



Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

May 1, 2009

Dr. Linda M. Noble
Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia
270 Washington Street, SW
Atlanta, GA 30334-1450

Dear Dr. Noble and Awards Selection Committee:

It is my great pleasure to nominate Dr. Karen Robinson, Associate Professor for Theatre and Performance Studies at Kennesaw State University (KSU), for the 2010 Excellence in Teaching Award. Dr. Robinson is an outstanding teacher, combining scholarly teaching, a deep dedication to mentoring, and a commitment to the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Student and collegial feedback demonstrate her success in combining a scholarly approach that incorporates literature-based innovative interdisciplinary content and teaching techniques with her enthusiasm for teaching and student engagement. Her students are clearly not passive learners. They are involved in exploring and critical thinking about the material. Further, she is an inspirational role model for her students and is deeply committed to mentoring students, both with respect to their academic success as well as their success after graduation.

She is also a campus leader for curricular innovations. Some examples of her leadership include: serving as the Global Learning Coordinator for the College of the Arts where she has successfully advocated for academic and study-abroad programs which increased opportunities for students to acquire global learning knowledge and skills; general Education Coordinator for Theatre and Performance Studies, where she collaborated with arts colleagues to enhance the global learning content of arts general education courses; and her contributions to developing a departmental rubric for evaluating writing in all of its writing-intensive courses.

Dr. Robinson is also active in disseminating her innovative approaches through professional publications and presentations. She has several articles on globalization of the arts curriculum and a number of presentations on innovative teaching in the arts appreciation course. In addition, she offered a popular workshop on campus on using the skills of theatre and performance studies to enhance teaching effectiveness.

Dr. Robinson is a role model for teaching excellence, and she is a noted theatre director. Her outstanding teaching was recognized at the campus level in 2008 when her colleagues selected her as the KSU Foundation Distinguished Teaching Award recipient.

Sincerely,

Lendley C. Black
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Karen Robinson
Reflective Statement

It is an honor to submit this application in support of my nomination for the University of Georgia Regents' Excellence in Teaching Award. In the following paragraphs I will summarize my approach to teaching, supervising, and mentoring in the Department of Theatre and Performance Studies at Kennesaw State University.

I am a teacher, scholar, and theatre artist (specifically, a performer, and a director of works for the stage). At the heart of my teaching philosophy are collaboration and collective learning with colleagues and students, and the marriage of theory and artistic practice. This is most vividly reflected in the profile of the scholar-artist, a prototype I seek for theatre and performance studies students, and one that I model through my own research and creative activity. No less important is my fervent belief that the arts play a crucial role in building a better world; this fuels my pursuit of intersections between the arts, education, and the larger community, whether local or global.

With students, I do not wish to merely "profess" my expertise, but rather, to generate questions and provide challenging experiences that pique curiosity, stimulate independent learning, and promote intellectual, artistic, and personal growth. To concur with Parker Palmer's statement in *The Courage to Teach*: I view myself as a mentor/leader who "is there to guide a collective inquiry into the 'great thing.'" This 'great thing,' whether it be an essay, a story, a play, a piece of music, a painting, an artist, or a performance, is a vehicle for deep and lasting discoveries about self, society, and the human community. Our collective inquiry must be rigorous and disciplined, yet playful; at the same time it must inspire and transform. I view my research and preparation as catalysts for lively and complex exchanges of ideas that light the atmosphere on fire and inspire students to carry inquiry and exchange beyond the classroom or rehearsal hall. My goal is that the students emerge with an awareness of—and ability to reconstruct—the *process* of reflection, synthesis, communication, and creation (whether written, spoken, or performed) that equips them for life-long learning.

As a teacher of theatre and performance studies, I emphasize *embodied practice*—a cornerstone of performance studies pedagogy—as essential to deep and lasting learning. Performance through body, voice, emotion, and imagination is a mode of inquiry and a way of knowing that transcends knowledge (in Bloom's taxonomy) to reach higher levels of attitudinal transformation that include respect, tolerance, and empathy for others. This progression is one that promotes understanding between peoples of vastly different backgrounds, beliefs, and cultures and is linked to my emphasis on multi-cultural and global learning.

As the following paragraphs will demonstrate, I implement embodied learning in conjunction with theory and collective reflection in a variety of contexts: the **classroom**, in **theatrical productions**, **global learning projects**, **individualized coaching**, and through the orchestration of **professional interactions and internships** that connect students to local, national, and international arenas. I am especially successful with those students that I encounter in two or more of these contexts. In such instances, the work that we begin in the classroom is reinforced and deepened during intensive rehearsals for productions or auditions; similarly, productions combined with actor-coaching experiences better prepare students for "real-world" work and careers in graduate school and/or professional theatre.

Cultivating the Scholar-Artist: Embodied Learning in the Classroom. I have taught over 35 courses throughout the 21 years of my teaching career. (See CV.) In each of these classes I interweave lectures, computer technology, recorded media, readings, discussions, and assignments that integrate the writing of scholarly papers with creative performances. Ongoing combination of analysis and embodied learning occurs through “enactment of real and imagined experience [as well as theory] in which learning occurs through sensory awareness and kinesthetic engagement.”¹ Assessment is both collective and collaborative: Students continually provide detailed verbal feedback for each other’s work. In the supporting documentation I highlight two of the courses that I currently teach.

Theatrical Productions: Embodied Learning as Artistic Practice.

I direct one fully realized production each academic year. (See selected titles in CV.) During the creative process of bringing a play from page to stage (8 weeks @ 22 hours per week), I engage with students in a collective approach to developing characterizations through rigorous textual examination, vocal and physical exercises and improvisations, and daily feedback that result in immediate revisions of student work. As scholar-artists, student actors combine research into author context, content, and style, with the creation of “performance analogues,” by which they translate their analyses into specific emotional, vocal, and physical choices for every moment of the text. The outcome is a series of public performances during which period the student actors and designers garner feedback from peers and additional faculty members. During this period, I facilitate “talk-backs,” (dialogues between audiences and actors/designers) after the performances. Students also complete written assessments of their artistic and personal growth after the rehearsal and performance process.

I link each of these theatrical productions to other fields of academic study by means of presentations in colleagues’ courses in English literature, American Studies, Arts Appreciation, and Freshman Learning Communities. I also connect with Student Success Services; for example, when I directed *Boy Gets Girl* (2004)—a play about stalking—the dramaturg and I collaborated with the Student Wellness Center and Campus Security to offer presentations on campus about safety and therapy for stalking victims. In the supporting documentation I feature a recent example of my production work.

