part of the festival weekend. Attendance is by invitation only. SCR staffers provide transportation for those guests interested in carpooling, and attendees return in time for the evening's performances.

Sunday morning of PPF 2013 included a panel discussion led by SCR's Mellon Playwright in Residence, Julie Marie Myatt. Many of the festival playwrights participated in the panel, including veteran PPF playwright Noah Haidle, whose PPF 2012 play, *Smokefall*, was in production at SCR during the 2013 festival. The breakfast-time panel discussion on "Why this play, now?" took place in the lobby of the Argyros Stage and was free to the public. SCR also partnered with HowlRound¹³ to broadcast the discussion live online for viewers worldwide (HowlRound TV, 2013).

¹³ HowlRound is an organization based at Emerson College in Boston, MA, that supports and promotes a commons-based approach to the advancement of non-profit theatre. For more information on HowlRound, visit www.howlround.com.

IV. Data Analysis

I began this research by asking how new play festivals are defining development through practice. Connected with this question are inquiries regarding gaps that may exist between festival participants and administrators, and if any clear bridges can be identified to help to close those gaps. Exploration of the Colorado New Play Summit, JAW: A Playwrights Festival, and the Pacific Playwrights Festival has revealed some common threads among manifestations of development and the ways these manifestations help to address gaps in the field of new play development. While the specific means for achieving these manifestations may vary from festival to festival, several core components appear repeatedly.

IV.1 Manifestations of Development

Playwriting as profession. Development may begin with the reinforcement of the concept of playwriting as a professional field. Policies set by hosting organizations regarding script submission are based in the core idea of a playwriting as profession and one that requires a special skill-set. Implied within this sense of professionalism is that proficiencies are recognizable by other professionals in the theatrical field, namely curators of new play festivals, i.e. the PCS reading committee or DCTC literary management. Professionalism of the playwright—as an individual and as a concept in the field—is, therefore, legitimized through new play festivals.

New play festivals, as represented by these case studies, often connect with playwrights through trusted professional channels—literary managers, artistic directors, agents, artists, and others—to gather an ample submission pool from which to curate their programming. Professional playwrights prove their skill through the quality of their submissions, but professionalism may also be evidenced by having representation through an agency, having

worked with a professional organization in the past, or being awarded a commission from a theatrical organization. Expectations and shared understandings of professionalism in this regard help to provide a common ground from which new plays can be advanced.

Playwright-driven artistic growth. Resources are provided to playwrights to allow them to engage with their own work in a communal setting while retaining the integrity of his/her artistic vision. Contrary to Nelson's (2007) fear that playwrights are not trusted in the culture of development, interviewees consistently cite the primacy of the playwright's vision in the festival's rehearsal process; as PCS's K. Tyler put it, "We're called 'A Playwrights Festival' . . . for a reason. We are playwright-driven. It's all about 'what do you [the playwright] want?' " (personal communication, March 17, 2013).

D. Langworthy echoes this sentiment in his definition of development at DCTC's New Play Summit:

"I would define development as providing the playwright with the means to fully realize their play. That can come in the form of feedback . . . readings, so they can hear their play aloud, and sometimes leaving the playwright alone, giving them time to find the play that they want to write" (personal communication, March 29, 2013).

Time to be spent at-will is scheduled into playwrights' days at new play festivals just as rehearsal time is scheduled. Festivals provide resources and a format to ensure those resources—actors, designers, directors, and dramaturgs—are available for the playwright's use.

Personnel are a consideration in the collaborative process, and playwrights have some influence over the persons involved in that collaboration. Though casting decisions may be made without the presence of the playwright, administrators work to carefully pair playwrights with directors who share an understanding of approach and/or aesthetic. Instead of being

overwhelmed by directors and dramaturgs as described by Cryer (1999), Dietz (1987), and others, playwrights are supported by collaborators who have been deliberately selected for their ability and intention to work toward the playwright's vision. The best collaborative combinations tend to yield fruitful script development.

Playwrights are also not required to utilize all of the collaborators available to them. Some playwrights utilize light and sound designers while preparing for their play readings. Others focus only on the words, leaving out technical aspects altogether. Even collaborating with the "oft-feared" dramaturg is not a requirement; not every play reading lists a dramaturg in its playbill, and each participating dramaturg takes part in a different way (as needed by the playwright). In this way, the development process remains flexible in order to support the playwright's vision.

