



CONFERENCE ABOUT VOLUNTEERS OF REGIONAL THEATRE

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CAVORT 2012

FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Terry Delavan, Syracuse Stage, New York

CAVORT 2012—what a fabulous memory! The Shaw Guild did an extraordinary job in preparing and presenting our 2012 conference for volunteers of regional theatre across the United States and Canada. This was our first *international* conference and set some very high standards!

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At right, Conference Chair Charmian Entine, with Keynote Speaker Leonard Conolly and Carol Reid, a member of the conference planning committee (program).



2012 CAVORT CONFERENCE *(Cont'd from p. 1)*



We were treated to an insider's view of The Shaw Festival with talks by the staff, a backstage tour and good learning experiences during the breakout sessions. We had a most inspiring talk about the importance of the arts and the connectivity all the arts provide to each of our communities. The keynote speaker at the gala dinner, a world renowned George Bernard Shaw scholar, gave us a wonderful look at the great Shaw himself.

And, of course, we can't forget the opportunity to re-connect with old friends in such a lovely setting. It is always so much fun to see new people and get to know them. I believe we all returned with a great deal of energy and enthusiasm to work with our own theatres. Each of our theatres provides such vitality to our communities.

I ask for your patience for just a little longer. I believe that we are close to securing a location for the conference in 2014. Stay tuned for further developments.

A standing ovation and a round of applause to the 2012 Conference Chair Charmian Entine, the planning committee and all the volunteers of the Shaw Guild involved in making this such an outstanding conference! For those who could not attend, we have outlined what you missed in this newsletter. We hope it will entice you to attend CAVORT 2014!



YOUR NEW CAVORT BOARD



The 2012-2014 CAVORT Board, from left, Wendy Ledford, Terry Delavan, Suzanne Mercer, Sue Barley, Patrick Oliva, Judy Dery, Barbara Nichols, Linda Vandivort, Patti Slagle, Roe Green, Charmian Entine, Suzanne Hebert, Judi Rabel, Carol Reid, Peter Gill and Lynn Bush.

The CAVORT Board welcomes two new members for the 2012-2014 term:

Lynn Bush, Seattle Repertory Theatre
Linda Vandivort, The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis

They replace Ann Bronsing and Joanne Euster, long-standing members of CAVORT, who are leaving us. Many thanks Ann and Joanne for your outstanding work.

A warm welcome to our new Executive Committee for 2012-2014:

Terry Delavan, President, Syracuse Stage
Wendy Ledford, Vice-President, The Old Globe, San Diego
Patti Slagle, Secretary, Actors Theatre of Louisville

Suzanne Mercer, Treasurer, Atlanta Shakespeare Company
Susan Barley, Immediate Past President, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis

And finally, good luck to the new Committee Chairs:

Judi Rabel, Membership Committee, Atlanta Shakespeare Company
Patrick Oliva, By-laws Committee, Pasadena Playhouse
Wendy Ledford, Nominating Committee, The Old Globe

TREASURER'S REPORT

CAVORT finances are healthy! CAVORT's 2011-2012 annual income was \$7,581. Expenses were \$5,999, leaving a current balance of \$1,581.

WHAT YOU MISSED

BRIGHT IDEAS WINNERS

There were many outstanding Bright Ideas presented at the 2012 Conference. But there must be winners. A committee of staff and volunteers from The Shaw Festival had the arduous task of choosing the three outstanding Bright Ideas. It was not easy. Seattle Repertory Theatre in Washington won the grand prize of \$100 for its Doggie Palooza concept. Runners-up, with a prize of \$50, were the St. Louis Repertory Theatre in Missouri, and Meadow Brook Theatre in Rochester, NY.

Doggie Palooza **A play-themed fundraiser** **Seattle Repertory Theatre**

In a town boasting “more dogs than kids”, the Seattle Repertory Theatre (SRT) Organization held a fundraiser featuring all things “dog”. This event was held in conjunction with the play *Sylvia* on the main stage. The play is about a couple, who while facing the changes that midlife brings, adopt a stray dog, *Sylvia*, played by an extremely talented actress.

