

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation

thINKingDANCE partners with Theatre Philadelphia to expand theater coverage in Philadelphia

by Julius Ferraro

What can dance critics tell us about theater?

In a quest to reach new audiences for performing arts in Philadelphia, [Theatre Philadelphia](#) and [thINKingDANCE](#) are joining forces and exploring how dance writing and discourse can provide new perspectives on theater. Beginning May 2018, tD writers will be lending their varied backgrounds, interests, and approaches to criticism to professional theater works in Philadelphia.

We probably don't need to reiterate that arts journalism, like its composite parts (arts and journalism), is in a state of crisis, with vanished funding, lost jobs, and shrinking markets all combining to turn once-robust "Arts & Culture" pages into tiny subsections of the "Entertainment" section. But criticism remains as important as it ever was. Partnerships like this one leverage the considerable talent and energy in our community to produce something better than the sum of its parts.

To open this project, we've asked a few tD writers why they write reviews, and some TP employees what they believe is the value of arts journalism.

I write reviews to provide thoughtful, informed, well-articulated feedback to Philadelphia artists and audiences. I write reviews to see performances more deeply: my eyes/senses/mind work differently when I am seeing-to-write than when I am just "there." (Both experiences are worth having.) I write reviews to discover what is essential in an encounter with a work, and how I can transform that experience into language.

- Lynn Matluck Brooks, tD writer

I write reviews to continue to manifest critical thought on the construction of works, choreographies, and/or events. It is a way to invite and inform the community in a larger dialogue.

- Ama Ma'at Gora, tD writer

Great criticism primes the public to think deeply about a piece of art. As a theater producer, I notice that audience members often want to talk to me about the review, essentially engaging in a three-way dialogue about the varied meanings of the play.

- Erin Reilly, Artistic Director of Theatre Horizon and Board President of Theatre Philadelphia

I write to stretch. I write reviews to challenge myself to think beyond the performative moment, to place an artist's work in context of history and culture and ask questions about how it means what it means, and how that meaning then shapes me as audience and shapes the world we live in.

- Janna Meiring, tD writer

When I write a dance review, I feel that I am working within a great tradition of bringing to light, legitimizing, and making sense of new dance work.

- Eleanor Goudie-Averill, tD writer

Criticism is an extremely valuable tool for audiences to discover new work and to unpack their experiences, which will only increase our audiences' engagement with our artists.

-Leigh Goldenberg, Executive Director of Theatre Philadelphia

I write reviews because I believe in the power of archiving cultural events, with live performance at the forefront. Art is always a reflection of the times and once the moment is gone, memories can become fickle and erode. Reviews ensure that we will not forget who came before us, who suffered, and who was in power. Reviews are in place to make sure we do not repeat history.

-Mira Treatman, tD writer

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