



**STAGE
DIRECTORS AND
CHOREOGRAPHERS
SOCIETY**

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your source for important notifications of all Union matters

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THE NEXT THREE YEARS

News from the **President** by KAREN AZENBERG

One year later. Three years later. The next three years.

In the fall of 2008 SDC adopted a three-year plan organized around the Union's core work: contracts, communications, and people. This tool for business planning was somewhat foreign for many of us on the SDC Executive Board, but it has proven to be a valuable device in not only setting short and long-term goals, but keeping those goals at the fore and managing the business of the Union in a proactive and not just reactive way. In this plan we challenged both the Board and the Membership to be strategic in considering the priorities of the Union, and we asked ourselves to be open and inclusive in thinking about what was needed to accomplish our goals. The 50th Anniversary was central to the launching of many of the newer aspects of the plan and though the occasion will always be remembered for its recognition of our past, it was also the beginning of a new path toward our future.

I recently reread our 50th Anniversary *Journal*. (Once again I offer my sincere gratitude to **John Dillon** for his exceptional editorial skills.) In Executive Director Laura Penn's remarks at the conclusion of the publication, she summarized what we viewed as the critical areas, the core of our three-year plan, on which we must focus our attention moving forward.

- **Contracts** – The economic challenges facing our employers have to be recognized and balanced with the need for equitable wages and benefits for our Members throughout their careers (Not to mention the changing climate of the industry in respect to media, property rights, and the people).
- **People** - The work of the Union will always be to help support and serve our Members, but we also need to inspire Directors and Choreographers to serve SDC and steward the next generation of artists and Union leaders.

- **Communication** – The continued need to be vocal advocates for our Members and also for the industry as a whole. Recognizing our national identity as well as our local roots.

It sounded great and, as Laura concluded, "Challenging? Yes. Simple? No. Exciting? Absolutely." At the time we were unsure how advancement might manifest but what a difference another year makes.

As you read this issue of your newsletter, I believe you will find numerous ways in which the Union is addressing our shared future – whether it be the inaugural meeting of the Northeast and Southwest Regional Representative Nominating Committees or the passage of the By-laws amendments or the Business Representatives recent travels to Colorado – you will also read about our advocacy efforts with our fellow unions and guilds, our continued advancement in our Tier contracts and, of course, updates on the Health Fund.

We continue to manage the Health Fund carefully in partnership with management trustees. While some signs have been encouraging, we remain vigilant in our oversight. The short-term good news is that we will not see an increase in eligibility this year or additional plan modifications. However, the Funds remain stressed. We believe we must take the coming months to more deeply analyze how we can create a sustainable benefit for Members.

With the negotiation of the ANTC agreement this spring the contract negotiation "cycle" begins again and as we prepare a team for the Broadway talks (our contract expires August 31, 2011) I realize that the next three year plan should begin to be formulated taking us forward to 2014. Challenging? Yes. Simple? No. Exciting? Absolutely!

I hope you enjoy this edition of your newsletter.

Onward!

ADVOCACY. ACTIVISM.

by LAURA PENN, Executive Director

ADVOCACY and ACTIVISM – right now. Take a minute to understand and respond to the myriad of issues swirling about our heads. If efforts to reduce or eliminate the NEA are successful, and if a few states are able to limit the collective bargaining powers of workers, your livelihood will be adversely impacted.

You benefit each and every day from the support the NEA distributes across the country, including to our own SDC Foundation. Dramatic cuts to the NEA (26%) made it through the House of Representatives by a mere eight votes. There are members in the Senate who now support this reduction and believe that it does not go far enough.

Wisconsin may seem miles away to some of you but it's not. As SDC Executive Board member **Ethan McSweeney** so eloquently stated, "If they can take away the right to collective bargaining from municipal workers and teachers, imagine how easily it will be taken away from artists."

The following link sends you to the **Americans for the Arts Action Alert Center**. Please write to your elected officials and your local papers. Make your voice heard in support of the NEA. Click [here](#).

SDC has joined with our fellow Theatrical Unions here in New York to support the workers of Wisconsin. Below is a statement released last week. Post it on your Facebook page, keep in touch through the SDC website and Facebook page. And if you want more information on how to get involved follow this link to the **AFL-CIO's We Are One**. Click [here](#).

“

If they can take away the right to collective bargaining from municipal workers and teachers, imagine how easily it will be taken away from artists.”

Ethan McSweeney

Director, SDC Executive Board Treasurer



COBUG Statement of Solidarity with WI Workers

The Coalition of Broadway Unions and Guilds (COBUG) hereby declares its support of and solidarity with the public sector unions of Wisconsin who have come under attack by the Governor of that state.

It is one thing to ask for givebacks from labor to help balance the budget in the form of wage cuts and higher contributions to sustain welfare and pension plans. But to aim at the fundamental rights of trade unions to collectively bargain over working conditions, to collect dues, to represent their members – these actions are nothing less than an all out assault against the basic underpinnings of the labor movement.

COBUG urges all of its members to stand by their Wisconsin sisters and brothers by speaking out against the legislative measures proposed by Governor Walker. We must stand together to rebuff this onslaught against organized labor – whether public or private. The right of all trade unions to legitimately negotiate and represent their members is at stake.

The members of COBUG have labor contracts or work for or with the Broadway League. COBUG was established to strengthen the position of Unions and Guilds within the industry, to participate in decision making that affects Broadway and the art and craft of theatre at large, and to educate the broader community about the collective role Coalition members play in keeping our industry vibrant and healthy.

