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Recap: Purdue University Hosts First Midwest Cirque Du Soleil Live Entertainment Workshop

By Jeremy Barnett

From March 21 to March 23, The Midwest Regional Section of USITT presented the inaugural Midwest Cirque du Soleil Live Entertainment Workshop. The workshop, hosted by Purdue University and featuring professionals from Cirque du Soleil and a number of other affiliated companies, offered participants the opportunity to learn about the operations of some of the largest performances in the world.

"[The workshop] was a highly professional environment where students were able to study with working professionals in a hands-on, experiential setting," said participant Amy Lynn Budd.

The Purdue Exponent, Purdue's daily student newspaper, points out that, "A 'professional environment' in the lens of Cirque du Soleil is much different from what societal standards deem professional." Cirque du Soleil is one of the world's largest production companies and is famed for its dazzling shows in which performers routinely appear to defy the limits of human physiology and the laws of physics. Maintaining dozens of individual companies around the world with demanding performance schedules and an industry-leading safety record requires that Cirque performers and technicians meet rigorous standards of professionalism.



Students participate in a dance master class taught by Katy Tate, Dance Master of "Love"



Cirque, Continued on Page 2

Beginning and Maintaining A Successful USITT Student Chapter

By Jeremy Barnett

USITT Student Chapters are a popular way for students interested in technical theatre to organize themselves for training, sharing fundraising to attend the National Conference, and - like all student organizations - to spend social time with people who share their interests. Still, students and advisors often find that maintaining a student chapter can be challenging. Many chapters find that students begin enthusiastically but participation wanes as the demands of departmental productions and the academic calendar take over. And yet, there are some chapters that seem to thrive. What is the difference, and how can a student chapter set itself up for success?

I asked Shane Kelly, Head of Theatre Technology at The Theatre School at DePaul University what the key was to DePaul's famously active Student Chapter.

Student Chapter, Continued on Page 3



Members of the University of Wyoming's student chapter, featured on USITT's webpage



Cirque, From Page 1

That professionalism was on full display at Purdue. Billed as an opportunity to learn from some of the most respected professionals in the entertainment industry, seminar leaders included the Artistic Director of "O", the Dance Master at "Love" and the the Head of Carpentry and Props for all Cirque operations.

The event featured classes and seminars in acting, automation, carpentry, dance, lighting, make-up, management, rigging,



Steve Bush of Meyer Sound leads a presentation on sound engineering

sound and wardrobe in nearly a dozen locations across Purdue's campus. Classes were small, making for a comfortable atmosphere in which attendees could to interact freely with their instructors. The event also included performances that both entertained participants and demonstrated some of the techniques discussed in the seminars.

"This is an incredible opportunity for students to network and meet people involved in the largest format and most challenging theater show running today," said Mercer Aplin, a graduate student at Purdue's College of Liberal Arts and workshop volunteer.

For many participants, the Live Entertainment Workshop was more than just educational: it was also inspirational. On the last day of the event, Dan Robinson said that the sessions "gave you something

to work toward. Being a student and beginning a career, you want to get to the point where you're working at this level, with these kinds of people." Chris O'Meara, a student from Michigan, pointed out that while a company like Cirque Du Soleil has access to technology and resources beyond those of a college or mid-sized production company, all of the instructors emphasized creativity and ingenuity over gadgets. "What was inspiring", he said, "was that every session concluded with the feeling that the technology as an aid, but that everything starts with the idea, and that's the most important thing. It was really empowering to hear these really high-level people saying over and over again, 'everything starts with an idea.'" That said, the technology was not lost on the rapt participants. O'Meara concedes, "the stuff they showed us was really, really cool."

Tenure Resources: Review Network and USITT Guidelines

Tenure is a professor's contractual right not to have his or her position terminated without just cause. It is a way to guarantee academic and creative freedom by protecting teachers from bias and allowing the free flow of creative ideas. This is especially true when such ideas deviate from established norms or contradict the opinions and tastes of colleagues and administration. As such, tenure serves as a form of job security for creative minds.

This freedom and security is as important in the creative arts as it is in research. It is awarded after a probationary period in which a professor establishes his or her credentials and value to the university through quality teaching, service to the university and academic excellence. Academic excellence, which is usually termed "Scholarship", is often demonstrated through peer-reviewed publication, invited lectures, seminars and related means that show a candidates contribution to his or her field of expertise. In some universities this is problematic for professors whose work in the creative or professional fields is non-academic.

