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"Backstage and On-Stage" - A Day in Chicago

By: Steven Jacobs



Photograph by Steven Jacobs

On November 9, 2013, twenty Midwest Regional Section members and guests enjoyed touring some of Chicago's performance venues. Marty Lazarus, President of Chicago Spotlight, made arrangements with the theatres we toured for our day in Chicago. The day began at the Oriental Theatre, The Ford Center for the Performing Arts, with a backstage tour of the touring company of *Wicked*. Participants toured the backstage area learning something about each production area. It was especially rewarding to see some of the high school and college students in awe with the way a touring production comes into a road house,

bringing in everything necessary for the production. Participants were also surprised to see how much of the scenery was hanging offstage on spot lines because the backstage area is not big enough to house everything.

After a lunch break, the group reconvened at the Pritzker Pavillion located in Millennium Park. This venue is used mainly for outdoor performances in the summer including symphony concerts and movie nights. The stage can be enclosed for inside performances during other

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

The USITT National Conference will take place March 26 - 29, 2014 and we want to see YOU at the Fort Worth Convention Center.

Take advantage of discounts for early registration, available now through February 13, 2014. Reduced rates available for students, early career members, spouses and significant others.

Register online at usitt.org/2014

For More information about conference highlights, see article on page XXX

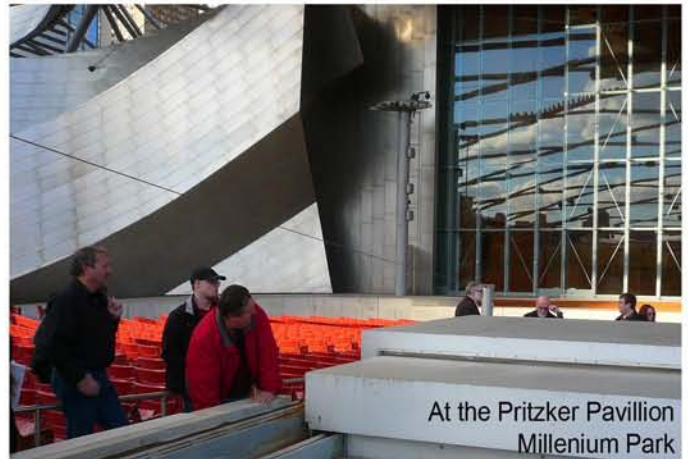


Back Stage and On-Stage, Cont. from Pg 1

seasons of the year by closing the huge glass wall doors, offering a great view of the Chicago skyline. We were guided through backstage areas including power distribution and dimming to the front of house audio position outside the building.

From Millenium Park, the group broke up to travel to the Apollo Theatre where *Million Dollar Quartet* has been performing for the last 5 years. We were escorted in before other audience members to hear the cast do their warm ups and mike checks. After the performance, the stage managers and audio technician stayed to answer questions about the show.

The weather was delightful for walking around downtown Chicago, tours were interesting and informative and a wonderful lively performance of *Million Dollar Quartet* rounded out our Sections "Backstage and On-Stage" - A Day in Chicago.



The Midwest Mechanical Design Competition

By: Beth Martell

For the past seven years, students from The University of Illinois and Indiana University have faced off in a mechanical design competition, pitting dart launchers, tennis ball cannons, basketball shooters and other small mechanical prototypes against each other to determine who had the best design. This year the participants will build baseball pitching machines and it's your turn to join in. If you are a theatre student, grad or undergrad, you are eligible to enter the competition and compete in the shootout on May 10, 2014. The winner gets a free pass to the 2015 USITT National Conference in Cincinnati and a shiny acrylic trophy, courtesy of the Midwest Section.



Teachers, this makes a great project for technical direction students to hone their design and prototyping skills. It can help designers understand and incorporate mechanical objects into their designs. We see the most success from students when this competition is worked into a graded class. You can even use this opportunity as a way to bolster enrollment! If you anticipate incorporating this project into a class, e-mail bmartell@illinois.edu with your anticipated enrollment so that we can hold space for you.

To find out more go to:
<http://www2.kcpa.uiuc.edu/kcpatd/Physics/MMDC.htm>.
 The competition is a ways off, but registration is limited, so act now.



