

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Current Play Selection Process and Opportunities for Member Input (per Victoria Theatre Guild and Dramatic School Bylaws, adopted June 27, 2010)

The Bylaws currently provide as follows:

- a Planning Production Chairperson is elected at each Summer General Meeting (bylaws 4.2(2)(b) [*The Summer General Meeting*], 5.2(3) [*Elections at the Summer General Meeting*], and 6.1(2)(b) [*Composition and selection of the Board*])
 - the election is by secret ballot cast by the members who are present and in good standing (bylaw 5.2(4)(d) [*Election procedure*])
 - members in good standing are those whose dues are paid and whose membership privileges have not been suspended (bylaw 2.8 [*Membership in good standing*])
 - a simple plurality wins the election (bylaw 5.2(4)(f) [*Election procedure*])
- the Production Chairperson serves a two-year term, the first year as Planning Production Chairperson and the second as Active Production Chairperson (bylaw 6.1(1)(f) and (g), and 6.1(2)(b) [*Composition and selection of the Board*])
- during the first year of his or her term, while serving as Planning Production Chairperson, that individual is responsible for (all from bylaw 6.4(5) [*Duties of other directors*]):
 - (a) is responsible for supervising the selection of the Season of plays to be presented during his or her second year in office, and for recommending this schedule of plays to the Board;
 - (b) is responsible for selecting the directors for the Season of plays that has been approved by the Board;
 - (c) may create such committees as he or she considers appropriate to assist;
 - (d) serves as chairperson of the Play Selection Committee, and any other committee he or she creates, and is the liaison between these committees and the Board;
 - [(e) and (f) – assisting Active Production Chairperson and becoming Active Production Chairperson in second year of term]
- the Play Selection Committee is a regular standing committee of the Society (bylaw 7.1(1)(f) [*Committees*]), and is responsible for:
 - helping the Planning Production Chairperson select a Season of plays each year to recommend to the Board as the plays to be presented by the Society for the following Season (bylaw 7.2(9)(a) [*Duties of regular and optional standing committees*])
- the Planning Production Chairperson, by virtue of his or her election at the Summer General Meeting, chairs the Play Selection Committee (bylaw 7.3(1) [*Composition and operation of committees*]), and must provide a report to the Society at the Annual General Meeting (bylaw 7.3(5) [*Composition and operation of committees*]), and may be required to report to the Board (bylaw 7.3 (6) [*Composition and operation of committees*])
- the Play Selection Committee, as with any other committee, meets as it sees fit, and has the power to regulate its meetings and proceedings as it considers appropriate (bylaw 7.3(4) [*Composition and operation of committees*])
- any member in good standing may volunteer to serve on any committee (bylaw 7.3(2) [*Composition and operation of committees*])

SUMMARY: In a nutshell, the members elect a Planning Production Chairperson each year at the Summer General Meeting, who is then responsible for chairing the Play Selection Committee, which helps the Planning Production Chairperson to select a season of plays to recommend to the Board. Any member can volunteer to serve on the Play Selection Committee. The Planning Production Chairperson, serving as liaison between the Play Selection Committee and the Board, and as a member of the Board, recommends a season of plays to the Board, which votes on whether or not to approve the season as presented. The ultimate decision about the season rests with the Board.

Current Opportunities for Member Input into Play Selection:

- by voting in the election for the Planning Production Chairperson (members can vote for the person whose artistic vision for Langham fits with theirs, and can ask questions of candidates before the election)
- by volunteering to sit on the Play Selection Committee
- by providing suggestions for plays to the Planning Production Chairperson (whether or not as a member of the Play Selection Committee)

Possible Perceived Shortfalls in the Current Process:

- there are no “guidelines” for the Planning Production Chairperson about the size of the Play Selection Committee or its composition
 - while anyone can volunteer, the membership of the committee is left to the discretion of the Planning Production Chairperson
- there is no requirement for the Planning Production Chairperson to solicit volunteers to serve on the Play Selection Committee (i.e. so there is nothing to prevent the Planning Production Chairperson from choosing particular people to serve on the committee)
- there is no requirement for the Play Selection Committee, through the Planning Production Chairperson, to advise anyone other than the Board about the progress of the Committee, or about the schedule of plays to be presented to the Board for approval before it is actually presented. The Board can require a report from the Play Selection Committee at any meeting of the Board and at any general meeting, but by the time of the AGM, the season has already been chosen and approved by the Board
- unless a member is part of the Play Selection Committee, the plays being considered are not known until the Season is presented as a fait accompli (i.e. there is no opportunity for review by the membership before the plays are presented to the Board for approval, at which point, there is no process for review of a Board decision)
- there are no guidelines for the composition of the Season (i.e. one tried and true play, one new play, one edgier one, etc.), and not always sufficient consideration is given to availability of rights before the schedule is presented
- the role of the Board is unclear with respect to approval of the Season – does the Board simply rubber-stamp the schedule of plays as presented (since the Production Chairperson has a mandate from the membership which elected him or her) or does the Board have a more active gatekeeper role to play? And if the latter, what is the threshold for intervention by the Board (i.e. egregious error vs. small concern)?
- it is unclear whether the Planning Production Chairperson and any board members who were members of the Play Selection Committee are entitled to vote on the motion to approve the Season of plays as presented

Possible Responses to Concerns about the Current Process:

- as with any democratically elected position, if you disagree with the direction taken by the individual elected, your recourse is not to re-elect that person the next time around
- the Board members, including the Planning Production Chairperson, are elected to manage the affairs of the Society, including making decisions about the artistic direction of the Society through approving the Season; and members exercise their rights by selecting those individuals they are confident will act in the best interests of the Society. The Board has ultimate responsibility, and is elected, to make these types of decisions on behalf of the membership
- if the Planning Production Chairperson does not have sufficient discretion to control the size of the Play Selection Committee, the process would be unworkable
- it would be unworkable to have to present the proposed Season of plays to the membership before recommending it to the Board – what would be the criteria and mechanisms for feedback?; who would have the ultimate say on the proposal to be presented to the Board? given the current timing for elections, how could any such feedback be presented in a timely enough manner to permit the required logistics to be worked out (i.e. securing rights, creating the brochure and advertising)?
- there is no magic formula for a successful season’s composition, and imposing such a structure will limit Langham’s ability to branch out, and take risks on occasion, to grow its patron-base and increase its artistic profile