Allowing the playwright to guide the development process helps to remove many of the roadblocks often seen in the field. Playwrights are treated as trusted collaborators capable of doing their own work rather than outsiders. Giving control to playwrights endows them with a sense of ownership over their artistic processes, allows them to break the molds of development processes that may hinder artistic vision, and helps to establish a more equitable sense of collaboration across all participants in the development process.

Fiscal capital. It may be argued that new play festivals make money for hosting organizations. However, tickets to new play readings tend to be significantly less than those of full productions. The costs associated with readings are below those of most regular season shows, but festivals must pay participating artists along with providing a certain amount of living accommodations for the entirety of the festival. Ticket sales are dependent upon a singular weekend of readings rather than those of a production's several-week run. Yet, in some cases, a

theatre organization may not charge a ticket fee at all; attending JAW, for example, has been free to audiences since 2007 (PCS, 2013c). Where, then, does financial development enter the picture?

For the organization, fiscal development stems from the opportunities for grant and foundation awards earmarked for the support of new work and new artists. Playwrights receive some financial support from participating in the festival. And both playwrights and theatre organizations are given the opportunity for later financial gains should the hosting organization select the playwright's work for later inclusion in seasonal programming.

Professional network. Festival readings build an audience for new plays. Festival attendees are often different from season subscribers, creating an audience of theatregoers specifically invested in new play development (K. Tyler, personal communication, March 17, 2013). The Colorado New Play Summit has built such an audience that readings take place twice during the course of the Summit weekend—once for an audience primarily of industry personnel, and a second reading for members of the general public.

Where this process differs from Megel's (2000) ideas of "backer readings" or "entertainment readings" is that no difference is seen between the reading presentations for industry personnel and those for the public—the only exception being a difference in script should the writer make any changes in the interim between readings. No alterations are made to evoke a particular audience response based on the professional status of audience members. Neither is the approach to the reading changed in order to entertain a broader public audience. The readings presented during new play festivals are developmental in nature, focused on the vision of the playwright.

Annual new play festivals develop social capital and name recognition for participating

playwrights among local and out-of-town attendees, both public and professional. Exposure can have later commercial pay-offs, as industry attendees at given festivals will often produce plays from the reading or other work by the same playwright(s) in later seasons. (Local groups producing plays by festival participants in subsequent seasons can leverage local awareness of the festival to increase attendance.) Long-term investment in a playwright by a theatre organization through development and production helps to combat some playwrights' financial problems discussed by London, Pesner, & Voss (2009) and encourages a similar long-term investment in playwrights on the part of audience members, building social capital among patrons.

Due to the interconnected nature of the professional field, participation in a festival can also create awareness of a playwright among artistic directors and literary managers—the individuals most often responsible for programming. The writer's work and name may then be shared among others in the theatre industry, leading to later readings, workshops, and/or productions.

Programming selections may help to develop an audience for locally relevant works. JAW 2012 featured Lauren Weedman's one-woman show, *The People's Republic of Portland*, described by K. Magaldi as "like watching *Portlandia*¹⁴, [PROP] is an outsider's insider joke about Portland . . . so there's a built-in audience for that" (personal communication, March 17, 2013). Denver Center Theatre Company presented a work of historical relevance in its 2013 festival: *Just Like Us* by Karen Zacharias, based on the book by Helen Thorpe. The play follows the true story of four undocumented immigrant girls and their turbulent transition out of high

¹⁴ *Portlandia* (2011) is a television series starring Fred Armisen and Carrie Brownstein produced by the Independent Film Channel (IFC). The sketch comedy series bases its humor in the many oddities, stereotypes, and jokes unique to Portland, Oregon, where the show is also filmed (Independent Film Channel, 2013).

school as documented by Thorpe, a journalist and the wife of the former Mayor of Denver, Governor John Hickenlooper. While these and similar works may garner interest from other regions, local presentation better connects the play to its clearest audience. And those audience members not familiar with a local work's content are provided with an access point to elements of local culture through the world of the play.

Organizations can develop additional social capital through the inclusion of local acts, artists, and stories in festival weekend programming. PCS's two local series, *Devise & Conquer* and *Made in Oregon*, bring to light local playwrights as well as other performance artists from around the city. For those individuals and organizations, participation in JAW provides them with an opportunity to gain attention, connect with other artists and festival participants, and present their work to a new audience.

