

NETC News

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A Quarterly
Publication of the
New England Theater
Conference, Inc.

Theatre: the Essential Art The 52nd New England Theatre Conference Annual Convention

Theatre alert! Where in the world is New England theatre today? Sightings are reported in the classroom, on the streets, in the prisons, in buses and trucks, in the community centers—and, oh yes, even on stages throughout the region. Theatre in New England is alive and well and refuses to be marginalized.

The 52nd New England Theatre Conference Annual Convention—**Theatre: the Essential Art**—focuses on the living art that is central to the quality of our personal, civic and social lives, even as mass media becomes more pervasive, as budget cuts threaten our programs, and as the spirit of the age grows increasingly more defensive and conservative.

The 52nd NETC Annual Convention will

- honor those individuals who demonstrate excellence in achievement in a variety of theatre disciplines and venues,
- showcase interaction between “legitimate” theatre and pop culture,
- explore diverse cultural resources for creative sources
- stretch our concept of theatre to think beyond the black box or proscenium arch

The preliminary schedule of workshops, panels and performances is available online at www.netonline.org. NETC convention goers can follow electronically the ongoing fine tuning of our dynamic and exciting programming as convention time approaches. Preview electronically the four-day excursion into finding the essence of the theatrical life force, or read the articles on workshops, awards, performances and exhibitors throughout this issue of *NETC NEWS*.

The elegant Providence (Rhode Island) Biltmore, in the heart of one of New England’s most dynamic communities, will house over sixty program events—performances, showcases, technical and publishing exhibitors, seminars and workshops—spotlighting the energy and diversity of the most human of art forms in these challenging times. The programming is designed

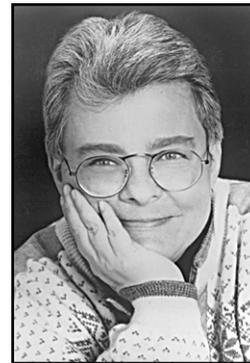
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NETC Awards Ceremony Extends from Saturday Banquet to Sunday Brunch!

The traditional NETC awards ceremony, usually completed at the Saturday night banquet, will be extended to the Sunday brunch to accommodate the schedule of one of our honorees, actress/playwright/activist **Eve Ensler**.

Be sure to reserve your place at both events!

The Major Award, in recognition of outstanding achievement in the American Theatre will be presented to **Paula Vogel**, prize-winning playwright of *How I Learned to Drive*, (1998 Pulitzer Prize for drama), *The Baltimore Waltz* (1992 Obie Award), *Hot N Throbbing*, *Desdemona*, *The*



Paula Vogel

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Theatre Olympiad Torch Heads to Providence!

Due to the overwhelming success of the 2002 Theatre Olympiad at the NETC convention in New Hampshire, this popular series of events designed for students in grades 7–12 will return to this year’s annual convention.

The Theatre Olympiad was created to give Junior High School and High School students a dynamic theatrical experience to replace the Publisher’s Showcase series that concluded in 2001. The idea behind the Olympiad was to fuse the fun and excitement of a friendly competition with the skill and artistry of theatre. The events in this program are specially designed to ensure that all students with an interest in theatre, from technology and design to the many aspects of performance, will have the opportunity to shine!

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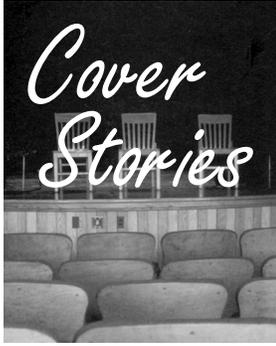
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new england
NETC
theatre conference



NETC Convention Brings the Latest in Tech and Scripts to Providence

One of the greatest parts of being connected to the New England Theatre Conference family is the chance to network with many different actors, designers, and vendors in available to New England Theater. Therefore it is with great pride that NETC welcomes this year's vendors to our conference in Providence. We look forward to all the new products that they will share with us!

These vendors help to make all our shows possible by providing lights, sound, scripts, education and more. Show your support and come meet them!

Brush up on the latest products in theatre technology, services and publications at our Exhibition hall. Many of our exhibitors have generously helped support our convention programs. Here is a partial list of our vendors, with web addresses for the curious:

- Advanced Lighting and Production: www.alpsweb.com
- B. N. Productions: www.bnproductions.com
- Cosacomica: www.cosacomica.com
- Dramatic Publishing Company: www.dramaticpublishing.com
- Playscripts Publishing: www.playscripts.com
- Rose Brand: www.rosebrand.com
- Stage Directions: www.stage-directions.com
- Suburban Tours: www.suburbantours.com

Regional colleges will offer information on programs and opportunities, helping teachers and students to make those important choices in theatre training. A special Friday lunchtime seminar will feature several of these exhibiting colleges, presenting their programs to high school students.

- Bridgewater State College
- Boston Conservatory
- College of the Holy Cross
- Southern Connecticut State University
- University of New Hampshire
- University of Southern Maine
- Western Connecticut State University

Drop by our Exhibition hall, pick up free samples, socialize at the Friday cocktail hour, and show your appreciation for our valuable exhibitors.

We have invited over 160 vendors to supply NETC members with information about their companies! We have been fortunate enough to receive sponsorships from ALPS Lighting, BN Productions, Dramatic Publishing, and Rose Brand Fabrics, and, most exciting; our vendors are presenting some workshops and helping us in the Friday Theatre Olympiad!

An example would be to highlight one of the workshops as an example of what is being offered. Rose Brand Fabrics Representative, Peter Monahan, will offer a workshop which will highlight the process and ways to make theatrical fabrics flame retardant. After the night club tragedy in RI, local fire departments are stepping up to the plate and enforcing much needed fire codes. Here is a wonderful opportunity to find out how to make your soft goods safe for your theatre, actors and staff.

Show support for your theatrical community and join us in November! If you know of someone who is interested in sending NETC information on their school, or theatrical business in order to participate as a vendor, have them contact lisanon@bu.edu.

Theatre: the Essential Art continued from page 1

to re-invigorate theatre practitioners and educators as we tap the springs that feed our creativity and commitment.

The 2003 NETC Annual Convention Co-planners are: Suzanne Ramczyk, *Bridgewater State College*, Frans Rijnbout, *Regis College*, Ann Marie Shea, *Worcester State College* and Luke Sutherland, *Community College of Rhode Island*.

See you in Providence!

2004 NETC Annual Auditions

The 2004 NETC Annual Auditions will be held on March 13, 14, 15, 2004 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Natick Massachusetts. These auditions offer job opportunities for actors, technicians and theater staff. The auditions are the largest general call in the Northeast and can accommodate over 1000 applicants. Applications will be available in the fall from the NETC office as well as at our website: netconline.org.

NETC 2003 Convention Offers Range of Performances for Every Taste and Interest!

From Shakespeare to street theatre, children's theatre to war protests, the NETC 2003 Providence convention—**Theatre: The Essential Art**—has it all!

- **Friday evening, November 7**—performance of Eugene O'Neill's *Moon for the Misbegotten*, at Trinity Rep. NETC registrants are offered a special \$32 price for tickets to this performance.
- **Jonathan Epstein**, Associate Director of Shakespeare & Company, will perform his one-man show, *Shakespeare's Sonnets and the Story Behind Them*, on Friday, November 7, at 5:30, this All-Convention Event is **free** to NETC registrants.

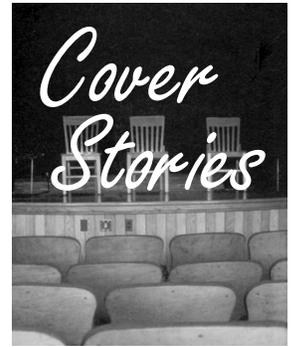
Other **free performances** include:

- *A Tribute to Langston Hughes*, by Providence Black Repertory Theatre, directed by Donald King, 2003 NETC Regional Award Winner—see www.blackrep.org
- Reverend Billy's Presidential Revival "Stop Shopping"—After 9/11 President Bush asked Americans to show their love of country by shopping. Reverend Billy, the creation of New York Obie-winning dramatist Bill Talen, thinks he's got it wrong. Our latest shopping spree seems to include Iraq. "His collar is fake, but his calling is real." *Village Voice*

Check out the *Church of Stop Shopping* at www.revilly.com

- Kathryn Blume, co-founder of the Lysistrata Project in *Accidental Tourist*—see www.pecosdesign.com/lys/accidental.html
- *Tamsen Donner; A Woman's Journey*, by Harwich Junior Theatre, Nina Scheussler, director—see www.hjtcapecod.org
- *Fields of Sacrifice*, by All Children's Theatre, directed by Joanne Fayan—see www.ACTinRI.org
- *Moving Vehicles*—included with banquet reservation—a one-man show by Paul Ricciardi. Eleven Characters, one small guy, one giant talent, one moving and humorous performance. "Paul's writing is witty and relevant, his performance engaging and moving." —John W. Thomas, *Life in Provincetown*
- *Imagine a Woman My Age...*, by Joyce Devlin (former NETC president), included with banquet reservation—see www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/theat/biojoyce.html

...And readings of new works, including the 2003 Aurand Harris Children's Playwriting Award winner.



Theatre Olympiad Torch Heads to Providence!

