

The Last Frontier Theatre Conference 2015 Evaluations Report



Los Angeles actor Frank Collison and Greek playwright/actress Glyka Stoiou share a few laughs in the late night Fringe Festival at the Fat Mermaid restaurant.

Introduction

Every year, participants are solicited after the Conference is over to get their feedback. There is a primary questionnaire, plus additional ones for Play Lab authors and readers. The results are tabulated here; in many cases, numerical data is given for multiple years by way of comparison. This document is used in planning for the subsequent year, and recommended as a resource to new participants in getting a feel for what the event is like.



Usually only 30-40% of attendees respond; this does not make the statistics invalid, but it does mean that they should be taken with a grain of salt. In addition to chronicling the feedback, some initial responses and plans for next year are blended into the document.

This Conference changed my life when I was attending UAA as an undergrad. It exposed me to new ways of thinking, and made me feel like I could make my life in theatre. It is the great privilege of my life to be able to facilitate that experience for other people.

Dawson Moore
Theatre Conference Coordinator

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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. 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>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Excellent	71%	66%	61.5%	45%	75%	58%	63.8%	55.1%	69.2%	72.6%
Good	20%	24%	29%	39%	20%	28%	27.6%	39.1%	23.1%	21%
Satisfactory	7%	8%	4.5%	12%	3%	6%	6.9%	4.3%	6.2%	6.4%
Unsatisfactory	2%	0%	2%	2%	0%	4%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0%
N/A	0%	0%	3%	2%	2%	2%	0%	0%	1.5%	0%



Elizabeth Ware and Mark Robokoff in Cyrano's Theatre Company's Thursday night presentation of "Macbeth."

Most of the systems for pre-Conference communication are in place and functioning well, particularly for playwrights and actors. There is sometimes a disconnect with members of theatre companies who are bringing evening productions; more needs to be done on getting orientation materials directly to them, as opposed to asking their point of contact to pass it along.

There is also a challenge in communicating with participants who are just attending, as opposed to presenting a play or acting in the Lab. We want more such attendees, and helping them feel confident about how the event works will help encourage this.

Conference Schedule

The Last Frontier Theatre Conference is one of the more ambitious events of its type in the world. With activities going from nine in the morning and ending close to midnight, it is often a topic of debate: should we do less? Could we serve fewer playwrights better than the current amount we do (50-60 yearly)? That said, there are no major changes planned to the structure of the Conference for 2016. The size of the community created by the Conference is a large source of where it's magic comes from.

	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Excellent	73%	67%	55%	59%	50%	50%	62%	58.5%	61.3%
Good	23%	29%	38%	39%	46%	36.7%	32%	32.3%	24.2%
Satisfactory	4%	3%	7%	1%	2%	13.3%	6%	6.2%	12.9%
Unsatisfactory	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1.5%	1.6%
N/A	0%	1%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	1.5%	0%



The cast of Thomas Pierce's "Almost Connect," a part of the Ten-Minute Play Slam, directed by Carrie Yanagawa. Cast (left to right): Jay Stevens, Tyler Browning, Kalli Randall, Jill Sowerwine.

Website

Aside from direct contact with the Coordinator, the website is our main means of conveying information to participants prior to the Conference, and of publicizing the event. We use it to facilitate programs such as the Monologue Workshop by making material available to participants there prior to their arrival in Valdez. It is also used 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>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Excellent	52%	51.5%	52%	45%	46%	48.3%	49.3%	44.6%	44.3%
Good	27%	22%	21%	35%	30%	41.7%	46.4%	38.5%	37.7%
Satisfactory	4%	4.5%	10%	12%	11%	6.7%	0%	9.2%	14.7%
Unsatisfactory	0%	0%	2%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
N/A	17%	22%	15%	8%	11%	3.3%	4.3%	7.7%	3.3%



There are two main areas from the later comments page that we will incorporate next year. First is an easy fix, making the pages more easily shareable with programs like Facebook.

The second is more complicated, and farther from my understanding: Making the site more interactive. What form this might take is unclear. There will be more ability to comment, and possibly an interactive board. There has always been a need for new people to get answers from veterans; possibly we will work on creating that forum this year.

Danielle Dresden performs in the Sunday evening performance where the Play Lab panelists present work that is either their own writing or personally significant to them.

Play Lab

The Play Lab is the central program of the Conference. Having a play presented in the Lab is the primary reason that playwrights attend the event. It provides 300-400 roles for actors. And its feedback sessions are the primary educational component of the entire week. Its continued improvement is a top priority throughout the year. While this year's numbers contain a slightly higher number of dissatisfied responses, over 90% of respondents still have the program ranked good to excellent.

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Excellent	71%	81%	76%	71%	77%	87%	75%	80%	73.4%	71%
Good	26%	15%	20%	25%	23%	5%	20%	16%	17.2%	19.3%
Satisfactory	3%	4%	2%	2%	0%	2%	2%	3%	4.7%	6.5%
Unsatisfactory	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	1.6%
N/A	0%	0%	2%	2%	0%	4%	0%	1%	4.7%	1.6%



Taran Haynes, Theodore C. Hooker, Brian Wescott, Tamar Shai, and Aaron Wiseman in the reading of Los Angeles playwright Amy Tofte's "The Scrambling Class."

While there is not a lot of wiggle room in the schedule, we will look at extending rehearsal time as much as possible.

The biggest change we will make, which should have a number of positive benefits, is adding a Sunday morning panelists meeting to go over the procedures, philosophies, and nuances of the Play Lab. This used to take place on the first Saturday night, but was eliminated in favor of having an event everyone could be involved in (reception, performance). Adding it back in should help address a number of areas where the process can be a little sloppy. These include:

- How readings are introduced.
- How to manage the audience feedback session.
- How to work with the room managers (who are keeping track of the time for scheduling).
- Reviewing the Conference's overall philosophy on how to give feedback.

The most worrisome aspect of feedback this year was the number of authors who reported that they did not receive their one-on-one feedback session with their lead panelist. They mostly reported that they were okay with this, but the Conference is not. It is a promised part of their experience here, and it is unacceptable that it is not taking place.

The missed connection can happen because the reading is on the last day of the Conference, or people can just miss each other, and possibly the panelist doesn't realize that they are assigned to a given play.

Regardless of the reason, this will be addressed in the Sunday morning meeting. I am loathe to assign a time for the meeting to take place; everyone's schedule is very complicated, and this is logistically tough to manage. It's possible we will try to schedule the meetings for people who are on the final day, as those tend to be the ones that fall through the cracks. They are also easier to schedule, as there are fewer commitments to manage.

Panels and Classes

The Conference offers many classes and panel discussions. The slate of classes grows organically from the featured artists who are in attendance, with them solicited for what they would be comfortable teaching and the Coordinator assuring a diverse overall curriculum. In the past couple of years, we have moved toward having more ongoing classes taking place over multiple sessions, as previous years' feedback consistently mentioned that classes were too short.

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Excellent	55%	73%	58.5%	52%	62%	68%	59%	44%	54.7%	58.1%
Good	17%	22%	29%	37%	17%	24%	31%	34%	34.4%	32.3%
Satisfactory	13%	0%	4.5%	7%	7%	2%	7%	9%	3.1%	4.8%
Unsatisfactory	0%	0%	1.5%	0%	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
N/A	15%	5%	6.5%	4%	13%	4%	3%	13%	7.8%	4.8%



The classes this year were for the most part very well received. This year we finally gave participants enough discussion about business; we normally have many people looking for more classes on business, but this year there was only one comment in that direction. We will try to keep meeting this need annually.

*New Featured Artist Ben Corbett led a five-part voice class called *The Joy of Phonetics*.*

There were a number of people who spoke of missing the Acting for Singers program, which was eliminated this year because of the program's limited number of participants. We will look at finding a way to have a singing component added to next year's Conference, but it must serve more people than the previous program, which capped at ten.

Evening Performances

The Conference presents five evenings of live theatre on the mainstage over the week. We start with an evening with the panelists from the Play Lab presenting either their own writing or work that is close to them, and then continue with productions of work by Featured Artists and/or Play Lab participants. The shows provide a communal point of communication for the participants, as it is one of the few events that run with no concurrent competition. It is also the main time that the community of Valdez can be involved in the Conference.

