

Atlanta Radio Theatre Company (ARTC)

Board Meeting, January 4, 2015

MINUTES

Members Present: David Benedict, Bob Brown, Ron Butler, Tony Fuller, Bill Ritch, Dave Schroeder, Brad Strickland, Hal Weideman, Ron Zukowski

The meeting was called to order by Bill Ritch at 14:07.

Initial items discussed included (1) duties of Board members, (2) an approximate report of the treasury (lacking the presence of the treasurer). The best estimation for the current amount held in the treasury is \$80,000. This includes a Sound of Liberty Grant, intended to allow ARTC to purchase rights to dramatize science-fiction stories that focus on the Bill of Rights.

Following a brief discussion of duties, the Board proceeded to the election of Board officers. Bill Ritch was elected by acclamation to the position of President; David Benedict was elected Vice-President; Alex Lucyshyn was elected Treasurer by acclamation; Brad Strickland was elected Secretary by acclamation and at this point took over recording the minutes from Bob Brown, whom Strickland thanks for his service.

The Board then took up business previously tabled for this meeting.

- (1) Production budgets. David Benedict presented a proposal to categorize productions under three categories: A, B, C, and D. "A" category productions would be allocated a budget of up to \$2,500.00; examples of "A" productions would be "The Colour Out of Space" and "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea." These are longer productions, or those requiring more in production costs. "B" productions would be allocated a budget of up to \$1,500.00. Examples of these would include "Blues for Johnny Raven" and "Rory Rammer: Volume 2." Both A and B productions would be issued as CD recordings. "C" productions would receive budgets of up to \$750.00. Examples: "Can You Hear Me?" and "House across the Way." Finally, "D" productions would receive budgets of up to \$50.00. Examples include "Brotherhood of Damn Sassy Mutants" and "Nikki's Place: The Collector." Ordinarily C and D productions would not be recorded to CD unless as a "B" side to another production. In discussion, the board decided to appoint a committee to review current and prospective productions and make sure they will be correctly categorized for budget purposes.

Expenses covered by the budget do not ordinarily include payment for actors; however, in the case of the Sounds of Liberty productions, actors will be paid. The A and B category productions are expected to recover the initial budgetary investment within three years of recording. One thing we do need is to gather accurate numbers for convention sales; currently we have reliable figures only for DragonCon and CONjration.

A goal of budgeting would be to increase promotional and advertising spending. The board agrees that we need to grow the organization and reach a larger audience; more funding also would mean better product. The category approach to budgeting is expected to aid this effort.

A motion to accept the category guidelines was made, seconded, and passed without dissent. In line with the discussion, the Vice President agreed to appoint a small committee to review and recommend any needed changes to the production budget proposal and production schedule.

- (2) David Benedict presented an outline of ARTC's presence online. ARTC has a new website which has generated more (but not substantially more) traffic. The Facebook page is up in "likes" to about 262. ARTC emails have a higher opening rate than the industry average.

Some methods of improving outreach: First, we need good estimates of audience numbers at conventions. Currently we are not receiving reports from Audible.com on the downloadable, licensed content ARTC provides them. David Benedict will look into this.

The CD sales for 2013 amounted to about \$317.00; for 2014 to about \$725.00.

Podcasting: we would need about 20,000 downloads to attract advertisers; however, we can attempt to get sponsors on our own. Currently every back-dated podcast is available for free. We can designate some as premiums, and if so, they will require payment. We might increase our spending on the podcast (about \$13.00 per month); however, there is some worry that the podcast might cannibalize CD sales.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed without dissent: ARTC will upgrade our budget for podcast to \$20.00 per month for one year and then in early 2016 will assess the results to determine whether the increase is advantageous.

Currently underway are plans for *Centauri Express*, a podcast that will feature interviews, music, and drama. A question was raised: Will *Centauri Express* replace other podcasts? Currently yes, with occasional exceptions. Question: How will *Centauri Express* be distributed, pay for download or sponsored? Bill Ritch suggested making special offers at the CD sales tables: if customers join as Patron members (helping to sponsor the podcasts), they will receive a bonus. David Benedict will explore ways of attracting Patrons and sponsors. We would

especially need to attract local sponsors, and maybe some major sponsors (e.g. Baen Books) for radio broadcasts.

Donors would be separate from sponsors.

The Board discussed crowdfunding possibilities (Kickstarter, Indegogo, Gofundme). We would need a strategy for using these to reach part of a goal.

Grants are another potential source of funding, but normally grants require a nonprofit to have at least one full-time employee.

Terminus Media has completed its CDC project, but they have said they will need the facilities again.

Other fundraising possibilities: studio rental for audiobook recording or for audition recordings for voice actors. The fee is \$250.00 per finished hour of recording; however, so far for ARTC this is only a side issue.

(3) Other needs. The Board discussed a number of other concerns and perceived needs for ARTC:

- A marketing packet for advertising and promotion; a presence in convention programs; an exploration of possible benefits from ARTC's underwriting Public Radio broadcasts (the cost usually ranges from \$200-\$8,000 per episode).
- ARTC website: needs more content—perhaps a blog, maybe movie and media reviews. With more film production in and around Atlanta, possibly interviews with film personalities? We might also expand it with background material about the various programs and series available from ARTC.
- Awards: the Mark Time awards are under new management; we don't know what that will mean. We also need to keep track of the Audie (audio publishing) awards. We also need to revive the Thomas E. Fuller award; it has not been given recently.
- ARTC needs more writers, editors, musicians, and directors—we can always use good performers, too.
- Piracy: We need to enforce ARTC copyrights when torrent sites, YouTube, and similar websites infringe.
- Audience engagement: ARTC has to find ways to encourage our audience to talk to us.
- Studio report: We are currently ramping up to produce “Dash Cardigan.”

(4) Tabled until next meeting: ARTC should establish goals and a plan for the future.

(5) A thanks to Hal Wiedeman for providing a hat-rack and a large-format printer.

(6) The next Board meeting was set for Saturday, March 7, 2015, at 14:00.

(7) With no other business, the Board meeting adjourned at 15:36

Respectfully submitted by Brad Strickland, Secretary