IV.2 Filling the Gaps

Learning communities. The time and resources dedicated to serving the playwright's vision in a festival environment builds trust as a play is explored, possibly for the first time, in a communal setting. Instead of the fights for control described by Anderson (1988), McNally (1986), and others, new play festivals work toward the creation of learning communities based on trust and mutual respect. Where mistrust may be expected as described by Nelson (2007), processes and activities at new play development festivals encourage honest, open communication among collaborators while maintaining the playwright's vision as paramount.

Different tactics are used in the creation of a safe, collaborative, artistic environment. Employing a feedback process such as the Critical Response Process used at JAW enables these temporary communities to build a common language around a shared focus: the playwright's vision. Rehearsal processes, social events, readings, and feedback sessions all contribute to the

growth of the theatre community, allowing for a more free-flowing exchange of questions, ideas, and discoveries. Social time, be it through planned or impromptu activities, helps to put faces to the names on play title pages, introducing playwrights to collaborators who are interested in playwrights' plays and careers. Focusing feedback opportunities on the needs of the playwright and involving playwrights in less structured interactions with other artists helps to make the playwright an active, respected collaborator in the development process.

Stemming from the broader learning communities created through the reading rehearsal process, networking opportunities abound throughout the many festival activities. One of the most important among these networks is the one created among playwrights. The creative act of playwriting is a mostly solitary, isolated process until a staged reading. In the new play festival setting, playwrights are able to connect with others who have experienced artistic and professional obstacles, approaches, successes, failures, and quandaries similar to their own. Few other settings—if any—provide the opportunity for several days of interaction among professional playwrights, and the recognition of a professional and artistic support network is vital to the maintenance and growth of playwriting.

Page-to-stage. New play festivals, as seen in this research, are hoping to reverse the trend of using readings as a cheap alternative to production. Instead, theatres host new play festivals as a means to an end, tying the development process to the goal of full-scale production shared by playwrights. The path from page-to-stage through new play festivals is not guaranteed to be a successful route, but the odds for production are good: among these case studies, between one and four of every five plays given a festival reading find their way to the organization's seasonal programming the following year. D. Langworthy reinforced the importance of long-term support of playwrights through production: "It is critical to us that there be a pathway from

the Summit to the season. . . [it] sends a message out to the world of new play development that we are deeply committed to producing a high percentage of the plays we read” (personal communication, March 29, 2013).

Producing plays that emerge from new play festivals is not a contractual obligation on the part of the festival host. Megel’s (2000) “development hell” is not yet a thing of the past. However, the choice by new play festival host organizations to produce plays emerging from festival readings is a major step toward closing the gap between playwrights and the field. The page-to-stage commitment made by the new play festivals in this research is not yet representative of new play development hosts on the whole. But, with time, the example set by new play development leaders may help to guide cultural practices toward post-development production as a major goal.

V. Summary and Conclusions

In my research, I looked to find how development is made manifest at new play festivals. Furthermore, I wanted to explore any identifiable gaps between artists and administrators at new play festivals and note any apparent ways in which those gaps are being addressed.

This research explored manifestations of development at new play festivals as a core component to recognizing and closing gaps in the field of new play development. New play festivals result in the manifestations of several kinds of development, including: the reinforcement and legitimization of playwriting as a profession; playwright-driven collaboration and artistic growth; the creation of social capital in support of new plays and playwrights; and opportunities for financial capital through the new play development experience. Furthermore, new play festivals build learning communities among playwrights and artistic collaborators, and theatre administrators are using new play festivals as tools to more directly tie new play development with full-scale production.

V.1 Recommendations

Despite arguments to the contrary, some new play festivals are taking steps to actively benefit playwrights through new play development. The manifestations of development presented in this research could be used as examples of how to better the culture of development in theatre in the United States through new play festivals. This research could have further implications in pointing out ways to close gaps between playwrights and theatre administrators, encouraging further collaboration and conversation regarding future new play development and its long-term ties to the future of theatre production.

Furthermore, this research could benefit the field of arts administration. Arts administrators are responsible for the creation of environments that foster new and innovative

work, and the processes administrators create—like the process of new play development—directly influence the experiences of artists—which will, in turn, influence future development of the arts. To paraphrase Megel (2000), arts administrators cannot settle for artists simply emerging “relatively unscathed” (p.36) from processes created to support multi-faceted artistic growth. Perhaps the development work being done at new play festivals can help point to some methods of creating fruitful relationships with artists in order to encourage longevity of a healthy artistic field.