Global Learning: Global Perspectives, Intercultural Engagement, and Engaged

Citizenship. For the past four years, I have increasingly focused on using theatre and performance to foster global citizenship. As College of the Arts Global Learning Coordinator—a position designed to support KSU’s Quality Enhancement Plan: Global Learning for Engaged Citizenship—I promote and facilitate global learning projects generated by colleagues in the Department of Visual Arts and the School of Music, as well as in my own department. At the teaching, supervising, and mentoring level, I follow Bloom’s taxonomy by encouraging students to study (knowledge), make (skills) and value (attitudes) performance work that asks important questions about identity, ethics, and social change in a variety of cultural contexts. I have supported this work with professional development that includes faculty learning communities and travels to Kenya, Tanzania,

¹ Stucky, Nathan and Cynthia Wimmer, eds. *Teaching Performance Studies*. Carbondale: U of Southern Illinois P, 2002. 3. Print.

Brazil, and a site visit to Casablanca, Morocco as preparation for a 2009 Study Abroad course. As my supporting documentation will demonstrate, I integrate materials and experiences from travels and research into classroom experiences, production work, and special global learning projects.

Intersections Between KSU Production Activities and the Local, National and/or International Arenas. I regularly foster alliances between my students and the “real-world” professional theatre community by means of KSU projects that intersect with local and national theatre activities. Through these intersections, students participate, once again, in embodied learning, with the added benefit of being engaged theatre citizens within a larger arena. My supporting documentation features one such project of international dimensions.

Coordination and Supervision of Internships within the Professional Theatre Community. Theatre and performance studies majors reach higher levels of commitment, artistry, and business acumen when they practice the analysis and art of theatre in professional venues outside our university classrooms and performances. The internships I coordinate—and highlight in the supporting documentation—offer students the opportunity to “shadow” top-notch professionals and build alliances that lead to opportunities during their undergraduate studies and after graduation.

Individualized Mentoring: Coaching the Student Actor for Auditions for Professional Theatre Companies and Graduate Programs. While the classroom provides opportunities for collective embodied learning, significant artistic growth is reliant upon individualized instruction outside of the classroom. For this reason, I regularly provide 30-60-minute individual coaching sessions for current students and alumni, during which we polish performance skills in projecting emotional truth, dynamic physical and vocal qualities, and strong interview techniques. Of 19 students I have coached in the last five years, three have been accepted into graduate actor training programs, four cast in theatre productions in the Atlanta area, and twelve have participated in Region IV Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival acting competitions.

Student Success During Undergraduate Study or after Graduation.

A number of students whom I have mentored are flourishing as scholar-artists: students like Mannie Rivers, who, during an international artists residency (see “Shangilia” in supporting documentation), discovered his “calling” to use theatre work with children to make the world a better place; or Elizabeth Neidel who, after an internship I helped her secure at the Alliance Theatre, is now a full time employee at that organization (see letter in supporting documentation); or Cassy Rush who, after completing a masters degree in drama education at NYU, has become a prize-winning playwright-educator, and works as a teaching-artist in underserved communities and renowned New York theatres. A chart in my supporting documentation shows theatrical areas in which students I have mentored are working.

Reflective Practice. For my ongoing revision of teaching, mentoring, and supervising strategies, I use three sources for revision: Self-assessment of particular strategies, student evaluations, and peer dialogues and reviews. In my supporting documentation I provide examples of instructional revision.

Scholarship of Teaching & Learning. As a scholar-artist, I frequently synthesize teaching, artistic practice, and global learning endeavors into written scholarship for dissemination in publications and presentations. A particularly effective example of this evolved from the confluence of a production, faculty learning community, and travel, all focusing on Kenya. These activities culminated in an essay entitled “Ethnographic Performance and Global Learning: *You Always Go Home.*” Please refer to my CV for other examples of SoTL.

Karen Robinson
Supporting Documentation

Cultivating the Scholar-Artist: Embodied Learning in the Classroom

Two of the courses that I teach currently are **TPS 1600: Introduction to Performance Studies**—required for all theatre and performance studies majors; and a more advanced course for performers –**TPS 4400: Auditioning Practicum**—that focuses on preparation of performances, resumes, portfolios, and interview strategies for professional theatre auditions and/or admission into graduate schools.

1. TPS 1600. Introduction to Performance Studies

Course Description (excerpted from Spring 2009 Syllabus):

Introduction to Performance Studies is an introduction to performance as a field of study and as an art form. In this course, will encounter, discuss, explore, question, and practice many modes of performance in multiple aspects of human life. In particular, we will consider three areas within the discipline of performance studies: **cultural performance, literary performance, and performance art**. Mirroring the departmental philosophy, we will approach the material as **scholar-artists** who embrace a marriage of scholarly research, analysis, reflection, and creative practice. Students craft and present three solo performances that feature storytelling, ethnography, ritual, poetry, performance art, and mixed media. Through your work, you will experience performance as a method of analysis and a mode of inquiry as well as a creative and aesthetic act. Ultimately, this class will broaden your sense of what performance has been, is, and can be.

Class atmosphere: Our learning is as *collective* and *collaborative* as the art of performance itself. Thus our time together represents not only an opportunity, but also an *obligation* to ask questions, to share our insights, and to receive those of our classmates with open minds. Then comes the payoff: that exhilaration of creative and/or intellectual discovery that is sparked both individually and collectively. Often these shared insights become the genesis for innovative and illuminating performance choices, as well as *written* insights in essays and papers.

Course Objectives (excerpted from Spring 2009 Syllabus):

[I developed the following departmental and course learning outcomes in collaboration with colleagues as part of KSU's Assessment of Learning initiative; note the alignment with the scholar-artist profile I mentioned above.]

This class contributes to meeting the following learning outcomes in the TPS major:

As artists, students will engage in creative activity and produce aesthetic work.

Students will:

1. Demonstrate professional work habits, etiquette, and collaborative skills appropriate to the discipline.
2. Use performance as mode of inquiry, method of analysis, and creative act.
3. Apply textual analysis to performance and/or production.
4. Practice ethical representation of others.

As scholars, students will produce and integrate research into discourse about theatre and performance studies. Students will:

1. Think critically and conceptually about texts, performance, and production.

2. Speak and write clearly and effectively and communicate with precision, cogency, and rhetorical force.
3. Conduct, communicate, and cite research in a manner consistent with scholarly discourse.

