

pittsburgh applause!

arts & entertainment newsletter

Protestors At Opera Benefit

On May 12, an estimated 200 protestors gathered outside the **Pittsburgh Opera's** headquarters in the Strip District to express their objection to the Opera's honoring Governor Tom Corbett and his wife at their annual Maecenas Benefit Gala.

The protestors were angry at the Pittsburgh Opera for honoring the governor despite his budgetary policies regarding arts education in public schools. "We've seen 50 music educators lose their jobs this year alone," Belle Vernon

School District educator Michael Rozell told UrbanMediaToday.com. "And more have been told they will lose theirs in the fall."

In a letter published in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, the Pittsburgh Opera's general director, Christopher Hahn, explained that they were honoring the state's First Couple specifically for their support of the arts through the **Pennsylvania Council on the Arts** (PCA). Republicans in the state legislature have been attempting to make huge cuts in the PCA's budget, which the governor has managed to prevent.

Locally, PCA grants are administered by the **Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council** (GPAC), whose executive director, Mitch Swain, distributed an eblast on May 11 defending Governor Corbett's record --- something that did not sit well with board member Charlie Humphrey of **Pittsburgh Filmmakers/Pittsburgh Center for the Arts**, who abruptly resigned in protest. Humphrey told the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's* Marylynne Pitz that Swain's email was "a one-sided 'fact' sheet." In her same article, Pitz discovered what may be an error in the email. Swain seemed to imply that a past *Post-Gazette* article by former staffer Dennis Roddy stated the governor restored \$800 million in arts funding. However, Pitz writes that she did a check of the paper's data-

base and couldn't find such an article.

Pittsburgh Applause has reached out to key parties for comment. Christopher Hahn responded, standing by his published letter. Mitch Swain also responded, clarifying that Roddy's comments were made in a memo not a newspaper article. The *Post-Gazette* has since published that clarification. Swain also praised Humphrey calling him "a valuable part of our arts community" and that he will be missed from the GPAC board.

The issue continued to grow in the following days. In the May 23 edition of *Pittsburgh City Paper*, editor Chris Potter defended the Opera's decision explaining that "if arts groups snubbed everyone who was a jerk at their day job, well . . . his town would be short a couple of museums." At the same time he criticized Swain's blaming local school districts for laying off arts teachers in his eblast: "That's a little like blaming firefighters for not rescuing everyone when an arsonist torches a building."

Post-Gazette editorial cartoonist Bob Rogers has also weighed in, with this cartoon <http://blogs.sites.post-gazette.com/index.php/opinion/rob-rogers-cartoons/34181-drumming-corbett>

For more, see the editorial on page 11.

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A&E Group

643 Liberty Avenue Suite 401
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
Ph (412) 325-7070
Fx (412) 325-7069

Steeltown Announces Winners

This year's winners of the Ellen Weiss Kander Award have been announced by **Steeltown Entertainment Group** as part of their annual Steeltown Film Factory program.



Founded in 2003, the Steeltown Entertainment Project's mission is to build a vibrant and sustainable entertainment industry in Southwestern Pennsylvania. The award is named in honor of attorney and co-founder Ellen Weiss Kander. The winners were selected from over 180 script submissions and determined by a committee of industry professionals.

First Place went to Yulin Kuang. Born in China and raised in Kansas, she is a recent graduate of **Carnegie Mellon University**. Kuang receives \$15,000 towards turning her script "The Perils of Growing Up Flat-Chested" into a short film. It is a coming-of-age tale inspired by her own teen years. "This is a story I feel particularly compelled to tell," Kuang explained to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's* Barbara Vancheri. "Something I couldn't have known then was that the horrible agonies of adolescence would be useful" to her future self.

The \$10,000 Second Place has been awarded to Chris Preksta for "Echo Torch," about a man who invents a light that can see ghosts.

Third Place and \$5000 went to the team of Scott Peters and Anthony Poremski for "Escape from St. Quentin's," a comedy about a young boy trying to escape church to play football with his friends.

