

**Minutes of the Washington Area Theatre Community Honors
W. A. T. C. H.**

Board Meeting, July 15, 2001, 4:00 P.M.
Reston Community Players Scene Shop
Reston, VA

Attending: John Monnett (TAP), Chair
Bob Bartlett (HBP), Treasurer
Sue Pinkman (RCP), Secretary
Don Wilson (PWLT), Adjudication Coordinator
Todd Huse (ESP), Webmaster
Mary-Anne Sullivan (CRT)
Suzanne Fehl, PTP
Chris Brown, MP (substituting for Judy Mayer)
Charles Salas, GFP
Mike Pemberton, SMP (substituting for Chris Tully)
Leta Hall, SSS

Visitors: Rick Hayes and Chad Wilmer from SMP

Absent: Peggy Jones (TTC), Roland Gomez/O'Malley Pitcher (LTA)

John Monnett, outgoing chair, called the meeting to order @ 4 pm. [Notes of the meeting officially began at 4:20 pm after election of new officers.]

Todd Huse moved to approve the minutes of May 6, 2001. Motion seconded by Charlie Salas. Motion was carried.

Treasurer's report by Bob Bartlett: \$1,189.90 in the WATCH account. All dues have been paid by member groups.

Nominations were accepted for new officers and elected positions:

John Monnett- treasurer, Sue Pinkman, chair, Mary-Anne Sullivan, secretary .
Todd Huse volunteered to run for any office not filled, but withdrew his name after
Mary-Anne Sullivan volunteered to run for secretary.
The slate carried unanimously. Congratulations to Sue, John and Mary-Anne.
Thanks to outgoing officers for wonderful service.

Mary-Anne Sullivan nominated Suzanne Fehl (PTP) for Adjudication Coordinator to replace Don Wilson in the 2002 season. Suzanne accepted; Mike Pemberton seconded the nomination. Suzanne was elected unanimously. Congratulations Suzanne.

Ad Hoc Duties were discussed and volunteers accepted for these positions:

Todd Huse will continue as WATCH webmaster
Bob Bartlett (HBP) will chair Publicity and Marketing Committee.
Todd Huse will continue as Events Coordinator.

John Monnett continued to facilitate this meeting with the new Chair's concurrence.

OLD BUSINESS:

Discussion on clarification of criteria for awards categories:

Don Wilson (PWL) suggested the need for a "Criteria Coordinator" to periodically review awards criteria.

Sue Pinkman (RCP) suggested there should be a review halfway during this awards year so that any new criteria or re-working of established criteria would be in place for January 2002. That would mean the review needs to be accomplished as soon as possible for review by the board.

Don stated he had responses from adjudicators questioning why there were no separate categories for make up and hair.

Sue opined we need to more clearly define general criteria for leads and featured player categories. RCP supports separate categories for supporting and featured players. That suggestion was tabled for later discussion in the meeting.

Leta Hall (SSS) suggested there be a comment section in the awards ballot to serve for special circumstances i.e. temporary performance spaces that have to make allowances for breakdown of sets, etc.

John Monnett (TAP) explained the board had considered that suggestion before, but felt a comment section would leave open the door for too many varying circumstances that could not be served well by the criteria and the processing of those comments would be difficult.

Don Wilson added that comments would not make any difference in the final scoring anyway since the ballots were done numerically. Don reiterated that the adjudicators score each production based upon how well the resources of that group are put to use. The board agreed that a comment section would not be useful.

John Monnett suggested a smaller group from the board be formed to review criteria and report back to the board. The board agreed with this course of action.

John Monnett, Don Wilson and Bob Bartlett volunteered to serve on the Ad Hoc Criteria Review Committee.

Bob Bartlett will ask each rep for comments from their judges and collect this data for use in the criteria review.

Corporate Sponsors:

Todd Huse (ESP) reported he has been searching for and was hopeful to secure one corporate sponsor vs several smaller sponsors for the awards so that name could be placed on the billboard, tickets etc, but not on the trophy. He maintained the award should be kept pristine as a WATCH award. Todd has been working with the Washington Post 200 and is currently looking at a company SRA as a sponsor. He has a good lead on a \$3000 donation which would be needed for the event and a possibility of a private donation.

Todd asked the question if this body needed to belong to any other organizations such as Cultural Alliance, AACT? Costs are prohibitive for WATCH at this time, but membership in other organizations could serve to further publicize our organization and provide more marketing.

