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# The Dramatist

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## DG REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

### Atlanta

by Pamela Turner

Talking to young(er), launch-pad playwrights can be a butt-kicking experience. Their bright-eyed enthusiasm brings back the moment we each realized our own calling, and then reminds us not to spend so much time looking back that we get stuck there. Then there's the late starter who doesn't worry about looking back. One thing I share with Atlanta-based playwright-actor-lyricist and graphic designer Daryl Lisa Fazio is the realization that some starts aren't entirely planned (i.e., it may not be an MFA-kind of launch) and as she voiced it "there's something to be said for the fearlessness and risk-taking that comes with having no idea what the heck you're doing." Fazio calls

#### THE GUILD HAS 30 REGIONAL REPS

in urban areas with the greatest concentrations of Dramatists Guild members. Your Regional Reps are there to answer any questions you may have about your membership, keep you informed on local programming sponsored by the Guild, and provide up to three regional reports for *The Dramatist* each subscription year. A complete list of Reps (and their email addresses) can be found on the Staff Directory page of the Guild's website.

this "dumb-luck" and it started in the early 2000s when she was teaching at Truman State University and impulsively wrote a (first) play because there weren't any two-woman shows to do with an actor friend. Her luck continued when that play *Greyhounds* was picked up by

an off-off-Broadway theatre where, under-terred by performing above a police precinct with prostitutes in front, a metal-detector entrance, and no AC, Fazio came away with "some New York reviews and a serious jonesin' to make more plays, particularly with challenging roles for women."

That relates to the writing she loves. Fazio mentions "Sarah Ruhl's language and magic. Annie Baker's silences...Tina Fey's celebration of the brainy, quirky 40-something woman writing her own rules of life." The last may describe Fazio herself, as after studying acting as an undergrad, and realizing she "didn't have the cajones to be a working actor," she got a master's in graphic design "so I could snag that coveted tenure-track teaching job and retire a happy, old, distinguished professor." Fortunately, the track didn't stay straight and Fazio fell in with people including a composer collaborator who finally pulled her completely



Freed Spirits—table work



Daryl Lisa Fazio

off and into her new “fantasy” of being part of a real theatre community. “I chose Atlanta because it’s accessible and has survivable winters.” The impressive part is her strategy for also surviving the stranger/strange land stage of a new town. Fazio got graphic design gigs “at any theatre that would have me,” joined Working Title Playwrights, went to “every playwriting workshop I could find,” and “auditioned for stuff.” In essence she used a four-prong strategy to meet people and show that she meant business. She also knew how to use her most prominent assets. “It can be difficult to get

respect and recognition as a playwright when you’re relatively unknown.” But she could get past some barriers as a graphic designer, “proving myself to be creative and dependable and motivated, getting to know the theatre’s mission and audience, then submitting a script...” Fazio also met and began to collaborate with director Justin Anderson even before any productions were on the table, leading not just to working together when a paid gig presented itself, but also to becoming champions for each other in whatever was going on for either of them. As for what she looks for in any director,

Fazio mentioned having someone “who’s got your back when you’re not in the room” and “if it’s on the page....will get the actors there.”

Two recent projects that demonstrate Fazio’s increasing presence in Atlanta were both at Emory University. The first was an invitation for her to participate in (Emory Playwright Fellow) Edith Frenli’s 48-hour (Paula Vogel-style) Bakeoff workshop where Fazio learned that when “procrastination and self-doubt are obliterated due to time constraints, you can write a surprisingly good play...That knowledge has informed every bit of writing I’ve done since.” She also took part in local directors David Cook and Patricia Henritze’s “Inside Voices” collaboration—“and now I’m writing a full-length play and a TV pilot based on it.” Asked how other people could get on “the list” for such opportunities, Fazio said if there is a list “it’s about staying visible, meeting people and keeping those relationships active, and taking 95% (because you should be discerning) of the opportunities that come your way.” In response to the question “Does age matter for writers,” she responded that “Life experiences matter. Perspective matters. Observing people matters. Most of us require age to collect those...”