Specifically, this course addresses the following outcomes (See page 4 for Likert scale responses on student evaluations):

1. Students will articulate a foundational understanding of the field of performance studies and identify/describe key concepts used in the field.
2. Students will demonstrate a knowledge and appreciation of performance as a *field of study*, as an *art form*, and as a *mode of inquiry*.
3. Students will discuss, describe, and practice various forms of performance.
4. Students will apply dramatistic and modal analysis to the performance of poetic texts.
5. Students will develop an understanding of *performance analogues* (e.g., performance choices based upon critical analysis of texts) and the relationship between the *analysis of text* and the *creative synthesis of performance*.
6. Students will apply a variety of approaches to the creation of performances.

SUMMARY of ASSIGNMENTS	Brief Description
Performance 1: Solo ethnographic performance and reflective essay analyzing the means and function of storytelling.	Students partner with a peer to exchange family stories, use them to create solo oral history performances, and practice ethical representation of one another.
Performance 2: Solo ritual presentation and analytical paper that applies performance studies theory and concepts to religious ritual.	Students visit a religious ritual outside their own faith and craft a speech analyzing the experience. Empirical observations are interwoven with application of performance studies concepts and theories.
Performance 3: Solo poetry performance and analytical paper.	Students select a poem from an anthology and prepare it for performance, using dramatistic and modal analysis to create performance analogues that transform analysis into performance choices.
Performance 4: Performance art (<u>group</u> performance) and paper.	Students create an original mixed-media performance that examines a particular question of identity: race, gender, or class.
Final essay (take home exam).	Students write an essay demonstrating the broad spectrum of performance and support their arguments with citations from readings and experiences throughout the semester.

SAMPLE RUBRIC AND PARTIAL ASSESSMENT FOR POETRY

PERFORMANCE: Maya Angelou's "Preacher Don't Send Me" (4=strongest rating)

PART TWO: Specific Performance Type: Poetry Performance 1 2 3 4

1. Projection of imagery: *Your sensory showing was especially vivid: smelling the "brunch"; seeing the "sun," swaying to the "jazz" as you heard it; caressing your cheek as you remembered/yearned for the season of fall: these were superb*

examples of combining emotional connection, gesture, and vocal shifts to make the images palpable for the audience.

2. Understanding of structure (progression and shifts in emotions and thoughts; fulcrum): *Very strong! Powerful use of a build as you progressed through the poem—I noted in particular your build on “milk for free” as your conviction mounted; and yet, you carefully painted the various emotional responses your persona experienced throughout to provide variety within the larger build. The pull-back to a soft pleading after your choice for the climax “Promise me that” for the phrase “nothing at all” was unexpected—in a unique and inventive sense—and, as a result, incredibly moving: Like a film camera zooms in to capture an intimate moment, you pulled us into a close-up of your persona’s need and vulnerability at that moment, and thus, created a strong ending to the performance.*
3. Understanding of prosody (metrical patterns, rhythm, organization of stanzas): *VERY CLEAR understanding embodied in your performance. Without sounding “Sing-song-y” you made the internal rhymes come alive and thereby emphasized the musicality of the poem—this is not easy to do. I noted in particular how you sounded the vowels and consonants in “kill” and “hill”—elongating the words so that they resonated—excellent example of emphasizing the tone color to powerful effect. The definition between stanzas was also very clear with your subtle shifts from one cluster of images to the next.*
4. Projection of personal/character (and point of view): *Another STRONG suit of the performance; your persona was fully realized, and so believable—as my notes above indicate: emotionally connected and present in the performance.*
5. Focus (clarity and appropriateness of choices): *Very consistent placement and clear closed focus on the “Preacher”; and appropriate shifts to inner-closed focus for private moments when you were hearing the jazz and feeling the fall, for example.*

Student comments about the course:

TPS 1600: Introduction to Performance Studies.

I felt that the instructor of this course was very passionate about the material she was teaching. Every class session the instructor would go out of her way to look each individual in the eye while communicating. Her “group” approach to this class was extraordinarily effective. She made every person in the class feel equal as far as valuing their opinions.

I adore Professor Robinson and especially appreciate her passion for everything she teaches. I liked the way grades were broken down, the percentages and such. She challenged us to be clear & articulate scholar-artists and I truly loved having Prof. Robinson again.

This class does an excellent job of asking its students to articulate and interpret artistic works. It also allows students to engage in multiple styles of performance that they may not be able to otherwise perform in.

Professor Robinson gave great lectures that went along with the assigned readings. They were well-organized lectures and were beneficial. The performances were also beneficial.

Each assignment gave a glimpse of different types of performance studies, as well as performance art. Professor was always willing to lend extra time to students who needed further clarification of assignments and concepts. This was a very challenging class but made me aware of my own strengths and weaknesses.

I also administered a supplementary (not required by the college) Student Rating Form with a Likert scale—1-5 (5 signified maximum impact) seeking student ratings on their progress with each of the course Student Learning Outcomes (1-4 and 6) listed above on page 3. I have since revised SLO's in Spring 09; thus, only 1-4 & 6 were rated in 2008:

TPS 1600	SLO 1	SLO 2	SLO 3	SLO 4	SLO 6
Fall 08	4.46	4.53	4.80	4.33	4.8
Spring 08	4.53	4.53	4.33	4.66	4.46

Peer Review (Dr. Hannah Harvey, Assistant Professor, Theatre and Performance Studies):

When I entered the room, the students were engaged in a heated discussion about their peers' in-class performances of poetry—praising, giving constructive criticism, drawing parallels between each others' work, and engaging their readings and theory in the discussion led by Prof. Robinson. What I admire most about Karen's teaching style is her ability to make such discussion-based lectures seem so effortless—during this discussion, she drew students back to their readings and asked questions back out to the class, such that students were teaching each other the application of the theories Karen had previously taught in class. She has given her students a most powerful gift—instilling in them the desire to learn and empowering them to critically question the world.

2. TPS 4400. Auditioning Practicum. Learning Objectives (excerpted from syllabus):

1. You will apply acting techniques to the preparation and performance of four audition monologues, as well as cold readings of scenes.
2. You will prepare and perform a variety of audition formats for the theatre.
3. You will produce a resume, headshot, and introductory letter that are appropriate to the profession of theatre.
4. You will practice critiquing the auditions of your peers.

Final Exam and Intersection with Atlanta area theatre professionals: I coordinated a panel of five artistic directors/artistic associates from the Atlanta theatre community to watch, interview, and provide feedback for the students' audition presentations. Several of these students have since been invited to audition for these theatres; one has earned a role.

