

NETC News

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New England Theater
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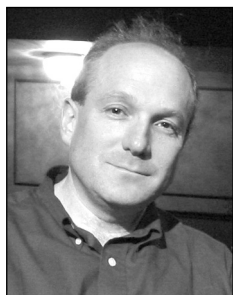
Countdown to Convention 2004

by Jeff Watts

NETC's Convention 2004 promises to be a memorable weekend. The exciting line up of activities, exhibits, workshops, seminars and performances promises great opportunities for everyone.

On Friday, November 12 the 3rd Annual Olympiad for high school students promises to be the best yet! Events for the Olympiad will include *Power Lighting*, *Free-style Set Design*, *Dance Decathlon*, *Free-style Costume Design*, *Vocal Marathon*, the new *Playwright's Challenge* and an exciting new *Improv Challenge* that will set the stage afire!

On Saturday, November 13th there will be a day-long series of interactive events led by professionals from New England and around the nation designed for the college and university student. Topics will include: *Auditioning for Success*, *Presenting the Design Portfolio—With Style*, *Making the Right Choices for Graduate School*, *Demystifying the Production Schedule*, *The Insider's Guide to the NETC Auditions* and more! College and University Students who attend will receive a guaranteed audition slot at the NETC Auditions in March!



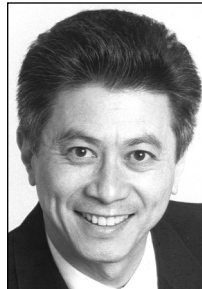
Donald Holder

Other events during the weekend include a double lighting workshop with Don Holder, NETC's Major Award winner. Don is a two-time Tony award winning lighting designer for *The Lion King* and *Movin' Out*. Don will also be delivering the keynote address on Saturday.

Constance Congdon will be speaking at the Sunday brunch. Playwright in residence at Amherst College, Connie is "one of the best playwrights America has produced," according to Tony Kushner, award-winning playwright who wrote the introduction to her collection *Tales of the Lost Formicans and Other Plays*.



Constance Congdon



David S. Leong

A professional fight choreographer and movement coach, David S. Leong's innovative style of creating action scenes, fights and battles scenes have been in many Broadway productions including *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Carousel*, and *The Civil War*. His feature films include *Titus* and *Alien Resurrection*. David will present a workshop titled "Staging Violence for a New Theatre" an exploration of stylized violence for the theatre with emphasis on physical and psychological storytelling.

NETC special award winner and Assiniboine playwright, William S. Yellow Robe, Jr., will present an engaging perspective into theatre. Yellow Robe will share not only his personal experiences as a student and working professional in the colonial art medium of theater, but provide a working means to a new interpretation to a foreign art form.



William S. Yellow Robe



Patti D'Beck

Our special guest Patti D'Beck is a veteran of thirteen Broadway Shows. Most recently she was the Associate Choreographer for *Brooklyn*, a new musical headed for Broadway in the fall of 2004. Her other credits include the Broadway productions of *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Grease!*, *Evita*, *A Chorus Line*, *Pippin*, and *Applause*. Patti will present a workshop entitled "Musical Theatre Dance from Cruise Ships to Broadway."

There is much, much more happening at the 53rd Annual NETC Convention. See our website (www.netconline.org) or contact us for a complete brochure. We look forward to seeing you at Convention 2004!

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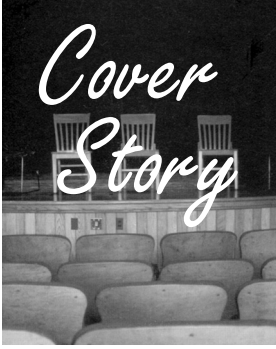
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new england
NETC
theatre conference



Convention 2004: Teacher Master Classes with Professional Development Credit

Building on the popularity and success of the teacher workshops at the 2003 convention, NETC expands the offerings to two workshops at the convention with a C.E.U. / P.D.P option for teachers. Both of the two 10-hour workshops will meet state requirements for the 6 New England states. The workshop choices are **Teaching Acting** and **Directing the Musical Play**.

Teaching Acting will be taught by Wil Kilroy, Associate Professor, Department of Theatre, University of Southern Maine. Wil studied the Michael Chekhov approach at the Chekhov Institute in LA and NYC. He has an MFA from University of Illinois with additional study at the National Shakespeare Conservatory and the American Academy of Dramatic Arts.

Directing the Musical Play will be taught by Raina Ames, Assistant Professor, Director of Theatre Education, University of New Hampshire. She has an MS in Education, with eight years teaching experience as a high school theatre teacher and drama director, and an MFA in Theatre from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Master Classes will begin on Thursday evening November 11 through Friday November 12. There is an additional fee for these classes and participants must pre-register.

Adjudication Workshop

Adjudication Workshop will be presented at the Convention by Suzanne Ramczyk and Tom Mikotowitz. This two-part workshop focuses on training adjudicators for the Moss Hart Award; however anyone interested in theatre adjudication or judging is welcome. In the first session on Friday afternoon, participants will learn the tools, formats and techniques of adjudication. Participants will be required to view and critique Portland Stage Company's production of *Almost Maine* by John Cariani on Friday evening. On Saturday morning participants will attend the second session to critique and discuss each adjudicator's work. Laptops are suggested as a helpful tool for this class but not necessary. Purchase of tickets for the show and pre-registration is required for this event.



The Sheraton of South Portland, Maine, just off Exit 7 on the Maine Turnpike, site of the NETC 2004 convention.

Convention Venue

The 53rd annual convention will be held at the Sheraton of South Portland, Maine.

The **Sheraton South Portland Hotel** is located across from Maine's largest mall. The hotel is conveniently located to L.L. Bean and Freeport shopping outlets (18 miles), Maine's Coast, The Historic Old Port Area (5 miles), Beaches and Lighthouses (5-10 miles) and just minutes from an 18-hole par 70 championship golf course. Portland International Jetport is one mile from the Hotel. 220 Rooms; Disabled Facilities Available; Restaurant; Lounge with Entertainment; Indoor Heated Pool; Jacuzzi; Saunas; Health Club with Nautilus & Cardiovascular Equipment.

Room Rates

NETC Convention special at \$79.00 per night. Price is subject to a 7% tax. For the NETC Guest Room Rate, reservations must be made on or before October 12, 2004, 12:00 a.m.

To reserve your room, call Sheraton Reservations at 1-800-325-3535. Be sure to mention that you are with the NETC Convention.