Member Organizations

Actors' Equity Association	IATSE Local One (Stagehands)	IATSE Local USA 829 (United Scenic Artists)
American Federation of Musicians	IATSE Local 306 (Ushers and Ticket Takers)	Local 30 (Operating Engineers)
American Guild of Musical Artists	IATSE Local 751 (Ticket Sellers)	Local 802 (American Federation of Musicians)
Association of Theatrical Press Agents and Managers (ATPAM)	IATSE Local 764 (Wardrobe)	SEIU Local 32BJ (Theatre Division)
Dramatists Guild of America	IATSE 798 (Make-up and Hair)	Stage Directors and Choreographers Society
International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees		IBT Local 817 (Theatrical Teamsters)

STRETCHING INTO OPERA

by GRETCHEN M. MICHELFELD, Associate Director of Member Services



Photo: John Gary Brown



Photo: William Gibson

In December, SDC and SDCF welcomed special guests Pamela Berlin and Beth Greenberg for a DCN panel about working in opera. I was honored to moderate the discussion, a large excerpt of which we've reproduced here.

What were your early experiences with opera?

BETH: As a child I discovered my passion for music and that I liked vocal music best -- both opera and musical theatre. This was my most joyous childhood experience, and that led me to perform and study music which led to studying theatre, which led to opera. That's the short story.

PAM: I had no experience of opera growing up. I played the violin, and classical music was very important in our home, but I really did not know the opera world or have any interest in it as a child, so I came to opera sort of through the back door. Beth and I are a good combination here because our backgrounds are very different and our experience in opera I think is very different. The vast majority of what I do is still theatre and I've only come to opera in the last 20 years, in large part because of my love of music. I learn the operas as I go. I'm not steeped in the repertory the way that Beth is, although I've certainly been trying to educate myself.

It seems like Pam lives in the world of theatre and visits opera, and Beth lives in the world of opera and visits theatre – is that fair to say?

BETH: That's fair to say. Then I guess a follow-up question is: "What's the difference?" That's something people are still fighting over. Pam was just talking about a production of Leonard Bernstein's *Mass* that she directed. That's a very good springboard because *Mass* was written about 40 years ago, yet no one has figured out what to call it because it's a new hybrid of many different styles. I'd love to hear Pam's thoughts about it.

PAM: I did it down in Norfolk, Virginia with the Virginia Symphony Orchestra, and it's true that trying to describe what it is or what genre it belongs to is almost impossible. Some people call *Mass* a musical theatre piece, some people call it an opera. It was a truly unique experience directing it because it's such a unique piece; a very wonderful and strange piece. In order for *Mass* to really be successful you need both legit opera singers and musical theatre performers. So the cast we ended up with had 18 principal singers in addition to the Celebrant, who really leads you through the service (it's a Catholic mass), a 100-member chorus, a 40-member children's chorus, and then the full symphony orchestra onstage. I also really wanted it to be a very physical production, so we had 8 dancers who were totally incorporated into the piece. What was really interesting was that it turned out to be this amazing love fest. The opera singers loved mingling with these musical theatre people and vice versa. *Mass* is a piece that truly defies compartmentalization it into one genre or another. And in truth, when it first came out the critics didn't know what to do with it and it was absolutely maligned by so many people. I think it was ahead of its time.

BETH: People are more open-minded now and willing to accept a work on its own terms. I think that's the key. I do a lot of work

with living composers who blend many different styles. One of the big differences between working in opera versus musical theatre is singing style. Opera singers train to sing unamplified, so volume is a big requirement. American opera houses often have over 2000 seats and works are still performed unamplified, with singers singing over big orchestras. But though the vocal demands of opera might be more extreme than those of musical theatre, equal attention is paid to the acting part of a performance. And opera singers are very game and enjoy the acting challenge as well.

How do you approach a work differently given the difference in scale?

PAM: I love the opportunity to work on a huge scale because most of the time in theatre I'm working on a much smaller scale, so it's great to be able to flex those muscles. But I think the thing that really got me hyperventilating initially was facing these 50 member choruses on chorus rehearsal night! I'd never had to deal with something on that scale. But, believe it or not, even though the worlds are in many ways very different, I find that in rehearsal my approach is not that different. You don't have a lot of time, but at the first rehearsal I ask the company to supply a libretto without the music, in other words as a script, so that we can sit and do a read-through. Needless to say sometimes the singers are incredibly uncomfortable doing that, but we talk about character, we talk about relationships. Even taking three hours to go through and talk character, relationships, history, back story, really serves you in good stead when you have to start getting up on your feet.

BETH: I find that the work tells you what to do and how to stage it, and its scale is certainly a part of this mix. I start with the text. I look for character and story; situations and back story, and ask a gazillion questions of myself and the cast. For me that's always the starting point. Then I look for the images and movement I can create that will support my interpretation of the story.

PAM: Quite often I have to make a choice about whether I am going to say yes to an offer that includes a rented set because companies cannot afford brand new productions of everything. So you get a call; we're doing a production of [name of opera] and you know that the set has been around the block and they're using very old and tired costumes, and then you have to make a choice. There have been times when I've said to myself this is an opportunity to do *Rigoletto* or *Lucia*... and I will say yes because it's an opportunity to work on this opera even though the sets and costumes are a huge compromise. The draw is the opportunity to live inside that music. And there have been times when I have to say no to something because it is an opera for which I have a very strong vision that I simply cannot compromise.

I'm wondering also about casting, about how much power you have as directors.

PAM: Zilch. Another huge compromise that's at the top of the list.

BETH: Casting directors might ask for some input, or if you have any special business that you'd like to accomplish in your staging, but usually operas will be cast years ahead of time, possibly long before we are hired.

PAM: I will also say something blasphemous – I can read music, but there are stage directors in opera who don't read music. You can do that. It is possible. You can love the music. I think it helps tremendously to be able to read music, but it is not absolutely requisite.

BETH: But I think you have to be musically sensitive if you're going to be in the opera world, even if you can't read music or have never played a single note on any instrument. You must be able to connect with and react to the music which sometimes gives you even more information than the text.

