



# The Institute of Outdoor Drama Newsletter

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## 2014 Auditions:

The Institute of Outdoor Drama will hold the 2014 auditions on January 17-18, 2014 at East Carolina University in Greenville, NC. We will be contacting theatre company directors soon or for more information call us at 252-328-5363.

## Next Newsletter:

Do you have something you want to share with the IOD



(Stephen Foster Story singers entertain at the Conference)

## Letter from the Director

The Institute's 50th Anniversary Conference in Kentucky this month brought members from across the United States in a series of meetings that were as much a reunion as a conference. Leading off with our longest-running member, *Ramona* (celebrating their 90th anniversary this year), and *Trail of the Lonesome Pine* (also celebrating their 50th anniversary), members from twelve states told the stories of their origins, travails, triumphs and plans for the future. Our hosts at *The Stephen Foster Story* (Johnny Warren) and the *Pioneer Playhouse* (Robby Henson) bourboned and dined us in classic Kentucky style and set the stage for a series of excellent sessions. These ranged from the annual Paul Green Seminar on "Sound and Music" to workshops on the impact of the

membership in the next newsletter? Just send it to: outdoor@ecu.edu and we will try to include it in the next newsletter.

Affordable Care Act, how to maximize our use of social media, the latest audience survey results and the art of the deal.

The annual Mark Sumner Award was presented to newly retired executive director Paul Nicholson of the *Oregon Shakespeare Festival* at the 50th Anniversary Banquet, after a moving tribute by Mark Hofflund of the *Idaho Shakespeare Festival*. The Institute's new \$500 cash award for excellence in volunteer service was presented to Lynell Ginter of *The Stephen Foster Story*. As this award was presented, I was proud to announce that it will henceforth be known as the **Scott Parker Award** in honor of our intrepid executive director of 18 years who remains an active member of the Institute and valued counselor to me.



*(Mark Sumner Award winners. L to R: Scott Parker, Larry Gustke, Paul Nicholson (2013 winner), Mark Hofflund, Jackie Mills, David Weiss, Barbara Polly, Dennis Anderson)*

Subsequent items in this issue of the newsletter will describe several of our more content-heavy sessions with links to PowerPoint files which our speakers used. Several videos of these sessions are also being prepared for posting on our website for members who were not able to attend.



*(On the road to Pioneer Playhouse)*

The conference concluded with a State-of-the-Institute business meeting and discussion which will guide our future development and continued

growth as a resource for all outdoor theatres both in the United States and around the world. As usual, great thanks are given to our staff member Susan Phillips for her wonderful and warm organization of all the events of the weekend.

--Michael Hardy

## A Brief History of the IOD

*(Note: This article appeared in the 50th Anniversary Conference program.)*



**ARCHITECTURE AND THEATRICAL DESIGN SEMINAR**  
L. to R.: John R. Lippard, architect; James W. Fitzgibbon, architect; David Weiss, designer

*(Photo from the first IOD conference in 1963)*

Following the success of shows such as *The Lost Colony* and *The Ramona Pageant*, theatre enthusiasts throughout the country began asking for help in establishing outdoor drama in their communities. In response, Harry Davis, Paul Green, Kai Jurgensen, and John Parker, among others, founded the Institute of Outdoor Drama at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. The Institute opened on January 1, 1963 and its first director Bill Trotman immediately began aiding potential theatre groups that wanted to tell the story of their local histories, as well as reaching out to all states to learn about other outdoor dramas around the country. Trotman stepped down after the first season, and playwright/producer Mark Sumner accepted the position, beginning a twenty-five year tenure at the Institute.

Sumner began research to improve the quality of outdoor dramas, believing that the Institute could help companies produce shows that were more effective and professional. He published white papers on best practices and developed the feasibility studies which were to become one of the Institute's most significant services to the field. The popularity of outdoor drama rose to new heights in the early 1970s, as the American Bicentennial approached. Potential companies, many of which continued past 1976, inundated the Institute with requests for advice, consultations, and more feasibility studies.