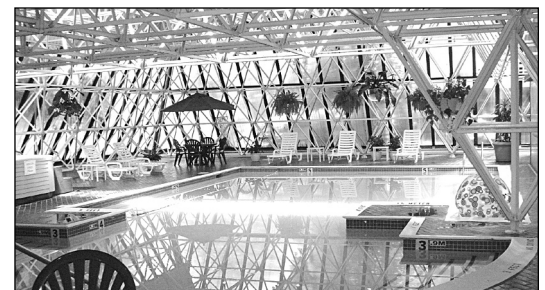
CONFERENCE DEADLINES

Hotel Room Reservations:

On or before October 12, 2004, 12:00 a.m.

Convention Pre-Registration:

October 21, 2004



Bring your suit! How you will find the time, heaven only knows, but a comfortable pool is available.

New England Theater Conference Holds New England Regional Festival

by *Chuck Emmons*

Acme Theater Productions and their production of *Lonely Planet* won Best Production at the 2004 New England Regional Festival (NERF), a region-wide competition sponsored by the New England Theater Conference. NERF was held July 31 in the Dana Humanities Center on the Campus of St Anselm College, Manchester, NH.

NERF is held every two years, bringing together the winners of Best Production awards from throughout New England to compete for a place at the national festival. The Maynard MA based Acme Theater will now go on to represent New England at the American Association of Community Theater's AACTFest 2005 in Kalamazoo, MI June 2005.

In addition to *Lonely Planet*, NERF attendees saw an excellent mix of shows including an original work by John Shanahan titled *Bob's Date*, (Runner Up for Best Production) performed by Curtain Call Theater of Braintree, MA, also representing Eastern Massachusetts; Act II of the searing drama *Bent* (Alternate Runner Up Best Production), by Panache Productions, representing Western Massachusetts; a cutting of Neil Simon's *The Good Doctor*, performed by Merrimack Community Theater of Merrimack, NH; and a series of short plays titled *Gaslight Café*, presented by Gaslight Theater of Hallowell, ME.

Groups had ten minutes to set up on stage, one hour to perform and ten minutes to strike their set. Each performance was adjudicated following the performance by three theater professionals; Dan LaMorte of

New York City, Joan Fuess of Albany NY and Lynn Kremer, a professor of theatre arts at College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA.

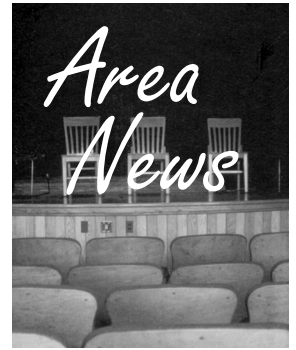
Runner-up for Best Production was Curtain Call Theater's *Bob's Date* and Panache Production's (Springfield MA), production of *Bent* was selected as the alternate runner-up

The adjudicators selected several actors for recognition. Among these were Tom Berry for his role of Jody in *Lonely Planet*; Neal Blaiklock for his various roles in Merrimack Community Theater's *The Good Doctor*; Richard Carey for the role of Nerves in Curtain Call Theater's *Bob's Date*; David Fisher for his portrayal of Carl in *Lonely Planet*; and Greg Harvey as the Guard in Panache Productions' *Bent*.

Directors Stacy Erikson of Curtain Call Theater and Dave Sheppard of Acme Theater received recognition, as did Acme's Gregg Thomas and Curtain Call's Martha Sawyer for outstanding costume design.

Curtain Call Theater's David Edge was rewarded for his excellence in lighting design and Acme Theater's John Murtagh was selected as the outstanding Stage Manager at the festival.

Both Acme's *Lonely Planet* and Merrimack Community Theatre's *The Good Doctor* were recognized for outstanding set dressing. The author of *Bob's Date*, John Shanahan, was awarded a Special Adjudicator's Award for his original play.



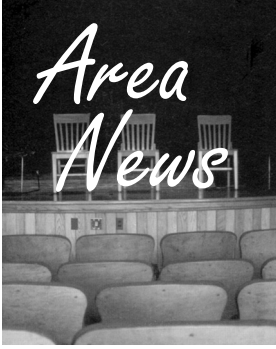
Stanford Calderwood Pavilion at Boston Center for the Arts

Through a \$4 million gift from The Calderwood Charitable Foundation, the Huntington Theatre Company will create the Stanford Calderwood Pavilion, comprised of the 360 seat Virginia Wimberly Theatre and the 200-seat Nancy and Edward Roberts Studio Theatre, at the soon-to-open Boston Center for the Arts (BCA).

Huntington Theatre Company's Managing Director Michael Maso remembers Calderwood as a "delightful, outspoken, passionate and deeply committed

patron of the arts," who supported new playwrights and artistic causes to the last moments of his life. Calderwood died in 2002 at the age of 81.

The grant, which combines capital and operating support, is the largest single gift ever made to the Huntington. The Stanford Calderwood Pavilion will be Boston's first new theatre facility built in more than 75 years.

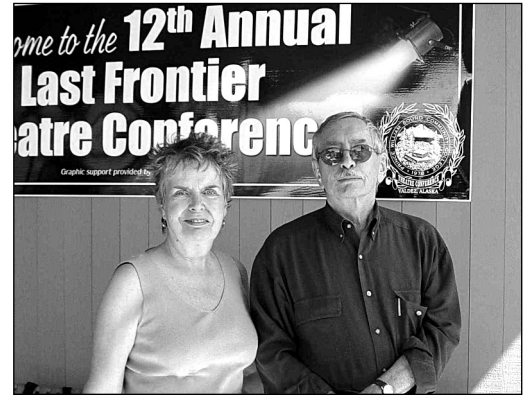


Last Frontier Theatre Conference Midnight Sun Shines on New American Playwrights

The sun never set on the 12th annual Last Frontier Theatre Conference, June 18-26, 2004, in Valdez, Alaska. Surrounded by snow-capped mountains on the shores of pristine Price William Sound, the playwrighting festival, founded and sponsored by Edward Albee, was a thing of wonder both within and outside the Valdez Civic Center

Ann Marie Shea, chair of NETC College/University division, participated in writing workshops and attended staged readings by such luminary writers as Albee, Tony Kushner, John Guare, and Romulus Linney. In addition, directors Lloyd Williams and Lawrence Sacharow and critic Mel Gusow joined actors Marian Seldes, Courtney P. Vance, Patricia Neal, and Joel Vig in a week of workshops, seminars and readings. The casual and dynamic atmosphere reflected the energy of the frontier setting and the celebratory nature of a midsummer solstice.

Hosted by Prince William Sound Community College, the playwrighting festival featured both a short play lab (where Shea's *The M-Pill* was read) and a lab where full-length plays were read before the panel of the above-named playwrights and directors. Dr. Shea was also invited to participate in the writing lab conducted by Constance Congdon, prize-winning playwright and professor of playwrighting at Amherst College.



