



SETC NEWS

September / October 2007

New Fall Graduate School Auditions Expand Prospects for Students, Faculty

Members spoke. SETC listened. For the first time in its history, SETC will host Graduate School Auditions in the fall. The auditions were added to meet the needs of representatives from a number of elite graduate theatre programs, who said they wanted to see prospects early in the academic year. But the big winners will be undergraduate students at colleges and universities throughout the region.

Fall Graduate School Auditions will be held September 8 at Spirit Square in Charlotte, NC. Just like the program held during our March convention, the fall auditions will allow acting students and design/tech students to take the stage in front of several graduate schools simultaneously. The grad auditions will become a regular part of the fall activities, which already include committee and board meetings, receptions and professional auditions. They will not replace the graduate auditions at the annual convention, just add to the opportunity.

How did this come about?

Recently, several graduate school recruiters told SETC officers that the March convention dates can fall too late in their academic calendar to provide the best results. Often professors had already awarded

It's Not too Late to Register!

Yes, you can still sign up to participate in the Fall Graduate School Auditions.

Who: Actors and designers/technicians seeking Fall 2008 grad school admission. School representatives from theatre graduate programs.

Where: Charlotte, NC

When: September 8, 2007

How: Contact Lori Leigh in the Central Office via e-mail (lori@setc.org) or phone (336-272-3645)

Deadline: September 5, 2007

More Info:

www.setc.org/auditions/graduatefall.asp

admission or financial aid to applicants they had seen months before.

By contrast, some universities wanted to keep the program in March, finding that the annual convention offered a great time to see prospective students. Even those favoring the September auditions planned to use the March event to recruit for classes in future years. (Attention, college juniors!)

Then came the brainstorm. Why not have both? Sounds good, but why would students

attend fall auditions if they plan to attend the spring convention?

◆ Practice

Auditioning and interviewing are skills that can be honed. As your presentation skills improve, you are giving yourself the best opportunity for the graduate school of your choice while making yourself more marketable overall.

◆ Networking

As with any profession, theatre artists find opportunity often hinges on meeting the right people. Adding another round of auditions increases the chance of making contacts among both professors and peers.

◆ Marketing

Studies show that shoppers buy products with familiar names, and voters elect candidates they know. That's why products have commercials and campaigns include signs, flyers and personal appearances. Similarly, this is another chance to offer your own commercial in the form of applications, resumes and a personal appearance for a VIP audience.

◆ Victory

And the No. 1 advantage? You just might be one of the fortunate auditionees that wins early admission or a scholarship from a college or university at the fall auditions!

From the President

David S. Thompson



We're Cooking up Drama at the Bistro

After three years of classes, 16 hours of comprehensive exams, an additional four years writing the dissertation, and finally the oral defense, I at long last held my PhD in Theatre. This, along with a bachelor's and a master's in the same field, was to prepare me for a lifetime of college teaching, was it not? But wait, what my graduate professors never told me was that, amazingly, this would also prepare me for restaurant ownership.

Somehow, on April 3, 2007, my husband and I – along with four other family members and friends – opened Bistro 239, a fine dining restaurant in the town of Rome, GA.

How this happened is actually quite interesting, but perhaps even more interesting are the uncanny similarities between opening a show and opening a restaurant.

For example, in a live theatre production, we have the front of house, supervised by the house manager, and backstage, which is supervised by the

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From the Secretary

Anna Filippo



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It All Starts in the States!

Don't Miss the Excitement at Your State Convention!

See Page 5 for Dates, Sites of State Conventions and Auditions

ASK SETC

Q When should I make hotel reservations for the 2008 SETC Convention in Chattanooga?

A You can make reservations online beginning September 1. Simply log on to www.housingweb.net, and enter the four-digit code "2161" for the SETC Convention. Follow the prompts to reserve your room(s). Your reservation will be confirmed via e-mail within 48 hours. Need to cancel later? You will not be charged for your room if you cancel at least seven days prior to your scheduled arrival date. If you have questions, call 1-800-964-8600,x3016. To view the 2008 Chattanooga hotels, visit the SETC website at www.setc.org.