After Sumner's retirement in 1989, the Administrative board of the Institute chose Scott Parker to be its new director. A veteran theatre manager and producer, Parker expanded the activities and staff of the Institute over the next eighteen years producing 32 feasibility studies, 17 national conferences and generating significant national publicity for the field. In 1991 Parker and the Institute established a new award recognizing individuals with significant lifetime contributions to outdoor drama: the Mark Sumner Award.

The 1990s saw a rise in attendance in outdoor drama to levels that surpassed those of the 1970s. By 2002, the Institute had grown to 122 participating members. These included history dramas, religious plays, Shakespeare festivals and variety theatres producing contemporary dramas and musicals.

In the first decade of the new century, the Institute's annual surveys of national attendance began to detect declines in audience participation. Calls for technical and managerial support from member companies increased, while the Institute began to experience its own challenges with reduced support from UNC-Chapel Hill as higher education budgets tightened. Parker retired in 2007, to be replaced by Rob Fox of UNC's Playmakers Repertory Company, and the negative budget trends continued, culminating in 2009 when the University regretfully informed the Institute that its support would have to be withdrawn entirely.

Bolstered by the support and deep concern of its members, Institute stalwarts Sumner, Parker, Fox, Susan Phillips, Jim Peacock, and Laurence Avery, set out to find a new home. With the invaluable help of Bill Friday, President Emeritus of the UNC System, the effort was a success. East Carolina University enthusiastically welcomed the Institute as a program of its College of Fine Arts and Communication in 2010 under then dean Mike Dorsey with the strong support of ECU Provost Marilyn Sheerer. A new governance system was developed for the organization together with a mandate for the Institute to become self-supporting within five years.

A new director, Dr. Michael Hardy, was selected to lead the organization and joined the staff in 2012. Under his leadership, the Institute has revived its research and best practices studies and has begun to attract grant support for these activities. A new website [www.outdoordrama.org](http://www.outdoordrama.org) has been launched, and membership has begun to expand again, growing beyond the United States with new theatres joining from Canada, the United Kingdom, Europe, Asia and Australia. The Institute is on target to become self-supporting for its activities by 2015.

As the Institute looks to the future, it plans to continue its international expansion and also to develop cooperative partnerships with other arts associations. A grant request to the National Archives to preserve and digitize the Institute's unique archive of the history of outdoor drama is pending, and a new study about outdoor theatre design will be published in the coming year. On this occasion of its 50th Anniversary Conference, the Institute salutes its members from around the world, thanks them for their support and acknowledges the many contributions of its former leaders and current friends in outdoor drama.



*(Delegates for the 50th Anniversary Conference, October 2013)*

## Outdoor Theatre Architecture

The Institute of Outdoor Drama has been awarded a \$19,000 research grant that will fund the work of a group of architects and theatre designers to re-imagine a contemporary outdoor performance facility to serve performers and audiences today and in the coming decades.



The design project began this fall and will be completed in approximately six months. Its goal is to develop a design template for two theatres with seating capacities of 500-700 seats and 1200-1500 seats, and to build a set of guidelines, documents, drawings and models that would be available through the Institute to assist theatres. The project team includes Barry Moore, senior architect with Gensler Architects in Houston; David Weiss, veteran outdoor theatre designer/director; Robert Long, theatre consultant and co-founder of Theatre Consultants Collaborative; and Christopher Hardy, landscape architects with SWA Group in San Francisco. Scott Parker, Director Emeritus of the Institute of Outdoor Drama, and Michael Hardy will act as advisors.

## Conference Highlights

**“The Impact of the Affordable Care Act”**, presented by Sherry Porter, an attorney in Louisville, Kentucky. Porter detailed some of the intricacies of the Affordable Care Act, and discussed how the implementation of this law will affect outdoor drama companies. The presentation can be found here: [Update on Health Care Reform](#). The full video of this session will be available on our [website](#) in the near future.



