Harnessing the power of performance to humanize global politics.

LABORATORY FOR GLOBAL PERFORMANCE & POLITICS

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
Walsh School of Foreign Service
Who We Are

Housed in the Walsh School of Foreign Service, The Lab is made up of artists, policy experts, activists, educators, and students who believe in the power of live performance to provoke empathy, break down stereotypes, and shed light on global challenges.

We create substantive, dynamic partnerships with leading theaters, cultural and policy organizations, embassies, and educational institutions from Washington, DC, across the country, and around the world.

The Lab is widely recognized for our pioneering approaches to integrating performance, the humanities, and international relations.

The Lab strengthens, nurtures, and promotes global citizenship and international collaboration through our leadership role in the UNESCO International Theatre Institute and the Global Theater Initiative, in partnership with Theatre Communications Group.

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“Leveraging Georgetown’s dual strengths in performance and international affairs, The Lab has greatly enriched the Georgetown and Washington communities …. For in bringing performances from around the world in which local voices give us their perspectives, they humanize today’s foreign policy challenges.”

— Georgetown University President
John J. DeGioia

“I think that artists both individually and through their works can illustrate better than any speech I can give or any government policy we can promulgate that the spirit that lives within each of us, the right to think and dream and expand our boundaries, is not confined, no matter how hard they try, by any regime anywhere in the world.”

— Former US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton at Georgetown University

ABOVE: Cellist Joshua Roman, actress/playwright Anna Deavere Smith, former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and Lab Co-Director Ambassador Cynthia Schneider in a panel discussion during Smith’s On Grace residency.

BELOW: Lab Co-Director Derek Goldman leads a workshop in Segovia, Spain at the inaugural ITI World Congress Student Festival, which Goldman curated.
“Because ultimately when I dream forward, I see a world that fully utilizes the power of communal narrative to help re-humanize our families, our cities, our countries, and our world. But more importantly than that, theater ultimately re-humanizes the most powerful tool on the planet: the human heart.”

— Think Tank member Kwame Kwei-Armah’s 2017 US World Theatre Day address

“The Lab brings policy experts, employees from the State Department and embassies, American and global theater practitioners, students, and community members that can speak firsthand to the experiences you’re depicting onstage—all in the same room—commenting and asking questions of your piece. There is no place besides The Lab that can create a conversation on a play like this. It was invaluable.”

— Think Tank member Heather Raffo on the development of Noura
“Going to Cambodia with The Lab showed me the power the arts have in rebuilding a nation. I was awestruck watching artists engage all forms—dancing, drumming, sculpting, and even the circus!—as a way to talk about Cambodia’s very recent traumatic past under the Khmer Rouge, and as a way to empower marginalized people in Cambodia’s present. Without The Lab, I would not have experienced this side of Cambodia.”

— Sarika Ramaswamy, Georgetown student (SFS ’18)

“Jan Karski, one felt, came from another place and time, a place of dignity and integrity, a time of courage and commitment, a community of just men and women who cared for each other deeply and equally. This powerful and beautiful play brings Jan Karski to life, and his report to the world is now more indispensable than ever.”

— Former Georgetown University President Rev. Leo O’Donovan
What We Do

The Lab creates, presents, and tours high-quality, cutting-edge performances that provoke new understandings and conversations about the pressing challenges of our world.

The Lab harnesses the power of performance to humanize global politics.

The Lab provides distinctive training and mentoring opportunities for artists working in a global context, for a new generation of leaders poised to work at the intersection of politics and performance, and for students seeking new approaches to today’s challenges.

The Lab’s signature approach raises voices rarely heard in Washington, DC through compelling, authentic narratives that cast critical issues in a new light.

The Lab’s work seeks at once to cultivate more humanistic approaches to foreign policy and to shift the national theatrical landscape to include global and local voices that are often unheard. We champion the vital role theater makers play in responding to urgent issues, sparking empathy and dialogue, and countering extremism.

We respond nimbly to world events, developing responsive public programs, residencies, workshops, multi-day convenings, panel discussions, and symposia.
“Tennessee Williams would have smiled at the poetry unfolding outside the National Building Museum... The tour is here via [The Lab], which has the great goal of giving international creative voices a platform in this fractious capital city. That’s a timely mission, and plainly this is a troupe and a show worth hearing.”

— The Washington Post

“What is it that makes someone so scared of a man with a pen? The reason is truth. Art has to do with revealing the truth.”

— Think Tank member Azar Nafisi, author of Reading Lolita in Tehran, at Burning to Tell You
“Our voices have to be heard, and we have to engage in dialogue with people like this because the only way we can defeat the forces of fear and anger and misunderstanding is by continuing to talk and by continuing to make art.”

— Bestselling author Zarqa Nawaz, at The Lab’s “Policy, Comedy, and the Dangers of Satire” forum

“The effort that The Lab is doing today is so critical… the power of performance, the power of storytelling, and the power of narrative are absolutely essential. In my mind, they are some of the only things that can actually have an influence on the political dialogue.”

— Dean of GU’s School of Foreign Service Joel Hellman in his opening remarks at the 2016 TCG Global Pre-Conference, Finding Home: Migration, Exile, and Belonging at Georgetown University

Mexico City-based Teatro Línea de Sombras Amarillo at the 2017 TCG Global Pre-Conference, Beyond the Four Walls.
BELOW Lab Fellow Velani Dibba (SFS ’17) and cast in Migrar, a site-specific journey conceived by Kamchàtka for the 2016 TCG Global Pre-Conference, Finding Home: Migration, Exile, and Belonging.

“I have fostered global connections and continued the practice of political theater through the Lab Fellows program, a tribe of innovative artists and generous collaborators. We are comprised of scholars and comedians, activists and students, immigrants and creators—intersecting identities that celebrate our multi-faceted knowledge.”

—Lab Fellow Devika Ranjan (SFS ’17; MPhil Candidate, Cambridge University; 2017 Marshall Scholar)

“Being one of the Lab Fellows means so much to me—as an artist, as a Syrian woman, and as a refugee. This is an amazing group of people, and I’m so proud to be one of them. We are more than friends, we’ve been united under the name of humanity, culture, and art, a connection that eclipses the different places we’re from. These are relationships that will last forever.”

—Lab Fellow Reem Alsayyah
Our expansive network includes the **Lab Fellows**, a group of path-breaking artists and thinkers from around the world working at the intersection of performance and politics, a **Think Tank** made up of visionaries in these fields, and a **Campus Cohort** consisting of Georgetown faculty collaborators from a wide range of disciplines.
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Co-Director  

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