Gassner Playwriting Award Goes to Connecticut Playwright

2003 saw the awarding of the thirty-sixth John Gassner Memorial Playwriting Award. The winner is Bruce Post, a playwright from Sandy Hook, Connecticut. The play is an extraordinary script called Size Matters.

Size Matters is insightful, frank and brutally funny. It’s about a gentleman who predicts his fortunes by the size of his penis. He’s displeased when his daughter discovers she has the same skill vis-à-vis her breasts, and he discredits her inventing her personal history.

If there’s obscenity in the script, it’s the obscenity of the way we behave. It has a truthful distortion of life coupled with strident comment on our obsession with body parts—as if Carl von Sternheim had teamed up with Karen Finley. If you would like a copy of the script, contact NETC.

Bruce Post is a playwright, a director, and a teacher at the Milford Alternative Program, a public school for secondary students-at-risk in Connecticut. He has an MFA in Theatre from Sarah Lawrence College, where he worked with Eduardo Machado. He’s the Executive Director of the Maxwell Anderson Playwrights Series and the Producer of the Annual Young Connecticut Playwrights Festival.

We asked Bruce to tell us about the script from his perspective. This is what he wrote:

I wrote Size Matters in response to my father’s death. The character of Dick is not my father. I didn’t know my father well; he left when I was one year old. He was an okay guy, I guess. But he did, literally, try to erase me from his life. When he remarried, he agreed to his new wife’s demand to never mention his earlier children to her family. The result was, for her parents and siblings, I never existed.

New England High School Drama Festival at Lawrence High School in ME

All over New England in January and February hundreds of high school drama programs are abuzz with rehearsals, set building, costume stitching, and light design to prepare a one-act play for competition. Throughout the months of March and April the schools present their shows for competition at local and regional levels with winners advancing to their State Competitions. Two winners emerge from each of the six State Finals to represent their state at the New England Drama Festival, a regional showcasing of the best in secondary theatre.

This year the New England Drama Festival will be held at Lawrence High School in Fairfield, Maine. Lawrence will host the twelve state representatives for an exciting three-day event on April 22–24. At the NEDF schools no longer compete. Instead, they showcase their work for each other, special guests and the general public. Each school is given written commendations from students and members of the New England Drama

2004 Convention Headed to South Portland, ME

Plans are well underway for the 2004 Convention to be held on November 11-14. The convention will take place at the Sheraton Twin Towers in South Portland, Maine, just off Exit 7 on the Maine Turnpike. The Sheraton is conveniently located minutes from the Portland Jetport and Amtrak. It is adjacent to the Maine Mall and there are dozens of eateries within walking distance. The accommodations are exquisite and the room rates will be very reasonable making the weekend very affordable.

The convention weekend will include the popular High School Theatre Olympiad on Friday and three days of programming for all levels of theatre including children and youth, secondary education, college, com-
Stoneham Theatre

When a newly-renovated 1917 movie house in the heart of Stoneham Square first welcomed audiences through its doors just three years ago, Artistic Director Weylin Symes could only imagine what was in store for the young company. It's been a whirlwind ever since.

“Sometimes it's hard to keep up,” says Symes with a smile. “We're delighted with the response we've seen. We've tripled in size over the past three years and we continue to welcome new people every day. It's really just exciting to be a part of it.”

Stoneham Theatre is now the fifth-largest regional theatre in Greater Boston—an impressive feat for a company that just passed its third anniversary. This year nearly two hundred performances are planned on its stage and 40,000 people are expected to pass through its doors. It’s an ambitious schedule like this that makes Stoneham Theatre the only company founded within the past ten years that's ranked by the Boston Business Journal among the area's ten largest performing arts organizations.

“What makes this theater intriguing is that it takes a chance or two,” says Boston critic Bill Marx, a sentiment echoed by audiences and critics alike. In an October 2003 article, the Boston Globe suggests that it's Stoneham Theatre's willingness to take calculated risks that inspires its growth.

“We're focused on new theatre for new audiences,” Symes says. “We produce new and less familiar works that still appeal to a wide variety of people.”

It's a concept that the staff, the board, and the audiences take seriously.

This spring, the theatre premieres two productions that Symes calls emblematic of the company's mission: The Sweepers, a tale of Boston's North End by John C. Picardi, and Lizzie Borden, a hauntingly beautiful new musical about the infamous alleged axe murderer. New works like these anchor Stoneham Theatre's subscription season as its audiences become increasingly more accustomed to its consistent quality and broad appeal.

Stoneham also takes seriously its commitment to education, an important part of building new audiences. The flagship of its educational programs is the Resident Youth Ensemble, an advanced training program for high school students. Fifteen selected students participate in intensive master classes with theatre professionals—the current course of study is an eight-week curriculum on movement-based techniques.

Advanced, ongoing programs like this for the high school level are rare, and the theatre is quick to declare their importance to the company. Members of the Ensemble are an integral part of the theatre's daily life, participating alongside professionals as assistant directors, production assistants, and occasionally actors. Only in its first year, the Resident Youth Ensemble is expected to become even more prominent as time goes on.

With all that's happened over the past three years, Symes is hesitant to guess where Stoneham Theatre might be three years from now. “Whatever happens, we just plan to continue producing the best theatre we can.”

Stoneham Theatre is a professional Equity company just minutes north of downtown Boston with easy access to I-93 and I-95 and free parking right across the street.

Gassner Award
continued from page 1

I became fascinated with the idea of a parent rewriting the history of his child in order to maintain an advantage or gain a personal benefit. As is often the case with my plays, I first saw a stage image. The image I saw was of Dick, his back to the audience, measuring the size of his penis. I like literal imagery. Our culture is so fascinated with penises and breasts, in dangerously self indulgent obsession, and so I wanted to focus on those body parts as potent symbols of the power of size. Americans are manic about size; witness SUV's and McMansions. Unfortunately this obsession results in a nation that consumes most of the world's resources and no longer cares about the consequences.

At first it was Dick's play, but it was clear after it wrote itself that the play really belonged to Steph [the daughter]. I really wanted to write about the pressure we receive to limit our goals, even to live below expectations so as not to make any waves.