We Want YOU to Help Us Give SETC's Website a Facelift

You may have noticed some changes recently to the SETC website, in particular on the home page. These adjustments are just a hint of things still to come. Over the next few months, the SETC website will undergo a complete redesign.

The goal of this project is not only to give www.setc.org an updated look, but also to make it easier to use. Major changes planned include a faster menu system, dynamically generated content, a calendar of events and deadlines, as well as more interactive and informative convention pages. Aside from giving information about SETC events, auditions and conventions, the website will serve as a resource on theatre in general. This will include information about our state organizations, member companies and institutions, as well as individual members.

You can help us make the redesign a success by sending us your content: pictures, press releases, special interest items, event listings and anything else you think will be of interest to the SETC theatre community. In particular, we would like to receive theatre-related photos, such as pictures of productions, facilities, technical specs, lighting instruments, auditions and backstage candid.

As we move forward in rebuilding www.setc.org, we want you to realize that **you are** SETC – and it is your comments, suggestions and input that will continuously shape the face of SETC on the Web. Your task is to communicate your ideas to me. My task is to put your ideas into motion. Together we can ensure that our website reflects and informs the SETC and theatre community.

If you have ideas, suggestions, comments, pictures or other content to share on the SETC website, please feel free to contact me via e-mail at chris@setc.org or by postal mail at the SETC Central Office (see address on Page 8).

Christopher Chandler is marketing and website manager for SETC. Don Wolfe, who normally writes Theatre Bytes, is on hiatus.



2008 Theatre Symposium Plans 'Outdoor Drama' Focus

Theatre Symposium, the scholarly meeting held annually by the Southeastern Theatre Conference, will take on an exciting topic in its 2008 incarnation: outdoor drama.

In some ways, there's really nothing so American – so Southeastern American – as performance outdoors. Whether a Kentucky history play about Daniel Boone, or a Passion play in Arkansas, American drama has embraced the spectacle of a large audience experiencing as a community a story that brings folks together.

Outdoor drama has a rich and storied past, both here and abroad, and the 2008 Theatre Symposium event promises a full complement of papers and presentations about outdoor drama not only as it is performed today, but also as it has been staged in its earlier incarnations. Selected papers from this event will be published in SETC's scholarly journal of the same name, *Theatre Symposium*, in 2009.

While the planning for the 2008 event is going on right now, the hope is that it will take place in its usual early April time slot, in Chapel Hill, NC, which fittingly enough, is the home of the Institute of Outdoor Drama (IOD). Scott Parker, the retiring director of the IOD and an SETC past president, has been assisting with the planning. Visit IOD on the Web at www.unc.edu/depts/outdoor.

Watch for a formal Call for Papers in the next *SETC News*, along with details about the upcoming event. In the meantime, take in some outdoor theatre near you!

- Jay Malarcher,
2009 Editor, Theatre Symposium
jaydrama@gmail.com

New E-mail Address?

Does SETC have your current e-mail address? If you've changed your address recently or haven't heard from SETC in a while, go to www.setc.org and update your contact information.

Attention, High School Students and Teachers: Do You Know Someone Who...

...Has strong potential in theatre and deserves to attend the SETC Convention on a KEAP Award?

The *Keynote Emerging Artists of Promise (KEAP) Award* is presented annually to four high school students who show promise in theatre and would benefit from receiving a grant to attend the SETC Convention. Nomination deadline: Jan. 15, 2008.

...Has written an outstanding play that should be recognized?

SETC's High School New Play Award recognizes a play written by a high school playwright in the SETC region. The winner receives \$250 and a staged reading at the 2008 SETC Convention in Chattanooga. Application window: Oct. 1 to Dec. 1, 2007.

More info: Visit the Scholarships/Awards area on the SETC website at www.setc.org

SETC Offers Scholarships, Awards for College, Grad School

Need Money to Attend Undergraduate School?

Each year SETC accepts applications from high school students for the following scholarships and awards:

✓ **SETC Secondary School Scholarship**

\$2,100 to a high school student upon entering a college or university in the SETC region to major in theatre. Deadline: January 15, 2008.