Student reflection at end of semester:

The knowledge I have gained from the audition practicum class is probably some of the most important, helpful, practical, and useful information I have received from all of my classes in the Department of Theatre and Performance Studies at Kennesaw State University. I say this because this class was focused on helping me get the job! But the most enjoyable part of this class was the group of fine young actors I worked with every week. We grew together and learned from each other. Their support and direction, along with that of our amazing instructor Karen Robinson, throughout the semester was truly invaluable.

Student e-mail:

Hi Professor Robinson, Just wanted to update you and let you know that Phillip was cast as "The DJ" at Georgia Ensemble. I am very glad that I had the opportunity to audition; it was a wonderful learning opportunity and experience. Of course, I would not have been

able to audition for the show had it not been for your Audition Practicum class. The class was definitely one of the most beneficial classes I have taken at KSU as far as relating to furthering my career as an aspiring professional actor. Thank you again for everything you have taught me.

THEATRICAL PRODUCTION: Embodied Learning as Artistic Practice

Everything That Rises Must Converge: a regional premiere of two Flannery O'Connor short stories adapted for the stage: "A View of the Woods" and "Everything That Rises Must Converge." April 14 – 19, 2009.

Involving a cast of nine student actors—four African Americans and five Caucasians—the ensemble members embodied narrators *and* characters, transforming instantaneously from one identity to another in full view of the audience. The complexity of O'Connor's language required the students to practice sophisticated projection of narrator/character point of view and advanced vocal techniques in pitch, emphasis, projection, and phrasing. Multiple settings within the story challenged the students to develop complex and innovative ensemble movement patterns and gestures. I used rehearsal exercises adapted from current pedagogy in collective theatre making to nurture heightened sensitivity to each other's emotions, movements, and energy. Given the social context of segregation that informs both stories, rehearsals began with rigorous examination of the text and participation in dialogues about race and identity. Students engaged in frank discourse about race relations, and as a result enhanced their abilities to converse openly about difficult—often "taboo"—issues. Mutual understanding, empathy, and respect were among the learning outcomes.

The following quote is excerpted from a website connected to the production, one co-created by myself, the dramaturg and the KSU College of the Arts webmasters to prepare audience members on and off campus for attending the production

(www.kennesaw.edu/theatre/EverythingThatRises/index.html):

What is the most rewarding aspect of performing this play?

Terry: *Working with a cast of nine. We have gotten extremely close, and we're able to have discussions about things that I don't think any of us would talk openly about, such as race and culture. It provides this safe space because it's a small enough cast for us to be able to feel like a family. Sometimes people say things that might upset other people, but for the most part, we are able to accept one another and help one another when help is needed. Also, working with Karen Robinson is amazing. She is absolutely brilliant. She can see things that none of us can see. I can't say enough good things about her.*

Post-performance student reflections (3) in response to my question: "What aspects of the director's rehearsal techniques helped you develop your work the most effectively?"

1) *Maintaining that delicate balance between not pushing enough and pushing too hard. Introducing new ideas, concepts/bringing issues in a way that isn't overwhelming. Flexibility in confronting and solving problems.* 2) *I feel that Karen Robinson did a fabulous job of providing a safe environment of exploration and fun for our ensemble to grow. I particularly enjoyed the team building exercises that we used at the beginning of our rehearsal process.* 3) *The honesty when something wasn't working and making suggestions to help us find what would work.*

Peer responses to the performance:

I am writing to say BRAVO! on an excellent opening night performance. The show was a visual and auditory feast, rich with well-crafted staging, text and nice blend of all the supporting elements. I truly value the way you used and highlighted the talents of the students, giving them a great opportunity to shine and grow. I know that you had some challenges to overcome along the way, however the work was powerful and moving, and I hope well worth the struggles. I love when a theatrical experience makes me wake up the next morning thinking about the work. —Ivan Pulinkala, KSU Director of Dance

THE PRODUCTION WAS FANTASTIC! Please tell the cast that I thought they were collectively wonderful. [...] I'm sure I'll be imagining your production each time I re-read these two stories. —Bruce Gentry, Professor, Georgia College and State University, and Editor, Flannery O'Connor Review

Recent Global Learning Projects for Faculty, Students, and Staff**1. Shangilia: Kenyan Youth Choir engages in residency at KSU.**

Shangilia is a school in Nairobi, Kenya I visited during my travels that takes in street children and orphans and immerses them in arts curricula as a means for healing and rehabilitation. After the visit, I designed, secured funding (@ \$25,000), and facilitated a four-day international residency featuring a 26-member Kenyan Youth Choir from the school, and a team of internationally renowned American theatre and music directors, musicians, and designers that joined them at KSU from November 5-9, 2007. The residency was a fusion of classroom interactions (over 350 students), lectures, discussions, and daily social interactions that involved over 600 students, faculty, staff and administrators. The week culminated in a sold-out performance for 630 people (linked to theatre, music, and visual arts general education classes, among others) in KSU's Bailey Performance Hall.

Response essays written by students in general education theatre classes:

One aspect of the event that impressed me was when the children sang "I Believe I Can Fly" at the end of the performance. Right before that song was sung a few of the children expressed themselves in words. One child stated that she has the right to succeed and the right to be whatever it is she wants to be. Another child stated that he will see you again, those of you who walked away or rolled up the window when help was needed. This was very heart breaking. [...] Once the concert was over I felt like I needed to do something different in order to make a difference in this world. I want my children to know that the poor may be with them always but you should always help those that you can. This concert was a real eye-opener.

*...The event helped to fulfill the value of art relating to learning about other cultures. I was impressed by the African culture and do think that I would like to travel there some day to speak with those who are there and to see how they live and experience their culture first hand. I think that gives people a sense of appreciation when they can visit other countries who are not as fortunate as we are here in this country. It also helps us to count our blessings and to maybe even give a little back to whatever community that we find ourselves in. ****

To say the least I was greatly changed by Shangilia's visit to KSU. I've made a decision to further my studies in the performance arts with a concentration in theatre education for social change. I want to be a part of a performing art whose goal is to make the world a

better place. —Mannie Rivers, Theatre and Performance Studies Major

2. *You Always Go Home: Creating Community for Kenyans and Americans at KSU.*

In 2006 and 2007, playwright/co-director Margaret Baldwin and I created a world premiere entitled *You Always Go Home* that celebrated the lives of Kenyan students, staff, and community members. With a cast of eight students of various ethnic backgrounds, we enhanced our collective understanding of Kenyan culture through readings, interviews with Kenyans, discussion/reflection, and attendance at KSU “Year of Kenya” lectures, as well as participation in a Kenyan dance workshop taught by a Kenyan guest artist. The performance that emerged wove together interviews, family stories, culture shock experiences, traditional Kenyan dances, music, and song. It was a featured event in an international conference hosted by KSU: “The Effect of the Kenyan Diaspora on the Development of Kenya”; following the event, I co-authored with Professor Baldwin an essay published in KSU’s *Journal of Global Initiatives* and presented the paper in a seminar at the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (see CV).

