

The Last Frontier Theatre Conference 2013 Evaluations Report



Karina Becker, Rachel Gregory, and Bill McAllister in Anchorage Community Theatre's production of Rand Higbee's "At Home With The Clarks."

All photos taken by Jamie Lang for Prince William Sound Community College.

Introduction



Each year, Conference participants have the opportunity to give their feedback on their experience in Valdez via an online survey. The responses are all analyzed here; this document then becomes a large part of planning for the subsequent year.

The first ten pages are a breakdown of participants' numerical rankings of various topics. Scores from previous years are included, as are initial reactions and plans for 2014. After that are quotes from the participants, sorted first by question, then more specifically by the topic of the response. My analysis is throughout the document.

Coordinating the Last Frontier Theatre Conference remains the great honor of my life. Much like the program itself, continued improvement is a constant goal. This document is where that growth starts for 2014.

Conference Coordinator Dawson Moore

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Information Received Prior to the Event

Our goal is to maintain ongoing communication with everyone planning to attend. Particularly for new participants, the size of the event and remoteness of its location can be daunting. To help allay this, all participants correspond directly with the Coordinator, and are repeatedly encouraged to contact him with any questions.

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>
Excellent	71%	66%	61.5%	45%	75%	58%	63.8%	55.1%
Good	20%	24%	29%	39%	20%	28%	27.6%	39.1%
Satisfactory	7%	8%	4.5%	12%	3%	6%	6.9%	4.3%
Unsatisfactory	2%	0%	2%	2%	0%	4%	1.7%	0.0%
N/A	0%	0%	3%	2%	2%	2%	0%	0%

While the 55.1% excellent ratings first jump out as the second lowest percentage in our history, the combined good and excellent scores are 94.2%, better than any year other than 2010, and there were no unsatisfactory rankings. Generally, communication was solid this year.

Our Goal for improvement for the 2014 Conference



This year we didn't put our program on-line prior to the event (which we have for the past two years), and it was missed, leading to multiple comments that people wished they knew with whom they'd be working.

There was also some confusion about the workings of the Play Lab process... this is clearly stated in multiple places, but more effort will be expended to make sure that people are taking in the provided information.

The information on housing can also be a little clearer... to some extent, you can make noise, but you can't make people hear it.

New York-based playwright Karen L. Lewis prepares her script for the Play Lab.

Conference Schedule

The ambitious slate of activities for the week provides participants with more activities than they can possibly attend. Daytime activities go from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. every day, with two to three choices during any time slot. Evenings contain both a production and late night theatre activities.

	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>
Excellent	73%	67%	55%	59%	50%	50%	62%
Good	23%	29%	38%	39%	46%	36.7%	32%
Satisfactory	4%	3%	7%	1%	2%	13.3%	6%
Unsatisfactory	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
N/A	0%	1%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%

The schedule is always a love/hate situation for the participants: they love how much there is to do, but hate that they have to miss things. They love that there's always something going on, but bemoan that there is no way they can be conscious for all of it. This year we returned to the format we used in 2011 and before, and achieved equivalent numbers.



Seattle-based Featured Artist Bryan Willis leads a workshop on community building

Our Goal for improvement for the 2014 Conference

With the continued ascendance in popularity of the Fringe Festival, we are going to experiment with moving the morning start time back to 10:00 a.m. and nights show curtains to 8:00 p.m. This is tentative, and creates other potential issues, but theatre people are not morning people, as a rule, so it's worth the effort.

Conference Website

Aside from direct contact with the Coordinator, the website is our main means of distributing information to participants prior to the Conference, and of publicizing the event. Information contained includes the Conference schedule; Featured Artist biographies; Play Lab selections and information; a “how the Conference works” essay (updated regularly); registration form; list of financial benefactors; available local discounts for participants; and a link to contact the Conference Coordinator. We also use it to facilitate programs such as the Monologue Workshop by making material available to participants there prior to their arrival in Valdez. Lastly, it is used to as a historical record of the event. Programs, photos, and other information give evidence of the Conference’s rich history.

	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>
Excellent	52%	51.5%	52%	45%	46%	48.3%	49.3%
Good	27%	22%	21%	35%	30%	41.7%	46.4%
Satisfactory	4%	4.5%	10%	12%	11%	6.7%	0%
Unsatisfactory	0%	0%	2%	0%	2%	0%	0%
N/A	17%	22%	15%	8%	11%	3.3%	4.3%

These are the best numbers for the website in the history of the event, largely due to a continued focus on keeping it current and a solid redesign in 2011.

Our Goal for improvement for the 2014 Conference

We have applied for an NEH grant to bolster the historical information available on the website. No other major changes are planned.



Anchorage's TossPot Productions' production of Arthur M. Jolly's "A Gulag Mouse."

Play Lab

Every year, the overall success of the Conference flows from the quality of the Play Lab. Experience has shown that when there are good plays being presented by strong writers, the positive effects are felt in every other aspect of the event. The continued improvement in the quality of the Play Lab is our top priority.

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>
Excellent	71%	81%	76%	71%	77%	87%	75%	80%
Good	26%	15%	20%	25%	23%	5%	20%	16%
Satisfactory	3%	4%	2%	2%	0%	2%	2%	3%
Unsatisfactory	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%
N/A	0%	0%	2%	2%	0%	4%	0%	1%

We had an excellent year in the Lab, with return attendees citing the high quality of the scripts in the Lab. The reduced cast size of the last two years has kept actors more busy, which is generally their preference. The caliber of writers was, overall, the highest in the history of the event; while this is a goal, it comes with additional the challenge of raised expectations.



Actors in the Lab reading of Pittsburgh-based playwright Eoin Carney's "Lawful Moral Persons" wait as panelist Jayne Wenger introduces the reading.

Our Goal for improvement for the 2014 Conference

The submission deadline for the Conference has been moved to November, nearly two months earlier, to assure that there will be time for additional screening of play submissions. While script quality was not an issue this year, it is better if there are more opinions on what plays are presented than just the Coordinator's (who is the sole final decider). In a small tweak, next year stage instructions readers will be provided with uniform text for introducing their readings.

We will also consider how to improve the individual respondents program, possibly requiring panelists to read those scripts in advance, and possibly scheduling a time for the meeting prior to the event. This year, panelist assignments are also to be included in the overall program, which should help authors feel more prepared for their experience in Valdez.

Panels and Classes

While the Play Lab is the primary educational component of the daytime programming, the Conference also offers classes and panel discussions.

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>
Excellent	55%	73%	58.5%	52%	62%	68%	59%	44%
Good	17%	22%	29%	37%	17%	24%	31%	34%
Satisfactory	13%	0%	4.5%	7%	7%	2%	7%	9%
Unsatisfactory	0%	0%	1.5%	0%	1%	2%	0%	0%
N/A	15%	5%	6.5%	4%	13%	4%	3%	13%

The rankings were marginally down this year. While the comments didn't provide a clear reason for this, my suspicion is that there were too many similar classes that focused on writing exercises. We work each year to provide variety; this year we may have fallen a little short in that area. That said, 78% good to excellent rankings is not bad.



Kia Corthron leading her class "Getting Unstuck."

Our Goal for improvement for the 2014 Conference

The early morning writing class (8:00 a.m.) will be dropped from the schedule. We'll aim to have better variety.

Evening Performances

There are evening performances every night, staging a wide variety of work. The focus is on playwrights developed at the Conference and work by the Featured Artist staff. The shows provide both education and entertainment for our participants. They are also our main connection with the community of Valdez, who often cannot take the week off to attend the day-time events due to work, but are available to see shows in the evening.

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>
Excellent	55%	65%	56%	23%	61%	57%	18%	51%
Good	39%	23%	30%	44%	34%	35%	39%	38%
Satisfactory	6%	6%	12.5%	29%	5%	2%	25%	7%
Unsatisfactory	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	2%	15%	1%
N/A	0%	6%	1.5%	2%	0%	2%	3%	3%

The line-up was very solid this year. A number of participants cited enjoying the return of the Playwrights Evening as a good thing, and the general tenor was that the line-up was stronger than 2012. It was also good to have an evening that honored the history of the Conference on Wednesday, and there will be an effort to continue to make this a part of the schedule.

Our Goal for improvement for the 2014 Conference

Shows will probably be switching to an 8:00 p.m. start time, so it will be important to select shows with a running time of 90 minutes or less.



Arthur Miller's sister, Joan Copeland, presented a reading of her brother's play "I Can't Remember Anything," and is pictured here with Joel Vig and Dick Reichman.

Fringe Festival

The Fringe ran Sunday through Thursday at a new location, the Fat Mermaid, under Bostin Christopher and Janna Shaw for the second year.

	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>
Excellent	35%	27%	38%	38%	28%	33.9%	33.3%
Good	12%	28.5%	26%	29%	22%	25.4%	31.9%
Satisfactory	8%	11%	6%	3%	13%	11.9%	11.6%
Unsatisfactory	2%	5%	0%	3%	2%	3.4%	2.9%
N/A	43%	28.5%	30%	27%	35%	25.4%	20.3%

The percentage of people who aren't involved in the Fringe seems to drop each year, and it is one of the reasons why we are going to go with a later start time for the traditional Conference events. The new space provided challenges: the first two days it was unbelievably hot, and it was a little too small. On the other hand, it was picturesque, well-situated in the town, and had food available.



Our Goal for improvement for the 2014 Conference

Largely this will remain the purview of the coordinators. We may work up a methodology for getting actor's interest noted beforehand; there are always a couple of complaints from people who feel that they were neglected. I doubt it's possible to ever completely address this, but as it becomes more central to the Conference, the increased early clarity of what the Fringe actually is will be important to distribute prior to the event.

Featured Artists

The goal is to create a group of professionals from multiple aspects of theatre who can provide attendees with insight and inspiration. We strive to involve featured artists who are accessible, intelligent, good-natured, and talented. These people are picked to suit the collaborative spirit of the Conference and the education we are endeavoring to provide. There is also an effort to involve Alaskans on the staff, both from within the University system and outside of it.