USITT Helps 6 Midwest Schools, 13 Nationwide, with Stage Rigging Safety

By: Jeremy C. Barnett

USITT has approved 13 schools across the country for free stage rigging inspections - the largest number of schools ever approved under the organization's Rigging Safety Initiative. Of those 13 schools, six are in the Midwest Regional Section including 1 in Indiana, 1 in Wisconsin and 4 in Michigan.

USITT's Rigging Safety Initiative is described on the organization's website as having been created "to fund inspections of theatrical rigging in secondary schools across America. The program is available to all secondary schools, public or private, in all 50 states. Schools apply to receive an inspection, and if they are accepted then the service is provided free of charge. USITT pays for the inspector, so the only cost to the schools is travel, housing and - on rare occasion - the rental of special equipment such as lifts to access the rigging system.

rigging equipment. Schools may apply for the inspection grant as a precaution, but USITT often receives applications from facilities that have already seen potentially dangerous wear on their equipment or have narrowly escaped accidents.



The regional schools that will receive training are:

- Northwest Community High School in Indianapolis, Indiana
- West Bend High School in West Bend, Wisconsin
- Zeeland East High School in Zeeland, Michigan
- Cityside Middle School in Zeeland, Michigan
- Northview High School in Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Godwin Heights High School in Wyoming, Michigan

The program began in 2011 with a grant from JR Clancy and with support from ETC, Shepherd Exposition Services and H&H Specialties. Since then it has helped 65 schools in 22 states. Selections are made twice a year, once in the spring and once in the fall, and each round has resulted in at least 10 schools being approved for funding. Schools are approved based on perceived need and available funding.



Some of the students who will benefit from rigging safety training

The schools receive "A detailed report in layman's terms regarding the safety and health of their rigging." Presented in a clear language by professional inspectors, schools will see what is working properly and what potential problems may arise and be eliminated with routine care. In addition to inspection, the schools receive 4 hours of training for up to eight students and staff members.

The Rigging Safety Initiative was set up to help schools prevent rigging safety problems.. USITT Executive Director David Grindle points out that many schools don't know when their equipment was last inspected. Adding to the uncertainty is that many public school's theatres double as community performance venues, making it difficult for school faculty and staff to accurately track the use of their



If you know of a school that would benefit from a safety inspection and training on their rigging system, please advise a faculty member or administrator to apply online at <http://www.usitt.org> under "awards and funding."

USITT Members with ETCP Rigging Certification are encouraged to apply online to be inspectors



Up-Coming Midwest Regional Events



The Theatre School at DePaul University

The oldest theatre conservatory in the Midwest has one of the region's newest performing arts facilities.

Attend a day at The Theatre School at DePaul University's new purpose-built building that contains two theatres, classrooms, design and production shops. The day includes a tour of the building and workshops in the production facilities and showcasing the new technical systems.

The new Theatre School building, which opened in September 2013, is a 165,000 square-foot, five-story multipurpose facility. It will house a 250-seat theatre, a flexible 100-seat black-box theatre as well as administrative and faculty offices, classrooms, rehearsal spaces, design studios, workshops and the school's script library.

Designed by renowned architect César Pelli and his firm Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects, the design of the building was informed by its dual function: to be a performance and public space, as well as a conservatory of all theatrical disciplines.

When: Sunday, February 23, 2014.

Where: 2350 N Racine Avenue, Chicago

USITT Midwest Regional Section Presents: A Cirque du Soleil Live Entertainment Workshop

These workshops have previously been offered on both the east coast and the west coast with great success; this will be the first time that the workshops have been offered in the Midwest, within a day's driving distance. All sessions are taught and conducted by Cirque du Soleil artists and staff, who traditionally have provided some of the best talents to teach the workshops!

When: Friday-Sunday, March 21-23, 2014.

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



Planning for Fort Worth, 2014: USITT Events Beyond the Conference

People who have attended one of USITT's annual conferences have experienced the stage expo, and most have taken part in the workshops, meetings and training sessions offered within the convention center. But there are other events before the official beginning of the conference that might inspire you to head to Fort Worth a few days early.

