

# MARTY POTTENGER: PLAYWRIGHT, PERFORMANCE ARTIST + DIRECTOR

TerraMotoInc@gmail.com

www.martypottenger.com

## BIO:

Playwright, Performance Artist, Director. B.S. Northwestern University, Oral Interpretation. Founder/Director of Art at Work, AEI a national initiative piloted with the City of Portland Maine's departments, unions and elected officials to improve municipal government through strategic arts projects. Art at Work's Police Poetry & Photography Calendar 2009 has received international attention with articles in the Guardian, Turkish Weekly, New York Times, American Police Beat, LA Times and msnbc.com.

Executive Director of Terra Moto Inc, a multidisciplinary arts organization. Member of Magdalena Festival, Network of Ensemble Theaters, Theater Communications Group. NYFA Fellow, Headlands Bridge Fellow, award nominations: Alpert Award, United States Artists, Leadership for a Changing World/Ford Foundation. Founding Member of Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art & Politics. 2006 TCG Plenary Panel: "Making Theater, Building Community." 2002 Symposium-"Oral History to Performance" University of Rome, Italy. Founder and Director of TheaterWorks performance workshops for union members with The Working Theatre. Past Board Chair of American Festival Project, a national organization of artists and cultural workers, based at Appalshop, committed to deepening the relationship of the arts to the daily lives of people and communities. Guest Teaching Artist residencies and lectures include Virginia Tech, Williams College, Emerson College, New York University, Mount Holyoke, San Francisco State University, Union Seminary. Funding support includes Nathan Cummings Foundation, Animating Democracy Initiative/Ford Foundation, NEA, NYSCA, LEF, Lila Wallace Readers Digest Fund, Trust for Mutual Understanding, Rockefeller MAP and Artslink among others.

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For more info go to [www.artsandequity.us](http://www.artsandequity.us) [www.abundancproject.net](http://www.abundancproject.net) [www.martypottenger.com](http://www.martypottenger.com)

## ART AT WORK Terra Moto Initiative / 2007 / DIRECTOR + ARTIST

In response to the success of the community performance project *home land security*, Portland's Department of Equal Opportunity & Multicultural Affairs and the School District's Multicultural Affairs Department asked Pottenger to develop a city-wide initiative that would use the tools of stories, art and performance to address long-standing issues of discrimination and perceived prejudice within the city government and the school system, with the objective of increasing equity. Following discussions with elected officials, school administrators, city employees and community leaders, the Art At Work (AAW) was created as a first-ever Portland city/school/community partnership to explore ways that creativity and the arts can effectively address discrimination, inequity and a growing sense of disenfranchisement at both ends of the political spectrum. Portland's AAW is a pilot project intended to start up in additional cities in 2009. One specific program trains local artists for long term residencies in city, departments, and unions to both make art & lead workshops - poet/police department, choral director/City Council and printer/Public Works. [www.artatworkproject.us](http://www.artatworkproject.us)

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## PRODUCTIONS + PERFORMANCES:

### WHO WE ARE / 2008 / WRITER + DIRECTOR

A performance about the lives and work of 8 members of Local 200, Service Employees International Union at Syracuse University, and performed by the members themselves. Working with the custodians, food service and maintenance workers, gave a forty minute performance about their lives and work. The project was so well received, many of the union participants continue to meet to develop their stories into another performance. The original performance is now a part of First Year Student Orientation Week at SU. After viewing excerpts of the performance at a Labor & Arts Symposium, Chancellor Nancy Cantor reversed a long-standing policy of hiring nonunion construction companies, a policy the union had been fighting to win for years.

### home land security / 2005 - 2006 / WRITER + DIRECTOR

After an unprecedented Border Patrol raid targeting the immigrant community of Portland Maine, the Center for Cultural Exchange asked Pottenger to create an arts project with the Portland's people affected by the raid. *home land security* became a two year community arts performance project focusing on security and sovereignty in since 9/11 and the seismic changes that followed. Written from story circles and interviews, the cast includes Mayor Jill Duson, Fire Chief Fred LaMontagne, State Senate President Beth Edmonds, Director of Multicultural Affairs Rachel Talbot Ross (President of Portland NAACP), Reverend Virginia Marie Rincon, Hispanic Mission in the Northeast, Heather Augustine, member of Micmac Nation Billy Woolverton, a writer and performer who has been homeless for the last ten years, Peng Kem, Cambodian leader, Hamid Karimian, a 17 year old Muslim Kurd high school student and Lucien Mathieu, an 83 year old French Canadian fiddler and retired union president. Live music includes charango, guitar, African drums, fiddle.

