AUDITIONING IN THE FALL? Successful Actors Share Tips for Getting a Job

SETC asked three experienced professional actors who will be auditioning at the Fall 2013 SETC Professional Auditions to share their best advice for fellow auditionees:

HANNAH TIMM: Auditioned at Fall Professional Auditions in 2012. Received offers from theme parks, regional theatres and children's theatres. Currently acting in 11 shows weekly at Sight and Sound Theatre.

Tips for Auditionees:
- Be yourself and know yourself. Show your character, not someone or something that you would like to be perceived as.
- Present yourself in the best manner, not just during your audition, but also outside of the audition room. SETC provides opportunities to network with producers and fellow artists. Take advantage of every interaction that presents itself to develop connections.
- Further your education and awareness through lessons, master classes and seminars. Remember, if you WANT the work, you have to DO the work.

AARON CHOI: Auditioned at Fall Auditions in 2009 and 2012. “Through the 2009 audition, I booked a job at Sight and Sound Theatre in their original production of Joseph and originated a role in the production.”

Tips for Auditionees:
- DO find material that shows off your strengths as a performer. Even if it’s not a role you’d actually get cast as, if you find a monologue or song that you can knock out of the park, then use it.
- DO NOT learn a song or monologue at the last minute before the audition.
- If you’re not a singer, DO NOT SING at your audition. I’ve watched other performers at auditions who are extremely strong actors and then they ruin their audition with a weak song performance.
- DO move on. Once auditions and callbacks are done, don’t harp on them. It will eat you up. Move on to the next audition or performance.

REGINA HARBOUR: First auditioned at SETC in 1977 and has auditioned many times since then. Also is an auditioner and served as the Georgia state auditions coordinator for five years. “Last job I got through SETC was a three-theatre tour of Me and My Girl with Prather Entertainment in 2011.”

Tips for Auditionees:
- How you say or present your name and number is critical. Yes, be you and be natural, but don’t mumble. As a hiring director, if I can’t understand the first words out of your mouth, the rest is for naught.
- Whatever monologue or song you choose, make your audition look effortless. Be it drama or comedy, let us see you enjoy doing this. Don’t show us your strife. Show us a person we would love to work with!
**State Organizations**

**Death Provides a Wake-Up Call on the Importance of Records**

Many times, as an SETC board member, I have heard people question why SETC places so much emphasis on manuals, bylaws, rules and discussion about minutiae. At times, even I have felt that spending too much time on these issues has bogged down SETC.

However, I have a whole new perspective after recently becoming executive director of the Florida Theatre Conference (FTC). Many of the documents that SETC members take for granted ( manuals in particular) would have been a real help in making my transition from an FTC board member to the executive director, who manages the day-to-day operation of the organization.

I assume that, like Florida, many other state organizations have executive directors, presidents, past presidents and division chairs who know and understand their own role within the larger organization.

But when a dramatic/traumatic transition takes place, where is that wealth of knowledge recorded?

When Bob Ankrom, our former executive director, passed away unexpectedly, we found that much of FTC’s institutional memory and pattern of work did not reside on paper, in documents or in others’ memories. In essence, it died with him. Our organization struggled to understand his processes, locate his contacts and connections, and recover his institutional memory.

I challenge each state organization:

- to follow the SETC model, collecting institutional memory, processes of work and manuals;
- to update bylaws and manuals regularly;
- to collect/share important contacts (e.g., newsletter printers and tax preparers); and
- to note deadlines for fee payments and other details related to 501(c)(3) status.

I will no longer question the open, recorded, exhaustive process that has made SETC so successful. I challenge you all to organize and share!

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**Succession Planning for Organizations:**

