

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MEETING MINUTES**

Monday, May 21, 2018 at 10:30am Eastern

PRESENT:

Mark Brokaw
Sheldon Epps
Linda Hartzell
Anne Kauffman
Ethan McSweeny

ABSENT:

Mark Lamos
Laura Penn

STAFF PRESENT:

David Roberts
Executive Director
Elishia Merricks
Program Associate

I. CALL TO ORDER

- a. President Sheldon Epps called the meeting to order and welcomed the Trustees who are not usually in attendance in person, as well as consultant and guest Christine O'Connor.

II. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

a. Gordon Davidson Award update

- i. Mr. Epps informed the Board of Trustees that the Gordon Davidson Award will be presented on Friday, June 15, at the Theatre Communications Group conference in St. Louis. The awardee, Oskar Eustis, is keen to attend the presentation to speak about Gordon Davidson's legacy and is arranging his schedule in order to do so. Mr. Epps is trying to free up his schedule in order to present the Davidson award to Mr. Eustis. However, he has a stand-by presenter in mind if his plans to attend fall through. An intimate gathering in L.A. is planned but the date is yet to be determined.

III. SECRETARY'S REPORT

a. Approval of Minutes, April 23, 2018

- i. Secretary Mark Brokaw asked the Trustees to recommend any changes or additions to the minutes from April 23, 2018. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve.

ANNE KAUFFMAN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 23 BOARD MEETING, ETHAN MCSWEENY SECONDED. MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.

IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

a. General Updates

- i. Executive Director, David Roberts, talked the Trustees through the Program tracking document in the Board Packet, highlighting that the FY18 Observership Class programming is wrapping up. The quality of the 26 opportunities and the mentors in FY18 has been high and is in keeping with the Foundation's mission to place Observers on opportunities with true masters of their craft. In order to maintain this high quality, staff are already approaching mentors for FY19 with the view to confirming opportunities months in advance.
- ii. With the exception of the Ockrent, all of the Fellowships have been completed in FY18. SDCF did reach out to Susan Stroman recommending two projects which were approved, however, they didn't work out. One project was due to an Assistant Director having already been identified, but the other didn't work out due to the Mentoring Artist's apprehension of the

- iii. material being particularly sensitive and their concern about how they would ‘look after’ a Fellow in the rehearsal room, especially in the current climate of the industry. The FY19 Gielgud is in process, with Roger Danforth interviewing candidates on May 22, and the Denham Fellowship will be launched on July 1. There have been four One-on-One conversations to date, with possibly one additional planned for June. The first Artistic Leadership Group (ALG) was in L.A. last January. It was well received, but some of the adjustments to the program made for the L.A. audience were less successful (i.e. inviting existing leaders of smaller theatres). The second ALG will be in New York City on June 4.
- iv. The Trustees discussed the nature of an ALG and Mr. Roberts clarified that the program aims to serve mid-career freelance directors who have shown interest in, or have been identified by SDCF staff and advisors as having potential for artistic leadership positions. An ALG is a half day event with about twenty invited guests and three to six invited speakers, each of whom receive an honorarium. It is an environment where attendees are invited to ask pointed a detailed questions in a highly confidential and low-risk environment, and to have those questions answered by professionals with a long history of artistic, management, or search firm leadership. Mr. McSweeney asked if it would be appropriate for a Trustee to attend as an auditor, to better understand the programming. Mr. Roberts confirmed that he would extend an invitation to Mr. McSweeney and any other Trustee who was interested in attending.
- v. The ALG was identified as key programming for mid-career artists and the Trustees discussed ways in which the program could be further developed. Mr. McSweeney questioned if SDCF programming could expand to include providing grants to support artists who desire to take part in training programs such as the one Michael Kaiser offers at the University of Maryland (Devos Institute). Ms. Kauffman affirmed the value of the ALG by sharing her experience of coming away feeling empowered that her skills as a director are directly transferable to artistic leadership. Ms. O’Connor agreed stating ‘You already know more than you think you do’. She also suggested that SDCF could produce a series of regional conversations as a supplement to the ALG, and the Trustees agreed that this could be an opportunity for earned income while serving to mid-career artists.