My favorite playwrights are Ibsen, who WAS the Master Builder, Beckett, who is my god, Albee, who taught me to think literally about the abstract, and Mamet, who teaches us all how to master subtext. Like Beckett, I believe that less is more.
NETC a Lively Presence at the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival

Once again, the College University Division of NETC was active and visible at the annual Region I Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. The festival, which took place January 29 through February 1, was based at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Warwick RI, with performances staged at Rhode Island College, Providence.

On Friday afternoon, NETC Audition chair Joe Juliano gave a spirited and informative presentation on the process of applying for and auditioning at the annual NETC Auditions. Over twenty highly motivated and talented students from throughout the region listened attentively and asked pertinent questions concerning the format and protocols of the NETC process. Joe reports that about a dozen students took advantage of his extending the deadline an additional week to accommodate students from the Festival.

On Saturday night NETC, through C/U chair Ann Marie Shea, presented the second annual Excellence in Acting Awards (with $150 cash prize) to two deserving student performers. In the Comic category, Alex Carey of Keene State College took top NETC honors with his performance of *Laughing Wild* by Christopher Durang. From Salem State College, Brianne Beatrice who performed the character Clytemnestra from Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*, was awarded the classical prize. The winners were selected at the semi-finals phase of the competition by judges Rebecca Hilliker of University of Wyoming and Steve Stettler of the Weston Playhouse in Vermont.

The prizes represent NETC commitment to support KCACTF’s efforts to keep the classics alive and comedy rolling in the undergraduate scene, and prize money is available to encourage students to develop technique in these categories.

Mentors of undergraduate actors throughout the region are reminded to keep these opportunities in mind when assisting students in selecting material for Irene Ryan competition.

A familiar face to NETC members, Patricia Riggin of Boston College, was awarded the Kennedy Center Medallion for her years of service to the regional festival. Patricia serves as chair of the playwriting chair for the region, supporting and encouraging student playwrights throughout the New England area. Congratulations to Patricia for well-earned recognition!

Comedy is King in *My Favorite Year*, the Acton-Boxborough Spring Musical

If you’re ready to laugh out loud, don’t miss the musical comedy at Acton-Boxborough Regional High School, *My Favorite Year*. Set in 1954 at the NBC-TV studios, this show recreates the excitement and fun of working on a live television show during this era. The story is set around freshman writer, Benjy Stone and his encounter with his childhood movie hero, Alan Swann, who is not the hero he had imagined. Swann’s week as guest on the King Kaiser Comedy Cavalcade almost drives King and the writers and producers of his hit show crazy. And when Belle, Benjy’s quintessential Jewish mother, invites the pair to Brooklyn, the whole neighborhood shows up to meet the famous movie star. With physical humor, great dancing, and even a sword fight, this show is full of energy from the opening number.

Based on the movie starring Peter O’Toole, which celebrates the work of Sid Caesar and the writers on his show that included Mel Brooks, Neil Simon and Woody Allen, the music and lyrics are by Ahrens and Flaherty, creators of “Once On This Island” and “Ragtime.” The production is directed by Linda Potter, with music direction by Jeannie Furlan and choreography by Melinda Samperi. To set the mood, a special 1950’s Retrospective will be shown 30 minutes before each show. Doors open early so don’t miss this look at the Golden Age of television and 1950s popular culture.

Performances are March 26, 27, 28 and April 2, 3. All shows are at 7:30 pm, except for the matinee on Sunday, March 28, at 3:00 pm. Tickets are $12 for adults and $8 for students and seniors; available online via credit card at www.MKTix.com. For more information, contact Susan Williams, 978-263-3143.
Seminars and Workshops, Helping Each Other Grow in the Theatrical Community

The NETC Professional division is happy to announce our Seminar and Workshop information bulletin! Do you have a seminar or workshop that you feel can help others in the New England Theatre Community? Or are you looking for a specific type of Seminar or Workshop that is being offered? The NETC Professional division would like to help!

The needs of the Theatre Community cannot be met at one convention yearly and we are aware of that. So in order to help facilitate these types of events the Professional division would like to produce a Seminar and Workshop “Catalogue” that would go out twice a year to all NETC Members. Anybody that is an NETC member can participate in this offer of seminars. In other words if you are member and have something to share or teach, let us help you make it happen!

A great example would be a popular Seminar I do myself, “Budgeting and Sourcing; How to Put up Your Show” this is a joint seminar that is provided by myself, and Kevin Russell of Arts Boston. So how do you get involved? Simple, email me at lisaanton@hotmail.com, a simple one-paragraph description of your seminar or workshop, with that include all needs, i.e. audio, visual, space, amount of participants, etc. Also include how much you require as a stipend, or if you offer this as a free event. Once a group is compiled we will start sending this out to our members.

The Professional Division is taking great strides to make improvements to our participation in the Theatre Community and we feel that this is a great start. Bringing contacts and knowledge to any and all who want it. We also wish for you to understand we would like all divisions to offer seminars and workshops! Maybe you teach elementary education and have a wonderful way to teach music to kids! Maybe your community theatre is wonderful at community outreach and fundraising! In the end we can all learn and teach each other to bring a better quality of theatre to all of New England.

So on behalf of the Professional Division I hope you will join us in our enthusiasm and submit as many seminars or workshops as you like to our bulletin. We are again very interesting in helping you all continue to work and grow in the New England Theatre Community!

2004 Convention Headed to ME continued from page 1

community and professional. Nationally known theatre practitioners are being sought out to present workshops in the latest techniques and training. Convention organizers are also looking to draw from the talent of local theatres and Maine artists to showcase the theatre work of Maine.

As the programming process begins organizers are open to ideas from the NETC community. Please email suggestions for workshops ideas, contacts who might present workshops, or whether you might have a workshop that you are willing to present. Our theme for the 2004 Convention is Basic Training for a New Theatre featuring new approaches to theatre training and stage production. The workshops will be geared to all levels of participation.

The planning committee includes, chairman, Jeff Watts, drama teacher at Lawrence High School in Fairfield, Maine, and co-planners are Carol Korty, youth and children’s theatre playwright and Wil Kilroy, associate professor at the University of Southern Maine. You may contact Jeff at jwatts@msad49.org.

