
**The National Theatre Conference:
The First Seventy-Five Years
1931-2006**

August W. Staub

PREFACE TO THE HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL THEATRE CONFERENCE

When the National Theatre Conference was formally organized in 1931, the need to keep records that might eventually be used in the compilation of its history was the least of its concerns. Rather, as a 1947 issue of *Theatre Arts* described it, “The National Theatre Conference hopes to remain, as its name implies, a not-too-heady and not-too-definite organization, but rather a medium for the exchange of ideas and of collective service between the leading organized theatres of all kinds throughout the country.” As Gus Staub discovered as he began to reconstruct what had taken place over the decades, the description of the National Theatre Conference as a “not-too-definite organization” was an apt description. There were a lot of gaps in the organization’s records; a historian’s nightmare.

But Gus was a long-time member of NTC and a determined, passionate historian. Consequently, this history is the result of an inordinate amount of time

spent conducting interviews on the telephone and in person, looking at a myriad of publications and sifting through the files and folders of the NTC records held in the Lilly Library at Indiana University. No one could have devoted more talent, energy and skill in piecing together the history of this prestigious organization.

Gus Staub died in the spring of 2008. Although he had finished the manuscript, Gus never saw his *History of the National Theatre Conference* in its published form. If he had, he would have undoubtedly accepted well-deserved congratulations and compliments with the kind of warmth and graciousness that was his style. Gus was a very generous man and this history is but one of the many gifts he gave to the theatre in general and the National Theatre Conference in particular. Would that we who are members of the NTC could have offered our profound thanks to Gus Staub in person.

—R. KEITH MICHAEL



This is a history of the National Theatre Conference (NTC) since its formal inception in 1931. This history was commissioned by NTC President Carole Brandt in 2005. Fortunately, the early history of the National Theatre Conference is presented by Tino Balio and Lee Norvelle in their 1968 work, The History of the National Theatre Conference, published by NTC. A considerable amount of the information contained in that work is held in the archives of the University of Indiana Lilly Library. Those same archives hold material deposited later by various officers of the National Theatre Conference. Unfortunately, not every president nor secretary since 1968 deposited materials at the Lilly Library because apparently there was no tradition or mandate to do so. Therefore, there will be unsatisfactory gaps in the history of NTC in the 38 years from 1968 to 2006. For the history prior to 1968, I have condensed the information found in the Balio and Norvelle book. —AUGUST W. STAUB

A PRE-HISTORY

The events out of which the National Theatre Conference grew begin with the decline of the legitimate theatre in America during and after World War I. While many theatres in New York City closed, the real decline was in the “road houses” which supported traveling professional companies throughout the nation. Many of these theatres were converted into movie houses. To discuss the issues and problems of the declining “road,” the first meeting of The Drama League was convened in Detroit in 1913. Three years later, a magazine devoted to theatre throughout the United States, *Theatre Arts Monthly*, began publication. As commercial theatres diminished, amateur or “little theatres” rose to fill the gap. Among the best known of these were Maurice Brown’s Chicago Little Theatre, which gave birth to

the Players Club of Chicago, the Cleveland Playhouse, the Pasadena Playhouse, the Dallas Little Theatre, the Memphis Little Theatre, and *Le Petit Theatre du Vieux Carre* of New Orleans. And, of course, there were important little theatres in New York City, such as the Washington Square Players and the Neighborhood Playhouse.

Paralleling the rise of little theatres was the introduction of theatre courses in colleges and universities. George Pierce Baker may be considered the progenitor of American educational theatre. In 1895, he introduced into the curriculum at Radcliffe College a course in the development of drama in the 19th century. Then he enlarged his scope in 1897 with a course entitled “The Drama from 1642 to the Present Day.” After the turn of the century, he offered a course in playwriting for both Radcliffe and Harvard

students. Among those who took the playwriting course were Eugene O'Neill, Sidney Howard, and Phillip Barry. As an outgrowth of this course, in 1905 he introduced English 47, a formal course in playwriting. Perhaps more significantly, Baker created in 1912 his famous "47 Workshop," in which plays written in English 47 were given public performance.

Sadly, Harvard never officially recognized Baker's "47 Workshop," and finally Baker left Harvard in 1925 to become head of the graduate department of drama at Yale where he was provided with a well-equipped experimental theatre. In the same year, Baker's educational theatre work was recognized in the February issue of *Theatre Arts Monthly*, which presented a map pinpointing the places in the United States where his influence was significant. In addition to working in the professional theatre, Baker's former students were teaching theatre at Northwestern University, Middlebury College, University of California, and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Baker was not the only important pioneer in educational theatre. In 1913, Thomas Wood Stevens established a Department of Drama at Carnegie Tech. Stevens' curriculum not only emphasized playwriting, but also the other aspects of theatrical production, including courses in acting, directing, scenery, lighting, costume design, and theatre management. Stevens assembled a significant faculty including B. Iden Payne, Chester Wallace, and Sir William Poel.

Payne and Baker were rivaled in educational theatre leadership by Baker's student, Frederick Koch. After studying with Baker, Koch took a position at the University of North Dakota, where in 1906 he founded the Sock and Buskin Club which toured the state presenting plays in remote prairie towns. Koch's work attracted the attention of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, where he became professor of Dramatic Literature in 1918. He immediately formed the famous Carolina Playmakers and taught his students the art of writing folk plays. He edited and pub-

lished their work in the three-volume *Carolina Folk Plays, 1941*. By then he had obtained a "Show Bus" and toured for many years with his students presenting their folk plays not only in North Carolina but as far south as Georgia and as far north as Boston.

Other leaders in educational theatre included Alexander Drummond at Cornell, Garrett Leverton at Northwestern University, and E.C. Mabie at the University of Iowa. Indeed, it was Mabie who joined with Lester Longman, the head of the Iowa Art Department, to create at Iowa the first MFA Degree in the arts. Such was the activity generated by these pioneers, that Kenneth Macgowan reported in his 1928 book, *Footlights Across America*, that Carnegie Tech, Northwestern, Iowa, Yale, and North Carolina had given nearly 500 performances of some 87 different plays.

It was clear by 1924 that some kind of organization of educational and community theatre would be beneficial to the survival and continued growth in quality in both types of theatre. The Drama League attempted to provide the leadership in the creation of such an organization, but the League never could seem to obtain a sufficient budget, nor could it develop the necessary strength in its own leadership. Thus, it was that in November 1925, Carnegie Tech, led by its president, Thomas S. Baker, hosted a conference on the "Drama in American Universities and Little Theatres." The meeting included presentations by such significant individuals as George Pierce Baker, E.C. Mabie, and Richard Boleslavsky. A report on the talks and discussions indicated that the delegates agreed to appoint a committee to organize a second conference. This latter conference, held in February 1927, led ultimately to the formation of the National Theatre Conference. Consequently, it might be logical to argue that the NTC received its formative impetus at Carnegie Tech in 1925, but it would not achieve its name and identity until 1931.

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

The suggestion for a follow-up conference to that at Carnegie Tech was taken up by George Pierce Baker who invited over 3,000 representatives of American theatres to meet at the newly constructed Yale theatre to discuss a possible national theatrical organization. Some 350 members of the professional, educational, and community theatre met at Yale on February 11 and 12, 1927, to hear the call for a nationwide theatrical organization as expressed in Lee Simonson's argument that the heady concentration of theatre in New York cannot continue indefinitely. While the attendees at the meeting unanimously agreed on the need for a national organization, there was little money to support such an entity.

In 1931, Kenneth Macgowan secured a grant for \$2,500 (which was quite a sum of money at the time) from the Carnegie Foundation through the American Association for Adult Education to pay the expenses for 30 leaders of community and university theatre to meet in order to find a workable basis for a national organization. A three-day conference was held in June 1931 at Northwestern University. After considerable and sometimes bitter debate, the delegates finally appointed a committee of 15 to serve as a Council for the organization that they tentatively called The National Theatre Conference. The Council was given the responsibility of writing a proposed constitution and by-laws.

In 1932, the National Theatre Conference received a \$1,000 grant from the Carnegie Foundation to cover the expenses for an NTC Council meeting in February at the University of Iowa. The Council elected George Pierce Baker as president; E. C. Mabie as vice president for university theatre; Gilmore Brown as vice president for community the-

atre; S. Marion Tucker as secretary; Mrs. Edith J. R. Isaacs—editor of *Theatre Arts Monthly*—as corresponding secretary; Kenneth Macgowan as chairman of the Council; and Frederick McConnell as vice-chairman of the Council. The officers having been elected, the Council then drafted a constitution, outlined the various services it hoped to offer to university and community theatres, and prepared various forms for applying for membership. On February 20, 1932, the National Theatre Conference came into formal existence.

The original plan for NTC was to divide the nation into nine regions, each of which had a regional director who represented the theatre work of high school, college, community, and professional organizations in his or her region. Each regional center would act as a clearinghouse for information and important theatrical supporting contacts. In a very important gesture for the existence of NTC, Edith J. R. Isaacs offered to house the central office rent-free in the New York editorial offices of *Theatre Arts Monthly*. Dues for active membership in NTC were \$25 annually for any regularly organized theatre, whether amateur or professional, that produced at least three full-length plays a year with an annual budget of at least \$1,000. Another class of active membership was any regularly organized college theatre producing no less than three full-length plays per year. A second class of membership, at \$10 annually, was active membership which included individuals considered significant because of their work in theatre, and \$10 annually for an associate membership for any junior college or high school theatre group.

The National Theatre Conference had hoped for a dues income of \$5,000 annually, which would support the central office in book mailing, other postage,

and necessary correspondence. Unfortunately, the membership income fell well below anticipation due in great part to the financial strain across the nation brought on by the Great Depression. The officers of NTC turned to the American Association for Adult Education (AAAE), and in November of 1932 the AAAE answered their plea with a \$5,000 Carnegie Foundation grant. To maintain the central office, the grant provided \$1,000. The remainder of the fund was to be used to support such projects as publications, library surveys, and a survey of high school theatre architecture. One immediate use of the grant was a notice to active members that NTC would aid in securing plays for production and information concerning royalties and performance rights. NTC would also aid in organizing regional theatre conferences. It would further act as an advisor in developing theatre libraries, in the designing or remodeling of theatres, and in the acquisition of fundamental equipment. Finally, NTC would act as a stimulator in the development of theatre libraries and would also consider publishing a limited number of selected books by authorities in various aspects of the theatre. One of the results of this notice was the discovery of the lack of basic theatre libraries, and the realization that the absence of fundamental theatre books in small town

libraries was a serious deterrent to the development of any on-going theatre group in such locales.

To alleviate the serious condition of meager theatre libraries, NTC published a series of handbooks including Rosamond Gilder's *A Theatre Library* (1932), Stanley McCandless' *A Method of Lighting the Stage* (1932), Richard Boleslavsky's *Acting, the First Six Lessons* (1933), and Edith Isaacs' *Architecture for the New Theatre* (1935). In 1934, NTC also inaugurated a special library membership at \$5 annually that would provide information on theatre books and other theatrical materials. The library membership was quite successful with 98 libraries across the nation joining by 1935.

The National Theatre Conference made another important contribution in the early 1930s by helping the non-professional and little theatres resist being included by the Federal government in the Professional Theatre Code. The Theatre Code had been expressly written to define the work and wages of Theatrical Stage Employees and Motion Picture Machine Operators, especially in New York and other large cities. After considerable and long-term opposition to the code, NTC was able to obtain dismissal of these theatres from the terms of the code.

DYING AND REVIVING

In October 1934, it was necessary for *Theatre Arts Monthly* to move to new, smaller headquarters. As a result, NTC had to rent additional office space at \$50 per month. There then followed other serious setbacks. In 1935, the long-time outstanding leader of NTC, George Pierce Baker, died. Gilmore Brown was elected the new president, who then had to deal with another serious problem: the Carnegie Foundation announced it was withdrawing future support for all dramatic enterprises. Unfortunately, although NTC had a membership of nearly 300, there was insufficient income to support necessary central office expenditures. A national conference was called in Chicago on December 30 and 31, 1935. The conference ended with a decision to allow NTC to dissolve, but before delegates returned home, they all became convinced that NTC must be saved. They agreed to support, among their colleagues throughout the nation, a concerted membership drive. They also formed various committees to formulate specific NTC activities, and finally they agreed to another council meeting in the very near future.

There was much discussion and many conflicting opinions on how NTC should regroup, but a final and crucial meeting, made possible by a \$750 Rockefeller Foundation grant, was held at the Hotel Commodore in New York City on December 27 and 28, 1936. Over strong objections from such members as Edith Isaacs, it was decided that NTC should continue as an organization limited to 25 of the most distinguished leaders in the non-commercial theatre. The newly recreated National Theatre Conference obtained a \$5,000 grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to cover operating expenses and to commence two important projects: A study of the royalty situation as it affects non-com-

mercial theatres so that newer and better scripts could be secured; and a study of the library needs of non-commercial theatres and how such theatres might cooperate with the American Library Association in meeting those needs.

An extremely fortunate event occurred when the president of Cleveland's Western Reserve University offered three rooms with free rent and utilities for NTC's central office. Another uplifting event was the 1937 decision by the Rockefeller Foundation to initiate an NTC fellowship project. The Foundation suggested that NTC award eight or ten \$1,000 fellowships each year to young directors or designers in order that they might be able to spend a year doing advanced study at either a university or an outstanding community theatre such as the Cleveland Playhouse or the Pasadena Playhouse. A Fellowship Committee headed by E. C. Mabie, announced in the 1939 issue of NTC's new publication, the *Bulletin*, that nominations were being accepted from NTC members only. By the time the Rockefeller Foundation had terminated the project, fellowships had been awarded to 26 young people between the ages of 21 and 35.

The *Bulletin*, published quarterly, was a very important new source of information and prestige for the National Theatre Conference. Subsidized by a Rockefeller grant, the *Bulletin* was sent, at no charge, not only to members but also to newspaper editors and drama critics, libraries, professional, educational, and non-commercial theatre people, and to any one who asked to be put on the mailing list. With the effects of the fellowships and the ability to communicate through the *Bulletin*, NTC became more and more invigorated. Membership was increased from 25 to 50 leaders in all areas of theatre. Annual meetings,

commencing in 1939, were set on the Friday and Saturday after Thanksgiving in New York City. In 1940, a new constitution was adopted. Terms of officers and members of the executive committee were redefined, and the presidency was limited to two years, with two additional years on the executive committee following

the president's term of office. Things were looking good for the revitalized National Theatre Conference, and the new vigor provided what was necessary to meet the demands of the Second World War.