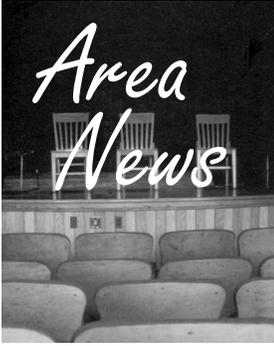
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Many popular events from last year will return, like the "The 5 Minute Play Dash" where teams of 4 to 10 students have 30 minutes to create a short play, as well as the challenging "Dance Decathlon" and the "Vocal Marathon." Set and costume designers will have the chance to strut their stuff in the "Free-style Design" events, and New England's class clowns can go head to head in the hysterical, "Comedy Improv High Jump."

The 2003 Theatre Olympiad will also include new events such as a special program conducted by the New England Shakespeare Festival that will introduce students to the exciting techniques behind "Unrehearsed Shakespeare" in the ever classic "Bard-athon."

Students in school theatre programs, as well as other youth theatre organizations, are invited to face off in this thrilling day of theatre. The Theatre Olympiad will begin at 8:15am on Friday, November 7 with a brief orientation, and will conclude with a closing ceremony from 4:15pm–5:30pm, which will include the presentation of gold, silver and bronze awards for each event.

Schools and organizations must register their students for the Olympiad. The registration form will be available on the NETC website: www.netconline.org. Additional information and a more detailed description of all the program's events are also posted on the site. Register soon and let the games begin!



Elliot Norton, Founder and Past President of the NETC, Dies at 100

As history will have it, noteworthy events of similar interest often happen within short periods of time from each other. In May of 1903, the Boston Museum, a longstanding Boston theatre known for housing one of America's most famous stock acting companies, closed its doors after six decades of operation; the Castle Square Theatre, located at Arlington and Chandler Streets celebrated its first six years with a printed history of its productions; and William Elliot Norton, destined to be the greatest American dramatic critic of the twentieth century was born in Boston's south end.

Throughout a major portion of the next 100 years, until his passing in July of this year, Mr. Norton would distinctly and unmistakably fulfill his destiny. The Dean of American Drama Critics, as he would be called, contributed as much to the development of theatre in America as any of this country's famous playwrights, actors, directors or theatre educators.

For New England theatre audiences, we would call Mr. Norton ours, one-of-our-own, born and raised down east (a term he would use in the title of his book). While Boston had always been a great theatre town, Mr. Norton put it on the map. To many of us, and a great many theatre professionals, Boston in a very real way became a more important theatre town than New York City. "What did Norton say?" was a

question frequently asked by theatre audiences and theatre-practitioners the day after press night. What Norton said guided many theatre-professionals on their journey from Boston to Broadway.

Among his numerous accomplishments—listed below in the Chronology—Mr. Norton was responsible for establishing this organization, the New England Theatre Conference, in 1950. In a recent interview with NETC College of Fellows member Caldwell Titcomb, Mr. Norton recalled that time. When asked to participate in a move to investigate the creation of a national theatre in this country, his efforts locally resulted in a group called the New England Theatre Assembly, which in turn formed the New England Theatre Conference. Since Mr. Norton had been the organizer, they voted him as the first NETC President. "...The idea developed that we should do more than just meet. The idea developed that the New England Theatre Conference—representing professional, community, college and school theater—should do something to help the theater. So we began to have annual conventions..." explained Mr. Norton. "Then we decided we ought to do more and so we developed a system of committees. Each committee had the job, for example, of investigating a professional theater, to find out...

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CHRONOLOGY

William Elliot Norton, 1903-2003

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|--|--|
| <p>1903 Born in Boston, MA on May 17</p> <p>1922 Graduated from Boston Latin School</p> <p>1926 Graduated from Harvard University</p> <p>1926 Joins the <i>Boston Post</i> newspaper as a reporter</p> <p>1934 November 28, appointed Dramatic Editor, <i>Boston Post</i> newspaper</p> <p>1950 Founded the New England Theatre Conference and appointed organization's first President</p> <p>1956 When the <i>Boston Post</i> folds, appointed Drama Critic of the <i>Boston Daily Record</i> newspaper</p> <p>1962 When the <i>Daily Record</i> merges with the <i>Boston American</i> newspaper, appointed Drama Critic for the new <i>Boston Record American</i></p> <p>1962 Receives George Foster Peabody Award</p> <p>1964 Receives George Jean Nathan Award in Dramatic Criticism</p> | <p>1966 Elected Fellow by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences</p> <p>1971 Receives special Tony Award</p> <p>1972 When the <i>Record American</i> purchases the <i>Herald Traveler</i> newspaper, appointed the Drama Critic for the new <i>Herald American</i></p> <p>1981 The Elliot Norton Awards are created in his honor</p> <p>1982 Retired</p> <p>1988 Voted into the Theatre Hall of Fame</p> <p>2003 Celebrated his 100th birthday on May 17</p> <p>2003 Died in Fort Lauderdale, FL on July 20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed over 6,000 performances • Authored <i>Broadway Down East</i> about the history of theatre in Boston. • Hosted <i>Elliot Norton Reviews</i> which aired on PBS for 24 years • At Harvard, studied with theatre historians George Lyman Kittredge and George Pierce Barker • Taught Shakespeare and Dramatic Literature at Boston University, Boston College, Emerson College and Harvard University |
|--|--|

Community Theatre Division

In May, NETC President Linda Murphy judged the Final Session for the 50th Annual Community Theater Drama Festival, sponsored by the Eastern Massachusetts Association of Community Theaters (EMACT). Adjudicators Kent Brown and Bil Pfuderer selected four finalists from the twelve Eastern Massachusetts groups who brought cuttings and one-acts to the annual event: *True West* by Acme Theater Productions of Maynard; *Lonely Planet* by Braintree's Curtain Call Theater; the musical, *Captains Courageous* by Newton Country Players; and *The Guys* by the Wellesley Players. After viewing all four, Linda Murphy selected *Captains Courageous* as the winner of the Best Production award for 2003.

Jennifer: What experience did you have with Community Theater prior to the Festival?

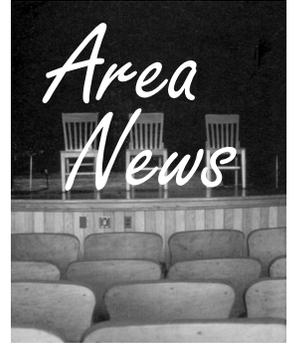
Linda: I feel somewhat embarrassed to admit that I have had little to no experience with much community theatre here in Massachusetts or throughout much of New England for that matter. I've been an occasional audience member when friends have either directed or performed. I can count on my fingers the number of community theatre productions that I have seen—and I apologize for my low profile. Working as I do, it's always been my schedule that keeps me so incredibly busy in both the professional and educational theatre world. Being invited to the EMACT Festival was a treat. Not only was the Festival celebrating a milestone 50th Birthday this season, it was an honor to represent NETC as the Finals Festival Judge.

Jennifer: How would you describe your experience as Finals Judge?

Linda: OUTSTANDING... is the first word that comes to mind, although I could go on and on with accolades that surrounded my experience. Remember, I was only present for one evening. This was a weekend event. There were a total of 12 separate productions that were staged and workshops that were given and attended. This was an Anniversary Festival with an Awards Ceremony that presented a Retrospective of EMACT's 50 years that was so entertaining, so informative, so poignant it hardly seemed to matter to the audience that it was 12:45 a.m. (Monday morning!) by the time I took the podium to announce my choice for the Best Production. This year, like the years before it, the Festival required endless hours of work from a remarkable "community" of dedicated talent, artistic, design, production, administrative and Festival staff. But, this year, unlike the years before it, found me fortunate enough to be invited me to participate. I would say that I was quite "spoiled" as a VIP—and loved the attention. It began with you, Jen... from the President of EMACT to the President of NETC, you are warm and welcoming. And so are the members of your EMACT Governing Board—most especially Marian Desilets, who was my very own personal adjudicator liaison and escort, her husband, Doug, MaryAnn Swift and Harriet Friedman. There was such gracious hospitality at every level throughout the entire process of planning, mounting and hosting this ambitious event at Brandeis University. This was a remarkable evening of theatre that I will never forget and will always be grateful to have attended. Thank you for having me.

Jennifer: What were your expectations prior to the event?

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Elliot Norton Dies at 100

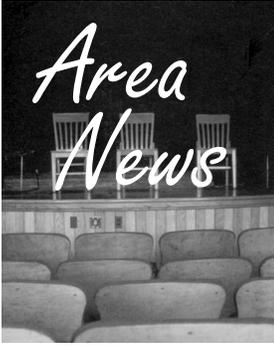
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how the professional theater could tie in with the community theater... We were drawing on all of New England."

Not too long after that, Mr. Norton contacted Kitty Carlisle Hart, the widow of the late playwright-director, Moss Hart, and with her consent, the group established the Moss Hart Award. Through his efforts, Mr. Norton convinced the Hearst newspaper organization, for whom he worked at the time, to provide the Winged Victory trophy presented annually to the overall Moss Hart Award winner. With Molly Gassner, the widow of the late theatre historian John Gassner, Mr. Norton and the group established the

John Gassner Playwriting Award, designed to encourage the development of new scripts.

"But while we, in the New England Theatre Conference, were working to better the theater as much as we could, to help people stay fond of the theater, and to encourage the production of what we thought were superior plays, we were doing this in an atmosphere when the theater was in low repute nationally... There was theater in only a few cities... And there was no regular theater in any other city in New England. So we were fighting all the time to keep theater in the public eye, and to continue to create the feeling that theater is, in my opinion, a vital part of life. It was a struggle but we enjoyed it...we got to know people who had similar ideas and similar ideals, and that was encouraging too."