PAM: You have to manage your time to be able to get from the first rehearsal to opening night. And the other thing we in the theatre are not accustomed to is the fact that in the last week opera rehearses less and less. They have to take care of their voices and they have to take care of their health so suddenly they're not rehearsing the night before you open and they're only rehearsing at night in that last week. The first couple of times it just absolutely drove me nuts, but that's the way it is.

What are the challenges of working on a new opera and are they similar to the challenges of working on a new play or musical?

BETH: It depends on what that opera has already gone through and where it is when you're working on it. Workshops are one thing, but I think it's important for the work to be quite finished to avoid rewriting during the rehearsal process. I see a lot of nervous people who are more nervous with new productions because there's so much at stake, and the pressure is on. At the same time I've seen a lot of unnecessary rewriting during final rehearsals, and that never helps the product. My best advice is to have something "ready to go" for its premiere.

What have your career trajectories been? How did you get your first opera job?

PAM: I had done a few little things, and then I had an assistant on a play who wanted to learn more about theatre because she came from the opera world. And as soon as I found out that her background was opera I said, "you know I'm really interested in trying to find a way into opera." And she said, "well, a friend of mine is just taking over an opera company in Salt Lake City. I could put you in touch." So my first opera was at the Utah Opera. I met with the artistic director and she was very interested in getting some theatre directors involved. So that was it. It was serendipity. But you should talk to Beth...

BETH: I got my first "real" opera job at City Opera because I spoke German, and the then director of the company, Christopher Keene, was interested in doing that repertoire. At City Opera I directed a couple of revivals before I directed my own mainstage work. But before arriving at Lincoln Center, I had worked on some amazing projects with Music-Theatre Group here in New York, in different production slots. In 1988 Diane Wondisford hired me to run the sound board on a new production by the young Julie Taymor and Elliot Goldenthal called *Juan Darien*. I was so lucky to collaborate with such brilliant colleagues. Now, looking back, I have to again say that my passion for music always carried me through. After I completed my university studies, I received a Fulbright and went to Germany to study theatre. I was an intern to the great director Gotz Friedrich in Berlin and that started my professional career. In terms of breaking into the business, identify the directors whose work you admire, contact them and ask to observe them. Then network, meet people, and get a "foot in the door" somewhere. Take on some small pieces -- you never know what relationships you will start in these situations. Work always brings work. Develop your skill sets and become the specialist in something you have a particular passion for.

PAM: In my experience it's all been networking and word of mouth exclusively. For whatever reason I find they often call me and say, "We're doing something where text is really important so we thought of you..."

BETH: Develop an identity that's really unique and then you'll become the go-to person. And do that by taking the small jobs, doing your best work, and developing good relationships with colleagues. That will always serve you. Sometimes the critics are helpful in that they review small shows. *The New York Times* has been very good for opera people in New York City, by reviewing small productions and even workshops of new pieces. Also, if you direct something high concept, that will sometimes attract media and get your name out there. I directed a site-specific production of Puccini's *Il Tabarro* aboard an oil tanker moored in Red Hook, Brooklyn. That brought considerable attention. But more important to me was the challenge to direct a classic in a new and unusual way. And that's what we directors thrive on -- new challenges. My best advice: go for them!

UPCOMING ANTC NEGOTIATIONS

by RANDY ANDERSON, Business Representative

The Agreement between SDC and The Association of Non-Profit Theatre Companies (ANTC) will expire on June 30, 2011. Member theatres of ANTC are: Classic Stage Company, MCC Theater, The Naked Angels, New Group, Primary Stages, Vineyard Theatre Company, Women's Project, and York Theatre Company. These vibrant theatre companies provide an essential piece of New York City's cultural landscape. SDC has enjoyed a great working relationship with these bargaining partners and over the past decade we've worked together to build a strong and equitable agreement. We are currently assembling the negotiating committee, so stay tuned for updates.



Members at the November 2010 Annual Membership Meeting in NYC

THE **BY-LAWS** REFERENDUM: **WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU**

by BARBARA WOLKOFF, Director of Member Services

As you know by now, the By-laws referendum has passed. The process leading to this referendum was a long and rigorous one. The By-laws Committee – Chair **Doug Hughes**, **Marcia Milgrom Dodge**, **Sharon Ott** and **Lisa Peterson** – with the assistance of **Walter Bobbie**, **Edie Cowan**, **Sue Lawless**, **Oz Scott**, President **Karen Azenberg**, the 2010 Nominating Committee as well as staff and Counsel, **Ronald Shechtman**, focused their examination of the laws governing the election of the Executive Board. Their goal was to ensure that the Board would be stronger and remain representative of the Membership in the years to come. The referendum had two parts: the first related to election procedures, size and term limits of the Executive Board, the second regarding the authority to ratify Collectively Bargained Agreements.

ELECTIONS AND THE BOARD

The Executive Board will increase from 30 members to 34 members. This increase will occur over the next three years— incrementally adding Board Members to ensure that the number of Board Members rotating off the Board in any given year will remain stable. Currently, Members elected to the Executive Board serve three-year terms with a consecutive term limit of four terms. Members will continue to serve three-year terms but will be limited to three consecutive terms. This shift will allow for greater diversity on the Board.

Every election begins with nominations. This process is a long and intense one. To ensure that the Nominating Committee has enough time to adequately vet the candidates for the slate, the Committee will now be formed no later than April 30th. Previously, this Committee was formed in the third week of May, which made it a race to bring the Election slate to the Executive Board in June (as required in the By-laws).