NE High School Drama Festival continued from page 1

Council. In addition to showcasing their one-act play, the students will take part in a number of theatre workshops, meet new friends from all over New England and enjoy the exhilarating atmosphere of the Festival. The New England Drama Festival is a highlight in the career of any high school thespian.

The theme of this year’s festival is Magic 2004: the Theatrical Journey. The festival weekend will celebrate the magic of theatre. Most of us are drawn to the theatre because of that magical moment we experience seeing our first show and we become addicted to the theatre the first time we tread the boards or work backstage. Finally, we learn to value theatre’s ability to move and inspire us. To borrow from Tennessee Williams; theatre is, “truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion.”

Support the theatre’s future by attending, or volunteering to present workshops, for the New England Drama Festival at Lawrence High School in Fairfield, Maine just off I-95 on April 22–24. For more information call (207) 453-4200, ext. #249.
NEW ENGLAND THEATRE CONFERENCE
2004 Convention Proposal Form

2004 Annual Convention—“Basic Training for a New Theatre”
November 11, 12, 13, 14 • Thursday Evening through Sunday Noon • Sheraton Hotel, South Portland, Maine

PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL
(Please type or print clearly. This form will be photocopied.)

Your name

Organization or affiliation

Mailing Address City State Zip

Day Phone Evening Phone

Fax E-Mail

Proposal Title

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL: (Minimum thirty to maximum fifty words)

• What is the topic and scope of the presentation?
• How does the presentation relate to the theme “Basic Training for a New Theatre”?
• State the outcomes or objectives—what will the participant learn from this presentation?
• Please help us by making your description concise, clear and appealing, and appropriate for use in the conference catalogue.

PERSONNEL: Please provide each presenter/speaker’s name and affiliation:

1.

2.

3.

TYPE OF ACTIVITY:

Please indicate the type of activity based on the descriptions below:

• Performance
• Paper: Reading(s) of a scholarly work
• Play reading: Book-in-hand presentation of original dramatic work.
• Workshop: Provides participants with hands-on experience to learn and apply new skills or techniques and receive feedback on their progress. Please note if participants are expected to dress to move, to prepare a selection, etc.
• Seminar: A wide range of viewpoints, usually presented in a lecture format, concentrating on a specific topic or a focused aspect of an interest area, facilitated by one or more experts.
• Roundtable discussion: Participants exchange points of view concerning a topic or problem under the leadership of a facilitator.
• Poster session: Visual presentation of graphic or technical materials with discussion among participants.
LEVEL OF ACTIVITY:

Select from among the following categories:

- **Introductory**: Assumes little or no information within the areas covered. The focus is on general orientation and increased awareness of the participant.

- **Intermediate**: Assumes a general familiarity with the literature and professional practice within the areas covered. The focus is on increased understanding and application by the participant.

- **Advanced**: Assumes thorough familiarity with current literature and professional practice. The focus is on recent advances, future directions, and applications of research.

- **Various**: Some activities comprise two or more levels of instruction. If more than half of the activity falls within the Introductory, Intermediate or Advanced level of instruction, the activity should be classified in that level.

TARGET GROUP/S

This presentation will be of most value to members interested in:

☐ Community  ☐ Professional  ☐ Children’s & Youth  ☐ Secondary  ☐ College/University

This presentation is appropriate for **secondary school students**:

☐ Yes  ☐ No

KIND OF SPACE NEEDED

☐ Chairs around perimeter  ☐ Chairs in circle  ☐ Chairs in rows facing one view

TABLE NEEDED?

☐ In center  ☐ In front

PIANO OR AUDIO/VISUAL EQUIPMENT NEEDED FROM NETC OR SHERATON HOTEL

☐ Piano  ☐ Screen  ☐ VCR  ☐ Slide projector  ☐ Computer projector  ☐ Flipchart easel

*Please make every effort to provide your own equipment to help us keep our overhead low.*

**Note:** Each session is 75 minutes long.

**Note:** NETC does not provide reimbursement or stipends for presenters.

ARE YOU A MEMBER OF NETC?

If not, would you like to join?

Please enclose a check made out to “New England Theatre Conference”

☐ $45 (Individual)  ☐ $30 (Student)  ☐ $95 (Group)

Please check division affiliation desired:

☐ Professional  ☐ Community  ☐ College/University  ☐ Secondary  ☐ Children’s

*Please send this completed form IMMEDIATELY to:*

Jeff Watts, Conference Chair for NETC 2004
By email to jwatts@msad49.org, or by mail to:
Jeff Watts, Lawrence High School
9 School Street
Fairfield, ME 04937
North Shore Music Theatre Receives 14 IRNE Award Nominations

Independent Reviewers of New England Honor NSMT Productions of PACIFIC OVERTURES and MEMPHIS

The Independent Reviewers of New England (IRNE), a panel of critics from community papers around the state of Massachusetts, have announced the nominees for the IRNE Awards honoring the best of the 2003 Theatre Season. North Shore Music Theatre (NSMT) received 14 award nominations honoring performances and creative teams who worked on NSMT’s critically acclaimed productions of Pacific Overtures and the world premiere of Memphis.

“We are thrilled to be nominated for these two productions from our 2003 Musical Season,” says Jon Kimbell, NSMT Artistic Director and Executive Producer. “Both Pacific Overtures and Memphis were risks for NSMT, but the rewards have great, and this vote of confidence from the IRNE Committee is truly an honor.”

Pacific Overtures is nominated in 11 categories including Best Musical Production, Best Director of a Musical (Kent Gash), Best Musical Direction (M. Michael Fause) Best Choreography (Darren Lee and Francis Jue), Best Set Design (Neil Patel), Best Lighting Design (William Grant III), Best Costume Design (Paul Tazewell) Best Sound Design (John A. Stone), Best Actor in a Musical (Steven Eng and Jason Ma), Best Supporting Actor in a Musical (Raoul Aranas) and the entire cast is nominated for Best Ensemble Playing.

Memphis picked up 2 acting nomination in the category of Best Actor in a Musical (Chad Kimball) and Best Actress in a Musical (Montego Glover).

The IRNE Awards will be presented at a ceremony at the Lennox Hotel in Boston on March 22, 2004. For more information about NSMT’s 2004 Season, visit the NSMT web site at www.nsmt.org, contact the North Shore Music Theatre at 978-232-7200.

