

# DESIGN AND PRODUCTION REVIEW

Winter 2017

*The USITT Midwest Regional Section represents the Theatre Technology interests of Theatre Professionals, Educators, and Students in the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin*



[midwest.usitt.org](http://midwest.usitt.org)

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**Midwest**  
Regional Section

## Section Headlines

### Board of Directors Elections 2017

You thought election season was over? Wrong! Elections are currently underway for several leadership positions in the Midwest Section. Have your voice heard, and vote today! All ballots are due to the Immediate Past Chair, Shane Kelly, by 8am, March 4th, 2017. Please return the ballots to [shane.kelly@depaul.edu](mailto:shane.kelly@depaul.edu).

### Midwest Regional Section Meeting - USITT 2017 in St. Louis

The Board of Directors invites all USITT Midwest Regional Section members (and those interested in joining!) to the annual Section Meeting at the 2017 USITT National Conference and Trade Expo in St. Louis, Mo. This year's meeting will be held Thursday, March 09, 8:00 AM - 9:15 AM in room 127. Nosh, news, and fellowship will be provided. We look forward to seeing you there!

### A Note from the Editor

Hello! I'm thrilled to be taking over as Editor of *Design and Production Review*, and I hope to hear from many of you in the near future with your ideas, projects, accomplishments, and announcements. My sincere hope is that the Review can serve as both a resource for its members, keeping you up to date on Section news and events; as well as a showcase of the spectacular work our members create every day. We have some fantastic content in the Winter 2017 issue, including a longform report from Kate Wulle on the recent USITT Midwest Section Door County theater tour event, as well as a technical brief on an LED strip light cart from Brian Nulle.

As I'm sure most of you are aware, the 57th Annual USITT National Conference and Trade Expo is less than three weeks away in our neighbor to the south, St. Louis. The inspiration and fellowship that comes from the national conference makes this one of the most exciting times of the year for USITT members, and I want to encourage all of you that can make it to reflect on how you can take the experiences and memories you make in St. Louis and translate them to your own work, your own schools and organizations, and our very own Midwest Section. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any ideas or thoughts you might have for the future of DPR, since this publication exists for you, the members.

Warmest regards,

Ryan Retartha

Editor

Production Manager, DeBartolo Performing Arts Center

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## Section Resources

### USITT Midwest Section Board of Directors

Interim Chair - David Krajec  
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Mary Black - mblack@mail.millikin.edu  
Heather Milam - hamilam@indiana.edu

### Programming and News

#### Upcoming Event

*Creating an Emergency Action Plan for Your Venue*  
Saturday, April 22, 2017  
DeBartolo Performing Arts Center  
at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana  
Details to be announced in early Spring.

#### Programming Request for 2017-2018

We are soliciting members for programming suggestions for beginning of fall 2017. We would like to consider your topics and locations, but would appreciate ideas to consider. We try to balance topics and locations as much as possible. Please email Steve your ideas.

#### Membership Renewals

If you have already renewed your membership with USITT Midwest Section, Thank you!

If you have not yet renewed, please consider doing so. You should have already received two renewal mailings, or you can renew online using Square for payment at the USITT Midwest website. Membership forms are also available on the web page:  
<http://midwest.usitt.org/membership>

#### Tech Olympics

The Section sponsors and runs a Tech Olympics at each of the high school theatre festivals in our Section, plus at KCACTF. Participants range from 20-50 per event, and are held in Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin throughout the year.

## News from the National

The national USITT Conference and Stage Expo 2017 is almost here! Join your fellow USITT Midwest members in St. Louis, Missouri from March 8-11 for a week of discovery, training, education, and inspiration. Whether you're taking in seminars and participating in discussions with leading experts in technical theatre, or having conversations with vendors on how their state-of-the-art products and services might serve you and your organization, there really is something for everyone. Student members can also benefit from resume and portfolio reviews, training sessions, and opportunities to learn more about some of the country's best employers and graduate schools.