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>
Excellent	62%	76%	81%	69%	77%	70%	67.2%	57.4%
Good	33%	20%	17%	27%	23%	26%	26%	33.8%
Satisfactory	5%	4%	2%	2%	0%	2%	5.1%	5.9%
Unsatisfactory	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	1.7%	0%
N/A	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	2.9%

While the numbers are slightly down, it's not a statistically significant amount.



Featured Artists Lisa Soland, Craig Pospisil, and David Edgecombe respond to a play reading.

Our Goal for improvement for the 2014 Conference

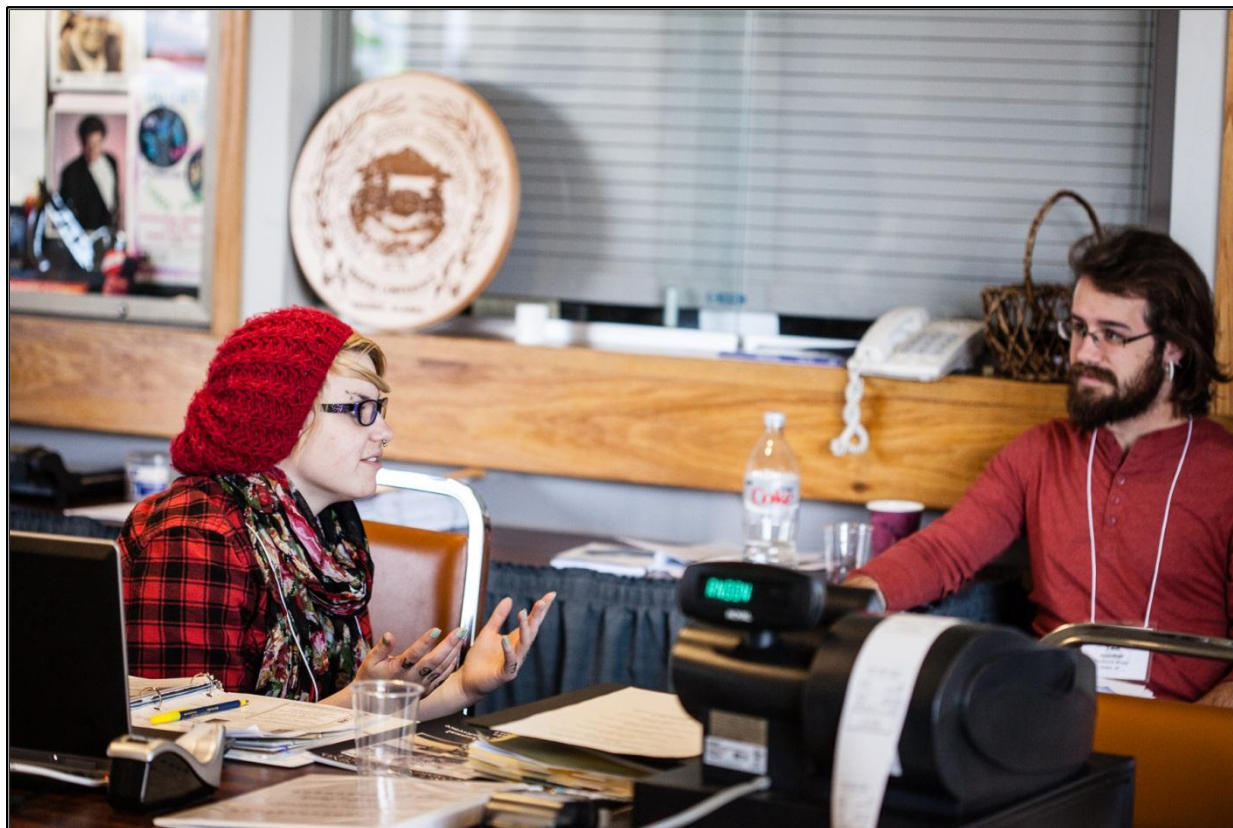
The staff for next year is largely already determined through a rotational system. There will continue to be an emphasis on having around 50% women on the staff, and racial diversity... and possibly age diversity, which was raised by one respondent who felt our paneling team was too old...

Conference Staff

The staff is the backbone of any quality organization. PWSCC strives to have the highest quality staff possible year-round, and the Theatre Conference is no exception. Through staff meetings and information packets, we make sure that all of our staff is qualified and capable of handling anything that comes their way (or finding someone who can).

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>
Excellent	94%	100%	98.5%	94%	100%	94%	93.4%	94.2%
Good	6%	0%	1.5%	6%	0%	6%	3.3%	4.3%
N/A	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3.3%	1.4%

Staff rankings are always high, and this year is no exception.



PWSCC staff members Cori Taylor and Ted Hooker at the registration desk.

Our Goal for improvement for the 2014 Conference

Due to the shortened pre-production period that our May deadlines gave us, there was probably one or two meetings too few to prep the staff, though this didn't have any obvious ramifications. There will be a couple of changes to how we run the staffing, but they will be essentially unnoticeable to the participants.

Food

We provide coffee, tea, and snack cookies all day at the Conference, in addition to a free daily lunch. We stopped asking for feedback on this in 2008, but decided to check in this year to see if the catered lunches were appreciated.

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2013</u>
Excellent	33%	50%	26.5%	37.7%
Good	20%	28%	47%	47.8%
Satisfactory	39%	30%	23.5%	8.7%
Unsatisfactory	8%	0%	1.5%	1.4%
N/A	0%	2%	1.5%	4.3%

The category is still too broad, but we got the general feedback we were looking for; i.e. 85.5% of the people ranked the food good to excellent, which is the most positive response we've received in the history of the event. .

Our Goal for improvement for the 2014 Conference

There are no changes planned for this upcoming year. Working with a lunch caterer was a drastic improvement over previous years where we worked with the local supermarket's deli.



The lunchroom is a common gathering place for conversation.

1. How did you hear about the Conference?

This data backs up common knowledge, that a majority of the participants are returning ones. The question should be moved over to the participating Lab playwrights next year, as that's where a majority of our new participants come from each year. If there's anything to be taken from this, it's that greater outreach needs to be done to Prince William Sound Community College's parent organization, UAA.

Answer Options	Response Percent
I'm a past participant.	54.5%
Friend recommendation	18.2%
Dramatists Guild	7.8%
The Playwrights Center website	5.2%
Cyrano's Theatre Company	2.6%
UAA Glee Club	1.3%
TBA Theatre	1.3%
UAA Theatre	1.3%
Googled "playwriting submissions"	1.3%
Playwrights Binge	1.3%
Out North Theatre	1.3%
Anchorage Opera	1.3%
Anchorage Daily News	1.3%
Anchorage Community Theatre	1.3%



Valdez singer Sarah Tapp in the Acting for Singers Workshop, with Nancy Caudill, Juliana Osinchuk, and Kim Estes.

2. Please rank the following aspects of the Conference.

Responses to these questions are listed on pages 2-11.

3. Are there any other types of activities you would like to see added to future Conferences?

Responses in this section indicate some specific areas of study that participants would like to see addressed in future years. Often, these classes have been presented in other years, but the curriculum is kept varied from year to year because of the number of repeat attendees.

No Suggestions

- “No. I loved it.”
- “None.”
- “No.”

Writing Classes

- “Any workshops in the afternoon dedicated to writing new material.”
- “I'd love more participatory panels in the afternoons, like the devised workshop, that are more hands-on for non-actors.”
- “More panels and classes.”
- “More small-scale interactive sessions with key featured artists.”
- “The more hands-on playwriting panels, the better.”
- “More Devising Theatre with a devised Theatre piece on the last day. More writing stuff.”
- “An intense workshop of a few plays that are then showcased at the end of the week in a more formal way.” *(we will discuss this with the teachers from last year; my general feeling is that this is opening a unnecessarily complicated can of worms, but it's worth discussing)*

Social Activities

- “I miss some sort of gathering and meet-and-greet before the conference begins. It would be nice, for instance, if there was some sort of random grouping and a task so that playwrights could get to know each other and then decide whose plays to see, etc. My suggestion would be some sort of synopsis workshop first thing, or even on Sunday, on the plays to be developed, and then maybe six or seven groups, and then remix and test the synopses among our peers. This would 1) introduce the playwrights to a few of

the others, 2) introduce us all to some of the [readings] upcoming, 3) help us with creating synopses.”

- “More socials akin to the glacier cruise and the gala -- I felt I had too little time to mingle.”
- “Maybe some kind of informal work-in-progress sharing group? That might be neat.”

Acting and Movement Classes

- “Improv acting classes could be fun and beneficial... And writers could listen in for inspiration.”
- “As an actor, I would have loved to have the opportunity to work with some of the guest artists who are also directors, perhaps give them the opportunity to direct some of the play-slam plays in a workshop format?”
- “I am always really psyched about yoga and, this year, hooping. But I just cannot be conscious that early. Can there be a later class too?”
- “More classes that are one day, with no prior commitment or preparation. I find myself unable to go to lots of things due to rehearsals and if there were a way to suddenly pop into something, I would do it more often.”
- “More movement. After sitting through so many plays, my whole body needed a stretch. Maybe put the yoga class at a later time during the day? Then I would have gone every day!”

Evening Productions

- “I enjoyed the Overnighters in the past (although I understand why it isn't done anymore).” *(this is a potential future show)*
- “Weather permitting... stage some performance events outside.” *(difficult to plan on)*
- “Maybe some local native artists performing music if possible. But not necessary.”
- “There should be other options than the Fringe--how about a talent show or open mic? The fringe got boring and super clique-y by Wednesday.” *(Fringe really covers our late-night needs; this person's personal issues are likely, for the most part, personal)*
- “Breakfast!”
- “Staged plays instead of readings.” *(we're not changing this aspect of our programming)*
- “Would love directors to come to the conference to direct the plays - like directors are available at the Great Plains Theatre Conference.” *(we have a few available, but there are no resources for bringing more, and the one year that we had them for each Lab show, it was largely not a positive experience)*

4. Which Featured Artist was most helpful to you in your time here?

The details of this response section are not included in this public report. It is my feeling that this information is for me to assist in staffing choices for the future. The artistic staff of this event remains consistently strong, and publicly weighing their comparative merits is not fair to that team.