John Monnett said there are BVA (Business Volunteers for the Arts) through the Cultural Alliance who will not take on long-term work but will do one-time projects. He is looking into

getting help with a one-time project such as the audit. Mike Pemberton mentioned dues for AACT are scaled for organizations and we may be able to join at a future date.

New Membership:

Bob Bartlett (HBP) will continue handling this drive. Bob said he did not want to contact some groups such as Colonial in Annapolis and Fauquier until the board had come to agreement on geographic restrictions for membership. Bob reported that Rockville Little Theatre (RLT) could not make this meeting, but had submitted their application for next year's membership. Bob will send out letters and/or phone area theatres regarding membership.

Todd Huse advised that RLT met the criteria for the 2002 season. They do three shows a season. Deadline for membership is September. Leta Hall (SSS) questioned whether Rockville Musical Theatre was joining with RLT as a consortium, but Todd said RMT had not applied with RLT, therefore the board should consider RLT's application as a stand-alone member. Leta opined that RLT would make a good contribution to the organization and would increase the number of Maryland based groups in Watch. Chris Brown (MP) concurred with Leta's comments.

Todd Huse moved to accept Rockville Little Theatre's application for the 2002 season. Mike Pemberton seconded the motion. Motion carried unopposed.

The board welcomes RLT to WATCH.

The secretary was tasked with sending an official welcome to WATCH letter via the new chair to email to RLT.

Inactive Status of Tapestry Theatre Company:

John Monnett provided an update on TTC. Although Peggy Jones was unable to attend this meeting, she advises TTC will produce a full season of 4 shows this season and if so, does this mean TTC will be returning to WATCH as a full member from inactive status? If so, then WATCH may have 14 active members next year to participate. **John/Sue will keep abreast of TTC's status.**

Adjudication Update:

Don Wilson reported he received some responses to his email of 12 July that provided a report of missing ballots. The first quarter is good with all ballots received and no group is in jeopardy of disqualification for lack of the required minimum of 7 judges to score a production. There are some missing ballots for recent shows. All reps reviewed Don's email and will notify their adjudicators with missing ballots. The board thanked Margaret Binning for taking on the large task of entering all the scores and tracking data. We are in good shape this year thanks to her efforts.

Awards Event:

Planning for the awards program event was tabled until the September meeting.

Awards Nominations Event:

Todd Huse reported there was no space identified or secured to date. He is looking for a location near the Birchmere. He will contact Birchmere to discuss using their lobby for the nomination announcements. The board agreed this would be preferred location if possible.

Board concurred with John Monnett's proposal that the Nomination Event be held the Sunday before MLKing Day, nearest to January 15, 2002.

NEW BUSINESS:

Software Discussion:

Leta Hall questioned whether the software Ms. Binning was using would generate averages. Todd Huse suggested we need to update the software to accommodate more groups participating this year and in future. John Monnett will look at the formulas. The current software averages each show category but do not tally each category across the shows. Discussion ensued on having an audit to Margaret's data entry. Sue Pinkman advised that last year the board felt new WATCH members could be used to provide a check to the data and look at the spreadsheets. The board decided to pursue getting a new member volunteer or an independent audit by September meeting.

Matrix for 2002:

John Monnett will be contacting John Downing and working on the matrix for adjudicators in 2002. WATCH Reps are requested to advise John their 2002 info as soon as possible. Mr. Downing has asked for this information sooner this year in order to work the bugs out of the matrix before adjudication training sessions and publication.

Info Needed for Matrix (email to John Monnett): Group Name, Number of shows in 2002 calendar year, primary month each show runs in (do not say July if the show opens the last weekend in July and runs for three more weekends in August – it would be considered an August show.)

