

OLD PUEBLO PLAYWRIGHTS'  
Statement of Purpose, Goals, and Membership  
September 9, 2013

Purpose:

Old Pueblo Playwrights (OPP) is a non-profit organization (Tax ID #860668756) dedicated to the idea of generating a supportive setting for the creation of plays for stage, film, video, radio and television. OPP is also committed to community outreach by featuring its best works in public play performances every year.

Goals:

To support members' works by offering play reading opportunities throughout the year.

To use a critique process that is based on the principles of drama.

To offer all members the opportunity for at least two readings of their work(s) which are then eligible to be stage-read in the annual Festival of New Plays.

Membership:

Any person interested in the writing of plays, screenplays, videos, or performance pieces is welcome. A small yearly fee for dues is asked, but not demanded by the organization. A fully invested membership provides participants the opportunity to have their plays read and critiqued, inclusive participation in OPP activities and voting privileges on all matters regarding the organization.

OLD PUEBLO PLAYWRIGHTS'  
By-laws  
As Revised September 9, 2013

## MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Membership timeline  
After attending at least two OPP meetings, a potential member can express interest in joining the organization to the president. The president or someone he/she designates will discuss the particulars of membership with the interested person
- B. Definition of a Member  
A fully invested member, therefore, is any person who has attended at least two OPP meetings, and has either paid (or informed the vice-president/treasurer they are unable to) their dues. (See DUES)
- C. Credit to OPP  
When members' works that have been read and critiqued at OPP meetings are produced in any form, the playwright agrees to add the following words to all programs and other associated literature/announcements where credit is given: "The playwright is a member of Tucson's Old Pueblo Playwrights."
- D. Use of Members' Names  
OPP has the right to publicize past and present members' participation in the organization.
- E. Use of Organization's Name  
Any formal communication by a member under the banner of OPP must be approved by the Executive Board.
- F. Meetings  
OPP is obligated to notify members only about special meetings, business meetings and meetings during which voting is scheduled for (1) revision of by-laws or (2) play selection for public performance.

## THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF OLD PUEBLO PLAYWRIGHTS

- A. Requirements  
The Board is required to meet at least four (4) times a year to discuss general business, public performances, fund raising, and any other activity deemed necessary for the running of the organization. Members of the Executive Board are to attend meetings OPP on a regular basis. They are also responsible for maintaining active liaison with the Arizona Theatre Company as long as OPP is using their rehearsal facility. The Executive Board has the right to approve or disapprove presidential decisions by a majority vote. In the event such a vote ends in a tie, the president shall cast the deciding vote.

### B. Officers

Officers (president, vice-president/treasurer, secretary and members-at-large) are elected individually by secret ballot not before November 1<sup>st</sup> and not after November 30<sup>th</sup> of each year. The term of office of these elected member begins January 1 after the election and ends December 31. These elected members constitute the Executive Board of OPP. Officers and members-at-large may serve consecutive terms.

### C. Duties of President

The president is a non-voting member of the Executive Board except in the case of a tie. He/she is responsible for governing the organization and schedules Executive Board meetings. He/she makes the ultimate decisions as to the scheduling of meetings and events as well as all other activities in the interest of OPP. The president may appoint and dissolve committees (with the exception of the Executive Board), organize public performances, conduct public relations, and seek out and apply for grants, awards and recognition for the benefit of OPP. One business meeting each year is to be called by the president for the purpose of considering future strategies and changes in policy. This meeting may be coincidental to the election of officers. Any member may present proposals at this time. All members must be informed concerning business meetings called by the president. The president shall be responsible for the dispersion of funds – in coordination with the vice-president treasurer.

### Duties of the Vice-President/Treasurer

The vice-president/treasurer assists the president and performs all functions necessary if the president is absent or otherwise unable to fulfill the duties of the office. The vice-president/treasurer is responsible for collecting and accounting for dues as well as monies related to any public performances and must report on the financial status of the organization at least quarterly. This report can be given verbally, but a written report must be available at that time.

### Duties of the Secretary

The secretary maintains the scheduling of events, attendance logs at meetings (including actors and directors who participate in play readings), as well as a current membership roll. She/he is also responsible for maintaining an ongoing community directory of actors and directors which can be used by members to engage participants in readings and public performances.