On its 26-acre Dunham Woods campus, the award-winning North Shore Music Theatre is creating some of the most vibrant and exciting musical theater in the country. As the largest nonprofit professional theater in New England, NSMT annually produces a six musical subscription series, a production of A Christmas Carol and an acclaimed Celebrity Concert series. With its renowned Theatre for Young Audiences program, a school touring program, and year-round classes for children, NSMT has become one of the region’s leading providers of theater arts and education.

Moss Hart Awards

All divisions are represented in this year’s Moss Hart Awards competition. Every organization is encouraged to enter its spring and summer productions in this contest which honors the finest theatrical endeavors in the Northeast.

The 2004 entries include The Bells of Amersfort, Honk, Every Seventeen Minutes the Crowed Goes Wild, Charlotte’s Web, All My Sons, Orphans, Lord of the Flies, The Laramie Project, West Side Story, and Cabaret.

For additional information on the Moss Hart award, check the website www.netconline.org

NETC Secondary Division

The Secondary Division of the New England theatre Conference is actively seeking members! The division is busy planning the Second Annual High School Olympiad for Conference 2004 to be held in Portland, Maine. We need your help and advice and your input! Come join the team who is making this event happen. We invite you to come to the next Board of Director’s meeting and see how the Olympiad is put together. The Secondary Division is composed of junior high and high school theatre and drama teachers who are interested in fostering networking and quality theatre experiences in the New England Region. We heartily invite you to join us and meet others who teach the same things you do! For more information, please contact Linda Potter, Chair 978-263-0173 or at e-mail lpotter@mail.ab.mec.edu.

Please visit NETC on the web at www.NETConline.org to find out how you can get more involved in your community!
“The Forum” Seventh Edition: Where In the World Are We?
by Suzanne M. Ramczyk, Ph.D.
Professor of Theatre Arts, Bridgewater State College and NETC Executive Secretary

Dear Readers,

This time around I am featuring two short essays by students of theatre, one undergraduate and one Ph.D. candidate, both who raise some very cogent issues concerning academia and theatre education. Mr. Marganian challenges us to concern ourselves with solid translations of the masterpieces of dramatic literature for use in production and teaching; and Ms. Madden demands that a balance be achieved in college theatre programs between practical courses and the more theoretically based ones. I believe that it is essays such as these that should make those of us who have established careers in professional theatre, theatre in higher education, and theatre education stand up and take notice. It is the voice of these developing theatre practitioners and educators that we mid or late career practitioners should consider to be the voice of theatre to come in the very near future. Let these voices break through those many-layered ivy covered walls of our esteemed institutions and through the cinder block walls of high schools or theatres to challenge any existing “calcification.”

As usual, we encourage any response to these pieces in the form of a short email to me (sramczyk@bridgew.edu), which needs to be submitted no later than April 25, 2004 for publication in the next NETC News. Further, if any reader would like to write his/her own “Forum” piece, please contact me at the above email address.

Suzanne Ramczyk,
editor, “The Forum”

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The Forum, Part One: Do the Best Translations Read Themselves?
by Jeffrey Marganian

Recently, an absolute plethora of translations of classic plays have appeared: Ibsen, Chekhov, the Greeks, some Wedekind and Strindberg. Many of these bill themselves as more actor friendly for students; that is, highly usable for young persons because they are written in the vernacular. However, translations for student actors should and ought to uphold similar standards as those merited by the original text. The effort to relax those standards has some negative consequences, of which three, to my mind, seem most apparent.

Firstly, these new translations into the vernacular are sometimes not accurate translations. There seems to be little relationship between the words chosen to the words in the original. Every translation of an original text is a separate work in its own right. Translation is highly specific. Words must translate appropriately. All of the translation must bear some resemblance to the artistic and thematic integrity of the original. This necessitates careful word choice. Translations that emphasize English vernacular or colloquialism quench the mother tongue of all its richness and verisimilitude in favor of readability and familiarity to an English audience that may result in inaccuracies. Words in a translation have to be specific to be effective. If they are not, a high likelihood of mistranslation occurs.

Secondly, vernacular translations destroy the daring and originality implicit in the original text. Plays that are in the canon as literature remain there for some outstanding merit they possess. Perhaps a superior execution of style, profound thematic content, or rich metaphoric use of language; all these fortify a work as dramatic literature. These distinctions must remain in the translation of a text if that text is to be warranted as worthy of the high status of the original. These distinctions are essential if students are to understand the historical significance of the works they are studying. A student shouldn’t admire Chekhov because he simply resides in the canon. A student ought to realize the
greatness of Chekhov for very real, specific qualities that are present in the mind in his or her reading. Those qualities should be there before the student's very nose, right on the page.

Finally, vernacular translations encourage a kind of cultural myopia. If a student cannot recognize some virtue in a text; if it does not at first seem strange to him or her; if it is written in a language s/he hears on the radio or TV, why would that student be inspired to read it? Something being strange, as the best art usually is, doesn’t mean it's bad. Strangeness is what educators are hoping to expose to their students, in order to release them from the everyday world. Great texts, strange texts, convince students to reach beyond themselves. Is this not the fundamental education process? Vernacular texts do not challenge the reader to explore the historic or literary culture outside the one s/he is reading. This is a breach of faith in the idea that true education is multi-cultural, its standards universal. Simplifying texts leave nothing for the student to explore, and therefore deprive him or her of the fecundity of personal growth. This can only ultimately undermine the integrity of all educational efforts, not just in drama.

Jeffrey Marganian is in his final semester as an Honor’s Theatre major at Bridgewater State College, and is intending to pursue graduate school and a career in dramaturgy.

The Forum, Part Two: Now What? A Graduate Student’s Thoughts on Academia

by Jennifer Madden

I am about to enter the job market after spending the last five years attempting to obtain a Ph.D. in that particular circle of hell known as grad school. With the economy in its current condition it seems as though my options are a) look forward to remaining an adjunct for the next twenty years or b) return to graduate school and acquire an MBA. More daunting than the shortage of actual positions is the internal strife facing many theatre departments; departments ripped apart by petty politics and/or slashed by cuts in institutional support. Theatre practitioners and educators aim for careers in college theatre due to both their love of the art form, of teaching, and of course, for financial stability. However, it seems that the rigorous demands of the ‘publish or perish’ mentality encourages a dependence upon obfuscating jargon and keeps us further and further away from uniting theory and practice. In other words, a dismaying tension exists between “skills” courses (acting, voice, and movement) and theoretical/text-based classes.

