

NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT IN THE UNITED STATES:  
HOW ITS STUDY IMPACTS ITS EVOLUTION

By

Shannon Musgrave

Submitted to the

Faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences

of American University

in Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements for the Degree of


Master of Arts

in

Arts Management

Chair:

  
Ximena Varela

  
David Snider



Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences



Date

2014

American University

Washington D.C. 20016

NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT IN THE UNITED STATES:  
HOW ITS STUDY IMPACTS ITS EVOLUTION

By

Shannon Musgrave

ABSTRACT

Between the years 2004 and 2009, a surge of research surrounding new play development in the United States came out of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Theatre Development Fund. This research concluded several chasms in the new play development field, chiefly between the people writing new plays and those producing them. Since that time, relatively little follow up has been done to assess if and what subsequent programs and/or cultural shifts have been put in place and what the impact has been on the field as a whole. This study explores current practices in the new play sector through observation and interviews with some of the nation's leading regional and resident theatre organizations and artists committed to new play development. The study explores several enterprising practices and programs put into place in the wake of past research, with varying outcomes and degrees of success.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the terrific support and brilliant insights offered by my thesis committee chair, Ximena Varela, and committee member, David Snider. Your guidance has been invaluable, and your belief in my work means the world. Thank you for your time and your care. Also, to Sherburne Laughlin, Anne L'Ecuyer, and Andrew Taylor for teaching, encouraging, and inspiring me for these last two years.

I would like to recognize the excellent work being done by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Arena Stage, Page 73, Playwrights Horizons, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, and Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, and thank them for their contributions to this work and to the new play field as a whole.

I gratefully acknowledge American University's College of Arts and Sciences for generously awarding my research with a Mellon grant. This financial support made it possible for me to conduct in-person interviews with new play practitioners across the country, providing not only the core of my findings, but also incredible insights as I embark on my own career in new play development.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	13
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	33
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS.....	37
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION.....	49
APPENDIX A.....	54
APPENDIX B.....	55
REFERENCES.....	56

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The current climate of new play development and production in the United States has been shaped by experts and practitioners in the field committed to its evolution and continuation. The research in this paper is based on the work of people and organizations whose dedication to better practices in the new play sector has influenced the way plays are developed and produced today, chief among them the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Theatre Development Fund, who from 2004 to 2009 conducted and reported on in depth studies with some of the nation's leading theatres and artists about the challenges, risks, and rewards associated with new plays. Since the release of these studies, there has been relatively little follow up to evaluate the impact their findings have had on the field. Through thorough study and analysis of the consequent literature, in depth personal interviews with leaders in the field, and participation in current new play development projects, the researcher hopes to assess the present-day state of the new play sector, and discover if and how the study of new play development evolves its practice.

The modern history of the new play development movement in the United States dates back to 1957, coinciding with the proliferation of regional or resident theatres throughout America thanks to major investments from the Ford Foundation. In 1958, the Ford Foundation Program for Playwrights selected the ten best new works from 750 submissions to produce on regional or trustworthy academic stages, and thus began the movement of the new American play and, arguably, the “dream of the commercial transfer” (Anderson 1988, 56-57), which many leaders of the regional and resident theatre movement saw as an unfortunate outcome; the intention being to have new work live and thrive

within local communities, strengthening artistic life all around the country. The 1970s and '80s saw another explosion of new play activity as the center of development and production moved off Broadway and into regional and resident theatre companies. Today the center of new play activity has definitively shifted to the decentralized not-for-profit theatre, both in and outside of New York City (London 2009, 23).

Each step in the evolution of new play development brought new challenges, complexities, and questions to be answered. Playwrights and not-for-profit theatre companies were engaging in relationships that were not only shaping the individual plays being crafted, but that were shaping the entire new play field as a whole. Issues of collaboration, commission, funding, and ownership came into play. Each decade brought a new standard and level of clarity in terms of what playwrights needed and how organizations provided, as well as how new work informed and impacted the missions of organizations.

In 2004, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's Performing Arts program staff focused its attention on new play development and production in the U.S. A four-year investigation bore several reports including David Dower's *The Gates of Opportunity*, and ultimately shifted Mellon's programmatic priorities in terms of funding for new play development. The discussions and reports that resulted from Mellon's initiative uncovered various kinks in the new play system, but one headline from the final report perhaps best concentrates the findings: "Creativity continues but our structures, systems, and nomenclature are not keeping up with the changes that are happening" (Ragsdale 2009, 2). Around the same time the Mellon Foundation was conducting its new play development research, Todd London, Artistic Director of New Dramatists, was conducting a five-year study for Theatre Development Fund (TDF) about new play production in the U.S., specifically focusing on

the lives and livelihoods of playwrights. *Outrageous Fortune – The Life and Times of the New American Play* is the result of London's study and uncovers what he called a "collaboration in crisis" between the people who write plays and those who produce them (London 2009).

Five years have passed since the Mellon Foundation released its New Plays Initiative reports and since TDF published London's findings. New play development in the U.S. continues to evolve and this research aims to decipher if and how this most recent wave of its study has impacted the relationship between playwrights and producing entities and the overall health of new play development.

### Statement of the Problem

As companies continue to define and refine their new play development programs and the costs and benefits therein, three themes arise for analysis and discussion: content development, organizational constraints, and artist supports. Content development includes defining an organization's role in the development of a new script, the evaluation of script development and its move to actual production, the necessity of collaboration among artists, companies, and various artistic disciplines, and the continued life of new plays. Organizational constraints come into play when looking at how budgets affect a playwright's capacity to create new work, how much voice and power is given to an organization's board of trustees when it comes to programming, how the audience's perceived appetite for new work plays a role in its coming to fruition, and the all-important question of supply and demand in the new play sector, as one study participant claimed that for all the new plays being written, there is not nearly enough space or resources to actually produce them (8, Participant 2013). Finally, artist supports come in many forms;

this work will focus on playwright residencies and how they are defined and structured among different companies, training opportunities for playwrights outside of an MFA, and the costs and benefits of commissions.

Though each theme will be examined separately, they are all vitally interconnected and cyclical in their practical application: the quality of the content development affects how willing and able the organization is to negotiate its constraints (budgets, resources, season slots), which are also then used for various methods of artist support, which tie directly back into the quality of the content being developed. It is important to be mindful of how each theme affects the others.

While playwrights are considered generative artists, the old adage about raising a child can be employed in terms of developing a play: it takes a village. Many players are called upon to take a script from the page to the stage, and when a theatre company is involved in the development process, complexities arise concerning who has final say in a play's "readiness" for production. A common argument heard among playwrights is that too many plays are over-developed or "workshopped to death" and never actually produced. Many factors contribute to this problem including discrepancies in the nomenclature. Words like "workshop" and "development" mean different things to different artists and different companies (Dower 2007, 14-16). Similarly, there are varying goals and definitions of success when it comes to new play programs. For some organizations, simply having a reading series is enough, though oftentimes it leaves the participating playwrights questioning the value therein. It is a common desire among playwrights that the development, workshop, and/or reading of a new work be a means to an end: production. It is argued that production *is* development in that a playwright cannot truly know if a play works or where the problems lie until she sees the work onstage in a full production



(London 2009, 91-96). A company actually taking a play from a reading, through a workshop, to production, however, is rarely the case in an environment where artistic leadership has to worry not only about the artistic value of what is being put on their stages, but also the monetary value of actual ticket sales. This point is discussed further below as it ties into organizational constraints. The tricky job of artistic administration can be seen by some playwrights as caring only about the bottom line at the sake of real artistic investment, when in fact many factors play into selecting plays for production. It becomes clear reading London's study (along with many of the other reports written over the last several years) that "some kind of mutual education is needed – for artistic directors to understand how playwrights are thinking about access and for playwrights to understand how play selection actually works" (London 2009, 104).

The (some may say unfortunate) reality is the way play selection actually works has much to do with an organization's budget. A large cast costs; a set with multiple locations costs; historically accurate costumes and props cost. Therefore, what is prominent on contemporary American stages? A four-person cast in one location set present day. London's study includes an eloquent statement from commercial producer Elizabeth I. McCann:

You cannot put limitations on a writer. He must be able, when he sits down at that machine, to write without any restriction. If Tony Kushner needs forty-nine actors and someone flying in from the ceiling, he can't sit down to write that play being told, don't write it for more than five actors and don't have any difficult scenic effects, because it's restricting his imagination and his vision – and that's happening. It's happening in the not-for-profits and it's happening in television. But the writer must have limitless opportunity to express his imagination (London 2009, 39).

Other organizational constraints that come into play when producing new work are the relationships and responsibilities an organization has to its audience and to its board of trustees. In London's study, a vast majority of writers surveyed agreed or strongly agreed

that “Expectations about audience reception and interest” are a prohibitive obstacle to production, making this by far the single most daunting hurdle for the new play (London 2009, 13). On the other side of the coin, artistic leadership within producing organizations want to know if writers are able to consider the specific audience for whom he or she is writing, understanding that if no one wants to actually see the play, there is not much point in producing it. Similarly, according to London’s study, playwrights also feel that the heavy hand of the board often “stifles the energy needed for new work to thrive. It fosters safe-thinking, unadventurous programming, and sameness” (London 2009, 11), suggesting a damaging disconnect between artists and boards.

Finally, and perhaps the most daunting organizational constraint of all, is the ever-present and often controversial question of supply and demand. With theatre companies receiving thousands of new scripts each year, and dedicating one or two (if any) of their production slots to new work, it is impossible to produce all, or even a fraction of the new work being written. While having a robust marketplace bodes well for producing organizations, some are concerned that the variance of quality within this large quantity of new work may be “silting up” the stream, making it more difficult to identify the truly worthy scripts (Ragsdale 2009, 3).