Student reflections on creating, rehearsing, and performing *You Always Go Home*:

*Before You Always Go Home, I knew very little about Kenyan people and their culture. Honestly, I didn't care much to ever find out. But thanks to this entire experience I have learned a great deal about Kenyans. I [have] also come to revere them as a people. I deeply respect their determination and courage to live through and overcome some of life's greatest tests. ****

*Our Friday performance for the Kenyan conference was the most rewarding performance I have ever been involved in. The talkback let me know that the Kenyans were incredibly grateful for our dedication to giving their country a voice. Some even said it felt like they were back in Kenya just for a while. Their comments touched my heart and let me know that we accomplished our job as performers. ****

Response to production: *I want to write to congratulate you both on your excellent work on *You Always Go Home*. I am delighted that I saw the show on Friday evening with our guests from Kenya in the audience. Their appreciation and gratitude for the work was palpable throughout the performance and in their enthusiastic response afterwards. I'm sure the performance will be talked about for a long time by many people. I especially appreciate how the show worked to build and to heal group identity and to foster community. A beautiful testament to the power of story, performance, and theatre!*

— Dr. John Gentile, Chair, Department of Theatre and Performance Studies

3. *Monkey King at Kennesaw State University and in Shanghai, China.* This touring production utilized innovative “collective creation” techniques wherein I as director, the playwright, choreographer, set, costume, lighting designers, and eight student actors co-created an original intercultural adaptation of the Chinese folk novel *The Journey to the West*. We have since written a paper theorizing about the process (yet to be published).

Impact on Student Learning: *Monkey King was a very positive learning experience for me—both educationally and creatively. As a student, it was a great honor to be allowed the opportunity to be a part of the writing process of the script. I am now more aware of how to utilize my body and its instincts as a tool in the writing and development processes of a script and its production. Also, I now have a very unique and very enriching experience by having performed *Monkey King* in China. I do not believe that most universities offer their students such benefit by allowing their students the chance to travel to such great lengths.*

This trip was a once in a lifetime opportunity and I learned so much more by this adventure than I ever could have if we had solely performed Monkey King within the boundaries of our school's campus. I would not substitute my personal cultural experience for the world.

–Sara Gozier, Monkey King Ensemble Member

Intersections Between KSU Production Activities and Local/National /International Arenas

In 2006-7, I spearheaded the department's participation in the *365 Days/365 Plays* International Festival created and initiated by Pulitzer prizewinner Suzan-Lori Parks and director/producer Bonnie Metzger. (In 2002-2003 Parks wrote a play a day for a year.) Atlanta was one of 16 communities across the U.S. that produced all 365 of these works. I served as artistic coordinator, coach, and mentor for fifty-one KSU students who rehearsed, directed, designed, and performed world premieres of ten of the plays in January 2007, and ten of the plays in September 2007. In September, student writers composed "response plays" that were juxtaposed with Parks' plays. Theatre and Performance Studies classes taught by myself and colleagues incorporated attendance and discussions of the plays and performances. Lisa Paulsen, faculty at Emory University and co-coordinator of the Atlanta 365 activities wrote about the KSU productions: *I saw undergraduate students take the stage with confidence, having made sophisticated choices about very open-ended material. [...] Karen, we are deeply appreciative of the leadership role you played in the Atlanta 365 network and recognize the important educational artistic impact your work had well beyond your campus.*

Coordination/ Supervision of Internships within the Professional Theatre Community

Through my personal connections with numerous professional Atlanta theatres I have assisted 30 students over the last five years with placements and/or supervised their internships in professional theatres:

- Tauheedah Hassan: administration, Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre Company
 - Elizabeth Neidel, Mannie Rivers: education interns, The Alliance Theatre Company
 - Ashley Cooper: production intern, Horizon Theatre Company
 - Rachelle Aiken: marketing assistant, Georgia Shakespeare
 - Brandon McCravy: acting intern, Synchronicity Performance Group
 - Joseph Borrillo: technical theatre; Briana Brock: artistic/administration; Michelle Callahan: marketing assistant, Theatre in the Square
 - Ryan Everett, Matt Lewis, Olivia Aston: acting interns, Georgia Ensemble Theatre
- KSU theatre and performance studies interns are now in demand as this e-mail excerpt attests: *We are thrilled. We are always delighted to have KSU interns!!!*

--Carol Jones, Director, Institute for Educators and Teaching Artists, Alliance Theatre

Student Success During Undergraduate Study or after Graduation

The chart below indicates the array of areas in which students I have mentored have worked or are working; some of these students are working in more than one area:

# Mentees	Graduate Studies	Theatre Ed.	Theatre / Film Performance	Design / Technical	Admin.
26	7	6	11	3	3

Hi Karen, I'm proud to announce that I got accepted into Sarah Lawrence's MFA Program. Thank you so much for your recommendation and help. All the best, Sherricka

Examples of Reflective Practice

*The following examples describe the **topic or task**, the **challenge**, the **source for a solution**, and the **revised teaching strategy**. Courses referenced are those I discussed on pages 1-4. My final example illustrates connections between class and rehearsal techniques.*

TPS 1600: Students prepare speeches analyzing their experience attending a religious ritual outside of their faith. During performances they were judging, sometimes mocking the rituals with their language, intonation, and gestures; moreover, they were not applying performance studies concepts to analyze the rituals. After reflection and dialogue with an alumna who is an educator, I wrote two versions analyzing the same ritual: one judgmental and “auto-centered,” and one that was open-minded and analytical. I asked two students to perform them; discussion followed, and the students identified the linguistic and behavioral differences between judgmental and open-minded analyses.

TPS 1600: Assignments include readings in a challenging text—*Performance Studies: An Introduction*, by Richard Schechner. In evaluations, students commented on their difficulty reading and comprehending the text. The following term I told students to bring in questions about the readings. At the beginning of the class session, I asked each of the students to write their questions on the board and “perform” them for the class; discussion and clarification followed. In addition, I distributed and discussed handouts summarizing and clarifying the concepts that I wanted to emphasize in the readings.

