

The Valdez Last Frontier Theatre Conference 2017 Evaluations Report



Play Lab respondents John Cariani, Hillary Bettis, and Arlitia Jones.

Introduction

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

Usually 30-40% of attendees respond. In addition to chronicling the feedback, some initial responses and plans for next year are blended into the document. Text written by the Conference staff is in bold; photo captions in italics; feedback quotes are in plain text.

Happy reading.

Dawson Moore

Theatre Conference Coordinator

Table of Contents

1	Introduction; Table of Contents	18	Featured Artists
2	Info Received Prior to the Event	21	Conference Staff
5	Schedule	23	Food
7	Website	25	Additional "Enjoyed Most" Comments
9	Play Lab	30	Additional "Enjoyed Least" Comments
11	Panels and Classes	33	Additional Comments
13	Evening Performances	37	Reponses from Play Lab playwrights
16	Fringe Festival	54	Responses from Play Lab readers

What is one thing you wish you'd had, or known about, prior to coming to Valdez?

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

Previous years, participants were asked for a general assessment of “the information received prior to the event.”

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>
Excellent	61.5%	45%	75%	58%	63.8%	55.1%	69.2%	72.6%	77.3%	63.6%
Good	29%	39%	20%	28%	27.6%	39.1%	23.1%	21%	19.7%	27.3%
Satisfactory	4.5%	12%	3%	6%	6.9%	4.3%	6.2%	6.4%	3%	5.7%
Unsatisfactory	2%	2%	0%	4%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0%	0%	0%
N/A	3%	2%	2%	2%	0%	0%	1.5%	0%	0%	3.4%

Participants were given a list to say which items they wished they had known more about. They could check multiple boxes.

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>
More about free housing	10.6%	11.7%
How to sign in	3%	2.4%
More about how the Play Lab works	4.5%	8.2%
More about outdoor activities in Valdez	10.6%	22.3%
More info on classes	9%	16.5%
More info on provided food	9%	3.5%
More info on the Monologue Workshop	9%	3.5%
More info on gala dinner theme	6%	10.6%
More info on shuttle service	n/a	10.6%
Nothing, previous participant	45.5%	47.1%
Nothing, felt prepared	28.8%	11.8%



Debrianna Mansini in her one one-woman show "The Meatball Chronicles," which was presented on the mainstage in 2017 after appearing in the Play Lab in 2015.

"Outdoor activities" is tricky, as we're not throwing an "outdoor activity" conference; some more pointers will be included in next year's correspondence toward websites that support this. Housing this year was run by an employee who was near the end of their tenure at the college, and communication was poor. That employee is gone, and whoever is running it next year will receive more support/attention from the Coordinator.

We will create a flier in collaboration with Valdez U-Drive to distribute to participants prior to their arrival in Valdez. We will also talk with TBA Theatre (or whoever produces the evening) about how to better communicate to participants in advance what will be happening at the gala dinner.

We already communicate to actors what classes in their field will be presented; next year, we will make sure that Play Lab authors receive equivalent information. Of course, every class has a description in the schedule already, but this is an easy additional way to let them know about them.

Additional Positive Comments

- I thought things ran so well, and the organization and details went great. Also, front desk and ALL staff were exceptional. Kudos!!
- I've never had a problem with this.
- Dawson and his team do a good job keeping us informed without overwhelming us with emails
- Thanks for all the personal and prompt responses to questions.
- All of the work to help people find rides to and from Anchorage and Valdez was super useful and appreciated.
- I love Dawson's emails. They are full of good information. Even if you have been to the conference before, it's a good reminder.
- I was so annoying with questions. [But I was] Never treated that way.

Monologue Workshop

- Contact information for the playwright whose monologue I have chosen. It's very frustrating to be asked to have the piece memorized when you know it will be cut.

Housing Issues

- Would have been great to know what linens we were getting with the housing (specifically, towels). Also, the structure of the Play Lab. But overall, quite good.
- Had to follow up with housing all the way along. Wish the housing confirmations had come sooner (they came only days before the conference began) and without my needing to reach out at every step. Also would have liked a bit more lead time on info about shuttles and checking in.
- I would have liked a little more info about how housing worked, but I also had a feeling it would all work out, so I wasn't particularly worried about it.

Scheduling

- That the Conference really ends on Sunday rather than Saturday (realistically should plan on staying Saturday night).
- Wasn't aware that performances were starting Saturday night the 10th. Possibly missed announcements? **All participants have access to the schedule from January on.**

Getting involved

- Early info on how to get a part in the Ten-Minute Play Slam. **This is the purview of the event's director, so there is no "how to" here, other than having one's program components (headshot, bio) in on time, so that they will know the actor is available.**
- How to sign up for the Fringe.

Play Lab

- I didn't receive the email regarding paneling assignments, but was otherwise well-informed about everything.
- There were a few hiccups in emails concerning housing and being cast in shows I didn't know about until I was already at the Conference and didn't have much time to give my character real thought before the rehearsal.

Miscellaneous

- I had no idea that we could return scripts to the front desk after readings for others to potentially take a read. Wish I'd known about that years ago.
- Definitely want to know more about the panels before going!
- Not for me, but for others.
- That I truly didn't need a car if I only did the Conference stuff.
- Weather. It was really wet this year and I wasn't prepared for that... not sure that's on you, though.
- Bring back Ben Corbett - maybe in the 1:30 slot?
- I did not know it was a playwrights' conference. Not a big deal, and maybe I just didn't see it because I wasn't looking for it, but I had no clue.
- I didn't get a true feeling about how much of Alaska's beauty I might be able to see within X number of minutes by car - or without - from Valdez. I guess I could have googled it and all but still some general idea would have helped.

Conference Schedule

The Valdez Last Frontier Theatre Conference is one of the more ambitious events of its type in the world. Activities run from nine in the morning and finish close to midnight. No one is expected to be there for everything (except the Coordinator).

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>
Excellent	67%	55%	59%	50%	50%	62%	58.5%	61.3%	72.7%	59.5%
Good	29%	38%	39%	46%	36.7%	32%	32.3%	24.2%	24.3%	39.3%
Satisfactory	3%	7%	1%	2%	13.3%	6%	6.2%	12.9%	3%	0%
Unsatisfactory	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1.5%	1.6%	0%	1.2%
N/A	1%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	1.5%	0%	0%	0%

There are more comments about the schedule throughout this document. With 93% Good to Excellent ratings, no major changes are planned. We will play with moving classes from post-lunch to pre-lunch, see if that can work.

We had talked about going to a digital format for the schedule. Guidebook has an excellent product, and it would make the staff capable of applying schedule changes that everyone would have immediate access to. That said, the system isn't broken, and this creates a whole new set of jobs. It will not be implemented in 2018, but is still under consideration.



Anchorage actors Jake Beauvais, Kimberly Allely, Lisa-Marie Castro, and Will Jackson.

Positive Comments

- Clear and flexible too when needed. Always available.
- It was nice to have the highlighted schedules with the personal inserts in the tote bags. Really classy :)
- I'm stuck between wanting the Conference to be longer or just enjoying the length it is currently because it wears me out every year (in a good way). I'm so lucky to have attended this year, and I look forward to many more!
- You've got this down! Not too many things going on at once.
- Receiving the previous year's Conference schedule/guide was really helpful.

No Solution, But There's So Much...

- Hate having to choose between readings, workshops, rehearsals happening at the same time – but I get that's just part of the beast!
- As always, not enough time to do everything I want to do - no way to fix that
- The only frustration is that there are so many good options offered at the same time that it's hard to choose! Thanks for repeating some--even though I couldn't make it the second time either due to conflicts. lol!
- As always there is not enough time to attend everything I wanted to attend.
- So many fun activities. I was just bummed I had to miss a few. But that's the price you pay for getting involved.

Class Times

- I wouldn't mind if there was a pre-Conference for three days leading up to the conference proper. If it was filled with workshops and classes for actors and playwrights I wouldn't feel so bad about missing out on stuff during the week because of rehearsals and readings.
- I believe that the workshops immediately after lunch, especially those for actors, are really hard... No time to enjoy food and then, no time to digest it.
- I think the writers would benefit from having a day of workshops just for themselves before everyone else arrives. Would be a way for us to get acclimated and to know each other better, which could be helpful since writers tend to be natural introverts. **There's a plan to add a pre-Conference writer's only retreat being considered and designed.**

Communication issues

- There were conflicting schedules in the program and in the email initially sent out so there was confusion and a crossover from one rehearsal into a reading I needed to be in.
- Was there an index?

Go Digital!

- Look into Guidebook. I think it can help manage conflicts and streamline scheduling.

Website

Other than direct communication with the Coordinator, the website is our primary way of conveying information to participants prior to the Conference, and of publicizing the event. We also use it to facilitate programs such as the Monologue Workshop by making material available to participants there prior to their arrival in Valdez. It is also the historical record of the event, including programs, photos, and summaries of past conferences.

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>
Excellent	51.5%	52%	45%	46%	48.3%	49.3%	44.6%	44.3%	46%	38%
Good	22%	21%	35%	30%	41.7%	46.4%	38.5%	37.7%	41%	47%
Satisfactory	4.5%	10%	12%	11%	6.7%	0%	9.2%	14.7%	12%	8%
Unsatisfactory	0%	2%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%
N/A	22%	15%	8%	11%	3.3%	4.3%	7.7%	3.3%	1%	2%

The website experienced a lot of issues this year, with regular crashes and times of unavailability, including the first three days of the Conference. This probably accounts for the number of people finding it unsatisfactory. We are talking with a volunteer who is interested in overhauling it.

In response to the question “How useful was the Conference website? Do you have any suggestions for improvements?”:

The Program

- Being able to view the program a couple weeks in advance was really helpful.
- Can we download the whole book?? **Yes, about three weeks prior to the event.**
- There wasn't too much on the website outside of the conference book download?



Actresses Alyssa Barnes & Kalli Randall

The Ride Sharing Page

- The rider-board seems to be persistently buggy.
- Again-- it was through the website that I found a ride to Valdez.

Make It More Fun!

- Add more photos, videos, graphics. Provide the info we need but it seems sort of institutional.

Update it!

- Psst, can you update the Fringe page? **Geez, we just did this in May...**

And someone felt we should know...

- I didn't look at it.

Functionality

- Didn't work consistently
- I think it could be more user friendly, and some of the definitions aren't clear to people who haven't been there.
- Great opportunity to implement newer web technologies
- I wish the layout were a little more user friendly and accessible.
- Had trouble viewing the catalog with Conference and rehearsal schedules online.
- Had difficulty viewing the entire web site on different platforms, especially my Mac.
- The website has gone down a few times since the conference. I also had trouble logging into the carpool page prior to the conference. The biggest issue I had was with the housing page. It said housing was no longer available all through the spring, and I started panicking thinking I didn't have housing. But it turns out that was from 2016, because the 2017 housing page hadn't opened yet.



The internet went out frequently at the start of this year's Conference, leading to many bemused faces like the ones Ryan Buen and Kerra Apolo are making here.

Play Lab

The Play Lab is the primary program of the Conference. Having a play presented in the Lab is the main reason that playwrights attend. It provides 300-400 roles for actors, and its feedback sessions is the most educational component of the entire week. Its continued improvement is a top priority throughout the year.

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>
Excellent	76%	71%	77%	87%	75%	80%	73.4%	71%	80.3%	72%
Good	20%	25%	23%	5%	20%	16%	17.2%	19.3%	15.2%	23%
Satisfactory	2%	2%	0%	2%	2%	3%	4.7%	6.5%	1.5%	3%
Unsatisfactory	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	1.6%	3%	0%
N/A	2%	2%	0%	4%	0%	1%	4.7%	1.6%	0%	2%

There were some small snags this year with communication, but nothing unexpected for a venture of this size. Next year we are planning to have a dedicated staff member (not the Coordinator) who is in charge of almost all things Play Lab-related. This will hopefully help with cutting down mistakes, which often arose from having too many people working on casting.

Additional Comments

Positive

- Smooth like buttah.

Great Plays!

- The plays this year were fantastic!
- Great selections this year - some I liked more than other, but nothing I really regretted seeing
- I did not see one play I did not like or find interesting this year!!

Better Orientation For Playwrights

- I enjoy the Lab and working with the playwrights very much. I think we should still be teaching a class on how to direct your own play. I know we give out information, but something hands on could be beneficial. Not sure when/how this could fit in. I wonder if someone like me (others are also qualified for sure) could be a 'floater' and just pop in and out to insure that everyone is confident and moving forward as planned...

