

**Agenda for the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Membership**

Monday, June 16, 2025 @ 12:00-2:45pm EDT on Zoom

AGM 2025 Reports, Financials, Minutes: <https://catract.ca/2025-agm-materials>

In attendance: Robin Whittaker (president), Moira Day (secretary), Justin Blum, Jenn Boulay, Cassandre Chatonnier, Heather Davis-Fisch, Dave DeGrow, Melanie Dreyer-Lude, Alex Ferrone, Thea Fitz-James, Barry Freeman, Andy Houston, Matthew Jones, Shelley Liebembuk, Hope McIntyre, Sebastian Samur, Alex Ferrone, Sasha Kovacs, Jimena Ortuzar, Julija Pesic, Jessca Riley, Sebastian Samur, Sara Schroeter, Nicola Sibthorpe, Annie Smith, Fraser Stevens, Walter Strydom, Mike Wallace (Theatre Museums), Kailin Wright

**1. Preliminaries**

**(15 mins)**

a. Call to Order

i. Meeting called to order at 12:11 EDT

b. Land Acknowledgement (President: Robin W.)

c. **MOTION:** to Approve the 2025 AGM Agenda

Moved by Fraser Stevens; Seconded by Jenn Boulay. Passed unanimously.

d. **MOTION:** to Accept the Minutes of the 2024 AGM

Moved by Jenn Boulay; Seconded by Sasha Kovacs. Passed unanimously.

**2. President's Report (President: Robin W.)**

**(15 mins)**

Great thanks were extended to all those who attended Act I on-line three weeks earlier. The very high quality of the sessions was praised, with special thanks being extended to keynote speaker, Jill Carter, for her exceptional and inspirational address. The appreciation of everyone in CATR was also extended to Alex Ferrone for his amazing work as Conference Chair. Thanks were also extended to all Board members who were stepping down at the end of meeting: Alex Ferrone (Vice-president), Fraser Stevens (Rep-at-Large), and Jess Riley (Prairie rep) who was also thanked for her leadership on the CATR archival committee, the Lawrence Prize and in fundraising; Shelley Liebembuk (BC rep) for her work on the ARAO committee, and Craig Walker (Ontario rep) for his invaluable experience and input. Robin W. also mentioned that moving forward into 2025-26, he was looking forward to continuing to work with Jenn Boulay (Graduate rep, accessibility initiatives, social media posts) Jimena Ortuzar (Member-at-Large, co-ordinator of Scholarly Awards Committee and Recognitions Committee, Chair of ARAO), Cassandre Chatonnier (Francophone rep), Justin Blum (Alberta and Territories rep., Working Groups co-ordinator); Sarah Robbins (Unaffiliated scholar rep; interview co-ordinator for 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary), Liviu Dospinescu (Quebec rep), Kailin Wright (moving from Atlantic rep to Vice President); Thea Fitz-James and Matthew Jones, who will continue to work with Alessandro Simari to keep Elections running smoothly this year; Moira Day (Secretary), and Sasha Kovacs (Interim Treasurer). He also welcomed new board members, Stephanie Dotto (Atlantic rep.), Julija Pesic (Ontario rep.), Sara Schroeter (Prairie rep.), Shahrooz Yousefian (BC rep.), Nicola Sibthorpe (Grad student rep), and Heunjung Lee (Representative-at-large). He also mentioned that we elected the second of our two elected positions on the committee on conduct, and welcomed Signy Lynch back on the committee, this time in an elected capacity. Special thanks were also extended to Dave DeGrow (Conference Manager), Sebastian Samur (Communications Co-ordinator) and Giorelle Diokno (Website co-ordinator), as well as Cameron Clark at Phantom Owl for giving our website a refreshing new look (a result of a necessary update to the Wordpress backend).