In addition, awards for Steeltown's second annual Take A Shot At Changing The World contest were announced. Students from over 20 area middle and high schools submitted short videos about how Pittsburgh has or can change the world. To learn more, and to watch videos of the entries, visit <http://takeashotcontest.org/>

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Kelly Award Winners

A suburban high school north of Pittsburgh was the big winner of this year's Gene Kelly Awards.



First held in 1991, they are given out annually by the **Pittsburgh Civic Light** Opera in partnership with the **University of Pittsburgh** to celebrate excellence in musical theater staged in the region's high schools. It is named after Pittsburgh native, actor/director/choreographer Gene Kelly (1912-1996).

Avonworth High School won seven awards, including Best Musical, for its production of the

daring musical "Sweeney Todd". The musical thriller, written by Stephen Sondheim and Hugh Wheeler and first performed on Broadway in 1979, is the bloody story of a man seeking revenge on the world. He does this by opening a barber shop, killing his customers and baking them in pies.

The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's* Sharon Ebersson has posted the complete list of winners online at <http://www.post-gazette.com/stories/ae/theater-dance/avonworth-wins-big-in-the-kelly-awards-637752/>

PSO Gets Major Honor

The **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra** (PSO) has received a prestigious International Classical Music Award for their recording of a symphony by Austrian composer Gustav Mahler (1860-1911).



Originally called the Cannes Classical Awards, they are selected by a collection of music critics and awarded at the annual Marché International du Disque et de l'Edition Musicale (MIDEM), the largest trade fair for the music industry. MIDEM is held each spring in Cannes, France.

In a press release, the PSO's music director, Manfred Honeck said "The members of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and I are very exciting to receive this recognition for our work. It is a great honor to have been chosen by this very distinguished jury . . . Having grown up in Vienna, I feel a personal connection with Mahler's music and I try to bring some special Viennese elements to the interpretation of these works."

The recording featured Mahler's fourth symphony and conducted by Honeck. The CD remains available at retailers.

Locals Get Tony Noms

This year's Tony Award nominations have been announced --- and they include some local connections.

The Tony --- officially the Antoinette Perry Award for Excellence in Theatre --- is presented jointly by the **American Theatre Wing** and the **Broadway League** to recognize achievement in live Broadway theater.

Ted Pappas of the **Pittsburgh Public Theater** (PPT) earned nods for two plays he was involved with: "Cybourne Park" and "Other Desert Cities". Both are coming to the PPT in the next season.

In a pair of complementing stories, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's* Sharon Ebersson has found several other nominees with Pittsburgh ties, including director/choreographer Kathleen Marshall, actor Christian Borle and actress Judith Light. For a complete list visit http://www.tonyawards.com/en_US/index.html



Movie & TV News

Another big-budget film may be coming to Pittsburgh as early as October, reports Barbara Vancheri of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

That film is called "Foxcatcher" and tells the true story of a descendant of industrialist E. I. du Pont who killed an Olympic wrestler and subsequently died in prison.

In other news:

Tom Cruise's movie version of the novel *One Shot* has been given a new title. It is now being called "Jack Reacher," after the character Cruise plays. Much of it was filmed in Pittsburgh and presumably has been testing well as the studio has moved the release date from February 2013 to December 2012.

Actor John Hamm, will star in a new film about a sports agent who signs a pair of unlikely rookie players --- both from India --- to the **Pittsburgh Pirates**. No director has been signed and no word yet if any of the film will be shot in the area.

Speaking of television series, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*'s Rob Owen reports that a proposed online TV show that was to be produced in Pittsburgh has been relocated. The 13-episode series --- based on a novel by a local author --- has been moved to Toronto. Owen's article also says the **Pittsburgh Film Office** feels that the production company changed locations because it didn't understand how the state's tax credit program works.

Cartoonists Coming

Pittsburgh has been chosen by the **National Cartoonists Society** as the site for their next annual convention, in May 2013.

Born in 1946, the National Cartoonists Society (NCS) represents professional cartoonists working in many fields, from comic books to editorial cartoons. It is not a union or a guild.

