

## Summertime!

It's still a bit chilly as we write this, but summer's coming and we're certainly looking forward to it. And as we move into summer, the Pegasus brainstorming poll has closed, the results are coming up on the website, and it's time to think about nominating your favorite songs, composers, and performers.

Everyone's got an opinion as to what makes a song or a person worthy of winning a Pegasus Award. While we could regale you with our own thoughts on the subject, we thought it might be entertaining to ask some of the experienced organizers of filk conventions what they had to say.

So let's line them up:

### Gary McGath – Concertino

There are songs which really grab people and then are forgotten a year or two later. Then there are songs which last – because they tell a great story, or make you laugh or cry, or say something important without pounding it into you, or have a wonderful tune. The songs which you love to hear not just the first time, but the tenth. The songs where every word counts, and the tune works together with the words (if it's an original tune) or the parody complements the original perfectly.

These are the songs which are Pegasus-worthy, which deserve not just the day's applause but more permanent recognition.

Similarly, there are performers who give importance to songs. They let you experience the story and not just hear it, they make you laugh or cry, they make you feel the message of a song and bring out the qualities of its tune. Songs and singers both come in many styles, but in their different ways, all the ones that are Pegasus-worthy give you a musical experience worth remembering.



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### Dr. James Robinson – Consonance

#### *What Makes a Song Worth Nominating?*

There are dozens of reasons to like a song. A good story, clever rhymes, elegant poetry, or a catchy tune all will capture our attention and compel us to hear a song again and again; perhaps we even learn it so we can perform it ourselves. For me, a great song touches and moves some deep part of me, whether it be my mind, my heart, my guts, or my funny bone. Lyrics and tune collaborate to inspire images, memories and feelings that sweep me into the song's world and hold me there long after the song has ended. When a song of any style moves me in this way, I think it's worth nominating.

#### *What Makes a Performer Worth Nominating?*

The most important criterion for me is the performer's ability to connect both with the audience and with the song being performed. To connect with an audience requires lack of self-consciousness, familiarity and comfort with the instrument being played, a good – or at least interesting – voice, songs chosen to support the singer's style, and a presence commanding interest and attention. It helps if the performer appears to be singing to each individual in the

audience, drawing them into the world created by the song.

Connecting with the song means that the singer knows it well enough to give it emotional or humorous nuance, so that each word or phrase means what it says. A good performer feels and lives the song while singing it, which brings it alive to the listeners. Face and body language, vocal inflection and instrumental styling should support, and not distract from, the material. A performer worth nominating leads us in the journey of the song, so that we both love and remember the song, and also feel like we know our tour guide in a more intimate way.

### **Steve Macdonald – DFD, Pegasus Evangelista Emeritus**

*Songs:* There are a few different qualities I look for in songs that I submit on Brainstorming Polls and Nominate. First, and foremost – it needs to be something that I remember. This is more difficult than it looks at first – but if I can only remember it as "that song that so-and-so did that was pretty cool" but not bring to mind any details of the song, or what it was about, then while good, it's not quite up there enough for a nomination.

I look for a unique perspective, or fresh looks at old topics. I seem to have a soft spot for exploring the reasons someone makes poor choices (e.g. "bad guys"), though a good "come from behind" song holds a lot of interest for me as well. A musical "hook" that keeps the song fresh in your head helps a great deal as well, but is not always necessary.

*Performers:* Technical skill, while nice, is really not the point for me in this category. How well does the performer communicate with their audience? Have I seen them perform in other venues than at filk cons? And if so, how did they do? It's all about communication, and creating an emotional space that carries everyone along. One of the most telling points – when they make a mistake, is it handled smoothly and without

interrupting the moment, or are you jarred out of place?

*Composers:* To me, someone who has written one really notable song does not belong in this category. Nominees here should have a body of work that is well recognized by folks in the community. From there, then I just apply my gut guidelines on songs: unique perspective or skillful handling of "traditional" filk topics, do they use hooks and how well, etc.

### **Ask Peggy!**

It's time again for our recurring feature where our resident expert, Peggy A. Ward, answers your questions about the Pegasus. And here's a question about last issue's column from "A.P. Admin" in Ada, Ohio:

"You just said that a song can only be on the ballot in two consecutive years. But 'Black Davie's Ride' was on the ballot for its third consecutive year in 2008 and won a Pegasus Award. What's going on with that?"

Good question! There's a special case in the rules that allows a song to appear in one of the floating categories, even if it means the song would be nominated for the third year in a row. After that, it would **definitely** be taking a year off. That clause is in the rules because it would be a shame to disqualify a song from a floating category that it was just **perfect** for.

And now you know.

### **Send Us Mail**

Fine! See what I care! Don't write to me. Sniff, sniff.

(Please send the editor your comments and questions before she becomes despondent. Life will be better for all of us.)

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