In reporting on the 2025 conference, Robin W. mentioned that the registration for the on-line conference was high but the actual attendance was curiously low. He hoped that the issue could be looked at more closely and addressed by the Board over the coming year since the high quality of the on-line presentations merited better attention. He mentioned looking forward at the in-person conference in Regina the following week, especially with the Atlas Hotel in Regina promising to be a wonderful conference venue for our first hotel conference. He reminded people that CATR would be in Victoria for 2026, and would be hosted by Sasha Kovacs and the University of Victoria's Department of Theatre. Since this also corresponded with CATR's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, volunteers would be welcome both for the conference itself, and for the series of on-line and in-person anniversary events planned over 2025-26. At its core we would be looking for multiple ways of bringing

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people together who have been attending conferences and been active with CATR for the previous forty-nine years. We would also be working with SQET on the event, especially since we had finally found a way to coordinate and share our membership lists.

In terms of new board members, Robin W. mentioned that CATR needed to find a new treasurer right away. While Sasha K. was willing to stay in the position until we had one, she was soon shifting over to fill the position of conference organizer full-time. As a result, suggestions, nominations, and self-nominations to fill the treasurer position were all much desired and needed. Sasha K., Robin W., and Katrina Dunn were all willing to help any incoming treasurer and CATR was willing to pay a bookkeeper to substantially lighten the load. Robin W. also mentioned that CATR needed a new president by spring, 2026 since he had served his two terms. He offered to talk to anyone who wished to take over.

### 3. Treasurer's Report (Treasurer: Sasha K.)

(15 mins)

Sasha K. mentioned that her primary responsibility was to prepare the 2024 financial statements. She mentioned that she had found that challenging because she had not been treasurer for the full year, and it took a while to learn how to negotiate the terms of our incorporated, non-profit status. We were now using Quickbooks which was a fantastic system, but it did require a specialist-level bookkeeper knowledge. She was recommending that CATR retain a bookkeeper for a limited number of hours throughout the year to keep our bookkeeping up-to-date, and that in turn would allow the process to run more smoothly when we submitted our work to the accountants. She had provided the Financials in advance of the meeting but could show them again on the screen. The data seemed to show a decrease in our assets, but this was due to a number of our investments coming to term, but not yet being redeposited back into our accounts. She and Katrina D. were still migrating the remaining investments left in BMO over to our consolidated accounts in CIBC. Once those numbers were in and balanced against operations, the 2024 budget would show we had had a strong, fiscally responsible year with revenues exceeding expenses, showing improvement over 2023. However, one complication was that TRIC, despite several reminders, had never invoiced us for the TRIC mailouts that typically go to our members so she was still waiting for it. In the meantime, since that amount comes to about \$8,000, she was budgeting for that amount as a kind of deferred liability. Still, even with that amount taken into consideration, both she and the accountant had signed off on it, viewing it as a strong report as regards CATR's fiscal situation.

Thanks was again extended to Sasha K. for her hard work as Treasurer.

- a. **MOTION:** to approve the 2024 year-end financial statements  
Moved by Jessica Riley; Seconded by Fraser Stevens. Unanimously passed.
- b. **MOTION:** to approve the 2025 budget forecast  
Moved by Shelley Liebembuk; Seconded by Barry Freeman. Unanimously passed.
- c. **MOTION:** to appoint Adams & Miles as public accountant for the 2025 fiscal year  
Moved by Justin Blum; Seconded by Jenn Boulay. Unanimously passed.

### 4. Conference (Chair: Alex F.)

(20 mins)

#### a. *CATR 2025 Conference Report*

Alex F. reported that the on-line Act I portion of the conference had been a success. He felt special credit had to be given to Jill Carter for her fascinating and deeply moving keynote address; many of the questions she asked us to consider, were being continually revisited across a lot of the sessions. There had been some small technical hiccups with TheatreAgora over the two days, some of it amounting to simply making sure that people were registered properly so that they could access the Zoom link. Still more work than expected had gone into negotiating the website, and some of the issues should be kept in mind for addressing in the future. While many sessions had been well-attended, we would like to see higher attendance across all the sessions in the future.