USITT Presents - Studio Gear, Hog4

Hog4 Console Training

This accelerated introductory course covers the powerful High End Systems Hog 4 control software. This new software is used on the Hog4 console, Full Boar 4, Road Hog 4, Nano Hog, and Hog4PC. This hands-on class will use Hog 4 consoles connected to visualizers. The class will cover the new features of the Hog4 operating system as well as the basic functions such as: patching, fixture editing, programming, timing, cuelists, scenes, effects, and much more. There is a multitude of hands-on exercises with each section covered.



Date(s): March 24, 2014 - March 25, 2014
 Time: 9:00 AM CST - 5:00 PM CST
 Dallas/Fort Worth Convention Center, Ballroom C

Registration Information
 Student/Early Career Member- \$60
 USITT Member- \$120

Sound Lab

Sound Lab is a full immersion education experience where sound designers in the theatre and entertainment industries learn hands-on techniques and technical information about the latest innovations in audio for live performance. Companies such as Meyer Sound Laboratories, L-Acoustics, and many others will be showcasing products and offering trainings on best and newest practices.

All who attend the Annual Conference will have a chance to experience Sound Lab since the USITT Keynote featuring Jaston Williams will be held in the Arena.

For 2014, Sound Lab will expand and focus on sound reinforcement and concert sound. The Fort Worth Convention Center Arena will have a full-scale stage equipped with a full-on concert sound and lighting system—with unique twists to bring education to the forefront and enable participants to actually mix in a 10,000 seat venue.

Other Events Before the Conference Convenes on Wednesday, March 26 *(from the conference website)*

Rigging Fundamentals with Jay O. Glerum

Monday, March 24 and Tuesday, March 25 8:30am - 5pm

Sketching with a Tablet: Drawing & Rendering from Your Desk - Begin at BASIC, but leave at ADVANCED)

Monday March 24 and Tuesday March 25 9am - 5pm

OSHA General Industry 10-Hour Training

Monday March 24, 2pm-8pm
 Tuesday March 25, 10am-6pm

USITT Electrical Workshop

Monday March 24, 6pm-9:30pm
 Tuesday March 25, 8:30am-6pm

Dallas Performing Arts Center and Environs

Tuesday March 25 7:30am-5:30pm
 Tour one of the most diverse arts districts in the country.

Philips Facility Tour

Tuesday March 25 8am-12pm
 Philips Strand Lighting and Philips Vari-Lite are happy to offer a tour their factory in Dallas

Creating Digital Portfolios

Tuesday March 25 9am-6pm
 Spend the day learning the process, from pre-planning through presentation, of a digital portfolio.

Not for Barbies: Model Furniture Techniques

Tuesday, March 25 9am-5pm

Working Safely at Height

Tuesday March 25 9am-4pm

Troubleshooting Moving Lights

Tuesday March 25 1pm-5pm



American College Theatre Festival Gets off to a Snowy, Delayed Start

The Kennedy Center

AMERICAN COLLEGE THEATER FESTIVAL

As snow and record-low temperatures swept across the midwest, participants in the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival struggled to get to the event venue at Saginaw Valley State University in Michigan. Event organizers elected to delay the opening by a day, rather than have hundreds of students, teachers and professionals traveling to the event unsafely.

On January 6, the day before the festival was scheduled to begin, host Ric Roberts released a statement saying, "we are very concerned about all of your safety! Not only do we want to make sure you all arrive in Saginaw safely, but we want you to do it without the stress of a deadline or approaching audition schedule."

Festival officers worked through the night to reschedule events so that acting, directing, design and production events could take place on a condensed schedule. While some events have been shortened, it is a credit to the festival staff that at press

time there have been no events cancelled.



Shakespeare in Detroit

USITT Midwest Elections

Shane Kelly, Chair of Design and Technology at DePaul University and Chair of the Midwest Regional Section, is calling for candidates for upcoming Section Elections. The Board consists of a Chair, a Vice-Chair for Programming, a Vice-Chair for Membership, a Vice-Chair for Communication, a Treasurer, a Secretary and eight Directors at Large who represent the Section Membership.

Members of the Board are active and passionate people from academic and professional theatre as well as sales and service businesses. The overarching goal is to serve the Section members with quality programming. If you would like to become more involved, please contact Shane Kelly, Chair, at skelly19@depaul.edu.

