From start to finish, ANPF 2012 was without question the most successful in the 20-year history of the organization. In eager anticipation of the week ahead, we began with a celebratory Gala at SOU’s Schneider Museum of Art. Rousing tunes were provided by the Bathtub Gin Serenaders, an extraordinary local band whose toe-tapping hot jazz added a lively ambience.

Following the Gala was the elegance of our Ashland Springs Hotel Kickoff Dinner and Theatre Talk interview with winning playwright Richard Manley, giving dinner guests an insight into the challenges that playwrights face. Other Theatre Talk interviews by ANPF board member John Rose with OSF actors John Tufts, Nell Geisslinger, and Mark Bedard were an enthusiastically acclaimed addition to the already busy Festival Week and are something we’re looking to expand on going forward.

Two playwriting workshops taught by the visiting playwrights—an ANPF tradition—were attended by an appreciative group of local aspiring writers.

The eight readings of the winning scripts provided the theatrical magic we were all waiting for: four exciting new plays written by talented playwrights.

ANPF Presents Jacob Marley’s Christmas Carol

ANPF Artistic Director Douglas Rowe will show a surprising new side of an old friend when he reads Jacob Marley’s Christmas Carol by Tom Mula on Wednesday, December 19, at the Ashland Springs Hotel.

Whether your introduction to Scrooge was from the book, the black-and-white movie with Alastair Sim, or the musical madness of Michael Caine and the Muppets, everyone is familiar with the story. But Marley is, after all, the first person mentioned in Dickens’s classic tale: “Marley was dead: to begin with.” When he finds himself in a very unsatisfactory afterlife, Marley seeks his own redemption by taking on the monumental task of redeeming that “squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, covetous old sinner” Ebenezer Scrooge. His adventures form the basis of this delightful and hilarious reading by veteran actor Douglas Rowe, who was seen in All the Way and As You Like It this year at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

The staged reading is December 19 at 7:30 p.m. in the Ashland Springs Hotel Ballroom. Tickets are $15, and seating is limited. Tickets available now at Paddington Station, by e-mailing tickets@ashlandnewplays.org, or by calling (541) 488-7995.
One of our winning playwrights this year referred to ANPF as the “gold standard” of new plays festivals; another, when asked how he would rate his experience with ANPF on a scale of 1 to 10, stated, “I’m sorry to say, but I could only give you a 15.” ANPF 2012 was indeed a wonderful week of readings due to the diligence and the theater savvy of our remarkable group of readers, who offered me a final dozen plays from which to choose our four selections. What then pushed us to our “gold standard” is of course our company of directors and actors, who, thanks to Bill Rauch and Oregon Shakespeare Festival, make up the vast majority of our onstage participants.

What motivates me to continue to volunteer for ANPF is our remarkable theater community nestled in this breathtakingly beautiful valley. In my 54 years of professional acting and directing across the country, I have seen nothing to compare. Not to be overlooked are our hardworking Board of Directors and volunteers, who give so much of themselves in pursuit of the organization’s goals. What we need now is your help. Pass the word! Although this year’s Festival Week was the best we’ve ever had, there were still some empty seats. We plan as an organization to step up our publicity, of which the single most important element is word of mouth. I am now working on our inaugural Christmas reading, which we hope to parlay into an annual event. Will I never understand the meaning of retirement?

A STANDING OVATION FOR OUR EXCELLENT CASTS AND DIRECTORS

HOW IT WORKS: Tala Ashe*, Bernard White*, Jackie Katzman*, Kathryn Meisle*, Jeff King*, and playwright Cary Pepper; directed by Cristofer Jean* (not pictured) =

OMISSION: back row: Ken Albers‡, Catherine Lynn Davis*, Rob Hirshboeck, Jason Rojas, Alejandra Escalante†, Geoffrey Riley; front row: DeLanna Studi*, Terri McMahon*, Kjerstine Rose Anderson*, and director Liisa Ivary* =


THIS ROUGH MAGIC: back row: Joe Wegner, Will Churchill, Russell Lloyd, Paul R. Jones, director Michael J. Hume*; front row: Monica Keaton, Elsbeth Poe, and Brandy Carson; playwright Richard Manley (not pictured)
Joshua Rebell  After a terrific week at ANPF 2012, my trip home was interrupted by a major Hurricane Sandy–caused delay. I mention this delay only because I’m the kind of person who would normally let a hurricane follow up to a great week put me in a sour mood and cloud my memory of the days before. However, my experience with ANPF was so wonderful, so helpful to the development of my play, and so moving to me in terms of how an entire community can be involved in supporting playwrights and their work, that I find I’m still high as a kite as I think about my experience with ANPF. From the bonding and friendships formed with the other playwrights to the focused, insightful, and invaluable talkbacks to the phenomenally well-cast and well-directed readings themselves, there was an amazing feeling of theatrical community throughout. I left not only feeling like my play was in better shape, but that I, as a playwright, was in better shape too.  

