



**STAGE
DIRECTORS AND
CHOREOGRAPHERS
SOCIETY**

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your source for important notifications of all Union matters

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STRENGTHENING THE CORE

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

As I begin my 2nd term as your Board President, I am so proud to be a Member of this Union and so honored by your support. Over the past 12 years I've seen SDC grow, accept challenges, care for its Members and lead the way towards positive changes in the industry. I look forward to the next 3 years and all that we have the capacity to accomplish. At our most recent Annual Membership Meeting an SRO crowd engaged in recognizing our achievements and reaffirming our goals. A critical decision to unanimously and bravely raise our Annual Dues in 2011 was a significant moment. Laura Penn's speech from the November 15, 2010 Membership Meeting (printed below) helped us put this increase in perspective as well as focus our future priorities as we continue to strengthen the core of this Union. — KAREN AZENBERG, SDC Executive Board President

Each Annual Membership Meeting has been an intense mix of joy and hardship for me – the joy of gathering and celebrating your work, and the challenge of hearing your struggles and wanting to address all of your hardships instantaneously. 2010 was a successful year in many ways. We have made progress in negotiations and I'm particularly proud of the Off-Broadway talks which resulted in some very dynamic new provisions. We believe the decline in contracts has leveled off, and SDC continues to be unique in our field in being able to state that more than 50% of our Members file contracts each year.



Laura Penn at the NYC Membership Meeting, Nov. '10.

And yet in many ways the successes are not so sweet when you see Members lose their health insurance by the dozens.

Most significantly over the past twenty four months we have set a course for the future that is strategic and focused. It is designed to ensure that employment opportunities are expanded, that wages are respectable and that employers pay their fair share of health and welfare. We are committed to increasing the visibility of the directors' and

choreographers' role in this industry, to protecting your work and to supporting your careers.

And it is hard. And we will continue. And we will succeed by deepening our commitment to a rich *Presence, Involvement and Governance*, which will in turn strengthen our Core.

Presence: In the past two years our presence across the nation has dramatically increased. We have held meetings large and small in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, Phoenix, Philadelphia, Boston and Tampa. Today your Executive Board has a deeper appreciation of their responsibilities as representatives of the whole of the Membership. Your staff can put Members' names to faces all across the country. It is a broad and at times unruly group we represent. Many levels. Complex texture. We serve many masters here at SDC (I feel as though I could give Goldoni a run for his money if I took a stab at story telling!)

The 50th Anniversary in 2009 was about numerous things – two important goals were to demonstrate our national nature and define our various constituencies. Founded by and for Broadway artists in 1959, today SDC represents a tremendously diverse community.

Recently I sat with great admiration and wished that many of you could have overheard a conversation. I was in a meeting with a Broadway producer and a Broadway director (one of your Board Members) discussing very intricate compensation models. Although we were focused on ways to protect the income of our top earners, this Broadway director paused to make sure the producer understood that SDC wasn't just Broadway. He passionately spoke of a responsibility to a larger fabric, the national

nature of SDC. It was a joy to experience such a strong sense of camaraderie from this Broadway star– and while this kind of solidarity has always been there, it’s something we now consciously cultivate.

Around the country we have also met with many of your colleagues who are not SDC Members. These are directors and choreographers who have found niches that allow them to pursue their careers without SDC. We are actively cultivating ALL professional directors and choreographers. We believe that anywhere someone experiences theatre of a professional nature, that director and choreographer should have a relationship with SDC. In addition we must expand our reach and include a new generation of emerging mid-size theatres across the country as well as creating agreements that make sense for the very specific work that takes place in areas such as Theatre for Young Audiences and Shakespeare Festivals.

Involvement: A top priority for SDC has been to increase Member involvement and create more access points for Members to engage with the Board and staff and to influence the Union’s decision making process. We have reorganized our staff to provide an increased Member Services department. We have begun utilizing strategic focus groups (this year we concentrated on the areas of artistic leadership and choreography), we regularly call you to solicit your opinions, we’ve learned how to utilize surveys (the Off-Broadway survey was instrumental in strengthening our workshop provision in this round of talks), and we are working (thanks to you!) to better understand the dynamics of institutional leadership. We are also connecting with colleges and universities in a meaningful way – offering support through the Foundation for them to employ SDC Members.

Governance: A full day retreat last spring led in part to a deep evaluation of Board practices. We dedicated much of the day to the question of “representation” and that directly brought us to the proposals you’ve read about in the By-Laws Referendum initiative: an increased nomination window, an expanded Board, decreased terms. All of these proposed changes are efforts to continue developing Member involvement and strengthen SDC. The consistent thread during all of our Board discussions is a desire to not only understand how the Board works on your behalf but also the Members’ needs and expectations and how to better educate the Membership about what the Union does and does not do.

And always, at the *Core* are your contracts. In 2010, 383 distinct employers have filed Tier contracts, up from 92 in 2009 – these were theatres that previously had no minimum terms and conditions. The next step will be to move many of them onto formalized agreements with Union security. This equals more jobs for our Membership. Our Independent Producer Agreements have increased from 43 to 73 since 2005 with many other theatres joining multi-employer agreements. While we will continue to make progress as we administrate our current agreements, we have much to do in the way of organizing. The 00’s were about Membership growth. The 10’s will be about employer growth.

And with negotiations we have doggedly, relentlessly pursued terms and conditions to advance the cause. We all know that Health has been a priority and we have in fact achieved significant growth in health contributions across all contracts. I know that does not feel meaningful to those who have lost coverage, but if we had not been successful in growing those employer contributions there might not have been coverage for anyone. We are stemming the tide. Two years ago the Health Plan was losing upwards of \$700K annually. Losses last year capped at about \$225K. We saw an increase of over \$90K in plan income – a direct result of recent negotiations. We’re not even close to solving the problems of the Fund, but at least we

have the right trajectory. And we are committed to keeping as many of you as possible on the plan. We want to create paths to other coverage, bridges to health care reform and eventually just better benefits. Our Pension Plan is equally challenged. The work we did last year was necessary – reduction of the accrual rate was a difficult decision your Union representatives made with the management Trustees and it seems to have made the difference in halting the downward decline. Investments have been performing well and again, our negotiations have increased employer contributions. It’s a step by step process, a lot of analysis, strategic action and waiting.