Sherwood (Jerry) Collins

It is with regret that we share the news of the death of Jerry Collins on July 15, 2003.

Jerry joined NETC in 1961, the same year that he arrived at Tufts University. He was a long time member of the NETC Board and President in 1973–74 and 1979–80. Jerry was also a charter member of the College of Fellows in 1981. Over the years he was a mentor to many new members of NETC. His last major contribution to NETC was as an editor of the oral history interview transcripts that were published in 2001 entitled *NETC 50 Years—A Commemorative History*.

Jerry served in the Eighth Army Air Force in WWII. He obtained a BS degree at Kansas State University, and an MFA and PHD at State University of Iowa in Drama/Playwriting. While at Tufts he was Department Chair from 1981–1993, directing over 30 productions. He also worked with the Tufts Summer Theatre for over 20 years and was a prime

mover in the creation of the Marston Balch Arena Theatre.

Jerry was associated with the Magic Circle Children's Theatre. While a member of the Massachusetts High School Drama Guild, he developed the high school playwriting competition, which bears his name.

Jerry was always willing to share his knowledge and experience in theatre, which was his passion. He will be remembered for his outgoing manner, kindness, generosity and sense of humor which put students and peers alike at ease when seeking his advice. Jerry will be missed by all of us who had the honor and pleasure of his friendship.

Anne Marie Shea, Professor of Theatre at Worcester State College, spoke of Jerry in this manner: "My impression of Sherwood Collins is, I would like to think, not a bad way for an academic to be remembered. He channeled his passion for learning and theatre into a life of scholarship, and his work lives beyond his years, affecting students far beyond the Tufts campus."

Community Theatre Division

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Linda: The EMACT Festival has a well known and well respected reputation for the tireless devotion and passion of the many community theatre groups that participate each year. I believed that I would see quality effort—but I was amazed at the Festival's level of professionalism. I was keenly aware of the truest sense of collaboration that existed among the performing groups, the backstage crew and the Festival staff. What can I say? I was very impressed!

Jennifer: What, if anything, surprised you?

Linda: To be very honest—it was your Festival and your Adjudicator guidelines. I respond for the Kennedy Center/American College Theatre Festival—Region 1 whenever I can find time, and to see that your EMACT Festival is also meant to be a "learning experience" surprised and pleased me very much. I am not one for "competition" or for picking a "winner"—although that was my responsibility. I was requested to "evaluate, teach and prescribe" the work that was presented. So, I admired the integrity of the criteria that was detailed for me in considering my selection. It validated my "high profile" decision.

Jennifer: On what did you base your decision?

Linda: I had it pretty easy, didn't I? I was only the Finals Judge. The Festival Adjudicators, Kent Brown

and Bil Pfuderer did all of the hard work for me. I just had to sit back and watch four fabulous cuttings. I gave *True West* by Acme Theater Productions of Maynard an "A" for acting—their work was angry, absurd, appropriate and authentic. *Lonely Planet* by Braintree's Curtain Call Theater was bold, playful, terrifying, poignant, political and sincere. *The Guys* by the Wellesley Players was compelling, truthful, conversational and presented without a hint of sentimentality. My choice for Best Production of 2003 was the musical *Captains Courageous* by Newton Country Players. The cutting was excellent. Every element of the musical was balanced and complimentary. Acting, singing, movement, staging—the total theatre experience was simply and brilliantly executed with energy, commitment and collaborative respect to the cast, musicians and production crew. The risks were greater by taking a musical cutting for tour. The cast of 18 men had singing voices to die for. The design elements were detailed. Clearly I based my decision on the Festival's guidelines with an emphasis on the fact that this production achieved both the highest quality dramatic and music material presented.

Jennifer: Any other comments?

Linda: Bravo to everyone, Jen!! I had a blast... and would happily do it again. Invite me back anytime!

UNH After School Theatre Workshops

The Department of Theatre and Dance at the Paul Creative Arts Center in Durham, NH will offer a series of after school theatre workshops from October 14 to November 20 from 3:45 to 5:00 p.m.

This six-week series offers education that may enhance a student's self-confidence, social skills, language skills, collaborative skills, problem solving, spontaneity, imagination, and creativity. Every Tuesday, Creative Drama for grades 2–5 will explore pantomime, sensory awareness, characterization, dialogue, vocalization, theatre games, story drama, improvisation, and puppet construction and manipulation for informal performances. Every Thursday, Advanced Theatre Classes for grades 6–8 will cover an in-depth study of acting, with focuses on character development and character-building techniques as applied to duet scene work. Lessons are designed and tailored to the age and experience level of the participants. Returning students, as well as new students are encouraged to enroll. Each course has been developed to meet objectives set by the National Standard for the Arts. People who are interested may call for brochure and fees.

DRAMA DAY

Oct 17, 10am–5pm

An all day school field trip event is available for grades 9–12.

Morning Session: 10am, Johnson Theatre: Performance of the musical *No, No Nanette*.

Afternoon Sessions: 1:30–5pm, Workshops & Demos may include:

Musical Theatre Auditioning Tips; Aerial Dance, Trapeze & Circus Art; Stage Combat; Playwriting & Entering Competitions; Stage Lighting & Sound Design (Time, Place, Mood); One-Person Theatre Company (Story Theatre); Musical Theatre Number & Choreography Rehearsal; Meet the Directors/Actors of *No, No Nanette* (Q&A); College & Careers in Theatre (Panel Discussions/Q&A); Puppetry; Swing Dancing; Actors' Dialect; Acting Technique; Comedy & Clowning; Improv & Theatre Games. Purchase tickets prior to October 8; tickets not sold at the door, \$7 each.

No, No Nanette

book by Otto Harbach and Frank Mandel

music by Vincent Youmans

lyrics by Irving Caesar and Otto Harbach

Escape from your reality and step into a nostalgic-era-revival with *No, No Nanette*, a major Broadway hit. The hilarious musical dramatizes the Smith family's wacky decisions, misunderstandings, and return to normalcy during the roaring '20s in New York and Atlantic cities. Appropriate for all ages, this large-scale musical will be performed with fresh enthusiasm, comical acting, exceptional dances, and magnificent chorus numbers. Enjoy a delightful, carefree theatre experience with the memorable, "Tea for Two" and "I Want to Be Happy"—their melodies will follow you home! "This winner of four Tony

Awards is a tap dancing musical comedy set in the stylish and vivacious 1920s," stated the Goodspeed Musicals of CT; also winner of 3 Drama Desk Awards, and the Outer Critics Circle Award!

Johnson Theatre, Oct. 15–18 at 7:00 pm and Oct. 19 at 2:00 pm. General Public, \$15.50; Seniors/UNH ID/Groups 15+, \$13.50

Tartuffe

by Moliere

a new translation by Ranjit Bolt

The play surrounds Orgon, a devoutly religious man who meets the charismatic Tartuffe and is so smitten by the man's piety that he is nearly taken for all he's worth, including wife and wealth. Tartuffe stirs up conflicting reports as to his character, ranging from a "beacon for our age" to "a lecherous puffed up ape." Fresh, funny, and breathtaking dialogue infused with 21st century humor inspires a memorable theatre experience! It's hard to imagine that this play was once castigated by the church and banned from public performance by Louis XIV of France. The central theme of religious hypocrisy is delivered with abundant wit—in rhyming couplets! *Tartuffe*, an astounding feat of great comedy, is paired with a sumptuous set and costumes that historically replicate 17th century French Baroque style.

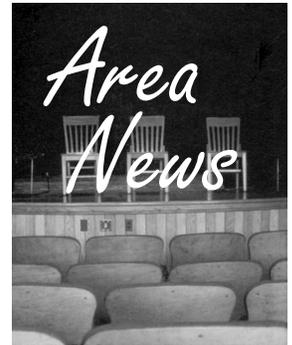
"The cleverness of Moliere's *Tartuffe* resides in its language." —Farouk Campbell.

"There is hardly a let-up in the humor and that alone is worth the price of the ticket." —British Theatre Guide.

Johnson Theatre, Nov. 12–15 at 7:00 pm and Nov. 16 at 2 pm. General Public, \$12.50; Seniors/UNH ID/Groups 15+, \$10.50

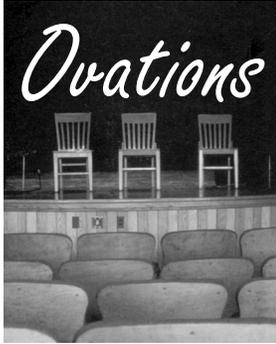
Nov 14, 10am-12:00pm

Tartuffe will be performed for school groups, grades 9–12. Schools must purchase tickets in advance. There will be no general admission or tickets sold at the door. Tickets are \$7 per person.



Trinity Repertory Theatre Welcomes NETC to Providence

Trinity Repertory Theatre, home base of our two Theatre Educator of the Year honorees, Stephen Berenson and Brian McElheney, will be an integral part of the 2003 NETC convention. In addition to offering a special \$32 discount ticket to convention registrants for the Friday evening performance of Eugene O'Neill's *Moon for the Misbegotten*, Trinity will be opening its doors for backstage tours Friday and Saturday. Trinity is just a few blocks stroll from our convention site, the Providence Biltmore in downtown Providence, so we invite all to take advantage of this extraordinary opportunity to get backstage at one of the nation's leading theatre companies.