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Excellent	55%	65%	56%	23%	61%	57%	18%	51%	45.3%	35.5%
Good	39%	23%	30%	44%	34%	35%	39%	38%	42.2%	38.7%
Satisfactory	6%	6%	12.5%	29%	5%	2%	25%	7%	9.4%	19.4%
Unsatisfactory	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	2%	15%	1%	1.6%	6.4%
N/A	0%	6%	1.5%	2%	0%	2%	3%	3%	12.7%	0%

There was backlash this year against a perceived misogyny in two of the scripts, which likely colored the numerical rankings. It marked the second year in a row where not enough attention was given to variety between the shows: in 2014, there were consecutive plays about women who had lost children. This year, it was two shows in a row about lonely nice guys who just need a girl to take a chance on them.



John Kaczorowski and Taylor Campbell in Buffalo Laboratory Theatre's "Mystery of the Silver Chalice."

Removing the Friday evening performance has continued to reap benefits, though it sometimes feels like there aren't enough slots anymore. With the first evening show slot taken by the Panelists evening, that only leaves four slots to fill. There is some conflict between wanting to show loyalties to existing relationships with companies and finding the best overall line-up for the week. At the moment, though, there is no substantial plan to change the method for selecting evening performances.

Fringe Festival

The Fringe Festival, like the evening performances, is one of the few events at the Conference that does not have directly competing events, thereby creating a place for a more communal experience. It takes place after the evening show at a local bar, presenting readings of short plays and sometimes other forms of performance (music, open mic).

	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Excellent	35%	27%	38%	38%	28%	33.9%	33.3%	46%	32.3%
Good	12%	28.5%	26%	29%	22%	25.4%	31.9%	33.3%	32.3%
Satisfactory	8%	11%	6%	3%	13%	11.9%	11.6%	6.3%	11.3%
Unsatisfactory	2%	5%	0%	3%	2%	3.4%	2.9%	1.6%	6.4%
N/A	43%	28.5%	30%	27%	35%	25.4%	20.3%	12.7%	17.7%

There is a general undercurrent among participants that the Fringe needs to shake itself up a little... that it's becoming just more readings of plays, as opposed to something outside of the mainstream. The Fringe has two coordinators who will work with the Conference Coordinator to make plans for next year. There were some issues with the venue again this year (noise, heat), but the truth is that there is no space in Valdez that will be perfect.



Anchorage actors Devin Frey and Jeff Brion with NYC-based Nicholas Walker Herbert hamming it up at the Fat Mermaid.

Featured Artists

The Featured Artist staff's main contingent is panelists in the Play Lab. There are also numerous acting teachers, and sometimes featured performers. They are in charge of providing overall guidance to the event, and essentially speak for the Conference. When one of them helps a participant, the Conference gets credit for that. The reverse is also true.

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Excellent	62%	76%	81%	69%	77%	70%	67.2%	57.4%	64.6%	66.6%
Good	33%	20%	17%	27%	23%	26%	26%	33.8%	26.2%	21.3%
Satisfactory	5%	4%	2%	2%	0%	2%	5.1%	5.9%	4.6%	6.6%
Unsatisfactory	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	1.7%	0%	1.5%	0%
N/A	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	2.9%	3.1%	6.6%

This year suffered from a lack of diversity. There were not enough female playwrights or minorities in the mix. This does not imply anything negative about the people who were here. It was actually a particularly strong year, but the Coordinator needs to do a better job in selecting a diverse range in the future.



Featured Artist Aoise Stratford teaching her class "Vision/Revision: Generating Ideas and Solving Roadblocks."

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>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Excellent	94%	100%	98.5%	94%	100%	94%	93.4%	94.2%	86.2%	96.8%
Good	6%	0%	1.5%	6%	0%	6%	3.3%	4.3%	10.8%	1.6%
Unsatisfactory	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1.6%
N/A	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3.3%	1.4%	3.1%	0%

This year, the Conference hired three specific past staff members to be a part of the staff, as opposed to pulling them from the general college staff. This generally worked well. We also experimented with a new schedule that did not have the front desk covered 24-7 as it has been in years past. Both of these changes worked mostly well, though there were some cash handling challenges.

It was also sad to have to add a whole line, as this year featured the first time anyone has ranked the staff anything other than good or excellent in the history of the event. Can't please everyone, I suppose.



Volunteer Josh Schmidlein and staff member Ryan Buen stand ready with the water.

Food

We provide coffee, tea, and cookies all day at the Conference, in addition to a free daily lunch. There is also a sit-down dinner at the end of the week, and this year we had a catered opening night meet-and-greet as well.

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Excellent	33%	50%	26.5%	37.7%	12.7%	6.5%
Good	20%	28%	47%	47.8%	42.9%	48.4%
Satisfactory	39%	30%	23.5%	8.7%	30.2%	30.6%
Unsatisfactory	8%	0%	1.5%	1.4%	11.1%	9.7%
N/A	0%	2%	1.5%	4.3%	3.2%	4.8%

There is always a lot of contention over food, with some people complaining that there aren't enough healthy options being offered, while others complain that those people are complaining about a free lunch. We stopped asking for feedback on it for a few years because the debate was always the same.

We will again provide the same food services in 2016. The only planned difference will be to distribute a menu of food items beforehand to participants, explaining what will and won't be available.

There is periodically talk of eliminating the free lunch, but there is no plan for that. Having it at the Civic Center enables the lunch break to only be 45 minutes long; if it wasn't provided, it would need to be at least 90 minutes, cutting into a schedule that already doesn't have enough hours in it. More importantly, that lunch is part of the Conference's mission to be as affordable as possible, so that college students who are already giving up a week of summer work can afford to participate.



Participants enjoy a free lunch.

How did you hear about the Conference?

This data backs up common knowledge, that a majority of the participants are returning ones. Respondents are allowed to list multiple sources.

I'm a past participant	59%
A friend recommended it	26.2%
TBA Theatre	6.6%
Cyrano's Theatre Company	3.3%
UAA Theatre	1.6%
Playwrights Center website	9.8%
Official Playwrights of Facebook	6.6%
Six Perfections blog	1.6%
PlaySubmissionsHelper.com	1.6%

Please rank the following aspects of the Conference:

Responses to these questions are listed on pages 2-12.

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

It was just fine as is

- All the offerings were terrific.
- I can't think of anything right now.
- Can't think of any. It's remarkably full right now.
- 3 x No
- 2 x N/A
- Not that I can think of - I appreciate the structure and what is offered.
- I can't think of any.
- Water-skiing! No wait. Nothing. It's jam-packed and delicious.
- Wow - I can't imagine what else it would need.
- I think there is plenty of great stuff going on!
- I'm not sure.
- More cruises! lol

Classes in General

- Morning classes are great!
- More panels and classes

- More workshops and outdoor activities!
- Yoga, info on devised theater, open mic

Writing Classes

- Any writer's workshops geared towards writing new material is always welcome!
- More panels and classes. Readings are a blast, but breaking them up with chances for discussion and learning would be great. And maybe a discussion of alternative forms of theatre making - devising, improv, etc.
- I felt I'd have liked there to be more classes. More playwriting classes.
- More workshops for writers or discussions or something slightly different than play readings for variety of planned activities.
- Playwriting lab
- It would be cool to have smaller writing classes where you could get to know playwrights and their work more one on one.



Monologue Workshop performance by Alaska actress Keriann Gilson.

Directing Class

- Directing workshops with experienced professionals.

Business Class

- More classes, sessions, on the different ways playwrights and actors can develop their crafts and find paying work. The practice of working as a residency artist can do both!

Singing Class

- I would love to see the voice for singers workshop return to the conference. I missed having that opportunity and had really been preparing a piece to work on when I thought it would still be a part of the conference.
- Something for singers would be great!

Acting Classes

- Since the actors are somewhat mixed, experience-wise, perhaps a few more acting oriented classes. A cold reading workshop.

Improvisation

- I would enjoy seeing more activities concerning improvisation, and possibly more classes/workshops about directing.
- I missed the improv classes from last year.

Play Lab

- I really think a bit more rehearsal time is needed in the play lab.

Other Miscellaneous Ideas

- More creation of new work. At the end of the conference see stuff written at the beginning.
- I would love to see the Sunday brunch reinstated. Also I enjoyed it when there was a bit more entertainment at the Gala. And I miss the overnights.
- Some kind of periodic shuttle to the college dorms - even twice a day to fit the breaks - would be amazing. On the hot days (high 80s and up to 92) it was a brutal walk. More pleasant mornings and nights.
- Some kind of nibbly breakfast stuff would have been very welcome - though we were already quite spoiled with cookies, beverages & lunches. I would trade cookies for morning muffins.
- A more designated casual space to chill between activities, with couches. Outside the theatre was good but often crowded. Hallways and outside patio were ok but not that comfy.
- I'd love one day in the middle of the conference for not doing anything and just hanging out with everyone. But, practically and financially speaking, I know that's not possible.
- Amazed by what we were given for such a nominal fee. It's an immersive experience and the only thing I can think of to add, I think might best be suggested but not necessarily organized for us is to have actors and/or fellow playwrights give a scene a second read (cf. Monologue Slam)

What did you enjoy most about the Conference?