Currently this talented (and hard-working) playwright has three things going up with her name on them: a production of *Split in Three* at Aurora Theatre, a world premiere of (commissioned) *Freed Spirits* at Horizon Theatre Company, and a reading of (Bakeoff piece) *The Flower Room* as part of Actors Express Threshold New Play Series. Figures that Fazio describes her kid self as “quiet and introverted but creative and driven...nose-to-the-grind-



Split in Three at Florida Rep

NICK ADAMS PHOTOGRAPHY

stone with a goofy streak.”

And here’s a goodbye from our outgoing Young Ambassador:

‘As a Young Ambassador for the Dramatists Guild, I honestly wasn’t sure what to expect. I hoped to make acquaintance with more playwrights, to provide a diverse outlook on theatre, and bring voice to new companies without the clout and backing of larger companies. What I learned was that the playwriting world is so large, yet small (and that production space in this town is hard to come by). Each person and every production (in addition to DG events like workshops, our Coffee with an Actor, and readings) challenged me to rethink what I thought was possible on stage and how/where it could be performed. More importantly, I learned that networking after a show, before the show, and during intermission is equally significant as the art itself. Being a Young Ambassador has made me a more confident, more bold, more reflective, and more dedicated artist. For that I am grateful.

With my term ending, my current plans include writing more and submitting regularly. Since graduating from seminary in May, I’ve completed two new residencies (Taleamor Park and Blackacre Conservancy) and will attend Hambidge Residency in November. Additionally, I’m working with Little Five Arts Alive, a partnership with Horizon Theatre Company; continuing work with Karibu Performing Arts

and remain active in ministry within my denomination. Thank you to Pamela Turner for choosing me to learn alongside her. She is a jewel to this community. Thank you also to the Atlanta theatre community for embracing an emerging artist.’

-Amina S. McIntyre

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## Austin/ San Antonio

by Sheila Rinear

**S**an Antonio proudly boasts being the hometown of gifted Dramatists Guild member William Mohammad Razavi. His life, on-going achievements, and continued selfless outreach to build theatre and grow playwrights so impact from behind the scenes that they define him as a beacon who outshines any spotlight we could put on him.

William is the Artistic Director of The Overtime Theater ([theovertimetheater.org](http://theovertimetheater.org)), the only theatre in San Antonio doing all original work for the stage with approximately fifteen productions a year and several late-night series and an Improv Troupe...all with loyal followings. William teaches Playwriting and Screenwriting at both St. Mary’s University and Our Lady of the Lake University. He works in the Classical Studies Department at Trinity University where he lectures on Numismatics. While William is charming, engaging, productive, and omniscient, the term most used in the city when his name comes up is, “genius.”

William wrote his first play in the 1990s as a youngster at Trinity University. He went on to earn his MFA in playwriting from Brandeis and, although he can claim a huge canon of work in several genres, he’s written over 60 plays and been widely produced. I asked William what the focus of his life is right now.

**WR:** I’m not sure I have a singular focus. Being AD at the Overtime Theater gives me opportunities to develop local writers as well

as my own work and to keep an eye out for interesting and unusual works by writers from across the country and even overseas. (William read over 900 plays that came across his desk last year.)

I also work with the Southwest Association of Literary and Dramatic Artists (SWALDA). We’re creating a web series based on a play we produced at OT. Also, teaching gives me a chance to hone ideas. Taken together with the many personal writing projects I’m currently engaged in, there is some narrative that can be expressed about where I’m going with all this.

**SR:** Talk to me about San Antonio theatre.

**WR:** Unless resources are redirected towards the production of new work, the theatrical community in San Antonio will revert to a cargo cult where even the most “bold” of the local theatres will present highlights from Chicago and New York seasons from five years ago and the rest of the city will continue to present the greatest hits of 1955 thinking there’s nothing wrong. Part of the problem? Performers drift toward the well-known pieces and performers are driving lots of the enthusiasm in this community which in turn drives the decision making process. I don’t blame them for wanting to play iconic roles, but in a world of limited resources? That creates a situation where most of the resources go toward productions of old work and almost no resources



William R. Razavi