# In-Depth

## Event Review: Door County Outdoor Theatre Tour

by Kate Wulle

The weekend of July 8-10 six USITT Midwest members braved heat, insects and the threat of rain to explore the three professional outdoor theatre venues in Door County, Wisconsin. On Saturday beginning at noon we visited Door Shakespeare near Bailey's Harbor, The Peninsula Players, Fish Creek, and finally Northern Sky Theatre in Peninsula State Park near Fish Creek. All three theaters are situated in beautiful woodland settings, which adds to the experience for the audience, but creates interesting challenges for casts and crews. After the tours we enjoyed a traditional Door County Fish Boil at Pelletier's Restaurant in Fish Creek. Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings the six of us attended performances at the three theaters together and/or separately. Between us we saw *Julius Caesar* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (actually on Tuesday) at Door Shakespeare; *Doctor, Doctor* and *Lumberjacks in Love* at Northern Sky, and Agatha Christie's *The Hollow* at Peninsula Players.

Peninsula Players is America's oldest professional resident summer theatre and is in the midst of its 81st season. In 1935 the Fisher siblings, Richard and Caroline, decided to put on a play behind a local motel in Fish Creek and produced Noel Coward's *Hay Fever*. It was such a success that they continued to produce plays each summer. Caroline acted, Richard produced and directed, their mother designed and made costumes and their father built sets and was the general handyman. By 1937 they had outgrown the motel site and bought a 22 acre former boy's camp on the shores of Green Bay. The Fishers bowed out in 1960 and sold the theatre at public auction to a New York lawyer, who hired Jim McKenzie as producer. MacKenzie and his wife, actress Jeanne Bolan, had been associated with the Players since 1947. In 1962 the Peninsula Players Theatre Foundation was formed to operate the theatre. Jim continued to work for the theatre in different capacities until his death in 2002.



The first structure was basically a barn in the woods with one side removed to create a stage and a proscenium arch with curtain. The audience sat on folding chairs out in the open. In 1946 a canvas tarp was hung over the audience to protect them from rain. And in 1957 a permanent open-sided roofed pavilion was constructed. The open sides were able to give audiences the feeling of still being seated in the woods, but canvas side curtains were able to be lowered for rain protection. Audiences were then seated on canvas director's chairs. Meanwhile actors and crew were housed and fed and costumes were built in the former camp's facilities. Through 2005 the sets were constructed outdoors on a concrete slab. In 2006 a new 621 seat audience pavilion was opened with more space for scenery, up-to-date electronics and new, more comfortable theatre seating. A new scene shop was also added. The costume shop remains housed in one of the former camp buildings.

Peninsula Players is a completely resident company with the 50 members of the company living on-site or in nearby houses that the theatre owns. Through the years many professional actors spent their summers honing their skills in Door County. Some nationally familiar names include Rene Auberjonois, Ralph Waite, Stacy Keach, Sr., Harvey Korman and Sam Wanamaker, who credited his work on building the playhouse in 1937 as an intern with giving him the idea to rebuild The Globe in London. Each year they pull actors from all over the country with a large number drawn from the Chicago and Milwaukee areas, including Greg Vinkler (Artistic Director), Joe Foust, and Tom Mula. Many of the technicians and interns are from midwest colleges. We were welcomed by Business Manager, Audra Baakari Boyle who has worked with the theatre for 22 seasons. Her husband, Scott Boyle (19 seasons), is Technical Director. (Off season he is Assistant Professor and Technical Director at the University of Minnesota Duluth.) We sat in the Beer Garden while she gave us a brief history of the Players. The Beer Garden runs down to the shore of Green Bay facing west so audiences can watch the sun

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set over the bay prior to curtain. Unfortunately, the costume shop was off limits due to fittings for their next production, *The Full Monty*. Their turn-around time is very short. *The Hollow* closes after a 4:00 pm matinee on July 24 and *The Full Monty* opens the evening of July 27. With Scott we walked over to the barn which was the original scene and prop shop and now is used as storage, across the slab where several projects were being worked on because it was a sunny day, and into the new, larger scene shop. A number of college interns were busy on *The Full Monty* set. They do some storage of flats and risers, but most have to be broken down after a show closes and new sets completely created. In Nordic Door County the pieces that can be recycled are stored in a Troll hut. Those pieces which can't be recycled are fuel for the nightly post-show bonfires held in the Beer Garden. These are a great hit with the audiences!



