

WRITING INSTITUTE HELPS AUTHOR BRING MEMOIR TO FRUITION

For years, Lucia Greenhouse struggled with the memoir she was writing about growing up in a family that practiced Christian Science. Then she discovered the Writing Institute at Sarah Lawrence, and for the next four

years, studied the Art of the Memoir with Joelle Sander. In August, her memoir, *motherfathergod: My Journey Out of Christian Science*, was published by Crown, a Random House imprint, 25 years after she started it. “That class gave me the structure and

discipline I needed,” says Greenhouse, the mother of four, who lives in Rye. “Joelle had a way of helping me tackle very sensitive material. She gently encouraged me to go where the essence of truth was.”

Sander’s class, which she has taught for close to two decades, was among 20 courses offered at the Writing Institute this fall in nonfiction, fiction, screenwriting, poetry, and journalism. The classes attract a broad range of students from writers like Greenhouse who are intent on publishing their work, and other memoirists, like octogenarian Inge Hershkowitz, who has documented her experiences in Hitler’s Germany, to those interested in learning the craft and finding their writing voice.

Some students take noncredit Writing Institute classes and later matriculate in Sarah Lawrence’s graduate writing program.

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Photo: Dana Maxson

In addition to small classes the Writing Institute affords students an opportunity to read from their work.

NEW MUSICAL IN DEVELOPMENT AT SLC SEE IT BEFORE IT MOVES TO NYC!

A new musical about the life of Dorothy Shaver, one of America’s first female CEOs who led Lord & Taylor during the 1940s and 50s, is under development at Sarah Lawrence College.

Called *The Christmas Windows of 1937*, the musical will explore Shaver’s life as she

developed the American Look in fashion, confronted sexism among her fashion industry colleagues, and created those iconic, spare, store windows at Christmas that so resonated with shoppers during the Depression.

“We’ll be developing the play with students, from the floor up,” says Director Jackson Gay, who has staged productions at the Yale Repertory Theater, Sundance Theater Institute, and The Public Theater. “It’s going to be a crash course with student actors, a composer, and the playwright.”

Performances of *The Christmas Windows of 1937* are set for November 17, 18, and 19 at 7

p.m. with a 2:30 p.m. matinee on November 19 in the Suzanne Werner Wright Theater

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Photo: David Willson

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Writing Institute *continued from page 1*

Photo: Bobby Friedel



Lucia Greenhouse

“There are lots of folks who want to develop their writing,” says David Donnelly, director of the Center for Continuing Education and Special Programs at Sarah Lawrence. “It can happen while you are working, or after you retire, and you want to cultivate and nurture your creative side.

Writing can be a wonderfully exhilarating thing to be engaged in.”

The noncredit classes typically run for 11 weeks from September through early December, with weekly two-hour classes on campus. Some are held during the day while others take place in the evening. The Institute also offers shorter courses. This fall, five-week Saturday classes included writer Marek Fuch’s “Getting a Bead on Your Lead,” which provides strategies for writers to grab readers’ attention with a good beginning to their writing project.

He’s also teaching a course, “Writing and Photography: Thinking Visually,” which explores how writers can use images to enhance their stories.

“From Web sites to books getting read on tablets, the worlds of words and visuals are really merging,” says Fuchs, who wrote the County Lines column in the *New York Times* Westchester section for many years.

“It’s all about conceiving stories visually and verbally, and presenting them in a way that’s engaging.”

Fees for the 11-week classes are \$575, while the shorter Saturday courses range in cost from \$175 to \$280. The spring semester starts in January.

Courses, which enroll a maximum of 10 to 14 students, are taught in a workshop format, encouraging discussion and sharing of student work. Students typically read their work, and their fellow students comment on what they hear. A community develops within the classes, as students provide helpful feedback, and the writing process deepens.

“Many writers find a community here that enables them to speak candidly, creatively, and openly,” says Steven Schnur, who has taught at the Institute since 1990. “The Institute is a portal, a way for people to come in, and find the voice to tell their stories.”