At the in-person conference at Regina, the keynote speaker was to be Moira Day. We had 30 sessions scheduled, plus our Associateship and awards ceremonies and banquet. We also had scheduled programming with C-Set (URegina, SK) and Howard University (Washington, DC, USA). We were also planning several theatrical fieldtrips into the City of Regina. Despite the exciting programming, however, we had encountered several financial challenges in the on-site portion of the conference. We did not receive a SSHRC Connections Grant this year, despite our high score. We know that organizers cannot always count on this funding. In our case, it made the difference between running a surplus, and a possible deficit. Additionally,

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the Regina Hotel Association had offered us up to \$10,000 in sponsorship based on the number of room nights that we booked at the Atlas hotel that were associated with our block code. Unfortunately, we did not hit that target, so we only got a portion of that money. Fortunately, it was still enough funding to sponsor our shuttle busses, which is what we had earmarked that money for in the first place.

We were also unable to arrange for an Indigenous host to collaborate with us this year. We had initially approached Sâkêwêwak First Nations Artist Collective, which is a multidisciplinary arts organization in Regina that works with and develops indigenous art and artists. Our thanks to Cassandre C. in helping to make that connection for us. However, while Sâkêwêwak expressed an interest in collaborating with us, they had just finished their annual storytellers' festival and were short-staffed for the summer, so they were not able to work with us in the way we had originally hoped. Two other groups we approached also could not work with us for similar reasons. However, because of the collaboration, advice, and connections we were able to achieve with Sâkêwêwak along the way, we were comfortable in donating the Indigenous Host fund to them anyway.

## b. *CATR 2025 Conference Budget Report*

It was reported that we were currently operating at deficit, though this number was shrinking as registrations continued to come in from people who planned to attend the Regina conference. While we had been given permission to tap into the \$12,500 contingency fund, the deficit was not going to come to anywhere near that, and most of the fund would still remain in place. Looking forward, Alex F. hoped that we would be more successful in getting SSHRC funding for our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference in Victoria in 2026, but cautioned that we could no longer take Connection Grant funding for granted, especially as competition for the funding increased. He suggested that that Theatre and English departments across Canada had continued to be very generous, and bearing in mind how precarious University finances are right now, he was very grateful that we had matched last year's department fundraising, and wanted to express his gratitude to all our colleagues and departments responsible for that. Nonetheless he suggested that CATR may need to fundraise more aggressively in other areas and seek out more stable funding than SHRRC.

There was also a discussion on Indigenous hosts, and best practices moving forward. In addition to thanking Cassandre C. again for the excellent work she had done in this regard at Regina, Alex F. also credited Sara Schroeter for the amazing contribution she had made in reaching out to Indigenous arts organizations in Regina to talk about how to facilitate this kind of collaboration, and to discuss the kinds of protocols we might want to put in place moving forward. It was mentioned that with the increasing emphasis on reconciliation and collaborative practices, Indigenous groups were being called upon more than they had been ten years ago to partner with groups of our kind. As a result, it was felt that more lead time, thought, and work needed to go into approaching and working with a local Indigenous host, and it was important to have someone who is local to the host city to facilitate those kinds of collaboration on a more ongoing basis.

Thanks were extended to Alex F. and the conference committee for all the work they had done. Further discussion focused on fundraising initiatives. As regards SSHRC, it was mentioned that the increasing number of excellent applications being submitted for presentation may be partially a reflection of increasing use of A1. Could we also make greater use of A1 to strengthen and sharply target applications? It was also suggested that we may need to consider raising conference registration fees if SSHRC was no longer reliable. Alex F. suggested that the main reservation against raising fees was the concern about keeping things affordable and accessible for students and the underemployed. In this regard, what we charged for conference fees was quite generous in comparison to what a number of other peer associations were charging. Nonetheless, we needed to fundraise better, if we wanted to stay both accessible and generous in terms of what we could offer our membership.

Robin W. again extended his thanks to Alex F. and to everyone involved in organizing the 2025 conference.