With an increased focus on Regional representation, Regional Nominating Committees are being formed to vet and put forth the Regional Representative nominees for the slate. This shift ensures that the best candidates to represent a region are found by the Members who live in and know their region. The Regional Presence Committee (Chair **Larry Carpenter**, **Sheldon Epps**, **Michael John Garces**, **David Ira Goldstein**, **Linda Hartzel**, **Amy Morton**, **Sharon Ott** and **Oz Scott**) worked tirelessly to determine the definition of the regions and continue their work on defining the specific responsibilities of the Regional Representatives. A map of the Regions is available on SDC's website.

The nominating process has already begun for the 2011 elections. Representatives from the Northeast and Southwest will be on this year's slate. The election ballot will delineate the Regional candidates for clarity in voting.

RATIFICATION OF COLLECTIVELY BARGAINED AGREEMENTS (CBAs)

Prior to the referendum, the ratification by the Membership of CBAs occurred at the Annual or Semi-Annual Membership Meetings. This often delayed enforcement of newly negotiated terms. For example, if negotiations for an Agreement were completed in June (the terms of which would be effective July 1st), the Agreement would not be ratified until November. In this example, a Member with a contract after July 1st may have to wait until the November ratification to receive the improved terms negotiated in the Agreement.

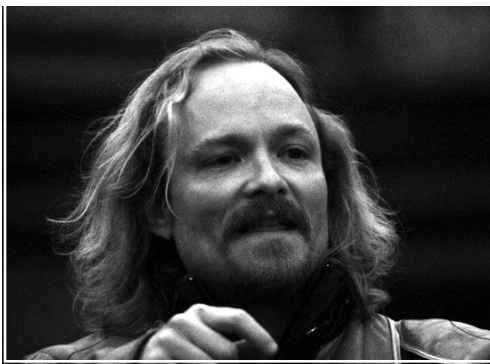
The By-laws change allows negotiated Agreements to be ratified first by the Negotiating Committee itself, and then by the Executive Board requiring a 2/3 vote. Should the Executive Board vote not receive a 2/3 majority, the ratification will be submitted within 30 days to those Members who have worked under the Agreement in the preceding three years. This change will allow all Members to receive the benefit of hard won increases in a timely fashion.

Finally, the referendum allowed the By-laws to be changed to accurately reflect the Union's name (from SSDC to SDC).

It takes a village to accomplish the fine work done by these Committees and all the Union's Committees. Board Member **Edie Cowan** (who has chaired more than a few committees around here!) reminds us that "serving on the Nominating Committee is one of the most important jobs that our Union has." When President **Karen Azenberg** calls for Nominating Committee members at the Semi-Membership Meeting (April 11, 2011 at 6 p.m.) raise your hand.

Likewise we depend on our Members to serve on the Teller's Committee. Edie would like you to remember,

"We have always counted our ballots in-house, and we rely on our Members to volunteer. To insure fairness, our By-laws call for three Members to be present during the counting process: one Board Member, one from the Nominating Committee and one at-large Member. Usually the counting process takes three or four days with morning and afternoon sessions of no more than three hours each. The staff accommodates Members' availability when scheduling and always provides snacks or lunch. Please consider volunteering for one or both of these committees. It's a fantastic way to meet your fellow SDC Members and perform a vital service to your Union at the same time."



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

GUY ROBERTS *Renaissance Man*

by EVAN SHOEMAKE, Business Representative

I can, in no way, claim to have a strong working knowledge of or proficiency with the works of Shakespeare. I know the basics, the highlights, and can sometimes place a quote or two. For example, I know that all the world's a stage where I question whether to be or not to be and wonder if this IS a dagger I see before me. That said, being surrounded by Shakespeare artists/interpreters/presenters/enthusiasts is a fascinating experience. One feels (simultaneously) energetic, deficient and awestruck. These practitioners are enthusiastic about, devoted to and driven by the words of Shakespeare, and **Guy Roberts** is no exception. To be honest, had I not had the pleasure of attending the 2011 Shakespeare Theatre Association (STA) conference in January, **Guy Roberts** may have been another name I occasionally ran across in our database but never knew anything about and you would not be meeting him now yourself. But because the SDC has committed to extending itself into previously rarely visited cities, I got to meet and learn more about Guy Roberts, an SDC Member making his career in the world of Shakespeare.

Guy serves as the Artistic Director of the Prague Shakespeare Festival as well as the Mermaid Theatre Company in the U.S. These are only two of the various hats he wears. Like many of his contemporaries and colleagues, he is responsible for directing, acting, choreographing fight sequences, arranging co-productions with other companies (his current project is with the Classical Theatre Company in Houston), organizing travel for his resident company, and fundraising, among other duties. It seems almost too much for one person to handle, but Guy takes it in stride. "I have an advantage because there's a great tradition that can be traced all the way back to Shakespeare's own company of actor-managers successfully running the show. The triumphs and defeats of those past artistic leaders is wonderfully instructive. Starting an English-language Shakespeare company in the Czech Republic is the definition of madness. It is something you do for love, not money." He offers some insight, though, to his own success: "The key is to find people who believe in the theatre's vision. The hard part is making sure everyone in that 'vision boat' wants to row the same way! It is a continual balancing act, but the short term goals become more manageable if you all have the same long term goals."