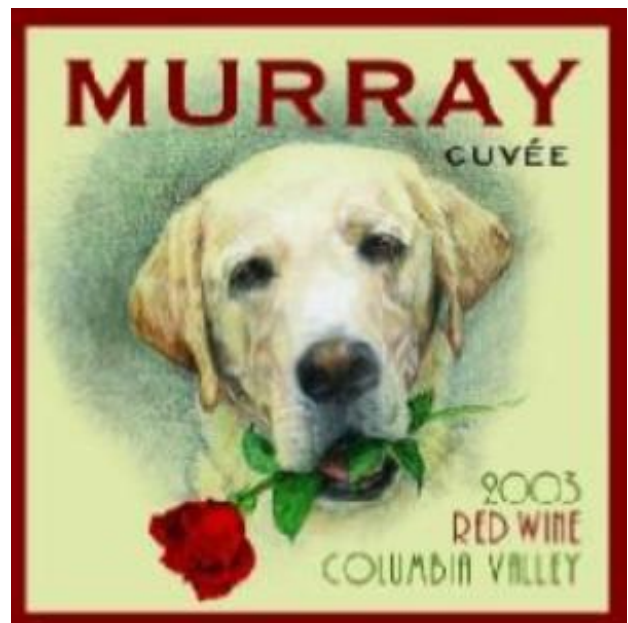
Doggie Palooza consisted of a pre-show evening party held in SRT’s small Benjamin Moore Spirits Lounge. Refreshments included fabulous catered appetizers (with dog bone-shaped shortbread cookies) and wine, as well as sparkling water. The price of admission was \$60, including a ticket for that night’s performance. Thanks to underwritten food and wine, the event netted about \$1,200. We employed two Rep interns to pour the wines, and that expense was also underwritten.

Very little volunteer time was required (except for filling ‘goodie’ bags and planning) and no theatre staff time.

To create the dog-themed event, we decorated the lounge with a grand banner for the “Doggie Palooza Wine Bar,” took advantage of larger-than-life dog portraits the theatre had in place and featured ‘doggie’ wine labels from Washington and Oregon

vintners. We used cellophane bags (after all, don’t all dog owners carry a small plastic bag?) filled with chocolate-covered pretzels as table decorations and take-home treats.

In jest, we encouraged people to submit their names in a draw for the door prize—a dog. In reality, the door prizes were a dog-label wine of the winner’s choice, theatre tickets for two, a *Sylvia* T shirt, and a *Sylvia* tote bag. The event was sold out with 40 attendees. We netted a nice sum, but we are most proud of the fact that we brought people into the theatre who are not season subscribers. In these economic times, filling seats is a priority. The gathering was very festive and was followed by a play filled with laughter. It seemed to be a very natural thing, to theme a party to a play. We do recommend it!



WHAT YOU MISSED

BRIGHT IDEAS RUNNER-UP

Garden Apartments Renovation Project Repertory Theatre of St. Louis

The 'Rep' owns an apartment building, the Garden Apartments, within walking distance of the theatre, where actors, directors and designers live during rehearsals and the run of the play. The building was old and drab with a real need for updating. Actors sometimes referred to it as *The Bates Motel*.

The Rep's volunteer group, Backers Volunteer Board (BVB), has held small fundraisers for the past few years to provide funds to help spruce up the apartments. The BVB worked closely with the Company Manager to make a small difference in the appearance of the apartments.

Bright Idea

A local magazine, *At Home St. Louis*, sponsors a community project each year. The magazine puts together a team of designers, contractors and donors to make a difference in the physical structures of local non-profit organizations. The BVB met with the magazine's editor to present the Garden Apartments as a possible project. A plan to renovate five of the units was accepted as the magazine's 2010 project.

Since the apartments are used almost year round, the only time to do renovations is in July. The magazine put together five teams to plan and design five units. Although months went into planning, the actual work had to be done in the one-month period. Donations came from vendors, corporations, and



Charmian Entine, left, and Alan Mills present cheques to representatives of the Bright Ideas winners.

individuals. The BVB gave \$5,000 to help the project. The entire project was directed by the theatre's Company Manager and the magazine editor.

Results

The public was invited to view the apartments for a fee of \$10 in advance or \$15 at the door. Around 200 attended. This small fundraiser helped to raise additional funds for the project.

At Home St. Louis featured a six-page article, with photos, about the project in their 2010 November/December issue. With rave reviews from the theatre, visiting casts, and the public, the magazine offered to extend the project to 2011 and complete renovations of the 14 remaining apartments. Landscaping, and an updating of the laundry room would also be done. The BVB donated \$1,500 raised from small fundraisers, along with seed money provided by the theatre. Fourteen teams of designers and contractors were put together by the magazine, and donors were found to help with appliances, flooring, paint, furniture, etc.

(Cont'd on p.6)

WHAT YOU MISSED

BRIGHT IDEAS RUNNER-UP

At Home St. Louis once again did a spread about the renovations in their 2011 November/December issue.

Summary

The improvement in the apartments is amazing. We are sure the word has spread throughout the theatre world that The Rep is a more desirable place to work. In addition, the theatre received positive public exposure through coverage in the magazine, tours of the apartments, and all the professionals who actually did the work.

Everyone associated with The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis feels pride in the updated and beautifully decorated Garden Apartments. We love to hear the reactions of the visiting cast when they see their “home away from home” for the first time.