My friends working in commercial theatre are often bewildered by academia’s seeming condescension towards the practical application of the field they purport to study. On the other side, there is the tendency to view theoretical labor as so much superfluous navel-gazing that serves no real purpose. Why must we privilege one over the other? In my own experience as an adjunct I have witnessed college administrators fail to recognize theatre as a valid discipline; funds are cut, positions axed. Does this explain theatre education’s rejection of practice? If we publish enough books and speak in ever more esoteric language then will we receive respect as a discipline? This is a topic that I chose to write about before I read Linda Potter’s excellent piece “Come Happy, Leave Hungry” in last month’s newsletter, yet I would like to build on the issues she raised.

It seems that the rigorous demands of the ‘publish or perish’ mentality encourages a dependence upon obfuscating jargon and keeps us further and further away from uniting theory and practice.

If we are to train future theatre practitioners should they not be rigorously trained in both theory and practice? The best theatre artists have an understanding of their chosen profession, its history and are able to articulate its place in the larger culture. The health of theatre departments and our future as a discipline depends on these two strands coexisting peacefully and rigorously, while recognizing each other's validity and necessity. The harsh realities of our chosen profession may be daunting but we must remember the joy of teaching, of remaining perennial students ourselves and staying in touch with why we became educators in the first place. A healthy symbiosis between theory and practice built upon a foundation of mutual admiration and respect will strengthen our departments, enrich our students, and ultimately embolden the future of the form.

Jennifer Madden is PhD candidate at Brown University and an adjunct at various colleges in the New England area.
Two Views from North of Boston

A rural Vermont high school senior and a junior examine the role of theatre in their current lives and in their futures.

We often examine the theatre professional or the college student from the point where they are now and look back to see how well they were prepared in secondary school. However, it is rare that we are able to see into the minds of the high school students who are about to enter the world of professional and college theatre. Two rural Vermont students from Mill River Union High School in North Clarendon, a school with a large theatre program and about 750 students, grades seven through twelve, share that point of view. Tiernan Martin, a senior, first shares his view as the student about to move into the college environment.

"As a student in a rural Vermont high school, theatre is of great importance to me. Theatre forces me to draw on my academic knowledge, my athletic ability, my artistic vision, and my general sense of being human. It allows me to explore and compels me to expand. After a long day of school, I can still go into a rehearsal with the energy to learn and push myself artistically, while at the same time releasing my school-day stress.

Living in Rutland, Vermont, it is rare that I see a great performance. This fact forces me to look outside my small-town upbringing. If I pursue theatre, I will have to leave Rutland and go where there is opportunity to immerse myself in the world of theatre. Theatre is like a good set of directions guiding me between high school and college.

My future college experience seems like a nebulous haze with only two certainties: I know that I want a school where I can exchange ideas on a personal basis with the professors, and I want to continue with theatre.

— Tiernan Martin

Ben Aleshire, a junior who is over a year from making the move on to college, gives us a slightly different perspective on the mindset of future theatre majors and professionals.

"I love theater. I have the chance to express myself, to meet people, and to feel the magic and experience the natural high that only the stage can give. As a junior in high school, drama is my focus. Most of my high school life is centered on it. It's both a great opportunity and so much fun that I know I want to continue theater in college. In fact, all the schools I've been looking at are theater-oriented. The only plan I have for my future is to major in theater, and to see where it takes me."

— Ben Aleshire

My theatre work also helps me in my everyday life. An experience that changed my whole perception of acting was watching another actor struggle with a role and then come to an understanding that allowed that actor to grow. The student actor tried over and over to deliver a series of lines, and each time the director stopped him to explain the objective. The actor made excuses as to why he couldn't do what the director was telling him and after a while it began to be more of an endurance test than a rehearsal. However, through the sheer determination and patience of the actor and his director, the character was finally realized. I learned that high quality work happens when a person fails, but strives until he succeeds. This experience taught me a better understanding of work on the stage, at a desk, or in the classroom.

Realistically, I know that my chances of becoming a professional actor a few years down the road are slim. Even though a career in acting may not happen for me, I know I want to pursue a theater major. I'm too infatuated with theater to just quit it after high school.

— Ben Aleshire

A theater major in college is one plausible option for me. My future college experience seems like a nebulous haze with only two certainties: I know that I want a school where I can exchange ideas on a personal basis with the professors, and I want to continue with theatre. As I look at the move from high school to the college stage, one question that comes to mind is what the difference will be between doing theatre for fun and studying theatre as a future career. I also question whether a college graduate can enter the business with a liberal arts degree as opposed to a conservatory degree. The largest question is whether or not the theatre has the atmosphere I want to work in for the rest of my life. I hear that the vast majority of actors are unemployed and I ask myself whether I want to work in such a highly competitive and unstable business. The answer is, probably not. But does that mean I shouldn't pursue theatre as a major in college? These are some of the questions that I am eager to answer as I look toward college and my future.

— Ben Aleshire

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NETC Board Member: A Profile

In an attempt to keep the members informed about the people who lead this organization The NETC News will present biographical sketches of the Board members, featuring a different member each issue. This issue introduces Ann Marie Shea, Chair of the College and University Division of NETC, member of the College of Fellows and Co-planner of the 2003 NETC convention in Providence.

Ann Marie has twice directed Moss Hart-winning shows: The Arkansas Bear, by Aurand Harris, 1990, for Worcester Children’s Theatre, and Brundibar, by Hans Krása and Adolf Hoffmeister, 2000, for Worcester State College and the Worcester Public Schools. She has served NETC as a reviewer for the Moss Hart Award and has been a respondent and member of the selection team for Kennedy Center American College Festival, Region I.

Her education includes an M.A. from The Catholic University of America and a Ph.D. from New York University. Additional studies include work with Shakespeare and Company, Catherine Fitzmaurice, B. H Barry, Marjorie Barstow and Frank Pierce Jones.

