

**4TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AMERICAN DRAMA AND
THEATER**

**THE ROMANCE OF THEATER: AMERICAN DRAMA AND ITS
STORIES**

Seville. May 28-30, 2012

www.romanceoftheater.com

The Fourth International Conference on American Drama and Theater to be held in Andalucia, Spain, will take place in May 2012, organized by the University of Seville. As many remember, the first and second conferences were hosted by the University of Málaga, and the third, in 2009, by the University of Cadiz.

Seville is one of the most beautiful cities in southern Spain, if not in all Europe; such universal characters as Don Juan or Carmen are among those the city has contributed to universal culture. Given such a Romantic setting, and after devoting the last conference to violence in American theater and drama, we thought that it was perhaps time for something a little lighter, and so, in keeping with the romantic character of Seville, we'll be looking at the long-time romance between the theater, playwrights, professionals, and, hopefully, audiences. In spite of the persistent rumor of crisis which has always surrounded this art, the truth is that it has never quite disappeared, and has surprisingly withstood the impact of new technologies and other vehicles for artistic communication which the digital revolution has brought about. There is something about the theater that continues to enthrall and seduce us. The first thing we would like to explore in our fourth conference is just this: what it is that makes theater, and American theater in particular, so resilient, and what it is that keeps infusing new life into it with each new generation.

An answer we soon came up with was that we all love a story. Storytelling has always been as indispensable to human beings as nourishment or clothing (perhaps even more). And theater always tells stories, or at least it did till Gertrude Stein complained that "Everybody knows so many stories and what is the use of telling another story. What is the use of telling a story since there are so many and everybody knows so many and tells so many." And then Bertolt Brecht, and Jerzy Grotowski, and Richard Foreman, and the Open Theater, and the Wooster Group, and other avantgardists went about transforming the traditional ways of telling stories. And yet, upon closer inspection, it is all too easy to realize that storytelling probably was more reluctant to abandon the stage than it proclaimed it was, and American drama continues to tell stories, albeit deploying new formats which reflect the new modes of apprehending reality.

Using both approaches as a starting point, the magic which theater possesses and its ability to captivate audiences, and the complex dynamics between dramatic writing and the desire/refusal to tell stories, we invite American drama and theater scholars to find ways to address these topics from whatever field of inquiry into American drama and theater they happen to work in. We will be receptive to all kinds of proposals that, in one way or another, attempt to shed light on such issues. However, here are some questions which participants might like to use as starting points:

- What kinds of stories has American drama told us? And why those and not others?
- How have such stories been given dramatic form?
- What are the stories surrounding the (hi)story of American drama? And how truthful or otherwise are they?
- What stories have never been told both about American theater and its professionals, performers, directors, playwrights, impresarios??
- How have 20th century avant-garde European theorists influenced American dramatic craft?
- Is there just one way to tell stories? What other modes have American playwrights come up with? And what artistic/ideological agenda(s) were they meant to serve?
- How are the stories of ethnic groups within the larger culture told by American drama?
- Are stories about canonical playwrights accurate and/or fair? Are there stories about them which have never been told? Why were they kept secret?
- What remains to be said about the silenced (hi/her)story of women in American theater?
- How can we enrich the body of stories which the American theatrical establishment continues to tell us right now?
- Perceiving the theatrical story: cognitive studies applied to the theater.
- How do cinematic and theatrical storytelling in America coalesce, and/or cross-fertilize one another?
- To what extent does dramatic storytelling in America necessitate the participation of the audience? What stories do audiences bring to the theater, and how do they shape what is enacted before them? What is the role of memory in the configuration of past stories, plays, or performances?
- Is there such a thing as storytelling which is specific for highbrow or lowbrow audiences?
- And, why not, what relationships and romances have there been between performers and other practitioners and the theater, or between themselves?
- What are the best-loved productions on the American stage?
- How has American drama dealt with love and romance, and from how many different standpoints?

- What sense can we make of the love/hate relationship between American theater and foreign playwrights and theatrical modes?
- And what can we say of America's longstanding romance with the Broadway musical?

Tell us your story, or, in more academic terms, please submit your proposal and write a brief e-mail stating its title and including a 5-7 line resume. Then attach a 150 word abstract, and send it to berceo@gmail.com by October 15, 2011. Proposals will be examined carefully, and, within 45 days, we will get back to you concerning acceptance (or otherwise).

For updated information on the conference, please check the Conference web page www.romanceoftheater.com