✓ **Polly Holliday Award**

\$1,000 to a student entering undergraduate school to study theatre. Deadline: January 15, 2008.

Need Money to Attend Graduate School?

Each year SETC accepts applications for the following scholarships and awards, which are given to qualified students pursuing master's degrees:

✓ **Leighton M. Ballew Award**

\$3,300 to a student pursuing a graduate degree in directing. Deadline: January 15, 2008.

✓ **Robert Porterfield Award**

\$3,400 to a student entering graduate school for the first time to pursue a degree in theatre. Deadline: January 15, 2008.

✓ **Marian A. Smith Award**

\$2,300 to a student pursuing a graduate degree in costume design and/or technology. Deadline: January 15, 2008.

✓ **William E. Wilson Award**

\$6,500 to a high school educator pursuing a graduate degree in theatre or speech and theatre. Deadline: January 15, 2008.

Details and application forms:
www.setc.org/scholarship

Professional Company Update: Convention 2008

It's time for professional theatre companies to start making plans for the upcoming SETC Convention, scheduled for March 5-9, 2008 in Chattanooga, TN. Here's what's new for 2008:

Auditions: Announcing the schedule.

Professional Auditions will be held on Thursday, Friday and Saturday during convention week.

Job Contact Service: An abundance of space.

We don't have the luxury of space at many convention locations, so we plan this year to enjoy the natural light, high ceilings (think really high) and wide open space of the Chattanooga Convention Center. Those of you who participated in Job Contact Service the last time we were in Chattanooga may remember our spacious surroundings, but we will have even **more** room this time. Our space has expanded from 18,000 square feet in 2004 to 28,800 square feet in 2008. (In Atlanta, we had about 10,000 square feet.)

Each registered JCS hiring company will have a six-foot covered table, chairs, **and** room to move around the table. There should be ample space for employees to visit with you and for interviewing without being on top of each other.

Would you like even more room? A limited number of 8-foot by 10-foot exhibit booths will be available for an additional cost on a first-come basis. These booths will include an 8-foot back drape, 3-foot side drapes, a table, chairs and a 7-inch by 44-inch sign. Contact April Marshall (april@setc.org) for details or to reserve one of these booths.

Callbacks: Meeting room or all-suite hotel?

Hiring companies will have two options for callback space in 2008. Option 1: Those companies seeking callback space in the convention center may reserve meeting rooms (after workshops are completed each day). Option 2: Those who like to utilize hotel space for callbacks may prefer the extra space afforded by the all-suite hotel located just across the street from the convention center. Please note: The all-suite hotel is reserved for **hiring** companies only.

Event: 'Eat & Greet' for professional companies.

SETC will host a continental breakfast from 7:30 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. Saturday morning to provide company representatives the chance to meet with Jon Moses, Professional Theatre Division Chair; Betsey Baun, SETC Executive Director; April Marshall, SETC Professional Services Manager; and Glen Gourley, SETC President-Elect. Companies, look for your e-mail invitation closer to the convention.

We look forward to seeing you in Chattanooga!

- Jon Moses (jmoses@riversidetheatre.com), Chair, SETC Professional Theatre Division, and Production Manager, Riverside Theatre, Vero Beach, FL; and April J'C Marshall (april@setc.org), Manager, Professional Theatre Services, SETC Central Office.

Make Plans Now to Attend SETC's Fall Events in Charlotte

Hotel Accommodations & Callback Headquarters

Omni Charlotte Hotel, 132 E. Trade St., 800-843-6664

Fall meetings,
SETC Committees:
September 7-8

Fall Graduate
Auditions:
September 8

Fall Professional
Auditions:
September 9-10

Special thanks to the North Carolina Blumenthal Performing Arts Center for its generous support

Join Us for an Opening Night Reception

8 p.m., Friday, September 7

Sponsored by the Metrolina Theatre Association

What's Up
in Professional
Theatre
by Jon Moses &
April J'C Marshall

SETC State Screening Auditions Coming Soon!

The 10 states of the Southeastern Theatre Conference (SETC) region will host screening/qualifying auditions for pre-professional actors (both students and adults) in October, November and December. (Please see state listings and deadlines on opposite page.)

