

Mailer steps in for Hoyt in Rep shuffle

By Sue Harrison

BANNER STAFF

The Provincetown Repertory Theatre has undergone a sea change yet again. Founder and artistic director Ken Hoyt has resigned and is being replaced by interim artistic director Norris Church Mailer.

The Rep has been through some rough times in the past year or so, and financial woes coupled with the lack of a permanent home have created problems. But as of Saturday, April 6, with a new board president and new interim artistic director, things may be taking a turn for the good.

At the annual board meeting on Saturday, Betty Diener succeeded Dr. Brian O'Malley as president. Ron Robin was elected as vice president and clerk and Dean Hara was chosen as treasurer.

Diener, a professor in the School of Management at UMass, lives in Eastham and has previous experience on theater

boards. She was optimistic that the troubled Rep can make a turnaround and regain its former standing. But, she says, for this year at least, the goals need to be modest.

"We haven't established a program [of plays for the season], but we have established a direction," she said by phone on Saturday. "We will be deciding on productions that are innovative and leading-edge but small."

The Rep is looking to produce three or four shows this summer ranging from one-person shows to plays with two or three actors. "We will be reviewing several," she said.

Diener was excited about having Mailer, who is an author, actress and playwright, on board during the transition period. "She has worked closely with new playwrights at the Actors Theatre in New York," Diener said of Mailer's background. "She's bringing a set of plays to be read by the board over the next few weeks, and some of her

ideas are very exciting."

(Mailer was out of town due to an illness in the family and could not be reached for comment.)

Diener approached the subject of Hoyt's departure carefully.

"Because we made the decision to go to smaller productions, it seemed like a good time to end the association," she said. "The things he brought to the Rep are extraordinary. ... He did the evening with contemporary playwrights, the musical production of Gorey plays that went on to New York, his 'Trip to Bountiful' was better than the version produced in New York and his pre-New York 'Mineola Twins' was wonderful. ... His vision is wonderful but large scale. It's a difficult year for all theatrical groups. I hope to have an association with Ken again in the future."

Hoyt was equally careful in his remarks.

"We can't see eye to eye on programming, and there is no

fundraising mechanism in place to fund the productions I think the Rep should be doing," Hoyt said. Much of his current frustration goes back to the changing program for this coming season. "The season has changed so many times, I don't know what I could do for them. I felt my ideas were no longer integral to the board's vision."

Like Diener, Hoyt was enthusiastic about the choice of Mailer.

"She's exactly what they need now," he said. "She has the talent, connections and vision to bring forth a wonderful aesthetic for Provincetown. I am so glad it's her who is serving as interim director. She's a theater gal. She knows what she's doing."

As for his own path, it's less clear. He is looking at some non-theater options for this year but remains steadfast in his feelings. "This (the Rep) is the thing I am most proud of in my life, but there's a certain sort of theater



PHOTO SUE HARRISON

Norris Church Mailer

that I want to do and it's not what they want to do."

Diener is ready to move forward and believes the future is promising.

"I think the Rep will continue to work toward the goal of bringing leading-edge theater to the Provincetown community."

Both the Rep and Provincetown Theatre Company just received their quarterly payments, totaling \$5,000 each, from the Schoolman Trust.