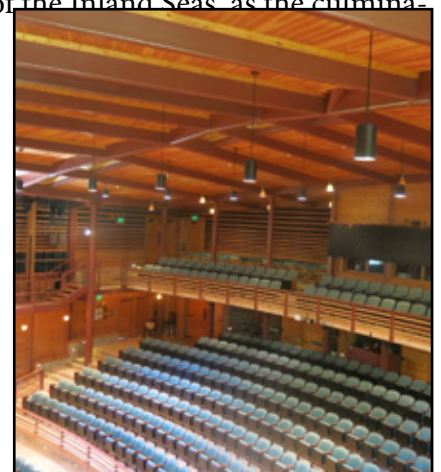
Scott then handed us over to Michael Trudeau the Master Electrician (& Bartender!) who guided us through the stagehouse. Michael is in his fifth season at the Players and spends winter doing theatre in Chicago. In the backstage corridor near the dressing rooms were relics of the original theatre building which had been demolished in 2005 to make way for the new structure. History is very important to the Company. A large area above the dressing rooms is used for costume storage which allows them to be very well organized. Above that storage area is the Electricians office and storage area at fly level. The new stage has extensive and up-to-date equipment which allows them a lot of freedom to do a variety of productions

each year. Their 2016 season began on June 14th with the two-person play, *Chapatti*, followed on July 6 by *The Hollow*. *The Full Monty* begins on July 27, followed by *Alabama Story* on August 17. The season closer running from September 7 through October 16 is the four person comedy, *The 39 Steps*.

From the cat walks we were able to look down on the elaborate box set for *The Hollow* as well as having a good view of the newly renovated house. The padded theatre seats sit on a concrete floor with radiant in-floor heating for comfort during the early and late season productions. The roof is planted with grass to limit run-off and to help cool the interior. The canvas curtains on the walls have been replaced by wooden counter-weighted panels which can be raised and lowered depending on outside light and weather and retain the "theatre in a garden" atmosphere. Many thanks to Brian Kelsey, Managing Director, Audra, Scott and Michael for an enjoyable and informative visit.

The second oldest professional outdoor theatre in Door County is Northern Sky Theater. Their Mission is "to create, develop, and present professional musical and dramatic productions which will further the knowledge and appreciation of the culture and heritage of the United States." Its origins date back to 1970 when Dave Peterson, a professor at UW Madison and his students created a production, *Song of the Inland Seas*, as the culmination of a one month course on the folklore of the Great Lakes. After visiting Peninsula State Park in Door County he arranged to have a cast of 18 singers and instrumentalists perform the play on a rustic stage in the park that had been used for slide shows and naturalist programs. It was a hit and continued to be performed for the next two years. The company was known then as The Heritage Ensemble and they continued to perform in the Park for the next 20 years. Founding members of the troupe included: Fred Alley, Fred "Doc" Heide, Paul Sills and Jeffrey Herbst.

Technically the theatre was very primitive until 1987 when the company built a technical booth and hired a sound technician. In 1989 the actors were able to stop changing costumes in the mud when a dressing room was





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constructed with donations from loyal patrons. In 1990 the troupe's name was changed to American Folklore Theatre to emphasize the dramatic elements of the productions and to reflect the broadening of the organization's scope. Plays ranged from native American songs in *Moon of the Long Nights* to the amorous adventures of lumber workers in *Lumberjacks in Love* which has been reprised many times, including this year. In 1992 they continued their season into the fall by moving into several town halls with ensemble shows like *Goodnight Irene*, the story of *The Weavers*. The group has won several awards from the County and helped in the development of Door Shakespeare Company. In 2003 a campaign raised the funds to complete a new stage which the company continues to use. Our tour was guided by Dave Alley, the Tech-

nical Director and the brother of Fred Alley, one of the founding members of the group who died suddenly at the age of 38. Audience members walk about a block from the parking lot through the forest to come upon a dip in the ground which creates a natural auditorium bowl. Seating is on benches with backs and this season they have begun to sell Reserved seats with cushions provided. Those in general seating can either bring their own seating pad, rent one, or sit on the bare bench. The house seats several hundred patrons. There are concessions stands, a fire pit and free bug spray at the entrance. In order to continue to be family friendly, ticket prices are kept to a minimum and shows last 90 minutes without intermission.

