

Wing Words

The Occasional Newsletter of the Pegasus Awards

Volume 1, Number 1

Welcome to Wing Words

We'll be popping up periodically to bring you news, comments, topics, and tidbits about the Pegasus Awards. In the same way that the Peggies' year has four "seasons", brainstorming, nomination, voting, and getting ready for next year, we hope to put out four issues. Look for it on the flyer table at your favorite filkcon and filk-friendly general SF convention.

So You Want to Be in a Pegasus Concert?

Erica Neely

One of the questions I get asked a lot (in various plaintive tones) is "How can I be in a Pegasus concert?" It occurred to me, therefore, that it might be useful to write up how a Pegasus concert gets put together. Hopefully this will dispel any misconceptions people have, and may also help me get new people on stage! I'm in favor of that.

The first thing to note is that authors get the right of first refusal. If the author of a song is going to be at OVFF, they get first dibs on performing their own song. Everything else is at my discretion. Now, in general I try to abide by any requests that authors may have. For instance, if a song of Gwen Knighton's is nominated, I'm happy to see if Three Weird Sisters is coming to OVFF and can do the song. However, I cannot guarantee that I will satisfy all author requests. If, for instance, every single person had requested Bill Roper cover their song this year, I would have had to disappoint some of them. Although I might be willing to pay good money to watch him try to sing both vocal lines of "Home" at once, having him do every song is not going to make a good concert. (Entertaining, yes, but not necessarily in the most productive way.)

My job is to put together a concert that showcases each nominee and is enjoyable to the audience. I try to get best performer nominees up on stage at some point if it's possible, since it's nice for people to get a chance to

hear them. But after that it comes down to asking myself a series of questions: Do I know anyone who does this song? Have I heard anyone do this song in a circle, say? Have I heard about anyone who does this song? Can I think of someone who would be a good fit for this song, even if I've never heard them do it? So, for instance, last year I needed someone to cover "Black Davie's Ride." I know that Art Warneke is a go-to guy for Cynthia McQuillin songs, so he was a natural choice. Similarly, when "Archetype Café" was nominated, I remembered that I'd wandered past a circle around 3 a.m. at FKO and heard Brooke Lunderville do an awesome job with it...so I emailed her to see if she'd be coming to OVFF.

The only problem is that while I know a lot of people, I don't know everyone. (Although if I don't know you, feel free to introduce yourself to me some time when I'm not running around on Pegasus business. I'm generally very friendly and I rarely bite.) And while I can hear a lot of different performances, I can't be everywhere. So there are undoubtedly people who would do fabulous jobs whom I just don't know about. These people are getting left out of the concert, not out of malice or deliberate exclusion, but just because I'm not omniscient.

Fortunately, I have a cunning plan. What I would like to do is have people email me (drneely@earthlink.net) if they are interested in performing in some future Pegasus concert. If you are interested, I need four things from you. (I will put these into a database on my computer for easy reference, but it will not be distributed in any way.) The first two things I need are easy – I need your name and your email address. The third thing I need is some sense of your repertoire. Do you know a lot of German filk songs? West coast filk songs? Old filk songs? (This last one would be particularly handy, because often songs in "Best Classic" are hard to find people for.) Heck, even if you are eclectic, that's good to know too; it means I might drop you a line some time and go "Do you know any of

these songs?" The fourth thing I need to know is whether you would be willing and able to learn a folk song for the Pegasus Concert if I needed you to. This is a very important question.

Last year I put up my semi-traditional post on LiveJournal looking for people who knew various of the nominated songs. No one would admit to knowing "Ship of Stone." No one would admit to *knowing* anyone who knew "Ship of Stone." (Clearly someone does know the song, since it wouldn't be on the ballot otherwise. But I couldn't find them.) So two weeks before the con, Bill Roper kindly stepped in to save me from my impending nervous breakdown by volunteering to learn the song. He did a fine job, but it'd be nice to have other people I can lean on in times of need as well. Want to be my new best friend? Be willing (and able) to learn a song for me.

Now, a few caveats. First, being on this list doesn't mean you'll necessarily be in the concert next year. It doesn't necessarily mean you'll be in the concert ever – it all depends on what gets nominated and what I need. But you have a lot better chance if I know you're interested than if I don't. Second, once you're on my list, you don't need to send me a lot of emails reminding me that you're interested. I'll remember. Few things are more annoying than having people repeatedly volunteer to do particular songs. Enthusiasm is fine, but repeatedly pestering me makes me less likely to use you. I'm only human, folks, and if it comes down to a choice between someone low-maintenance and easy to work with or someone who emails me every other day telling me how fabulous they are, I'm going to go with the low-maintenance person. (And I'll form my own opinions about how fabulous you are, thanks.) So far I haven't held this kind of breach of etiquette against anyone, but it'd be nice to avoid if possible.

Third, there are many, many things that are unnecessary for being chosen to be in the concert. I don't care if you: haven't been a guest, don't have an album out, haven't ever been on a CD, haven't done a concert at a major folk con, haven't done a concert period, don't play an instrument, can no longer play an instrument, aren't someone I know personally...do you get the idea? I care about finding good people for particular songs so I can put together a good concert. If I've never heard you, I'll probably try to have a listen at some point. It's helpful for me to know whether you're an ethereal soprano or a grainy alto, a person with rock-

styling or a person with an operatic vocal quality, and so forth. I want to be able to match people and songs. But there's not some kind of secret handshake that you need to know or anything. In fact, I particularly like getting new people on stage and getting new versions of songs we've heard before – it's what keeps the concert interesting!

Note specifically that if you're an a cappella performer, that's not a problem. We have people do a cappella performances, and we also have musicians who would be thrilled to accompany you, if you want. So don't worry about that either. We have ways of making this all work. So don't sell yourself short or figure that you have to be a Big Name to be on stage – you don't. You just need to be someone that I think would do a good job at filling a particular need that I have.

Special note to instrumentalists: I would be thrilled also to have a database of instrumentalists who would be willing to accompany Pegasus performers. I'm particularly looking for non-guitar players (because I'm more likely to need them), but having a list of people who can work up a basic guitar accompaniment (or do lead guitar with someone else) is useful too. Email me with your information too, please!

Hopefully this has made the Pegasus concert process a little less mysterious; please feel free to email me (drneely@earthlink.net) if you're interested in performing or if you have any questions. I'm always happy to talk Pegasus with people!

Wing Words Wants to Hear From You!

Send your questions, comments, and concerns to:

WingWords@ovff.org

Next Issue

The floating categories for 2008 are Best Comedy Song and Best Tragedy Song. We'll take a look at "Comedy" vs. "Funny" and "Tragedy" vs. "Serious" and why the former half of each pair is a good bit different from the latter half of the pair.

Hint: "Ian the Grim" is a tragedy. "Hope Eyrie" is serious. (Unless we never get back to the Moon. **Then**, it's a tragedy...)