NEA, Rockefeller MAP Fund, Maine Arts Council, LEF Foundation, National Performance Network

"...moving, honest, vital - a 'true reality show' - don't miss it" - Portland Press Herald

## PRODUCTIONS + PERFORMANCES: *continued*

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### ABUNDANCE / 2000 – 2004 / WRITER + DIRECTOR

Abundance is a national community performance project about money and America. Asking “What is enough?” and “What would be enough for you?” the Abundance Project included four years of in-depth interviews with 30 multi-millionaires and 30 minimum wage-earners throughout the United States as well as a monthly NYC dialogue that included undocumented workers, millionaires and the people in between. The 5 actor play, co-directed by Steve Bailey, was written in part with text from these interviews and dialogues, and toured to sold-out houses in Seattle, Houston, Burlington, Washington DC, Providence, Philadelphia and NYC. Incorporating art-making as a critical tool in creating vigorous community engagement on a challenging topic, the Abundance Project included arts-based civic dialogues with ideologically and economically diverse groups in each city, putting the power of theater to work in transforming conversations and communities. [www.abundanceproject.net](http://www.abundanceproject.net)

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Rockefeller MAP, NYSCA, NEA, Animating Democracy Initiative/Ford Foundation, Threshold and the Nathan Cummings Foundation  
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*“Elegant and troubling...one of 2003’s Ten Best Plays” — Seattle Post Intelligencer*

*“Abundance is a clear-eyed, barrier-breaking, unsettling, and ultimately optimistic new play that lives on in the mind days after you see it.” — NYTheater.com*

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### JUST WAR / 1999 - / PLAYWRIGHT

Written from interviews conducted in Yugoslavia (‘99 & ‘00), pamphlets, almanacs, governmental reports, news articles, and transcripts from war crimes trials in The Hague. A solitary actor in over 30 roles accompanied by a guitarist playing an original score of gypsy flamenco music, tells the tale of the dissolution of Yugoslavia at the end of the twentieth century. Interviews included renegade and veteran soldiers, their families, peace activists, former prisoners, government officials and artists. Just War looks at the possibilities of forgiveness and healing for both perpetrators & victims, in the context of regional conflict and international policy. Director/Dramaturg Ana Miljanic, acclaimed Yugoslavian theater director and democracy activist; Centre For Cultural Decontamination, Belgrade, Yugoslavia. Current

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The Trust for Mutual Understanding, Artslink  
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### WINNING THE PEACE / 1999 / CREATOR, WRITER, EDITOR, DIRECTOR + CO-PRODUCER

A play written from over 400 collected emails from the people in Kosova and Serbia during the war, read by 35 New York leading citizens from theater, dance, religion, the military, unions, legal professions, publishing, education and business. Music by Terry Dame. St. Peter’s Church, NYC NY. Co-Producers: The Working Theatre and Cornell University Labor College.

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The Suitcase International Fund, Dance Theater Workshop / Trust for Mutual Understanding/Rockefeller Brothers Fund  
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### CITY WATER TUNNEL #3 / 1996 – 1999 / SOLO PERFORMER, WRITER + ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Multi-media, Obie-winning play and 5 year community art project. Produced by Dance Theater Workshops and Dancing in the Streets 1996 and The Working Theater 1998. Music Steve Elson. Premiered Dance Theater Workshop and HERE, NY, 1996. City Water Tunnel #3 is about the building of the largest public works project in the Western Hemisphere (non-defense). The tunnel’s construction began in 1970 and is scheduled for completion in 2025. CWT#3 was created in partnership with Local 147 of the Tunnelworker’s Union and NYC’s largest city agency, the Department of Environmental Protection who is in charge of the tunnel’s design, planning, financing and construction. To date, CWT#3 has included: Gallery Exhibits of photographs, artifacts and tunnel memorabilia / live multi-media performance(s) produced in NYC, the NY Upstate Watershed Region, universities, conferences and theaters internationally / establishing a Memorial Fund which raised \$20,000. towards the commission and installation of granite drinking fountains in each of the five boroughs to honor the 25 people who have died thus far / onsite lunch time performances at construction sites and NYC Government office buildings / a video by Mary Ellen Strom that traveled in installation form to the jobsites / two weekend Fairs for the public and tunnel building community. In 2000/01/02 CWT#3 toured Rome (Symposium & performance), Stockholm, Belgrade, Flynn Center for the Performing Arts, Burlington VT, the New England Tradeswomen Conference, and Legionarts, Cedar Rapids, Iowa; 1999 as well as Danceplace, Washington DC.; George Meaney Labor Center, Silver Springs, MD; Working Women Festival, San Francisco CA; University of Kansas, Lawrence KS; 1998 and a month-run at the Judith Anderson Theater NY.

