



**STAGE  
DIRECTORS AND  
CHOREOGRAPHERS  
SOCIETY**

**NEWSLETTER**  
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*your source for important notifications of all Union matters*



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**COVER**

**COMING TO A THEATER NEAR YOU!**

by RANDY ANDERSON, Contract Administrator

I'm sitting in a blissfully cold movie theater munching on a 'small' bag of popcorn sizing up the mostly middle-aged, predominantly white audience as they select their seats in the low light. It is a very specific crowd for a very specific event. No, we're not going to see a Hollywood blockbuster, nor are we going to be reading subtitles of a foreign art house flick. My fellow audience members and I (who now almost fill the theater) are going to see *London Assurance*, the final show of the National Theatre's inaugural season of *NT Live*.

*NT Live* promises to 'capture the live theatrical experience' and bring it to movie theaters around the world, an endeavor that has proven to be wildly successful. And it's easy to see why. From the commentator who introduces the production outside the National Theatre building to the birds-eye camera shot of the audience as the lights go down (after all, isn't that how we know the play is going to begin?), they've done a fantastic job (in this writer's opinion) of creating a live theatrical experience. At one point I commented to my neighbor that I could no longer tell the difference between the laughter in our audience and the laughter coming through the speakers. To which she responded, "There's laughter coming through the speakers?" The evening felt very 'West End' right down to the horribly long restroom lines at intermission. Sadly, however, there was no ice cream vendor in the isles to sell me a creamy treat with a wooden spoon.

So why am I writing this? Why have so many articles been written in this newsletter about the use of captured theatrical footage? The simple answer is because it's here, it's becoming more prevalent, and it affects you, the Director and Choreographer. On the heels of the Metropolitan Opera Cinecasts, a new hybrid of cinema and theatre is emerging that is making

the viewing of 'captured' stage productions more popular. It used to be that a single wide shot was how a performance was captured, but today HD cameras can capture scenes in almost any light, and it's no longer cost prohibitive to have multiple cameras set up to catch every angle. Tomorrow who knows how intricate the capturing process will become and how much further the lines between capturing a live performance, and staging a performance to look live will become?

In mid June, Laura Penn and I attended the TCG National Conference in Chicago where we presented a break-out session titled "Capturing the Live Experience." Our goal was to start the larger conversation about where Stage Directors and Choreographers fit into the world of filming live theatrical events as we at SDC believe that our Directors and Choreographers should be an integral part of shaping this new artistic paradigm. By the animated discussion, the 90 minutes that felt like 5, and the flurry of follow up conversations we've had, I'd say we were very successful in achieving that goal. Joining us in leading this discussion was SDC Member **Sheldon Epps**, SDC Executive Board Member **Amy Morton**, and Artistic Director of *On The Boards* in Seattle WA, **Lane Czaplinski** who is currently overseeing *ontheboards.tv*, an online service that provides on demand viewings of captured live performances. We were pleased to see SDC Board Members **Linda Hartzell** and **Michael John Garcés** there as well.

It would be foolish to think that this activity will remain 'across the pond' or in non-union presenting houses. This trend will continue and it is the job of the unions to set up protections for our Members both artistically and financially. In all of our conversations, questions have been raised about compensation, collaboration, property rights and maintaining the integrity and original intent of the production. I wish we

HEADER: Executive Board Member and Director, Ethan McSweeney, directing *A View from the Bridge* at the Guthrie Theater. Photo by Michal Daniel.

had the answers to those questions, but we don't - not yet. And right now nobody does, it's just too new. But these are questions that we will need to answer in the coming months and years. And one of the best ways to begin answering these questions is by fully understanding the activity. To that end, the SDC Foundation has established the "Live on Screen" initiative with the goal of educating our Membership about the techniques of capturing live performances, learning the vocabulary, and acquiring the tools to better collaborate with camera directors when they capture your show. If we can start with the art, protecting and understanding the demands of this new world of captured performance, we will be better positioned to begin setting guidelines, protections, and minimum compensations for our Members that allow this activity to grow and solidify your role in it.

As the production of *London Assurance* ended and the actors were taking their bows, I began to remove my sweatshirt in preparation for the 90 degree heat that awaited me outside. The experience was wonderful but there was something missing. The announcer was talking about season two and I noticed that they credit two creative teams, "Creative Team for the Stage" followed by a list of people,

and "Digital Creative Team" followed by another list of people. I'm struck by the clear distinction. But something is still missing. I walk out of the theater and start toward home. Going through the list of things that could possibly have been missing from this "live experience" it finally dawns on me. Nobody clapped. Was it because they felt foolish clapping for a screen? Or because the performers wouldn't hear them across that large expanse of blue? Whatever the reason, for me it killed any illusion that I was at a play. And as exciting as all this new capturing of live theatre is, it's only an addition to, not a replacement for going to see a show. The lights go down and the play begins; that part we got. But if I don't get to applaud at the end and share my joy with the performers, it's always going to feel like the movies.



by KIM ROGERS, Business Associate

**O**ur Broadway Toast: a new SDC tradition! This brainchild of SDC Board Member **Rob Ashford** began last year and has been a great way to not only celebrate the work done over the course of the season but to build a sense of community amongst our Broadway Members.

On Friday June 11, Members who worked on Broadway in the 2009-2010 Season gathered with the SDC Staff and Board at the Glass House Tavern (whose bartenders created a special "Red SeDuCtion" cocktail!) to celebrate the close of the season and the upcoming Tony Awards. Tony Nominees **Marcia Milgrom Dodge**, **Lynne Page**, **Sheryl Kaller**, **Kenny Leon**, **Gregory Mosher** and **Stephen McKinley Henderson** mingled with Broadway first timer **Michele Lynch**, Mike Ockrent Fellow **Gregg Wiggans**, Board Member **Wendy C. Goldberg** (representing the 2010 Regional Tony winning Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center), Former Board President **Pamela Berlin**, and current Board Members **Susan H. Schulman**, **Mary B. Robinson**, and **Oz Scott**. As Executive Director **Laura Penn** said in her toast, "Most often you find yourselves the 'only one' in the room—maybe you have a partner, a collaborator in a director or choreographer, but it is rare. And it is all too rare that we ever gather together." Our SDC Broadway Toast was the perfect opportunity to do just that.