NTC GOES TO WAR

To contribute to the war effort, NTC proposed to set up theatrical productions at each training camp to elevate the morale of the inductees. A Training Camp Committee, which included Paul Green and Hallie Flanagan Davis, was created to oversee the use of a \$55,000 Rockefeller Foundation Grant to cover the years 1941-45. The project began at Fort Brag and Fort Bliss, and the impressive uplifting of the morale of trainees participating in theatrical productions caused the War Department to extend the Training Camp Project and even to include 16 hours of instruction in theatrical arts to be given in the Special Services Officers Training School at Washington and Lee University. Another highly successful war program was the War Bond Project. The project began when the Pennsylvania Community Theatre in Harrisburg presented a production of Kaufman and Hart's Broadway success, *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, directed by NTC member Kenneth Rowe. The State Theatre in Harrisburg, seating 2,200, was donated free of charge. Admission was by purchase of war bonds ranging from \$25.99 to \$1,000. Kaufman and Hart attended the production and auto-

graphed six copies of their play to be given to the persons purchasing the highest denomination of bonds. More than one million dollars in bonds were sold. Working under the supervision of the Treasury Department and the National Theatre Conference, Rowe supervised other "war bond productions" across the country.

During the war demobilization period of 1944, NTC created two very useful projects. The first was the presentation of non-professional shows at the various army hospitals. These productions, though limited in length and scenic adornment, provided necessary entertainment for those recuperating from battle injuries. The second project, headed by Robert Schnitzer, was a Veteran's Counseling Service for discharged veterans seeking information concerning education or employment in some area of theatre. In all, the National Theatre Conference had contributed in several significant ways to the war effort, and the Rockefeller Foundation was so pleased with the work of NTC that in 1945 the Foundation announced a grant to NTC of \$155,000 for the five-year period commencing in 1946.

AFTER THE WAR, NEW DIRECTIONS

The National Theatre Conference should certainly have been proud of its contributions to the war effort, and it had a strong financial future ahead with the sizeable five-year grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. But even as NTC had several successful projects supporting the troops, serious organizational problems were developing. These problems were postponed in part until after World War II, but through the war-years member complaints increased. Among other things, NTC now had the competition of the growing popularity of the American Educational Theatre Association (AETA), which had no real membership restrictions. NTC members complained that, unlike AETA, they had little input in the running of their organization. Officers were elected by the Board of Trustees, and the officers and the Board decided on the nomination and election of new members and the limit to the number of active members. Changes were slow in coming for most of the membership problems, but several new post-war projects were created which generated excitement even among the disgruntled.

In the October 1944 issue of the *Bulletin*, Frederick McConnell published an editorial in which he called for the building of a new National Theatre after the war. The significant part of his plan was a request that at least 500 university and community theatres each create an attached company of professional actors, directors, designers, and technicians. The nonprofit professional companies would be able to provide the kind of theatre excellence that was not always possible to attempt in the commercial theatre which must make a reasonable profit for its investors. The new NTC president, Sawyer Falk, announced that

he intended to appoint committees to concentrate on realizing McConnell's vision. Falk's committees immediately set to work by presenting Stanford University's Department of Speech and Drama with a \$7,000 grant to finance five junior artists-in-residence fellowships in order to create a permanent attached professional repertory company. A second committee established small grants to aid new playwrights in completing and revising their manuscripts. The new playwrights aided by this project included, among others, Barrie Stavis, who was thus able to complete his famous *Lamp at Midnight*.

Falk also oversaw a revision of the National Theatre Conference Code of Regulations in 1946 that required that the president and the board of trustees be elected by the membership present at each year's annual meeting. This more democratic organization oversaw two more new projects in 1947: The New York Tryout Studio and the National Theatre Conference Touring Company. The Tryout Studio used Hunter College's theatre to allow recent college graduates and young men and women who had been out of professional theatre for years because of the war, to rehearse and present productions of plays, such as *No Exit*, to be seen by actors' agents and heads of community theatres who might be able to offer the young aspirants jobs. The project, which ran for three years before funding was exhausted, apparently was quite successful. The second and more enduring project was the creation of an NTC touring company. As proposed by Lee Norvelle at Indiana University, the touring company would be composed of ten students—five men and five women—each with a \$1,000 fellowship for the academic year. The touring

company would also be provided with a grant of \$7,000 per semester for royalties, publicity, office expenses, and other general expenses.

When the budget was approved, Norvelle sent announcements to NTC members asking them to nominate one actress and one actor, graduate students preferred. A company was assembled after auditions at Indiana, and rehearsals for *The Late Christopher Bean* began on September 25, 1947. Indiana University waived tuition and fees and provided rooms for members of the company. The production opened at Indiana University and, after a short run, toured for seven months. Among the places visited were Indianapolis Civic Theatre, Indiana State Teachers College, Case Western Reserve University, and the State University of Iowa. The company rented Indiana University's truck and station wagon. The touring company was both a critical and financial success. A second successful season followed, but in 1949, Norvelle announced that he could no longer serve as director of the project, so that after three highly successful years, the touring project came to an end.

A second project originated by Lee Norvelle was to have a better life span. As he gave up the reins of the touring company, Norvelle suggested that he create a nonprofit summer stock theatre with whatever funds were left from the NTC Touring Company proj-

ect. He was given permission to do so, and he established a summer theatre in Brown County State Park, located about 20 miles from Indiana University. With the aid of A. J. Rogers, owner of the Brown County State Park hotel, a tent theatre was set up for the summer of 1949. The Brown County Playhouse received excellent reviews and had a very successful and profitable season, so successful that there was never a request for additional NTC funding. Soon a handsome theatre was built and, under the special guidance of R. Keith Michael, NTC member and first chairman of the Indiana Department of Theatre and Drama, the Brown County Playhouse grew robust and continues today as a highly regarded professional summer stock theatre and the oldest professional theatre in Indiana.

The final project in which the National Theatre Conference was able to use Rockefeller Foundation money was the especially successful regional theatre conferences. In 1949, NTC received a \$7,500 grant to support selected regional theatre conferences. The first such conference was held in Pennsylvania at the Carnegie Institute of Technology. By 1952, when the Rockefeller grant ended, NTC had also sponsored regional conferences in the Southwest, the Southeast, New England, the Middle Atlantic, Ohio-Illinois-Indiana, Wisconsin, and Dakota-Minnesota.

1950-1970: AGAIN IN DANGER OF SURVIVAL, BUT REVITALIZING

In 1951, the Rockefeller Foundation notified the National Theatre Conference that there would be no new grants nor renewal of any standing grants. The Foundation had decided that there would be different ventures to which its funds would be dedicated. NTC President Sawyer Falk, recognizing the danger in which this decision placed his organization, urged NTC membership to be inventive in pursuing new projects while, at the same time, remaining steadfast in their commitment to NTC. On the other hand, the president of the American Educational Theatre Association, recognizing that NTC might no longer be a freestanding competitor, suggested that NTC meet jointly with AETA.

Certainly, there were good reasons for NTC to consider the AETA proposal. In December 1950, the final issue of the *Bulletin* was published. In 1951, the central office was closed. These events increased the growing disinterest of the general NTC membership, many of whom had become discouraged by the fact that the officers of the organization had provided little opportunity for individual members to have much input into the work of the National Theatre Conference. In November 1952, a survey indicated the number of members planning to attend the annual meeting would not even constitute a quorum. Accordingly, President Falk cancelled the meeting and notified the membership that the 1953 meeting would be held in conjunction with the AETA meeting in New York. But the Board of NTC did meet in 1953 and

elected Frederick McConnell, who held office for only a year, and in 1954 Lee Norvelle was elected to succeed him. To revitalize the organization, Norvelle appointed Monroe Lippman of Tulane University as chair of the Membership Committee, and NTC set about in a concerted effort to elect new and distinguished members.

The efforts paid off, and Norvelle was able to report that the 1954 meeting was the best NTC had had in a decade. In the following year, Frank Whiting argued that NTC should forget about projects and become an honorary club for highly distinguished persons who could enjoy a few days each year in one another's company. Norvelle agreed with these concepts, and Paul Baker, who followed Norvelle and held office from 1958 to 1961, set out to invite the theatres' most distinguished personalities as speakers. Among such speakers over the next five years were John Gassner, Harold Clurman, Mordecai Gorelik, and Esther Jackson.

In 1961, the National Theatre Conference's new president, Theodore Viehman, inaugurated a new project called the Appraisal Project and appointed a committee to survey what significant alterations the American theatre had undergone since World War II. Special interest was to be paid to playwrights, the professional theatre, the community theatre, regional nonprofit theatres, new stage technology, new theatre architecture, the theatrical audience, and the relationship of the Federal Government to theatre. The committee estimated that \$24,000 would be needed to

complete the project. NTC provided \$1,000, the Rockefeller Foundation contributed \$4,000, Tufts University offered \$2,500, and a number of smaller contributions brought the 1963 total to \$10,000. The Appraisal Project went forward and was completed with the 1968 publication of *Theatre in America: Appraisal and Challenge* by Marston Balch, Robert Gard, and Pauline Temkin.

The final project of President Viehman's tenure was the appointment of a committee that would review NTC's structure and constitution. A more democratic process was provided for the nomination of new members and for the election of officers and members of the Board of Trustees. Finally, a limit of 100 members was set and those elected to membership would represent outstanding contributors to the American theatre in commercial, non-commercial, or educational theatre. The National Theatre Conference was finally taking the shape it would retain in the 21st century. It would not be many years until the newly invigorated organization would cease meeting with AETA and return to its late November meetings at the Barbizon Plaza in New York City. Publication of its newsletter, *Broadside*, would resume. It was under the guidance of presidents E. Curtis Canfield (1964-65), Arnold S. Gillette (1966-67), and Norris Houghton (1968-69) that the National Theatre Conference took on the strength, and stability of the current organization.

In 1967, under the guidance of President Arnold S. Gillette, another important project was inaugurated: the naming of the Person of the Year. Each year a person considered very significant in the American theatre was to be recognized, and that person would be invited to make a presentation at the National Theatre Conference's annual meeting. The Person of the Year Award placed greater significance to the NTC presidency because the president, after consulting with the Board of Trustees, would select the recipient. This procedure continues to the present day. It was

expected that the Person of the Year would address the members, attend the luncheon, and lead a discussion and answer session afterward. The first recipient of the Person of the Year was Hallie Flanagan Davis. During the Depression, Davis had been director of the Federal Theatre Project of the WPA. She had taught playwriting at Vassar and Harvard and after the Depression she became head of the Department of Theatre at Smith College.

During the tenure of President Norris Houghton, Rosamond Gilder was recognized as the Person of the Year in 1968, and Joseph Papp in 1969. Gilder began her theatrical career as an assistant to Edith Isaacs at *Theatre Arts* magazine and would eventually become its editor. Gilder's widely-read book, *Enter the Actress*, was among the first important studies of women in the theatre. Joseph Papp had introduced Shakespeare in the Park and, in 1967, he converted the Astor Library into a theatre which is currently known as the Public Theater. Among the productions done under his tenure were *Hair* and *A Chorus Line*. In all, the Joseph Papp Public Theater has presented works which have won 138 Obie Awards, 40 Tony Awards, and four Pulitzer Prizes.

Norris Houghton was one of NTC's most distinguished presidents. Prior to his becoming president (1968-69), he had co-founded in 1954 the Phoenix Theatre in New York City for which he directed and designed for many years. Prior to working at the Phoenix, he produced several Broadway shows, including *Once Upon a Mattress* which won the 1960 Tony Award. After serving as president, Houghton continued his illustrious career at the Phoenix with shows such as Tennessee Williams' *27 Wagons Full of Cotton* and Arthur Miller's *A Memory of Two Mondays*. In addition to his work in the commercial theatre, Houghton also served as dean of Theatre Arts at the State University of New York at Purchase and was the author of two important books on the theatre, *Entrances and Exits: A Life In and Out of the Theatre* and *Seeds of Modern Drama*.

THE 1970s: GAINING STRENGTH, THEN AGAIN SERIOUSLY THREATENING TO FAIL

Norris Houghton was followed in the NTC presidency by Kendrick Wilson who served for three years, 1970-73. The information on his presidency is meager because there were few records kept.

Wilson was the founder of the Omaha Community Playhouse, an organization that many now consider to be among the most important community theatres in the country. While at the Playhouse, Wilson directed the young Jane Fonda in several shows. Wilson remained with the Playhouse as director until his retirement in 1967. During his presidency, Roger L. Stevens (1970), Zelda Fichandler (1971), and Tennessee Williams (1972) were named Persons of the Year, respectively.

Roger L. Stevens was, in 1970, chairman of the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts. He had just finished his term, 1965-69, as the first chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. Prior to that he was an important Broadway producer whose productions included *West Side Story*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, and *A Man for All Seasons*, the latter of which won the Tony Award. Stevens also won Tony awards for revivals of *On Your Toes* and *Death of a Salesman*.

In 1971, Zelda Fichandler was on the artistic staff of the Arena Stage in Washington, DC, one of the most significant regional theatres. Fichandler, along with NTC member Vera Mowry Roberts, was among the co-founders of Arena Stage. In 1976, Arena Stage was the winner of the first-ever presented Regional Theatre Tony Award, and under her direction, Arena Stage

was sponsored by the State Department as the first American theatre to tour the Soviet Union. Her production of *Inherit the Wind* played Moscow and St. Petersburg. In 1984, Fichandler resigned her position with Arena to become chair of the graduate acting program at Tisch School of the Arts New York University.

By the time he was named Person of the Year, Tennessee Williams was known throughout the world as one of America's greatest playwrights. By 1972, Williams had already written some of his most famous works, such as *A Streetcar Named Desire*, for which he won the 1948 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, the winner of the 1955 Pulitzer Prize. His 1952 work, *The Rose Tattoo*, won the Tony. Members were inspired by the visit with such a great playwright.