Christmas Musical *continued from page 1*

on Sarah Lawrence’s campus. Admission is free but seats are limited. Please reserve by calling (914) 395 2412.

Gay, who has found a niche in the theatrical world directing new works, says she had been in discussions with playwright Cheri Magid about the musical when she received a call from Robert Lyons, creative director of the Sarah Lawrence Theatre Program, asking if she’d be interested in directing a student production this fall. She mentioned her fledgling project with Magid. Lyons told her he wanted it.

So rehearsals moved forward this fall, with script revisions and new songs being developed by Magid and composer Evan Palazzo, whose swing band, The Hot Sardines, will play for the performances.

“The students will experience what it’s like to work with new material, with the writer and the composer in the room,” says Gay.

Magid hatched the idea for the production when developing an idea for a family-oriented Christmas play. During that research, she discovered Shaver’s story, which unfolds in a musical that focuses on

her activities in the 1930s as she worked her way up Lord & Taylor’s corporate ladder. In 1937, when the economy slid deeper into the Depression, Shaver decided on a dramatic change to the windows outside the clothing store’s famed Fifth Avenue windows, which were traditionally chock full of the latest winter fashions during Christmas.

But in 1937, with money scarce, Shaver removed the clothes from the windows, and replaced them with a deep red backdrop, large bells, and piped-in carillon music. The simplicity struck a chord with New Yorkers yearning to sense the spirit of Christmas, but lacking in cash to indulge in presents for their family and friends. Shaver had an ability to sell, but in 1937, she had to confront the problem of trying to sell when few had the money to buy.

“Instead of selling something, Dorothy was giving them something,” says Magid. “They stopped, looked, and felt what Christmas was all about: goodwill for all, no matter what the struggle, with a feeling of communal warmth.”

Sarah Lawrence College’s Theatre program, ranked as one of the best in the country by The Princeton Review, creates theatre artists who are skilled in many disciplines: actors who write; directors who act; theatre makers who create their own projects; sound, set and lighting designers who are well versed in new media and puppetry.

inTOUCH

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HIGH SCHOOL SUMMER PROGRAM STUDENTS INSPIRED TO ENROLL AS UNDERGRADUATES

Photo: David Donnelly



Melissa Ramos '12 says she found out about Sarah Lawrence the cliché way from the 1999 movie "10 Things I Hate About You".

"Julia Stiles gets really excited about getting in, and I remember thinking 'Why?'" explains Ramos, a Washington Heights native. "I was young when I saw it, but I wanted to know what the school was about and why she was freaking out."

Ramos did her homework and before her senior year of high school, decided to take a three-week visual arts summer program workshop at SLC. She painted and studied art theory and history from the early mornings to late afternoon, while living in the Dudley Lawrence residence hall.

Convinced that Sarah Lawrence was a place of "limitless possibilities," she applied as an early decision candidate. After enrolling as an undergraduate, Ramos' primary passion became poetry.

"The workshop I took made clear the sort of diligence and stamina you need to do the work here," Ramos adds. "Everyone I met was likeminded and interested in exploring what was outside of our textbooks. We were all very thirsty."

KEEP *in*TOUCH

Between print issues of *InTouch* we are now sending monthly e-mail calendar updates. If you are not receiving them, please send your e-mail address to communications@sarahlawrence.edu and put 'InTouch Calendar Updates' in the subject line. If you are not already receiving a mailed copy of *InTouch*, get your free subscription by calling (914) 395-2220 or visiting www.slc.edu/intouch.

Summer programs at Sarah Lawrence capture students' hearts and minds on behalf of the College. Sixty-five of the 258 (25 percent) high school students who participated in summer programs from 2006-2010 applied to SLC. Of those 65, 28 have enrolled (43 percent).

The summer programs also often alter perceptions of the College, particularly those of students who have grown up in the New York City metropolitan area – from whence many of the summer program students hail – and think SLC is a bit "too close to home."

