VASTA enjoyed another successful conference year. Despite the excessive heat and humidity in Chicago during the first week of August and the impressive thunderstorm that closed Chicago Airports for a number of hours the first day of the ATHE conference, the stalwart participants were not phased. They arrived a little damp, a little bedraggled, a little later than expected, but with enthusiasm and collaborative spirits undaunted.

VASTA’s own conference, entitled “The Lost Secrets of Speaking Shakespeare”, followed hard on the heels of the ATHE conference and was hosted by Roosevelt University. The response to the conference was overwhelming and registration began with a long, hot and steamy reception line that Eric Armstrong (Conference Planner) has promised will be more interesting next year. However VASTA members made good use of this opportunity to reacquaint with “old” friends and to warmly welcome new ones. As a two-year member, and first time VASTA conference attendee, I must take this opportunity to comment on the friendliness and generous collegiality of VASTA board members and focus group representatives.

The workshop sessions, led by three extraordinary artist/teacher professionals, were all participatory. Catherine Fitzmaurice, Jan Gist, and Roger Gross contributed their insights, knowledge, and years of experience and scholarship regarding the speaking of Shakespeare’s heightened text. Catherine Fitzmaurice shared her approach to understanding and speaking the language comprehensibly; Jan Gist offered her insights into the shape and structure of Shakespeare’s language that “direct” the speaker to access the “acting clues” embedded in the text; Roger Gross presented his approach to the challenges and demands of scansion and thus the speaking Shakespeare’s verse, based on his years of rigorous research. While the work presented was often in agreement, at times it conflicted and contrasted. This stimulated discussion, challenging participants to make their own decisions.

The conference was rounded out by a lecture and exciting Q&A session with Dr. Kenneth Altman of Northwestern Medical Center on “vocal fold microsurgery.” Dr. Altman squeezed the conference into his very busy schedule at the last minute, and we are very grateful for his contribution.

Due to the remarkable response of members to the theme of this conference, Catherine, Jan, and Roger graciously agreed to teach “overtime” to allow all the participants an opportunity to share prepared work, and receive individual attention & feedback. Thank you Catherine, Jan, and Roger for your generosity!

All in all it was an exceptionally valuable conference experience and acknowledgment of the people responsible for this memorable occasion is necessary. Thank you to Eric Armstrong (VASTA Conference Planner) for his diligent organization and infinite source of humor. Jim Johnson, who was unable to attend the conference, assisted Eric in its preparation and we thank him as well. We hope to see you all in San Diego in 2002!

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Focus Group Representative
Assistant VASTA Conference Planner 2002

Are You On the Promotion and Tenure Track?
by Karen Ryker

Although the promotion and tenure process can vary radically from institution to institution, (and certainly from country to country) in many cases the process can cause great anxiety. It can seem like an insurmountable obstacle to some engaged in the beginning stages - or in the final stages of the review process. For those of you who are on the tenure-track within the USA, I offer a few thoughts that might put the process in perspective and suggest a plan of action. Since the promotion and tenure process might play out quite differently in an educational institution outside of the USA, I invite VASTA members you who have experience of those systems and processes to share your thoughts in future issues.

When you join a tenure-granting institution you make a commitment to the institution and to its principles and goals. And the institution makes a commitment to you, which could, over the span of a career, easily represent a million dollars in salary and benefits (particularly health and retirement). A career-long relationship represents a major investment for both you and the institution: you commit your knowledge, talent and energy and the university commits financial support and protection of your academic freedom.

Know the expectations of your institution and of your tenured colleagues (who will likely make decisions concerning your advancement). It is not un-

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