



**STAGE
DIRECTORS AND
CHOREOGRAPHERS
SOCIETY**

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 58

NOV/DECEMBER 2010

your source for important notifications of all Union matters



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VOTE - IT MATTERS

News from the **Executive Director** by LAURA PENN

As the Haitian proverb says "there are mountains beyond mountains." In our country, and indeed around the world, there is much work to be done.

I am counting on the fact that by the time you read this you will have recently exercised your civic duty by casting your vote on Election Day this November 2, 2010. What a race it has been - locally, nationally – and as I write this I can say I find the uncertainty rather unsettling. As the Haitian proverb says "there are mountains beyond mountains." In our country, and indeed around the world, there is much work to be done. Here's hoping. (More on voting at the end of this letter.)

In NYC on behalf of our Membership, we try to do our part day-by-day. And in between solving problems, anticipating brush fires and planning for the future, we are buoyed by knowing that even with the pressure continuing to weigh on nearly every facet of our communities, great work is taking place in rehearsal halls and on stages across the countries. Directors and Choreographers are hard at work in coffee shops and studios, with designers, writers, collaborators, funders, investors and partners. New plays and musicals are taking shape, directors and choreographers are delving into the depths of classics, and Members, youthful in spirit and/or age, push the form itself in space and time and content. We continue to be watchful of employment patterns and are hopeful the decline is leveling off. If this is true, then of course the next step will be to rebuild – employment as well as our Pension and Health Plans.

We recently completed our negotiations with the League of Off-Broadway theatres. We found our bargaining partners to be a dedicated group of producers, both commercial and non-profit. The talks were tough and intense, creative and fair. Your team was impressive - led by **Leigh Silverman, Chay Yew and Dan Knechtges** (for a complete report read Barbara Wolkoff's article on page 4). It is in everyone's best interest that we fight for Off-Broadway to thrive. Its place in the eco-system is crucial. These talks complete this cycle of our major negotiations, and then it starts all over again next year with Broadway followed by LORT in 2012.

As contract negotiations and administration of agreements take precedent on a daily basis, we continue to find time to ensure SDC is present in the larger theatrical community. We keep an eye out for the many ways in which we can participate and influence a strengthening of the industry and the craft.

In September we celebrated Broadway Salutes for the second year, an event designed to



André De Shields and Chita Rivera at Broadway Salutes. Photo: Bruce Gliikas

recognize the myriad of artists, technicians and craftspeople who have worked for 25, 35, and 50+ years in their respective theatrical crafts on Broadway. **André De Shields** emceed for us this year and the program was directed by **Marc Bruni**.

Chita Rivera also joined in the celebration. Next year I will serve again on the committee with a cross section of colleagues from the Coalition of Broadway Unions and Guilds, but will step down as co-chair. It has been an honor these past two years to be part of establishing this event. This collaboration between unions and employers, in this case COBUG and the League, is an example of how we can all work together beyond the bargaining table to support the field. Today there is a list of more than 2,400 people who are part of the Broadway Salutes community!



Top Left: 2010 Broadway Salutes celebration in Times Square. Top Right: Nina Lannan, Daniel Adamian, Laura Penn and Tony DePaulo. Bottom: Recognized Member Hope Clarke (middle in white) with guests Michelle Robinson, Rosa Curry and Randy Davis (from left to right). Photos: Bruce Glikas

We recently returned from Chicago where we presented the second Fichandler Award to **Michael Halberstam**. The evening included a panel discussion on Directing, Chicago-style and was followed by a great reception. This issue includes Michael's acceptance remarks.

You have hopefully often heard SDC and others within the industry reference the Actors Fund. If you are like me you may have smiled and thought quietly to yourself, "nice," and then gone about your business. Well, not me anymore. I am learning that SDC needs to help our Membership access the resources of the Actors Fund. Seriously. The name is the name and probably will always be so, but it does not do justice to the services the Actors Fund provides to anyone – yes, ANYONE – within the entertainment industry, family and partners included. You are going to find the Actors Fund referenced more often in our communication to you. For example, this month I committed to trying to help us all understand what Health Care reform means to us and how we can expect it to begin affecting people in the short term. No need to reinvent the wheel – see ["Every Artist Insured"](#) by The Artists Healthy Insurance Resource Center. In addition to information in layman's terms about Health Care reform, you will also see that there is a movement to ensure all artists have health insurance by 2014. If the Actors Fund is leading the charge, I feel certain they will make this happen. SDC needs to be helpful to the Actors Fund who in turn can provide you with services well beyond our capacity. So check it out. It will be time well spent.

And finally – vote now. Cast your votes for your Union leadership. Ballots were mailed (if you've misplaced yours call us we will have another in your hand immediately). Your Executive Board vote is one of the most important rights you can exercise as a Union Member. Not only because it is this body that represents you, sets policy and charts the course for the Union, but because we are unique as a creative Union – over 50% of our Membership works every year. That means over 50% of our Membership should be our baseline for elections. Not 30%, not 20%, which is what can be the case in local and national civic elections. Let's be better than average.

Vote – it matters.



Executive Board ballots have been mailed and are due SDC office by 3 p.m. on Monday, November 15th.

Every vote counts!

SDC's Executive Board

OFFICERS

Karen Azenberg
President

Larry Carpenter
Executive V. P.

Kathleen Marshall
Vice President

Ethan McSweeney
Treasurer

Mary B. Robinson
Secretary

REGIONAL
REPRESENTATIVES
Linda Hartzell
Northwest

Tom Moore
Southwest

Ethan McSweeney
Northeast

Richard Hamburger
Southeast

Amy Morton
Midwest

BOARD
Julie Arenal
Rob Ashford
Walter Bobbie
Joe Calarco
Tisa Chang
Edie Cowan
Marcia Milgrom Dodge
Michael J. Garcés
Wendy C. Goldberg
Richard Hamburger
Linda Hartzell
Doug Hughes
Sue Lawless

Paul Lazarus
Tom Moore
Amy Morton
Sharon Ott
Lisa Peterson
Lonny Price
Susan H. Schulman
Oz Scott
Leigh Silverman
Daniel Sullivan
David Warren
Chay Yew

About this year's election...