TPS 1600: In groups, students create and present performance art pieces that question how society marks identity according to race, gender, or class. Students were either avoiding substantive investigations because they wanted to “play it safe,” or did not understand how to identify an issue. After conference with a colleague who uses the same assignment, I prefaced the project with a class session devoted to collective sharing of personal narratives about experiences when they were treated a certain way because of race, class or gender. I then asked the students to use these first-hand experiences as fodder for their performances.

TPS 4490: As part of their audition presentations, students must enter a room and introduce themselves and their monologues to their auditors. A seemingly simple task, students were not rehearsing, and appeared awkward and tentative. Drawing upon 25 years of conducting professional auditions, I created a class session composed entirely of exercises focusing on entering a room, greeting future employers, and introducing oneself with confidence and charisma.

All Courses: Our department requires all students to use correct MLA formatting and citation conventions for their papers. Handouts and my corrections on papers were not yielding improvement. I created a separate assignment, *just* focused on creating a Works Cited list, and gave individualized verbal corrections for each student’s attempt in the first ten minutes of class with instructions that they re-submit corrected copies. Next semester, I shall introduce this assignment within the first week of classes.

TPS 1600 and Rehearsals for Productions: Because performance work relies upon collective willingness to perform in front of others, to critique, and be critiqued, students do their best performance work when I establish a mutually supportive, team relationship early in the class or rehearsal process. Towards this end, I continually integrate new ensemble exercises into the classroom and rehearsal hall. For the last three years, I have made use of ensemble theatre exercises from recently published books on the topic: for example, *The Viewpoints Book*, by Anne Bogart and Tina Packer, and *Through the Body*, by Dymphna Callery.

KAREN ROBINSON

Curriculum Vitae

krobins1@kennesaw.edu
770-420-4446

309 Gordon Ave NE
Atlanta, GA 30307

EDUCATION:

MFA, Directing: Tisch School of the Arts, New York University. May 1984.

BA, magna cum laude, Theatre Arts: University of Colorado, Boulder. May 1980.

BA, English Literature: University of Colorado, Boulder. May 1980.

TEACHING HISTORY:

Kennesaw State University Department of Theatre and Performance Studies: Associate Professor, General Education Coordinator and Coordinator of Internships. January 2000 to present.

Introduction to Performance Studies

Introduction to Theatre Studies

Senior Seminar: Samuel Beckett

Directing Styles

Theatre Practicum and Production

Play Analysis for Production

Arts in Society: Theatre and Performance

Principles of Directing

Auditioning Practicum

Arts in Society: The Arts in New Orleans

North Carolina School of the Arts: Faculty in General Studies. January 1989 – May 1999.

Theatre History: Ancient Greece to Postmodern Theatre

Topics in Dramatic Literature: Recent Broadway and Off Broadway Successes; Women Playwrights;

Shakespeare in Performance; Farce; Ibsen, Chekhov and Shaw; Theatre of the Absurd; Irish Drama;

Ethnic Playwrights in America; Comedies of Manners; Pulitzer Prize Winners; The Playwright as

Social Conscience; Molière; The Changing Image of the Hero; American Musicals; Images of Women

Humanities: The Arts in Context

Graduate Seminar in Contemporary Theatre

Wake Forest University, Department of Speech Communication & Theatre Arts. Visiting Faculty. 1988.

Introduction to Theatre *** Graduate Seminar in Theatre Aesthetics *** Directing Lab

THEATRICAL DIRECTION: ACADEMIC THEATRE (Selected Titles):

Everything That Rises Must Converge (regional premiere) Kennesaw State University

You Always Go Home (co-director/world premiere) Kennesaw State University

Monkey King (world premiere / adaptation) KSU & Shanghai Theatre Academy

Boy Gets Girl (2nd alternate, KCACTF Regional Festival) Kennesaw State University

A Midsummer Night's Dream LaGrange College

Top Girls Wake Forest University

HMS Pinafore North Carolina School of the Arts

Dido and Aeneas North Carolina School of the Arts

A Doll House Wake Forest University

Antigone Wake Forest University

PROFESSIONAL THEATRE (Selected Titles):

As You Like It Georgia Shakespeare

Twelfth Night Georgia Shakespeare

A Streetcar Named Desire Georgia Shakespeare

The School for Wives (world premiere: tr. by Ranjit Bolt) Georgia Shakespeare Festival

Amadeus Georgia Shakespeare Festival

Tartuffe (world premiere: tr. by Ranjit Bolt) Georgia Shakespeare Festival

Much Ado About Nothing Georgia Shakespeare Festival

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO TEACHING AND LEARNING:

- Baldwin, Margaret and Karen Robinson. "Ethnographic Performance and Global Learning: *You Always Go Home*." *Journal of Global Initiatives* 2 (2007).

- Collins, Charlotte, Edward Eanes, and Karen Robinson. "Interdisciplinary and Global Approaches to Arts Appreciation." *The International Journal of the Arts in Society* 2 (2007).
- Gentile, John S. and Karen Robinson, eds. *Arts in Society: Theatre, Supplemental Textbook, First and Second Editions*. Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 2000 and 2002.

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS RELATED TO TEACHING AND LEARNING:

- "The Topical Arts Appreciation Course: Using the Past and Present Arts of New Orleans." College Music Society. Atlanta. September 28, 2008.
- "Theatre and Performance as Tools for Global Engagement: Performing Ritual as Intercultural Investigation." Association of Theatre in Higher Education 22nd Conference. Denver. July 31, 2008.
- "The Case for Globalization in Theatre Studies." Association for Theatre in Higher Education 21st Conference. New Orleans. July 28, 2007.
- "*You Always Go Home*: The Power of Narration and Memory among Kenyan Students." 2007 International Conference and Investment Forum: The Role of the Kenyan Diaspora in Kenya's Development. Kennesaw State University. March 23, 2007.
- "Interdisciplinary and Global Approaches to Art Education." International Symposium on the Arts in Society at Tisch School of the Arts. New York City, February 2007.
- "Getting Into the Teaching Zone." Center for Teaching and Learning: Kennesaw State University. February 2006 and 2005.
- "100 plus and No Help: Interactive Teaching Strategies for Large Enrollment Classes." Panel Presentation. Association for Theatre in Higher Education National Conference. New York City, 2003.
- "SoTL Leadership: Practical Application" (Co-presenter). Conference on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Southbend, 2002.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION:

