

Subversives Unite.: An Opinionated View of the Evolving Teaching Artist Field and How the Bay Area Has Joined the National Conversation in Process—and Shaken It Up a Bit.

Section 1 (Arriving Somewhere)

Oakland-based performance artist Violet Juno has an impressive list of performance credits and arts residencies across the country. A self-identified mixed-blood English/German/Norwegian/Native American multi-media artist, Juno built has a national following. An upcoming special edition of the online *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies* dedicated to her work. So it's not surprising to find her in residence at the bucolic Montalvo Arts Center in Saratoga just south of San Jose.

What is surprising is the nature of her 16-week residency: Juno is the sixth Teaching Artist Fellow (the first who calls the Bay Area 'home') in the Sally and Don Lucas Artists Programs, the first residency in the nation established to support the Teaching Artist's process synergistically with the artist's creative process.

Juno sees her work as part of “an emerging canon of artists who simultaneously hone their skills as an artist and as a teaching artist -- not one in service to the other but rather as an intricately interrelated whole.”

The seed for Montalvo's Teaching Arts Fellowship, was planted, cultivated and carried to market by Teaching Artist guru Eric Booth during his residency at the artists' retreat there in 2005 and 2007, a time when the phrase “teaching artist” had little resonance. In fact, when Booth founded the *Teaching Artist Journal* (TAJ) in 2003 and went looking for a publisher a few years later, he was told that he was writing for a profession that didn't seem to exist. There was no tangible evidence that being a Teaching Artist was a field of endeavor—no professional organizations, no unions, no certification.

That perception is changing, and Juno's 22 year resume serves to reflect the emerging profession of the Teaching Artist. From her start teaching a youth summer art camp in St. Louis, she has since taught and coordinated programs at migrant camp schools, museums, reservation schools, a half-way house, and too many public school to count. Reflecting on the impact of her work has, she says, “naturally compelled” her to activism on behalf of Teaching Artists.

Juno's trajectory reflects the field: for decades, artists might be found at any school or community site, working individually or hired by arts organizations, called artists-in-residence, arts educators, artist-teachers—and in reality transforming individuals, environments and discourse. But until recently, wherever and whatever they were, and regardless of the transformative nature of their work, these jobs were likely to be perceived as gap-fillers for under-employed artists or, even less flattering, working in them would be seen as indication of lack of creative ambition, a compromise between making art and making a living. As teaching can be marginalized in the art world, so is art too often marginalized in the education world.

Teaching Artists work a two-profession career, and owning this hybrid nature has led us to take action on our own behalf, seeking increasingly public recognition of the professional expectations, challenges and standards to which we hold ourselves and one another accountable. Teaching Artists are, by virtue of their own struggle to step out of the margins, agents of change.

Bruce Davis, executive director of Silicon Valley Art Council, says, "We've supported artists teaching in schools for more than 20 years and never thought of calling them "teaching artists" until several years ago." He notes the increasing professional recognition of what it takes to be a teaching artist today. "They have credentials; degrees (some Masters); and in particular with the Alternative Schools (in juvenile hall, group homes, and ranches) our Teaching Artists have been trained to deal with social issues, often way beyond the ordinary classroom."

Bay Area Teaching Artists are asking for opportunities and support to develop the skills Davis sees in his successful grantees. Belinda Taylor, coordinator of Berkeley-based Teaching Artists Organized (TAO), a coalition of leading arts organizations and individuals working to promote the work of Teaching Artists throughout the Bay Area, sees the trend sharply curving upward. "Our members tell us what they need and what they want—they come already steeped in their art forms," she says, "But they often seek professional development on partnering with schools and community groups, to know more about educational theory and practice, classroom management and other school concerns. And they know they need to learn to be entrepreneurs and business-savvy."

I've been working in partnership with Taylor to help Teaching Artists Organized (TAO) meet the new demands of the field, and we've been blown away by the expertise and

dedication of the partners and advisors who founded and continue to guide our new organization. (See list of founders/advisors below.)

Over the past decade, Teaching Artists across the nation have been finding each other, finding their voices, and working together toward what can only be called a movement of change. The Bay Area is taking its place as a strong new voice in that movement, with regional collaborative, statewide leadership, and local initiatives with theatre, arts commissions, education alliances, and national relationships.

