

University of Kansas Department of Theatre



Newsletter
Fall 2015

ITT is sponsored by the KU Office of Diversity and Equity

Welcome to the ITT newsletter!

Inside this issue:

- 1 What to we've been up to this semester Fall 2015.
- 2 Meet our newest members.
- 3 See what some of our members are up to outside of ITT.

Here you will find our semester news, information about our projects and activities, upcoming events, live performances and more....



KU ITT Students in the audience of the KU Town Hall on Race, Respect and Responsibility- November 11, 2015

#SOTA/KU Theatre represented

Dr. Jane Barnette, Dr. Henry Bial, Dr. Nicole Hodges Persley, Dr. Jeanne Klein and Ms. Kathy Pryor were in attendance.

ITT Students mentor Lawrence High School Student for Disability Awareness Month

ITT members Aden Lindholm and Ashley Martin were volunteer mentors for a student from Freestate High School on October 21, 2015. This is the second year that ITT student have served as mentors in partnership with Ranita Wilks of Independence, Inc. Lawrence, a Lawrence non-profit organization that provides outreach services to the Lawrence disability community. Since 1978, Independence, Inc. has served as a resource in Lawrence and Northeast Kansas through their mission to maximize the independence of people with disabilities through advocacy, peer support, training, transportation and community education. As an Independent Living Center, we work with people. For more information about the organization, please visit: www.independenceinc.org/

ITT

- 1) ITT Students as Mentors for Disability Awareness Month.
- 2) *Community Outreach: ITT with AUMI and Disability, Inc.*
- 3) ITT “TED style” diversity talks to commence with Kathy and Jay Pryor. Event will take place Spring 2015. Date TBD.
- 4) Our team doing amazing projects with improvisation and social change work.

Meet our new GTA:

Meet Blair Lawrence Yates; our new assistant program director for ITT. Yates is an international MA student from the UK specializing in directing. Back in 2013/14, Yates was a part of ITT while on exchange as an undergrad, taking part in the Haskell collaboration project and many of the sketches, and is now back to help facilitate this important work. Yates is a longtime advocate for social change through theatre having taken classes with recently retired KU professor, and founder of ITT, Delores Ringer on Applied Theatre, and learning about many topics of diversity with Dr. Nicole Hodges Persley through ITT and other acting work. Yates’ work in theatre for social change comes primarily from Augusto Boal’s work and the *Theatre of the Oppressed*, specifically working with non-actors and identifying areas of injustice and exposing them for debate. Yates is looking forward to working with the new members of ITT and is ready to help continue bringing high class theatre to the campus and to the community.



Meet our new members:

This year we welcome seven new members to the ITT team. They are talented and dedicated to creating work that helps illuminate and discuss issues of social injustice.

Aden Lindholm – Aden is a senior majoring in Theatre Performance and minoring in U.S Public Policy and History.

Adrian Brothers – Adrian is a senior majoring in Theatre Performance.

Ben Schatzel – Ben is a junior studying Human Biology with an emphasis in Applied Behavioral Sciences.

Emily Schwerdtfeger - Emily is a junior studying Theatre Performance with a minor in French.

Madison Tubbs – Madison is a sophomore studying Visual Art with a focus in Printmaking and Expanded media, minoring in Art History and Theatre.

Matthew Scott Fraser - Matthew is a freshman majoring in Theatre Performance.

Michaela Mense – Michaela is a freshman majoring in Theatre and Voice.

For more information about all of our members, please visit our website.



Making Change: ITT Members Spotlight

1) Using Improvisation to Make Art: Jake Miller and his research into Charlie Chaplin:



I will be exploring the history and influence of one of the greatest silent film artists of all time, Charlie Chaplin. My project, supervised by Dr. Nicole Hodges Persley, will consist of two main parts. First, I will create a presentation of information regarding the history of Chaplin's life and style; but more importantly Chaplin's influence on the world of entertainment, specifically his use of silent film to reach a diverse audience, address social injustice, and to entertain. This presentation of information will preferably be done in the form of a video essay that would be presented via projection directly before the second part of my product. The second part of my product is a performance piece based on Chaplin's works. This performance piece will be an homage piece paying tribute to one of my acting heroes while also exploring Chaplin's famous use of physical comedy to tell simple and heart-warming stories that delved into much deeper subjects. The scene itself will come from multiple improvisation workshops I will conduct after I compile research, images, and videos of Chaplin that inspire me. The subjects I will have to study for this project include: Vaudeville history, film history, Chaplin's life, ballet, physical comedy, storytelling, theatre for social justice, American history, silent film, stage combat, stage/costume design, directing, theatre production, social psychology, etc.

