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Welcome: The Patti Pace Performance Festival

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The City Limits

When you consider the radiance, that it does not withhold
itself but pours its abundance without selection into every
nook and cranny not overhung or hidden; when you consider

that birds' bones make no awful noise against the light but
lie low in the light as in a high testimony; when you consider
the radiance, that it will look into the guiltiest

swervings of the weaving heart and bear itself upon them,
not flinching into disguise or darkening; when you consider
the abundance of such resource as illuminates the glow-blue

bodies and gold-skeined wings of flies swarming the dumped
guts of a natural slaughter or the coil of shit and in no
way winces from its storms of generosity; when you consider

that air or vacuum, snow or shale, squid or wolf, rose or lichen,
each is accepted into as much light as it will take, then
the heart moves roomier, the man stands and looks about, the

leaf does not increase itself above the grass, and the dark
work of the deepest cells is of a tune with May bushes
and fear lit by the breadth of such calmly turns to praise.

—A. R. Ammons

Welcome to the Patti Pace Performance Festival! Thank you all for coming
from far and wide to gather here. We have much to share and learn from one
another. I hope that you will immerse yourselves in the festival process and take
the time to meet new people, reconnect with old friends, colleagues, and men-

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tors, and discuss your departmental programs and the performance work presented and created during your stay.

The Patti Pace Performance Festival is a conference that gathers scholars, artists, faculty, graduate, and undergraduate students from various theatre and communication departments across the country to one central location. The festival features a non-competitive learning environment, where discovery, play, and experimentation provide participants a safe space to experiment with the product and process of theatre, performance, and communication.

As conceived by Dr. Patricia Pace and several of her colleagues, the Georgia Performance Festival was to be a spring retreat that “[brought] together teachers, students, scholars, and artists in a community of discovery” (*The Patti Pace Performance Festival*). The first festival was held in St. Simons Island, Georgia February 2 – 3, 2001. Due to her untimely death on November 17, 2000, Patti was never able to attend the festival. The festival was given her name and has since been organized by her colleagues and friends in different locations across the central and eastern United States.

The Patti Pace Performance Festival is a two-day (Friday and Saturday) celebratory event held annually in the spring. During the event, participating schools present faculty and student produced theatre and performance work. Each performance presented is paired with a faculty respondent, who has had time prior to the event to communicate with the directors and prepare a response, which is shared immediately after each performance presentation. The larger group is then given the opportunity to critically engage and discuss the performance as well.

Each year the festival hosts a guest scholar or two: one who delivers a keynote lecture engaging the chosen conference theme and another who leads the students in a performance workshop. In the workshop, students work in groups with attendees from other schools to collaboratively create group performances that embody their interpretations of the festival theme. With anywhere from four to six hours to prepare, students present their workshop performances on Saturday evening.

For me (and likely many of you as well), a festival was the entryway into the world of performance studies. It was 1999 when Patti packed me and four other women, who were performing in her adaption of Christina Rossetti's poem, *Goblin Market*, into a cramped van to attend the *Petit Jean Performance Festival*. “Come buy, come buy!” After that festival, I knew performance studies was my future.

Melanie Kitchens O'Meara is Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication at Augusta University (formerly named Georgia Regents University). She continues to organize the Patti Pace Performance Festival, which will next take place at Georgia Southern University January 29-30, 2016.

What got me to that moment was finding Patti in the first place. It was my sophomore year in college at Georgia Southern University when I found her tucked away in a corner of the Communication Arts trailer. She was the Director of Theatre and Performance at the time, and her office was connected to a black box, a small performance space where she spent countless hours directing, teaching, and mentoring students like myself. How blessed we all were to learn and play with Patti. Her frizzy strawberry hair out of place, a loose flowing dress with an earthy tone, a big smile and a witty comment under her breath. She skips through the hallways of my memory, a quirky spark of life exuding whimsical brilliance and contagious joy. There is no one quite like your first mentor—like Patti. Thanks to Patti, festivals keep me enthusiastic and invigorated about performance studies and what it means to *do* performance. I am deeply honored to be the organizer of the Patti Pace Performance Festival, and I am forever grateful to Patti for introducing me to our performance festival community.

I have been organizing the Patti Pace Performance Festival for the past seven years. During my first six years as organizer, the festival was hosted twice by each of the following schools: Louisiana State University, where Patti taught briefly as a Visiting Assistant Professor; Southern Illinois University Carbondale, where Patti received her Ph.D.; and Georgia Southern University, where Patti taught as an Assistant and Associate Professor for many years.

I am beyond excited to welcome you all to the 2014 Patti Pace Performance Festival here in my hometown of Augusta, GA at my home institution, Georgia Regents University Augusta. To be able to host my festival family in the place that I call home and welcome you into my community (the intermingling of communities) is quite special.

Attending the festival this year are sixty-five students and thirteen faculty members from eleven participating universities including: Georgia College and State University, Georgia Regents University Augusta, Ithaca College, Kennesaw State University, Louisiana State University, Northwestern University, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Temple University, University of North Texas, University of South Carolina, and Xavier University of Louisiana. We also have several students from two local high schools, a high school in Ohio, and a high school in Kentucky. Welcome to you all.

Please join me in giving our guest scholars a special welcome. The keynote lecture titled “Activists, Bodies, and Political Arguments” will be delivered by Dr. Jason Del Gandio of Temple University and the workshop titled “MY AUGUSTA: A Workshop in Community Engagement” will be led by Dr. Gretchen Stein Rhodes of Louisiana State University.

The theme for the 2014 Patti Pace Performance Festival is “Performance and Community Intervention,” and I think it urges us to consider the importance of performance festivals to our performance studies community. These are spaces and places where performance programs dance, and we can see and

hear the tune of the varied and different musical numbers as they collide. Performance scholars, read and respected on the page, are here in the flesh having ordinary conversations about their love of performance. Almost instantaneously, students make magic in this place with their bodies and voices and a few performance tools. The non-competitive and safe space of the festival creates, nurtures, and sustains friendships and mentorships that better the work we do as performance scholars and artists. "Performance and Community Intervention" also reminds us that we are part of larger, multiple and varied, communities, and that our performance work impacts people in both our immediate communities and in communities at large. How we alter and are altered by our communities and the people we encounter within those communities matters.

I leave you with a little something adapted from a David Byrne song by another one of my favorite mentors, my colleague and (most importantly) my friend, Michael Bowman.

Not everyone notices as things drift slowly in and out of focus
Being in the theatre is more important than knowing what is going on in the performance
The information in the theatre is crowded
It builds up because it cannot get out of the theatre
The performers talk, we can still hear what they said a minute ago
This happens in any closed room, the information never leaves it
Until someone goes out to get a coke or a drink of water
Then some information escapes as they leave and enters the hallway
When the performance is over and everyone leaves the theatre
The accumulated information leaves with them and spreads out across the campus
to become forever a part of the landscape
The performance is a gift to the surrounding community

("Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned")

Works Cited

- Ammons, A.R. "The City Limits." *Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology*. 2nd ed. Ed. Helen Vender. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002. 360-1.
- "Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned: The Rennes-le-Chateau 'Mystery.'" Dir. Michael Bowman. HopKins Black Box Theatre, Baton Rouge. November 2002. Performance.

Melanie Kitchens O'Meara

Welcome

The Patti Pace Performance Festival. "Performing the Child's Body." Festival Directors Amy Burt, Scott Dillard, Bruce Henderson. St. Simons Island, February 15 – 16, 2002. Festival Program.



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