

Wing Words

The Occasional Newsletter of the Pegasus Awards

Volume 1, Number 2

The Seasons of the Pegasus

Like nature, the Pegasus Awards go through four seasons. The first, starting after New Year's Day, is the brainstorming period. During this time, you can fill out a paper ballot or go to the Pegasus website. (It looks like the website hasn't quite been updated as of this writing, but it should be ready shortly.)

The purpose of the brainstorming period is to get a wide variety of suggestions out in front of people to help guide them during the nominating process. The Pegasus committee goes over the suggested songs, carefully removes those that have already won or are otherwise ineligible, and produces a paper ballot for the nominating process that includes representative songs for each filker suggested in each category. The website, having more space, gets less culling.

We need you all to participate in the brainstorming process, because you've likely run into talented people that some of us have never heard of. Without your input, we **still** won't have heard of them.

Brainstorming season runs through the end of FilkOntario. The committee then prepares the nominating ballot, which you'll usually see released at Marcon and which you'll always find on the Pegasus website.

Nominating season usually runs until about a month before Labor Day. Because Worldcon is early in August this year instead of over Labor Day weekend, we'll be accepting paper ballots through the end of the con, with on-line nominations closing slightly earlier.

Nominating season is where **you** make the most difference. There are many, many songs, songwriters, and performers who are eligible to win a Pegasus Award – you get to nominate up to five people or songs in each category. If you don't nominate someone, they or their work won't have a chance of appearing on the

final ballot. And that brings us around to the concept of the "wasted vote". Some folks might argue that nominating what you really like, regardless of whether you think enough other someones like the same thing is simply a waste of a vote. It's better to nominate something or someone that's popular, because that way you'll have the biggest chance of influencing the ballot.

Here's a Pegasus fact – because there are **so many** things that are eligible in any category, it doesn't always take a lot of votes to get something on the final ballot. If you vote for what you like best, it just might surprise you and sneak onto the ballot. And to be honest, we're **always** happy to see something new and interesting pop out of the process.

After we get your nominating ballots and tally them, we contact the nominees and see if they want to accept the nomination. Not everyone does, for a variety of reasons, and it's **always** their choice. But eventually, we have a full ballot.

And then it's voting season. Some folks vote early, some folks vote late. But you'll always find representative samples of the nominated songs, writers, and performers up on the Pegasus website to help you decide who you want to vote for. If you can make it to OVFF and haven't yet made up your mind – or even if you **have** and just want to enjoy the music – you can listen to the Pegasus Nominees' concert on Friday night and hear all of the nominated songs before casting your ballot.

Then the committee counts the ballots late into the night, determines the winners, and orders the awards for Saturday night's Pegasus Award banquet. If they have any energy left after that, they go filking.

The fourth Pegasus season? Complete exhaustion on the part of the Pegasus committee. It's been a long year, hasn't it?

Dying Is Easy, Comedy Is Hard

Above are the reported last words of Sir Donald Wolfit, a British actor and director. That's particularly apropos this year, as we find that the floating categories for the Pegasus Awards have drifted to "Comedy" and "Tragedy". It turns out that defining tragedy is relatively easy; defining comedy is a bit more difficult.

Let's start with the easy case: tragedy. The handy dictionary.com defines tragedy as "a dramatic composition, often in verse, dealing with a serious or somber theme, typically that of a great person destined through a flaw of character or conflict with some overpowering force, as fate or society, to downfall or destruction". Looking at past Pegasus winners, you see that "Ian the Grim" is clearly a tragedy, while "Shai!" – although an equally serious (and only **slightly** longer) song – is clearly not.

There are many funny songs, but not all of them are comedy. Returning to dictionary.com, comedy is defined as "a play, movie, etc., of light and humorous character with a happy or cheerful ending; a dramatic work in which the central motif is the triumph over adverse circumstance, resulting in a successful or happy conclusion".

A song is clearly part of the "etc." above. A comedy needs to be funny, but it doesn't necessarily have to have a "happy" ending. Cheerful will do, as was the case with "Falling Down on New Jersey". "Threes" has a happy ending, but no one would mistake it for a comedy.

But what makes a funny song **not** a comedy? One thing might be the absence of a plot. "I Want to be Peter Lorre" is an absolute stitch of a song, but it isn't so much a dramatic work as a statement of intent. There doesn't necessarily need to be a **lot** of plot – veering off to musical comedy, "Mamma Mia" isn't exactly long on plot, but it's clearly a comedy.

Comedy and tragedy both tell stories, just in different ways and with different results. And depending on how it's handled, dying by slipping on a banana peel can be either comic or tragic. It all depends on how the author gets you there.

And we got you to the end of this little essay on comedy and tragedy without once mentioning the Three Unities.

Our Mailbox Is Mostly Empty

Our mailbox would be **completely** empty if it didn't have two test messages in it. Since we know it's working, that's probably even sadder than if there were nothing there at all.

We'd like to hear from you about what you'd like us to discuss in Wing Words and what you think of our first two issues. You can contact us at:

WingWords@ovff.org

Looking for Back Issues?

Previous issues of Wing Words are available in PDF format on the Pegasus website. Our first issue includes an essay from Pegasus Evangelista Erica Neely on what goes into assembling the Pegasus Nominees concert each year and how you can volunteer for future concerts. (We hear that one person has actually read the essay and volunteered; **you** could be next!)

Getting the Wing Words Out

We distribute Wing Words at the filk conventions and at other filk-friendly conventions. It's easy for us to find the filk conventions, but we need a little help locating all of the filk-friendly conventions. If you're involved with a filk-friendly con, give us a shout at the e-mail address above and we'll work to make sure that your convention gets some. (If you'd like to **help** get them there, we'd appreciate that help too!)

Coming Next Issue

We've spent this issue chatting about the floating categories. Next issue, we'll talk about the fixed categories and how they're handled.

Write a Song!

If you can write a (non-trivial) song in the space remaining on this page, your handwriting is too small!