Ann Marie Shea and Edward Albee

Valdez being the terminus of the Alaska pipeline, local economic interests were visible in the generous support of local energy and banking interests. Artistically, the Alaskan theatre community supported the festival with performances from Anchorage Community Theatre and Kokopelli Theatre Company, also from Anchorage (which, by Alaskan standards is considered "local," being a mere eight-hour's drive from Valdez). Far from the starlit skies of New England, writers, directors and actors renewed their commitment to craft under the midnight sun.

Lowell Swortzell Dead at Age 74

The world of educational theatre is saddened by news of the death of Dr. Lowell Swortzell, professor emeritus at New York University, who died in New York City August 9, 2004. Lowell and his wife, Dr. Nancy Swortzell, were recipients of the 1997 NETC Special Award. The couple, who served as executors of the estate of children's playwright Aurand Harris, were finalist readers for the NETC Aurand playwrighting award since its creation in 1997.

In addition to co-founding the nation's first program in educational theatre at NYU 1966, Lowell was renowned as a prolific writer, with seven books and twenty children's plays to his credit. He directed the

"New Plays for Young Audiences" series at the historic Provincetown Playhouse in Greenwich Village.

A Fulbright Scholar, Lowell was inducted into the College of Fellows of the American Theatre at the Kennedy Center, received the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Children's Theatre Foundation, and also earned the New York Times "Outstanding Book of the Year" award for his compilation *All the World's a Stage: Modern Plays for Young People*.

Nancy requests that in lieu of flowers, contributions be made to the Lowell and Nancy Swortzell Graduate Scholarship Fund in Educational Theatre at NYU.

NETC NEWS: CALL FOR ARTICLES!

We are seeking fun, informative, and insightful articles about recent or upcoming events in the New England theatre community.

Contact Ann Marie Shea at ashea@worchester.edu, call 617-424-9275, or visit us on the web at www.NETCOnline.org

“New Generations” Program Selects Two New England Theatres

Double Edge Theatre of Ashfield, MA and Long Wharf Theatre of New Haven, CT have been selected as participants in the the New Generations Program, a grant initiative cooperatively designed by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and Theatre Communications Group. The New Generations program covers two distinct objectives: “Mentoring the Leaders of Tomorrow” and “Cultivating the Audiences of Tomorrow.” Both New England theatres will be part of the “Mentoring the Leaders of Tomorrow” aspect of the program.

Double Edge Theatre founder and artistic director Stacy Klein will mentor Justin Handley in ensemble leadership, performance creation and management. Handley will create, perform, tour and collaborate in the ensemble’s next performance of the *Garden Cycle*, and will be integrated into every aspect of the theatre’s leadership. Handley is associate director of Double Edge and has composed and directed the theatre’s music for the *Ex-CHANGE* project and the *UnPOSSESSED*. He is an accomplished magician, circus performer and musician (violin, guitar, kora) and released *Ebadaka*, a CD of traditional kora music from Gambia in 2000.

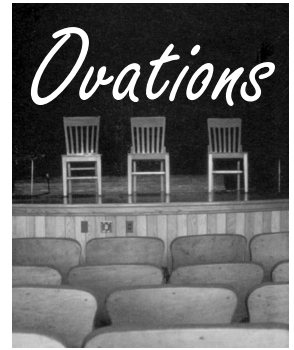
Long Wharf Theatre’s artistic director Gordon Edelstein will mentor Eric Jiung Ting in the practice of artistic direction. Ting will lead workshops, act as assistant director, and participate in season planning and in the administration of the theatre. Ting is a playwright, director, performer, and puppeteer.

Directing credits include works by Shakespeare, Williams and Brecht. Original works include *RWANDA: A Vaudeville*, *Killing Lincoln* (Toronto Fringe) and *Je t’embrasse Elvis* (Avignon Off). The latter two were created with Company Ajar, which he co-founded with colleague Amy Russell in 1998. Ting is a graduate of the International Actor Training Academy and West Virginia University.

For further information about future rounds of this program, visit TCG’s web site, www.tcg.org.

TCG’s executive director Ben Cameron (NETC 2001 Convention keynote speaker) stated, “The New Generations Program has quickly become a signature program for the theatre field. It supports the development of the future leaders in the theatre, and the cultivation of the audiences of the future. In doing so it addresses some of the most pressing and important issues facing the field today. We are all grateful to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Doris Duke Charitable foundation for their vision and support of such a significant program.

Olga Garay, program director for the arts at the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, remarked upon the success of the program: “The New Generations program has been a total success. The participants in the mentorship program have all gone on to careers in our country’s leading theatre while the audience development projects have reached out to whole new generations of theatre goers.”



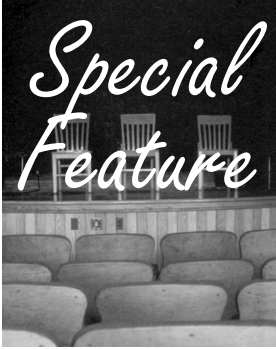
ACT Director Named RI Foundation Fellow

Congratulations to **Wrenn Goodrum**, artistic and executive director, All Children’s Theatre (ACT) of East Providence, RI, on being named Rhode Island Foundation Fellow. She intends to visit children’s/youth theatres with missions, visions and programs similar to ACT throughout the country, including several in the Northeast, Michigan, Florida, and throughout the Southwest. Visits to national parks will be included on her trips. Goodrum seeks “to discover fresh innovative and creative ways to achieve ACT’s mission and vision,” as well as “to revitalize my life’s mission and spirit through traveling (and) to develop a means by which to balance my professional and personal life.” *Bon voyage*, Fellow Wrenn!

AACT Honors Patricia White

Patricia White, of Nashua Theatre Guild and the New Hampshire Community Theatre Association, was presented with the Distinguished Merit Award from American Association of Community Theatre at their annual convention in New York City, June 25, 2004. The award recognizes contributions made to promote and develop the highest standards for community theatre. AACT President John E. Sullivan said, “Pat White has led a life devoted to the arts.”

A native of New York City, Pat came from a family of artists and caught the theatre bug at the age of eleven, when she was cast as Joan of Arc (and managed props for the same production!) As representative of Region I of AACT, Pat has been a member of the NETC board for many years. Congratulations on recognition well deserved!



First Things First—Your Audition for Musical Theatre

by *Linda Potter*

edited by *Susan Williamson*

Auditions are unavoidable if you want to perform on stage. Knowing what to expect and thinking about what you want to do in advance will make you more comfortable so that you will do your best. Here are some tips on how to get through the audition process.

First and foremost, come prepared to listen and learn. Listen carefully to everything that is said to you. Listen to the directors, their comments, their suggestions and especially take care to try hard to follow any stage directions or changes they want you to make in your character. Don't try to second guess what the directors want from you; just do exactly what they say to the best of your ability. Directors are looking not only for how willingly you take direction, but also how readily. In other words, directors look for actors who suit the character **and** who are quick to perceive what the director wants and able to adjust their acting accordingly. If you have the opportunity, listen to other actors audition and learn from their strong points and their weak points. Never copy another actor's performance. Your audition is an expression of who you are as a person. It should never be a pale copy of another person.