In 2000 USITT wrote a document called Tenure and Promotion Guidelines (which can be found online at http://www.usitt.org/files/usitt_tenure.pdf) to help guide candidates and institutions on how to present and review creative work in an academic setting. Among other things, it advocates that candidates and institutions seek respected members of the professional and academic community to evaluate and review creative work to mirror the peer-review process of academic publication. To help with the tenure review process, the USITT-Midwest Section has compiled a list of professors and professionals who could be contacted to review a candidate's work. As stated on the USITT-Midwest Section's website:

As a service to the section, the Midwest Section of the United States Institute for Theatre Technology (USITT): Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, & Indiana, has developed this Tenure Review Network comprised of tenured faculty and industry professionals (non-academic) who are willing to be potential promotion & tenure package reviewers for our region's (and beyond) tenure-track assistant professors and associate professors (those applying for promotion to "full" professor). Faculty applying for tenure and/or promotion, their department chairs, and their deans may refer to this list as an immediate network of colleagues for the promotion and tenure review process.

Most universities begin their review period in the autumn. The USITT-Midwest Section invites instructors seeking tenure to make use of this resource to support to support their candidacy. The section also states that this Tenure Review Network is in its infancy. If you are willing to be a part of this network, please send the following information to



Student Chapter, from Page 3

Kelly said simply, "The USITT @ DePaul student chapter continues to thrive because the chapter is student driven with the students taking ownership of everything that they do."

"I truly am an advisor and resource for them as I often alert them to activities, programs and competitions they may want to participate in and give them advice on activities they have planned or initiatives they are taking, but I very infrequently tell them what to do—the board and members make those decisions for themselves."

There are a number of ways that advisors and students can create sustainable student chapters, Beginning with these recommendations:

Establish by-laws

USITT recommends that students chapters adapt by-laws that govern outline procedures and goals for functions like elections, recruitment, events and fundraising. Having these procedures in writing serves as a reminder for chapter officers and establishes working operations that can be passed from one year to the next. It eliminates the question of how and when to hold chapter functions and allows new administrations to come in each year with procedures already in place.

Set goals that meet members' needs

The student body in each chapter will have needs and interests that are different from those of other chapters. Some may want to focus on fundraising so that the entire chapter can attend the annual USITT Conference. Some may want to focus on training opportunities, while others may be more service-minded and still others may emphasize social opportunities. While a mix of events is good for any student chapter, a clear statement of the goals of the chapter will help ensure that its members are being served.

Create events that serve multiple goals

Having established goals, it is also important to make sure that chapter events serve a range of interests. Keep in mind that events should be both fun and educational. If students want to learn about safety harnesses and rope work they might consider a trip to a climbing gym or a rappelling wall as part of their training. Hosting a student dance (and

charging admission) might be a way to learn and practice club light and sound programming.

Schedule events early and regularly

Some chapters have found that setting a calendar at the beginning of the year helps to ensure that they run regular events. Other chapters appoint an officer to coordinate an event with school productions - for example a painting workshop to correspond with a show that will use multiple backdrops, or lighting and sound control board training on the first



Members of the Oakland University USITT Student Chapter explore ropes, harnesses and tension while learning to walk a slackline

show of the academic year. Many chapters use university breaks as time to schedule service events such as bench focusing a department's lighting equipment or helping an area high school with scenic construction. Whatever works for your organization, having events on the calendar early helps ensure full participation.

Recruit and encourage participation of non-members

Finally, successful chapters encourage participation of members and non-members alike. This ensure that work and fun are shared, and that the chapter will be passed to new generations of students as active members graduate.

Kelly concludes, "It is important to remember that chapter activities aren't difficult to organize, because often you will find that there is someone or some company willing to help out a group of interested and driven students in their desire for new experiences and further knowledge."

2015 CONFERENCE & STAGE EXPO

Showcasing the best

- Find new solutions
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usitt.org/2015 CINCINNATI MARCH 18-21

We Want to See
YOU
in Cincinnati

The USITT National Conference will take place March 18 - 21 and we want to see YOU at the Duke Energy Convention Center.

Take advantage of discounts for early registration, available now through December 4, 2014. Reduced rates available for students, early career members, spouses and significant others. Register online at usittshow.com



STUDENT DESIGNERS!

There Is Still Time To Get Your Submissions In!

WHAT: USITT-Midwest Section's 2014 Student Design Digital Competition

Student designers may present a digital portfolio of their original work for a single design in one or both of the following two categories:

1. Non-realized "paper" design

Students may choose from the 2014 (last year's) **OR** the 2015 (this year's) KCACTF Region 3 Regional Design Project Allowed Plays –whether the design had been entered in KCACTF or not.

