



The Institute of Outdoor Drama

College of Fine
Arts and
Communication

201 Erwin Building
East Carolina University
Mail Stop 528
Greenville, NC 27858-4353

252-328-5363 office
252-328-0968 fax

www.outdoordrama.org

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For Further Information contact:
Michael Hardy, Director
252-328-2467
hardym@ecu.edu

ANNUAL AWARDS ANNOUNCED Greenville, N.C. –

The Institute of Outdoor Drama (www.outdoordrama.org) recognizes significant accomplishment in the field of international outdoor theatre in two awards: the **Mark Sumner Award** for lifetime achievement and the **Scott Parker Award** for exceptional volunteer service. The awards are named in honor of the two primary Directors of the Institute who led the association for over forty years.

This year, on the occasion of the Institute's 50th Anniversary, the Mark Sumner Award was presented to **Paul Nicholson** (Ashland, OR), retired Executive Director of the *Oregon Shakespeare Festival*. A native New Zealander, Nicholson's career began as a planning manager, management accountant and systems analyst in the corporate sector. He subsequently served as the administrative director for Downstage Theatre, the largest and oldest of theatres in New Zealand. Emigrating to the *Oregon Shakespeare Festival* in 1980, he served in the executive role for 16 years. During this time, he saw the membership of the Festival increase from 2,000 members to 18,000, while audiences doubled. During this time, he helped to found the Western Arts Management Institute, served on several panels for the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as many local boards.

The Scott Parker Award is a new award for volunteer service established this year, and the initial recipient was **Lynell Ginter** (Bardstown, KY) of the *Stephen Foster Story*. Associated with that production for over 20 years, Ms. Ginter auditioned for the drama as a college student but came to play a much larger role as an adult, supporting the organization in an amazing number of ways from groundskeeping, sales, company hospitality and—from time to time—performing.

Speaking of the awards, Institute Director Michael Hardy said, "Outdoor theatre is one of the most challenging environments for producing plays and musicals, and the leaders in this field have succeeded in spite of rain, wind and (sometimes) fire. They are a special breed of artists and managers, and we are proud to salute the best of the best with these awards.

The Institute of Outdoor Drama was founded in 1963 and is located at East Carolina University in the College of Fine Arts and Communication. Since its inception, the Institute's scope has grown to include a wide variety of theatrical organizations around the world who perform in outdoor settings including Shakespeare festivals, historical dramas, religious dramas, renaissance festivals, dramatic and musical theatre. These organizations are united by their dedication to producing outstanding theatre in outdoor settings and their unique roles in providing exceptional entertainment and tourism attractions for their region.

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