

BRIGHT IDEAS FORM

BRIGHT IDEAS CATEGORY: Special Project



PROJECT: Play Discussions

Sponsored by Actors Associates of Actors Theatre of
Louisville

Play Discussions are presented three times during each theater season. These sessions are led by an Associates' member who is an English teacher at Louisville's Trinity High School and include a panel with members of the Actors Theatre Literary Department. The first two Play Discussions of each season are held in November and February. Each focuses on the play that has just closed and also features a preview of the play about to open. The final Play Discussion in April deals with the recently completed Humana Festival of New American Plays productions.

During Play Discussions, the dramaturge for each play discusses his/her impressions and understanding of the play(s) with which he/she worked. The dramaturges' perspectives are unique because they not only perform extensive research on the plays but also are present when the director and creative staff make key decisions about the details of each play's production. Additionally, dramaturges participate in rehearsals by contributing to actors' creative decisions in interpreting their characters. Participants gain in-depth insights from Play Discussions that are not immediately available to the majority of playgoers.

Our Play Discussions always provide ample time for audience questions. For example, during the 2009 post-Humana Festival Play Discussion there was a lively debate about the question of "What is a play?" This topic arose because several of the Humana offerings that year were not dramas in the traditional sense.

Play Discussions are open to the public, free of charge, and include a light supper provided by Actors Associates volunteers.

GOAL

The **Play Discussions** provide a means for Actors Associates members to enhance their enjoyment and understanding of the productions at Actors Theatre. In addition these Play Discussions provide a way to reach out to the general public with the goals of attracting new members to Actors Associates and augmenting the positive experience the public has at Actors Theatre.

The Play Discussions are also one of the ways that members of Actors Associates can contribute to the goals of our organization. Members can assist in choosing the plays to be discussed; in selecting facilitators for the discussions; in scheduling the dates, places, and advertising for the discussions; and in making arrangements for the refreshments.

RESULTS

During the **Play Discussions** the audience gets a behind-the-scenes view of the theater production process and also a sense of the insight and passion the dramaturges have for play development and for Actors Theatre. The dramaturges, in turn, get a sense of the reactions of theater patrons to the plays presented at Actors Theatre.

A key to the success of the Play Discussions at Actors Theatre is the willingness of theater management to encourage and support the Literary Department staff's participation. As a result, the atmosphere of the Play Discussions is not only professional but also friendly and conducive to the candid exchange of ideas.



Panel for October 2009 Play Discussion included L to R: dramaturges for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *A Christmas Story*; facilitator & Associates' member Frank Ward; Associates' Education Committee Chair, Bill Young



Participants enjoy the post- Humana Festival of New American Plays discussion.