Diversity

- Could be more diverse :)
- Diversity? It's tough to attract those who may have reservations about being around a mainly white audience. It's great to see old friends but also important that we stir the mix.

Scheduling

- I wanted to see more readings but most of the ones I wanted to see matched up with something else I wanted to see. This is unhelpful because I have no idea how to fix that.

Panelists

- The one lead critic and two secondary critics format could have been made more clear. Reading the names and then the bios of the listed previous ones gave the impression that all the critics were of the same caliber.
- Loved the increase in Alaskan artists on panel.

Facility Issues

- Please fix doors to rooms so that they can be quietly opened and shut. Either that or enforce policy that no one enters or leaves while the play is being presented.

Acting

- Very well acted this year, performers continue to get stronger.
- Much better quality of actors this year. Much better quality of plays.

Scheduling

- Love that it starts at 10:00 a.m.



Actors prior to the reading of Anchorage playwright Andrea Staats' Consciously Couple (But Not to Each Other).

Panels and Classes

The Conference offers many classes and panel discussions. The slate of classes grows organically from the featured artists attending. They are solicited for what they would be comfortable teaching. The Coordinator oversees the overall curriculum.

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>
Excellent	58.5%	52%	62%	68%	59%	44%	54.7%	58.1%	55.4%	43%
Good	29%	37%	17%	24%	31%	34%	34.4%	32.3%	32.3%	39%
Satisfactory	4.5%	7%	7%	2%	7%	9%	3.1%	4.8%	4.6%	7%
Unsatisfactory	1.5%	0%	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
N/A	6.5%	4%	13%	4%	3%	13%	7.8%	4.8%	7.7%	11%

The numbers are slightly down, but not enough to be worrisome (82% good to excellent, with 11% not having taken classes). Some specific comments.

Purely Positive

- This year's panels and classes were AWESOME! I particularly thought John, Tim, Cassie, and Arthur together...such an amazing combo!

Yoga

- It would be useful if there were a way to integrate the classes more fully into the conference. The yoga teacher was good, but the class was taught at an advanced level that might have been intimidating to people without a prior practice. I know at least one person who didn't go for this reason. Always a difficult balance so experienced folk don't feel that it is too basic. **If they didn't go, how did they know how difficult it was? =)**

Diversity

- A more diverse panel (in terms of race/ethnicity and theatrical practice)

Acting Workshops

- More workshops for actors please!
- I only took acting workshops, which I really enjoyed but I would have liked something a little more advanced.
- Was only able to attend part of Improv classes. [At times the instructor was] difficult to understand.
- I missed having the voice workshop in the mornings.
- I learned quite a bit from the panelists and from the one class I could make it to- Ben's vocal and physical warmup class, I still use his techniques before I rehearse, I'm very happy I attended his class!

Other Classes

- Would be great to have more classes geared towards playwrights and directors.

- While a Conference for playwrights, it would have been good for more on directing. **Directors are a small percentage of our attendees, and not surprisingly, when we've offered classes for them, they've not been well-attended.**

Panels

- I didn't take any classes but I thought the panels were well executed.

Specific Teachers

- Bring Ben Corbett back! John Cariani was an excellent teacher.

Playwriting Classes

- Enjoyed everything I attended, though I wish there were more advanced classes for the writers who are, ahem, more seasoned. Am aware that this is tricky given the hugely variable levels of experience of attending playwrights, though.
- I wrote more about this in the Playwrights' survey, but I'll also mention that I didn't participate in the playwriting classes. Partly because I participated instead in the monologue workshop (which I really enjoyed), and in Carol Laursen's class (which I also really liked), partly because I used that time to prepare and work on my own play, and partly because there wasn't a playwriting class that particularly grabbed my interest.
- Would have loved more writing workshops.
- I didn't find From Table Read to End Scene helpful at all. It seemed that we were helping her with her play, and as the professional playwright, I felt it should have been the other way around.

Schedule

- It was difficult to hear the speakers who were teaching writing when the improvisation classes were in the room next door. Maybe there can be more concurrent workshops on acting, writing and voice or other things at the civic center and the improv workshops at the big room at the college where the food was on Sunday. The classes were excellent but the sound interference was problematic. **There are other spaces, but the schedule is tight, so it's hard to find time for people to get themselves to an alternate location. Sound bleed is definitely a challenge of the Civic Center, even more for readings than classes.**
- Hard to attend other classes with Play Lab commitments.
- I wish that some of the classes hadn't happened at the same time.
- Wish there were more!
- Perhaps a full schedule [I only saw day-by-day] so one can plan ahead. **There's a full schedule in the program that everyone is handed when they sign in, as well as on the website.**
- Unable to attend any classes or panels this year.
- I would have liked to see some more classes or different timed classes.
- It might be fun to have a guided writing section where people could just work on their plays quietly together (maybe on the last day?).
- I didn't get to attend any classes this time around but it looked like a good selection.

Evening Performances

The Conference presented six evenings of live theatre on the mainstage over the week. The shows provide a communal gathering place for the participants, as it is one of the few events that run with no concurrent competition. It is also the main time that the community of Valdez is involved in the Conference.

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>
Excellent	56%	23%	61%	57%	18%	51%	45.3%	35.5%	71.2%	56%
Good	30%	44%	34%	35%	39%	38%	42.2%	38.7%	16.7%	33%
Satisfactory	12.5%	29%	5%	2%	25%	7%	9.4%	19.4%	7.6%	9%
Unsatisfactory	0%	2%	0%	2%	15%	1%	1.6%	6.4%	1.5%	1%
N/A	1.5%	2%	0%	2%	3%	3%	12.7%	0%	3%	1%

The numbers are down from last year, but that really speaks more to how exceptional 2016 was, rather than a failing of 2017's line-up. Additional comments:

Purely positive:

- Best roster of evening shows I've seen in my 11 years at LFTC
- The line-up was particularly good this year.
- Only saw one but it was an intriguing play and very well acted.
- Excellent variety this year.
- They were fantastic this year.
- Five excellent shows and you can't beat the price!
- Especially loved *The Meatball Chronicles* and *With Love and a Major Organ*. Unfortunately, I missed the first two shows.
- I loved seeing our Monologue Workshop instructors on stage in a full-length play.
- *Constellations* and *With Love and a Major Organ* stood out to me. I found them to be both compelling structures for which to tell your story, and well-acted by the performers.
- Surpassed expectations. *Constellations* and the J. Edgar Hoover piece were standouts in a strong group, and I also loved the night of all the featured artists doing excerpts. That was truly lovely. And I cannot say enough about how much it warmed my heart that the evening performances were open and free to everyone in Valdez. That was just awesome.
- I particularly enjoyed Julia Lederer's play.

Mixed

- *With Love and a Major Organ* was terrific. Always enjoy the Playwrights nights. Did not enjoy the other shows as much as in the past.
- *Where do we go from here* and *With Love and a Major Organ* were both gorgeous. I didn't see *The Meatball Chronicles*. *Constellations* was good. The others were all right.

- Featured Artists' night was excellent this year. *With Love and a Major Organ* was well done. The other evening performances were not my cup of tea. I feel that last year's evening line-up was stronger, both in material and production value.
- Keep recruiting the best shows for the evening. Some weak shows in past years reflected poorly on the conference. In talking with locals it still seems many know nothing of (or perhaps care nothing about) the Conference. Any ways to attract more locals to the evening shows? **We've actually seen a huge increase in local attendance in the past two years, due mostly to making the evenings free and putting table tents with the line-up for shows at local businesses.**
- Very uneven in quality. [One show's] script was quite amateur for a national playwriting conference... [Another company's] shows have been poorly produced and directed both years. Energetic but technically and directorially lacking. Nice to see that the strongest show was by a young local company. *Constellations* was charming and well directed and acted with quality technical elements.

Diversity

- There was LGBTQ representation in two of the five evening performances, but no LGBTQ playwrights (as far as I know), that made me a little uncomfortable. In particular, the gay character [one play] was quite problematic in my view. That said, the quality of performances was very high and I thoroughly enjoyed *With Love and a Major Organ*! I didn't catch *Constellations* (saw it in Anchorage - loved it) or *The Meatball Chronicles* but I heard good things.
- More diversity re writers, actors, writers please.
- The plays were not very good this year. Also if you have plays about gay people and gay culture, it is probably a good idea to get input from that culture. The plays - one from direction and one from script were really homophobic. It was sad and made many LGBTQ people who attended the Conference very angry. Also, the whole thing was incredibly white. **I stand behind these shows, and do not think they are homophobic. These were the only two comments about it, so I guess the "many LGBTQ people" who were "very angry" decided not to comment...**

One-Acts

- I would like to see the return of an evening of shorter plays from the conference. There are a lot of great one-acts from the Conference screaming out for a production.

Local Work

- I would love to see more local work done. I love seeing people from out of state. But I love seeing Alaskans being able to show off their talents more. It's one of the few places we get the opportunity to see each other's work. Being able to see what Fairbanks, Anchorage, and Juneau have to offer is amazing. Less Lower 48 (or Aussies), more 49.

Or Not Local Work

- I would love to see more international performances. Those I've watched this year were poorly directed, except [one particular production], which was pretty amazing.

Schedule

- I was sad to have missed the first performance! The switch to having the first performance on Saturday was a bit of a bummer for me. I didn't mind having a show followed by the cruise in years past. I assume that's why it was moved - to spread out the schedule.



Featured Artist Jayne Wenger leads the room.

Fringe Festival

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

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>
Excellent	27%	38%	38%	28%	33.9%	33.3%	46%	32.3%	41.5%	46%
Good	28.5%	26%	29%	22%	25.4%	31.9%	33.3%	32.3%	24.6%	26%
Satisfactory	11%	6%	3%	13%	11.9%	11.6%	6.3%	11.3%	10.8%	12%
Unsatisfactory	5%	0%	3%	2%	3.4%	2.9%	1.6%	6.4%	4.6%	3%
N/A	28.5%	30%	27%	35%	25.4%	20.3%	12.7%	17.7%	18.5%	13%

Purely Positive

- So much more inclusive and organized now!
- It was fun. That's all you can ask for. Didn't really realize that I could sign up to act in it or write for it until I'd been there a day, or two. But that's mostly due to me.
- SO MUCH FUN!
- Just a lot of fun!
- Love the camaraderie and appreciate the efforts to give anyone the chance to perform. Should not be necessary for any one actor to read more than once in the Fringe. Rob and Janna did a great job again.
- A very fun event that also offered more opportunity to meet and work with people.
- A rowdy good time as always.
- Nice to see this event has grown and come such a long way. It's a great way to blow off steam and have a lot of laughs at the end of a busy day.
- Fringe was awesome this year!
- It's the fringe. Some good some terrible what can you do. **I'm calling this positive because not worrying too much about quality is a feature of most Fringe Festivals.**

It Was Too Tame

- While always fun the Fringe Festival seems to have become a bit tame in recent years and a lot less "fringy" than it used to be. The edgiest piece was the one where someone was breaking eggs in a basket. I wish there could be some more risky pieces like that, whether serious or funny.
- I love the Fringe. Always have and I suspect I always will. But I will make one observation: The more mainstream it becomes the less "fringey" it becomes. There's both good and bad in that.

- I was a bit disappointed in the Fringe. Wasn't very edgy this year. I think it should be (in part) a place for stuff that's a bit too controversial/on point for other stages, and that didn't really happen this year.
- The Fringe is not fun. It used to be fun. It's super structured. I would let it be more open to people. Have 10 minute slots available for people to sign up and show things. It needs to be less curated.
- It's getting quite structured and losing a little of the fringe vibe. Maybe after the scheduled stuff some impromptu monologues or something could be fun!
- It's getting very tame: silly, even smutty, but pretty bland, inoffensive fare. There's no edge.
- Silly.
- There can always be more material.
- The Fringe doesn't leave much room for drama types

Not My Bag

- I missed out as I was usually too tired.
- I rarely attend these activities because I am old and need my sleep, but I hear it's awesome.
- Didn't have the energy to attend.

Communication

- Only complaint: I submitted and never heard back. Now that I've seen what Fringe is, I know why my piece didn't quite fit the bill(s), but as a new participant, I didn't know who Janna was until Friday, and never got to speak to her. Could never find her during the day!



Space Challenges

- We're getting a little big for that room. Pretty crowded and hard to hear.
- Love the new song! I would attend the Fringe more often if it wasn't hotter than the surface of the sun in that room.

Schatzie Schaefer and Fringe Emcee Rob Lecrone began every night with a song this year.

