

Last Frontier Theatre Conference Evaluations Report

Each year, participants in the Last Frontier Theatre Conference are given the opportunity to fill out feedback forms on their experience in Valdez. Their responses are used in the planning of subsequent Conferences. A blank copy of the response sheet given to every registrant is at the end of this report.

There are three sections to the feedback summaries. First are the numerical breakdowns of evaluation ratings of both the 2005 and 2006 Last Frontier Theatre Conferences. They show improvement in this year's event, and contain analysis on how the Conference can be improved for 2007. This section contains a majority of the analysis of the data, and plans for next year.

Second and third are text from the participant's responses. The first section is from all Conference participants; the second section is from the writers participating in the Play Lab. These comments are broken down first by question, then more specifically by the topic of the response. They are primarily included to give the reader a feel for the enthusiasm for the event present in most of the respondents.

Please note that any missing percentages are a result of people responding "not applicable" on their evaluations.

Information Received Prior to the Conference

Our goal is to maintain excellent communication and relations with anyone who is planning on attending the Conference. Ideally, every person planning on participating in the Conference will have access to any information they need to properly prepare themselves for the Conference. To that end, all correspondence and publications of the Conference have the personal e-mail and phone number of the Conference Coordinator. Also, our website (www.pwscc.edu) has been completely restructured and contains all information that a person would need in preparing to attend the Conference in Valdez.

In 2005 we received the following ratings in this section:

- 62% excellent
- 25% good
- 9% satisfactory
- 2% unsatisfactory

In 2006, we received the following ratings in this section:

- 71% excellent
- 20% good
- 7% satisfactory
- 2% unsatisfactory

We are pleased that there was a 9 percentile increase in “excellent” ratings, which combined with a 16 percentile increase from last year means that this process is becoming much more successful each year.

Our Goal for improvement in this section for the 2007 Conference:

The systems for communicating with the participants prior to the Conference are all adequately in place to make sure that everyone is being communicated with. The goal for this year is to make sure that all correspondence is explicit and clear, as there was still a small percentage of people who received the same correspondence as the 91% who ranked communication as good to excellent but still felt like they did not know what to expect. To some extent, the blame for this is shared with these participants, as all the information they needed was presented to them, and they may have not read it carefully enough. But we will endeavor to make such misunderstanding even less likely in the future.



Play Lab

The top priority of the Conference is to support the development of new work and early-to mid-career playwrights. Every year, the success of the Conference flows from the success of the Play Lab. When there are quality plays being presented by strong writers, the positive effects are felt in every other aspect of the event. Therefore, the continued improvement in the quality of the Play Lab is our top priority.

In 2005 we received the following ratings in this section:

71% excellent
27% good
2% satisfactory
0% unsatisfactory

In 2006 we received the following ratings in this section:

71% excellent
26% good
3% satisfactory
0% unsatisfactory

We are pleased that 97% of the attendees rated the play labs as excellent to good, and that 0% found the labs to be unsatisfactory. This year's biggest triumph was the addition of our individual feedback sessions for the Play Lab playwrights. This gave every playwright the chance to sit down and have a discussion about their play with one of their panelists. See the comments section for additional feedback to this new addition.

Our Goal for improvement in this section for the 2007 Conference:

We are very happy with the Play Lab as it stands now, and will avoid making any drastic changes. Among the changes from last year's critique that were implemented and well received were:

- The schedule was well-planned this year to avoid running out of time during the critique session.
- The return of full-length plays into the mix was very successful.
- As previously mentioned, the individual mentoring sessions.

There needs to be further communication with actors previous to the Conference to make sure that they honor their acting commitments, as there was an occasional issue of actors not being where they were supposed to be this year.



Panel Discussions

Panel discussions work with classes as one of the educational components of the Conference. They give participants a chance to hear a diversity of opinions on a given topic in a single sitting.

In 2005 we received the following ratings in this section:

48% excellent
39% good
2% satisfactory
7% unsatisfactory

In 2006 we received the following rating in this section:

55% excellent
17% good
13% satisfactory
0% unsatisfactory

This year we cut back on the number of panels in an effort to keep participants active and engaged, and placed them all towards the beginning of the week. The panels were specified towards the business of theatre as this was a popular request in 2005. Our excellent ratings improved by 7 percentiles and we completely eliminated any unsatisfactory ratings.

Our Goal for improvement in this section for the 2007 Conference:

Next year, we plan on having more group taught classes, as opposed to panel discussions. We universally hear from our participants that being able to be actively involved increases the quality of their experience. We will continue to make an hour-and-a-half the minimum time for a class or panel discussion, as this improvement worked well so that people did not feel like conversations were truncated by time limits.



Classes

One of our goals is to provide educational, engaging, and inspiring classes to all attendees. These classes cover a very broad curriculum dealing with all of the varying aspects of theatre. We strive to attract educators and professionals that can best serve the needs of the students attending the classes.

In 2005 we received the following ratings in this section:

64% excellent
27% good
0% satisfactory
7% unsatisfactory

In 2006 we received the following ratings in this section:

51% excellent
30% good
10% satisfactory
2% unsatisfactory

Our goal from last year was to eliminate as many unsatisfactory ratings as possible by trying to make our classes more advanced and specific. We succeeded in dropping our unsatisfactory ratings by 5 percentiles.