At our most recent negotiations we held fast to the point of almost breaking with a commitment to serving the Membership particularly in the area of Health and Pension. I am sure many of your peers who served on the negotiation committees can share the drama of those moments.

Dues are
the foundation
of a Union – the one
constant. All other
assessments are variable
and attached to income,
but with Annual Dues
everyone is taxed
equally.

All of this work *Presence, Involvement and Governance* is necessary – right now we must remember that being part of a Union is yes, about your terms today, but it is also critical to what you may need tomorrow. If you are not given that right of first refusal, or your work is stolen, or your employment is terminated if your employers must be chased down for your fees and Health and Pension payments – we are here. SDC is your advocate and your safety net.

This year the Union will end the fiscal year with a small deficit of less than 5% of our operating budget – much of the deficit can be attributed to a slowing of royalty income and to staff transition. We are lucky to have more than adequate reserves to cover this. And yet we must continue to push forward with our goals. Our future lies in growing stronger and expanding our representation – we do not want to become a boutique Union that only represents a group of artists that work in a 12 blocks radius of Times Square.

In order for us to do this work responsibly we must look at dues. Dues are the foundation of a Union – the one constant. All other assessments are variable and attached to income, but with Annual Dues everyone is taxed equally. Today we are asking everyone to pitch in. Assessments have already increased for our top tier earners many times over in the past five years. The last time we came to the Membership asking for a dues increase was 1994, 16 years ago. Sixteen years ago we increased dues from \$130 to \$150 and it is frankly amazing that we haven’t had to do it since then. Had the dues been raised according to the cost of living, they would be \$215 today. In the past, surpluses from Broadway and new Members paying initiation fees have consistently underwritten the work the Union takes part in everyday on behalf of the larger Membership. Right now those income sources are not increasing and are not expected to in the near term. The Board voted today, thoughtfully and reflectively, to increase Annual Dues from \$150 to \$200 and to increase the SDC Initiation Fee from \$1,000 to \$1,500, with a credit for the first year dues. Associate Dues will go up from \$50 to \$60 a year and the Associate Initiation will be raised to \$300. We hope to “soften the blow” by offering more convenient payment choices; an automatic deduction option as well as a payment plan. Please see Cole Jordan’s newsletter article for the particulars.

No one likes to increase dues; many people struggle to make this career work in this “rugged racket” as a member of your Board once pronounced. And yet we must keep SDC strong.

On behalf of the staff and the Executive Board it is a privilege to do this work with you and we appreciate your support. Thank you.

*After the speech the Membership
unanimously voted to ratify the dues increase.*

If you prefer to pay with a credit or debit card, simply go to www.SDCweb.org, log on and click on "make a payment" and click on "Member Dues and Payments". This will bring you to a page with four options...

...SDC wants to make paying Annual Dues as simple and painless as possible.

YOUR NEW PAYMENT OPTIONS

by COLE JORDAN, Director of Finance and Administration

This is my first article in the SDC Newsletter. After working here for six months, I must say that the SDC staff is truly dedicated and I am proud to work with them. I also give credit to your Executive Board for keeping a stable environment in which dues have not increased in over 16 years! Truly a remarkable feat but, paraphrasing an old adage, in this world nothing is certain but death, taxes and dues increases...I am writing this article to explain the new payment programs we have put in place for 2011.

If you are a current Member, feel free to pay your 2011 Annual Dues of \$200 upon receipt of your invoice. A simple check in the mail is how the majority of our Members pay, and you still have until March 31, 2011 to pay without incurring late fees.

If you prefer to pay with a credit or debit card, simply go to our website, www.SDCweb.org, log on and click on "make a payment" and click on "Member Dues and Payments." This will bring you to a page with four options.

Option One is the one SDC has always provided, which is a one-time payment for your dues, fees and/or Initiation fees. Full and Associate Members can pay using a Visa, Mastercard, Discovery Card or American Express card. If you have a PayPal account, you can also pay with your checking account. Enter the amount you are paying and you will be directed to our PayPal merchant account to make your payment. Simply follow the directions when you are in PayPal.

Option Two on the payment page is Auto Recurring Annual Dues \$200. This feature allows Full Members to sign up for automatic annual payments. Every year your Annual Dues will be charged on your credit/debit card or checking account on the anniversary date of your initial automatic payment. You must sign up for PayPal in order to use this feature. Signing up for PayPal is extremely easy and safe. Just click on the PayPal button, follow the instructions to sign up, and in a minute you will be done with setup and you can pay. This is a perfect option for Members who do not want to worry about remembering to make a payment year after year.

Option Three on the payment page is Auto Recurring Associate Dues \$60. This feature allows Associate Members to sign up for automatic Annual Dues payments. The instructions are the same as those for Option Two.

Option Four on the payment page is Auto Recurring Quarterly Dues of \$50. This feature allows Full Members to sign up for automatic quarterly installment payments. This option is a convenient way to make smaller payments four times a year. We hope it will be helpful to those whose cash flow is unpredictable. Every three months you will be charged on your credit/debit card or checking account the Quarterly Dues of \$50 starting from the initial payment date used and then every 3 months thereafter. Again, you must sign up for PayPal in order to use this feature. Signing up for PayPal is extremely easy and safe. Just click on the button and you will be directed to PayPal. Follow the instructions to sign up and in a minute you will be done with setup and payment and you'll receive an email confirming your transaction. This is perfect for Full Members who do not want to worry about remembering to make a payment, are on a very thrifty budget and risk possible suspension if their dues are not paid on time.