The stage itself is made up of a number of levels linked by ramps and steps, backed by an uneven wall of vertical timbers. It is both rustic and extremely flexible to accommodate a theatre that runs several shows each season in repertory. In the 2016 season *Lumberjacks in Love* (a perennial favorite), *No Bones about It* (*Romeo & Juliet* set in the world of competitive BBQ), *When Butter Churns to Gold* (a melodrama of the dairy world) and the brand new *Doctor, Doctor* (a new doctor is initiated into Door County life) are each performed several times a week from June 15 through August 27 in this outdoor venue. *Guys and Does* (a musical comedy about deer hunting and father/future son-in-law relations) runs from September 2 through October 15 at Door Community Auditorium and is joined by *And If Elected* (a musical look at presidential campaign history that has been performed every election year since 1992) beginning September 29 at Old Gibraltar Town Hall.



Backstage consists of two buildings one of which houses the dressing rooms and the other is used for technical equipment and prop storage. Because different plays are performed each night, few if any set pieces are used. Scenes are mostly set with props and lighting. In the production of *Doctor, Doctor*, for example, there are three tapestries with Door County vistas hung on the vertical timbers. When the scene goes into the doctor's office, a tapestry is pulled back to reveal a second tapestry with medical diagrams. When the scene is in the town store, another tapestry is revealed with various goods. The orchestra sits in front of the stage to stage right. Lighting positions are limited by Park restrictions, as are other improvements the company may wish to make. However, Northern Sky has excellent relations with both the Park and the DNR and they have recently signed a new 15 year agreement which will ensure this partnership continues to thrive. Thank you to Ann Birnschien, Marketing Director, for arranging the tour and to David Alley, Technical Director/Lighting Designer for explaining the workings of this unique theatre.

Door Shakespeare, the youngest of the three theaters we visited, was created under the umbrella of

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Northern Sky Theater (AFT) in 1995. It is also the only one on the Lake Michigan side of the Door Peninsula. The venue is on the grounds of Bjorklunden (Bjorklunden vid Sjon, Swedish for “Birch Grove by the Lake”), the 425 acre former home of the Boynton family which they bequeathed to Lawrence University. The theater itself is in the Garden at Bjorklunden. In its first season the same acting company performed *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *The Comedie of Errors* at Bjorklunden and then performed across the peninsula at the American Folklore Theatre. Door Shakespeare became its own non-profit organization and has produced 27 productions by classical playwrights. Besides Shakespeare their plays have included those of Oscar Wilde, Oliver Goldsmith, Edmund Rostand, Richard Sheridan and Moliere

among others. They perform two plays in repertory each year from June 29 through August 20 (the shortest season of the three as well). Besides the productions they sponsor Doorways, a week long workshop for children which includes theatre games (a la Paul Sills), ensemble work and Shakespeare. Prior to select performances they also sponsor the Will in the Woods Education Series which uses interactive lessons developed by the Folger Shakespeare Library. Thanks are due to our guide for this adventure, Amy Ludwigsen, Executive Director, native of Door County and graduate of Northwestern University. Like Northern Sky, some of what the theatre can and cannot do is monitored by an outside agency, in this case Lawrence University.