Artist supports come in many forms, some more effective than others. Many organizations make the claim to be “artist-focused,” but this can mean different things to different people. As Dower points out, producing organizations are rarely actually “artist-focused,” instead, “artist-friendly” with a focus on producing work their audiences will enjoy and that will sustain the organization (Dower 2007, 11-12). But how do organizations balance their needs with the needs of the artists? Numerous support structures are employed, including but not limited to, residencies, commissions, and training.

Playwright residencies are common especially within organizations with a mission to produce new work and support living playwrights. The specific details and regulations of these residencies, however, vary greatly from organization to organization. The idea of an “artistic home” for playwrights has long been advocated, although for some artists, the sense of permanence that accompanies often runs counterintuitive to their creative nature. This study will explore if and how playwright residencies are effectively working in the U.S. today.

This study will also examine how, when, and where playwrights are being given training opportunities, particularly outside of MFA programs, and if these training opportunities are contributing to actual production.

Another artist support comes in the form of commissions. While commissions directly pay a playwright to write a play, oftentimes the artists to whom they are given perceive a lack of authenticity. As one playwright in Dower’s report remarked, “Commissions are the money theaters pay playwrights to go away. ‘We know you are a playwright. We want your name in our grant reports. We’re never going to produce you. Here’s some money’” (Dower 2007, 25). While this represents one side of the equation, the other may argue that once a commission is accepted, the playwright assumes a shared responsibility to create something worthy of production.

The disconnect between commissioned plays and their production is a common source of tension in the new play sector. It is argued that a commission is not necessarily a great ‘artist support’ unless it ultimately leads to production. London writes, “Of course, for a playwright who writes a play on commission and then sees it produced, the initial fee is, presumably, prelude to greater income from royalties. For many writers, this connection is

theoretical” (London 2009, 59). Yet again, it cannot be assumed that any play commissioned is entitled to production; the play must have merit.

The challenges surrounding the content development of new work, the organizational constraints that arise as a result of its development and production, and whether or not the systems in place for artist support are really all that supportive, have created some conflict and divide between the people writing plays and those producing them. To improve the ecology of the new play sector, artists, administrators, and funders need to work together to cultivate the financial, structural, and artistic support needed to effectively develop and produce new plays.

### Background and Need

The lack of follow up on the reports or assessment of subsequent programs following the surge of study surrounding new play development between 2004 and 2009 proved the need for this study. The chasms uncovered in these past analyses require repair in order to contribute to a healthy new play sector.

This research aims to identify steps that have been taken to improve the new play ecosystem as a result of the studies conducted by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (New Plays Initiative) and by Todd London and Theatre Development Fund (*Outrageous Fortune – The Life and Times of the New American Play*).

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of recent reports and initiatives surrounding new play development in the United States by researching and

interviewing some of the country's most influential people and organizations developing and producing new plays today.

The research in this paper, while not comprehensive, aims to uncover how, if at all, The Mellon Foundation's Initiative and TDF's study have impacted or changed the ecosystem of new plays in the United States today by conducting in depth interviews with artistic directors, playwrights, administrators, and program officers from some of the leading theatres and foundations that have had a hand or a stake in these studies. The researcher also attended and participated in new play convenings, intensives, and workshops to better understand the current state of new play development and to make connections between theoretical study and actual practice and production.

Out of this study, the researcher hopes to paint a more current picture of the state of new play development in the United States and illustrate how its study and analysis impacts its evolution.

### Research Questions

This research is guided by two main questions, predicated on the findings of the past studies referenced:

- 1) How are theatre companies with a vested interest in new play development effectively and appropriately utilizing their resources to ensure success?
- 2) What steps are being taken to foster creative work environments in which the responsibilities and challenges faced by organizations and by playwrights are mutually understood and respected?

### Significance to the Field

This research uses the findings of the existing reports surrounding the health of the United States' new play sector to craft interview questions for those in the field currently working toward its improvement. A list of preliminary interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

The ideas, perceptions, and behaviors of this study's participants reflect the careful thought, creative solutions, and sweeping passion for new play support in this country. While approaches and opinions differ, it is clear that those working in the new play sector care deeply about its contribution to the American theatre landscape and are working for its continual growth and evolution.

The ideas offered in this study are born out of careful research, practical application, trial and error, and personal experiences. The researcher hopes to provide a clear picture of the current state of new play development and explore ways in which its evolution into new practices might be attributed to its study. By assessing the challenges faced and successes achieved by some of the nation's leading new play artists and institutions, and how these challenges and successes were met, the researcher hopes to benefit the field as a whole through vicarious learning.

### Definition of Terms

The terms used in this study are defined in the context in which they are to be understood.

*Enhancement money* – Money paid by a commercial producer to a not-for-profit theatre for the support of a production of a new play or musical in exchange for the rights to transfer it

*Generative artist* – A term used for playwrights, composers, choreographers, and or artist-led theatrical ensembles; artists credited with the actual creation of the work

*Pipeline* – A channel supplying the new work of American playwrights to regional theatre companies

*Residency* – A form of artist support in which an artist is granted time, space, and or an ‘artistic home’ from a theatre company (The specifics of each residency vary and are crafted by each organization)

*Script-in-hand or reading series* – A new play is read onstage by actors for an audience, usually without costume or set and with minimal if any blocking

*Workshop* – A process of developing a new play in which a playwright may be given any number of resources – actors, a director, rehearsal space, etc. – so that he/she, along with the producing organization, may assess the play’s readiness for production (The specifics of each workshop vary and are crafted by each organization and/or creative team)

*World premiere* – The first ever production of a new play

### Limitations

This qualitative study consists of reflection upon the researcher’s own participation in new play development intensives and convenings, as well as interviews with professionals in the new play sector. While the interviewees in this study represent significant contributors to the field, they are only a small fraction of the people and organizations influencing the new play sector in the United States. This study only looks at a subset of organizations and individuals; however, their experiences and responses are valuable and representative as they constitute some of the most prominent participators in new play development in the United States.

This study does not look deeply at new work that is being developed or devised by ensemble-based companies, but rather focuses on the more traditional relationship between a playwright and a producing organization in the development and production of a new play. Future research would benefit from looking at new work devised by entire ensembles or creative teams, as this type of work is becoming more prevalent and being considered by producers and funders as a significant trend in the field.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

Recent studies in new play development in the United States have uncovered chasms between playwrights and producing organizations, leading to what some experts in the field have called an unhealthy new play ecosystem (London 2009, XIV). Between 2004 and 2009, a wave of detailed and comprehensive studies were conducted and published by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Theatre Development Fund (TDF), among others. These studies were initiated as a means to identify and clarify difficulties faced by artists and organizations dedicated to new work, and to reexamine the priorities and measurements of success therein. It is important to note that while these studies were meant to illuminate the current new play climate without partiality, each author is somehow connected to the field, and at times seems to be writing through a biased lens based on his or her experience.

*Outrageous Fortune – The Life and Times of the New American Play* is a book-length study published in 2009 by TDF, authored by Todd London, co-authored by Ben Pesner, and assisted by Zannie Voss who supervised the quantitative research. The study, based on both qualitative and quantitative research, explores what it refers to as a “collaboration in crisis” among playwrights and producing organizations. London is Artistic Director for New Dramatists – an organization whose mission is “to provide playwrights with time, space and resources in the company of gifted peers to create work, realize their artistic potential, and make lasting contributions to the theatre” ([newdramatists.org/what](http://newdramatists.org/what))

– and having served in that position for sixteen years, writes *Outrageous Fortune* with a firm focus on the playwright as the central figure in new play development.

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's New Plays Initiative was an inquiry into new play development and production in the United States and generated four reports that ultimately shifted its theatre program's priorities and goals. The first report to emerge was David Dower's *The Gates of Opportunity*, a study that explored the available infrastructure for supporting new works and new artists in the United States. Also in 2007, the Mellon Foundation's Susan Feder and Diane Ragsdale gathered a group of playwrights and artistic leaders in the new play field for a day-long colloquy surrounding the underlying casual relationships that contribute to how new plays are developed in this country. The results are found in Ben Pesner's *2007 New Play Development and Production Summit Summary and Analysis*. Pesner also penned for the Mellon Foundation *Today and Tomorrow: New Play Development Before and After Opening Night*, a report on the convening of a group of prominent new play professionals during the Actors Theatre's 2009 Humana Festival of New American Plays. The starting-point of the gathering was the presentation of excerpts from *Outrageous Fortune* and *The Gates of Opportunity*, both of which were still unfinished at the time. This gathering was the first public airing, the guests serving as an informal sounding board. Finally, Diane Ragsdale's *New Play Development Programs in US Theaters* summarizes Mellon's previous reports and explains the Foundation's changes in practice of support for commissions, readings, workshops, and premieres.

This literature review will address three areas related to the current state of new play development in the United States, which have emerged and evolved as a result of the aforementioned studies. The first section will address research related to content development for new plays before and as they are being produced. The second section will

focus on findings surrounding organizational constraints when it comes to new play development. Finally, the third section will discuss research related to support for artists.

### Content Development for a New Play

A topic often debated in new play development is if, how, and to what extent an organization is involved in the actual development of a script. Several factors and themes come into play under the umbrella of content development, including the actual definition of “development,” collaboration among artists and administration (and the power dynamics therein), organizational flexibility, clarity of purpose for an organization’s new play development programs, valuing the development of relationships with artists over product, thinking of production *as* development rather than development *instead of* production, and finally collaboration among organizations for the continued life of new plays.

