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Pryor Cashman's Controversial 'Urinetown' Intellectual Property Case Covered by The New York Times

The role of Managing Partner Ronald H. Shechtman in a controversial intellectual property case was featured in an article in the November 15, 2006, edition of *The New York Times*. The text of the article is below.

Creative Team of 'Urinetown' Complains of Midwest Shows

In the latest salvo in the battle over the extent of copyright protection, five members of the creative team behind the 2002 Broadway hit "Urinetown: the Musical" are charging that productions of the show in Chicago and Akron, Ohio, have copied their work without permission.

The letters, drafted by a lawyer, Ronald H. Shechtman, on behalf of the director John Rando, the choreographer John Carrafa, and the set, lighting and costume designers of the Broadway production, were sent on Monday night to the team behind an award-winning production at the Mercury Theater in Chicago and to the team behind the Carousel Dinner Theater production of the show in Akron.

The letters charge that in design and directorial aspects, the shows were replications of the Broadway production. The shows - which have both closed - had a license to use the script and music from "Urinetown," but, the letters assert, such permission did not extend to reproducing creative decisions made by the Broadway production's director, choreographer and designers.

Mr. Shechtman's arguments concern a controversial area of intellectual property: creative input into a production beyond the script and music. While choreography is specifically protected by law, the situation for stage direction is not as clear.

The letters also maintain that the productions violated laws against unfair competition. Several messages left for the directors and the choreographer of the Chicago and Akron productions were not returned.

The Mercury Theater production closed in May, but was nominated in September for seven Joseph Jefferson Awards, which honor excellence in Chicago theater. Among the nominees were Thomas Mullen for his direction and Brian Loeffler for his choreography. Mr. Loeffler, who also choreographed the Akron production, ended up winning.

The Broadway creative team is demanding, among other things, that the teams for both the Chicago and Akron productions provide a detailed accounting of all their revenues, from which "an appropriate license fee and damages" would be determined. The letter to the Chicago production also demands that Mr. Loeffler formally return any awards he won for his work on the show.

Both letters go on to say that if the demands are not met, the Broadway team will seek damages in court.