### Duties of the Members-at-large

The members-at-large are expected to attend all Executive Board meetings, be available to chair committees, and carry out any business assigned by the president. If an officer of the organization vacates his/her post, then a member-at-large will be nominated to fill that position by the president. At a meeting of the general membership, the members will vote on the nomination.

## DUES

Membership dues are thirty-six dollars per year. Dues are paid after January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. Current members should pay their dues by January 15<sup>th</sup>. Members who, for any reason, are unable to pay their dues must inform the vice-president/treasurer. That member will be excused from payment without needing to explain or justify their situation. An individual who decides to join OPP after January of any given year will pay a pro-rated amount based upon three dollars a month. Only members whose dues are current may participate in the voting process.

## OPP WEBSITE

The president, with the advice and consent of the Executive Board, will appoint a member (ideally a member-at-large) to manage/oversee the OPP website. Said member can engage a non-member in this enterprise. If service fees are required, these fees can be approved only by the Executive Board.

## REVISIONS OF BY-LAWS AND STANDING RULES

### By-laws

The By-laws may be revised only if two-thirds (2/3) of current members in attendance at the meeting, where change is proposed, vote for the revision. All members must be notified of any proposed changes at least two weeks prior to the vote. Absentee 'ballots' must be received by the secretary at least twenty-four (24) hours before the vote will take place. These absentee ballots need to be in writing (land mail, e-mail or personal note).

### Standing Rules

The Standing Rules may be revised by a majority of members in attendance at a regularly scheduled meeting during which the president calls for a vote.



## STANDING GUIDELINES OF THE OLD PUEBLO PLAYWRIGHTS

Amended July 26, 2020

### I. SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The OPP member schedules a Monday night reading of his/her play with the secretary. The playwright also selects a facilitator from the membership to lead a critique session following the reading. It is advisable to engage a facilitator before the reading so he/she can review the work and prepare for the discussion.

Generally, OPP reads only one full-length play during a regularly scheduled meeting (50 pages or more) or several shorter plays by one or multiple authors.

### II. PLAY READINGS

#### OPTIONS

Playwrights have several options regarding the reading of their plays.

- The Cold or Table Reading: The play is cast from the people in attendance at the regularly scheduled OPP meeting. The readers have not read the script and no director is required.

- Actors as Readers: The play is cast using actors the playwright has engaged previous to the reading. Generally no rehearsal is involved and no director.

- Actors as Readers with Rehearsals: The play is cast using actors the playwright has engaged, the reading is rehearsed and a director might be involved.

- Staged Reading at the Festival: After at least two readings at regularly scheduled OPP meetings, plays can be voted on to determine if they are ready to be included in OPP's annual Festival of New Plays. These staged readings are performed before an audience from the community at large with scripts in hand, incorporate a director, actors, up to five rehearsals, some blocking and some props. (See below for details.)

### III. PLAY CRITIQUES

The primary function of the critique process is to provide the playwright with constructive observations and suggestions to further the development of their work. The playwright's peers fulfil a vital function by raising questions for the playwright to consider rather than providing answers that may conflict with the playwright's vision. A discussion facilitator is key to the success of this process.

A facilitator chosen by the playwright previous to the reading leads the follow-up critique session. His/her job is mainly to field questions, clarify points and keep the discussion on track. All those who choose to participate in the discussion must direct their comments to the facilitator. The facilitator may, at any time, interrupt and cease discussion that in his/her opinion constitutes badgering or a personal attack on anyone present.

Prior to the reading, the playwright may give questions to the facilitator that he/she wishes to have raised during the critique session. Playwrights are not allowed to participate in the critique nor at any time justify, explain or talk about aspects of the play. When discussion is complete as determined by the facilitator, the playwright may ask questions for clarification of points made.

Participants should confine their reactions to the material at hand. We believe it is neither appropriate nor the business of OPP members to offer ideas, changes or suggestions to the playwright that might be construed to be rewriting. Playwrights are free, of course, to seek out this sort of input apart from the session.

Readings and critiques may be tape-recorded providing the tape is for personal use and all present agree to the taping.

Upon occasion, a past member and/or members of the community may present a project providing no current member has a play reading scheduled. These people from the community at large may submit only one project a year unless they decide to become an OPP member.

