March 2012

Notes from the Director

Greetings from the Peacebuilding and the Arts Program at the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life at Brandeis University.

Last fall, in collaboration with colleagues at Search for Common Ground (SFCG) and the Alliance for Peacebuilding, we convened a conversation at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) on building an infrastructure for the field of peacebuilding and the arts. Thanks to great documentation by SFCG interns and the persistence of Jonathan White, SFCG’s Learning Portal Content Manager, the report on that conversation has been completed, and is accessible in our resource library. Although the report is complete, the conversation has just begun; we welcome ideas about strengthening work at the nexus of the arts, cultural work and conflict transformation from all those who read this e-newsletter.

In the fall of 2012, the International Peace Research Association, which includes an Arts and Peace Commission, will convene its bi-annual conference at Mie University in Japan. This gathering will be a great opportunity for artist/peacebuilders, as well as researchers and educators in this field, to meet in person and exchange ideas. Please see the news item below for more information. And please consider submitting an application to offer a paper or presentation, due to IPRA on May 1.

March is Women’s History Month, and also marks the one-year anniversary of what has become known as ‘The Arab Spring’. The featured artist and news items below were selected in part to acknowledge these important moments.

All the best,

Cindy
Cynthia E. Cohen, Ph.D., Director
Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts
**Arts and Peace at the International Peace Research Association, Mie University, Tsu City, Japan**

**November 24-28, 2012**

This year, the International Peace Research Association is convening its bi-annual conference in Tsu City, Mie Prefecture, Japan. Since 2004, IPRA has included an Arts and Peace commission which facilitates networking and sharing of information among artists, peacebuilders, researchers and educators throughout the world. This year, we will be exploring the following themes: music and conflict transformation; visual art and peacebuilding; music therapy; documentation, assessment and evaluation of work at the nexus of art, culture and peacebuilding; the contributions of theatre and ritual to the creative transformation of conflict; and developing a global infrastructure to support the peacebuilding/arts field. We welcome proposals for sessions on these and other topics, including initiatives in Africa, the Middle East, South and Central America, Indigenous communities, Asia and Pacific regions, among others. Those interested in proposing individual presentations or sessions should submit an application as soon as possible, but no later than May 1.

In most years there is a little, but VERY little, financial assistance for participants from non-OECD countries. We encourage colleagues who wish to participate to mark the November dates in your calendar, and seek resources from your institutions or other sources available to you. Please check the [IPRA](http://www.ipra.org) and [conference websites](http://www.ipra.or.br) for more information.

Cynthia Cohen and Maria Elena Lopez Vinader, co-convenors, Arts and Peace Commission, IPRA.
**Featured Art: Sites of Passage at Mattress Factory**

Curated by Tavia La Follette and Katherine Talcott

Mattress Factory showcased “Sites of Passage,” an exhibition with new and context-specific work by 17 Egyptian artists and 20 U.S. artists from September 9, 2011 through February 12, 2012. This exhibition was the final exposé of the first “dig” of The Firefly Tunnels Project. The project began in August of 2010 when artist, workshop leader, and co-curator Tavia La Follette went to Egypt to begin the exchange. Performance and installation artists from both Egypt and the U.S. converse through a virtual lab/website, where they exchange ideas and materials. The commonality between both sides of the “tunnel”/website is that the artists have gone through an intensive workshop with La Follette. It is during this workshop that the artists explore a common symbolic language or code of communication. The workshop focused on art as a deeper language of communication, dealing with such topics as religion, culture and identity, while also examining how to engage with virtual art as a force for social change.

**News from the Field: Celebrating the Women's History Month**

**On Equal Terms: Mixed Media Art Installation by Susan Eisenberg**

February 5 – May 13
Michigan State University Museum

On Equal Terms combines realistic and fanciful works of art with personal testimonies to bring viewers into the experiences of women who work on construction sites. The exhibition celebrates the pioneers, as well as the tradeswomen and their allies who have kept the gates open for three decades. The installation’s launch coincided with the 30th anniversary of affirmative action for women in the construction industry. In 1978, the federal government enacted policies that opened construction jobs and apprenticeship programs to women. Had those policies been enforced beyond the initial years, the construction workforce would likely now be roughly 25 percent female. Instead, women today hold less that 3 percent of building trades jobs… [Read more.](#)

**Our Beautiful Daughters: Art exhibition by Yoko Ono in India**

Yoko Ono’s first exhibition in India, “Our Beautiful Daughters,” invited the audience to participate in her art and activism through collaboration. “Mend Piece” and “Heal Together” are participatory art works for the audience to stick together broken pieces of china and sew cloths onto a large, slashed canvas. This collective repairing of the broken pieces create a sense of rebuilding a world which is shattered by war and hatred. “My Mommy is Beautiful” is a tribute to all mothers in the world from their children. The hundreds of memoirs written on the large white canvases ranged from humorous to confessional, and are filled with color and emotion. One note reads, “The reason I fight for the environment is that I always want you to have the gardens you
love.” Throughout her five decades of career, Yoko Ono’s commitment to her activism on peace and healing has been the core of her work in performance art, video, film, poetry, installation and art… Read more.

Myriam Abdelaziz: Photographing the Revolution in Egypt
“During the recent events in Egypt, initially, being a female photographer was helpful, because they didn’t expect me to be documenting ‘for real’ and I was just not perceived as a threat. However this has changed, and in Egypt when the authorities realized women are actually a threat, and maybe even more so than men, they started to react. Now in Egypt the army considers women a big threat… Read more.