Discussion of Adjudication Problems:

SMP visitor and adjudicator Rick Hayes provided feedback on making very clear that judges will be traveling to geographic areas not necessarily in close proximity to their own group. Leta Hall commented that some of the reasons why SSS adjudicators were having problems in the beginning was because of geographic distances. She asked if the matrix could be programmed to include adjudicator preferences for areas? John Monnett advised new members that the matrix was random and could not provide for that preference – each group was under the same hardship and the purpose of watch is to ensure productions are not adjudicated regionally but a random selection of judges from all groups. Don Wilson explained that the matrix ensures that no judge views two shows in succession at the same location. Bob Bartlett opined that the judges we select are important in that they be willing to travel and view shows. Returning WATCH reps indicated with five judges this season, the fewer number of shows assigned was more manageable and we were having fewer problems ensuring adjudication. John Monnett and Sue Pinkman encouraged the liberal use of alternate adjudicators to alleviate conflict problems or distance problems within adjudication groups. It was mentioned that Lee McKenna from Tapestry had volunteered to be a floater since Tapestry was inactive this year and groups may wish to contact her if they get in a pinch. Sue Pinkman reiterated that the matrix is not perfect, but there is no perfect way with load of combinations to achieve a random selection. Don Wilson explained the seasons were not spread evenly as well, making it more difficult to give adjudicators more proximal venues. Mary-Anne Sullivan commented that use of many alternates helps and to provide in-house training on your own if need be.

Adjudicator Training for 2002:

The board discussed upcoming locations and timing for adjudicator orientation sessions. It was the consensus with the addition of new groups that three sessions should be held in Maryland, D.C. and Virginia. **Dates in early November were preferable (first two weeks in Nov?).** The following reps were tasked with inquiring/securing a date to host an orientation session at their facilities:

Leta Hall from SSS for Maryland venue, Mike Pemberton from SMP for D.C. metro location and Sue Pinkman from RCP for the Virginia session.

These reps are to report back with responses and dates if possible at September board meeting.

Board members were reminded they are to secure at least 5 adjudicators for the 2002 season by mid-October.

BY LAWS AMENDMENTS PROPOSED:**Redefining the geographic area for membership in WATCH.**

Todd Huse summarized his proposal sent previously to the Watch Board:

Using the Washington Monument as the center point, a 20 mile radius encompassed almost all the counties in the current bylaws. Most of these counties touch the Beltway. Three out of the current members fell out of the radius by 5 miles. CRT, PWLT and PTP. **The board agreed to grandfather in these members in WATCH who would not meet the new geographic criteria.** Todd suggested a 5 mile buffer zone outside this 20 mile radius be included in the proposed amendment with the proviso of a 2/3 vote by the board. Discussion ensued.

Whereas the current bylaws open up an adjudication area which is prohibitive to acceptable travel times/distances for individual adjudicators and prejudice those organizations located furthest from the beltway, and whereas there are many theatre organizations within the D.C. Metro area yet to join which will promote growth in the organization, the following amendment to the bylaws as updated 01/01/01 was proposed by Todd Huse and seconded by Don Wilson:

It is proposed:

The WATCH Bylaws Section II. Membership, Paragraph B Eligibility criteria for membership, subparagraph 3 be amended to as follows:

Perform within the accepted boundaries of the greater metropolitan Washington area (District of Columbia; Maryland counties of Prince Georges and Montgomery; Virginia counties of Fairfax and Arlington and encompassed cities). A group with a performance facility in a county that does not touch or fall within the Washington, D.C. Capitol Beltway (495) requires a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote by the Board to accept membership.

The amendment passed unanimously.

Division of the Current Awards Category Make-Up/Hair into two separate awards categories:

Discussion of the proposed by law change sent previously to the Watch Board:

Mike Pemberton posed the question of how important the category was to divide it. Chris Brown commented the field for hair is extremely narrow.

Don Wilson commented that a split would provide for future growth in the field and that scoring hair with makeup was mixing apples and oranges. Rick Hayes agreed.

Whereas the current bylaws, appendix B provide for one awards category which encompasses both hair and makeup and there is sufficient evidence to support there are distinct difference in the artistries of these two areas in theatre, the following amendment to the bylaws, appendix B as updated 01/01/01 was proposed by Todd Huse and seconded by Sue Pinkman.

It is proposed:

The WATCH Bylaws Section IV. The Awards Process, Paragraph A, Appendix B be amended as follows:

Elimination of the combined category award for Make-Up/Hair. The addition to Appendix B of one technical category award for Hair and one technical category award for Make-Up. The total number of Technical awards in Appendix should be changed from ten (10) to eleven (11).

The amendment to Appendix B passed unanimously.

Correction to Bylaws Passed

Later in the meeting, Mike Pemberton moved to correct the current bylaws to reflect the addition of the new technical award from 25 to 26 total number of awards authorized. Todd Huse seconded the motion.