Featured Artists

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

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>
Excellent	81%	69%	77%	70%	67.2%	57.4%	64.6%	66.6%	68.3%	65%
Good	17%	27%	23%	26%	26%	33.8%	26.2%	21.3%	21.2%	25%
Satisfactory	2%	2%	0%	2%	5.1%	5.9%	4.6%	6.6%	6%	8%
Unsatisfactory	0%	0%	0%	2%	1.7%	0%	1.5%	0%	1.5%	1%
N/A	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	2.9%	3.1%	6.6%	3%	1%

Generally, we're doing fine. There will be an emphasis for 2018 on diversifying our featured artist staff. Some of the comments below about changing up who comprises the staff are off-the-mark. Our Play Lab this year had 11 out of 14 respondents who were not with us in 2016, for example, which is hardly just having the same people over and over again. Some veterans are necessary every year, to reduce the learning curve; some new people are necessary as well, so that we will get new perspectives on art. It's a balancing act.

Purely Positive

- Yes! I met so many smart, generous people. Thoughtful, constructive play paneling.
- New contributing artist were (overall!) great.
- Featured artists were fantastic!
- The one who was the lead critic on my piece, Cassandra Medley, was excellent. As to why I didn't click the buttons that say "good" or "excellent" is only because I have nothing to compare it to.
- Loved the easy access to then individually.

Mixed

- Mostly stellar - there were a few who did not seem to have a lot to say, would turn it back on themselves pretty quickly
- There was only one who was more or less unavailable
- I feel compelled to share that I saw one of the featured artists tell multiple writers that their plays were "unproducible." While [they are talented and entitled to their opinion], I felt this was insulting, short-sighted and showed a lack of imagination on his part. I felt this & some of his other feedback could in fact be detrimental to a more insecure emerging writer.
- I felt that some of the comments from [a particular panelist] were unhelpful and even destructive to the writing process.

- As with the Play Lab, it's great to see old friends but also important that we stir the mix.
- It felt like the featured artist staff this year was not quite on a similar level. Some artists had a lot of experience to critique from or spoke to opportunities to help me get produced. Others seemed to have less of an ability to give me either useful feedback on work or ideas on marketability and production.
- One panelist seemed to make all of his feedback in multiple readings somehow an opportunity to talk about himself rather than the play or the playwright, but overall a very strong group of FAs this year.
- Love the kindness and camaraderie of LFTC. I think we have far less elitism than the early days but perhaps more "Ask Me Anything" opportunities like Jane Wenger did. Opportunities for artists who are trying decide their next moves to ask working professionals questions. Maybe add some extra time at the end of the "Evening With Featured Artists" where all the attendees can "ask anything"?
- I generally found the featured artists to be impressive, thoughtful, talented, generous people. I wish I had gotten opportunity to engage with more of them. Is there room for an artist or two who comes from a more experimental background? Or maybe a slightly more culturally diverse group?

Diversity

- Always a pleasure and needed additional diversity

More New People

- There are too many of the same people involved. It used to be that there were diverse, rotating professionals from outside of Alaska that offered opportunities to learn and grow for Alaska actors, playwrights and directors. Specifically, please reconsider bringing back those of state playwrights, actors and professionals that have been here more than once. This shouldn't be an annual gig for them. You guys should do more to recruit people of color and other professionals to provide diversity of perspective. Otherwise, there is a decreasing value to attending the conference if it will just be the same old same old.
- Same people = same conference with little or no innovation or new opportunities for new plays, readers, people. Also it was incredibly white. There was limited diversity and that also contributes to the stagnation.
- A lot of the same people year-after-year. It seems like it is annual gig for them and it is causing the whole conference to become cliquish and redundant. **Over half of the featured artists were not here the previous year. These comments came from separate sections, and I suspect they're from the same respondent.**

About Those Alaskans

- Again the number of Alaskans on the featured panel is a great move! Love the outside influences but we have great minds and artists right here in our state.
- I felt that too many of the panelists were Alaskans. I would have liked more national feedback.

Everyone Loves John Cariani

- Kudos to John Cariani.
- I heart John Cariani



Featured Artist Ben Corbett and Anchorage actress Taylor Campbell.

Conference Staff

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

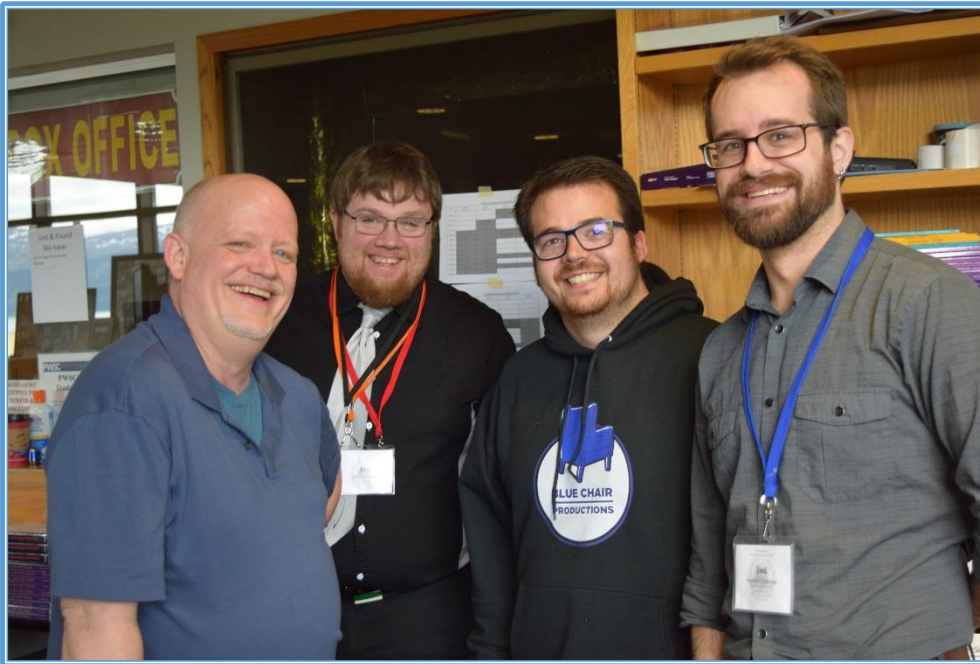
	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>
Excellent	98.5%	94%	100%	94%	93.4%	94.2%	86.2%	96.8%	90.9%	93%
Good	1.5%	6%	0%	6%	3.3%	4.3%	10.8%	1.6%	6.1%	5%
Satisfactory	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	1%
Unsatisfactory	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1.6%	0%	0%
N/A	0%	0%	0%	0%	3.3%	1.4%	3.1%	0%	0%	1%

We actually meant to eliminate this question, as we are not worried about the quality of our staffing. People will still have the opportunity to air any concerns they have, but the purpose of this report and the process of creating it is to learn how to throw a better Conference. We don't suffer from a lack of people saying "good job."

Purely Positive

- Only wish there was a way to indicate beyond excellent -- they were extremely helpful, attentive, available and great problem solvers. They are an example people should aspire to.
- The Conference Staff is always top notch.
- There was a uniform friendliness and competence among the staff. The table was always well staffed with grounded, inventive, creative souls.
- Excellent and helpful as always!
- The best!
- Super excellent!
- So welcoming. So helpful. So awesome.
- Keriann! Ted. Ted. Ted!
- A+ team!
- Always always always excellent! You guys are amazing.
- Everyone was very easy to speak to, get along with, and were all totally helpful when I asked for help. Thank you.
- Thank you thank you thank you!!!
- You guys are rock stars. Every one of you.
- Truly amazing

- Superb. Truly. Thank you.
- Excellent.
- Totally helpful in every way!
- Fantastic, as always.
- Lovely as always. Good people working hard to make everything run smooth!
- Beyond excellent! (As always!)
- Couldn't praise you guys more. Such 'yes' people. You make everyone feel important and a part of the Conference. The staff were the highlight for me!
- All very hard-working and generous. Big props to all of them.
- The staff was great
- BEST. STAFF. EVER. They make the world go round and I love each one of them dearly.
- Well done this year! You all are amazing!!
- These guys rock!



- Everyone is always so helpful and on top of everything, and when something goes wrong there was always someone ready and willing to fix it as soon as possible! Everyone had such a great attitude and were so polite and approachable!
- Extraordinary!!!
- Hashtag Ted
- Nice folks!

They Work Too Hard

- Always there and sometimes overburdened.

Food

We provide coffee, tea, and cookies all day at the Conference, in addition to a daily hot lunch, an opening day fish fry, and a sit-down dinner at the end of the week. This is provided to participants as a part of their \$50 registration.

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>
Excellent	33%	50%	26.5%	37.7%	12.7%	6.5%	16.7%	17%
Good	20%	28%	47%	47.8%	42.9%	48.4%	39.4%	54%
Satisfactory	39%	30%	23.5%	8.7%	30.2%	30.6%	31.8%	23%
Unsatisfactory	8%	0%	1.5%	1.4%	11.1%	9.7%	7.6%	1%
N/A	0%	2%	1.5%	4.3%	3.2%	4.8%	4.5%	5%

	<u>Enjoyed It!</u>	<u>Pretty Tasty</u>	<u>It Was Fine</u>	<u>Kinda Yucky</u>	<u>N/A</u>
Personal Pizza with Tots & Salad	14%	17%	27%	6%	36%
Chicken Pot Pie with Salad & Cookies	26%	18%	14%	10%	32%
Spaghetti & Meatballs with Garlic Bread & Salad	33%	19%	19%	1%	27%
Loaded Burritos with Rice and Beans	19%	23%	20%	8%	30%
Pot Stickers with Fried Rice & Salad	26%	19%	16%	1%	38%
Country Fried Steak with Mashed Potatoes & Green Beans	25%	16%	17%	9%	33%
Rustic Sandwiches with Chips & Brownie	21%	25%	19%	5%	30%

We are fairly locked in on our caterer, as there aren't a lot of options in Valdez, which gives us the opportunity to work with them on improving every year what is provided. This is why we went with individual questions about meals: we'll probably be pulling from the same menu; now we'll know not to get the pizza and tots option, and that people enjoyed the pasta day and maybe we should have two of those.

Our goal is to provide a meal that everyone can eat, regardless of their dietary restrictions or choices. We get better at this every year, largely thanks to the pressure we annually feel from this evaluations report.



What does Sarah Bethany Baird's hand over her mouth mean? Only Mark Robokoff and Danielle Dresden know for certain.

Comments

- Regarding the food, I am vegetarian, and I thought the caterer did a great job with that, especially the veggie bake on pot pie day.
- The food at the gala WAS FREAKING DELICIOUS.
- Please thank the caterers for the accommodations they made for gluten free eaters this year and encourage them to continue making strides in this direction. I'd love to be able to eat the lunch every day.
- Having actual vegetarian options during lunch, and salad available daily - so appreciated.

From the "least favorite part of the Conference" answers:

- I'm never that crazy about the food, but it's okay. I'm glad there was salad offered most days. Pizza and tots is the weirdest starch meal combo I've ever seen.
- 2x "The food."
- High prices of restaurants in town (though there is nothing you can do about this).
- Local restaurants.
- When the coffee would run out
- No gluten free lunches. But that's expected. The socialization at the Museum was also pretty crowded/tight, though the desserts were delicious and it was a cool venue.
- It was often hard to find something gluten free to eat, though the caterers did a better job this year.
- Some of the food combos.

Additional responses to “what did you enjoy most about the Conference?”.

Everything, or Many Things

- All of it. Just all of it.
- The whole Conference.
- The sense of community was extraordinary. The work was fantastic. The workshops were so interesting. Basically the whole thing, but especially the kindness and generosity of the people.
- The near universal good will and the multiple avenues for growth.
- The everything.
- Such a great, inspiring week of art – thank you!
- I loved every aspect of this conference! I couldn't possibly pick.
- The huge number of activities available
- All the things.
- Plays, play labs and workshops.
- Reconnected with old friend, meeting new friends, meeting with EXCELLENT guest artists and getting their feedback, attending AMAZING workshops, and the CRUUUUUUUUISE.
- Panels, workshops, and evening performances.
- The overall experience, the evening shows, and the cruise.