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Kenny Leon, Lynne Page;  
Pamela Berlin, Gregory Mosher, Marcia Milgrom Dodge



Holes at Seattle Children's Theatre directed by Linda Hartzell

NEWS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SEQUENCING

by LAURA PENN



Where we begin the work ahead will contribute greatly to our success. Creating the "to do" list is often the easy part. It is the critical step of sequencing that often catches us – causes us to fall short or to need to regroup. I have found that the odds of achieving a challenging and clearly articulated goal increase dramatically if I carefully consider the sequencing of my "to do's".

I served as the assistant production manger at the Seattle Rep when Dan Sullivan was Artistic Director. My job during techs was to sit and simply be available. I waited and watched – hour after hour of slow, often excruciatingly slow tech – in case someone might need something. A ride to an apartment, a cup of coffee, a set-up for an early morning photo shoot. This time Dan was directing The Tempest, and it was a beautiful, ambitious and extraordinarily difficult physical production. As is generally the case with The Tempest, the storm sequence took days to tech. Being a bit spirited and young and arrogant, I kept my own notes. I remember that there was some small bit of business that a secondary character was doing at the top of the show – and it wasn't working. I don't remember specifics; I just remember wondering why Dan had not asked him to stop. Hour after hour, day after day, this bit of business distracted me. You know how it goes – they would start at the top and run until it came to a screeching halt. Then they would begin the interminably slow process of teching the next page, then the next, and then back to the top. Each time we returned to the top of the show – there was that bit of business. Should I tell Dan? He was dealing with so much – maybe he needed my eye? It would be simple to fix. Just tell the actor to stop! Humility got the best of me. I resisted. Finally the full show was tech'd, then a run-through and a preview. The next morning Dan begins by sitting quietly with the cast and slowly, thoughtfully, gracefully he works through the show beat by beat – focusing on the small stuff. Gently but firmly he corrects the bit of business that had been causing me to lose sleep. I saw the cast, exhausted but safe, feeling proud of their accomplishment and ready to hear and accept notes. Oh... I get it. Lesson learned. Make a list. Consider what to do when. Sequence.

Today I think about sequencing, about layers and about parallel tracks. I consider the context, the texture and the complexities of tasks and the reality of being human. How and when to build consensus. The act of creating something new or managing change. All the while I try to remain

sensitive to immediate needs, resisting the seductive path, constantly fixing the small stuff and feeling proud at being able to cross something off the list. I know that fixed small stuff doesn't mean very much without the large stuff for it to rest on.

I have sat in three distinctly different rooms with brilliant Directors and Choreographers over the past two months, and each gathering leads me to think about sequencing.

The first room was that of the Nominating Committee, which has been meeting and working intensively over the past month putting together the slate for the fall elections. This committee is a mix of at-large and Executive Board Members. The chair is the formable Oz Scott. Singularly one of the most important tasks a Board is charged with is to perpetuate itself through its Board cultivation, recruitment and rotation process. This committee is very thoughtfully balancing the needs of the Union today with the challenges we may face tomorrow. It has analyzed the demographics of the Board and its alignment - or lack of alignment - with the Membership. They have worked to find the right tension between work and influence, understanding that both are necessary but neither should dominate or diminish the other. Literally hours upon hours have been dedicated to reflective candid discussion, with late night phone calls to many of you, searching for the right mix. In the end they have identified what the slate can and should look like this year. The variables are many but with the proper sequencing an impressive slate moves forward.

The second gathering was an Executive Board retreat. Over 2/3 of your Board (the other 1/3 was in rehearsal) flew in from across the country to spend eight hours on a Sunday considering the major governance issues that must be addressed to position SDC to effectively pursue its vision, support its ambitions and confront emerging challenges. Exploring the questions: How do we align the Board's skills and expertise with SDC's goals and objectives? What is governance in the context of SDC? The day was about taking a precious moment to reflect on how we are doing and how can we do better. At the end of the day clarity begins to form around goals and strategies the Board will adopt moving forward to strengthen itself – addressing committee processes and structure of meeting agendas, communications and Board development. Threaded through these discussions throughout the day was the desire to keep perspective, to



LEFT: The placing of the dots at the 2010 Board Retreat. Photo care of SDC.

#### Sequencing CONTINUED

ensure that we continue to take care of the day-to-day while we re-commit ourselves to dedicating our energies to the long-term needs of SDC and serving the Membership. Basically, to not get so distracted by the small stuff that we lose sight of the big stuff, the future.

And third – just last week in Chicago – the TCG conference. We joined Equity, who has had a consistent presence, and the Dramatist Guild who was also there for the first time. The conference itself was wide-ranging and it would take pages to share everything we brought back to SDC as well as my own personal responses. There were more than 900 of our closest friends in attendance: artists, managers, trustees. Teresa Erying is doing a stellar job of guiding this fleet! The conference was about trying to find answers to the biggest

questions in our field while providing tactical support to help everyone deal with today's immediate challenges and barriers to success. I saw so many people and wished for more opportunity for substantive exchange. I really wished I could have captured **Anne Kaufman's** acceptance speech for the Alan Schneider Award, both the words and her energy! Fantastic. (We did get her words. See Anne's remarks in the Our Union page). Our session – a tight room, smart people, and a slippery topic – new media – one in need of deep consideration for sequencing. How do you as artists want your work to be seen in the new electronic dimension? Where is the cinecast going? And can we find a way to let go of the "business" of this for a brief moment while we figure out the "art" of it? Sequence. We must, of course, ensure standard protection for your work in this new dimension – but let's not let the need for business tasks distract us from the bigger moment – which is happening right now and which is there for you to help shape, help lead. (See Randy's front page article)

I have never actually talked to Dan about my revelation during *The Tempest* tech – I thought about it as I started writing this piece – then thought, no -- What if I had the sequencing all wrong?

PS – We Skype now.