One of Guy's long term goals is to build upon his current "mini Bridge project" making cultural exchange between the Prague Shakespeare Festival and an American theatre company an ongoing tradition. For the upcoming productions of *King Lear* and *As*

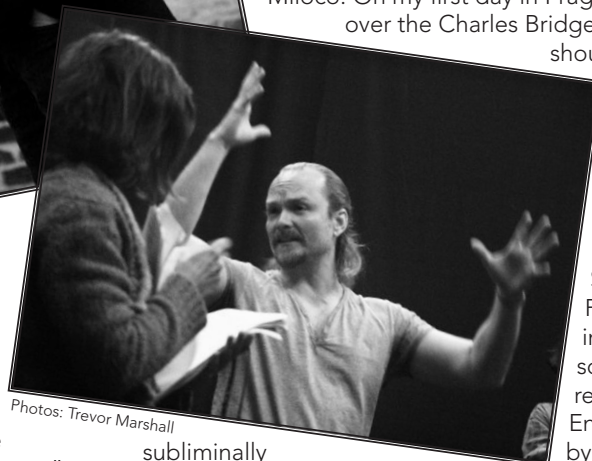
You Like It, Guy and his resident company of actors will join with members of Houston's Classical Theatre Company to rehearse and perform the shows in Texas. Then everyone will hop across the pond and remount the shows in the Czech Republic. Though it is a massive undertaking, Guy believes it's worth it. "In America we sweat and bleed and kill ourselves creating productions that have the shortest of shelf lives. The European repertory tradition allows productions to develop, sometimes over years. I want to have an ongoing dialogue with other companies so these projects can continue to mature, complimented by the exposure to new ideas and sensibilities. The CTC partnership is the first step."

So, what leads a native Texan to uproot himself and move halfway across the world to set up a Shakespeare Festival in a country whose language he did not speak? "Well, I love a country that elects a playwright as its President as soon as it emerges from communism. In fact, there is a wonderful story, perhaps apocryphal, that one of the first things (Vaclav) Havel did after his election was hire his theatrical lighting designer friends to design the lights for Prague Castle and the city of Prague. I hope it's a true story and if it's not I don't even want to know!" says Roberts.

Certainly there was more than the gorgeously lit city that led Roberts to head to the Czech Republic? "Oh, of course. While I was Artistic Director of the Austin Shakespeare Festival I received a grant to direct and produce *Macbeth* with a Czech company, Divadlo Miloco. On my first day in Prague, as I was walking over the Charles Bridge, I said to myself 'I really should move to Europe and start a Shakespeare company, and if I don't do it now I never will.'"

But an English-speaking Shakespeare Festival in Prague? "Prague has an incredibly vibrant theatre scene coupled with a great respect for Shakespeare. Encouraged perhaps by my Czech ancestry, I be now." Roberts' instincts seem to be correct because the festival's audiences are continually growing, PSF is entering its fourth season and they recently sold out every performance of *Romeo and Juliet*. Plus, as Guy notes, "Everyone wants to learn English; they're studying it in school so what better way to learn it than from Shakespeare?"

There are as many approaches to tackling a Shakespeare play as there are plays in the canon, thirty-six or thirty-seven, depending on whom you ask. Guy's directorial approach, as he puts it, is very text



Photos: Trevor Marshall

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It's such an exciting time to be a part of the Shakespeare community. There's so much inspiring work and so many discoveries happening, with Shakespeare theatres, literally all over the world.”

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based. “I place enormous emphasis on the verse with my actors. I also love the tradition of wrestling in the rehearsal hall with the same challenges that have confronted centuries of other artists.” Elaborating on his method of directing Shakespeare, Guy adds, “I try to remove myself as much as possible. I want audience members to leave the theatre and feel like they understand something about Shakespeare, not about me.”

In recognition of or homage to those who have tackled the plays before him, Guy says “Before I begin rehearsal I do extensive research on production history, on how the plays have appeared to audiences in previous productions, so I feel like when I go into rehearsal I have a strong context. There have been so many amazing, smart theatre artists who have worked on these plays, I owe it to myself and my audience, to find out what made those productions successful.”

Without a doubt Guy Roberts has vision and is living up to the expectation and goals he set for himself that first day walking across the bridge in Prague. “It's such an exciting time to be a part of the Shakespeare community. There's so much inspiring work and so many discoveries happening, with Shakespeare theatres, literally all over the world. I feel privileged to be part of this community and contributing in some small way in Prague.” Though his festival is still developing and growing, and Guy himself is continually expanding his creative vision, the case could be made that currently, the world is his stage but he is more than just a mere player.

Epilogue

Some quick tidbits about Guy...

His favorite Shakespeare character to play:

“The clichéd, but true, answer has to be Hamlet. There is so much in the part you could play it every year for the rest of your life and still be making new discoveries.”

Favorite Shakespeare play to direct:

“I'm hoping my favorite play to direct will be *As You Like It* or *King Lear* because I'm about to begin rehearsals for both of them!”

Guy is Houston born and raised but currently splits his time between Houston and Prague. He has traveled and taught extensively including at schools in New York, Boston, Texas and Europe.

He also conducts Shakespeare Leadership workshops for Sigma Breakthrough Technologies, Inc, training corporate executives and managers in the art of leadership using essential Shakespearean lessons as a model for dealing with modern-day corporate challenges.

WESTERN ROUNDUP

by EVAN SHOEMAKE, Business Representative

For this Appalachian-bred Southerner, who only thought he knew what mountains were, visiting the gorgeously majestic state of Colorado was a true education in elevation. I am still not certain what the writer meant when he said Rocky Mountain High or if it could be the cause for the kindness exhibited by everyone I encountered in Denver and Boulder, but there is no question Colorado was an education.

All kidding aside, I recently had the pleasure of travelling to Colorado, visiting both Denver and Boulder. Along with former SDC Contract Associate Kristy Cummings, we made our way west to attend and lead a roundtable discussion at the Shakespeare Theatre Association (STA) Conference held on the campus of the University of Colorado/Boulder in the facilities of Colorado Shakespeare. Over the course of our (too short) trip we had the opportunity to take a tour of the incredible Denver Center Theatre facilities and sit in on a discussion led by Artistic Director and SDC member **Kent Thompson**. During our brief hours in Denver we also got to sit down and spend some time with Executive Board Member **Wendy Goldberg** (and her adorable son, Max!), **Evan Cabnet**, **Gavin Cameron-Webb**, and Sabin Epstein, who, interestingly worked in the (S)SDC office under the guidance of Mildred Traube!

