

Mid-America Theatre Conference 2018
Milwaukee, WI – March 15-18, 2018
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
Friday, 15 March 2018
Prepared by Jennifer Goff, Secretary

Present: Chris, Tyler, Mark, Shawna, John, Peter, Sara, Beth, Brian, Jennifer

Peter convened the meeting at 6:28

I. Approval of 2017 minutes – moved and seconded by Tyler and Brian. Motion passed unanimously.

II. Business meeting prep

- Confirming that we have the minutes from last year's meeting online
- Tyler made a compressed presentation of the financial state of the organization. Conference continues to cover journal printing costs.
- Current report is mostly up to date, minus a new Schanke donation, which will be moved to the proper account when we are able to get to the physical branch.
- Finishing the year in the black.
- Tyler and Brian will revisit the idea of separating out the Schanke money.
- Tyler confirms for Mark that we will be getting a new credit card for our PayPal account.
- Tomorrow, Tyler and Brian will be going to Chase to change over accounts into Brian's name, get new cards, etc.
- Jen Schleuter is looking for a process for a new editor of *Theatre/Practice* – Peter will look into this.
- Beth suggests that we spread out the elections over the course of the business meeting in order to give us time to count ballots, etc.
- There is no apparatus for voting by proxy – our process is artisanal.
- Incoming co-chairs are already in place, and the graduate students are in the process of voting today and tomorrow.
- Shawna will make the announcements for the 2019 and 2020 conferences in Cleveland and Chicago.
- Beth inquires about whether there is language in the new contracts with conference planning vendor about hotel rates coming in lower than the conference rate. Clint seems certain that this will not be an issue when we work with him. If it's not in the contract, we can talk about what we can do to protect ourselves. There have been issues with this with the Hyatt, and will be the reason that we will be unlikely to return.
- And now it's time to start the dropboxes for 2019 and 2020!

III. Job Descriptions/Elections/Nominations

- Peter will look up the information for *Theatre/Practice*
- Robert's rules say there are no votes by proxy

IV. *Theatre History Studies*

- Lisa is shadowing for the 2019 issue, and will step in to lead 2020 – the CFP will have to be released pretty close on the heels of the conference.

- Last year we discussed what the plan is for cycling out the book review editor. Rob does not seem to have it on his radar to cycle out. So we probably need the Exec Comm to step in to put this cycle in place, rather than making it at the discretion of the editor. It makes sense to set this cycle in opposition to when the main editor cycles out.
- Brian notes that, with term limits for everything else, it makes sense to put in a term limit for the book review position as well.
- It would be best to have the book review editor to come in to watch on the 2020 issue, and take over for the 2021 issue. Peter will approach Rob with this plan. Editors are chosen by committees convened by the president.
- Sara has already sent the report for the business meeting. The 2018 issue is going well and deadlines are working well.
- Communication with the press has been going well. Thorough copy editors are great. Communication about image formatting is going well.
- 2019 issue submissions are a little up. Over the 4-year term, there has been a 30-50% acceptance rate, and we feel pretty good about that and giving people a space to share their work. And Lisa has set the topic for the 2020 special section as well. Printing the Schanke winner as an exemplary essay has been a good decision.

V. Web concerns

- Mark points out that we have been carrying options for Individual/Institutional memberships on PayPal, which is from a previous entity. Peter suggests that there might be an opportunity to make it a subscription to *Theatre History Studies*, but Mark is not convinced that many people would want to do it. Sara doesn't worry that removing the option would be any trouble for *THS*. Beth mentions that it is nice to be able to be a member even when you can't get to the conference might be something people would be interested in. In general, it's not a huge problem and people are fine with leaving it as is.
- Listserv – Mark needs to talk to Anne about ILSTU's limited tenure as the host for this server. Mark has a different module that he is going to roll out slowly. If we could get a clean copy of the extant list, we could port it over. Peter and Chris are mentioning that it might not be great to auto-enroll. We will notify the current listserv that they will need to enroll in the new system. The new system will have a much better unsubscribe system. Peter suggests that we can autoenroll the old list if possible, and then allow them to unsubscribe, because it will be so much easier.
- Handoff will involve about a year of shadowing Mark before taking over, which has been reassuring to the people Beth has been talking about. Mark is working on a handoff document with passwords, etc. As we continue growing, it's probably not a bad idea to start changing login info when information changes hands.
- Beth asks if conference registration can include a checkbox for people to opt in or out of the email list.