At a typical audition for a musical you are likely to perform for the director, music director, choreographer and producer. In summer stock or professional theater, the casting director will be there also. The director might ask another person with theatrical experience who is not connected with the show to sit in and observe in order to gain an objective opinion. Each person is looking for different things from you. Your audition begins when you walk into the room so remember to act accordingly—and always arrive a few minutes early so that you can relax and get focused.

Auditions are stressful for every actor and, believe it or not, equally stressful for those who are on the audition team. During auditions, the director is really looking for the potential you show for playing different characters, not a finished product or polished scenes. He wants to observe what special talents you have, hear your voice, and see how you move. At the same time, he wants to get a sense of your personality and your willingness to follow directions. He is also looking for the chemistry between you and the other actors on stage as well as how you respond to him. As difficult and stressful as this is for you, try to open up to the experience and remember to smile and present yourself as honestly and positively as you can.

Remember that the team wants you to be good. They are wishing only the best for you in your audition, because the better you are, the easier their jobs will be.

Most, if not all of the directors and producers have had to audition in some way for their own jobs. It is a part of the business of the theater that nearly everyone is being judged all of the time. Not that this knowledge will make your job any easier, but take some comfort that your auditioners have been, or will be in your place sometime soon.

Do not spend too much time preparing “how to say your lines.” The most important you can do on stage is to be yourself, to act naturally and to listen, *really* listen to your scene partner. The human interaction and communication between you and your scene partner is critical to the success of the scene.

BEFORE YOU ARE ON STAGE

Plan to arrive at your audition well ahead of time. You should allow time for extra traffic, missed cabs or late rides. It is very important to arrive in time to warm up, go to the bathroom, get a script if possible, fill out the forms carefully and ask any questions you may have.

Read the script before the audition, if you have the opportunity. It will help you in your audition to have a clear idea of what the show is about. Have in mind specific characters in which you would be interested. Check the pronunciation of words that may be unfamiliar to you. Do not spend too much time preparing “how to say your lines.” The most important you can do on stage is to be yourself, to act naturally and to listen, **really** listen to your scene partner. The human interaction and communication between you and your scene partner is critical to the success of the scene. An audition reading that is too well-rehearsed may seem stale to the auditioners. Remember, the casting team is looking for **potential** in your acting, not a finished product. If your characterization is set in stone, then there is no room for growth. Directors look for actors who are interested in learning and growing into the role.

If you can't read the script, at least spend a few minutes before the audition looking through the audition scenes.

Don't try to memorize the script before an audition. It's fine to use the script, so just remember to try and look up at the other actors when they are speaking so

that you can listen and react. As you audition listen to the other actor's lines. Interaction with others is key to any acting. Talk to the other actor; try to affect the other actor or to change the way they think. Use the text to really communicate something to the other person in the scene. Then listen and receive what they are saying to you and let it affect you.

Be realistic but don't limit yourself. In other words, try out for characters that you are physically able to play. In musical theater, the script is often abbreviated to make room for the songs and dances, so the actors need to be recognized instantly as their characters. Sometimes an actor may be cast who is a marginal singer and dancer but who looks the part. On the other hand, don't limit yourself by only auditioning just for the main roles. Many actors enjoy being in the secondary lead positions and perhaps playing several characters in one show. If you do a good job, the director will notice and you may have the opportunity to do additional roles.

Come prepared to listen and learn. Listen to the directors very carefully when they give directions. Often they are testing to see how willingly you take direction. Listen, if you can, while others are auditioning so that you will learn from their strong points and their mistakes. Never try to recreate another actor's performance—make your audition your own work.

If you have a question, don't be afraid to ask the director or producer. They are there to help you. Don't make a pest out of yourself, however, and waste your precious audition time by trying to impress the panel with what you know. Directors are looking for actors who are easy to work with for weeks or months at a time, so leave your ego and attitude at home.

Understand that you will be nervous. Everyone is nervous in an audition but don't let your nerves take over. Instead, **breathe** slowly, deeply, and consciously. Don't use the time before your audition to chat nervously with others. Respect their space and warm up time. Sit quietly and concentrate on the job you have to do or find some exercises that help you relax and do them. Before coming on to the stage, warm up both your body with stretching and your voice with vocal exercises. Get your blood pumping and remember to breathe, breathe, and breathe. Sing your songs earlier in the day before coming to the audition. Don't try to show off in front of others who are auditioning. Just relax and be yourself as much as you can.

During your audition the director may stop you in the middle of a line or a song. This is a normal occurrence. It is not a critique on your performance. The directors have only a finite amount of time to spend with you, so you want to make that time as rich as possible. They may ask you to sing the song again or say the lines in a different style. It is most important to take his request

Listen to the directors very carefully when they give directions. Often they are testing to see how willingly you take direction. Listen, if you can, while others are auditioning so that you will learn from their strong points and their mistakes.

and give it your very best shot. Do not hesitate, just give it a try. Directors admire courage and they admire those who are willing to take a risk.

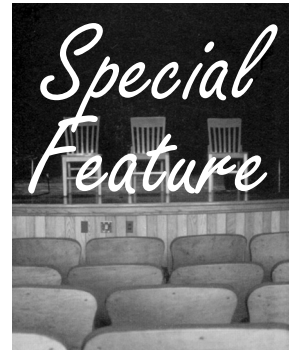
Wear neat but comfortable clothes. Forget the very high heels or any extreme clothing. Fix your hair neatly out of your face. Your eyes and face are the most expressive part of your body—don't hide them. Dress to flatter your body size and shape. If you are called back, don't change a thing, not your hair, not your clothes. Women should wear light makeup suitable for the stage. It is usually not effective to dress as the character you hope to play. On the other hand, dress so that the auditioners could envision you in the role. Avoid coming to an audition in costume. Remember, this is business, so dress appropriately.

Don't drink milk or eat a heavy meal before you audition. Dairy products will cause mucus to form and you may have a difficult time speaking or singing. You'll feel better if you simply eat a light snack and drink water before you go to your audition.

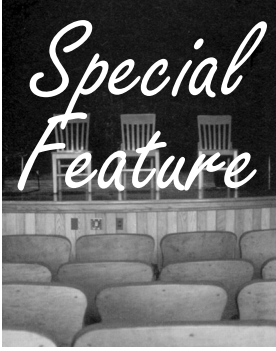
WHEN YOU ARE ON STAGE

Smile and walk on with confidence. Always begin your audition positively with a smile even if you don't feel like smiling. Walk across the audition space with your eyes forward and don't let them fall to the floor during the entire time you are on stage. Stand quietly and wait until you have been given a sign to start. Speak loudly and clearly so that the back of the house can hear you. Don't slouch or put your hands in your pockets. Many directors decide within a few seconds if they are interested in you as an actor. The time it takes you to cross the stage and take your place in the center are often the most critical of your audition. Walk with confidence and ease.