What do the Women Say? Celebrating International Women’s Day at Golden Thread
March 9
La Pena Cultural Center, Berkeley, CA
In celebration of International Women’s Day and Support Women Artists Now Day, Golden Thread Productions presents an evening of poetry and performance in partnership with Sunbula: Arab Women for Change and WomenArts. In light of the recent sweeping changes across the Middle East, this year’s program explored women’s role in the social and political transformation of the region. Pondering the Solo – This year’s program features Denmo Ibrahim, Jennifer Jajeh, Rohina Malik and Maryam Rostami - four women performers of Middle Eastern background who have written, performed and produced their own show. Profound, rambunctious and illuminating, this new generation of solo women performers tackles themes of displacement, dual loyalties and entitlement to expand definitions of citizenship, activism and womanhood. Watch their short video clips.

Read more News from the Field on our website.

Upcoming Events

Screening of "Acting Together on the World Stage: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict"
March 21, 4:00pm
Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies, University of British Columbia, Canada
Commentators are Professor Rena Sharon, UBC School of Music, Professor James Stewart, UBC Faculty of Law, Professor Maureen Maloney, SFU School of Public Policy, and facilitated by Professor Michelle LeBaron, UBC Faculty of Law. Free and open to public, but registration is required. To register, contact pwias.assistant@pwias.ubc.ca.

Day Workshop
Acting Together: Accessing Creativity to Transform Conflict
March 22, 9:00am-4:00pm
Justice Institute of British Columbia, Canada
“Acting Together: Accessing Creativity to Transform Conflict” workshop led by Cynthia Cohen
and Professor Michelle LeBaron. To register for a workshop, contact register@jibc.ca.

**Screening of "Acting Together on the World Stage: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict"**
March 22, 6:00-8:00pm
Justice Institute of British Columbia, Canada
Screening followed by dialogue with Cynthia Cohen. Screening is free and open to community but registration is required. Please contact conres@jibc.ca.

Learn more about our upcoming events.

**Resources and Opportunities**

**50th Annual World Theatre Day**
March 27, 2012
The international theatre community celebrates World Theatre Day annually on March 27. Each year, a renowned theatre artist of world stature is invited to craft an International Message to mark the global occasion. This year, John Malkovich will deliver his international message at UNESCO in Paris. **Theatre Communications Group** (TCG), which serves as the US Center of the International Theatre Institute (ITI-US), is hosting an essay contest asking theatremakers to respond to the question of whether the next generation of theatremakers will be a **Generation Without Borders**. Learn more about the essay contest. Read more about ways to participate and about past World Theatre Day events.

We encourage readers of this newsletter to celebrate World Theatre Day by screening our documentary, Acting Together on the World Stage: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict in your communities, classrooms and organizations. To purchase the documentary and toolkit, please visit **New Village Press**. In honor of the 50th Annual World Theatre Day, we are making fifty copies of the documentary, (single DVD without the toolkit) available for free to individuals and organizations that find the purchase price prohibitive. We will send the discs to the first 50 people who send us email request. This single DVD comes with one-time only public screening right, and we offer it to the first 50 people who commit to a screening in by the end of June, and who email us before March 31. Please email to coexistence@brandeis.edu with the subject line: World Theatre Day Offer, with your name and mailing address.

**Arts and Peace Commission, IPRA Conference, Japan - November 2012**
This year’s bi-annual conference takes place in Mie Prefecture, Japan. Proposals for individual presentations or sessions on all topics are currently being accepted. Please send proposals on themes related to arts and peace to both Katuya Kodama at kodama@kni.biglobe.ne.jp and Cynthia Cohen at cecohen@brandeis.edu. Deadline: May 1, 2012. But earlier submissions appreciated. For more information and submission guidelines.
Golden Thread Productions: Middle East Center Stage
Golden Thread Productions is dedicated to exploring Middle Eastern cultures and identities as expressed around the globe. Its mission is to make the Middle East a potent presence on the American stage by developing and producing theatrical work that is aesthetically varied and politically and viscerally engaging. The organization maintains a webpage that links to their global community, including theatres throughout the Middle East.

GNWP: The Global Network of Women Peacebuilders
GNWP bridges the gap between policy discussions and implementation and action on the ground on women, peace and security issues.

Resources related to gender and to the Arab world in the Acting Together toolkit:
Acting Together on the World Stage: Tools for Continuing the Conversation is a set of resources on a second disc that accompanies the documentary. The eighteen videos and eighteen print documents can be explored through four different navigational pathways, including one that groups the documents and short videos according to issues and concepts: instrumentalization and artistic integrity; documentation and assessment; transitional justice; and gender. One of the short videos tells a story that is not included in the documentary: theatre director Iman Aoun describes the history of theatre in Palestine, the work of Ashtar Theatre, and the role of theatre in building capacities for democracy in Palestine. To learn more, please visit the toolkit page on the website, or purchase the toolkit from New Village Press.

Acting Together on the World Stage: Documentary & Toolkit
Learn more about the toolkit of short videos and print documents that accompanies the documentary.
Get inspired! Join the conversation! Act!

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To comment on "Peacebuilding and the Arts Now" or to join the listserv, send a message here.
Got this as a forward? [Sign up](#) to receive our future emails.