FROM THE CONTRACT DESK

## UPDATE ON CONTRACTS

- The new SDC/Broadway Agreement booklet and rates are now available online
- The SDC/LORT Agreement booklet and rates are now available online
- The SDC/Off-Broadway Agreement expired June 30, 2010. Tentative dates for negotiations of a new multi-year contract are set for early August
- SDC has a new promulgated contract for the New York Musical Theatre Festival (NYMF) The contract is now available online
- The Tier Contract will be updated to include provisions for Short-term Choreography on non-musicals, enhanced billing, health contribution increases and minor adjustments to tiering criteria. Changes will be effective January 1, 2011 (details of those changes will be in the next issue of the Newsletter)



## WHERE IN THE WORLD IS SDC?

### VISITING THE UPPER MIDWEST

by BARBARA WOLKOFF, Senior Contract Administrator

**Spring** is a beautiful time of year in the Upper Midwest, though during my visit May 11-14, the May showers tried to rain on my parade. Undaunted, I was excited to return to the community that taught me how magical theatre can be (I'm a native Minnesotan—born in St. Paul, raised in suburban Minneapolis). It's no secret that the Twin Cities have a vibrant, active theatrical community and I experienced as much as I could squeeze in.

SDC's Twin Cities Members are just as interesting as the community of which they are a part. During my visit I had the opportunity to meet individually with **Peter Rothstein** of Theater Latte Da, **Joel Sass** of The Jungle Theater, **Lou Bellamy** of The Penumbra Theater and **Jack Reuler** of Mixed Blood Theater. In each encounter we discussed how the Union could be more present in the community—how to work together to bring Union and Foundation programming to the Twin Cities. We talked about the challenges and rewards of being a local director; uses of new media in the promotion of themselves and their productions and how these issues are being translated into negotiations of SDC's Collectively Bargained Agreements.

Another exciting connection was with Leah Cooper. The Program Director of the recently formed MN Theater Alliance, Leah is also a director and non-profit administration consultant and assisted **Ethan McSweeney** at the Guthrie on his production of *A View from the Bridge* in the 2008-09 season. Leah and I discussed the Alliance, its mission and goals and how and where the interests of the Union and the Alliance might intersect.

While preparing for my visit, I learned that local Artistic Directors have a monthly breakfast meeting. I was curious and wanted to know more. Discussions with Leah Cooper and Jack Reuler revealed some details of how this breakfast came about. A number of years ago the Minneapolis Star-Tribune was going to change/reduce their coverage of theatre. As a result of their efforts to keep theatrical coverage meaningful, the theatres realized that they were not unified in their message. The ADs realized that, for the most part, they were only gathering and talking at conferences like

TCG. From this, the breakfast was born. Supported by the McKnight Foundation, the monthly breakfasts have created an environment where ideas and resources are discussed and shared—a collaboration that enhances the community.

Also on my agenda were meetings with theatres and their representatives. In some cases the focus was a discussion about creating Independent Producers Agreements (IPAs), in others just a hello to folks with whom our relationships are already defined through a Collectively Bargained Agreement. At the Children's Theatre Company, Ellen Baker and I discussed children's theatre companies across the country and the ways in which CTC is and isn't like the others, as well as the next steps in creating an IPA. At the New Chanhassen Dinner Theatres, I met with Michael Brindisi and Solveig Haseth. We shared productive conversations about Chanhassen's relationship with SDC and its members and specifics for a new IPA. James Scott of the Guthrie Theatre gave me a tour of that impressive facility and I was able to say hello in person to so many people we usually only get to meet by phone. Also at The Guthrie, Executive Board Member, **Wendy C. Goldberg**, was in town directing *Dollhouse* and invited me to attend the first run-through of the production. It was an exciting afternoon...to be able to see one of our Members at work (a beautiful production taking shape) and the chance to chat with SDC Members **Joe Dowling** and **Marcela Lorca** during the intermission break.

It would not have been a proper visit if I didn't sample local bounty of theatrical offerings. Though time was tight, I was able to see Peter Rothstein's production of *M Butterfly* at the Guthrie and Lou Bellamy's production of *Two Old Black Guys Sitting Just Sitting Around Talking*. Both productions reminded me of what I learned so many years ago in the Twin Cities, theatre really IS magic. By the end of the trip the sun had come out both literally and figuratively as new connections had been made, older ones renewed and a clear sense of what next we can do together to strengthen our ties in such a wonderful community. Flash forward: It was great to see Peter Rothstein again when he attended the June 29 DCN in New York City. To all our Members, stop by the office when you're in New York City. We love to put names and faces together.



## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: PHILIP HIMBERG

by KRISTY CUMMINGS, Hauptman Fellow

*I recently had the opportunity to sit down with Philip Himberg, the Producing Artistic Director of the Sundance Institute Theatre Program, to discuss his career, the Sundance Theatre Program, and his thoughts on theatre. Below are some of the highlights from our conversation.*

**To begin, can you tell us a little bit about yourself and how you came to the Sundance Theatre Program?**

My trajectory as a Director and Artistic Director was a bit unusual and had some sidebars. My first professional opportunity came when I was a student at Oberlin College in Ohio and I participated in an internship program that brought me to New York to work at the Chelsea Theatre Center in Brooklyn. So, I am really big on recommending internships to students in training. I think they can change your life; mine certainly did. I worked initially at Chelsea and that got me my first paid job as an Associate Producer at Playwrights Horizons, in the very early years, well before "Theatre Row." Eventually I served as a co-Artistic Director with Bob Moss and Andre Bishop, focusing on Playwrights Horizons/Queens Theatre-in-the-Park. In 1979, I received a TCG NEA grant that was given to Artistic Directors to observe the way other theatres worked, and I went to the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles. In 1982, I took a real hiatus from theatre all together. I was 29 and I decided to indulge my interest in medicine and healing. I went back to school and got a degree as a doctor of Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture and what followed was a 12-year career as a natural healer. That chapter very much informed my life and I think still does, as I continue to "nurture" artists. In 1996, I received a phone call from a colleague of mine who had worked with me at the Taper. He had recently been hired by Robert Redford to take over the reins of the Sundance Institute as the Executive Director and he hired me to run the Theatre Program. And I've been doing that now for almost 15 years.

