**WLPG LEADERSHIP TEAM, NOVEMBER 2021**

**CLEITON ECHEVESTE, Brazil**

 Actor, playwright, director and researcher, Cleiton is a Master's degree student in the Postgraduate Program in Performing Arts, at the Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro, where he is part of the Study and Research Group on Creation Processes in Theater for Young Audiences.
 Cleiton holds a BA in the area from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. Born in the south of Brazil, on the border with Uruguay, he settled in Rio de Janeiro in 2002, where he is one of the creators and managers of Pandorga Theater Company, whose repertoire and research is dedicated to urgent themes in TYA.

 He has artistic and creative partnerships with collectives such as the *Os Tapetes Contadores de Histórias* group, the producers *Telúrica Produções* and *Bactéria Filmes*, and the educational institution *Michael Chekhov Brasil*. He has awarded plays translated into Spanish and published in Brazil, Peru and Argentina. With Pandorga, he participates in national and international festivals, and is a winner of several national awards. He also develops projects related to literature, memory and the elderly.
 He is a member of the Brazilian Center of the International Association of Theater for Young Audiences

**JENNY ANNE KOPPERA, USA** Jenny Anne Koppera, Artistic Director of Spinning Dot Theatre based in Michigan, has her MFA in Drama/Theatre for the Young from Eastern Michigan University, and she is active nationally and internationally in the field of children’s theatre.Professionally, Jenny comes from a background in dance, theatre, and the study of the French language. In addition to her work with Spinning Dot Theatre, she frequently directs, choreographs, and lectures at Eastern Michigan University.
 In 2010, she received a national AATE Doyle Fellowship Special Recognition Award for her work in the field, and in 2011, she interned at the ASSITEJ World Congress in Copenhagen and Malmo.
 In 2012, Jenny was selected as one of the Rye Fellows at the IPAY Showcase, and she was the TYA/USA Delegate to the International Directors’ Seminar hosted by ASSITEJ Germany in 2013.
 She was honored to be selected as the 2014 TYA/USA Ann Shaw Fellowship Recipient, and in 2014 and 2017, she was thrilled to act as a *Write Local. Play Global*. Delegate at the ASSITEJ World Congresses in Poland and South Africa.
 In 2018, Spinning Dot Theatre was selected as the Outstanding New Children’s Theatre in the US by the American Alliance for Theatre in Education.
 Currently, she is very proud to sit on the TYA/USA Board of Directors and the WLPG Leadership Team during this pivotal and exciting time for theatre for young audiences in the US and throughout the world.
[www.spinningdot.org/](http://www.spinningdot.org/)

**KIM PETER KOVAC, USA**

Kim worked at the Kennedy Center for 35 years, most recently as Artistic Director of Kennedy Center Theater for Young Audiences and co-founding director (Administrative) of *New Visions/New Voices*.

*NV/NV* has had significant impact on the field nationally and internationally, helping with the development of 126 new plays and musicals from 110 playwrights and 40 composers working with 67 U.S. and 13 international companies. In 2016, *New Visions/New Voices: 25 years/25 Plays* was published by Dramatic Publishing, co-edited by Deirdre Kelly Lavrakas and Kim Peter Kovac. In 2018 they were awarded the first-ever Harold Oaks Award for Sustained Excellence by *Theatre for Young Audiences/USA.*

He produced over 100 commissioned world premiere productions of plays, operas and dances for young audiences produced by the Center from both emerging and established artists. He holds an MFA in Directing from the University of Texas at Austin and has conducted workshops, seminars, and symposia fourteen countries as well as in TYA programs in four US universities.

From 2002-2014, he was on the ASSITEJ EC, including two terms as Vice-President. From 1998-2017, he was on the board of *Theater for Young Audiences/USA*, including one term as President.

He recently published the poetry collection “*Border Sounds: Poems & Dispatches from Other Timezones.*

In 2017 he was designated an ‘Honorary Member’ of ASSTIEJ and was inducted into the College of Fellows of the American Theatre. [www.kimpeterkovac.com](http://www.kimpeterkovac.com)/

**DEIRDRE KELLY LAVRAKAS, USA**

**Deirdre Kelly Lavrakas** worked at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC for 35 years as a Teaching Artist, Production Operations Manager, and co-founding director (Artistic) of New Visions/New Voices.

*NV/NV* has had significant impact on the field nationally and internationally, helping with the development of 126 new plays and musicals from 110 playwrights and 40 composers working with 67 U.S. and 13 international companies. In 2016, *New Visions/New Voices: 25 years/25 plays* was published by Dramatic Publishing, co-edited by Deirdre Kelly Lavrakas and Kim Peter Kovac. In 2018 they were awarded the first-ever Harold Oaks Award for Sustained Excellence by *Theatre for Young Audiences/USA.*

She has directed over 80 plays, musicals, and operas for both adults and young people. Highlights include*: A Broadway Songbook* and *Fascinating Rhythms*, commissioned by the U.S. Department of State for a seven-week tour of six South Asian countries, and Michael Nyman’s opera *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat.*

Favorite Kennedy Center projects for young people include the conception, development, and direction of *Walking the Winds: American Tales* *and Walking the Winds: Arabian Tales* (a co-production of the Performing Arts Center of Amman, Jordan), both of which use folktales and traditional songs.

