

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF THEATRE
ANNUAL MEETING 2016**

NAST President's Report

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Good afternoon, and welcome to a city whose name only those who are born here pronounce correctly. But whether you call it Louieville, Louisville, or Loulville, we are delighted to be holding our 51st Annual Meeting in this gracious, hospitable Southern city. Especially after celebrating our 50th anniversary last year, it seems altogether appropriate that our theatre organization is here at a time the venerable Actors Theatre of Louisville (ATL) is observing the 40th anniversary of its esteemed Humana Festival of New American Plays, and I hope you will find the time to see some of what is being presented. The folks at ATL have been very welcoming to NAST, and we appreciate their generosity.

Last year, especially due to the anniversary of NAST, we tried in our programming to spend some time looking backward, as well as time looking to what the next 50 years in theatre (and specifically theatre in higher education) might bring. This year, while continuing to attempt some prestidigitation about the future, we also want to address many of the immediate issues you have indicated are of concern to the membership. We are, therefore, providing panels on a number of legal matters of which administrators need to be aware: Title IX, HIPPA, FERPA (and other assorted alphabet clusters); panels on the health and wellness needs of students *and* faculty; a panel which addresses assessment, in the hope this can cease being a dirty word to those of us in the arts; panels that will explore what it means to be a student and a theatre administrator in the 21st century; and we will spend a lot of time discussing curricula, both at the undergraduate and graduate level. For those of you with graduate programs, in particular, please let me encourage you to attend the first of what will be an ongoing series of hearings regarding standards for graduate degrees, the first of which will occur tomorrow at 4:15. Our work collectively on establishing standards is one of the most important aspects of our work as an accrediting body and helps ensure that we, not others, remain in control of our curricula.

As some of you know, I attempted to retire last year, but, like Al Pacino in *Godfather III*, "Just when I thought I was out, they pull me back in." However, this personal misadventure, coupled with conversation that Holly Logue, Karen Moynahan, and I had last July, caused me to think more carefully about succession planning than at any point in the past, and I wanted to take just a few minutes to share some observations with you.

None of us, probably, were trained to be administrators. Perhaps in a few lucky instances you had a mentor who took you under his or her wing and helped guide you in your career, but I suspect most of us were tagged because (1) no one else would take the job and (2) we were dumb enough to accept the invitation to join the club. To give us some credit (and we *do* deserve credit), I'm pretty sure the actual reasons our names rose to the top of the heap were

because our colleagues found us to be organized; to be good listeners; to be good writers; to be good advocates about our programs to others; to be dependable; and, finally, to be gluttons for hard work. And it is hard work. We certainly did not take our jobs for those huge administrative stipends that are added to our paychecks, although we must acknowledge we do get some compensation for the added turmoil.

Now, with all this being said, who among our junior faculty in their right minds would want to take on responsibilities of chair or program director? After all, they all grew up hearing the immortal words of Waylon Jennings, “Mammas Don’t Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Theatre Department Chairs.” What do we do?

Well, it seems evident that unless we encourage, nurture, and support our younger faculty who seem to have an inclination in administration, you, too, may be saying, *“Just when I thought I was out, they pull me back in.”* And, despite my earlier comments, I think there *are* junior faculty who have a genuine interest in administration and want to be used, but who are often either afraid to acknowledge their interest, or see no way to initiate conversation around the topic.

Which brings me back to our NAST Annual Meeting. There is no better way to introduce newer potential theatre administrators to the trending issues of the day than by inviting them to attend our gathering. So, next year, please try to budget for your heir apparent to accompany you to NAST (which requires you to identify a successor, something we in academia are terrible at, while our counterparts in business excel at the process). Next year, we will hold our meeting at a beautiful Westin resort and spa on the shore of Lake Las Vegas, about a half hour (but a world away) from the neon of the strip. There is kayaking, paddle boarding, hiking, golf, and a multitude of spa activities. With a little financial assistance from your institution, you could help a potential chair not only learn a great deal about theatre administration, but also provide what I am sure would be a well-deserved mini-vacation for those long-suffering family members who often wonder what on earth we really do night after long night at those so-called tech rehearsals.

But for now, we have a great deal of programming in front of us and a lot to accomplish between now and noontime Saturday. On behalf of the NAST Board of Directors and the staff in the National Office, again, welcome, and I hope you find the coming attractions to be worth much, much more than the price of admission.