The AACT/Fest 03 Award Winners

The national festival of the American Association of Community Theatre was held in Torrington, Connecticut, June 25–28, 2003, at the landmark art-deco Warner Theater. The national festival, held every two years, is the culmination of theatre competition on the state and regional levels. Eleven theatre companies chosen the best in their states and regions will compete at the national level. New England was represented by Theatre Company of Saugus and their production of Jean-Claude van Itallie's *Interview*.

AWARD WINNERS

Best Production

Spokane Theatrical Group

Spokane, WA—Region IX

I Never Saw Another Butterfly

by Celeste Raspanti

Second Place

Bas Bleu Theatre

Fort Collins, CO—Region VII

Three Viewings

by Jeffrey Hatcher

Third Place

Elkhart Civic Theatre

Bristol, IN—Region III

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum

Burt Shevelove & Larry Gelbart, Music & Lyrics

Stephen Sondheim

ADJUDICATORS SPECIAL AWARDS

Excellence in Acting

Paul J. Hanft, Pseudolos, *Forum*,

Elkhart Civic Theatre, IN, Region III

Jerry O'Boyle, *Hysterium*, *Forum*,

Elkhart Civic Theatre, IN, Region III

Frances Burns, Virginia, *Three Viewings*,

Bas Bleu Theatre, CO, Region VII

Wendy Ishii, Mac, *Three Viewings*,

Bas Bleu Theatre, CO, Region VII

Carrie Hamilton Howard, Artemis, *Eleemosynary*,

Haywood Arts Repertory Theatre, NC, Region IV

Rosa Metoyer, Sadie Delaney, *Having Our Say*:

The Delaney Sisters' First 100 Years, City Park

Players, LA, Region VI

Karen Murphy, Sarah, *Crosswords*, Prescott Fine

Arts Association, AZ, Region VIII

Laura Kohler, Raja, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*,

Spokane Theatrical Group, WA, Region IX

Marianne McLaughlin, Irena, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, Spokane Theatrical Group, WA, Region IX

Steve Anderson, Honza, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, Spokane Theatrical Group, WA, Region IX

Cemantia Crain, Shen Te/Shui Ta, *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, Venice Little Theatre, FL, Region IV

Excellence in Ensemble Acting

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, Elkhart Civic Theatre, IN, Region III

The Good Woman of Setzuan, Venice Little Theatre, FL, Region IV

The Laramie Project, Players Theater Company, NJ, Region II

Excellence in Overall Visual Effect

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, Elkhart Civic Theatre, IN, Region III

Excellence in Set Dressing

Three Viewings, Bas Bleu Theatre, CO, Region VII

Excellence in Choreography

A New Brain, The Chameleon Theatre Circle, MN, Region V

Excellence in Lighting

Eleemosynary, Haywood Arts Repertory Theatre, NC, Region IV

I Never Saw Another Butterfly, Brian Ritter, Spokane Theatrical Group, WA, Region IX

Excellence in Costumes

I Never Saw Another Butterfly, Nanci Haskin, Spokane Theatrical Group, WA, Region IX

Excellence in Costume & Property Design

The Good Woman of Setzuan, Carrie Riley-O'Donnell, Venice Little Theatre, FL, Region IV

Excellence in Original Music/Sound Effects

The Good Woman of Setzuan, Venice Little Theatre, FL, Region IV

Excellence in Music

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, Elkhart Civic Theatre, IN, Region III

Technical Directors Award

Elkhart Civic Theatre, IN, Region III, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*

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It's a big universe.
Where do you fit in? SM



“The Forum” Fifth Edition: Where In the World Are We?

by *Suzanne M. Ramczyk, Ph.D.*

Professor of Theatre Arts, Bridgewater State College and Chair of the NETC Long Range Planning Committee

“Dialect: Form of speech peculiar to a district or class; subordinate variety of a language with non-standard vocabulary, pronunciation, or idioms”—a simple definition provided by *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* for what can be a complicated issue in the world of theatre. Ah, dialects and accents: as theatre practitioners, we seem to love them or hate them! How many actors feel absolutely lost when handed a tape and told to come back to rehearsal with a Russian accent, a Southern dialect, or a Standard American “sound?” How many stage directors anguish over whether or not they are really necessary at all to a production? How many of us avid theatergoers attend a “dialect” play and leave wondering what language the actors were speaking? So, what’s Ramczyk’s beef this month? Is she just spending too much time in those dusty studios, musty classrooms, and darkened temples of Dionysus? Not so, dear readers! But this month, I would submit herein that directors need to pay as much attention to the “aural” world of the play they are creating as they do to the “visual,” particularly to that aspect of the aural world as created by the actor’s speech and voice.

Now, I am not suggesting that all theatre companies have a trained speech coach on retainer to serve their every accent and dialect need; though, if money were a “non issue,” what a joy that would be. Further, I have never been a proponent of “leveling” anyone’s native dialect or accent and the corresponding regional idiosyncrasies. Indeed, I am a great believer in the notion that those inherent speech and vocal traits are a vital part of one’s culture that should be retained as a preservative of that culture and the individual’s identification within such. Further, these verbal or vocal trademarks can be celebrated and even flaunted onstage, creating a vibrant and exciting world for a theatrical production. Surely, The American Repertory Theatre has demonstrated this many times over the decades, unabashedly (and successfully, I should say) flaunting the verbal trademarks of some of its most distinguished actors. So, what’s the problem?

For this theatergoer, the simple fact seems to be that the aural world of the play as created by the actors’ vocal and speech patterns and practices is often slighted or even overlooked altogether, with respect to the significant role it plays in the creation of the overall world of the play. Sure, a simple task it is for most major regional theatres and for large college/university theatre programs to take the aural world of a play quite seriously, what with their speech and voice specialists on staff or faculty. But

not every struggling smaller theatre, liberal arts college program, and community theatre is so fortunate! Right? Further, many a director of professional or university theatre is guilty of the oversight I suggest above.

Okay, so let’s get to the nitty-gritty of the situation. Picture this: you attend a pricey, visually magnificent professional production of one of the Bard’s most compelling tragedies. The audience applauds the scenery and costumes; you hold your breath as some of your favorite actors deliver some of the most profound lines in the cannon of English drama. However, a “star” is brought in for the major role to sweeten the box office “take.” And said star is so encumbered by his vocal fry and his regional vowel distortions that many of his lines are barely understandable. So much for that \$54.00! Or, you are thrilled to get a “single” for another pricey professional production of your favorite Oscar Wilde. Everything is “period perfect,” costumes, scenery, furniture, props, and movement. However, some of the actors obviously did not feel the need to use the hired voice and speech coach; and, therefore, some characters are clearly denizens of Wilde’s London, while others have roots in Chicago or Southern California. And, finally, perhaps you show up at your favorite community or college theatre to revel in the comedy of a contemporary play set in some English-speaking country other than the United States. As the evening progresses, it becomes clear that the “take the tape and learn the dialect” approach was obviously utilized. Every actor speaks his or her own version of the dialect, thus never quite revealing in which country the play actually takes place as there are so many options.

I propose that many a director does not consider the significance of this aural world as keenly as she considers that of the visual. And well she should, as the aural world speaks just as loudly as the visual one when it comes to the creation of the overall, special world of a play! (hmm...) When we take our seats in the subdued pre-show lighting, we are all keenly aware of the impact of any pre-show music and of the not-so-subtle statements a dimly lit stage setting is making. The fun, light-hearted music, for example, may clearly set us in late 1970s America, reinforced and augmented by a striking rendition of a late 70s Manhattan apartment. The characters enter, and the clothing reinforces the era, place, and overall atmosphere of this special world. However, the dialogue starts and although one actor seems to have done his homework, another clearly hearkens from somewhere in the Midwest, and another,

The simple fact seems to be that the aural world of the play as created by the actors' vocal and speech patterns and practices is often slighted or even overlooked altogether, with respect to the significant role it plays in the creation of the overall world of the play.

from Fall River, Massachusetts! All aspects combined, the sets, music, costumes, props, witty urban banter, and multiple American dialects signal a world quite different from what the playwright intended, and, most likely, from what the director desired. It is this confusing or ambiguous "world" that is of concern. What is it that the director and company want me to embrace? Within what framework am I to interpret the action of the play? What thematic material should I glean from the ambiguous framework? And on a more basic level, who are these people and how am I to relate to them? What is the cultural, economic, and social class, or the educational bottom line in the world of this play? Quite simply, where am I?

Thus, if the aural world as created by the actors' vocal and speech qualities and capabilities is of vital importance, what is to be done? First, I suggest setting one's priorities with respect to the "special" world that will be created. This "special" world consists of that which is dictated by the given circumstances provided by the playwright, along with every aspect of production designed by the director and all the rest of the artistic staff. Thus, every choice will influence, define, reflect, augment, or detract from, even obfuscate, the world of the play. And, as we are all taught and well know (John Cage notwithstanding), all art is choice, not chance! Surely, none of us set out to obfuscate that world. So in setting our priorities, we must decide how important it is for any production to be period accurate and place specific. Typically, the more accuracy and specificity we demand of the visual aspects, the greater the corresponding demands on the aural ones. That is, the more we suggest or portray the visual components of any specific society, social group, or sub-culture, the greater the need for those "forms of speech particular to that district or class." I would add, with my apologies to the Concise Oxford, those "sounds" inherent to a district or class. Surely, the Stratford Shakespeare Company in Ontario, Canada, is a clear example of this need for aural specificity, as the company tends towards "museum" theatre developed to astounding heights of brilliance.