The artistic staff's wrap-up meeting was held at the Coordinator's house this year, and here they're pictured on the back deck with the snow covered back yard in the background.

5. What did you enjoy most about the Conference?

Many respondents listed multiple aspects in their answers, so each individual response might not be a person's single favorite part (for example, 'Valdez' might not have been the absolute best part of someone's Theatre Conference, but they wanted to make sure they cited its importance to them). Much of what is to be enjoyed in attending the Conference is not a specific part of it, but the overall experience.

Generally, the most important part of this event is the people. I joke that my real job as Coordinator is to trick people into coming, give them stuff to do, and then let them educate each other. While this is obviously an overstatement, there are seeds of the truth in it.

The People, Atmosphere, etc.

- “All the different ways in which theatre was celebrated and getting to meet people from all over the world.”
- “The inspiration that comes from being surrounded by like-minded people.”
- “Simply put, the people.”
- “What didn't I enjoy!? I think my favorite part is always the people. Reconnecting with old friends and making new ones.”
- “Meeting people.”
- “Working with so many varied artists who were all willing to ‘play,’ adjust, rewrite, take direction, go for broke, offer suggestions, and strive to let the plays be heard.”
- “Watching actors, playwrights, - artists of all types - sharing and learning is a totally safe, nurturing, constructive environment.”
- “Meeting so many interesting/friendly/gifted writers and actors. Making friendships and connections I wouldn't have had without the Conference. The combination of dedication and fun.”
- “Inclusive, supportive and constructive sense of camaraderie.”
- “When there was time to meet, greet, and hang out with new friends.”
- “The ability to focus on theater for a whole week in an environment that feels welcome to all.”
- “And finally - the people!”
- “Interaction with featured artists.”
- “I love the people and the people involved.”



The audience at the Fringe Festival.

- “The people, directors, actors, participants.”
- “The talent level, range, and enthusiasm of the participants. And the mountains.”
- “Everyone is SO NICE.”
- “I learned so much from the writers and actors I interacted with every day. I was inspired, rejuvenated, and exhausted (in the best way). I loved the opportunity to dive in to new works as an actor.”
- “The chance to meet many inspiring people involved in the American theatre industry.”
- “The collegial atmosphere.”
- “Meeting other playwrights.”
- “Meeting great people.”
- “The friendly people who seemed genuinely kind.”
- “Networking and being in Alaska.”
- “The cruise!!! I also met some fabulous people that I intend to stay connected to.”
- “The camaraderie.”
- “Meeting new colleagues and seeing old friends.”
- “Making friends and professional contacts.”
- “Always enjoy seeing everyone and meeting new people! i love the social elements sprinkled throughout the labs.”
- “The people. Just the greatest.”
- “Intellectual stimulation and great sense of personal connection with participants.”
- “The camaraderie with the Featured Artists and playwrights.”
- “I enjoyed being immersed in the ocean of incredible performers.”
- “The community is always the most enjoyable aspect to me.”

Evening Performances

- “The evening performances (Featured Writers in particular - so happy it came back this year), and the play labs.”
- “The evening performances.”
- “The evening performances were much stronger this year than last year.”
- “I thought the evening performances were excellent this year. A good variety of plays and not one clinker in the bunch.”
- “The Arthur Miller reading.”
- “This year in particular the evening performances were all spectacular. I was taken by all of them. The Sunday performance likely being my favorite.”
- “*Red* was so good.”
- “This year there was a marvelously strong set of evening plays.”

Play Lab

- “This year both plays I read were really of the highest caliber, which shows the overall arc of quality trending the right way for this Conference.”
- “Saw some really excellent plays in the Play Lab - the good ones this year were really good!”
- “The Play Lab - one of the best crops of plays I've ever seen.”
- “Play lab and seeing all the works in progress.”
- “Quality of work.”
- “Dynamic discussions. Getting together with amazing fellow artists and discovering new, exciting plays.”
- “I loved the plays I was given, particularly *Pardon My Invasion* and *Searching for the Sign*. Thank you for the leads! I love having lines!”
- “The one-on-ones with the writers.”
- “The exposure to the creative process.”
- “The plays.”
- “Panelists Bryan Willis and Kara Corthron were incredible. I loved having the chance to see plays morning, noon and night. So helpful to aspiring playwrights to be immersed in it.”
- “Seeing strong new work.”
- “The Play Lab was excellent this year- almost every play was strong- great plays, great readers- maybe the best one yet! Thank you, Dawson- you made magic!”
- “The heart of the conference, to me, was the Play Lab readings, and I was very pleased with the way they were done. The play-labs.”
- “The overall quality of the plays was higher than I expected, and a lot of the feedback sessions were productive.”
- “The Play Lab should be the heart of the conference. I was somewhat disappointed in my own, insofar as the feedback/responding was concerned, the cast did their job well and it was nice to hear it.”
- “The quality of plays is very high.”
- “The Play Labs were superb.”
- “The careful feedback I got!”
- “The new plays.”

Monologue Workshop & Ten-Minute Play Slam

- “The monologue workshop! Really awesome to see new work come to life so quickly and in such a diverse collection!”
- “Play Slam.”
- “The last day--everything was practiced and that made for amazing performances and I learned a lot about monologues and it made me want to return just for that!”

Staff

- “The staff was also awesome.”
- “The staff was uniformly amazing.”

In General

- “I also enjoyed the general atmosphere.”
- “The play lab, meeting new friends, spending time with professionals, the evening events...good god--just about everything. Not to mention the beauty of Valdez.”
- “There seemed to be less, "fluffy stuff". More work. I really enjoyed how busy I was.”
- “Pretty much everything was terrific this year. Food was a definite improvement.”
- “The good plays and the camaraderie.”
- “Whale watching tour. Valdez!”
- “The plays--and us-all being together.”
- “The number of plays and participants. And the performances. Heard many good things about various workshops which I regret NOT attending; loved some of the ones for actors.”
- “The workshop selections were great.”
- “It's impossible to choose one thing.”
- “The variety of shows and readings available. Lots of different opportunities.”

6. What did you enjoy least?

These are specific responses to individual experiences, not automatically systemic problems that need addressing. The schedule was discussed earlier (page 3); the Fringe issues have been brought to the Fringe Coordinator's attention; and the Play Lab issues are mostly addressed later, in the playwrights' response section.

Nothing

- “N/A.”
- “Liked it all.”
- “Nothing.”
- “Loved it all.”
- “Um... nothing.”
- “Nada.”
- “Can't think of anything.”
- “Can't think of anything!”
- “The fact that I had to leave. “



Jaron Carlson and Mark Robokoff in the Cyrano's Theatre Company production of John Logan's "Red."

- “That it's so short!”
- “There was nothing not to like- the perfect weather had a lot to do with it- maybe the best weather of 21 years?”
- “Everything was Excellent!”
- “Uhh... Negative self-talk? Not your problem.”

Schedule

- “My time was very limited and I didn't get to hear as many plays as I would have liked.”
- “Waking up for the early play labs was a bit of a drag, but only because my housemates weren't inclined to lie down before the wee hours.”
- “Not being able to see more plays.”
- “Although it's probably unavoidable because of how tight the schedule was it was tough to make it in time to the 9 am readings and there were a few days when I just couldn't pull it off.”
- “That I had to leave early.”
- “Early morning call times - but I don't know what you can do about that.”
- “Too many conflict events. Had to miss a lot of stuff.”
- “Even with the midnight sun, there doesn't seem to be enough hours in the day to absorb everything going on. I need a clone of myself...”
- “Early mornings. But I recognize the necessity. It just would be nice if things didn't start until 10am, given the fact that it's impossible to go to bed early.”
- “Didn't get to see half of the Play Lab plays I wanted to see.”
- “Missing out on many of the play labs because of conflict. This can't be fixed. Thanks.”
- “Never enough time to do everything you want!”
- “Never enough time to do/see everything I want to - could you look into bending time and space for next year?”
- “Not being able to hear all the play readings and a few of the evening performances.”

Laura Crow and Jill Sowerwine in the Fringe.



- “I wished for more hours in the day and more energy in my mind and body. The conference seemed to run so smoothly and all the more negative aspects seemed to have been addressed successfully.”
- “Timing. Prefer June.”
- “I didn't have enough time to enjoy the panels and more Play Lab things.”
- “I was greatly perturbed by one featured artist's admission that he "does not read the plays before the staged readings." This person was one of my panelists as well. While I understand why he would do this in that 99 percent of typical audience members do not read a play before seeing it, I felt for the purposes of this conference it is unhelpful, dismissive, and shows a lack of regard and consideration for playwrights trying to get the best feedback possible.”

Fringe Festival

- “I thought the new location for the Fringe was not fully conducive for it. It has grown such in popularity that it demands a space big enough to handle the crowds that attend. Plus, it is much better to have better isolation from noise. Which is one of the advantages that the Glacier Sound Inn was much better at in both respects. If the Conference is going to be in May again, I would suggest finding a slightly larger, quieter venue.”
- “I wish there had been a bonfire. Also, I wish there had been Fringe events on Friday and maybe even Saturday night.”
- “The Fringe this year... the pieces were too long and too serious. At the end of a long play Lab day- we just need to watch and see silly things. And where was the museum night? Missed that!”
- “I'm not a huge fan of the Fringe, but maybe that's just on me to not go so much.”

Housing

- “The housing part was a little confusing.”
- “Room situation -- 8 smelly guys in one small apartment, with one bathroom.”
- “Accommodations were not as spacious as in any prior year, due to the lack of community donations toward conference housing needs.”
- “The smell in the dorm rooms - it was weird.”
- “Being sick--sadly, I had the crud for most of the conference so wasn't able to participate as much as I would have liked.”
- “Having to leave early!”

Play Lab issues

- “Would have liked more age diversity in the responders to the Play Lab. Most were over 50.”
- “Panels shared with [a particular panelist].”