Work can still be done to create a stronger page-to-stage connection between new play development and production. Quantitative research regarding the number of plays produced post-development festivals could help to create a measureable gauge for the effectiveness of new play festivals in guiding the page-to-stage transition. Similar research could also help to explore how effective the field may be in creating lives for new plays beyond world premieres.

More specific research into how new play festivals receive feedback from their participants, the feedback received, and the lessons learned from each year’s feedback could be of great use to other new play developers (organizations and festival hosts) in improving playwrights’ development experiences. Festivals often complete their own reflections, but the lessons learned at the individual festivals remain internal to the hosting organization. Sharing research into the experiences of playwrights and practitioners at various new play development festivals could help improve theatre’s development culture as a whole.

Exploration of feedback systems employed by new play festivals could also benefit the field of arts administration. Administrators working to build strong connections with artists may be able to look to new play festivals as places where feedback structures have played a part in facilitating long-term relationships with artists. The environment created by—or supported

through—feedback structures influences playwright/administrator relationships at new play festivals, and an examination of feedback methods and structures could point to practices applicable in other areas of the arts.

V.2 Significance

Through the examination of practices and experiences at the Colorado New Play Summit, JAW: A Playwright's Festival, and the Pacific Playwrights Festival, I have uncovered several components of development's diverse manifestations. Ultimately, my findings lead me to three key values I have come to recognize as concepts vital to new play development. Embracing these values can lead to artistic success throughout the field; denying them creates a culture of alienation and divisiveness between playwrights and other practitioners.

Trust. If the American theatre is to continue to grow, the voices of playwrights must be heard not only on stage but also in the development process. Tight budgets in theatres often lead to limits placed upon theatre designers and directors, and a similarly restrictive attitude has tended to be impressed upon our playwrights. Creative restrictions will only push playwrights to 1) limit their creativity in order to write plays that fit predetermined parameters, thereby stagnating the field, or 2) stop writing theatrical works altogether. Just as directors and other theatre practitioners are trusted to guide the production process, playwrights require the same trust in guiding new play development processes.

Respect in collaboration. Theatre can be said to require the participation of at least two people—an artist and an audience member—in order to be *theatre*, in order to be *art*. Theatre is, then, collaborative by its very definition. The relationship created between an artist and his/her collaborator(s) defines the theatrical experience, and debates over control of that relationship only lead to divisiveness. So it is in the development process. As the work of an artist, a script

must serve the playwright's vision, first and foremost. Contributions by collaborating directors, dramaturgs, artists, audience members, and other should neither be ignored nor accepted without question. Mutual respect of contributions to the artist/collaborator (playwright/collaborator) relationship is necessary to successful development.

Commitment. Embracing trust and respect in development will only help to close gaps within the culture of development. In order to improve playwright/practitioner/administrator relations across the field, the theatre industry must commit to investing in its playwrights. Support does not only have to be fiscal commitments such as residencies and commissions (though they are a great boon). Commitment comes in the form of productions of new plays emerging from development processes—not just world premieres, but the commitment to the life of a play through several productions. Not every play ever written will be produced, nor should all plays ever written be produced. However, a commitment to the life of a play is a commitment to playwrights across the nation: the voices and works whose stories make the theatre resonate with life are respected by the field, appreciated by audiences and artists alike, and deserve more than a place on a shelf.