With a Master of Fine Arts degree in Acting/Voice from George Washington University, Ms. Lavrakas founded/directed the Theater Training program for Young People at the Kennedy Center. As a teaching artist, she has conceived, developed, and conducted numerous performing arts related workshops for theatre professionals, teachers, and young people. Teaching highlights include residencies in Palestine, Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Thailand, Bahrain, and Belize. She adapted her Kennedy Center theater training curriculum to help create the first theatre training program for children and young people in the Arab Middle East, at the Performing Arts Center in Amman, Jordan.

**LEREKO MFONO, South Africa**Lereko Mfono is a multifaceted writer and theatremaker who honed his craft at the National School of the Arts and later studied Applied drama at Wits University-Drama for Life in Johannesburg, South Africa.
 Lereko has participated in various national and international writing projects, he was a Top 3 finalist in the Imbewu Scribe National Scriptwriting Competition in 2013 with his play *Malebone*, and internationally was selected into the ASSITEJ Inspiring a Generation programme that led him to travel to France, Paris in 2013 to develop self-penned Standard Bank Ovation award-winning play *Narrative Dreams*, which went on a national tour and was nominated for a Naledi Award.
 He also travelled to USA, Washington DC, in 2016 after being selected to take part in The Kennedy Centre’s *New Visions/New Voices* Festival where his play, *The Kids From Amandla Street*, enjoyed its development and a staged reading.
 In 2017, Lereko was selected as Artist-in-Residence by Michigan, US, based theatre company Spinning Dot theatre where he presented talks on Playwriting at the University of Michigan and Northwestern University. The residency coincided with the international premiere of *The Kids from Amandla Street.* Lereko is currently working on his newest play *The Water Wars*, supported through the Beyond Borders initiative by Canada’s Young People’s Theatre.
 Lereko has facilitated and taught Creative Arts in Correctional Centers, Schools and organisations in and around South Africa and Television writing credits include *Isibaya* (Season 7&8), multiple award-winning soap opera.
 In 2019, Lereko was selected as part of Mail and Guardian’s 200 Young South Africans.

**KARIN SERRES, France**

Upon graduation from the ENSATT (National Theatre School) in 1987 as a scenographer, Karin Serres has been a French set and costume designer, writer and translator.

As a playwright, she has written more than 80 plays, often staged, published and translated, for both young audiences and adults. Additionally, she writes radio plays (SACD Grand Radiowriting Award in 2011) and novels (“Monde sans oiseaux”, SGDL first novel prize 2013, “Happa No Ko”, *Pépites Internationales* award 2019, “Les silences sauvages”, Alma 2019).

 Passionate about working with the infinite sensory diversity of the languages, Karin seizes all the opportunities to let her writing experience meet other artists, thinkers or producers. She is a working member of *Write Local, Play Global* and Observatoire de l’Espace and she enjoys sharing experiences, traveling and writing throughout the world, because working elsewhere, in some unknown place, is one of her favorite creative energy.

 In 2015, she received a grant from French Institute to go traveling in Japan for writing a fantasy novel for teenagers and in 2019, she spent 5 months in New Zealand at the Randell Cottage Writing residency.

 She’s been invited 3 times by the *New Visions New Voices Festival*, USA (2014, 2016 and 2018) to accompany the International Intensive foreign playwrights. She’s currently writing on commission for several theatre compagnies and enjoying a long-term writing residency at French CNES (Space Studies National Center). You can visit her professional website at [www.karinserres.com](https://na01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.karinserres.com%2F&data=04%7C01%7C%7C7110403a452b4fcb556a08d9a2f24849%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637719983740124730%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=EDqmIQywBZMHHRtLLE%2FRoBvedO%2Fyn9EnSGeXx5hrKak%3D&reserved=0)

**SIMONE SPITERI, Malta**

SIMONE SPITERI was born in 1983 and trained for her Diploma in acting at the Malta Drama Centre between 1996 and 2004. She obtained her B.A. (Hons.) and M.A. in Theatre Studies from the University of Malta. She set up her own theatre company, Dù, in 2004 in which she performs, directs and writes. Her written and directed work has been performed in Denmark, Egypt, Sicily, Spain, Macedonia, USA, UK and France.

Two of her written works *Appuntamenti* (2009) and *Kjaroskur* (2011)won first prize in the National Francis Ebejer contest for playwriting. Both *Appuntamenti* and *Lacuna* (2006), have been chosen as one of the 120 best plays for the European stage in the European Theatre Convention’s (ETC) bi-annual publication. She has written extensively for ŻiguŻajg International Children’s Festival, work for young people for the Malta Philarmonic Orchestra and worked with several companies on translations of classics into Maltese.

In between her company’s productions she often collaborates with other theatrical Companies on the main Maltese stages as director, actor or playwright. She lectures part-time within the Theatre Studies department at the Unviersity of Malta and has published books with Merlin Publications. In 2014 she was also an International Playwright Observer at *New Visions, New Voices* at the Kennedy Centre in Washington D.C. and a chosen writing resident at La Chartreuse in Avignon, France in 2016.

In 2020, *Żewġ Drammi* won the National Book Prize for Drama. She is also on the theatre sub-commitee of MEIA (Malta Entertainment Industry Association). In 2020 she was also appointed as one of the Associate Artists of the national theatre company Teatru Malta and she is the Director of Learning at theatre-training academy Studio 18.