b. Visioning + Program Framework

- i. The last nine months has seen the Trustees and Foundation staff placing a lot of focus on the organizational transition. Mr. Roberts believes that SDCF is now at the right point to start thinking of the bigger picture and that the Board is looking to him to articulate a vision and lead the organization through this next phase; he talked the Trustees through the proposed vision he has for SDCF.
- ii. Grounded in the organization’s mission, and guided by its three-word mantra (or tagline: “Access. Connectivity. Legacy”), SDCF works to achieve its goals through its programming. Historically this includes a wide range: Observerships; Fellowships; Awards; One-on-One Conversations; Artistic Leadership Groups; Panels; Roundtables; Masters of the Stage podcast; past programs such as Symposia; Guest Artists Initiative; Masterclasses; and proposed programming such as Research and Convenings.

A number of these SDCF programs have been successful. Others have been improved and refined in recent years. And others have not been as successful or focused. They have been somewhat ad-hoc. This plethora of programs are potentially diffuse or diluted, good ideas with not enough support, or that now overlap with similar programs, are ill-defined, and often unclear about which constituencies are being served. What they lack is a cohesive and unified framework.

iii. CAPACITY and PRIORITIZATION

Mr. Roberts outlined the following three strategies as the best way to improve upon the current programming and gave examples for each (see presentation)

- a. Optimizing program delivery
- b. Specifying and deepening program content
- c. Creating space and resources for R&D

iv. PROGRAMMING and EVENT FRAMEWORK – Mr. Roberts proposed that the programming of SDCF should fall into the following categories:

1. Artist Development Programs
 - a. Observerships
 - b. Fellowships
 - c. Other
2. Professional Programs
 - a. Artistic Leadership Groups
 - b. Roundtables
 - c. Other
3. Public Programs
 - a. One-on-One Conversations
 - b. Masters of the Stage
 - c. Other
4. R&D – as needed

Mr. Roberts went on to identify what the “must-do” programming elements were, contrasted with the flexible “nice-to-do”/responsive programming could be. He also enumerated who the target constituencies were, and which part of the mission/mantra each program was most in service to.

v. HONORS and RECOGNITION

1. SDCF has five active awards: the “Mr. Abbott” Award; the Breakout Award; the Callaway Awards; the Davidson Award; and the Fichandler Award. The Mason-Wilson award is an additional award and is contingent on a bequest. In the last year SDCF has successfully consolidated the presentations of a number of these into a single event to occur annually in November. This excludes the “Mr. Abbott” Award (which also serves as the organization’s primary fundraiser) and the Davidson, currently in its inaugural year. He noted that the Mason-Wilson Award is in development, based on a bequest/promise to give.

vi. WHAT’S NEXT?

In conclusion, Mr. Roberts requested the Trustees consider the following.

1. Endorsement of the proposed framework, so staff could move forward with FY19 short term planning
2. Once endorsed, staff would work with Finance Committee to develop the economic logic of the framework, with an updated draft of the FY19 budget; and further incorporate the framework into a 5-year financial plan.
3. With Christine’s work to inform it, implement fundraising strategies, and identify support needs; one such idea mentioned several months ago was procuring a grantwriter.

vii. The Trustees requested that the SDCF staff create a one page summary of the Foundation programming so that they can accurately talk about each program when in conversation with

prospective donors. They expressed a desire to dig into the SDCF mantra of ‘Access, Connectivity, and Legacy’; and to think about adding the idea of ‘sustainability’ of career to the mission - how do we support people wanting to stay in this field?

- viii. The Trustees continued to discuss the Foundation’s regional presence in terms of programming and prospective donors. Linda Hartzell was keen to shine light on donors in the regions who love theatre and are often (or potentially) committed to annual giving. The Trustees discussed the importance of maintaining the established relationships with NYC based donors but emphasized the importance of showing regional prospective donors how SDCF is serving the regions and how they can be involved in a meaningful way. This speaks to earlier conversations with Ms. Hartzell and her interest to introduce Mr. Roberts to prospective donors in Seattle.