The Whole Thing

- Being immersed in new theatre all day!
- Seeing all the wonderful theatre in such a short time.
- The overall supportive spirit of all participants. It seemed as if everyone was there to meet, share, and to make good theater.
- The conference. High point of my year.
- The focus on the work and on connecting with and respecting individuals wherever they are in their practice.
- Spending a whole week just talking about and watching theatre is such a privilege. I also enjoyed the gender diversity of playwrights, and I think that could be even better in the future.
- Being immersed in theater, and everything related to theater and playwriting for an entire week with others who shared that interest.

- Featured artists, conversation about writing, the place.
- The wide variety and amount of work being done. 7 days of theatre from 10- midnight is really great.
- Being immersed in theatre for an entire week. It was like summer camp for grownups!

Networking

- Meeting all the writers and actors and generally having a GREAT time with this well-organized conference in beautiful Valdez
- I appreciated the opportunity to network with so many playwrights and other theatre artists. This was the largest concentration of playwrights that I've ever been with...it was awesome! Simply put - the people.
- Reconnecting and meeting new people
- Working with such a great group of talented actors and playwrights.
- Interaction with other artists.
- Everyone was so kind. I didn't have a single unpleasant interaction with another actor.
- Seeing old friends and discovering new ones!
- The chance to interact with the artists
- It was great getting to see so many varied plays and meeting playwrights at all stages of their careers.
- Meeting new playwrights
- Meeting actors, directors and writers with a passion for what they do and for sharing.
- I love meeting new artists and the awesome, friendly vibe of the conference in general.
- The people and the place.
- Seeing friends from past conferences, and enjoying their plays and performances.
- Meeting other playwrights and professionals
- The people are so friendly and open
- This mix of people and getting to meet folks from all over the world with such sincere devotion to theater.
- Making friends.
- The people! I loved getting to spend a week connecting with other playwrights from around the country.
- The camaraderie of being with fellow artists and easy access to guest artists
- Meeting new people every year and seeing the amazing actors and bonding with other playwrights.
- The camaraderie, the friendships made, the networking opportunities and of course.....the reindeer sausage at the Totem.
- Seeing old friends and making new ones.
- Meeting artists from around the country.

- The amazingly friendly and talented staff and other invited artists many of whom I now consider friends and running mates. The conversations about craft and each other's plays was wonderful. I attended many readings and felt the feedback by the panels and audience was excellent and helpful and by and large the acting was terrific.
- Meeting new like-minded people in an amazing setting.
- The featured artists
- Meeting new, exciting, talented theater-makers and friends.

Play Lab

- 3 x The Play Lab
- The Play Lab...excellent, excellent work by all involved.
- Play lab - so invigorating to hear so many words from such a diverse talent pool.
- The readings and feedback.
- Play labs were wonderful.
- The play lab and panelist's feedback/comments. I very much appreciated finding out in advance what panelists would be attending what readings.
- The Play Lab -- participating and meeting kindred spirits from all over the country and Australia -- Greece too!
- Excellent panelists this year!
- Watching all the different plays.
- Some great Play Lab plays this year.
- Hearing plays and critiques.
- The Play Labs are so fascinating.
- Play lab panel feedback
- The 30-minute feedback session with our lead panelist
- working with Laura Gardner, voice lessons, Rand Higbee, and the monologue workshop

Performances

- The performances.
- The evening shows.
- Seeing quality performances.
- The wonderful performances.
- Some of the evening performances were fabulous -- particularly *An Iliad*.
- *The Mystery of the Silver Chalice* was fantastic.

Education

- I loved the classes.
- The workshops!

- Other than networking, I valued the workshops offered by the featured artists. I learned a lot! I also appreciated the featured artists friendliness and flexibility to meet outside of sessions.
- I always enjoy Gregory Pulver's classes.
- The opportunities to improve the craft.
- Improving my ability to appreciate and analyze plays through group discussions.

Fringe Festival

- Fringe shows were fun and experience at the Fat Mermaid was a good time
- Fringe

Ten-Minute Play Slam

- The play slam was really well done.

The Monologue Workshop

- The monologue workshop!

The Staff

- Also, Conference staff members were incredibly helpful and prepared.
- How friendly and helpful the staff was

Food and Receptions and Housing

- I had heard food was bad but I found it tasty and varied
- Reception at the museum was fun!
- Glad there were vegetarian options at the meals
- Very affordable housing option!!! Really appreciated this!
- I missed the cruise at the end but heard it was fantastic.
- The cruise was also awesome.
- Oh! And real half-and-half for the coffee! Not just that powder stuff! So happy!"

What did you enjoy least about the Conference?

Nothing

- I only wish it lasted longer!
- Solid conference. No real downside.
- 2 x N/A
- We could work a little harder. As a featured artist, play lab respondent, I had plenty of free time.
- How short it was

Facilities

- The oven that Room C can (unavoidably, I'm afraid) become.
- Acoustics in rooms A and B
- The opening reception was so crowded that it was hard to hear a word of conversation after a while. Perhaps a larger venue?

Schedule

- The sheer volume of the schedule. There were readings I wanted to see but couldn't because of competing plays in the same time slots. I also found myself needing breaks to digest and make room for more offerings. That self-regulating is not a bad thing but there was a desire to want to see more than I could.
- There were some readings I had to miss, but probably nothing you can do about that.
- Because of scheduling, I missed most of the classes
- It felt overscheduled this year - I wish there was a little more open time in there, like when there used to be a half-day free.
- The fact that I still couldn't get to see everything I wanted to was frustrating but was no one's fault. If there was a way that all the big presentations could be done on one day so we could see them all, that would be wonderful. I missed several things due to rehearsals--that said, I don't want to give up doing the play labs either. It's a conundrum!
- Longish gaps in activities at certain points each day offered a welcome chillout, but weren't quite long enough to do anything fun. It would have been nicer to have medium sized breaks with more workshops during the day, and then break earlier in the day, one long break before evening activities
- That I can't be at every single play at once.
- Leaving before the cruise and the closing night!

Evening Performances

- I wish the evening performances had included more work by women.
- [specific show] and other sexist performances.
- I found some of the evening performances offensive and sexist. I hope that in the future outdated content like this will not be featured at a conference that otherwise does a great job celebrating women and their accomplishments in the arts.
- The evening performances this year were slightly weaker, overall, than last year (my opinion).
- I thought there were a few less than stellar artistic endeavors this year.
- The play by [particular playwright] was probably the low point.
- Evening shows were weak, especially [particular production].
- The evening performances.

Classes

- The workshops could have had more variety. 5 days about phonetics was a bit much.
- The acting workshops, other than the monologue workshop, tended to be first thing in the morning. I would have been more likely to attend if a class were offered at 11AM or after, given I wasn't busy with a rehearsal or a reading.

Food

- Not having lunch food to eat.
- 2 x The food
- Would have liked a vegetable with each meal - though it's churlish to complain about free lunches.
- And the lunches, although I recognize fresh food is hard to come by in AK.
- I am gluten intolerant and usually prepare to not eat when I go out. However, the day the company and I arrived, there were gluten free corn dogs. I was so surprised, it was like a free trip to Disneyland and it just made my day. Every day after that there wasn't anything I could eat though, and after I had gotten my hopes up, it was a bummer to go and see there was nothing I could eat. In past years I would munch on the salad side at least, but this year there was dressing and croutons mixed in so even that wasn't okay to eat. So I guess if lunch isn't going to be allergy friendly, say so before the conference so people come prepared, and stick to that. Just providing food I could only eat one day really raised a false hope and was a huge bummer for me.



A discussion with the cast of "Mystery of the Silver Chalice."

Weather-related

- Too hot outside.
- Having to think really hard and all I can come up with was the heat -- which had nothing to do with anyone there!
- The weather and no air conditioning!
- Very brutal treks back and forth to the dorms on the hottest days.
- It has nothing to do with the conference, but I can't get a decent nights' sleep with all that infernal sunshine.
- The heat!
- The mosquitoes. In the future, I'm bringing bug spray.
- Biting insects - mosquitos, no-see-ums. Please do not invite them back next year.
- Hah traveling to alaska is hard!