*See Theatre and the Law, Page 8*

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**2013-2014 SETC Calendar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 1, 2013</td>
<td>2014 SETC Convention hotel reservations open: <a href="http://www.setc.org/hotel-info">www.setc.org/hotel-info</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 22, 2013</td>
<td>Online submission, professional actor/dancer applications for Fall Professional Auditions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 22, 2013</td>
<td>Online submission, student applications for Fall Graduate School Auditions/Interviews</td>
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<td>Aug. 22, 2013</td>
<td>For POSTMARK on applications by companies for Fall Professional Auditions and by schools for Fall Graduate School Auditions/Interviews</td>
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<td>Aug. 22, 2013</td>
<td>Hotel reservations for Fall Meetings/Auditions</td>
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<td>Sept. 6 – 7, 2013</td>
<td>Fall Board/Advisory Council Meetings, Atlanta, GA</td>
<td>Final Deadline: <a href="http://www.setc.org/hotel-info">www.setc.org/hotel-info</a></td>
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<td>Sept. 7, 2013</td>
<td>Fall Graduate School Auditions/Interviews, Atlanta, GA</td>
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<td>Sept. 8 – 9, 2013</td>
<td>Fall Professional Auditions, Atlanta, GA</td>
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<td>Sept. 30, 2013</td>
<td><strong>Deadline:</strong> Workshop proposals for 2013 SETC Convention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. – Nov. 2013</td>
<td>Applications for SETC Screenings for Spring Professional Auditions (dates vary by state). Page 6 for list; or check with your state coordinator, your college or university theatre department; or visit <a href="http://www.setc.org/setc-screenings">www.setc.org/setc-screenings</a></td>
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<td>Oct. 15, 2013</td>
<td>2013 SETC Convention registration opens</td>
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<td>Nov. 15, 2013</td>
<td>Fringe Festival applications</td>
<td>Final Deadline: <a href="http://www.setc.org/hotel-info">www.setc.org/hotel-info</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 21, 2013</td>
<td>Convention program advertising</td>
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<td>Dec. 1, 2013</td>
<td>SETC Young Scholar’s Award entries</td>
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<td>Dec. 18, 2013</td>
<td>High School New Play Contest entries</td>
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<td>Early bird Commercial Exhibits and Ed Expo reservations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 15, 2014</td>
<td>Convention Commercial Exhibit space reservations</td>
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<td>Education Expo space reservations (Non-Commercial Exhibits)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 16, 2014</td>
<td>Professional AUDITIONEE application/registration</td>
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<td>Refund requests – no refunds after this date</td>
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<td>SETC Secondary School Scholarship (High School Students)</td>
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<td>Keynote Emerging Artist of Promise (KEAP) Award (High School Students)</td>
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<td>William E. Wilson Scholarship applications (High School Teachers)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Denise Halbach Award applications (Graduate Study in Acting or Musical Theatre Performance)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Leighton M. Ballew Award applications (Graduate Study in Directing)</td>
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<td>Robert Porterfield Award applications (Graduate Study)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tom Behm Award applications (Theatre for Youth)</td>
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<td>Jan. 21, 2014</td>
<td>Convention program to printer; no changes after this date.</td>
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<td>Jan. 22, 2014</td>
<td>Polly Holliday Award applications (High School Students)</td>
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<td>Marian A. Smith Award applications (Costume Design)</td>
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<td>Jan. 28, 2014</td>
<td><strong>Deadline:</strong> EMPLOYER registration for Spring Auditions and Job Contact Service</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Online applications from auditionees for Graduate Auditions and Undergraduate Auditions/College Interviews</td>
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<td>Entries in Graduate and Undergraduate Design Competition (Scene, Costume, Lighting, Crafts/Technology)</td>
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<td>Convention advance registration (Individuals, students and seniors)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Applications by college and university institutions and representatives for Graduate and Undergraduate Auditions/Interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb. 17, 2014</td>
<td><strong>FULL FEES WILL BE CHARGED</strong> to all applications postmarked after this date and on-site</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 5 – 9, 2014</td>
<td>65th Annual SETC Convention, Mobile, AL</td>
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‘I absolutely love the Fall Auditions’

Ricky Cona is currently “having a blast” playing Pinocchio in Shrek the Musical at Prather Entertainment Group’s The Broadway Palm in Fort Myers, FL. In 2013, he played Seymour in Little Shop of Horrors at the Derby Dinner Playhouse.

Ricky went through SETC Fall Professional Auditions in 2011 and 2012 and Spring Professional Auditions in 2010. “I absolutely love the Fall Auditions and recommend people going to the fall event,” Ricky says. “While I enjoyed spring, there were so many people. I find Fall Auditions to be a little more intimate, and the casting directors have a lot more time with you.”

Ricky met Brian Ensman from Prather Entertainment Group in 2011 at SETC auditions and kept in touch, which led to his casting as Pinnochio. He got his role at Derby Dinner Playhouse in Little Shop of Horrors after 2012’s Fall Auditions.

“I loved my time with Derby Dinner,” he says. “It was a really creative place with fun people who made me feel at home. They provided housing right next to the theatre – very homey and comfortable. I made great friends and met some wonderful folks. At Derby, when you work with them, you’re family.”

