

**In this Issue**

- Purdue University Hosts Cirque Workshop, pg 1, 2
- DePaul hosts tour of new Theatre School facility, pg 1
- High School Theatre Festivals Inspire Students to Imagine Careers in the Arts, pg 3
- Fort Worth Beyond the Conference, pg 4
- Student Perspective: Taking Advantage of Regional Programming, pg 5

**Purdue University Hosts Cirque Du Soleil Live Entertainment Workshop**

The United States Institute for Theatre Technology Midwest Regional Section presents Cirque du Soleil Live Entertainment Workshop, hosted by Purdue University.

Originally developed at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts on the East Coast and Chapman University on the West Coast, the first Midwest version of this highly popular series provides nearby college students, faculty and staff an extraordinary opportunity to engage leading industry professionals from Cirque du Soleil.

This symposium exists to provide attendees with the opportunity to meet with, learn from, and directly engage these professionals through large-format presentations and a series of Master Classes targeted to a wide variety of disciplines in design and technology.



*Cirque, Continued on Page 2*

**DePaul University Hosts Tour of New Facilities**

by Shane Kelly



On Sunday, February 23, 25 members of USITT Midwest Regional Section gathered at The Theatre School at DePaul University for a tour of the newly opened facility and a day of workshops. Workshops included a Production Management Roundtable, Sound Design Post-Production Techniques, Scenic Painting, eChameleon and Motorized Winch Rigging and two light labs featuring a variety of moving light LED fixtures and consoles. The light labs were part of a full weekend of lighting workshops presented by the USITT @ DePaul student chapter.



**Cirque**, Continued from Page 1

## Purdue University to Host First Midwest Live Entertainment Workshop

The Live Entertainment Workshop will take place Friday, March 21 through Sunday, March 23 on the Purdue University campus in West Lafayette, Indiana.

"This is an honor that just blows us away, that they've asked us to do this," says Richard Thomas, professor of theatre and director of the Midwest workshop in an interview with Purdue Today. "In the past, they've done this at prestigious arts schools on each coast." When Cirque officials approached Thomas about conducting a Midwest workshop at Purdue, he says, "a whole lot of people at Purdue said 'Let's do this' and offered support." They included Steve Hall, director of Hall of Music Productions; Joel Ebarb, department chair and associate professor of theatre; Rich Dionne, assistant professor of technical direction; Carol Cunningham-Sigman, chair and professor of dance; and Harry Bulow, professor and head of the Patti and Rusty Rueff School of Visual and Performing Arts.

Purdue provides outstanding conferencing facilities, economically-priced hotels and restaurants, and a welcoming environment just a short drive away from many area schools and campuses.

The faculty and staff at Purdue University have worked hard with USITT Midwest Regional Section and Cirque du Soleil to make this workshop available at no charge!

### Cirque Workshop Sessions

Cirque workshops are unique in the way they bring together managers, designers and technicians from a wide range of disciplines related to live entertainment in the performing arts. The event goal is to create a collaborative and supportive environment that encourages the sharing of ideas, techniques and experiences.

Event workshops will bring together all attendees in one meeting place for discussions related to topics that concern us all, and then will break out into Master Classes targeted to specific disciplines including Audio, Automation, Management, Lighting, Rigging and more. At the end of each day, participants will come together again to celebrate the magic of live entertainment in special events hosted by Cirque du Soleil.

At the workshop, attendees will learn from top professionals in the theater industry through large-format presentations and a series of master classes in numerous disciplines of design and technology.

"The people they're bringing are very exciting," Thomas says. "Also, every one of these workshops addresses a career opportunity. That's another reason for having this here." There will even be mock auditions to show how Cirque handles auditions.

Among the instructors are:

- Krista Monson, artistic director of "O," Cirque's aquatic romance at the Bellagio in Las Vegas.
- Katy Tate, dance master for "LOVE," a Beatles show in Las Vegas.
- Mike Peters, assistant head of rigging for "O."
- Steve Bush, senior technical support representative for Meyer Sound, a big player in big loudspeaker systems.
- Leonard Miller, national sales manager for Philips Entertainment Division, a big name in LED and lighting

### Cirque Du Soleil Fact Box

Did you know that...

- *Cirque du Soleil* began as a group of 20 street performers in 1984
- Today, *Cirque* employes nearly 4000 people including 1,300 artists. The company's employees and artists represent more than 50 nationalities and speak 25 different languages.
- Cirque shows have been seen by 150 million people in 300 cities in 40 countries and on 6 continents
- Cirque has more than 19 shows in production around the world including 8 resident shows in Las Vegas alone.
- More than 100 types of occupations can be found at Cirque.
- Close to 15 million people will see a Cirque du Soleil show in 2014.
- Cirque du Soleil hasn't received any grants from the public or private sectors since 1992.