In his report from a field survey of the infrastructure for new works and new voices in the American Theatre conducted January – August 2006 and funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, *The Gates of Opportunity*, David Dower identifies fungible terminology as one of the new play sector’s chief obstacles (Dower 2007, 10). He cites “development” as one of these fungible terms noting that the ways in which organizations use it, and their reasons for doing so, vary drastically. Some organizations dub their dedication of significant time and resources to the artist – be it for a specific work, career advancement, or to facilitate peer support activities – development. Other organizations define development solely by project, meaning their programs and resources are only available for artists whose work will ultimately support the institution. Dower also points out that an organization’s commitment to development may be because of funders’ elevation of “development” to a high priority. A commitment to “development” is often measured as much, if not more so, in

terms of activities that benefit audiences, communities, or regions as it is in direct impact on the artists (Dower 2007, 13-14). This is also where an organization's clarity of purpose in its new play development programs becomes vital and is further discussed below.

Dower's *Gates* later reports that the playwrights who participated in his study cited notes sessions with the artistic staff as one of the most inauthentic moments of the development process (Dower 2007, 28). The relationship between artist and administrator can be tricky and difficult to navigate, especially without mutual respect for the other's job. In another Mellon funded report, *Today and Tomorrow: New Play Development Before and After Opening Night*, Ben Pesner describes a conversation that took place among some of the 80 artists and institutional leaders observed during the Special Guests Weekend of the Actors Theatre's annual Humana Festival of New American Plays in March 2009 (Pesner 2009, 1).

Much of the conversation pertained to the power dynamics between writers and nonprofit producing organizations, and whether the structures of relationships in the field serve or hinder writers' interests. Also, participants described a theatrical universe that has, especially in the past decade, moved away from playwright-centric approaches to embrace more and more work created under non-traditional models (Pesner 2009, 3).

In an earlier study conducted by the Mellon Foundation, Pesner reported the findings of a daylong meeting of playwrights and artistic leaders in the new play field in New York in 2007. The participants formed breakout groups organized by affiliation and reported back on indicators of best practices in the field as well as warning signs of substandard practices. Among the best practices were: "Strong, deep relationships between artists and institutions, including plentiful intermingling between playwrights and theater leaders," and "Open, abundant, two-way communication between playwright and theatre personnel." Among the warning signs were: "Institutional theaters that are too staff-

oriented, rather than writer oriented,” and “Hostility to writers in theaters’ marketing departments” (Pesner 2007, 14-15).

Addressing the divide between artists and administrators, in his book-length study, *Outrageous Fortune – The Life and Times of the New American Play*, Todd London advocates for some kind of mutual education, “for artistic directors to understand how playwrights are thinking about access and for playwrights to understand how play selection actually works” (London 2009, 104).

A common thread running through much of the literature is the value of organizational flexibility when it comes to developing plays. In her report for the Mellon Foundation, *New Play Development Programs in US Theaters*, Diane Ragsdale identifies several glitches in the new play sector as were brought up during a 2004 meeting of leaders in the performing arts field. One of these was “that work was being presented that was neither as complete nor of the quality it could have achieved with adequate resources and time, and sufficiently flexible structures to support the creative process, which differs from artist to artist.” She goes on to reference Dower’s *Gates of Opportunity*, noting one of his three key findings included that “support for the development of new work seemed to be directed at one-size-fits-all approaches, even though the process of artistic development is idiosyncratic and calls for a case-by-case, artist-by-artist approach” (Ragsdale 2009, 2-3). Dower’s report highlights some of the problematic consequences of the codification and franchising of the new play development process. First he points to emerging artists being forced to bend “their language, their process, and even their aesthetic preoccupations to avail themselves of opportunities.” He goes on to address how the cookie-cutter approach encourages sameness and a lack of authenticity; that organizations often fall to decisions not to produce new plays out of habit and predetermined notions, rather than testing their

axioms (“We never actually produce plays from our reading series,” “New plays always lose money,” “We can’t develop it unless we get the right to premiere it,”) on a case-by-case, artist-by-artist basis (Dower 2007, 21). And going back to Pesner’s indicators of best practices in the field, he identifies “Flexibility of approach: creation of a process tailored to the specific work, rather than vice versa; methodology that is shaped to the project, as opposed to a set model into which playwrights are shoehorned” (Pesner 2007, 14).

However, organizational flexibility, while ideal in theory, is much easier said than done. When organizations are accustomed to a systematic way of approaching projects, it takes a shift in organizational culture to start thinking and working on an individual, customized basis. London writes:

But rethinking process for each artist and play takes organizational flexibility and time, both of which many theatres lack. It’s easier to resort to the established structures: cold or under-rehearsed readings, followed by staff critiques and/or audience talkback sessions (London 2009, 138).

The problems of new play development are compounded by organizations’ lack of clarity of purpose. This ties into and stems from Dower’s uncovering of “fungible terms,” as many organizations include new play development on their list of priorities, but do not clearly define their goals therein or how new play development serves their missions or the artists involved. Ragsdale reports that this lack of clarity leads time and time again to common, unhelpful practices such as workshopping a play as a substitute for full production (discussed further below), or using readings as a tool for “test marketing” a play with audiences or for cultivating donors (Ragsdale 2009, 3-4). Dower’s report takes this concept of a reading series and unpacks it as the most dispiriting process cited by the generative artist participants in his study. Playwrights felt that reading series are often more for the benefit of the organization than for the development of the play; that the

desire to have these programs is driven by funding opportunities rather than real artistic development (Dower 2007, 27). London references Dower's study, highlighting the need for organizations to be clear about their focus. Whether it be audience-, product-, community-, or artist-focused, or some combination of multiple focuses, transparency and clarity about their goals is paramount. When an artist is working in a product-focused organization, "the institution's investment becomes attached to that product – through credit, the assignment of future rights and royalties, as well as control over its future life," (London 2009, 17).

Dower's participating artists singled out effective institutions and advocates for their work, and the practices that create that sense of effectiveness. One practice especially celebrated was that of developing a relationship with the artist, not just the play; where they felt part of the whole team (Dower 2007, 30). Ragsdale notes that as a result of these findings, the Mellon Foundation is now "less interested in how many new works a theater develops or premieres, and more interested in the quality and depth of its relationships with playwrights and other artists," (Ragsdale 2009, 7). Encouraging relationships between institutions and artists has the potential to bleed into relationships between audiences and artists, which London addresses as a prized opportunity for many playwrights – writing for parts of society with which they share affinity, including specific ethnic groups or the people of precise neighborhoods and communities. Yet of the climate current when London's study was conducted, he writes: "there are few opportunities for writers to get to know theatregoers over time – productions are too sporadic, and ongoing relationships with theatres (and, by extension, communities of ticket buyers) are rarely sustained" (London 2009, 222-223).

Tying together this idea of relationship-building with what is perhaps the largest commonality among these reports in terms of content development – the idea of production

as development, rather than development programs *instead of* production – London’s study found that plays are only rarely produced by the theatres that “develop” them. He writes:

A professional artistic life requires fruition. For playwrights, that means seeing their work on stage, completed, realized, enacted. If this study establishes anything, it’s that the centrality of playwrights in the American theatre, their ability to mature as writers, and their faith in that theatre are all being eroded by a lack of continuity of production. Few have the kind of ongoing relationships with theatres that encourage the cultivation of bodies of work. They are always starting over (London 2009, 91).

Later he simply states, “production is development.” (London 2009, 95). This sentiment is echoed in Ragsdale’s report, which lists areas of support recommended by participants and considered by program staff to be relevant to the Mellon Foundation’s aims. Number two on the list was “Support productions, not development,” reasoning that when funders make grants to theatres to “develop plays” rather than “produce” them, they are inadvertently giving the wrong incentive (Ragsdale 2009, 5). This incentive has led some theatre companies to view commissions, readings, and workshops as safe alternatives to actually fully producing new work, without sacrificing the claim of “new play development.”

Dower’s findings agree, stating that regardless of quality of the opportunity, pay scale, or its perceived status, playwrights in every community visited said that what they need most to continue their artistic and professional development are production opportunities (Dower 2007, 22). And returning once again to Pesner’s warning signs of substandard practices in the field, “Disjunction between the amount of new play *development* vs. *production*” makes the list (Pesner 2007, 15).

Finally, even when a new play finds its way to the pot of gold that is production, that’s often the end of the rainbow (to keep with a metaphor). The idea of “premiere-itis” is addressed in many of the readings and is defined by London as “the overvaluing of first



productions and the devaluing of subsequent ones.” (London 2009, 56-57). This “premiere-itis,” like so many factors of new play development, can be attributed to funding programs that favor the production of world premieres. “There are numerous granting opportunities for premieres and few for second productions.” (London 2009, 150).

Recognizing the problems of a play having one production, then being forgotten, a number of organizations turned to collaboration with their fellow new play developers to promote the continued life of new plays. This is addressed in several of the reports, noting however, difficulties in the process of sharing new work. In Pesner’s 2009 report, he touches on Dower’s notion of “alignment,” in which he argues that “the theatre community should focus on creating more efficiency by encouraging more effective collaboration among organizations in various areas of the sector.” Acknowledging that theatre leaders frequently communicate with each other, he finds problematic that projects are passed around on an ad hoc basis with no real efficiency or intentionality (Pesner 2009, 4-5).