Meadow Brook Theatre Cabaret Meadow Brook Theatre

Bright Idea

A basic variety show with volunteer performers, hosted by Artistic Director Travis Walter. Billy Konsoer, a performer in *Breaking Up is Hard to Do*, the spring musical two years ago, suggested the cabaret as a fundraiser. The performers are the cast and crew. Last year, the cabaret featured performers who worked at Meadow Brook Theatre, past and present.

After the show each year, performers mingle with the audience in the theatre and lobby, carrying hats from the costume shop to accept donations.

Keys to Success

The cabaret is scheduled on the third Saturday of the run of the spring musical. That performance begins at 6 p.m., so the cabaret begins around 8:30 or so. The audience is, of course, invited to stay.

To publicize the show, Travis Walter mentions the cabaret in his curtain speech before performances for several weeks before the date. It is posted on the Meadow Brook Theatre website and Facebook page. The performers also tell their friends.

Estimated Hours

Travis Walter usually spends five to seven hours co-ordinating the talent, posting the information and making sure the accompanist has all the music. There’s a rehearsal on the Friday afternoon before the performance and, of course, the performance itself. The performers, lighting designer, sound designer, stage manager, accompanist and staff all volunteer the six to eight hours it takes to create and perform this show.

Estimated Cost

Minimal

Results

We raised \$1000 the first year and \$1,200 the second. We should do even better this year because now Meadow Brook Theatre audiences expect the cabaret show.



Shaw Guild representative Alan Mills with Judy Dery, representing the Meadow Brook Theatre Cabaret Bright Idea.

WHAT YOU MISSED

NETWORKING



WHAT YOU MISSED

WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS WORKSHOP

If you have issues with your volunteers, workshop leader Dave Hunter has a few pointers for you: make your expectations crystal clear, train and develop your volunteers and think “succession planning”.

Dave, a university professor with many years of experience in working with volunteers, opened this workshop by dividing participants into two groups—one to discuss best practices related to volunteers and the other to discuss issues and problems with volunteers.

Representatives of the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis think their volunteer program runs “perfectly” and they were eager to share their best practices. They have a board of 35 volunteers, each of whom heads a committee. And they claim that the more they move into different areas, the more staff appreciates them. They believe their ‘secret’ to success is that the people who started the board were very strong with creative ideas, which has continued through the years.

Members of the second group, on the other hand, identified such issues as an aging volunteer base, problem volunteers, staff expectations of volunteers and development of volunteer leaders.

Dave immediately jumped on the word “expectations”. That’s where the volunteer process actually begins, he said, and its importance cannot be overestimated. Volunteers need to know exactly what is expected of them and need to be trained. Then, and only then, can the conversation of what they ‘can do’ and what they ‘will do’ take place. “Communicate clear expectations right from the beginning to avoid surprises and upsets,” said Dave. “Remember, these ‘problem volunteers’ are our friends and neighbours.”

He explained that volunteers often think things have to be done a certain way because that’s the way they’ve always been done. But new staff may have different expectations. In these instances, an orientation session may be helpful to get new staff and volunteers talking to each other. Another very important consideration is looking ahead at a time

frame for developing people. “Do your succession planning over a six-year period,” he said. “Although you can be accused of ‘closed shop politics’, it pays to look ahead and groom specific volunteers.” A volunteer may start out tearing tickets for plays, but could progress to becoming a good team captain or a good hosting chair.

A tool that may be helpful in spotting potential leaders is the Big Five Model of personality, said Dave. (Google these words and you will find lots of information that can help you identify personality traits and strengths to look for in your volunteers.)

The Big Five personality traits are extraversion versus introversion, agreeableness versus antagonism, conscientiousness versus undirectedness, emotional stability versus neuroticism and openness to experience versus the opposite. You can’t ask your volunteers to take the test, but it’s helpful to be aware of these characteristics in others...and yourselves.

Other suggestions during the workshop included

recruiting new volunteers through newsletters, flyers or the local newspapers; hosting a volunteer orientation session in the spring; getting word out to high school students regarding the opportunity to earn the 40 hours of community service they need to graduate; reaching out to home school groups that have the flexibility to come in and help with things like food service, ushering, sale tables, decorations and so on.

“It’s important to use your networks and your creative thinking when it comes to volunteers,” said Dave. You can also offer ‘perks’ to your volunteers to encourage them.

In Dave’s estimation, it’s most important to think ahead to identify the volunteers who can work and manage in the future. “Don’t forget succession planning.”

WHAT YOU MISSED

STARTING A DOCENT PROGRAM WORKSHOP

“What is a docent?” was one of the first questions asked during this workshop, led by **Suzanne Merriam, Shaw Festival Senior Manager, Education,** and **Arlene Carson, Shaw Guild Docent Chair** for the past three years.

Basically, a docent is a fancy word for someone who acts as a guide, typically a volunteer guide in a museum or gallery. The Shaw Guild’s docent program is its backstage tour program.

