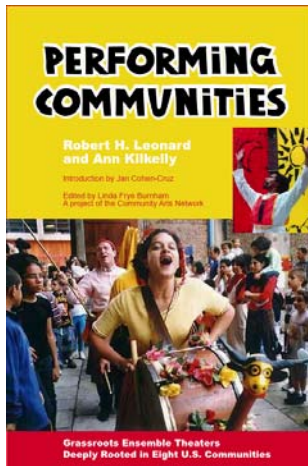


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Oakland, CA, New Village Press, the publishing arm of Architects/ Designers/ Planners for Social Responsibility releases a new title: *Performing Communities: Grassroots Ensemble Theaters Deeply Rooted in Eight U.S. Communities*

By Robert H. Leonard and Ann Kilkelly with introduction by Jan Cohen-Cruz
Edited by Linda Frye Burnham. A project of the Community Arts Network

Ensemble theater is one of the hottest American performance forms today. It's more than art – it's a movement, a movement about communities expressing their most urgent issues through drama dance and song. *Performing Communities* is an inquiry into a genre of theater that arises from and empowers the grassroots. The book profiles established ensemble groups from inner-city Los Angeles, small-town northern California, African-American South, multicultural southern Texas, low-income central Appalachia, economically struggling South Bronx New York and cross-continental Native America.

This compendium of critical writing about the role these theaters play in building community shows how these artist groups are *forged* by working in and with their communities over time. Ensemble theater is discovered to be neither alternative nor marginalized, but vanguard, a natural evolution of the movement that propelled regional theater "away from the commercial restraints of New York and toward a theater expressive of the rich diversity of American culture." It is theater that is

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politically and emotionally charged. It can be cathartic, healing and has proven ability to effect social change.

The book *Performing Communities* has been created from interviews, analytical essays, and play excerpts from the "Grassroots Theater Ensemble Research Project," an inquiry into American ensemble theaters that have been working in communities for 10 to 35 years. Although originating from a scholarly report, the language has been edited for a popular audience and offers an intimate glimpse into each local ensemble community. The book will appeal to followers of contemporary and popular theater, social change activists, community building specialists, and a public curious about cultural development in the United States.

Advance Praise:

"... you should get to know the remarkable folks in this book. They're a special breed, and they've got news about what's valuable in the art and practice of theater that will open your eyes and expand your mind."

— Jim O'Quinn, editor
American Theatre magazine

"You're watching performers in the process of raising the bar in their own lives and that asks the audience to make the same gesture."

— Peter Sellars, director

"With the contemporary world ablaze in "culture wars" along comes a book describing the work and philosophy of theater artists who artistic excellence is sharpened by their relationship with the life of communities."

— Liz Lerman, choreographer

About the authors:

Robert H. Leonard is Professor of Theatre Arts at Virginia Tech and former artistic director of the Road Company, an acclaimed ensemble theater that produced two dozen original plays reflecting the issues of Central Appalachia.

Ann Kilkelly is Professor of Theater Arts and Women's Studies at Virginia Tech and a nationally recognized scholar and performer who created the Diversity Training Laboratory that uses performance techniques to examine diversity issues.

Jan Cohen-Cruz is Director of Theatre Studies at NYU Tisch School of the Arts. She is author of *Local Acts: Community-based Performance In The United States* (Rutgers University Press 2005).

Linda Frye Burnham, editor, is co-director of Art in the Public Interest and the Community Arts Network. She founded *High Performance* magazine and is editor, with Steven Durland, of *The Citizen Artist: 20 Years of Art in the Public Arena* (Critical Press 1998).

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