Our Goal for improvement in this section for the 2007 Conference:

For 2007, there are three basic ideas that will be prevalent in planning the class curriculum:

1. More active writing classes, as those were definitely the best received offerings of 2006.
2. More group taught classes, where participants have the opportunity to hear different perspectives within the same block of time.
3. Smaller classes. Discussions are underway with Perseverance Theatre to provide people to lead small group discussions on producing topics such as marketing and costuming. While these classes will not be as popular as the larger classes with our featured artists, they will provide smaller discussion groups, something that was requested in the feedback commentary.



Evening Performances

We have evening entertainment every night of the Conference. We attempt to stage a wide variety of work, from children's theatre to docudrama. The shows provide both education and entertainment for our participants. Ideally, they are also our main connection with the community of Valdez, who often can not take the week off to attend the day-time events due to work, but are available to see shows in the evening.

In 2005 we received the following ratings in this section:

39% excellent
50% good
7% satisfactory
2% unsatisfactory

In 2006 we received the following ratings in this section:

55% excellent
39% good
6% satisfactory
0% unsatisfactory

We were pleased to see such good scores in this category, as we took a risk on producing more unknown plays by unknown writers who had presented their work in the Play Lab. While the scripts might not as been as strong as work presented in the past years by the most prominent names in American theatre, the plays were exciting and fresh, and they tied closely with the stated goal to help the development of the participating writers.

Our Goal for improvement in this section for the 2007 Conference:

This year had a number of exciting changes that we will continue with next year, starting with a first evening production of the *Alaska Overnights*. This project, which involves fully creating productions in 24 hours, was a great way to start the evening shows off with a jolt of energy. We will also continue to produce plays workshopped in the Play Lab on at least two evenings. Another primary goal this year is to get the theatre community in Fairbanks to produce an evening, as they are the third biggest theatre community in the state, and their presence here helps the Conference truly be an event for the entire state.



Receptions

The after-show receptions give attendees an opportunity to meet and socialize with both each other and our featured artists.

In 2005 we received the following ratings in this section:

- 50% excellent
- 39% good
- 4% satisfactory
- 0% unsatisfactory

In 2006 we received the following ratings in this section:

- 39% excellent
- 39% good
- 17% satisfactory
- 0% unsatisfactory

While our numbers have dropped somewhat, we are still pleased to have no unsatisfied participants in this section. This year we had a new caterer for these events, which improved upon the food greatly.

Our Goal for improvement in this section for the 2007 Conference:

The success of this year's receptions is a direct result of excellent catering and a group of extremely accessible featured artists and theatre professionals. The re-addition of a communal cruise on Stan Stephens Cruises was very well received. There are no major planned changes to the receptions, just a continued attention to timeliness and food quality.



Food

We provide coffee, tea, and snack cookies all day at the Conference, in addition to a full lunch and other concessions available for sale.

In 2005 we received the following ratings in this section:

- 21% excellent
- 43% good
- 25% satisfactory
- 4% unsatisfactory

In 2006 we received the following ratings in this section:

- 33% excellent
- 20% good
- 39% satisfactory
- 8% unsatisfactory

While this remained our lowest ranked category, an increase of 12 percentiles of excellent ratings indicates that the food was improved this year. Another triumph for us was that we were able to provide our lunches for free to all Conference participants, and save thousands of dollars from our budget on the costs of lunches. Many people said that the Gala Dinner provided this year was the best in the history of the event.

Our Goal for improvement in this section for the 2007 Conference:

There are no major planned alterations for next year. A note of interest here is that this year we saved \$7,000 on our lunch budget while being able to provide lunches free of charge to all participants.



Featured Artists

One of our goals in approaching the Conference is to create a group of professionals who can provide attendees with insight and inspiration from all aspects of theatre. We strive to contract featured artists that are accessible, entertaining, good-natured and talented. These people are hand-picked to best suit the needs of the Conference and the education we are looking to provide.

In 2005 we received the following ratings in this section:

68% excellent
25% good
7% satisfactory
0% unsatisfactory

In 2006 we received the following ratings in this section:

62% excellent
33% good
5% satisfactory
0% unsatisfactory

A 0% unsatisfactory rating tells us that no participants had a significantly negative experience with our featured artists, a fact of which we are very proud. 95% of responses were good and excellent.

Our Goal for improvement in this section for the 2007 Conference:

We have two primary goals for next year in our featured artist staffing:

1. Bring up new people who can provide repeat participants with new perspectives on the craft of playwriting.
2. Increase the diversity of our featured artists. While we have done a good job in having women involved (over 50 %), we want to involve more culturally diverse artists. We will accomplish this through using current featured artists to provide us contact information for appropriate artists, and then contacting them by August.



Quality of Conference Staff

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

In 2005 we received the following ratings in this section:

- 100% excellent
- 0% good
- 0% satisfactory
- 0% unsatisfactory

In 2006 we received the following ratings in this section:

- 94% excellent
- 6% good
- 0% satisfactory
- 0% unsatisfactory

We are pleased that our staff joined together to do their part in throwing a highly successful Conference. The major increase of community members coming to us as volunteers was also a great asset for our staff.