Section 2 (Finding the *There* Here)

Like many artists, Teaching Artists defy easy categorization. And as creative types, we tend to resist agreements about standards, which we've seen turn toward standardization (read, "one size fits all") in other professional fields. Certification carries with it dangers of codification, and codification runs the risk of flattening creativity and shutting doors to the field. Unions can lead to bureaucracies and elitism. The very nature of creative, alternative engagement that makes Teaching Artists so effective makes categorization undesirable. At the same time, Teaching Artists face huge professional challenges: insufficient pay for professional work, lack of acknowledgement of the skills they hold and the value they bring to their partnerships, and difficulty in obtaining binding contracts or in fact obtaining reliable work at all. Without visible professional standards, we can't advocate well on our own behalf.

It's apparent now that we need to take charge of the conversation in a big way. As Davis notes, "Teaching Artist" is a term of relatively recent coinage that used to be quite controversial. Though now largely accepted, it is not yet clearly defined. This seems to be the general state of the field—increasing acceptance without clear definition or direction. And that's what makes this moment both very exciting—we have so much energy and activity that many things seem possible—and very risky—as others take note of our work, their expectations can outstrip our capacities and their impatience may lead them to dominate the conversation.

Although the Bay Area has come relatively recently to the conversation, we are now emerging as a hotbed of activity in the nascent Teaching Artist field. One advantage to coming a bit late is that there is so much to build on from Teaching Artist communities and leadership organizations like the Lincoln Center Institute for Arts in Education (New York), John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (Washington D.C.), Urban Gateways

Center for Arts in Education (Chicago), Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning through the Arts (Virginia), Pepcich Center for Arts Education (Minnesota), Music Center of the Performing Arts Center of Los Angeles, Kentucky Center for the Arts, **Chicago Arts Partnership in Education (CAPE)** and Nashville's Tennessee Performing Arts Center.. ..

Our late entry to the larger conversation doesn't mean that we lagged in the actual on-the-ground work of being artists working in school and community settings, with or without an awareness of the developing field of Teaching Artistry. Individuals, small groups and larger institutions carried out artist residencies, offered school-site performances and assemblies, and brokered relationships between artists and schools in a variety of ways. The California Arts Council has always funded artists in schools, and the Bay Area has a long list of organizations receiving continued funding for many years.

We've been connecting to the national conversation through the Kennedy Center's local partners Cal Performances and Berkeley Unified School District since 2001; Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts in Davis and Elk Grove Unified School District (since 2003); Wells Fargo Center for the Arts and Healdsburg Unified School District (since 2005); Stanford Lively Arts and Palo Alto Unified School District (2007). And just last year, the Kennedy Center selected Sacramento as one of x national sites for a new initiative.

Equally significant Bay Area theatre companies demonstrate a growing awareness of the link between their Teaching Artists' work and their core artistic mission. California Shakespeare Theatre's Jonathan Moscone traces his exploration of the relationship: "My experience taught me that theaters' education programs were more often than not ancillary to the central missions of theaters. And I didn't really know how to fix that when I assumed the leadership of Cal Shakes in 2000." Temporarily suspending his education department's activities for a year, Moscone engaged in some rigorous thinking and research, with funding from the East Bay Community Foundation, to reimagine education for the theatre. It was during this transition time that I met Jonathan and watched him find what he calls "a passion for what a theater, and specifically our Theater, can do to participate in the learning of young people." Once he could see the synergist relationship, he guided the creation of very specific language for their education programs, identifying them in the broader (and also more specific) sense as "artistic learning" Programs. The language holds today, and Cal Shakes current Director of Artistic Learning, Trish Tillman, has a quote coming. ..

Section 3 –

In July 2000, I left the best job in the Bay Area theatre community to take the second best job, embarking on a challenging new learning curve. As Executive Director of TBA, I'd been privileged to learn from real theatre people on the ground about the range, scope and needs of a diverse theatre-making community. As Executive Director of the Julia Morgan Center for the Arts in Berkeley, I knew I had a lot to learn from real educators in the arts. Fortunately, I didn't know how much I had to learn, or I might have shied away from the plunge.