- *The Bacchae* of Euripides - Soyinka
- *Pseudolus* - Plautus
- *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* - Shaffer
- *The Rover* - Behn
- *The Piano Lesson* - Wilson
- *Hello Dolly!* - Herman & Stewart
- *Story Theatre* - Sills
- *A Long Day's Journey into Night* - O'Neill
- *Sweeney Todd* - Publisher: MTI
- *Rashomon* - Kanin
- *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* - Shakespeare
- *The Birds* - Aristophanes (Arrowsmith)
- *Jeffrey* - Rudnick

2. Realized design

Students may enter a design completed for a production at their school during the 2014 calendar year.

WHO: USITT-Midwest Section Student Members

- ❖ All entrants must be student members of USITT-Midwest Section and currently enrolled students of colleges and universities in the section's four states: Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, or Indiana.
- ❖ Each entry must be the sole original design conceived and rendered by the individual student entrant, verified by the student's faculty advisor.

WHY: Scholarship for Student Registration:

USITT Annual Conference & Stage Expo; Cincinnati, Ohio; March 18-21, 2015

WHEN: Entry deadline: November 1, 2014

Award announcement: December 1, 2014

Scholarship recipients will then be notified of how to access their free conference registration.

HOW:

1. Students should indicate their intent to enter by emailing Shane Kelly, chair of USITT-Midwest, at skelly19@depaul.edu. **Do not include design materials in this email.**
2. Shane will then contact the student with information for uploading designs.
3. Students will upload their design, in a digital format (CD, PowerPoint, webpage address, etc.) per Shane's instructions.

Entries must include the following:

- a. Cover page including student's name, school, & contact information.
 - a. This information should **NOT** appear anywhere else on the design materials provided.
- b. Confirmation letter from faculty design advisor confirming the eligibility of the student designer and design.
- c. One-page Concept Statement. Original scripts should include a brief synopsis.
 - a. Concept statement should include concise descriptions of overall production concept; specific design concept; how the design concept is realized
- d. Digital design portfolio for the project must be organized & complete
 - a. Contain elements that clearly communicate the design, such as Research; Analyses; Drafting; Renderings; Other materials developed for the design
 - b. Realized designs should include representative production photos.

DETAILS:

- a) One national conference registration scholarship is to be awarded for each of the categories.
- b) The following design disciplines will be considered: scenic, costume, lighting, makeup, sound, projection.
- c) Winners will be selected by blind jury by a guest adjudicator, to be announced.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

Contact USITT-Midwest Design Coordinator: M.C. Friedrich, mcfriedr@mtu.edu



Midwest Regional Section Fall Events: A recap

The Midwest Regional Section held two successful events in October. The first event kicked off on October 4th with two all day workshop events at the University of Michigan at Flint. The Costume session was led by Adam Dill, Costume Shop Supervisor at UM-Flint and guest presenter Rick Tuckett, Costume Director for the School of Theatre Arts at the University of Arizona. The session was taught to costume design and technology students and focused on tailoring techniques utilizing the Sartor System of flat pattern drafting of historic men's wear for the stage. It is a simplified method of drafting originated by Robert W. Trump. The presenters also introduced other tailoring construction methods including tailor worked buttonholes, welt pockets and pad stitching.



The students had hands on experience creating basic body blocks drafted using the Sartor System and practicing the tailoring techniques taught. Michelle Hathaway, a student at the school summed up the session well with "Math is fun! It is a different way of using my creative side."

The other session of the day at the University of Michigan at Flint took place in the studio theatre space that was converted into an ETC Ion console training space with 9 console workstations. ETC trainers Ellen White and



Spencer Lyons took participants through Ion programming from the basics to more intermediate skills as the day progressed.

The second October event took place in the Mill Theatre at Elmhurst College in a jointly sponsored event between the Midwest Regional Section, Chicago Spotlight and Elmhurst College. Rick Arnold, Technical Director of the Mill Theatre moderated the program. Drawing from their wealth of experience, professionals from Loyola University, Northern Illinois University, Chicago Spotlight, Inc. and First Folio Theatre shared their perspectives on what they look for in applicants or candidates in terms of their resumes and portfolios. They focused on how the individuals present themselves and also discussed the attributes of print and/or digital portfolios.