The Executive Board is made up of 30 Directors and Choreographers working across the country. Five Board members serve as regional representatives and are charged with considering the challenges and concerns of Members working within a specific region (Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, Midwest).

In this year's election, a total of ten Board members will be elected: eight at large, one from the Midwest and one from the Southeast. The candidate running for the Midwest regional rep who receives the most votes in this category will join the Board. The candidate running for the Southeast regional rep who receives the most votes in this category will also be elected.

You may vote for ANY ten candidates.

2010 Executive Board Slate

Julie Arenal
*Incumbent Director/
Choreographer*

David Bell
Director/Choreographer

Jesse Berger
Director

Walter Bobbie
Incumbent Director

Larry Carpenter
Incumbent Director

Jeremy Dobrish
Director

Marcia Milgrom Dodge
*Incumbent Director/
Choreographer*

Timothy Douglas
Director

Angel Gil Orrios
Director

Richard Hamburger
Incumbent Director

Devanand Janki
Director/Choreographer

BJ Jones
Midwest Rep. Director

Moisés Kaufman
Director

Paul Lazarus
Incumbent Director

J Barry Lewis
Southeast Rep. Director

Pam MacKinnon
Director

Art Manke
Director/Choreographer

Amy Morton
*Incumbent Midwest Rep.
Director*

Sharon Ott
*Incumbent Southeast Rep.
Director*

Andy Sandberg
by petition Director

Susan H. Schulman
Incumbent Director

Seret Scott
Director



Do not to take
our collective power
for granted. When our
Union calls and asks for help
– a committee, a panel,
a project, or research
support - say “yes!”

OUR UNION

WE ARE STRONGER

by BILL CASTELLINO, SDC Member

Many of us make our livelihoods on the road. Directors/Choreographers spend months in the regions, touring, on cruise ships, at universities - far from friends, family and the familiar. Nonetheless, we do our best to create good work, develop new professional relationships, and grow as artists. In short, we make the most of it, but the road can be lonely... and stressful.

It is even more stressful without our Union's protection. I recently directed a production in Canada where SDC has no jurisdiction. Such engagements fall under the auspices of Canadian Equity, which I was required to join.

Last June I flew to Toronto and was driven 90 minutes to begin a four week gig. This is a reputable, successful commercial theatre employing many people and enjoying its 25th year of operation. Upon arrival, I was installed in a filthy, substandard apartment above a funeral parlor (Not kidding!). I approached management the next day; I was relocated 45 minutes away and told to pay half the cost of the car rental and all the gas to get to/from work. Both the new “apartment” and car were shared with two others. Rehearsals were in an ice hockey rink with a cement floor without air conditioning. All of this was in violation of my signed contract and contrary to industry standards. When challenged, the producers responded, “If this is unacceptable, leave – just let us know so we can make other arrangements.”

It's the “director's nightmare:” caught between the work and the working conditions. I called SDC and heard sympathetic voices, supportive comments, and genuine compassion. But with no SDC contract there was nothing SDC could do. Out of respect for the project, my colleagues, and the art – I stayed. This was a difficult decision and a debilitating experience; though someday it may be a good (and funny) “war story.” (BTW, Canadian AEA helped to get the car and gas paid.)

It can be tough on the road, but tougher without SDC protection. Without our Union to assure that conditions honor the contractual terms (or at least support us in the fight for such), we may find ourselves alone - living the “director's nightmare.”

Do not to take our collective power for granted. When our union calls and asks for help -- a committee, a panel, a project, or research support – say “yes!” It is the attention that our Union (volunteers, committees, Staff, and Board) gives to the details of negotiations and the enforcement of terms that make our professional lives better. When we play an active role in this process, WE ARE STRONGER! If for no other reason, get involved with SDC to avoid spending the night in an apartment over a funeral parlor!

P.S. Let's get jurisdiction in Canada.

TIER CONTRACT **CHANGES** Effective **January 1, 2011**

by MAURO MELLENO, Director of Contract Affairs

Since the introduction of the SDC Tier contract in January of this year, there have been over 500 contracts filed with the Union. In addition to equitable payments to Directors and Choreographers working under the Tier contract, the Union has been able to make great strides in securing Independent Producer Agreements with many of the Employers/Theatres hiring SDC Members.

Feedback from Members and Theatres has led to some adjustments in the contract. The following changes will be effective January 1, 2011:

CRITERIA FOR TIER PLACEMENT: The Contract will be moving from six (6) tiers to seven (7) tiers. The criteria will remain the same (seating capacity/ ticket price/ number of performances), however, there will be a new tier between the current Tier 1 and Tier 2:

TIER	CAPACITY	TOP TICKET PRICE	NO. OF PERFS
Tier 1	Less Than 100	\$20 or Less	10 or Less
Tier 2	101 - 150	\$21 - 25	11 - 20
Tier 3	151 - 199	\$26 - 29	21 - 24
Tier 4	200 - 299	\$30 - 39	25 - 29
Tier 5	300 - 399	\$40 - 49	30 - 34
Tier 6	400 - 499	\$50 - 59	35 - 39
Tier 7	500+	\$60+	40+

FEES: Theatres whose criteria placed them in the current Tiers 2-6 (soon to be Tiers 3-7) will not see an increase in fees. The additional tier is in response to member and employer concerns that the "leap" from Tier 1 to Tier 2 was too great. In an effort to maintain and/or create jobs, the new Tier 2 was created to provide a smoother transition for producers while maintaining quality standards for members. Tier 2 minimum fees are \$1000 for a Director and \$800 for a Choreographer.