I hope these options are helpful. SDC wants to make paying Annual Dues as simple and painless as possible. In the next few years, we plan to upgrade our technology platforms to allow you to securely access, through the "Members Only" section of the web site, more of your employment and financial records when you need them.

I look forward to meeting and speaking with you. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to give us a call.

Please Note: SDC will not accept the Quarterly payment option of \$50 after March 30, 2011.

A Note About Cancellation: PayPal provides a method of cancelling your automatic renewals and/or quarterly installment payment methods at any time.

FOUNDATION UPDATE

by ELLEN RUSCONI, Associate Director of SDCF

SDCF's 2009 – 2010 Joseph A. Callaway Award was presented to **Byron Easley** and **Ciaran O'Reilly** at the SDC Annual Membership Meeting on November 15, 2010. This award was established in 1989 by **Joe Callaway** to recognize excellence in the crafts of Directing and Choreography in New York.

Linda Burson, Chairperson of the Callaway Committee, introduced the award, and SDC Members **Barry McNabb** and **Jack Going** presented each award. Below are excerpts of their remarks. Please note that both Byron and Ciaran graciously thanked all of their collaborators, but for space reasons, we had to remove that portion of each speech.



Jeffrey Denham (finalist), Igor Goldin (finalist), Michael Wilson (finalist), Byron Easley (Choreographer recipient), Michele Lynch (finalist), Tyler Marchant (finalist), Ciaran O'Reilly (Director recipient), at the Callaway Award presentation in NYC, Nov. '10.

“ This past season our committee saw and evaluated nearly 200 productions, which translates into over 2000 performances. The shows of 2009-2010 were truly an amazing lot with commensurately outstanding directors and choreographers. It was a treat to see so much engrossing and superbly rendered directorial and choreographic work. Our finalists include the season's 'crème de la crème' and we are so thrilled to honor each one of these for their uniquely exceptional work in 2009-2010.

Linda Burson,
Callaway Committee Chairperson

“ I am privileged enough to have known tonight's Callaway Award Winner for Choreography for very close to 30 years. We met joining the tour of **Bob Fosse's** "Dancin'." What I remember of him back then still holds true to this day. He is one of the most genuinely positive, passionate and gracious men I have ever met. And then there is the brilliant talent on top of all that... Byron is dedicated, thorough, thinking and a true collaborator.

Byron's choreography has been seen throughout the country in regional theatres and this year marks his professional New York debut with Langston in Harlem.

Barry McNabb, Choreographer,
Callaway Committee

“ Words cannot completely express the thanks, honor and gratitude with which I accept this award tonight. For as long as I can remember dance has been a celebration of life for me, it's always given me a sense of connection to something much bigger and greater than myself. I hear music and it makes me move, almost involuntarily. Interestingly enough my parents never discouraged my outbursts of creative expression, they assumed it was something I would outgrow, instead of grow into.

How honored and blessed I am to be part of the theater community, to have the opportunity to collaborate with other artists and tell story. Giving our society reflections of itself, often beautiful, good, bad, or even ugly, but always celebrating life. Thus, as I accept this award this evening I do not stand alone, I share this award with many others...it was the collaboration of all these [Langston in Harlem] artists that culminated to this moment. Thank you!

Byron Easley, Choreographer,
2009 – 10 Joe A. Callaway Award Recipient

“ Ciaran O'Reilly is a fine actor- turned- director. I commend him for his many remarkable directorial feats at the Irish Rep, especially The Hairy Ape, one of five finalists for this award in 2007. His tackling of the very difficult early Eugene O'Neill play is a task that many of us in the room would be very hesitant to touch, but touch it he did with a magic wand: his production of The Emperor Jones was stunningly theatrical and thrilling in every respect, immensely deserving of our highest award.

Jack Going, Director,
Callaway Committee

“ Thank you Callaway Committee. I am deeply honored to receive this award from the SDC Foundation. It means everything to be in the company of the extraordinary talent of my fellow nominees and to be singled out by the actual people whose work I admire so very much.

Echoing the sentiments of Byron Easley, no director works in a vacuum and I share this award first with my partner **Charlotte Moore** who founded the Irish Rep with me 22 years ago... and my friend and colleague Barry McNabb who offered sublime inspiration and style in his choreography.

I feel particularly proud that this award comes from directing a play by Eugene O'Neill. O'Neill spent chunks of his formative years attending the plays of The Irish Players when they were touring in New York in the early 1900's. It is well documented that the plays had a huge impact on the young man's creative imagination and I like to think that he would have been particularly pleased that the Irish Rep continues to bring them to their audiences.

There is a certain irony on winning this particular award because one of the first tasks of many directors in directing a play is to erase the stage directions in the script. I feel that one of the main ingredients in the success of this production was in faithfully following the stage directions that O'Neill wrote. He created the blueprint and the inspiration for everything on the stage. And so I share this award very especially with Eugene O'Neill and his visionary stage directions.

Thank you Callaway committee. Thank you SDCF. I am so thrilled.

Ciaran O'Reilly, Director,
2009 – 10 Joe A. Callaway Award Recipient

REPORT FROM THE FIELD: GUEST ARTIST INITIATIVE RECIPIENT, KIM WEILD'S BIG ADVENTURE!



SDC Member **Kim Weild** was awarded the first Guest Artist Initiative Grant of the season and was hired to direct Charles Mee's *Big Love* at Arizona State University. Kim kept a production diary for us, some of which is excerpted below. You can read the entire chronicle on our web site. Visit the Guest Artist Initiative page under the Foundation tab.

April 29, 2010, 12:40 p.m. I'm in Tempe, Arizona for three days of auditions and the first of several design meetings. My room at The Twin Palms hotel is a strange mix of Southwestern adobe and what I imagine to be Howard Johnson circa 1972. It is within walking distance of ASU. Five months from now, the iHop attached to the hotel will become known as "Kim's office." I'll be on a first name basis with all the staff (even arrange tickets for them to see *Big Love*) and Sadie, the African Grey parrot who lives in the lobby...