Once we arrived in Boulder, and my sinus cavity began its slow decline, we were greeted by an intimate group of STA conference attendees. Included in the mix of Shakespeare enthusiasts and experts were SDC Members **Stephen Burdman**, **Bruce Hostetler**, **Harland Meltzer**, **Geoff Kent**, **Guy Roberts** and **Jay Paul Skelton**. We even had the benefit of running into another Member, **Jane Page**, while sitting in the hotel lobby! There may have even been more Members in attendance that we were unable to speak with and if we missed you, our sincere apologies. Since we were at the conference simply to listen, observe and learn we kept a fairly low profile.

The conference was incredibly insightful and both Kristy and I walked away knowing so much more than we knew when we arrived and we also walked away with a host of questions. How many plays ARE there in the Shakespeare canon and which ones seem to get left off the list? There is such a world of diversity on display in the Shakespeare Festival/Theater community, one that we would not have assumed existed based solely on the fact that they share a common inspiration but hearing from those in attendance and sharing in their experience only served to enlighten us further to the work that our members do in this field. Kristy and I were extremely happy to be present at the conference and were even more excited by the attendance at our breakout session and the questions that were posed and discussion that was sparked.

All in all, our trip to Colorado was exhilarating. It was a joy to meet and spend time with so many Members in such a concentrated space and it was a remarkable experience being ensconced in the world of Shakespeare theatres and their staffs. We extend a warm thank you to everyone who aided us with this trip and look forward to the next one!



SDC STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS FOUNDATION

ARTISTIC LEADERSHIP AND A ONE-ON-ONE WITH TONY TACCONE

by ELLEN RUSCONI, SDCF Director of Programs

This season, as we explore the topic of Artistic Leadership in our revived One-on-One Conversation series, we have been fortunate to have a variety of Directors and Choreographers as guests, many of whom helm theatres outside of New York, including Jonathan Moscone, Michael Grandage, and, most recently, Tony Taccone. Next up will be a conversation between David Cromer and Michael Halberstam.

As always, we audio-record these conversations for future podcast on our archives, SDCF Masters of the Stage, and we've been working with American Theatre Wing to make these programs available on their web site as close to the event as possible.



Most recently, our December One-on-One Conversation with Rob Ashford and Michael Grandage was added to our archives. Next up, scheduled to be available online on March 10, was my January 17 conversation with Tony Taccone in New

York. Tony spoke about a wide range of topics - his career trajectory, influential moments, working with writers, his foray into playwriting - in front of an audience of 72 at the Beckett Theatre. The following are excerpts, and I hope by reading, you'll be encouraged to visit our archives and listen to these recent conversations.

TOP: Tony Taccone ABOVE: Rob Ashford and Michael Grandage

"I would say one of the biggest differences about my generation growing up versus the generation that's come after us is that we were not burdened by the word 'career'. We were 60's people so we came into the work with the idea that we were cultural workers. We were not careerists. We were not doing this for some 'resume building'. We were doing it because we felt like the work was the place where we could have a dialogue with the world about what was going on..."

"My recollections of college were about embracing life and the world and thinking. Thinking was celebrated as a feature of one's existence. I mean thinking in an active way, and it's actually influenced my work. Many actors are taught how not to think - you want to be feeling, and I think that's a huge mistake."

(At Eureka) "An arsonist was out to get us because we were staging a play called The Jail Diary of Albie Sachs about a Jewish communist anti-apartheid lawyer who was about to go on a speaking engagement in the United States. These vigilantes called us up and said you don't know us, but we're going to get you. We're like, dude, we can't even get people to come to our theatre. Yeah, right."

These people came to the 1st preview of the show, they hid in the back of the stage, and they wired the place up and they blew it up. It was a professional job. All the questions about is theatre meaningful? Does anybody care? *Public utterance matters.*"

This podcast will be available online at AmericanTheatreWing.org on March 10.

HEALTH UPDATE

by JOHN EVERSON
Pension and Health Funds Administrator

April 1st marks the beginning of a new eligibility period for the SDC-League Health Fund. If you are eligible for benefits for the upcoming six-month period, you should have received your notice by now from the Fund Office. If you believe that you are eligible, but have not received notification, please give us a call at 212-869-8129.

Looking back to the July-December 2010 contribution cycle, if employer contributions met or exceeded \$1,100, you will be entitled to six months of eligibility from April 1st through September 30, 2011. If contributions exceed \$2,200 (double the minimum), you will be entitled to a full year of benefits. If contributions made on your behalf in a contribution period exceed \$1,100 but do not reach \$2,200, you may apply the excess to the next period to help meet the minimum eligibility level. Please note however, that excess contributions over \$1,100 may be carried forward one period only.

The Trustees of the Fund met on January 12th, and after constructive discussion and collaboration, decided to hold the line on our minimum threshold for eligibility at \$1,100, with no



increase since January 2010. In addition to maintaining the \$1,100 minimum, the Trustees also decided not to make any changes to our benefits at this time, neither to our Oxford or Kaiser plans, nor to the Option B Medical Spending Account. This was done to allow time for us to assess the effects of the changes that have been made in recent years, and also to see the full effect of increases to our income as a result of recent successful SDC negotiations with LORT and the Broadway League, as well as in other jurisdictions. Our costs do continue to rise, in light of on-going double digit premium increases. Oxford initially asked us for a 27% increase effective January 1st, 2010, but with the aid of our consultants at the Segal Company, we were able to negotiate that increase down to 14% with no reduction in benefits. Our administrative costs have been virtually flat from Plan Year 2009 through Plan Year 2010, and our total reimbursements to our Participants using the Option B Medical Spending Account have been trending lower.

