



NEWS FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Welcome to the new SDC website and the inaugural issue of our e-news. When I arrived at SSDC in the spring of 2008, the world looked quite different from today. As a nation, no one could say for sure whether we would have a white woman, a black man or a white man in the oval office. Few of us knew how to spell “kindle” and a cine-cast was something way high-tech that only the Metropolitan Opera produced. Our non-profit producers carried on, fatigued but committed. The Dow was still hovering around 12000. Broadway stages were fully lit. As a recent Seattle transplant I found a

wholesome comfort in my WAMU account. With glimmers of change on the horizon, in a prescient way the Union’s Executive Board charged me with crafting a plan for the future. The mandates were clear-- advance our contracts, strengthen our infrastructure and raise the profile of the Union and the artists we serve -- all in anticipation of our next 50 years and the changing nature of our industry. After intensely listening, watching and questioning, I began to find my way as the ground beneath us shifted, trembled, then shook. In the fall we adopted a three-year plan and the work began. Later this summer an update of progress towards all goals will be forth-coming, but on this, the eve of the launch of our 50th anniversary, we proudly share with you, the Members, a bold articulation of your Union.

Our goal was to find an image and a brand that fully articulates the extraordinary work you do. Membership pride. Recognition. Something “sticky.” Something memorable in the cyber world, this hyper visual world. We are quite simply the sum total of our Members and Associates and at the same time we are our relationship to the larger theatrical community, your representatives and producers, our fellow unions and artists. We are a national community. We are quality, respect and focus. We are forward thinking. We exist to support and protect your unique theatrical contributions.

So after months of meetings and revisions, and questions. After drafts and discussions and consideration, on March 16, 2009, the SSDC Executive Board unanimously voted to re-brand the Union as SDC, Stage Directors and Choreographers Society. With your work strongly positioned out-front and with

honor to the founders, an image that shares the strength and style of our Membership, with a nod to the dramatics, we look forward to the next 50 years.

Honoring our past and clearly stating our purpose.

As Hal Prince said, “The new SDC Brand is really a signal that the old SSD&C is taking a giant step forward. Personally, I welcome a revived sense of theatre as a community...our future depends on it.”

But a name and an image are just that, and only that, without the commitment and energy behind the brand. Throughout this new e-newsletter you will catch up on Union Business, as usual, while beginning to experience SDC’s increased commitment to member services. We will continue to be reliable and to be the constant for you in your sometimes challenging journey as an artist. Throughout the year we will be rolling out new programs and initiatives designed to strengthen our core work, which is your Collectively Bargained Agreements. We also believe we have a responsibility to you to recognize the larger context of the world within which you do your work, and to use our resources to influence positive change in the business of theatre, the non-profit sector, health care, education and more.

This morning I read an optimistic piece on national health care reform. Is it actually possible that we may in our lifetimes, even the next few years, see material changes in our country’s health care system? How can SDC support the recent discourse around the revival of *Joe Turner’s Come and Gone* in New York? Shouldn’t we recognize that there are too few opportunities for African-American artists and all artists of color in this industry? Why aren’t our own Membership demographics better balanced? How can we be thrilled for women directors who are finally getting a chance and not wonder – why in 2009 are women still having “firsts” in this industry? In the months ahead shouldn’t we seek ways to connect our Members with basic resources in much the same way other theatrical unions often do? (Simple – here’s a link to a piece AFM Local 802 produced for their members on access to stimulus monies – take a look, it is pretty wide-ranging:
http://www.local802afm.org/frames/fs_news.cfm?xPublication=65866288)

And on it will go. Thank you for a great first year and thank you in advance for your commitment in the months ahead as we have much work to do.

- Laura Penn



WELCOME TO THE NEW SDC E-NEWSLETTER



In the spirit of SDC's latest efforts to be environmentally and fiscally responsible and our dedication to help lead the way toward a "greener" theatre and world, I'd like to welcome you to your new, paperless E-Newsletter.

Instead of receiving

printed material in the mail, you'll get a bi-monthly email with links to each article in the Newsletter. The Newsletter will also be posted on the web site, so you can quickly refer to it if you need to, or print it out and take it with you on the train in the morning. The Strike and Default list and the new Members and Independent Producers Agreements lists will be regularly updated on the web site as well.