The People/Atmosphere

- There was so much I enjoyed, it is hard to choose one thing. Maybe the "spirit" of the Conference. I have participated in 4 new play conferences and there was something very generous and fun about LFTC that I really enjoyed. I enjoyed that the artists all seemed interested and supportive of one another and sincerely wanted success for each other. I felt a lot of care. And it was so fun!
- 5x “The people.”
- The general vibe and total dedication attendees seemed to have for each other and the work.
- Everything. Spending time with my tribe.
- As always, being surrounded by bright, imaginative people who create a kind of mass creative surge.
- Seeing old friends and making new ones.
- The people. The positivity and pride in being there, and in the work happening.

- The camaraderie, the feeling that we were all in the same boat about creating art (there are naturally little cliques and friendships formed, but it felt like there was never a group off to the side slamming the work of others). Very positive.
- Conversations Collaboration without Concern the ongoing mix of people known & new
- People!
- The people I met.
- Seeing all the lovely artists again.
- Networking with other theatre people.
- The people and the art and, of course the views, and of course, of course: Dawson!
- The camaraderie and support of the writers, actors and featured artists. I always feel like I have made lifetime friends
- Best part is always seeing old friends and making new ones. The ability to network here is fantastic!
- The people who participated, the energy.
- Watching young artists make discoveries and old artists find new energy.
- The people. Networking.
- A ton of new faces this year. That is always excellent.
- The people!!!!
- The people! Everyone was lovely!
- The sense of community and support for my work.
- Being with theatre folk in Alaska, and meeting so many wonderful new people, and seeing an incredible, gorgeous part of the country I'd never considered before.
- The amazing people.
- Meeting new people. Some more icebreaker events throughout the week would be nice. Some don't arrive on the first day or are too focused on their plays to really get to meet people first few days, and it'd be nice to have a social event for talking each day.
- The community. Being surrounded by brilliant, talented, gorgeous human beings for an entire week, while celebrating our favorite art form. It's the best.
- Being surrounded by likeminded people
- The camaraderie of the participants.
- Being with my tribe. Just a great group of theatre folks. Loved the collaboration.
- Seeing everyone again.
- I loved being around so many talented artists. I learned from all of them and gah, it was just so cool. I also met an incredible playwright (all of the playwrights were incredible but there was one in particular that really spoke to me).



First year playwright April Littlejohn

- Connecting with other theatre people.
- The overall peaceful and open hearted atmosphere. Being my second year, I realized the Conference happened all too fast for me. I miss everyone and I feel like I didn't get to talk to enough people although I did make many new friends.
- The mutual respect and support of the Conference, the chance to collaborate and share with each other.
- Meeting other artists.

The Play Lab

- Participating in and seeing a variety of plays in the lab, plus the panelist feedback was informative and focused
- Working with all levels and aspects of new plays and playwrights. It's my jam!!
- 4x "The Play Lab "
- Reading and listening to more plays than I have in the past.
- Talking with the playwrights after the readings. So many amazing voices.
- Interacting and networking with other artists & hearing new plays!
- All of the amazing work I got to see, whether in the Play Lab or the evening shows.
- Brand new playwrights had an opportunity to present their work for Play Lab.
- Play lab acting!
- Play readings. When they were good, there were amazing. When they were not so great, it was still educational.
- I enjoyed working with playwrights and watching them discover how their actors interpreted their work.
- I loved the Play Lab panels.
- Also having the opportunity to see so many new plays by talented playwrights.
- The opportunity to work with playwrights and actors.
- The Play Lab [readings] I saw were some of the best ever.
- Rehearsals and Readings, the opportunity to engage in practice
- The quality of work was excellent and varied, and every performance I saw gave me things to think about, whether I enjoyed the play or not
- Participating in the Play Lab.
- Play Lab and getting to interact with other playwrights
- The Play Lab and the classes. As a new playwright, it was eye opening.
- Listening to the playwrights discuss the scripts after each reading. They were very insightful.

Evening Performances

- This year I really enjoyed the evening performances.
- Evening performances.

- I also loved the featured artist's night.
- The evening performances
- I thought the main stage plays were wonderful
- All of the performances at night.
- The evenings...
- The Featured Artists evening show in particular.
- The performances.



First year playwrights Andrea Fleck Clardy and Hannah Ricke

Fringe Festival

- Janna and the Fringe. I love her!
- The Fringe!

The Staff

- Of course the staff was FABULOUS!!!
- Friendly attitude and how well it was run.
- The welcoming approach of staff, guest artists, actors, and participants. Also, the support by the city of Valdez.

Monologue Workshop

- The Monologue Workshop with Laura, Frank, and Rob was a highlight as well. Can't wait for next year!!
- Loved the whole Monologue Workshop, from prep to performance.
- 2x "The Monologue Workshop."

Ten-Minute Play Slam

- The 10-Minute Play Slam
- Play Slam was great.

Specific Classes and Events

- Tim Daly's Workshop
- I also loved the boat tour.
- The writing workshops.

Gala

- The gala was quite enjoyable, though the sound seemed off.
- Loved the Gala dinner and the museum reception.
- Closing party was a gas. The music was loud (which I get) but perhaps next time give a little more space for talking/socializing in between sets?
- Because the gala is so Alaskan-centric, it felt a bit odd that that's the ending for the conference itself. Enjoyed it, but felt a bit removed.

- The gala was an impressive production but it was difficult to have conversations due to the volume of the live music. Difficult to balance sound in that space, I'm sure, but the biggest complaint I heard from people that night is that it was hard to socialize in that loud room.



Jay Burns and Jeremy Gaunt in the Cyrano's Theatre Company production of Timothy Daly's "The Afterlife of J. Edgar Hoover."

Additional responses to “what did you enjoy least about the Conference?”.

Not Long Enough

- How fast it seemed to go - wished it could have lasted longer.

Nothing

- Nothing today here.
- I am a Conference fan.
- Nothing that I can think of offhand.
- I can't think of a single low point.
- WHERE WERE THE BEAR ALERTS?? I never once felt I was in danger of being eaten.
- The nothing.
- They ran out of John Cariani's *Almost Maine* scripts lol
- I truly enjoyed every aspect.
- I truly enjoyed it all.
- n/a
- Everything was perfect!
- I'm having a really hard time answering this, so I'm just going to say nothing. I had a fantastic time.
- Nothing comes to mind.
- Nothing in particular.
- N/A – I've been enough times to choose what I like.
- Really, nothing to speak of. It was a great experience.
- Not sure.
- There wasn't anything I disliked.
- There wasn't anything I didn't enjoy. But maybe different workshops? Advanced? Something new? I'm not sure. Really, it was great.
- I enjoyed everything...I would welcome more workshops :)
- Leaving.

The Presented Material

- Some of the plays weren't to my taste.

Schedule

- I wish there were more hours in a day so I could have done more. But barring a shift in the earth's rotation, there was nothing I didn't enjoy.
- It is not long enough.

- Early mornings??
- Only that I can't see everything or talk to everyone!



- There's never enough time to do all that I want to do.
- Mmmmmm...I'd like it to be even longer? ;))
- I wish I'd known there would be some programming on Sunday morning.
- I couldn't go to two readings at one time.
- Lack of time with the people.
- Not being able to see everything.
- That it ends too quick!
- Lack of sleep. Inability to see or spend time with as many readings, workshops and people as I would have liked.
- That it ended.
- Too brief.
- I had to leave!
- I would have loved it to be longer. :)
- The fact that it ended... BOO
- Can we do it twice a year? One and a half?
- Went by too fast.

Evening Performances

- Some of the evening performances were below average.

Social Stuff

- People!
- It's an intense week for an introvert.
- Being a somewhat introverted first timer, finding the way in could be daunting.
- I would have liked some sort of true meet and greet, ice breaker thing. I get really socially anxious in a room full of strangers and acquaintances. I think the first few days would have been way better for me if there had been something like that.
- I had a hard time meeting new people. But that's not the Conference's fault.
- Honestly, all the mingling. I don't need to talk much (though I can if I must) and eventually grew weary of all the socializing and networking. Fortunately, there are many outlets for people like me.

The Weather (we're working on it, Alaskans For Global Warming!)

- The weather.
- The grey sky.
- The rain.

Gala

- The Gala gets pretty boring, all the speeches. And I wasn't that taken with the whole zombie thing. Why were there devils, too? I was confused.
- I wish the volume at the gala would have been lowered. The band is fun, but ultimately, it's the last chance to talk to people for the week, and I could barely hear the people sitting next to me
- The Gala. (First, let me say that the service was excellent. It always is!) But the theme was forced and strange. It was too loud to have any conversations and often too foggy to see across the room. Some execution and behavior at both the producing company's table and at the podium seemed disrespectful to the deceased and to the evening's honored. Do we have to have themes?
- The microphone quality at the Gala.
- The music at the Gala was very loud and it was hard to speak with anyone. I would love it if they left more time for people to socialize before ramping up the music.
- The Gala was very fun, but I felt like there was a lot of confusion regarding the theme...It would've been better to understand if it was advertised as a 'Monster Ball' or something along those lines, instead of 'Addams Family Chic/Zombie Jamboree'...Those felt inconsistent :)
- I felt very prepared for the Conference. However, I think I only felt that way because I went with someone who had previously attended. If it wasn't for them I wouldn't have known about the themed Gala

Travel

- Getting there

Play Lab Issues

- Having my stuff read aloud to strangers. But hell, that's why I wanted to go.
- Not having enough Play Lab parts
- I know there's no time for it, but I'd have loved to have had one reading of the play, been able to do rewrites and then rehearse again, and then have another reading.
- My only negative was the miscommunication of which plays I had been cast in.

Housing

- The only thing that I could list here doesn't even outrightly involve the Conference. It was the timeliness of the housing confirmations for the college. They took a little longer than I anticipated to confirm rooms, but that is a very small thing. And again, has little to do with the actual Conference. **No, this is absolutely a concern for the staff.**

Closing Brunch

- The last Brunch (Sunday) The oral history was fine, but displaying past 'laundry' was awkward, especially for the many who were not concerned.

Weather/Nature

- Bugs
- The weather

Miscellaneous

- The video i received from the show was not complete.
- There is currently a lot of pressure on the conference staff to resolve emergencies that come up (ex. printing out the playwrights most current scripts). It may be worth looking at strategies to help alleviate that. More on this below.
- The cruise. Wish we could all be on one boat.

Diversity

- Lack of diversity. having quite workshops next to the wonderful improv...made hearing and concentration difficult

Additional Comments

Purely Positive

- Thank you, Dawson Moore, for coordinating this Conference and getting the right people in the same room -- you have directly positively impacted my writing career.
- Such an inspiring week. Life changing in fact. Feels like a regular attendance once you start! Can't stop!

- To quote myself: I have returned to Austin and find my heart is both overflowing and still beating in Alaska. So I must pour out, just a little. I am moved and exhausted by my experiences this week at the Last Frontier Theatre Conference. I was transported, flattened, and expanded, continually, by the work I witnessed and engaged in; I feel enlarged and inspired by the infinite generosity of the brave, lantern-carrying, ground-digging, yawping group of people, all working, diligently, joyfully, to create art and to recreate themselves. This Conference is a mountain I hope to climb forever.
- Another incredible, inspiring, and amazing week. Well done and thank you, Dawson and Company!
- 42 - that's what it's all about. **I have no idea what this means.**
- The Conference has hit its stride. Keep up the good work!
- This was bar none the best conference I've ever attended. I'm incredibly grateful to have been a part of it.
- Great job!!
- Cannot WAIT 'til next year.
- Dawson is a f*cking rock god. Don't let that go to your head. **(see below)**



- Thanks for the ride.
- Thanks! I really hope I can come back.

- Maybe it was being the 25th anniversary (or maybe it wasn't), but this year's VLFTC seemed even more enjoyable than usual. Congratulations on a fine job, Dawson and the crew!
- This Conference was not what I was expecting, but it was totally what I needed. If it was just as it was this year, I'd come back for years to come.
- I've been to the Conference many times. If I didn't love it I wouldn't keep coming back. So whatever complaints I might have are minor. It's the one week of the year I look forward to during the rest of the year.
- I thought this was a fantastic year at the Conference. For me, it always comes down to the quality of the plays and the diversity of voices. I thought there were some amazing writers there this year. Lots of politically aware work, too. And comedy! I hope we keep on the trajectory of excellence.
- Keep up the super work, all.
- Thanks for having me!
- Thank you for everything. This is such a special event.
- Dawson and crew, you are all rock stars, and Ted gives great hugs which really helps on Wednesday afternoon.
- Great as ever.
- All in all, a jam packed exhilarating experience.
- I am very much looking forward to next year. Keep doing what you are doing! This Conference has become a highlight of my year!
- It was a wonderful experience! Thank you very much for making such a magical week.
- Can't wait for next year!
- The energy, helpfulness, and openness of everyone was remarkable.
- Sincere and monumental thanks to Dawson and the entire staff for such a wonderful event. #standingo
- This conference blew my expectations away. I absolutely loved it.
- You guys are amazing! Thank you, once again!! xoxo
- Great Conference. A highlight of the year.
- Was my first time & I can't wait to come again!!
- A rewarding, memorable, enriching, invigorating artistic experience offered in a beautiful place. An awesome week.
- Keep up the good work. I can't wait till next year.
- Hi, Everyone. Miss you guys.
- Love the Conference - keep it going!
- You have so many repeat attenders for a reason. I am beyond honored to be part of your number. Having a hard copy of well-respected submission sites would be awesome

Diversity

- Obviously, diversity is something that we all need to work on.