TIER	DIRECTOR	CHOREOGRAPHER
Tier 1 Fee	not less than \$100	not less than \$100
Tier 2 Fee	not less than \$1,000	not less than \$800
Tier 3 Fee	not less than \$1,500	not less than \$1,200
Tier 4 Fee	not less than \$2,500	not less than \$2,000
Tier 5 Fee	not less than \$3,500	not less than \$2,800
Tier 6 Fee	not less than \$4,500	not less than \$3,600
Tier 7 Fee	not less than \$5,500	not less than \$4,400

The Director-Choreographer minimum Salary remains at no less than 150% of the Director minimums.

BILLING: In addition to billing in programs and houseboards, the Agreement will also include billing credit on the show page of the Theatre's website

SHORT-TERM CHOREOGRAPHY ON NON-MUSICALS: New provision. Employers in Tiers 2-7 may employ a choreographer for a non-musical production for 10 days or fewer (which need not be consecutive). The minimum fee for each day or part thereof shall be 10% of the applicable Tier fee for a Choreographer. Pension contribution shall be 8% of the fee paid and a health contribution shall be paid at 50% of the applicable Tier rate. For services required for more than 10 days, a full Choreographer contract shall be filed at the applicable Tier rates.

PENSION & HEALTH CONTRIBUTIONS: There will be no change in pension contributions, which is currently 8% of all compensation. Health contributions per contract will increase as follows:

TIER	HEALTH
Tier 1	\$100 (no change)
Tier 2	\$375 (new tier)
Tier 3	\$400 (from \$350)
Tier 4	\$500 (from \$450)
Tier 5	\$600 (from \$550)
Tier 6	\$700 (from \$650)
Tier 7	\$800 (from \$750)
Academic Tier A	\$375 (from \$100)
Academic Tier B	\$800 (from \$700)



If you have questions regarding the Tier contract or the changes effective January 1, 2011, please contact the appropriate SDC Business Representative below:

Theatres in PA, DE, NY, NJ, NH, VT, ME, CT, MA, RI, please contact **RANDY ANDERSON** (RAnderson@SDCWeb.org)

Theatres in ND, SD, NE, KS, OK, LA, AR, MO, IA, MN, IL, WI, MI, IN, OH, MS, AL, TN, KY, GA, FL, SC, NC, VA, WV, MD, DC, please contact **RENEE LASHER** (RLasher@SDCWeb.org)

Theatres in CA, WA, OR, ID, AZ, NM, UT, TX, NV, CO, WY, MT, AK, HI, please contact **EVAN SHOEMAKE** (EShoemake@SDCWeb.org)



Directing, Chicago-Style panel at Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago.
Photos: Mark Campbell Creative

FOUNDATION UPDATE

by ELLEN RUSCONI, Associate Director of SDCF

As many of you know, SDCF recently presented the Zelda Fichandler Award at Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago. It was a highlight of our season so far. The evening began with a panel of Chicago directors – Seth Bockley, **Timothy Douglas**, **Gary Griffin**, Kimberly Senior, and **Dennis Zacek**, moderated by **Sheldon Patinkin**, followed by the presentation of the Award by **David Cromer** to **Michael Halberstam** and a reception. Thanks to participants and our 150 attendees; you all made it a true celebration.

The Foundation year begins on July 1st and runs through June 30th, mirroring the theatre season, so at November 1st, we are 1/3 of the way through our year. So, in addition to our panel and award presentation in Chicago, what have we accomplished, and what is still to come?

Our Callaway Selection Committee has selected nine finalists – five directors, four choreographers - for this year's Callaway Awards, to be presented at the November 15th Annual Meeting.

We've announced a new Fellowship, the Charles Abbott Fellowship, for an emerging artist to work on a classic musical in a regional theatre in early 2011. We've already awarded three Fellowships this year: **Tea Alagic** was awarded the Denham Fellowship in support of her upcoming production of *The Babbel Project* to be produced by Incubator Arts Project in March, 2011. **Tome Cousin** received our Mike Ockrent Fellowship to observe **George C. Wolfe** direct *A Free Man of Color* at Lincoln Center, and Saheem Ali was awarded our Sir John Gielgud Fellowship to observe **Michael Greif** direct **Tony Kushner's** *Angels in America* at Signature Theatre Company. Each Fellow was selected as a finalist by selection committees made up solely of directors and choreographers; thanks to all selection committee members.

We've just offered our 5th Guest Artist Initiative Opportunity in eleven months. Our 6th opportunity - as a Guest Artist Choreographer - will be announced in the next week or two. Our first Guest Artist, **Kim Weild**, is currently at work at Arizona State University. We plan to include her thoughts on the experience in the January Newsletter.

On October 4th, we held our first discussion on Artistic Leadership, inviting a group of Members for an informal discussion with Greg Kandel of Management Consultants for the Arts. More conversations are being scheduled with others in the industry. Our first One-on-One Conversation with **Annie Kaufmann** and **Jonathan Moscone** exploring the idea of Artistic Leadership, is November 14th, from 1 - 2:30 p.m. Attendance is strictly limited for this event, so please reserve your spot early at Foundation@SDCweb.org.

We've placed eleven Observers on productions around the country – from Broadway to Berkeley – with another fourteen yet to come. We've hosted two DCN's (next topic: Working in Opera on November 30), and we've continued to build community and strengthen connections with other organizations.

Stay tuned for news on events in 2011, including our Symposium, the next Guest Artist offering, further Live On Screen opportunities for experienced artists, and future One-on-Ones.



MICHAEL HALBERSTAM OF WRITERS' THEATER

2010 FICHANDLER AWARD

by LAURA PENN, Executive Director

On October 18th in the city of Chicago, Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation (SDCF), the not-for-profit foundation of Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC), presented Michael Halberstam of Writers' Theatre with the 2010 Zelda Fichandler Award, which recognizes an outstanding director or choreographer who is transforming the regional arts landscape through singular creativity and artistry in theatre. The award heralds accomplishment to date and promise for the future, artistic vision, and deep commitment to a region outside of New York. It carries an unrestricted grant of \$5,000 to the individual recipient.

