

**OREGON SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
March 7, 2008**

**PRESENT:**

**Board:** Karen Allan, Mary Arnstad, Ray Bacchetti, George Bell, Bertie Bialek, Rick Bleiweiss, Susan Cain, Kevin Cartwright, Yogen Dalal, Sid DeBoer, Bill Findlay, Bobbie Foster, Louise Gund, Lyn Hennion, Paul Hill, Peter Koehler, Jr., Rudd Johnson, Ginny Lang, Kathryn Ma, Celia Meese, Jim Risser, Angelica Ruppe, Nancy Tait, Jerry Taylor, Roy Vinyard, Noell Webb, Elisabeth Zinser

**Trustees:** Chuck Butler, Beth Cotner, Kelly Meldrum, Bill Nichols, Fred Rehmus, Mick Seidl

**Staff:** Linda Fern, Joan Langley, Paul Nicholson, Mallory Pierce, Bill Rauch, Peter Thomas, Jerry Roos, Bruce Wand

**Guests:** Sarah Brown, Rob Melrose, Carolyn Peake, Roberta Stebbins

**ABSENT:**

**Board:** Julie Dixon, Mort Friedkin, Jody Patton, Guy Saperstein, Brenda Williams

**Trustees:** Robert Porter, Dan Thorndike

**A. Meeting Convened:** President Jerry Taylor called the meeting to order and a quorum was noted. Taylor asked if there were any additions or corrections to the Minutes of the last meeting.

**Motion by Angelica Ruppe, second by Susan Cain to ratify the Minutes of the January 25, 2008 meeting. Carried unanimously.**

**B. President's Report:** Taylor reported the Festival is off to a wonderful season. He sees many young people attending performances and credits Joan Langley, Director of Education, for her fine work in educating the younger audience members. Taylor added that he enjoyed the energy of the students when he attended a recent performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Taylor introduced Sarah Brown, President of the Soroptimist International of Ashland. Brown presented the Festival and the FAIR Program with a check for \$25,100. Soroptimist partnered with the Festival to rent pillows and blankets for the 108 performances on the Elizabethan stage.

**C. Tudor Guild Report:** Carolyn Peake, Tudor Guild liaison, introduced Roberta Stebbins, President of the Tudor Guild. Stebbins presented the Festival with the first installment of their \$180,000 pledge, in the amount of \$80,000. Peake reported the Tudor Guild Gift Shop has a lot of new merchandise relating to the 2008 season. She encouraged everyone to come and visit the shop.

**D. Endowment Trustees Report:** Fred Rehmus, President of the Endowment Fund, announced that this was Beth Cotner's last Board meeting, as her term has ended. Cotner has supported the Festival for many years and her presence will be missed. Kelly Meldrum from Palo Alto, California, has been appointed as a new Endowment Trustee. Rehmus reported the large cap markets have dropped almost 10%; however, performance is 2.5% better than expected. Rehmus credits the fund managers for doing a great job and for the strong diversification of the portfolio.

**E. Issues from the Field:** Paul Nicholson, Executive Director, noted that Tim Bond, former Associate Artistic Director for 10 years, is now the Producing Artistic Director of Syracuse Stage and the Syracuse University Department of Drama. Syracuse Stage has just hired a former

OSF intern from 1981, Jeffrey Woodward, as its new Managing Director. The American Performing Arts Conference will be held June 11-14 in Denver, CO. This will be the first time all performing arts organizations will be together in one venue. Four thousand participants are expected; the focus will be on the upcoming Presidential elections and looking at the positions the candidates have on performing arts. Bill Rauch, Artistic Director, will be serving on a panel discussion; Nicholson will also be in attendance. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) had previously decided to cancel all site visits because of budget issues. Site visits included talking with artistic leaders, meeting with Board members, attending performances and then writing a report on their findings. Theatre Communications Group (TCG) expressed concerns about this decision and the NEA may reconsider. Nicholson commented on staff concerns regarding the recession and gas prices; staff will continue to monitor the situation and will keep the Board informed.