**Cirque Workshops and Registration**, Continued on Page 5



## High School Theatre Festivals Help Students Imagine Careers in the Arts

By: Jeremy C. Barnett

It has long been the conventional wisdom of the entertainment industry that the theatre is a dying art... but don't tell that to the thousands of students from across the midwest who gather each winter at state theatre festivals sponsored by the International Thespian Society.

For two or three days in November (Wisconsin), December (Michigan) or January (Indiana and Illinois), students immerse themselves in the world of the theatre. The High School Drama Festivals are more than just school-sponsored trips and weekends with their friends: they offer opportunities to develop skills, meet other theatre enthusiasts and even explore careers in the performing arts. Students participate in work shops led by professors and industry professionals, watch and perform in shows and compete against each other in playwrighting, acting, directing, design and technology. In many cases, these events provide students with their first interaction with professional theatre artists.

The State Festivals also provide opportunities to explore continuing education in the performing arts, with college interviews, portfolio reviews and scholarship competitions. These events encourage to students to imagine themselves in entertainment industry careers while meeting hundreds or thousands of people who share an interest in the performing arts.

### Sharing Productions, Sharing Ideas

From the point of view of the students, the "spine" of the festivals are the productions: they provide the structure of festival and a place for students to share their excitement for the theatre.

Jason Maracani, a college sophomore who participated in the Michigan Theatre Festival points out, "everyone sees the shows, and that's what initially brings everyone together. Between the shows, your time is your own, but the shows bookend your days."

The number of productions varies from state to state. Michigan's Theatre Festival included five shows and a student showcase, while Illinois presented 20 productions.

"It's such a good environment because it is a teaching environment," says Mike Karasch Fremd High School in Illinois. "My students get to see shows and see what other kids are doing because they don't get to see what other high schools are doing that often. They are totally immersed in the [theatrical] environment and that is great."

### Workshops: Expanding One's Interests

If the productions provide the structure for the festivals, the workshops are the opportunities to explore individual areas of interest. Students choose from dozens of

workshops in all areas of performance and technology. These are usually small seminars led by experts in their respective fields and are intended to introduce students to advanced techniques that are often beyond the scope of high school education. The seminars also provide allow students to ask professors and professionals questions about their experiences, their work and how their careers.



### Students Meet USITT at the Tech Olympics

The USITT Midwest Section has a well-established tradition of running one of the most popular events at the festivals: the Tech Olympics. The Midwest Section's first regional Tech Olympics was at the Wisconsin High School Theatre Festival in 1999, and was organized with the guidance of ETC's Ellen White. Building on that success the section added Illinois in 2003, Indiana in 2006 and Michigan in 2009.

The popularity of the Tech Olympics in the Midwest Region is so impressive that it was given its own article in USITT's monthly newsletter, sightlines in 2006, 2010 and again in 2013. The sustained success of these events is due in large part to the efforts of Ken Frazz in Indiana, Steve Jacobs in Illinois and Ellen White in Michigan and Wisconsin.

The challenges of the Tech Olympics vary from year to year. Past events have included focusing a source 4, using a nicopress, tying knots, building a platform, wiring a connector and costume quick changes. Corporate sponsors including ETC and Indianapolis Stage provide prizes for the events (the award for first place is often an ETC Source 4).

Jon Worther, a teacher from Indiana, says, "The kids love the Tech Olympics because the events are fun and they get to show off their skills...but the events also reinforce the idea that there is a correct way to execute these tasks, and that there are people in the world whose jobs depend on taking these tasks seriously."

For many students the tech olympics is their first exposure to USITT and is often their first time interacting with professional technicians.

"It gives our students confidence to know they can do something like this and it's also a great way for them to network," says Mike Karasch. "All the judges are industry professionals, so students can talk to someone about a career. That is cool because these people are actually working in the industry."

*Festivals, continued on page 6*



## Fort Worth Beyond the Conference: Cowboys, Culture and Cuisine

by Jeremy C. Barnett

With dozens of seminars and hundreds of exhibitors, the USITT National conference packs so much activity into five days that it would be easy to never leave the conference center and hotels, and miss seeing Fort Worth itself. However, if you find yourself with a little time on your hands, Fort Worth offers a dizzying array of attractions and experiences for the entertainment industry professional.

