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!

Judylee Vivier
Focus Group Representative
Assistant VASTA Conference Planner 2002

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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-
usual for a faculty member who has been denied tenure to be surprised by the reasons. Since you are ultimately responsible for making a good case for your advancement, it’s never too early to clarify those expectations (even before accepting a tenure-track position). Acquire the guidelines, study them, ask questions, and seek clarifications. Chances are you will have the average five or six years prior to the tenure decision, so establish a workable game plan that allows you to fulfill expectations in a reasonable manner.

**Be your own advocate.** Learn about the history of the tenure situation in your department. Know backgrounds and values of the faculty who will evaluate your case. Ask questions. For instance, if professional activity is expected, how does the department or university define this? Acting or coaching in an Equity company or SAG/AFTRA film? Is a distinction made between Small Professional Theatre and LORT-A or Broadway contracts? If you are expected to achieve national recognition, how is that defined? If significant work away from campus is expected, is there provision for coverage of your duties during an extended absence? If expectations seem unrealistic or impractical, it’s in your best interests to educate the decision-makers, to help establish models (i.e. for national recognition) which are achievable while enabling you to focus on your primary task of education.

**Document the work you are doing.** Have your work videotaped, audiotaped; get peer evaluations, student evaluations, and letters of response to your work. Keep accurate records including dates and names of those with whom you’ve worked. Get invitations in writing - even if you must decline the invitation. Invite other professionals to view your work and then respond in writing. Ask your employers to write letters of evaluation for your file; or better yet, ask your department supervisor to request a formal evaluation from a professional. Request annual reviews.

**Service - Determine what is considered service of value.** Volunteer to serve on appropriate committees. Get involved in national/international professional organizations (such as VASTA, ATHE, ACTF, The Voice Foundation, The Center for Performance Research). Contribute to professional journals (such as our own Voice and Speech Review).

**Above all, begin now.** Create a profile and process that suits your style and talents, and which enables you to become a contributing and valued member of the team. Be partners with those evaluating your tenure progress. Seek their counsel, and think creatively about how to tailor the guidelines to your needs and abilities. You and your colleagues are in this together. Hopefully, you will be partners for a long, creative journey together.

VASTA offers several advocacy documents that are available at no charge to members, and at the modest charge of $5 to non-members. These publications, *Guidelines for Promotion and Tenure, Evaluation Guidelines*, and *Training Guidelines* are available through the current VASTA treasurer, Lisa Wilson. Although the VASTA board is in the process of reviewing and revising these guidelines and supporting materials, the documents, as they currently exist, can be extremely helpful to you and to your tenure review committees. Write for them today!

To order, write:
Lisa Wilson
1535 S. Florence Ave.
Tulsa, OK 74104, USA

Marlene Johnson & Friends at the VASTA banquet in Chicago, 2001

**VASTAVOX**

VASTAVOX is a listserv owned by Dudley Knight at UC-Irvine where members of the list can discuss, via e-mail, concerns about Voice and Speech. This open list allows anyone to join. VASTA members are encouraged to subscribe.

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