Miscellaneous

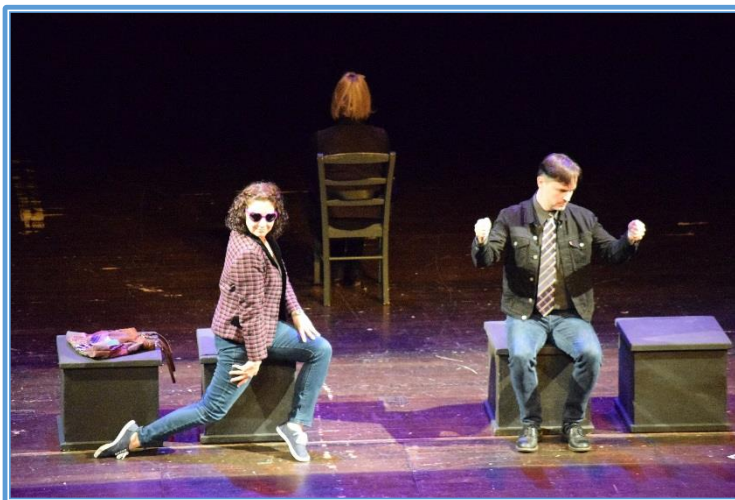
- Sell t-shirts.
- Love that you're thinking about an "exit plan," Dawson, and hope that doesn't happen for several years.

Programming

- More workshops please! And better evening performances like *Naked in Alaska* or *Good Men Wanted*.
- It would be cool to be able to screen the Tony's sometime - being all together when they happen, it could be fun.
- I would welcome even more writing workshops
- Maybe have some guided adventures or short tours like to the canyon or the pass or glaciers lake or Solomon Gulch or old town...for folks from far away and who flew in to get a little more taste of Valdez...maybe during Fringe or after Fringe or a picnic tour between 5-730pm

Innovate!

- If you can get people comfortable with it, tablets can sometimes be a more economical solution than paper and ink. It would work best with a Wi-Fi connection at the civic center, but people could have all their scripts on their tablet and they could be updated by a website admin. There's a lot to it but tablets can be \$20-30 now which might cost less than printing out 100+ page scripts for people, especially if you reused the tablets in subsequent years. I think it might help to avoid scheduling other things during lunch, or to deliberately split lunch into two different time slots. It seemed like everyone was getting fed, but it was somewhat disruptive.



Michelle Gardner, Laura Gardner, and Rob Lecrone in the Wednesday night production of Julia Lederer's "With Love and a Major Organ."

Responses from Participating Playwrights in the 2017 Play Lab

Were the responses of the panel useful to you?

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Very Helpful	53.1%	85.7%	71%	64.5%	62.9%
Reasonably Helpful	28.1%	9.5%	9.7%	22.6%	31.4%
Somewhat Helpful	15.6%	4.8%	12.9%	9.7%	5.7%
Not Helpful	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The Opposite of Helpful	3.1%	0%	6.45%	3.2%	0%

Purely Positive

- The panelists were not only helpful, they were relieving. They were affirming, they had to let go of "figuring out the play" and just watch and listen and be completely engaged. This is something I have been striving for in my writing for years.
- Having three opinions is a big help.
- Each shared a useful thought or two, for sure!
- Panelists were helpful at the reading and Eric Coble was great as a point man. Both Arlitia Jones and Peter Ellenstein also gave me further thoughts about the play later in the conference.
- The more specific comments of Michael Evan Haney were the most useful to me.
- I've also been at [another playwriting conference]. This conference had much more CONSTRUCTIVE comments, not only on helping the play but marketing to an audience.
- The private session was incredibly productive. My frustration was I realized the problem in rehearsal, and my philosophy has always been to never present to the public something you know is problematic. But you only get one rehearsal slot, and I didn't want to unnerve the actors with new material cold right before their performed, and, of course, the panelists confirmed, one by one, exactly what I'd suspected in rehearsal. But even that is helpful.
- I had Michael Evan Haney, Teresa Pond, and John Cariani on my panel, and they were absolutely wonderful. All of their notes were so, so helpful.
- More than very helpful. EXTREMELY helpful.
- The reflections from each panelist were morale-boosting and fairly helpful. What was tremendously helpful was the one-on-one session with John Cariani.
- Incredibly supportive yet inspiring me to work to improve.

- I found my panel members (Timothy Daly, Teresa Pond, and Shane Mitchell) to be very honest, thoughtful, and insightful. I trusted them and learned from them.
- My play is very hard to give helpful feedback on, but my panelists did their best and gave me several good ideas.
- Panel's feedback helped me fix a script problem I've been wrestling with for over a year.

Mixed

- Almost all of the feedback was fantastic. I felt supported by my panelists, and it definitely seemed they wanted to help me make the play whatever I wanted it to be, rather than fit it into what they might want or what they would do with the same idea. I did receive feedback from one panelist along the lines of "This show is expensive. You should look at the budget of a REAL theatre sometime." Considering I've run theatres myself, it told me this particular panelist hadn't read my bio and didn't take me seriously as an accomplished theatre artist.
- I thought all the panelists in all the labs did a good job being affirming yet gave constructive feedback. In mine, I would've liked more from the female panelist since my play was so female-centric. But overall they were great.
- If by panel you mean everyone who watched and spoke. If by panel you mean the three pros then I'd say very helpful because of the time I spent with Cassandra Medley. I liked everyone, the other two pros also, but Cassandra was obviously used to a very different level of competition. I've had readings in a number of different situations and formats in Manhattan. The audience response in Valdez was similar, and therefore reasonably helpful, but having had that experience already it wasn't a revelation or anything. But it was good and I liked it and thank you. <3
- One of my panelists was very knowledgeable and gave me good feedback. The other two seemed to lack the experience and education that others in the audience had to offer. They were all positive and kind, just, lacked some of the depth of insight I had hoped for.
- I didn't get any mind bending ideas on where to take my play next or if I should try to do any more with it or just leave it be. I wish I had asked that question. I didn't, and that was my fault.
- For some reason, my plays rarely get strong feedback. It seems as though it has happened every year except one.

Was the audience feedback session helpful to you?

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Very Helpful	34.4%	33.3%	61.3%	32.3%	40%
Reasonably Helpful	40.6%	33.3%	19.3%	45.2%	45.7%
Somewhat Helpful	15.6%	33.3%	12.9%	16.1%	8.6%
Not Helpful	3.1%	0%	6.5%	6.5%	5.7%
The Opposite of Helpful	6.2%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Purely Positive

- Never in my life, either in my own plays or others, have I heard an audience so quiet. It was like church. I interpreted this as everyone being so locked in and engaged. It gives me goosebumps (in a good way!) thinking back to it. The critical responses were very informative, it was fascinating what people got out of the play!
- The audience was honest, encouraging, and not at all leading. They asked great questions and gave me a good sense of what they saw, rather than just how to fix it. I was deeply moved by how much each audience member gave to every play they saw.
- The enthusiasm and the support of the audience was very gratifying.
- Was very positive. The stumbling blocks pointed out were ones that I had a feeling about and helped verify what I needed to do.
- The reaction of the audience taught me a lot.
- The audiences are getting better and smarter. I appreciate that very much.
- Just to not overlook it-- one of the most helpful things about any audience feedback is what they offer DURING the event. I learn as much, and usually more, during the performance, as I do afterward. That said, I found the post-reading audience feedback to be encouraging, thoughtful, and useful (and well-structured).
- I felt my play was well received, but I mostly got compliments from the audience.

Mixed

- Generous feedback in general. A fair number of comments that felt more like plot and character rewrites, but the panelists did a good job reeling those in. Wish the question I'd given my lead panelist was asked of the audience afterward – that never quite happened, though I guess the feedback did sort of answer the question in turn.
- Some strange comments, but I guess they were still all useful in their own way.
- Even without comments, they are helpful. You can get such a great read just by feeling the audience.

Was the private meeting a panelist helpful to you?

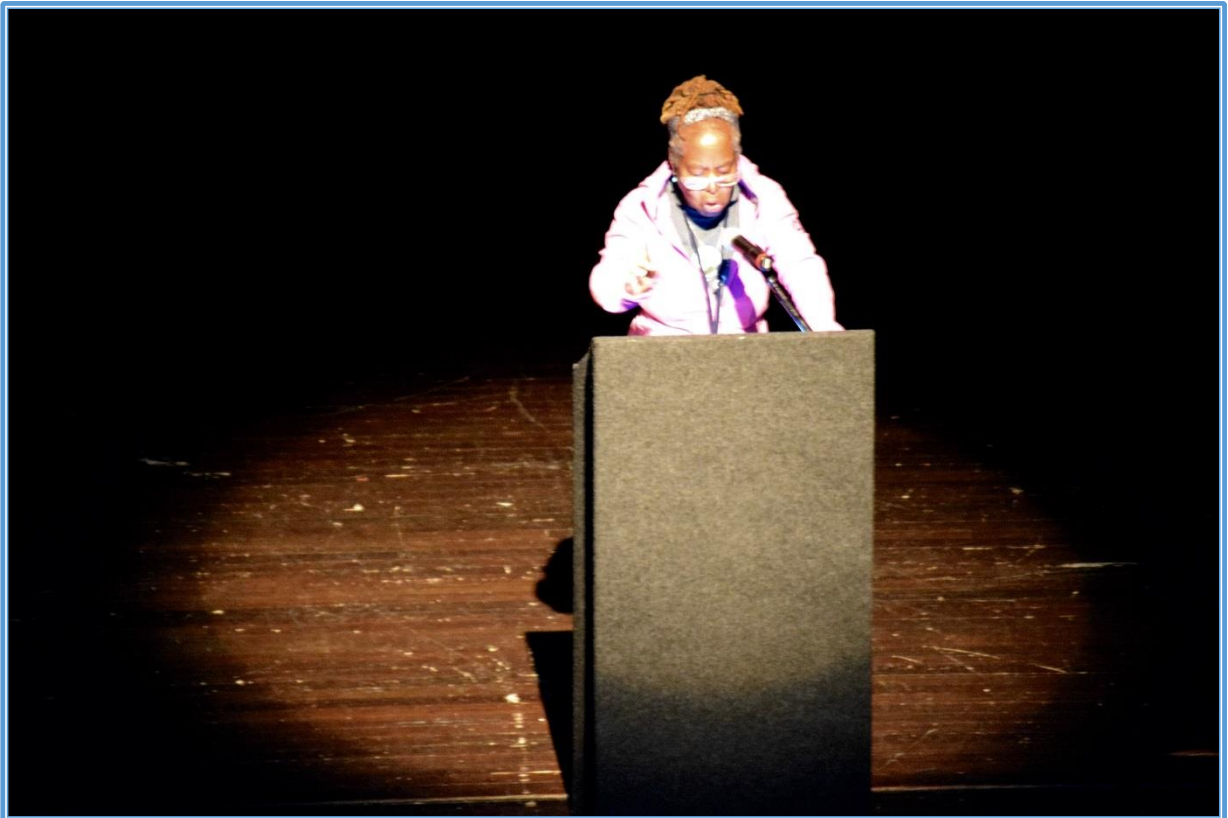
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Very Helpful	46.9%	71.4%	48.4%	58.1%	77.2%
Reasonably Helpful	18.8%	19%	12.9%	25.8%	17.2%
Somewhat Helpful	12.5%	0%	12.9%	9.7%	2.8%
Not Helpful	3.1%	4.8%	6.5%	6.4%	2.8%
The Opposite of Helpful	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Didn't have one	12.5%	4.8%	19.3%	0%	0%
Didn't have it yet, but have plans to do it via distance	6.2%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Purely Positive

- I will admit, I have known the panelist I met with for years, and was always turned off by them. I was reluctant to go into the meeting, but it turned out to be a really good dialogue. We were very much on the same page of where the play was in its development, and the type of rewrites I needed to do next. Now I have a very positive opinion of this panelist, and hey, we all have flaws and quirks. It makes us all the better for them I suppose.
- Of the 3 conferences I've been to, I feel like I had the best conversation with my lead panelist. Thank you, Peter Ellenstein!
- Eric Coble was very encouraging and helpful.
- Peter Ellenstein is the best!
- I've commented on this several times. Cassandra Medley knew of which she spoke (oooh that sounds a little too too if you ask me) and she spoke with me in a way that made me feel she thought I could take advantage of her knowledge. She rocked.
- INSANELY helpful. (Why am i capitalizing everything? Why am I screaming?!!)
- Peter Ellenstein was fantastic.
- I was fortunate that all 3 of my panelists took me to lunch! It was a bit overwhelming, but helpful. There's no way I can incorporate everything, but the discussion was highly valuable.
- John Cariani met with me one-on-one for an hour and a half, and it was tremendously helpful. It was the best collection of notes I've gotten on this play, and I will be using pretty much all of them for my next draft.
- My panelist was Timothy Daly and I am so grateful for this pairing. I was apprehensive at first, as I was concerned that his interest in structure might lead him to be prescriptive

or dismissive of a play whose structure was deliberately wild. But I found him to be surprisingly open, while also offering some very smart, rigorous ways to see and strengthen my play. When we began our conversation, he very thoughtfully asked me a couple of probing questions that then informed his feedback. I found this to be really smart and considerate.