## 5. **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee Report (Chair: Robin W.)**

**(20 mins)**

Robin W. mentioned that our Association was started in 1976, and we ran our first conferences separately from Congress in 2017. We have achieved much over fifty years and need to celebrate that, while constructively critiquing ourselves, and blueskying what directions we hope to travel in the next fifty years, as well as how to achieve the necessary changes to head in that direction. Over the next year, we would particularly like to build our membership and get them involved in our planning for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, which will hopefully extend over the entire twelve-months, culminating in the 2026 anniversary conference at Victoria. He mentioned that this might include regional roundtables possibly held through TheatreAgora and involving our regional reps as

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leaders; gathering interviews through Stephen Johnson's Gatherings Project; and involving both emerging and emeriti members in conference roundtables or sessions. One possible strategy might be to organize discussions with a historical focus around such keywords as nationalism, region, etc., terms that have changed a lot over the past 50 years. It was suggested that further thought needed to be given to additional travel funding for the next year, not only for students and the precariously employed, but also for retirees, if one was hoping to plan special events involving past presidents, Saddlemyer winners, *etc.* In this regard, he mentioned that Jess Riley, Michelle McArthur and Jenn Boulay had started thinking about fundraising for next year as well. We also wanted to closely involve long-term members and associates who had been very active with CATR over the 1970s and 1980s and remained active today. This also meant involving long-term cognate groups such as SQET, *TRIC*, Talonbooks, and Playwrights Canada Press in our discussion of highpoints and challenges.

Following the model of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the University of Victoria, it was suggested that we might want to curate through UVic a similar on-line chronological timeline for CATR, that could be juxtaposed against the one created for UVic. A display of photos, artefacts and similar materials of archival interest might also be assembled from the current archival collection at Guelph as well as materials members currently had in their personal collections. Perhaps it was possible to put together a room or speaker's corner where audio recordings and footage from past conferences, documentaries, or interviews could be played, and people could record their own impressions as well. While it was a project that would have to extend beyond the 2026 conference, perhaps it was possible to use the conference as a focal point to assemble materials for a documentary or a book-length memory book. Robin W. closed on an appeal to the membership to get involved in the committee in any way they could; he also mentioned that Sebastian Samur, as communications officer, would continue to reach out with updates.

On an additional note, Cassandre C. mentioned that SQET was particularly excited about meeting with us at Victoria in 2026. She mentioned that she had attended their conference at Chicoutimi about ten days previous, and they had prepared a tiny exhibition of the archives of SQET featuring all their different bulletins, and publications related to their conferences. They were hoping to do a travelling version of the display and bring it to Victoria. They were also planning to send two delegates, a senior academic and a junior one, to the conference to ensure both perspectives were represented. Robin W. mentioned that CATR had also recently revitalized their association with the University of Guelph's Archives and as a result the latter were open to receiving new records as well as sharing older ones with us. Robin W. further mentioned that we could display archival items on our website as well. Another item that was raised was the question of Working Groups at our annual conference; it was mentioned that working group applications had dipped in recent years. While we could accommodate up to five at a time at our conference, we only had one new application last year. This was another reason to spend 2025-26 reviewing the structure and practice of Working Groups associated with CATR and hosted at the conference.

## 6. Federation Report (President: Robin)

(20 mins)

Robin W. reviewed our long history with the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences. Even as early as the 1930s, an annual congregation of inter-disciplinary Canadian learned societies had started meeting at a single university each year; by the time CATR joined the Learned Societies in 1976, the latter had already been running for about thirty years in its more established format of revolving to universities around the country for a set period every spring. In 1996, the Federation was formed through the merger of the Social Science Federation of Canada and the Canadian Federation for the Humanities; less than a decade later, "the Learned's" became "Congress." While CATR followed the Federation through that transition, by 2016 it was experiencing difficulties related to the growing size and expense of the annual conference. This included difficulty with catering not working; with room scheduling issues that sometimes left theatre departments struggling to get access to rooms, studio spaces, and even theatre spaces within their own buildings; growing expenses; and a sometimes difficult, unwieldy, and clunky bureaucracy. This led to a decision to hold our own conference separately from Congress in 2017; in the years since then, we had returned twice to Congress at Vancouver in 2019 and Montreal in 2024, feeling there were advantages to coordinating our conference to theirs when it was hosted in a larger urban centre.