Kelly Sina appears in the title role of Cinderella at Derby Dinner Playhouse in 2010.

“Through SETC Professional Auditions, we fill approximately 3 to 6 actor, singer, dancer contracts in every season. Additionally, as our technical and off-stage needs change, we often hire permanent staff members through SETC’s Job Contact Service. We’ve been hiring through SETC for almost 20 years.”

- Lee Buckholz, Associate Producer/Artistic Director

SETC had an opportunity this past spring to catch up with Lee Buckholz, Associate Producer and Artistic Director for Derby Dinner Playhouse. Below are excerpts from the interview.

Tell us about your theatre.

Derby Dinner Playhouse, located in Clarksville, IN, is proud to be one of the oldest, continually-operating dinner theatres in the country. Currently in its 38th season, Derby Dinner is Southern Indiana’s only professional theatre. The Playhouse is the theatrical entertainment leader in Indiana and neighboring Kentucky, noted for professional productions of Broadway musicals and lighthearted comedies. Derby Dinner Playhouse has received national recognition for its new musicals and is a member of the National Alliance for Musical Theatre.

Our theatre is a major stop for tour buses on both North-South and East-West routes, serving the region by reaching out to more than 3 million people through the years. Annual attendance has grown to nearly 200,000 patrons annually.

What types of shows do you produce?

Derby Dinner Playhouse typically produces musicals, comedies, mysteries or dramas on mainstage – as well as children’s musicals, performed weekdays for school groups and on Saturday for the public. All school shows have accompanying lesson plans to help teachers incorporate the play into the curriculum. The Derby Dinner schedule also includes 10 concerts per year as part of the Concert Series.

What opportunities do you offer performers and technicians?

All actors and technicians are paid professionals who are hired from local and national talent pools. In addition to regular performance opportunities, we encourage our actors and technical staff to attend local and national professional development classes and workshops as well as giving them opportunities to teach and share their skills and talents with the community through a series of workshops and classes.

What is unusual about your theatre?

The Derby Dinner Playhouse stage is surrounded by tiers of dining tables and chairs and has a seating capacity of approximately 500. Seating is arranged “in-the-round” and each guest is given a perfect view of the stage. With its wide variety of shows, excellent food service and intimate facility, an evening at Derby Dinner Playhouse is truly something that everyone can enjoy.

More info: www.derbydinner.com
Community Theatre Division

Festival Participation Benefits Theatre and Community

As I brush off the sawdust from working on the simplistic (ha!) set for *Noises Off* and sit down to write this column, I am also enjoying social media pictures of theatre friends from across the country who are at AACTFest, the national community theatre festival that kicked off this week in Carmel, IN.

Even though it has been two years, the experience of participating in a national festival is still fresh on my mind. The Wetumpka Depot Players are still basking in the benefits of participating in not only a national festival but also the state and SETC festivals we have entered. If your company is on the fence about participation, consider how the rewards may benefit your organization.

**Festivals Make Your Theatre Stronger**

Festival participation raises standards. Taking a show to a festival/competition allows the director and cast to take an even closer look at the production details knowing that they will be examined not only by their audiences, but by trained adjudicators. In turn, the knowledge gained through seeing other shows and attending workshops travels back home with every participant and aids in making future productions stronger. Your audiences will thank you – and happy audiences mean increased ticket sales!

Submitting a show also provides your company with a wonderful opportunity to rally your local community’s support. It’s a source of civic pride to see a local group take the state, regional or national spotlight. The results of festival participation will generate additional positive publicity. Coming home with any award tacks “Award-Winning” onto your future marketing materials.

**Volunteers Benefit, Too**

Perhaps one of the greatest benefits of asking your volunteers to share their time and talents to make a festival entry feasible is that it encourages your group to “breathe.” Taking in new ideas is fabulous but so is giving volunteers an opportunity to share their expertise and network with others who appreciate the significant contributions we make in our own communities.

- Kristy Meanor, kmeanor@wetumpkadepot.com, Chair, Community Theatre Division

**SETC Best Actress Wins AACT Award, See Page 8**

Cell/University Theatre Division

Network at Division Reception, Share Input on Tenure

We invite you to get involved in the SETC College and University Division’s initiatives and to bring us ideas for your own projects. We need your input! Network with others who understand the day-to-day challenges of making college-level theatre programs happen.