In 10 years, change has come slowly: Gaps in perception of the value of education to art-production still exist. Concerns about funding for arts learning versus funding for production were recently highlighted when David Byrne (yes, of *Talking Heads*) wrote a blog on December 12 promoting focusing all available public funding away from major arts organizations to funding arts learning for every child. (Read "Art Funding or Arts Funding" at <http://journal.davidbyrne.com/2009/12/121209-art-funding-or-arts-funding.html>).

Nonetheless so much has changed in the field that I am occasionally staggered by the distance we have traveled in the expansion, clarity and movement of the conversation. Today there are multiple strands of the movement accessible here in the Bay Area.

- Regional collaboratives and partnerships working together to advance the role of teaching artists in healthy communities
- Formation of a statewide network of California organizations that support the work of Teaching Artists and advocate for professionalization of the field.
- Professional development opportunities, including an option to earn a certificate in arts integration from the Alameda County Office of Education (see below)

Teaching Artists Organized (TAO), a fiscally sponsored project of Community Initiatives.

One of the most visible and active of the regional collaboratives is the relatively new TAO. Inspired in 2004 by Cal Shakes Artistic Director Jon Moscone's commitment to arts learning as core to his artistic vision, then-Director of Artistic Learning Elena Ronquillo approached me at the Julia Morgan Center for the Arts about creating a collaborative in support of theatre teaching artists. Theatre Bay Area (Dale Albright), Berkeley Rep's School of Theatre (Rachel Fink), the Community Network for Youth Development (Lynn Johnson, now representing Glitter and Razz Productions) and San Francisco Performing Arts Workshop (Jessica Mele) invited Dancers Group to join them as founding members,

along with Young Audiences of Northern California (Mary Kelly, and now Kris Murray), Museum of Children's Art (Patricia Hannum), California College for the Arts (Ann Wettrich), and San Francisco Arts Providers Alliance (see below). And as the fabulously talented Teaching Artists at the Julia Morgan dispersed following the board's decision to dissolve the program, they took their commitment to new organizations and became part of TAO—Shawl-Anderson Dance Center (Jill Randall, also serving as current Board Chair), Cal Performances (Rica Anderson), The BEAT (Roger Dillahunt), Dave Maier (Berkeley Rep) and individual Teaching Artists Jeff Raz (the Clown Conservatory) and Rebecca Fisher (Creative Education Institute and the Marsh). Newer partners include Youth Arts in Marin (Miko Lee) and ArtYowza (Rebecca Stees), among others. TAO serves 300 individual members (membership is currently free), with coordination from Belinda Taylor, www.teachingartistsorganized.org. I currently serve as interim director for TAO, representing also my own Teaching Artist enterprise, the Creative Education Institute.

TAO membership is free and currently tops 300 names. We provide a bi-monthly newsletter, access to information about job and training opportunities, professional development, and advocacy for the field. We also represent Teaching and Community Artists at arts education alliances, conferences and workgroups. Our biggest challenge is keeping the focus just on the Teaching Artist—we are so used to be in service to our partners that it's hard to resist the call to be inclusive in our scope.

Teaching Artist Support Collaborative (TASC) of California

Spearheaded by TAO with funding from the California Arts Council (through a grant to the Alameda County Arts Commission), TASC is taking shape as a statewide network to serve as connector, communications hub and advocate for the professional needs of teaching artists and the organizations that support them. The core planning group consists of Young Audiences of San Diego, the Music Center in Los Angeles, Cal Arts, Los Angeles County Arts Commission, the Alameda County Arts Commission, SF Arts Commission, Young Audiences of N. California, Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission, TAO and others. A draft strategic plan is making the rounds of dozens of California organizations that have participated in the three-year conversation about the needs and of teaching artists. TAO has played a facilitating role to bring this collaborative into being.

The Arts Integration Specialist Certificate Program

Back at Montalvo, Violet Juno collects her camera, preparing for a meeting with Downtown College Prep, a San Jose public charter high school for students from mostly Spanish-speaking immigrant families who are the first in their families to prepare to go to college. Juno's passionate intensity about her work radiates through her delicate frame. "I know I'm doing my job when it's a bit of a challenge for the school. It's a catch-22—if you adapt your work strictly around the needs of the school--Teaching Artists are very good at adaptation—then everyone agrees in advance and everyone is happy." Juno's face lights up with rueful mischief. "But there's a real possibility that if you're doing your artistic and educational job well, you're going to be offering choices, perspectives as an artist that will surprise everyone and maybe cause some disturbance. But aren't surprise and discovery what both learning and art-making should be about?"

