



**ATHE Membership Meeting**  
**Grand Cypress DE, Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress Orlando**  
**August 10, 2019**  
**2:15 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. EDT**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 2:19 p.m. EDT. President Harvey Young determined that there was a quorum.

**In Memoriam**

Harvey took a moment to acknowledge those friends and colleagues whom we have lost since our last meeting. This year we mourn the passing of:

Paul Bryant Jackson; Julian Olf, Former VP of Research and Publication; Richard Hornby; David Bevington; Cicely Berry; Alison Van Dyke; Asha Pande, founding member of the Indian Society for Theatre Research; Eric Alexander, founding member of International Federation of Theatre Research; Victor Ukaegbu, founding general secretary of the African Theatre Association; Winston Ntshona; Harold Prince; Katherine Kerr; Martin Charnin; Franco Zeffirelli; Ntozake Shange; Maria Irene Fornes

Members in attendance added to this list: Robert Weimann; Reed Davis; Ian Watson

The membership shared a moment of silence and remembrance.

**Approval of Minutes**

Chase Bringardner made a motion to approve the minutes from the 2018 Membership Meeting, seconded by Karen Jean Martinson. Approved by voice vote.

**Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Jon Rossini discussed the budget, noting that we currently have a deficit \$42,081, due to the management transition. This figure does not incorporate our investment reserves. In the past, it has not been necessary for ATHE to draw on investment income. All documents are listed on the ATHE Finance Committee website.

Harvey reiterated that the deficit was due to the shift in our management structure, from contracting with Ewald to Executive Director Aimee Zygmanski. During the transition, there was overlap in these management structures to ensure that our operations ran smoothly. This obviously was an unanticipated expense, but we are very happy with the shift in management. *The audience responded with loud applause.*

Lionel Walsh made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report, seconded by Chrisin Essin. Approved by voice vote.

## **ATHE Conference 2020**

VP Conference 2020 Carlos Alexis Cruz extended to the members an advanced welcome to Detroit. He outlined key highlights of the city: it was an economic powerhouse in the height of the motor city, it has a long legacy of communities standing up to power through protest, it has weathered an economic crash, and it is a site of rebirth. Communities of adaptation are the norm in Detroit, and they can inspire all of us for the difficult times ahead in 2020. The power of theatre lies in its communities, and this will be the driving force of the conference. The theme revolves around five key words: Shift, Combustion, Union, Resiliency, Spark. Alongside of this is the notion of Drive. While all of these are car terminology, if we dig deeper, we find that these concepts are the inner workings of change.

## **President's Report**

In his report, Harvey credited the work of what it is we do, creating a conference theme and enacting a vision. ATHE runs on volunteer labor, and it is year-round dedication that makes our organization a success. He then recapped three issues:

1. At the start of Harvey's term, he voiced concerns related to the closing of drama and theatre departments. ATHE has responded actively. The example of Indiana University is important: ATHE and others made an effort to save that program, and drew a lot of attention to its impending closure. IU's administration paused, and said they would figure out how to maintain the program. When people were distracted, the University quietly closed down the program. When we make a stand and call for growth and salvation, we need to be consistent; when we are making calls for action, they must be sustained.
2. Harvey noted that, when he became President, the costs of membership fees and rates of conference were of great concern. We looked hard at our costs in Boston, lowered the conference rates, and kept that rate for this one. We are always looking for ways to improve your experience. That mindfulness led to the shift in management. We will always strive to be of value to our members.
3. Harvey noted that he joined ATHE twenty years ago. In the first conference he attended, he was amazed by the friendliness of the members and their commitment to theatre. These friendships sustain us and inspire us. He then singled out Josh Abrams, lauding him as a person with an engaging, smart outlook for what theatre and performance studies can be, a hard worker, and a dynamic leader.

## **Recognition of Volunteer Service**

The Conference Committee has created an amazing event for us this year. As of this morning, there are 692 registered participants in Orlando. The CC stood and were recognized: Andy Gibb, Trevor Boffone, Shelby Brewster, Chase Bringardner, Carlos Alexis Cruz, Ingrid De Sanctis, Megan Geigner, Martine Kei Green-Rogers, Tiffany Ana López, Monica White Ndounou, Barbara Parisi, Traivs Stern, Aaron Thomas, and Harvey Young.

## **Recognition of Governing Council**

The continuing members of the Governing Council stood and were recognized: Carlos Alexis Cruz, Suzanne Delle, D.J. Hopkins, Kelly Howe, Karen Jean Martinson, and Jon Rossini. The departing GC members stood and were recognized: Tiffany Ana López, Ann Folino White, Andy Gibb, Barbara Parisi, Trish Ralph, and Shawna Mefferd Kelty. Harvey offered praise to each for their unique contributions.

## **Inauguration of New Officers**

Harvey officially transferred the presidency of ATHE to Josh Abrams. Josh thanked Harvey for his service, his tireless work on behalf on the organization, and the grace and elegance of his leadership

and welcomed him to the office of Immediate Past President. Josh presented Harvey with an award, plus a gift of beer drinking that includes a gift card to a Boston brewery and elegant beer glasses!

Incoming GC members were recognized and inaugurated: Chase Bringardner, President-Elect; Monica White Ndounou, VP Advocacy; Dassia Posner, VP Awards; Ann Haugo, VP Conference 2021; Noe Montez, VP Professional Development; Carla Della Gotta, MAL Operations; and Emily Rollie, MAL Outreach.

### **President's Address**

Josh noted that it was truly an honor to receive this gavel from Harvey. He thanked Andy Gibb for the nearly impossible task of conference planning, and praised the excellent work of Nancy Erickson and Devon Binder, who pulled the details of the conference together in just seven weeks. Josh noted that he is the first ATHE president not based in North America, which marks an exciting milestone.

ATHE is grounded by our Focus Group-based structure, and our work is guided by similar goals and aims. We have long understood ATHE as advocacy organization, and we must consider what that means in our present moment of urgency. Considering the many crises of the he cited Toni Morrison, "I know the world is bruised and bleeding, and though it is important not to ignore its pain, it is also critical to refuse to succumb to its malevolence. Like failure, chaos contains information that can lead to knowledge – even wisdom. Like art." It is necessary to also find hope, to move forward hopefully. We are **FOR** theatre **IN** higher education. These are small but crucial words. What it is that we inculcate in our students and in our society when we teach theatre? Most of our students will not have an explicit theatrical practice, but theatre can teach them how to be in the world and how to act in the world. We must double down in professing the values of understanding and making theatre. I stand before you and you see me. We must accept the challenge of this simple and powerful act.

We are already a year-round organization, and we will double down on that call. Powerful changes are coming to and for higher education. ATHE can and must have a significant voice in these issues. ATHE is planning a second summit with other organizations to amplify each other. This has been and continues to be a year of transition. We must be swift as an organization as we continue to address the problems we have all had with ATHE over the past year. There are things we can and need to do better, and our new Executive Director not only understands us, she is us.

### **Other Business**

Andrew Gaines, the CP for STRP informed the members that the Focus Group has evolved and transformed. The group realized that their name no longer reflects who we serve. With the blessing of the GC, it will now will be called Wellness, Community, and Aging (WCA). They welcome proposals and dialogue around this theme.

Josh informed the membership that the creation of the Middle Eastern Theatre (MET) Focus Group was approved by the Governing Council.

### **Adjournment**

With all business concluded, the meeting was adjourned at 3:16 p.m.

*Respectfully Submitted,*

*Karen Jean Martinson, ATHE Secretary*