

Minutes of the FCTC Board Meeting

January 11, 2009

Present were: Margie Cain, Jen Carbee, Kevin Christopher, Helen Soule, Walter Mahany, Jennifer Martin, Jerry Stark and Mary Skidmore Taylor

The meeting was called to order at 2:25 pm by President Walter Mahany.

Old Business: Kevin said that we had received a note from the museum in St Albans thanking us and encouraging future collaboration.

Play Selection:

There was a question about whether changing play selection procedures required amending the bylaws. The bylaws state that productions must be conducted in accordance with this organization's policies and procedures. Helen suggested and all agreed that it would be preferable to move forward through policy change since that is easier to adapt.

There are two (not mutually exclusive) ideas for obtaining input on plays that are to be proposed before the formal proposal process. One is to have monthly public play readings and to require that plays go through this process before they are presented. The other is to form a Play Reading Committee, who would read the plays prior to the budget proposal and come to the budget proposal and membership meetings prepared with comments. This would allow FCTC membership to ask questions of someone who has no vested interest in a particular play. The goals of the public play readings include getting more public buyin (possibly attracting new actors and directors), getting people thinking earlier about what they might want to propose, and supplying a list of approved plays for potential directors who are uncertain about what they would like to propose.

Kevin asked whether we need to tie ourselves down to planning a whole season in advance. The reason for this change was so that we could sell ads for the season and at this point, that process isn't working. Margie thinks it is helpful for actors to know in advance so that they don't commit elsewhere.

Kevin suggested the Dragonfly in Colchester as a possible site for the first play reading and it was agreed that the location is good. He will pass contact information to Jen Carbee who will make the arrangements. We will shoot for Tuesday, January 27th or perhaps a different night if the Dragonfly has one that is particularly slow. Jerry has a melodrama in two acts that we could read. Copies for this exist. Whoever wants the play to be read will be responsible for making and destroying copies. Helen will be the contact person for people who wish to attend.

Jerry shared a play review sheet developed by the Stirling Players in Stirling, Va. Jerry moved and Margie seconded a motion to use this form with the understanding that we

will make changes as we use it and find that we want to add or subtract things. The motion passed. Jerry will provide copies of the evaluation form with the logo changed on the night of the reading.

Kevin said that based upon his experience he believes that people are not coming to FCTC shows because of the plays we choose. Margie framed the question as how do we continue to do theatre that enriches our lives while attracting enough of an audience to survive financially. Based on a conversation with Michael Metz, she suggested that we are going to have to do a popular show each year so that we can bookend it with more challenging productions. At least once a year we could do something that makes us artistically happy. Other companies do one popular production that is the same every year which pays for the whole season. Lost Nation did a radio show production of *It's a Wonderful Life* which packed houses and was very profitable. Helen suggested building a tradition around a Christmas season production. *Our Town* and *I Remember Mama* and *A Christmas Carol* were suggested as possible ideas. Kevin mentioned a three character *Dickens by Candlelight* that is produced in Florida. Kevin and Jen thought that a children's theatre production would be a draw.

Walter asked about our purpose. The Articles of Association say that our purposes are "to provide the community with a theatre experience, to encourage community participation in all aspects of theatre, to hold public performances and to provide workshops for learning experiences." We are struggling on community involvement and failing on workshops, but otherwise doing okay.

Helen suggested that our schedule might be a traditional show at Christmas, a children's production in the summer and something interesting in the fall. Kevin works well with children and while in college developed a model for a children's theatre program. This program ran for three hours on Saturday mornings. The first semester is theatre games and scene work. Right before winter break there is some kind of performance for parents. Second semester consists of rehearsals working toward a full-fledged production. He would be willing to do something like this for us.

Margie suggested that we might be able to do such a program at Fairfax School. We could charge a good fee. We would need to design a syllabus and an attractive brochure. Background checks would be necessary for anyone participating. Local college theatre programs might yield interns who could help. Mary agreed to contact Fairfax's Recreation Director to ask whether they might be interested in sponsoring this program, which would help with insurance issues. Jennifer Martin is willing to help with the program. Kevin asked for a partner to help with logistics and Mary agreed to do the early groundwork with Fairfax School. The group decided that it might make sense to make FCTC's spring production connected to the children's program. Adults as well as kids would participate. Margie would be willing to codirect *Peter Pan* (not the musical). Kevin suggested FCTC Children's Preparatory Theatre Program as a name.

We agreed that doing something related to Dickens at Christmas time (with tea, cookies, cocoa) in St Albans would work well. City Hall, church spaces and the Historical

Museum were suggested as possible sites. Kevin will contact the group in Florida that does *Dickens by Candlelight* to ask for permission to produce this show.

The Play Review Committee will consist of one Board member and at least two volunteers from the membership who will serve two year terms. This committee will submit their findings first to the Board and then to the membership. The proposing director will submit a copy of the script to the committee.

Kevin will send an email to the membership outlining the changes that we have decided upon today, including the children's program and starting a holiday show tradition. This leaves two slots, summer and fall, available for proposals. Margie will send Kevin copy about the Play Review Committee for inclusion. Walter suggested reflecting back to our statement of purpose. The email will also remind people of the new timeline and set a director's intention date of July 15th (which gives the play review committee time to do its job). And it will briefly mention the public playreadings.

Margie raised a concern that Bob Martin hasn't heard back about the rights to produce *Chicago* this summer. There is no Plan B. Walter will talk with Bob to express our concern. Kevin will send another email alerting people to the possible need for a new proposal for summer and asking for help with the ad insert.

Helen moved and Jen Carbee seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion passed and we adjourned at 4:56 pm.

Our next meeting will be on February 23rd at Mary's house.

Note: The location of this meeting has since been changed to Kevin's place of employment.