Festival is not a requirement, but candidates are asked during auditions to talk about the theatre they have seen. “We want people who have seen everything and can talk about it,” said Arlene. The ability to adlib and improvise is important.

Conference delegates were most interested in docent numbers, selection and training.

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Numbers

The Shaw Guild’s docent program started in 2004 with 17 docents. In 2010, 29 docents, averaged 25 backstage tours each during the season. In 2011, 32 docents averaged 27 tours each. Tours have increased in 2012, but the number of docents remains the same.

Selection

Docents, who may range in age from 55 to 75 years, are chosen from about 400 guild members. Recruiting is done through the Shaw Guild newsletter, which discusses openings available due to retirements.

The selection committee looks at the candidates in terms of their availability on weekday and weekend mornings, stamina and endurance. It also looks for people who can engage with groups and ‘perform’. “It’s not for the faint of heart,” said Arlene.

A panel of Shaw Guild executive members review the candidates’ resumé’s. An in-depth knowledge of the Shaw



WHAT YOU MISSED

STARTING A DOCENT PROGRAM *(Cont'd from p. 9)*

Training

Training is rigorous and ongoing. New docents attend a session with a vocal coach to learn how to project and use their voices better. They learn tips about hand placement when speaking, putting their weight on their right toe when they want to project better, speaking at a lower pitch that is easier to listen to and the importance of a pause.

Sometimes docents need to get used to a new conversational style. They can't say everything they know. Rather, they need to learn how to listen to each other and invite one another to converse with the tour group.

The docents all attend lighting/sound sessions and receive family tour training, as needed.

Docents must attend 'show and tell' sessions for three of the main plays. During these sessions, the director and designer discuss what the show will look like, the playwright and share behind-the-scenes stories.

Docents are also expected to attend 'first reads' of the three main plays so they can see the process from beginning to end. They are encouraged to see every show's dress rehearsal. They can sit in on any play, free of charge, to see how it evolves.

Tour assignment

Docents may shadow a senior docent on tours until they feel comfortable to lead their own tour, which may be a public tour, student tour, senior tour or family tour.

According to Suzanne, public tours have set times, which are advertised on the Shaw Festival website and in all marketing material. A sandwich board in the parking lot of the main theatre also advertises tours. Student tours are advertised in student handbooks sent to schools.

Family tours were added last year, with the same

stopping points as the regular tours, but including more hands-on activities. "We need to encourage people to bring out kids," said Suzanne. "The docent program is very important to education and outreach. These are ambassadors for The Shaw; they become marketers, 'selling' our plays.

All the docents love the theatre student tours, said Suzanne, but other student tours can be challenging. The key is to make the tours as interactive as possible to engage them. These tours are more flexible and conversation-focussed.

The process of assigning docents to tours has been completely computerized for the last few years, using Google Calendar. Docents indicate their availability on a monthly basis and are then assigned tours from a master list. "On some days, we need six docents; on others we may need as many as 20," said Arlene. The docents reply with a "yes", "no" or "maybe" regarding their availability for specific tours.

Tours of 10 to 15 people are considered most manageable. Docents work in pairs to make the tours more hands on and personal, and for health and safety reasons. Tours last an average of an hour. There is a 'reduced step' route for those visitors who are less mobile.

Tours

Tours start 'in the house' with a 10-minute talk tailored to the interests of the group. Subjects include the mandate of the Shaw Festival, the ensemble, the repertory nature of the theatre company and set/theatre space changeovers.

Visits include a rehearsal hall (to see what a stage manager does), the costume construction area, set storage, the trap below the stage and a dressing room (to view wigs, makeup and wardrobe).

"Docents are so welcoming and passionate," concluded Suzanne. "They get caught up in it; they love what they do!"

WHAT YOU MISSED

FUNDRAISING FOR DUMMIES WORKSHOP

“You gotta know when to hold ‘em and know when to fold ‘em!”

Kenny Rogers was not present at this workshop, but the theme of that tune struck a chord. How long do you stick with a specific fundraiser? Is it successful enough to continue? Or do you need to find a newer, more creative idea to keep the money flowing into your theatre?

There’s no simple answer. But, according to the four panellists who led this workshop—including three volunteer fundraisers and one professional—there seems to be no limit to fundraising possibilities. What’s important, according to Peter Gill (who views his 35-year volunteer fundraising career as a hobby), is to have a goal and ensure it’s doable. “You can spend a lot of hours raising a little money, and you won’t be able to get volunteers to help the next time around. Some fundraisers make more for less effort.”