Playwrights must be present at any regularly scheduled OPP meeting where their play is being read for the purposes of a critique.

#### IV. THE STAGED READING

The ultimate purpose of writing plays is to achieve performance. Therefore, OPP will plan at least one public presentation each year – Old Pueblo Playwrights New Play Festival. It consists of staged readings.

#### PLAY SELECTION

An OPP member's work is eligible for Festival selection voting immediately after its second reading and subsequent readings and discussions at an OPP meeting. The author may decline to put the work to a vote in which case the work will be deemed not ready for public performance. Because our play-polishing process is crucial to our improvement as playwrights, and to maintain the integrity of the Festival, later substantially rewritten drafts of plays deemed ready for public performance should be presented as readings at regular meetings. These later drafts will be submitted to a new vote unless the playwright declines. In that case, see above.

#### VOTING

Voting will take place by secret ballot immediately after the critique has concluded or when there are multiple works read and discussed at a single meeting, at the conclusions of the final discussion.

Only current members and associate members in attendance may vote. The author of the work being considered may not vote.

The question will be: IS THIS PLAY READY FOR A PUBLIC PERFORMANCE? Voting membership indicate either yes or no.

The president will appoint two people, neither of whom is the author, to collect and tally the ballots in secret. The results of the voting will not be announced to those in attendance or the general membership, but will be shared confidentially with the author, president and secretary. Only the final result may be divulged, not the margin of yes versus no votes. (Unless excluded as the author, either the president or secretary or both may tally the results.)

A work may be deemed ready for public performance if it receives four yes votes or yes votes from a majority of those voting. Whichever is the great number.

The president and secretary will keep a record of all works deemed ready for public performance and, at the appropriate time, will schedule those works for staged readings at the public performance.

If in the event that there are more works deemed ready for public performance than available presentation opportunities, the membership will vote using a numerical rating or some other appropriate method. Those plays with the highest number of votes will be included in the public performance. Plays voted ready yet excluded from the up-coming public performance due to this final selection process will still be deemed ready for any subsequent public performance.

Playwrights must be available to attend rehearsals and the actual staged reading of their play during the Festival.

## AUDITIONS

Open auditions for actors will be held by OPP as required to prepare for a public performance. At that time, playwrights and directors will constitute the selection committee. Pre-casting is discouraged as it can trouble actors who presume all roles are available. Exceptions can be made if an actor has played a specific role at OPP readings during the year and wishes to perform the role again.

## VIRTUAL NEW PLAY FESTIVAL

In the event circumstances make it infeasible to present the New Play Festival before a live audience, the festival may be exhibited to the public in alternative media, including, but not limited to, social media, streaming or live video. Members wishing to have their plays recorded for display via Zoom, YouTube, or other recorded formats now known or hereafter devised, will be required to sign release forms granting permission for this limited time use. This includes Playwrights, Performers, Directors, Producers, Designers and others who have added creative and/or artistic elements to the production. OPP may also choose to present non-festival plays, scenes from plays, and promotional material over streaming video and similar media, providing all participants have agreed and signed the release forms for limited use, and potential release via promotional media sources. Any large-scale expenses for video production must be approved by the membership. The playwright must affirm that he or she is the author of the work in question and holds all rights to its distribution

## OPP Critique Session Guidelines

These critique guidelines are not official, as are the bylaws and standing rules. They are suggestions.

In advance of a reading, the playwright:

1. Selects a **facilitator** from the membership to lead a critique session following the reading and provides the facilitator with a script.
2. Provides thoughtful **questions** to the facilitator that will be asked during the feedback discussion following the play. Questions with simple yes or no answers should be avoided, as they create very little discussion. i.e. 'Is this play funny?'.
3. Schedules **actors** to read or selects members of OPP. Playwrights are encouraged to bring actors new to OPP to meetings because we like to meet new actors.
4. Selects someone to read **stage directions**.

Generally, OPP reads one full-length play during a regularly scheduled meeting (50 pages or more) or several shorter plays by one or multiple authors.

As the annual festival approaches, repeat readings for festival consideration may be given priority over first readings.

After a second reading, the playwright may request a membership vote on whether to include the play on the list for possible inclusion in the annual festival. Submission of a play for a second reading assumes that revisions/rewrites have been made to the first version.