Classes

- There didn't seem to be a lot of useful writing workshops. Bill's talk on the business of writing was great but didn't find the others helpful.

Play Lab

- I think establishing a standard protocol for how readings are introduced, and who does it, would help. Being casual sometimes seemed a little sloppy.
- The writing was so uneven. Some of the plays, sorry but it's true, were painful to sit through.
- The brevity of the rehearsals especially in the rehearsal rooms with the fans that could not turn off. It felt like there was literally no time to fully focus on the script with the writer and actors because there was always white noise in the background.
- Didn't get much feedback from panelists although what I did receive was valuable, but audience was great.
- I felt that some featured artists didn't respond well during their feedback session. For instance, some artists didn't speak enough and didn't provide as much insight as other featured artists. I didn't have a concern with any responder speaking too much—sometimes responders wouldn't say enough. The insights offered from the featured artists are valuable—not only for the playwright who wrote the play, but also for the audience to hear. I learned a lot from listening to the responders, but sometimes they could be reserved and not offer much.
- It was the most demoralizing experience I've ever had as a writer, bar none.
- Some experienced actors were very rude in readings...giving notes to other actors who are newer in a cruel, even mocking way.
- There were several Featured Artists who, despite Dawson's instructions, rewrote people's plays during Play Lab feedback.

Housing

- The dorms were seriously overcrowded this time around ... 10 people sharing one bathroom is not really a tenable situation.
- I stay in the dorms and for the most part that works just fine. But when 9 to 10 guys all need to be at the civic center at the same time each morning, the one bathroom they all share does become a bit of an issue.

Fringe Festival

- Fringe Festival: With the heat wave (can't be helped, understandably..no one's fault), the cramped space of the venue, and inability to hear the shows, plus long wait time to get drinks under number system, Fringe was a big letdown.
- There was very little I didn't enjoy. For me particularly, the Fringe didn't do much for me. I like that we had a place to go and a chance for people to share their work in an informal setting. I'm wondering if the work could be from stuff created during that week. To celebrate the spontaneous feel of the presentation more.
- Fringe was not fun! Isn't it supposed to be fun?

Ten-Minute Play Slam

- The other disappointment was the play slam. The scripts were all too similar and the pace was deathly slow especially since we were forced to wait over 30 minutes for the house to open.

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

Nothing

- I had all the info I needed - thanks!
- 3 x None
- 4 x N/A
- Nothing - I thought the information I received ahead of time was great. This was my first time at the conference and I felt like I knew everything I needed to. Dawson replied to emails promptly with good information. He was incredibly helpful.
- I had everything I needed.
- Can't think of anything more I needed.
- As a past participant I had all the information I needed.
- Think I had plenty of information
- Well prepared this year, but this was my second time.
- I was so very impressed by how much information I received prior to the conference. I can't imagine it being done any better.
- You gave us a lot of info in advance.
- I felt very informed! The schedule had everything laid out so well I couldn't possibly have come up with a question.
- I had all the information I needed.
- I was fully informed
- Had everything I needed.
- Had enough.
- Nothing. I felt SUPER prepared to head to Valdez. The pre-conference emails were helpful and I had a good grip on what to expect.
- I felt I had been properly informed in every aspect necessary.

Play Lab information

- What to expect from the Play Lab
- Just like to know who I'm reading with in the Play Lab ASAP
- I think the essay on directing, while excellent, ended up being very misleading for those of us with cast members who were not professional actors and made us feel more timid about having a say in the proceedings.

Weather

- The only thing that I felt I could have used more preparation about was the amount of daily sunlight. It took me days to adjust and get a full night sleep which heightened the fatigue factor. The dorms are just OK in blocking out light. There was a new Alaskan friend who had to leave the dorms mid-week get a room at the Best Western to get a good night's sleep. And he's native. So any advanced recommendations, warnings, etc. I think would be useful.

Food

- Did not know lunch would be provided. I found out very soon but if that info was distributed beforehand I missed it!
- About the food...
- "The information I got implied that Valdez was absolutely removed from the outside world, and impossibly expensive. I would have liked to know there was a supermarket right next to the dorms! And nothing was as terribly expensive as stated (maybe restaurants but you didn't have to eat out every meal)

Evening Performances

- More information on the evening performances? Maybe that was on the website. *(Descriptions of all the shows was posted on the website for a month prior to the event.)*

More About Valdez

- I was told after the fact that between the bears and some unsavory local elements that it wasn't totally safe to walk alone at night - would have liked to know that upfront. *(It is generally as safe to walk alone at night in Valdez as anywhere else.)*
- If a pool or other swimming option is available it would be nice to know (although I guess this week was uncharacteristically hot). I did see a swimming pond below the center but info in advance would have been helpful.
- To bring a hand held fan! The warm weather caught me by surprise.
- That heat waves are possible. I brought layers, but not light ones!
- Restaurants and stores availability ahead of time. Hard to accommodate allergies.

Housing

- They did say the dorms were Spartan but if I'd known they had absolutely no kitchenware I would have packed some. Luckily my roommates drove up from Anchorage with everything but the kitchen sink.

Schedule and Specific Events

- I may have missed this part of the information package - I wish I knew about the Gala.
- I really didn't understand what the Ten-Minute Play Slam and Monologue Workshop were about. Somehow they completely washed by me as a new comer. I would like to have understood beforehand that they were my major outlets as an actor after readings. That was hard to know beforehand.

- A better sense of the history and traditions of the Conference ALTHOUGH returning members do an excellent job of reaching out to newbies.
- I made my plane reservations before receiving the schedule, so I thought Saturday was a full day, not just a welcome dinner. So I came a day earlier than I probably would have with that info.

And there's this...

- How many attractive available men would have been around.

How useful was the Conference website?

Very

- Very good site.
- Very
- 2 x It was great.
- 2 x It was fine.
- Good. Nope.
- The website is useful. I appreciate the tips to actors and directors participating in the readings.
- Fairly useful in terms of dress, temps, flow of the week socially.
- Excellent.
- Great website. Great job.
- The website is good.
- The information about housing was very helpful. I was able to arrange my room well in advance at the dorm.
- Very useful. The conference website contains a wealth of information—thank you.
- Very thorough. And was very helpful preparing to attend.
- Very, and I referred to it frequently.
- It's pretty great.
- 2 x Fine
- Quite useful. I appreciate the list of past play lab selections being up there.
- It was great.
- Its rad!
- It's useful enough.
- Very useful - having the program with the cast lists and playwright bios up before the conference was very helpful.



TBA cast and production team for "Cockeyed," with the author, William Missouri Downs.

Very, with feedback

- Very useful - keep everything up to date as much as possible.
- Very useful. Sooner info is up the better.
- Very useful. I would suggest putting the week's program and schedule there if it's not there already. And I would put a button on the home page taking us right to the schedule. I'd prefer to have the conference book on my iPad instead of having to carry a printed book.
- Great but the connection between people doesn't seem to work very well.
- It was useful, I consulted it quite a lot while I was preparing to travel.
- Pretty good. A bit hard to find the Housing page
- It's functional - could be prettier.
- Very useful. For first timers a description of the time commitment necessary for the monologue workshop would be helpful.
- The website is generally good, but perhaps materials from prior years could be more distanced from this year's. Sometimes I got uncertain about where the new stuff would be, but that could just be me.

Didn't Use It Much

- Don't use it very much
- To be honest, I haven't used it...
- In all fairness, I didn't visit the website so I can't comment.
- Sorry I didn't use it too much but will in the future!
- It was perfectly fine, but I didn't use it very much.
- 2 x N/A

Prefers the Personal Touch

- Because I'm returning, I get my information directly from Dawson for the most part.
- I honestly never even look at it for anything besides past photos and monologues. I usually get my information from Dawson's emails.
- I got more out of Dawson's emails than the website

Feedback

- It would have been fun to have one that was easier to share on FB and twitter, other social media.
- Perhaps, ways to make website more interactive? Perhaps, a chatroom or live chat link that can help answer questions in real time.

Digital Program *(which was on the homepage of the website)*

- i would have liked to be able to down load the guide for my files.
- I don't know if the Conference program was online anywhere but that could be helpful. Would it cut down on cost ? I would much rather look at something on my device,

phone or laptop than the booklet/catalog. Could that be a registration option? Physical or e-book? And then if you want to purchase one you can at cost or something?

If you participated in the Fringe Festival, please rank each of the following aspects of the event on how important they are to you.