The presidency for the next three years was held by Gregory Falls (1973-75). Falls had been the director of the University of Washington School of Drama from 1961 to '71, when he retired and founded A Contemporary Theatre in Seattle, where he worked as full-time director. As with Wilson, Falls passed away in 1997, and he deposited no records with the Lilly Library. Therefore information is scarce during his tenure. Apparently it was during Falls' presidency that the *Bulletin* was resuscitated, but that is difficult to establish since there is no file on the *Bulletin* nor its editors.

During Falls' presidency, Ruth Mayleas was named Person of the Year in 1973, and Paul Green in 1974. At

the time she was honored, Mayleas was head of the Theatre Program for the National Endowment for the Arts. Prior to that, she had been director of the American National Theatre and Academy's National Theatre Service Division. Throughout the 1980s and early '90s, Mayleas was director of the Ford Foundation's Arts Program. She was also vice president of the League of Professional Theatre Women, and is the author of *Theatre Artist's Resources*.

Paul Green, at the time he was Person of the Year, was professor of Drama at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and director of the UNC Chapel Hill Institute of Outdoor Drama, which he had founded. Born in North Carolina and educated at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and at Cornell, Green had won the 1926 Pulitzer Prize for Drama for his play, *In Abraham's Bosom*. He wrote other plays produced in New York, but he then returned to North Carolina, where in 1937 he wrote the famous outdoor drama, *The Lost Colony*, which is still being presented each summer.

For some unrecorded reason, there was no award given in 1975. There may have been some turbulence in the year 1975, for it is not clear in the records who served as president, and it seems to have been at that time that the meeting place for NTC was moved to The Players club. Jay Broad (president in 1976-77) is not certain whether he or Greg Falls was president in 1975. It was in that year that the meeting place was changed but not without some difficulty because at first The Players club resisted, since they had no policy of renting out meeting space. However, Broad was doing a production with Alfred Drake, The Players president, and Drake intervened on behalf of NTC. Although, as indicated, there was no tradition of storing records, Broad and all the remaining presidents of NTC are still alive so that this history can at least call upon their memories, and most have been very forthcoming and generous in responding to requests for information.

In 1975, Broad had begun his tenure as artistic director of Long Island's PAF Theatre, where he produced works by such playwrights as Mark Medoff and Albert Innaurato. He had been founder and producing director of Theatre Atlanta (1964-70), the first LORT theatre in the South. Theatre Atlanta was presented for an extended run on Broadway and was profiled on TV's *60 Minutes*. Among the works Broad created and presented in Atlanta were *Red, White and Maddox* and *Conflict of Interest*. He then returned to New York and produced his play *White Pelicans*, starring Jose Ferrer and Morgan Freeman. *Conflict of Interest* was produced by Joseph Papp and *Goodnight Grandpa*, which Broad directed, starred Milton Berle.

During Broad's presidency, John Houseman (1976) and Danny Newman (1977) were named Persons of the Year, respectively. Houseman was born Jacques Haussman and educated at Clifton College in England before coming to the United States and taking his stage name. An actor, director, and producer, Houseman founded, with Orson Welles, the prestigious Mercury Theatre which did the famous, and infamous, radio production of *War of the Worlds*. Houseman produced many films and television programs. He taught acting at Juilliard where actors Patti LuPone and Kevin Kline were among his students and helped him form a touring company, The Acting Company, which is still active today. In 1976, Gerald Schoenfeld, chairman of the Shubert Organization, was also a featured speaker.

Danny Newman, the 1977 Person of the Year, was a famous press agent for the Chicago Lyric Opera and the author of the widely used book, *Subscribe Now!: Building Arts Audiences Through Dynamic Subscription Promotion*. First published the year Newman spoke to NTC, the book is now in its 11th edition. Newman, who recently retired from the Chicago Lyric Opera, also is the author of *Tales of a Theatrical Guru*. Newman and members of NTC spent a day

exploring the often neglected aspect of theatre publicity.

Broad remembers that during the late 1960s and throughout the early 1970s, except for a featured speaker and a presentation by the Person of the Year, the two days of meetings were generally given over to open discussion among the members, a tradition that continued to some degree into the 1980s. It has since been replaced by visits to special theatre sites in New York City and to discussions with significant theatre scholars and artists, as well as an introductory session with new members and the presentation of scenes from the play selected for the Stavis Award.

After his presidency, Broad's later activities included work at the Odyssey Theatre in Los Angeles, theatre critic for the *Jewish Journal of Los Angeles*, author of the national touring show, *The Big Coca-Cola Swamp in the Sky* starring Colleen Dewhurst, and guest director at the Schelykova Theatre Festival in Russia. In New York, he directed Ron Miller's *Defending the Light*, Richard Abron's *The Brother's Berg*, and a revival of his own play, *Conflict of Interest*. He has served on the Executive Board of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers and has been a visiting professor at Yale, Hofstra, University of Southern California, University of Washington, and Arizona State University.

In 1978, Arthur Wagner was elected president and served 1978-1980. Wagner was the founding chair, in 1972, of the Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of California, San Diego, where he also founded and headed the Graduate Professional Acting Training Program. A director and actor, Wagner also created graduate acting programs at Tulane, Ohio State, and Temple universities. He is a graduate of Stuyvesant High School in New York City and of Earlham College. His Master's degree is from

Smith College, and his PhD is from Stanford University. In 1972, the same year in which he joined the faculty at UC San Diego, Wagner was elected to NTC. He reports that he attended every meeting until 1977, where in absentia he was elected president. He was concerned that he might miss the 1979 meeting because he was going on sabbatical, but he was assured that his vice president and other board members would take up the slack. Wagner proposed to hold the 1978 meeting in Los Angeles as a gesture to those members from the West Coast.

At that meeting the distinguished director, Gordon Davidson was named Person of the Year. Davidson was founder, in 1967, of Los Angeles' Mark Taper Forum. Among his productions at the Taper were two shows which went on to win the Pulitzer Prize in Drama: *The Kentucky Cycle* and *Angels in America*. In 1977, the Mark Taper Forum received the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre. Davidson retired from the Mark Taper Forum in 1989 and is now a freelance director. Former president of Theatre Communications Group, Davidson was inducted into the Theatre Hall of Fame in 2000.

According to Wagner, the 1977 meeting was very successful, but the majority of members, mainly from the East, indicated that they preferred that future meetings be held in New York City. A committee was formed to prepare the 1979 meeting in New York. Unfortunately, Wagner was away in London for his sabbatical, and without presidential leadership, the 1979 meeting never materialized, disappointingly so because Douglas Turner Ward was to have attended as Person of the Year. As a result of the failed annual meeting, a sizeable number of dissident members proposed that NTC be disbanded.

THE 1980s

RECOVERY ONCE AGAIN AND INCREASED STRENGTH

Arthur Wagner was determined the National Theatre Conference would not be dissolved on his watch. He called a meeting of NTC members attending the ATA conference in the summer of 1980 and managed to instill sufficient interest in the National Theatre Conference to feel confident that there would be significant attendance at a National Theatre Conference meeting in December. And, indeed, there was a strong attendance in December 1980, and a successful meeting, which, among other things, honored Lloyd Richards as Person of the Year.

Lloyd Richards was at the time dean of the Yale School of Drama, a position he held until 1991. Born in Toronto, he moved to Detroit at a very young age, and studied drama at Wayne State University. After graduation, he moved to New York City to seek a career in theatre. He ultimately found work as a director and, in 1958, became famous for his production of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*. He also introduced August Wilson to Broadway with his production of *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. A winner of a Tony Award for his direction of Wilson's *Fences*, Richards had also worked in developmental capacities with Wendy Wasserstein, Lee Blessing, Christopher Durang, and David Henry Hwang.

Relieved and proud to have saved NTC, Arthur Wagner returned to UCSD and to his professional work at such places as La Jolla Playhouse, San Diego Rep, and Idaho Shakespeare Festival. He is currently professor emeritus at UCSD, having retired in 1992,

but he continues to act and direct professionally. He proudly states that the NTC has been among his "highest pleasures and pride in the course of my career."

Reuben Silver (1981-82) followed Arthur Wagner as president. Silver took his BA at Wayne State, his MA at the University of Connecticut, and his PhD at Ohio State University in 1961. He became an NTC member in 1958. In 1968, he was elected treasurer of NTC and served in that capacity until he was elected president. It was necessary that he serve so long as treasurer because NTC was incorporated in Ohio and needed a treasurer from that state. In 1955, Silver became director of Cleveland's Karamu House, the nation's oldest African-American cultural organization. While at Karamu House he worked with Cleveland native Langston Hughes, directing many of Hughes' plays and other theatrical productions based on Hughes' poetry. Silver's assistant director was his wife Dorothy. In 1976 he became head of the Theatre Arts program at Cleveland State University where he remained until his retirement in 1996.

Silver felt that his being from the US "heartland" gave NTC a broader geographical base. During Silver's presidency, Ellen Stewart (1981) and Peter Zeisler (1982) were named Person of the Year. In 1981, the NTC had one of its meetings at Ellen Stewart's La MaMa E.T.C. to hear her talk. Stewart's story is indeed an extraordinary one. Born in Louisiana and raised in Chicago, Stewart, whose nickname was MaMa, came to New York to be a fashion

designer. She worked for some years as a clerk at Saks Fifth Avenue, but when her life seemed to be going nowhere she sought out a place where she could open a coffee shop and perhaps do an original play or two. Thus was born in 1961 Stewart's Café La MaMa. As plays were soon given, it acquired the complete name, La MaMa E.T.C. (Experimental Theatre Club). By the time she was NTC Person of the Year, Stewart had introduced such important theatre artists as Robert DeNiro, Al Pacino, Billy Crystal, Sam Shepard, and Lanford Wilson. In 1993, Stewart was inducted into the Broadway Hall of Fame, the first Off-Broadway producer to receive such an honor.

Peter Zeisler, the 1982 Person of the Year, was the co-founder of the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis. For many years, Zeisler had been a successful stage manager for some of Broadway's most significant shows. But he was weary of commercial theatre, and, during a discussion with the director Tyrone Guthrie, they decided to attempt to establish a theatre where great works could be done in repertory. Thus was born in 1963, the Guthrie Theatre of Minneapolis, one of the great success stories of modern theatrical art. Zeisler was also to serve for 23 years as executive director of Theatre Communications Group. Zeisler, who, like Reuben Silver, was from the "heartland," gave an eloquent call to action to theatre people across the country. The National Theatre Conference also held one of its 1982 sessions at Playwrights Horizons Theatre.

One of the issues of Silver's tenure, and one that continues to the present day, is that some whom we invite to be members are glad to accept the honor but make little contribution to NTC and often fail to attend meetings. After his tenure as president and his retirement from Cleveland State University, Silver continued to work professionally with his wife on various productions, and they have given Jewish dramatic readings throughout the United States, Israel, Europe, and Russia.

Martha Coigney was elected to follow Silver (1983-85). Coigney is best known for her work with the International Theatre Institute. When elected to the presidency of NTC, Coigney had been director of the US Center of the International Theatre Institute since 1966 and had been accorded in 1980 the honor of *Officier des Arts et Lettres* by the French government. Prior to her tenure with ITI, Coigney had worked at the Actors Studio and then for Roger Stevens, founding chair of the National Endowment for the Arts and founding head of the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts. The 1983 conference began with a visit to Joseph Papp and his Public Theater. The afternoon was spent at The Players club with a panel on Advocacy featuring Edgar Rosenblum of the Long Wharf Theatre, Henry Lowenstein of the Bonfils Theatre and Denver Center for Performing Arts, and Anne Murphy, executive director of the American Arts Alliance. Saturday morning featured a panel of important theatrical designers: John Lee Beatty, Pat Zipprodt, Beverly Emmons, David Jenkins, and Jules Fisher.

Sunday afternoon was given over to the formal lunch and a presentation by the Person of the Year: Adrian Hall, director of the Trinity Square Repertory Theatre of Providence and the Dallas Theatre Center. Hall, who holds an honorary doctorate from the University of Delaware, founded the Trinity Repertory Company of Rhode Island. In addition to his theatre work, Hall also writes and produces for PBS Television. When he was NTC Person of the Year, he had just followed Paul Baker as director of the Dallas Theatre Center, where he created a new professional company. His work was so successful that in 1985 funds were obtained for a new theatre building designed by the famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

The 1983 conference set the pattern for what is now expected of NTC meetings. With the dispensing of the long session in which NTC members reported on their activities during the year, more time was avail-

able for visitations in and around New York City and for meeting with significant practitioners of theatre in the city. Consequently, in 1984, the conference began with a Friday visit to the Actors Studio. Friday afternoon and Saturday morning were given over to panels on modern actor training and new visions for training future actors. Sunday was devoted to a presentation by and discussions with Jon Jory, the 1984 Person of the Year. Jory was the artistic director of Actors Theatre of Louisville and the creator of the famous Humana Festival of New American Plays. Jory, who had founded Connecticut's Long Wharf Theatre before becoming, in 1969, the artistic director of the Actors Theatre of Louisville, founded the Humana Festival of New Plays in 1979, for which he received a Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre. He has since retired from the Actors Theatre and become professor of Acting and Directing at the School of Drama, University of Washington.

The 1985 conference varied slightly in structure. Ming Cho Lee, the famous scenic designer, was Person of the Year, but because he always taught at Yale on Saturday, his talk and discussion with NTC members was held on Friday. Lee was born in Shanghai to parents who were both Yale graduates. In 1949, the family moved to the United States, where Lee attended Occidental College in Los Angeles. After college he secured a job as an assistant to Jo Mielziner. Lee's first Broadway design was for the 1962 production of *The Moon Besieged*. He went on to design over 20 Broadway shows, including *The Glass Menagerie*. In 1983, he won a Tony Award for his scenic design for *K2*. He had also done over 30 shows for Joseph Papp at The Public Theater, as well as operas and ballets. Lee is currently a member of the faculty of Yale University's School of Drama. He is also a member of the American Theatre Hall of Fame, and a holder of the National Medals of Arts.