The following change to the current bylaws as updated 01/01/01, was proposed:

Bylaws Section IV. The Awards Process, Paragraph A.

There shall be 26 awards presented for outstanding achievement in the theater arts by the member theaters in 26 categories as approved by the board of directors (see appendix B). Plus any special awards as deemed appropriate by the board of directors.

The motion and correction was passed unanimously.

The Chair tasked the Criteria Review Committee with editing the existing criteria to incorporate separate criteria for Hair and Make-Up prior to the next season.

The new award for Hair will take effect in the 2002 season.

Discussion on Addition of Performance Awards:

There was a long discussion on the addition of performance awards. The general consensus was that actors wanted another category of recognition, especially in the featured category. Five Featured Players were nominated out of a field of 255 at the first awards event. Don Wilson proposed revamping the current Featured Awards Category into Supporting and Minor. Problems were cited in providing clear criteria to identify the difference between leads, supporting and minor characters in a production. Mike Pemberton allowed that splitting this

category would create more uncertainty among the adjudicators. There was a suggestion that if this proposal came into being, the theatre companies themselves would have to determine the leads, etc which would create a different set of problems not only politically but logistically in getting that information to the scoring tabulator. Todd Huse opined that creating 4 more awards would mean 4 more trophies (for both musicals and plays) and dilute the honor of the award. Todd suggested that perhaps one more performance award could be added to prevent the “Judy Dench” scenario where an actor with few lines or stage time could take away the featured award from a more deserving supporting actor. Todd proposed we create a “Cameo” award – one single award for outstanding achievement in performance by a cameo role in a musical or play (whether male or female). The adjudicators would circle “C” as they do “L” for the leads on their score sheets to indicate that one outstanding performer with one outstanding moment in a production. Seven judges would have to agree on the “C” and the highest score wins (like the process applied to leads). Todd asked if we would need to create a separate line on the score sheet to make the Cameo player so that person could actually receive two scores and not be disqualified from receiving the featured actor award.

Mary-Anne Sullivan urged the Criteria Review Committee to look at the terminologies applied to the awards categories to perhaps think of words that do not predispose adjudicators to under-score or over-score a performer or misplace them in a category. Featured sounds like another word for “cameo.” Semantics are important. It was the view of several members in her company that at least another performance category was needed to reward those actors who have traditional supporting roles, come to more rehearsals and have more lines than a performer who has one shining moment; however she allowed that both sides of the argument are valid. Leta Hall commented that perhaps the equity regulations could be applied to determine leads from supporting or minor characters since their pay scale does determine a difference for actors.

Sue Pinkman moved that the discussion be tabled until the Criteria Review Committee could further study the proposal to add a cameo award or to divide the featured category and present a proposal at the next meeting. Bob Bartlett seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Other Business:

Sue Pinkman commented that NVTAs has now suggested groups canvass the POST to get reviews of their shows. Sue suggested reps (as an option) email her with a figure of how much their group spends on ads etc in the POST each year to perhaps write them a letter with this information. John Monnett advised he had been in touch with the POST and that the editors made it clear that the money community theaters spend does not matter. Perhaps a better route for groups would be to contact the editor of the Lively Arts Section to ask for help and to get with individual weekend section editors to find reviewers for shows. Lively Arts Editor at the POST is very nice and helpful: Raymond Boyer, 202-334-7006.

Don Wilson should be notified of current 2001 season changes as groups identify fall or winter shows which were listed as TBA’s in the current matrix. Please send Don the name of the production and production dates.

Announcements:

Bob Bartlett announced effective January 1, 2002, Hard Bargain Players would be going to a 3 weekend performance schedule vice two weekends. This announcement was well-received.

RCP, HBP and TAP brought in brochures for their upcoming seasons. Please take some and pass them along.

Our condolences to Peggy Jones who was not able to attend the meeting because of a death in her family.

NEXT MEETING: Sunday, 30 September 2001 at 4 pm, Reston Scene Shop.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:25 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Mary-Anne Sullivan
Secretary

Secretary's Note: please forgive the lengthiness of these minutes; however, with SSS in attendance for the first time as well as new reps and visitors asking questions about the WATCH process, I felt as many comments as I could write down were important to be included this time rather than the blanket statement "discussion ensued." Hopefully new members will now have some background on how the previous board formulated current policies. Also, we had lots of new business at this meeting.