Conversely, I would propose that the less specific we are in our visual choices, the less specific we need be in our aural ones. This is where The American Repertory Theatre has excelled in recent decades. The company's

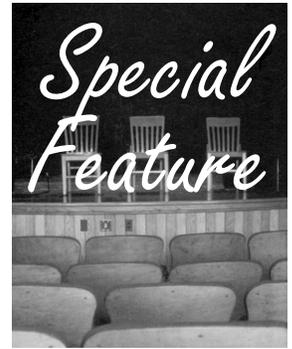
artistic staff specializes in creating non-specific visual worlds for many of their productions, indeed ones that soar to such heights of virtuosity that aural accuracy in terms of dialect choices would indeed often be inappropriate. Directors not only often opt for clear Standard Stage American, but also, at times, revel in the individual speech idiosyncrasies of the actors. There is a lesson in this for all of us!

Next, I would suggest that one always evaluate the appropriateness of the Standard Stage American dialect. For example, many major professional theater companies in this country have opted frequently not to utilize the R.P. English dialect for many 17th through 19th century British comedies. Additionally, Standard American is almost always the dialect of choice for American productions of Shakespeare. And if the play is a translation from another language and the characters inhabit some non-English speaking country, then Standard American is entirely appropriate, rather than English with the corresponding foreign accent. Further, this dialect is typically the easiest for all American actors to learn. Tapes abound, as do courses on the campuses of almost every college and university with a theatre or speech communication program. Utilizing this nonspecific verbal sound generally will not confound the world of the play created by the visual components of production.

Correspondingly, this leads to another simple suggestion. It is wise for every stage director to study voice and speech in the form of at least one good course to become facile in Standard Stage American.

Finally, if it is decided that a dialect is necessary to the production, when calculating production budgets, it may be wise to consider the assistance and price of a good speech coach. After all, the lilt and rhythms of the Irish dialects, for example, are a necessary component in the worlds of the plays by contemporary and modern Irish playwrights. If there is not the funding to maintain ongoing coaching throughout the rehearsal process, even a few thorough sessions with a coach (augmented by tapes) will elevate the aural level of any production. It is quite simple to find teachers and coaches through college and university theatre programs, or through VASTA (Voice and Speech Trainers Association) at www.vasta.org. Additionally, this is a wonderful website with many links to speech, accent and dialect tapes. If funds are severely limited, often an advanced voice and speech student can be found through college theatre programs.

In conclusion, it behooves all of us directors to listen to the worlds of our plays and not only see them. Is there vital information that can be conveyed through the vowels, consonants, lilts, melodies, and rhythms of a unified, specific speech pattern? Or, will the playwright's and our



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A Cast of Thousands

Or How To Direct Very Large Groups and Retain Your Sanity (Part II)

by Linda Potter and Jeanie Furlan

PREPARING IN ADVANCE

Early preparation is the most important factor in insuring the success of a large production. It's important for the director and producer to create a time line and stick to it. Your time line should look something like this:

Six months before auditions: choose your show, find your team of producers, choreographers, set designers, costumers, stage managers and with them decide on the size and breath of the show. Budgeting starts early: if you plan carefully you can afford to dream a little.

Four months before auditions: find your lighting, sound and extra production staff needed such as musicians, publicity chairs, head cuers, makeup chairs, head set builders and painter, props masters. Decide with the team how large the show is and how many extra staff the show will require. Decide how the show will be expanded and find the extra people needed. Examples might be extra costumers for specific parts of the show, or extra directors to handle those who do not make the main show.

Two months before auditions: Find your stage crew and house manager and finance chair.

One month before auditions: Find your refreshment chair and other important chairs such as cast party, T-shirts, photo board, newsletter, website master, program designer, and poster designer.

After auditions: organize all teams and get ready to rehearse.

You might also find this book helpful: *Fundamentals of Play Directing*, by Dean & Carra, (read at least chapters 13, 14, and 16).

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Managing a large cast requires stricter adherence to rules. Everyone should be made aware of the rules and consequences of breaking them very early in the rehearsal process. Here are some essential rules to follow:

1. Start and end every rehearsal on time and require parents to be prompt for pick ups.
2. Insist that there is absolute quiet when you speak.
3. Insist that there is absolute quiet when there is acting going on the stage
4. Insist on respect for each other, the facility, and the staff. This is probably the most important rule that a director and team can have. Disregarding this rule is grounds for instant dismissal.
5. Require a note for absence: everyone needs to be committed and attend all rehearsals.

Carefully plan the rehearsal schedule so that no one is ever sitting idle. Here are some ways to do this:

- Double and triple book rehearsals: schedule a music rehearsal at the same time as a blocking rehearsal, if possible, in different sections of the building.
- Plan rehearsals of separate sections of the show on separate nights.
- Hire if needed, extra pianists for larger rehearsals so that the cast can be broken down into smaller sections.
- **Assign** a specific person who in charge of scheduling adults who help at each rehearsal and each performance. Help could include discipline, roll call, passing out papers, side bar line rehearsals, clean up.
- Have an attendance person monitor attendance. Make phone calls when an actor or crew member has missed two rehearsals
- Plan large costume teams—as many as 25 per show.
- Have a contract that is signed by both the student and parents. This contract carefully delineated all expectations. (We use this for school productions only).

General organizational tips that will help you manage large cast numbers:

- Use two rooms for waiting to go on stage, one for makeup and a quiet green room.
- Have at least 6 cuers for each show and one head cuer.
- Have walkie-talkies for communication between backstage, lighting and green room.
- Make sure everyone has a show bag with name and phone number on it. Keep everything in the bag—make up, water, script, pencil, hairbrush, mirror, etc.
- **Teach** your cast to take care of their props and costumes and to leave props and costumes that belong to others alone. They should also learn replace props and costumes to their proper places after rehearsals and performances.
- Have cast dress at home except for costume changes.
- Make sure there are adequate place to hang costumes and have cast with costume changes bring costumes on hangers and replace them when finished.
- Do a makeup workshop several weeks before opening so that all know the rules of the makeup procedure.
- **Organize** a large makeup team that is waiting and prepared before each show. Call the cast in segments for makeup starting with leads and specialty characters first. If the makeup is simple have the cast apply it at home.
- Use dressers for fast costume changes
- **Collect** a small fee from each cast member to cover the cast party.

WHERE DO I PUT EVERYONE?

An initial question that a director must confront with a large cast is: how do I accommodate the number without compromising the quality of the show? When you choose and gather your team about you, consider alternative ways to include your groups who are outside the leads and named characters. Here are some possibilities:

1. Pre-Shows: These groups have 25 to 50 actors under a second director who use music and dialogue from other sources or from the director. They perform before the show, perhaps even starting with the light still up, maybe talking in character to the audience. They have a similar theme as the show itself, but are used to warm up the audience. Music from the Overture can be used for movement around the stage or in a choreographed dance. The lobby is also a possibility for a performance venue for this group. In addition to a director, the pre-show has a producer, a costumer but usually shares the musical director with the main cast.

2. Vignettes: These groups have 25 to 50 actors under a second director, and they come in for large group scenes at the beginning of Act II. They can be used to swell the sound of a chorus number, or to set the atmosphere with dialogue and a song before Act II begins. The dialogue and song could be from the public domain (a folk song, a famous speech, etc). The songs and dialogue could be original written by the vignette group or scripted by the director or writer. Aside from the director, these groups have a producer, a costumer and share the musical director with the main cast.

3. Improvised skits or scenes: These groups have 10 to 35 actors under a second director who improvise around themes that are connected to or compliment the play. The scenes are inserted before during or after the play depending on the content.

With these possibilities in mind, meet with your set designer and stage manager and ask for their input as to where, when, and how these groups can be accommodated. Get measurements of your stage. Look closely at doors: rear, side, front and backstage. Look at waiting zones for the groups. Use adults to manage kids who are comfortable with giving “shush” directions without alienating the crowd. Sign up several cuers for the final rehearsals and performances whose job it is to move along the cast and get them on and off stage quickly, safely and quietly.

As you might have noticed, all of these options have one basic foundation: careful planning. In your early visioning of the show, you can help yourself by looking at the groups and thinking about how to group them. You must be able to find time, six months or more, before you even choose the play to start a “buzz” among people who might support your effort. Network to key people about possible plays and start the excitement

building so that when you do have all the papers in hand, you are set to coordinate your team and handle the numbers that might arise.

AUDITION FORMAT FOR A LARGE CAST

We suggest that one person manage the auditions. This might be the producer of the show or someone else who has a small amount of time to volunteer. This person will need to be available during the auditions hours and will need some assistance. There are two types of audition formats that have been successful for large casts:

**1. Complex Format—
High School or Community Theater**

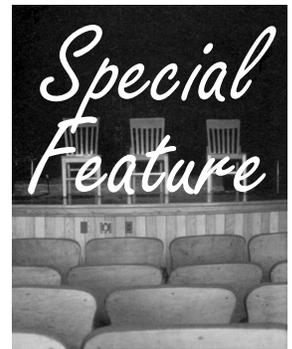
Make all music and scripts available in the school or town libraries five weeks before auditions. Include a CD or audio tape to accompany the written choral score with melodies and lyrics.

Audition and Dance Workshops: These are two-hour workshops given ten days or two weeks before auditions. Attending a workshop is not mandatory to being cast in the show but offers an opportunity to get comfortable with the audition process. The director explains the reading process and answers questions about the show and about characters. The music director teaches or goes over the songs that he wants the auditionees to know. The choreographer teaches a typical sequence of steps that she will expect everyone to know. The workshops are timed so that the dance and music is going on at the same time with half of the group attending one and then switching to the other session. These workshops are optional but time-saving devices during auditions.