**Division Reception Was a Success**

The College and University Division membership tried a new approach during our interest meeting at the convention in Louisville, to great success. We expanded the meeting into a reception in order to make our annual time together more enjoyable and appealing. And adding to the appeal: refreshments! Attendance was up with this new approach, thanks to the generosity of Tripp Oliver at MainStage Theatrical Supply and Esthere Strom with Barbizon Lighting in Charlotte and Atlanta.

Discussions are under way with these and other potential sponsors on how to expand next year’s reception – and we are also brainstorming ideas for the College and University Division to join forces with these sponsors on meaningful ways to impact young, emerging professionals’ lives and future careers. More to come!

**Tenure Guidelines Being Developed**

Explaining what we do as actors, directors, designers and stage managers to those who are not involved in the making of theatre can be a challenge. Those of us in tenure-track positions at colleges and universities understand this challenge because we must defend our work to administrators regularly, and often our career advancements are on the line.

The College and University Division is in the process of constructing a best practices document for educators in our SETC community. The working title for this document is “SETC Guidelines for Promotion and Tenure and Post-Tenure Review.” Most agree that the USITT best practices documentation is essential for technicians and designers going through the tenure, promotion and post-tenure review processes. Our goal is to provide a similar document for other areas of theatre.

College and University Division Vice-Chair Paul Crook of Louisiana Tech University is leading the development of this best practices manual. Please contact him if you are interested in helping compile this very important document: pcrook@latech.edu.

**Nominate or Become a Leader**

We have another opportunity for involvement in the division: Volunteer to be on the Nominations Committee for the next vice-chair of the College and University Division. Or better yet, put your name in the hat as a candidate!

For more information about the division and the roles of vice-chair and chair, please contact me at the address below.

- Karen Brewster, brewster@etsu.edu
  Chair, College/University Theatre Division

Theatre for Youth Division

Suggest a Play, Workshop

The Theatre for Youth Division is looking forward to an exciting year! How can you be a part of that?

**Bring a Production to Mobile**

The division is now accepting applications for performances at the 2014 Theatre for Youth Festival in Mobile, AL. Each year we aim to find one professional theatre production, one college theatre production and one youth theatre production to present at the festival. Last year we had outstanding performances by Lexington Children’s Theatre, Unity Productions and The Whole Backstage Theatre.

Do you know of a theatre or school doing innovative work for young people? Please encourage them to contact festival chair Jennifer Scott McNair at j.mcnair@galloway-school.org and share the great work they are doing with young people in Mobile!

**Award Nominations Accepted**

Annually, the Theatre for Youth Division gives the Sara Spencer Award to an individual or organization for distinct achievement. (Continued on Page 5)
Go Beyond Social Media to Involve People in Your Art

This year I was faced with an incredible challenge: stepping into the role of artistic director at a nonprofit professional theatre in Columbia, SC. I had served as associate artistic director for over 7 years, and have been a staff actor and director there for 19, so I felt I was somewhat prepared for the task at hand. I also was fortunate to be teamed with a wonderfully knowledgeable and driven new managing director, Larry Hembree.

The daunting part? The two of us were taking over for the founding artistic and managing directors, Jim and Kay Thigpen, after 27 years. It was like being handed the keys to Mom and Dad's vintage Mercedes. The transition team toiled for over three years to find the ideal people to take over the helm in order to enable their retirement. No pressure!

Challenges in New Leadership

We have implemented many changes but continue to learn lessons on a daily basis. We were able to keep and expand our amazing staff, and we are constantly reassessing our individual responsibilities. Larry has rebuilt and reinvigorated the Board, and we hired a consultant to help us devise and implement a strategic plan. We have had a great deal of artistic success this season, as well as a good deal of commercial success.

Of course, there have been a lot of fiscal mountains to climb, as well as other unforeseen hurdles. Our biggest "audition" as leaders was getting the community and patrons to trust us. Ironically, the name of the theatre is Trustus.

Add Value to Audience’s Experience

One of the most important steps we have taken is to enrich the audience experience on multiple levels. In this world of instant gratification, where people can immediately feel invested and involved in important causes through Twitter and other social media, we sought ways to get people passionate about what we do.