Screening auditions provide an opportunity for persons who do not meet SETC's professional actor qualifications to vie for a limited number of audition slots at the SETC Spring Professional Auditions. Scheduled for March 6, 7 and 8, 2008 in Chattanooga, TN,

the Spring Professional Auditions typically attract about 100 hiring theatre venues.

To participate in screening auditions, auditionees must complete the SETC audition application **and** register with their states for the auditions. The SETC application must be completed online before the state deadline.

In three states – Florida, Georgia and Virginia – auditionees must register and pay fees separately to their state organizations in addition to submitting the SETC audition application online.

In the other seven states, auditionees can

pay state registration fees with their SETC applications – and be automatically registered in their states.

A significant change this year is that those persons who are selected to advance from each state will have approximately **two weeks** following their screening audition in which to complete their SETC Convention registration. This is vitally important because any auditionee who does not register for SETC will lose his/her audition slot to an alternate from that state.

For guidelines and to download the online application instructions, please go to www.setc.org/auditions/screening.asp.

Happy auditioning!

- April J'C Marshall,
Manager, Professional Theatre Services



2007 auditionee.

Warning Shot: Noise in Play Prompts Lawsuit, Insurance Hike

Iwould like to share with you a law-related horror story that I heard at a Legal Q&A session during the recent American Association of Community Theatre festival, AACTFest '07.

It concerns a theatre that produced a play in which blanks were shot from a handgun. Signs posted at the theatre entrance and announcements in the program alerted the audience that handguns would be fired during the performance, creating loud noises. After the show, an elderly, regular theatre patron claimed that her hearing was damaged by the gunshot. (Had it gone to court, the age could have been a relevant factor, which is why I mention it.) Although the theatre staff had doubts about the veracity of the claim, the theatre's insurance company chose to pay a settlement rather than go to court. When it came time for renewal of the insurance policy, the premium increased dramatically as a result of that claims payout, according to the theatre staff.

Didn't the warnings shield the theatre from liability for this type of hearing loss? The answer may vary, depending on the case law having to do with "assumption of risk" in the particular state where the incident occurred.

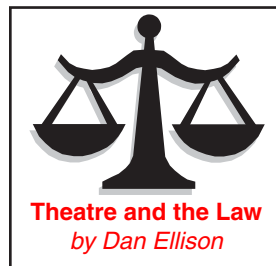
Do You Have a Horror Story?

The only way that we all can find out about **settled** lawsuits or claims is by sharing that type of information with one another. E-mail me your theatre-related legal horror stories at artandmuseumlaw@aol.com. I will not share names or locations without your permission, but the generalized information will help us all.

still have been effective)? Was a hearing expert consulted prior to the production, in order to evaluate the potential effect of the particular decibel level in question and to alert staff to any particular demographic that might be more susceptible to hearing loss? Could the warnings also have included more facts? For example: "Persons susceptible to hearing loss should not sit in the first X rows. Earplugs are available for using during Act II, Scene 3."

The list of relevant queries goes on and on – and underscores the importance of all theatres considering such issues. Be sure you have adequate insurance coverage as well as good dialogue with your insurance agent. And when you are shopping for insurance, ask your agent about the effect of paid claims on rate increases.

Dan Ellison is a Durham, NC-based attorney who has concentrated on arts-related law and nonprofit law for 15 years. He is a past president and the current executive director of the North Carolina Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts. Have a question? E-mail him at: artandmuseumlaw@aol.com.



Hone Your Skills at SETC's On-Site Auditions Workshops

Looking for tips on auditioning? SETC offers two acclaimed "Nail That Audition" programs:

- ◆ Day-long **master class** for groups of up to 25 focused on improving auditioning skills. This class is appropriate for theatre professionals, teachers, high school and college students.
- ◆ Abbreviated **workshop** (1-2 hours) for groups of any size, featuring general information on auditioning, plus details on SETC's different types of auditions.

SETC has presented the master class to numerous groups, including: University of Florida MFA Theatre Program, Gainesville, FL; Mary Washington University, Fredericksburg, VA; Carol High School, Southlake, TX; Lee University, Cleveland, TN; and Cherokee Historical Society, Cherokee, NC.