	Very important	Important	Sure, why not	Don't really care	Would rather this wasn't a priority
Hearing only great scripts	15.4%	35.9%	41%	7.7%	0%
Using only the best actors	15.4%	23.1%	23.1%	25.6%	12.8%
Hearing work by many different writers	48.7%	41%	10.3%	0%	0%
Inclusivity in casting, giving everyone a chance	34.2%	34.2%	18.4%	13.1%	0%
Seating availability	15.8%	63.2%	15.8%	5.2%	0%
Food service	7.7%	25.6%	46.2%	18%	2.5%
Bar service	23.1%	41%	30.8%	5.1%	0%
Knowing in advance what will be performed	5.1%	28.2%	18%	38.5%	10.3%

These results are very similar to those from last year. They are even less concerned with quality, strongly reinforcing the belief that the Fringe Festival is about inclusivity more than quality (though of course that remains a concern as well).

Additional comments

Purely positive

- A great conference as usual.
- I greatly enjoyed attending and working in this conference.
- Great conference!
- This was a really special week. Thank you!
- Another wonderful conference!
- Still a great time!
- I adore the conference and hope to attend next year! I never leave without making at least a few new friends.
- None, Just that it was stellar and I hope I'm there next year.
- Amazing, life changing experience. Incredible staff.
- Great time great experience can't wait to return!
- Thanku for a great conference!

- I also am glad writers and actors got to participate with the ten minute play festival and monologues. I enjoyed hearing everyone's work.
- It's a wonderful conference, really meaningful. So glad it continues to be so.
- I love coming up to Valdez each summer with my friends.
- LFTC ROCKS
- So fun! Learned lots! I will miss it if it goes away. A lot"
- Well done all! I was very happy and energized and felt very lucky to be part of it.
- Great job, as always :)
- The conference was fun impeccably and I was blown away by the care Dawson and his entire staff to every single detail. Created the possibility for good work to happen and collegial support to develop.
- Great job, as usual! This is simply one of my favorite things to do.
- Great conference. Can't wait to come back next year.

Have more publicity

- This was my 2nd year of participation, and I am surprised how inexpensive it is, and how few people outside of the theatre world attend the conference. I would strongly recommend additional publicity around Alaska- specifically Fairbanks, Juneau and Anchorage in free community calendars (online and print) and perhaps public broadcasting announcements. This conference is awesome, and should be packed!

Location, location, location

- Valdez is awesome!
- Beautiful location, as always!

Fringe Festival

- Great work everyone -- and kudos to Janna too!
- Really enjoyed the Fringe!
- Janna rocks!
- Fat Mermaid continues to be a great location

Diversity

- I thought that generally the conference did a great job trying to be inclusive. I was impressed by the number of female playwrights and featured artists. But more ethnic diversity could be considered in the future. Also, not crazy about the actor/actress distinction. No need for the gendered title. But I could tell that organizers were conscious of diversity and inclusivity and that was really exciting to me!
- I appreciate that there seemed to be a balance of male to female playwrights. I'm wondering about diversity regarding race. One way to strengthen interest in diverse groups is to invite diversity of actors up - and colorblind cast the readings.

Schedule

- Have you ever considered moving the evening performances to the morning? I attended every evening performance, but my energy level was severely tested. Imagine the evening performances at 8am. *(This has some merit, but it would eliminate the ability for local people to attend.)*

Food

- Nothing to do with Lab, but food was excellent on several days and beyond serviceable on the others. Food is expensive in AK and \$55!!!!
- Everyone always says salad at lunch, and it's not possible. However - frozen peas are obtainable. Just once, a green vegetable with one meal during the week... even in Valdez, right?
- Thank you for feeding us lunch. The food was eclectic and well put together each day. I'm seriously thankful.

Staff

- Dawson of course is awesome.
- Great job, again, Dawson and Company!
- Dawson is a national treasure. His kindness saved me.
- Dawson is magnificent at his job. He was magnanimous, organized, easy going and helpful throughout.
- Thank you to Dawson and the entire staff for all of your hard work!
- Fairly solid year - as always the conference staff makes this event a great event - I believe that friendliness and support is why so many of us return year after year
- Conference staff -- from Dawson down -- was FANTASTIC!

Provide a Contact List

- I'd love a contact list of all participants. At least email. *(We leave contacting each other up to participants to avoid privacy issues; if someone contacts me looking for someone's information, I pass that request on to the person.)*
- The "schedule rating" above had to do with reading it and understanding ahead of time where to be/when. Even studying the sheet sent ahead I totally missed that I had schedule conflicts. The schedule of the conference itself...the way the day unfolded was great.

Program Cover Art

- I love this conference. One tiny note - the posters/program covers don't live up to it. There's a distinctive look to them - Valdez scenery, an added element that is performance related (sometimes.) ... I can't help feeling that given the amazing poster designs by some conference participants that there could be a truly theatrical cover that would elevate the look of the conference to the outside world. There are posters of shows people hang up as art... I doubt the program cover is one of them. It could be.



Elizabeth Ware and David Edgcombe receive the Jerry Harper Service Award.

Responses from Participating Playwrights in the 2015 Play Lab

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

Nothing

- I had all the information I needed before arriving, thank you!
- Excellent
- No
- I felt like I had just enough information.
- Extremely useful!
- Very
- The info was clear and useful. No surprises.

- All was very well planned. Excellent casting and time to rehearse was great.
- As a long time participant I knew where to find all the information I needed...or at least I knew who to ask.
- Excellent.
- Very useful.
- It was quite adequate. This was my first experience and I felt prepared for everything that happened.
- I was very satisfied with all the information I received.
- Info was very useful.
- Very. I liked knowing the readers & panelists names prior.
- It was all great. I felt very good about the whole process.
- This was really useful because I was able to suggest re-casting my play based on the headshots in the catalog pdf.
- The information was spot on. I felt supported and informed. It was also easy to track down actors that I was paired with because of the conference program (including photos is awesome).
- I got everything I needed. It was excellent.
- Super useful
- Very useful. No more info needed.
- I felt pretty prepared, and also it was very useful having that talk by Dawson on the first day, going over how everything would work.
- Very useful!
- Very useful.....clearly returning to the conference allowed me to mentally organize myself in advance of the conference itself. That first year can be soooooo overwhelming.
- It was thorough and useful.
- All available information was excellent! I felt very prepared for the conference!

How To Guide

- The essay on direction, while excellent is very misleading when there are non-professional or beginning actors reading your play.

Good, but...

- The info I received was great. What I would have liked to know in advance: 1. Who are my actors 2. Have they read the play 3. Do they have questions Not playwright related: 1. The dorms have nothing at all in the way of kitchen ware or bathroom supplies 2. There is a fully stocked, large supermarket right by the dorms 3. Is there a place to swim, rent bikes and otherwise recreate? If so, what are the prices, rules etc. ? 4. Simple list of fun things to do when not at conference. Maybe it was there but I missed it.

- Didn't really quite understand how it would all work. Was unsure of protocol. Is it okay to contact colleagues in advance? Can rewrites be submitted? Until what point? (*This information was included in the initial correspondence, and was only an e-mail question away.*)

Didn't feel prepared

- I wish I had received more information regarding the featured artists assigned to my play, the rehearsal process, the selection of readers, and the play lab in general.

Were the responses of the panel useful to you?

	2013	2014	2015
Very Helpful	53.1%	85.7%	71%
Reasonably Helpful	28.1%	9.5%	9.7%
Somewhat Helpful	15.6%	4.8%	12.9%
Not Helpful	0%	0%	0%
The Opposite of Helpful	3.1%	0%	6.45%

Yes!

- I agreed with a lot of what the panel was saying. While critical, it was out of a good place - they wanted it to be the best play it could be.
- I found the responses from the panelists, at other plays, to be very helpful. Everyone seemed on fire this year. Maybe it was the warmer weather but discussions were specific and helpful.
- Insightful comments that I've absolutely incorporated into revisions.
- One panelist had a specific recommendation for staging that I have since tested and it works brilliantly. A great tip.
- Changes made.....soooooooooo much better. Thank you.
- They were insightful and confirmed my own feelings about the play's strengths and weaknesses, which is a good sign.
- I felt this year's panel was very in tune with the play and willing to listen to my intent. I appreciated their comments and responses which were more directorial in a way which was interesting and helpful given that I may be the one directing it in the future.
- I had a really good panel this year.
- Danielle wrote many useful comments on my script and handed to me the next day! Who does that? She was great! Eric was right to the point, his comments were really helpful and he was open to all playwrights to talk more about the scripts after the Play Lab.