Ann Marie is Professor of Theatre at Worcester State College where she is developing curriculum integrating the visual and performing arts, as well as teaching theatre as an integral part of the liberal arts program. At Worcester State College she directs two productions a year. Most recently she directed The Laramie Project (fall, 2003), and she has in progress, Debut Stages, an evening of student-written short plays. Ann Marie is currently striving to develop playwriting at Worcester State College, with Ronan Noone as adjunct professor, and artist-in-residence for the current production. In this regard, she was delighted that WSC student, Jessica Cooper, won second place recognition in the 2004 KCACTF regional festival 10-minute play event.

Ms. Shea organized the Augusto Boal residency and workshop at Worcester State College in 2000. She has presented at various venues—NETC conventions, KCACTF festivals and Association for Theatre in Higher Education conventions—on topics ranging from Theatre of the Oppressed to presentations on the history in theatre. At various medievalist conferences Ann Marie has presented on off-beat treatments of Jeanne d’Arc in obscure dramatic works.

Her recent sabbatical in the spring of 2003 provided opportunity to pursue translation of the first play featuring Jeanne d’Arc as a dramatic character, the 15th century Le Mistère du Siège d’Orléans, an undertaking that required travels to France (for the Orleans’ Joannine fetes), to Rome (to view the manuscript in the Vatican Library), and to Paris and Vienna. The sabbatical also inspired her to return to creative writing. As a self-described, recovering English major, she has been daring to submit original scripts to various outlets as the opportunity arises.

Two Views North of Boston
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Realistically, I know that my chances of becoming a professional actor a few years down the road are slim. I’m only a kid from Vermont, and I know it’s a tough business to enter. Even though a career in acting may not happen for me, I know I want to pursue a theater major. I’m too infatuated with theater to just quit it after high school.

When I think about it, all this is actually pretty far away. But even though I’ve got another year and a half of high school I’ve got to start planning my future now. One of my main obstacles is money; my family doesn’t have the money to send me to college. Although the “college search” process is still a year away, I worry about scholarships, student loans, financial aid, and tuition costs.

I have to admit that I’m also a little intimidated by the prospect of just moving to college. The idea of uprooting to some huge metropolis and living at an arts university with thousands and thousands of other students, half way across the country from my former life is a little nerve-racking. My high school is surrounded by farms; it’s practically on a dirt road. A wire fence is all that separates our parking lot from grazing sheep. Many of my classes have only a handful of students. Going to any college, even a small one, will be a huge leap for me. But even with all that, I can’t wait.”

Tiernan and Ben provide an insight into the vision of the next generation of theatre majors and professionals as they look from a rural Vermont high school at the prospects of a career in the theatre.
Message from the President: You Are Invited to Join Us!

by Tom Mikotowicz

As you probably already know, NETC is a volunteer organization that supports theatre throughout the New England region. We have a board of directors, committee chairs, and divisional members who donate their time, energy, and expertise to helping us fulfill our mission. These volunteers come from the five divisions of theatre: Community, Youth and Children, Secondary, College and University, and Professional. They are directors, actors, writers, designers, technicians, industry employees, and general theatricians, who throughout the year attend quarterly board meetings and special get-togethers to take care of the region's theatre business. Of course, there is much socializing that goes on, networking, and many friendships are made that often last for many years.

Many people aren’t aware that they can become involved with NETC as a volunteer. Our organization is always looking for volunteers to share their expertise and opinions. We have openings on our board of directors and on several committees, including Awards, Membership, Conference, and others. In addition, we always need people to write on theatre and theatrical activities for the NETC News (which you are presently reading), and for the New England Theatre Journal (NETJ), which is distributed world-wide. Once a year, we hold auditions for summer theatres, and once a year we hold our annual conference, both of which require lots of “peoplepower!” With all of these activities, there is much to be done in our organization. Somehow, we do get it done every year and, in fact, we have a lot of fun doing it. NETC has been in business for more than fifty years, and, with the help of our volunteers, we will easily be around for many more years to come!

As for volunteering, in addition to our regular board openings, we have just embarked on a new initiative of “division building,” which means that we are going to expand our board by ten members. We are going to add two members to each of the five divisions to fill out these positions in the secondary, college, community, professional, and children’s theatre areas. Although I have said that there is the benefit of meeting new people and developing friendships, involvement in NETC can also help if you are interested in networking with other professionals from around the region, expanding your theatrical experience and knowledge, or providing service to your profession. Volunteers shouldn’t be afraid of lacking experience and training because, although many of our board members have skills in theatre and arts management, many do not. Although NETC benefits its members, it also offers its volunteers lots of practical experience and training. In NETC, there is always someone there to help you! I know, because I joined the organization many years ago, and, as a result, instantly got to know many theatre people throughout the New England region who have generously shared their expertise with me.

So, whether you have lots of experience or not, we are always interested in anyone, at any level, who is willing to join us as a volunteer! Email me at miko@maine.edu or call 207-299-8550 to speak to me directly about getting involved. You can also contact the NETC office (listed on the back of this newsletter), or, if you know any present board members of NETC, you can speak to one of those fine dedicated people!

High School Theatre Olympiad 2004

The successful High School Theatre Olympiad has become a major part of the NETC Convention in recent years. In 2004 we look to continuing that tradition by making the Olympiad even bigger and better. The Olympiad is a day of workshops, competition and fun for students and teachers alike. It is open to all high schools in New England.

Plans for the Olympiad are being made now and will include many of the events that have become favorites of Olympiad participants and some new events and challenges. Among the events will be the Freestyle Costume Design, the Bard-a-thon, the Dance Decathlon, Power Lighting, Vocal Marathon and the Freestyle Set Design. An exciting new Improv Challenge will set the “stage afire” throughout the Olympiad day. The planning is not done yet! Planners are still working on the Olympiad programming and promise an unforgettable and enriching experience for all participants.

Students will have a chance to meet theatre professionals who will judge each event and give students written feedback on their efforts. Students will also have an opportunity to meet representatives from colleges throughout New England that offer exciting Theatre Programs. Teachers and high school directors will not be left out. Plans are being made to offer, on the day of the Olympiad, special workshops that will encourage, inspire and sharpen their skills as well.