Lead presenter is Hardy Koenig, who served for four years as SETC's Educational Theatre Services Manager before returning to academia in fall 2008 as assistant professor of theatre at Minnesota State University Moorhead. A lifetime SETC member, Koenig is a member of the Graduate Auditions Committee.

For more information on how to bring "Nail That Audition" to your theatre and on program presenters, please visit the SETC website at www.setc.org or e-mail Lori Leigh at lori@setc.org.

Note: The contents of this column are intended for general information purposes only and should not be construed as legal advice or legal opinion on any specific facts or circumstances.

Your state convention and auditions schedule

ALABAMA

Festivals/Auditions:

Location: TBA
College Fest: Oct. 26-27, 2007;
Secondary Fest: Nov. 29-Dec. 1,
2007; Auditions: Oct. 27, 2006

Auditions Coordinator:

Lee Van Dyke
University of South Alabama
Mobile, AL
W: 251-460-6305
E-mail: lvandyke@usouthal.edu

SETC State Representative:

Michael Howley
Alabama State University
Montgomery, AL
W: 334-229-4278
E-mail: mhowley@alasu.edu

FLORIDA

Convention/Auditions:

Lakeland Center, Lakeland, FL
Convention: Oct. 31-Nov. 4, 2007
Auditions: Nov. 2-3, 2007

Auditions Coordinator:

Des Gallant
Florida Atlantic University
Boca Raton, FL
W: 561-297-3872
E-mail: dgallant@fau.edu

SETC State Representative:

Steve Bayless
Gibbs High School
St. Petersburg, FL
W: 727-893-5452
E-mail: bayless727@aol.com

GEORGIA

Convention/Auditions:

Southeastern Technical College
Vidalia, GA
Convention: Oct. 18-21, 2007
Auditions: Oct. 19-20, 2007

Auditions Coordinator:

Kimberly Garcia
Columbus State University
W: 706-568-2048
E-mail: garcia_kimberly@colstate.edu

SETC State Representative:

H. Duke Guthrie
Valdosta State University
Valdosta, GA
W: 229-333-5820
E-mail: dguthrie@valdosta.edu

KENTUCKY

Convention/Auditions:

Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, KY
Convention: Nov. 9-11, 2007
Auditions: Nov. 10-11, 2007

Auditions Coordinator:

Tim Davis
Bluegrass Community and Technical
College
Lexington, KY
W: 859-246-6672
E-mail: woundedeagle8@yahoo.com

SETC State Representative:

Kathi E.B. Ellis
Kentucky Alliance for Arts Education
Louisville, KY
H: 502-897-3314
kellies@kyartsed.org

MISSISSIPPI

Convention:

Hattiesburg University
Jan. 10-13, 2008

Auditions

Millsaps College, Jackson, MS
Dec. 8, 2007

Auditions Coordinator:

Allison Stafford
Hinds Community College
Tupelo, MS
W: 601-857-3267
E-mail: aestafford@hindscc.edu

SETC State Representative:

Tom Booth
Tupelo Community Theatre
Tupelo, MS
W: 662-844-1935
E-mail: 1tb@bellsouth.net

NORTH CAROLINA

Convention/Auditions:

Fayetteville State University
Fayetteville, NC
Convention: Nov. 15-17, 2007
Auditions: Nov. 16, 2007

Auditions Coordinator:

David Schram
Greensboro College
Greensboro, NC
W: 336-272-7102 x243
E-mail: schramd@
gborcollege.edu

SETC State Representative:

John Hartness
Barbizon Lighting Company
Charlotte, NC
W: 704-372-2122
E-mail: jhartness@barbizon.com

SOUTH CAROLINA

Convention/Auditions:

University of South Carolina, Upstate
Spartanburg, SC
Convention: Nov. 9-11, 2007
Auditions: Nov. 10, 2007

Auditions Coordinator:

Dale Savidge
North Greenville University
Tigerville, SC
W: 864-977-2081
E-mail: dsavidge@ngu.edu

SETC State Representative:

Leslie Dellinger
Lexington High School
Lexington, SC
H: 803-957-9863
E-mail: Lgdellinger@aol.com

TENNESSEE

Convention/Auditions:

Lambuth University
Jackson, TN
Convention: Oct. 24-28, 2007
Auditions: Oct. 27, 2007

Auditions Coordinator:

Meleia Lewis
Dyersburg State Community College
Dyersburg, TN
W: 731-286-3261
E-mail: mlewis@dscc.edu

SETC State Representative:

Melissa Shafer
East Tennessee State University
Johnson City, TN
W: 423-439-5837
E-mail: shaferm@etsu.edu

VIRGINIA

Convention/Auditions:

Richmond Marriott & Convention
Center
Richmond, VA
Convention: Oct. 26-28, 2007
Auditions: Oct. 26-27, 2007

Auditions Coordinator:

Wesley Young
Radford University
Radford, VA
W: 540-831-5484
E-mail: wyoung@radford.edu

SETC State Representative:

Mac Damron
Mills E. Godwin High School
Richmond, VA
W: 804-750-2600
E-mail: cmdamron@henrico.k12.
va.us

WEST VIRGINIA

Convention/Auditions:

Musselman High School
Inwood, WV
Convention: Nov. 2-3, 2007
Auditions: Nov. 3, 2007

Auditions Coordinator:

April Daras
Davis and Elkins College
Elkins, WV
W: 304-637-1360
E-mail: darasa@davisandelkins.edu

SETC State Representative:

Greg Mach
West Virginia Wesleyan College
Buckhannon, WV
W: 304-473-8855
E-mail: mach@wwvc.edu

Information for Out-of-Region Auditionees

Do you live outside SETC's 10-state region and wish to audition? The state where you reside or go to school determines your audition site.

Audition Site	Out-of-Region States Auditioning at This Site
Kentucky	Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin
Mississippi	Arizona, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Texas
Tennessee	Alaska, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, N. Dakota, Oregon, S. Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wyoming
Virginia	Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont
West Virginia	Ohio, Pennsylvania

More info: www.setc.org/auditions/state/screening.asp

SETC Region Theatres Win Major Awards at AACTFest in Charlotte

Manatee Players of Florida and Cookeville Drama Center of Tennessee won a number of awards at the American Association of Community Theatre's national festival, AACTFest, in June in Charlotte, NC.

The theatres, selected as the region's winners at the SETC Convention in March, were among 12 community theatres that advanced to the national festival.

Cookeville's *Escanaba in Da Moonlight* won for Best Sound Design, and Manatee's *Sweeney Todd* took home three awards, including Best Director for **Rick Kerby**,

Best Set Design for **Marc Lalosh** and Best Vocal Direction for **Rick Bogner**.

"The cast and crew of *Sweeney Todd* fell in love with the city of Charlotte," said Kerby. "It is a city full of life and arts appreciation. The local hosts Ginger Heath and Keith Martin did a great job of keeping us entertained, organized and happy. Each and every theatre represented at this year's AACTFest was so incredibly strong and diverse. To be selected to receive awards out of a field of so many talented companies is certainly an honor."

Dave Johnson, Cookeville's director, said he was very proud of his theatre's award for Best Sound Design.

"The show's success depended so much on a clever sound design, and [sound designer] **Brandon Walls** made that happen in a way that took our production to its highest possible level," he said.

Johnson noted that this was a year when "the adjudicators definitely favored the musicals ... After a showtune karaoke party and a showtune awards production, and then all the major awards dominated by musicals, we felt like Monty Python in a production of *Cats*."

Indeed, in an unusual occurrence at AACTFest, musicals won all three Best Production honors: First place, Denton (TX)

Community Theatre's *Crowns*; second place, Spokane (WA) Civic Center's *Assassins*, and third place, Aberdeen (SD) Community Theatre's *Honk!*.

SETC Region Individuals Honored for Contributions

Individuals from the SETC region also were big winners, receiving six national awards at the AACTFest.

