**Call for Participants: CATR Curated Panel (2016):**

***Hidden Roles of Theatre in Higher Education: Liberal Arts and University Theatre Programs in Canada***

Over the last couple of years, I have had the privilege of sitting on several program review committees for theatre departments at a variety of universities. Despite vast differences in size, scope, and curriculum, the majority, including our own at Mount Allison, claim a relationship to “liberal arts” or “liberal education.” Yet, the terms describe hugely different curricula and outcomes, which caused me to wonder what was really being meant by the “theatre/drama” – “liberal arts/education” associations and how this was affecting student learning. This led me to investigate a bit further and, to my surprise, while I have discovered ample discussion of the role of theatre programs in liberal arts argued by our American colleagues (Gressler, 2002; Fliotsos & Medford, 2004; Kindelan, 2012 to name only three of many), I have found little on the question from a Canadian perspective.

Discussions of university theatre programs in Canada seem to emphasize ambitions to professional or pre-professional training. Where education and theatre come into discussions, the focus is on TIE at the primary or secondary levels. All of these contributions are important, but an awful lot of our students come out of theatre programs neither to work professionally in theatre nor to teach in schools. I wonder if it’s time we started some conversations about how our own university theatre programs are taking up the liberal arts concerns of our institutions and, more importantly, of many of our students.

I would like to invite participants to a panel for the 2016 CATR conference where each would present a brief (10-minute) position paper or observations, followed by a significant opportunity for round-table and from-the-floor open discussion.

As way of example, topics/questions to consider might include…

1. Concepts of “liberal arts/liberal education” as they relate to theatre programs in higher education.
2. Theatre programs and the development of multiple intelligences.
3. How do theatre courses help students become responsive to social issues & develop social responsibility?
4. The relationship between theatre activities and experiential learning (beyond specifically technical or job-related theatre skills).
5. The role of theatre programs in institutional curriculum development.
6. How do theatre programs help students become better citizens of the world?
7. How do theatre programs develop skills that students need when they seek employment outside the theatrical profession or manage economic opportunities in the dynamic marketplace of their future?
8. What is the evidence that theatre programs teach students to think critically and analytically?
9. What are the relationships among curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular theatre activities in the formation of “the whole student”?
10. What is the relationship between theatre arts and the “creative economy”?
11. How do performance activities create transformative experiences for students?
12. How do theatre programs teach creative thinking?
13. How do theatre programs develop understanding of the self and others?

Please address any questions or email brief (300-word) proposals for your position paper or observations by January 15, 2016 to Glen Nichols at gnichols@mta.ca

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