The performance space is next to the original Boynton garden which the company has recently refurbished for use by patrons prior to the play and for outside money making events. It is an open area in the surrounding woods which once was also the site of the Boynton tennis courts and, as such, is flat. Audience seating is on risers set up in a semi-circular configuration. Until a few years ago, most of the action was performed on the ground — the acting area delineated with colored mulch and flat rocks. Today an enormous oak tree at center stage is surrounded by a balcony with steps coming from both the acting area and from the back. A large oval low platform in the center of the ground level acting area allows for more varied heights for focus. In this year’s production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (in repertory with *Julius Caesar*) the fairies place a quilted, rustic throw over the oval to create Titania’s bower. Besides the audience risers and the balcony and oval there is a lockable technical booth above and behind the risers for lighting and sound control. Actors enter and exit through paths in the wood and quick changes are completed behind screens. The dressing rooms are across the parking lot in a small outbuilding. Costume shop and storage are off-site in a recently acquired office in nearby Bailey’s Harbor. Lights are hung on four poles around the stage. All of the technical equipment is rented for the season. As a fitting climax to our afternoon of exploring, we watched the fiery boil-over at a traditional local fish boil and ate whitefish with boiled potatoes and onions followed by cherry pie, another Door County tradition, before heading for various evening productions. Everyone had a marvelous time and learned a lot. Thanks again to all three theaters for their cooperation and hospitality!



# Technical Design Spotlight

## LED Strip Light Storage Cart

by Brian Nulle

Proper storage and transport of lighting equipment is an essential factor in maintaining its lifespan. The purchase of twenty ETC Selador VividR LED units, ten in the 42" size, and ten in the 11" size, which would be stored and used primarily on mounting trunnions, provided a unique storage challenge to the technical team at the University of Notre Dame's DeBartolo Performing Arts Center. Technical staff at the center asked other theaters in the region, but nobody seemed to have an elegant solution for storing these particular instruments. After two years of storing the fixtures on the floor in lighting storage, and loading the units on and off of temporary carts for every use, a customized cart was designed and built to serve both as permanent housing and as a transporter for the fixtures and their associated cabling.



### DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The cart needed to have space to carry all twenty of the VividR fixtures in a way that made any single unit or group of units readily available for use. It needed to include space for the associated Powercon and 5-pin DMX cabling which would travel with the units. The cart would also need to fit onto a freight elevator (9' deep, with a 4' wide door), which represented the tightest space on its path from lighting storage in the basement of the building to the stage spaces at ground level. Finally, the storage cart needed to be easily maneuverable, functioning well when fully loaded with only

a single operator. An optional design objective was to include storage space for five of City Theatrical's SHoW Baby 6 wireless DMX transceivers frequently used in conjunction with the Vivid R fixtures.

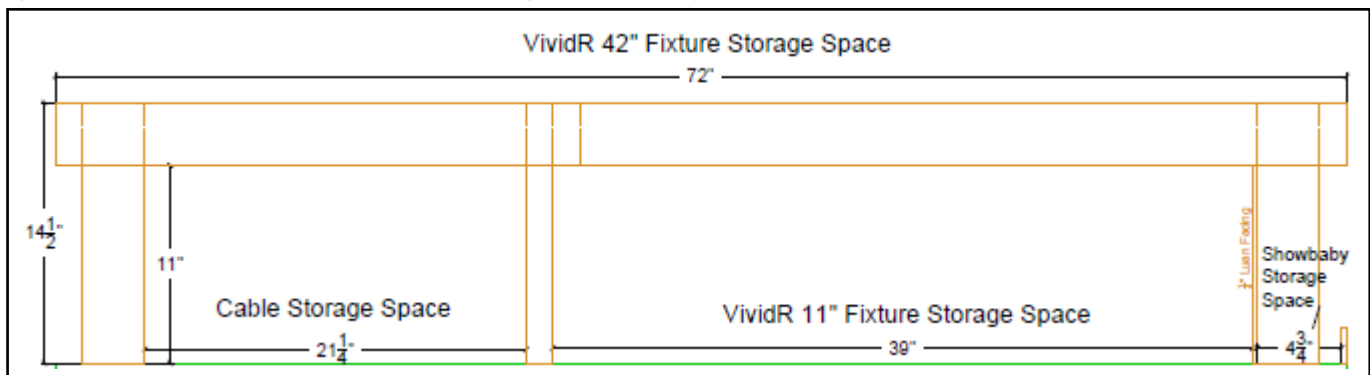


Figure 2: Side View Plan

### CONSTRUCTION

Figures 2 and 3 offer side and front views, respectively, of the dimensions of the platform designed to sit atop a 3'x6' hardwood platform truck purchased from Global Industrial (Item #T9A241697), and Figure 4 provides an isometric view of the full design without the lighting instruments or storage bins. The 39" wide top of the constructed platform was equal to the width of the feet of the 42" fixtures, allowing them to straddle the top side by side. Legging up the platform to 14 1/2" allowed sufficient height beneath the platform that the 11" fixtures could slide beneath the hanging trunnions of the 42" fixtures without obstruction. Building the middle legs off-center