SETC's own longtime community theatre leaders **Ginger Heath** of Monroe, NC, and **David Allen** of Memphis, TN, were honored with the 2007 David C. Bryant Outstanding Service Award, which recognizes AACT members for significant, valuable and lasting service to community theatre. Heath, who served as co-chair for the 2007 national AACTFest in Charlotte and has been involved in community theatre in the region for decades, also served two terms as SETC's Community Theatre Division chair and is SETC's liaison to AACT. Allen, who has been a volunteer or staff member at Theatre Memphis for 30-plus years, also has chaired SETC's Community Theatre Division. The third recipient of this prestigious award also hails from the Southeast: **Nick Credgington** of Fort Belvoir, VA, deputy chief of the US Army Entertainment Division.

Two sisters who are volunteers at Florida's Ocala Civic Theatre, **Rosemary Green** and **Louise Carpenter**, received the Robert E. Gard Superior Volunteer Award, presented to volunteers over 65 who have served community theatre for more than 25 years. And **Angela L. Ardolino**, the executive producing director and creator of the Miami (FL) Children's Theater (MCT), an innovative theatre for kids by kids, received a Special Recognition Award for her work. This award is presented to persons or organizations whose contributions to community theatre are far-reaching and of a special nature.



Manatee Players' *Sweeney Todd* won the award for Best Set Design, in addition to Best Director and Best Vocal Direction.

Honk! Overcomes Rain, Floods to Place Third at AACTFest '07

Like the many theatres in the Southeast that survived Hurricane Katrina determined to produce again, the cast and crew of South Dakota's entry in AACTFest '07 have a new appreciation for how the forces of nature can both destroy – and bring together – communities.

Soon after receiving the Best Show award at the Region V AACT Festival, Aberdeen Community Theatre cast and crew members endured a major storm that dumped nine inches of rain in three hours, flooding streets and sending sewage into homes.

In a story posted on the AACTFest website, Andrea Wagner, mother of *Honk!* cast member Joey Wagner, writes that she awoke to find her two sons splashing through water in basement bedrooms. And they were far from alone in facing flooding problems. "More than 75 percent of the homes in Aberdeen had water damage," she writes.

As Wagner helped neighbors, she wondered how in the midst of this disaster the theatre would raise the major funding it needed to go to the national festival. Then, at the end of a long day of helping others, "someone slipped money into my pocket with a whisper in my ear to give it to the community theatre," writes Wagner. Others around the city, the region and the nation gave, too.

"The city of Aberdeen has a long way to go toward recovery," she wrote before leaving for the national convention, "but it will be represented in Charlotte... Our community is proud of its theatre and wants *Honk!* to be there."

Honk! did its city proud, rising above disaster to receive third place in the Best Production category.

Need a Job?

Every week, you'll find the latest jobs listed in one place!

Need to Fill a Job?

Post it where it will be seen!

SETC's Online Job Contact Service

THE place to find and fill jobs fast...

www.setc.org/jobcontact/jcb/jcb.asp

Ben Cameron Tackles New-Era Issues

From the
Executive Director

Betsey Baun



Ben Cameron spoke at the national AACTFest in Charlotte, NC on June 20, 2007— and his words were powerful. The former executive director of Theatre Communications Group posed important questions, challenged current theatrical practices and guided us toward innovative thinking that addresses current societal shifts.

Newly appointed as program director for the arts at the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Ben grounded his speech with findings from the foundation's 2006 initiative. This program worked with Arts Presenters, Dance USA and Theatre Communications Group to convene conversations with more than 700 artists in 14 cities.

In addition to identifying the chronic issues (artist compensation, organizational under-capitalization) and idiosyncratic issues (pressing for one field, but not others), the findings also showed “issues that cut across disciplines...issues that were not on the proverbial front burner a decade ago, if indeed they existed at all, but that warrant our most fervent attention if we wish to survive.” With Ben's permission, my column paraphrases and quotes his assessment of some new-era issues we, in theatre, face – and some questions we must answer.

6 Challenges You Can't Ignore

1 The traditional nonprofit system isn't working any more.

Ben points to “the increasing dysfunctionality of the 501(c)3 model – the breakdown of old fundraising strategies, the increasing difficulties around managing boards, ... the hunger for new models [and] the desire to find another way to finance and sustain work.”