The Fichandler Selection Committee was comprised of professional directors and choreographers; this year's committee included Sheldon Epps, Wendy C. Goldberg, Sari Ketter, Tom Moore, Jessica Redish, Steve Scott, and Ed Stern. The award is given regionally on a rotating basis. The award complements SDCF's "Mr. Abbott" Award, presented bi-annually in New York to recognize lifetime achievement, and the Joe A. Callaway Award, given annually for distinguished direction and choreography in non-Broadway productions in New York. These three awards are the only awards given to theatre directors and choreographers by their peers.

The award was presented to Mr. Halberstam by David Cromer at Steppenwolf Theatre. The evening began with a panel of Chicago directors, Seth Bockley, Timothy Douglas, Gary Griffin, Kimberly Senior, and Dennis Zacek, moderated by Sheldon Patinkin, discussing the Chicago stage-directing aesthetic and where it is headed in the 21st century. The evening was captured for future podcast through SDCF's online programming series, "SDCF's Masters of the Stage," a collaboration with American Theatre Wing.

Following are excerpted remarks from Executive Director Laura Penn's introduction of the Award, David Cromer's toast to Michael and Michael Halberstam remarks.



Top: Michael Halberstam and David Cromer.
Bottom: Guests attending the Fichandler Award presentation and panel discussion at Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago.

Photos: Mark Campbell Creative

Introductory Remarks by LAURA PENN, Executive Director

Last year the Union celebrated its 50th anniversary. We gave tribute to **Shepard Traube, Bob Fosse, Agnes de Mille**, and all the people who 50 years ago said Directors and Choreographers should join together and create, as they did, a society for the advancement of their art form. They committed themselves to ensuring that Directors and Choreographers have protections as they did their work. We highlighted many of the Union's accomplishments. We also recognized that SDC was founded to work with a narrow, tight group of people who work in defined neighborhood in Manhattan. Today SDC has over 2400 members and associates across the country. Directors and Choreographers are working in all types of theatres. How you make your work today is quite different than the challenges that faced our founders and, as the lines continue to blur between the art forms, your career paths will continue to evolve.

During our 50th year as we celebrated, we positioned ourselves for the future. It is a thrilling and difficult time today and

we are committed to supporting you on your journey. Looking toward the founders of the regional theaters seemed an appropriate way during our 50th year to demonstrate that SDC is a national labor Union. It was **Zelda Fichandler**, in 1950 who said to D.C "here is the spot," here is as good as it gets. Although her work from Arena Stage traveled all across the country, and indeed around the world, it was always D.C and her community that she cared about the most.

As so in establishing this award, we wanted to acknowledge the profound impact the regional theatre founders have had on the field and honor their legacy. The national arts landscape was transformed by their artistry, their passion, and their courage. Through this Award, SDC Foundation recognizes extraordinary individuals who are building upon this legacy by advancing and continuing to transform the theatre through their unique visions and creative work.

Zelda Fichandler, founding Artistic Director of Arena Stage, stands at the forefront of the regional theatre movement. But she

stands with many visionary artists who dedicated themselves and their artistry to communities across the country. Their vision, aesthetic and rigor have brought seminal works to the stage and have profoundly shaped the artistry and careers of actors, designers, writers, directors, cultural policy. Their tenacity and spirit helped build the eco-system that many of our metropolitan areas and indeed rural areas across the country rest on today. It was Zelda, it was **Gordon Davidson**, Nina Vance, Tyrone Guthrie and it was many of you here in Chicago, many of your friends who made this possible; made it possible for countless Directors and Choreographers, indeed artists of all forms to have your lives outside of New York.

We want to call out a particular kind of courage and bravery. We want to encourage these artists. Zelda has reminded me time and time again that it has always been hard to live your life in the American theatre, and it is actually always going to be hard. And yet we feel a sense of urgency right now to support Directors and Choreographers who have



Michael Halberstam

Photo: Mark Campbell Creative

Stratford Festival acting company in Ontario Canada for 25 years. He was profoundly dedicated to education of artists and the principals of company spirit over the reach for stardom. In 1994 I brought him down from Stratford to act at Writers' Theatre in a co-production with Apple Tree theatre in Highland Park. Before we went into rehearsal I asked him what he expected of me in my role as director. He thought for a second and said "Oh well... just keep the stage picture visually interesting, you know, tell the story; keep the pace moving; and stop me from being sentimental." There, in a divinely succinct statement, could be the art of direction.

There is and always has been an urgency to our profession. It has been argued that the human instinct for appreciating art is not a

Acceptance Speech by **MICHAEL HALBERSTAM** 2010 Fichandler Award Winner

Thank you so very much! I am immensely moved and grateful for your trust and faith in presenting me with this award tonight and I will strive to live up to your hopes of future promise. Thank you to SDC! Thank you to everyone with whom I have ever collaborated and thank you David for your poignant introduction.

The greatest advice ever given me as a director came from an actor called Nicolas Pennell. Nicky was a member of the

socially learned experience but an innate one. In fact, it has also recently been theorized that although empathy is not exclusive to humanity, it was perhaps our ability to translate our personal experience through art that allowed homo-sapiens to become dominant.

As our planet becomes increasingly polarized around inflexible ideology and dogma, the need for shared experience and common understanding is becoming about a matter of survival. Where else will people be able to come and dialogue in order to find common ground but within the limitless confines of artistic expression? To paraphrase Kafka, art can serve "as the axe that shatters the frozen sea within us." For me, the axe we wield is the theatre. It is in the theatre that we can provide a place where people can come not to seek answers, but to ask the right questions.