Another of Dower’s findings suggests that isolation and provincialism are constraining productivity of activity, citing examples such as Austin’s Rude Mechanicals, Seattle’s On the Boards, and San Francisco’s Z Space, all of whom are working in direct, programmatic ways to help their local artists break through to attain a national reputation (Dower 2007, 16).

Included on Pesner’s list of indicators of best practices are “The continued life of a new play in any capacity – an excellent indicator of a successful collaboration” and “Frequent, substantive communication among leaders of different theaters” (Pesner 2007, 14).

And finally, Ragsdale notes that the Mellon Foundation has learned and changed some of their practices, stating, “we no longer privilege the premieres of new plays over

subsequent early productions – we are more interested to encourage theaters to work together to assure that excellent plays do not die after their premieres and good plays have the opportunity to become better plays” (Ragsdale 2009, 6).

### Organizational Constraints in New Play Development

Obstacles for new play development often come in the form of organizational constraints, seen by some as the necessary evils of not-for-profit theatre companies. Within this area, some of the themes that emerged from the studies include: an organization’s board and audience relations and each group’s involvement (or lack thereof) in new play development; monetary resources, constraints, and allocations as they relate to the size and scale of new work; the assumed risk an organization takes on with new play development; and the question of supply and demand across the new play sector.

London’s study found that of the participating playwrights, more than 82 percent agree or strongly agree that “Expectations about audience reception and interest” are a prohibitive obstacle to production, making this by far the single-most daunting hurdle for a new play (London 2009, 13). Dower found similar results in his study, quoting one playwrights as saying, “The feedback is really less about the progress of my play, it seems, than it is about how to make my play work for their audience” (Dower 2007, 29).

Many theatres are turning to new audience engagement and education practices in hopes of cultivating an appetite for the unknown. This can become complicated, however, as mentioned above, when it comes to content development. Playwrights are wary of audience feedback sessions, viewing them as more beneficial for the organization’s engagement efforts than for the artistic development of the play. Instead, some playwrights from London’s study suggest opening up the process of new play development to the audience.

Invite them to a rehearsal and get them “more interested in not only the finished play, but also the project of developing new work.” London goes on to warn, however, that giving audiences access to the process and giving them a voice in the development of a play are two very different things (London 2009, 240).

All not-for-profit organizations are governed by a board of trustees who are ultimately responsible and accountable for the organization’s fiscal health and adherence to its mission. A board’s involvement in programming can give rise to complications, especially when it comes to new work, which is perceived to be even more of a financial risk. London’s study found that many playwrights believe that the heightened influence of boards adds to insularity within the artistic selection process. There’s a presumption that because many board members come from the for-profit world, they don’t understand the necessity of financial risk for artistic gain. London writes:

The board’s heavy hand, playwrights argue, stifles the energy needed for new work to thrive. It fosters safe-thinking, unadventurous programming, and sameness. Playwrights seem to be saying the cultivation of the new in the theatre demands risk; the prevalent system of nonprofit theatre squelches its leaders’ tolerance for risk. As one playwright, a winner of multiple Obie Awards, puts it: “No board goes to an artistic director and says, ‘Can’t you be a little riskier?’” (London 2009, 10-12)

Financial constraints and allocations account for perhaps the largest segment of the ‘organizational constraints’ theme and directly relate to the limited size and scope of the majority of new plays being developed in the United States. London’s findings state that: “Two-thirds of the theatres surveyed believe that it has become harder (58 percent) or much harder (9 percent) to develop new plays in the past decade.” They attribute the increased difficulty to financial constraints – expenses that are too high and a lack of funding (London 2009, 19).

These financial constraints have had a tangible impact on the size and scale of new work that is being written, developed, and produced. London quotes Elizabeth I. McCann, a commercial producer, who said: “Just about every playwright writes to a small cast, because they figure, ‘How am I going to get this on, given the resources of these not-for-profit theatres, I can only get it on if I have a small cast.’ And that’s death for a playwright.” (London 2009, 39) And she’s right, as later London reports that “For artistic directors, ‘cast size and composition’ is the most severe obstacle to producing a play. ‘Too expensive’ is the closely related, second-greatest obstacle” (London 2009, 183). Ragsdale’s summary of “unhelpful practices” as collected from individual meetings with playwrights, dramaturgs, artistic directors, and heads of playwriting centers also included: “new work being limited in scope and size by financial circumstances of theaters willing to present them,” later going on to quote one of the participants:

...the danger is that this [practice] will lead to a self-perpetuating cycle, in which writers tailor plays for ever-smaller venues and shrinking casts because they know they won’t be produced otherwise; and theaters in turn program ever-smaller plays because no large ones are being written. Audiences are then implicitly trained to expect that new work means smaller, second-class work (Ragsdale 2009, 4-5).

Pesner’s report agrees, quoting a participant as saying: “One of the reasons people don’t like new work in this country is that if you did it any cheaper, you wouldn’t have a play” (Pesner 2007, 8).

One controversial way organizations can combat the financial risk associated with producing new work is to make an enhancement deal. This is typically money given to the organization by a commercial producer to help subsidize production costs. The agreement is that the producer then gets rights to transfer or produce the play commercially should it do well at the not-for-profit organization. London notes an important distinction between two types of enhancement, and the artistic, ethical, and legal distinctions between them:

In one instance, the theatre seeks enhancement funds for a project *as* subsidy, by attempting to interest producers in a play or musical it believes in. The second type of enhancement works the other way around. A project comes to a theatre from a commercial producer who sees a life for the piece and wants to try it out in an environment with a built-in audience, some developmental expertise, and, presumably, more safety than the commercial theatre offers (London 2009, 163).

Pesner's warning signs again come into play here as he lists "shrinkage of average cast sizes," "over-reliance on earned income," and "over-reliance on enhancement money from commercial producers" as three things to avoid (Pesner 2007, 15). Later, in his section detailing recommendations from participants on possible funding initiatives, "large-cast support" and "risk-reduction" both show under the overarching theme of "Support for Risk Taking Associated with Producing New, Ambitious Work." These suggestions encourage funders to provide monetary support that would enable theatres to produce works of large size and scope, thereby encouraging writers to create larger-scaled work. In addition, they call for funders to encourage theatres to take artistic risks by providing support to remove box office pressure and reward quality work, successful marketing efforts, engaging audiences, and "getting back into the business of taking risks on new work" (Pesner 2007, 16-18).

The idea that risk management has taken the place of promoting creativity in some theatre companies is a startling observation that ties back into clarifying the purpose of a new play development program. In Pesner's 2009 study, one participant – a director of new play development – offered the opinion that "All arts organizations operate on a continuum between promoting creativity and risk management. Both are necessary." He noted the dual imperatives of serving a mission and demonstrating fiscal responsibility, but questioned "where on the spectrum does any individual organization fall; and is it honest about its place?" (Pesner 2009, 14).

Finally, under this “organizational constraint” umbrella falls the idea of supply and demand in the new play sector. Ragsdale summarizes one of Dower’s three key findings thusly:

The extent of artistic activity is robust, however, the quality of the results is unpredictable. Artists are flooding the system, and a great deal of work is being created, but there is a concern that the field may be “silting up” – the glut of artists choking the gates make it difficult for real talent to be identified and promoted through the system; thus, the overall quality of what is presented is declining (Ragsdale 2009, 3).

### Artist Supports

The final research area extracted from the studied literature is artist supports – how organizations and funders are specifically supporting artists in their creation of new work. This section revisits and synthesizes the two previous themes in the areas of relationship building between artists and institutions, and production as the ultimate artist support. Also examined here are commissions, residencies, direct artist funding, support for local artists, and training programs.

Returning to Dower’s fungible terminology, coming in at number one is the term “artist-focused.” Dower finds that many, if not most, organizations describe themselves as “artist-focused” even though their work, goals, priorities, and outcomes are vastly different. He goes on to explain that the real problem with organizations throwing the term around without any real muscle behind it is that it obscures the important value that this term carries when used discriminately. Dower writes that to be truly “artist-focused” means:

...that the resources of the organization are entirely focused on the artists participating in its programs. It means that the energy of the place is prioritized and activated on their projects, their artistic growth, and even their career advancement; that the purpose of the organization is built around their success; and that “success” is defined by the artists themselves (Dower 2007, 10).

London's study delves into the idea of an artistic home for writers – a theatre where they can grow their body of work, mature as artists, and deepen their knowledge of an artistic company and of their community. London writes that while theatres often claim to share this ideal, few have created it (London 2009, 42). The ones that have, however, speak of it as a kind of informal residency wherein the playwright is just as much a part of the theatre's success as the theatre is of the playwright's. One artistic director describes such a relationship saying, "If every single theatre in the country that does any new work at all had a resident playwright with the only commitment being that if we like your play we'll produce it...you would have 96 playwrights who would be a lot happier" (London 2009, 45).

Production, in addition to being the pinnacle of new play development, is the ultimate artist support. Artist participants across all studies echoed the need for production in order to grow as a writer. London encourages producing organizations to think of production in terms of artist support and development rather than just product development, writing: "The terms of quality may slip and slide – one solution remains steady. How do writers get good? How do good writers write better, even great, plays? The most common answer is the most obvious one: by seeing their work in production." (London 2009, 30)

While Dower's findings show the same appetite for production from emerging artists, he is skeptical about "more production opportunities" being a panacea, citing a story of one playwright from his study, a few years out of grad school and inundated with productions and commissions. While it should sound like a success story, Dower spoke with producers at organizations that might be this writer's next professional step, who already view him as a writer who does not finish his plays, but jumps from one to the next without really committing to any. Dower goes on to question the balance in the new works sector

between working on a script privately and developing it publicly, calling some of these early productions what observers may have in mind when they talk about the “silting up of the system” referenced in Ragsdale’s report above (Dower 2007, 22).