**Can you tell us more about the Sundance Institute Theatre Program itself and how it has evolved throughout the years?**

It is a program whose mission is to support the voices and the projects of emerging, mid-career and established American playwrights and directors. The program added "and directors" when I came on board. We receive about 700 applications each year (mostly from playwrights and playwright/director teams, but also from directors) and we support this new work through several laboratory programs. The lab that has existed since the beginning of the Institute in 1981 was initially called the Sundance Playwrights Lab. In 1996 when I came in, we changed the name of it to the Sundance Theatre Lab to reflect the fact that I felt new work was being created not only by playwrights but also by

directors who were interested in either being the principal artist of a new work, or re-conceiving classical texts, or collaborating with other artists in innovative ways. So once I started working at Sundance you could apply as a lab fellow, either as a playwright or as a director. That was a major piece of what changed. What also changed was that we added other laboratories to the program, such as the Sundance Playwrights Retreat at Ucross, where playwrights and composers are given the space to just put the pen to the paper, and the Sundance Theatre Lab at White Oak, which focuses on developing musical theatre and ensemble-created work. But the centerpiece lab is a 21-day lab where projects rehearse on alternative days so that the playwright, director, and dramaturg have a full day in between rehearsals with actors to really think deeply about their work and to do rewrites without rushing them. I don't know many other programs that have that kind of luxurious time and I think it sets us apart.

We continue to refine the process that happens at the Utah lab. We have dramaturgs working on each project and two or three creative advisors or "mentors," who are usually leading artistic directors and/or playwrights who arrive to see the final readings of the work at the lab and participate in a roundtable conversation with the playwright, director, staff dramaturgs and myself the next day. I should mention that there is no public performance at Sundance. During the last week at the lab, each project will present a reading or a staged reading to the assembled community, but there are no producers or audience. So there is a great rare opportunity to work to the very end without pressure.

But I think it is important to note that at Sundance, we support the artist even more than the project, so we are really interested in the writer more than his or her play or the director more than his or her project. We're interested in the voice - what the artists have to say. And if we find someone we really believe is creating something extraordinary, innovative, and a key word would be risk-taking, even if the play seems a little unformed, we're ready to support that artist.

*Because of construction at the Sundance Resort in Utah, this year the Sundance Theatre Lab took place in two new locations: first at MASS MoCA in North Adams, Massachusetts and the second in New York City- the Theatre Lab at Governors Island. How was conducting the lab in these new places challenging, rewarding and/or different?*

It was all those things: It was challenging, it was rewarding, and it was different. The reason there were two labs in this season was because the summer lab [in Utah] was able to accommodate a critical mass of about 80 people and that is about 7-8 plays. There was no venue we could find to replace that many people at once, so we decided to divide the lab into two pieces. MASS MoCA offered us two weeks last March/April, so we brought 4 projects there and another 3 projects to the second lab, which occurred in June on Governors Island off the coast of Manhattan. That was our first non-residency lab, so that lab actually created much more of a challenge. One of the main missions of the labs besides developing the plays is to create a true artistic community. We do that by people staying overnight and having all of their meals together and really living together for 2-3 weeks. On Governors Island we didn't have that. I was really concerned that it would be just another New York workshop. But it wasn't- it was way more successful than that. People felt compelled to be part of the group. They stayed for happy hours we had on the mainland every night, we had a pizza night down on Stone Street and we had a screening of a film down at the National Museum of the American Indian. Those activities were really celebrated by the group. So that was lovely and the work got done and people wrote well and prolifically.

It was different having 30 people rather than having 70 or 80 and what we realized this year was that the core value of the critical mass was missed. When you have 80 people and 7 plays there's a cross-fertilization of lots and lots of ideas and when you have 4 plays and 30 people there is still a cross-fertilization but not as much. But aside from that, the process went on and people did great work on their plays.

*Will the summer theatre lab return to Utah next summer?*

Next year the summer lab will be one 3-week lab. It will be 21 days, it will have 6-8 projects and they will have the day off in between. It will not be at Utah because the resort will still be under renovation. We are about ready to announce where it is going to be but not quite - but it will be somewhere in the west, somewhere in the mountains.

*This July you are conducting a theatre lab on the island of Manda, Kenya as part of the Sundance Institute East Africa initiative. Can you share a little bit about this initiative?*

Every aspect of the institute has always had an international component. We describe Sundance as "an American institute with a global reach." And when I got to Sundance, it became apparent to me that American directors were woefully unaware of work happening outside of our country and that they were the losers in that. If they were able to see other cultures in process, it would inform their own work and make for a richer experience. So right away I began to invite international guests to the lab.

We made the decision that the areas of the world we would work in would be areas where there was political or social change happening because we had an idea that in those areas younger artists would be creating work to respond to the changes that were occurring around them. Two years ago, we turned our attention to East Africa because there was a huge shift happening in those communities- Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Rwanda in particular- and there were in fact young artists coming up that were creating dynamic new work. So, we are on a formal five year initiative in East Africa. We have visited the region over the last several years and we have brought American artists there, including Sundance alumni director Rebecca Taichman and playwright/performer Charlayne Woodard, and have brought artists from East Africa to our lab at Sundance. Now we are posed to have our first 3-week lab on the island of Manda, off the coast of Kenya this July. We had an open submission policy just like we do for our lab here and we received 47 applications from 5 countries. We chose 4 projects and we paired them with directors and performers in Africa. So there will be about 25 people on this island plus 2 creative advisors- one American, Leisl Tommy who is a director, and George Bwanika Seremba, who is a Ugandan writer living in Ireland. And it's a little bit of an adventure because there are 4 languages I know of that are part of this collaboration: English, French, Kirwanda and Kiswahili.

*And you will be working in all 4 languages?*

Yes in all 4. I mean everyone speaks a little English, some speak a lot of English but some speak much less English, so that will be a challenge. Also the projects are not deeply scripted- some of them have scripts for sure but some of them are being created on their feet with improvisation and music and poetry. It is going to be amazing to figure out how we use the Sundance methods to shepherd these projects and [to experience] how the artists support each other.