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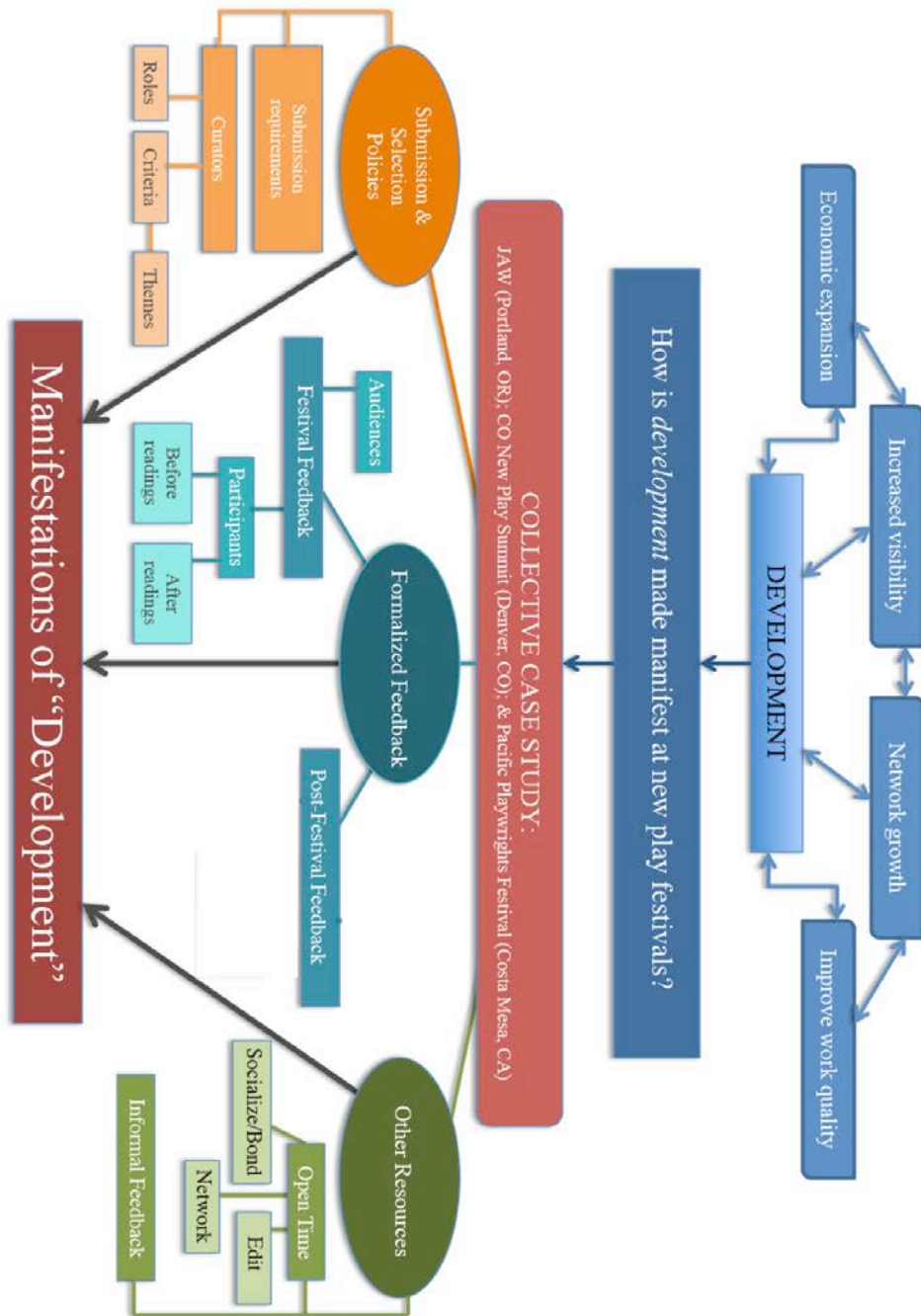
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VII. Appendices

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Appendix A: Research Conceptual Framework



Appendix B: Sample Recruitment Letter for Research Participants

<DATE>

Dear <POTENTIAL INTERVIEWEE>:

You are invited to participate in a research project titled **[insert meaning here]: Manifestations of Development at New Play Festivals**, conducted by Tara Wibrew from the University of Oregon's Arts and Administration Program. The purpose of this study is to explore how development is being employed and embodied within new play festivals.

New play festivals are central to the current national system of new play development. How these festivals define and bring to life "development" directly informs the nature of the festivals and, in turn, the ideas of what development means within the art form—and by whom the various definitions are most frequently used. Working from the idea that new play festivals are hotbeds of collaboration, creativity, networking, and several aspects of growth in the theatrical field, this research aims to explore the role of the new play festival in defining and bringing *development* to life in all its variations. The resulting study will provide an overview of areas of development supported through new play festivals and may point to system gaps and/or suggested actions for closing the gap between producers and individual artists.