The Olympiad is currently being developed by NETC’s Secondary School Division members Linda Potter and Jeff Watts and they encourage more participants to come on board to help us bring this event to the next level.
College of the Holy Cross: Position Announcement


Design and technical direction for two major theatre productions; coordinate one dance concert; teach course on general design (fall) and lighting design (spring). Department has a full-time assistant technical director.

Application letter, vitae, and three letters of recommendation:

Edward Isser, Acting Chair
Department of Theatre
College of the Holy Cross
1 College Street
Worcester, MA 01610

Holy cross is a Jesuit undergraduate liberal arts college with an enrollment of 2700 located in central Massachusetts that offers a curriculum leading to the Bachelor of Arts degree with majors in 20 fields.

The department is committed to providing students with a comprehensive academic background in theatre with the opportunity to participate in two professionally directed and designed productions each year. The department staff consists of three full-time faculty directors and two part-time faculty that teach courses in dramatic literature, acting, directing and playwriting, two part-time instructors in dance, and Luce scholar in Balinese dance and music, a faculty designer/teacher/technical director, a full-time assistant technical director and a full-time costume designer.

The College is an Equal Opportunity Employer and complies with all Federal and Massachusetts laws concerning Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action in the workplace.

Technical Director Needed

Fenn School Summer Camp is hiring a technical director for summer drama camp. The schedule includes flexible hours from June 12 through July 16. Tech director will be responsible for simple lighting, sound and set design. Sets will be built by the tech director with assistance from wood shop staff and campers. Excellent pay is offered. Contact David Platt, director of Summer Fenn Camp. Email at: dplatt@fenn.org or contact Linda Potter, Drama Camp Director, at lpotter@mail.ab.mec.edu

Seeking Director of Development

Stoneham Theatre, a professional non-profit theatre company 8-miles north of Boston, seeks a Director of Development to join its existing 9-member staff. They produce seven main stage shows, new-works series, youth programs and special events on $1.3M annual budget. An energetic, qualified, motivated individual is needed to oversee and implement all aspects of development, including corporate sponsorships, annual fund approach to individuals, fundraising events and seeking funding through foundation and public grants. Strong organization and computer skills are essential. Candidates should have experience with all aspects of fundraising for a mid-sized to large non-profit organization, including direct approaches, campaign planning, working with volunteer board members and grant writing. Salary with benefits, and a commensurate with experience are offered. Submit resume, references, cover letter to Troy Siebels, Producing Director, Stoneham Theatre, 395 Main Street, Stoneham, MA 02180; or email troy@stonehamtheatre.org

NETC NEWS: CALL FOR ARTICLES!

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

Deadline for upcoming issue: May 15, 2004

Contact Peter Marsh, Vice President of Communications at PMarsh0613@aol.com, call 617-424-9275, or visit us on the web at www.NETConline.org!
**Produce My Show Please!**

Are you looking to be cutting edge? How about offering your students the opportunity to work on a show never before produced in the New England area? Do you have a show you want produced? Well here is your chance!

A new series, “Produce My Show Please!” is now being offered in the NETC News Bulletin. If you have a new piece that you want to see produced email Lisa Antonecchia at the Huntington Theatre Company and she will be happy to feature your information in the News.

The First Featured Show is (Drum roll Please)!... *Heaven in Your Pocket*, a contemporary musical is two acts!

The music and lyrics are by Mark Houston, story and libretto by Mark Houston, Francis J. Cullinan and Dianne M. Sposito. The cast includes 4 females and 2 males. The approximate running time of this production is 2 hours, with an intermission. It is set in a single interior scene.

*Heaven In Your Pocket* follows the journey of the Heavenly Belles, a female singing trio hailing from Heaven, Oklahoma, en route to stardom in Nashville. An unexpected detour to Kansas City plays havoc with their plans and everything is up for grabs. A charming hairdresser, a handsome cowboy and a Miss Fixit complete the cast of characters.

Francis McCullinan, one of the shows librettists, said, “This is an ideal contemporary package for civic and educational theatre venues. It has great appeal to groups from high school age and up, and includes the retirement home crowd!”

He went on to say that, “casting includes actors/singers from post teen through adults in their early fifties; however for college groups the show can work with the two women (age early 40’s) being played by young character actresses.”

*Heaven in Your Pocket* is already having great success, and has been produced in many cities in the Midwest and the south, but the production team is looking to bring it to the New England area, and they are open to talking with anybody who is interested. The team knows that, “the increasing popularity of the Nashville sound makes the musical aspects of the show most appealing.”

This production team has a proven track record and a fierce energy for their piece. Many of you may have been lucky enough to meet Mr. Cullinan at the NETC Convention in Providence, RI, and you know his energy is infectious! So if you are looking to find out more about this piece contact him at fjc340@comcast.net, I am sure this show will get you tapping your toes too!

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**Special Workshop in “Active Script Writing” and Psychodrama Offered**

A special weekend workshop in a new scriptwriting technique that utilizes a psycho dramatic process will be offered on May 1 and 2 at the University of New Hampshire. An introductory workshop in psychodrama will also be offered on Wednesday and Thursday evenings, April 28 and 29.

Conducted by Dr. Eberhard Scheiffele, a board certified psychotherapist, and scholar and David Kaye, Associate Professor of Theatre at the University of New Hampshire, the workshop will offer participants the chance to develop characters and stories through the use of psychodrama. This new technique allows the playwrights to actively experience and explore the world of their creation. “Active Script Writing,” is designed to give the playwright the opportunity to delve deeply into the full spectrum of a character, and to bring out a fullness and clarity that can only be achieved through experience.

Developed by Kaye and Scheiffele, “Active Script Writing” was first presented at the Association of Theatre in Higher Education in 2000 and will be offered this summer at the International Psychodrama and Sociodrama conference in Oxford, England.

Dr. Scheiffele, will also host a two evening introduction to psychodrama workshop. Both workshops are open to the public. Contact David Kaye at djk@unh.edu for workshop fees, exact times and registration.
North Shore Music Theatre Collaborates with Shakespeare & Company to Present Romeo and Juliet

Two of the most innovative leaders in integrating the arts and education join forces

North Shore Music Theatre (NSMT) and Shakespeare & Company (S&Co) have announced a collaboration that will bring Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet to NSMT’s 1800 seat theatre-in-the-round. As part of the S&Co’s Spring Tour, Romeo and Juliet will have a different twist when it arrives in Beverly.