2 The next generation of leaders has different expectations.

Ben asks where we will find the “successors – especially given different expectations from young people around higher compensation, shorter hours, in essence less patience for the sacrificed lives of dignity and the financial masochism that were the givens ... Potential young leaders want the same latitude to reinvent and reshape organizations to meet their own artistic ambitions as their predecessors were given, raising issues ... about an organization's capacity for change ...”

3 Audiences are eroding.

Ben notes the “declining rates in subscriptions renewals, the difficulties in attracting single-ticket buyers, the collapse in the window of social planning ... a disorienting shift that continues to plague marketing departments and box office staffs who still struggle to understand the new social rhythm” of their audiences.

4 Competition for ticket buyers' attention is fierce.

“We now compete with the more than 3,000 different marketing messages a typical American sees every day ...” Ben says. “We compete with unprecedented exhaustion and over-scheduling, a time in which (according to a Yankelovich poll) half

of consumers across all income levels say that lack of time is a bigger problem than lack of money ...”

5 Shifting economics threaten our ability to serve our communities at an affordable price.

Ben notes that “audiences are shrinking, and that our own financial needs, in tandem with negative shifts in funding, mean escalating ticket prices that threaten to place attendance beyond the reach of many in our communities that we wish to serve.”

6 Technology has changed our audiences' expectations.

Ben says technology is not only impacting the performing arts but also “altering the basic assumptions of consumption: thanks to the Web, we believe we can get whatever we want, whenever we want it, customized to fit our personal needs. We can shop at 8 at night, 3 in the morning, expectations of customization and personalization that performing arts organizations, at least, cannot meet. Young people especially can get their culture on demand through YouTube and iTunes any time they want it and at little or no apparent cost ...”

Before the AACT audience could ask, “What can we do?” Ben posed the question himself. Then he led us to important questions and shared stories of how some organizations have responded. He challenged us individually and collectively to shift from the reactive to the proactive, to “enter long, difficult, deep discussions about why we exist. Because we have a building is not enough. Because we have staff is not enough. Because we have a history and awards and a reputation is not enough. We must reorient ourselves, expanding our realm of concern beyond the qualitative to understanding what mandates us to continue to exist – indeed, what is the value we offer our community?”

3 Questions You Must Answer

Every arts organization, Ben says, must be able to answer the three basic questions outlined below.

1 What is the value of having my organization in my community?

2 Harder: What is the value my group alone offers, or that my group offers better than anyone else? Duplicative or second-rate value will not stand in this economy.

3 Hardest: How will my community be damaged if we close our doors and move away tomorrow?

Thank you, Ben. It's our turn now.

NOTE: You can download the entire text of Ben Cameron's June 20, 2007 address to the American Association of Community Theatre's AACTFest gathering in Charlotte at www.aact.org. Ben has asked us to note that the posted speech and these excerpts are from his prepared remarks and do not reflect numerous departures he made from the text, such as his Southern reflections about sweet iced tea, barbeque or his beloved University of North Carolina Tar Heels.

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From the Secretary

(Continued from Page 1)

stage manager.

The same is true for fine dining. In the front of house are the "actors," those who interact with the public, such as the servers, the stewards, the host, the bartender and the managers. Backstage, or back of house, there's the "crew," including the chefs, cooks, prep cooks and dishwashers. There exists a line, of sorts, that separates the front of house from the back. When someone crosses that line, the demeanor changes, for now he is "onstage," performing for the "audience," or the clients. There is also a script that servers learn to help them properly interact with customers, for as in any fine dining establishment, there are certain expectations of service.

The show begins when the front of house opens, and everyone assumes a role to produce an experience that is both enjoyable and creative – very similar to the experience we hope to have at the theatre. Interestingly enough, I put my directorial skills to work each night. It just depends on whether it's in the black box or at the Bistro.

Ooops! No Job?

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Saturday, September 8
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*SETC members are invited
to attend ExCom meetings.
Board members are expected
and encouraged to attend
these meetings to participate
in discussion of proposals
before the board.*

SETC 2008

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Where to Send News

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