

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
MEETING MINUTES**

Monday, April 23, 2018 at 11:00am Eastern

**PRESENT:**

Mark Brokaw  
Anne Kauffman  
Ethan McSweeny  
Laura Penn

**PRESENT BY PHONE:**

Sheldon Epps  
Linda Hartzell

**ABSENT:**

Mark Lamos

**STAFF PRESENT:**

David Roberts  
*Executive Director*  
Elishia Merricks  
*Program Associate*

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** – President, Sheldon Epps called the meeting to order at 11:07 by thanking all involved in the 2018 “Mr. Abbott” and celebrating the success of the event. He made a special note of thanks to Trustee Laura Penn for taking on the many needs of the “Mr. Abbott” event, in addition to her SDC duties.
  
- II. **PRESIDENT’S REPORT**
  - a. **“Mr. Abbott” Highlights**
    - i. Executive Director of the Foundation, David Roberts, stated that Julie Taymor and the Foundation were well represented at the event and that the overall success of the evening, enjoyment of the guests, and quality of the production helped to solidify the annual status of the “Mr. Abbott”.
    - ii. Treasurer Ethan McSweeny, who attended the debriefing, shared that many of the notes were positive. He shared that in his experience of attending recent industry galas, this year’s “Mr. Abbott” really stood out and had a wonderful sense of community that other galas did not, and this was really reflected by the ‘in-the-room’ giving.
    - iii. Board of Trustees who attended continued to praise the evening, complimenting how well it reflected Julie Taymor and her aesthetic, how it was well directed, and the messaging was clear. Ms. Penn noted how especially strong and effective the story telling surrounding co-director, Tyne Rafaeli, and her previous Gielgud Fellowship with Julie, made the evening feel authentic.
    - iv. The Board of Trustees continued to discuss how the evening was one of few that successfully, and most purely, reflected the honoree and that the success of the evening was anchored to Julie’s collaborators as their investment in the evening and connection to Julie was professionally and personally deep. Julie was also an honoree that has a commitment to emerging directors and beliefs that are aligned with the mission of the Foundation. The Board of Trustees decided that the connection to SDCF values should be an informing quality for the SDC Board to look for in an honoree.
    - v. Over \$132,000 was raised.
  
  - b. **Gordon Davidson Award**
    - i. Mr. Epps informed the Board of Trustees that the Gordon Davidson Award Committee met to name the first honoree: Oskar Eustis. The selection was unanimous and based

on his success at The Public Theater in New York City, and also his previous regional work at Trinity Repertory Company, and Eureka Theater. The Davidson Committee believes that Mr. Eustis' deep connection to Gordon Davidson and his interest in the development of young directors makes him the perfect inaugural awardee. The first Gordon Davidson Award will be presented at the TCG conference in St. Louis this June 14<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> and a smaller event in L.A. to toast both Mr. Eustis and Gordon Davidson's memory at a date to be determined. Mr. Epps let the Trustees know that he has been in touch with Gordon Davidson's family and they completely endorse the Committee's selection. Mr. Eustis was reported to be was 'flabbergasted, flattered, and thrilled' and Mr. Epps assured the Board of Trustees that Mr. Eustis displayed a desire to be at TCG in person to speak to about Gordon Davidson and his legacy. He also requested of the Trustees and staff that information about the inaugural awardee be a well-kept secret until the event or other public announcement.

- ii. It was discussed that the award will ideally be presented on the Friday of the conference, that way the Foundation can leverage the SDC 'Happy Hour' as a celebration amongst the membership, providing more visibility to the award and the Foundation.
- iii. The Board of Trustees asked if we intended on covering travel for Mr. Eustis, as Mr. Eustis had already expressed his desire to be at TCG to accept the award; it was decided that the Foundation should wait until Mr. Eustis' attendance is confirmed and offer travel support only if it is requested.

## **II. SECRETARY'S REPORT**

### **a. Approval of Minutes, March 19, 2018**

- i. Secretary Mark Brokaw asked the Trustees to recommend any changes or additions to the minutes from March 19, 2018. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve.

**ANNE KAUFFMAN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 19 BOARD MEETING, ETHAN MCSWEENEY SECONDED. MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.**

## **III. TREASURER'S REPORT**

### **a. "Mr. Abbott" Financial Results**

- i. Mr. McSweeney walked the Trustees through the two page document in the board packet. He pointed out that a lot of the in-the-room donations were first-time donors and that all of them need to be folded in to the SDCF cultivation plan. He announced that the total gross income for the "Mr. Abbott" was \$237,476 and that all of the expenses were in line with what was projected, although production costs were a little higher than expected.
- ii. The Board of Trustees requested a detailed break-down of the production costs.
- iii. Ms. Penn indicated that the cost of the updated "Mr. Abbott" video was an investment for the Foundation as well as for the 2018 "Mr. Abbott" as most of the footage can be used in subsequent years.
- iv. The Board of Trustees discussed the financial benefit of utilizing videos in future tributes, however, some Trustees suggested that it might not always be appropriate for the honoree's body of work.
- v. Ms. Penn stated that the selection of the event consultant was unavoidable due to the co-chairs' expectations and prior relationship with this particular consultant. However, Ms. Penn was confident that in the future the Foundation would be best suited to go

back to its longstanding relationship with Connie Wilkin and Jen O'Connor of Foresight Events. Other costs that were unusual with past practice included the fee for one of the co-directors (as this is usually voluntary, and lead by a single director), and also the final week over-hire for production coordinator Amy Fritz.