Suzanne Bradbeer  Every few years or so, there is a lot of hand-wringing and talk, lamenting the death of theater. Well, theater may or may not be in trouble generally, but it is obviously thriving in Ashland, Oregon. I am so impressed by the entire ANPF community. It is a truly astonishing group effort. Corbet and Bill, who run my B&B, started the day for me with delicious food and great conversation. My “buddies,” Marguerite and Jim, got me where I needed to be and were often delightful and generous dinner companions as well. Fred and Norma (indefatigable!), Doug, Gray, Elizabeth—tireless. Thank you, Joe Collonge, for the late-night rides home. The readings were enthusiastically attended, the talkbacks lively and thought-provoking. I hope to know my director, Kimberly Scott, for a very long time. My cast knocked it out of the park. Ellen Lewis is a treasure and I both liked and admired my fellow writers. Does all this sound like hyperbole? It is not. Because finally, and most importantly, my play is stronger for the experience. I am so grateful.  

Cary Pepper  From the moment I got off the phone when Gray called to say I’d won, to . . . well, a few minutes ago, I’ve been using the same words to describe ANPF: class act! The warm embrace of the festival staff and the people of Ashland; the respect for our art and the esteem for our talent; the unqualified support of everyone involved on any level of the festival; the welcome of my cast and the willingness to collaborate; the intelligent, perceptive level of feedback in post-reading discussions; the support and the safety net provided by EM Lewis, our host playwright; the way we were taken care of day-to-day; and then, the topper: When it was over, and all was said and done, the people spearheading the festival asked us, “How can we do this better?” ANPF is an invaluable, unforgettable experience—personally, professionally—for any working playwright.  

Richard Manley  I had a wonderful time. It was an example of the “circle” I mentioned in conversations a couple of times. I am, to a large extent, my work. I put it into your hands and stood back, somewhat tentatively, wondering what the Ashland community would do with it (and me). You treated it and me like something of value, worthy of time and care. Negative criticism was given carefully and with respect. Positive feedback was everywhere and presented as credible, intelligent comment. I gave you my words, and they circled back to me filtered through the warmth and curiosity and encouragement that is Ashland. And my hosts, Joe and Jean Collonge, must be praised as well, not just for their generous hospitality—and knowledgeable conversation and sense of humor and support (they came to both readings)—but for the fact that they treated me like family.  

Editor’s note: Richard’s winning play opens under its alternative title, The Truth Quotient, on January 9, 2013, off-Broadway at the Beckett Theater on 42nd Street in New York.
ANPF 2012 Festival Week Recap  continued from front page

and directed and performed by our cadre of professional artists whose work never ceases to amaze and impress. Finally, the insightful post-
reading audience talkbacks, guided by our gracious host playwright Ellen Lewis, capped off the twentieth-anniversary festival.

As in the past, when the set is struck and the lights are dimmed, the ship captains and the navigators of ANPF once again applaud the diligent
and astute readers who select these wonderful plays; the donors who help keep our all-volunteer organization going; and the knowledgeable
audience members who support us in so many ways. The 2012 anniversary Festival Week was indeed one we will all remember. Onward to
ANPF 2013!

Reading Committee Is Already Working on ANPF 2013

ANPF 2013 is already under way, as our 52-person Reading Committee has signed on to sift through the 200-plus submissions to discover the
four gems that we’ll present at ANPF 2013. After a kickoff party and two training sessions, each reader will score 50 to 60 plays. Based on their
scores, 30 to 40 semifinalist scripts will be winnowed down to 12 finalists. Readers will meet in discussion groups four times during the five-month
evaluation process. These group meetings comprise the heart of ANPF, as passionate opinions flow freely and lifelong friendships are formed.

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