Always face the audience but try not to look directly into the eyes of the people who are auditioning you. Choose a spot a little over the head of the central person on the audition team at the back wall of the house and look there. Some focus just slightly off to the side of the auditioner's head near the ear. This is called spotting. In fact, you can pretend that your acting partner is in the center of the house and play to him. The more



continues on page 8



First Things First

continued from page 7

believable you make your imaginary acting partner, the more believable you will be. Never close your eyes when acting or when singing—and don't look up at the ceiling because then the audition team will only see the whites of your eyes.

Stay focused on your performance every second during your time on stage. Don't let your eyes or mind wander off of the task at hand. Don't let your eyes wander aimlessly during the performance. Focus your eyes and your thoughts on your performance of the character. Don't worry about how you are doing and don't critique yourself as you are performing.

You may move as you read, but don't pace or rock back and forth. Your movement should make sense for your character. If a large powerful move is called for in the script, such as a punch, do a much lighter shadow version of the movement, such as a light touch on the shoulder, to represent the punch. There is no need for long intense kisses or strenuous fights in an audition unless requested to do so. Make sure that if a scene calls for a kiss or a punch that you, as a scene partner, are aware that the kiss or punch needs to be received as well as given. The reception of the kiss or punch is actually what makes the action effective on stage.

Use your hands. Hands are one of the most expressive tools for an actor. Think about the meaning of the words you are singing or saying and use hand motions sparingly to emphasize points you feel are important. Don't move your hands unless you find a reason to justify doing so in the song or script. Remember you are on stage, not television, so you will need to use bigger gestures in order for the audience to see them. Remember, gestures are distracting and meaningless if not motivated by the lyrics or the script.

Take some risks. The auditors hope to see a full range of who you are and what you can do. Therefore, take some risks and use your imagination when reading. Be bold. React to events in the scripts in your own unique way. Don't copy any one else or try to be something you are not.

Listen closely to the other actors' lines and react to them as your character would react. Play the character to the best of your ability. Don't spend time of effort agonizing on how the character is different from you. Read with as much courage and expression as you can. Try to pick out the most important characteristic about your role and make sure it is communicated as you read. The two most important words in auditioning are "**listen** and **communicate**". When another actor is speaking, listen to that actor. Get your eyes off of the page

and react as if you are your character. When the other actor's line is finished, then look back at the page for your line.

As you read a scene, try to find the conflict then work to make that conflict real and clear. Try to discover reasons your character says what he says and acts the way he does.

Always compliment and support other actors—then they will do the same for you. Never coach or correct other actors, that is the director's job.

Hands are one of the most expressive tools for an actor. Think about the meaning of the words you are singing or saying and use hand motions sparingly to emphasize points you feel are important. Don't move your hands unless you find a reason to justify doing so in the song or script.

VOCAL AUDITIONS

If your audition includes singing, choose your songs and rehearse them in advance. Select those that reflect the style of the show for which you are auditioning. Bring two contrasting choices, one slower ballad and one up tempo. Generally singing auditions are brief, sixteen bars of music, or thirty two beats. You need to choose a piece that gets right to the heart of the song and shows off your voice right away. Musical directors generally judge voices within the first few seconds and their opinions usually don't change. Make sure the songs are in your range. Bring two copies of the music that are easy to read. Mark the beginning and end of where you are singing. Let the pianist know the tempo you prefer and quickly point out a tricky spot or two. Also, remind her that you will nod when you are ready. Treat the pianist kindly. She can make or break you.

You may be asked by the directors to sing a specific song from the show. In this case you probably won't be able to ask that the song be transposed to a better key for your voice. Try to be familiar with all of the songs in the show so that you will be relatively comfortable singing whatever is requested. Usually, you will not sing the entire song in the audition, so be ready to stop when asked. Don't worry. This is normal and does not reflect on your performance of the song. Just express yourself as you sing and show that you enjoy it.

Good diction, phrasing and emotion are essential when you are reading lines for a role, yet you must exhibit all of these qualities, plus sing on pitch and with proper

breathing, in your vocal audition. Sometimes a singer is so nervous that he experiences a “vocal clutch” which tightens the throat and singing muscles so that he cannot produce much sound. To avoid fear or nervousness taking over, carefully study and prepare the song so your mind will concentrate on the delivery of the music and not your anxiety. Think of where the song occurs and to whom it is sung. This will help you to envision the character the directors want to see.

WHEN YOU LEAVE THE STAGE

Don't compare yourself to other actors who are auditioning. Don't judge yourself before, during or after your audition. You have no idea what the director is looking for, so you may be just what she wants, or not quite right for any of the parts. Do your best and trust the director to make the right decision for the production. A positive attitude is contagious. Work to eliminate negativity in your thoughts before, during and after your audition.

Use the audition as a chance to learn. Even if you are not successful getting the part you want, you should leave the audition feeling that you gave it your all and therefore it was a success for you personally. Try to view every audition as a learning experience. Focus on the positive aspects of you audition. Take note and learn from the negatives then let them go. Beating yourself up or trying to second guess the directors are totally useless and futile tasks.

Remember that first impressions count. The audition team is there to see what you can do the first time. Rarely does a second try change the mind of the team. First impressions are the most important, so make a strong, positive, and powerful effort the first time around and forget asking to audition again. If the directors want to see more, they will call you back.

Your demeanor and attitude are on display before, during and after your audition. The directors will be looking for even the slightest hesitation to follow directions or a sense of resentment or irritation from you. Remember that, just as a song is not over until the piano stops playing, the audition is not over until you leave the building, so keep your comments and criticisms to yourself until you are out of earshot of everyone else. Always smile and thank the audition team for their time when you leave.

THE MONOLOGUE

A monologue is a short one person scene that is prepared by an actor to show off his strengths. The monologue is currently the most popular form of audition for a first audition. Usually at callbacks, auditionees are asked to read from the script. View a monologue as a golden opportunity to show yourself in the very best light. Choose a monologue that shows off your strengths. Your monologue should give the auditioners a glimpse of the full range of your talent.

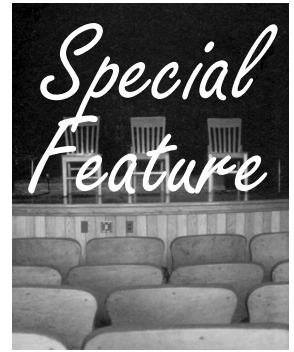
Choose a monologue that tells a complete story with a beginning, a middle and an end. The piece needs to have a point in the story that could be called a climax. The monologue should give you the opportunity to jump right into the scene, as opposed to spending precious seconds in introductory material.