Saturday and Sunday of the 1985 meeting were given over to what Coigney called "a Nordic inva-

sion." There were in all 60 members of the Nordic Theatre Council who presented and discussed issues with NTC. The Council had members from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, and, although they had previously met with all manner of New York City cultural leaders, the group reported to Coigney that meeting with NTC was a "wonderful national American encounter for them."

After serving three years as president, Coigney continued her distinguished career as director of the American Center of the International Theatre Institute. In addition, she served as president of the worldwide ITI from 1987 to 1995. At the worldwide congress of ITI in 1995, she was awarded the Picasso Medal by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for service and commitment to international culture and understanding. In 1998, she shared with ITI a Tony Award for service to the American theatre and to world understanding. The following year she was accorded the honor of *Officier de l'Ordere National de Merite* by the French Government. In January of 2003, Coigney retired as director of the US Center of ITI, but continues to lecture and give after dinner speeches, and is currently at work on a book about her 50 years in the theatre. Although Coigney felt that her presidency of NTC was marked by a feeling of unease and concern about the position of theatre in American life, she emphasized the need for theatre in all human communities by quoting Harold Clurman as saying "God damn it, theatre is a human right."

Douglas Cook was elected president of NTC for the years 1986-87. Previous to his election, Cook had been president of the American Theatre Association and the University Resident Theatre Association. Cook holds a BFA from the University of Arizona and an MA from Stanford. He had been the chairman of the Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of California-Riverside, and was then head of the Department of Theatre and Film at Pennsylvania State

University. Since 1966, he had been on the staff of the Utah Shakespeare Festival, where he served as the producing artistic director. In 1977, he had provided the design of the famous Adams Shakespeare Theatre at the Festival.

In 1986, Martha Coigney, who was then the immediate past president of NTC, was named Person of the Year. Among other things, Coigney discussed with fellow NTC members the events surrounding the International Theatre Institute's 1986 Festival of Nations held in Baltimore, Maryland. In 1987, the Person of the Year was Greg Mosher, director of Lincoln Center Theatre and recipient of two Tony Awards. Mosher holds a directing degree from Juilliard. After graduation he moved to Chicago where he soon became director of Chicago's Goodman Theatre. He then moved to New York's Lincoln Center where he created a robust theatre featuring new playwrights and new works by such established playwrights as Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller. Among the new works that he introduced was John Guare's *Six Degrees of Separation* and David Mamet's *Speed the Plow*. In addition to his theatre work, Mosher has also done film and television productions. He is currently adjunct professor at Columbia University School of the Arts. As usual, NTC members listened to a talk by Mosher, then lunched with him and spent the afternoon in discussion with him.

In 1987, the National Theatre Conference Board raised annual dues to \$40. In the same year, NTC established an important new award: the annual Paul Green Foundation Award of \$1,000 designed to recognize promising new talent in the theatre. The Paul Green Foundation recipient was to be selected by the Person of the Year. Mosher selected Clark Gregg, who had recently founded, along with David Mamet, The Atlantic Theatre Company. Clark went on to play major recurring roles on television series such as *The West Wing* and *The New Adventures of Old*

Christine. He wrote the screenplay for the 2000 film, *What Lies Beneath*.

After his presidency, Doug Cook continued his work as producing artistic director of the Utah Shakespeare Festival, of which he is now the director emeritus. He also worked at other theatres, including the Tokyo Opera Company, the Eugene O'Neill Memorial Theatre, and the National Theatre of Chile. In 1991, he co-founded and served as the first president of the Shakespeare Association of America. He received the Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Arizona, and has since retired as the head of the Department of Theatre and Film at Penn State University.

To close out the decade, Milly Barranger was elected to serve a three-year term from 1988 to 1990. At the time of her election, Barranger was on the faculty of the Department of Dramatic Arts at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where, since 1982, she had been the department head and the producing director of the Carolina PlayMakers Repertory Company. Barranger holds a BA in English from the University of Montevallo, and an MA in English from Tulane University. She took her PhD in theatre from Tulane, where she had also served as head of the Tulane Theatre Department before moving to North Carolina. In addition, she served as president of the American Theatre Association. By the time of her NTC presidency, Barranger had published four books, the most notable of which was her 1984 theatre history work, *Theatres Past and Present*.

As might be expected of her, in her first term as president, Barranger selected the *avant-garde* director and playwright Robert Wilson as Person of the Year. A native of Texas and a graduate of the University of Texas, Wilson took a BFA in architecture from Pratt Institute. In 1968, he formed an experimental theatre company, The Byrd Hoffman School of Byrds. In 1970, he created, with Philip Glass, his world-renowned production, *Einstein on the Beach*.

In 1984, his highly experimental work, *the CIVILWarS*, made its premiere. The play was selected by the Pulitzer Prize committee for the award in drama, but the Supervisory Committee turned down the recommendation and consequently no award in drama was given for 1984. As had been anticipated, Wilson and NTC members spent most of Saturday in earnest and provocative discussion.

Wilson selected Jennifer Rohn to receive the Paul Green Foundation Award. Rohn has since gone on to do important roles for Robert Wilson and a number of major Broadway shows including *The Crucible* and *The Kentucky Cycle*. She has also worked in important regional theatres such as the Guthrie Theatre, the Cleveland Playhouse, and the Philadelphia Theatre Company. She also has appeared in several films and in television series such as *Law and Order*. She is currently on the faculty of Bennington College.

In 1989, the Person of the Year was Colleen Dewhurst, the distinguished actress who was the holder of two Emmy and two Tony Awards. Born in Montreal but raised in Milwaukee, Dewhurst was a graduate of Milwaukee-Downer College. After graduating, Dewhurst migrated to New York City where she studied at the American Academy of Dramatic Art. After working for some time in New York, she won the 1961 Tony Award as Best Supporting Actress in *All the Way Home*, and in 1974, she won the Tony Award for Best Actress in Eugene O'Neill's *Moon for the Misbegotten*. She went on to do many stage, film, and television roles, and to win four Emmy Awards, as well as many other awards and recognitions. She was in 1989, and until her early death in 1991, the presi-

dent of Actors' Equity Association. She proved to be a delightful and entertaining person with whom to spend the day.

Dewhurst named Tracy Copeland and Garrett Dilhurst to share the Paul Green Foundation Award. Copeland received both her BA and MA from the University of Michigan and an MFA from New York University. Since receiving her Paul Green Award, Copeland has appeared in the 1996 Broadway production of August Wilson's *Seven Guitars*. She has also appeared with Denzel Washington in a production of *Richard III*. Copeland has worked at several important regional theatres, including the Alliance Theatre of Atlanta. She is currently on the faculty at the University of Tennessee.

Another significant award was initiated in 1989: The Barrie and Bernice Stavis Award for a promising professional playwright. Stavis, a distinguished member of NTC who died in 2007 at the age of 100, was the author of several books and an established playwright whose most famous work is *The Lamp at Midnight*, a study of Galileo's tribulations. He donated an initial fund of \$5,000 to set up the Award. The process for the annual Barrie and Bernice Stavis Award is for the NTC president to appoint a committee to make recommendations. The NTC president then selects the Stavis winner from among those recommended by the committee. The first Stavis Award went to Ezra Goldstein, whose plays include *Swimming with Sturgeon*, produced in 2005 at Off-Broadway's Abingdon Theatre. The announcement of the addition of the Stavis Award prompted NTC to raise dues in 1988 to \$75, part of which would go to support awards.

THE 1990s: GOING STRONG

Milly Barranger brought the National Theatre Conference into the final decade of the 20th century as an organization with a growing feeling of worth and importance. As she observes, "...the vitality of the members and the addition of new members...make the annual meetings at The Players very special occasions." Officially limited to 120 of the outstanding theatre leaders in the country, the National Theatre Conference, during Barranger's presidency, "...pondered, dissected and debated issues that defined the relationship between the educational and the professional within the theatre community." The Conference, during the 1988, 1989, and 1990 meetings, wrestled with concerns about non-traditional casting with Joanna Merlin, Sharon Jensen, and Able Lopez. Dramaturg Anne Cattaneo and the BAM New Wave producer Liz Thompson discussed multiculturalism and new work. Censorship and the arts was discussed with arts advocates Ruth Mayleas, James Leverett, and Judith Malina. The New York Performing Arts Library director Robert Marx presented issues concerning archival treasures. Theatre managers Berenice Weiler and Barry Grove discussed economic issues, and producers Robert Whitehead and Lewis Allen took up the problems of transferring productions from university stages to Broadway. During Barranger's tenure there were also site visits to the Vineyard Theatre on East 15th Street, and to Applause Books on West 71st Street, where then-publisher Glenn Young hosted a cocktail party for NTC members.

The Person of the Year for 1990 was the accom-

plished playwright Wendy Wasserstein. Wasserstein was born and raised in Brooklyn. She received her BA at Mount Holyoke and her MA in creative writing from City College of New York. Her MFA in playwriting was taken at Yale. Her thesis play, *Uncommon Women and Others*, was produced Off-Broadway a year later, 1977, starring Glenn Close and Swoosie Kurtz. Wasserstein's career was launched, and she went on to write ten plays and two films in her short life. In 1983 she wrote *Isn't It Romantic* and in 1989, *The Heidi Chronicles* for which she won both the Tony Award for Best Play and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. At the time she addressed the National Theatre Conference, she had received honorary doctorates from Mount Holyoke and from Bates College, and she was professor at Large at Cornell University.

Wasserstein, in addition to giving a stimulating talk, named Peter Parnell recipient of the Paul Green Foundation Award. Parnell has since become a well-known stage and television writer. He wrote several episodes of the TV series *The West Wing*, for which he was also a staff producer. Among his many plays are *Flaubert's Latest*, *An Imaginary Life*, and *QED*, which starred Alan Alda on Broadway. His play *Trumpy* was produced by New York City's Atlantic Stage Company in 2007.

Anthony Clarvoe, who is now a successful playwright and whose work includes *The Brothers Karamazov* based on the Dostoevsky novel, was named the Stavis Award winner. Since receiving the Stavis Award, Clarvoe has gone on to write seven plays, including *Let's Play Two* and *Ambition Facing West*, which have been produced throughout the

United States. Clarvoe is the recipient of a number of significant grants, including one from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Among the organizational issues met in the Barranger presidency were the problems of increasing the membership. In 1988, total membership had fallen to 88, but by the time Milly Barranger left the presidency membership had increased significantly. Dues were also raised to \$75 in 1988. The increase was used to fund the various awards. And in 1989 a new pre-registration procedure was established.

Always an energetic leader in her field, after her presidency, Milly Barranger continued to head the Department of Theatre at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, until her retirement in 2003. Her writing is prodigious, with countless articles and a number of significant books, the most important of which, perhaps, is her excellent study of a great female director, *Margaret Webster: A Life in the Theatre*. In Barranger's honor, Alice Welsh contributed \$333,000 towards establishing the Milly S. Barranger Distinguished Professor Chair at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Welsh's contribution was matched by \$167,000 from Chapel Hill's Distinguished Professors Endowment Trust Fund to create a \$500,000 Professorship.

Another significant woman leader in American theatre, Berenice Weiler, followed Barranger as NTC president for a three-year tenure from 1991-1993. Weiler had acted as general manager of a number of important Broadway productions, including *Meet Me in St. Louis*, *Star Dust*, *Wind in the Willows*, and *Nine*, before assuming the presidency. Weiler's presidency began with a serious discussion of whether the NTC publication *Broadside* was too costly to continue. During the discussion, Vera Roberts stressed that the annual meetings, not its publications, were the most important activity of NTC. According to Roberts, these meetings featured National Theatre Conference's true function as a "think tank" about the theatre.

In 1991, Norris Houghton was Person of the Year. Houghton was one of the most important names in the theatre at the time. He was co-founder and managing director of the Phoenix Theatre of New York, and his Phoenix Theatre production of *Once Upon a Mattress* won a Tony Award. He had worked with many of America's and Europe's most famous performers and directors, and he had written a much used book about Russian Theatre, *Moscow Rehearsals*, which had brought to the United States a complete picture of the work of Meyerhold and Stanislavsky. When he was named Person of the Year, Houghton had just completed his important book, *Entrances and Exits: A Life in the Theatre*.

Houghton selected Amie Brockway for the Paul Green Foundation Award. Brockway, the producing artistic director of the Open Eye Theatre in the Catskills and in New York City, has produced many shows in her continuing professional life. She is a playwright, as well, and has served as editor of *TYA Today* and as co-president of the League of Professional Theatre Women.

Erin Cressida Wilson was the winner of the Stavis Award. Wilson is now a professor of English at Brown University. Previously she was on the faculty at Duke University. She has written over 15 plays and a number of film scripts as well. Her work, *The Erotica Project*, was produced at the Joseph Papp Theatre. She has also had plays produced at the Mark Taper Forum, the Magic Theatre, and the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh. Among her screenplays are *The Burgermeister's Daughter*, and *Fur*, starring Nicole Kidman and Robert Downey, Jr.

Person of the Year for 1992 was Lynne Meadow. Meadow, artistic director of the Manhattan Theatre Club, had moved many of her productions to Broadway, including *Crimes of the Heart*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Lips Together, Teeth Apart*, and *The Piano Lesson*, at the time she was named Person of the Year. And she has since moved many more since

such as *Love! Valour! Compassion!* and *Doubt*. Her productions have won 45 Obie Awards, 15 Tony Awards, and four Pulitzer Prizes. She has taught at both NYU and Yale. As might be expected, Meadow and NTC members spent a fascinating day.

Mark Brokaw was named by Lynne Meadow for the Paul Green Foundation Award. Brokaw has grown since 1992 into a very important director in New York City. He is resident director at Second Stage Theatre, and he has directed at Playwrights Horizons, the Manhattan Theatre Club, and the Roundabout Theatre. In 1997, he won an Obie Award for his production of Paula Vogel's Pulitzer Prize-winning work, *How I Learned to Drive*. He has also directed at important regional theatres across the US, such as the Guthrie, Yale Rep, Seattle Rep, and Actors Theatre of Louisville. He directed a major film, *Spinning Into Butter*. Mark Brokaw is also an adjunct faculty member and visiting director at Fordham University.