This new format will not only help save paper, energy and Union funds, it will also free us up from the space constraints of the printed form. Articles can be more in-depth. We won't have to cut an article or a photo because we don't have the room to print it.

It's more crucial now than ever that you keep your contact information current. Don't miss an issue of the SDC E-Newsletter—keep your Online Profile information up-to-date!

If you have any corrections or concerns about anything you read in the E-Newsletter, please call or email me. My new email address is GMichelfeld@SDCweb.org and my extension is still 236.

My best to you all,
Gretchen M. Michelfeld
Membership Coordinator, SDC

50th ANNIVERSARY LUNCH LUNCHEON



Thanks to a dedicated 50th Anniversary Committee, a hardworking staff and a select group of theatre veterans the Launch Luncheon this past April 24th was a great success. The room was filled with theatrical luminaries from all areas of our industry. Exactly

50 years to the day that **Judge Saul Streit, Agnes de Mille, Ezra Stone, Shepard Traube, Hanya Holm and Erwin Feldman** signed the Union's Articles of Organization, **Hal Prince**, John Connolly, **Bartlett Sher**, Phil Smith, Bill Dennison, **Andy Blakenbuehler**, Roger Berlind, Bill Craver, Kevin McCollum and more



than 100 others gathered to celebrate our anniversary. They came to honor SDC's past, celebrate our present and look forward with us to our future. The program included speeches from **Hal Prince, Kathleen Marshall** and Victoria Traube as well as the presentation of a plaque dedicated to our Union's founders, which was accepted by **Ed Sherin, Mercedes Ellington**, Helen Gallagher, George Irving and Joy Abbott joined together to honor "Mr.

Abbott" Award-winner **Donald Saddler**. In addition to these festivities our new logo was revealed and Board Treasurer **Doug Hughes** spoke powerfully about the artist's role into today's recession-riddled society (See page 3 for details). 50th Anniversary Co-Chairs **Larry Carpenter** and **Tom Moore**, along with Laura Penn, Executive Director of SDC, also addressed the room. Other honorable guests of note



included Harry Weintraub, **Marge Champion**, Nina Lannan and **Andre De Shields**.

The Launch Luncheon is the first of many events scheduled for our 50th anniversary. The official launch of the new brand will take place on May 18th at the Semi-Annual Membership Meeting in NYC. Throughout the year there will be Artistic Director events held at various theatres across the country as well as a One-on-One Conversation with **Hal Prince**, a West Coast celebration in Los Angeles and last but not least – the Gala on November 8th. I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible throughout this celebration year.





OUR UNION

On April 24, 2009 the 50th Anniversary Launch Luncheon was held at Sardi's restaurant in New York City. At the event Doug Hughes shared the following remarks.



It might be bad form, but I will begin with an apology. By rights, you should be addressed at this point by **Karen Azenberg**, who definitely upholds the tradition of the fiery labor-leading orator when she speaks as the Union's president. Instead, you are stuck with me, the Union's Treasurer. I get it - You were expecting Barack Obama but you're getting Timothy Geithner - Please be gentle with me.

I also must confess that until this anniversary drew nigh, I had done very little if any reflecting on the founding of my Union. I have done so now and must report that the fact that fifty years ago, for the common good, a group of men and women founded a society, a union whose Members would always be, very nearly by definition egomaniacal, arrogant, obstinate, envious and eccentric, strikes me as nothing short of miraculous.

I also, though not a religious man, thank God for it. For the Union, in its childhood when I was a child, has conferred dignity upon the strange, glorious craft that I grew up to practice.

Those of us on the Board of the Union have spent a fair amount of time discussing the fact that it is not widely understood what directors and choreographers do. I am always tempted to suggest on those occasions that we are placeholders for the audience. Audience members who get to talk back. We sit where the audience will sit, out front, and we are granted the privilege of imagining, devising and implementing the best possible way for a story to be told, for a song to be heard, for the spirit of a dance to take form. We do our work in collaboration with indispensable colleagues: writers, composers, producers, actors, designers, and technicians. We serve and we lead as a company goes about the strange alchemical process of speaking a truth, fashioning some joy, manufacturing a memory that might, for a time, mean something to our fellow

citizens, the members of the audience who will ultimately join us out front.

It is admittedly, a strange profession. It is, historically, a new profession.

It is undoubtedly, if you care about the theater these days, an essential profession.