2) Theatre for Social Change in Africa: Emily Schwerdtfeger in Dakar

Every person has the capability to improve the lives of others with their gifts and skills. This is a concept I have always believed in. I think everyone should, through their chosen profession, make an impact in their community. When I decided to study theatre at KU I was afraid that my life would become focused on my own success, rather than on the quality of life around me and not as beneficial as that of a nurse, teacher or social worker. Then, while researching a project for a French class, I stumbled across a theatre in Senegal that was using interactive drama to teach rural communities about family planning, women's rights, and reproductive health. The group was a branch of the Theatre of the Oppressed and I quickly became obsessed. Most of my research focused on the theatre in Dakar, Senegal, called Kàddu Yaraax. I discovered a study abroad program in Dakar that taught students about the culture and history of the arts in Senegal and knew that was the step I had to take. Now I am getting ready to enroll in classes at the Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar. A large component of this study abroad program is an apprenticeship with a local artist. This is where I hope to become a part of Kàddu Yaraax and begin my education in Theatre of the Oppressed and forum theatre. I believe that what I learn in Senegal will change my life and motivate me to change the lives of others. It will enable me to return to KU and continue making a difference. I will graduate in May of 2017 with tools that will let me develop this work in other part of the country and use my love of theatre to fuel my responsibility, my desire, to promote change and unity in the world. This is what I want to do with my life.



Seeking student, staff and faculty speakers for

“Free-Styling Change: Improvising Solutions for Social Justice” We will invite students, faculty and staff to talk about a moment in their lives where they realized that they wanted to be a catalyst for change in their communities.

Inaugural Speakers: Kathy and Jay Pryor. Event to take place in Spring 2016. Date TBD

ITT will help facilitate the improvised talks. Inspired by “TED Talks,” we ask that students, faculty or staff speak for a minimum of 5 minutes and a maximum of 18. ITT director Dr. Nicole Hodges Persley and GTA

Blair Lawrence Yates, will facilitate a community dialogue after each talk that will work to connect the improvised experiences and create potential solutions for further dialogue about social issues. Please email Dr. NHP hodgespersley@ku.edu or Blair Lawrence Yates b686y498@ku.edu if you would like to be on the Spring roster. #DiversityMatters

Changing the world one performance at a time...

ITT students promote disability awareness at Lawrence Public Library

ITT students participated in the KU Interarts AUMI Jam session at the Lawrence Public Library in the Sound + Vision studio on November 4, 2015. Our students volunteered in musical jam session where they created music with the Adaptive Use Musical Instrument, a computer generated software that allows people with limited mobility to create music. For more information about this on-going opportunity to build community and create art with community members with limited mobility, please visit <https://aumi.drupal.ku.edu>



Freestyling Change: Improvising Solutions for Social Justice – is a new talk series produced by ITT about making a difference on KU’s campus, our community and the world. Each series will feature a small “TED style” talk—about how they work to make the world a more inclusive place by considering a complex relationship to diversity of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, and/or veteran status.

ITT is updating its website regularly to give you the most up to date information about what we’re doing, where we’re going and who our people are. For this information, videos, pictures and more please don’t hesitate to visit our site:

<http://ittkansas.wix.com/awareness>

Interactive Theatre Troupe KU ITT

1530 Naismith Drive, Room 317
Lawrence, Kansas 66045
(785) 864 2820

For more information about ITT contact:

Dr. Nicole Hodges Persley, PhD. ITT Director
hodgespersley@ku.edu

Blair Lawrence Yates, ITT GTA
b686y498@ku.edu