- They were awesome. Everyone should have the ability to give this kind of feedback.
- I loved my panel. They were so supportive and respectful. The feedback they gave me was specific and actionable.
- I appreciated that I had a diverse array of expertise shared between the 3 responders. For instance, acting, playwriting, and design. Although the responders have a wealth of knowledge and roles behind them, it was nice to see that their primary focus as an artists differed amongst each other.

Mixed

- I did sit on other plays where a panelist seemed to get off on trashing a play. For example, one panelist was overheard trashing the title of a play he was about to go critique. This made it seem like he didn't want to be there. Furthermore, it was as if he made up his mind before giving the piece a shot.
- Some of the comments were very helpful, others not so much, but all (in my session) were delivered with kindness and diplomacy, so that was good -- in a couple other sessions, I found myself cringing in sympathy for the playwright. Comments like "Ok, let me tell you how to write comedy..." are not helpful. So... comments I received were fine, others that I witnessed: not so much. Also, I'm a pretty brass-tacks sort of person, and I can handle hearing that something just doesn't work. But mostly, I saw the panels very carefully finding positives to share, even when the script had glaring inadequacies. So the fact that my panel's feedback was not negative left me wondering what they weren't telling me. Surely there was something that needed fixing. But their comments largely discussed the themes of the play. Another featured artist who was not on my panel (Eric Coble) came up to me later to offer some input, and his comments were immediately useful; he identified a flaw -- glaring once he pointed it out -- and I'm really grateful for that.
- The lead panelist pointed out several times that she understood the deeper meaning of the play. This was affirming but not that useful for rewrites. The other two panelist made helpful comments about structure which I've benefitted from.

Not Good

- A random participant came up to me and said my panel was just terrible and basically tried to re-write rather than understand my play. I was actually grateful to hear it because the whole experience was so traumatizing and I thought it was maybe all my fault.
- One panelist said it wasn't a play. Another said it was a radio play. And my main panelist spent our 1-on-1 time talking about how he would rewrite the play rather than talking about what the play was.

- I thought the mentors this year were a little biased towards commercial, linear work and dudes. My mentors kept talking about my work being not produceable which felt a little besides the point.

Was the audience feedback session helpful to you?

	2013	2014	2015
Very Helpful	34.4%	33.3%	61.3%
Reasonably Helpful	40.6%	33.3%	19.3%
Somewhat Helpful	15.6%	33.3%	12.9%
Not Helpful	3.1%	0%	6.5%
The Opposite of Helpful	6.2%	0%	0%

Yes!

- It was most helpful hearing what people got out of the play, which spanned the spectrum of responses.
- This year the panelists were adept at directing the discussion toward playwrights' specific interests for critique.
- It was both flattering and useful, as there were several pertinent comments and it was great to hear where people were confused or unclear.
- This helped me meet and know people at the conference and I made some great connections and possibly budding friendships because of sensitive comments and ideas stated during talkback
- I always appreciate hearing from the audience. That immediate visceral response tells me the most I need to know about the work.
- I thought these sessions were conducted as well as any other play reading sessions that I've participated in.
- It was so interesting to find out how things landed with different people. There was a mutually respectful atmosphere. No one tried to rewrite my play.
- What was most helpful about the audience feedback was people talking to me afterwards. Once the first panelist said my script wasn't a play, people didn't want to contradict that. But, afterwards, in social situations, lots of people gave me good feedback.
- They caught a number of things that I hadn't. Audience was quite helpful as well.

Mixed

- My play didn't have sufficient time to have an adequate post read feedback session as we were up against lunch and time was limited. I got extremely useful feedback from my colleagues, but had to seek them out individually in the days that followed.

- Many people describe your play in terms of what it meant to them, and while it's nice to hear that it resonated on some level with them, they often go on to then "help" by suggesting that you emphasize that particular element that they liked best. So, often, audience feedback requires significant sifting to find useful nuggets.

Not Good

- My play reading was late Thursday afternoon. A number of audience members told me they were exhausted after a long day and week and zoned out, though more told me they couldn't understand or hear the actors.
- I wish the mentors steered the conversation away from prescriptive advice to playwright.

Was the private meeting a panelist helpful to you?

	2013	2014	2015
Very Helpful	46.9%	71.4%	48.4%
Reasonably Helpful	18.8%	19%	12.9%
Somewhat Helpful	12.5%	0%	12.9%
Not Helpful	3.1%	4.8%	6.5%
The Opposite of Helpful	0%	0%	0%
Didn't have one	12.5%	4.8%	19.3%
Didn't have it yet, but have plans to do it via distance	6.2%	0%	0%

Yes

- Aoise Stratford was hands down the best lead panelist I have ever had as a returning Play Lab participant. She not only had very insightful & notes for me, she also had hand-written notes in a copy of my play for me to take home for rewrites later. I only wish our meeting could have lasted longer - please invite her back!
- The meeting offered insight to the different directions my play could go, with rewrite process considerations.
- My private meeting went well. My responder went page by page with notes and observations. It was clear that my primary responder put time and effort into their response outside of the reading.
- My lead panelist was Eric Coble and he was fantastic. He asked me before the reading if there was anything specific I wanted him to look for. Then, he spent lots of time in our one-one-one addressing my questions and sharing his own thoughts. I was very happy with the whole process.

- Was impressed that my lead person went through my text after the reading and gave me line notes on the script to take home with me. Felt like this person really got the play.
- Absolutely. I was impressed with how he (David Edgecombe) addressed the technical and stylistic elements of the play, as well as practical venues for me to showcase the piece. He hit several nails on the head.
- Again, a good panel and a good point person.
- Danielle was really great!

Mixed

- One of my other panelists, not my lead panelist, was EXTREMELY helpful and pulled me aside for a private meeting. My lead, unfortunately, was not.
- My "lead panelist" was very kind and generous with his time and comments. But as I mentioned above, I could handle more direct criticism, if needed. I wonder if giving the panelists time to confer amongst themselves and then having the final feedback session reflect that meeting would give a fuller sense for how the play worked across many people.
- My panelist, charming as she was, didn't have much playwriting experience. There is sometimes great insight from a designer's viewpoint... and as a secondary panelist it is great to have that viewpoint represented. As a lead panelist, the one on one didn't really go anywhere. That said, a previous year's one on one with Gregory (also starting from a designer viewpoint) was excellent. This may be a single experience, not an ongoing issue. I'm not disappointed and don't feel shortchanged... but a new writer might have missed their chance for some deeper feedback.
- I didn't really get one on one time with my head panelist. I DID have an opportunity to have a sit down with other featured artists. That was VERY helpful.
- I know he tried to be helpful, but when I rattled off my influences on the play -- which aren't that bizarre -- he didn't really know them well enough to help see what I was trying to accomplish. I know it sounds like I'm being defensive, but I felt like my respondents didn't understand the play. Maybe because only 1 was a playwright? Other playwrights' comments throughout the conference were much more helpful and seemed to grasp much more what I was trying to do.

Not Good

- The panelist came up to me after the reading and said she had nothing to say beyond the few comments she'd made publicly, so essentially declined a private meeting.
- I went on the last day and we just missed each other. I felt pretty satisfied though with the comments after the reading.
- I never had a one-on-one with anyone from the panel, but was a worthwhile experience regardless.

- One on one was never mentioned. Didn't miss it.
- Wasn't offered.

Were you satisfied with the performance of your readers?

	2013	2014	2015
Very Satisfied	40.6%	33.3%	55.7%
Satisfied	37.5%	47.6%	26.7%
Somewhat Satisfied	18.8%	9.5%	6.6%
Dissatisfied	6.3%	9.5%	10%

Yes

- Bostin Christopher was extremely skilled and smart and I was very happy he was cast in my script.
- My readers were undergrads from UAA, and I wouldn't have traded them. They were so excited, enthusiastic, and anxious to do a good job. I only give them one mark down because they were, of course, more green than more experienced actors. But I loved working with these actors.
- Thank you, wonderful casting gods.
- The actors at the conference are so fricking good! I had a banging cast this year.
- One of my best casts ever.
- Since I was able to handpick who would read two of the main characters I felt I had a good head start on my casting. But I was happy with everyone else and generally thought that most of the other readings I saw were served well by the cast.
- Fabulous readers. Inspired casting!
- They rocked.
- My actors were perfect. They were committed, very smart, very professional. They were perfectly cast. Whoever did the casting clearly understood the play and cast it with care.
- Well cast.