It's nice work if you can get it, but how do you eat if you are so lucky as to get it? How will it be insured that directors and choreographers can age in the profession so that the wisdom accumulated over a career can be placed in service to the audience? How will the Union's 36 year-old pension plan, reeling from the impact of unregulated market forces, be nurtured and sustained? How will its 31 year old insurance plan, subject to the cumulative lunacy of this country's approach to health care, be protected? How will it happen that the job of directing and or choreographing will be taken up by ever more men and women whose histories, traditions and experiences are central to the life of this land but under-represented on its stages? How will the calculations be performed that permit directors and choreographers a fair share of revenue for their contributions to cincasts, streaming video, mobisodes and the other endlessly proliferating "ways of seeing" that this society is generating. How, without impinging one jot on the rights of our collaborators, will directors and choreographers work be protected from theft? How can great careers continue to be fostered within and without institutions across the breadth of this country? For we all know that there is more and better theater in America than at any point in its history. It's just not all happening in New York.

This is the work of the Union and as one who has the privilege of sitting on its Board and working with its staff, I am here to report that at fifty, the Union is just getting warmed up.

We come to this work at a time when all of us are tempted to the sin of despair. "Nobody has any money. There is no money." The Union's hope is that these defeatist mantras don't divide the constituents of an art form that is more essential to our society now than it was during the era of illusory prosperity. Why? Because writers, composers, producers, actors, technicians, choreographers and directors know a couple of things that are crucial to know right now.

We know how to survive. We do well under pressure. And we know how to make things. We are - all of us, no matter where our name falls on the title page of the program - workers.

All of us call our work "productions." Something is produced. Something is made. We don't deal in paper profits and absurdly inflated valuations. We labor in the real world, the realm of flesh and blood. We all labor to bring something forth with the same combination of high idealism and low cunning that animates everyone who achieves a life in the theater. And we labor with the confidence that the theater will be obsolete only when the human body is obsolete.

These are hard times. These are adverse times, but Shakespeare, the ultimate hyphenate, a writer/producer/actor/director, tells us that "sweet are the uses of adversity." We should trust him. After all, he had to cope with the theaters being shut down by plague. Although I am not ruling that out as our next industry challenge.

This Union at fifty, with a little distinguished grey in its hair, believes we all can make sweet use of the adversity that confronts us. Hard times teach us who we are. Hard times transform us. These times can transform us for the better. This will require determination. This will require patience. This will require courage at those passing moments when all signs seem to point to the contrary. This will require respect for our selves and for each other. These are virtues that are very becoming when one attains the age of fifty.

So with all respect and gratitude for the founders, for my fellow SDC Members, for the Union's staff and for my brothers and sisters in the theater, I thank you for your attention.

Let's all meet here again on April 24, 2059.



REGIONAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

by Karen Azenberg, SDC President



David Ira Goldstein, the Artistic Director of Arizona Theater Company, recently invited me to come to Phoenix and meet with our Members and Associates from that area. David had heard me speak at the West

Coast Membership Meeting last June. At the meeting I had expressed my desire to use SDC to help invigorate the national community of directors and choreographers, and to make sure that all our Members nationwide were able to be a part of that conversation. So on a lovely Sunday in April, I flew to Phoenix and met with 16 Members and Associates (and a few non-member working directors) at the Arizona Theatre Company. The conversations ranged from our current 50th Anniversary Celebration, to pension and health questions, to the economic impact felt by theatres in their region, to specific questions about contract use, but the most exciting part of the meeting for me was the energy I felt in the room. You know what I mean? It is probably what guided each of us to a career in the theatre in the first place and it is exactly the kind of conversation I hope can happen in many states, cities and regions. As directors and choreographers we rarely have the occasion to sit as a group and simply compare notes and exchange ideas. It was a joy. I want to thank those that attended the meeting – some drove several hours in order to be there. I also want to acknowledge the generosity of **David Ira Goldstein**, Associate AD **Samantha Wyer** and the Arizona Theatre Company for hosting the day and treating us to a matinee of *Somebody/Nobody* directed by **Jon Jory**. It was a wonderful day I hope to have many more like it, maybe in a city near you??

