



'Irreplaceable' director of P'town theater festival to step aside

By Kathi Scrizzi Driscoll

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Behind-scenes reorganization likely for Tennessee Williams event.

PROVINCETOWN — The executive director of the Provincetown Tennessee Williams Theater Festival will leave his position in June to pursue a master's degree, setting off a transition that officials say has been two years in the making.

Jef Hall-Flavin, who has led the Williams festival for 11 of its 13 years, will not cut ties with the organization, though. He will remain on the board of directors, may direct shows in future years and will consult with staff through this year's Sept. 27-30 event, which he has helped to plan.

Hall-Flavin's departure will result in a reorganization of duties, and although a national search is expected, the new hire may not fill the role of new executive director, festival curator David Kaplan said Tuesday.

"He's irreplaceable, so it's unfair to look for someone to replace him," Kaplan said, noting Hall-Flavin's expertise about Williams and theater, his abilities as a theater director and his skill at events.

"That combination is unlikely to nil, it's not going to happen again, so we're redefining what it is we need and see what our staff can do" to take over some of Hall-Flavin's duties.

"This is a large change for us," Kaplan added, "but it's not at all a change in our mission or a change in how we deliver the goods."

This change was not a surprise, Kaplan said. Hall-Flavin, who is also a theater educator and producer, first talked two years ago about international graduate studies in the arts. He and officials have worked to make that happen, but keep him connected to the festival, ever since.

Board president Patrick Falco said Hall-Flavin “made an indelible mark” on the festival and Provincetown. Attendance has topped 46,000 since 2006, with visitors from 36 states and nine countries, according to a count Hall-Flavin mentioned Tuesday in a note to patrons about “what we’ve accomplished together.” The festival has presented 129 productions involving more than 1,400 theater artists from all over the world.

Those shows have included 11 world premieres of Williams plays, several of which were among the many shows Hall-Flavin directed. The festival also has hosted theater stars, including Brian Dennehy, Zachary Quinto, Cherry Jones, Dana Delany, Elizabeth Ashley and Eli Wallach.

In a written statement, Hall-Flavin noted he is at heart a theater director and is “encouraged that the board will be able to engage someone (now) whose passion lies in administration and fundraising. I think this is a great moment in the festival’s growth.”

Producing director Charlene Donaghy will continue in the post she has held since 2006 and manage much of the longtime core staff during the transition. She also has joined the 14-member board.

Details of the 2018 festival will be announced at a June 2 gala, although Kaplan said Tuesday the theme would be plays built on characters waiting for something.

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