# Technical Design Spotlight: LED Strip Light Storage Cart

meant that all of the smaller fixtures could store side by side on the back half of the cart, shifting most of the weight towards the operator and smart wheels. The front of the cart is large enough to contain a small storage

tub on each side for cables. We opted to purchase side-loading storage tubs (Rubbermaid #1P75) so that the cables within are accessible without having to remove any of the 42" fixtures to open the top lid. With the top back of the platform butting directly up against the handrail of the cart, there was an available 4¾" space at the back of the cart for the SHoW Baby 6 boxes (See Figure 5). Luan facing allowed separation of the various segments to keep contents unobstructed and organized.

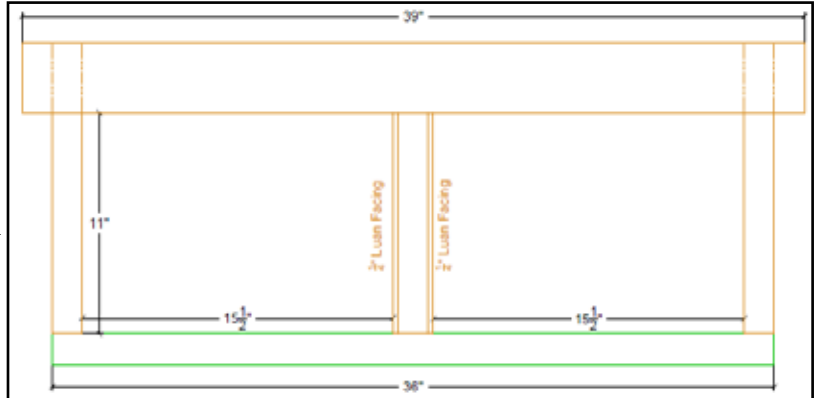


Figure 3: Front View Plan

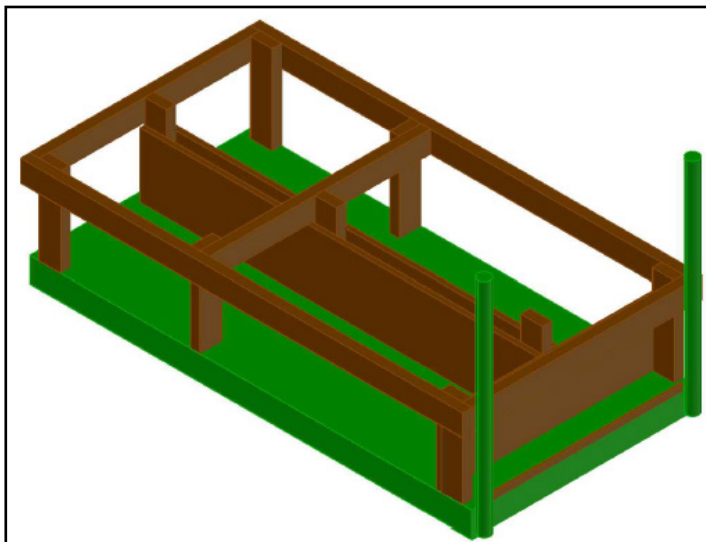


Figure 4: Isometric Rear Overview

## ADDITIONAL UNTESTED IDEAS

- Friction between the 42" fixtures and the wooden platform keeps the units from sliding off the front end, but adding removable pegs using a 1" drill bit and wooden dowels to the front will increase security.
- Storing the 42" fixtures as pictured with lens down allows the units to take weight on the strong lens frame, rather than the protruding cable ports. However, this leaves the vent holes exposed to falling dust. A sheet of fabric (muslin or canvas) could be used to protect these holes during extended periods of storage.
- Building handles into the front face of the platform could provide additional functionality.