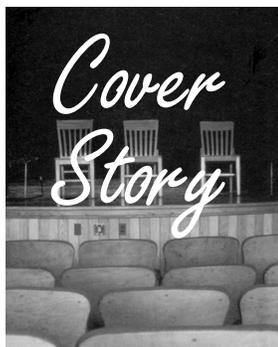
Sign-up: The Auditions Producer will organize this process. Usually a notice is put up on a bulletin board and/or the web site with instructions on how to sign up. The person signs up for a scheduled audition time by signing up at a counseling office at school or by calling or emailing the producers home.

Timed Slots: Determining how much time you need depends on the script, the difficulty of the music, how much the musical director wants to hear, and the amount of dancing the choreographer needs to see. For instance, if you schedule 45 minutes for 10 auditionees, plan on 10 minutes to sing 20 minutes to read lines, and 15 minutes to teach and dance a 32-count routine. We allow open auditions so that other auditioners may observe the process.

Picture and Numbers: When each person arrives at the audition, he checks in, completes a form, and has his photograph taken. (We use Polaroids and shoot two auditionees at a time to save on film. We then cut the photo apart and staple each person’s face to the appro-



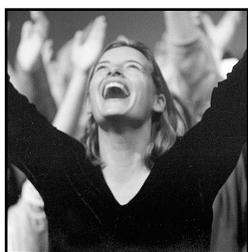
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NETC Awards Ceremony continued from page 1

Mineola Twins, Meg, And Baby Makes Seven and *The Oldest Profession* Vogel has had her plays produced at theatres throughout the United States, Canada, England, Brazil, Chile, and Spain. A member of the faculty of the M.F.A. playwriting program at Brown University since 1985, Vogel will be giving the 2003 NETC Keynote Address.

Special awards for outstanding achievement on a national level will go to **Mary Hartman**, actress and educator from Shakespeare & Company and playwright **Eve Ensler**.



Mary Hartman

A member of Shakespeare & Company since 1988, Mary Hartman has acted in many of their productions, and is currently, with Kevin Coleman, leading the Company's renowned Education Program. She has co-directed numerous secondary and elementary school productions of the classics. She also co-directed a production of *Romeo & Juliet* on CD-ROM at Springfield Central High School for Sunburst Technology, and received the Beacon Award from the Public Schools of Springfield, Massachusetts for equity and excellence in education. A director of Shakespeare productions at the Theatre Museum in Covent Garden and at Shenandoah Shakespeare Express, she has served as resident lecturer at Shakespeare's Globe Museum in London. She is the Project Co-Director of the *Shakespeare and the Rose Playhouse Institute*, and *Discovering Macbeth*, both funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, and Project Director of *Shakespeare Action*, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Actress, playwright, activist, Eve Ensler uses theatre as a vehicle to help women find their voices on a variety of topics, whether the female body (*The Vagina Monologues*) or women caught in the Bosnian wars (*Necessary Targets*). She has made *The Vagina Monologues* available without royalty through the V-Day Campaign, a global celebration where colleges and communities in general stage the play as a fund raiser for organizations dedicating to stopping violence against women. In 2003 over 1000 V-Day performances were scheduled world-wide. Since 1998 the V-Day organization has raised over \$14 million dollars, and has been named by Worth Magazine as one of the 100 best charities. Whether in an Ivy League campus, a Native American reservation, a village in

Kenya or Afghanistan, through the generosity and inspiration of the author, Ensler offers a theatrical and imaginative challenge for men and women to visualize a world without violence, irrespective of the source—domestic, social or governmental.

For outstanding achievement on the regional level the **American Repertory Theatre Institute for Advanced Theatre Training**, **Boston Playwrights' Theatre** and **Providence Black Repertory Theatre** will each receive an award from NETC.

The **Institute for Advanced Theatre Training** was established in 1987 by the American Repertory Theatre as a training ground for the professional American theatre. In 1998, the Institute began an exclusive collaboration with the Moscow Art Theatre School. The union of the two schools has created an historic program that provides unparalleled opportunities for training and growth. The wide range of courses given by the international faculty offers students unique preparation for the multi-faceted demands of the professional theatre. The Institute program simultaneously respects the great traditions of the past and encourages the development of new ideas and forms of expression.

Founded in 1981 by Nobel Laureate, Derek Walcott, **Boston Playwrights' Theatre** has become a center for new plays in New England, a theatre run by playwrights for playwrights. Home to the playwrights of Boston University's Creative Writing Program, the theatre annually produces the Boston Theatre Marathon (recipient of the 2000 Elliott Norton Award), and First Stages Reading Series, enabling fledgling playwrights to see their work in the hands of professional performers.



Providence Black Repertory Theatre

Since 1996 **Providence Black Repertory Theatre** has been developing, producing, and presenting high quality artistic performances inspiring hope, creating understanding and bringing people together. With special emphasis on the importance of empowering youth, the troupe provides after school theatre training programs, People's (Pay What You Can) Matinees, and Student School Day Matinees. PBR uses theatre to emphasize the value of communication and constructive problem solving to make a positive difference in the lives of their target audience.

A Cast of Thousands

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appropriate form.) Each person is assigned a number next to their name as they sign in. This number and their first name are written boldly in marker on a wide piece of tape which is on their chest throughout the audition process. The name and number on the person auditioning should be big enough for the casting directors to see from their table. The picture and the number help the directors to remember the person with better accuracy.

Rating Rubric: To evaluate quickly and fairly, we use an audition rubric which is broken into Acting, Singing, and Dancing sections. Each director stage, music and dance, uses a different color pen to circle on the rubric and write short comments about the person's audition. This way with color coding, it is clear who wrote what. Any rating system is fine. We use a scale of 1–4 with 4 as the highest rating we can give. We use a simple version for younger casts and a more complex version for high schools and community theaters.

Posting the Cast List: All actors are extremely concerned about when they will find out their parts. Let the auditionees know exactly when and where the list will be posted, which roles are leads and which are ensemble parts, and what the rehearsal commitment is for each part of the cast. If this is in a school situation, try to post

NETC Awards Ceremony

continued from previous page

The Leonides A. Nickole Theatre Educator of the Year Award will be presented to **Stephen Berenson** and **Brian McEleney**, Co-Directors of Trinity Rep Conservatory, Providence, Rhode Island. Under the leadership of Berenson and McEleney, Trinity Rep Conservatory has distinguished itself not only for a passionate commitment to excellence in teaching the technical skills of performance, but also for creating a nurturing and creative atmosphere in which their students can flourish. Known for the joy they bring to their teaching, they focus on the needs of their students in developing their powers as actors. Under their leadership, graduates of the conservatory have gone on to careers, not only in the Trinity company, but also throughout the country. McEleney and Berenson have cultivated what was a two-year non-degree program into a flourishing and prestigious MFA, in consortium with Brown University.

In addition, winners of the Marie Phillips Volunteer Award, the Moss Hart Memorial Award, the John Gassner Playwriting Award and the Aurand Harris Award for Children's Plays will be announced at a later date.

the cast list near the end of the day so that people are not upset all during classes. We recommend that you post it on a weekend or Friday night so that there is time for everyone to accept the director's choices.

2. Basic Audition Format

This format follows many of the procedures above but is simplified because you are dealing with younger auditionees and/or first time auditioners. This format is used mostly with auditioning huge casts of between 90 and 250.

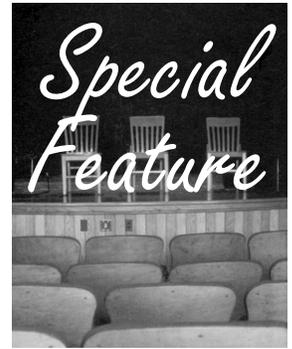
1. Scripts are available in the library five weeks before auditions.
2. Sign up is the same as above.
3. Timed slots are the same as above.
4. Picture and numbers. This is the same as above except an Alphabet letter is added before the number to make it easier to track the groups as they rotate.
5. Rotating groups. Since this is for a large group of young children, the groups are lead from room to room where there is an adult helping with lines to read, a musician to practice the audition songs several times, and another adult to practice the simple movement that is required by the choreographer. The music audition for a large group can be simply a few measures of a familiar song such as "America the Beautiful" or "You're A Grand Old Flag" After the group has visited each station (about 10 minutes each) then the auditioners go to the stage and audition.

6. Simple informational audition sheet. Stage, music and directors rate singing, acting and dancing on a 1 to 4 scale with short comments to help remember the auditioner. Color coded pencils or pens aid in identifying who said what on the form. Be specific and write as many comments as possible on each candidate. You will need this for the casting later.

Whatever the form, make sure to keep careful track of every auditioner, what they wanted to audition for, how many times they read and sang and if they are chorus or lead material. Enter the information into the computer as soon as possible. Check and recheck that you have cast every child and that no one has been left out.

The audition process is always difficult—and even more so with a large cast. It is important that a producer be at the casting table to help organize papers. If you strive to listen and watch intently during auditions, and aim for a positive and cheerful atmosphere, then the process will be as stress free as possible, and you as a director can get on with the more joyful procedure of putting the whole show together.