*As a director yourself, how do you balance running the Sundance Theatre Program with your own directing work?*

It is tricky to balance. I feel like I only direct when I feel compelled to direct. I would say that every 18 months to 2 years, I allow myself to direct outside of Sundance. And I feel it is important, that for me to sit in a room with other directors and to respond to their questions or give advice, I need to be working outside of my own cocoon, so I know what the 'real world' is like. My colleagues at Sundance understand that as well and they have been very encouraging to me to develop myself as an individual artist. I am actually now working on a piece I developed at Huntington Theatre with Maureen McGovern that is going to the Geva Theatre Center. I am also doing a little playwriting, which is new for me but I think it is also important to my growth as an individual. It is all a balancing act.



Member **Andrea Andresakis** at Alaska Dance Theatre. Photo by Marc Lester.

Member Spotlight: Philip Himberg CONTINUED

*What kind of theatre trends are you currently observing across the country? Are there any challenges or issues you feel directors and choreographers in particular are facing?*

I think the challenges in the field seem to be somewhat economic and somewhat about courage. I feel there are probably not enough people running theatres who have the courage to do the more challenging work, so they are opting for safer, more familiar work, which I find kind of tragic. You can't program one new play in a season and then wonder why people don't come to it the way they came to the more familiar work. If you went into Barnes & Noble and there was one new book on the new book table, you don't provide an opportunity for readers to look at the range of new published work and get a sense of the body of new writing. That is what's happening in a lot of the regions; less risk-taking, more fear, and that is, in part, due to economics and ticket sales. It impacts playwrights for sure, but directors interested in new work will find less opportunity as well. There are probably few theatres that are "directors' theatres," where they are into encouraging young directors to come and try their hand at even a classic. So I think those waiting-for-the-phone-to-ring opportunities are probably less.

*You recently spoke on a panel about opportunities at the SDCF's Symposium for Emerging Directors and Choreographers- if you could pick one piece of advice to share with this constituency that you feel is most important, what would it be?*

Create your own work. Go be inspired by art, by others people's work, other plays. Go to museums constantly, see interesting films, read great books- those exposures will create the ideas and surprises you're going to come up with in how you discover your talent, find your voice, interpret work. And by create your own work I mean there should be 4 or 5 projects you have at all times that you are passionate about. It can be a collaboration with an emerging playwright that you believe in and love; it can be creating a new solo piece with your actor friend who is also waiting around for something to happen. That I think is probably a great assignment. I think what you don't want to be doing

is hanging out waiting for an assignment or working on a project that is not interesting. People are going to hire you when you are out there. Make a list of every Artistic Director whose work you admire and make sure they are on your email invite list. And keep writing to them. I mean, I read those emails- I can't see half of them but I do [attend] many- I'll say, "Oh, that's interesting. I don't know that director but that writer applied to us once." So sometimes I am going to see the work of the playwright and then I see a director or actor's work and that is how Sundance may become interested in you. So be really proactive.

*Before we officially wrap up, do you have any parting thoughts you would like to share with the SDC community?*

I would love people to know that directors can apply to Sundance and that partnerships between directors and playwrights are encouraged as well. Also, that there is an open submission policy and our deadline is October 1. Our applications should be online by September 1. ([www.sundance.org](http://www.sundance.org))

*On behalf of the SDC, thank you, Philip, for sharing your passion with us!*



## PENSION & HEALTH SUMMARY ANNUAL REPORTS

by JOHN EVERSON, Funds Administrator

The SDC-League Pension and Health Funds are pleased to provide you with the following summaries for the 2009 fiscal year. As required under ERISA, complete statements have been filed with the IRS. If at any time you would like a copy of your individual pension credits, or have any question regarding your entitlement to pension or health benefits, please contact the Funds office at 212-869-8129 or by email at [Pension@sdcweb.org](mailto:Pension@sdcweb.org).

### Your Rights to Additional Information From the Funds

You have the right to obtain copies of the full annual reports or any part thereof, on request. The items included in these reports are (1) financial information and information on payments to service providers; (2) assets held for investment; (3) insurance information including sales commissions paid by insurance carriers, and (4) information regarding any common or collective trusts, pooled separate accounts, master trusts, or 103-12 investment entities in which the Plan participates. To obtain a copy of the full annual report, or any part thereof without charge, please write to the SDCLeague Pension and Health Funds, 1501 Broadway, Ste. 1701, New York, NY 10036. You also have the legal right to examine the annual reports at the Funds Office, or by contacting the U.S. Department of Labor, Public Disclosure Room, N-1513, Employee Benefits Security Administration, 200 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington D.C. 20210.

### SDC-LEAGUE PENSION FUND

(Federal Tax Id #13-6634482; Plan Number 001)

Summary Annual Report as of 8/31/09

#### Basic Financial Statement:

Benefits under the Plan are provided by a trust. Total Plan expenses were \$2,653,571. These expenses included \$621,387 in administrative expenses and \$2,032,184 in benefits paid to participants and beneficiaries. A total of 1,596 persons were participants in or beneficiaries of the Plan at the end of the Plan Year, although not all of these persons had yet earned the right to receive benefits.

The value of Plan assets, after subtracting liabilities of the Plan, was \$30,091,962 as of August 31, 2009, compared to \$33,901,943 as of September 1, 2008. During the Plan Year the Plan experienced a change in its assets of \$-3,809,981. This change includes unrealized appreciation or depreciation in the value of Plan assets; that is the difference between the value of the Plan's assets at the end of the year and the value at the beginning of the year, or the cost of assets acquired during the year. The Plan had total income of \$-1,156,410 that included employer contributions of \$2,206,789, a gain of \$2,081 from the sale of assets, and earnings from investments of \$-3,381,364.

#### Minimum Funding Standards:

An actuarial statement shows that sufficient money has been contributed to the Plan to keep it funded in accordance with minimum standards of ERISA. A summary of the contributions made to the Fund on your behalf may be obtained by contacting the Fund Office.

### SDC-LEAGUE HEALTH FUND

(Federal Tax Id #13-2958267; Plan Number 502)

Summary Annual Report as of 8/31/09

#### Insurance Information:

During the Plan Year the Plan had contracts with Oxford Health Plans and Kaiser Permanente to pay claims incurred under the terms of the Plan. The total premiums paid for the Plan Year ending August 31, 2009 were \$2,021,109.