The future of the Health Plan is an ongoing discussion for the Trustees, and we welcome your feedback. Stay tuned and keep in touch.

ALTERNATIVE HEALTHCARE RESOURCES While we make every effort to provide eligibility and quality benefits to as many members as possible, we realize that periodic lapses in coverage are not uncommon. If you need help, excellent resources are available from the sources listed below. Please also refer to our website (www.SDCweb.org) for more information. Click on "Health and Pension" at the top of the homepage, and then on "Health Resources."

**New York State
50% COBRA Subsidy**
www.ins.state.ny.us

Visit the above link and click on Consumers, Health, COBRA and Premium Assistance Index, and State Continuation Assistance for Entertainment Workers. Although we cannot guarantee how much longer this excellent program will last, it currently remains available, providing a 50% subsidy for up to twelve months for income-qualified COBRA candidates who work in the entertainment industry.

**The Actors Fund Health Insurance
Resource Center**
www.ahirc.org
212.221.7301, ext. 265

This wing of the Actors Fund provides a database of useful resources for the uninsured and under-insured in our industry. You need not be a member of Actors Equity to avail yourself of their services. While they are not an insurance broker, they may be able to assist you in finding relatively low cost health insurance.

Fractured Atlas
www.fracturedatlas.org
212.277.8020

This membership organization works with artists to provide a variety of services, including low-cost health insurance.

Tonik Health Insurance
www.TonikHealth.com

Tonik offers "simple, affordable health insurance" aimed primarily at young and healthy people who might otherwise be tempted to go without health insurance to save money. Tonik serves residents of California, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, New Hampshire, and Nevada.

Freelancers Union
www.freelancersunion.org

Free to join, the Freelancers Union provides assistance with health insurance and retirement savings to its members.

Hirschfeld Clinic
212.489.1939

Located in the Aurora, at 57th Street and 10th Avenue in New York, the Hirschfeld Clinic provides medical services and consultations free of charge to members of theatrical unions.

**Callen-Lorde Community
Health Center**
www.Callen-Lorde.org

Callen-Lorde dedicates itself to meeting the needs of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities and people living with HIV/AIDS. They provide services, regardless of one's ability to pay, offering onsite financial screening and sliding scale fees.

Therapy Safety Net
www.TherapySafetyNet.org

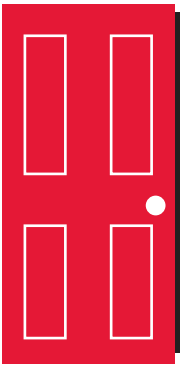
Providing a free referral service and an extensive list of participating therapists, Therapy Safety Net connects uninsured artists with affordable credentialed mental health professionals.

University Dental Services
Low cost dental services are offered in New York City and in Los Angeles through major university dental school programs, typically by qualified student dentists, under the supervision of teaching professionals.

New York University Dental School
www.NYU.edu/dental

**Columbia University College
of Dental Medicine**
www.dental.Columbia.edu

UCLA Dental School
www.dent.ucla.edu/patientcare



SUCCESS STORIES

OPENING NEW DOORS WITH THE TIER CONTRACT

by RENÉE LASHER, Business Representative

When we initiated the Tier Contract in 2009, we hoped that it would prove to be an easy, user-friendly introduction to SDC for employers who had rarely or never before hired SDC Members. Happily, that appears to be exactly what is taking place. I had two recent conversations that are examples of the larger experience we at SDC have been observing.

The Unicorn Theatre has been an important producer and developer of Contemporary plays in Kansas City for over 30 years. The Managing Director at the Unicorn called to talk about hiring an SDC Member for an upcoming production. The last time they filed an SDC contract was in 2004, and the contractual requirements were very different, so this was new territory.

In Detroit, there is a special theatrical project in development for the summer to coincide with baseball season. The Founding Director of a local theatre company is helping the producers put this project together. They are engaging an SDC Director, and we spoke about how to utilize the Tier Contract for the activity. This needed some specific consideration because of the unusual nature of the project.

Naturally, there were plenty of questions and concerns, but both parties approached the conversation openly and pleasantly, and I believe we achieved positive results. SDC strives to make the hiring of our Members accessible and desirable for theatres of any size, anywhere. I hope that these employers, as well as all the others for whom the Tier Contract is a new experience, continue to work with SDC and its Members for many years to come.



OTHER UNION NEWS
NOTEWORTHY

NEW MEMBERS

Jared Coseglia
Director
Long Island City, NY

Chuck Coyl
Choreographer
Chicago, IL

Rick Dildine
Director
St. Louis, MO

Daniel Erdberg
Director
New York, NY

Larry Keigwin
Director/Choreographer
New York, NY

Wendy Knox
Director
Minneapolis, MN

Jason Loewith
Director
Washington, DC

Michael Mastro
Director
New York, NY

Troy Miller
Director
Ridgewood, NJ

Birgitte Mutrux
Choreographer
Los Angeles, CA

Floyd Mutrux
Director
Los Angeles, CA

Simon Phillips
Director
NSW, Australia

Laurie Woolery
Director
Los Angeles, CA

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Colleen Britt
Director
New York, NY

Mark Finley
Director
New York, NY

Daniel Fishbach
Director
Los Angeles, CA

Brian J. Fruits
Director
Montgomery, IL

David Gutierrez
Director
Benavides, TX

Cedric Hill
Director
Union City, NJ

Levi Kaplan
Director
Marietta, GA

Annie G. Levy
Director
Brooklyn, NY

Dennis Lickteig
Director
Oakland, CA

Melissa Maxwell
Director
New York, NY

Matthew Robert Moore
Director
Stanford, CA

Patrick Pearson
Director
Fullerton, CA

Deb Royals
Director
Raleigh, NC

Seth Sklar-Heyn
Director
Brooklyn, NY

Elisabetta Spuria
Choreographer
Astoria, NY

Miriam Tobin
Director
Brooklyn, NY

Matthew J. Vargo
Director/Choreographer
Anaheim, CA

Robert Westley
Director/Choreographer
Woodside, NY

IN MEMORY OF

Blake Edwards
Director
Santa Monica, CA

Marsha Hanna
Director
Dayton, Ohio

Michael Langham
Director
United Kingdom

NEW OR RENEWED IPA'S

North Shore Music Theatre (IPA to RMT)