Peter Gill and Judi Rabel

Creativity is essential. A major fundraiser for the Shaw Festival is a three-bout boxing card event in Toronto, which celebrated its 27th year in 2012. Boxing and theatre? Well, George Bernard Shaw was a huge boxing enthusiast and wrote a novel about it. That’s the hook! And revenue from this annual black tie gala is about a half million dollars a year. Worth continuing? You bet. And although the event is organized by a committee of volunteers in Toronto, Shaw staff work with the committee to fill the room each year.

Panellist Judi Rabel, a volunteer with Theatre Tuscaloosa in Alabama and a former volunteer with Atlanta Shakespeare Company, told workshop participants of the ingenuity of Tuscaloosa volunteers in coming up with a fundraising hook to support their theatre’s summer musical, *The Sound of Music*. It was a tough time to raise funds because Tuscaloosa had just been hit by a tornado. But volunteers persisted and came up with the unique idea of having a ‘bridal shower’ for Maria to raise money. They

created an on-line ‘bridal registry’ which featured gifts such as instruments for the orchestra and various costumes. The fundraiser was successful because it was different. “There’s got to be a plan; you can’t nickel and dime people to death,” said Judi. “It takes a couple of years to make a lot of money with an event. The bridal shower was a one off event, but the same creativity can be applied to repeat events.”

The two main roles in fundraising are organizing and “the ask”. As many as 80 percent of volunteers don’t like “the ask”. But here’s a useful strategy to remember: if a person says “no”, respond with “maybe next year” so they know you’re coming back.

Other tips? Use the words “every penny counts” in your fundraising. Consider impulse donations that can be dropped in a jar in the theatre lobby. Consider

(Cont’d on p. 12)

WHAT YOU MISSED

FUNDRAISING FOR DUMMIES *(Cont'd from p. 11)*

a raffle present of lunch with the actors, with the winner selecting the actors.

Get your Chamber of Commerce involved in advertising your event on its website, or in its pamphlets.

Try a "matching dollar" campaign. Find a major donor and encourage people to match the amount of that donation with a set time limit for tax purposes. 'Advertise' with articles in the local news. Send emails to everyone who has ever donated.

In some provinces and states, theatres with endowment funds can get matching funds (or up to 70 percent of the amount) from their governments or foundations. However, it can be difficult for theatre organizations to receive grants in these economic times. One panellist said that 95 percent of getting a grant can depend on connections, and that volunteers can help make these connections.

Panellist Judy Dery, an actor and volunteer with Meadow Brook Theatre in Rochester, New York, offered this important tip: register your guild with the local Chamber of Commerce. It may cost \$100 to join, but it opens the door to major outreach with every business in your community.



According to panellist and professional fundraiser Adam Martin, associate director of development for The Shaw Festival, his focus is on individual giving. "That gives me the largest result for effort," he said. "The Shaw raises \$6 million annually, with \$3.5 million in individual gifts."

Panellists and participants alike raised dozens of ideas for fundraising. But the bottom line was "Always look at all you are doing with a critical eye. Set a goal and know why you're setting it." Mistakes will be made, and the panellists shared a few, but overall, it can be fun to "fun' raise" when you keep your creative juices flowing.



WHAT YOU MISSED

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR PLAY-GOING EXPERIENCE

Whether you love a play or hate it, it can still be a successful play-going experience. At least that's the perspective of experienced actor/director David Schurmann, who co-led the CAVORT Conference workshop, "Getting the most out of your play-going experience."

David voiced his perspective in response to a question from Odette Yazbeck, long-time Director of Public Relations for the Shaw Festival, who had asked, "We strive to make everyone happy with our plays. Is that what we should do?"

"It is more important to inspire the unexpected, provoke conversation and feelings you didn't expect, good or bad," said David. "If you inspire debate and conversation, the play is successful." His advice to play-goers? "Go to the play with an open mind."

David knows of what he speaks. He has 30 years of regional theatre acting experience, including more than 40 Shaw Festival plays; he has worked as an off-season director in many productions; and is making his directorial debut with The Shaw Festival this year, with Noel Coward's *Present Laughter*.

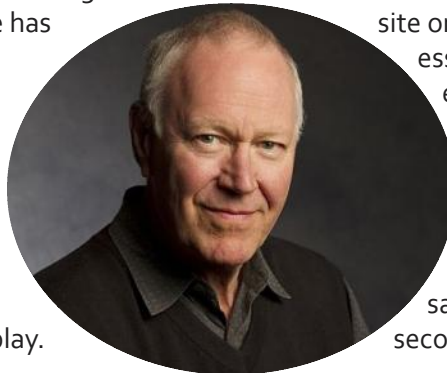
Among many questions, Odette also asked David how much work an audience should do before seeing a play.

David's answer was to the point. "An audience shouldn't have to do any homework at all if the director and cast have done their work."