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Lila Wallace Arts Partners, Rockefeller MAP, NYSCA, NYFA, Arts International, Greenwall Foundation.  
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*“Lyrical...speaking with intimate knowledge, and yes, even love...a Blending of Studs Terkel, Anna Deaver Smith and Pete Seeger.” — The New York Times*

*“rejoice that you have another chance to catch Marty Pottenger... a triumph of this genre... the erotics of work... structured as tightly as a sonata, juxtaposing video with live action, motion with stillness, music with storytelling; it’s truly a labor of love.” — Village Voice*

## PRODUCTIONS + PERFORMANCES: *continued*

CONSTRUCTION STORIES / 1997 / WRITER, DIRECTOR + SOLO PERFORMER

Framing out walls, hammering, mixing cement, installing locks amidst intimate, ironic, precise stories about love, work, death and dignity from a working class perspective. An evening of plainspoken, richly textured stories told while doing construction on stage. Round Don't Fit Square, a story about the ending of a 17 year relationship as a mortise lock is installed in a scarlet red door, is followed by Mixing Story, a silent strenuous mixing of sand, water, mortar into cement to the accompaniment of Bach's Cello Sonata #4. Killer Brick Memorial Wall, where a stack of old bricks from a now demolished building is made into a wall as one minute stories are told about co-workers killed on the job. In Construction Stories, Pottenger - a construction worker for the last 20 years - brings a builder's perspective to the nature of things, speaking to the daily beauty and brutality of physical labor. Dance Theater Workshop NY NY 1991; SUSHI Neo-Fest San Diego CA; Highways Los Angeles CA 1992; ICA London England 1993; Green Room Manchester England 1993; Theater Rhinoceros San Francisco CA 1994; excerpts aired NPR, KPFA, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, & Voice of America

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*"The work itself tells a story...wry and poignant."* — *Wall Street Journal*

*"regales you with intimate and ironic portraits of people and things in her life, even as she comments on the social contexts that control and shape those interactions. A virtuoso story-teller, uncanny in her use of detail and her warm humanity."* — *LA WEEKLY*

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HOUSE BUILDING TIME / 1989 / CREATOR, CHOREOGRAPHER, DIRECTOR + PRODUCER

Conceived, choreographed, directed and produced by Pottenger to celebrate the 1st National Tradeswomen Conference, House Building Time is a 15 minute choreographed construction of a small house, including framing out the walls, windows and door, wiring an overhead light, plumbing water, and setting a roof of rafter trusses. In the time it takes Maria Callas to sing the "Mad Scene" from Donizetti's Lucia de Lammamor, a team of working women, real carpenters, plumbers, electricians and laborers, all in yellow slickers, execute approximately 80 cues and finish as a lone electrician walks back towards the completed house, leans in, and pulls the light's chain, turning on the light as the aria ends. 1st National Tradeswomen Conference in Chicago, Illinois.

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*"Pottenger transformed the attendees notion of 'artwork' by creating a performance piece that included real laborers, and she introduced others to the possibility of their own creativity."* — *High Performance*

WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE A MAN / 1987 / PLAYWRIGHT, DIRECTOR + SOLO PERFORMER

Combines music, stories, and dance to examine the condition of the lives of men. A census-taking, standup tragic comedy show that at times resembles an action-adventure magazine. A vast hys/torical survey of men's lives as men as told by the men themselves. The stories drawn from over 60 interviews include "Harry Belafonte, Genghis Khan, Kermit & Me," "Real Penis Stories," "Most-Best-Time-With-My-Dad" and "Slowly I Turn..." Franklin Furnace NY 1987 and 1988 receiving a "Jerome Award;" Pyramid Art Space, Rochester NY; Diverseworks, Houston TX with PS 122 Field Trips

## AWARDS, HONORS + FELLOWSHIPS:

Art At Work / AEI nominated for a National League of Cities "Best Project Award" / 2009

Heroine Award from the Portland Police Department for the Courage to combine Poetry and Police Officers

United States Artist Nomination / 2007

New York Foundation for the Arts Advisory Board / 2003 - present

American Festival Project Board Chair / 2001 - 2004

Art & Democracy Conference Appalshop / 2004

CLAL The National Jewish Center for Learning & Leadership "Future of Social Change" Roundtable / 2002

The Fund for Women Artists - Abundance / 2000 - 2002

New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship - DIRT, CWT#3, Abundance / 1992, 1994, 1999