Feedback discussions following the reading of your play:

- The facilitator's job is to guide the discussion. The duties of the facilitator include posing specific questions provided by the playwright to the audience or actors, preventing the discussion from dissolving into tangents or repetition, and keeping one person or a small group from dominating the discussion.
- While the facilitator is guiding the meeting, all questions and comments are directed to the facilitator, NOT to the playwright. The playwright refrains from making comments, questions, or explanations during this period.
- The discussion is about the play and not about the playwright or the speaker.
- Participants in the discussion are encouraged analyze any part of the play, artistic or technical, by specifying details.
- When the general discussion is complete, the facilitator turns time over to the playwright, at which point the playwright can ask any further questions they wish or make comments. At this time, IF THE PLAYWRIGHT SO DESIRES, the playwright can request that the audience make suggestions for specific "rewrites," or ask for more informal opinions, but the playwright is under no

## OPP Basic Facilitation Guidelines

Old Pueblo Playwright's primary purpose is to provide members critiques of their work based upon the principles of drama and/or the principles established in the play itself. To that end we use the following guidelines –

1. Writers of the play being critiqued **select a facilitator** (preferably before the evening of the reading) from the membership and **provide the facilitator questions** addressing elements of the play about which the playwright has concerns or is otherwise seeking input.
  - a. It can be helpful to describe the genre of the play and your general intentions regarding its development and results previous to the reading.
2. **The facilitator**, after the reading of the play at a regularly scheduled OPP meeting, directs the critique session following.
3. The **playwright is not addressed** directly during the critique. Nor does the playwright speak or respond in any way during the critique.
4. All responses to the questions specifically or the play generally during the critique are directed **directly to the facilitator** – not to the playwright.
5. Participants in the critique address only the facilitator, **not other participants**.
6. Comments should be evenhanded and fair-minded. They should be based on dramatic principles generally and/or those parameters established in the play and meant to be constructive – not destructive. To that end consider these –
  - a. Beware of your personal bias and/or lack of familiarity regarding a given genre, style, topic
  - b. Consider the play the playwright intended to write, not the one you think she should have written (beware of suggesting 'rewrites')
  - c. We want all our members to succeed and treat them accordingly
7. Following the critique the playwright may comment, but **it's best not to defend the play, explain the play or in any way challenge any particular comments**. It's the job of the playwright to make use of the comments made during a critique as she/he sees fit.
8. **The facilitator maintains the right to manage the critique session such that the above guidelines are followed.**

## The General Critique

***The following criteria are to be considered during the general critique process. They are intended only as a guide and need not be “checked off” by the facilitator. For instance, the facilitator may choose to begin the discussion with character analysis instead of the play. The point is to aid the playwright in the craft of playwrighting, not to provide a classroom situation.***

### The Play

- What is the play about? What is the central conflict of the play?
- What did you like? What confused you? Is the dialog compelling?
- Is it clear why this play is happening at the particular time specified?
- How is the exposition handled? Does the action stop for this information?
- What is the driving force of the play? Did it sweep and carry you along?
- Did the plot progress logically? Did it make sense? Anything superfluous?
- Is the progression of the play predictable? Any surprises or turn of event?
- Is the play preachy, self-conscious, or is the author's message overbearing?
- Do important events happen on the stage? What makes the play dramatic?
- Does the play talk about situations or does action occur onstage?
- Does the play resonate? Can you identify with the issues?
- Are issues and ideas presented in a satisfying and/or provocative way?
- What is the scope of the play? Does it try to cover too much? Too little?
- Does the play advance? Do the scenes build to a climax?
- Is the play creative and original? Does it throw new light on familiar subjects?
- What about structural inconsistencies? Did events, etc., come out of nowhere?
- Is the play theatrical? What is its purpose? What about style, texture, imagery?
- Does the play have a sub-textual aspect; that is, a force outside the obvious issue of the play?
- How does the ending affect you?

### Characters

- Is there a clear protagonist and antagonist?
- Are the characters well-rounded?
- Does the protagonist have flaws?
- Does the villain have redeeming qualities?
- Could you identify with either one or both?
- Do the characters appear real and well fleshed-out?
- What characters do you care about? In which do you have less interest?
- What do the characters want and what do they risk to get it?
- Are the characters consistent and believable?
- Do the characters create the action in the play?
- What are the bones of contention among the characters?
- What is at stake? Are the stakes high enough to maintain tension in the play?
- Are any characters unnecessary? Do they talk too much and do too little?
- Are the behavior and/or attitudes of the characters revealed, or are they talked about?