As many as 300 professional illustrators will be descending on downtown, a long-time goal of Joe Wos, the founder of Pittsburgh's **ToonSeum**. The ToonSeum is one of only three museums in the country dedicated to the cartoon arts. Wos told Sharon Ebersson of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* that he hopes that

the convention will allow the public to participate. "One of the things I've been working toward building in Pittsburgh is a community of artists and their fans," he told Ebersson. "That's why I want to make sure that this time there is a public component." Past conventions have been closed off to all but members and their guests.

More information on the NCS is available at <http://www.reuben.org/>

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Images

Photos Celebrating Pittsburgh's
Arts/Entertainment History & Community



Here is a candid shot from this year's Steeltown Film Factory contest showing the winners of this year's Ellen Weiss Kander Award.

— Source: Steeltown Entertainment Project

To have an image considered, email Jim Richards at jim@james-richards.com



June is Pride Month, a celebration of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community.

Log on to the calendar for a special feature section of related events.

FRI
1
The Three Rivers Arts Festival and Jazz Live International are back, and we have sections on them, too.

FRI
1
An exhibit opens at the **Pittsburgh Glass Center** offering the first comprehensive survey of works by Australian artist Nick Mount.

SAT
2
Go "Full Bloom" at the **Kelly-Strayhorn's** annual party.

SAT
2
Sexy cartoon legend Betty Boop is the center of an animated festival at the **ToonSeum**.

THU
7
Local singer/songwriter Carla Bianco performs her original pop songs at **Stage AE**.

FRI
8
Betty Boop isn't the only sexpot in town this month: violinist Joshua Bell joins the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra at **Heinz Hall** tonight.

FRI
8
The Gospel musical "Who Do You Love" at the **New Hazlett** offers a modern take on an inspiring Biblical story.

SAT
9
As part of Pride Month, the great Melissa Ethridge is performing in an outdoor concert.

SUN
10
Speaking of Pride Month, the annual Pride Fest is today.

THU
14
DJ and producer Avicii heats up the **Consol Energy Center** offering club anthems for the biggest dance party you've ever seen.

FRI
15
The Pittsburgh Symphony officially ends its season at **Heinz Hall** with a program dedicated to English composer Eugene Goossens

SAT
16
Sing a happy tune at the **Carnegie Science Center** for the new interactive exhibit "Guitar".

SAT
16
A trio of intertwined exhibits at the **Frick Art & Historical Center** explores 200 years of printmaking.

SUN
17
Be sure to check out our list of Father's Day events!

THU
21
Grammy winning vocalist Sylvia McNair joins the Pittsburgh Pops for an all-Gershwin program at **Heinz Hall**.

FRI
22
The darkly funny and haunting musical "Next To Normal" bows at the **New Hazlett** with its unique look at our over medicated world.

FRI
22
The alternative rock band Modest Mouse is anything but modest at **Stage AE**.

SAT
23
Opening at the **Andy Warhol Museum** is an exhibit offering the first comprehensive survey of artist and activist Donald Moffett.

SAT
23
Savor some home-grown cuisine at the **Heinz Regional History Center**.

FRI
29
The great trio En Vogue performs their signature R&B at a **Heinz Hall** charity concert.



The City's Best Online Calendar Can Be Found At
www.post-gazette.com/events

National/World A&E News Round-Up

Court Declines Downloading Appeal

In late May, the United States Supreme Court declined to review a jury award against a university student for illegally downloading songs --- giving the music industry something to smile about.

In 2009, **Boston University** student Joel Tenenbaum lost a jury trial which convicted him of illegally downloading 30 songs and ordering the young man to pay \$675,000 to the plaintiffs. Those plaintiffs include some of the industry's biggest music labels.

Jennifer Pariser of the **Recording Industry Association of America** explained to TheWrap.com that the message is that "people are not anonymous when they steal music online and they can be sued." Meanwhile, Tenenbaum told TheWrap.com that he will ask the district court to reduce the fine, but added "nearly any amount of damages I am forced to pay will bankrupt me or be an obligation I will have to share with my family".