- vi. It was agreed that the planning process and workflow of the annual "Mr. Abbott" needs to be in effect year round in order to cultivate relationships and commitments with the honoree's collaborators and to hire more effectively with a clear division of roles and responsibilities.
- vii. Ms. Penn reminded the Trustees that 2019 is SDC's 60th anniversary year, and informed them that conversations are being held among SDC's Executive Committee and others about the celebration being the main fundraiser for the Foundation.
- viii. The Board of Trustees deliberated about the possibility of combining the "Mr. Abbott" with the 60th Anniversary event, so as not to lose the annual pattern that SDCF has worked hard to establish. Mr. McSweeney suggested that the FY18 "Mr Abbott" may not be the best boiler plate for the anniversary and questioned if SDCF could rely on SDCs 60th Anniversary celebrations to generate the funds that the Foundation needs.
- ix. Mr. Epps recommended that the discussion around the "Mr. Abbott" and SDCs 60th Anniversary would be best placed in the fundraising strategy meeting on May 22<sup>nd</sup> and the Board of Trustees agreed.

**b. Financial Primer and Budget Overview**

- i. Mr. McSweeney walked Trustees through the finalized FY17 Audit in their Board packet.
- ii. The Board of Trustees discussed the audit with Mr. Roberts and Mr. McSweeney clarifying points of confusion - 'cash and cash equivalents' identifies what is in the SDCF bank accounts. 'Unrestricted' means that the funds can be used for general operating and is not restricted by time or program. Some of SDCF's money is restricted by grants and donors, specific to certain programming. Grants receivable are promises of grant. Pre-paid expenses are applied when a bill has to be paid in advance e.g. You have to put a down payment for a venue for an event in Fall FY19, but you have to commit to it in Spring FY18. Temporarily restricted funds come into play if someone buys a ticket for the "Mr. Abbott" in Dec, it is temporarily restricted for the event next April. The Mason-Wilson Fund is permanently restricted as a bequest. Ms. Penn noticed that the \$5,000 Mason-Wilson funds did not appear in the audit or audit notes and asked for Mr. Roberts to check on its status.
- iii. Ms. Penn noted that SDCF has an investment policy meant to protect against inflation; donor-restricted funds, for example, are limited to drawing down 5% each year to maintain the fund for the future.
- iv. With time running short, it was decided to table the remainder of the conversation. The Trustees agreed to take a deeper dive into the document and Mr. McSweeney asked that the Board of Trustees take into account that the reserve funds are lower than he would like. It should allow six months of operation for the organization.
- v. Mr. McSweeney noted that a year-end review would be presented for the next meeting on May 21.

**IV. FUNDRAISING REPORT**

**a. "Mr. Abbott" Post-Mortem Analysis**

- i. Linda Hartzell was keen to highlight to the Trustees that the success with additional donors in the room at the "Mr. Abbott" is an opportunity to build relationships, and

share the story of the Foundation and its programs (such as the wonderful opportunities that SDCF Observers receive) is a way of strengthening that connection. In speaking with consultant Christine O'Connor, Ms. Hartzell believes that SDCF will be able to develop short-term and long-term plans in getting people excited about giving to the Foundation and maintaining their commitment.

**b. Funding Update and Development Training and Christine O'Connor/ Albert Hall & Assoc.**

**Update: May Strategic Planning Session**

- i. Mr. Roberts informed the Board of Trustees that the SDCF staff will be undergoing training in the SDCF donor database throughout May.
- ii. At the retreat on May 22 there will be a longer discussion on SDCF's fundraising plan and a discussion on how best to begin building the board.
- iii. The Trustees requested that Mr. Roberts send them a list of all the "Mr. Abbott" donors so that they could send out personal thank yous.
- iv. SDCF has completed two NYSCA applications. One is the annual SDCF application focused on the Observership Program with a \$15,000 ask. The second application was a research grant that shepherded by Ms. Penn and Maureen Fox requesting up to \$25,000. Ms. Penn committed to circulating the narrative for the research grant application and highlighted that its focus on mid-career directors and the opportunities and support available to them should be conducted regardless of the success of the NYSCA grant application.
- v. Mr. Roberts informed the Trustees that the NEA recently sent notice that it has recommended the FY19 SDCF application to be funded at its current level of \$25,000.
- vi. Mr. Roberts brought the Weill Fellowship to the attention of the Board of Trustees as there was an increase in the FY18 funding in order to support the international travel expenses for the selected Fellow, Anna Michael.

**V. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**a. Programming Update**

- i. Mr. Roberts presented updated Human Resources documents with refreshed language and additional processes that will be put into place in FY19. Ms. Penn requested that the Board of Trustees delegate this approval to the staff of SDCF and Marisa Levy, the point of contact for SDC.

**VI. OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS**

- a. It was agreed that the Board of Trustees meeting on May 21 should begin at 10:30 AM EST, to allow for additional time needed with the addition of the Consultant's presentation.

**VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- a. The Trustees met for an executive session at 12:25 PM EST.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**