



# The New Harmony Project®

Serving Writers. Celebrating the Human Spirit.

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## We're Celebrating The New Harmony Project 2007

The following summary of our experience was written by Paul Walsh, Artistic Director, as he reflected on this year's conference.

“For ten days, New Harmony Project writer-in-residence Theresa Rebeck carried around a copy of Kafka everywhere she went. On the eleventh day, she had completed a first draft of a new play. That evening Rebeck's *The Understudy* received a spirited cold reading to an enthusiastic audience of actors, directors, dramaturgs, student interns and friends at the 21<sup>st</sup> annual New Harmony Project. Rebeck's hilarious new play takes place during a doomed understudy rehearsal in an unnamed Broadway theater for a recently discovered play by Kafka. The morning after this first reading, Rebeck jetted back to New York to attend auditions for the Broadway premiere of her play *Mauritius*, which she'd begun two years ago at The New Harmony Project. It opens this fall at the Manhattan Theatre Club's Biltmore Theatre.

This is the magic of The New Harmony Project, an annual residency program for stage, screen and television writers held in idyllic New Harmony, Indiana. This year's conference met from May 18 to June 2. Founded in 1986 to counter a desultory trend in modern popular culture towards glorifying violence and exploiting despair rather than celebrating hope and the possibilities of the human spirit, The New Harmony Project has contributed to the development of nearly 200 plays and other projects by such nationally prominent writers as Warren Leight, Michele Lowe, Shane Black, Dan O'Brien, Robert Schenkkan, Arlene Hutton, John Henry Redwood, Sunil Juruville, Lee Blessing and Jim Leonard.

“The New Harmony Project is dedicated to *servicing writers* and *celebrating the*

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Y finds it easy to be young at heart at The New Harmony Project.

environment that mixes professional actors, directors, dramaturgs and support staff which includes college student interns. Inspired by the ideals set forth in our mission, The New Harmony Project searches out and supports writers who 'name, celebrate, honor and praise order in the midst of chaos, life in the midst of death, atonement in



Carrie Hughes, dramaturg, Sarah Cameron Sunde, playwright Anna Ziegler and Jessica Dickey, actor, take a break from their work at the Barn Abbey.

workshops—supported by a team of director, dramaturg and professional cast—culminating in public readings. The two-week workshop of New York playwright Anna Ziegler's *In the Same Room* was directed by Sarah Cameron Sunde with

dramaturgical assistance from Carrie Hughes of the

McCarter Theater in Princeton, New Jersey. Iowa

playwright, Austin Bunn, work-shopped his play

*Timberland*, with directorial assistance from New York-based director Lisa Rothe and

dramaturg Gavin Witt from Baltimore's CenterStage. Mark Lutwak, former artistic

director at the Honolulu Theatre for Youth, directed the workshop of long-time

collaborator Y York's new play *And L.A. Is Burning*, with dramaturgical assistance

from Debra Cardona-DePeahul of the Classical Theater of Harlem.

In addition, five writers-in-residence, including Rebeck, joined The New Harmony Project this spring to work on personally selected projects. Nationally

*human spirit.*' The Project encourages us to dream, to dare, and to envision new ways of representing our ongoing quest to live in a society that values human creativity and resourcefulness, as well as our very human struggles to live meaningful lives. Set in New Harmony, Indiana, site of two nineteenth-century utopian communities, the annual conference provides writers with an opportunity to work on their scripts in a supportive and nurturing

environment that mixes professional actors, directors, dramaturgs and support staff which includes college student interns. Inspired by the ideals set forth in our mission, The New Harmony Project searches out and supports writers who 'name, celebrate, honor and praise order in the midst of chaos, life in the midst of death, atonement in

the midst of separating hatred, liberty in the midst of oppression, sacrifice in the midst of vanity, and spirit in the midst of corruption.' Our writers come from across the country and write for stage, television and film, but they share a desire to investigate the complexity of what it means to be human in the best sense of the word.

This year three plays received full development



Playwright, Austin Bunn and Lisa Rothe, director, enjoy the final night banquet.

renowned playwright and screenwriter John Pielmeier completed his play *Madonna and Child*, about a painter's crisis of faith upon learning that his mother is being considered for canonization by the Vatican for her work with African children with AIDS. Lynn Rosen, whose play *Back from the Front* was produced this spring by New York's Working Theater, began work on a new play tentatively titled *Puddy Tat*. Composer and lyricist team Kim Oler and Allison Hubbard continued work on their new musical *Buddy's Tavern*, based on the film *Two Family House* (2000) by Raymond De Felitta who is collaborating with them on the book.



David Worthington, college intern, and Debra Cardona-DePeahul smile for the camera.

Also attending all or part of the two-week conference this year were members of The New Harmony Project board of directors, including playwrights Mat Smart and Anne Nelson, novelist Margaret McMullan, actors Carrie Preston and Karl Kenzler, writer and composer Matty Selman, and founding board members Jeff Sparks of the Heartland Film Festival, actor Gary Bayer, and John David Lutz of the University of Evansville, who was honored this year with membership in the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.”

As we wrap up the 21<sup>st</sup> Project, we begin our preparation for the 22<sup>nd</sup> Conference. Plays and scripts are selected for developmental workshops by a committee of The New Harmony Project Board of Directors, writers, dramaturgs, actors and other media professionals. Last year nearly 150 submissions from across the country arrived in our mail box. Submissions continue to grow each year; we expect at least 150 for The 2008 Project. If you or an acquaintance is interested in submitting, visit us on-line at [www.newharmonyproject.org](http://www.newharmonyproject.org) for the details.

To all of our friends and supporters and especially to the community who gathered, thank you for making 2007 one of our best!

Now we look forward to hearing from you. Send your news to [jfdavid@newharmonyproject.org](mailto:jfdavid@newharmonyproject.org).

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