V. TREASURER’S REPORT

- a. Mr. McSweeney brought the Trustees attention to the FY19 budget that is to go in effect on July 1. He explained that, in his opinion, there were “too many lines in the budget” and it would be in the best interest of SDCF to trim or re-group the lines in order to make better and clearer financial decisions, driven by programming, rather than being locked into a programming commitment driven by a budget. He proposed, similar to the proposed program framework structure, but with tweaks, the following budget groupings, where the several programs are currently listed:
 - i. Programming
 - ii. Observerships and Fellowships
 - iii. Awards

He explained that new lines tell the same story, or are aligned with, the proposed programming structure, in that they will take into account capacity and prioritization. Mr. Epps added that it would help to eliminate the sense of failure if, for whatever reason, staff don’t complete a specific program, or the projected number of programs aren’t fully achieved. Also allowing the Foundation to be responsive to its audience and the ever changing climate of the industry, as well as funders.

b. FY18 Year-End Projection + FY19 Draft Budget

- i. The individual income line is less than expected. Mr. McSweeney suggested that the Trustees need to think of individual giving differently. We have the SDCF board who we’re empowering to get ‘gets’. We also have a funding pool of the SDC board (barring the Trustees who are both SDC and SDCF). There is confusion among both the SDC and the SDCF boards in believing that their “Mr. Abbott” ticket purchase acts as their annual giving. Ms. Hartzell shared that in regional theatres the messaging is very clear and has to be re-iterated, they are committed to buying a ticket and making an annual gift. Alongside the clarity with the boards Mr. McSweeney stated that the FY19 end of year giving appeal needs to be more strategic.
- ii. The Corporate/Institutional line is higher than budgeted due to the addition SDC gift for underwriting the fundraising consultant. This line also includes the unrestricted \$5,000 commitment from Time Warner.
- iii. The government income line is on target for FY18. NEA have recommended SDCF for funding in FY19. The NYSCA grant applications for FY19 are submitted and in process with NYSCA. Currently, the budget also includes the NYSCA research grant but this is not to be considered as unrestricted funding.
- iv. The “Mr. Abbott” budget line, reflects a goal of \$200,000 gross for FY19. With SDC’s 60th anniversary celebration next year it is important that SDCF communicates this to SDC because the event needs to act as the SDCF annual fundraiser, and we want to be aligned with the union’s expectations.
- v. The Trustees discussed the SDC annual contribution of \$65,000 and Mr. McSweeney expressed that SDCFs five-year plan should look at steadily becoming more and more independent, but

underscored that it should be a gradual reduction, and should never be the intention to go away completely.

- vi. Mr. Roberts stated his belief that this is an opportunity for SDCF programming to attract corporate sponsors. Mr. McSweeney added that the Foundation has fundraising flexibility that the union doesn't. This ability was a big consideration in the formal separation and transition of the two organizations.
- vii. Mr. McSweeney continued by reporting that the Awards line of the budget will be a little under budget in FY18, and the Abbott Award budgeted net of \$100,000 was exceeded by \$32,000. However, he expressed the importance of the Trustees considering placing this excess in the reserve fund.

c. Cash Flow Snapshot

- i. With limited remaining time in mind, Mr. McSweeney suggested that the Trustees discuss page 3 of the Cash Flow Snapshot. This outlines the lowest point in SDCFs budget as December, when the Foundation is waiting for the NEA grant in December, and the annual SDC contribution in January/February.
- ii. There are two rounds of income from the annual appeal, projected to be received in early December and late December, each aiming to bring in \$5,000.
- iii. The Trustees discussed the upcoming changes in the tax laws and the importance of researching what the impact could be on the Foundation's end of year giving.

VI. CONSULTANT PRESENTATION - Christine O'Connor/ Albert Hall & Assoc.

- a. Ms. O'Connor's report was moved to the scheduled retreat on May 22, the following day.

VII. OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS – none discussed

VIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION – none held

IX. ADJOURNMENT

LINDA HARTZELL MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING, MARK BROKAW SECONDED. MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.