In 1992, the Bernice and Barry Stavis Award went to Octavio Solis. Solis was born in El Paso, Texas, the son of Mexican immigrants who were short-order cooks. Through hard work he managed to complete college and to earn an MFA from Trinity University. Solis had already completed three plays by the time he received the Stavis Award. He has since written many more plays and, while most of his plays are produced on the West Coast where he resides, Solis is without doubt a writer on the national scene. He is currently an artistic associate of the South Coast Repertory. He has been awarded a playwriting grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and two playwriting grants from the Kennedy Center. Among his recent works is a feature-length film, *Prospect*.

In 1993, George C. Wolfe was named Person of the Year. Wolfe, an African-American playwright and director, has a BA in theatre from Claremont College and an MFA in dramatic writing and musical theatre from NYU. At the time he was named the Person of the Year, Wolfe had received an Obie Award for Best

Director for his 1989 production *Spunk*, and 11 Tony nominations for his Broadway production *Jelly's Last Jam*, about Jelly Roll Morton. In 1993, Wolfe received a second Tony Award for his direction of Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*. After his meeting and discussion with members of NTC, Wolfe would continue as one of the more important figures in contemporary American theatre. In 1996, he would be awarded the Tony for his direction of his musical work, *Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk*. He also was the director of Susan-Lori Parks' Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *Top Dog/Underdog*.

Wolfe selected Suzan-Lori Parks, an African-American playwright and screenwriter, for the Paul Green Foundation Award. When selected, Parks had already written five plays, including *Death of the Last Blackman in the Entire World*, often considered her masterpiece. She had also won a 1990 Obie Award for Best New American Play for her work *Imperceptible Immutabilities in the Third Kingdom*. Since receiving the Green Award, Suzan-Lori Parks has received another Obie Award in 1996 for her play *Venus*, and was named to the McArthur Foundation Genius Award in 2001. In 2002 she received the Pulitzer Prize for Drama for her play *Top Dog/Underdog*. She was the first African-American woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. She has also written film plays and radio plays. In 2006, she completed her most intriguing work: *365 Days/365 Plays*, in which she wrote a play a day for a whole year. Also in 2006, Suzan-Lori Parks would be named NTC Person of the Year.

The 1993 Barrie and Bernice Stavis Emerging Playwright Award went to Edwin Sanchez. At the time Sanchez received the award, he was emerging as an important Latino playwright and as one also willing to deal with issues of life as a homosexual. Among his important plays were *Dona Sol and Her Trained Dog* and *Clean*. In 1994, he wrote the sweetly comical and highly successful *Icarus*. He would develop into a

very important American playwright with plays produced in New York and throughout the United States. His most significant works include *Back Story*, *Barefoot Boy With Shoe On*, *Reviving Rita*, about the actress Rita Hayworth, and *Trafficking in Broken Hearts*. He has won several awards including the Theatre Communications Group Playwriting Award, The AT&T New Play Award, and the ASCAP New Play Award. Sanchez continues to be highly productive.

In the last year of Weiler's presidency there was a serious discussion of the cost of publishing "Broadside." In terms of membership, it was decided that the designation of "honorary" might be elected by any member upon formal retirement from his or her position. It was also decided that there may be more than one member from a single institution but that each such member must be in a different field of specialization.

Following her presidency, Weiler continued her demanding and very full schedule as a manager for New York professional theatre programs. She has also served on various boards of professional organizations, and she is currently a Special Advisor to the New York Coalition of Professional Women in the Arts and Media. Milly Barranger, in her important book on Margaret Webster, credits Weiler as being especially helpful in providing material for the book.

Alan Rust served as National Theatre Conference president from 1994 to 1996. Rust received his graduate degree from Ohio University and commenced immediately an active professional acting career including positions with Cleveland Play House and Hartford Stage Company. He has also directed at professional theatres in the United States and in Australia, Sweden, and England. In addition, he served as dean of the North Carolina School of the Arts.

In 1994, the Person of the Year was Anna Deavere Smith. Smith, who holds an MFA from the American Conservatory Theatre, is a professor of Performance Studies at New York University Tisch

School of the Arts. A playwright and performer of great reputation, Smith had already written six plays by 1994 and had won two Obie Awards for *Flies in the Mirror* and *Twilight Los Angeles*, both one-woman shows in which she, as performer, created as many as 46 different roles. In 1993, *Newsweek* said that she was "the most exciting woman in American theatre." Needless to say, Anna Deavere Smith's talk and the discussion that followed were exciting and stimulating.

Smith selected Shay Youngblood for the Paul Green Foundation Award. When selected, Youngblood had already won the 1993 Kennedy Center Lorraine Hansberry Playwriting Award for her play *Talking Bones*. A native of Georgia and a graduate of Clark Atlanta University, Youngblood took her MFA in creative writing from Brown University. By 1994, she had already written four plays including *Talking Bones* (1988) and *Shaking the Mess Outta Misery* (1989), which was made into a film in 1992. In the years since her NTC recognition, Youngblood has written three more plays and published two novels and a collection of short stories. In 2001-2002, she was visiting professor at New York University, and in 2002-2003, she was Writer in Residence at the University of Mississippi. In 2004, she received the New York Foundation for Arts Award.

In 1994, the Stavis Playwright Award went to Theresa Rebeck. Rebeck was a graduate of Notre Dame with MA, MFA, and PhD degrees from Brandeis University. At the time of her award, she had already written two plays: *Spike Heels* (1992) and *Does This Woman Have a Name* (1993). She also had written scripts for various television series, including *Brooklyn Bridge*, *Family of Man*, *Dream On*, and *LA Law*. In 1994, she completed two additional plays, *Loose Knit* and *Family of Man*. In the years following her Stavis Award, Rebeck has written eight plays, three screenplays and scripts for the television series *Law and Order: Criminal Intent*. In 2003, she was a

finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

In 1995, Terrence McNally, the distinguished playwright, was named Person of the Year. A graduate of Columbia University and a member of Phi Beta Kappa, McNally commenced his playwriting in 1964. By 1995, McNally had written eight plays, including *Frankie and Johnny in the Claire de Lune* (1987), *Lips Together, Teeth Apart* (1991), *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1993), which won the Tony for Best Book in a Musical, *Love! Valour! Compassion!* (1994), and *Master Class* (1995), winner of the Tony Award for Best Play. In 1991, a film had been made of *Frankie and Johnny*. In 1990, he wrote a television special, *Andre's Mother*, for which he received an Emmy Award. As might be expected the day spent with Terrence McNally was a very special event. And McNally has continued his prodigious output with five significant plays, including the 2007 work *Deuce*, which had a highly successful but limited run on Broadway starring Angela Lansberry and Marion Seldes.

McNally selected Tim Sheridan to receive the 1995 Green Foundation Award. Sheridan was a promising young playwright who had recently been awarded a Playwright's Fellowship to Juilliard. Another dramatic writer, Eduardo Machado, received NTC's 1995 Stavis Award for an emerging playwright. Machado was a Cuban exile who came to the United States at the age of eight. Although he spoke no English at the time, he grew up to be an American citizen and a prolific playwright. By 1995, Machado had written more than 14 full-length plays, including *Wishing You Well*, *Why to Refuse*, *Stevie Wants to Play the Blues*, and *Once Removed*. Since receiving the Stavis Award, Machado has written and had produced many more dramatic works. His *Havana is Waiting* was staged in 2001 at New York's Cherry Lane Theatre, whose artistic director is NTC member Angelina Fiordellisi. Machado was elected an NTC member in 2006.

There were not one but two Persons of the Year in 1996: actress Zoe Caldwell and her husband, director/producer Robert Whitehead. Caldwell was, by 1996, a truly famous star actress who had already won four Tony Awards for performances in *Medea*, *Slapstick Tragedy*, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brody*, and *Master Class*. Whitehead, along with Elia Kazan, was the producer-director of the Repertory Theatre of Lincoln Center and a Broadway producer-director of many of his famous wife's productions. By 1996, he had had many Tony nominations and had won three Tony Awards for *A Man for All Seasons*, *Master Class*, and *Death of a Salesman*. In 2002, Whitehead received the Tony Special Lifetime Achievement Award.

Caldwell and Whitehead selected Laura Hembree to receive the Paul Green Foundation Award. At the time of her award, Hembree's play *Car Pool* had created quite a stir. The Barrie and Bernice Stavis Playwright Award went to Dennis Covington. At the time he received the Stavis Award, Covington had just received the De la Corte Press Award for his novel *Lizard*, which he had also adapted into a play. His most powerful book, *Salvation on Sand Mountain*, a non-fiction work about a Fundamentalist church engaged in snake handling, would soon be published, and win the Rea Non-Fiction Award. A film based on the book would follow. Covington served as the head of the Creative Writing Program at the University of Alabama and co-authored a novel, *Cleaving*, with his wife, Vicki Covington.

Two additional important awards were established in 1996 by the National Theatre Conference: the Outstanding Achievement Award and the National Theatre Conference Scholarship. The Outstanding Achievement Award, to be given annually, recognizes outstanding achievement by a not-for-profit theatre. To select the recipient of the Outstanding Achievement Award, the president presents several possibilities to the Board of Trustees. After discussion between

the president and the board, the president selects an award winner. The winner of the Outstanding Achievement Award will then select a person completing work in a professional theatre-training program or an internship in a professional theatre organization. The person so selected will be the winner of the National Theatre Conference Scholarship with a value of \$1,000.

The 1996 Outstanding Achievement Award went to Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre Company. The Steppenwolf Theatre was founded in 1974 and had matured into one of the most respected professional theatres in the United States, with not only an exciting season of plays for adults each year but also an extensive education program for children and young adults. Steppenwolf named Ian Barford, who was then an intern at Steppenwolf, as the NTC Scholarship recipient. Barford has returned well his scholarship investment. He became an ensemble member of Steppenwolf where he has performed more than a score of major roles. In addition, he has performed major roles at theatres throughout the United States including Chicago's Goodman Theatre. He has appeared on a number of major television shows, such as *Without a Trace*, and has acted in three important films, most notably *Road to Perdition*.

Two important decisions were made by the Board of Trustees during Rust's presidential tenure. First, four seconding letters would not be required if the majority of Board members were willing to support nominees, and, second, the board directed the secretary to write to seven members who had not paid their dues for some time to say that they would be dropped from the rolls.

Rust especially remembers two important presentations during his presidency. The first was the intriguing talk by Jean-Claude Baker on African-American entertainers of the 1930s and 1940s. Baker, the son of the famed Josephine Baker, had much to say about performers of his youth. An author and

poet himself, Baker joined with Chris Chase to write a biography of his mother, *Josephine: The Hungry Heart*. Jean-Claude is also owner and operator of the Chez Josephine Restaurant on Theatre Row in New York, which celebrates his mother's life works.

The second was the surprising presentation of Zoe Caldwell. Caldwell and her husband, Robert Whitehead, were joint Persons of the Year. Whitehead was set to introduce his wife and be her partner in the question-and-answer session after her talk. As Rust explains, things began with a call to Rust's house the night before the scheduled talk. Rust was already in New York, and his wife answered the telephone. Caldwell asked how long her talk was supposed to be. Mrs. Rust said she didn't know, but, as she understood it, things were very busy so that it might be good to keep the talk short. On Saturday, Robert Whitehead was introduced and stood up and introduced his wife, Zoe. Zoe Caldwell rose and repeated Mrs. Rust's remarks and sat down. After a stunned silence and then some really good laughter, there followed an exciting and enjoyable question-and-answer session.

Since his presidency, Alan Rust has not been very active in NTC because he has been acting professionally during November and December for the past decade with The Cleveland Playhouse and more recently with the Hartford Stage Company. He is an adjunct professor at Ohio University and the associate director of the Drama Division of the Hartt School in West Hartford, Connecticut. In addition, for the past 17 years, Alan Rust has been the artistic director of the Ohio University Players/Monomoy Theatre in Chatham, Massachusetts.

Rust was followed in the NTC presidency by Jim Volz, who served in 1997 and 1998. When he assumed the presidency, Jim Volz was, and still is, a professor at California State University at Fullerton. Previous to that, he was head of the department of theatre at Wright State University. A PhD graduate of

the University of Colorado, from 1982 to 1991 Volz was managing director of the Alabama Shakespeare Festival where he presented over 100 professional productions. He served for many years as a critic and columnist for New York's *Back Stage* newspaper, and he is a long-time editor of the Shakespeare Theatre Association of America's *quarto*.

Volz credits Sherry Eaker and Sidney Berger as "essential to the planning of the 1997 and 1998 NTC conferences." These conferences featured, among other things, an "...exciting walking tour of New York's 42nd Street Development area with special backstage overviews of Disney's New Amsterdam Theatre and *The Lion King*." There was also a tour of the renovated and reinvigorated New Victory Theatre, which included a presentation of a special emphasis on programming and producing for young audiences.

During the 1997 conference "The Perks, Perils, Problems and Passions of Running America's Theatres" were addressed by Cincinnati Playhouse artistic director Ed Stern, Repertory Theatre of St Louis artistic director Steven Wolf, and Stephen Hollis, the English stage director, who has served, among other assignments, as artistic director of the New Arts Theatre of Dallas, Texas. There followed an intimate session with playwright Tina Howe that explored "The Lure and Danger of Writing for the Theatre." NTC members also began a two-year discussion of strategic planning issues.

The Person of the Year in 1997 was Edward Albee. Already a distinguished and famous playwright who had won a 1961 Tony Award and three Pulitzer Prizes for Drama in 1967, 1975, and 1994, Albee had recently been awarded the National Medal for the Arts. He has since won an additional Tony Award for *The Goat or Who is Sylvia* (2000) and a Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2005. He, of course, continues to be active and productive. His latest work is *Me, Myself and I*.

Edward Albee selected Kevin Cunningham to

receive the Paul Green Foundation Award. Known at the time of his award as a leader in experimental production, Cunningham is now the artistic director of the 3-Legged Dog Media and Theatre Group, where video and other technical processes are used together with live actors. He has also written and directed *The Realism of Simple Machines*, staged at La MaMa E.T.C., and *House of Bugs* presented at Ontological-Experimental Theatre. His play *Automatic Earth* was produced by The Signature Theatre in 1999.