- Does the dialog fit the characters in terms of age and demeanor?
- Do all the characters have well-defined reasons for being in the play?
- Is any character in the play simply a mouthpiece for the author?
- Did the character(s) develop and change during the course of the play?

### **Practical issues**

*Consider elements that might make this play difficult to produce, such as:*

- Length and number of characters
- Animals, babies, and/or missing limbs
- Elaborate scenery and/or many set changes
- Unrealistically fast costume or makeup changes
- Special effects
- Specialized lighting
- Difficult entrances or exits
- Actors must possess rare skills or master obscure accents
- Huge or unusual props
- Specific character types



Dave Sewell Letter, May 20, 2018

Revised for OPP New Member Welcome Packet, April 23, 2023

## Effective critiques – the OPP facilitation process

Dear Colleagues:

Welcome to Old Pueblo Playwrights! Our community of playwrights is dedicated to nurturing the craft of writing for the theatre, providing you with actionable tools and critiques that will help you develop your work to its fullest potential. Fulfilling this commitment requires that we maintain a safe space that respects each member's artistic integrity while celebrating our diverse backgrounds and levels of expertise.

The work we bring into the group may be close to a finished product, ready for workshop-level development, or a very raw sketch of an idea that may, in time, become a full-fledged play. No matter at what stage the play may be, the OPP critique process can and should provide the playwright with welcome support, thoughtful insight, and actionable input. But before the reading begins – even before you assemble your “cast” – you need to select a *facilitator* to guide the post-reading critique.

The facilitation process is vital to who we are as an organization because it serves two primary purposes:

- To engage members in actively *mentoring* their peers through the craft of playwrighting, by serving as a sounding board, assisting with planning for the upcoming reading, and debriefing with the playwright following the reading and discussion.
- To ensure the *integrity* of the post-reading critique by addressing the playwright's objectives and concerns, keeping the discussion on-point, and managing the discussion in a manner that ensures all participants and viewpoints are respected.

I think you'll agree that those are weighty tasks that should probably not be taken lightly.

Here's what the official OPP Standing Rules say about facilitation:

*A facilitator chosen by the playwright previous to the reading leads the follow-up critique session. His/her job is mainly to field questions, clarify points and keep the discussion on track. All those who choose to participate in the discussion must direct their comments to the facilitator. The facilitator may, at any time, interrupt and cease discussion that in his/her opinion constitutes badgering or a personal attack on anyone present.*

*Prior to the reading, the playwright may give questions to the facilitator that he/she wishes to have raised during the critique session. Playwrights are not allowed to participate in the critique nor at any time justify, explain or talk about aspects of the play. When discussion is complete as determined by the facilitator, the playwright may ask questions for clarification of points made.*



*Participants should confine their reactions to the material at hand. We believe it is neither appropriate nor the business of OPP members to offer ideas, changes or suggestions to the playwright that might be construed to be rewriting. Playwrights are free, of course, to seek out this sort of input apart from the session.*

*Readings and critiques may be tape-recorded providing the tape is for personal use and all present agree to the taping.*

*Upon occasion, a past member and/or members of the community may present a project providing no current member has a play reading scheduled. These people from the community at large may submit only one project a year unless they decide to become an OPP member.*

*Playwrights must be present at any regularly scheduled OPP meeting where their play is being read for the purposes of a critique.*

Clearly, facilitation is key to successful critiques. So much so, that it behooves OPP leadership as well as the membership at large to make sure that we maintain the integrity of the facilitation process. Sure, it's natural and expected that from time to time we have spirited discussions (and even votes) about what facilitation should look like. Still, such discussions should serve as a way to continually monitor the process and tighten it up when we begin to take it for granted.

By the way, several years ago, the OPP executive board established, and the membership ratified, the "OPP Basic Facilitation Guidelines." It's well worth studying when you get a chance, along with *The General Critique*, a useful set of facilitation questions compiled by our dean of facilitators, Gavin Kayner.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Questions and comments are always welcome. May your writing continue to flourish and provide you with a sense of fulfillment!