- Kennesaw State University Distinguished Teaching Award. 2008.
- College of the Arts Distinguished Teaching Award. Kennesaw State University. 2008.
- Direction, *Twelfth Night*: "an absolute knock-out." *The Wall Street Journal*. 2006
- Direction, *A Streetcar Named Desire*: Atlanta's Top 10 Directors. *The Sunday Paper*. 2005.
- KSU College of the Arts Distinguished Service Award. Kennesaw State University. 2004.
- Direction, *Amadeus*. In top ten productions for 2000. *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.
- USG Chancellor's Award: Faculty Development Seminar to East Africa. 2004.
- *Much Ado About Nothing*. In top ten productions for 1996. *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*
- Outstanding Student Advisor. School of the Arts, Kennesaw State University. 2000-01.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE:

- KSU College of the Arts Global Learning Coordinator: 2004-present.
- Ad Hoc Appraising Teaching Effectiveness Committee: 2008-present.
- Chair, College's Strategic Plan Revision Committee: 2007-8.
- Chair, College of the Arts Tenure and Promotion Committee: 2006-9.
- Chair, College of the Arts Tenure and Promotion Guidelines Revision Committee: 2006-8.
- Global Learning, General Education, and Honors Councils.
- University Faculty Awards Committee: 2008-present.
- Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival Production Respondent: ongoing.
- David Mark Cohen Playwriting Award Jurist: 2006-present.
- Casting Associate, Georgia Shakespeare: 1990-2007.



College of the Arts
Department of Theatre and Performance Studies

April 8, 2009

Regents' Teaching Excellence Awards
BOR of the University System of Georgia
270 Washington Street, SW
Atlanta, GA 30334-1450

Dear Selection Committee:

I am happy to support Professor Karen Robinson's nomination for a University of Georgia Regents' Award for Excellence in Teaching.

In the nine years that Karen has served on the faculty of Theatre and Performance Studies at Kennesaw State University, she has produced an impressive body of work in teaching, supervising, and mentoring, in addition to written and artistic scholarship for which she has been recognized in the greater community.

In Karen's initial capacity as Coordinator of Theatre in General Education, she redesigned the department's theatre education course into an increasingly experiential learning environment wherein theatre faculty collaborated to engage classes ranging from 100 – 300 students in lively and thoughtful reflections—both written and verbal—about the vital connection of the arts to our lives as human beings. Through a carefully conceived blend of lectures, discussions, multiple media—live and recorded—hands-on performance exercises and projects, and attendance at a wide array of performance genres, the course has continued to offer non-majors a dynamic approach to theatre and performance. Moreover, she has stewarded the transformation of that course into one that incorporates substantive global learning experiences and mentored a successor in further enhancements of the course.

Three years ago, Karen transitioned from her capacity as Coordinator of Theatre General Education to assume the position of Coordinator of Global Learning for the College of the Arts. In this new capacity she has excelled in the promotion and engagement in global learning, an endeavor that moves the impact of her work as an educator beyond the classroom to the university and beyond. As a participant in KSU's Quality Enhancement Plan: Global Learning for Engaged Citizenship, Karen has promoted a number of exceptional global learning activities. Her work in the design, coordination, and planning of a four-day residency featuring the Shangilia Youth Choir of Kenya (which featured internationally renowned American theatre and music artists) is exemplary. The Shangilia Youth Choir visited classes, interacted with over 600 KSU students, faculty, and staff, and presented a lauded sold-out performance in our 630-seat Bailey Performance Hall. The performance represented the Choir's first performance in the United States.

Throughout her tenure, Karen has been a key participant in department initiatives and projects that connect directly to the teaching and learning goals of the department, such as

the department's assessment of learning efforts. These have included the conception and authorship of theatre and performance studies student learning outcomes; participation in embedded assessments that include class visitations and conception/revision of our writing and performance rubrics; the revision of our mission and vision statements, and our recently revised strategic plan. Because of Karen's intimate familiarity and commitment to these initiatives and goals, her teaching, supervising, and mentoring are in effective alignment with them.

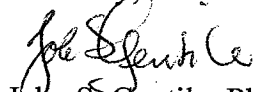
Karen has also been at the forefront of promoting the development and involvement of African American students in departmental activities and performances. Her consistent advocacy of material and performances that feature and celebrate the lives of African Americans will culminate in her direction of the first all African American production in the KSU mainstage theatre next spring—the Pulitzer-Prize Winning *Fences* by August Wilson. This is a notable accomplishment in our university given its modest minority enrollment, which has, however, increased steadily over the last nine years. She recognizes that, in order to attract more African American majors, we must demonstrate that there are multiple opportunities for their development in our departmental activities.

As a theatrical director recognized outside the university, Karen integrates her pedagogy, teaching, and artistic imaginations into highly effective learning experiences for KSU students. She has been instrumental in helping to expand the production offerings to include new works, diverse voices, and global perspectives. I myself have worked with Karen as an actor in one of her KSU productions, and have had first-hand experience of how she works compassionately, rigorously, and tirelessly to evoke first-rate performances and to nurture the whole artist and human being. Her emphasis on professionalism, commitment to excellence, and passion for artistry are values that our students take into other classes, productions, and careers after graduation.

Furthermore, Karen's deep and wide connections within the professional theatre community have resulted in powerful opportunities for our students to work with consummate professionals in the classroom, in university theatrical productions, and subsequently in professional contexts outside the university at such prestigious theatres as the Alliance, Georgia Shakespeare, Theatre in the Square, Synchronicity Performance Group, Georgia Ensemble Theatre, and True Colors Theatre Company.

In conclusion, Karen has grown to be a role model for the other faculty members in our department and college who are at earlier stages in their careers. As a dedicated educator, scholar, and artist, Karen is clearly deserving of the University of Georgia Regents' Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Sincerely,



John S. Gentile, Ph.D.,

Chair and Professor,

Theatre and Performance Studies



March 31, 2009

**College of the Arts
Department of Theatre and Performance Studies**

Selection Committee
Board of Regents' Teaching Excellence Awards

Dear Selection Committee:

I'm delighted to offer my full support for Karen Robinson's nomination for the 2010 Regents' Teaching Excellence Awards. I have known Karen for seven years, and I can speak to her outstanding teaching skills, exemplary artistry, and compassionate mentoring work.