You were selected to participate in this study because of your experience with <NAME OF RELEVANT CASE STUDY FESTIVAL> and your experiences with and expertise pertinent to development. If you decide to take part in this research project, you will be asked to provide relevant organizational materials and participate in an in-person interview, lasting approximately one hour, during the winter and/or spring of 2013. If you wish, interview questions will be provided beforehand for your consideration. Interviews will take place at <NAME OF FESTIVAL>, or at a more conveniently located site. Interviews will be scheduled at your convenience. In addition to taking handwritten notes, with your permission, I will use an audio tape recorder for transcription and validation purposes. You may also be asked to provide follow-up information through phone calls or email.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 541.953.1038 or twibrew@uoregon.edu; you may also contact my research advisor, Dr. Lori Hager, at 541-346-2469 or lhager@uoregon.edu. Any questions regarding your rights as a research participant should be directed to the Office for the Protection of Human Subjects, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403, (541) 346-2510.

Thank you in advance for your interest and consideration. I will contact you shortly to speak about your potential involvement in this study.

Sincerely,

Tara Wibrew
Masters Degree Candidate in Arts Management
Arts & Administration, University of Oregon
twibrew@uoregon.edu
541.953.1038

Appendix C: Interview Consent Form

Research Protocol Number: _____

[insert meaning here]: Manifestations of Development at New Play Festivals

Tara Wibrew, Principal Investigator

University of Oregon Arts and Administration Program

You are invited to participate in a research project titled **[insert meaning here]: Manifestations of Development at New Play Festivals**, conducted by Tara Wibrew from the University of Oregon's Arts and Administration Program. The purpose of this study is to explore how development is being employed and embodied within new play festivals.

New play festivals are central to the current national system of new play development. How these festivals define and bring to life "development" directly informs the nature of the festivals and, in turn, the ideas of what development means within the art form—and by whom the various definitions are most frequently used. Working from the idea that new play festivals are hotbeds of collaboration, creativity, networking, and several aspects of growth in the theatrical field, this research aims to explore the role of the new play festival in defining and bringing development to life in all its variations. The resulting study will provide an overview of areas of development supported through new play festivals and may point to system gaps and/or suggested actions for closing the gap between producers and individual artists.

You were selected to participate in this study because of your participation in _____ and your experiences with and expertise pertinent to development. If you decide to take part in this research project, you will be asked to provide relevant materials and participate in an in-person interview, lasting approximately one hour, during winter and/or spring 2013. If you wish, interview questions will be provided beforehand for your consideration. Interviews will take place _____, or at a more conveniently located site. Interviews will be scheduled at your convenience. In addition to taking handwritten notes, with your permission, I will use an audio tape recorder for transcription and validation purposes. You may also be asked to provide follow-up information through phone calls or email.

There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study, particularly since this phase of research is exploratory in nature. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study will be carefully and securely maintained. Your consent to participate in this interview, as indicated below, demonstrates your willingness to have your name used in any resulting documents and publications and to relinquish confidentiality. It may be advisable to obtain permission to participate in this interview to avoid potential social or economic risks related to speaking as a professional with experience at an institution. Your participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

I anticipate that the results of this research project will be of value to the field of professional theatre as a whole, especially in regards to new play development. However, I cannot guarantee that you personally will receive any benefits from this research. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 541.953.1038 or twibrew@uoregon.edu; you may also contact Dr. Lori Hager at 541-346-2469 or lhager@uoregon.edu. Any questions regarding your rights as a research participant should be directed to Research Compliance Services, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97401, (541) 346-2510.

Please read and initial each of the following statements to indicate your consent:

_____ I consent to the use of audiotapes and note taking during my interview.

_____ I consent to my identification as a participant in this study.

_____ I consent to the potential use of my photograph as a participant in this study.

_____ I consent to the potential use of quotations from the interview.

_____ I consent to the use of information I provide regarding the organization with which I am associated.

_____ I wish to have the opportunity to review and possibly revise my comments and the information that I provide prior to these data appearing in the final version of any publications that may result from this study.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you have received a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies. You have been given a copy of this letter to keep.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Thank you for your interest and participation in this study.
Sincerely,

Tara Wibrew
Masters Degree Candidate in Arts Management
Arts & Administration, University of Oregon
twibrew@uoregon.edu
541.953.1038
2897 Gilham Road
Eugene, OR 97408

Appendix D: Interview Cover Form

Case Study:

Data ID:

Date:

Key Descriptor:

Interviewee Details:

Interview Location:

Consent form: Signed Email Audio recording Okay to quote

Date of consent: _____

Notes on Interview context:

Key points:

CODING

INFORMATION

NOTES



Thank you note sent _____

Appendix E: Sample Interview Questions

- 1) What is your history with new play festivals?

