

GETTING CAST (OR NOT GETTING CAST)

From "Bath House Players Newsletter", February 1976. By Phil Grecian

Let me get something off my chest and clear the air for some of you at the same time.

The Bath House Players is not a closed shop. I think every director has to face this problem at one time or another. I don't know a single director in town (and that includes our program, Civic's program, WU's Dale, high schools, junior high schools) who has not had to address himself to this accusation at some time in his life. I had hoped that if I ignored it, it would go away. That philosophy is naïve...a cancer ignored grows. Luckily a good friend advised me of the continued growth. Let's talk about it.

Imagine yourself a theatre director. You have chosen a season of...say...four plays. Your continued existence as a theatre depends (in one way or another) on box-office returns. Box office returns depend on quality of material presented. So...keep one eye on the quality of your productions. Now, you are personally dedicated to a quasi-democratic system with participants. You don't want to establish a stock company...you want to use new people to keep the program alive and growing. Keep an eye on new blood. You require every bit of rehearsal time to prepare each show, and can't afford to rehearse at the convenience of each cast member, tho' you are willing to work some scenes around some conflicts, given early notice. Keep an eye on participant schedules.

You are also trying to allow individual artistic growth by allowing participants who show strong interest to have the opportunity to sharpen their skills with a variety of theatrical experiences. This, you feel, will benefit your program and the programs of others. Keep an eye to individuals. By mixing the new and the old you feel that one group can learn from another. Now, this next is very difficult to understand: all things considered, you feel that cast chemistry is important...two people might read for the same part equally well, but somehow one of the two seems (chemically) more suited for this particular part at this particular time. That is the person who is cast. Keep an eye on cast chemistry.

So...where does this put you as a director? For one thing it puts you in a very odd position anatomically...you have five eyes. You leave the theatre after each audition hoping that those who don't get parts will try again...you know you can probably use them in the next show...or the one after that. You wish you could cast everyone who read well. You know some will be discouraged...and never try out again. This, in itself, discourages you. So much talent can slip thru your fingers this way. So what can you do? Well, you cast one or two or three or more new people each time...give them time to begin that developmental phase, meanwhile using "old hand" and allowing them to develop even more...and aid in the development of the new folk. You spend a lot of time trying to avoid people you didn't cast because you're afraid of their reaction to you...you're just as sensitive about rejecting someone (this time around) as they are about being rejected. You remember a few times when you yourself were not cast in a role you really wanted...you remember how you felt. You spent some time cursing the director...then you spent some time doubting your own talent ("Maybe it's gone. Maybe I never had it.") Then you tried again.

You also remember casting a show once a while back...and posting the cast list...and there was one performer who was not cast. You remember the disappointment he didn't hide as he turned away from the callboard. You remember the tears in his eyes. You remember how truly terrible it made you feel.

There were 54 roles available in the Bath House Players 1975 season. 21 of those roles were played by "first-timers." If you weren't cast this time, please try again. We need you.