Of course, an actor's work is different from a director's work. David explained that actors take a single-minded approach: who am I; where am I; what am I doing here? They need to know everything about their own character. A director, on the other hand, needs to know what the play is about, why he/she is doing it and everything else, from researching the play and building an actor's confidence to helping design the performance space and working out the blocking, lighting and sound

details. "A director has to interpret everything to make a clear, clean production that the audience can clearly understand."

Odette discussed the many ways The Shaw Festival tries to make the play-going experience more enjoyable for its audiences. It conducts pre-show chats a half hour before the play, during which a director or assistant director discusses the play with audience members. "It's paramount for plays that people have never heard of," said Odette. "The more we share, the more they enjoy the play."



The Shaw also drives people to its "Tell me more" site on its website. It has a preliminary essay in its house program, in which the essayist focusses on a particular element of the play. The Shaw also produces study guides for students, which are sent to their teachers. "We target young people who have a hard time with the art of listening," said Odette. "Everything is done in 20-second sound bites."

As conference delegates became more engrossed in this workshop, conversation veered to such questions as: How can a play-goer tell if a performance style is the actor's or director's choice? Do many actors explore their characters beforehand? Does a director's work evolve differently from what he originally thought? Do directors like actors to learn their lines before rehearsals start? And do directors choose their own actors? Conversation was animated and informative.

If you didn't attend this CAVORT Conference, you may find the answers to these questions and more at the next conference in 2014. Plan to attend.

WHAT YOU MISSED

HOW CAN WE USE TECHNOLOGY TO BETTER SERVE OUR THEATRES?

Over the past decade, technology has evolved at an incredible pace. Some of the things possible today were almost unthinkable just a few years ago. But it's far from certain that volunteer groups in general, and theatre volunteer groups in particular, are harnessing the powers of this incredible technology to assist them.



Suzanne, left, and Carol roll up their sleeves to take on technology.

With a quick show of hands during this workshop, led by Suzanne Hébert and Carol Fraser, it appeared that most member theatre volunteer groups have adopted email as their basic communication tool with their members. This in itself presents advantages: speed of course, as well as savings from both printing and mailing.

CAVORT itself provides an excellent example. Back in 2010, it was decided that the CAVORT Newsletter would be emailed and only sent by post to the few members who do not use the computer. This has of course saved us a great deal of money; it's allowed us to improve the newsletter in terms of layout, colour and size, since printing costs are no longer an issue. More importantly, it's allowed us to send the newsletter to any interested party. The mailing list has more than doubled over two years, from approximately 200 to almost 500. What a great information and publicity vehicle for CAVORT. What is somewhat more awkward for member theatres is that we have not moved much further since adopting email.

Few volunteer groups even seem to have developed their own website. There was a feeling expressed that it's expensive. As a few participants noted, it's not. There are now many providers who allow even computer neophytes to easily develop a professional-looking website.

Websites are the tip of the iceberg. We often complain that theatre volunteers are an older group, and that we find it difficult to recruit younger members. If we are to be successful, we will absolutely need to start talking in their language. What's that? We all know. And we're afraid: *Twitter*. *Facebook*. Blogs. Many participants did express fears at these (only relatively) new media, of losing their identity, of being invaded by nasty viruses, etc. It's not that dangerous, countered other participants who have the experience. And it's definitely worth it.

Many other computer-based programs were discussed. *Flicker* for sharing photographs (really easy to set up). *SurveyMonkey* for polling. *Google Calendar* and *Doodle* (yes, they do all have funny names) for scheduling tasks and bypassing the telephone. All and all, a very illuminating session!

**The single biggest problem
in communication is
the illusion
that it has taken place.**

GBS

WHAT YOU MISSED

MAKE 'YOUR' DREAM COME TRUE: SHARE IT!

Dr. Rosemary Hale, a guest speaker at the 2012 CAVORT Conference, sees the arts as a light in the world we live in. Like the volunteers who attended the conference, she sees herself as having an “enduring passion for theatre”. And her praise was high for conference participants who are doing “wonderful things” to make their regions—and the world—a better place.

An academic at Brock University in St. Catharines, Dr. Hale has worked tirelessly for close to 10 years towards her dream: the construction in that community's downtown core of a school of fine and performing arts, as well as a public performing arts centre. As chance would have it, she saw the first concrete evidence of her dream one week before the conference—what she called a “big ass” shovel in the ground.

At the conference, Dr. Hale hoped to inspire and convince participants of the importance of following their dreams for their regional theatres. She discussed her own personal experience to demonstrate that dreams do come true.

She encountered many obstacles along the way. But she persevered. She created important partnerships within the community, turned her personal dream into a collective dream, kept the dream alive in spite of plateaus, and recruited



Rosemary Hale

the “dream team” needed to keep things together in an organized way.