Karen's work with the Kennesaw State University Quality Enhancement Plan in her role as Global Learning Coordinator for the College of the Arts has taken KSU into many new areas of global exploration and understanding. She has connected KSU students to the world community through one production that we have sent to China, and another that is in preparation for travel to Morocco. We were also honored to present the Shangilia Youth Choir from Kenya last year, a residency that Karen designed and secured funding for. The engagement between the Kenyans and KSU students was one of the most touching and memorable moments in my KSU career.

Karen is a consummate teaching professional who helped develop the fledgling Department of Theater into the unique and successful department of Theatre and Performance Studies. She has taught a wide range of courses, and she has been a driving force in the creation of many of the department's offerings. In particular, she was the General Education Coordinator for the TPS 1107, "Arts in Society" course from its initial development to the more sophisticated, global course it is today. She also mentors faculty in our required courses in the major and is one of the principal reasons we have consistency in our multiple-section courses.

When students are preparing for professional or graduate school auditions, they seek out Karen for coaching and advice. It is not unusual for her to be coaching several students a week outside of her class responsibilities. A number of these students have earned roles in professional productions and/or been admitted to graduate programs. Karen is passionate, kind, and firm with her students. They know they have to work hard for her approval, but that she will be fair and honest in her observations and praise.

Karen shifts easily between the academic and professional worlds, and our students have benefited from these connections. An Associate Artist with Georgia Shakespeare, she has directed many highly regarded productions, several of which have had direct involvement of our students. Just recently she directed a reading of Margaret Baldwin's new play *Night Blooms* that featured both award-winning professionals as well as KSU students. It was a delight to watch.

In short, Karen is the kind of professor we want to have in the classroom, in the rehearsal hall, and in our meeting rooms. She has helped transform this department and has engaged and inspired our students. I highly recommend her for this award.

Sincerely,

Dean Adams

Associate Professor and Artistic Director

1000 Chastain Road • MD 3103 • WB • Bldg. 31 • Rm. 249 • Kennesaw, GA 30144-5591

Phone: 770.499.3123 • Fax: 678.797.2426 • www.kennesaw.edu



April 15, 2009

Dear Selection Committee:

I am writing this letter in support of Karen Robinson's nomination for the University of Georgia Regents' Excellence in Teaching Award.

I am currently a full time employee at the Alliance Theatre Company in Atlanta, Georgia. I began my journey at the Alliance Theatre as an intern my junior year in college while attending Kennesaw State University. I continued my internship throughout my senior year and was fortunate enough to have a full time job with the Alliance Theatre immediately following graduation.

When I look back at my college career, Professor Karen Robinson was the professor, mentor, and role model who guided me to where I am today. Not only did she assist and mentor me throughout my Alliance internship, she also taught me in the classroom and on stage.

Prior to participating in Professor Robinson's Shakespeare class, I had only read Shakespeare in my middle and high school courses. The thought of acting it out made me uneasy, but it was not long until I felt confident. There was a point when she noticed my confusion and made the time to set up a one on one session with me. At the time I was a freshman in college, and I will never forget how special and important she made me feel. This is an inspirational story I continue to pass on to students I teach in the Education Department here at the Alliance, along with other local Atlanta theatres.

Professor Robinson cast me in my first show at Kennesaw State University. Once again, she went above and beyond, giving time and attention to each individual actor. When she directs, she does not sit behind a table or in a chair. Rather, she becomes part of the ensemble, participating in each activity and giving all of herself while doing it. She later cast me in two more shows. I received American College Theatre Festival nominations for both, and I still thank her for pushing me to do my best work with two very unique roles.

I am now an educator, teaching artist, choreographer, and performer in Atlanta. I continue to use the knowledge I learned from Professor Robinson in the classroom, rehearsal, and on stage. She continues to support my work, giving professional advice, attending performances, and now, being a friend.

Kennesaw State University should be proud and honored to have Karen Robinson on their faculty, and I am proud and honored she has been part of my life.

Sincerely,


Elizabeth Neidel

April 14, 2009

Selection Committee
Regents' Teaching Excellence Awards

Dear Selection Committee:

I began my college career in the fall of 2005 at Kennesaw State University. Little did I know as I walked in to my very first college class that I would be meeting one of the people that would help me realize my true passion, acting. Professor Karen Robinson team-taught my Theatre Appreciation class with another department faculty member. It did not take me long to realize that Professor Robinson was not just a teacher, but also a passionate artist whose main objective was to cultivate her students in the art of theatre. She has many strengths but I found her commitment to her students to be her greatest strength of all. Out of a class of 150 students, she knew my name, my work, and was able to give me detailed advice as to how I could strengthen my writing. Her dedication to her students really made an impression on me because it is so rare, especially in general education classes, to find such a caring teacher.

I have known Professor Robinson for nearly four years now and since that Theatre Appreciation class, I have worked with her on four different projects and been in two more of her classes. In the fall of 2007, she taught my Introduction to Performance Studies class where she helped me find a strong interest in personal narrative and poetry performances. A year later she headed a course in auditioning that I took, and I grew tremendously throughout the semester thanks to her advice, coaching, and knowledge from being a professional director who works a great deal in the Atlanta theatre scene. Also, she always offered to work with us individually on our monologues outside of class so that we could be better prepared. Professor Robinson guided us through both classes with intriguing lectures and a great deal of hands-on work, but she also encouraged us to always dig deeper into the material and to form in-class discussions so that we could discover, for ourselves, insight into the topic at hand. She demanded participation and articulate conversation from us, which was essential to our learning.

Professor Robinson is different from most professors. Whereas most professor/student relationships end when the class is over, Professor Robinson is willing to go beyond class time, way beyond. She directs and heads theatrical projects for the department. In January, Professor Robinson cast me and eight others in *Everything That Rises Must Converge*, a chamber theatre piece based on two short stories by Flannery O'Connor, she was directing for KSU's Department of Theatre and Performance Studies 2008-2009 season. Under her direction, I have grown so much as an actor. I think the two greatest things I have learned from her through working on this project are taking risks as an actor, and paying close attention to the language in the text. She has helped lead me to some amazing discoveries and it has been such a thrill working with her for the past three months.

I am so fortunate and thankful that I have had the opportunity to learn from Professor Karen Robinson. She has been such an inspiration to me over these past few years. She has helped lead me to places in my writing and work as a theatre artist that I never thought I would go. Because of Professor Robinson, I am constantly challenging myself to not take the easy way out, but to be honest, specific, and articulate. Professor Robinson has impacted me as a student, an artist, and a human being and I am forever grateful to her.

Ryan Everett