In order to ask the right questions I believe that we should approach rehearsals with absolute fidelity towards text and audience and in order to do so we must apply the same rigorous analysis to ourselves. Can we truly be said to be revealing truth if we only scarcely know ourselves? It is surely too easy for directors and actors to present only the charming, sentimental and loveable aspects of ourselves onstage. And yet, if we vie for the audience's affections we soften conflict and blunt character defect. It is at the heart of human frailty that truth reveals itself most vividly and that dramatic conflict sparks most thrillingly. As artists we must know ourselves integrally and harness our own defects and weaknesses in order to recognize them in the stories we stage for it is only in the total rendering of the human condition that audiences can find themselves. A director's self-knowledge in the rehearsal hall can create a safe place for actors to similarly delve and above all, we must enable and then trust our actors. Theatre is a quintessentially collaborative art. If the director's vision becomes overly articulated, it can subsume

committed their life to a community – whether the commitment be institutional or not. We are here to support you as you grow as artist yourselves and influence the creative lives of others around you.

Two years into this award, nearly 100 nominees have come through our office. Last year the extraordinary **Jonathan Moscone** of Cal Shakes was lauded for his work in Northern California. Born in the Bay Area, he moved, traveled the country and landed right back home to lead and transform Cal Shakes into a force within an extremely competitive and complex theatrical environment.

This year it is Chicago's Michael Halberstam. He is the honoree from a depth of nominees who truly make the case for the mid-west as a cultural force for today and tomorrow. To quote from the nomination of Michael, "He's demonstrated an uncompromising vision, steadfast leadership, the highest degree of artistry, keen intelligence, savvy administrative guidance, careful stewardship in cultivation of support, and through it all has maintained an unwavering focus on making world class art.



Excerpt from Fichandler Award Toast to Michael Halberstam by DAVID CROMER

So, WHY?! Why Halberstam, why the Fichandler?

Because, Michael took the structure of a life in the theatre – he applied his passion, his geekdom, his pure love to it (which is something he does not even know he possesses) and he did something we all set out to do, that we are all trying to do – many of us succeed at it in varying degrees but he succeeded at it rather monumentally and modestly, if that makes sense. He started a company based on a principle of small greatness and professional viability and respect and he has kept his word. When he said "the word and the artist," he seems to have really meant it.

He kept the contract he made with his audience, which was that in exchange for their attendance and their loyalty and their support, he would bring them the very best he could conceive of to bring them. He has presented almost exclusively great and glorious words; he has supported and nurtured and encouraged and given a hard time to and been loyal to wonderful, wonderful artists who, from the very beginning, were paid what they were worth – in my case, far more than I thought I was worth. He really, actually did it, with courage it never occurred to him he possessed, with tenacity he'd never admit to.

So, that's WHY.

Above: David Cromer
Photo: Mark Campbell Creative

the communal spirit of the process; and while it might inspire praise for a moment in time, it will not engender long-term transformation in the observer.

Creating a safe place for artists has been a hallmark of our work at Writers' Theatre. First and foremost we pay our actors, designers, and directors considerably above and beyond the scale required by our unions. Furthermore, we strive to keep our budgets in balance with the art. If our actors are wearing costumes that cost more than their entire paycheck over the run of the show and are being asked to act on stunningly expensive sets but can barely afford their rent it's hard for them to hold the mirror up to nature. As institutions we must stop thinking about our artists as temporary employees and start thinking about them as full-time employees who change their faces on a regular basis.

For almost two decades now, Writers' Theatre has had one simple philosophy, "the word and the artist." We've used it in the rehearsal hall and in our administrative offices, and it's yielded pretty conclusive results. We enjoy close to 5,700 subscribers; 86% of whom regularly renew; almost a third of whom donate; a \$3.7 million budget; and we are budgeted for and play to 97% capacity. I passionately believe that these figures are the result of giving ownership of the company and of the work to our artists.

Saying "yes" is an organizational philosophy. By enabling everything within reason that we're asked to do, we give our artists personal stakes in their work. When theatre practitioners know that the work we do is our own we will do EVERYTHING we can to make it work, for what we do costs emotionally, psychologically and spiritually.

In 1995 Nicolas Pennell died of cancer. Before he passed, he wrote a letter to the acting company at Stratford that has always served as enormous inspiration to me and I'd like to share a little of it with you now in the hopes that it might offer you the same.

"For it is that unique gift that is ours (our joy and our sorrow too): to delve into the stuff of our lives, and dig up with absolute fidelity and accuracy our happiness, our ecstasy, our pain, our misery, our laughter, our ironies, our intimacies passionate and unidentifiable - hot or icy cold; all unguarded and uncensored, free and truthful - and, through the medium of the text, allow the audience to receive the transubstantiation of our truth into their truth, their reality.

'To hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature.'

For that is what we must do as artists: demonstrate the shared wholeness of the human condition to our audiences; in order that together we may arrive where we started from and know the place for the first time.

That demands from us, my hearts, courage, endurance, energy and commitment of an impossibly high order."

Although Nicolas died fifteen years ago, his ideas live on at Writers' Theatre. If I have a legacy, I would like it to similarly be the anonymous ghost of my ideas that endures. Our best work in fact is viral in nature. And although awards and reviews are pleasing for the moment, it is the anonymity of our contributions that have the most enduring effect. Zelda Fichandler's work will certainly outlive her name. It transformed the regional theatre and makes the idea of Writers' Theatre possible. What an honor then and how wonderfully humbling to be asked to follow in her footsteps.



Photo: Hollis Scarborough

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

LYN CRAMER

by KRISTY CUMMINGS, Contract Assistant

I recently spoke with Lyn Cramer, a Director/Choreographer who is associated with such regional theatres as Lyric Theatre of Oklahoma, Music Theatre of Wichita, and Casa Manana in Ft. Worth, Texas. Lyn is also the professor of Musical Theatre Dance and a Resident Director and Choreographer at the University of Oklahoma. Below are some of the highlights from our conversation regarding her career and her work at the University.