"Cowboys and Culture" is the Fort Worth city tagline, and it's a promise the city intends to keep. Fort Worth rose to prominence because of its famed stockyards, the beginning of the original old west cattle drive. The stockyards are still a prominent part of the city landscape, as is Sundance Square, which lent its name to one of the West's most famous outlaws. Revenues from the cattle industry were heavily invested in culture and arts, and today Fort Worth is home to the nation's third largest cultural district. Remarkably nearly all of Fort Worth's attractions are located in three neighborhoods easily reached from the Convention Center

**Downtown/Sundance Square.** A few blocks north of the Convention center, Sundance Square is the center of Fort Worth's business and entertainment district and is stacked with theatres, restaurants and night clubs. Highlights include the Scat Jazz Lounge, Hyena's Comedy Club, the Bass Performance Hall, the Circle Theatre, and an assortment of Tex-Mex, Cajun and international restaurants. For world class barbecue, check out Texas de Brazil or Risky's.

**Stockyards District.** 3 miles north of the Convention Center (#1 bus), the Stockyard District is home to America's only year-round rodeo (at the Cowtown Coliseum) and a twice-daily public cattle drive (down Exchange Ave). The area includes numerous museums, family activities and Billy Bob's Texas, America's Largest Honky Tonk.

Visit the White Elephant Saloon, the site of Fort Worth's last gunfight in 1887.

**Cultural District/West 7th Street.** American's 3rd largest cultural district includes the Kimbrell Art Museum, the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, botanical gardens, and nearly a dozen other museums. Just bordering the Cultural District to the north is West 7th Street (#2 bus from the convention center), known for its quiet, residential-area shopping and dining.



# FORT WORTH



### Getting To and Around Fort Worth

#### To/From Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport:

**Train:** Take the Trinity Railway Express from Centreport/DFW station to the Fort Worth Intermodal Transportation Center, just 2 blocks from the convention center. Shuttle buses from the airport to the train station leave every 15 minutes. Fare is \$2.50. Travel time is about 28 minutes. NO SERVICE ON SUNDAY.

**Taxi:** taxi rates from DFW to the Fort Worth Convention Center charge a flat rate of \$48.00.

**Go Yellow Checker Shuttle:** Shuttle bus service to major Fort Worth Hotels for \$19 one way. For more information see [www.yellowcheckershuttle.com](http://www.yellowcheckershuttle.com).

#### Around Fort Worth:

**Bus:** Fort Worth has an extensive bus system and easy-to-use maps posted throughout the downtown area.

**Taxi:** Flag fare is \$2.25 and rates are about \$1.80/mile. A taxi from the convention center to the Stockyard district would cost about \$11.15 without tip.

**Bike Share:** Fort Worth Bike Sharing operates on a membership basis. Memberships can be purchased for \$8/day or \$20/week. Bikeshare stations are located throughout downtown Fort Worth.



## ***Cirque Workshops and Registration***, Cont. from pg 2

The packed 3-day event will include sessions and masterclasses including:

- Meyer Sound Audio Sessions
- Philips Entertainment Lighting Sessions
- Automation Sessions with Tait Towers and Stage Technologies
- Production, Carpentry and Props Sessions
- Artistic, Dance, and Performance Sessions
- Stage Management Sessions
- Wardrobe and Makeup Sessions
- Rigging Sessions

In addition to the learning sessions, the event also will rouse attendees with featured performances in the evening

A complete list of sessions (along with instructor biographies) can be found at <http://midwest.usitt.org/cirque>.

### **Registration for the Workshop**

While Registration is free, it is also mandatory because space is limited: The event can accommodate only about 300 registrants, registration is strictly limited on a first-come, first-served basis, and At press time The Cirque du Soleil Live Entertainment Workshop is still accepting advanced registrations. However, everyone must register in order to gain admission to the Workshop. Applicants can register for one, two or all three days.

Reservations for Master Classes will be made on-site when you arrive. There are strict enrollment limits for all Master Classes and these are provided on a first-come/first-served basis. If there are spaces still available that have not been reserved, admission will also occur on a first-come/first-served basis.

The Workshop is intended for adult audiences and may contain and explore mature themes and subject matter. Children under the age of 16 will not be allowed into any event. Parent or guardian must accompany minors under the age of 18.

Purdue University, USITT Midwest Regional Section, and Cirque du Soleil will make every effort to present the workshops as advertised. However, no warranties are made either expressed or implied and all workshops are subject to cancellation due to low enrollment, acts of God, or any forces beyond the control of Purdue University, USITT Midwest Regional Section, and Cirque du Soleil.