- John Cariani rocks!!
- She was warm and caring and helped with a question I had about the end. I should have come with more specific question and if there's a next time I will do that.
- Absolutely essential!
- Cassandra Medley is a treasure! **Treasure is pictured below.**



- John Cariani was the perfect panelist for this play since he has great command of the complex genre of comedy. He was generous with his time and very thoughtful about zeroing in on the underpinning structural problems, while at the same time being extremely encouraging about what worked. He focused on many specific details, and also gave me general guidance. In some ways the conversation was a mini-master class. I so appreciated learning from his expertise. -- by contrast, last time I attended the conference my play was in the sci-fi genre, and my panelist took less than 3 minutes with me, standing, in the room, to tell me that she had nothing to say because she didn't understand sci-fi.

Mixed

- Took away a good thought or two about how to tighten structure and focus in on a tone/genre. Felt a bit like the panelist had so much going on that he couldn't quite remember specifics of my play, though. Understandably so, but it did limit the kind of conversation that was possible.
- My play was finished, so there wasn't much for her to say about it.

Not Really

- My panelist was in a rush to get to the Monologue Workshop and so she asked if we could meet in the lunch line. I have to admit I felt a little insulted, considering I'd flown a long way to be there and would definitely not be able to talk about my play with so many people around. I had to demand that we meet privately instead. We talked for about 15 minutes and then she again asked if we could move the conversation to lunch because of the Monologue Workshop. But by the time we got to the cafeteria, so many people had stopped us both to chat about various things that we never really re-grouped (exactly as I expected). I was pretty disappointed in how that all played out. I'd recommend panelists make it clear to any other commitments that their work as panelists has to come first. I'm sure Laura wouldn't have minded if she was late because of her role as a panelist, especially if she let her know in advance.

Were you satisfied with the performance of your readers?

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Very Satisfied	40.6%	33.3%	55.7%	64.5%	69.5%
Satisfied	37.5%	47.6%	26.7%	25.8%	14.3%
Somewhat Satisfied	18.8%	9.5%	6.6%	6.4%	14.3%
Dissatisfied	6.3%	9.5%	10%	3.3%	1.9%

Purely Positive

- Just... great. Great, amazing, fantastic, superb, wonderful, funny, heartbreaking.
- Great casting! I adored them.
- The ladies did a great job and gave me all I asked for.
- They went from a cold read to a strong performance very quickly.
- All my readers were excellent. Rob Lecrone was, of course, outstanding.
- I want to thank Rob again for stepping in cold. I think if people didn't know one actor was sick, they wouldn't have been able to tell Rob was doing a cold reading. He was excellent.
- I was impressed with how well chosen they were to reflect the characters
- My readers were top notch! Thank you!

- What a gem of a cast. Getting such talented actors to do the reading was one of the greatest, most pleasant surprises of the entire conference.
- I had a fantastic cast. Every one of them!
- What a bunch of sweethearts. They gave it everything.
- I found my group of actors to be very open and enthusiastic, even despite their own insecurities about understanding the play. They were trusting and honest and brave and all enjoyable to be with.
- My cast was amazing!
- The student readers were far better than expected and should be commended!



Grace Williams, Erin Dagon Mitchell, and Warren Weinstein in Rand Higbee's "The Feral Child."

Mixed

- It was a bit all over the place, but I had a bigger cast, and some were strong and well cast, others not as much. But that's OK. Everyone was willing to jump in and had a good attitude.
- There were 2 amateur actors in my reading that came up late for the rehearsal. They hadn't even read or studied their part. All the other actors were great!

- It's super easy to dump on actors. I thought they did a good job. [One] wasn't right for the part of a woman who was confident in using her sexual prowess to get what she wanted. But everyone was good, professional and easy to work with.
- Two were great; two were flat. This was disappointing as the play was intense and demanded inspired acting. Even when this was pointed out at the rehearsal, it was not delivered.
- Mixed bag. I don't think this is avoidable, as I like newer actors, and even participants to work in the Lab. Ironically, veteran actors were my problem. One had to be replaced, for no-show. Another, was a snob who showed up when and how they wanted. Did not care about what I wrote on the page as far as entrance, exit, or character description. Nor, did they note times assigned for our play. They were the central character, but were late, to both reading, and rehearsal.
- The majority were extremely well cast and did a beautiful job. -- One of our actors had trouble reading from a script. It happens. -- Note: several non-speaking roles were cast in advance so we started out with more actors than we knew what to do with. Small communications problem there. -- A bit more time to rehearse would help. It was all kind of frantic and rushed, especially having to dispatch the extra actors in the room before we settled down to read.

Eh, Not Great

- It's hard to get young actors up to speed with a script and only one rehearsal. I felt my friends had more seasoned actors in their plays, and I can't help comparing to them.
- It was clear to me that one of the readers had not looked at my script prior to rehearsal, and his lack of familiarity with the piece certainly impeded our ability to put together a good performance.
- However, one of my actors from Valdez didn't show. I know some local actors are consistent, but if there's a way to screen them??? **Oh yes, we know who this is and won't be using them again.**
- All were delightful people, which is always a relief. One reader was strong and well-cast (stole the show). The other two readers were low energy, and likely miscast. It was tricky to get those two (who fed off one another, and had most of the play to deliver, unfortunately) to move the piece along. When I realized the energy problem, I made it the mission of the rehearsal to pick up cues, keep energy through the lines, give permission to overlap some in specific places, and so on. I also found the two the next day before the reading and gave a couple thoughts about actions to play, things that had come to me since the rehearsal and meeting them – again focused on ways to keep it active, up, moving. The reading was better than the rehearsal, energy-wise. Still, though, a few fellow Lab playwrights approached me independently and unprompted at points after the reading to encourage me to stand up for my work the next time and ask

for readers who'd project more – they felt like it was hard to hear the lines and one wondered why a panelist didn't interject to ask for volume and energy. I learned a good deal from hearing it aloud, and from going through the process. But I am hesitant to make changes/take certain notes until I hear the piece again with the driving energy and confidence that this reading lacked.



Shaelisa Anderson, Taylor Campbell, and Karen Lauer reading in Amy Tofte's "Parts & Pieces."

What worked best for you in this process?

Everything

- Everything.
- I had an ideal experience - a packed house of very attentive people who engaged thoughtfully with the play.
- It all worked great.
- Pretty seamless from beginning to end.
- The environment is so supportive, so encouraging. A welcome relief in many ways.
- Everything ran smoothly, no complaints about the process.
- Everything. Ever-y-thing. It was a great experience, which I'm grateful for. It gave me a real sense of how to refine the play, and even more important, a sense that the play has legs.

- There is so much that was positive for me, it's hard to single out a particular thing. I appreciate that there was so much support provided which really freed me up to focus on my creative work.
- Being a new playwright, I was awash in information and I loved it. I loved the classes and would love some more options next year
- Dawson

Rehearsal! (seriously, no one ever lists this.

- I liked that I had a solid 3 hours the day before the reading. My actors were clearly prepared, so I felt the rehearsal time was just right. We could rehearse and prepare while also having time to participate in other events.
- I had time to run my play twice during the allotted rehearsal period. **Rehearsals were expanded as much as the schedule would permit this year.**

Director

- Having a director for my reading! Thanks SO much for providing this service to those of us playwrights who are terrible at directing.

Pre-Conference Communication

- Communicating with the actors before even arriving in Alaska. As a past-participant I have the luck/experience/fortune being friends with many of the actors cast in my play, and I was able to answer a lot of their questions and talk to them extensively even before rehearsal. But I found this extremely helpful, and we could hit the ground running when it came time to rehearsal.

One-on-One Panelist Meeting

- The one-on-one feedback helped me weave together all the other feedback, and determine what questions I wanted to ask moving forwards with the play.
- The private meeting with a panelist.
- This year, the feedback from my lead panelist.
- Meeting one on one with my responder...it is a more candid discussion and much appreciated.

Feedback

- Classes and feedback.
- The reaction of the panel and audience which was more positive than I anticipated.
- Panel feedback.
- Hearing feedback from panelists and audience.

Process

- Working with the cast and getting feedback from fellow playwrights. It was so enlightening and refreshing to hear ideas from peers who weren't competing with me for anything.

- How much of it you all took care of for me. Felt great to show up and have it all organized so well. Thank you.
- The speed from rehearsal to reading, and the simple straightforward audience and panel feedback.
- Being able to go back and forth between readings/panelists and workshops. I feel like I improve my writing every year because of this.
- Being able to attend classes and see everyone else's work

Audience

- Being able to see audience reaction and what lines worked, what didn't. That always helps a TON!
- The enthusiastic response of the audience.
- I tried to go to every Play Lab reading I could, and I really got a lot out of hearing the notes each of the plays received. My Lab was later in the week, so it really helped me to prepare for my own reading.
- I was grateful to have the opportunity to watch other readings before mine occurred.
- Witnessing the audience's response during the reading.

The Readers

- The engagement and competence of readers.
- I was lucky because my actors did so much of the work themselves, I had very little to do in terms of directing them.
- The openness of my cast to take direction and work to make the reading match what I intended.

Other

- I'm not sure what worked best for me. I am not a fan of just reading plays, so the process at the Conference is a difficult one for me to assess well.

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

Nothing

- I can't think of anything!
- It worked very well for me.
- It's really a well-oiled machine. There is a lot going on. I was a little bummed to miss my roomie's play reading because that was the same time as my rehearsal, but I really don't think there's any way to avoid that.
- Nothing obvious comes to mind.
- Nothing really. It is a wonderful, fruitful experience.
- Not really anything I can think of right now.
- I love this thing.

Directors

- This may not be feasible since the Lab is mainly set up for actors and writers, but I did feel my own limitations when it came to directing my rehearsal—so having directors present who would be up for directing each of the pieces would be really, really awesome. That said, it also wasn't a problem for me to direct my own, and my actors were wonderful. It was just a moment when I could tell I wasn't as much in my element. **We offer the service of a director to everyone, but in 2018, we'll make sure that it's offered more than once, so that people don't miss that this is an option**

Scheduling

- This is more of a general critique about this year -- scheduling actors seemed off, or slipping. The actor assigned to my stage directions had to leave for another rehearsal a quarter of the way through our rehearsal (for a full-length play!), then returned towards the end of the rehearsal. Luckily we were able to replace them. I am not sure if this was a case of actors over-committing themselves, or if there was a problem in scheduling, but time is valuable for our one rehearsal, and things came to a grinding halt while we figured out getting a new person. Fortunately the reading went great, but this is obviously a situation that needs to be avoided.

Acting

- In some cases, I wondered if actors and/or speakers had been advised about the acoustics in the reading rooms.
- Less amateur actors...
- I would continue to weed out weaker actors and playwrights, and bring in more well-trained actors like Michelle Gardner.