Make sure the monologue is appropriate for you. The age of the protagonist in the piece should be similar to your own. It should be a character you can relate to and understand. Your monologue should reflect the strongest parts of your acting ability. Make sure that the monologue fits easily into the allowed audition time. Pieces that are too short may not show your ability and pieces that are too long are merely irritating to the auditioners who are always extremely pressed for time.

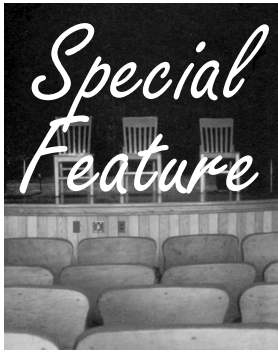
Choose a monologue that tells a complete story with a beginning, a middle and an end. The piece needs to have a point in the story that could be called a climax.

Finding just the right monologue is not easy. Monologues can be found in numerous places. There are literally hundreds of books on the market that contain audition monologues for every age. Many of these monologues are overused and trite, however so choose carefully. Other resources for monologues are plays, novels, short stories, essays and even magazine articles. Be wary of using speeches from current movies, as comparison is almost unavoidable. Most actors have several monologues ready and choose the appropriate one for the part for which they are auditioning. In other words, if the desired role is one filled with comedy, then the smart actor performs a monologue that shows off his comedic ability.

Callbacks are another opportunity to show yourself in your best light. A director usually calls back an actor for one of two reasons: he has seen something in the actor's performance that he likes or he has not seen enough of the actor to make a sound judgement. Either way, a callback is good news! Bring your music again to the callback, for the audition team may well want to hear you sing again. Wear the same clothes to the callback. Bring your dancing shoes to callback for you may be asked to dance in this audition. Callbacks vary depending on the directors. Some directors will want you to read from the script in combination with other actors. Some will want to talk to you and find out a little more about you, the person. Other directors will want to work with you on some theater games or improvisations. During callbacks, the director is working to find



continues on page 13



“The Forum” Ninth Edition:

by Suzanne M. Ramczyk, Ph.D.

Professor of Theatre Arts, Bridgewater State College and NETC Executive Secretary

Dear Readers,

Over the past two years, this column has addressed some exciting, cogent, and sometimes unsettling opinions and ideas. In conversation, several readers have expressed their appreciation of or disagreement with some of the sentiment expressed herein. Overall, I am thrilled that the column has, at the very least, inspired some amount of thought and I hope to continue to offer “quality” essays that will continue to do this. Again, I would encourage any readers to please email me any responses they may have to any of the “Forum” columns. It has been my hope that through these responses, we may establish some sort of dialogue. As much as I enjoy the “live” responses, I feel the general

readership would benefit from any printed ones. So please email me any response, from one sentence up to 200 words. (sramczyk@bridgew.edu)

This edition of “The Forum” challenges us educators, in particular, to take a long, hard look at gender concerns in teaching theatre, with respect to dealing with the Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual and Transgender students in, or entering, our theatre programs. Guest contributor, Steven Satta, asks us the very difficult question concerning working with these students: “Is your work inclusive of and relevant to their unique experience of the world?”

***In this edition of
the Forum***

“They’re Here! They’re Queer! Are You Ready?”

by Steven J. Satta

Assistant Professor, Theatre Arts Department, Towson University

In 1997 I was hired to teach at a popular and well-regarded summer theater program for high school students. It is an extremely intense program, meant to give students a taste of college-level, conservatory-style training. Over the course of the program these students not only discover the art of theater but they discover themselves in new and powerful ways. Inevitably a few students—male and female—“come out” as gay over the course of the summer. Indeed the person who hired me said he was thrilled to have an openly gay man on faculty as a role model for students struggling with this issue.

It’s a mere seven years later and times have changed. Many more students are “out” and proud before they even arrive. One summer there were so many out boys that a wing of the dorm was affectionately known as Christopher Street. Perhaps you know these students in your high school or community drama class or club. These students are out to friends and usually at school and to their families. They run Gay-Straight Alliances, attend social events and conferences for gay teens and take their same-sex dates to the prom.

And eventually they graduate and go to college—perhaps the college where you teach.

This means more and more openly gay students will be visiting universities wanting to know about academic and social opportunities specifically for them. More

and more students will discuss this with their high school teachers or community directors. Is there an LGBT (Lesbian/Gay/Bi-Sexual/Transgender) Student Center? A Queer Student Union? Classes in Lesbian/Gay Studies? Queer Theory? Is the faculty supportive of gay students in the classroom? Are the curricula inclusive of gay issues and gay experience? Can students receive unbiased and knowledgeable feedback on gay-themed projects? And their parents may ask, “Will my gay child be safe on this campus?” Can you answer these questions?

And don’t point them toward the Counseling Center. These kids were born way after 1973 when the American Psychological Association took homosexuality off the list of official disorders. They don’t see themselves as having pathologies; they see themselves as having identities. They don’t need to be counseled, they want to be celebrated. And what does that mean for us in the theater? What does this mean for the actor-trainer?

Are you ready for them?

Whether in university, high school or community settings, teachers will encounter more and more out students. Is your work inclusive of and relevant to their unique experience of the world?

Years ago a student of the summer program I mentioned contacted me for advice—his college acting teacher

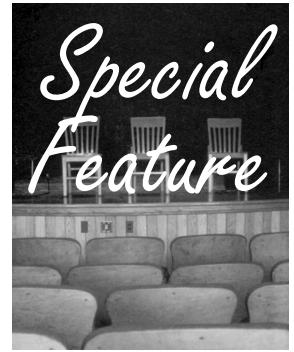
forbade him to work with gay-themed material in class. I was upset but I understood what was happening. The prevailing wisdom says an obviously gay actor won't get work and his teacher was increasing his marketability by guiding him away from queer material. Preparing students for the marketplace is the job of the actor-trainer, but lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender (LGBT) students present an interesting and often difficult obstacle in this regard. The number of online discussions I see among actor-trainers indicates that helping students appear more "masculine" or "feminine" is a consistent issue. We discuss ways to lower vocal pitch, make movement more delicate, etc. but I think this approach may actually miss the mark because it doesn't address the real issue. I believe the real issue is identity.

Sexual/affectional identity is deeply important to every human being, but particularly during the transition from teen to adult. Heterosexual students find expression for their identities easily, while opportunities for expression are hard won and jealously guarded by queer students. In the classroom, the dormitory, etc., the LGBT student must constantly speak up or feel invisible and powerless in the face of conscious or unconscious homophobic or heterosexist remarks and attitudes. And they face the barrage of media in which they are frequently absent or demonized or mocked. They must grip tightly those things that give them a sense of identity and self-worth.