Marvell Repertory Theatre (IPA to ANTC)

Cape Playhouse (IPA to TSS)

Ogunquit Playhouse (IPA to TSS)

Drury Lane Productions (individual IPA)

STRIKE & DEFAULT

Members asked to work for one of the theatres or producers appearing on the Default or Strike list should contact Mauro Melleno (ext. 237, MMelleno@SDCweb.org) immediately. Work rules stipulate that Members may not work for employers on the Strike list and must have an appropriate SDC contract for all employment, otherwise fines or penalties may be incurred.

STRIKE LIST *The Strike List contains employers with whom serious issues have arisen and remain unresolved. Examples include refusal of these employers to recognize SDC, or failure to comply with the terms of an SDC contract. No Member may render directorial or choreographic services, including those associated with "show doctoring," for a producer or theatre posted on SDC's Strike List.*

Alternative Scenario LLC Jeffrey Altshuler, Producer	DS Unlimited David Syner, Producer Los Angeles, CA	Perkins Productions Robert Perkins, Producer
Baci Management d/b/a B&B Prod. Mary Card, Producer	Dublin Theatre Company Rick Robinson, Producer Dublin, CA	Playhouse Theatre Group Tracy Flater, Producer
BCBGMaxAzria Entertainment, Inc. Charles Cohen, Producer Beverly Hills, CA (producers of <i>The Ten Commandments</i> in LA)	Steve Hildebrand, Producer	Prince Music Theatre
BINGO Chicago, LLC Carel Davis, Russ Tilaro, Agnes Corrado, Producers	International Theatres Corporation Thomas Scalen, Producer	Shear Madness Las Vegas, LLC Terrence Williams, Producer
BT Productions	Israel Oh Israel, International, Inc. Richard Bernstein, Producer	Gloria Hope Sher, Producer
Classical Theatre of Harlem	Lombardo Org. LLC, Matthew Lombardo, Producer	Stage One Inc. (City Repertory Theatre of Wichita)
Darren Lee Cole, Producer	Lone Star Performing Arts Association	Starlight Theatre, San Diego, CA Kimberly Layton, Producer
Jack Cullen, Producer	L3 Productions Jon Cutler, Producer	Twin Tiers Theatre Festival Rohit Kapoor, Producer
Drama Center, Inc. Gary Waldman, Producer Florida	Musical Theatre of Los Angeles	Valley Musical Theatre
	On the Run Productions	

DEFAULT *The Default list contains employers with whom serious issues have arisen and have been resolved to the satisfaction of SDC. Examples include initial refusal of these employers to recognize SDC, or failure to comply with the terms of an SDC contract. Members may work for employers on the Default List, however prior to commencing rehearsals the Member must work with staff to ensure employer obligations, such as posting bonds, have been met.*

A Woman of Will Company, LP Ashley Road Productions Jack Nadel, Julie Loshin, David Braun – Producers	Diverse City Theatre Victor Lirio, Producer	Rubicon Theatre
Altar Boyz Chicago Joe McGinnis, Altar Boyz Chicago LLC, Producers	Benjamin DeRuyter, producer	Abraham Salaman, Producer
American Music Theatre of San Jose	Edwards Entertainment Group Armstead Edwards, Producer	Sales Guru Consulting, LLC Karen Paull
Obie Bailey, Producer	MadCap Productions	Barbara Schottenfeld, Producer
Mark Balsam, Producer	Richard Martini, Producer	Shows By Jutta, Inc. Ned Toth, Producer
Brian Bantry, Producer	Myriad Productions, Grant Robbin, Producer	David Sonkin, Producer
Chanhassen Dinner Theatre	NET Theatrical Productions Albert Nocciolino, Producer	Special Entertainment Events Christopher Raphael, Producer
CLO of South Bay Cities	New City Stage Company Ginger Dayle, Producer	Allen Spivak, Producer Barrie & Lynn Wexler, Producers
Coconut Grove Playhouse, Florida	Stephen O'Neil, Producer	Robin Tate, Producer
M. Carlyle Productions Michael Carlyle, Producer New York, NY	Playhouse Theatre Group Tracy Flater, Producer Plowshares Theatre Company	Stages Repertory Theatre, Houston, TX
Clyde Winkler Entertainment Tom Clyde, Producer	Plowshares Theatre Company	Texarts Association
		Whole Art Theater



**STAGE
DIRECTORS AND
CHOREOGRAPHERS
SOCIETY**

NEWSLETTER
VOLUME 60
MAR/APRIL 2011



your source for important notifications of all Union matters

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Stage Directors and Choreographers Society

1501 Broadway, Suite 1701

New York, NY 10036



- **Semi-Annual Membership Meeting**
Monday, April 11, 2011 at 6 p.m., Location TBA.
Come hear current Union news, mingle with fellow Members and volunteer for the 2011 Nominating Committee.
- **DCN: Showcasing Your Choreography!**
Tuesday, March 29, 2011 at 6 p.m.
- Please remember to put SDC in your bio.
- Show your solidarity with union workers across the country - post on SDC's Facebook page, write your elected officials and local papers. Every little bit helps.

Recently seen on Facebook: **I stand with my fellow Wisconsin SDC Members as well as AEA and IA in protest to fight for the rights of workers here and across the nation.** - Tyler Marchant, SDC Member