**Minutes of May ATCA Ex-Com Conference Call**

**May 4, 2016**

Bill Hirschman called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. EDT. The following Ex-Com members were present: Susan Cohn, Charles Giuliano, Lou Harry, Brad Hathaway, Bill Hirschman, Kerry Reid, Ed Rubin, and Martha Steketee. Barbara Bannon, ATCA secretary; Barry Gaines, ATCA administrator; Jay Handelman, ATCA Foundation president; Anne Siegel, and Robert Sokol were also present. Wendy Rosenfield was absent.

Bill announced that Lou won an award as the best theater critic in Indiana from the Society of Professional Journalists and congratulated him. Lou said that the Steinberg/ATCA and Osborn Award presentations at Humana went well and the playwrights were very pleased with their awards.

Barbara is still compiling minutes from the preliminary Ex-Com meetings in Philadelphia since she was not able to attend them. Barry and Jay took notes, and she will assemble the minutes from them and circulate them by e-mail. Then they can be posted on the website.

Bill and Chris Jones attended a preliminary meeting with Doug Wright and some other playwrights; they are investigating having some joint meetings that will enable the Dramatists Guild to interact more with theater critics and continue the dialogue that was started in the panels at the past two New York mini meetings. What this will involve is still in the process of being organized; another meeting is planned in the fall.

The winner of the Regional Tony Award was announced, but there was no mention of ATCA’s involvement. Paper Mill Playhouse was the overwhelming choice of ATCA members, and ATCA should get credit for recommending theaters for the award. There was discussion about the right way to react: should we complain to the American Theatre Wing? Brad suggested instead that we notify the winner and make sure that ATCA is included in the theater’s acknowledgment of winning the award.

Barry has just returned from attending the IATC meeting in Craiova, Romania, which was held in conjunction with the International Shakespeare Festival there. He participated in a panel on writing about Shakespeare and will submit a report on the conference.

Barry made a report on the financial status of the Philadelphia conference. The income was down slightly from what was originally anticipated because several people withdrew at the last minute and were issued partial refunds. The total income is $10,761, which amounts to a slight profit of about $295.

The videos of the conference panels and presentations are done and look very good. They should be up on the website within the next week or two. We need to pull out some segments to use for a promotional trailer. Lou also suggested that articles written about Philadelphia and the conference should be posted on the website.

Wendy has a new job that is taking up much of her time; she needs to cut back on the amount of time she spends handling social media on the website, so we should find someone who can help her. Bill and the Ex-Com commended Wendy on the great job she has done with social media on the site.

Brad discussed an initiative that will be coordinated with Foundation ATCA. We want to make a study of what has occurred in theater criticism during the past few years—all the changes and the new forms that criticism is taking. The study will take a look at the past, present, and future of criticism. What are the questions we want to ask? Brad, Ed, and Martha have expressed interest in being involved.

There was a discussion about whether Richard Christiansen should be made an emeritus member of ATCA. He is now retired and was once an active member of the organization. He also did a Perspectives in Criticism presentation. Kerry Reid made a motion, seconded by Ed Rubin, to give emeritus membership in ATCA to Christiansen. The motion passed unanimously.

Anne Siegel said that the Membership Services Committee will consider suggestions for emeritus membership in ATCA if people think there are those who deserve it. The committee needs to come up with a clear definition of an emeritus member.

Robert Sokol made a preliminary report on the upcoming conference in San Francisco. Susan Cohn, John Angel Grant, and Brad Hathaway are already members of his organizing committee. They have come up with some possible dates: February 22–25, March 15–19, May 17–21, and June 14–19. He said the May and June dates are the two he thinks will work best. He will send out a questionnaire to ATCA members to poll them about their choice. Members will have two weeks to respond. He reviewed the questions that members will be asked:

* What dates do you prefer for the conference?
* How much do you want to pay for a hotel? Is there a range in the price?
* Do you want to share a room?
* What should the conference fee be?
* Are you interested in coming earlier or staying later?
* Can you walk to some events?
* Do you have theater or play suggestions?
* Do you have any other ideas or suggestions for conference organizers?

There was some discussion about whether it would be helpful to schedule the annual conference at about the same time every year.

There was discussion about a 2017 mini meeting. Where and when should it be held? We probably have to settle on the San Francisco conference dates before this can be decided. Jay reminded everyone about the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem in 2017. He is waiting to receive more information from the organizers. They are interested in having us come.

What about regional mini meetings? Should we consider possibly having some of these in the future? Lou also suggested having an Ex-Com meeting in New York if there is not an actual mini meeting.

We have adopted an anti-discrimination statement. Do we have to add anything else to it to focus it on LGBT issues? The feedback we have received on the statement has been positive.

There was discussion about recruiting new members. What kind of outreach do we need? The following suggestions were made:

* Contact lapsed members and see if they want to rejoin; if they are no longer writing, they can become associate members.
* Offer student memberships; we can contact theater departments at universities and see if they can have any student critics who would like to join.
* Contact various theaters and see if they have any educational programs that involve critics.
* Contact theater organizations and see if any of their members would like to join.
* Approach people we know personally who are actively writing and tell them about ATCA. This has turned out to be the best approach thus far.
* Contact former students at the O’Neill Theater Center’s National Critics Institute.
* Invite people to attend a panel at one of our conferences or mini meetings.

We need to find ways to raise our national profile and let people know we exist and explain what we do. Attracting younger members is definitely a priority. Bill mentioned that several new members attended the Philadelphia conference and said they felt very welcomed by the group. He thanked everyone for going out of their way to make these new members feel comfortable.

The business being concluded, the meeting ended at 3:15 EDT.

Respectfully submitted by Barbara Bannon, ATCA secretary.