Our Goal for improvement in this section for the 2007 Conference:

This year had more volunteers from the community than 2005, and we hope to continue this trend in 2007. But there is no higher ranking in this report than that of the staff, a fact we take great pride in. Many repeat attendees cite how the staff has become like a family that they visit once a year.



1. Would you like to see any other types of activities considered for future Conferences? If so, what?

- **Positive Comments**
 - “Keep continued emphasis on nuts and bolts of playwriting – outstanding this year.”
 - “No – very well balanced.”
 - “Plenty to do already.”
- **Evening Shows**
 - “Featured Artists reading their own work.”
- **Classes**
 - “Classes were excellent.”
 - “More interactive activities – perhaps classes where you can return after having rewritten portions of play; more 2-part classes where you can go off and work then return.”
 - “More classes where we work in small groups with writing exercises.”
 - “More small group classes.”
 - “Design classes, not too many. Gregory’s is great, though maybe another one for lights, sound, etc.”
 - “More playwriting seminars. Class on rewriting that would span a couple of classes (I missed Jayne’s). Workshops on putting your work out there in the universe.”
 - “Perhaps some kind of peer discussions (small groups) among playwrights, actors, and directors, by specialty!”
 - “I was happy with what offered. More stage combat would be fun, especially if there was something more advanced.”
 - “A possible workshop addressing how to take rejection.”
 - “I like any activity involving writing exercises.”
 - “More on-site writing exercises (a la Congdon).”
 - “I wish there were more/more specific classes. I found the classes to be general and not very applicable to me as a writer. The group discussions tended to get off track and instead of learning anything, people just talked about themselves.”
 - “General discussions – no topics – just open.”
- **Outdoor Activities**
 - “Possibly more Nature Walks/Hikes.”
 - “I loved Adam’s hike. Anything outdoors is good.”
 - “I loved the cruise. The kind of group adventure is really fun & great for people to get to know each other.”
- **General Comments**
 - “Need to add live band at the gala so we can stay and dance and not go to a smoky bar.”
 - “A little more for actors.”
 - “Need to have some different things if you want to keep the same people coming back. Would be good to have one keynote-type person (major playwright) to anchor the Conference and draw more general participants

(Anchorage people who are theatre viewers as opposed to actors/playwrights.)”

2. Whom would you like to see invited to future Conferences?

Current or previously attending artists, preceded by number of requests:

3: Gary Garrison

2: Connie Congdon

1: Danielle Dresden, Michael Hood, Steve Hunt, Barclay Kopchak, Laura Linney, Mark Lutwak, Elaine Romero, Kate Snodgrass, Jayne Wenger, Y York

Individuals who've not previously attended:

2: Eric Bogosian, David Mamet, Jeffrey Sweet

1: Bruce Campbell, Kia Corthron, Richard Dresser, Will Dunne, Christopher Durang, Eve Ensler, Richard Greenberg, David Ives, Charlie Kaufman, Neil LaBute, Todd London (New Dramatists), Ron May (Artistic Director of Stray Cat Theatre), Ellen McLaughlin, Harold Pinter, Toni Press-Coffman, Steve Vineberg (Holycross College)

Types (as opposed to individuals) to bring up:

3: More Artistic Directors,

1: Dramatists Guild Representative, Innovative Theatre Groups, More Women Playwrights

Some quotes:

“It’s great to have a star name or two, but keep Conference the way it is – focus on nuts and bolts, not sitting at the feet of the great & powerful.”

“A teacher who teaches playwriting to teach re: a specific topic: i.e. monologues, character, etc. Classes were very general, basic, and not interesting.”

“More quality people like we already have.”

“More playwrights from all across the country, and more actors from the same.”

“Actors/Actresses who are interested in new works and are looking for roles that they find interesting enough to want to play & who can help a writer find a producer.

‘Names’ who have some power... somebody to get behind a project or a role and get it to the right people.”

3. What did you enjoy most about the Conference?

• General Atmosphere

- “Great sense of community.”
- “General ambience.”
- “Learning new things – meeting new people and connecting with old.”
- “Camaraderie.”
- “Great people.”
- “Informal talks with others, particularly writers.”
- “Meeting people & play labs.”
- “Nice people.”
- “The people.”
- “Informal interaction with other participants.”

- “The interaction between playwrights, actors, etc.”
- “Meeting people and renewing acquaintances/friendships.”
- “The Atmosphere”
- “The fact that there was time to talk/interact with so many different writers.”
- “Kindness of strangers: the featured artists, panelists, actors, writers, staff... all made this a wonderful time.”
- “I appreciated the support & sense of welcoming: comping, lunch, transportation, credits, opportunity to work with professionals.”

- **Classes**

- “Most classes were great. Libby’s was less informative; however, the rest were fantastic. John Yearley is another great stage presence, different from Gary but he has the same charisma and charm that makes people gravitate towards him. Gregory’s class was brilliant as usual. Y’s class was fantastic and productive. Her writing exercises spark so much for me, and I want to go home and start kicking out scripts after her class. Meron’s was insightful as well; some were saying it lingered a few times, but honestly, I think he had to hammer home points of feasibility that people just weren’t getting. Overall, I loved the new perspective he gave playwrights.”
- “I have never had the opportunity to attend an MFA program in playwriting, but I consider my time in Valdez equivalent.”
- “Classes.”
- “Classes were great.”
- “I enjoyed the classes the most. Being both an actor and a playwright, I appreciated being given a choice between which classes I would rather attend.”