Thus the male student with feminine mannerisms may be deeply attached to these behaviors because they are his only expression of a deeply important part of himself. A limited, superficial sense of self usually results in a limited, superficial expression. Give him the chance to know himself more deeply and validate him in the classroom and that behavior may transform on its own because he no longer needs it. Or if technical adjustments are needed, they may be much easier because the student's sense of self is more deeply integrated and not reliant upon those specific outward expressions. Students who understand themselves as more than stereotypes will be far less inclined to behave in stereotypical ways.

Part of expanding an actor's skills is expanding their understanding of themselves. We encourage actors of color to find material that addresses their heritage and their culture. We encourage women to look at the work of female and feminist playwrights to understand the struggle and the power of women in our society. We expand their conception of themselves, their place in the world and their history in order to expand their grasp as actors, increase the number and kinds of roles and material to which they can connect in a personal and meaningful way. They must first find who they are before they can reach beyond themselves into character.

LGBT or "queer" students need the same opportunities. Indeed, they may need more: even those who come out in high school are way behind the curve; their straight peers have been freely exploring how to be straight since kindergarten. Queer students must understand themselves as "queer" in order to understand themselves fully. Material that puts them in contact with the rich and proud heritage they can claim as their own is vitally important to their training. They must be exposed to a variety of reflections of themselves from different authors and from different historical moments in order to see themselves clearly. They must go beyond *The Children's Hour* all the way to

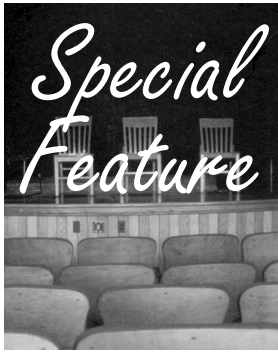


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Angels in America and *Take Me Out* and the work of Tim Miller and Holly Hughes and David Drake and Paula Vogel. They must be not only allowed but encouraged to create work from this part of themselves. Queer art is valid art.

It may require some reading to guide these students to rich, exciting, important, queer material. (Or we college folk may need to guide them to a class **outside** the theater department!) So as teachers we get to expand our horizons while doing this. Their straight classmates expand their horizons through exposure to this material. Perhaps most importantly the kid struggling secretly (or not so secretly) with his or her identity receives a positive message without risking exposure. This may be the best way to reach the student who has not identified him or herself, the student who has not opened the door to a direct conversation. In an inclusive classroom, everybody wins.

So, rather than having LGBT students work on appearing straight, you might encourage them to explore the depth and range and reality of being queer, the depth and range, that is, of being fully themselves. Chances are, along the way they'll realize what it means to be fully human. And that applies to any character they could ever want to play.



An E-interview with Sandra Fenichel Asher

Author, teacher, playwright and winner of NETC's 2003 Aurand Harris Playwriting Award for her play *In the Garden of the Selfish Giant*

Interviewer: Jay DiPrima (Harris Award Chair)

Note: Sandra Fenichel Asher also writes children's novels under the name "Sandy Asher."

Jay: I want to personally thank you for your touching play, *In the Garden of the Selfish Giant*. The staged reading at the NETC Conference certainly brought a tear to many eyes—especially in the moments of truth between mother and daughter. You seem to have a very deep understanding of the adolescent psyche. Why is that?

Sandra: First, thank you for your sensitive response to the reading! A long time ago, I read something about writers having only one story to tell and telling it over and over again—the story of the one thing in life they truly understand. I think in my case, it's the opposite: I return as a writer to my own experiences as an adolescent because it's an area I'm probably doomed never to understand completely. I keep working at it, trying to wear away its dense mysteries with the constant drip-drip-drip of my words!

Truly, I don't know what makes some of us forget certain periods of our lives and others remember them clearly, or what drives some of us to keep revisiting them, trying for ever-deeper understanding. I didn't set out to write for or about children. In college and for years afterward, I was mainly writing literary poetry for adults. But a friend of mine read a batch of my poems all at once and noted that every single one of them contained a child character or a reference to childhood. That was my first hint that I had some sort of special calling. Still, several more years passed before I fully realized that any time I considered a topic to write about, I was most interested in how it affected a young person. Some might call it a case of arrested development, I suppose! But it's just the way I'm built.

Jay: The anecdote you related in the playwriting profile of your web site was very funny - your first ventures (as a second grader no less!) into the art of writing, directing, acting and touring. In that profile, you mentioned a new play about eighth graders based on the book by Avi, *Romeo and Juliet Together (and Alive!) at Last*. As a middle school teacher I'm intrigued by its billing—"Shakespeare and middle school as you've never seen either before!" Can you tell us something about it and its present state of development?

Sandra: I'd be delighted, because the play is a lot of fun, and its development was a dream-come-true

experience. Some time ago, I was working on a new adaptation of *Little Women* at the Stebens Children's Theatre in Mason City, IA. Tom Ballmer, the artistic director, brought up the idea that it would be wonderful to have three youth theaters commission a new script together, with all three promising to bring the playwright in for rehearsals and performances of a full production, thereby helping to get the script rewritten, polished, and ready for publication. Tom had specifications: He needed a large cast, with lots of

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challenging roles for teenagers—more girls than boys—and an attractive title that would bring teens in to audition and families in to see the show. I went in search of the perfect story and found Avi's charming novel, *Romeo and Juliet Together (and Alive!) at Last*. "Now that's an attractive title!" I thought, and the story lived up to the title's promise: Two terribly shy 8th graders are in love, but unable to talk to or even look directly at one another. Their classmates decide to help by putting on their own production of *Romeo and Juliet* and voting the star-crossed lovers into the lead roles. The conspirators write an adaptation that leaves everything out of the original that they don't understand—leaving about 25 minutes of Shakespeare—and with no experience, only two weeks to rehearse, and one classmate determined to ruin everything, the performance is one disaster after another. But true love triumphs!

I love it because it's a very funny and sweet story about kids trying very hard to do a good thing. I added a "dream sequence," in which the two young people adapting Shakespeare imagine it being done perfectly (as all playwrights do!). So the actors get to do modern comedy, straight Shakespeare, and all-out farce.

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Sandra Fenichel Asher

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Quite a challenge! The play was commissioned by Laguna Playhouse Youth Theatre and the University of Utah Theatre Department (for its youth theater program). Both gave it full productions and brought me in for development. Tom received a grant from the Children’s Theatre Foundation of America to support his production and to bring me back to Mason City twice—for early rehearsals and for performances. Each cast was different—some older than their characters, others quite a bit younger, some highly trained, others about as green as the characters they were playing. But every production was a joy. As Tom said, “The audience fell out of their seats laughing. And then they rolled down the aisles.” There’s nothing quite like farce when it goes smoothly! The script is now available from Dramatic Publishing.