- 2) What are your roles and responsibilities at new play festivals?

- 3) How do you select plays?

- 4) How do you define development?

- 5) What do you think is the role of public readings at new play festivals?

- 6) Where or who do you look to for resources and information regarding new play development?

- 7) Any other thoughts or impressions that you would care to share?

Appendix F: Website & Document Analysis Form

<FESTIVAL NAME>

Website or Document	Category of Info/Coding	Description	Notes

Appendix G: Conceptual Framework of Development

Simplified View of Development: the “To” in “Page-To-Stage”



A Closer View of Development



Appendix H: CNPS 2013 Industry Guest List

Industry Guests



Playwrights
 Robert Benjamin
 William Missouri Downs
 Laura Eason*+
 Lauren Feldman+
 Marcus Gardley*+
 Idris Goodwin*
 Rebecca Gorman-O'Neil
 Felice Locker
 Matthew Lopez+
 Michael Mitnick*+
 Jonathan Munro
 Tanya Saracho*
 Robert Schenkkan*
 Eric Schmiedl*
 Tracy Shaffer
 Mat Smart
 James Still*
 Catherine Trieschmann*+
 Karen Zacarias*+
 *Commissioned playwrights

Author
 Helen Thorpe+

Dramaturgs
 Alex Barron+
 Tom Bryant+
 Liz Engelman+
 Heather Helinski
 Allison Horsley
 Douglas Langworthy+
 Kathryn G. Maes

Directors
 Michael Arabian
 Nick Avila
 Shelley Butler+
 Mike Donahue+
 Christy Montour-Larson
 Tlaloc Rivas
 Liesl Tommy+
 Kent Thompson+
 Chay Yew+

+2013 Summit Premieres & Readings

Abrams Artists Agency
 Beth Bickers

American Theatre Critics Association
 Jonathan Levine
 Jim Volz

Arden Theatre Company
 Terry Nolen

Arvada Center for Arts & Humanities
 Cynthia DeLarber

Center Theatre Group
 Pier Carlo Talenti

Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center
 Scott Levy

Contemporary American Theatre Festival
 Jenny Ewing Allen

Creede Repertory Theatre
 Cat Augur
 Jim Brown
 Jeff Carey
 Diane Knutzon
 Lindsey Leavell
 Pete Leavell
 Maggie Schlundt
 Elizabeth Zurn