#### Basic Financial Statement:

The value of Plan assets, after subtracting liabilities of the Plan, was \$1,954,316 as of August 31, 2009, compared to \$2,447,520 as of September 1, 2008. During the Plan Year the Plan experienced a change in net assets of \$-493,204. This change includes unrealized appreciation or depreciation in the value of Plan assets; that is the difference between the value of the Plan's assets at the end of the year and the value at the beginning of the year, or the cost of assets acquired during the year. The Plan had total income of \$2,601,401 that included employer contributions of \$2,012,086, employee contributions of \$528,827, no gain or loss from the sale of assets, and earnings from investments of \$57,280. Total Plan expenses were \$3,094,605. These expenses included \$370,496 in administrative expenses and \$2,724,109 in benefits paid to or on behalf of participants and beneficiaries. A total of 1,073 persons were participants in or beneficiaries of the Plan at year-end.



FEATURE

# ANNE KAUFMAN ACCEPTING THE ALAN SCHNEIDER DIRECTING AWARD

printed with the permission of Member, Director ANNE KAUFMAN

*The Alan Schneider Directing Award was established in 1984 to commemorate the life and work of Alan Schneider: Director, teacher and mentor. The Award is funded by the Alan Schneider Memorial Fund; a joint venture of TCG, SDC and The Acting Company. Past recipients of the Schneider Award include former SDC Executive Board Member **Mark Brokaw** and current Board Member **Mary B. Robinson**. This year's recipient was **Anne Kauffman** who was nominated by **Blanka Zizka** of the Wilma Theater. The following is a reprint of her acceptance speech. Enjoy!*

Thank you so much, Blanka.

What an honor it is to receive this award and to receive it here among my closest colleagues and potential future employers.

I would like to thank a bunch of people who played a part in cultivating me as a director.

So here goes, and I'll do it quickly, I promise:

To Mrs. Gilbert, my grade school music teacher, who was responsible for encouraging the thespian inside by casting me as Eliza Doolittle in the 8th grade production of *My Fair Lady*; Mrs. Gilbert whom my mother ran into at a grocery store in Phoenix (my hometown) a few years back and who, when my mother gushed about how I'd continued to pursue and work in the theater due to the great influence Mrs. Gilbert had had on my life, clearly had no recollection of who the hell I was. Mrs. Gilbert I remember you and I would like to thank you.

To my Dad for taking me to New York for the first time at age 13, where I saw *A Chorus Line*, *Dancin'* and *Evita*, furthering my ambitions to become a musical theater star. Thank you, Dad.

To Mr. Barclay the head of the Audio/Visual department at Camelback High School who helped me edit a video of a scene I'd "directed" from *Death of a Salesman*, where Biff and Happy were played by two girls from my English class... Mr. Barclay who encouraged me to think about directing as his son was a director too...his son Peter Sellars, had I heard of him?... I was like, "Who?" Thanks, Mr. Barclay.

To all of the student directors at my undergrad who consistently and solely cast me as men (which spoke more to the shortage of guys in the drama department than to my talent as an actor capable of gender flexibility), and for conspicuously NOT casting me in musicals, thereby gently, but clearly ending my dreams of becoming a musical theater star. I thank you.

To Michael Hackett, my first directing teacher who uttered strange and foreign words to me like *Pina Bausch*, *Ariane Mnouchkine*, and *opera*. And who was the first person to call me a director, thank you, Michael.

To Carl Weber who told me that he was thrilled by the first minute of the Russian Symbolist play I directed in college and immediately lost interest for the ensuing 90 minutes...that the play itself reminded him of a production he'd seen in Russia where there were 60 boys on stage "fucking fucking each other" and that was exciting theater...thank you, Carl for teaching me that the theater is not an intellectual enterprise, but a sexual one.

To Gorbachev, for opening up the Soviet Union and rendering my job helping Jews get out of the Soviet Union unnecessary, thereby catapulting me to New York to make a go of this theater thing once and for all.

To Peter Filichia who mentioned me in an article in *Theater Week* in 1993 entitled 'Kushner, Kesselman and Kauffman' citing *their* accomplishments as playwrights, and mine as a house manager for Circle Rep. In the article he predicted that I was destined for great things based on my ability to handle cranky patrons in a calm and generous manner. What he didn't mention in the article was my ability to change the urinal cakes in the bathrooms at Circle Rep in a calm and generous manner. Thank you, Peter.



photo by Alan Wiener

To David Esbjornson who took me under his wing at Classic Stage Company in 1993 and for whom I assisted on many a show and through whom I met amazing theater artists and fell in love with new plays and the new play process. Thank you, David.

To Les Waters who taught me how to think outside the box and how to use the 'c' word as a term of endearment. Thank you, Les.

To Susan Bernfield and New Georges for giving me my first professional directing gig out of school...thank you, Susan.

To Zelda Fichandler who stared right through me and said "What are you talking about" when I mentioned how difficult it was to be a woman director in America...I said *that* to Zelda Fichandler!

To the likes of Mac Wellman, Paula Vogel, Erik Ehn, Len Jenkins, Jeffrey Jones and Tina Howe for cultivating a generation of playwrights who are reclaiming theater for theater's sake, and with whom I have had the great honor of collaborating. Without these playwrights and their predecessors, I doubt I would be standing before you today. Thank you.

To Blanka Zizka, James Haskins and the Wilma Theater for nominating me for this tremendous award, and for inviting me into their artistic family home for a working experience I will not soon forget.

And a huge thank you to TCG, Emily Cachapero (whom I met in 1988 when we were both at ACT) Aya Ogawa, and the panel of interviewers for this award, Lisa Peterson, Kristin Marting, Woodie King Jr. and Gordon Davidson for so graciously sponsoring my introduction to you all. Not sure I'm allowed to mention who was on the panel...don't know how these things work, but now the cat's out of the bag...thank you thank you.

To Alan Schneider for trusting that American audiences can handle daring work, and for being an inspiration to young directors who are interested in keeping the minds of American audiences open.

As I look back on this list of thank yous, I am reminded that there is no set path a director takes, that each time one of us wants to pursue a life in the theater, we are trailblazing, and an 'ascent' is a series of random experiences and miraculous events. By receiving this award I am able to make a cohesive map of this random journey, and I cannot thank you enough for so officially and generously recognizing me as a card-carrying member of this community.