Mixed

- Incredible cast.....sadly the stage directions could hardly be heard. I should have anticipated that and made different arrangements. But that said.....AMAZING cast.
- There was a medical complication with one reader that was unavoidable, but she did a good job covering it up.
- I feel extremely lucky with the cast I had. I only recommend the actors project more and pick up the pace, but I recognize the limitations for a one-day rehearsal and reading.

Not Good

- This seems to be a problem. The people I was assigned couldn't follow directions and were not capable of creating the characters. The adjudicators saw through this, but compared to some of the excellent reads I heard I was disappointed.
- I felt that out of my cast of three, two out of my three readers were miscast. One of those two was extremely miscast. That was also the consensus from colleagues who were in attendance. Those same two actors hadn't read the play til the night before the rehearsal which was also disappointing,
- I had a cast of 4, plus a stage direction reader. Two of the cast members simply couldn't read the lines as written -- I know I write somewhat densely, but not impenetrably. They struggled so much that key plot points were obscured. I don't blame them; I think one rehearsal was just too little.
- This is probably way too much candor but I was unfortunately at the mercy of the casting process which did my play no favors. It was definitely great fun directing and sharing the play in the live, pressured environment of a one rehearsal reading. That's always a great feeling. But my biggest regret with the entire conference was getting handed an inexperienced actor, really wrong for my lead. How bad can a reading go, you figure. Had I but known. We spent a good 10 minutes in rehearsal just stopping to go over words she didn't know and persistently pronounced wrong, like "Zurich" and "next of kin." So expand that aggravation... Comedy is so dependent on delivery, and comic timing is a gift from the Theatre Gods - at least your play has a fighting chance. While the other actors were skilled and the stage directions reader was marvelous, the performance didn't gel, largely because this actor was so off the mark. All the more painful after watching so many terrific actors in other plays. We also started off with an inadvertent mix up, as much my fault as anyone's, where a character wasn't cast, so we had to run around and find an extra actor. Then we discovered that the actors had the wrong version of the script, nobody's fault really, so we had to find and print out the right version. Then it became clear that the actors weren't too familiar with the script so a lot of recapping and explaining was required. With these and other snafus we lost 25 minutes of precious rehearsal time, which also compromised the quality of the reading. On the other hand, the actors were good about getting together for a read through before the performance, even if it turned out to be a train wreck. I'd been looking forward to showing my work to my peers, but in the end I was quite disappointed with the wasted opportunity, and somewhat embarrassed. Honestly I've had far more successful cold readings with the right cast. But as I always say, what doesn't kill us makes us stronger, and I'm not just talking about salmonella.

What worked best for you in this process?

Everything

- It's hard to point to one thing. It's the overall process from the rehearsal to the meeting with my point person on the panel, it all works very well.
- I actually thought the entire process worked quite well.
- It was great to see so many brand new plays and to soak up their critiques. I felt very supported by the conference staff and the actors had great intentions. The panel and audience were respectful and supportive. The rehearsal and the promise of the performance took me out of listener mode back to writer/director mode which was exhilarating as always. It was an honor to be part of the conference.
- The whole process was hugely beneficial to me. I would say the panel feedback was the most helpful aspect. But, just hearing my work interpreted by new people was really exciting in and of itself. I also really appreciated the relaxed, supportive atmosphere.
- The overall atmosphere at the conference helped me be relaxed, yet organized with how I approached the reading. Everything went well.

Ability to Use Latest Draft

- Being allowed to have the most updated draft of the script printed out by a reasonable date before the conference was extremely helpful!

Rehearsal

- I like that the readings were done simply so I could concentrate on directing the intent of the piece rather than worrying about being creative in the staging.
- I was really glad I ended up with a director. She was able to give quick notes to the actors better than I would have been able to, and her feedback afterward was better than the featured artists.
- This year I enjoyed working with the actors in rehearsal. They were enthusiastic and helpful. Very professional.

Just Hearing The Play

- I'd never heard this play out loud in front of an audience, so that was immensely helpful.

The Community

- The entire process was a surreal experience. I loved getting a chance to meet and bond with emerging playwrights. There is so much talent, it's unbelievable!
- I LOVED the relationships developed with so many talented colleagues who I now consider friends. Those colleagues were invested in attending my reading and in offering constructive feedback to help improve my play. I also loved hearing everyone's work throughout the week and participating in so many constructive feedback sessions with talented panelists and audience members. I feel that my skills at listening and offering constructive feedback were enhanced by attending all of those sessions.

Directing

- Although at first I was a little apprehensive about having to direct the rehearsal of my script, "Marshall's Manual" made the expectations very clear and allowed me to approach it with confidence and without undue stress.

Feedback

- The feedback with panelists worked best.
- A panel that really came across professionally and caring yet constructive.
- Having a panel and then having private time with my lead artist moderator. I loved having Nan Barnett there.
- I also really liked having three adjudicators so you got feedback from more than one person.
- The one on one was the highlight for me. Both constructive and validating.
- The reading and feedback with adjudicators.
- I think my lead panelist's comments were the most useful part.

Casting

- The casting at the Festival is exemplary.
- The cast.
- The best...the casting. I was blessed with a cast that was ready to go, inquisitive, made choices, and fit the parts.
- The respect I was given by the actors and the panel. That allowed the actors to do their best work. I was so impressed with the work they put in to getting their character right - also getting the right accents.

Performance

- Hearing it in the room with wonderful, committed actors.
- The day of the performance.

Other People's Readings

- It was very useful to go to other people's readings and hear the comments. I learned a lot that way.

What would you like to see improve or change in the Play Lab?**Nothing**

- Nothing. I appreciated the organization on the behalf of Dawson and the conference. I am thankful that my panelists were responsive, positive, and critical in the feedback session. I cannot think of anything I'd change.
- It was really great. Everyone was so helpful and I met a lot of wonderful creative people.
- I can't think of anything right now.
- Less sunshine. But that's not the Play Lab's fault.
- Unsure. It was a great experience.

- It's great the way it is. I can't think of anything I'd change.
- It seemed to run like clockwork. No suggestions.

Playwrights getting to ask questions

- I probably could have taken a little more initiative, but I would have loved to ask the audience some questions in a completely non-defensive manner (for example; is there a scene you would like to see, how did this moment work, was X clear or not, etc.) - maybe a writer could approach their lead panelist before the reading to ask the audience on their behalf as well. I suppose a writer could approach individuals after the reading with questions also. On a technical note, Just make sure the actors are heard - otherwise, it's all great!

Casting

- I know we can request know actors and I appreciate the difficulty in ideally casting all the plays, so I'd say we playwrights just need to do with what we have unless we recast at our discretion.
- I have no idea how casting could be improved with the large numbers of actors and writers, but if writers could be included in casting questions the casting directors might have that would be great. I must add here that there were readings I saw that were terrifically cast. Just wished I had felt that way about mine.
- I applaud the huge efforts that go into scheduling a highly complex operation like this. But if there was any way to have an advance meeting with the actors at least one would be prepared for problem solving. If there was an emergency ombudsman to turn to in this type of situation it might help. Staggering the play readings would possibly enable writers to see more of each other's' shows.
- I'd love an opportunity for returning playwrights to request actors for their plays.

Rehearsal time

- A bit more time for rehearsal and also for the feedback session post-read for longer full lengths. Also, if actors could be urged to read and be prepared with questions in advance of the rehearsal that would help.
- Rehearsal time was on the short side.
- At least one more rehearsal.
- Slightly more rehearsal time.

Scheduling

- The transitions between readings can sometimes a bit rough. I think a little more facilitation wrangling folks in/out might be helpful. Otherwise, I wouldn't change a thing!
- I don't know - I missed many beautiful plays, because there were three at the same time, but that's how the conference works.
- A few less plays, perhaps? Schedule felt overfull this year.



The annual cruise to Shoup Bay on Stan Stephens Cruises.

- I'm a little reluctant to say this because there is something wonderful about the amount of work going on, but I wonder if reducing the number of play lab plays, by say, 20 percent, wouldn't help the whole process. I sensed that the panelists were pretty burnt out by the end. There were some pieces I saw that I didn't think we're ready for the conference. Maybe something to consider.
- Personally, I would like to see some of the longer plays earlier in the day. Seeing longer plays and then seeing the evening performances wears me out. It wouldn't need to be every day but some days.

