

# NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER

THE INDEPENDENT NEWS SOURCE

- ACCOUNTABILITY
- ART & MEDIA
- FAITH & PARISH
- GLOBAL
- PEACE & JUSTICE
- POLITICS
- SPIRITUALITY
- THEOLOGY
- VATICAN
- SISTERS' STORIES

## For Still Point, theater is for everyone

by [Nicholas Sciarappa](#) | Jun. 6, 2014



Since 1993, Still Point Theatre Collective has been producing professional touring stage performances that have gained a positive reputation in the Chicago area, throughout the Midwest and beyond.

But for Still Point, theater is more than just selling out shows and attracting audiences to share inspiring stories. Separate from the professional productions, the group has outreach programs that teach both the fundamentals and the power of theatrical expression to the developmentally disabled and female prisoners. For Still Point, theater is for everyone.

Related: [Evangelizing actors ignite mission flame](#) by Joseph R. Veneroso

Still Point founder Lisa Wagner-Carollo hoped to work in ministry since the age of 15, was active in theater in high school and college, and felt a calling to social justice.

"It was kind of confusing, wanting to go into ministry, social justice and theater," she said.

Take a sneak peak at our [Global Faith special section](#). This content is only available in the print newspaper and Kindle edition, so [subscribe today!](#)

Inspired by Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, Wagner-Carollo created a play about Day's life through the Call to Action theater ministry. From there, Wagner-Carollo's desire to expand her vision of creating and starring in professional stage productions and to teach theater to the developmentally disabled grew into her own theater initiative.

The name Still Point came from the idea that there is a still point in each person where God lives that can't be violated.

"Having a small theater company can be very challenging," Wagner-Carollo

said. "You're going against the grain in many ways. I decided that I wanted to call it Still Point as a reminder of where the focus should be."

Ever since, Still Point has been breaking the mold of what it means to be a theater collective. One of the outreach initiatives, the Imagination Workshop, boasts seven workshops a week in various developmental disability centers.

With the Imagination Workshop, Still Point designs a theater program "based on the participants' functionality and need," said Ben Gray, managing director of Still Point. "It might include dancing, movement and music."

Periodically, those in the program put on performances for family members, staff and others in the community.

"I've seen the changes in communication skills happen due to these programs," Gray said. "These people really open up and express themselves freely."

On top of its commitment to working with the developmentally disabled, Still Point began a new program in 1998 called the Persephone Project, bringing the arts to women in Chicago-area detention centers. The project allows participants to work together to express themselves through storytelling and journaling. The collective takes the women's works and adapts them into a play that the women perform for prison volunteers, fellow inmates and invited guests.

Teaching classes in the prisons comes with some challenges.

"Building trust is the main thing," Gray said. "Outside of the class, the last thing that they want to do is trust one another. They have to be wary of one another. Improvisation games, reflection in front of others, and theater take trust."

The Persephone Project has evolved into the Sisters Rising project, which has the same goals, but is aimed at women who were recently released from prison. Participants receive a stipend as they learn life skills while touring their shows in the Chicago area.

"Art has something that we think has value for everyone," Gray said. "It should be a part of everyone's daily life as a means of expressing themselves."

[Nicholas Sciarappa is an NCR Bertelsen intern. His email address is [nsciarappa@ncronline.org](mailto:nsciarappa@ncronline.org).]

---

*This story appeared in the [June 6-19, 2014](#) print issue under the headline: For Still Point, theater is for everyone .*

 print

 email

 pdf

 Like 16

 Tweet 3

 Share 1

---

[► Show comments](#)

SEARCH



GLOBAL  
SISTERS  
REPORT

START  
READING>

*Exclusive*

*Saint Mother Theodore Guerin items*

SPGiftShop.com • 812-535-2947



## NCR EMAIL ALERTS

Sign up to get *NCR* updates by email. Existing users: change your preferences here. Enter your email address in the box below and click "Go."

Privacy by  SafeSubscribe<sup>SM</sup>



JUNE 20-JULY 3, 2014



Publishing company a game-changer in the world of Catholic news

Editorial: Electric, bold new voices are challenging inequality

Priests' letter to nuncio denounces Venice, Fla., bishop

Special Section [Newspaper only]: Global Faith [PREVIEW](#)

Not all of our content is online. [Subscribe](#) to receive all the news and features you won't find anywhere else.

**SUBSCRIBE!**



**The Leo House**  
**Established 1889**  
*"A Place with a Heart in New York City"*  
 Centrally located in Manhattan, The Leo House is a quiet, not-for-profit, Catholic Christian guesthouse with an old world charm.

---

Groups welcome  
 Free WiFi  
 Average room rates are \$105 to \$140  
[Click to visit](#)

## Donald Senior to priests: 'We're living through a remarkable moment'

by Thomas C. Fox [NCR Today](#)

## Slandering Presbyterians

by Ken Briggs [NCR Today](#)

## +Dolan on Ethics & Young People

by Michael Sean Winters [Distinctly Catholic](#)

## Bout of illness a reminder to seek empathy with, not sympathy for, others

by Bill Tammeus [A small catholic](#)

## Church is essential for faith; there are no 'free agents,' pope says

by Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service [The Francis Chronicles](#)

## Anti-Semitism & the Presbyterians

by Michael Sean Winters [Distinctly Catholic](#)

## 'Orange is the New Black' does a great service to prisoners everywhere

by Mary Ann McGivern [NCR Today](#)

## The Tea Party Loses in Mississippi

by Michael Sean Winters [Distinctly Catholic](#)

## Morning Briefing

by Dennis Coday [NCR Today](#)

## 'Vatican II priests' meet, express new hope

by Thomas C. Fox [NCR Today](#)

[More posts >](#)

**PUZZLED?** Why not be a part of our picture?

**CSA**  
Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes  
Promoting Justice, Building Community

**Contact:**  
CSA Office of Vocation Discernment

[www.csasisters.org](http://www.csasisters.org) • [vocations@csasisters.org](mailto:vocations@csasisters.org) • 920.907.2310

[ACCOUNTABILITY](#)

[ART & MEDIA](#)

[FAITH & PARISH](#)

[GLOBAL](#)

[PEACE & JUSTICE](#)

[POLITICS](#)

[SPIRITUALITY](#)

[THEOLOGY](#)

[VATICAN](#)

[SISTERS' STORIES](#)