The advantages of continuing our membership with the Federation and the Congress remain what they have always been: it allows CATR members with memberships in multiple Associations to attend several conferences at the same time and place, and to allow the easier organization of joint sessions with adjunct societies; the book fair allows more face-to-face meetings with editors and book purchase opportunities; there are a larger pool of noted speakers to listen to as part of the larger umbrella event, sometimes childcare facilities, and special grants to help bring in visiting speakers/artists to address your own conference and student assistants as part of EDI initiatives; in bigger cities, there are often related activities and special events in the community scheduled to

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coincide with Congress. The Federations's advocacy function between conferences has also been helpful, especially in earlier years.

Balancing against this, though, are the extra expenses (we pay the Federation about 2,000 to 3,000 a year for membership dependent on the size of our membership), difficulty with aligning deadlines, problems with working with an electronic portal that is slow, inflexible and hard to negotiate; and staff who are often overwhelmed and stretched thin. Additionally, the growing size of Congress has meant more political and labour issues of the kind that complicated the Montreal Congress, and has tended to restrict the movement of Congress to a smaller number of large urban centres in Central Canada; and even then, larger universities have had to rethink the growing expenses and logistical issues of playing host to the event. In 2026, these growing problems climaxed with the original host for the conference withdrawing on short notice, leading to Congress 2026's cancelation, replaced with a smaller, alternative event.

It was suggested that if we withdrew from the Federation, we would have to pay an extra fee to rejoin. However, if we feel secure enough about running our own conference, and can now rely on Zeffy to manage registrations and memberships separately from the Congress portal, we may decide it is worth saving the money we currently devote to Federation membership dues to put towards managing our own conference and advocacy outside the Federation. If moving across the country to a variety of large and mid-sized universities and urban centres was a priority, then the much smaller size of our conference has also made that goal easier and more practical to implement. Additionally, over the past few years Talon and Playwrights Canada have chosen to attend our conference rather than the Congress book fair. Several members wondered if it might be possible to align our conference with that of other close cognate associations, if we wanted to preserve the advantages of overlap and collaboration outside of Congress. It was thought that this might be a possibility, especially with several other longstanding associations thinking of withdrawing from the Federation over their own general frustrations, and specific unhappiness with the disruptions and controversies of the Montreal conference.

Robin W. invited CATR members to write to him about their thoughts and concerns about the Federation. He promised to bring the concerns of the Board and the CATR membership to the Federation when he met with the Federation at their upcoming AGM.

## 7. *Other Business / No Oral Report*

**(30 mins)**

- a. Conference Working Groups Report (WG Liaison: Justin B.)
- b. Recognitions
  - i. Associateships Report (President: Robin W.)
  - ii. Scholarly Awards Report (Coordinator: Jimena O.)
  - iii. Scholarships and Grants Report (Chair: Emily R.)
  - iv. Lawrence Prize Report (Chair: Michelle M.)
- c. Membership
  - i. Membership Report (Membership Coordinator: Heidi L.)
  - ii. Elections Report (Nominations Committee Chair: Matt J.)
  - iii. Graduate Students Report (Grad Student Rep: Jenn B.)
  - iv. Unaffiliated Scholar Report (Unaffiliated Scholar Rep: Sarah R.)
  - v. ARAO Report (Co-Chairs: Robin, Jimena O.)
  - vi. Accessibility Report (Accessibility Coordinator: Jenn B.)
  - vii. Communications Report (Communications Coordinator: Sebastian S.)
  - viii. Committee on Conduct Report (Committee Rep: Jess W.)
  - ix. Zeffy Report (Conference Manager: Dave DeGrow)
- d. Cross-Institutional Reports
  - i. Theatre Agora Report (Theatre Agora Co-Chair: Fraser S.)
  - ii. SQET Report (CATR Liaison to SQET: Cassandre C.)
  - iii. Ad Hoc Committee on *TRIC* Report (Chair: Fraser S.)
- e. Archival Committee Report (Chair: Jess R.)

## 8. **Adjournment**

Moved by Barry Freeman; Seconded by Kaitlin Wright. Passed unanimously. Adjourned at 2:00.