According to NSMT Education Director Marty Johnson, student audiences will see a 90-minute production specifically designed for NSMT’s unique theatre. “Shakespeare & Company will be adding six additional actors to their touring production and NSMT will be designing and building a full set and additional props,” says Johnson. “By working together, we are enhancing the theatrical experience for thousands of students from all over the region.” The actors joining the production are Stephen Anderson, Katie Atkinson, Stephen Libby, Robert Serrell, Sarah Taylor, Brian Weaver, and Tom Wells.

NSMT is committed to providing education-rich programming to students, and the company’s annual presentation of Shakespeare is seen by over 9,000 students every year. “We are very fortunate to be able to tap into the skills and experience of Shakespeare & Company. It’s a partnership that makes a great deal of sense in light of decreased funding for arts organizations and schools,” explains Johnson. “With this collaboration we can continue to make Shakespeare accessible and affordable for all school children.”

Romeo and Juliet will be directed by Kevin Coleman, who also heads S&Co’s Education Program. “North Shore Music Theatre’s expertise in all aspects of design, production and performance promises to take our Romeo and Juliet to a new level. We are especially looking forward to performing for a week in-the-round. It’s a wonderful opportunity for both companies to present something special to students who otherwise would not have an opportunity to experience the works of Shakespeare.”

The joint production will run from March 15–19 for students in Grade 6 and up. For more information on Romeo and Juliet and other NSMT Education Programs please visit www.nsmt.org or call 978-232-7257.

One of the most extensive theatre-in-education programs in the Northeast, Shakespeare & Company’s programs has reached over half a million students since 1978 with innovative performances, workshops, and residencies. Guided by Coleman and Company education artists and teachers, educators continue to develop and fine-tune their programs to enhance and complement curricular activities in elementary, middle, and high schools across the country.

North Shore Music Theatre's award-winning Theatre Arts Academy annually reaches over 100,000 students with their extensive arts education programs and youth performances. The theatre's Youth Performance Academy attracts thousands of students from 4-18 years old who are interested in exploring the world of music, theatre and dance and honing their craft. In 2003, NSMT's Youth Performance Academy was awarded the Junior Theater Festival Outstanding Achievement: Musical Performance for its moving performance of Godspell, JR. With partnerships with Music Theatre International (MTI) and Disney Theatricals, NSMT's Theatre Arts Academy has become the model for schools and organizations around the country and is one of the region's leading providers of theatre arts and education programs.

Weston Playhouse Announces its Season

Weston Playhouse, a summer theatre since 1937, announced the ’04 summer main stage season. The Company will open on June 24 through July 3 with Tartuffe by Molière, translated by Richard Wilbur. The season will continue on July 8–31 with The Full Monty, book by Terrence McNally and music and lyrics by David Yazbek. On August 5–21 the Company will present Big River with a book by William Hauptman and music by Roger Miller. A story of truth and myth, The Drawer Boy by Michael Healy will be presented on August 26–September 5

Other Stages, intimate performances in alternative spaces, will open on June 30–July 18 with Topdog/Underdog by Suzan-Lori Parks. The Pulitzer Prize-winning drama will be presented at the Weston Rod and Gun Club, and August 12–29 will see Swingtime Canteen by Bond, Repicci & Busch, a 40’s musical revue, also at the Weston Rod and Gun Club.

Weston’s fall production and tour at the playhouse on Oct. 14–16 and on tour Oct. 18–Nov. 3 will be Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead by Tom Stoppard.
Who’s Who at NETC

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Tom Mikotowicz, President, University of Maine
Russell Swift, Executive Vice President, Emerson College
Jim Quinn, Vice President for Administration and Finance and Clerk of the Corporation, Bridgewater State College
Peter Marsh, Vice President for Communication and Development, Mill River Union School
Suzanne Ramirez, Executive Secretary, Bridgewater State College
Hank Zappala, NETC Management, Emerson College
Linda Murphy Sutherland, Past President, Huntington Theatre Company

DIVISION DIRECTORS
College/University Theatre Division
Anne Marie Shea, Chair, Worcester State College
Luke Sutherland, Community College of Rhode Island

Secondary School Theatre Division
Linda Potter, Chair, Blanchard Memorial School
David Kaye, University of New Hampshire
Jeffrey Watts, Lawrence High School

Youth Theatre Division
Marty Johnson, North Shore Music Theatre
Nina Schuessler, Harwich Junior Theatre
Ron Jones, freelance actor/director

Professional Theatre Division
Lisa Antonecchia, Huntington Theatre Company
Dana Knox, Broadway in Boston

Community Theatre Division
Charles Emmons, New Hampshire Community Theatre Association
Jennifer Howard, Chair, Burlington Players, Inc.

Directors-At-Large
Kevin Russell, Arts Boston
Tim Fitzgerald, Newton Country Players

COMMITTEE CHAIRS
Summer Theatre Auditions
Joseph Juliano, Jr., Hamden Public Schools

2003 Providence Convention
Jeffrey Watts, Lawrence High School
Carol Korry, playwright
Wil Kilroy, University of Southern Maine

NETC/New England Theatre Journal
Stuart Hecht, Boston College

Long Range Strategic Plan
Lisa Antonecchia, Huntington Theatre Company
Kevin Russell, Arts Boston

College of Fellows, Dean
Sigurd Jensen, Emeritus, Southern Connecticut State University

Annual Excellence in Theatre Awards
TBA

Moss Hart Awards
Richard Rousseau, Colonial Theatre

John Gassner Memorial Playwriting Award
Steven Capra, freelance writer, director

Aurand Harris Memorial Playwriting Award
Jay DiPrima, Mickey Dude Productions

Marie Phillips Service to NETC Award
Bevie Lord, Performing Arts Academy at the Orpheum

Leonidas A. Nickole Theatre Educator of the Year Award
Ann Marie Shea, Worcester State College

Constitution and By-Laws
Sigurd Jensen, Emeritus, Southern Connecticut State University

Nominating Chair
Russell Swift, Emerson College

NETC Newsletter
Peter Marsh, Mill River Union High School

AACT Liaison
Patricia White, Region I Representative

KCACTF Region 1 Liaison
Wil Kilroy, University of Southern Maine