CONDUCTING A PEDAGOGY:
THE INFLUENCE OF MARIA IRENE FORNES’S TEACHING AND
THE PADUA HILLS PLAYWRIGHTS WORKSHOP AND FESTIVAL
ON THREE CONTEMPORARY WOMEN PLAYWRIGHTS

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ABSTRACT

In some circles, Maria Irene Fornes is as hallowed for her
toplaywriting pedagogy as she is for her plays. Over the years,
she developed a series of exercises and a method of presentation
to guide students in what she described as “creating life.”
Many of these exercises were honed in various workshops
including the legendary Padua Hills Playwrights Workshop and
Festival under the direction of playwright Murray Mednick, whose
pedagogical philosophy closely matched that of Fornes. In an
effort to assess the broader implications of their combined
approach to playwriting and its long-term effect on American
theatre, this dissertation examines the impact of this
playwriting pedagogy on the careers of three women playwrights,
all alumnae of the Padua Hills Playwrights’ Workshop and
Festival, ultimately revealing how, as with Aristotle, teachers
beget disciples who beget converts and so on, exponentially,
ensuring the endurance of this unique approach to playwriting
and the survival of the art.