

OnCampus

Les lettres D'Amour: Playwright realizes her dramatic visions

Since graduating from Millsaps with a double major in theatre and English, Lisa D'Amour, B.A. 1991, now a three-year resident of Brooklyn, has spent significant time in Minneapolis, Houston, Santa

Barbara, and her native New Orleans in conjunction with her writing career—sometimes to teach and sometimes to oversee productions of the plays she has written. “The nature of being an emerging playwright these days is to be very transient,” D'Amour says.

After spending her junior year in an exchange program at Hunter College in New York City, D'Amour came back to Millsaps and directed the play *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill as her senior thesis. “It was really fabulous to have the support of Lance Goss and Brent

Lefavor as I was directing this ambitious work,” she recalls. After graduation, her internship with the National Playwrights Conference at the Eugene O'Neill Center in Connecticut inspired her to go home to New Orleans and start “writing and directing like mad,” as she puts it. She later attended an M.F.A. program at the University of Texas-Austin.

In October and November 2006, D'Amour directed her brother Todd in the multimedia one-man show *Stanley* at HERE in New York City. “The piece is a riff on the character of Stanley Kowalski from *A Streetcar Named Desire*,” D'Amour says, “and explores issues of obsession, loss, and desire, touching especially on the recent losses incurred by our hometown of New Orleans.”

D'Amour received a residency grant from the National Endowment for the Arts/Theatre Communications Group to

write *Hide Town* for Infernal Bridegroom Productions in Houston.

“We visited Texas ghost towns and small towns, and I wrote a play inspired by our experiences,” D'Amour says of her inspiration for *Hide Town*. “Many of the towns felt like they were dying, or were already gone altogether.” The play, which debuted in 2006, is set in a Texas saloon during a future ice age. The bar's patrons may well be the last people on earth.

Another side of D'Amour's vision of Texas ran at Minneapolis's Children's Theatre Company this year in the form of *Tales of a West Texas Marsupial Girl*. The show is a children's musical about a girl born in West Texas with a marsupial pouch. D'Amour is currently finishing a play that deals with issues of gentrification in New York City, and in May she will present *Bird Eye Blue Print*, a site-specific performance created for a vacant office in lower Manhattan.

—Margaret Cahoon



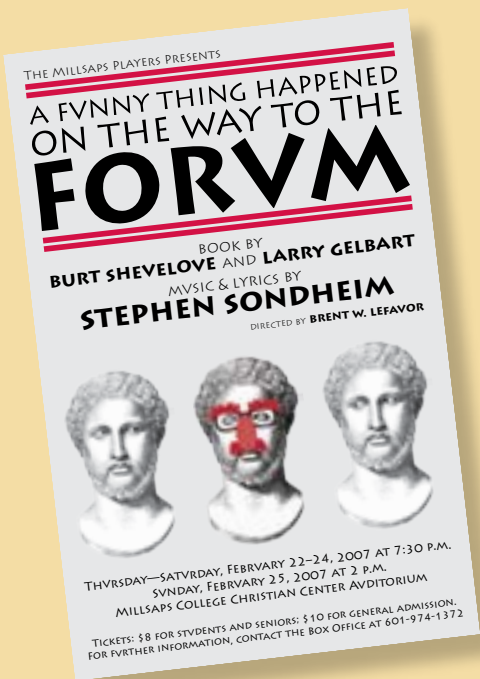
Stanley “explores issues of obsession, loss, and desire, touching especially on the recent losses incurred by our hometown of New Orleans.”



Native writer comes home

“Oh my gosh!” Margaret McMullan exclaimed when she heard about the exam that Dr. Suzanne Marrs, professor of English, had recently given her students. “I’m on an exam with *them*?” She was referring to the celebrated Mississippi authors Richard Ford and Ellen Douglas. McMullan, an acclaimed author and Mississippi native herself, came to campus in late February to give a public reading and talk to Marrs’s Southern Literature and Culture class—the same class that had recently studied and been tested on McMullan’s book *How I Found the Strong*. During the class meeting, students asked McMullan about her character development, her creative process, how she got started as a writer, and balancing her work as a teacher with her work as a writer. McMullan is a professor of English at the University of Evansville in Evansville, Indiana, and received an M.F.A. in fiction from the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville.

—M.C.



From left, Austin Tooley as Pseudolus, Cody Stockstill as Erronius, and J.R. Braun as Hysterium.

Players' toga party

In February, The Millsaps Players presented the musical *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. The production was directed by Brent Lefavor, associate professor of theatre and technical director, with choreography by Linda Mann and music direction by Harlan Zackery. The show included performances by sophomore Austin Tooley, sophomore David Lind, junior Jacqueline Coale, and freshman Andrew Fredericks.

This performance of *A Funny Thing* was dedicated to Dr. Catherine Freis, professor of classics, who is retiring from Millsaps this year.

The Players' 83rd season continued in April with Milan Stitt's *The Runner Stumbles*, with guest director Anne Sullivan.



Roxie Randle as Vibrata, Austin Tooley as Pseudolus, and Miles Sugar as Marcus Lycus.