VI. 2018 Conference

- A bit of a messy start at the registration table which slowed down the check in process a bit. But we seem to have found a sweet spot. We are at 260 so far.
- Jen will go print more surveys
- Atrium is likely to be an issue for the acoustics of the keynote speaker and business meeting. Shawna notes that it might be a good idea to ask for more defined information about the space.

- Apparently Family Feud auditions are happening Saturday morning, and we are hoping that they will be out of here by 11:00. The hotel is going to keep an eye on people to make sure that they don't take our breakfast food in the morning.
- Positive reactions to the land acknowledgement information at registration.
- Larissa is planning to be at most of the conference on Saturday.

VII. 2019

- Cleveland – again. It rocks.
- Shawna has a few ideas for possible themes
 - Immersion led to Invention – inventing, creating, devising, contraption, gadgets, creative ability, fabrication, concoction of tales, brainchild
 - Revival/Renaissance – 2015 regional Tony grant – new play development, Entry Point and New Ground play festivals.
 - Lisa Langford, Eric Coble, Rachel _____ (local dramaturg)
 - The committee generally likes the idea of invention

VIII. 2020

- Chicago!

IX. Fellows and Fundraising

- Peter has assembled a fellows committee, but they haven't really done much yet. John and Robert talking about ways to raise money – which is not quite the full attention. There was a suggestion of purchasing insurance of some kind, but we can't afford that.
- Peter is hoping to have some sort of meeting with the committee during the conference, but that remains to be seen.
- Talking about instating a presidential scholarship fund to pay into for the next three years help provide travel and conference funding for a graduate student. Peter proposes using this as a model.
- It's hard to arrange people to give money, when no one has all that much money to give in the first place. So we need to think small and strategically. We won't probably end up with a lot of named funds. We can put a donate button on the website, maybe have smaller funds like the presidential scholarship that people can pay into during different times. Still, we want to avoid too much separating of the money to prevent limiting the usefulness of the fund. Brian doesn't think that keeping track of this money within the general fund will be any trouble.
- There has been some concern about the way the Schanke money is and is not used, but it does not seem to be problematic enough to make a change. But Schanke wants to be able to track what his money is doing. We consolidated accounts a few years ago, so it's a little harder to track of what has actually been growing. Peter suggests that it might not be a bad idea to go ahead and separate the Schanke money back out on its own in order to be able to illustrate the precise benefit of his contribution. The good will established by this gesture might well be worth the investment he has given. Could there be a checkbook for that account to make it easier to draw down the money. And we have to have a contingency for when the fund doesn't make the required \$500. But perhaps knowing that the account ebbs and flows is also important knowledge for Schanke as a donor. This could help him understand that it is not a perpetually reliable endowment per se.
- Peter believes it is important for us to set up for a way for the ExComm and membership to participate in the future of the organization.

- We don't want to bleed the membership dry, but we do want them to understand that this organization does cost money and we can share stewardship.
- Mark reminds us that the membership at large doesn't necessarily know all of what we do to make the conference happen, and a little transparency might help inspire people to pitch in.
- Peter is happy to try to lead this initiative over the course of the next few years. Funding specific initiatives seems like the most effective way to inspire people to give.
 - Graduate student support – invests in the future of the organization
 - Contingent faculty/independent scholars
 - Local artists
 - Community College/Junior college faculty – not a population we tend to have much contact with
- Sara has questions about the makeup of the *THS* editorial board. She suggests that getting some fellows on the editorial board might be a good way to have them feel more involved. Peter concurs that this is a good idea, both for the fellows and for formalizing the role of the editorial board.