Way Off-Broadway Honors

The honorees of this year's Broadway League Awards have been announced. Among them are Tom Gabbard, of **Blumenthal Performing Arts Center** in Charlotte, NC and Wayne McWorter of the **Nederlander Organization's** Pantages Theater in Los Angeles.

Founded in 1930, the **Broadway League** is the national association for the Broadway industry including

theater owners, operators and producers. The Broadway League Awards recognize excellence and achievement for touring shows. They were first presented in 1992. For more information, visit <http://www.broadwayleague.com>.

A Royal Honor

Rene Buch, the Cuban-American co-founder and artistic director of **Repertorio Espanol** has been honored with the Order of Isabella the Catholic.

Repertorio Espanol was founded in 1968 to present the best of Latin American, Spanish and Hispanic-American theater to a broad audience in New York City and across the country. The company has won many awards, including the Drama Desk. The Order of Isabella is granted by the Spanish crown to non-Spanish citizens in recognition of services that benefit or foster Spanish culture and cultural exchange. The order was created in 1815 by King Ferdinand VII.

Buch will receive the order at a ceremony in New York this month. In a press release, he expressed his pride: "As my parents were subjects of the Spanish crown, I believe they would be very happy."

Making The Big Change

Just in time for Pride Month, punk rocker Tom Gabel of the band Against Me has announced that he will begin living life as a she.

According to Wikipedia, Gabel has gender dysphoria, a medically recognized condition for people

who have difficulty or cannot identify with the gender of their birth. He has begun taking female hormones and will likely undergo gender reassignment surgery.

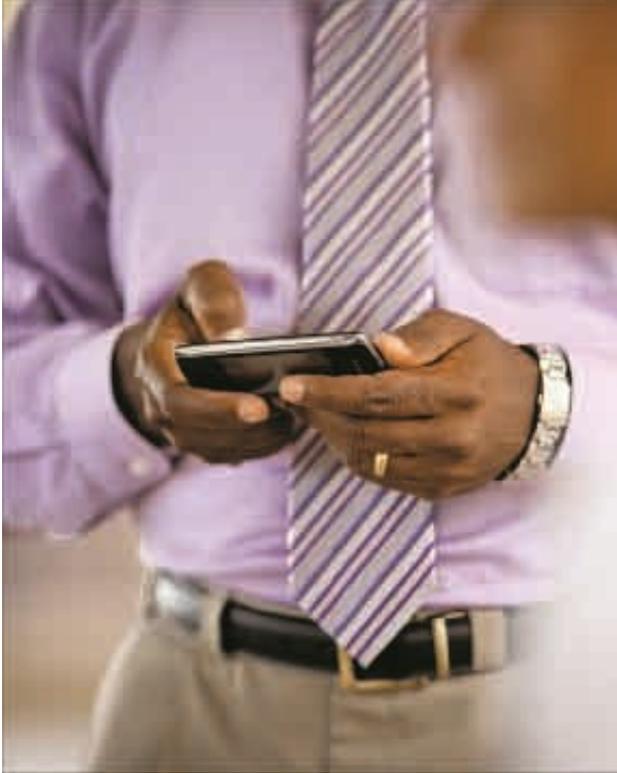
"I'm going to have embarrassing moments and that won't be fun," he tells *Rolling Stone*. But he is being open with the press in the hope that the public "will understand, and hoping they'll be fairly kind."

Once he completes his transition to a woman, Gabel plans to take the name Laura Jane Grace. He has been married twice and has a daughter. His current wife, visual artist Heather Hannoura, is said to be fully supportive.

Watching TV Without TV

More and more people are watching their TV online, reports MediaPost.com. In an article written by Wayne Friedman, an analytics company has determined that for the first three months of 2012 more long-form content (i.e., longer than 10 minutes) was consumed than shorter videos. The rise in tablets and smartphones are cited as the reasons.

The time watched on smartphones grew by 41% and by 26% for tablet; 95% of tablet video viewing is on iPads.



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First Merged Meeting

The national board of the newly merged **SAG-AFTRA** convened in Los Angeles on May 19.