Alpert Award Nominee Theater / 1997 + 1998

Headlands Center for the Arts Bridge Residency / 1998

OBIE Village Voice City Water Tunnel #3 / 1996

NPN Residences: On The Boards, Seattle 2004, The Flynn Center, Vermont '04, '03, '02; Diverseworks Houston '04, Painted Bride Philadelphia PA '04, Legionarts, Iowa 2000; Rhode Island / 2004, 1998

## ORGANIZATIONS + ACTIVITIES:

Grantmaker's In the Arts "Arts & Equity Initiative"  
Atlanta, Georgia 2008

NPAC / TCG "Theater and Social Justice"  
Denver, Colorado 2008

Tangrene, Keynote, "Arts & Equity Initiative - Art At Work,"  
Düsseldorf, Germany 2008

Grantmaker's In the Arts Conference Speaker "A People's Dialogue: Patriotism & Identity"  
Cleveland, Ohio 2004

Asian Arts Initiative Community Workshop "A People's Dialogue"  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 2004

New York University Gallatin Scholar's Program "A People's Dialogue"  
New York, New York 2004

Auburn Seminary Abundance Workshop Auburn Seminary Board of Trustees  
New York, New York 2004

Americans for the Arts National Conference Workshop Leader "A People's Dialogue"  
Washington, DC 2004

TCG and APAP 1st National Performing Arts Conference "Touring Opportunities" Panelist  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 2004

Grantmaker's In the Arts Workshop Leader "Abundance Project"  
Seattle, Washington 2003

National Conference on Dialogue & Deliberation Workshop Leader "A People's Dialogue"  
Washington, DC 2003

Association of Performing Arts Presenters "Making Policy" '04, "Best Practices" '02, "Independent Artists"  
New York, New York 1998

Animating Democracy Learning Exchange/Chicago - "Sept 11 & U.S. Citizenship"  
Chicago, Illinois 2001

United Tradeswomen, New York, New York, 1977 - 1987

Heresies: A Feminist Magazine on Art & Politics, New York, New York, 1976 - 1984

## PUBLICATIONS + REFERENCES :

Water-Works: The Architecture and Engineering of the New York City Water Supply, by Kevin Bone, Gina Pollara, Marty Pottenger, 2006

Theater; Yale School of Drama; "Theater and Social Change" Marty Pottenger - Author, Spring 2001

*Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*; "Flow: An Interview with Marty Pottenger" Author - Leslie Atkins  
Durham; The University of Kansas Press, Fall 1999.

*The Citizen Artist, 20 Years of Art in the Public Arena*; Edited by Linda Frye Burnham and Steven Durland;  
Critical Press 1998, "CWT#3: Making City Water Tunnel #3" Author - Marty Pottenger.

*The Lure of the Local, Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society*; Author - Lucy Lippard;  
The New Press, New York 1997; Distributor - W.W.Norton & Company.

*Landscape Narratives, Design Practices for Telling Stories*; Authors - Matthew Potteiger & Jamie Purinton;  
John Wiley & Sons, 1998.

Reviews and articles (see [www.abundanceproject.net](http://www.abundanceproject.net)):

*The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, The Village Voice, Backstage, Time Out, Dance Magazine, The Daily News, Newsday, Glamour, San Francisco Chronicle, San Diego Union-Tribune, Washington Post, New Yorker, Topeka Kansas, Seattle Post Intelligencer, Seattle Times, Houston Chronicle, Philadelphia Inquirer, In Motion Magazine, Providence Journal, Dance Online.*

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## TEACHING:

Since 1995, Pottenger has been invited by Theater, Dance, History and English Departments to lecture and teach workshops on Community Performance Theory & Practice including Williams, Emerson College, Virginia Tech Dartmouth, University of Texas Austin, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Jacob's Pillow, SFSU, San Francisco Art Institute, Mount Holyoke, , Roanoke College, University of Kansas, School for Visual Arts, Dickinson College, George Mason University, Mills College and SUNY Albany, and SUNY Purchase. In 2002, the University of Roma, Sapienza, held a Symposium on Pottenger's work which included performance workshops, lectures by professors and a performance of City Water Tunnel #3.

Founder TheaterWorks! with The Working Theater 2002; where union members develop performances about their experiences as workers, deepen connections, define issues and offer solutions. Participating organizations include Local 371 of social workers, Communication Workers of America (Local 1180), Garment Workers (UNITE), and Amalgamated Life Insurance workers. At the final performance of each class, labor leaders and politicians come making the imaginative reach of performance increasingly significant in the lives of working people.

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