

Many years ago, on his way to the Tony Awards in New York, the great Broadway lighting designer Boris Aaronson, a Tony-nominee, was congratulated by friends, who said, "Good luck! Oh, but you won't need any!" to which Mr. Aaronson reacted strongly: he had already won a number of Tonys, but he told his friends:

"I need all the luck I can get. Success in the theatre is a miracle!"

Tonight here in New Bern we honor one of the great success stories in the history of North Carolina's dramatic arts. Of actress-director-producer-&-educator Bo Thorp and the Cape Fear Regional Theatre I can proudly say:

To have started a theatre in an old moviehouse in a tough North Carolina town, to have shepherded and sustained it, season after season, and built a base of thousands of subscribers – this alone would be amazing. Hundreds of shows over nearly fifty years, classics and new shows from New York, including: *Guys & Dolls, Streetcar, You Can't Take It with You, Fiddler, Forum, Dark of the Moon, Gypsy, Becket, Grease, Robber Bridegroom; Look Homeward, Angel; Fences, Indians, A Midsummer Night's Dream . . .*

Yet on top of that, to have ultimately devoted so much of the theatre's efforts toward presenting, and in many cases engendering, original works by North Carolina playwrights, composers, and lyricists, and thereby to have *this* element –

so full of trial and chance – become a hallmark of the work of this theatre – this too is an amazing feat. And it is precisely what UNC Professor Frederick Koch was after when he founded, ninety years ago, the Carolina Playmakers, where Bo Thorp trained, and called for “fresh dramatic forms [for] the traditions and present-day life of the people – *a native theater.*”

Ms. Thorp worked with one of Proff Koch’s first students – Paul Green – on *The Highland Call*. And she has involved *many* North Carolina authors from the current generation in doing shows at the Cape Fear Regional Theatre: *INCLUDING* Clyde Edgerton, John Justice, Lee Smith, Jill McCorkle, Jim Wann, Mike Craver, Don Dixon, Jack Herrick and myself. And that means not only shows at the jewel-box *CAPE FEAR* theater in the Haymount section of town, but also shows on a second stage, an outdoor theatre that CFRT operates, seasonally, on the Cape Fear riverside near the Person Street bridge.

Bo, you and the theatre have certainly lived up to your motto: “...to enlighten, inspire and educate...” To have celebrated the classics and to have invested in contemporary writers and new works, to have collaborated excellently for a lifetime in the evolving, living theatre, this is a miracle . . . and for this, the North Carolina Literary & Historical Association’s first annual Hardee Rives Award for Dramatic Arts is presented to Bo Thorp, Artistic Director, and her company, the Cape Fear Regional Theatre of Fayetteville . . .

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