SAG-AFTRA represents performers in television, radio and film. It was created earlier this year with the merger of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) and the American Federation of Television & Radio Artists (AFTRA). The union has hundreds of members in the Pittsburgh area and maintains a full-time office in downtown Pittsburgh.

Among the business conducted was confirming David P. White as National Executive Director [see

Pittsburgh Applause, May 2012 – ed.] and authorized his new three-year contract. In a press release, White expressed his gratitude for the new board's vote of confidence adding "there is much more to be done [other than the actual merger] and I look forward to working with the officers, directors and our talented staff team to continue to improve our operations and further empower" the members.

The meeting also reviewed the proposed 2013 budget of \$95 million and approved a national committee be established regarding commercial contracts.

Key Staff Changes

Two major arts institutions have made key personnel changes.

The **Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh** has appointed Dan Byers to a newly created curatorial position at the Carnegie Museum of Art (CMA).

The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's* Mary Thomas reports that the new post is called the Richard Armstrong Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art. It is named after a former CMA curator who is now director of the **Solomon Guggenheim Foundation & Museum** in New York City. Byers has been an associated curator.

In other news, the **Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre** (PBT) has hired three new dancers and promoted two other performers. Among them is Brazilian native Christine Schwaner has been moved up from soloist to principal. "She is just a very professional, beautiful dancer," the PBT's Terrence Orr told the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's* Sara Bauknecht.

Les' New CBS Deal

Leslie Moonves has mapped out his potential future should he leave as CEO of **CBS Corporation** in 2015.



In Pittsburgh, CBS Corporation owns two television and four radio stations, the most notable being KDKA.

Moonves has inked a new agreement that will finance his own production company if he does not stay on as CEO. According to MediaPost.com, the four-year agreement covers TV, film and digital content with CBS investing up to \$3 million annually. In return, CBS would get first option on any new shows that Moonves' company creates.

There is still a very real possibility that he will continue as CEO after 2015.

Meanwhile, Moonves made headlines across the media trades with his claim that a new technology by **EchoStar's** Dish Network is illegal. That device is called the Auto Hop, which allows viewers to skip commercials. "They can't put our content on without commercials," he told TheWrap.com. "They just can't do it. It's illegal." Dish is already facing legal action by another company over their carriage agreement.

Locally, KDKA anchor Susan Koeppen returned to the station's 6:00 p.m. newscast on May 14 after a congenital problem caused her to collapse in November. Ac-



cording to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's* Maria Sciallo, she had a faulty heart valve and underwent surgery in March.

Romero's Got Game

Pittsburgh film legend George Romero is starring in a new video game.

Romero is providing his own voice to "Zombie Squash," being developed by a division of **Attila's Creative Works**.

According to a company press release, "Zombie Squash" is set in a world "where vegetation has gone wild from evil experiments gone wrong." The player takes the form of a rabbit who fires vegetable ammunition --- such as carrots and zucchini --- against mutated squash bent on world conquest.

For more information, including a video featuring Romero, visit <http://acwgames.com/>

A "New" Manor Theater

A local movie theater with almost ninety years' of history has undergone a historic renovation.

The Manor Theater, a landmark in the city's Squirrel Hill neighborhood, has been completely upgraded to include a new concession stand with an expanded food menu, new seating and equipment and even a bar.

With the rise of online and on demand movie rentals, many theaters across the country --- be they independent or part of a chain --- are trying to make movie going a more social (and, hopefully profitable) experience.

Owner Richard Stern told Barbara Vancheri of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* how exciting the entire process was. During the demolition phase, they discovered elements like an oval plaster medal-

lion in the ceiling and a marble floor. Stern decided to restore both. "Once we started the project," he explained to Vancheri, "we got carried away."

"Part of what we're doing is bringing back the historic charm of this theater," Stern's daughter Alexa told the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review's* Michael Machosky. "The marble flooring, the detailing, plaster ceilings are absolutely magnificent." The theater remained open during the renovation.