Figure 5: SHoW Baby 6 Storage (Rear Cart)

*Brian Nulle is the Assistant Production Manager of the DeBartolo Performing Arts Center at the University of Notre Dame*



# Member News

## USITT Midwest Design Competition Winners 2016



Realized Design Winner: Jeremy Smith, Indiana University - Scenic Design for *The Exonerated*

Jeremy Smith is a first-year M.F.A. student in scenic design at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. He received his B.F.A. in design and technology from Arkansas State University. Scenic design credits include *The Exonerated* (Indiana University,) *The Miss Firecracker Contest*, *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, and *The Three Bully Goats Griff* (Arkansas State University), *Annapurna*, *Dying City*, and *Five Lesbians Eating a Quiche* (TheArts@311). He was the properties master for *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Prospect Hill*, and was the assistant properties master for *Dancing at Lughnasa*, as well as the Scenic Charge for *Duchess of Malfi* (Indiana University). Properties credits include *Pippin*, *Catch Me If You Can*, *The Music Man*, *The Wiz*, *The Addams Family*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *Death-trap*, *Steel Magnolias*, and *Bram Stoker's Dracula*. Jeremy is currently working as the assistant scenic designer on *The Drowsy Chaperone* at Indiana University. [jeremysmithdesigns.com](http://jeremysmithdesigns.com)



Realized Design Winner: Heather Brown, Michigan State University - Lighting Design for *The Tempest*

Heather Brown is a lighting designer and current graduate student enrolled at Michigan State University in the MFA production design program. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in Theatre from Grand Valley State University and an Associate in Science and Arts degree in Theatre from Northwestern Michigan Community Theatre. She completed a full year apprenticeship at Williamston Theatre and continued to work there as the resident assistant lighting designer and master electrician for two years before acceptance into MSU's program. Recent design credits include lighting design for *The Tempest*, *And Away We Go* and *Theatre Engine: Flash Mob*, and Scenic Design for the world premiere of *Mount Olympus Junior High*. For more info, visit [heathertheatre-design.com](http://heathertheatre-design.com).

# Member News

## USITT Midwest Design Competition Winners 2016



Paper Project Winner: Alana Yurcyk, Indiana University - Scenic Design for *Dutchess of Malfi*

Alana Yurcyk is a second year MFA candidate in Scenic Design at Indiana University. Originally from Zionsville, Indiana, Alana received her Bachelor's degree in Theatre (Scenic Design) and English from Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. For IU Theatre: *The Duchess of Malfi* (Scenic Designer), *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* (Scenic Designer, Scenic Charge Artist), *Berserker* (Scenic Designer), *Mr. Burns*, a post-electric play (Prop Master), and *Antigone* (Prop Master). For Indiana University Summer Theatre: *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* (Scenic Designer, Prop Master). For Xavier University Theatre: *The Last Five Years* (Scenic Designer), *Spring Awakening* (Scenic Designer), and *Godspell* (Scenic Designer).

Adjudicator: David M. Barber

David M. Barber is an award winning designer of scenery and costumes for theater, television, film and special events, with almost two decades of professional experience to his credit. Recent world premieres include *The Wedding Gift* by Chisa Hutchinson and *20th Century Blues* by Susan Miller (Contemporary American Theater Company), *Appoggiatura* and *The Most Deserving* (Denver Center Theater Company) and the new opera *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (presented by El Museo del Barrio). He has served as E! Entertainment's New York Art Director since 2009. Other television work includes Art Direction for *Football Night in America* and *The TODAY Show* for NBC Universal and Production Design for the MTV pilot *Fashion Mega Warriors*, produced by Tyra Banks. Awards include the Drama Desk, American Theater Wing Henry Hewes Award, Connecticut Critics Circle Award, Denver Drama Critics Circle Award, Denver Ovation Award, Westword's "Best of Denver", and two New York Innovative Theater Awards. He has been a guest lecturer / designer at several schools, including Hope College, Whitman College, Mount Holyoke College, Washington College, University of Colorado and George Mason University; served as a panelist for the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and an adjudicator for U.S.I.T.T.'s College Design Competition. He is a member of United Scenic Artists Local 829 and currently resides in Brooklyn, NY.