- **Featured Artists**

- 3 x “Gary Garrison” Also: “Gary Garrison: When I was debating whether to return, it was Gary’s name that triggered me to go. He was great, as expected. A real gem. I learned a lot from him. Gary alone was worth the price of admission.”
- “Patricia Neal. Every word she uttered.”
- “Judith rules!” Also: “Judith Stevens-Ly: On her own, she was willing to look at one of my longer scripts and spent a half hour giving me feedback. Her insight was amazingly helpful, and what she said about this one work can be applied, I’m sure, to all my work.”
- “The quality of the faculty and the evening performances were high as always.”
- “Relaxed panelists – not frenetic or overworked.”
- “John Yearley’s class: John’s writing was a great inspiration for me last year (I can directly trace one of my biggest theatre achievements to this inspiration), and I loved his class this year. His input on the panel was also wonderful. He’s a great communicator.”
- “Erma Duricko”

- “Gregory Pulver” “Gregory Pulver: I love what he brings to the Conference. Loved his exercise.”
- “Y York”
- 2 x “John Yearley”
- “The communication and non-segregation between featured artists and other participants. “
- Accessibility of featured artists
- **Evening Performances**
 - “Performances: Vig, Skala, Perseverance.”
 - “The Alaska Plays: Of the night-time activities, this was my favorite.”
 - 2 x “Lilia!”
 - “Evening shows: Here’s where Libby Shined. The Overnighters were also a wise call, and because it was so early, it really energized people to see Conference participants working, etc. The return to the Lab is awesome, keep it. It inspires all participants who believe their work might be up there one day. I didn’t care for *The Laramie Project*, but I’m glad it was brought in and done. I like Perseverance being there. It’s the perfect exclamation point to Alaska Theatre.”
 - “Performing in the Overnighters & the Fringe.”
 - “Connection to the Alaska theatre scene.”
 - “The night performances (minus Thursday & Friday).”
 - “My participation in the Overnighters is one of my all-time favorite theatre experiences.”
 - “The Fringe Overnighter: I really appreciate the work that Erick and Barry do (a lot of it unthinks, I’m sure). I had such great pleasure doing the mid-week overnight writing.”
- **Play Lab**
 - “Listening to plays.”
 - “The variety in the Play Lab.”
 - “Intelligent and informative response sessions.”
 - “The ability to interact with theatre pros and hear works in progress.”
 - “Opportunity to meet privately with my panelist.”
 - “The chance to see a wide array of work in a short time.”
 - “The new plays, of course, though I still had to miss too many plays.”
 - 3 x “Play Lab”
 - “Participating in play readings.”
 - “The people/hearing plays read/discussions/seeing other folks from past years.”
 - “Rehearsal time: I know there was mixed response to this. For me, it worked out. My main actor was an hour late, and instead of forcing us to panic and find a last minute replacement, we were able to re-group and have a productive reading.”
 - “I learned a lot in Play Labs... panel comments were very helpful.”
 - “Play Lab – readings and commentary.”
- **Valdez**
 - “Beautiful surroundings.”

- “Cruise.” “The late night cruise: I am so intent on taking advantage of the Conference offerings, I really don’t ‘do’ Alaska as I like. Thanks for making this possible.” “Please pass on my gratitude to Stan Stephens Cruises: to go out on the bay like that with so many friends was a terrific gift.”
- “The high school swimming pool: I love to swim and this was a great place to do it. This might be another way of saying that the community of Valdez made us feel very welcome. (Tom Horton went to both the Last Frontier and Omaha conferences this year. It was really interesting to hear his comparison of both. He liked both, but said he liked the Last Frontier more because it was more personalized. At Omaha, he had to rent a car and stay 8 miles from the conference. At Last Frontier, we were all in this together.)”
- “One of the biggest highlights for me was the city of Valdez itself, the people who live in your town. I remember last year when you came to Anchorage for a recap meeting about the conference, and you expressed a wish to involve the citizens of Valdez more in the Conference... I think you’ve succeeded. Local actress Meghan Tanner was a fantastic, talented addition to my Overnighter. Thanks for putting her in my cast.”
- **General Praise**
 - “This conference recharges my batteries. And each year, I feel they need less and less recharging - carryover from the previous conference. It's an honor to be invited to this each year. I hope people never lose sight of that. The staff and the people are testimony to the personal touch this conference has, that I feel wasn't as prominent in 2004. In the last two years, this has been about the playwrights. I'd like to see more networking, invites to submit work among participants and their respective theatres. Still, when I'm at the LFTC there is no doubt in my mind that I'm there because the guest artists, the people running it, and the people in attendance want to see me become a better and more successful writer.”
 - “Had a great time at the Conference. I am definitely planning on submitting something for next year because I’d love to attend again. It was definitely a highlight of my creative career thus far.”
 - “Let me say what a wonderful experience I had this year. No elitism, only a supportive, exciting Conference. The best group of plays so far and an assembly of experienced and inspirational panelists. The Workshops were very well done, and the feedback from the participants was stimulating. The staff was accommodating and congenial. Doug, you rule by example and the staff reflects your concern for others. Dawson, you are funny, self-deprecating and intelligent. You are an example for young playwrights. In short, the best conference I have attended during my twelve years of involvement.”
 - “This year’s Conference was a terrific boost to me as a playwright. I had the opportunity to hear my play out loud for the first time. I also heard other plays read from playwrights all over the country, even New Zealand. These playwrights, wherever they’re from, are also part of my community,

and without the Conference, I would never get the chance to share work with them. In addition to the Play Labs, lectures and workshops offered me much to think about in terms of my work. Some of it exciting. Some of it downright scary. That's a good thing."