The *Post-Gazette* has posted photos and a video online at <http://www.post-gazette.com/stories/ae/movies/renovated-manor-boasts-new-seats-sign-floor-and-bar-637466/>

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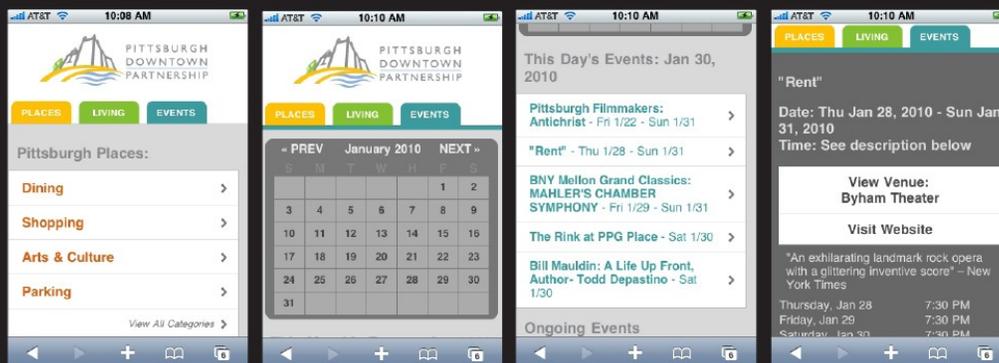


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Pittsburgh Applause Editorial

The Opera, The Governor & GPAC

By James A. Richards

We all know what everyone's been talking about lately.

Let's start by getting a few things straight: The Pittsburgh Opera has every right to honor whomever they wish. It is true that the governor has fought against direct funding cuts to non-profit arts organizations, although much of that credit probably belongs to Mrs. Corbett [See July 2011 edition of *Pittsburgh Applause* at <http://www.james-richards.com/PittsburghApplauseJuly2011.pdf>]. It is equally true that the state has been cutting arts funding for schools, and that was what the protesters were protesting. They have every right to do that, too.

Moreover, as the Pittsburgh Opera's Christopher Hahn made

clear in his public letter, they were honoring him for successfully opposing proposed cuts to the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, which provides valuable funding to non-profit arts groups. His fellow Republicans have been wanted to cut huge swath in the Council's budget. The Opera obviously considers arts education funding a separate issue and I am inclined to agree with them on that. Moreover, standing up to members of his own party --- a party that has become more extreme, especially on social issues and toward an arts world that many of them hold in low regard --- does take some serious bravery. I don't support Corbett but the Opera's decision makes a lot of sense to me.

What makes less sense to me was the eblast Mitch Swain of the

Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council (GPAC) sent. He should have just focused on the Opera's right to honor him. It would have been more appropriate for the governor's office (or his re-election committee) to publish a defense of his positions.

Way back in the Paleolithic Era of my life --- college --- one of the lessons taught in Public Relations class was not to escalate a bad situation. You want to manage it, not make it bigger or worse. Sadly, this is just what happened.

Letters to the editor are welcome via email to jim@james-richards.com

They may be edited for publication.

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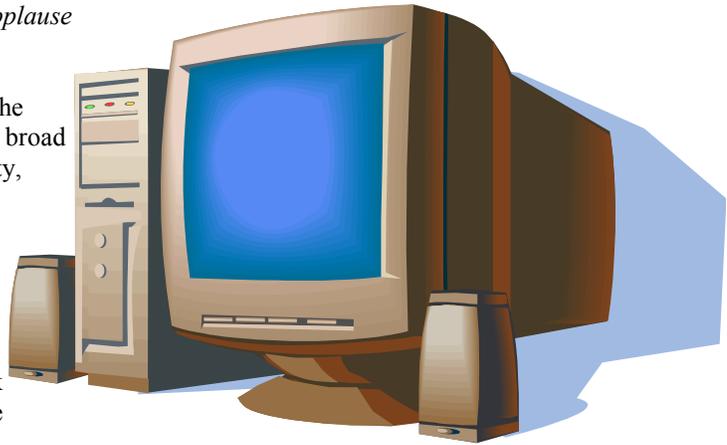
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