Can you tell us about your career path and how you came to be a choreographer and director?

My mother introduced me to theatre very early in life and put me on stage when I was 10 years old. Mind you she didn't have to twist my arm. I played Nellie in *Annie Get Your Gun* at the local university that I ultimately ended up attending. That experience gave me the bug. I was in 4th grade and I had a ball. All of the college students were so kind to the children in the show that it instilled a drive in me to be a part of their community, the theatre community. Prior to that experience, music was a huge part of my childhood so I had already been singing for quite some time. Everyone in my family was always singing and harmonizing and playing instruments, so I was constantly surrounded by music at home. Also, I had been dancing since I was 7 years old. Early on, performing seemed to be a natural path for me.

When I went to study drama and theatre in college, choreographing became my next step. I choreographed the college productions and taught at a local dance studio, which put me through college. I would go right from class to the studio and I would teach in the evenings and on weekends. Then, after I joined Actors' Equity with my very first show out of college (*The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* in 1982), I was constantly surrounded by professional choreographers and was able to observe the way they worked and their different styles, which was extremely beneficial. In terms of choreographing professionally myself, I choreographed 2 or 3 productions before joining the SDC. The question, "Should I become a choreographer?" never popped into my head as the profession just naturally evolved for me. I continued to work solely as a choreographer until I was hired to choreograph *42nd Street* at Casa Manana. It was then that one of the producers asked me, "Who do you want us to hire as the director?" So I said, "Me!" That was the first time I worked as a director/choreographer, and my first chance to say, "I want to direct too!" And now, that is what I primarily like to do. Nothing ever seemed out of the ordinary as my career advanced. I never felt I was waiting for my turn but more so that one opportunity naturally segued to the next; I have been very lucky in that regard. It was always pretty evident from the time I was a child that I was going to take a leadership role. Not only did I have the playground organized but I was the kid who was doing the neighborhood musicals on the back patio with sheets for curtains, dragging all of the parents in the neighborhood to be in the audience.

When did you become a college professor?

Teaching really landed in my lap. I was in rehearsal for *Peter Pan* with Cathy Rigby in Fort Worth, TX when I got a phone call that changed my life. It was a request to teach at Oklahoma City University. At the time I thought it might be a good idea to sit down in one location for just 9 months as I had been moving around quite a bit so I signed a visiting instructor contract in 1989 and here I am. I never envisioned myself in higher education; I never envisioned myself staying put in one place. I only signed a 9 month contract on purpose but 6 weeks after I got to OCU they were pressuring me to stay. It was a hard decision because I didn't know anyone in that area but it ended up being the best decision I ever made. I stayed at OCU for 12 years and then I came to the University of Oklahoma. I love it here because this program is equally weighted between voice, dance and acting instruction. We are training true triple threat talent.

I have now been in higher education for more than 20 years and it has been wonderful. In addition to my work with the students, the university schedule works out really well with my professional summer employment. Working in both arenas has been truly rewarding for many reasons but one in particular is that I get to work with my students in the university environment and then again when they go on to work professionally in the area. It is amazing to see how far they have come.

What differences do you find between working with students and working with professionals since you do both on a regular basis? Do you have to alter your style in either case?

When I am working with my students there is another layer to my position because I am an authority figure for them and I am grading them in their classes. This automatically creates a certain level of respect. For instance, if I tell them they have to be off book on Monday, they are off book on Monday. Also, I see my students every single day so I know them really well. I know how hard I can push them, when they need a helping hand, and when they need a stern hand. In a professional setting I tread far more lightly because I don't always know people's work speed, or work ethic, or insecurities; all of those things come into play in rehearsal. Also, with professionals you are working with your peers. Even though I am the director, we are all employed by the theatre together and the Executive Director or the Artistic Director is everybody's boss. Sometimes, as with one of my recent *42nd Street* gigs, you get lucky and you know or have

“Say yes to every opportunity, no matter what it is. Anything from pageants to community theatre to high school musicals, they can all teach you something and every single environment will train you in a new and different way.”

previously worked with everyone in the cast. This makes a huge difference because you already know how to work with each person. In a way, that job was more like my experiences at the university.

The other difference is that my students are accustomed to my style and pace. I go incredibly fast when I work and sometimes, in a professional setting, people do a double take so I have to adjust a bit. I seem to always be under the gun to get a show up and running. Usually I only have 2 or 3 weeks, or 6 weeks in the university setting, but even then we are only rehearsing nights and weekends. My life seems to happen in 21 day increments. Once, I would love to be able to do a show without book ends or time constraints.

As someone who works with emerging artists of the theatre industry, what advice would/do you give to aspiring musical theatre directors and choreographers?

Something I would share with anybody young who is coming up in the industry is that you should say yes to every opportunity, no matter what it is. Anything from pageants to community theatre to high school musicals, they can all teach you something and every single environment will train you in a new and different way. I actually think high school theatre is the best training ground. It will truly test your ability because most students don't have professional dance training in high school. Early in your career take advantage of every opportunity and jump in with both feet. If nothing else, each experience will teach you patience and if you find it's not your thing, you can rule it out for the future. However, always be prepared; never go into rehearsal unprepared.

Being a professor at the University of Oklahoma and having worked primarily in the central region throughout your career, how would you describe the theatre scene and atmosphere in Oklahoma as compared to that of the coasts?

I think it is more about a difference in audience than a difference in the art or the actors, dancers and singers. I believe that not-for-

profit theatres out here tend to follow a certain school of thought, because they want to stay open, which is that you can't be too edgy or take too many chances when programming your season. I have directed several productions in this area, some that have produced long lasting editorial comments in newspapers week after week by people who are writing to complain about them. This makes the theatre experience here different from that of the coasts but not less professional. There is nothing about the work environment here that is less professional than anywhere else. It is not about talent level because quite frankly if we can't find it here we get it from the coasts. In Oklahoma we never have to lower the bar, which is really rewarding. I work in theatres

that follow a rating system, much like movies, warning audiences about shows that might cause controversy here in the Midwest, but even with that in place we still get letters from audience members and season ticket holders that question what we do if it is not family-oriented. I think to a certain extent every Artistic Director across the country shares that challenge.