April 30, 2010, 12 p.m. My first *Big Love* production meeting. Walking into design studio 222 on the second floor I am greeted by a sea of people only a few of whom I can distinguish as students. It's a young looking faculty. The room is alight with excitement yet I'm a little disoriented by the new surroundings, the noon-day heat and not enough water...

September 26, 2010, 12:18 p.m. My six week residency at ASU begins. My room has a lovely northern view of the campus, the huge Grady Gammage Auditorium, the desert hills upon which is emblazoned a mighty maroon "A" and a never ending smell of bacon, butter and syrup...

November 5, 2010, 7 p.m. Opening night I assemble the cast onstage to thank them. I must single out Jessica and Lee for without their strong conviction, their ability to follow their interest, this production would not have happened. There are hugs, a few tears and big, big love. As I walk off stage Jen whispers in my ear, "the house is sold out."

November 6, 2010, 9 p.m. Another full house and terrific show. Immediately following there is a talkback organized by Jayson our dramaturg... Toward the end an older woman raises her hand not to ask a question but to say, "I walk in and I don't know what to expect, there's no curtain. I wait for the break, it never comes-I don't miss it. I'm absorbed in what I am experiencing and I loved it!" She then proceeds to go down the line directly addressing each actor giving her opinion of them and their character, concluding, "You were all perfect!" The audience and the actors eat it up. It's a delicious collision of university theatre with the general theatre going public. Shortly after, we all descend downstairs. Guillermo has thoughtfully ordered us a wedding cake complete with a headless groom and a blood-splattered bride. The cast presents me with two gorgeous paintings created by Jessica. I'm actually left speechless.

As I walk back to my hotel the sky alight with a full moon, I pause to listen to the desert birds, to look at the silhouette of palm trees, to smell the night jasmine-to soak the moment in before I return to my room to pack.

Above: *Big Love* directed by **Kim Weild** at Arizona State University. Photo: Tim Trumbull

FROM THE CONTRACT DESK: A YEAR-END WRAP-UP

by MAURO MELLENO, Director of Contract Affairs

As this newsletter goes to press, SDC is in the process of finalizing the Agreement with the Off Broadway League. The negotiations were tough and fair, and we ended up with a contract we are all proud of. Details will be made available after signature by both parties. The new Agreement will be retroactive to 7/1/2010.

We've negotiated or re-negotiated many LORT IPAs this year including The Pearl Theatre and The Acting Company in NYC, The Olney in Maryland, California Shakespeare Theatre, The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, Shakespeare on the Sound in Connecticut, the Studio Theatre in D.C. and many others. Among the many new or renewed Individual IPAs, are the Chicago Shakespeare Theatre and Big League Theatricals.

Your Contract department staff, which includes Randy Anderson, Renée Lasher and Evan Shoemake, continues to work diligently to organize theatres, negotiate and enforce your contracts and to be readily available to SDC Members and Associates who have questions and concerns. This year we've been particularly fortunate to have the invaluable aid of 2010 Hauptman Fellow, Kristy Cummings. Many of you know Kristy from her insightful "Member Spotlight" articles. She is also a tireless researcher whose work has helped our organizing efforts beyond measure. We wish her luck in her future professional endeavors and know she'll be a great advocate for you and your work no matter where she lands.

2011 will be a heavy negotiating year at SDC. The following Agreements or individual Independent Producer's Agreements will expire in 2011:

ANTC	expires 6/30/2011
Ensemble Studio Theatre IPA	expires 6/30/2011
Director's Company IPA	expires 6/30/2011
Broadway	expires 8/31/2011
Theatreworks/USA IPA	expires 12/31/2011
Encores! IPA	expires 12/31/2011

So stay tuned and stay involved!

SUCCESS STORIES:

Better Agreements. Better Relationships.
Your SDC TIER contract at work.

New London Barn, a summer stock theatre in New Hampshire, used to hire a couple of SDC Members a year under the Special contract. The compensation varied, but it was never more than \$1,250 for a Director. Last year, as the Tier rolled out, the theatre was unable to make the jump to their Tier level. Artistic Director and SDC Member **Carol Dunn** was committed to elevating the status of her directors and worked with SDC on a "transition" year in 2010. In 2011 New London Barn will be hiring more SDC Members and all of them will be paid at the appropriate Tier 3 level. This not only amounts to a 30% increase in compensation, but more jobs for our Members, and a stronger relationship between New London Barn and SDC.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

DEVANAND JANKI

by KRISTY CUMMINGS, SDC Hauptman Fellow

"I am known as a choreographer but I hate to make up steps..."

Not exactly what I expected to hear when I sat down with Director/Choreographer Devanand Janki to talk about his career and get his thoughts on the theatre industry. Quick to ease the look of confusion on my face, Dev went on to clarify, "I love the exploration of the storytelling and I love dance but when it comes down to deciding whether it should be a ball change or a kick or a shimmy..." and then he laughed. Dev has directed and choreographed the Off-Broadway hit Zanna Don't as well as numerous TYA productions, developmental workshops, readings, and many musical productions around the country. Below are some highlights from our recent conversation.

What led you to the theatre and to being a Director and Choreographer?

I saw the Bolshoi Ballet, in Russia, when I was 4 years old and it changed my life; it made a huge impression on me. I started ballet when I was 9 years old and then trained as a professional ballet dancer throughout my teenage years. In addition to dancing, I was a boy soprano in my stepfather's opera company. While I had a great interest in performing, the director/choreographer element always seemed to come to me very easily early on. I moved to New York, went to theatre school and was a gypsy in many Broadway shows and tours for years. Then I found my way into directing and choreographing several benefits for organizations like Broadway Cares/Equity Fights Aids and the Actors' Fund, which allowed me to get my feet wet as a professional director and choreographer. That was the best training for what I do now and it is how a lot of young directors and choreographers get their professional start. After those benefits, professional jobs just started coming my way.