- “The quality of the performances, readings, and actors was very disparate.”
- “I wish I had had more Play Lab readings, but I realize that is a puzzle to put together, so no biggie. I had to work with a very unprofessional actor who arrived 15 minutes late to a rehearsal, without a script, not having read the piece, and immediately suggested that we'd postpone the rehearsal so that she could do a workshop. Kinda annoying, but not much you can do about it now.”
- “I would have liked to spend more time preparing my play for the Lab.”
- “Some of the plays were not in good enough shape to merit a reading yet. Some of the readers were not capable of performing a reading with minimal rehearsal.”
- “Play Labs at 9 am, which were empty and devoid of energy. Mine was one of those. I'd rather they go later--til 6:30 even. But there is a party vibe there and that's great, but I had two hungover actors, one of whom didn't even have a printed script for rehearsal because she was hungover and forgot it.”
- “Not getting acting roles.”
- “My actors, specifically. The actors in general were fab.”
- “The fact that the rehearsals are scheduled differently than the readings sometimes meant I would miss two readings by being at one rehearsal. Or at least it seemed that way. I could be wrong.”
- “Feeling like an outsider and what I perceived to be politics about favorite plays and playwrights.”
- “The moment one of the playwrights took the stage and began lecturing on Aristotle....”
- “Feedback on my play was short. I thought the dramaturgy sessions were weak. It was mostly about how this very unique situation was working on the Klondike play without any takeaway. Also the talkbacks after the Play Labs were very uneven. Some really engaged the audience and other respondents and the playwright and there was a discussion. My own was simply five minutes of opinion, three minutes of opinion, two minutes of opinion, let's go have lunch. It has taken the wind from my sails.”
- “The times for rehearsal and readings were a little confusing in the beginning. But, it worked.”

Specific Events

- “The 10 minute play slam was below par.”
- “I didn't go to any truly inspiring workshops--they were often pretty dull.”
- “One of the evening performances was disappointing.”
- “Hmmm, that's a toughie. Oh, yeah, locking the east end women's room so it wasn't available after the evening performance. 15 minutes open at the end of performance would be appreciated.”
- “The musical recital shouldn't be a recital but presentation of scene work on songs.”

Food

- “Honestly, the lunches. That said, it really didn't matter. Food shmoed. It wasn't a culinary conference and \$\$ is a big issue.”
- “Food was a lot better than last year, although the evening gala food seemed to be worse?”

7. What information do you wish you had prior to participating this year?

A majority of people answered nothing, a good sign. A couple of the authors in the Lab came with expectations that were not met, though they weren't promised, either. In having the strongest class in our event, the professionals in the Lab brought their past experiences with them for how their plays should be responded to in Valdez. The documents that are sent to them will be reviewed to make sure they are a fully accurate depiction of the process in Valdez.

Nothing

- “I found the information to be clear and thorough. I believe those who think otherwise probably did not read the entire document.”
- “4 x N/A.”
- “N/A. I was well-informed prior to arriving.”
- “None.”
- “There was enough information.”
- “Can't think of anything.”



Playwright Chip Bolcik and his wife Laura aboard the Wednesday evening cruise.

- “Nothing.”
- “I felt fully informed before I participated.”
- “Was happy with it as it was.”
- “Not sure how you can forewarn us on the intensity of the week. I was an emotional wreck. Simply too fabulous.”
- “You sent me everything i needed to know (although i didn't process it all- i should have- next time i will)”
- “Actually, we had all the information we needed. It would have been nice to have it just a little earlier, but I can't even really complain about that.”
- “How nice and sunny the weather was going to be. Seriously, can't think of anything, but then I am a past participant and know the ropes.”
- “I can't think of anything right now.”
- “Very well informed.”
- “I was well informed. But it was my 8th year so I'm up on it.”
- “I felt very informed.”
- “I think you supplied everything I needed.”
- “All was fine.”
- “I wish I'd taken the time to be better informed. My fault, not yours. (Didn't "get" the play slam concept; had no idea - from the name - that it'd be well executed (directed, acted, rehearsed). Didn't know the Fringe was so bon vivant. I would have reversed submissions; something to the slam instead of the fringe (which I heartily enjoyed the nights I was there; just better suited to HA HA comedies...)”
- “The information that I would have to leave once I got there. That was not in the brochure.”

Housing

- “The exact details of the housing.”
- “I found I knew much, and I went with the flow for the rest. I guess knowing there are no utensils, etc. in the dorms would be a little helpful. But with Safeway across the street, it wasn't a problem at all.”
- “I wish I'd been prepared for the nocturnal noise level in our housing.”
- “The housing part.”

Fringe Festival

- “A better sense of what the style was for the Fringe Festival.”

Clothing

- “Small, but I didn't guess the gala would be as formal as it was. A reminder to bring fancy duds would have been nice.”

- “Bring boots, and even if you don't own boots, buy a pair. There was a lot of running water due to the melting snow.”
- “I wish I had known to pack a dress!”

Play Lab info

- “I would love to get my scripts a little sooner.”
- “More information about actors who might be reading your play.”
- “I only wished to have known who my actors were in my play reading prior to arrival, but even then it was fine.”
- “I would like to have known the depth there would be to the feedback. I would like to have chattered with the primary respondent before the Play Lab. It would be best for all playwrights if, a little like a dramaturg, the lead respondent would 1) actually read the play, and 2) discuss it with the playwright before the reading. What are you curious about? What world does this play explore? What plays are in your (playwrights) oeuvre which explore similar themes? And all of this, not in a minute before the Play Lab or at lunch or in the hallway. I didn't know the respondents, nor met them until the play had been performed. A little bit of exploration before, knowing the environment and feeling safe in it for the Play Lab would make it all a much richer experience.”
- “Contact info for writers with whom I was going to be working.”
- “I'm not sure if a PDF of the entire booklet was put up this year - I forgot to check. But if it wasn't, I wish it would be, and that everyone would be notified of that fact by an email.”

Schedule

- “That the cruise on Wednesday, but you probably did tell me that.”
- “We didn't have the schedule of workshops for some reason, only got them when we got there? Would be nice to have a pdf version emailed prior to the event.”
- “Coming for the first time, I was unsure of the lay of the land, how things would be handled. That I should come to the conference center and get signed in, etc.”

Food

- “How expensive the food would be in Alaska.”
- “List of restaurants in the area.”

Justin Oller, Kristin Fernandez, and Rhiannon Johnson in TBA Theatre's production of P. Shane Mitchell's "The Memento," part of More Than Words, an evening of one-acts.



8. How was the Conference website? Any suggestions for improvements?

We got a couple of great quick fixes from this section, but do not have great ambitions for the site beyond its current set-up. It's meant as a practical place for distributing information, and it does that effectively.

No suggestions

- "Helpful and well organized."
- "Good. No improvements necessary."
- "Works for me!"
- "I thought it was well-laid out."
- "Good.....no additional thoughts."
- "Website is fine."
- "Fine. No suggestions."
- "Pretty good, but no specific suggestions."
- "I thought it was great. Did the job for me!"
- "2 x Fine."
- "Nope."
- "Fine. Nope."
- "I especially liked that the schedule was on the website."
- "I thought it was great."
- "Works for me!"
- "I did not refer to the website much for information so I don't know."
- "It was helpful, included what I needed."
- "Beautiful!"
- "Great!"
- "The website was clear, useful and very helpful."
- "Very helpful."
- "Always worked to give me the info I needed. And I love the URL."
- "Excellent."
- "I thought it was fairly easy to navigate."
- "Seems fine."

Specific Stuff to Add/Change

- "Perhaps a little more information about the weather, and about getting around Valdez (I had no idea how easy it would be, for example, to go to the supermarket)." *(this is an excellent idea and a section has been added to the orientation page.)*

- “It's great and keeps getting better! This might be a lot of unnecessary work, but maybe copies of the evening performance programs?”
- “Looks pretty good to me. If anything you may want to get a proper promotional video on your main page. Or more promotional videos and description on your main page.”
- “The information the average person would need was available, but I was pretty fuzzy on the details of how it worked for members of the Glee club.”
- “The cover page could touch on what the conference actually does. You have to go to the about button to find out what the conference does but some hints could be on the home page to draw folks in to begin with the Play Lab button doesn't tell what the Play Lab is.”
- “Maybe nice to have a bulletin board for messages other than rides.”
- “Might it be possible for people to download plays directly from the website?”
- “More graphics showing your stunning scenery... I mean the mountains and Prince William Sound.”
- “I wish I could have received email notifications when someone responded to my post.
- “Fine. As above, I wished I would have known who was who a little better, especially the respondents.”
- “I used it only a little, but it was excellent for what I needed at the time (I don't remember what it was).”

Aesthetic Comments

- “I think the website is nice, but it has a very very basic feel to it. It doesn't seem smooth. Other than a more aesthetic need I am mentioning here, the website does exactly what it needs to do.”
- “It served its purpose. I think the links all worked. Would love to see more photos.”
- “Very good. A little more interactive.”

Really About Wanted Info More Than the Website

- “I like it when the program is posted on the site before the conference begins.
- “In past years I was able to read the PDF copy of the program ahead of time online, but it wasn't uploaded this year. I like reading up on playwrights and fellow actors when I get the scripts for the play lab and missed having that option.”
- “It could look hipper, more modern. But then more people might come and I don't want that.”
- “Having play lab casts posted is really helpful. Sleuthed out one of my casts and we were able to discuss the script before we even came down.”

Website? What website?

- “Didn't use it.”
- “I actually never visited the conference website. Oops.”

- “I was surprised not to see the conference program posted online ahead of time this year like it has been in years past.”
- “I didn't use it extensively, but would like to learn to do so.”

9. Additional comments.

Mostly people use this section to say ‘thank you’ in one form or another. The suggestions at the bottom are mostly not practical or redundant to programs already in place.