There are two ingredients to this: customer service and audience enrichment. We have made great strides in customer service –

with new online ticketing, expanded bar selection, and aesthetic improvements to the facility. It is the audience enrichment that we are finding to be the most valuable. Theatres across the country are implementing pre-show talks with dramaturgs and production teams, talk-backs with the cast, and discussions led by experts on the play's content. We have been inspired by searching what other theatres are doing to make their audiences feel personally invested in the process of making and enjoying theatre. To enrich audiences’ experience is to add greater value and significance to every moment they spend in your theatre. As they feel that greater connection, they will invest more of themselves.

Dewey Scott-Wiley, deweyw@usca.edu
Chair, Professional Theatre Division

Secondary School Theatre Division

Teachers, Students Benefit from Attending Convention

Why do we teach high school theatre? Besides the fact that theatre is an art we love and cherish, what’s in it for our students?

We Have an Impact Beyond the Stage

From time to time I like to reflect on why I do what I love and how it affects others and not just myself. Many of our students have the potential to end up as high school dropouts if they aren’t involved in theatre. Research has proven that being involved in an arts program keeps many high school students engaged and in school. We have the opportunity to motivate our students to stay in school and continue their education. We not only help them build communication skills that are necessary for life but we also help build self-esteem. We are able to help students realize they can be successful and can boost their confidence each and every day. In addition to having a great time with an incredible art form, we are life changers.

Opportunities Await You in Mobile

Being involved with SETC can be a life changer for you. If you haven’t been attending our annual convention recently, then you need to make plans for Mobile 2014.

You can take advantage of many opportunities at the convention, including over 300 workshops and many interest group meetings. You can see great theatre from around the Southeast in the play festivals, discover vendors and resources that can impact your theatre program in the Exhibit Hall, and gather college information for your students in the Education Expo. You also will find workshops designed just for you, the educator, at the day-long Teachers Institute, held on Wednesday of convention week. Make plans now to join us in March in Mobile.

Bring Your Students, Too

There are so many opportunities at the SETC Convention for students. Remember the scholarship opportunities that are there for your students.

Do you have students who can't afford to attend? The KEAP Award is available to help talented, promising students who would love to come to the SETC Convention but cannot afford to do so. Visit www.setc.org/keynote-emerging-artists-of-promise-keap-awards for more information. This is your chance to help those students get to the SETC Convention.

Weigh in on Division Restructuring

I want to thank for you allowing me the opportunity over the past years to serve as your Secondary Division Chair. Please join us in Mobile as we continue a discussion we started this past March on the idea of restructuring our division slightly. I’d like to hear from you on the idea I have proposed, which would make the Play Festival chair a more permanent type of position. The idea behind this proposal is to create more consistency from year to year in the planning and implementation of the high school festival.

- Bill Murray, dramacator@gmail.com
Chair, Secondary School Theatre Division
he idea of change sometimes instills fear in us. Other times, we can see that a particular change will bring about improvements. The change in Undergraduate and Graduate School audition days at the 2014 SETC Convention in Mobile seems to fall clearly into the latter category.

In May, SETC’s Executive Committee reviewed and approved a requested change from the Undergraduate/Transfer and Graduate Audition Committees. Chair John Frendenberg and SETC Educational Theatre Services Coordinator Claire Wisniewski presented the proposal in three parts: 1. Move each audition one day earlier; 2. Dedicate a portion of each day for design/tech students; 3. Distribute school and auditionee information in advance of auditions electronically.

The Executive Committee voted to support the proposed changes because we believe they will create a wonderful opportunity both for students and for colleges and universities.

The changes provide an opportunity for undergraduate programs to have an extra day of recruiting, and graduate programs will be able to continue their callbacks on Saturday. Also, auditionees will have the opportunity to talk with the school representatives who saw their auditions and talk with all schools who gave them a callback. The change also will give design-tech students a better opportunity to present their portfolios to interested institutions. Ultimately the change will give schools a more extensive recruiting opportunity and students a better chance to connect with their next step in the education ladder.

WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT AT SCHOOL AUDITIONS IN 2014?
- Undergraduate Auditions move from Friday to Thursday of convention week.
- Graduate School Auditions move from Saturday to Friday of convention week.
- A portion of each day is dedicated to design-tech student presentations.
- School/auditionee info will be distributed electronically prior to convention.

WHAT DO SCHOOLS SAY ABOUT THE CHANGE?
“LOVE this idea! I had the conversation with a few people this year in Louisville that we wished the auds were earlier in the week, since we’re always so damn dead by Saturday.”

“This is a great step in the right direction!”

“I am very much in favor of this new schedule for the Undergraduate Auditions and design/tech interviews.”