**ARTISTIC PRESENTATION:** Jeff Whitty, playwright for *The Further Adventures of Hedda Gabler*, provided a brief talk on his background. Whitty was born and raised in Coos Bay, Oregon; attended the University of Oregon where he studied acting. He moved to New York in 1993 to work as an actor and writer; however, writing became more interesting to him. Whitty is the playwright for *Avenue Q*, which won a Tony Award. Whitty shared that when he writes, he discovers the characters as he goes along; for *Hedda* the doors kept opening with respect to the souls of the characters.

#### **STRATEGIC ISSUES:**

**1. Striving for Artistic Excellence (Goal 1):** Rauch reported on the season's first four plays. He feels the season is vibrant and diverse of palate in themes and color of the work and is very proud of the work on stage. Opening went very smoothly and he encouraged Board members to see the all the plays. The Festival is making an emotional connection with the veterans through *Welcome Home, Jenny Sutter*. *Fences* is a great production and is doing very well. *Clay Cart* is transporting people to a new world; this is the most joyful piece Rauch has ever done. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was a struggle to get to the age appropriate format. He noted that decisions are made a year earlier as to which plays will be most age appropriate for school groups. The Director, Mark Rucker, wanted a contemporary and hip play, but when it got to on-stage rehearsals, there was a gap in the age appropriateness. Colleagues worked very hard to collaborate getting it ready for opening. Many costumes and choreography were changed. Rauch tried to protect both the artistic process and the relationships with teachers and schools systems. The net result was we reset the age rating to middle schools and up. This was a learning process for Rauch. Other updates included staffing announcements- Scott Kaiser is now Director of Company Development; John Sipes has accepted a position in Knoxville, Tennessee; commissioning work continues with Lisa Loomer working on a play for OSF; Maria Headley, a novelist, has started a program called The Upstart Crow Project, where the most creative women playwrights in the U.S. have been asked to write plays based on Shakespeare works; The U.S. History Cycle will announce the first participating playwrights in June; and The Black Swan Lab is a program Rauch hopes to launch next year which involves a gathering place for new play development.

Rauch concluded his report by announcing the 2009 season. His goal was to have Shakespeare performed in all three theatres, continue to commit to non-Western classics, have new plays performed in all three theatres, and have an American classic and an American musical. He also wants to stage a world premier in the Angus Bowmer Theatre, the first European classic not written by Shakespeare in the New Theatre and the first play written by a person of color on the Elizabethan Stage; his goal was to select plays that can be in direct conversation with one another. The 2009 season will be: *Macbeth*, *The Music Man*, *Equivocation*, *Paradise Lost* and *Death and the King's Horseman* in the Angus Bowmer Theatre, *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, *The Servant of Two Masters*, *All's Well That Ends Well* in the New Theatre, and *Henry VIII*, *Don Quixote* and *Much Ado About Nothing* on the Elizabethan Stage.

The 2009 season will be a week longer than normal, as was 2008; we will examine this to see if it should become the norm.

**2. Developing our Audience Partnership (Goal 4):** Alan Brown, Marketing Consultant, presented the results of the 2007 audience survey which was both in-venue and mail-in. The Festival is on a regular cycle of surveying and is able to look at data for the last 27 years, which few cultural organizations have. A final report will be made available later next month. Mallory Pierce, Director of Marketing and Communications, reported ticket sales for the season as a whole are slightly below last year at this time. We have budgeted for 87% capacity this year with a 5.2% increase in revenue. Spring sales are very strong but summer and fall sales are down. It appears that patrons are purchasing their tickets closer to their arrival date. Membership is up for new and returning members.

**3. Dealing with Space and Facilities Challenges (Goal 11):** Nicholson announced to the Board that staff leadership believes it would be best, given the current economic situation and the reduced working capital position, to postpone the new Production Building. He will make a recommendation at the June Board meeting whether or not to continue the Bricks Renovation that had been previously authorized to start in November 2008. Rauch commented that he supports the decision but noted there is significant organizational stress for many people who have to work in crowded conditions; there is also high demand for education and rehearsal spaces. There is clearly a need for some kind of physical expansion and it is urgent. Our expectation is that we will integrate space needs into our new Long Range Plan.