- "The variety of workshops/plays – loved having stage combat, film screenings, plays of different lengths, the fringe, the evening shows. Also loved the warmth and accessibility of the featured artists! Wonderful mentors!"
- "As an actor, I wasn't sure what to expect from a theatre conference devoted to playwriting, but what I found was a theatre conference devoted to theatre and all of the players that go into creating art. I know I was lucky to have been asked to be included on the number of readings I was given, but in addition, I was so grateful to be able to take a wide variety of workshops that all had something inspiring to offer. I was also inspired by the accessibility of the people who came to the event."
- "I had a wonderful time at the Theatre Conference. Everything was so well planned and it was a delightful getaway. Plus, an added bonus – I learned something. What more could I ask?"
- "This conference is one of the best things I have ever done. I had an amazing time and met some great people. I also made contacts as well as people I now can consider friends."
- "People I would have been terrified to approach in the "real world", but who made me feel like my voice was special and who took the time to share their talents and expertise with me. I was also so impressed with the schedule of events and all the different types of entertainment and social get-togethers included in the mix. You have a special thing going on in Valdez, and while I understand you inherited the gig, I can see how much it must be growing under your guidance of and love for it. I just want to thank you for allowing me to be a part of the magic."
- "My experience this year topped last year's, which I wouldn't have believed possible. As always, I spread the word all year long and can't wait for next year."
- "What a fantastic experience, awesome people, amazing conference, unique location, interesting workshops, wonderful spectrum of work in progress...I know I haven't said it all but thank you! I just hope I can write something to get me back there again next year. Thanks once again, it was a pleasure meeting you and participating in such a professionally organized conference."

- **Staff**

- "I wanted to say how much I enjoyed the Conference and how you did such a splendid job getting it all together. You are truly an advocate of the theatre and should go down in theatre history."
- "The staff were very helpful and nice."
- "It was run beautifully – everything happened when scheduled, people seemed organized."

- “The staff: Adam and Ryan, et al. President Doug Desorcie is a tireless supporter of the arts and made us feel welcome. He’s also got a flair for comedy, and so I suspect drama as well.”
- “The great organization/staff: I know many take this for granted, but I am so impressed by how organized and friendly everything is. I feel like I’m visiting family... the good kind of family. Thanks.”
- **Food**
 - “Michael Holcombe’s delicious send off breakfast.”
 - “Free food/lodgings.”
- **Miscellaneous**
 - “Gala.”
 - “The gala is a seriously wonderful tradition that makes the whole week come together. This year was no exception.”
 - “Free conference fee for readers and tent city make it do-able.”
 - “he slower pace.”
 - “Positive Improvement of Writing.”

4. **What Improvements would you Suggest?**

- **Schedule**
 - “Scheduling rehearsals so that classes can be attended.”
 - “More time for classes. I missed out on some great ones due to rehearsal conflicts... I wish there was another way to schedule it.”
 - “We should be given more rehearsal time – especially for full-length plays.”
 - “Give estimates of reading time so people can know if a play is long or short... can be posted on the door the day of the reading.”
 - “Indicating the length of the Play Lab readings in the program that one can schedule their day more efficiently.”
 - “Make it longer!”
 - “Don’t schedule rehearsals – let groups decide.”
 - “Scheduling rehearsals in a way to let readers attend more workshops, other Play Labs, etc.”
 - “Conflicts with plays: probably this can’t be avoided, but I hated to miss plays because of conflicts. It was good to have some long plays, but I lost my concentration for this later in the week.”
- **None**
 - “I like it as it is!”
 - “Bottle this year’s vintage to open how this one went for all future Conferences.”
 - “None.”
- **Publications**
 - “Programs should have people’s e-mail addresses to contact them.”
 - “A Conference contact list with e-mails.”
 - “A rating system of the plays in the schedule. Perhaps a movie-type rating or something of your own invention. I’ve heard from local folks who would like to attend the plays (and/or bring their kids), but they are afraid

of seeing one that is replete with foul language, violence, or sexual situations. The titles and little blurbs don't really convey what the play might contain."

- "Program should denote length of play."

- **Length**

- "Make it somewhat shorter? It is too long to attend everything."

- **Transportation**

- "Better transport from Anchorage."

- **Play Lab**

- "The lead panel member should have read the play as well as seen the reading. I would have liked to have had more time with my lead person. She seemed rushed and had to hurry to meet someone else."
- "For the shorter plays, perhaps doing them back to back, instead of in competition with each other."
- "Written feedback, ratings from audience."
- "Having directors for Play Lab readings."
- "Maybe more short plays."
- "Maybe someone other than Dawson can do the reading schedules or at least the changes. He seems overburdened."