(The final installment of this article will appear in the November, 2003 Issue)





President's Message

by Linda Murphy, President, NETC Board of Directors

Wasn't it just yesterday that I began my term of office as President of NETC's Board of Directors? It was at the 2001 Boston Convention. We celebrated our 50th Anniversary and looked forward to NETC's next 50 years!

During my two-year term, I've happily welcomed six new faces to the Board table. And, what pleases me most is the entire Board's collaborative energy supporting the initiative to take these Board meetings of ours "on the road." What I hope my Presidency will be remembered for is its regional outreach efforts. I am applauding the election of NETC's next President, Tom Mikotowicz, who hails from Bangor, Maine. We are the **New England** Theatre Conference and our membership continues to strengthen in every one of our 5 Divisions—in every one of our 6 New England states. My congratulations to all of our elected and re-elected Board members. My sincerest appreciation to my Board of Directors' colleagues—my friends—at NETC.

Looking ahead to the Providence convention this November at the Biltmore Hotel, I would like to extend a personal invitation to attend our Annual Meeting on Saturday, November 8. Meet the Board, congratulate our new President, and learn about upcoming NETC long range plans and projects. Come join us during the entire weekend of workshops, lectures and events. Saturday night is our Annual Banquet and Awards Ceremony where we'll honor our *Excellence in Theatre Award* winners, Paula Vogel, Eve Ensler, Mary Hartman (Shakespeare & Co.), Boston Playwrights Theatre, Providence Black Repertory Company and ART Institute for Advance Theatre Training. We will also remember the passing of two of our colleagues, Past President and College of Fellows' member, Jerry Collins—and our beloved founder, Elliot Norton.

It is the richest of our traditions, NETC's annual convention—and the best opportunity that I know to share, network, make new friends, see old ones and discover an active role for yourself in NETC's community of theatre artists, educators, practitioners and advocates. Our energy is contagious!

Shakespeare & Company Special Convention Master Class

Pre-registration required—openings limited—credits available!

Kevin Coleman, Director of Shakespeare & Company's Education Program, the largest theatre-in-education program in the Northeast, will be in residence at the 2003 NETC Convention in Providence RI, November 6 and 7, sharing his vast expertise in teaching Shakespeare.

In keeping with the convention theme, "Theatre: the Essential Art," Coleman's teachers' master class will embody the pedagogy and artistic vision at the core of the Shakespeare & Company philosophy, *i.e.*, Shakespeare's theatrical texts as dynamic keys to the full range of human experience. Sometimes called "Stop Teaching Shakespeare", the workshop scheduled for Thursday evening, and all-day Friday, responds to high school teachers' need for more strategies, tools and rationale to meet Shakespeare *on his own terms—performance!*

Coleman has acted in, and directed, numerous productions on the various stages of the company's home in Lenox, Massachusetts, as well as teaching text analysis, acting, scene study, stage combat, clown and directing in the company's renowned education programs. He annually directs the New England touring productions, and oversees the school residency programs, which reach students from elementary through college. Most recently Kevin appeared on the Shakespeare & Company stage as the clown in the 2003 production of

King Lear, (starring another NETC featured performer, Jonathan Epstein, in the title role.)

This workshop is appropriate for high school teachers of Shakespeare, drama directors and teaching artists at all levels.

NETC is happy to be able to offer this master class (costing hundreds of dollars elsewhere) for a mere \$50 fee (\$75 for non-members). In addition, high school teachers in all six New England states may be eligible for earning professional development credits. *Special note to Massachusetts High school teachers—Massachusetts teachers wishing to obtain C.E.U.s are required to attend a one-hour session prior to the first session Thursday evening to outline the nature and format for a required paper that will fulfill final assessment criteria.* For further information on earning professional development credits, contact Linda Potter at Lpotter@mail.ab.mec.edu.

Convention goers planning to take advantage of this extraordinary opportunity are urged to register immediately. Pre-registration is required, and participation is limited to 20 individuals.

Shakespeare master class pre-registration, as well as registration for the entire convention, is available on-line at www.netconline.org. Go to "conventions" and find the hyperlink for "convention brochure."

Expanding Our Options

A slew of new performance venues have started to bridge the gaps in the greater Boston theater scene.

Anyone who has tried to mount a theater production in Boston within the past few decades is vastly aware of the difficulty in finding space to perform. In our efforts to find new and available venues, we have sought out churches, parks, and even piano factories that we could transform into viable performance spaces, and to varying degrees of success.

It had been just shy of 80 years since any theatres have been built in Boston, but creative Bostonian artists have always found ways to introduce new spaces onto the scene. The number of new venues and reincarnations that are popping up all over the city now though, is quite staggering. This boom is on all fronts; smaller, mid size (finally!), and grand theatres. The large grand theatres will continue to put Boston back into its slot at the right hand of Broadway, and the mid size theatres will allow many theatre companies that were bursting at the gills to grow, therefore freeing up space for the struggling small companies to find homes. Below is a sampling of our new options:

The Boston Opera House: The 2800 seat crown jewel of Boston is finally getting the renovation it deserves. Close to \$40 million dollars will be spent by Broadway in Boston/Clear Channel Entertainment to bring this behemoth back to its original splendor and beyond. Everything from the proscenium forward is getting a 100% historic restoration. Everything from the proscenium back is getting torn down, and turned into a state of the art stage house worthy of the technical challenges of *The Lion King*. It is slated to open in July of 2004 (just in time for the Democratic National Convention). www.broadwayinboston.com

The Modern Theatre: Independent philanthropist, Bobby Sager, saved this historic theater from destruction after the city invested a hefty chunk of money to keep the roof from caving in during last winter's snowstorms. The theater is facing a \$10 million renovation. Both the Modern and the Opera House have recently achieved historic landmark status to protect them as theaters. www.bostonpreservation.org

The Paramount Theatre: A new facelift helps incorporate this into the new and expanded theatre district. Talk is still circulating as to who will renovate it, and how it will be renovated, but the ball is rolling.

The Boston Center for the Arts/Huntington Theatre Company: These two have been working together for a couple of years with the City of Boston and the Druker Group to build two new theaters next to the existing BCA. The Virginia Wimberly Theatre will be a 360 seat proscenium theatre, and there will be a yet unnamed 200 seat flexible black box. The space will also feature rehearsal and office space. These are both slated to open in fall of 2004. www.bu.edu/huntington/newtheatres

The Constellation Center: This new arts complex is slated to open in the heart of Kendall Square, and although it

is more geared to music performance, it will be a state of the art option for small cabaret shows and other bare bones theatrical endeavors. It will consist of a large concert hall (800-1000 seats), a second mid-size hall, a "Jewel Box" for intimate events, and a hall for lecture, seminar, and special events. www.constellationcenter.org

The New Institute of Contemporary Arts: The ICA is in the works to build a new facility down at Fan Pier next to the Moakley Courthouse that will contain a brand new 300-seat performing arts theatre. This space will have two walls of floor-to-ceiling glass looking out at sweeping panoramic harbor views. It is a gorgeous space with very unique design and production challenges. www.icaboston.org/information/thenewica

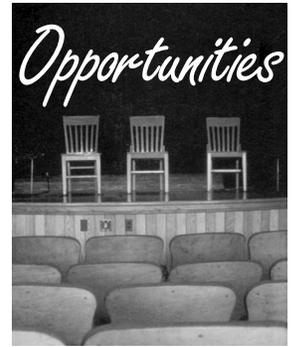
Midway Studios: As part of the plan to appease the artists' colonies that were being uprooted by all of the development surrounding the Fort Point Channel area, the City of Boston, in collaboration with the Artists of Fort Point, the Channel Center Residential LLC, and the Fort Point Development Collaborative have designated 200,000 square feet of mixed-use space for an arts complex. In addition to 89 live and work studios for visual artists (priced below market rates) and many other visual arts facilities, there will also be a 200 seat fully equipped black box theatre, a 50 seat black box/rehearsal space, and a smaller rehearsal hall/classroom.

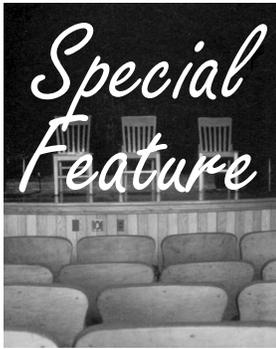
The Arts Center at the Arsenal on the Charles: This is another full arts complex in Watertown that has many different performance and support spaces. There will be a 380 seat proscenium theatre space, a flexible seating black box, classroom/rehearsal spaces, and a scene shop, as well as visual artist workspace and galleries. This is slated to be the new home of The New Repertory Theatre of Newton. www.watertownarts.org

The Market Theater: This exciting new theater company shuttered its doors after just 18 months in order to prepare itself for a brand new complex at Zero Arrow St. The Carr Foundation is spending just shy of \$20 million to build the new space that will include a 350 seat theater, associated rehearsal rooms, and office space for the Carr Foundation, Market Theater, and other Cambridge non-profit organizations and foundations. www.markettheater.org

In addition to the new spaces that are being introduced to the scene, there have been many improvements happening at existing venues. Just a couple of summers ago the Boston University Theatre, home of the Huntington Theatre Company and the BU School of Theatre Arts had a facelift to beautify the interior of the 80 year old theatre. The Cutler Majestic at Emerson College just emerged from a \$10 million complete restoration project coupled with the building of a state of the art production complex that contains two new black boxes. The Colonial is also facing historic renovations in its lobby spaces.

With this new palette of performance venues, it is now the responsibility of the Boston theater community to fulfill the promise of an expanded theater scene, and the responsibility of the greater Boston community to support and embrace that promise.