Use Directors *(All playwrights are offered the option of having a director assigned to their reading.)*

- Play labs were great! Might be interesting to have directors involved in the play labs-- perhaps they could lead/direct the readings. I personally find it beneficial to work with new directors and get their take on the text.
- I'm not sure it would be feasible, but I'd love to see everybody get a director -- or at least make it an option people could request?
- I wish there was a way to work with a director and have just a bit more rehearsal time. I like to rewrite after rehearsal and the 24 hour turnaround was tight.

Panelists

- I feel lucky that I had such involved responders who respected my work as playwright. I heard from others that that wasn't the case with everyone this year but as I didn't witness anyone having their play being re-written I can only say that keeping the panel to those giving reactions rather than writing instructions is imperative. I am appreciative that I had that with my panel.
- And I'd love to see the respondents actually listen to the feedback rule "Don't rewrite the playwrights plays, instead explain how you responded to specific moments"!
- Maybe panelists with more diverse backgrounds would help provide better matches with playwrights. Mine was definitely a terrible match. This is unrelated but I also wanted to comment here on aspects of the conference culture that were difficult. I want to be clear that I am not asking for more female representation at all. The important thing is the quality of the scripts. But plays were praised where female characters were only either dumb and "hot" or hags and harridans. In one guys play a panelist had to timidly suggest that maybe the (male) playwright should not have his protagonist kiss a woman who someone has just attempted to rape. And the (male) panelist offered this apologetically, rather than as an insight or point of discussion. That evening play about the invisible philosopher was so offensive, all the women were talking about it. Controversy, shock and satire are wonderful but female caricature is dull and praising the practitioner of it does them a real disservice out in the actual world where theater is increasingly directed, selected and produced by women. I am against censorship, period, but there was little space for discussion of these problems in the culture of this particular conference.
- I was very impressed with how well the Conference was run and it is hard to see how it could improve. It would be interesting to have another type of acting class other than monologue work available but i did appreciate that the actors were not A listers who would take the focus away from the work of the conference. I wonder if you would consider Donald Margulies as a guest artist. <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0546869/> and if you would add a class or lecture about screenplay writing vs play writing.

Responses from Readers in the 2015 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?**

Very Useful

- Very useful - the sooner I can receive scripts, no matter what draft they are, the better.
- It was useful.
- It was very useful.
- Very useful.
- It was excellent.
- Very useful
- Very useful and adequate.
- I thought the information i received was excellent. i felt prepared for each reading.
- Info was good.
- All very useful - can't think of anything that could have been added
- I felt well informed.
- I'd received that information at prior conferences, so I knew I'd be receiving it. There's no information I wish I'd received.
- I've participated before so I felt I had more than enough info! I think the new people are where to really get good answers to this question.
- I've been to the conference before, so I already knew how it worked and everything. I think the amount of information is gret!
- Got everything I needed.
- Useful
- Perfect! I was eager for information before the program came out since I was new and wanted to know what to expect, but in the future I think I'll be fine.
- Excellent

More Play Lab Info Wanted

- I really only received the script. I wish I received more information regarding the rehearsal process.
- Some background notes from the writer on my character might've been helpful.

- It would have been nice to know who the other actors were in our specific play labs prior to arriving. Not critical, just would have been nice.

More Info on Other Actor Programming

- I really had very little understanding that the monologue workshop and ten minute play festival were my prime opportunities for really digging into pieces as an actor outside of the play lab...even with the play lab. The little I knew about the Monologue Workshop made me feel it was about working on a monologue for professional use in the world...a great thing to have...but as I knew I wouldn't use the monologues in my age range for an actual audition, I passed. Had I understood that it was also a real celebration of the writer's work that we'd been seeing all week, I would have happily participated.

Weather (*The heat wave this year was unlike anything I've seen in 25+ years of living in Alaska, so it caught many people, including me, unprepared.*)

- Incredibly useful...for those of us lower 48-ers, how to prepare for Alaskan weather would be helpful.

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

No

- 5 x Nope!
- 8 x No
- None
- No, it was straightforward.
- No, it was great.
- I think keeping up with scheduling was a challenge, but conference staff and schedules in both LFTC program and on hall monitor helped a lot.

Rehearsal Schedule Challenging

- Rehearsal meeting area was a little chaotic but that's okay.
- Being new it took a bit to get used to - where to go for rehearsal etc but it became increasing clear as the week progressed.
- The schedules didn't all match up causing for some confusion and even anger in showing up at the wrong time for rehearsals.
- I wasn't exactly sure how things were supposed to go at my first reading, which I didn't realize until it was about to happen, but it wasn't difficult to catch on.

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

	2013	2014	2015
Yes	65.6%	73.1%	69.2%
Mostly	21.9%	13.5%	23.1%

Somewhat	6.3%	13.5%	0%
Not at all	6.3%	0%	7.7%

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

	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Mostly</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>DN Participate</u>
Fringe Festival 2013	0%	18.8%	18.8%	46.9%	15.6%
Fringe Festival 2014	3.9%	9.8%	23.5%	45.1%	17.6%
Fringe Festival 2015	8%	28%	28%	20%	16%

	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Mostly</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>DN Participate</u>
Monologue Workshop 2013	0%	3.1%	6.3%	43.8%	46.8%
Monologue Workshop 2014	0%	7.8%	7.8%	62.7%	21.7%
Monologue Workshop 2015	3.9%	3.9%	11.5%	61.5%	19.2%

	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Mostly</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>DN Participate</u>
Joy of Phonetics 2013	0%	7.7%	15.3%	27%	50%

	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Mostly</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>DN Participate</u>
Warm-ups and Beat Downs	3.8%	3.8%	15.4%	15.4%	61.6%

	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Mostly</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>DN Participate</u>
Bustin with Bostin	0%	8%	20%	8%	64%

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

	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Yes	56.9%	52%
Yes, but would have liked more	35.3%	44%
No	7.8%	4%

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

	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Yes	86.5%	57.7%
No	13.5%	42.3%

- Sometimes classes conflicted with rehearsals so it would have been nice to have more opportunities later in the week
- Something for experienced actors who don't really need classes
- Can performance classes happen throughout the day? Could master classes be part of an evening performance, event? Or could private tutorials happen during the day?
- Maybe some info on how you can bring a show or be part of the 10 minute play festival as an actress
- I really felt like the conference was lacking without the singers workshop.
- Voice, I missed Nancy!
- I would have liked to have been cast in more of the readings.
- I think for me, it was just that my schedule didn't allow for much participation in the workshops for actors. There was always a rehearsal or something that would interrupt the class for me, so I didn't bother going.

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

	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Yes	96.2%	100%
No	3.8%	0%

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

No

- None - all fine folks and was happy working with them.
- 8 x No
- Nope. I appreciated that she was receptive to my feedback after the performance.
- 2 x Nope
- No, she was wonderful!
- No. The playwright was lovely.
- None - all lovely people!
- No. It was written by my friend and I was dying to do it.
- Not personally - they all came in prepared knowing what they were looking for and with stage instructions clearly decided.
- No, they were all amazing!

Nothing major, but...

- A little.....playwrights should be advised to keep acting notes simple and easy to follow. Assuming and making comments on an actor's career or type without knowing them is not useful to the process (observed..not personally experienced).

- Not directly but i heard of some issues with a guest artist who was not available for the playwright after their reading, which was not cool.
- No problems, per se. Except that one of them started by saying she had no idea how to direct or what to do with us except read the play. This was unfortunate because I think the smallest bit of guidance and focus for the actors would have been helpful for her reading.

9. How long have you been acting?

	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Less than one year	1.9%	0%
1-5 years	9.6%	15.4%
6-10 years	11.5%	23%
11-15 years	11.5%	11.6%
Over 15 years	65.4%	50%

10. What type of training, if any, have you received in the craft of acting?

	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
BA in Theatre	42.2%	25%
Master's in Theatre	28.9%	20.9%
A college course	11.1%	8.3%
More than one college course	40%	25%
Workshops	62.2%	45.8%

- All I can say as an actor is that the more you are open and willing to play, you will have fun and get a lot out of the Conference.
- Lftc
- Film course
- I trained with the actors studio teachers and Circle in the Square in NY and classes with Larry Moss, Alan Arkin and many other teachers of note.
- Private acting coach for several years.
- 8 years experience in community theatre.
- Meisner training over the course of several years with several different teachers trained by Sanford Meisner
- Some shows seemed miscast - 25 year old actresses playing roles clearly written for more middle aged women and several cross gender castings that I felt did not serve the playwright. The playwright was very generous about it in the rehearsal but I overheard them complaining to a friend afterwards.