- **Fringe Festival**

- "The Fringe was a provocative and exciting experience, and I saw several good plays the nights I attended. My one comment is that it needs to be moved. The space is noisy, interfering with the remaining diners in the restaurant. Sound system is awful. I think Ernesto's second floor would be perfect with a little stage on one end.
- Fringe at the commons, it's more relaxed.

- **Classes**

- "Panel discussions/classes – some repeated from last year – maybe mix up some topics."
- "Don't double book the 2nd part of classes/lectures at the same time, when the first parts were at different times."
- "More hands on writing workshops, like those given by Gary, Gregory, and John."
- "I would love to see some of the workshops team taught – for example, directing with Erma Duricko and Mark Lutwak."
- "The acting workshops that were here seemed to turn into round table discussions rather than actually getting to workshop pieces. The potential is there for some good acting workshops and it didn't seem to really go anywhere."
- "Not all of the teachers had something to offer outside their own personal experience. In other words, they had the experience of having collaborated in the creation of a play, but had no real insight into how other people (students) could do likewise. Teaching experience is good, too!"

- **Food**

- "Posting the lunch menu the day before so that those with particular dietary needs or desires can plan ahead. Keeping the drinks separate from

the lunch bags so that a choice can be made without searching through individual bags.”

- “Milk with the coffee, donuts in the morning... maybe Dunkin Donuts would donate?”
- “Better snacks (made available for purchase if not for free). Those cookies are awful. “
- “Wish the lunches were a little healthier, though I appreciate it was offered.”
- “The food this year wasn’t the best.”
- “Wonder if there could be healthier offerings. And maybe water instead of soda.”
- **Evening Shows**
 - “If you have a couple of short evening shows, a couple of long ones, then stagger them out. If you’re doing a cruise, try to do a short performance that night.”
 - “Perhaps one evening show that had audience/panel favorites perform – so everyone could have a chance to see them.”
 - “Would have liked a brief description (plot) of evening plays. Early in the week. Simple format if possible. Inform if there is an intermission.”
- **Featured Artists**
 - “Ron Rand is a marvel at actor training, but overall, counter-productive as an evaluator of new plays.”
 - “Diversification of participants. Bringing in more people from across the country would give a greater opportunity for networking outside Alaska regional theatre. “
- **Miscellaneous**
 - “Tip the balance toward more Alaska work.”
 - “Perhaps pay actors so there would be more of a sense of responsibility – preparation, punctuality, etc.”

5. How did you hear about the Conference?

- 8 x Previous attendee.
- 7 x Friend
- 2 x Google
- 2 x Knew about it from previous years.
- Dawson
- Website
- Some publication
- Gregory Pulver
- ACTF
- Brochure
- InSight for Playwrights

6. Any Additional Comments?

- **General**

- “Thank you for a wonderful experience. It was well worth a week of my life.”
- “The cruise was amazing.”
- “Find funding to encourage Alaska companies to provide Play lab work through to full productions at the Conference, with publications to follow down the line.”
- “I love the new non-star configuration, and every class I took was a winner. I learned quite a lot, and can’t wait for next year.”
- “What a supportive environment to learn and grow in. I am thrilled to have been a part of the process.”
- “Love the hospitality. “
- “I think it was great and I would definitely come back, but I do feel it could be upped a notch. Play Lab is the focus and that’s great, but there is the potential for more actor focused events and seminars: that could attract a higher caliber actor pool which would be better for the Play Lab.”
- “This festival rocked! Thank you so much for this wonderful opportunity!”
- **Schedule**
 - “Time off in mid-week appreciated.”
 - “Didn’t feel so pressured as in past years – space/time was allotted for rehearsals.”
- **Food**
 - “Change in luncheon format quite successful. Better a good sandwich than a blah buffet.”
 - “I like the box lunches, and don’t miss the trough line. The gala dinner was delicious.”
 - “Food. Please add veggies and salad, but I appreciated having lunch provided. Thank you! There were many days I hate during my rehearsal.”
 - “There were no vegetarian or kosher options.”
 - “The food could have been better. I would rather have paid for better quality.”
- **Staff**
 - “Dawson and Doug rule.”
 - “The staff. They remember people from year to year, and when you land, that makes you feel like a returning partner in this great event. Adam was great as usual. Dawson again delivered and I think the staff is a big draw for people to return every year.”
 - “As you can see by my notes for improvements, I found the professional objectives met with excellence. Your staff is marvelous – they go above and beyond, and all with warmth and genuine smiles.”
- **Play Lab**
 - Mark Lutwak: “I maintain that the Liz Lerhman response format would be more helpful for respondents to organize their thoughts and to articulate their language. Also, a better way to involve audience. Also, best way to arrange ideas so writers can hear & use & prioritize comments.”