Purely Positive

- “Thanks Dawson! You're the best!”
- “Thanks, Dawson, for another amazing conference! Can't wait till next time!”
- “Love, love, loved it!”
- “As always it is a great pleasure to share this experience with you, Dawson. Also that Theodore guy, what a hottie.”
- “If you never invite me back, I would still consider this a pivotal moment in my career. My craft has just jumped through the roof. Thanks a zillion.”
- “Dawson and crew were very professional and handled all my questions and concerns with ease. Thank you!!!”
- “Dawson was so helpful in corresponding about everything the whole time!”
- “Excellent work, yet again! Thank you!!”
- “You rock. Seriously.”
- “I had a ball.”
- “This was one of the best theatre conferences I have ever attended. The generosity of spirit was wonderful!”
- “Loved it. Not much else to say.”
- “Wonderful job by all staff, courteous and helpful - as always. Great job on the unbelievable 8 days of sunny skies. Also, the lunches were incredible.”
- “Frankly, given the challenges this conference has faces, the 21st year can only rationally be seen as a monumental success, and proof that this endeavor must and will continue. Congratulations to the staff at PWSCC for making it happen.”
- “Overall, wonderful conference, great job!!”
- “Great job. It was fun.”
- “Keep on keeping on!”
- “Keep doing all that you do!”
- “The lunches were a quantum leap in improvement, and made the impromptu lunch round-tables so much better.”

- “A remarkable and memorable experience. I have been involved in the planning of conferences and this one struck me as amazingly well run, with a combination of attentiveness, organization, and flexibility that was very impressive and rarely achieved.”
- “I know we say this every year - but this really was the best year ever!”
- “Overall: excellent. Staff, as always, were fantastic! Wednesday boat trip was weird but fun: as a previous participant I simply wasn't used to it so early in the week. No big deal.”
- “I had no problem with the conference being in May and would not object if it happened every year.”
- “I cannot overestimate the work that goes into this conference. Much thanks to Dawson and the rest of the crew. I was happy to have been invited.”
- “I had a great time.”
- “One of the best conference years ever.”
- “Really good this year, I'm very glad I decided to make it- as I said, maybe it was the best one yet- you guys did a great job- everyone was super helpful- the vibe was outstanding- congrats and thanks to everyone involved- I had a blast and learned something too!”
- “Considering how costly the travel was, and my expectations for the Play Lab, I was pleasantly surprised at how much I got out of the experience beyond the sight-seeing I knew I would enjoy. Thank you.”
- “For me, it was the best LFTC week ever, all considered.”
- “It's a very important event for me as an Alaskan theatrical artist. I always enjoy it and find it a great place to network, talk shop, watch plays and have fun.”
- “The only reason I did not attend the panels and classes was due to my involvement as a playwright and actor in other readings and events. Overall, it was the most productive year I have had so far in many different ways, and it was a time of great artistic and personal growth.”

Artistic Staffing

- “Good mix of people this year. Felt fresh. Didn't miss the large artist staff, think with a smaller one you can target and get some new play development folks involved and I'm always down to see more people who can help the work get further would be cool too.”

Play Lab

- “Very well run. Please consider inviting directors as well to direct the Play Labs.
- “Please track weak readers to see which ones should be encouraged to get further vocal training before being allowed to do Play Lab readings again.

Programming

- “More monologs!”
- “I was a little let down by the 10-minute play slam. The plays were all good, but, a ten minute play should be a ten minute play. It shouldn't be a 15 or 20 minute play with the formatting scrunched so that it fits into 10 pages. Many playwrights work very hard to make sure their play fits into that ten minute time frame.” *(the longest play in the Slam was 14 minutes, and it really was just the one)*

We're Not Friendly Enough

- “As a non-Alaskan, I felt like an outsider. My understanding is that in years past Alaskans often felt like outsiders. It would be nice to find a balance between the two.” *(this is one person's issue... most people talk about how they feel included; and the bit about Alaskans feeling like outsiders is not an accurate description of what the issue was in the past)*

Someone always asks for this...

- “Optional roster of participants who might want to stay in touch. Conference hashtag for participants to communicate more during conference via twitter.” *(we won't be going into the Twitter-world on my watch)*

And... the weather...

- “Oh! No way to have anticipated this, but it would have been good to send out a winter weather advisory this year. And maybe update the website and Facebook page. (If there was an email, please disregard.) Camping in May is very very cold. The only place without snow is under the tide line, so that only worked until the moon waxed.”



Participants and new friends gather aboard Stan Stephens Cruises.

Responses from Participating Playwrights in the 2013 Play Lab

PLAY LAB PLAYWRIGHT RESPONSES

1. How useful was the information you received before the Conference regarding the process, rehearsals, selection of readers, etc? Is there other information you wish you had prior to arriving in Valdez?

Purely positive

- “Very good.”
- “I really didn't know what to expect, but fail to see how you could have better prepared me. Attending prepares you. I started reading some comments from last year and dismissed them as sucking up; it couldn't be that fabulous. Shows what the hell I know.”
- “Very useful! Dawson was so so helpful in coordinating.”
- “Excellent. I did not want for anything. It was great!”
- “I felt very comfortable with the information. Dawson was very prompt with his responses and informative.”
- “No, actually it was quite good. It doesn't take long to 'catch on.' Nice job, folks!”
- “Very useful, professional, informative, and inspiring.”
- “As a past participant I knew the process pretty well.”
- “I felt I was pretty well-informed before coming to Valdez.”
- “The information was good before I arrived.”
- “The info I received was good- everything worked out well – I was lucky enough to be cast in 5 or 6 plays – good roles – good plays all – it was a pleasure working with new authors and helping them realize their work – also, my play received a nice reading – I got good feedback and advice from my panelists – very helpful.”
- “Great. Was the overpriced food mentioned? Complimentary lunch was a big help.”
- “I thought you supplied everything I needed in a well-organized way, and any questions I had were answered promptly by Dawson. Bravo.”
- “Very.”
- 2 x “Great.”
- “I knew the process pretty well beforehand, having been a participant for many years. This was the first time I had a play read though.”

- “I didn't pay much attention to the information I received before the Conference due to the fact that I was a past participant and had been very busy in the months leading up to the conference. I remember it being very comprehensive last year!”
- “It was fine.”

Positive with feedback

- “Very useful - I would only love to know who my readers are before arriving to the conference.”
- “A little more information about who would be reading your play in play lab would help. Also did not realize it might be better to present an early draft than a finished piece.”
- “I thought it was very useful. I would have loved a chance to email the cast beforehand, and to know who my panelists were.”
- “It was fairly useful. I would add that the playwrights should know the readings will be simultaneous with other readings -- ie, competitive, and they should "sell" themselves and their plays to those who might want to see the kinds of plays they are doing.”
- “Very helpful- I might have liked to know that there would be difficulty in casting one of my roles.”
- “I don't know whether a PDF of the full conference book was online this year - I forgot to check. If it wasn't, it should be, and we should all be alerted to that fact with an email.”
- “The information was somewhat vague for someone who came to the conference for the first time.”



New York playwright Kevin Armento's "killers" reading, featuring Nicholas Walker Herbert, Morgan Mitchell, Danielle Rabinovitch, Jamie Nelson, and Jill Sowerwine

- “The information was adequate.”
- “It's my own fault, really. But arriving late and going right into my rehearsal without seeing other Play Labs and the extent to which the readings are "staged" disadvantaged me. My readers really, just read. The more information you give playwrights about directing, the better. The article online is not that helpful with specifics re: movement, etc. Even if you just collected some blurbs from playwrights who had directed before-- that would be great. It's a 'what I know now' sheet that I would have loved.”

2. Were the responses from your panel helpful to you?

Very Helpful: 53.1%

Reasonably Helpful: 28.1%

Somewhat Helpful: 15.6%

Not Helpful: 0%

The Opposite of Helpful: 3.1%

- “Wonderful comments. I particularly loved having a designer on my panel - I find a design perspective is often super helpful as I'm figuring out my plays (but maybe that's just me).”
- “Yes. Their comments were very helpful and detailed.”
- “I really enjoyed the process.”
- “Pretty much on target with what I needed to hear.”
- “I got a lot of positive feedback and some points of criticism that were useful to hear and consider.”
- “My panelists were so nice I was afraid they were given to me out of pity. (I have since decided this was not so; please do not burst my bubble.)”
- “They were very complimentary and gave some small suggestions for improvements, but I was generally left with a feeling that there wasn't much more to do on the script. It left me feeling I should be attempting something more ambitious - which was a nice feeling to have!”
- “I felt really lucky to have the panel I did and I thought the feedback was strong, constructive, and useful.”
- “Kara! Bryan!”
- “Come on!! You put professionals in front of me, and I'm not going to win big time? I would recommend a face to face 'class' with all the rookies---with a much better explanation of the process. Reading about it didn't do the process justice. More

attention would add more to the process. And if you could help me with my ego.....ha ha”

Mixed

- “My responses from [two panelists] were very specific and concrete, however, I felt [the third panelist’s] response to be vague and mildly condescending (and I felt he gave the same kind of feedback at other people's readings as well). But he did have some good things to say to me personally outside of the audience feedback, so I know he means well.”
- “While only one of the three panelists really "got" what I was trying to do, all the comments were sincere and helpful.”
- “I think the most helpful part was meeting one on one with my panel point person after the reading. We could expand the conversation more. I wonder if playwrights could write up a bit about their plans for the production/its history that could be shared with the panelists before the talkback? So they know what to look for? It was fine feedback, but very generic.”
- “I prefer a theater audience's laughter and clapping to comments.”
- “One of my professional respondents appeared to take my invitation to be tough on my script quite to heart. There were moments when he seemed angry at me and/or my work rather than focused on the text. It was obvious from his remarks that he hadn't read the play in advance or, at the very least, didn't realize my cast had one rehearsal.”
- “Comments ranged from 'what!?' to 'Yes, yes, that's a very good point'.”