Artists have always been shamans and truth-sayers, outsiders and subversives, champions of oddity and eccentricity and individuality and curiosity and self-meaning. Organizational systems tend to be nervous around artists, and rightfully so. We're good at bringing out hidden ideas, nurturing self-worth, honoring multiple perspectives, and celebrating the processes of learning. It's basically our job, to shake things up and re-think what's possible.

Bruce Davis reminds us: "[Teaching] artists often go into non-physical combat with the kids they are teaching. And so very often, the ARTS WIN! Total change in attitude!" It's that total change in attitude toward the work of Teaching Artists that we are aiming for now, in our non-physical combat with the systems that don't yet know how amazingly cool and talented and effective we are. If you want to join the movement, check out TAO and these other leadership organizations:

Arts Providers Alliance of San Francisco (San Francisco Arts Commission)

The Arts Providers Alliance of San Francisco (APASF) is the largest affiliation of local arts education agencies and teaching artists in the Bay Area, and as founding partners with TAO, they contribute to making TAO a major presence in the Bay Area. An all volunteer alliance of professional artists and arts organizations, SFAPA is dedicated to the advancement of arts education in San Francisco, providing a network (through regular meetings and an email listserv) for arts educators to work effectively with the SFUSD. APASF also provides trainings for teaching artists to improve their practice and organizes the annual Arts Education Resource Fair

Silicon Valley Arts Council -- Teaching Artist programs

Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission

ACOE Alliance for Arts Learning Leadership

California Arts Council

The cash-strapped CAC uses revenues from the sale of the Arts License Plate to support its Artists in Schools program, integrating community arts resources—teaching artists and arts organizations—into a comprehensive, standards-based program, underscoring the critical role the arts play in shaping a student's overall well-being and academic achievement. Over the past three years the CAC has engaged its statewide network of arts commissions and major arts providers in a conversation that has resulted in formation of the Teaching Artists Support Collaborative (see above).

Musician Corps.

Advocay: CAAE

Who hires theatre and/or danceTeaching Artists?

A.L.I.C.E.

Berkeley Rep School of Theatre

California Shakespeare Theatre

Cal Performances

Galileo Summer Quest

Handful Players

Luna Kids Dance

Opera Piccola

Performing Arts Workshop

StageWrite

[Note: The original draft of this was peppered with disclaimers about my deep bonds of professional respect and personal affection for most of the people I quote, but perhaps it

will suffice to say I know these people, work with them, respect them and feel honored that they supported my efforts to write this overview. I would especially volunteer to be president of a fan club for Rica Anderson, Roger Dillahunty, Rebecca Fisher, Violet Juno, Dave Maier, Jill Randall, Jeff Raz, and Belinda Taylor.]

Research side bar

In 1999, TBA led field research using “social marketing” techniques with Bay Area theatre companies. The TBA staff included then-editor Belinda Taylor, and now-editor Karen McKevitt, and theatre member volunteers—Exit Theatre’s Christina Augello, Unconditional Theatre’s John Warren, Mary Beth Smith, then Yerba Buena Center Marketing Director, Andrew Smith, then ACT marketing director at and Rich Newirth, then with the SF Arts Commission. Fueled by Packard Foundation funding, from then-program manager Barbara Kibbe, we were exploring what people in and outside theatre thought were the core benefits to society that theatre played in a healthy community. One strand of our research focused on arts education.

Research results told us

- ❑ Artistic and managing directors saw far less connection than education and outreach directors did between a theatre company’s season and its education programs.
- ❑ Development directors were concerned that funding for education would divert support from performance and production funding.
- ❑ Artists who teach were more inclined than any other group to organize to change perceptions of the value of theatre and dance education in and after school.

To see published results of the research, go to Theatre Communications Group Centerpiece archive for December 2002 at http://www.tcg.org/pdfs/publications/centerpiece/centerpiece_1202.pdf