**4. Capital Campaign:** Nicholson commented that once the Long Range Plan has been completed we will want to form an ad hoc Board committee called the Needs Assessment Committee, to look at the needs of the Festival for space and funding. That committee's work will lead to a campaign feasibility study. The hope is that the capital campaign will begin in June of 2010 if the study shows it is feasible. 2010 is the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Festival. The Capital Campaign will include Endowment, artistic and marketing initiatives and facility needs.

**5. Creating a Supportive Company Environment (Goal 2):** Janet Shalda, Director of Human Resources, reported on the longevity of company members. Two hundred thirty-seven company members have worked at the Festival for 5 seasons or more. The awards ceremony will take place at the next Company Call on April 1<sup>st</sup>; Board members and Trustees are welcome to attend. She also briefly reviewed the OSF compensation plan and noted that approximately 10% of company members are now at or above the top of the range for their position. The Human Resources Committee is examining this issue and will present recommendations at the June Board meeting.

**6. Ensuring Fiscal Health (Goal 6) and Creating Strong Development Relationships (Goal 7):** Angelica Ruppe, Finance Committee Chair, reviewed the audit process and report; the result was a clean audit with minimal adjustments. The Reserves Subcommittee continues to meet to develop a policy on the Festival's reserves. Jerry Roos, Director of Administration and Finance, reviewed the financial report for 2007, which is final per the audit. Earned income for 2007 was \$18,725,000; total operating expenses were \$24,706,000; total contributed income \$5,931,000; net loss to reserves is approximately \$50,000. Artistic Director transition costs totaled \$256,000. The activity statement for the three months to January 2008 shows the following projections for the year: earned income \$19,984,000; operating expenses \$26,639,000; total contributed income \$6,563,000; net loss to reserves is projected to be \$93,000.

Peter Thomas and Peter Koehler, Jr., reported the latest estimates for contributed income. The Allen Foundation awarded the Festival a three-year \$100,000 per year grant. This is the highest amount this Foundation gives and the first time for a multi-year grant. The annual Bowmer Society campaign is set to begin and is using a \$60,000 matching challenge. Darlene Kruse has retired from the Development Department after 27 seasons with the Festival.

**7. Developing a Diverse, Fully-Informed Board (Goal 9):** Ray Bacchetti, Chair of the Board Governance Committee, reported that the last Board self-evaluation survey was completed 18-24 months ago. We expect to undertake the survey again after the Governance Committee has reviewed the questions. He noted that the Theatre Communications Group (TCG) has published a study about theatre boards and the committee will review this report as well. Bacchetti also announced the list of nominees for election to the Board, the Board members who have agreed to a second term and the list of proposed officers. He will nominate these at the Annual Meeting that will occur immediately following the close of the Board meeting.

**8. Expanding OSF Diversity (Goal 10):** Nicholson reported that a search is currently underway for a new diversity consultant. Two candidates have already been interviewed and a third candidate is scheduled soon. Diane Burbie, from Los Angeles, California, has been hired as the interim diversity consultant. The members of the two interview teams are a diverse group of company members from throughout the Festival. The issue of diversity has taken on a bigger profile since Rauch's arrival. The consultant will provide individual coaching and give training on many diversity issues. Rauch noted that he does not attend a meeting where diversity is not mentioned. There is a high focus on recruitment, hiring and retention at the Festival. Discussions are ongoing regarding how to encourage the community to support diversity. Nicholson commented that he met with the Ashland Chief of Police approximately six months ago to discuss profiling and to discuss the ongoing training the police have had on diversity issues.

**Forum for Non-Agenda Items:** Nicholson reminded the Board that the Festival's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary is coming in 2010. Over the next 18 months, there will be more planning and discussions regarding the celebrations.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ray Bacchetti  
Secretary