You have worked extensively in the Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) arena, most notably on shows for Theatreworks/USA and the Kennedy Center. What excites you about working on children's theatre?

I am actually about to begin rehearsals for a new Theatreworks/USA show which will be, I think, my 12th TYA show. I love working on these shows, specifically the Theatreworks/USA shows because they do such high caliber work and hire the best writers and actors to develop their pieces. Often times you say "children's theatre" and people have an impression that it is hokey or that it is theatre that talks down to the kids. It is actually the contrary. I love being able to bring good theatre to young people, to make an impression on young kids, which is hard to do because kids are the toughest audience. You have to be very specific, tell a strong story and be extremely efficient while doing so. I feel I have really honed my skills by doing TYA musicals and it has really helped shape the adult theatre I do as well. I try to remind our actors that for a lot of the kids in the audience, it is the first time they are ever experiencing live theatre and I want them to hold that responsibly.

What do you find unique about working in the TYA arena?

I would say that, as with any musical, the director/choreographer balance in a TYA show can be interesting. I understand the choreographer gets paid less, but with TYA musicals the show is only an hour long but there are just as many musical numbers

as a full length show. Therefore the choreographer has more weight to carry so the balance can be a little uneven. The show structure is usually something like half of a scene and then a full production number, then another half of a scene followed by another full production number and so on. It is like I finish one number and then suddenly it's my turn again. So it is different from a full length musical where there are full length book scenes and much more text work. I wish it was a little more equitable in that way but like anything with musical theatre, it is all a collaboration.

You have also directed and choreographed many new works, readings and workshops. What draws you to new work?

It is my passion. Developing new work is always so exciting; to work with writers, have a spark of a new idea and then see how it blossoms into something else. I get involved in new work in all different ways. Sometimes people come to me with scripts and ideas, other times I am hired by a producer, and I also seek out collaborations with writers I like. At any given time I have about ten different things in the fire. It is so nourishing and as an artist that is my favorite part. I always enjoy working on something original that will generate work for myself and others. The hope that it could be the next big hit always keeps it thrilling.

Most recently you choreographed the new musical Shine! at the New York Musical Theatre Festival. How would you describe your experience at NYMF this year?

It was my first time doing a NYMF show and it was intense. It was really fun but it was like guerilla theatre in the trenches with five hours of tech to do this big musical. It was actually a little insane. We did have really great outside producers that strongly supported us. It is hard though because people are not getting paid a lot of money. Not that it is all about money, but it means you have to be very flexible especially with the actors' schedules. It was rare that we would have everyone in the cast in the same room at the same time. You are also limited in what you can do in terms of lighting and set design because as I said you only get five hours of tech time and you only have a half hour to load in and out. But it was generally a very positive experience. I think there is room to improve what is going on at NYMF but I hope it can be figured out because it is a great venue to promote new work.

You have a long and successful collaboration history with SDC Director, Peter Flynn. What do you think makes for a good partnership between a director and choreographer?



Devanand Janki in rehearsal for *Shine*.
Photo: Jerry Ruotolo

Whether I am directing a show or choreographing a musical number, it is always about intention, storytelling, and finding out how the performers and characters move organically. Specifically about Peter, we have been working together for the past 12 years and have done approximately 30-40 shows together. We are at the point where we finish each other's sentences. I think our partnership works because we always have so much fun and we have such respect for each other as artists. I think a good collaboration is when you are able to communicate clearly with one another, hash out ideas together and share the same vision for the piece. Because I am a Director in addition to being a Choreographer, I approach everything with a director's eye, which I think is helpful when working with a director.

There is sometimes a misconception that a choreographer is generally there to only serve the director's vision. How do you balance executing a director's vision while ensuring your voice is also heard?

People work in all different ways. Some directors direct the book scenes and once there is music playing the choreographer is responsible; some directors want more input in what happens musically as well. I think it is a case by case basis. The tough thing about musical theatre in general is ownership- what part belongs to whom? Part of the reason Peter and I collaborate well together is because it is a team effort— everything I say he takes into consideration and vice versa.

For the past 9 years you have been a Choreographer and Artistic Associate for Broadway Bares, a benefit for Broadway Cares/Equity Fights Aids. You have also directed and choreographed benefits for the Actors' Fund. What draws you to that kind of experience?

It is basically a science putting those benefits together. You have to do so much homework, be extremely specific, not waste people's time, and work quickly. There is also only so much you can choreograph without overburdening people and usually you have only an hour or two for technical rehearsals so there are many challenges. What is exciting is that you get to work with the best in the business. There is this wonderful element of trust because you know the people you are working with will deliver and give it their all. I love the process; I get high off of it actually. There is an amazing energy throughout the process because you have the entire crew of a Broadway show, several stage managers and brilliant costume designers, all volunteering their time for a good cause.

You have talked a lot about being an efficient director, in many instances because of time constraints on the rehearsal process. If you had all of the time in the world, like 6 months of pure rehearsal time to put up a show, what approach would you take?

I would still be very efficient. The reason I like to be so efficient is so that I can have playtime at the end. I am very much a visual person and like to focus on the big picture and structure of a piece, so when I am working on any show I like to put it on its feet as quickly as possible. People have different processes and some actors don't like my way because they want to do the table work. I do a little of that but I would rather get it on its feet so we can

spend more time working on it, finessing it. If I had a show where I had a lot of rehearsal time I would still do the same thing, especially with a new work.

Shifting gears just a bit, what has been your experience as a person of color working in the theatre industry? Has your race ever been a factor?