Two of the major and most common artist supports in the new play sector are commissions and residencies. They come in many forms and are, like so many factors in new play development, defined on a case-by-case, organization-by-organization basis.

While London cites commissions as one of the few ways for playwrights to earn money to actually write plays (London 2009, 133), Dower points to a lack of authenticity as perceived by artists who receive commissions from theatre companies, stating that only 30 percent of commissioned plays reach production at the theatre that commissioned them (Dower 2007, 25). London’s findings report that 43 percent of writers have either never received a commission or have never had a produced play that began as a commission from the producing organization. He continues, reporting “plays that bring in both commission and royalty money from the same theatre are rarer than rare” (London 2009, 59).

Dower found that the amounts paid for commissions tend to be too small to be meaningful, and that playwrights often experience commissions as a way for the theatre to purchase legitimacy. Rather than truly being about the play, the playwrights in Dower’s study spoke of a sense that commissions were more about giving the theatres an opportunity to show funders that they were committed to new work and new voices (Dower 2007, 26).

Pesner’s *New Play Summit Report* echoes these sentiments, with one playwright saying:

The danger with commissions is that they encourage the writing of unnecessary plays, plays that the playwrights don’t really care about, plays that the theatres don’t really want to see. It’s basically a \$20,000 greeting card. If you are going to



create something that isn't going to be done and doesn't matter to anybody, you should write some TV or do something that makes more money. You shouldn't use your precious craft to do the work nobody really wants... We need to find a way to ask for the urgent play, and then reward that with production (Pesner 2007, 6).

Artistic leaders, however, had a different view, stressing that writers share the responsibility not to create unnecessary plays, and explaining that commissions generate value for theatre companies as well, not just for writers. As for the road from commission to production, one artistic leader explained, "One of the reasons we give out more commissions than we can possibly produce is that we want to improve the odds of generating enough producible new plays to feed our appetite" (Pesner 2007, 6-7).

In her 2009 summary report, Diane Ragsdale notes that as a result of these findings, the Mellon Foundation is "no longer inclined to support commissioning programs at theaters that do not have a demonstrated track record of producing works they have commissioned" (Ragsdale 2009, 6). While this sounds like good news for playwrights, the implications could actually mean fewer new plays in the pipeline if theatres are only going to be commissioning plays on the condition that they produce them.

Returning to Dower's fungible terms, "residency" comes in at number four. "Residencies can mean everything from a literal home where playwrights can actually reside, to a meeting between an artist and the community." Depending on how well residencies are defined and set up, they have the potential to be powerful interactions between artists and communities, or the risk of being obligations detrimental to the artistic process (Dower 2007, 14).

The number one recommendation for funders that came out of Pesner's *New Play Summit Report* was support for playwrights in the form of artist residencies, suggesting the creation of "marriages" between artists and institutions that would last anywhere from one

to five years and would provide the writer with a cash stipend as well as benefits. This recommendation included tailored and flexible fellowships affording the writer productions, development time, and mentorship as needed, but not obligating the writer to create work specifically for that theatre (Pesner 2007, 16).

Direct artist funding is a practice that has come and gone in various forms and iterations within the new play sector, and one that was heavily advocated for by playwright participants in these past studies. London writes, “Playwrights complain that new play development programs ‘fundraise on the backs of writers,’ because, although artist support justifies the programs, the artists themselves rarely benefit from such funding” (London 2009, 28).

Ragsdale’s report included a quote from a leading artistic director about the direct support of artists:

Something pernicious about the whole field that has changed in my adult lifetime is the nonprofit theatre has decided to get out of the business of supporting artists. The underlying assumption is that artists will not make their living in the nonprofit theatre, [or] for the most part in the commercial theatre either, that you’ll make your living in television or teaching, and that you’ll slum with us. We are going to limit who writes plays for the American theatre to that segment of writer who can write good TV shows or maybe musicals. That would be a horrible limitation of what our field is (Ragsdale 2009, 5).

Dower’s report found playwrights to be very clear about their suggestion for how to help the field: give the playwrights direct support for writing plays and money to bring with them into the conversations about production (Dower 2007, 33). Pesner’s 2007 report similarly included suggestions for direct grants to individual artists (Pesner 2007, 16).

While travel and transience seem to be the way of the playwright, support for local writers plays a role in the new play ecosystem. London writes, “It may be true that playwrights have to follow the work, but it is also true that all playwrights live

somewhere,” later continuing, “If local writers have trouble getting a hearing in their own neighborhoods, it may be even harder for them elsewhere – which may account for the fact that three-quarters of America’s playwrights live in only two cities, New York and Los Angeles” (London 2009, 195-196).

Dower reports that he entered his study with the assumption that an infrastructure for emerging artists would exist in each community as an essential element of the ecology of the community and connecting that community’s artists and projects to the field. He was surprised to find that most communities he visited had not organized around their local voices, nor made it a priority to support them. Instead he found most development centers recruit nationally for participating playwrights and that most small companies dedicated to new work are producing writers out of New York (Dower 2007, 8).

Pesner’s report, however, did find that participants valued “cities that support a local ecosystem capable of nurturing artists and the arts,” naming it one of the indicators of best practice in new play development.

### Summary

To ensure a healthy new play ecosystem, it is imperative for playwrights and producing organizations alike to respect the challenges associated with content development, organizational constraints, and artist support, and to carefully consider their own roles and responsibilities therein. The reports and literature referenced highlight some of the discrepancies and chasms that existed at the time of their study and publishing.

This study contributes to the existing research as a qualitative assessment of previous reports and their influence on some of today’s leading artists and producing organizations dedicated to new plays in the United States. By assessing new and

enterprising programs, resource allocations, and organizational cultures in today's new play sector, this study aims to uncover successful practices as it paints a picture of the current ecosystem.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

This study examines the current state of new play development in the United States as it has been shaped and influenced by its most recent wave of study. The research questions used to guide this study are as follows:

- 1) How are theatre companies with a vested interest in new play development effectively and appropriately utilizing their resources to ensure success?
- 2) What steps are being taken to foster creative work environments in which the responsibilities and challenges faced by organizations and by playwrights are mutually understood and respected?

This qualitative study consists of reflection upon the researcher's own participation in new play development programs, as well as interviews with professionals in the new play sector, and describes the risks, obstacles, and rewards associated with new play development in the United States today as experienced by some of the nation's leading artistic directors, playwrights, administrators, and funders. Interviews and observations were used to collect data in content development, organizational restraints, and artist supports with the primary goal of revealing if and how TDF's *Outrageous Fortune* and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's New Plays Initiative have influenced the current state of new play development, and what its future may hold.

This study took place in three of the United States' major theatre cities: New York City, Chicago, and Washington, DC.

The claim that Washington, DC is the second largest theatre city after New York has been met with some suspicion, though Linda Levy Grossman, President and CEO of

Theatre Washington, maintains that after New York City, Washington, DC does more work than any other theatre town in the country (Nnamdi 2013, 12:09:26). The research conducted in Washington, DC took place in several settings beginning with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Here, the researcher took part in a two-week new play development intensive in which participants observed and worked with professional playwrights, directors, and dramaturgs, guiding a development based rehearsal room, which led to script-in-hand readings of each new work. Next, at Arena Stage – one of the nation’s largest and oldest resident theatre companies – the researcher carefully studied Arena’s American Voices New Play Institute as well as its contributions to the Mellon Foundation’s study, particularly David Dower’s *The Gates of Opportunity*. Finally, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company – a mid-sized theatre that thinks of new plays as the very heart of its mission (Shalwitz 2009, 4). Here, the researcher attended the National New Play Network (NNPN)’s annual conference and showcase of new plays as well as the Triple Play convening – a project that evolved from *Outrageous Fortune – The Life and Times of the New American Play*, and *Counting New Beans – Intrinsic Impact and the Value of Art* published by Theatre Bay Area, with a goal to increase the appetite for new theatrical work, focusing on the crucial relationship between the generative artist, the audience, and the theatre institution (Herrmann, personal communication).

Interviews were conducted in these three major cities at organizations of varying size, scope, and mission, with operating budgets ranging from \$300,000 to \$23 million.

People and organizations consulted for this study are those with robust new play development programs and with proven track records of success in new play development and production. The researcher also took special interest in organizations that have been or are currently being supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Eleven formal interviews were conducted for this study. All individuals who participated in this study on an interview basis will remain anonymous. The participants included two producers, two artistic directors, two directors of new play development, two executive directors, two playwrights, and one program officer. These individuals were chosen because they represent distinct voices and varying points of view in terms of their roles and responsibilities in creating, developing, and producing new plays. The interviewees are artists and administrators working at some of the most influential theatre companies in the country. It is notable that only three of the eleven interviewees were women and only one was a person of color. While this can be considered a limitation of the study, these statistics seem to be in line with the current demographic of theatre leadership and playwrights produced in the United States; however, this conclusion is based on the researcher's observation and not a formal or quantitative study. London notes that for *Outrageous Fortune*, though they surveyed theatres on numbers of plays produced, they did not study their seasons nor compare playwrights' perceptions about their own representation on their stages. However, he goes on to write: "Few of the playwrights we met or interviewed believe that men and women are produced in equal numbers. Or if they believe it generally, they question its particulars – women may have the same number of productions, but not the same scale of productions" and later, on the subject of race: "In meeting after meeting, playwrights and some artistic administrators of all ethnic backgrounds challenged the notion that writers of color are produced as frequently or widely as white writers" (London 2009, 64-68).