Francesca Normile '13 had every right to think just that, given that she actually grew up on campus—her house was across the street from the Esther Raushenbush library on Boulder Trail.

Normile has wanted to be a writer since middle school, and accumulated a large number of journals she now finds amusing to read. She enrolled in a three-week summer writing program at the College when she was 15.

"I think I was the youngest in my class, and I was definitely scared, but the teachers were so encouraging. That class definitely changed my perception," Normile says. Like Ramos, she applied to Sarah Lawrence for early decision.

"A lot of my friends didn't know how unique the academic environment is at Sarah Lawrence when they were looking at schools, and when I describe it to them, they all wish they had applied," Normile adds with a smile.

Summer programs run three to five weeks and currently offer filmmaking, musical theatre, dance, and writing. There is also a three-week evening course on the creative essay and a five-day writing and theatre workshop led by prose writers, poets, and theatre artists.

Students in the three-week classes have two one-on-one meetings with their instructors, who are highly regarded experts in their fields.

Jacob Dannett '14 grew up on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. He is studying painting this year and is involved with a number of clubs, including one that organizes an annual dinner to celebrate workers on campus.

Dannett took a visual arts and poetry summer program in 2009, and because of it, says he felt comfortable on campus, which helped in ultimately selecting Sarah Lawrence out of the eight colleges to which he was accepted.

"I'm able to explore what I love here, and that's what really matters."

For more information about high school programs



Photo: Dana Maxson

High school students participating in writing, theatre, dance, music, and filmmaking classes enjoy the College campus in summer.

For up-to-date information, visit
www.sarahlawrence.edu/events

in SPIRATIONAL

FROM CLASS TO ACTION

On Saturday mornings in southwest Yonkers, elementary school children come to Iglesia Memorial de San Andres to draw, play, and engage in creative activities in a program designed and run by Sarah Lawrence students.

Headed up by sophomores Rui Gui and Sharon Holiner, the program grew out of their experiences last year assisting at San Andres' afterschool program, which serves Latino children in one of the city's poorest neighborhoods. This October, Gui and Holiner were joined by six Sarah Lawrence volunteers from a newly formed club called Iglesia Scholars.

Gui, who was born in China, says the volunteer activity is her way of helping immigrant children who lack the support she experienced growing up. Her family lived in

Germany and three US cities as her father, a college professor, moved to teaching posts in university communities.

"I'm lucky. I have the benefit of college-educated parents and didn't face the difficulties these kids face," says Gui. "But I still am an immigrant child."

The Rev. Yamily Bass-Choate, rector of Iglesia Memorial de San Andres, says the Saturday program has been a big hit in the neighborhood, where the Spanish-speaking Episcopal congregation was founded on Post Street about 30 years ago.

"There are very few free programs to enrich the lives of children here," says Bass-Choate. "San Andres could not afford to have the caliber of teachers that come to volunteer from Sarah Lawrence."

Gui came to San Andres to help at the church's after-school program during the 2010-11 school year for the service-learning component of a course, Poverty in America. With the help of the Office of Community Partnerships, she decided to start the Saturday program in the spring, as a way to provide additional enrichment opportunities for the students.

One Saturday the Sarah Lawrence students taught the children about world music, delving into how different cultures have different musical styles, utilizing video clips, recordings, and playing the guitar and the church piano. Another Saturday was devoted to learning about the oceans, including a game called Sharks and Minnows.

The Saturdays this fall include presentations on the universe and outer space, geography, undersea creatures, the ocean, and the concept of exploration, during which the students make up their own stories of discovery.

"We're bringing in materials about volcanoes, airplanes, dinosaurs, magical creatures, and the ecosystem," says Holiner. "I'm really having fun with the kids."

Holiner, who works as a camp counselor during summer vacations, says she enjoys sharing her knowledge with the children. And she says they provide her with much in return. "They have the ability to be completely there in the moment, and not have the pretensions that can make adulthood so extremely complicated," she says. "It's a good way to get back to that for a little while. And it's a good way for me to do something useful with my time."