Jay: You obviously love to write for young audiences, for in addition to three dozen award winning plays, you have written nearly two dozen books for young readers! Your enthusiasm for this age is inspiring and I will make available your web sites so that other educators and drama practitioners can access these valuable plays and books.

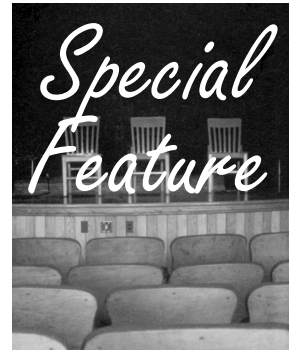
My last question is about your involvement with Drury University and *USA Plays for Kids*. Can you provide some background information about this project?

Sandra: I don’t think ALL of my plays have won awards, but, yes, I’ve written about three dozen, plus the books. My husband recently retired after 36 years at Drury University, where he taught history. I taught

a creative writing course there for seven years, but couldn’t continue because I found myself traveling to schools and conferences too often to maintain any sort of continuity. (It’s a strange side effect of writing success that you’re expected to become a public speaker. My theater training came in handy!) So in 1986, Dean Steven Good created a new position for me: writer-in-residence. It entailed an office, a small honorarium, and no real job description. But with his encouragement, I came up with a variety of projects I thought would be beneficial for writers and for the school: the Drury University One-Act Play Competition, a one-day Writing for Children Workshop, and Good Company Theater for All Ages, among others. The *USA Plays for Kids* web site usaplays4kids.drury.edu, which links to the Web pages of playwrights around the country, was an offshoot of America Writes for Kids, which links to the Web pages of children’s book authors usawrites4kids.drury.edu. (Note that there is no www.)

That, in turn, developed out of Missouri Writes for Kids—a series of 30-second TV spots that my friend and colleague David Harrison and I taped to promote reading by introducing children, teachers, and librarians to the work of “real, live” authors who lived in our state. I’m told that some of those TV spots are still running on public television in the Springfield, MO, area, although my husband and I now live in Lancaster, PA. The Web sites, which were designed by our son Ben, are still under my supervision and supported by Drury. I think we’re close to 300 linked children’s writers by now.

Thank you, again, for your interest, Jay, and for spreading the word about the sites!



First Things First

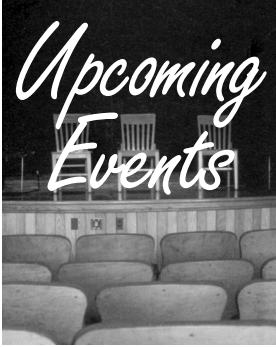
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out how you might fit into his show. He has probably called back several people for each character and is trying to mix and match the actors in terms of chemistry, size, vocal quality, and general look. Stay positive and listen to what is being asked of you. This is the part of an audition where the director is testing your attitude and your willingness and ability to be directed and to work with others.

You might be asked to sing a song from the show, so it is a very good idea to get a CD or the music from the show before your audition. Familiarity with the script and the music will give you a leg up at callbacks. Remember, just because you have been called back, you

have no assurances of being cast. You are one step closer than you were in your first audition but still will be competing with others for roles.

At the end of callbacks, thank the directors for calling you back and smile. Remember, even if you are not selected for this particular show, the director may well remember you. Many directors take copious notes at callbacks and call actors for other shows in the future!



...Virginia Woolf? at Bridgewater State College

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, Edward Albee's masterpiece, will be presented September 17, 18, and 19 at Bridgewater State College in Bridgewater MA, produced by BSC Theatre and The Center for the Advancement of Research and Teaching. The production features NETC's executive secretary, Suzanne Ramczyk, as Martha and Michael Fennimore, of *Shear Madness* fame, as George. The production is directed by renowned Boston actress, Paula Plum, who is the recent recipient of the Elliot Norton Award for Sustained Excellence. Friday's and Saturday's performances are at 8:00 pm, with a 2:00 matinee on Sunday. Seating is very limited, so reservations are strongly suggested. Call 508-531-1321 for tickets. For directions, see the BSC website at www.bridgew.edu; the theatre is attached to the Rondileau Campus Center.

Tales of the Lost Formicans at Worcester State College

Tales of the Lost Formicans, by NETC award recipient Constance Congdon, will be staged at Worcester State College the weekend of November 4, 5, 6, and 7. NETC Board member, Ann Marie Shea, who had the opportunity to study with Congdon this past summer at the Last Frontier Theatre Conference, will direct. John Howell Hood and Susan Johnson Hood are designers.

The absurd comedy covers all the frightening "A" words—adultery, adolescents, Alzheimer's disease and especially aliens—with a manic assortment of dreamlike theatrical effects. For further information on tickets and performance times, call 508-929-8843.

Message from the President

by **Tom Mikotowicz**
President, NETC Board of Directors

Dear NETC Member,

A year goes by so fast that we thought we would remind you of all the great benefits you received as a member, and help you keep getting these benefits throughout the next year.

Did you go to the annual NETC Conference at the beautiful Biltmore Hotel in Providence last year? 700 of your fellow members did and took full advantage of over 70 workshops, meetings and performance events over three days! From a five-minute play competition to a Master Class in Shakespeare, and from a cogent keynote address by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Paula Vogel to playwright Eve Ensler's call for political activism at the Sunday brunch, there was something for everybody, no matter what their experience or career level.

Whether or not you made it last year, we want you to know that our 2004 Conference, to be held in South Portland, ME at the Sheraton, is just around the corner. A current membership in NETC not only assures you a spot, but allows you take full advantage of discount rates!

Of course being a member of NETC is more than attending the conference. An NETC member gets year-round benefits including

- Quarterly issues of the *NETC NEWS* containing regional theatre news, audition announcements and articles relevant to our industry
- Exclusive access to online Job postings and Calendar listings at netconline.org
- Subscription to the acclaimed *New England Theatre Journal*—an internationally distributed and highly respected scholarly journal.
- An invitation to participate in our Award programs for writers and productions
- An invitation to apply to our Annual Theatre Auditions at the member rate—join 1000 auditionees and over 56 producers as we help cast literally hundreds of shows!
- And much more!

In the enclosed materials you will find more information on these programs and activities along with a sneak peak at the upcoming conference, featuring such theatrical luminaries as two-time Tony Award-winning lighting designer Don Holder, internationally known fight choreographer David Leong, and playwright Constance Congdon, to name a few. Renewing your membership is as easy as completing the enclosed membership form, or by visiting us at www.netconline.org.

Any organization is only as good as its members and we are proud of our 53 year track record of having the best membership around. The Board of Directors and I would like to thank you for being with us for the last year, and invite you to join us again for what we think will be our best year ever.

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Jay DiPrima, *Mickey Dude Productions*

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