Curious Theatre Company
 Chip Walton
 Sara Poorman
 Eve Orenstein

Dulcina Eisen Associates
 Barry Katz

Elissa Myers Casting
 Paul Fouquet

Gersh Agency
 Jessica Amato
 Seth Glewen

Industry Guests



Harden-Curtis Associates
Mary Harden

Lincoln Theatre, ME
J. Bourge Hathaway

LOCAL Theater Company
Joy Pak
Pesha Rudnick

Lone Tree Arts Center
Lisa Rigsby Peterson

Milwaukee Repertory Theater
Brent Hazelton

Phamaly Theatre Company
Chris Silberman

Primary Stages
Andrew Leynse

Rogue Machine Theatre
Henry Murray

Roundabout Theatre Company
Jill Rafeson

Samuel French
Amy Marsh

South Coast Repertory
Henry Haskell
Pat Haskell
Marc Masterson

Stuart Thompson Productions
Kevin Emrick

Su Teatro
Tony Garcia
Tanya Mote


Theatre Aspen
Paige Price

Theatre Works
Susan Fairbrook

Utah Shakespeare Festival
Nancy Melich

William Morris Endeavor Entertainment
Derek Zasky

Appendix I: PPF 2013 Industry Guest List



Industry Guests

59E59 Theaters <i>Elysa Kleinhans</i>	Goodman Theatre <i>Steve Scott</i>
American Conservatory Theater <i>Michael Paller</i>	Harden-Curtis Associates <i>Mary Harden</i> <i>Scott Edwards</i>
Alliance Theatre <i>Celise Kalke</i>	Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust <i>Jim Steinberg</i> <i>Lori Watson</i>
American Theatre Critics Association <i>Jonathan Levine</i>	Hartford Stage <i>Elizabeth Williamson</i>
Arizona Theatre Company <i>David Ira Goldstein</i>	HowlRound <i>Polly Carl</i> <i>Joel Veenstra</i>
Berkeley Repertory Theatre <i>Madeline Oldham</i> <i>Julie McCormick</i>	International City Theatre <i>caryn desai</i>
California State University, Long Beach <i>Andrea Caban</i>	L.A. Theatreworks <i>Anna Lyse Erikson</i>
Center Theatre Group <i>Pier Carlo Talenti</i>	Laguna Playhouse <i>Lojo Simon</i>
Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park <i>Blake Robinson</i>	LaJolla Playhouse <i>Shirley Fishman</i> <i>Gabe Greene</i>
Counter-Balance Theatre <i>Annie Loui</i>	Lakewood High School Performing Arts <i>Barbara Barkemeyer</i>
Creative Artists Agency <i>Corinne Hayoun</i>	Manhattan Theatre Club <i>Jerry Patch</i>
Denver Center Theatre Company <i>Kent Thompson</i> <i>Bruce Sevy</i>	Milwaukee Repertory Theatre <i>Brent Hazelton</i> <i>Matt Bartel</i>
DeWalt Management <i>Suzanne DeWalt</i>	Mitchell K. Stubbs & Associates <i>Mitchell Stubbs</i>
Dramatists Play Service <i>Stephen Sultan</i> <i>Judy Sultan</i>	Mixed Blood Theatre/NNPN <i>Jack Reuler</i>
Elizabeth George Foundation <i>Elizabeth George</i> <i>Barbara Fryer</i>	National Endowment for the Arts <i>Ralph Remington</i>
Gallant Management <i>Lisa Gallant</i>	Northlight Theatre <i>Kristin Leahey</i>
Geffen Playhouse <i>Kristina Leach</i>	Oregon Contemporary Theatre <i>Tara Wibrew</i>

PlayPenn
Paul Mesejian

Playwrights Foundation
Jeffrey Lo

Playwrights Horizons
Alec Strum

Playwrights Realm
Renee Blinkwolt

Primary Stages
Casey Childs
Andrew Leynse

Roundabout Theatre Company
Jill Ratson
Joshua Fiedler

Samuel French
Amy Rose Marsh

SDB Partners
Susan Schwarz

Second Stage Theatre
Kyle Frisina

Shakespeare Orange County
David Schaffer

Station3 Entertainment
Henry Huang

Theatre @ Boston Court
Jessica Kubzansky
Aaron Henne
Emilie Beck

Theatre Communications Group
Kathy Sova

Toft Lake Center/Hedgebrook
Liz Engelman

United Talent Agency
Darren Boghosian
Andrew Cannava
David Kramer
Theresa Peters
Mark Subias
Melissa Well

William Morris Endeavor
Derek Zasky

Yale Repertory Theatre
Jennifer Kiger

Actors
Wade Allain-Marcus
Cate Campbell
Jennifer Christopher
Lenne Klingaman
Alex Knox

Park Krausen
Angie Light
Lisa Morgan
Sasha Surdyke
Amelia White

Designers

Tom Buderwitz
Sara Clement
Vincent Olivieri

Directors

Nick Avila
Barbara Bain
Drew Barr
Bart DeLorenzo
Gavin Cameron-Webb
Art Manke
Marya Mazor
Casey Stangl
Paul Willis

Dramaturgs

Elyse Griffin

Playwrights

David Adjmi
Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa
Sofia Alvarez
Adam Bock
Jennifer Barclay
Sheila Callaghan
Jonathan Caren
Julia Cho
Larissa FastHorse
Dorothy Fortenberry
Michael Golamco
Jose Cruz Gonzalez
Sarah Gubbins
Jennifer Haley
Leslye Headland
Beth Henley
Stephanie Hutchinson
Sara Israel
Tom Jacobson
Nick Jones
Rolin Jones
Jonathan Josephson
Lisa Kenner
Deborah Wicks LaPuma
Eric Loo
Jennifer Maisel
Ronald McCants
Robert Menna
Meg Miroshnik
Megan Mostyn-Brown
Henry Murray
Teresa O'Neill
christopher oscar peña
Daria Polatin
Andrew Saito
Steve Serpas
Val Stulman
Julie Tosh
Steve Yockey

SCR Founding Artists

John-David Keller
Hal Landon

Stage Managers

Julie Haber