The 1997 Stavis Award in Playwriting went to Keith Glover. Glover, an African-American playwright who had studied as a youth with Lee Strasberg, had appeared on the soap opera *As the World Turns* and had won the Rosenthal New Play Prize in 1997 for *In Walks Ed*. By the time he received his NTC Award, Glover had already written three plays and would have his musical *Thunder Knocking on the Door* staged in 1998 by Washington's Arena Stage. Since then he has been very active both as a performer and as a playwright. In 2001, The Actors Theatre of Louisville staged his *Heaven and Hell (On Earth) A Divine Comedy* in their Humana Festival of New American Plays.

It was in 1997 that Kathleen Conlin, then chair of the Stavis Award Committee, initiated the practice of having scenes from the Stavis Award play presented as a special session of the annual NTC conference. The practice has continued to the present day, and members of NTC have especially enjoyed the new plays and have presented interesting questions and comments after the performance.

In 1997 the NTC Outstanding Achievement Award went to San Diego's Old Globe Theatre. Founded by Craig Noel and first built in 1935, the Old Globe now does a season of 14 plays on three stages. The current Old Globe complex was completed in 1993 after two fires caused the theatre to undertake a ten million dollar remodeling. Important productions, such as Steven Sondheim and James Lapine's award win-

ning work, *Into the Woods*, were staged initially at The Old Globe. The Old Globe did not nominate anyone to receive the NTC Scholarship Award.

During the 1998 conference, NTC members celebrated the history of the theatre with a tour of the Museum of the City of New York's highly acclaimed exhibit: "Broadway! The Great White Way". The tour was conducted by the museum curator Marti Jacobs. Included in the tour was a special collection of New York theatre memorabilia and Broadway artifacts from the 19th century. A particular highlight of the 1998 conference was a visit with Tony Award-winning producer Stewart F. Lane, who discussed the impact of Broadway tours on the industry. In another session, Theatre Communications Group executive director Ben Cameron and TCG Board chairperson Kent Thompson presented an overview of the American Theatre. In a third session, Edgar Rosenblum, long-time managing director of the Long Wharf Theatre, previewed an ambitious "TheatreVision" project that endeavors to bring stage works to television.

The 1998 Person of the Year was Jerry Bock, the famed musical theatre composer who was the holder of two Tony Awards and a Pulitzer Prize for Drama. After graduating from the University of Wisconsin, Bock spent three summers at the Tamiment Playhouse. His Broadway debut was in the 1955 musical *Catch a Star*, with lyricist Larry Holofcener. In 1959, he joined with lyricist Sheldon Harnick to do the hit musical *Fiorello!*, which won both a Tony Award and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Among his other productions were *The Apple Tree* and the Tony Award-winning *Fiddler on the Roof*. The year before he was named NTC Person of the Year, he established the \$2,500 Jerry Bock Award for Excellence in Musical Theatre.

Jerry Bock selected Deborah Bailey Brevoort for the Paul Green Foundation Award. After completing two degrees at Kent State University, Brevoort, whose parents had sung in a local Gilbert and Sullivan the-

atre, took an MFA in Playwriting from Brown and an MFA in Musical Theatre Writing from New York University. Her early professional years took her to Alaska, where in 1980 she founded and served as the producing director of the Perseverance Theatre in Juneau. She had already begun to write such early works as *Into the Fire*, when she commenced to work with composer David Friedman on *King Island Christmas* (1988). Since receiving the Paul Green Foundation Award, Brevoort has now joined the faculty of the NYU Tisch School of the Arts. She also teaches graduate courses at Columbia University. She has won numerous awards and has been very active as a writer and librettist of such works as *Blue Moon Over Memphis*, a Noh play about Elvis Presley, *The Women of Lockerbie*; a work about the bombing of Pan Am flight 103; *The Poetry of Pizza*; and *The Blue Sky Boys*.

The Barrie and Bernice Stavis Award for an emerging playwright went in 1998 to Richard Helleesen. Helleesen, had written only three plays when selected for the Stavis Award but has since blossomed. It was in 1988 that he did a special musical adaptation of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. The work was an immediate success and is still produced widely across the country. Helleesen has served on the faculty of California State University, Fullerton, and has centered his work on the West Coast, but his more than 25 plays and adaptations have been produced in repertory theatres across the United States.

The 1998 NTC Outstanding Achievement Award went to The Roundabout Theatre of New York City. Founded in 1965 by Gene Feist and Elizabeth Owens, The Roundabout has grown into New York City's largest not-for-profit theatre organization. The Roundabout Theatre currently owns two Broadway playhouses: the American Airlines Theatre and Studio 54, and one Off-Broadway theatre: the Laura Pels Theatre. In 1988, The Roundabout Theatre's production of *Cabaret* won the Tony Award for the best

revival. Since then there have been many important Roundabout productions that have garnered awards, especially the production of *Pajama Game* (2006), which won two Tony Awards, and the 2004 production of *Assassins*, which won a total of five Tony Awards. The Roundabout Theatre named Mary Grace Landiver as the winner of the National Theatre Conference Scholarship for 1998.

Jim Volz observes that “The late 1990s were an exciting time for the National Theatre Conference as the membership advocated support for playwrights and young persons entering the field and providing the financial support to make a difference in the lives of theatre practitioners. This was also a time of great collaboration between the professional non-profit regional theatre, the Broadway commercial theatres, and the academic world, and the NTC conferences reflected the camaraderie, collaboration, and sharing of strategies, leadership styles and resources.” During Volz tenure the Board of Trustees decided in 1997 to discontinue the publication of “Broadside” because it was too costly.

Since his presidency Volz has continued a very full professional life. He is currently on the faculty of California State University, Fullerton, president of Consultants for the Arts, and a voting member of the prestigious Tony Awards Regional Theatre Awards Committee. He continues to serve as editor of *quarto*. He is the author of over 100 articles and of seven books, including *How to Run a Theatre: A Witty, Practical and Fun Guide to Arts Management* (2004) and *Regional Theatre: A Brief History and Backstage Guide to Working in American Theatre* (2006). He is married to professional actress and educator, Evelyn Carol Case, and together they have edited two books.

To close out the 20th and open the 21st century, Scott Parker led NTC as president, 1999-2000. Parker has recently retired as director of the Institute of Outdoor Drama, a position he had held since 1990.

Parker comes from a theatre background. His father was general manager of *The Lost Colony*, and Scott Parker followed in his father’s footsteps to become producer of Paul Green’s famous work, which is the oldest outdoor historical drama in the nation. Parker holds a BA in English from Guildford College, an MA from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and an MFA in directing from the University of Virginia. He is a former president of the Southeastern Theatre Conference and the North Carolina Theatre Conference and founding member of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education. Since 1990, he has served as vice president of the Paul Green Foundation, and in 1992 he received the Suzanne M. Davis Award for service to theatre in the South.

In 1999, the Person of the Year was Sir Peter Hall. At the time, Sir Peter had recently left his position with the Royal National Company to do productions at the Old Vic. From 1960-68, Hall had headed the Royal Shakespeare Company, which he had founded. Prior to his work with the Royal Shakespeare, Hall had been at the Oxford Playhouse and then at the Arts Theatre of London where he directed the first English language version of *Waiting for Godot*. Sir Peter Hall was in New York to open his production of *Amadeus*, which would go on to win five Tony Awards in 2000. Obviously, his discussion of authors and actors was fascinating for members of NTC. As Person of the Year, Hall selected Hamish Linklater to receive the Paul Green Foundation Award.

Hamish Linklater was the son of the famous voice teacher Kristen Linklater. After taking his degree from Amherst, Hamish Linklater went immediately into professional acting, his first professional role being that of Tom Sawyer in the Actors Theatre of Louisville’s production of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. In 1998, he appeared in The Acting Company’s productions of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Love’s Fire*, which were presented both in New York and London. He also did work on the West

Coast in productions such as *Measure for Measure* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*, both directed by Sir Peter Hall. In 1999, he was doing Laertes in *Hamlet* at the New York Shakespeare Festival when he received the NTC Award. In 2000, he would go into cinema in such films as *Groove* and *Fantastic Four*. He performed as a regular character in the TV series *Gideon's Crossing*.

The 1999 Stavis Playwright Award was presented to Nilo Cruz. Cruz was a Latin-American playwright who had come to the US from Cuba at an early age and became an American citizen. He studied theatre at Miami-Dade Community College and then moved to New York City, where he studied with fellow Cuban playwright Maria Irene Fornes. It was Fornes who recommended him to Paula Vogel who was then teaching at Brown University. In 1994 Cruz completed an MFA at Brown. Prior to winning the Stavis Award, Cruz had already written five plays, his most recent being *A Bicycle Country* (1999). Cruz fulfilled his Stavis promise by becoming playwright-in-residence at the New Theatre in Coral Gables, Florida, where he wrote four more important plays, including *Anna in the Tropics* for which he won the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. He was the first Latino-American to win the Pulitzer Prize.

The 1999 Outstanding Achievement Award for a not-for-profit theatre went to the South Coast Repertory Theatre of Costa Mesa, California. Founded in 1964 by David Emmes and Martin Benson, who continue as its directors today, the South Coast Repertory Theatre has an enchanting history. It began in an old hardware store, converted into a 75-seat theatre, with a production of *Waiting for Godot*. The directors wanted especially to emphasize the development of new plays. By 1967, they were successful enough to move to an old Variety store converted into a 217-seat theatre. By 1978, they had earned enough income and gathered enough gifts to occupy a real theatre with 500 seats and a 79-seat second theatre. By 1988, they had won a Tony Award for Regional Theatres. Forty percent of the plays done at West Coast Repertory Theatre are new works and include such important plays as Craig Lucas' *Prelude to a Kiss* and Margaret Edson's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Wit*. The West Coast Repertory currently occupies the beautiful Folino Theatre containing three performance spaces. The Folino Theatre was financed in great part by a ten million dollar gift from the Folino family. The West Coast Repertory Theatre named Terrence Winston s the recipient of the 1999 NTC Scholarship.

ADAPTING TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF A NEW CENTURY

Scott Parker presided over the National Theatre Conference's entry into the 21st century. In the year 2000, the NTC enjoyed visiting with William Ivey Long, who was named Person of the Year. Long is perhaps America's most distinguished costume designer. He comes from a theatre family. His father was founder of the theatre department at Winthrop University, Rock Hill, South Carolina. Long took a degree in history at the College of William and Mary, and then entered the PhD program in art history at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. One of his professors there suggested he transfer to Yale to study costume design. At Yale, Long did his major work under Ming Cho Lee, who was also an NTC Person of the Year (1985). Long's roommate was the actress Sigourney Weaver. His fellow students included Wendy Wasserstein, Meryl Streep, and Christopher Durang. William Ivey Long completed his MFA in 1975 and moved to New York City. His first Broadway show was Gogol's *The Inspector General*. Since then he has designed costumes for over 50 Broadway productions, including *Lend Me A Tenor*, *Six Degrees of Separation*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Chicago*, *Annie Get Your Gun*, and *Cabaret*. He has also created costumes for several Off-Broadway productions, five films, including *The Producers*, as well as operas and ballets. At the time he was Person of the Year for NTC, Long was already the holder of Tony Awards for *Nine*, *Crazy for You*, and *The Producers*. He would go on to receive two additional Tony Awards for *Hair Spray* and *Gray Gardens*. He later designed costumes for Mel Brooks' musical *Young Frankenstein*.

William Ivey Long's choice for the 2000 Paul

Green Foundation Award was the actress and dancer, Kate Levering. Driven to be a professional actress and dancer, Kate Levering, who was an outstanding student, left high school in Sacramento, California in 1997 and headed for New York City. She was almost immediately cast in *The Life* (1997). In 1999, she worked in a revival of *Annie Get Your Gun*. In the year she won the Green Award she was performing in a revival of *The Music Man*. In 2001, she played Peggy Sawyer in a revival of *42nd Street*, for which she won the Fred Astair Award for Best Female Dancer for the tap routines she performed. She has since done considerable acting in major television series such as *Home Improvement*, *Law and Order: SVU*, *Close to Home*, *Cold Case*, and *CSI Miami*.

Thomas Gibbons was the emerging professional playwright chosen to receive the year 2000 Barrie and Bernice Stavis Playwright Award. A 1976 graduate of Villanova University, Gibbons has set his base in Philadelphia, though his works have been produced Off-Broadway and throughout the United States. In 1979, his play *Exhibition* was produced by The Philadelphia Company. In 1985, he received a production of his play *Homer* by the Source Theatre in Washington, DC. In 1993, he became Playwright in Residence at the InterAct Theatre Company of Philadelphia, which has produced six of his plays, including *Bee-Luther-Hatchee*, *6221*, *Black Russian*, *Permanent Collection* and *Axis Sally*, which received the Roger L. Stevens Award. Thomas Gibbons has also been awarded a Penn Fellowship in the Arts.

The Children's Theatre Company of Minneapolis was the winner of the NTC Outstanding Achievement Award for a not-for-profit theatre. The Children's

Theatre Company of Minneapolis, established in 1965, is now the largest professional children's theatre company in North America and among the three largest in the world. Since receiving the NTC Outstanding Achievement Award, The Children's Theatre Company won the 2003 Tony Award for an Outstanding Regional Theatre. The Children's Theatre Company selected Andy Madsen for the NTC Scholarship Award.

During Parker's presidency, the Board decided that any member would be dropped after he or she did not respond to a fourth appeal for dues payment. There was also long and worried discussion about the fact that financing for the Stavis Award was in trouble. When Scott Parker completed his presidency, he made an extremely important move that certainly aided this writer in providing a reasonable history of NTC since 1967. Parker had been a member of NTC since 1987 and had served on the Board of Trustees since 1989. He had retained all his records of the years from 1989 to 2000. These records included all minutes, agendas, financial reports, membership lists, and other materials. He bundled the records up and sent them to the Archives Librarian at the University of Indiana Lilly Library in Bloomington, Indiana. The Archives at the Indiana Lilly Library are complete from the NTC inception until 1967, but the Scott Parker papers are the only ones that have been deposited since 1967. Parker's contribution to American theatre continues, even after his retirement as director of the Outdoor Drama Institute. In 2000, he was elected to membership in the College of Fellows of The American Theatre.