NEW LORT TOWN-HALL MEETING

On Wednesday May 20th we will be holding the second LORT Town Hall meeting in preparation for our 2009 LORT negotiations. We invite any and all Members who have worked under the LORT agreement during the last 4 years to attend and share their experience and insights. This is a crucial step in our process; we rely on our Members to help us identify areas that require attention, and to set our priorities. Our first LORT Town Hall, held on March 9th, was a valuable first step, but we need as much Member input as possible. Your participation is vital to our preparation and to a successful negotiation in a very challenging environment. If you can't attend but have thoughts you'd like to share, please email RLasher@SDCweb.org.

Wednesday, May 20th
10am-noon
1501 Broadway, Suite 1701
Please RSVP ONLY if you are able to attend to
RLasher@SDCweb.org

SDC GREEN UPDATE

Dear Directors and Choreographers,

This past month, as the SDC Member of the Green Committee, I attended a meeting with representatives from the various unions. Here's a report on the initiative and how we can help.

The Broadway Green Committee is an initiative created to bring together the theatre community to identify and adopt better practices for sustainable theatre. Much is already taking place within the theatrical community to make productions more energy efficient. The website greenbroadway.com identifies some of the practices that have been put into place and is a great resource for information on how directors and choreographers can take the lead in making sure our productions are green.

What can we do as directors and choreographers to make our productions as green as possible? There are three ways we can help.

1. Check out the website at greenbroadway.com and ask your stage manager and designers to adopt the green practices recommended by the greenbroadway committee. While it is the designers who will have the information about new developments in the fields of lighting, scenic, prop and costume design, they will be more green-conscious if encouraged by us to do so. As directors and choreographer we can lead the way. Ask everyone on your team and in your cast to check out greenbroadway.com.
2. Documentation of our efforts is important. Whether you're working on Broadway, at a regional theatre, a university, or a black box community theatre, if you have made your production green, let us know at GoGreen@SDCweb.org
3. If you have discovered a new way to make your production green. Send your idea to GoGreen@SDCweb.org and we'll share it with the rest of the theatre community on the [greenbroadway](http://greenbroadway.com) website.

Please contact me if I can answer any questions.

- John Carrafa



PENSION & HEALTH FUNDS

HEALTH, ELIGIBILITY AND THE WORKING MEMBER By John Everson



Over the past few months we have received many phone calls and emails from Members expressing their concern over the recent changes to the SDC-League Health Plan. Given the realities we face, the message has not always been an easy one to deliver, but we are grateful for your intelligence in asking the right questions and your willingness to participate in this process.

While we have absorbed increases in the semi-annual enrollment fee, prescription drug co-pays, and deductibles since the beginning of 2008, clearly the most difficult issue we have faced is the increase in the threshold for eligibility in the Plan. Beginning with the January-June 2008 contribution period, the threshold increased from \$600 to \$800, affecting eligibility at 10/1/08 and 4/1/09. For the January-June 2009 contribution period, the threshold increases again to \$870,

which will affect eligibility at 10/1/09.

One of our participants recently asked the tough question: "How many of SDC's Members currently have health insurance through the Fund, and how many are projected to lose their insurance under the new plan?" While it may be of little consolation to those who have recently lost eligibility, our data reveals that a remarkably high percentage of working Members have retained their eligibility for health coverage. In addition, we are seeing a large increase in the number of Members taking advantage of the New York State COBRA Subsidy, and also many participants qualifying for the federal COBRA subsidy available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Here are the latest statistics with regard to Membership and eligibility for the Health Plan. SDC currently has 1895 full Members. Of these 767 (or 40%) had contributions made on their behalf to the Fund during the July-December 2008 contribution cycle (the period we look to for determining eligibility at 4/1/09). Of the 767 Members, 399 had contributions at or above the \$800 minimum threshold. An additional 93 became eligible at 4/1/09 by virtue of rollover contributions from the prior period.

The total Member eligibility count for the cycle beginning 4/1/09 is 496. This figure is down from 552 at 10/1/08, and down from 695 at 4/1/08 when we were using a \$600 minimum threshold for eligibility. These figures reflect a decrease of 29% in total eligible Members over the past year.

The Option A count (for those relying on the Fund for major medical and hospitalization insurance) for the cycle beginning 4/1/09 is an estimated 252. This figure is down from 273 at 10/1/08, and down from 304 at 4/1/09. These figures reflect a decrease of 17% in Members electing Option A over the past year.