Schedule

- A littttttle more time between plays (we're talking 3-5 min more). There were times I couldn't get to the restroom before the next play started. And quieter doors :) But all in all, it's a very well-tuned machine that was a total pleasure to be a part of. I was so impressed and grateful to be there.
- I don't see how you could possibly fit more in. I mean, I'd love more workshops, but then I'd miss plays. I'd like more plays, but then I'd miss workshops I would be cool with one day off in the middle of the conference to, say, go kayaking and then extending the conference by one day. That could be kinda nice. **We used to have a half-day off on Wednesday mornings, but it became impossible to keep it without cutting back on the number of participants. Taking time away is up to participants, and it does mean that they will miss some Conference events.**

- My actors weren't happy about missing lunch, and some were late as they were waiting in line to bring it down. I felt rude asking them not to eat, but would have liked to start rehearsal promptly...

Audience Size

- Sometimes the audiences are small, so I feel bad for some people.
- It would be nice if there were some way to ensure more than a smattering of people at some readings (like mine). It's hard to gauge audience response to a work when there are only about five attendees. Not sure how this could be addressed, short of conference-goers signing up for readings to attend, which might impede some of the pleasant free-and-easy feel of the week. Just an observation.



Downstairs rehearsal with Skyler Davis, Barry Levine, and Devan Hawkins.

More Rehearsal Time

- I think this might be impossible, but of course an extra hour of rehearsals would be amazing.
- I'd love to be able to do rewrites and have more rehearsal and even more than one reading, but for that to be possible, there'd have to be fewer plays in the Lab from the get-go.
- A bit more rehearsal time if possible.
- All I can think of is: A little more rehearsal time

Earlier Collaboration with Cast

- I wish there had been a way to meet my cast before the rehearsal, so I'd have had just a bit more information walking into the rehearsal. Maybe a meet-and-greet on the first day – a make the rounds, find your playwrights/actors kind of thing? I know many actors are cast in many things... Some playwrights later in the week went to certain readings to get a feel for their readers by watching them in other roles. Would have totally taken that approach, but most of my readers weren't reading in anything else.

Want to Read Everything (and this might be a clever way to do that)

- I'd like to see a way to be able to read other scripts from the Play Lab online, at least during the conference. It would be a simple matter to post PDFs of all the plays up on a password-only page during the conference, and take it down a couple of weeks later. It's great being able to ask for copies of scripts at the front desk, but it sure would be nice to be able to get e-copies.

More Elitist Selection Process

- Fewer plays, harder to be chosen. Knowing that seeing the other work would all be worthwhile. All of which would require more money from grants and less from participants so it's easy to say but hard to do. Less summer camp and more preseason camp. **We're not doing this. Most other playwrighting conferences run this way, and that's great. We are a celebration of artists, regardless if they are Emmy winners or amateurs. This means that we'll see some not-great plays. It means not every performance will be great. But that's what we do, because our event is educational (first clue: it's produced by a college). People who can't deal with that, who feel like it belittles the experience, they have other like events they can attend.**

More Extensive Staging

- I would like to see the plays enacted with movement rather than read from music stands. This would minimize the stage directions which were not always clear as the readers were seated and looking down.

Feedback Cards

- I thought it went very well. I'd suggest having the audience complete some note cards that give them the option of sharing their thoughts. **We used to do this, but the current staff feeling is that people get tons of feedback, making it unnecessary.**

How Gym Is Provided

- Also, it would be nice if the college had a use fee for the gym and not a weekly fee. This is the second year in a row that I paid the 20.00 and only got there once because of my schedule. I would rather pay as I go. **There is a daily use option available (\$10).**

Room Arrangement

- Hmm...different chair set up for the audience? I honestly pay attention better on the floor so I found myself sitting on the floor as the week progressed...it helped me focus and stay awake ;)
- Maybe ask audience members to move forward if the room is sparsely populated? After the reading, have the playwright come sit in the front row where they can hear and see the panelists clearly.
- Room C is very very warm in the afternoons...

Programming

- New and interesting classes about the craft of playwriting.
- Nothing really. I loved learning from everyone. Maybe a fun writing experiment.

This one is writing their doctorate...

- I think the Play Lab is very successful in its organization. I personally wish I would have been able to see more plays (many times there were 2-3 plays at any given time slot that I wanted to see), but I also think there is a lot that is gained by having so many plays included so I don't think I would change that. If there is a way to stagger the schedule to allow opportunity to see more and without losing the volume of work, that would be awesome. A couple things I would suggest exploring for the future: 1. Is it possible for a few of the plays to have a longer process? What happens if a play is allowed 2,3,4 rehearsals? A longer process could be really enjoyable for playwrights as well as actors. **I'm not in favor of any process that created unequal tiers for participants.** 2. I love that the focus is on development, sharing, and feedback, but also wonder if there is the possibility to add a small professional opportunity or two. For example-- what if an agent or two is invited to the conference? Or what if there is opportunity for the writers to gather to share stories about their own experiences with agents, etc? Is there a structured opportunity for playwrights, directors, producers, actors, to exchange information, etc. like speed-dating? Again-- I love that the "business" aspect of making theatre is largely put aside in favor of development, exploration, and creativity. I just wonder if there are ways to add some small kind of professional event that doesn't color or spoil the fun. **This happens informally, and there are no plans to institutionalize it.**

Was the first day Orientation Session helpful to you? Was there anything else you later wished had been discussed there?

Yes

- Very helpful.
- It was helpful as a reminder of the information we'd already received, and I appreciated how quickly Dawson got through all the info. And it was great to have time available for questions up front. It felt very respectful of our time.
- It was good for a first timer.
- Yes, thanks for hosting.
- I found it very helpful.
- Orientation was very helpful. Glad you have something like that. Looking back at it, you should be really proud. It really is a well-run conference.



The orientation session these comments are talking about!

- Yes, very helpful.
- Yes, it was very helpful, and I felt like it covered all of the questions I had.
- I was all set. Thanks!
- Yes. I was unsure of how the readings went.

- Yes. I'd never been the "Silent Playwright" before, so that was very interesting for me to experience, especially in comparison to the two hour-long talkbacks I had to do for a new piece just three weeks prior to the conference.
- I found it hard to focus but fortunately most of it was already familiar.
- Orientation was great. So glad I attended.
- It was helpful to be reminded of the process.
- It was very helpful.
- It was all good!
- Yes, it was extremely helpful.
- Nope. **Hoping this is for “did you need anything else...”** Thank you so much guys.

Didn't go

- I am lucky in that I am a past participant, so I did not attend -- but one thing, I always recommend to new playwrights to ask all of your panelists to chat with you one-on-one if you can, be it for 5 or 30 minutes – the worst thing they will do is say no!
- Didn't attend. I've gone to several in the past and no longer feel the need
- I wasn't there for the orientation session since I arrived a day later.
- Didn't go. I drove from Anchorage and I think I missed that.
- Yes, very helpful. I felt fully informed & ready to go!
- Didn't attend; didn't need to. I've been before.
- Had been to the Conference before so didn't attend.
- N/A - I wasn't there for it.
- 2x “N/A”
- Did not get to attend
- There was an orientation...?
- I didn't participate in the orientation session, since I've been to the Conference before.

Additional Information That Should Have Been Included

- If there is time for it, the opportunity to see the rehearsal spaces would have been welcomed.
- I did have one suggestion -- at some conferences I've been to, they color code newbie nametags (or names in the book). That way, others can recognize first-year people and make an extra effort to get to know them.
- I wouldn't have minded a handout on what to go over with my cast and hints of how to make the reading go well. **We e-mailed every playwright just such a document, but next year, we will make sure to have physical copies available.**
- It would be good to know how much control I had over the reading of my play. If an actor is more than a little late, do I have the right to ask for a different one? It's a pet peeve.

Responses from 2017 Play Lab Readers

Some questions are specific to being an actor in the Play Lab. Some of them have been blended into the appropriate place earlier in the document, but others felt more organic to leave here as “actor issues.”

Answers to the question “Once in Valdez, was there any part of the Play Lab process that confused you?”

Nope, It Was All Good

- I felt sufficiently informed prior to arriving at the conference. The email updates from Dawson were very welcome and very detailed, please repeat this!
- Very helpful, thanks.
- N/A
- 4x “Great.”
- I had all the materials that I needed to be successful.
- 2x “All good.”
- Very.
- It was great.
- No, it was pretty straight forward.
- The information was very useful. I found the schedules to be very helpful both before the conference in the emails we received and in the booklet we were given in Valdez. I don't think there was any extra information that I required beforehand. I think that the Play Lab orientation with Dawson on the first day is incredibly helpful! Especially for newcomers. I would have liked my scripts just a tad earlier, but I understand that that is not always possible and that you take casting incredibly seriously. So I understand it takes some time. Anyways, the point is, I think all the information was very helpful.
- Useful information - no complaints.
- Very helpful. Loved getting the rehearsal schedule in advance
- It was fine.
- Info was fine.
- No, this year i was only in one show so I had ample time
- Very useful. The website and communication from Dawson allowed me to feel very "in the loop," even as a first-time attendee.
- Excellent.
- I was already familiar with how the play lab worked, so I was fine.
- Worked great. I felt mostly prepared.
- 2x “Very useful.”

- Excellent. But I've been before so hard to say what's missing.
- Very helpful. Thank you
- Did not know what I was getting myself into but pretty easy to figure out.
- Excellent. None.
- It was useful.
- No. But I'd been there before. I loved performing the thoughtfully crafted schedule was great.



Lots of great conversations at the Fringe Festival.

- I think I was pretty well prepared.
- I didn't have any problems.
- The information was extremely useful. I always feel that Dawson's emails are thorough and clear.
- Very good.
- Good
- Appreciate that standard best practices are stated in advance, especially for newcomers.
- Wonderful!! This was my second year, so I was familiar with the process. It was nice to get a refresher.
- I felt really prepared for the Play Lab. All of the information was given to me before hand and I was not confused about anything going into it.
- The information was fine.
- Everything I received was great and I felt prepared when I arrived.

Make People Do Their Work!

- Just that actors MUST be responsible for reading the script in advance. I know you can't control that...

Wished They Knew People Beforehand

- Information was very helpful. Knowing other cast members would be nice.

Really for the Monologue Workshop...

- Old timer here so I did not read the prep info. Would let monologue actors know that they are expected to attend both group sessions and three 15-minute coaching sessions. Only excuse should be you are either a reader or a teacher of a class. If you want to see attend lot of readings as audience member that's great but be aware you still have a commitment to 3 sessions. Avoid scheduling a session too close to the end of a play

rehearsal or reading in which you are a reader. They tend to go long and you miss your coaching session.

Prepped Scripts That Were Revised

- Useful, but 2 of my plays had very new and different drafts upon arrival, so it felt like some of the time I put in beforehand was a little wasted. I probably had time during the week to look at them anyway.

And lest you forget from earlier...

- I wish we had been informed that we could return scripts to the front desk after readings, as I've just been chucking mine.

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

No

- Not at all -- I am a past participant, so I knew the lowdown.
- None.
- N/A
- No, been before.
- 12x "Nope."
- 12x "No."
- No, not at all, it was very straightforward and clear.
- Naw.
- No, it made sense.
- No, everything was very well organized.
- No confusion - very straightforward.
- Not at all.
- Everything seemed pretty clear and changes were clearly posted.
- Not really! Everyone and everything was enjoyable. Such a great experience.
- No, all was very clear and accessible.
- No, I was not confused about anything.

Playwrights as Directors

- The playwright of the piece I was in took your advice not to direct too literally. She refrained from giving feedback during rehearsal. When someone asked a question just before we went on stage, out came a bunch of notes about how she wanted fundamental shifts in the characters from what she saw in the rehearsal. The points were legitimate, but it would have been better to receive them the day before.
- I don't think that playwrights should direct. You should assign directors/actors. OR, do not let playwrights add blocking. Blocking was added by the playwright to the piece I

was in and it was horrible! It made us all do weird things and we couldn't just read out. The issue was so many of the stage directions were cut that the play made little to no sense so the playwright tried to get us to convey the play through action. Leave in the stage directions please. They are part of the play and removing them is like removing the bones of a person. It makes no sense to take them out and playwrights rightly freak out b/c their shows make no sense. Also, playwrights should not ask actors to give up entire days to rehearse their plays. They are just too close to it. Maybe assign actors to direct with specific instructions of no blocking and they are there to guide. Playwrights get too precious.

- I do think it would help if the playwrights/actors were given solid rules for what is appropriate for a reading. Is it okay to actually do some of the blocking instead of it being read? Do we look at the people we are on stage with or do we look out?

What Sort of Sadist...