In **“Social Media: You Like Me, You Really ‘Like’ Me”** an additional seminal seminar was presented by Johnny Warren, managing artistic director of *The Stephen Foster Story*, Billy Bass, an actor in *The Stephen Foster Story*, and Jeff McMichael, a producer, director and editor for MCM Productions. This presentation highlighted the most popular forms of social media and offered strategies on how to receive the maximum visibility from social media. They also gave information regarding demographics and individual social media outlets. Their lively presentation can be found at [Social Media Trends](#). The video of this session will also be uploaded to the Institute's web site soon.



*(Brother Parker prays over the soup. R to L: John Tissue, Marina Hunley-Graham, Dennis Anderson, Dan Wilkinson, Ken Jones, David Weiss and Larry Gustke [hidden], Scott Parker)*

This year’s Paul Green seminar, entitled **“Sound and Music”** featured

presentations from McCrae Hardy, music director of *The Lost Colony*, Tom Hayes, audio engineer, and Michael Rasbury, Associate Professor in Sound Design at the University of Virginia. Ken Jones, writer and director of *Lincoln: A Pioneer Tale* served as the provocateur. They discussed ways to improve music and sound within amphitheatres, from properly placed speakers and microphones, to how the physics of sound can work to our advantage. The video of this session will be also be available at our website.



Dr. Larry Gustke, former Associate Professor of Travel and Tourism at North Carolina State University presented the annual **Audience Opinion Survey** results, taken from a number of companies to show the

#### The 90th Anniversary Season of



**Ramona** took place this summer and Artistic Director Dennis Anderson shared some of the highlights of its history and plans for the future.

**IOD**

## Archives

The Society of American Archivists in New York has published an article on the IOD's extensive collection of materials related to outdoor theatre which has been compiled over the past 50 years. The Institute is working on a project with the collections department of the East Carolina University Joyner Library to preserve the documents and recordings of this archive and house them in the rare books section of the campus library. Eventually, it is hoped, the most significant material will be digitized and available to researchers around the world. The article appears in the Society's [Performance Magazine](#).



(Early costume design by Ora Mae Davis for *The Lost Colony*, c. 1937)

IOD members are reminded that the Institute gratefully accepts significant historic materials from outdoor theatres around the world, and this project further ensures their preservation and lasting value to scholars. We have collected records of over 600 theatres and, over the past decades, 18 Masters theses and Doctoral dissertations have been written with the assistance of these records.

## Remembrances

by Susan Phillips

The definition of family is a group of people united by certain convictions or a common affiliation. We are a family; we are part of the outdoor theatre family. Each show, each season, each new cast becomes part of our family. Part of our Texas family lost 5 cast members in August. Those Texas Angels are Amanda Starz, Andrew Duncan, Julian Arredondo, Clint Diaz and Eric Harrison.

In September we also lost another member of the Outdoor Drama Family, James Wilson of the Snow Camp Outdoor Drama. He was founder and General Manager and received the Mark R. Sumner Award in 2009. He opened the first historical drama, *The Sword of Peace* 40 years ago, and 20 years ago he opened a 2<sup>nd</sup> historical drama, *Pathway to Freedom*. Both shows were about Quakers; *The Sword of Peace* was about the Quakers and the American Revolution and *Pathway to Freedom* was about the Quakers and the Underground Railroad. He was always like a one man band, he did it all. He did whatever was needed to be done. To quote a newspaper article, he put his blood, sweat, and tears into that theatre. He



kept that theatre going despite many doubters in the beginning and survived for 40 years overcoming many challenges.

Texas Angels and James, you will be missed. [Remembrance 2013](#)

The Institute of Outdoor Drama (IOD) is a program of the College of Fine Arts and Communication at East Carolina University in Greenville, NC. Since its inception in 1963, the Institute's scope has grown to provide services to a wide variety of theatrical organizations around the world who perform in outdoor settings including historical dramas, Shakespeare festivals and religious and contemporary theatrical presentations. These organizations are united by their common adventures in producing theatre in outdoor settings and their unique roles in providing exceptional values in tourism , education and entertainment. For more information please visit our website at <http://www.outdoordrama.org>.

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