Sidney Berger would, as president for 2001-02, set a strong pace for NTC in the new century. Berger is director of the School of Theatre and Dance at the University of Houston, founder and producing director of The Houston Shakespeare Festival and co-founder and producer of the Houston Children's Theatre Festival. He took his PhD from the University

of Kansas, and taught there 1958-63. He then became director of Graduate Studies in Theatre at Michigan State University. In 1969 he took his position at the University of Houston, where he holds the title of Moor's professor and has received the university's highest honor: The Ester Farel Award. He has directed over 90 productions at the University of Houston, as well as 27 productions for The Houston Shakespeare Festival, including *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*. He has also directed at Houston's famed Alley Theatre. He has done a number of adaptations of works for stage and for film, and his publications include *The Playwright Versus the Director* (Greenwood Press, 1994). He is also on the board of London's Globe Theatre.

In 2001, the Person of the Year was the distinguished actress Marian Seldes. Born in New York City, Seldes studied acting at the Neighborhood Playhouse. She made her Broadway debut in 1948 in *Medea*. She then was featured in a number of shows, winning the 1967 Tony Award for *A Delicate Balance*. She has also done many major film and television roles. From 1967 to 1991 she taught at the Juilliard School of Drama and since 2002 has taught at Fordham University. She was featured in two Albee plays: *Three Tall Women* and *The Play About the Baby*. Her most recent Broadway appearance is in the limited run of Terrance McNally's *Deuce* with famous costar Angela Lansbury. NTC members spent an enjoyable luncheon and discussion with Ms. Seldes.

As Person of the Year Marian Seldes selected Kathleen Early for the Paul Green Foundation Award. Early played the young girl in *The Play About the Baby*. She also played Juliet in a touring production of *Romeo and Juliet* and has toured with Theatre Works/USA. She is currently in the cast of a national touring production of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf?* starring Bill Irwin and Kathleen Turner.

The 2001 Barrie and Bernice Stavis Award was presented to Naomi Iizuka. By the time she had

received the Stavis Award, Iizuka had already written eleven plays, but she would soon become one of the more important young playwrights in America. Born in Tokyo in 1965, Iizuka's father is Japanese and her mother Latina. Naomi grew up in Japan, Holland and Washington, DC. She took a degree in classics at Yale and was in the Yale Law School when she left for an MFA in Playwriting at University of California, San Diego. She has taught playwriting at the University of Texas and the University of Iowa and is currently a professor of dramatic arts and director of the Playwriting Program at the UC Santa Barbara. Her plays have been produced throughout the United States including Actors Theatre of Louisville, the Berkeley Rep, and the Joseph Papp Public Theater. Her latest play is *Anonymous*, 2006.

In 2001, the National Theatre Conference's Outstanding Achievement Award went to The Goodman Theatre of Chicago. The Goodman Theatre, established in 1925 by the parents of the playwright Kenneth Sawyer Goodman, who died early, is the oldest non-profit theatre still active in Chicago. It was funded by grants from the Goodmans to the Art Institute of Chicago to establish a professional theatre and a School of Drama. In 2000, it moved to its current location in a handsome building with two fully equipped theatres. It is currently headed by Robert Falls, and in 2007, the Goodman Theatre justified the NTC Award by, among other things, staging all seven of the plays in August Wilson's cycle.

The Goodman Theatre selected Jay Paul Skelton as the recipient of the NTC Scholarship. At the time he received his scholarship, Skelton had already made a name for himself. A native of Massachusetts and the holder of an MFA in Theatre from DePaul University, Skelton was a directing associate with the Goodman Theatre. He also was a visiting professor at the University of Notre Dame. After receiving his award, Skelton joined the directing staff at Goodman Theatre and has directed elsewhere as well. In 2002, he

directed *Clearing Hedges* for the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland.

At the 2001 conference, sessions were held to discuss the phenomenon of current Shakespeare theatres and festivals, numbering roughly 150 in the United States. Questions were raised as to whether an adequately skilled pool of talent was available for all these projects. An agreement was reached that there was an urgent need to train actors and directors in a theatre that was primarily text-based. It was further agreed that there were currently an insufficient number of actors who were trained in verse.

Noted playwright Arthur Kopit, author of the musical *Nine* and other important works, talked about the loss of large-scale plays in New York. He felt that the severe limitations imposed on playwrights in terms of cast size, scenic changes, number of costumes, etc., also limited the imagination of the playwright. He recognized regional non-profit theatres as the only institutions capable of taking such risks. He argued that there is a need to produce "unsafe" work to revitalize the theatre.

In 2002, a blizzard struck the east coast on the weekend scheduled for the NTC meeting and airports were closed. As a consequence, Sidney Berger missed the first day of the meeting, but his colleagues were able to be in touch with him and conducted the first day meetings without him. Elizabeth Ireland McCann, the noted Broadway producer, was the first speaker. McCann had been active as a Broadway producer since the early 1970s, and was the holder of five Tony Awards for producing the best play: *The Elephant Man*, *Amadeus*, *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*, *Copenhagen*, and *The Goat or Who is Sylvia*. She began her talk by saying "I don't know why you theatre people have meetings in the morning." She went on to describe herself as "a quality pusher for legitimate theatre." She reflected on the sad state of contemporary theatre, given the fact that the younger generation has become addicted to the

screen. She stated that this trend could ultimately dehumanize and desensitize us, particularly since the cost of Broadway productions has skyrocketed. She argued that there is a need to expose ourselves to complex ideas in the theatre in order to expand our imaginations. She ended her talk by deploring the lack of first-rate writing, noting that, with the exception of Edward Albee and Tony Kushner, little of dramatic magnitude was present in the Broadway theatre.

Sidney Berger arrived in time for the second day of the conference to hear major lighting designers, Kevin Rigdon and Jules Fisher, lead a session that discussed the major innovations that have affected stage lighting in recent years. Light, they argued, has grown more valuable and more flexible in telling a story than in past years. Moreover, with the dramatic growth in technology, more time is becoming necessary in order to blend lighting with the other intricacies of production.

Estelle Parsons was 2002 Person of the Year. Parsons is a distinguished stage, film, and television actress. Born in Massachusetts, she graduated from Connecticut College where she studied law. For a while she sang with a band, but her law background finally landed her a job as a political reporter for television's *The Today Show*. Once based in New York, she began her theatrical career with several Broadway shows and finally won a Tony Award for Best Supporting Actress for her work in *Bonnie and Clyde*. Her television work includes a long-running role on the situation comedy, *Roseanne*. She has also appeared in TV series such as *Law and Order: SVU*.

Parsons conducted an affecting and vibrant session in which she presented her ambitious plans for future productions in which she would function as producer, director, or performer. She was very passionate about her recent work with the actor Al Pacino. She also indicated that she was contemplating a production of Oscar Wilde's *Salome*. She would realize her Broadway production of *Salome* starring

Al Pacino in 2003. Parsons noted in her discussions with NTC that the current theatre is "pretty dead" and that we will need to awaken it with a theatre of scope and passion.

Estelle Parsons named Gioia Marchese as the recipient of the Paul Green Foundation Award. An actress and choreographer, Gioia Marchese has gone on since her award to appear in four major films, including *Love Made Easy* and *Quarter Life Crisis*, and to do choreography for a production of Sam Shephard's *Seduced*.

The NTC Outstanding Achievement Award for 2002 went to the American Repertory Theatre, Harvard University. Founded in 1980 by Robert Brustein and Robert J. Orchard the American Repertory Theatre is housed in Harvard's Loeb Drama Center. The Theatre has a resident acting company that, in addition to presenting a full season of productions, operates as a training conservatory in association with Harvard University. In 1986, the American Repertory Theatre won the Regional Theatre Tony Award. The theatre has presented the original productions of *'night, Mother* and *Big River*, as well as experimental works by writers such as Robert Wilson and David Mamet. Currently under the direction of Robert Woodruff, the American Repertory Theatre was recognized by *Time* Magazine in 2003 as one of the top five regional theatres in the country.

The American Repertory Theatre named Ryan McKittrick as winner of the NTC Scholarship. At the time of his award, Ryan McKittrick was a student of dramaturgy at Harvard and the associate dramaturg for the American Repertory Theatre. He has since become the dramaturg for the Berkeley Repertory Theatre, and is now on the faculty of Brandeis University.

Kathleen Conlin was National Theatre Conference president for 2003-2004. Conlin holds a BA in English from Youngstown State University, an MA in theatre from the University of Pittsburgh, and a PhD

in theatre from the University of Michigan. When she assumed the presidency, she was dean of the College of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Illinois. Prior to that she had been chair of the theatre department at Ohio State University, 1992-96, director of Theatre at Ohio University, 1987-92, and a faculty member at the University of Texas, 1978-87. Positions held in the professional theatre include directing at the Berkeley Shakespeare Festival, the Three Rivers Shakespeare Festival, and the Illinois Shakespeare Festival. Since 1990, she has been the associate artistic director of the Utah Shakespeare Festival. Before assuming the presidency of NTC, she had chaired the Barrie and Bernice Stavis Award Committee since 1997.

Kathleen Conlin feels that she was able to reinvigorate the intellectual, critical, and artistic scope of the NTC annual meeting in seven important ways. First, she developed a new format for introducing new members entitled “Hot Topics” in which each new member presented an issue or idea in the theatre for which they were passionate. Second, she launched the first day of the 2003 and 2004 conferences with a high-powered, wide-ranging discussion of cultural trends, demographic analyses, and thought-provoking commentary on the arts in the 21st century with Ben Cameron of the Theatre Communications Group. Third, she continued the tradition of staging the Stavis Award play. Fourth, she made a point of advising Persons of the Year to prepare remarks that included issues and topics of interest to the NTC membership. Fifth, she responded to membership requests to establish special sessions on theatre training that considered issues related to “viewpoints” and “hip-hop.” Sixth, she actively worked to include a wide-range of theatre professionals who represented diverse points of view. Those presenting talks in 2003 and 2004 were Daniel Sullivan, Moisés Kaufman, Nilo Cruz, Robyn Goodman, and Sharon Jensen. Seventh, she developed a special session celebrating our literary heritage by recognizing the most important intellectu-

al contributions to the development of new theatre in the 1960s and 1970s. In this session, Glen Young publisher of Applause Books, presented the special speaker, Barney Rosset, legendary founder and publisher of Grove Press.

Conlin also developed a mid-year letter to the membership which included a packet listing award winners, persons of the year, necrology, code of regulations, etc, in order to keep the membership alert to the organization.

In July 2004, Conlin called the Board to a special session in New York City to develop an action plan for NTC. This action plan included the following statement:

“The Task Force believes that NTC must also work to broaden the scope of our work and to include members and participants who challenge our vision and practice of the theatre and ‘shake things up.’” The main points are the following:

1. NTC should work to advance an active membership of people who represent diversity (with reference to women and persons of color).
2. NTC should also work to develop programming at the annual meeting that includes new ideas and “alternate points of view” in the theatre.
3. NTC should encourage all award committees to actively solicit suggestions for award winners whose excellence reflects the diversity of our theatre.”

Kathleen Conlin is also very pleased that in the two years of her presidency the nominations of individuals from commercial theatre was increased to balance the number of members holding academic positions.

In 2003, the Person of the Year was John Guare. Guare, a native New Yorker, began writing one acts, his first being at the age of eleven. He took his BA

from Georgetown University and an MFA from Yale. In 1968, Guare won an Obie Award for his one-act play, *Muzeeka*. His breakthrough play was *The House of Blue Leaves* (1971), which won four Tony Awards when revived at The Lincoln Center in 1986. In 1971, Guare won a Tony Award for his libretto for the musical *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. He continued to write and be produced extensively. In 1980 he wrote the script for the film *Atlantic City* directed by Louis Malle and starring Bert Lancaster and Susan Sarandon. In 1990, his work *Six Degrees of Separation* won an Obie Award in New York and an Olivier Award in London. John Guare is a Council member of the Dramatist Guild and the co-editor of *The Lincoln Center Theatre Review*. NTC members found the time with him quite enlightening.

John Guare selected Christopher Shinn for the Paul Green Foundation Award. Shinn is a native of New York who studied playwriting at Columbia and NYU. Prior to his being selected for the Green Foundation Award, he had written five plays, including two plays in 2002: *What Didn't Happen* and *Where Do We Live*. His 2003 play was *The Sleepers*. Since receiving the Green Award, Christopher Shinn has written additional works, including *On the Mountain* and *Dying City*. A collection of his plays was published in 2006 by Theatre Communications Group under the title *Where We Live and Other Plays*. Shinn now teaches playwriting at the New School for Drama.

The 2003 Stavis Award for an emerging playwright went to Carson Sarah Kreitzer. Kreitzer holds a BA from Yale and an MFA from the University of Texas at Austin. A very prolific young playwright, with more than six plays already written, scenes from her very provocative play, *The Love Song of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, were performed for members of the National Theatre Conference. The work would later be published in Smith and Krauss' *New Playwrights: The Best of 2004*. Her other plays include *Dead Wait*,

Freak Show, *The Glory of God*, and *Self Defense, or death of some salesman*.

The NTC Outstanding Achievement Award for 2003 went to the Signature Theatre Company. Founded in 1991 by James Houghton, the Signature Theatre is considered an Off-Broadway Theatre. Located at 555 West 42nd Street, the Signature Theatre building seats 160. The Company is dedicated to having a master playwright in residence for an entire season. The Signature Theatre will then produce past plays and premieres of new works by the playwright-in-residence. The playwright-in-residence in 2003 was Bill Irwin. Others have included Lanford Wilson, Paula Vogel, Arthur Miller, John Guare, and Horton Foote. The plans are to include a special theatre in the newly designed World Trade Center to house the Signature Theatre Company. Sarah K. Bartlo was selected by the Signature Theatre Company to receive the NTC Scholarship for 2003.

The 2004 Person of the Year was the Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Lanford Wilson. Wilson had received his Pulitzer Prize in 1979 for his play, *Talley's Folly*, but he had continued writing in the 20-odd years since being so honored. Among his more important works are *Book of Days*, *Rain Dance*, *Burn This*, *Hot L Baltimore*, and *Fifth of July*. He told NTC members that he was currently at work on a new play, *Breakdance*. The interaction between Lanford Wilson and members of NTC was especially lively, particularly since many of them had produced Wilson plays.

