I received a 2008 Professional Development Grant to curate, produce, and create work for the 2008 Lit Moon World Shakespeare Festival, an international festival seen October 16-26, 2008, in Santa Barbara. This generous grant was instrumental in the development of my recent professional work, both as a theatre director and festival curator, leading to several international directing invitations, the development of an international theatre network (of which I am founding president), and a wealth of one-of-a-kind cultural experiences. As I reflect on my work over the past decade, I realize that I have been extraordinarily blessed: it has been a fruitful period of creating, producing, touring, and curating, and I look forward to the next decade with great anticipation!

I had four specific goals for my 2008 Professional Development Grant: 1) produce, curate, and direct plays for the 2008 Lit Moon World Shakespeare Festival; 2) revive one play, The Tempest, for the festival, and create a new all-woman production of Julius Caesar, in a co-production between the Lit Moon Theatre Company, Westmont College, and the Young Open Theatre Festival of Skopje, Macedonia; expand and develop my experience with international Shakespearean performance; and expose the Westmont community to the wealth of Shakespearean performance. I am happy to say that all of these goals were met, and though the production of Julius Caesar was beset with visa problems for the Macedonians, the production was ultimately completed and received wonderful reviews in area press.

The 2008 Lit Moon World Shakespeare Festival featured six fascinating productions, including A Midsummer Night’s Dream from the Marjanishvili State Drama Theatre of Tbilisi, Georgia; Othello/Measure For Measure, directed by famed Bulgarian director Lilia Abadjieva, in a Lit Moon Theatre Company/Westmont College co-production, which featured several Westmont students and Westmont Theatre Arts Professor Mitchell Thomas; Poor, Poor Lear, by Finnish actress Nina Sallinen; The Winter’s Tale, by the UCSB Department of Theatre and Dance, and Blue Tempest, directed by myself, for the Lit Moon Theatre Company. In addition, the festival featured a design exhibit, workshops and lectures, and social events, all aimed at exploring the contemporary vitality of Shakespearean performance.

The festival was a popular and critical success. We sold out 6 performances, and had nearly full houses for several others, and sold over 2,500 tickets. We attracted significant local, regional, and national press, including extensive coverage in the Santa Barbara papers, and a story in “American Theatre” magazine (the second time the festival has been featured in this important periodical). Two of the artists associated with the project – Nina Sallinen and Lilia Abadjieva – received Independent Theatre Awards for their excellent contributions to Santa Barbara Theatre.
Westmont was significantly involved in the project. Students saw the festival (Theatre Arts, English, and Westmont in the Arts), appeared in productions (*Julius Caesar* and *Othello/Measure For Measure*), and interacted with visiting artists. Mitchell Thomas performed leading roles in the Lilia Abadjieva production, and Ms. Abadjieva served as an artist in residence at the college for September and October of 2008. In addition, the college was one of the festival’s five partners, and Porter Theatre served as one of the festival’s four venues. Students wrote extensively about their experiences with international theatre; I received fine, nuanced writing that displayed our students’ insights into the value and significance of this unusual cross-cultural experience.

The festival celebrated the international significance of Shakespeare’s plays, and provided the intellectual contexts for understanding them at this time of the new century. I provided both old (*Blue Tempest*) and new (*Julius Caesar*) work for the festival, continued to develop my own knowledge of international Shakespeare performance, and sharpened and expanded my methods directing and producing. The festival, through classes, social events, meetings, and panels, cultivated cross-cultural dialogue and relationships, and provided a forum to help develop cross-cultural sympathies and sensitivities.

Notably, the festival created numerous rich opportunities for collaborations and projects. The relationship with Macedonian artists and administrators Dejan Projkovski and Sasho Ognenovski led to a recent invitation to direct at *The Great Gatsby* at the Macedonian National Theatre in Bitola. Eventually, this production became *An American Tune*, coauthored by myself and Jeton Neziraj, the Artistic Director of the National Theatre of Kosovo in Prishtina. My relationships with Balkan artists led Dejan Projkovski and myself to found “interACT,” a network of international theatres and festivals, created for the purpose of creating inter-cultural co-productions. At present, the network features 32 member theatres, including ones throughout the Balkans, Eastern and Central Europe, the US, and Asia. At the founding of the organization in March, I was nominated Founding President of the network. There are numerous projects in the works, all generated from my sabbatical in 2007, and my professional development grant project for 2008. These include an invitation to direct at the Tampere, Teatteri, in Tampere, Finland in the winter of 2010, a project with Jeton Neziraj’s theatre in Prishtina in the near future, and invitations to perform in Tbilisi, Prague, and Skopje.

I am very grateful for the evident support of the college for this kind of professional work, and am blessed work at the kind of institution that encourages this kind of creative output for its artists. Thank you!