Absolutely. It has been a factor my entire career as an actor and then as a director and choreographer. I am very aware of it and I sometimes feel like I am the squeaky wheel in the room. I often go to the first meet and greet for a production where all of the actors, producers, stage managers, everyone is in the room, and more often than not I am the only person of color or one of the two people of color amongst the whole company. I think to myself, "Oh OK, I have to represent here." As a director, when I am involved in casting, I am very conscious of how I cast a show and I try to be as multi-cultural and diverse as I can. I take a little bit of issue when people say it is hard to find a diverse cast because it may just take a little more effort. A lot of times I hear, "Oh we can't find the diversity," and I say, "Well, then we need to try harder." For instance, I directed a production of *Aladdin* at Chicago Shakespeare two years ago and we were trying to be as diverse as we could but no actors of color came in. I didn't know if in good conscience I could cast an entirely Caucasian company of *Aladdin*. We ended up getting a really great diverse cast but we had to work hard to find them. It can be harder to do in the regions but is a challenge even in New York at times. I will always push to have more diversity and I think it is important that opportunities are given to people of color as well. I am however, a big advocate of the best people for the job. Ultimately it is about creating good work and finding people who inspire you.

What kinds of challenges or issues do you feel directors and/or choreographers in particular are facing today?

It is always the challenge of money and time; being given the opportunity to do the work and do it well. Casts are getting smaller, budgets are getting smaller, rehearsal time is getting shorter and a lot is being asked of us under not the best of circumstances. For instance, when we are asked to put up a big flashy musical in a week and a half; that is crazy! I did *Cats* for 3 years on Broadway, and I have been asked 5 or 6 times to mount that show in the regions but I have always said no because there is usually only two weeks of rehearsals. For a show like *Cats*, which is entirely dance, that amount of time is insane. I have turned down those jobs because there is no way I can do the kind of work necessary in that time frame.

And finally, as we wrap up is there anything else you would like to share with the SDC community?

I still feel like a fledgling director even though I have been doing it for 15 years now. It is always new for me, it is always a discovery. Every time I start a job I have those first- day- of- school jitters and I wonder if people will actually pay attention to me. But once I am in it I am always so comfortable. I feel very blessed to be able to work in the field that I love.



MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS ON BOTH COASTS

by GRETCHEN M. MICHELFELD, Associate Director of Member Services

NEW YORK



CALIFORNIA

On November 15th, 2010 a record number of Members attended the Annual Membership Meeting in New York City. SDC Members were hanging from the rafters at Manhattan Theatre Club's Studio Two as the Callaway Committee presented their annual awards for direction and choreography (see Ellen Rusconi's article for more details) to **Ciáran O'Reilly** and **Byron Easley**, and SDC President Karen Azenberg gave the SDC President's Award for Extraordinary Service to **Melvin Bernhardt**.

Melvin is probably best known to the rest of the world as the Tony Award-winning Director of Broadway hits like *Da* and *Crimes of the Heart*, but we at the SDC will always be grateful for his years of dedicated service on the SDC Executive and Honorary Advisory Boards and for representing us so well on the Tony Administration Committee.

Executive Board Member/Chair of the By-Laws Committee, **Doug Hughes** led a very productive discussion about the proposed By-Laws changes, which address governance, elections, nominations and contract ratification procedure. We're hoping by now you've all received and reviewed the By-Laws referendum materials and ballots. The ballots are due January 14th. Please don't forget to vote!

Other items on the Agenda included a discussion of the proposed 2011 Annual Dues increase (it passed unanimously) as well as updates on contract negotiations and SDCF activities. If you live elsewhere or weren't able to make the meeting, this newsletter contains articles with much of the information you missed. Feel free to get in touch with your staff if you have questions or comments or need clarification.

On December 6th, 2010 Executive Director Laura Penn, President **Karen Azenberg**, Director of Member Services Barbara Wolkoff, Health & Pension Funds Administrator John Everson and Executive Assistant Elizabeth Miller led the West Coast Area Membership Meeting at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in Los Angeles. West Coast Area Members received the same updates as their counterparts in New York. An open forum included a discussion of contract issues and questions.

Following a reception, Board Member **Michael John Garcés** moderated "The Art of Capturing Stage Work for Broadcast" with fellow Board Members **Lonny Price** and **Oz Scott**, an SDCF-sponsored One-on-One Conversation as part of the Live on Screen! initiative. SDCF hopes to excerpt this discussion in the future.

Special thanks to all West Coast SDC Board Members for their support.



Melvin Bernhardt with Members Bick Goss (left) and Hope Clarke (right). Right Header: Oz Scott and Lonny Price in Los Angeles. Left Header: Doug Hughes in NYC.

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES UPDATE: RESOLVED THAT THERE SHOULD BE MORE AND MORE SERVICES...

by BARBARA WOLKOFF, Director of Member Services

Happy New Year from my new desk as Director of Member Services! Actually, it's the same desk, same office, just a new hat. Our New Year's resolution in the SDC Membership department is to continue to focus on finding and offering new services for the Membership. To that end we've identified some fresh opportunities and want to remind you of some others that have been around for a while.

Whether you live in or visit NYC, **48 Lounge**, a swank hangout in the theatre district is offering SDC Members an exclusive rewards program called "Local 48." Simply present your Union membership card to the office manager at 48 Lounge (48th street, just west of 6th Avenue) and fill out a short application. You'll receive a Local 48 card that has a \$15 credit on it. You'll also receive a 15% discount (25% on Monday nights.) on all drinks and food items and a free drink on your second, third and fourth visits. Please Note: Gratuity is added to original pricing and the program is subject to change or cancellation without notice. 48 Lounge: 1221 Avenue of the Americas (48th St., btw. 6th & 7th) NY, NY, 10020 • p. 212.554.4848 • www.48nyc.com.

Need a place to stay when you're in New York? SDC has secured a preferred rate at the **Staybridge Suites in Times Square**. To secure this rate follow the link in the **E-version** of the newsletter. You will be redirected to the reservations page with a built in discount. These reservations do not require you to pay immediately and offer the flexibility to cancel should your plans change. Staybridge Suites is located at 340 West 40th St.

