

# **My First Year on the Drammy Committee**

## **By Barbara Conable**

I came on the committee the way all fifteen do: by recommendation of a member and an interview. I'm glad I was chosen. From June 2010 to June 2011, I saw seventy-five plays, a gratifying, sometimes thrilling, way to serve one's community, though you can perhaps imagine, not always easy. Travel to some venues is challenging. Sometimes the weather makes one want to stay home. Sometimes the plays are sadly miscast or ill-conceived. Watching actors and technicians struggle to do what they are unprepared to do is disheartening.

Expense is not the issue it is in many volunteer efforts because the theatre companies generously provide comps for the shows that are eligible for awards. The committee spends much of its collective effort attempting to cover all eligible shows. You may read about what makes a show eligible elsewhere on this website. In the year I have been on the committee, we failed in only one regrettable instance to get enough members to a show to make a decision. That's a remarkable achievement.

Though I'm seventy years old and no stranger to responsibility, I was nervous for our first quarterly meeting. I printed out my notes and brought along the programs for reference, as most members do. At each meeting, we may make nominations for awards in all categories, and a nomination must be seconded to be considered. Not all nominations are seconded, so selection begins within the first five minutes of our first meeting and extends through the strenuous Memorial Day meeting at which we make our final decisions. As a theatre movement trainer, I made a nomination based on my admiration for the movement in a show. The nomination was not seconded. It happens frequently that one member's perspective is not shared by the others, meaning that our aggregate choices are sounder than any individual's would be.

Ours would be a proud and prosperous nation if the gravity the Drammy Committee brings to its task were duplicated in the Senate and the House of Representatives. Others may not always agree with our choices, but I have no doubt they would respect them if they could witness the care taken in their making. We debate. We make our cases passionately. We persuade. It's an exemplary process. It really is. I've been on many committees in my life, but never a better or more serious one. As theatre lovers, we know that quality matters here the way it does in air, water and food.

It sometimes happens that a committee member is nominated for an award. In that case, the member excuses oneself from the debate and paces the hallways. We who are left doing the debating imagine that our banished colleagues who live by their imagination must be imagining what we are saying and doing, so the pressure is on us to do it right.

Only making our selections is more demanding than putting on the ceremony. I am in awe of how much work the planning, execution and fundraising takes, and this committee does the

work itself, with no outside help from event planners. I have yet to find my niche in that process, though I much enjoyed writing blurbs the presenters speak in giving the awards, a task we divide among us, so when a presenter asks, "Who writes this stuff?" the answer is: we do.

How long does a member stay on the committee? As long as he or she likes, though in a typical year, one or two members leave and new ones take their place. Term limits may be imposed in the future. If that is done, it must be carefully done. There is so much to do and such an imperative to do it well, continuity is very important. As for me, I intend to stay on the committee as long as I comfortably can. All my years of coaching actors has taught me what I need to know to serve it well, and I greatly respect my new colleagues, so why would I leave?

**Editor's note: Barbara Conable served on the committee from 2010 to 2013. We thank her for her wonderful service.**