## **Student Perspective: Taking Advantage of Regional Programming**

By Jeremy C. Barnett

The 2013 USITT National Conference in Milwaukee allowed an unprecedented number of midwest regional college students to take part in the educational and career-building workshops of the entertainment industry's largest technology event. One of the notable advantages of the conference traveling to a different location every year is that it becomes available to new groups of people at each new venue. However, when the conference is far from home, students and young professionals often feel financial pressure that makes attending the conference prohibitively expensive. Fortunately, quality programming such as the *Cirque du Soleil* event at Purdue University gives students an opportunity to participate in high level workshops without breaking their budgets.

I sat down with Josh Williams, the president of the Oakland University USITT Student Chapter, to talk about how his chapter made the decision to put their fundraising efforts into attending the Cirque event this year.

Oakland University is in Southeast Michigan, within easy driving distance of Milwaukee. "Almost all of our BFA design and technology students attended the conference in Milwaukee," Williams says. "We got a lot out of it. Most of us looked into attending the conference in Fort Worth."

When the Cirque du Soleil Live Entertainment Workshop at Purdue University was announced, students at Oakland weighed their options. Ultimately they decided to fundraise as a group to go to the Live Entertainment Workshop.

When asked what made the decision, Williams said that cost was a factor, but that the students also considered the new experiences they would have at the Cirque event. "We went to the national conference in Milwaukee and we will certainly go to Cincinnati [in 2015]. The Cirque workshop would be a different opportunity for broader understanding of advanced technology and equipment... not to mention personal networking with high end professionals."

Williams added, "Most colleges don't have access to the kind of experience or technology that Cirque can provide."

Richard Thomas, Coordinator of Design and Production at Purdue and director of the Live Entertainment Workshop, agrees. In an interview with Purdue Today, Thomas said, "Rigging is very high-tech, as are lighting and sound. Automation means computer-controlled scenery, sometimes with people on the moving pieces, which has become such an attraction in recent years. A stage could cost \$100 million when using automation" While that is beyond the capabilities of colleges and universities, students will be able to get exposure to that kind of technology at the Live Entertainment workshop at Purdue. And for students who are unable to attend the National Conference in Fort Worth, USITT is providing a high-end educational and networking alternative.



*Festivals, continued from page 3*

### College Interviews and Scholarship Awards

Exposure to professionals and experts at the theatre festivals can encourage students to think about a career in the performing arts, and talking with colleges about continuing education can help a student take the next step on the path to becoming a theatre practitioner. Festivals facilitate that dialogue by inviting college representatives to talk to students, who can compare college programs and even interview with the colleges of their choice. The festivals also hold scholarship auditions in which actors perform monologues and designers present portfolios in hopes of winning scholarships. In a thank you letter to participating colleges, Erik Hart, the director of the Michigan State Theatre Festival told college representatives that, "combined, you made offers of more than \$3,500,000." Across the four states of the midwest region, hundreds of students were accepted into college programs and millions of dollars in grants and scholarships were offered to enable them to continue their studies.

Theatre Festivals are about opening students' minds to their own possibilities. Scenographer Pamela Howard has said that when she "is often asked how she became a theatre designer... and how did [she] know such a profession existed." The question is telling: as a society we do not teach our children to imagine themselves as artists - and certainly not on the creative or production side of the performing arts. The state Theatre Festivals in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin are places where committed students can discover for themselves the possibilities of a career in live performance.

Jason Maracani, a college sophomore majoring in Theatre Design and Technology, sums up his experience as a student attending the Michigan State Theatre Festival:

"The Michigan State Thespian Festival, more than anything, gives students the chance to meet new people, learn from workshops, see shows, receive feedback from qualified judges in every facet of theatre, and take part in mass auditions for colleges and scholarships. From attending the festival as a high school student, to serving on the Michigan Student State Board, to coming back as a college representative, the festival has always provided me assurance of the talent and sense of community that exists in this profession on a large scale. It gave a chance to see beyond what a single high school could teach, and it taught me to look at theatre as more than just a hobby. The festival had me looking into pursuing theatre after high school from the point I was a sophomore, and it helped me research which schools fit what I was looking for. The Michigan State Thespian Festival played a huge role in my desire to pursue theatre as a career and it helped shape who I am as a theatre student and designer."



We Want to See  
**YOU**  
in Fort Worth

### USITT Midwest Regional Section Annual Meeting

This section meeting is the USITT-Midwest Annual meeting. All Conference attendees living within the boundaries of our section are encouraged to attend, however, only Section Members are permitted to vote on issues that require membership approval.

Please join us for a light breakfast, numerous award presentations and important section information and announcements

When: Thursday, March 27, 2014, 8:00 AM - 9:15 AM

Where: Fort Worth Conference Center, Room 202C