Feel the Burn! We've begun a discussion with **New York Sports Club** for a 20% reduction in the monthly membership for their Passport level membership and no initiation fee for new members. NYSC has facilities from Massachusetts to Washington, D.C. and the Passport membership allows access to those clubs with no restrictions. Also, NYSC membership allows you to visit non NYSC sports clubs in the URSA group for a daily fee. **If you are not currently a NYSC member and want to take advantage of this rate, please call or email me at BWolkoff@SDCweb.org.** Once SDC has enrolled a limited number of new members this rate will become available to current NYSC members whose contracts have expired.

Did you also know that as a Union Member you qualify to become a member of **TDF** (Theatre Development Fund) and receive notices on discount tickets to theatre, dance and music performances? Also, TDF has a National Membership available if you live more than 100 miles outside New York. The National Membership offers the same discount performance prices (\$20 to \$36 a ticket)—but at a special reduced membership of only \$12 a year (regular membership for New Yorkers is \$30.00 per year), only a dollar a month! www.tdf.org.

The Actors Fund is not just for actors! As an industry professional you qualify for all the programs and assistance offered by the Actors Fund. To quote their website, "The Actors Fund offers a broad spectrum of programs including comprehensive social services, health care services, employment and training and housing." There are Actors Fund offices in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago, but their assistance is not limited to those areas. For more information visit The Actors Fund website at www.actorsfund.org.

If there are particular services you are interested in, please let Gretchen and me know. We will continue to reach out and look for new places and opportunities for all Members. And don't forget to stop by when you're in the neighborhood. We love to see the faces we know and put faces to the names and voices we've not yet met in person. If you need a spot for a meeting, a quiet place to read or just to check your email, the Founders Lounge and Library in our offices at 1501 Broadway, Suite 1701 are available. Just call Lena at the front desk to reserve.



PENSION AND HEALTH UPDATE

by MAURO MELLENO, Director of Contract Affairs/Pension & Health Trustee

It has been my pleasure to serve on the SDC staff since 2000. Ever since I can remember, I have dreamed of being a part of the theatre community in some capacity. Like multitudes of thespians before me, I began searching for “my place” in this community as an actor. Before being hired as a Contract Representative at SDC, I had the privilege of being a (sometimes) working member of Actors’ Equity Association and a casting director for Theatreworks/USA. For the past ten years it has given me great satisfaction to work on behalf of stage directors and choreographers. While I have always had respect for the work these artists contribute to the theatre, my current role enables me to be a true advocate for their right to fair wages, property protection, job opportunities and, of course, decent pension and health contributions. I have forged many wonderful relationships within the Membership I represent, and I take great pride in the work the SDC staff strives to do on their behalf.

So why did I balk last year when approached about becoming a Trustee on the SDC-League Pension and Health Funds? I should immediately have jumped at the opportunity. But I hesitated. Part of me wanted to roll up my sleeves and start helping heal the sick Pension and Health Funds for the participants - of which, as a Union staff member, I am one. But another part of me was extremely conscious of the terrible economy, poor market performances and dire state of P&W Funds throughout the country; why would anyone be willing to sign on to wrangle with such issues, given the current climate? It was too fraught with difficulties. It was too much responsibility. In the end, I

decided to accept the challenge of this important fiduciary role because I did not want to live by a double-standard. SDC staff is always telling the Membership to get more involved. How, then, could I sit back and not participate in something as important as people’s health and pension security?

Before going on I’d like to clear up a common misconception. The security of SDC Members’ Pension and Health Funds is determined by the Fund’s Board of Trustees - not the Union’s Executive Board. The Trustee Board is equitably made up of both Union and Employer representation. The Funds’ Board is made up of eight Union Trustees and eight Employer Trustees. Together these appointed Trustees analyze all aspects of the Fund’s performance and make crucial decisions that affect the participants (e.g. accrual rate on pension, investment decisions, health eligibility level, co-pay amounts, what health provider to use, etc.). When a meeting is comprised of folks from both labor and management, it usually means “negotiation” - and certainly a negotiation of sorts happens when the Trustees meet. However, having now attended four Trustee meetings, I must say that both sides (Union and Management) are diligently working toward the same goal: ensuring prosperous and healthy Funds for all participants. In sum, it is precisely because the Trustee Board is fairly made up of both Union and Employer representation that this system of checks and balances works.

I recently attended the Annual International Foundation Conference along with approximately 6,000 other Fund Trustees from all over the

United States and Canada. After two extraordinary (and extraordinarily intense) days at the Pre-Conference that were geared toward new Trustees, I attended 12 sessions with subjects ranging from “Reading Plan Financials” to “Healing a Sick Health Plan.” Sitting and working among thousands of Trustees, I was amazed by the camaraderie between labor and management and inspired by their mutual dedication. As all of us are aware, the SDC Funds have been experiencing some hardships, and the Trustees have been left with no choice other than to make some difficult decisions regarding pension and health benefits. What I learned at the Conference was that every other union’s Funds are experiencing the same problems. And we were all there with the same purpose; to help and support our constituents.

My experience of attending the Conference was invaluable. I encourage all Trustees who have never attended to do so. I encourage all participants of the Funds (that’s YOU, SDC Members) to read and pay attention to the notifications mailed to you by the Funds. These notices are mandated by Federal law and for good reason. They may seem formal and complicated, but take the time to interpret and understand them. Your own participation is instrumental in ensuring the long term sustainability of our Funds. If you find that it’s too complicated, help us make the information more clear. Contact the Funds or contact the Union. Let us know in what way you feel we should better communicate the issues. I encourage you all to do what I did: engage. The issues are complex, the work is daunting, but the reward is a better future for the entire Union.

SDC EXECUTIVE BOARD ELECTION RESULTS

OTHER UNION NEWS
NOTEWORTHY



SDC Executive Board President
KAREN AZENBERG was elected unanimously by the Executive Board to serve another three-year term as President.