The issue was recently raised again at 'The Summit' – an in-depth exploration of DC theatre, which began with a panel discussion consisting of five artistic directors from prominent DC theatres (four men, one woman, all white). Here a question was posed from

an audience member with sobering statistics about the ratios of male to female writers and directors as well as writers and directors of color in DC's major theatres (Abelman 2014). Theatre Communication Group reported similar statistics in its article naming the most produced playwrights from 2009 to 2013, overwhelmingly populated by white men (Schulenberg 2012).

For this study, in addition to participatory research and interviews, the researcher conducted thorough analysis of the reports that came out of the Mellon Foundation's New Plays Initiative, Todd London's *Outrageous Fortune – The Life and Times of the New American Play*, and all applicable literature.

After conducting the interviews, and all data were collected, the researcher followed a process for data analysis, reading and transcribing all pertinent data. The data from the transcripts were then coded and labeled, and finally, categorized into major themes and patterns as they emerged. These findings are detailed in the following chapter.



## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

These findings emerged out of the researcher's investigation into the impacts and outcomes of numerous reports and studies conducted on the ecology of new play development in the United States between 2004 and 2009. Careful study and analysis of their findings, which primarily highlighted the perceived causes for breaks in collaboration between playwrights and producing organizations, led the researcher to question if and how these findings have contributed to a more healthy and evolved state of new play development today.

Participation in new play intensives and convenings, as well as in-depth interviews in the field provided a wealth of knowledge to the researcher with regard to current themes and conditions in the new play sector. The interviews were guided by a set of preselected questions, employing follow-up questions as necessary as the interview proceeded. A list of the initial, preselected questions can be found in Appendix A.

#### Development vs. Production

The relationship between development and production in the new play sector can be fraught. As gleaned from studies past, in the most troublesome cases, development programs are used as a safe method for organizations to claim new play efforts and secure funding without actually taking the risk of fully producing new work or truly investing in the playwright or the script. At best, new play development is taken on a case-by-case basis, putting the needs of each playwright and script first, with the ultimate goal of full production. Between these two poles is a spectrum of activity, including robust new work

programs totally separate from season planning or within organizations that don't produce at all.

The participants interviewed for this study had varying correlations between play development and actual production at their respective organizations. The findings below demonstrate samples of how new play development and production are interrelated in the current climate.

One participant, a director of new play development, dove into the question by noting that every era says the same thing in terms of acknowledging "a time of great writers," sentimentalizing the past and discounting the present. But how do these celebrated writers earn their acclaim? Talent, to be sure, but they also need time and space to develop their craft. While recognizing the fact that writers want commitment to production, this participant suggests, "The idea that we only want to develop plays that are worthy of being produced is silly. The notion that a reading is an audition for production seems flawed" (2, Participant 2014). This participant's organization has a new play development program that is not necessarily connected to the full season planning. The plays they develop through readings and workshops are given time, resources, and actors, but not necessarily productions.

Another participant's organization has a similar view of new work development with its new work festival sending only one of 24 plays developed to production, but claiming the program is "more about building relationships" than producing plays (4, Participant 2014). (The concept of relationship building is discussed further in a section below.)

This, however, runs counter to the opinion of a playwright participant whose simple answer to the question, *What is the most valuable resource a theatre company can offer a playwright?* was: "A fully produced production" (11, Participant 2014).

A participant whose organization produces exclusively new work said the organization's involvement in the development of each script is entirely dependent on whether or not the playwright invites that kind of collaboration.

We certainly take as active a role as possible in producing readings, workshops, feedback, research support, etc. to the playwright once we've committed to the project. And all these steps are developed in association with the playwright and tailored to the needs of the particular play and the preferences of the particular playwright to help bring the play to fruition...or at least getting it as close to the finish line before it opens on our stage (7, Participant 2014).

The continued life of a new play (meaning second, third, and fourth productions at other theatres across the country after it has received its world premiere) is something that has been more recently recognized as an important part of a play's development. In the past, world premiere productions were highly valued and generously funded. This led to a kind of "produce it and forget it" mentality, leaving many new plays disregarded after their first production. In response to this, theatre companies and funding organizations have begun placing higher priority on second and third productions of new plays in hopes that with each production, the script becomes more fine-tuned and whole, while at the same time the playwright is exposed to more and varied work environments, creative teams, and audiences.

The National New Play Network (NNPN) is an alliance of nonprofit theatres across the country championing the development, production, and continued life of new plays. Its flagship initiative, the Continued Life of New Plays Fund, supports three or more theatres that choose to mount the same new play within a 12-month period, resulting in what they call a "rolling world premiere," giving the playwright the opportunity to see his or her play fully produced by three or more different theatres all in the span of one year (National New Play Network, website).

A participant in this study claims there has been a culture shift thanks to programs like NNPN's Continued Life of New Plays Fund, making the development and subsequent productions of new plays more important than the claim to their world premieres. "It's also a great way to get new plays travelling across the country." (9, Participant 2014).

Another participant weighs in that not only is the status of producing a world premiere shifting, but that it doesn't really matter to an audience.

I think more and more institutions around the country are understanding that there's tremendous value in writers getting to continue to investigate what they have on the page. I think the field is understanding the value of second and third productions, and not worrying so much about that "world premiere." It doesn't actually mean anything to audiences. There's a kind of sexiness that's exciting to a certain extent, but audiences just want to see great work. I don't know that seeing "world premiere" on a kiosk or a piece of marketing really matters (1, Participant 2013).

### Audience Involvement

So what does matter to an audience, and do their theatre companies know? At least one of the participant's organizations engages in robust audience segmentation work and is known in the field for having cultivated an audience with an appetite for the unknown. The organization's research has shown that their audience cares about who is in the shows and what the story is. A recognizable title does not matter. In fact, many plays produced at this organization are unknown (4, Participant 2014).

The concern that audiences may not be open to the risk of attending new plays was one of the driving factors behind the Mellon Foundation's studies. Todd London's study found that of the participating playwrights, more than 82 percent agree or strongly agree that "Expectations about audience reception and interest" are a prohibitive obstacle to production, making this by far the single-most daunting hurdle for a new play (London 2009, 13).

However, participants interviewed for this study seem to suggest that may not be the case. “I think it’s a little bit of a fallacy. I think audiences have more of an appetite for the unknown than theatres give them credit for” (1, Participant 2013). This shift is perhaps guided by more robust audience engagement programs, which are becoming a major focus of organizations dedicated to new work.

In February 2014, Theatre Development Fund, Theatre Bay Area, and Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company joined forces to present the Triple Play convening – a conversation around the topic of strengthening the vital triangular relationship between audiences, generative artists, and the theatres who connect them. Supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Triple Play’s goal is to increase the appetite for new theatrical work by surveying playwrights, theatre leaders, and audiences to better understand attitudes toward initiatives designed to increase interest in new work, all to uncover the best new thinking and practices in the field, and share what’s working to excite new interest in new work (Herrmann, personal communication). The researcher attended this convening and was interested in the notion that the institution doesn’t necessarily need to be the liaison between artists and audiences. The institution facilitates the relationship, rather than mediates it.

One question raised during this convening was “Who are we inviting and how are we cultivating curious audiences?” A few in the audience (most of whom were theatre administrators) shared stories of success within “audience design” programs, where much like a set or costume designer, one or more of their staff is dedicated to designing the audience for each play. This is a fairly new concept and one that may gain traction if the season subscription model declines.

Another interesting point made was that within new play development there is an “ecology of risk,” meaning the entire system has to mediate risk; it’s not just about the audience’s tolerance of it as is often primarily discussed. New work is risky for the artists, the institutions, *and* the audiences, so the question becomes how does each segment effectively reconcile its risk and take the leap?

### Financial Resources, Constraints, & Allocations

In assessing why new play development and production is considered risky for an organization, it almost always comes down to a matter of finances. It is a financial risk for the board because the institution risks losing revenue from an audience who may or may not take the risk of spending their money on a ticket to a play of which they have never heard.

Size and scope of new plays are taken into consideration as a result of financial concerns as well, leaving the contemporary new play catalogue predominantly populated with small-cast, one-set plays. Playwrights know it is expensive and therefore unlikely for an organization to produce anything bigger and thus are writing smaller and smaller plays.

Funders play a sizable role in this, as does strategic financial planning on the organization’s end. Several participants in this study gave examples of effective utilization of their organization’s resources to aid in combatting the financial risks of new play development, as well as clever financial structures put in place specifically to support new plays of a larger size and scale. These findings are detailed below.

When asked whether or not budgetary constraints limited the way playwrights are writing new plays, one director of new play development answered with a question: “Do playwrights write with an eye to getting a large audience? Can they write a ‘hit’? Will it sell

and be compelling to other people? This is what we're looking for [more so than a small cast]" (8, Participant 2013).

The size of the organization plays a role to some extent as well, as one playwright participant noted that the various union contracts used by differing sizes of organizations constrict what a playwright can or cannot write or create (10, Participant 2013). This point is addressed in London's study, and he quotes commercial producer Elizabeth I. McCann:

How you turn that around, I don't know. How you try and have any meaningful conversation with Actors' Equity, and you say, "Look, you know, why can't we create a kind of situation in which if a play needs ten actors, we can get a 20-percent cut in scale, or something? To compensate for the playwright's need?" But, of course that argument would get you nowhere (London 2009, 40).

The researcher interviewed one executive director whose organization made the risky decision to run a deficit budget in order to produce a large-scale new play they fiercely believed in. The play ended up being hugely successful, generating enormous revenue for the organization, which they poured into a sinking fund. They call this their Artistic Enhancement Fund, and it is monies controlled by the executive and artistic directors that are undesignated and used to supplement their normal sustaining money specifically for the production of large-scale new work (5, Participant 2014).