By the same token, when I direct and choreograph at the University, I can push the envelope all I want because there is an understanding that we are an educational theatre and we are allowed to go beyond the standard limitations. We don't have our hands tied here like we do in professional theatre because we don't have the constant pressure to make money in order to keep our doors open. We recently produced both *Rent* and *A Chorus Line* with the provision that both of those shows remain censorship free. We also did a production of *Cabaret* not long ago where I pushed the envelope literally as far as I could and we sold out and ended up extending our run. After that success, I was asked to direct my version of *Cabaret* at a professional theatre here in the Midwest. When it opened, controversy erupted, which was a somewhat different reception than we received when we performed it at the University.

“I was the kid who was doing the neighborhood musicals on the back patio with sheets for curtains, dragging all of the parents in the neighborhood to be in the audience.”

DIRECTOR/CHOREOGRAPHER NETWORKING MEETINGS

by GRETCHEN M. MICHELFELD, Associate Director of Member Services

SDC and the SDCF have been on your side this fall with two Director/Choreographer Networking Meetings aimed at helping your talent shine through. In September, we were very lucky to have DanceBreak's Melinda Atwood and **Matt Williams** talk about "Creating a Great Choreographer's Reel." Matt even used his own choreography to compile examples of "good" and "bad" reels for everyone's viewing pleasure! In October a panel including the Drama League's **Roger T. Danforth**, Theatre Communication Group's Emily Cachapero, SDCF's Ellen Rusconi, as well as program recipients **Beatrice Terry** and Michael Goldfried analyzed the application process of three of the top career development programs. The discussion was moderated by your new Director of Member Services, Barbara Wolkoff. Not a New Yorker? Unable to make it to Midtown for the events? Remember that many of our terrific DCN's live on as podcasts as part of the American Theatre Wing website's "[Masters of the Stage Program!](#)"

Join us on November 30th at 6 p.m. when **Beth Greenberg** and **Pamela Berlin** will talk about "Working in Opera!" December's DCN will be announced shortly.

Our best ideas come from you. What would you like to discuss? What kinds of panels would you like us to put together? Email me at GMichelfeld@SDCweb.org with suggestions. I look forward to hearing from you!

Member Spotlight CONTINUED from page 11

What kind of presence do you feel SDC has in the central region? In what ways do you feel that SDC could increase its participation there?

Frankly, there are not that many of us SDC folks here. I mainly stay connected through the Newsletter; I cherish it and read up on the issues that it covers. I also travel frequently to New York. I will be there again when I go on sabbatical in the spring and I can hardly wait to attend my first SDC meeting, to sit there and be a part of it.

To increase SDC participation, I think it has to be a grass roots thing out here. Personally, if I could get a list of all of the SDC Members living in the state of Oklahoma, I would make an effort to reach out and connect with them. If I got on the phone with someone and said, "Hi, I am here in Norman, OK," as opposed to you calling from New York, I think it would make a difference. Right now, I think those of us out here must be like me and rely completely on their Newsletter for that connection. I think that profiling me in this Member Spotlight will help because then if I made a phone call it might be more worthwhile and we might be able to round some people up and have a meeting. Overall, I think people would welcome a stronger SDC presence here and those who are not yet Members could get more information about the benefits of being an SDC Member and how to join.

Is there anything we haven't covered that you would like to share with the SDC community?

I think SDC is a great union and I think being unionized is so beneficial. When I joined SDC, I wasn't even sure what it was all about but my experience has been nothing but positive. SDC has taken care of me my entire professional life. I want to tell people to stick with it. If you are an associate member, become a full member. Take advantage of everything the union has to offer and get to know SDC because you never know when you are going to need your union.

Finally, if you had to select one, which musical would you choose to direct and/or choreograph next?

I would like to do something new, something brand spanking new that I create, instead of a title that already exists. I would love to work collaboratively with a creative team from the very beginning, so that I could be involved in the music arrangements and the script development, etc. I would absolutely love to do a show where I start with a completely blank slate.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and passions with us, Lyn!



PENSION AND HEALTH NEWS

HOW ARE WE DOING?

by JOHN EVERSON, Funds Administrator

YOUR HEALTH BENEFITS...

As of August 31st the SDC-League Pension and Health Funds have closed the books on Plan Year 2010. While our once ample Health Fund reserves continue to decline, we do have reason to be optimistic as we look ahead. The rate of decline has greatly slowed from previous years. Employer contributions for the Plan Year increased by 4.5% while our expenses for both benefits and administration remained flat. Successful negotiations between SDC and LORT and the Broadway League resulted in significant increases to our income. While it's unrealistic to say that there will be no more modifications needed to stabilize the Plan, there is good evidence at this point that we are making substantial progress.

The Trustees of the Funds will meet again in January with co-counsel and our consultants from the Segal Company to consider our next course of action. While financial realities cannot be ignored, know that the Trustees will use every effort to maintain first-rate benefit options for you the participants of the Plan. Keep in touch. If changes are made, you will be advised as soon as possible. If at any time you have questions or concerns about the benefits available to you, don't hesitate to call the Fund Office at 212-869-8129 or by email at Health@SDCweb.org.

YOUR PENSION BENEFITS...DO YOU KNOW WHO YOUR BENEFICIARY IS?