- “I was generally looking for more opportunities to work and to show my work rather than sit & listen. I refer to the classes rather than the plays. The discussions after the plays were great, although the question/answer period would have been interesting rather than straight comments with no response from writers.”
- “Don’t send scripts to people – have them work on them and then take them away because you have schedule conflicts – work out the conflicts instead.”
- “Can some tentative schedule be posted on the website as well as reading assignments. Even if they change at the last minute, it would give us some idea to go on.”
- “Mark Lutwak (heck of a nice guy, otherwise) prefaces panel discussions with a deadly boring, talky, unnecessary spiel about how to critique. By the third reading, I was ready to bail from any discussion I knew he’d be running. Please (tactfully) discourage him.”
- **Featured Artists**
 - “It’s hard for newbies – many returning people were familiar with the featured artists – it would help foster further dialogue if the featured artists would be more accessible to people they don’t know. I was constantly introducing myself, but the featured artists always sat with their friends at lunch & made no effort to learn about the new playwrights – maybe that’s not part of their deal – but it would really help.”
 - “Featured artists: They’re great! Gregory is a must, his perspective is invaluable to writers. Gary inspires people, period. He empowers each participant and I swear when people walk out of his classes, they look like they’re wearing a big S on their chests. John Yearley is a gem, the coolest, most down-to-earth featured artist you have. I think everyone should spend five minutes talking to him. Erma is the belle of the ball. I’d like to see her directing again because I loved her stuff last year. She, like the others, empowers. Y York is great, and she opened up a lot more this year. Danielle is great as well: bright, nice, and fantastic on panels.”
 - “Great Job, Dawson – and everybody – I really enjoyed Michael Hood’s style of commentary – as it was extremely focused and positive. Emphasis on what works.”
- **Miscellaneous**
 - “Small & medium t-shirts, please. The fashion of wearing larges by slightly built women is long past.”
 - “If \$\$ allows, conference souvenir bags such as the ones given at the Katchemak Bay Writers Conference would be more memorable.”
 - “Would love to have the gym locker room open till midnight, as many of us are busy from 8:00 to 11:00 daily.”
 - “Thank you for the receptions at museums, cruises. Super great way to see these since the day is filled with workshops.”
- **Publications**
 - “Single program book much better than dual books of previous years.”

- “In program, try to combine cast list & play descriptions with schedule. Really frustrating jumping back and forth figuring out my personal schedule. Keep up the great work!!”
- **Publicity**
 - “I’m not sure how you promote the festival, but I’m sure more could be done to encourage additional attendance. Advertise in Insight for Playwrights and other newsletters.”
 - “I met some Swiss tourists who were unaware the public could attend evening performances – perhaps posters in hotel and RV areas noting evening plays would be a good idea.”
- **Fringe Festival**
 - The Fringe at the PWSCC Commons was a much better setting.
- **Yoga**
 - “I love that yoga was offered (though I didn’t do it).”
 - “Thanks for daily yoga.”

Reponses from Participating Playwrights in the 2006 Play Lab

The responses from Lab participants from this year were highly positive, as the following transcript of all written responses will indicate. The new changes that were instituted based on last year's feedback (one-on-one mentoring, rehearsals the day before the reading, and giving the panelists a how-to guide before they arrived at the Conference) all were well received, and corrected challenges that occurred in 2005.

Based on the feedback from the forms and the wrap up discussion on June 25, 2006, there are a number of small changes planned for next year. They are:

1. *Assign a time for the one-on-one sessions, as opposed to leaving it up to the panelists and writers to schedule them.*
2. *Upgrade the renown of panelists; i.e. bigger names.*
3. *Include end times on readings so that people will better be able to schedule their time.*

Generally the Lab ran very well this year, and the revisions are all minor tweaks, as opposed to last year when there were real systemic changes to be made. Presenting full productions of plays that had been read in previous Labs in the evenings was highly popular, and will continue to be a major part of the Conference.

*Dawson Moore
Theatre Conference Coordinator*

ANSWERS TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS:

How useful was the information you received before the Conference regarding the process, rehearsals, selection of readers, etc?

PRO

- "Great, made the readings more productive because we could focus on the work and not the organization."
- "Good."
- "I felt informed, up-to-date. The e-mails were great as well, and I appreciated those because God knows I need less clutter and less paper communiqés help."
- "Very."
- 2 x "Very useful."
- "Good. I understood what was going on."
- 2 x "Excellent."
- "Quite useful. I was new to the process and had to learn it, but it was very welcoming."

MIXED

- "I didn't get much, but I didn't really need any."

CON

- Not helpful – did not know what to expect – a more comprehensive overview, size, type of conference, who featured artists are...

Was the Play Lab experience beneficial for you and your development as a playwright?

PRO

- 5 x “Yes.”
- “Yes, hugely.”
- “Very much so. In retrospect, after last year’s Conference, I gained more confidence to put my work out and get produced.”
- “I had an awesome time – I can’t thank you enough for everything. I have already begun my revisions (& they are major revisions). The reading was totally helpful – actually, the conversations I was able to have with other writers about it afterwards was the most helpful. The conference has become so invaluable to my young writing career. Each time I’m there, I feel like I have graduated to be a better person and writer.”
- “It was nice to hear it out loud and to get feedback from a wide variety of people.”
- “Yes. Good reading and good feedback.”
- “Extremely! I feel like I know the changes I need to make & how to go about doing that. I feel like I have greater confidence about what works and inspiration to continue.”

CON

- “Not really.”

Were the responses from your panel helpful to you?

PRO

- 2 x “Yes. Very.”
- 3 x “Yes.”
- “Extremely helpful, thought provoking, stimulating.”
- “I thought the panels did well with their feedback and in general worked to make the writers feel comfortable. In all cases, it was clear they listened to the plays. They fed off each other.”
- “Yes, extremely.”
- “Very useful. Structured and insightful.”
- “Very! Especially Jessica Goldberg. She was absolutely wonderful, clear, helpful, inspiring and smart – great help.”