Not Positive

- “It turned out to be very perfunctory. Chief respondent 5 minutes, and the other two 2-3 minutes. There was no discussion among them, no questions to me, a quick nod to the audience but no one there said a word, end of story, let's go to lunch. The reading itself -- hearing the play aloud -- was helpful. I felt a great lack of interest and I am left feeling that the play is weak and my ability as a playwright questionable.”
- “To be honest, it felt quite amateurish. They had very little sense of how to guide a discussion, and even less sense of how to offer feedback for a writer. It felt like grandstanding before an audience (for their own ego) which created a tone of audience grandstanding for their own egos as well. At no time was the playwright asked "What would be most helpful for you?"
- “It was 9 am. No one was there. I had at least one hungover actor who was tired and who hadn't even been prepared for rehearsal. So the comments were as good as they could be ...That said, it was 9 am and no one wanted to be there. Gregory was good. He spoke to his expertise, which I very much appreciated.”

3. Were the audience feedback session helpful to you?

Very Helpful: 34.4%

Reasonably Helpful: 40.6%

Somewhat Helpful: 15.6%

Not Helpful: 3.1%

The Opposite of Helpful: 6.2%

We periodically talk about removing this section of the process, as it is often hard to control and leads to some of the more negative parts of the week. But despite a couple of negative experiences, it generally is viewed as a helpful part of the process. It's hard to see how we could do much more to educate the audience about how to respond.

To address the final comment... we have a feedback process in Valdez, and I am sorry it didn't work for them. That said, we will not be recreating the process for each individual writer. The comment that has been made with some frequency through many responses is that the author should be asked what they need to hear. This part of the process DOES need to become more universal.

Positive

- "Worth the whole trip."
- "Comments were all over the place, and it was gratifying to see that my play reached an emotional response from a lot of viewers."
- "I think it's always useful to hear what an audience thinks of the play."
- "While I felt like I was in the hotseat during my audience feedback and it was hard hearing certain things, it is all for the better. I was amazed also at the amount of feedback I received, people kept raising their hands to speak, which has to be good in that the play wasn't boring."
- "I had one audience member (public - not associated with the conference) come up afterward and say something mildly insulting. I don't think there's a way you can stop that. It didn't ruin my experience, but maybe reminding the public about reading etiquette would be helpful. I think some of the comments (even in other readings) seemed like the public thought they should give a consumer report."
- "Feedback welcome, and many in the audience have a high level of experience and expertise. Good to allow audience comments in addition to the panel"

Mixed

- "Not a word spoken. Not a thought expressed. What does that say."
- "Again, just kind of general."

- “Since there were only about 4 people there, it was not helpful. It had a sophomoric workshop vibe that wasn't present in the other Play Labs I attended.”

Not Positive

- “Again, full disclosure, one of the most laughable sessions I've ever been a part of. Completely off the wall, unintelligent, and unprofessional. Comments out of left field, and many of those from the panelists. The experience of hearing the play was a positive one, but man oh man did I leave with a bad taste in my mouth after the discussion. Also, there was no variety in the other readings I attended. I wish the playwrights could speak with their panel ahead of time and AGREE upon a post-reading process. For example, maybe one playwright wants a traditional talk-back, but another wants none at all. Maybe one wants to have specific questions answered, maybe another wants to have ten minutes alone with the panel. Every playwright (and play) is different. The format should accommodate and do so on behalf of the playwright, not the audience.”

4. Was your private meeting with a panelist helpful to you?

Very Helpful: 46.9%

Reasonably Helpful: 18.8%

Somewhat Helpful: 12.5%

Not Helpful: 3.1%

The Opposite of Helpful: 0%

Didn't Have One: 12.5%

Didn't Have One Yet (but have plans to do it via distance): 6.3%

Generally, this part of the program is positive and appreciated. There is a continued problem with making sure that everyone gets their meeting, however. Next year there will be an attempt to tentatively schedule the meeting, though this is very tricky. It is also nearly impossible to make sure in advance that everyone ends up matched with their optimal respondent.

- “It was great to have the perspective of a professional dramaturg on the script - she connected with me even before I arrived at the Conference and we met privately before the reading to discuss where I was in the process, what kind of critique would be most helpful. After the reading, she had very helpful pointers to think about for future rewrites, and made herself available to read future updated drafts as well. I also got to sit down privately with my other panelist [to] talk about the troubled parts of the play and very helpful things to think about.”
- “... since he felt the play was ready to send to theaters we talked about theaters he thought jived with my style and offered to make a recommendation if he had any

connection to a particular theater. His positive response and enthusiasm was encouraging, to say the least.”

- “We had a lovely talk. I had come to the conference having already decided on some new scenes, etc., so we discussed that. And why the play matters.”
- “I spoke to [my panelist] about the play and also about MFA programs, which may not have been relevant to the Play Lab, but was certainly relevant to myself and I was glad to have that opportunity. I was also able to talk to [them] more directly about things that had worried me about the script.”
- “[My panelist] was specific and insightful and questioning. She was authentic and clearly talented and schooled in providing feedback. I have some clear ideas of what didn't work and some clear ideas of what did. I know what I'll attack when I go back to it. I'd love her to give me feedback on all my work!”
- “My guy was really good- the nicest most helpful guy.” “[my panelist] was a good choice!”
- “We didn't quite synch up in terms of style, but that ended up being helpful - it was useful to get an outside perspective, so I could be alert to how people who think differently than I do might digest my work.”
- “Good session with some good insights for not only this play but for my plays in general.”
- “Wow, [my panelist] was helpful. We talked about the next steps and she answered my questions very thoughtfully. Excellent.”

Mixed

- “I feel lucky in my lead respondent, as his was the viewpoint of the panelists that I felt most 'in-line' with. If it had been either of the other respondents, I'm not sure I would have gotten the same advice or assistance, despite their credentials.”
- “We spoke for a few minutes after the reading, but since I was at the end of the week, I think we were all a little burnt out. I know I was and I felt like I got enough feedback during the session with the entire group.”
- “[They were] nice. We did it over lunch so it was busy place. His comments were a repeat of the comments in the session. He essentially went through his notes. I realized later on the trip home, neither in the private meeting, nor in the session, was I asked anything at all. It was more like a quick critique -- granted with some suggestions -- than part of a developmental process. Everyone seemed courteous, but perfunctory: in summary, your play is not worth thought or words. Unspoken: What are you doing here?”
- “He seemed a little rushed.”
- “I didn't feel well on Saturday, so I never got my meeting, sadly.”

- “For whatever reason we didn't meet. It's okay though. I got what I needed from the panel.”
- “Non-confrontational, helpful, right on....I can't help but wonder if maybe the panelists start to face burn out as the week proceeds...the intensity seemed to lessen as the week went on...completely understandable and I have no suggestions. Thank you for the generosity of all these pros.”

Not Positive

- “I graciously bowed out of a meeting because the session was so unhelpful.”
- “Any other of the panelists would have been great--maybe let playwright choose one of three? [Mine] is very self-absorbed and has one experience to relate--hers.”

5. Were you satisfied with the performance of your readers?

Very Satisfied: 40.6%

Satisfied: 37.5%

Somewhat Satisfied: 18.8%

Dissatisfied: 6.3%

We work with a wide range of actors, ranging from professionals to amateurs. While balance is an objective, staging 54 readings, not all casts will be created equally. That is reflected in these responses. Some playwrights express a desire to be more involved in casting and selecting their panelists, but this is not practically feasible for a project this size.

- “When I heard the play read it actually sounded at least somewhat like I heard it in my head before hand - something that very rarely happens.”
- “There is of course a wide variety in talent, but I have noticed the talent pool has improved over the last few years.”
- “They surpassed my expectations. I didn't know what to expect. My play required accents. They nailed those accents in a really authentic way. What a cool surprise. By the time rehearsal was over, I had complete confidence in the actors. What a great group.”
- “I was incredibly happy with my performers, they brought the script alive and I don't think I would have gotten the warm response to my script that I had without them. My readers with Danielle and AJ - just wanted to let you know again how great I thought they are/were!”
- “My readers were a little tired in the rehearsal but rose to the occasion during the performance/reading- they did a really good job.”

- “Of the four readers, three were excellent, and one was miscast. Overall the reading was as good as prior ones I have had, all of those with more rehearsals.”
- “I had NEVER heard my play read by decent actors - and ended up with 3 who were dead on, exceptional. The other one was fine. She had to step in at the last minute. And really - organizing this is an insane task. I'd like to see any mewling whining playwright in attendance come even close to achieving this level.”
- “It was great that I had an actor that could do the required dialect perfectly. I think it needs to be specified on the actors application (if it isn't already) exactly which dialects they can do perfectly so everyone can have brilliant accents for their work.”
- “They did well with a short rehearsal time!”
- “Nothing is perfect, but all in all and good casting.”
- “Bostin and Taylor killed it!”

Mixed

- “Every actor did a great job. My only critique would be simply be louder, articulate, no add-libs, and pick up cues.”
- “Two hours of rehearsal is not much to get into anything bigger than pacing, unfortunately.”
- “Not all were prepared.....but others were VERY prepared. It was wonderful to have age relevant actors. Best set of actors ever.”
- “What a tough job to cast, so this is not a criticism of casting. I was surprised, however, that some actors were very experienced while others were borderline illiterate. And I'm not being mean. But really, they could not read the lines let alone act. I'm sure there are many "locals" who look forward to participating, but the quality was very widespread. When they were good, they were great. When they were bad, they were painful.”
- “I think, under the circumstances I'm somewhere between 'very satisfied' and 'satisfied'. With only one short rehearsal - and I don't have a lot of experience directing actors - they pulled it off very well. The experience among the actors was obviously varied, which can be frustrating for a playwright. I was mostly concerned they were able to give the audience the opportunity to really hear the words and in my case, I think they did that. So, I was quite pleased overall.”
- “It seemed there were several non-actors spread out through the reading. Many playwrights seemed stuck with one person without basic acting skills. A bummer for the other actors as well.”
- “They did a fine job. A couple were not as strong as the others, and in Room B the acoustics would be difficult for Richard Burton. I wished they would have also commented on the play.”