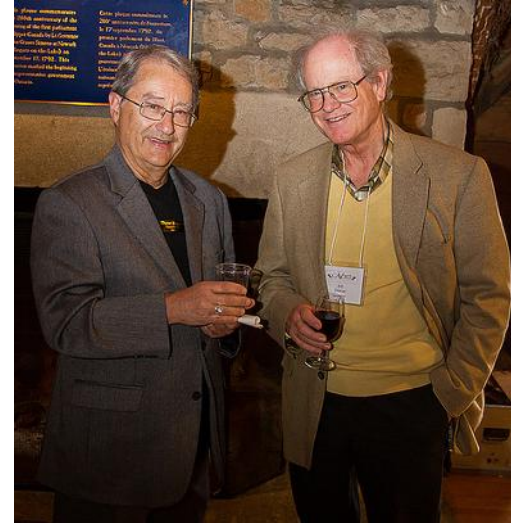
“Optimism, confidence and good attitude are at the heart of what we do as volunteers,” said Dr. Hale.

Perhaps her most important point was her question, “Can your dream be one person’s dream if it takes a collective to make it happen?” If not, you have to be ready to give your dream away and make it a shared dream.

The conference began officially on Monday morning in the Shaw Festival Theatre with a welcome by Shaw Artistic Director Jackie Maxwell, a presentation by Design Director Bill Schmuck and backstage tours.



WHAT YOU MISSED



WHAT YOU MISSED

A DIRECTOR'S INSIGHT INTO SHAW PLAYS

Have you ever thought of a play from the perspective of the director?

Participants at the 2012 CAVORT Conference had the opportunity to do just that, attending a preview of George Bernard Shaw's *Misalliance* one day and then enjoying the play director's personal insights the next. *Misalliance* director Eda Holmes entertained our theatre volunteers with some inside stories on the challenges and latitude of directing Shaw's plays.

Misalliance, said Eda, is one of Shaw's "vitality and intelligence plays"—way ahead of its time but considered, in its early years, as one of his worst plays ever. It did, however, gain much more appreciation in later years.

In Canada, one of the joys of directing Shaw is the absence of restrictions for the director. The plays have been in the public domain since 2000—giving directors total latitude in their interpretations.

At the same time, directors realize that a large percentage of every Shaw Festival audience has already seen—and has an opinion about—all of Shaw's plays. The same is true of the actors who have played Shaw's characters over the years. "It places a lot of pressure on a director," said Eda. "It's intimidating, but a remarkable opportunity."

The director's challenge, she said, is to find a way to stand on the shoulders of all of this experience—to look at the play, find a different perspective and update it. With *Misalliance*, it was a matter of "hooking" a play written in 1909 into the popular culture of our time.

Eda chose to set this year's production of *Misalliance* in 1962, the year The Shaw Festival was established. The choice seemed a good one, since that time epitomized the same spirit of rebellion that Shaw wanted to capture in *Misalliance*.

Eva was able to make some character tweaks: a "very modern" male to bring the character to life for



Eda Holmes

today's audiences and a female lead with a strong sexuality. "It made a more interesting character than a woman who knits," she said.

Since attention spans have changed since 1909, trimming excess was an important part of her job as director. Shaw had a tendency to overwrite, sidetracking the viewer, said Eda.

Eda has a healthy respect for Shaw's ability to weave important social ideas into domestic comedy. But she also enjoys the little things that can make the theatre-going experience fun.

"I do a lot of physical activity in the plays I direct," said Eda. "Because of my background in ballet, I think with my body, and my relationship to a story is physical. I try to lift the audience's imagination by being more physical with my characters."

Misalliance props also managed to lift the imagination of some theatre volunteers who asked about windows breaking in every performance. "The windows are made with plastic and magnets, which can be stuck back together for the next show," said Eda.

Learning what goes on behind the scenes is just one attraction of a CAVORT Conference. Keep this in mind for the next conference in 2014.

CAVORT MEMBERSHIP

CAVORT individual membership stands at 233, with some of our member theatres very well represented:

Shaw Festival: 48 members
Pasadena Playhouse: 38 members
Repertory Theatre of St. Louis: 38 members
Seattle Repertory Theatre: 28 members
The Old Globe: 21 members
Actors Theatre of Louisville: 14 members
Atlanta Shakespeare Company: 12 members
Meadow Brook Theatre: 6 members

CAVORT MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

If you did not renew your membership at the Conference, it's now time. Individual memberships run for two years, from conference to conference.

CAVORT Individual Membership Form

Yes, I would like to join CAVORT!

Membership is valid until the last day of the next CAVORT Conference.