Chicago Spotlight, Inc. *There's so much more to see!*



Rick Arnold summed up the day by saying "I thought it was a good event in terms of message and affability of those involved."

Because Sometimes We Forget Why The Theatre Community Matters...

As a kid who wasn't into sports, at school I felt almost alienated at times, whereas in the theatre community there was this amazing sense of camaraderie. Early on, we would go to rehearsals with my dad and I was like the mascot for the backstage crew. That was a big part of my childhood
- Zach Braff

Choosing to be in the theatre was a way to put my roots down somewhere with other people. It was a way to choose a new family.
- Juliette Binoche



Call For Nominees for Founder's Awards

The Midwest Regional Section is accepting nominations from Section members for the annual Founders Awards. The Board of Directors of the Midwest Regional Section annually presents two Founder's awards, named in honor of those who first chartered the Midwest Regional Section of USITT. The first award is given in recognition of a student for their hard work and enthusiasm in pursuing a career in Technical Theatre; the second in recognition of a section member for their service to our Section.

Student Award

Active Section members may nominate students to receive a monetary award of not less than \$300.00 and a one year Membership in the Section. Students may be either High School Seniors or College Undergraduates.

The criteria for nomination are:

- active in the High School or College Technical Theatre program;
- intent to pursue a career in Technical Theatre or related field; Student nominees will be expected to:
- provide the Founders Award Committee with a current resume;
- write a brief statement of their goals in Technical Theatre.

Students who are nominated need not be a current member of the Section.

Section Member Award

Active Section members may nominate one of their fellows for this award. The award consists of a plaque briefly detailing the member's contributions to the Midwest Regional Section and a Lifetime membership in the Section. Nominations must be made and seconded by current active members.

Criteria for nomination are:

- active member of the Section
- outstanding contributions to the Section in the form of participation, growth of the Section, service to the Section and assistance in achievement of Section goals.

How to Nominate

Student Award

Fill out the nomination form completely and return to:

Thomas V. Korder
USITT Midwest Awards Committee Chair
500 South Goodwin Ave.
Urbana, IL 61801
or by e-mail to: kordertv@illinois.edu



*The Founder's Award was Established to
Honor the Founder's of the Midwest Section Charter:
Richard Arnold
Glenn Naselius
Bernhard Works*

The committee will contact the nominee requesting the criteria information listed above.

Section Member Award

Fill out the nomination form completely, secure a second for your nomination and mail, fax or e-mail as above. Multiple nominations for the same Section member will be considered as seconded.

Nomination Deadline

All nominations must be received by January 25, 2015. Awards will be presented at the Midwest Section meeting at the USITT Conference and Stage Expo in March at 8:00 AM local time.



Up-Coming Midwest Regional Events

Backstage and Onstage: Newsies in Chicago

Join us as the Midwest Regional Section presents a "Day Onstage and Backstage" with a backstage tour of Newsies at the Oriental Theatre/Ford Center for the Performing Arts, followed by a matinee performance of the show. The schedule will be as follows:

- 11:00 - Backstage tour of Newsies at the Oriental Theatre/Ford Center for the Performing Arts
- 12:30 - Lunch before the show (area suggestions will be provided)
- 2:00 - Matinee Performance of Newsies



The Section has purchased 20 group rate tickets for the matinee, which will be sold on a first come/first serve basis. The tour has a capacity of 30. Interested parties may sign up for the backstage tour without signing up for the performance

Event Date: Saturday, December 13 2014

The Oriental Theatre/Ford Center for the Performing Arts
24 West Randolph Street, Chicago

Fees: \$80 for Individual Members to take the tour and attend the performance*
\$10 for Individual Members to register for the tour only*

*Fees vary with membership status

Registration is due by November 7, 2014. Registration forms can be found online at midwest.usitt.org

Scenic Painting Basics



Sponsored by USITT Midwest Regional Section, Chicago Spotlight, Inc, and The Theatre School at DePaul University. Joanna White, Scenic Artist, will guide participants through hands-on painting activities. Whether you are brand new to scenic painting or have some of the basics already, you'll come away with more experience in techniques such as brick and wood, to glazes vs. washes, as well as learning more about basic painting tools and mixing colors.

Event Date: Saturday, May 9, 2015

9 AM - 4 PM

The Paint Deck at The Theatre School, DePaul University
2350 N. Racine Avenue, Chicago

Fees: \$35 Registration Fee
\$15 Materials Fee

Due to the limited number of participants, you are encouraged to register by April 24, 2015. Registration forms can be found online at midwest.usitt.org

