

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 playwriting 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.