Lanford Wilson named Steven Drukman as recipient of the Paul Green Foundation Award. Steven Drukman holds the PhD, 1999, from New York University and is currently a member of NYU's drama faculty. Drukman took his BA from Oberlin College and his MA from the University of Wisconsin. When he first came to New York, Drukman established a career as an actor. Then he went into journalism, where for some years he wrote articles for the Arts

and Leisure section of the *New York Times*. As the century turned, he began writing plays that attracted producers' attention such as *Truth and Beauty* and *Going Native*, which was a nominee for the 2002 Pulitzer Prize. The year he received the Green Award, he completed another play: *Another Fine Mess*. Since 2003, he has written two more works: *Collateral Damage* and *Fox Hollow*. He has also appeared in a major film: *East Broadway*, 2006.

The Saint Louis Black Repertory Company received the NTC Outstanding Achievement Award for 2004. The company was founded in 1976 by Roy Himes, then a student at Washington University, St. Louis, as the Phoenix Theatre Group. In 1981, the St. Louis Black Repertory Company found a home in the abandoned presbytery of the Greeley Presbyterian Church. Continuing to grow, the Company moved in 1992 into its current location, the Grandel Theatre in the renovated Grand Center. Dedicated to providing "a platform for theatre, dance, and other creative expressions from the African-American perspective that heightens the social and cultural awareness of the audience," the Black Repertory Company is now the largest African-American professional theatre in the country. Its founder, Roy Himes, has been invited to direct in important theatres throughout the United States and is currently the holder of an honorary doctorate from Washington University. In addition to works by Black writers, the St. Louis Black Rep also presents works by Shakespeare and modern works such as *Waiting for Godot* from an African-American perspective, including use of "hip-hop" and "rap." The St. Louis Black Repertory Company selected Xosha Roquemore as the recipient of the NTC Scholarship.

Carole Brandt served as the National Theatre Conference president in 2005-06. When serving as president, Carole Brandt was dean of the Meadows School of the Arts at Southern Methodist University, a position from which she has now retired. She had the

distinction of being the first woman dean in the history of SMU. Prior to her position at Southern Methodist, Carole Brandt was head of the Department of Theatre at Penn State. Before going to Penn State, she had served as chairwoman of the Department of Theatre at the University of Florida and the director of the School of Drama at Illinois Wesleyan University. Carole Brandt holds a BS and MA from the University of Illinois. Her PhD is from Southern Illinois University. While she was serving as president of NTC, Carol Brandt was also president of the National Association of Schools of Theatre. She is the past president of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education and dean Emerita of the College of Fellows of the American Theatre. Carole Brandt has taught theatre for over 40 years. Upon her retirement in 2006 from SMU, the University named a garden in her honor and the Illinois High School Theatre Festival endowed a scholarship in her name.

Carole Brandt observes that "because the National Theatre Conference is a mom-and-pop operation without infrastructure in terms of office and staffing, it is not an easy organization to lead and manage. In fact, while the Board is eclectic in terms of a mix of theatre professionals and academics, members are challenged to assume more responsibility and provide more support than other national organizations. . . While the Board and membership helped in myriad and significant ways, it feels as if the health and vitality of the organization and worth of the annual meeting falls squarely on the shoulders of the president and her or his staff."

It was in recognition of the issues pointed out by Carole Brandt that the NTC membership in 2006 created the Cindy L. Havens Award for Administrative Excellence. The first Havens Award went to Cindy Havens, Carol Brandt's assistant in the dean's office at SMU, who had worked tirelessly on NTC administrative matters in 2005 and 2006. Cindy Havens holds a BA in Theatre Management and Production from the

University of North Texas. Following her graduation she worked as assistant box office manager for the Majestic Theatre of Dallas 1982-92. She then pursued a career as a paralegal until 1998 when she returned to her roots and became Assistant to Carole Brandt, dean of the Meadows School of the Arts at SMU.

Carole Brandt also pointed out that during her presidency she became increasingly concerned about NTC's fiscal viability and stability. Too many members were not attending the annual meeting nor paying their dues. Among the basic causes of this problem was the fact that while some people are honored to be invited into NTC, they do not always feel a responsibility to support it either financially or with their presence. To address this problem, President Brandt worked with the Board and with treasurer Dan Carter "to analyze the issues the organization faced and how best to address them." Finally, substantive changes were recommended in the NTC Code about financial and participatory requisites essential to maintain membership. These changes included a code requirement that any member not attending for three successive years shall be dropped, unless a formal appeal is received. Dues were set at \$125 and can be changed at any time. Failure to pay dues 30 days after dues deadline would result in the member's being dropped from NTC. In 2005, the membership was notified of the code changes.

Michael Kahn, artistic director of The Shakespeare Theatre, Washington, DC, was the 2005 Person of the Year. Michael Kahn was born in Brooklyn and graduated from the New York High School for the Arts. He has a BA from Columbia and an honorary doctorate from Kean College of New Jersey. After graduating from Columbia, Kahn began his career directing Off-Broadway. He gained national recognition when his production of Adrienne Kennedy's *Funny House of a Negro* won an Obie Award. In 1969, he was offered the position of artistic director of The American Shakespeare Theatre in

Stratford. In 1974, he assumed the Producing Directorship of the McCarter Theatre in Princeton, and in 1986, he moved to the Shakespeare Theatre in Washington, DC. He is also the director of the Drama Division of Juilliard School in New York City and has been on the faculty at New York University and Princeton. His former students include Kevin Klein and Robin Williams. There was a good interchange with Michael Kahn throughout the day. Indeed, President Brandt described his work with NTC as "spectacular."

Michael Kahn selected David Muse for the Paul Green Foundation Award. David Muse, who holds a BA and an MFA in directing from Yale, is currently the associate artistic director of the Shakespeare Theatre, Washington, DC. In addition to his duties at the Shakespeare Theatre, Muse also directs at the New York Theatre Workshop, and in Washington theatres such as the Theatre Alliance and the Arena Theatre.

Jim O'Connor's selection committee identified Julia Cho as the recipient of the Stavis Playwright Award. Cho, a daughter of Korean immigrants, wrote her first play in the eighth grade. A native of Southern California, Cho graduated from Amherst and was working on a PhD in English at UC Berkeley when she decided to move to New York City and become a full time playwright. Before receiving her award, Cho had already written *99 Histories*, *BFE*, and *The Architecture of Loss*. In 2005, she was at work on *Durango*. She has since written several more plays that have found production in New York. Most of her work deals with Asian-Americans, consequently she met the criterion established during Kathleen Conlin's presidency that more emphasis in NTC awards be placed on diversity in ethnicity and gender.

The NTC Outstanding Achievement Award for 2005 went to the Dell'Arte Company. In operation for over 30 years, the Dell'Arte Company stresses physically inspired work created by an ensemble group. Based in California, the Dell'Arte Company has per-

formed throughout the United States and in Europe, Canada, and South America. It also operates the Dell'Arte School which offers the MFA in ensemble-based physical theatre. In 2004 it presented *Shadow of Giants*, about tree-sitting in California, and in 2005 it was touring its adaptation of Moliere's *The Miser*.

The Dell'Arte Company named Jessica Keight Gleason and Tyler Olsen as recipients of the NTC Scholarship. Gleason has been a member of the Dell'Arte Company since 2002. She has taught at the Dell'Arte School and is currently the assistant to the director of the Dell'Arte School. Olsen is a more recent member of the Dell'Arte Company. He received his BA from Minnesota's Bemidji State University and is also a graduate of the Dell'Arte School.

In 2006, a variation on the new members program was added to the Friday meeting: the new member introductory requested that new members of NTC present themselves and their special approaches to the art of the theatre. A second session of the Friday meeting was a presentation of the history of the National Theatre Conference by panelists Vera Mowery Roberts, Felicia Londré, and August Staub. President Brandt also notified members that The Players club would no longer be able to accommodate a Friday meeting but that the Friars Club had generously agreed to have NTC as its guest on Fridays.

The 2006 Person of the Year was Suzan-Lori Parks. Parks was the 1993 recipient of the Paul Green Foundation Award. Since winning that award, she has become one of America's more important playwrights. A full description of her accomplishments has been provided earlier in this history (see 1993 Green Foundation Awards). Born in Kentucky, Suzan-Lori Parks went to high school in both Germany and Maryland. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Mount Holyoke College, she took a degree in both English and German. She is the holder of two Obie Awards, the MacArthur Foundation "Genius Grant," and the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for Drama for her play, *Top*

Dog/Under Dog. She is the first African-American woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. In addition to stage plays, Suzan-Lori Parks is also the author of several screenplays, including *The Great Debaters* directed by Denzel Washington and soon scheduled for release. Parks is also author of the novel *Getting Mother's Body*. The discussion with Susan-Lori Parks included, among other things, her extraordinary work *365 Days/365 Plays*. From November 2002 to November 2003, she set for herself the task of writing a new play every day for a year. Now released for production, *365 Days/365 Plays* has been performed and well received throughout the USA.

Parks named Bonnie Metzgar winner of the Green Foundation Award. Bonnie Metzgar is Parks' producer of *365 Days/365 Plays* at The Public Theater. Metzgar began working with Joseph Papp at The Public Theater in 1989. In 1994, she became Papp's stage manager and in 1996, she rose to the rank of Associate producer. Currently she is associate artistic director for Denver's Curious Theatre Company. She is also on the faculty at Brown University.

Colin McKenna received the Stavis Playwriting Award for 2005. A 1998 Fordham graduate, McKenna holds a Master's degree in playwriting from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. He was named in 2006 a Playwriting Fellow by the Dramatist Guild of America. His first major play, *The Secret Agenda of Trees*, scenes from which were performed for the members of NTC, was produced at New York's Cherry Lane Theatre, whose artistic director, Angelina Fiordellisi, is a member of NTC.

The NTC Outstanding Achievement Award went to The Public Theater of New York City. Founded by Joseph Papp in 1954, The Public Theater now occupies several performance spaces including the theatre at Lafayette Street, which was the former Astor Library, where the 1967 premiere of *Hair* was presented, and the Delacorte Theatre in the Park where

free Shakespeare in the Park is produced. In addition, The Public Theater also produces at Joe's Pub and at Joe's Pub in the Park. Over 250,000 people annually attend productions at The Public Theater. Such productions have included not only Shakespeare and other classics but also the premieres of such works as *Take Me Out*, *A Chorus Line*, and *Top Dog/Underdog*. During its more than 50 years of existence, productions at The Public Theater have won 40 Tony Awards, 135 Obie Awards, and four Pulitzer Prizes for Drama.

Andi Stover was named as the recipient of the 2006 National Theatre Conference Scholarship. Stover took her BA at Yale in 1997 and is currently in the MFA program in Dramaturgy at Brooklyn College. A playwright and dramaturge, Andi Stover has had her play *Four of a Kind* produced at WOW Café and her work *Music to Travel By* presented at Under Saint Mark's Theatre. Included in her services as a dramaturge is her work on the production of *Beauty Queen of Leenane*, presented by Persevrus Productions.

And, of course, as discussed earlier, the initial Cindy L. Havens Award for Administrative Excellence went to Cindy L. Havens.

At the Sunday business meeting in 2006, the membership discussed the financial future of NTC. A proposal was made to hold the annual meetings in less expensive cities, but the membership decided that meeting in New York City and at The Players were

important to the identity of NTC, especially since meeting in other cities had previously brought about the danger of the organization's demise. The membership then directed the board and the president to seek a different and less expensive time to meet in New York and to renegotiate the costs with The Players club. The possibility of a separate luncheon fee was also discussed. October was suggested as a meeting time, and the 2007 meeting was set for the last weekend in October.

An important announcement at the 2006 business meeting was the fact that NTC now had a Website. President Brandt profusely thanked NTC member Eric Fielding, former chair of Theatre and Media Studies at Brigham Young University, for designing the attractively presented and highly detailed Website [www.nationaltheatreconference.org].

On completing her presidency, Carole Brandt suggested that, after she had had discussions with past presidents, greater efforts should be made to publicize the annual awards and thereby publicize NTC. With a higher profile, it might not prove so difficult to convince some award recipients, such as Persons of the Year, that it is worth the effort to give a full day to the National Theatre Conference. Brandt observes, "I was honored to serve the National Theatre as its president and was gratified to feel, as I turned the virtual gavel over to Jack Wright, that some things that we value had happened through a lot of people's efforts, generosity, and talents. It was a good run!"

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS STRONG AND STRIDING TOWARDS ONE HUNDRED

Upon the end of Carole Brandt's term of office, the National Theatre Conference had completed its 75th year of official existence. And, despite undergoing several threats to its existence, NTC indeed is now a strong and close-knit organization with a bright and exciting future as a "think tank" for the leaders of American theatre. Moreover, NTC has entered the 21st century as the proud possessor of an internet Website superbly designed by Eric Fielding, NTC treasurer and a former member of the Board of Trustees.

Jack Wright was elected to follow Carole Brandt in NTC leadership for 2007-08, and it will be his responsibility to move NTC forward on its 25 year journey to a 100th birthday. Jack Wright is an excellent choice to start the journey for NTC. A PhD graduate of the University of Kansas, Wright has been on the KU faculty since 1976, where for some time he served as director of University Theatre in the KU Department of Theatre and Film. He has not only

worked in educational theatre but has acted and directed and assisted in casting for a number of professional stage, film, and television productions. He was the recent recipient of the University of Kansas Kemper Award for Teaching Excellence. Wright is also a member of the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.

As has been the case for many years now, the current members of the National Theatre Conference, limited to 120 active members, in addition to emeritus and honorary members, are among the most distinguished persons of the American theatrical community, either as educators or professional theatre practitioners or both. Although a new meeting time, late October as opposed to early December, has been set and the meeting place will be divided between the Players and the Friars Club, there is no reason to assume that the NTC will not approach 100 years with great vigor and distinction and that its contribution to the practice and understanding of the art of theatre will continue to be especially significant.

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