All incumbents were reelected:

JULIE ARENAL
WALTER BOBBIE
LARRY CARPENTER
MARCIA MILGROM DODGE
RICHARD HAMBURGER
PAUL LAZARUS
AMY MORTON, Midwest Representative
SHARON OTT, Southeast Representative
SUSAN H. SCHULMAN

SDC Welcomes New Board Members:



MOISÉS KAUFMAN is a Tony and Emmy nominated director and playwright. His most recent play, *33 Variations* was nominated for 5 Tony awards including Best Play. Previous to that, Mr. Kaufman directed the Pulitzer and Tony award-winning play *I Am My Own Wife*, earning him an Obie award as well as Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle and Lucille Lortel nominations. His plays *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde* and *The Laramie Project* have been among the most performed plays in America over the last decade. Mr. Kaufman also directed the film adaptation of *The Laramie Project* for HBO, (opening night selection - 2002 Sundance Film Festival, National Board of Review Award, Humanitas Prize, Special Mention for Best First Film at the Berlin Film Festival). The film also earned Mr. Kaufman two Emmy Award nominations for Best Director and Best Writer. He is the Artistic Director of Tectonic Theater Project and a Guggenheim Fellow in Playwriting. He is the recipient of the Joe Callaway award. Other credits include *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* (Mark Taper Forum); *Macbeth* with Liev Schreiber (Public Theater); *This Is How It Goes* (Donmar Warehouse); *Master Class* with Rita Moreno (Berkeley Rep).



SERET SCOTT has directed a dozen productions at the Old Globe Theatre as an Associate Artist. Off-Broadway she premiered *Mujeres Y Hombres* at New Victory Theatre, and directed *Birdie Blue* and *Zooman and The Sign* for Second Stage Theatre, *Yohen* for Pan Asian Rep. Regional credits: Arena Stage, Woolly Mammoth, Studio Theatre, Ford's Theatre, South Coast Rep, Tribute Productions, Geva Theater, Studio Arena, ACT-SF, Long Wharf, Hartford Stage, Actor's Theatre-Louisville, Oregon Shakespeare, George Street, McCarter (outreach), Crossroads, Alliance, Indiana Rep, Alley, Philadelphia Theatre Co, National Black Theatre, New Mexico Rep, among others. She directed workshops for Roundabout Theatre, Pacific Playwright's, O'Neill Theatre Center, NY Stage and Film, Sundance, New Harmony and is a former Director in Residence at New Dramatists. Seret authored *Second Line*, produced by NJ's Passage Theatre and DC's Atlas Theatre and is a Drama Desk Award winning actress. Her directing nominations include Beverly Hills' NAACP, Connecticut Critics Circle and Helen Hayes.

NEW MEMBERS

Steven Amato
Director
Long Island City, NY

Dexter Bullard
Director
Chicago, IL

Joyce Chittick
Director/Choreographer
Las Vegas, NV

Kimberly Senior
Director
Chicago, IL

Brian Shnipper
Director
Los Angeles, CA

David Winitsky
Director
Maplewood, NJ

Steve Witting
Director
Forest Hills, NY

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Krystal Banzon
Director
Jackson Heights, NY

Josie Bray
Director/Choreographer
Astoria, NY

Brandon Bruce
Director
Coralville, IA

James Bush
Director
Lubbock, TX

Rachel Beth Foulks
Director
Vermillion, SD

Tommy Iafrate
Director/Choreographer
Macomb, IL

Shakina J. Nayfack
Director/Choreographer
Los Angeles, CA

Leigh Selting
Director
Laramie, WY

Nancy Simon
Director
Walla Walla, WA

Francesca Ursone
Director
Palisades, CA

Mo Zhou
Director
New York, NY

NEW OR RENEWED IPA'S

Red Bull Theatre
NYC
IPA to ANTC

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	On the Run Productions
Baci Management d/b/a B&B Prod. Mary Card, Producer	DS Unlimited David Syner, Producer Los Angeles, CA	Perkins Productions Robert Perkins, Producer
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	Playhouse Theatre Group Tracy Flater, 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 Kapur, Producer
Diverse City Theatre Victor Lirio, Producer	Musical Theatre of Los Angeles	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	Sales Guru Consulting, LLC Karen Paull
American Music Theatre of San Jose	Edwards Entertainment Group Armstead Edwards, Producer	Barbara Schottenfeld, Producer
Obie Bailey, Producer	MadCap Productions	Shows By Jutta, Inc. Ned Toth, Producer
Mark Balsam, Producer	Richard Martini, Producer	David Sonkin, Producer
Brian Bantry, Producer	Myriad Productions, Grant Robbin, Producer	Special Entertainment Events Christopher Raphael, Producer
Chanhassen Dinner Theatre	NET Theatrical Productions Albert Nocciolino, Producer	Allen Spivak, Producer Barrie & Lynn Wexler, Producers
CLO of South Bay Cities	New City Stage Company Ginger Dayle, Producer	Robin Tate, Producer
Coconut Grove Playhouse, Florida	Stephen O'Neil, Producer	Stages Repertory Theatre, Houston, TX
M. Carlyle Productions Michael Carlyle, Producer New York, NY	Plowshares Theatre Company	Texarts Association
	Rubicon Theatre	Whole Art Theater



**STAGE
DIRECTORS AND
CHOREOGRAPHERS
SOCIETY**

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 59

JAN/FEBRUARY 2010

your source for important notifications of all Union matters

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- Dues are increasing. Please consider a payment plan.
- By-Law ballots are due to the offices of SDC by January 14th, 2011. Vote! It matters.
- Please note the SDC offices will be closed on the following days:
 - Friday, December 31st** - New Year's Eve
 - Monday, January 17th** - Martin Luther King Jr. Day
 - Monday, February 21st** - Presidents' Day
- Please remember to put SDC in your bio.
- SDCF One-on-One Conversation, late January 2011 featuring **Tony Taccone**, Artistic Director of Berkley Rep and guest.