- scheduling through meal times
- Lunches during rehearsals confused me. I was told to bring it with me...but it felt inappropriate. It's free, so who's to complain. But on a day that I rehearsed from 9 through 3 with very little break, it would have been nice to have a time when there was a mandatory break.

Rewrites

- I think the playwrights need a hard deadline for when the script must be finalized and for that deadline to be enforced. Showing up to a Lab rehearsal and spending an hour getting the right script adds a lot of stress and confusion. Otherwise no, I was not confused.

Class Descriptions

- Maybe be a little clearer as to whether a class is geared to actors, writers or both.

Did anyone mention...

- I missed the information about meet upstairs. Perhaps, state this at check in. Later I noticed a sign on a hall I had not walked down.

Ten-Minute Play Slam

- Wasn't quite sure what the Play Slam was, but that was down to me... plenty of info online.
- How to become an actor for the Ten-Minute Play Slam.

Not Sure What This Refers To...

- The only frustrating portion was being moved around to different rooms/outside w/o notice

Hell is Other People

- Why were people entering a room when the play had already started? it is very disruptive.

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

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Yes	65.6%	73.1%	69.2%	71%	78%
Mostly	21.9%	13.5%	23.1%	15.8%	18%
Somewhat	6.3%	13.5%	0%	5.3%	2%
Not at all	6.3%	0%	7.7%	7.9%	2%

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

	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Mostly</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>DN Participate</u>
Fringe Festival 2013	0%	18.8%	18.8%	46.9%	15.6%
Fringe Festival 2014	3.9%	9.8%	23.5%	45.1%	17.6%
Fringe Festival 2015	8%	28%	28%	20%	16%
Fringe Festival 2016	2.7%	15.8%	26.3%	42.1%	13.1%
Fringe Festival 2017	2%	10%	26%	44%	18%

	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Mostly</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>DN Participate</u>
Monologue Workshop 2013	0%	3.1%	6.3%	43.8%	46.8%
Monologue Workshop 2014	0%	7.8%	7.8%	62.7%	21.7%
Monologue Workshop 2015	3.9%	3.9%	11.5%	61.5%	19.2%
Monologue Workshop 2016	5.3%	7.9%	13.2%	60.6%	13.2%
Monologue Workshop 2017	2%	2%	10%	62%	24%

	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Mostly</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>DN Participate</u>
Joy of Phonetics 2015	0%	7.7%	15.3%	27%	50%
Warm-ups and Beat Down 2015	3.8%	3.8%	15.4%	15.4%	61.6%
Creature Meet'n'Greet 2015	2.7%	2.7%	0%	29.7%	64.9%
Bustin' with Bostin 2015	0%	8%	20%	8%	64%
How the \$!#% do I network? 2016	5.3%	7.9%	5.3%	26.3%	55.2%
Improv for the Actor 2016	2.6%	7.9%	2.6%	23.7%	63%

Unraveling the I Don't Know's of Acting 2016	2.6%	7.9%	2.6%	26.3%	60.5%
SOLOfire: Personal History Writing / Movement 2016	2.7%	5.4%	0%	16.2%	75.7%
From Impulse to Expression 2017	2%	8%	6%	8%	76%
Bridging the Gap Between Playwright and Actor 2017	2%	6%	4%	8%	80%
Improv for the Actor 2017	2%	6%	12%	14%	66%
Creative Movement For the Actor	2%	0%	8%	10%	80%
Table Read to End Scene 2017	6%	8%	2%	10%	74%

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

	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>
Yes	86.5%	57.7%	89.5%	76%
No	13.5%	42.3%	10.5%	24%

Warm-Ups

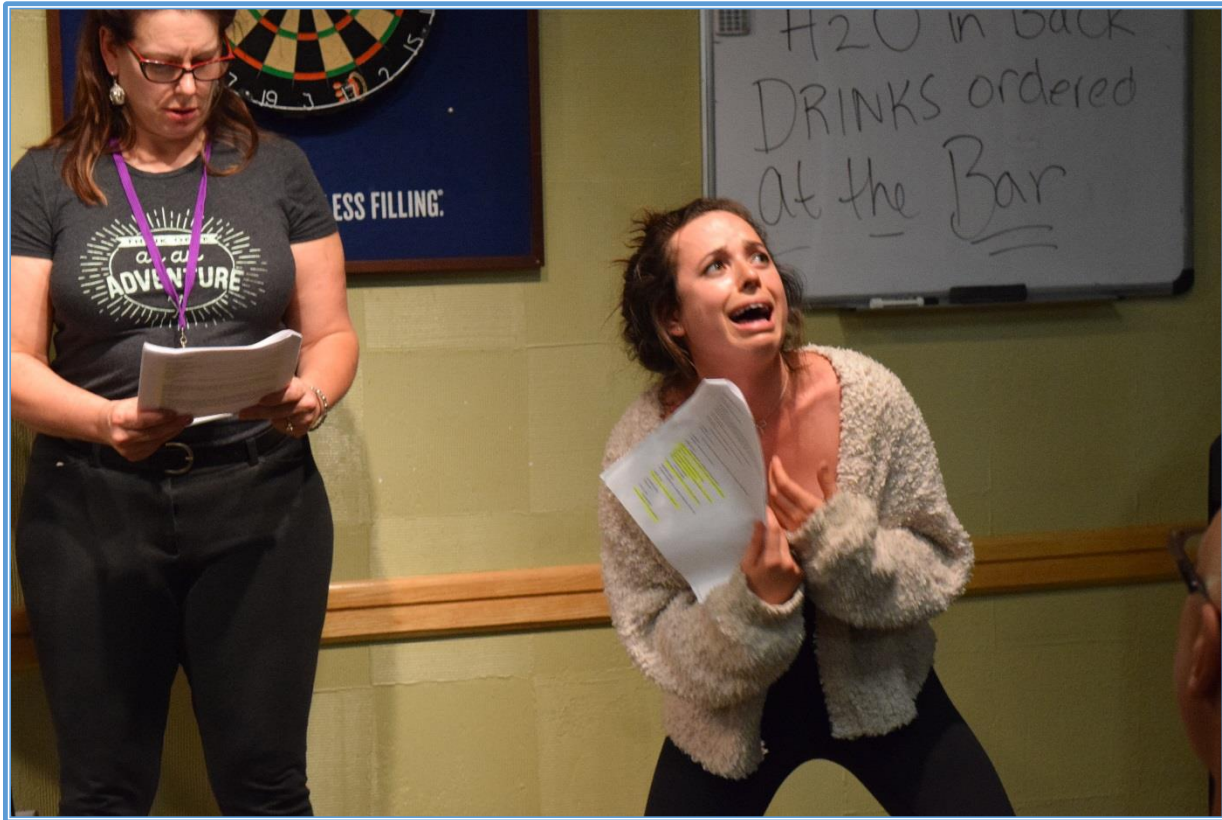
- I think having some sort of daily group warm-ups. Oh look what is next....
- Bring back Ben Corbett in the afternoon.

Schedule Challenges

- It's frustrating that some of them happen at the same time. but I know that probably can't be helped. Having to choose is difficult. I want to do it all!
- Schedule conflicts.

Classes

- More workshops! Not immediately after lunch!
- Said no but unsure anything could be added unless the conference adds more days. If there was interest bring back audition technique class or business advice for actors (Bostin's class).
- Classes at different times, accent workshops, maybe a stage combat workshop.



First time playwright/actress Amanda Kohr hams it up at the Fringe Festival.

More Advanced Classes

- I only say no because I didn't feel I really learned anything I didn't already know. I really enjoyed the classes I took as a refresher and something fun to do but something more advanced where I could learn something new would have been nice. And perhaps if I had attended all of the workshops then I would have but I ran out of time.

More Roles

- In addition to reading stage instructions I would like to have an actual role.
- Additional performance opportunities.
- I'd love more but not sure time would allow it.
- I was disappointed to not be assigned to more readings. I was put in three, one of which was for stage directions. I've been coming to the Conference for a few years, and I love being in the Lab as an actor. I want to do more!
- I would have really liked to have been in more readings.
- I was given three plays to read in. Two of them I read stage directions and the third was a one dimensional stereotype bit part. I do not mind bit parts, and I don't mind reading stage directions. Both are critical, but it was a blow to my fragile actor ego not to get something with more meat to it. I would hope that if you are going to have someone

read two sets of stage directions that at least the one character part be something that is substantial. I would not want the challenge of casting all of those plays. Hats off to everyone who has to do that. Just something to keep in mind for the future. Thank you for all you do.

- More opportunity or a backup list.
- It was tough coming in as just an Actor this year and just receiving stage direction roles. I understand that new people are generally a risk, but it's difficult for me to justify coming down as an actor if you're unsure that you're even going to get one character role. That also could have been due to other circumstances, but that was the experience I had with it. However, that doesn't deter me for future conferences, as it was a wonderful experience, just something to keep in mind. For most people I talked to they always said their first year was less enjoyable than following years because of that, and if you lost those people, or they didn't come back because of that singular experience, I just think it's a missed opportunity that could be improved upon.
- You guys have a clique. That clique gets to read an exorbitant amount of scripts. There were three women who read 5 plays each. Most women did not even get one. That is crazy. It needs to be equitable. It's just reading. Some of the best reads were people we have never seen. Additionally, one person should not cast the roles. **The first duty of casting is to the playwrights. This means that casting isn't, and won't be, even. The clique is an illusion, and "most women did not even get one" is flat out untruth. We work very hard to give everyone at least one character to work on in the Lab, but there are a ton of factors, including what roles are available. This year, for example, there were very few roles for women over 50, so they had less to do.**

Diversity

- Also, so little diversity in the playwrights and actors. Anchorage, for example, is one of the most diverse cities in the nation. If you aren't finding actors, playwrights, etc. of diverse backgrounds - you guys aren't looking hard enough.

If we were to offer warm-ups for actors/performers during the day, would that appeal to you?

Yes, in the mornings	24.49%
Yes, in the afternoon. (1:00 - 1:30 p.m.)	32.65%
Maybe, I was pretty busy.	40.82%
No, I warm up on my own/live in a warmed up state!	22.45%
Other Responses	6.12%

- Like at 11 maybe? but I also do my own prior to reading.
- Yes! 10 minutes prior to the readings. Not a massive warm-up but something. I did it on my own a little but a group might be nice.

- Meditation in a quiet place in nearby natural settings).

Other Comments

Purely Positive

- It was really wonderful and I think you are doing an amazing job with it.
- Another great Conference.
- Thank you for creating an amazing theatre experience.
- I loved having a bag for my readings!
- So grateful that I was included.
- I had the best week! I'm already itching to come back!!

Taking Responsibility

- My only criticism is for myself -- I wasn't as prepared as I should have been for one of the play readings. Next time, I will do my diligent homework, and do every reading I am assigned proper justice.

Rehearsal Comments

- I'm just a playwright who masqueraded as an actor. One of my playwrights could've benefitted from a longer rehearsal as it was a longer play. Overall, it was a great experience.
- There seemed to be a lot of other actors having issues with their schedules - not sure how to fix that, but had a lot of our limited rehearsal time wasted tracking down people.

Repeat from earlier...

- I would consider having 1 to 3 reads of more developed plays that had a longer rehearsal schedule. Perhaps two or three rehearsals. I think this would be helpful for the playwright in later stages of the play to have a more robust presentation of the ideas in her work. It would also provide the actors the opportunity to explore characters in a more meaningful way with the playwright.

Outdoor Stuff

- Had a blast! I love the current format. Would like to see maybe an organized hike or walk about town, but otherwise great.

Cast Better

- Inappropriate casting is distorting the Play Lab experience for the authors, audience, panelists, and cast.

Ten-Minute Play Slam

- I wish the Play Slam was more open to casting but it seems like you have to be part of the in crowd. And with the director never changing, only that particular crowd has a chance. Seems like a private club.

Monologue Workshop

- After choosing a monologue I would like to have an email address for the playwright so the piece could be edited down before I memorize it.

Get Rid of the Amateurs

- Continue to weed out weak actors, and bring in strong ones. The Conference is moving in such a good direction!

Business

- Agency networking or meeting producers in our areas would be great! Maybe an industry session?! Q and A

Communication

- Clearly communicating with people if they have been replaced or the show has been recast so no one has to deal with that uncomfortable two people here for the same part thing. I know mistakes happen, but it is soo uncomfortable.

Social

- Prior to the Conference assign newbies an old timer who can answer their questions and be their guide when they arrive. Saw a few newbies who didn't seem to interact much and some old timers who didn't extend themselves.



Until next year, love to all the people with the stamina to read this from Valdez!!!