- Anne Kaufman



## GREGG WIGGANS: 2010 MIKE OCKRENT DIRECTING FELLOW

by GRETCHEN M. MICHELFELD

SDC F is proud to introduce you to our 2010 Mike Ockrent Directing Fellow, Gregg Wiggans. The Ockrent allowed Gregg to work alongside Director/Choreographer (SDC Board Member) Rob Ashford on the Broadway production of *Promises, Promises*. Gregg's previous credits include Associate Directing several shows for The Transport Group, and Assistant Directing at Williamstown and The Papermill Playhouse. His New York directing credits include *Kristin Chenoweth: This One's Personal* and *Ripcord*.

"It's challenging to enter a project of this scale and size ego-less-ly," reflects Gregg. "Rob Ashford is a great model to watch and be around for this. Every day I entered the rehearsal room or the theatre, I was reminded that it's about the work and telling the story." Gregg was delighted to learn that Rob is always looking for the strongest idea in the room and he demands that others do the same thing.

For Gregg, the most memorable (and surreal) moment of his Fellowship was when Neil Simon entered the rehearsal room for the first time. "Then to witness him writing and revising the book of *Promises, Promises*, to be a part of that, it's special," says Gregg, "He's a national institution. Needless to say, I now have many hand-written jokes framed on my wall!"

Next up he returns to his regular summer gig as the Assistant to Artistic Director (and SDC Board Member) Wendy C. Goldberg at the newly Tony-Awarded Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center. "I encourage everyone to come out and see the process," urges Gregg, "American Theatre begins at the O'Neill!"



## MEMBER SERVICES UPDATE: PRACTICALLY SPEAKING

by GRETCHEN M. MICHELFELD, Membership Coordinator

After Michael Grief selected Saheem Ali as the 2010 Gielgud Fellow on Grief's production of *Tony Kushner's Angels in America: a Gay Fantasia on National Themes* at the Signature Theatre Company, he offered to sit down with the Gielgud Selection Committee's finalists to give them a little advice about advancing their directing careers.

Four of the finalists were able to make it to the informal meeting in the SDC Conference Room, where fruit and muffins were served along with some practical advice from Michael. I was allowed to sit in with this group and I came away with some great pointers that I'm happy to share.

Michael believes that it is important to assist but that you need to get your own work up as well. What does he look for in an assistant? Someone who is "on the ball" and thoroughly understands the logistical issues of a production. Someone who has interesting and helpful things to say but waits until the right time and the right place to offer an opinion. Sensitivity is key.

And what about getting that work of your own up? Michael suggests picking a "director's" project; something that will showcase your particular strengths and tastes. But make sure the show can be done well on a budget and, if possible, partner with another artist (an actor or designer) who is able to help produce it.

Michael highly recommends reading plays at New Dramatists. Find your playwright—the one whose work speaks to you and who doesn't already have a huge career. This allows you to approach artistic directors and literary managers with projects in hand that you're dying to do. Having a project you're passionate about is always advisable, Michael says. The same applies to keeping in touch. "When you keep in touch, make it project-oriented."

Excellent and pragmatic advice!

This year's Gielgud finalists included: Saheem Ali, Corey Atkins, Krystal Banzon, Mike Donahue, Kareem Fahmy, Jesse Geiger, Anthony Londell Sanford, **Troy Miller**, **Sarah Rasmussen** and Lori Wolter



Those able to attend the roundtable with Michael Grief are featured above. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Corey Atkins, Jesse Geiger, Kareem Fahmy and Troy Miller.

## WELCOME: COLE JORDAN AND KRISTY CUMMINGS

by GRETCHEN M. MICHELFELD



### SDC Welcomes COLE JORDAN, Director of Finance and Administration

The SDC Staff and Executive Board are pleased to welcome Cole Jordan as our new Director of Finance and Administration. The Director of Finance and Administration is responsible for the coordinating, planning and reporting of all financial activities, delivering effective and efficient accounting, financial systems and processes that meet the current and future business requirements of the Union.

Cole comes to SDC from the Rock Spring Club in West Orange, NJ, where he served as the Controller. He has an extensive arts background, having received his BFA from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and worked as the Business Manager at both the New Jersey Shakespeare Festival and Caroline's Comedy Club, and the Controller at the Joseph Papp Public Theatre.

"After being out of the NYC scene for 10 years, I thought what better way to challenge myself than to be in the heart of Times Square working at a very respected theatrical union," says Cole. "After meeting the SDC Staff and Board I knew this would be a great experience. I couldn't have asked for a better team." Theatre and entertainment have always been his passion, so he's thrilled to be "back in the entertainment capital of the world."

Cole met his wife Lori on the Upper East Side of Manhattan and they lived in Astoria until they started a family. Now they live in Sparta, New Jersey with their four children, Eric (16) Nicole (14), Diana (12) and Caroline (9).



### Welcome KRISTY CUMMINGS, SDC Hauptman Fellow

The Staff and Board are equally pleased to welcome Kristy Cummings as the 2010 Hauptman Fellow. Kristy is currently a graduate student in Brooklyn College's MFA Performing Arts Management program. She completed her undergraduate degree in Theatre and Communication at Fairfield University in Fairfield, CT. Upon graduation she worked as an actor at various theatres and joined the Actors' Equity Association in 2005.

Still having a passion for theatre but looking for a different career path, Kristy began to explore the management side of theatre in 2008 through an internship in the Special Events department at Roundabout Theatre Company. After taking a three-month break to live and volunteer in Cusco, Peru with her husband, Tim, Kristy began her studies at Brooklyn College where she is focusing on a career in General Management. During her first year she worked as the Programming Associate at Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts.

Kristy was thrilled to receive the SDC's Hauptman Fellowship and is looking forward to increasing her knowledge of the Union perspective through the various projects she will work on this summer. Kristy would like to thank everyone at the SDC for their warm welcome to the office.



STAGE  
DIRECTORS AND  
CHOREOGRAPHERS  
SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 56

JULY/AUGUST 2010



Member **Andrea Andresakis** at Alaska Dance Theatre. Photo by Marc Lester.