MIXED

- “Some panelists were better (more informed) than others. Mostly, yes; at least they articulated their impressions (& being obligated to come up with a response immediately can’t be easy).”
- “As much or little as most others I’ve participated in.”

Was your private meeting with a panelist helpful to you?

PRO

- “I loved the mentor concept. It was so awesome. In my experience it was great, and productive. But I saw others who perhaps got a little down about

their feedback , and the mentor’s took a personal initiative to lift the writer’s spirits. In general, the mentors had a vested interest in those they mentored and it was a great sight.

- 4 x “Yes.”
- “Yes. Great further input.”
- “Yes, very. It allowed for more of a dialogue.”
- “Yes. Jayne Wenger was helpful and encouraging. I appreciated the time she set aside to talk with me.”
- “Jessica was great. I liked that she had read the script before she saw it. And we waited a couple of plays before we met – that was great to let everything soak in for both of us. She’s great!”

MIXED

- “It was very short, but that was all that was necessary.”
- “Didn’t have one/didn’t realize I was entitled to one. But I didn’t feel it was necessary this time around.”

CON

- “No.”

Were you satisfied with the performance of your readers?

PRO

- 4 x “Yes.”
- “Very.”
- “Very! Wonderful casting!”
- “Extremely satisfied. I was blessed with Wayne Mitchell and Amy Berlin. They were terrific – took direction beautifully and gave it their all.”

MIXED

- “For the most part. More rehearsal time may help.”
- “2 of original readers were no-shows. Readers/actors should be confirmed. Replacement actors miscast, but it didn’t really impact the reading. 2 of the readers were great!”
- “Yes and no. For the time allotted, they were fine. But the casting was off, it would have been nice to have some input (I know that is impossible).”
- “More or less. One of the readers was less than ideal—but even so, it made me concentrate more on hearing the words.”

What worked best for you in this process?

GENERAL

- “The organization and prep by Dawson Moore & his staff; my readers; my panelists.”
- “Feedback, talking through problems with supportive people.” “The feedback from both the panel and other participants.”
- “Hearing how the words flew and how easy it was for the readers.”
- “Getting to work with the actors myself and getting such a variety of feedback.”
- “Getting read before a good audience.”

- “Hearing it and then getting feedback one on one after the group feedback... having Jessica Goldberg help me figure out how to do what I wanted to do.”
- “Hearing everyone’s (not just the panel’s) opinion on the play that was read. I like it when the discussion is opened up to the audience, too.”

REHEARSALS

- “Having a chance to go over the script a few times.”
- “Interaction with actors before reading.”

PANELS

- Panel responses.

What would you like to see improve in the Play Lab?

GENERAL

- “It worked for me! Thank you!”
- “Might give people a simple feedback sheet (anonymous), let them write comments if they wish.” “Perhaps a little written feedback card for us to give notes to the other playwrights after each play lab. That may have a checklist of aspects to check off about the effectiveness of the work.”

DIRECTORS

- “Maybe having a director assigned to collaborate with.”

PLAYS

- “Not to be too critical, but a few of the plays were simply bad by anyone’s standard. Pointless and/or badly written stuff wastes everyone’s time. I realize this is only my opinion, someone else could have absolutely adored something that bored me, but there were a few pieces that made me cringe. Tighten up on the admission standards, even for new playwrights.”

REHEARSALS

- “Don’t schedule rehearsals – let participants schedule them – or go back to rehearsals just before the reading.”
- “Maybe some time to workshop with the actors and actually be able to rewrite based on how that process works.”

ACTORS

- “Since I worked on several other plays, I saw some readings spoiled by actors and/or the lack of direction. I would love to draft some guidelines for actors and playwrights directing their own work similar to the guidelines for playwrights printed in the program.”

14th Annual Last Frontier Theatre Conference

June 17 – 24, 2006

Evaluation Form

Please take the time to fill out the following form to help us evaluate the 2006 Theatre Conference. Your comments and suggestions helping the planning and development of the Conference, and are essential for our grant reporting. Help us make this Conference the best that it can be!

How would you rate the following?				
1 = unsatisfactory 2 = satisfactory 3 = good 4 = excellent 5 = not applicable/known				
1. Information you received prior to the Conference				
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
2. Play Lab				
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
3. Panels Discussions				
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
4. Classes				
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
5. Evening Performances				
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
6. Receptions				
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
7. Food				
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
8. Featured Artists				
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
9. Quality of Conference Staff				
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.

Additional Comments

- Would you like to see any other types of activities considered for future Conferences? If so, what?

- Whom would you like to see invited to future Conferences?

Response Section for Playwrights in the 2006 Play Lab

- How useful was the information you received before the Conference regarding the process, rehearsals, selection of readers, etc?
- Was the Play Lab experience beneficial for you and your development as a playwright?
- Were the responses from your panel helpful to you?
- Was your private meeting with a panelist helpful to you?
- Were you satisfied with the performance of your readers?
- What worked best for you in this process?
- What would you like to see improve in the Play Lab?

Name (optional): _____ E-mail address: _____