Similarly, another study participant described a program that their organization recently put into place – a fundraising campaign specifically for the commission and production of 25 new plays over the next ten years. Describing the parameters that qualify for expenditures from this campaign, the participant said, "...costs that are above and beyond what we might normally be able to afford in any one season – this might mean an extra large cast, enhanced developmental steps, major production needs or special effects, etc." The participant went on to say that while the program is fluid by design, allowing for

case-by-case specifications, there is rigor around how they account for and allocate these specific funds (7, Participant 2014).

When asked about how the board serves as a champion or an obstacle for new play development, one participant said, “The measure of success can be skewed within a board. Here, the board doesn’t interfere with the selection process” (2, Participant 2014). In contrast, another participant noted that their board has recently created a committee designated as the New Play Development Fund Committee with the purpose of educating and involving their board in the new play development process. This committee also funds the work, builds relationships with the artists, and gets to see what the new play development process truly entails. A fairly new venture, this committee has the potential to bridge the implicit gap between artists and boards, but also could become complicated when funding and programming intertwine.

### Residencies and Commissions

Two very common and widely practiced artist supports come in the form of residencies and commissions. Though the researcher found these programs at times to be at odds with one another, each has its pros and cons for both the artist and the institution.

“Residencies are really becoming a bandwagon,” said one participant, “and there is a discrepancy between the theory and reality of residencies” (2, Participant 2014). The theory is that every writer wants an artistic home, but as noted in the following section on building relationships, the reality of those artistic homes can begin to feel constricting.

A development that seems to have come out of the studies referenced in Chapter 2 is the defining of terms for residencies. One participant noted that their organization’s



residencies recently went from being open-ended to having clear goals and end dates (8, Participant 2013).

Perhaps the largest residency development to have come out of the past studies is the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's Playwright Residency program, which funds 14 theatres to have a playwright on their full-time staff with salary and benefits for three years. The specifics of the agreements are left up to each theatre/playwright partnership and approved by the Foundation, but most include a combination of writing, administration, community engagement, and education. The salaries for the playwrights are on par with senior staff, and ultimately up to the organization to decide. While not required, almost all participating organizations have agreements to produce something from the body of their resident playwright's work within the three years, though not necessarily a work that is created *during* the residency so as to avoid putting pressure on the playwright with production deadlines (9, Participant 2014).

Study participants had varying opinions on the value of these residencies, one staking the claim that "a playwright is a playwright; they don't necessarily have the desire or the skills for administration," and raising the concern of tension among the staff if the resident playwright is not working 60 hours a week, but is making more money than the staff that is working those hours (2, Participant 2014).

Arguments on the other side, however, are that it is incredibly valuable to have a playwright fully embedded into the life and culture of an institution and that "the more we can figure out ways for the artists to do what they were called to do and make a living doing it, the better" (1, Participant 2013).

Still other study participants do not engage in residencies at all, instead investing in a robust commissioning program. Like residencies, the way commissions work varies from

organization to organization. Most participants agreed that they only commission writers with whom they have “successfully collaborated on previous shows,” (6, Participant 2014) or who have a proven track record of “crossing the finish line” (8, Participant 2013).

One participant detailed how commissions typically work within their organization:

We only commission writers we already have a relationship with and who we feel really get how the organization works, understand and appreciate the capabilities of our company of artists, and especially what our audiences respond to. We also really like writers who want to collaborate with us and build a true partnership on each project with real give and take and back and forth. Writers who want to get 'entangled' with us are the folks we want to be investing in, not people who hold themselves back and apart from us and only view [our organization] as a stage, a shop, and a royalty check. After that, it's fairly easy (I mean you already have the relationship: they know you, we know them.) We discuss a project they might want to write for our audience and our company, they say yes, and I write up a contract. We'll maintain contact with them throughout the development period providing whatever support they need to get the play to the finish line: readings, research trips, workshops, quiet time to write, whatever they need, which is determined through much conversation and discussion. ... Our job is to provide a menu of what's available and work with them to tailor a pathway that we all think will work (7, Participant 2014).

### Relationship Building & Focusing on the Artist

As past studies and reports cited the need for organizations to prioritize building relationships with artists, the researcher found that counsel taken to heart in the current new play development climate. Every one of the eight theatre administrators interviewed highlighted the importance of the relationship with the artist, more so than the finished product, in their organizations.

Relationships were the most common answer whenever participants were asked about reconciling the balance of power between artists and administrators. When asked about this balance of power, one participant answered:

I think it's all about relationships – what relationship does the playwright have to the institution and more specifically to that artistic director. ... I think [it is most successful] when a writer and an artistic director or a director of new play development really have a plan for the play and understand what the trajectory wants to be in the development process, so that way the writer feels like the institution has their back and wants what's best for the play. But I think it's totally case-by-case. There's never a one-size-fits-all for a new play development process. It's always going to be about relationships. It's always going to be about "what does this play need?" (1, Participant 2013)

By putting the human relationship at the center of the process, it makes communication, focus, and work on the product easier and more natural. It also helps in eliminating perceived barriers between artists and administrative staff.

One participant, a managing director, noted the value of a collaborative organization without walls between the artists and administration, but recognized that the larger the institution, the more difficult that kind of relationship can be. "It's harder at a bigger organization because the infrastructure and bureaucracy get in the way...so you have to consciously shape strategies to make sure you are integrating artists and building relationships with them" (7, Participant 2014).

Another participant noted that their organization's entire new work program is aimed more at seeding and building relationships than anything else. This participant went on to say that for this particular organization, the new work programming is focused toward discovering local writers and starting relationships there (4, Participant 2014).

Another interviewee agreed that giving playwrights an artistic home is valuable, but made the important clarification that having an artistic home doesn't necessarily mean they stay home. "They have [artistic] lives outside of this theatre, even though this theatre is their 'home.' It is an artistic home for a significant group of very talented people, but it just one of their homes" (5, Participant 2014).

At one organization, a participant stated that they want all of the playwrights they produce in a particular season to feel as though they are in residence for that year. In addition to regular royalties, the season playwrights receive a pre-production fee and contributions from the organization to their health insurance. Additionally, the playwright is given the option of working in the organization's education program, providing more opportunity for income and a home base for that year (2, Participant 2014).

### Defining Success in New Play Development

Like many factors highlighted in the previous sections, the definition of success varies from organization to organization, but on the whole is centered around the support felt by the artist, the quality of work achieved through collaborative efforts of the artists and the institutions, and the audiences reached by the work.

One participant claimed that success for an artist is measured by being able to make a living as an artist (11, Participant 2014). Another referenced ticket sales and reviews as data points for success, but more important was the sense of artistic achievement: "whether we provided roles for company members, whether the play gets picked up and produced elsewhere following its appearance at our theatre, whether the playwright leaves satisfied and the experience leads to another project here..." (7, Participant 2014)

Another participant pointed to donor and new audience attraction as a measure of a new work's success and echoed the above sentiments of ensuring a fulfilling process for the artists and spurring subsequent productions of the play around the country (6, Participant 2014).

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

In assessing how the health of the new play ecosystem has improved as a result of the findings of past research, it is important to recognize some of the specific programs that have recently emerged in the new play sector. As trends and priorities shift toward actual production of new work, the continued life of new plays, and deeper and more committed relationships between artists and organizations, the researcher finds a few influential programs to be indicative of the impact these past studies have had on the field.

One of the most significant and recent programs to emerge is the Mellon Foundation's new playwright residency program. Announced in January of 2013, the \$3.7 million program places 14 playwrights in full-time, salaried staff positions at 14 not-for-profit theatre companies around the country. Aimed at establishing meaningful and mutually beneficial relationships between playwrights and producing organizations, this program allows playwrights to be more integrally involved in the strategic and administrative functions of an organization while giving the organization the benefit of a different artistic voice and point of view. In the best-case scenario, this program encourages mutual understanding, respect, and collaboration among some of the key players in new play development. One can also imagine this program creating challenges, for example giving playwrights roles and responsibilities they may not want or be qualified for; creating tensions among existing staff; possible conflicts of interest in the season planning process. While challenges are likely to arise, the goals of this residency program are in line with Mellon's findings, and aim to foster creative work environments in which the

responsibilities and challenges faced by organizations and by playwrights are mutually understood and respected.

An example of an organization effectively utilizing its resources to promote new play development and production is Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company's Free the Beast campaign. Designed to support the production of 25 new plays over a ten-year period (2012 – 2022), Free the Beast is a targeted, ongoing fundraising campaign from which the money raised goes toward the specific needs of each new play selected, whether it be research, larger casts, extra rehearsals or workshops, or increased technical resources. Since its launch, Free the Beast has supported the production of three new plays to date and another three coming up this season and next. On their website ([www.woollymammoth.net/free-the-beast/](http://www.woollymammoth.net/free-the-beast/)), Woolly Mammoth lists specifically how Free the Beast funds are being allocated for each production.

A major contributor to the continued life of new plays is the National New Play Network (NNPN), whose Continued Life of New Plays Fund supports three or more theatres that choose to mount the same new play within a 12-month period. NNPN gives \$7,000 to each participating theatre and allows certain projects to apply for Collaboration Funds, which provide the partnerships additional time and resources to work together on a specific element or need of the play that might not otherwise be afforded due to budgetary or time constraints. This program encourages not only collaboration among theatre companies across the country, but also gives credence to second and third productions of a new play. It should be noted that while NNPN encourages the playwright to work on the script with each company during the rehearsal and run and make adjustments based on what is learned from each production, it is not a requirement.