As you may know, pre-retirement death benefits are available to the beneficiaries of Members who are vested in the SDC-League Pension Fund. It is very important that a beneficiary form be on file in the Fund Office for you, designating your beneficiary. It is not enough to name your beneficiary in your will. Legal counsel advises us that the beneficiary designation form functions as a contract, and takes precedence over a will, even if the will carries a more recent date than the signed card. If you have not filled out a form, or if you are not sure who is recorded as your beneficiary, please call the Fund Office at 800-317-9373. Following is a summary of your options for designating a beneficiary. Please note that while federal law applies to the entitlement of spouses to pension benefits, the Trustees have endeavored to equalize the options available to you regardless of your marital status.

If you are single:

- Anyone may be named as your beneficiary.
- An institution or trust may be named.
- If no one is named, the benefit is paid to your estate.

If you are married:

- Your spouse must be your beneficiary unless he/she waives his/her entitlement.
- If your spouse waives his/her entitlement, anyone may be named.
- If your spouse waives his/her entitlement, an institution or trust may be named.
- If no one is named, your spouse is your beneficiary.

Again, if you have questions regarding this important matter, or any other pertaining to your entitlement to benefits through the SDC-League Funds, don't hesitate to call.



WOMEN'S HEALTH AND CANCER RIGHTS ACT OF 1998

On October 21, 1998, Congress passed the Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act. This law requires all health plans offering coverage for a mastectomy to also provide coverage for reconstructive surgery. This coverage is provided for you by the SDC-League Health Plan through either Option A or Option B. For further details please log on to www.sdcweb.org or contact the Fund Office at 212-869-8129 or by email at Health@SDCweb.org.

STRIKE & DEFAULT

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

STRIKE LIST

Members may not accept employment from any theatre or producer on the SDC Strike List.

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

DEFAULT

Serious issues have arisen over these employers' refusal to recognize SDC, or their failure to comply with an SDC Contract.

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



OTHER UNION NEWS
NOTEWORTHY

NEW MEMBERS

Kathleen Amshoff
Director
Brooklyn, NY

Andrew Block
Director
New York, NY

Nancy Renee Braun
Director/Choreographer
New York, NY

Gene Castle
Director/Choreographer
New York, NY

Laurence Connor
Director
United Kingdom

Tim Dang
Director
Los Angeles, CA

Matthew Gardiner
Director/Choreographer
College Park, MD

Rupert Goold
Director
United Kingdom

Mark Robert Gordon
Director
Phoenix, AZ

Jon Kimbell
Director
Rye, NH

John Moletress
Director
Washington, DC

Janine Molinari
Director/Choreographer
New York, NY

Brian Issac Phillips
Director
Cincinnati, OH

Tom Quaintance
Director
Los Angeles, CA

Diana Van Fossen
Director
Montgomery, AL

Suzanne Viverito
Choreographer
Forest Hills, NY

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Arthur Adair
Director
Austin, TX

Laura Apelt
Director
Poquoson, VA

Jason Bruffy
Director
New York, NY

David Callaghan
Director
Montevallo, AL

Elliot J. Cohen
Director/Choreographer
New York, NY

Elle De Amor
Director
Jersey City, NJ

Jason Eckard
Director
Hickory, NC

Edward Elefterion
Director
Brooklyn, NY

Jean Giebel
Director
Hempstead, NY

Andrew Golla
Director
Portland, OR

Ken Hailey
Director
Astoria, NY

Jackob G. Hoffman
Director
New York, NY

Lori Wolter Hudson
Director
Astoria, NY

Scot Lahaie
Director
Shelby, NC

Adam Levi
Director
Woodside, NY

Walker Lewis
Director
Brooklyn, NY

Marti Lyons
Director
Chicago, IL

Elizabeth Margolius
Director
Chicago, IL

Mike Metzler
Director
New York, NY

Julie Petry
Director/Choreographer
Bloomsberg, PA

Scott Rodrigue
Director
Rockville Center, NY

Mia Rovegno
Director/Choreographer
Brooklyn, NY

Richard Tatum
Director
Los Angeles, CA

Kara-Lynn Vaeni
Director
Brooklyn, NY

Naisa Wong
Director
Pasadena, CA

IN MEMORY OF

George Keathley
Director
Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Arthur Penn
Founding SDC Member
Director
New York, NY

NEW OR RENEWED IPA'S

The Acting Company
New York, NY

The Kennedy Center
Washington, DC

Studio Theatre
Washington, DC



STAGE
DIRECTORS AND
CHOREOGRAPHERS
SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 58

NOV/DECEMBER 2010

your source for important notifications of all Union matters

HEADER: SDCF Associate Director Ellen Rusconi, SDC Executive Director Laura Penn and Executive Board Member Amy Morton with 2010 Fichandler Award-winner, Michael Halberstam in Chicago.

*Mark your
calendars with
these Important
SDC dates!*

The 2010 Annual Meeting will take place on **Monday November 15th, 2010** at **6 p.m.** sharp at Manhattan Theatre Club's Rehearsal Studio 3 (311 West 43rd St., 8th floor).

On the agenda:

- The results of the 2010 Executive Board elections
- The presentation of the Callaway Awards
- Ratification of the new Off-Broadway contract
- An important discussion of the proposed SDC By-Laws changes

Refreshments and general discussion. Please bring your ideas and concerns! RSVP to GMichelfeld@SDCweb.org

The 2010 West Coast Membership Meeting will take place on **Monday, December 6th, 2010**. Details are forthcoming so please stay tuned.

A Seattle-Area Membership Meeting will be held on **Monday, December 20th, 2010** from **12-1:30 p.m.** at the Seattle Children's Theatre (201 Thomas Street).

Join Executive Board Member **Linda Hartzell** for some lunch and lively discussion.

RSVP to GMichelfeld@SDCweb.org

Please note the SDC offices will be closed on the following days:

- **Thursday, November 11th** - Veterans Day
- **Thursday & Friday, November 25th & 26th** - Thanksgiving
- **Friday, December 24th** - Christmas Eve

1501 Broadway, Suite 1701
New York, NY 10036