That is everything on the agenda.

Beth suggests that we might want to brainstorm on the fundraising initiatives.

Sara and Shannon were speculating about the Shoes of Scholarship calendar – call it *Character Shoes*. ☺

Beth recalls the group to focus on initiatives – looking for ways to help each of the individual symposia shine.

- Respondents, rehearsal rooms, etc. Pedagogy and Practice/Production don't have the same support that the other symposia do. Perhaps there would be awards or respondents.
- AV is generally pretty expensive - \$125/day/room in MKE. \$288.50/day/room in Houston. The price can be an issue depending on the union contracts for the AV support. It might be something that people are willing to pay a little more to support.

Peter suggests that we might generate the list of ideas for funding initiatives from the membership. For the next survey – rank initiatives and then talk about funding the top three.

If we want to commit to full AV for all sessions, we would also have to raise the price of the conference.

In order to recognize Pedagogy and Practice/Production, an award probably makes more sense than a respondent with all the variety of what is being presented. Awards are, of course, attractive to universities and colleges, and the cash reward could be pretty small and the award could still mean something. So, who is judging this and how? What are the criteria? We would have to present awards later in the conference than the business meeting – since there are still papers being given after the business meeting. Perhaps that would give people the impetus to stay through Sunday morning if there is potential for an award.

Travel funds probably need to have some teeth – not just little tiny chunks of money.

Peter suggests forming a not-a-committee that can shape these awards. And we would have to figure out who might judge each year – co-chairs, someone from the exec, maybe a fellow.

For next year – we can work on another survey.

Peter suggests that Beth will announce the President's fund at the business meeting.

Tyler suggests that we might be able to find some money to set aside for the Pedagogy and Practice/Production so that we can ask people to contribute to something that already exists, rather than trying to get them to donate in order to start this new thing that doesn't really exist yet. And we can make the announcement of these new awards with the CFP for next year.

We do have contracts for the next two years, but Clint tells us that site visits are an option – hotels will comp the rooms for such visits.

Chris brings up the idea that we had talked about trying to keep people from submitting to too many symposia. The attempt was made to get the co-chairs to report the names of who applied, but they did not. But this year we did still end up having a few people who over-extended themselves. But we do think there might be some benefit to officially limiting people to apply to only two symposia. And we also had someone who used their theatre history paper as the article in progress paper as well, which feels like double dipping, and possibly too short of a paper for the AiP. None of the co-chairs were willing to sacrifice their participants to balance out the multiple applicants.

Tyler suggests that there could be a google form for submissions, which would populate a sortable database of all the people who submit. And we have to think through the ways that people might mess things up. Chris notes that google forms can be a little glitchy. Mark will check on the inventory of tools attached to our website to see if there is anything useful there. Brian points out that it would be good to be able to track the people who are not accepted.

John also suggests the possibility of "masters" to help curate slots that may be having a hard time making.

There has been some shifting in the field from just straight theatre historians. Shawna notes that this has been a benefit for generalists for her. Funding is also diminishing for conference travel.

Beth mentioned FormStack as a Google docs-like program for collecting submissions. It is pricey, but sounds pretty nifty.

Brian mentions that Shawna will likely need to bring up the problems with multiple submissions and lack of communication from the co-chairs at the lunch tomorrow. We also need to talk to them about advertising too.

But we are comfortable saying that people cannot submit to more than two symposia. So, what do we do if someone over-applies? Other conferences have simply replied to tell people to choose their submission. Mark suggests that there are some interfaces that limit the number of responses per person. We do think it would be better if the conference planner were making this call rather than the co-chairs having a death match about it. If someone does submit to three, can there be an automatically generated email telling them that they need to choose. Limits can help to minimize the impression that overload is necessary to be an artist scholar.

7:43pm – Business concludes