What is the NETC College of Fellows?

The College of Fellows is an honorary group of NETC members who have been recognized for their long time commitment to excellence in theatre throughout New England. The College was created in 1985 replacing the Advisory Council.

The COF also functions in an advisory capacity to the Board of Directors and Executive Committee when matters are referred to College for consideration.

The members of the COF also serve as a living history of NETC.

The College meets in the spring to consider nominations for new members based upon the nominees' involvement and contributions to NETC and New

England Theatre. New members are inducted as part of the awards ceremony held at the annual NETC convention. The College meets socially during the convention and conducts any necessary business.

The COF contributes a theatre history based program at the annual convention.

This year's is titled: "The Only Good Burlesque Show Is A Dead Burlesque Show: The Rise and Fall of Boston's Old Howard Theatre."

The members of the COF live in the six New England states, Kansas, Florida, and New York. COF members include 15 past presidents and eight original incorporators of NETC.

NETC COLLEGE OF FELLOWS

The College of Fellows is an honorary group of NETC members who have been recognized for their long time commitment to excellence in theatre throughout New England.

Sigurd A. Jensen, Dean	Connor, George C. x †
Armin, Jeanne N. †	Contrucci, Judith
Babbitt, Donald	Devlin, Joyce *
Balch, Marston ‡ †	Dirks, Arthur L.
Batcheller, Joseph D. x * †	Emery, Joy
Blackman, Eugene J. ‡ *	Garvey, Sheila H.
Brann, Vincent C.	George, David Allen *
Bronson, Bernice	Grana, James.
Cavanagh, Mary F. †	Grant, Harlan F. ‡ x †
Cole, Edward C. ‡ x †	Guinan, Mary E. †
Collins, Sherwood C. x * †	Hart, Kitty Carlisle
Combs, Charles E.	Horrigan, Barbara L.

Hutchinson, P. William	Romano, Michael A.
Janney, Kay Print	Rootes, Minor R.
Jensen, Sigurd A. *	Rousseau, Richard T.
Juliano, Joseph Jr. *	Sankus, Patricia H.
Kirshner, Virginia ‡ x * †	Scharff, Thomas E. *
Korty, Carol	Shoemaker, Roger *
Leger, Norman	Stump, Walter
Letendre, Donald	Thorsen, Steve *
Marsh, Peter	Titcomb, Caldwell x
Matheson, Barbara B.	Warye, Richard J.
McDonald, Robert A. *	Welch, John B.
Mendelson, Steven M. †	Williams, Henry B. ‡ * †
Mikotowicz, Tom	Zappala, Henry W.
Murphy, Linda	
Nickole, Leonidas A. *	‡ NETC Incorporators
Norton, Elliot ‡ x * †	x COF Charter Member
Perry, Elaine Foster	July 22, 2003
Philips, Marie L. ‡ x †	* Past NETC President
Ramczyk, Suzanne M.	† Deceased

The Forum

continued from page 11

visions be hampered by a dialect or accent done poorly? Whichever, what a treat it might be to actually "hear" the world of a play, rather than only "see" it!

—Suzanne M. Ramczyk, Ph.D.

If you would like to respond to the above essay in any way, please send your thoughts to sramczyk@bridgew.edu no later than October 24, 2003. Our only requirement is that you do not exceed 150 words. Your response will be published in the next edition of "The Forum."

Further, if you are interested in writing your own "Forum" essay, please contact Suzanne Ramczyk at the above email address. Such essays may address any aspect of theatre in the professional, college and university, education, child and youth, or community theatre realms. What a wonderful opportunity to "get is said!"

Theatre in the Open Presents...

Salem's Daughters

by Wendy Lement

Saturdays & Sundays, September 6–28, 2:00 pm

Admission: \$5.00

Maudslay State Park, Newburyport

More information available at www.theaterintheopen.org

Description:

For a group of girls on the brink of their teens, the daily routines of Salem Village in 1692 offered little outlet for fantasy. This chilling story examines the strange phenomenon of the Salem Witch Trials through the eyes of the young women who did much of the accusing. Folk tales of spells and voodoo become entangled with the ignorance of the village elders, and the girls begin to scream...

Possible Location for Maine Convention 2004!

On July 22nd, Jeff Watts of Lawrence High School in Fairfield, Maine and Tom Mikotowicz of the University of Maine drove to Camden/Rockport area of Maine to the Samoset Resort to examine the facilities as a possible site for the Maine 2004 conference. Judy Wasson, sales representative of the resort, provided a tour of the facilities, which have recently undergone a multi-million dollar renovation.

As a possible site, the Samoset seems ideal for the type of focused conference that will occur in Maine. This conference would be a smaller, one-event type of workshop, yet retaining the extremely popular high-school Olympiad. There are approximately five or six rooms for simultaneous meetings/workshops, ranging in size from small to large. In addition, there

is ample display area for theatrical vendors and schools in a very large adaptable room. Of course, there is a large tri-partite ballroom, which can accommodate workshops in each of its adaptable spaces, as well as the banquet, once the inner walls are opened up.

The look of the Samoset is exquisite, located on the sea with a rustic interior and very modern exterior buildings, including a health club, swimming pools, a formal restaurant, and a somewhat less formal grille. It is fairly situated far up the Maine coast, and would penetrate into the state farther than one in Portland, or in the Western mountains. Also, it would serve a part of the New England region that has not yet been served. Anyone interested can see the facility online at: www.samoset.com

Currently, planning is in the initial stages of development a contract with the resort. If all goes well, the November 2004 convention will be at the Samoset Resort in Central Maine!



Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Running a Convention, But Were Too Shy to Ask. . . .

Those of us who have been attending conferences and auditions over the years look forward to seeing the same smiling faces volunteering at the registration desk, but do you ever wonder how and when these people eat lunch? Or how about those “important” NETC people who get to sit with the celebrities at the awards banquet? What did they do to get to mingle with the stars?

Answer—they *volunteered*. For over fifty years New England Theatre Conference has relied on volunteer talent and efforts to accomplish its programs. Maybe this year is your turn to join in the fun.

The convention planners are compiling a list of tasks and times just right for first time volunteers. Whether you can be available for a day or an hour or two, your presence will be valued. Among the openings are:

Registration desk—from any time Thursday through Saturday, brief or long chunks of time. Take money and meet old friends. It shouldn't be a problem for most of us.

Lunch service—we are looking into possibility of selling box lunches Friday and Saturday for conventioners on the run in our action-packed schedule. All that is required is to take the money and hand out the lunch.

Trinity Theatre tours—if you are planning on going on one of the tours (Friday afternoon, Saturday morning) of Trinity Repertory Theatre and already know the way from the hotel, you would be the ideal guide for out-of-towners.

The **Theatre Olympiad** for high school students is going to be bigger and better than ever. If you would like to be part of this exciting introduction to theatre with young people, maybe you would like to help with the distribution of pizzas and sodas at the Thursday evening teen social. Or perhaps share the buzz at the awards ceremony Friday afternoon.

Strike and set up—So much of theatre is just getting the stuff loaded in while something else is moving out! The exhibitors as well as some of our presenters will appreciate some helping hands and strong backs as they struggle to strike and set-up in our condensed presentation schedule. As with all other volunteer tasks, this does not require a major commitment of time—just a reliable, prompt someone to serve for a specified, short spur.

Greeting and hosting celebrities is your opportunity to meet the famous and accomplished. Simply show up at the appointed time and place, walk over to your celebrity and say, “Welcome to the New England Theatre Conference.” The conference planners will have arranged where to bring them and to whom to introduce them.

Interested? Please contact Ann Mare Shea (ashea@worchester.edu) with listing of available time(s) and type of work you would like to contribute. Our list of tasks will grow as the time approaches. Your contribution will help make this convention a success!

Who's Who at NETC

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Linda Murphy, President, *Huntington Theatre Company*
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 High School*
Tom Mikotowicz, Executive Secretary,
University of Maine
Hank Zappala, NETC Management,
Venture Comm Associates, Inc.

DIVISION DIRECTORS

Youth Theatre Division

Richard King, *Beverly Public Schools*
Nina Schuessler, *Harwich Junior Theatre*

Secondary School Theatre Division

Linda Potter, Chair, *Blanchard Memorial School*
David Kaye, *University of New Hampshire*

College/University Theatre Division

Anne Marie Shea, Chair, *Worcester State College*
Frans Rijnbout, *Regis College*
Luke Sutherland, *Community College of Rhode Island*

Community Theatre Division

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

Professional Theatre Division

David Ramsey, Chair, *Lakes Region
Summer Theater*
Lisa Antonecchia, *Huntington Theatre Company*
Dana Knox, *Broadway in Boston*

Director-At-Large

Kevin Russell, *Arts Boston*

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Summer Theatre Auditions

Joseph Juliano, Jr., *Hamden Public Schools*

2003 Providence Convention

Suzanne Ramczyk, *Bridgewater State College*
Frans Rijnbout, *Regis College*
Ann Marie Shea, *Worcester State*
Luke Sutherland, *Community College
of Rhode Island*

NETC/New England Theatre Journal

Stuart Hecht, *Boston College*

Long Range Strategic Plan

Dr. Suzanne M. Ramczyk, *Bridgewater
State College*

College of Fellows, Dean

Sigurd Jensen, *Emeritus Southern Connecticut
State University*

Annual Excellence in Theatre Awards

Wendy Lement, *Regis College*

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*

USITT Liaison

Crystal Tiala, *Boston College*

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