\$10 per individual, if the affiliated theatre is a member of CAVORT
\$15 per individual, if the affiliated theatre is NOT a member of CAVORT

Enclosed \$10 or \$15 (see above) for my 2012-2014 membership: _____

Name _____

Street address _____

City _____ State/Province _____

Country: _____ Zip/Postal Code _____

E-mail address _____ Phone _____

My theater is _____

Staff: _____

Volunteer: _____

Mail, with your cheque payable to CAVORT Inc to:

Suzanne Mercer, Treasurer, CAVORT INC., 404 Princeton Way, Atlanta GA 30307 USA

CAVORT 2012: EVALUATION FORM RESULTS

Overall Rating for this conference: 4.76 out of 5
Session ratings: 4.5 to 5+ for almost everything

Suggestions for future:

Give us a chance to see more plays
Post a sign for people leaving for airport to phone shuttle
Make name tags larger and bold person's name
Have another great closing keynote speaker like Leonard Conolly
Get younger volunteers
List the floor that the activities are on

A highlight for me was:

Theatre tour—I wish we could have had a full tour
The whole experience
Costume designer discussion
Costume and set designer presentation; keynote speaker
Walking around your lovely city
The two plays
Seeing Niagara Falls
Opportunities to talk to members of other theatre organizations to share ideas. Seeing the Festival Theatre and office space—WOW! The workshops. Gala Dinner. Everything you planned was appreciated and well presented. Some things appeal more to some; other things appeal to others.
Reconnecting with friends, play, costume talk
Shaw Guild members very accommodating, friendly and warm
Meeting Leonard Conolly
The organization of everything
Starting a Docent Program (informative and interesting); the Reif Winery and Niagara Falls tours
Hotel and wonderful service
The play, *Misalliance*
Dine Around was great

I didn't appreciate:

No negatives
Rain—oh well!

Additional comments:

Impressive theatre complex; we envy you your spacious buildings and grounds.
Having done a CAVORT I know it was a lot of work, but well worth it.
Such friendly hosts.
Thanks for a wonderful time; your guild is great.
All was first class. Thank you for all your hard work.
This was a great conference. The group putting this on was so gracious and bent over backwards to make our stay enjoyable!

Suggestions for Dine Around could go out by email beforehand, giving us more time to make a decision. I liked the weather alert on email.

Would be nice to have notices of events, special places, tourist type of things before and after CAVORT, for example, the upcoming 1812 celebrations.

This conference was informative, fun and interesting! Your hard work really paid off in making a fantastic event. And all of your hostesses and hosts were wonderful and welcoming! Thank you! Enjoyed it very much.

Pacing and scheduling worked well. Thank you for producing one of the best of the four conferences I have attended.

I thoroughly enjoyed it. It's worth it for the ideas and inspiration. I thought it was wonderfully organized and run. It was great to see old friends and make new ones. I learned from the workshops I attended.

This was an excellent conference. Very beneficial. Everyone was so friendly and helpful. Beautifully organized. Meals were all excellent.

Fundraising for Dummies did not meet my expectations for specific, concrete, how-to tips. We got a few, like use email to verify communications and reassess goals regularly, but much of the presentation discussed specific events.

Niagara Falls tour was so wonderful, just too rushed.

The meeting rooms could have been cooler. I know this is a problem at this time of the year but it made it hard to concentrate on your excellent workshops.

Fantastic! A perfect CAVORT conference with the right mix of theatre, networking, pertinent workshops, Shaw emphasis and energizing for the volunteer.

Assign a 'buddy' to new members. I enjoyed the workshops that I attended.

Falls tour leader was not familiar with the subject. Read from a script as he was driving. Hotel (or Guild?) should provide more information about the hotel: e-mail, pool, etc. My compliments to the chef and wait staff at the Gala Dinner.



CONFERENCE ABOUT VOLUNTEERS OF REGIONAL THEATRE

CAVORT BOARD 2012 - 2014

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CAVORT INC. is a not-for-profit corporation whose purpose is to strengthen and recognize volunteer organizations and to establish a network for the exchange of ideas, projects and fundraising activities vital in the support of professional, not-for-profit regional theatres.

CAVORT Member Theatres

Actors Theatre of Louisville, KY
Alliance Theatre, Atlanta, GA
Asolo Repertory Theatre, Sarasota, FL
Atlanta Shakespeare Company, Atlanta, GA
Banyan Theater Company, Sarasota, FL
Blyth Festival, Blyth, Canada
Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Cincinnati, OH
The Cleveland Play House, Cleveland, OH
Florida Repertory Theatre Fort Myers, FL
Great River Shakespeare Festival, Winona, MN
Horizon Theatre Company Atlanta, GA
La Jolla Playhouse La Jolla, CA
Meadow Brook Theatre Rochester, MI
Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Ashland, OR
Pasadena Playhouse, Pasadena, CA
The Old Globe, San Diego, CA
The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, St. Louis, MO
Seattle Repertory Theatre, Seattle, WA
Shakespeare Festival St. Louis St. Louis, Missouri
The Shaw Festival, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Canada
Stratford Shakespeare Festival, Stratford, Canada
Syracuse Stage, Syracuse, NY