- “I had a cast (mostly) comprised of kids who were (mostly) wrong for the roles- they were enthusiastic, but not as intuitive or malleable as I might have liked. That said, the actors I saw in other readings were all very secure- I think it was luck of the draw for me.”
- “On a side note, I asked for a director this year and didn't get one. While I was fine without one, I do think if people ask for directors, there's an obligation to dig one up.”
- “I would have liked to have been able to audition actors on day one instead of having people assigned.”
- “Some playwrights are the best readers of their own work--can this be offered an option?” *(this is generally discouraged, as we are playwriting conference, not a performance artist one; we do use playwrights in readings of other people's work)*
- “If I had thought of it beforehand, I would have [swapped two actors]. If I had done that my response would have been 'very satisfied'.”
- “Some were amazing but some were not actors... [specifics about specific actors]... All that said, if the website and the early emails to playwrights made clear we were working with amateur actors, I think the tenor would be different. But I expected pros...”



LA-based actress/playwright Amy Tofte with Anchorage's Taylor Campbell and Aaron Wiseman in the Play Lab reading of Fairbanks playwright Carey Seward's "The Calm."

6. What worked best for you in this process?

There is good variety to what works best for people.

Feedback

- “Getting feedback after the script was heard plus getting separate time with my panelist. That was especially helpful.”
- “The feedback I got was incredibly helpful.”
- “Receiving positive comments.”
- “The intimate, one on one, post-reading discussion with the actors and audience members who were smart and professional.”
- “Dedicated panelists who really had helpful things to say about the play, both positive and negative.”
- “It's a combination of many things. The panel, the audience and the actors themselves combine to give you good insight on your work.”
- “One on One with responders.”
- “Open-Ended Response.”
- “Many things worked - what worked best was frankly the availability the panelists and other conference participants made themselves to me in order to talk about my play.”

The General Atmosphere & Process

- “I love the process.”
- “My play was very straight forward, so additional rehearsal time wouldn't have mattered a great deal. It was all super.”
- “Realizing that I could learn MUCH from this... somehow I thought they'd be handing out 'Tony's'.....ha ha.....but I can't imagine a better process.”
- “The atmosphere, pleasant staff and professionalism of everyone involved.”
- “Letting go and having fun.”

The Rehearsal

- “The rehearsal before the reading- and having strong actor/readers- I had plenty of time to find my character and get direction from the author.”
- “The rehearsal.”

The Reading

- “The opportunity to see the play is in itself very valuable.”
- “Seeing and hearing the words and witnessing the audience react to them.”
- “Hearing reactions from the audience.”
- “What worked best was 1) the deadline to get the revision of it done and 2) hearing it read out loud.”
- “Getting to hear new readers take on the roles of these characters.”

- “I’m very glad that I brought in a script that still had work to be done and a lot to gain from the experience- other playwrights brought in polished work and it felt like the conference was less productive for them. Then again, maybe they gained something else.”
- “Having the script read out by two skilled performers was very useful - I had not had this opportunity before. It made it clear for me that the rhythms of speech were correct and that the audience was able to follow the story. I also became aware that the script could very easily work as two American characters, which was a nice discovery!”
- “Hearing the play read.”

7. What would you like to see improve or change in the Play Lab?

Most of the comments in this section amount to ‘more,’ as opposed to tweaks in the existing system. More rehearsal time, more time with our panelists, more say in how our feedback runs. While these are good goals on principle, they’re hard to execute in the Last Frontier format. With 54 plays, there literally is no additional time for rehearsals.

The size of the event is often called into question. “Couldn’t you do more for individual playwrights if there were fewer of them?” The answer to this is “probably,” but there are intangibles that would be lost in shrinking the number of participating playwrights: fewer people to network with, smaller audiences, fewer roles for actors, smaller audiences for evening performances. There are other events that use a smaller formula, and they get to give each individual writer’s piece a more complete process.

Rehearsal process

- “The rehearsal spaces were really noisy due to the fans so sometimes it was hard to hear and pick up lines.”
- “A director would be kinda nice. Even just because another person has taken a solid look at the play. But, I also see how it’s too fast and potentially difficult to do that and get the playwright’s vision.”
- “I’d love for you to invite directors to direct the Play Labs. It would be great to network with directors, and it would be less of a hassle to deal with directing your own play.”
- “Not enough time for rehearsal. And the readers seemed a bit overworked so we couldn’t get into it with fresh energy.”
- “Extra time with actors before the reading maybe.”

- “The only thing I can think of was one character was not cast when I arrived, but it was solved quickly and there were no train wrecks. Otherwise, I might encourage fellow writers to use the most of their rehearsal time (which you already kinda do).”
- “I'd like to contact my assigned actors before the Conference to introduce myself. My play was read at the beginning of the week and I had no clue who anyone was before we meet at the rehearsal. That's only possible if everyone is agreeable to having their contact info given out.”
- “More time with actors...”
- “I would love more rehearsal time and/or a chance to email with the actors beforehand.”

Feedback Process

- “A longer time for discussion might be helpful. Occasionally the audience feedback has to be cut short.”
- “I would like the panels to be uniform in their method/approach to the feedback sessions. Some writers felt attacked. (I did, however, agree with much of their criticism; but because some other writers had such love fests the less fortunate were unprepared for people wanting so much done to ‘repair their plays.’)”
- “Maybe sense that plays in draft are welcome or maybe even a better choice. I thought mine had to be as finished as possible, but others brought in early drafts and therefore maybe got more out of the discussion.”
- “I mentioned earlier: Meet, even on-line, with the chief respondent before the event. Do they understand what you are trying to do? Do they have questions? Where are you in the process? How do you see your work in theater tradition? I would really like to see this as a good developmental opportunity. That would also be good dramaturgy. That said, other Play Labs were more engaging and other audiences were more engaged, other playwrights solicited by the panelists. I am left feeling my play and my play lab was a failure, not as a result of anything about Last Frontier, but because the play itself (and my work) was substandard and boring. I am trying not to be a prima donna, nor am I complaining. Just wondering if the work is worth salvaging.”
- “Open-Ended Response.”

Scheduling/Fewer Plays

- “I think having fewer plays, and more time to devote to each one selected, would work better for me. As is, I can get much of the same thing from my local playwright support group.”
- “Less overlapping events. Wanted to attend everything!”
- “Fewer plays. Raise the bar on the quality of the plays and keep the acting talent at a college/pro level. Plays that had to be read at 9am were at a distinct disadvantage. Actors aren't in good shape, audience doesn't want to be there. If there were only 35 plays, would anyone have to go before noon?”
- “I think if you continue the party vibe and the fringe festival, plays should start later. Panels could go in the morning. I would even have done a lunch slot--and keep lunch going for longer so it's in two shifts. Or go later until 6. But I kind of feel that I was sold on having an audience and I didn't get one.”

- “I hate having to choose between two friend’s plays. It’s awful to not get both. Is there a way to have some plays read again or something?”

Acting Pool

- “I feel I mostly lucked out with my cast, but even so I had one actor who just didn’t have the chops (thankfully he was in a small role). While I understand the difficulty in arranging for a million actors for a million plays, it is frustrating to have a reading thwarted by mismatched acting talent. (Again, while I feel I mostly lucked out, I spoke with several playwrights who felt they didn’t truly get to hear their plays). Additional rehearsal would probably also be beneficial.”

Staging

- “Staged plays instead of readings. I never show unfinished work and am uncomfortable with readings instead of staged work.”

General

- “Just the role of the public.”
- “Higher caliber writers; higher quality actors; more playwright agency in the post-reading process.”
- “I might like to have a better idea of the stage in development the plays are in and for the readings to be organized in a way that reflected/acknowledged this.”

Positive Comment

- “This year everything was really good- a big improvement over last year’s play selection- all the plays were strong and accomplished works of theater.”



Panelists Lisa Soland, Craig Pospisil, and David Edgecombe moderate the discussion of Anchorage playwright Mike Daniels play “Birthright.”

Responses from Participating Readers in the 2012 Play Lab

1. How useful was the information you received before the Conference regarding the process, advice, and rehearsal schedule? Is there other information you wish you had prior to arriving in Valdez?

Generally speaking, actors feel well-informed. Many have been coming for years, and it is important to continue to act as if none of them had done it before, so that new performers don't get left out.

The only issue raised more than once was the possibility of being put in contact with the playwrights before the event. It is the opinion of the Coordinator that this sounds good on paper, but has potential negatives that outweigh the benefits.

Purely positive

- "It was very useful, and incredibly helpful to have the rehearsal and performance schedule prior to arriving as someone who participated and was involved in several readings, it helped to clarify and plan accordingly."
- "It was great. Everything was clear."
- "The information was all sound."
- "Worked for me."
- "It was very useful as well as nice and concise. I don't think any other information was needed."
- "Very useful."
- "All was great! I wish more people would read the section on how to give proper feedback in the labs... there were a couple out of line comments."
- "Very useful."
- "Schedule was spot on!"
- 2 x "No [I didn't need more info]."
- "Good."
- "Pretty good."
- "I was well informed and as a result I came to the conference well-prepared."
- "Everything was great."
- "I was fully prepared coming into Valdez, but I've been coming for many years."
- "Very useful"
- "Excellent."
- "It was useful."
- "Useful."

- “Since I've gone so many times, it's hard to know if a fresh person starting the process had enough information. I think so.”
- “I felt well informed.”
- “The prior information was more than adequate. I didn't need any other information.”
- “It was fine. It told me what I needed to know and where I needed to be.”

Positive, with feedback

- “Good very helpful. It would have been nice to have a list of open hotels and maybe a group discount with some of them.” *(there is a page with discounted hotel rates on the Conference website)*
- “Bring boots (but I mentioned that in another survey already - this is more my own personal note that it's good to have a nice pair of boots - it's like a room of one's own for your feet.)” *(there's a section on the Conference website that talks about how to dress, and we have added boots as a suggestion)*
- “As I mentioned in the other survey, I wish that the program would've been available online in PDF format ahead of time (like in prior years), so that I could've read up on the playwrights and fellow actors who I worked with.” *(This will happen again next year.)*
- “I think it'd be advantageous to be given playwrights contact information ahead of time.”
- “Would have liked to establish contact with writers with whom I was going to be working prior to Conference.”
- “After 11 years, no real need for more information about the Conference. The dates would help earlier so the air plans could be more proper, (not leaving on Saturday for instance).”
- “Cast list/contact information for other readers in play lab readings would have been helpful.”
- “I didn't know that the playwrights would be directing their own shows.”