“This would be a most welcome change. We found it VERY difficult to meet with students in the time provided after auditions this year.”

QUESTIONS?
E-mail Claire Wisniewski in the SETC Central Office at claire@setc.org.
VivaHub Links Nonprofits with Businesses for Fundraising, Groupon Style

hat's worse, a fundraising project or a root canal? If you would choose the root canal any day, don’t despair. There's a new fundraising platform called VivaHub that has the potential to make fundraising a great deal easier. Visit vivahub.com to learn more about this program, which is a Groupon-type service that links nonprofit organizations with businesses for fundraising.

Each nonprofit organization picks businesses for partnership. Then the merchants cooperate by offering deals for services that complement business as usual. For example, a restaurant might offer wine pairings for its regular Friday night menu. The donor purchases the deal through Vivahub, enjoys a dinner with wine, and the nonprofit organization gets a cut of the purchase price.

Durham Arts Pilot Project Raises $11,000

Todd Atlas, the founder, tested the program by collaborating with the Durham, NC Arts Council. The goal for the first test was $5,000, which was met and exceeded; a second trial program, targeted to raise $4,000, brought the total funds raised to $11,000. Granted, these goals are not huge. However, keep in mind that, unlike many fundraising services, Vivahub charges its nonprofit clients nothing.

In the two Durham Arts Council campaigns, more than 400 people bought packages. One person was responsible for raising $1,000 by sending reminders to friends and acquaintances. Thus, with VivaHub, one well-motivated person who couldn’t afford a $1,000 donation was just as effective as someone with money of his own to give.

VivaHub provides steady reminders of how a campaign is progressing. The nonprofit learns which supporters are making contacts and gets updated lists of buyers and reports of donations from merchants. Merchants determine what percentage of a deal goes to the organization. Vivahub gets a percent of the merchants’ revenues. The nonprofit pays nothing at all.

Atlas can develop a fundraising plan in a matter of hours for a nonprofit, with just two bits of information: the nonprofit’s timing for its business territory expand, its effectiveness will grow as well.

Plans to Grow

The fundraising platform is still in the Beta development phase. Most of the deals on VivaHub are in its hometown of Durham, NC, but it is receiving inquiries from as far south as Miami and as far north as Canada. As VivaHub’s relationships with merchants and its business territory expand, its effectiveness will grow as well.

More Information

Visit the website at www.vivahub.com or send an e-mail to Atlas at fundraisers@vivahub.com.

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Organizations Should Plan Ahead for Succession

If we are fortunate, we will experience the process of growing older. Nonprofit theatre and arts organizations also age— and need to be prepared for the challenges that accompany aging. Unlike people, who have a corporeal existence (i.e., we have bodies that are born and reach a natural endpoint— death), nonprofit organizations are created by statute and in most instances are designated with perpetual existence. SETC, for instance, at 64 years old, is poised to outlive all of its founding members.

What Happens to a Nonprofit as It Ages?

The future of a nonprofit organization can become a major issue when a leader steps down, especially when it’s a long-running nonprofit that has been fundamentally linked to its founder. One nonprofit organization that I know, when its founding member and longtime executive director was about to retire, set in motion a plan for dissolution. However, a ground-swell of support for its mission led to some grants and some board member rejuvenation that enabled the group to continue even after the executive director retired.

The Guthrie Theatre, celebrating its 50th year, has had seven artistic directors who, according to the Minneapolis StarTribune, “tinkered with Guthrie’s original idea, reshaped the mission, the stage and even the building. The cumulative effect has been an evolution of Guthrie’s original idea.”

Succession Plans Should Be Part of Your Discussion

A nonprofit board should, as part of its requisite duty of care, plan for succession as well as success. Succession plans should evaluate change in leadership. Executive directors and artistic directors move, get sick, retire, die, burn out, and for other reasons may be unable to serve. Could your organization survive an unexpected staffing disaster?

Change is not only inevitable, but also necessary. As the Jefferson Airplane song “Crown of Creation” reminds us, “Life is change, how it differs from the rocks.” Periodic reviews of policies, bylaws, staff, board members and board member terms are essential. Is your organization poised to embrace change?

Dan Ellison is a Durham, NC-based attorney with a concentration in arts-related law and nonprofit law. He can be reached at artandmuseumlaw@aol.com. The contents of this column are intended for general information purposes only and should not be construed as legal advice or legal opinion on any specific facts or circumstance.

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