As a percentage of the full Membership of SDC, 26% are eligible for the Health Plan at 4/1/09. It may be more significant, however, to consider the eligible participants in comparison to those who worked during the contribution period. Here we see 65% of working Members becoming eligible at 4/1/09 (496 / 767). It should also be noted that of the 767 "working Members" in the July-December period, 85 had less than \$100 contributed to the Fund on their behalf. Discounting these 85 -- whose jobs during the six-month period paid fees under \$1250 -- the percentage of working Members with eligibility increases to 73%.

It may be helpful to remember that the minimum threshold for eligibility is a highly leveraged number. For each participant whose contributions come in at the minimum (\$800 for 4/1/09 and \$870 for 10/1/09), the Health Fund incurs a potential liability ranging from \$2200 for Option B, to \$3300 for the Oxford Plan. The Trustees of the Fund have made a very difficult decision in maintaining first-rate options to fewer participants, as opposed to offering an inferior Plan to a broader group of members. In fairness to those working more consistently and/or in higher paying venues, they have elected to continue to offer a quality Plan.

Thanks again for your participation in this discussion and sharing your concerns. Know that we will continue to listen, and to work with you to provide the best benefits possible for you in this changing and challenging economic environment.

SAVE THE DATES

LOS ANGELES AREA

On Monday June 1st, Executive Board President, **Karen Azenberg** and Director of the 50th Anniversary Initiative, Karina Miller will hold a Membership Meeting in Los Angeles at the Audrey Skirball Kenis Theatre at the Geffen Playhouse at 6:30pm, to fill everyone in on SDC's 50th Anniversary activities and re-branding initiative, and to listen to your questions and concerns.

BAY AREA

On Wednesday June 17th, Executive Director Laura Penn, Senior Contract Administrator, Barbara Wolkoff and Funds Administrator, John Everson will hold a Bay Area Membership Meeting (time and place TBA). Come meet your new Executive Director, hear all the good news about the 50th Anniversary and re-branding initiative and bring your questions and concerns about contracts, Pension and Health to discuss with John and Barbara.



NEW MEMBERS

Jen Bender
Director
New York City

Brooke Ciardelli
Director
Norwich, VT

Colman Domingo
Director
New York City

Cheryle Faraone
Director
Middlebury, VT

Adam McKay
Director
Los Angeles, CA

Wes Grantom
Director
Astoria, NY

Joan Kane
Director
New York City

Paul Lazar
Director
Brooklyn, NY

Domenique Lozano
Director
San Leandro, CA

Antony Marsellis
Director
New York City

Armando Molinda
Director
Los Angeles, CA

Calvin MacLean
Director
Knoxville, TN

Annie-B Parson
Choreographer
Brooklyn, NY

Tom Ridgely
Director
New York City

Holly-Anne Ruggiero
Director
New York City

Jeff Shade
Choreographer
Weehawken, NJ

Rick Snyder
Director
Wheaton, IL

NEW ASSOCIATES

Randall Delone Adkison
Director/Choreographer
Jacksonville, FL

Jeremy Aldridge
Director
North Hollywood, CA

Cristina Alicea
Director
New York City

David Boone
Director
Southaven, MS

Jay D. Brock
Director
Hyattsville, MD

Kristy Chambrelli
Director/Choreographer
Hamden, CT

Michele Dunleavy
Choreographer
State College, PA

Nancy Fisher
Director
New York City

Imani
Director
Brooklyn, NY

Chip Klose
Director/Choreographer
Rego Park, NY

Sarna Lapine
Director
New York City

Kris Lee
Director
Brooksville, MS

Raymond B. Lee
Director
Greer, SC

Tony Mata
Director/Choreographer
Gainesville, FL

Javier Molina
Director
Passaic, NJ

Nick Potenziari
Director
New York City

Stephen D. Sanborn
Director
Copake, NY

Annette Trossbach
Director
Cape Coral, FL

Shannon Ward
Director
Astoria, NY

Misti B. Wills
Director
New York City

Jess Zweiman
Director
Brooklyn, NY

IN MEMORY OF

Henry Butler
Director
New York City

Alfred Christie
Director
New York City

Dom DeLuise
Director
Pacific Palis, CA

Felton Smith
Director/Choreographer
Marston, NC

NEW INDEPENDENT PRODUCER AGREEMENTS

Casa Manana Theatre
IPA to RMT

Ogunquit
IPA to TSS

Walnut Street Theatre
IPA to LORT

Bay Street Theatre
IPA to LORT