2. Once in Valdez, was there any part of the Play Lab process that confused you?

The only repeated comment was that there was some confusion about schedule. While it is the same process that has been in place for many years, attention will be paid to how to make the documents as clear as possible. Rehearsals are not open to the public, so it makes sense to have them on their own schedule; the two-sided handout all participants receive has both the times of readings and rehearsals. It's possible that for 2014 we will create a schedule that lists complete Play Lab commitments by show, including both the rehearsal time and performance time in one place.

Purely positive

- “None.”
- “Not really. Rehearsal meeting place clear. Playwrights were a little confused at times, but that's not anything to do with the planning.”
- 13 x “No.”

- “No all was well.”
- “No. It was very easy to know where we supposed to be and when.”
- “I think I was kind of confused, but I just followed the person in front of me and kept going with the flow and I always seemed to find myself where I was supposed to be. It all worked out, just being there and going with the flow.”
- “Not if I checked the schedule (ahem).”
- “No, but again, have been participating for many years.”
- “None at all. The layout was easy and accessible.”

Schedule

- “The times of the rehearsals being different from the readings were a little confusing at first.”
- “The difference between the scheduling of the rehearsals compared to the scheduling of the readings confused me. I couldn't figure out why they wouldn't be scheduled at the same time, just on different days.”
- “I found the sheet with the rehearsal/performance schedule confusing. I would have preferred that it be organized by day, with each day's including both rehearsal and performance. Going back and forth was confusing.”
- “Having the rehearsals and performances at different times was new and took some adjustment, but everything still worked well and I was never late.” *(not actually new this year)*

Miscellaneous

- “No. I do wish there was a chance for actors to make it known they're interested in doing fill-in work on other shows if need be - I had a couple of days free at the end of the week and would have happily jumped in.” *(this happens informally via the Coordinator)*
- “Are playwrights supposed to speak during feedback segment? Some do and some don't. Why were some readers either unintelligible or too quiet or both? We are there to serve the writers; if their words can't be understood we have failed the writers.” *(guidelines are in place, but absolute uniformity of process is impossible to achieve; we work with performers of various levels, but endeavor to keep a minimum level to the quality)*
- “I guess I was a little nonplussed as to why the majority of labs took place in the morning.” *(not actually true)*

3. Did you feel like you were given enough rehearsal time for Play Lab readings?

Probably there's not much point in asking this again, as the process works for most people, and there's not time to add more rehearsal schedule.

- Yes: 65.6%
- Mostly: 21.9%
- Somewhat: 6.3%
- Not at all: 6.3%

4. How useful are the following additional activities and opportunities for actors?

The feedback here is very positive. The statistics here back up what an important part of the event the Fringe Festival has become, with a very high level of participation. Of those involved, 55% rated their involvement as 'very' useful, and none said 'not at all.'

The level of satisfaction of those involved in the Monologue Workshop is exceptionally high, with over 80% saying they found it 'very' useful. The program, currently running so well, is tethered tightly to its two exceptional leaders, Laura Gardner and Frank Collison.

The Acting for Singers Workshop is a small program for a few people, and provides a good alternative program. It is hard to get much useful statistical information from a sample size that small. What this mostly points to is that both that program and the Monologue Workshop might profit from a questionnaire aimed directly at their participants, with space for more specific feedback on the minutia of the process.

	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Mostly</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>DN Participate</u>
Fringe Festival	0%	18.8%	18.8%	46.9%	15.6%
Monologue Workshop	0%	3.1%	6.3%	43.8%	46.9%
Acting for Singers.	3.1%	6.3%	3.1%	6.3%	81.3%



Laura Gardner works with Henry Weaver in the Monologue Workshop while co-teacher Frank Collison looks on.

5. Did you receive adequate notice prior to the Conference about these programs?

The Monologue Workshop and Acting for Singers program are mentioned in almost all group communication with the cast. The Fringe Festival could use more promotion ahead of time; the reticence to doing this is based on its impromptu roots, but now that it is filling such a large role in the additional programming for actors, it could use further explanation in the future, possibly including a way to indicate one's interest ahead of time.

Purely Positive

- 23 x "Yes."
- "Absolutely - the only reason I chose not to participate in the Monologue Workshop or the Acting for Singers workshop was due to my involvement and time commitment as a playwright and actor in other readings and events at the conference."
- "I knew about them already."
- "I don't really remember to be honest."

About the Fringe Festival...

- "Not the fringe festival, but yes for the monologue workshop and acting for singers."
- "I think that the fringe could have been publicized more. (and controlled by guidelines that were fringe friendly...more comedy, less drama)"
- "I'd heard about each of them before the Conference except for Fringe, but not hearing about Fringe is adequate notice for Fringe."

About the Monologue Workshop...

- "I had intended on participating in the monologue workshop but arrived late and never felt like I could jump in after the first day." (*people can jump in late, if they ask*)

About the Acting for Singers program...

- "Yes. Would have liked to hear more about the Singers workshop."
- "For the most part I received adequate information about these programs. I might be interested in the Acting for Singers Workshop, but I'm an actor, not a singer. Could it be that this is a Singing for Actors Workshop? Is there a difference?" (*the program is intended for singers to learn more about the craft of acting; it is not intended to teach people to sing*)

6. Did you feel like there were enough additional opportunities available to you to either perform or participate in performance classes during the Conference?

Generally this year, people had enough to keep them busy. A couple of people mention the Fringe Festival as being hard to get involved with, something we'll work with the coordinators on for next year. While we want to continue to offer additional smaller classes, the ongoing programs we have for actors mostly seem to meet their need to feel utilized.

Yes

- 14 x "Yes."
- "I had plenty to work on/do with just reading in the Play Lab - while I would welcome any other workshops or classes, I probably would not have enough time to participate."
- "There were almost too many to be able to take advantage of them all."
- "There was so much going on, I often felt like I was missing out on something, but I was totally okay with that - I loved the fact that I had 2 or 3 great options of things to do at any given moment of time."
- "I was offered plenty of opportunities for performance and participation."
- "YES!!! That's what I LOVE about it all!"
- "If I had wanted to participate, I feel I would have had the opportunity."
- "Lots of schedule conflicts. Had to miss classes/workshops because of rehearsals/performances."
- "Wish there could be more but there are only a finite number of hours."
- "Yes I did! Thanks to Dawson and Laura Gardner I had a marvelously busy Conference. And loved it!"



Wisconsin-based playwright Rand Higbee with two of his Alaskan muses, Karina Becker and Lindsay Lamar.

Want more, or something else...

- “I'd love more.”
- “The Fringe was a bit clique-ish.”
- “I sort of got dissed by the Fringe, but didn't take it personally.”
- “I was there as a playwright too. Would not have been enough if I were just acting.”
- “As I mentioned in the General survey, I think an improv class would be a wonderful thing to have available. It would serve to hone actors' skills as well as inspire any writers that may listen in or participate.”
- “I'd like more. But then, I'd probably miss seeing more plays.”
- “Personally, I felt good about what I was doing, but I knew a few other actors who felt underutilized.”
- “It would have been nice to have the ability to work with some of the guest artists who are also directors, perhaps working with them on some of the Play Slam plays in a workshop format?”

7. Would you be open to being in contact with the playwrights of the plays you are reading in prior to the Conference?

While it's good to know that an overwhelming majority of the actors are willing, how to institute this in a useful way is unclear.

YES: 96.9%

NO: 3.1%



The curtain call from the Evening with Our Feature Playwrights.

8. Did you experience any problems with playwrights during the Lab process?

It's good that there were no reports of major personality conflicts. The answers raise two primary issues. The first is that separate directors be involved in the Lab process; the second that the scripts be better prepared by rehearsal. Both of these issues are raised are in communication with the writers ahead of time. They are offered the option of having a director, and are asked to prep a reading script for the actors. There will be an increased emphasis on these two points in next year's communications.

No Problems

- 15 x "No."
- "No, they were all lovely:)"
- "Nope! They are lovely."
- 2 x "None at all."
- "Not at all, they were all enthusiastic and gracious."
- "None they were charming"
- "Both of my playwrights were lovely."

Personality conflicts

- "Nothing major - one playwright I considered to be a little intense, but hey, as a playwright myself, I understand how writers get passionate about their work."

The Director-Question

- "No, some felt rushed and some could have used a director."
- "Not at all, though it might be nice to give all playwrights the OPTION of using a director. I'd hate to see this become a mandatory thing though." *(they are all offered the option of using a director, though it is discouraged)*
- "No. It wasn't really a problem, but one playwright seemed confused about how to stage the reading."
- "I'm not a big fan of having playwrights direct their own work. They are too close to it and generally don't know how to speak about the craft of acting. They tend to give line readings and demand emotional states rather than focus on what a character is doing."

Script Preparation

- "There was one play in which I had to read several different characters. It would have been helpful to know in advance what the writer specifically had in mind, because how I interpreted it and how she intended it were very different and I had to readjust in a short amount of time during our rehearsal. It would have been helpful to have had contact info for her provided so I could have checked in with her. She did not provide it on the title page of her play."

- “Wish ALL playwrights had followed Dawson's request to arrive at rehearsal with scripts that indicate which stage directions are to be read and which are not read. We spent 50% of our one rehearsal debating which stage directions to read! Total waste of time.”
- “One of the playwrights DID NOT edit his play prior, so time was wasted on editing which stage directions to read, and he had a different version of the play, which made this process even more difficult. So we had to come in for extra rehearsal time.”

Miscellaneous

- “I still have no idea what "B.L." could've possibly stood for.” (*I have no idea what this is referring to...*)
- “Recommend giving playwrights a standardized format for the top of the reading: Actor/character intro etc.” (*this is a good idea that we'll implement next year*)



PWSCC Professor Emerita Gail Renardson, with Coordinator Dawson Moore, accepts the 2013 Jerry Harper Service Award at the closing night gala.