SDCF FOUNDATION UPDATE

## SDCF NEWS: CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

by ELLEN RUSCONI, Associate Director of the Foundation

To cap off the 2009 – 2010 season, SDCF hosted a day-long symposium for 40 emerging directors and choreographers on Monday, June 21. The theme of the day was “Creating Opportunities,” and the purpose was to give the attendees an opportunity to assess their careers, think about next steps, speak with industry insiders, and meet each other.

The day opened with a two hour session with David Diamond. David is a well-known career coach for artists and has been a friend of SDCF for a long time. In fact, David formerly served as SDCF’s Executive Director. Attendees threw themselves into the exercises David led: declaring accomplishments (In the past week, I ...), stating life goals (In my life, I will be happiest if I ...), and discussing ways to focus on career and reduce life stress. David emphasized that life doesn’t have to be stressful, something to keep in mind throughout career and life (and particularly helpful to keep in mind at this summer’s family reunion.)

Gretchen M. Michelfeld, SDC Membership Coordinator then moderated “Opportunities for Emerging Artists.” We were fortunate to host Melinda Atwood (DanceBreak), **Roger T. Danforth** (Drama League), Linsay Firman (E.S.T.), **Philip Himberg** (Sundance Institute), and Elena Holy (NY Fringe Festival), each speaking about their individual programs and selection processes. They gave great insight into how best to present oneself in an application. Melinda volunteered to come back to our SDC/SDCF DCN in September to speak more in depth about DanceBreak submissions and how to effectively present stage choreography on screen, in advance of the DanceBreak submission deadline in October.

After taking time to meet each other over pizza from Two Boots, we welcomed critics Adam Feldman (*Time Out*) and David Sheward (*Backstage*), agent Michael Moore (Michael Moore Agency), and artistic staff and producers Megan Carter (Women’s Project), Amanda Feldman (Lark Play Development Company), Hugh Hayes (Yank), Mark Russell (The Public’s Under the Radar), and Tony Speciale (CSC). Their discussion centered on how and when to invite VIPs and best ways to get their attention. Their advice? Do your research, carefully target attendees, and save the invitations

for that special project that has relevance today. These folks are booked; getting them to a second production is very difficult if the first isn’t interesting.

The day closed with an inspiring discussion with Jeffrey Horowitz, Artistic Director of Theatre for a New Audience. He discussed his entry into theatre, his goals in producing, and what has inspired him in many of the directors he’s supported over the years – **Julie Taymor**, **Bart Sher**, **Darko Tresnjak**, and **Arin Arbus** – and those who have inspired his work – **Peter Brook**, **Liviu Ciulei**. He spoke of many TFANA productions over the years in which the director showed the play in a new light, and the excitement of rediscovery. He wrapped up the day by reminding the group that they are the future of theatre, and they are among those who will fuel rediscovery on stage in the future.

This day-long symposium was a great dress rehearsal for the 2-day symposium for experienced directors and choreographers we have planned for winter 2011. Building on the momentum of our TCG and DCN media discussions, the winter symposium will center on Capturing Work on Screen and will discuss both artistic and logistic concerns of recording stage productions for showing through the increasingly common simulcast, cinecast, and webcast. This symposium will be just one element of SDCF’s new Live On Screen Initiative, a series of hands-on opportunities and discussions aiming to prepare experienced directors and choreographers for four-camera shoots of their productions. We offered one opportunity under this Initiative in 2009 – 2010, for director **Erica Gould** to shadow Executive Board Vice President and Director **Larry Carpenter** on five shooting days of ABC’s *One Life to Live*, and we’ll offer several more opportunities in 2010 – 2011.

In order to support these programs, SDCF relies on individual support from our Members. To support our programs, please consider making a tax-deductible donation to SDCF today by sending a check to SDCF, 1501 Broadway Suite 1701, NY, NY 10036, or making a donation online at [SDCweb.org](http://SDCweb.org).



OTHER UNION NEWS  
**NOTEWORTHY**

**NEW MEMBERS**

**Sarah Benson**  
Director  
Brooklyn, NY

**Roger Castellano**  
Director/Choreographer  
La Verne, CA

**Jason Hale**  
Director  
Astoria, NY

**Jon Marans**  
Director  
NYC

**Benjamin McGovern**  
Director  
Minneapolis, MN

**Rusty Mowery**  
Choreographer  
NYC

**Nancy Robillard**  
Director  
NYC

**NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS**

**Christopher Anderson**  
Choreographer  
NYC

**Siouxie Easter**  
Director  
Aurora, NY

**Susan E. Evans**  
Director  
Oakland, CA

**Dave Groom**  
Director  
Brooklyn, NY

**Diana Hall**  
Director  
Eugene, OR

**Stephen Largay**  
Director  
NYC

**Joshua Legg**  
Director/Choreographer  
Natchitoches, LA

**Malini Singh McDonald**  
Director  
Kew Gardens, NY

**Virginia Monte**  
Director  
Astoria, NY

**Stephen Nunns**  
Director  
Baltimore, MD

**Alessandro Pellicani**  
Director/Choreographer  
NYC

**Terell Richardson**  
Director  
Baldwin, NY

**Sonita Surratt**  
Director  
Chicago, IL

**Christine Tankersley**  
Director  
San Marcos, TX

**Deborah Wolfson**  
Director/Choreographer  
NYC

**IN MEMORY OF  
Claudia Asbury**  
Director/Choreographer  
Orlando, FL

**Thomas P. Carr**  
Director/Choreographer  
Dingmans Ferry, PA

**Israel Hicks**  
Director  
White Plains, NY

**Mesrop Kesdekian**  
Director  
Newton Sq., PA

**Jack Sydow**  
Director  
Studio City, CA

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**NEW OR RENEWED IPAS**

Olney Theatre (LORT)

California Shakespeare Theatre (LORT)

Pearl Theatre Company (LORT)

Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey (LORT)

*Don't forget...*

- Please remember to put SDC in your bio!
- DCN Update - July 13th at 5:30 is the Observership Open House. Then we're back again in September with Melinda Atwood of DanceBreak!
- Save the date - Annual Membership Meeting in NYC November 15th (time & location TBA)



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