With both funders and artistic leadership acknowledging the value of developing and producing new work and prioritizing the needs of the artists, the new play sector seems to have benefited and evolved as a result of the most recent wave of thorough study surrounding it. The participants in this study were uniformly in agreement about the importance of putting the needs of the artists first and of an organization's ability to be a flexible and malleable space for creative work to come to fruition.

As funding priorities and definitions of success are becoming more clear, they are also shifting more toward artist support and actual production. Organizations are tasked with synthesizing these priorities with the attraction and education of their audiences. While new work has traditionally been synonymous with risk, leaders in the field are finding ways to strategically plan for and minimize the negative impact associated with that risk, not only monetarily, but also in terms of attendance, critical review, and artistic integrity.

Looking at new play development and production as a triangular relationship between the artists, the producing organizations, and the audiences creates a system in which the risk is shared, and where communal education and understanding are not only paramount to success, but also make success more easily achievable.

Today's new play climate is one of experiment and innovation. Now five years have passed since the Mellon's New Plays Initiative and TDF's publishing of *Outrageous Fortune* and the savvy new play organizations are taking what was discovered and using it to shape the way they develop and produce. They are creating strategic budgetary solutions to cushion the financial risks of producing new plays, such as designating a sinking fund for the production of new work, or creating a long-term fundraising campaign to support the production of new work over the next decade. Foundations are reevaluating their funding

priorities, now giving more consideration to the second and third productions of new plays rather than their world premieres in hopes of generating the continued life of new plays. Residencies are becoming more defined, with goals that benefit both the artists and the host organizations.

As the new play sector continues to evolve, new challenges are likely to arise. This study seems to indicate that the people at the helm are well equipped to adapt and acclimate to new ideas and hopefully are not afraid to question the system when the practices and norms are no longer servicing the field.

### Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the results of this study, there are several recommendations and possibilities for future research. First, as noted in the limitations section of Chapter One, the size and scope of this study were relatively small, with only eleven participants representing seven organizations interviewed. The organizations, while all dedicated in some way to new play development and production, were widely varied in size and scope.

The researcher recommends a comparison of small-budget organizations to large-budget organizations in terms of what is possible and or prioritized in new play development. Additionally, future studies may benefit from narrowing the scope of study and focusing on just one aspect of new play development – residencies, or commissions, or perhaps a mixed methods study incorporating quantitative budgetary research and focusing solely on the financial aspects of new play development.



## Conclusion

The major conclusion reached as a result of this study is that the thorough research and reporting on the new play sector has indeed made an impact on its evolution and current practices. The concerns and challenges acknowledged in the reports out of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's New Plays Initiative and by Theatre Development Fund's *Outrageous Fortune – The Life and Times of the New American Play*, have led to changes in the ways funders and producing organizations are thinking about new play development programs and the way their success is defined. While the people who led these investigations are not necessarily directly involved in the development and production of new plays, their academic and exploratory research serves the field well in adapting and evolving its practices to ensure its continued health and vibrancy. As the new play sector continues to progress and develop, all the key players will benefit from acknowledging the contributions of a variety of experts in the field. It takes a village to raise a new play.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) How does your organization see and exercise its role in the process of developing a new play?
- 2) What is the balance of power between playwright and artistic leadership as a new play is being developed or workshopped?
- 3) Are organizations still concerned with getting the world premiere of a play or is the continued life of new plays as or more important?
- 4) How do new plays compare to others in terms of revenue for your organization?
- 5) How does your board of trustees feel about the risk of producing new work? How are they involved, if at all, in your new play development programs?
- 6) Do playwrights write with budget constraints in mind? With audiences in mind? With companies in mind?
- 7) How often do commissioned works or plays that are worked on during residencies going on to full production at the host organizations? How up front and honest are organizations about this?
- 8) If your organization has a residency program, what are its terms and conditions, if any?
- 9) How do playwrights and artistic leadership feel about having a playwright on full-time staff? What would the job description look like?
- 10) What is the most valuable resource a theatre company can offer a playwright?
- 11) How do you define success?

APPENDIX B  
ORGANIZATIONS CONSULTED

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

Arena Stage

Page 73

Playwrights Horizons

Steppenwolf Theatre Company

Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company

## REFERENCES

- 1, Participant. Interview, November 27, 2013 2013.
  - 2, Participant. Interview, February 27, 2014 2014.
  - 3, Participant. Interview, February 27, 2014 2014.
  - 4, Participant. Interview, March 7, 2014 2014.
  - 5, Participant. Interview, March 7, 2014 2014.
  - 6, Participant. Interview, March 18, 2014.
  - 7, Participant. Interview, March 18 2014.
  - 8, Participant. Interview, November 8, 2013 2013.
  - 9, Participant. Interview, February 27 2014.
  - 10, Participant. Interview, July 30 2013.
  - 11, Participant. Interview, March 16 2014.
- (editor), George Plimpton. *Playwrights at Work*. New York: Random House, 2000.  
Interviews.
- Abelman, Brett Steven. "Arena Stage's First Summit, Headed by Peter Marks, Sparks Online Debate." <http://dctheatrescene.com/2014/02/19/arena-stages-first-summit-peter-marks-sparks-debate/>.
- Anderson, Douglas. "The Dream Machine: Thirty Years of New Play Development in America." *TDR (1988-)* 32, no. 3 (1988): 55-84.
- arenastage.org. "Leadership." <https://http://www.arenastage.org/about/leadership/>.
- Bent, Eliza. "Moving on In." *American Theatre* March 2013 2013.
- Cohen, Edward M. *Working on a New Play: A Play Development Handbook for Actors, Directors, Designers, and Playwrights*. Second ed. New York, NY: Prentice Hall Press, 1988.
- Crespy, David A. "A Paradigm for New Play Development: The Albee-Barr-Wilder Playwrights Unit." [In English]. *Theatre History Studies* 26 (2006 2006): 31-51,165.
- Dower, David. "The Gates of Opportunity." 2007.  
———. "Playwright Residencies: Success on Whose Terms?" In *HowlRound*, 2013.

- Hansel, Adrien-Alice. "How Do You Develop Plays? Some Observations from Round 1." Washington DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 2010.
- Haslett, Rosalind. "Architecture and New Play Development at the National Theatre, 1907-2010." [In English]. *New Theatre Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (Nov 2011 2011): 358-67.
- Healy, Patrick. "Leaving the Light on for Playwrights." *The New York Times*, January 14, 2011 2011.
- Herrmann, Jeffrey. Email, January 21, 2014 2014.
- Kepler, Adam W. "Theater Residencies from Emerson College." *The New York Times*, January 6, 2013 2013.
- Kompanek, Christopher. "The Anna Shapiro Workout." *American Theatre Magazine*, March 2014 2014, 30 - 33.
- London, Todd. *The Artistic Home: Discussions with Artistic Directors of America's Institutional Theatres*. 1st ed. New York, NY: Theatre Communications Group, 1988.
- . "Chicago Impromptu." *American Theatre* 14 (1990).
- . *Outrageous Fortune - the Life and Times of the New American Play*. New York, NY: Theatre Development Fund, 2009.
- Miller, Stuart. "The Scenic Route." *American Theatre*, May/June 2012 2012.
- . "Village Rallies Round a Playwright's Tale: Rattlestick Oversees Lucy Thurber's Five-Play Cycle." *New York Times*, August 9, 2013 2013.
- Miller, Tony Proscio and Clara. "How Steppenwolf Excelled, First on the Boards, Then in the Boardroom, and Ultimately on the Balance Sheet: An Unfinished Drama in a Least Three Acts, Probably More." In *Rising in Stages*, edited by Nonprofit Finance Fund. New York, NY, 2003.
- National New Play Network. "Continued Life of New Plays Fund." National New Play Network, <http://nnpn.org/about/programs/continued-life-of-new-plays-fund>.
- . "New Play Exchange." National New Play Network, <http://nnpn.org/about/programs/new-play-exchange>.
- Nnamdi, Kojo. "The Kojo Nnamdi Show." In *On Stage in our Region*, 50 minutes: WAMU 88.5, 2013.
- Pesner, Ben. "2007 New Play Development and Production Summit Summary and Analysis." In *New Plays Initiative*, 2007.

- . "From Scarcity to Abundance." *Arena Stage*, 2011.
- . "Today and Tomorrow: New Play Development before and after Opening Night." In *New Plays Initiative* 2009.
- Power, Robert Hedley; Harriet. "Over There." *American Theatre* December 2012 2012.
- Pressley, Nelson. "New York Theaters Embrace Oft-Neglected Risk: New Plays." *Washington Post*, January 17 2014.
- Proscio, Tony, and Clara Miller. "Rising in Stages." *Nonprofit Finance Fund* (2003).
- Ragsdale, Diane E. "New Play Development Programs in Us Theaters." In *New Plays Initiative*, 2009.
- Schulenburg, August. "Top 11 Most-Produced Playwrights of 2012-13 Season." Theatre Communications Group, <http://www.tcgcircle.org/2012/09/top-11-most-produced-playwrights-of-2012-13-season/>.
- Shalwitz, Howard. "Woolly Mammoth: A Brief Intellectual History." (2009). <http://qawww.woollymammoth.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/WoollyHistory.pdf>.
- Shirley, Don. "Cuts' Drama Remains at Ctg; Ritchie's Changes at Center Theatre Group Have Some Worried About New Play Development in L.A." *Los Angeles Times*, 2005 Jun 22 2005, 0.