

# usitt

## Design & Production Review

SUMMER 2015

**Midwest**  
Regional Section



### From our point of view: 2015 USITT in Review

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)



Student, **Allison Switalski**, Saginaw Valley State University

*"Attending USITT in 2015 opened my eyes to all the opportunities available within the theatre community. It really cemented in that I'm on the right path. I met so many other passionate and talented technicians and designers whose successes have me very excited to see where my education and career will lead me. I consider the USITT conference to be a pivotal event in my undergrad years."*

Sound Designer, **Christopher Plummer**,  
Michigan Technical University

*"This year was a solid year for programming and manufacturer involvement. There were many more sound companies on the expo floor and a speaker demo organized with Live Sound International and ProSoundWeb that had 16 different systems set-up for listening was an exceptional experience. The sessions ranged from discussions with professional designers in the area and a hilarious and very informative session with **Early Career Sound Designers** to practical sessions on **Composing for Non-musicians, Wireless Technologies, Sound Creation Techniques, and Sound Teaching Techniques**. The Guerrilla Sound Challenge was yet again a fabulous success with a wide variety of contestants from students to professionals and a final live performance with musicians, an actor, and a large bag of mail that will be remembered for some time by those who experienced it."*

Costume Technician, **Adam Dill**, University of Michigan-Flint

*"There did not seem to be a lot of costume related choices, but the options offered were excellent! LaLonnice Lehman's presentation on **Fashion at the time of The Great Gatsby** was among my favorites, and I always love the scope of knowledge and materials presented in the poster sessions. Collaboration, communication, and education are so important to what we do in the world of costumes! With that in mind, I am so thrilled to continue student education this year for USITT! I will be presenting **"Negotiations in the Fitting Room"** at the 2016 conference in Salt Lake City! This panel discussion will offer insight on how to navigate the tougher moments costume technicians face when put on the spot in the fitting room. Topics for discussion include: proper demeanor and dress for a fitting, how to handle actor body issues in the fitting, suggestions for dealing with the pressure of feeling "on the spot", and how to effectively achieve the designer's wishes in a professional manner – and how to do the above in a cool, calm, and collected way."*

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[snewport@umflint.edu](mailto:snewport@umflint.edu)

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## Meet a Director:

### M.C. Friedrich & Paul Brunner



**Name:** Mary Carol Friedrich, it's a southern double name so I answer mostly to MC and almost not at all to Mary.

**Title:** Professor of Design & Technical Theatre at Michigan Technical University

**Production I'm currently working on:** Summer downtime! Actually, I am beginning to look at the next academic year's productions and discerning what will be assigned to students and/or faculty.

**Favorite thing about my job:** My wonderful colleagues and bright students. It doesn't hurt that I can see bald eagles flying over the canal outside my office and costume shop windows.

**Piece of advice for young theatre artists:** Diversify early in your education to keep your options open later. I have found myself scene painting when I was hired to be an electrician. Be open to new locations and experiences, especially early in your career.

**Favorite thing about USITT:** The variety of options open to me, my colleagues, and my students. There is something for everyone! I can recharge my creative batteries, stay relevant in my chosen fields, meet up with colleagues and old friends from many walks of life in the entertainment industry. My students can find relevant internships, grad schools, career-starting jobs. The website and archives of TD&T and the Costume Commission are great resources. I love visiting the different cities in which the conference is held.

*M.C. Friedrich was the winner of the 2015 Founder's Award. Congrats M.C.!*



**Name:** Paul Brunner

**Title:** Associate Professor of Theatre Technology, and Technical Director at Indiana University

**Production I'm currently working on:** I am the Technical Director for the USITT-USA 2015 Prague Quadrennial Exhibits, for the summer of 2015. The exhibits were built during the summer and winter of 2014. I am also currently in production for *Mr. Burns a Post Electric Play* for IU Theatre & Drama which opens in October.

**Favorite thing about my job:** I love the variety that theatre presents to crafts persons. Certain aspects are repetitive for sure, but each challenge I face is unique and energizing. I also love working with students on productions. They keep the process fresh, and their inquisitive nature keeps me on my toes.

**Piece of advice for young theatre artists:** network, network, network. Any and all current classmates and colleagues are your future professional network. Don't burn bridges, ever. And diversify! Don't just do theatre, but work in opera, dance, ballet, etc. There is so much work out there if you have even a hint of experience in these other areas.

**Favorite thing about USITT:** Networking! I've had the good fortune to meet hundreds of people through USITT Midwest and the National Conference. I'd be nowhere without the connections, professional mentorship, and current technology available through USITT. Now I'm starting to learn about non-profit leadership by being more involved in both the Midwest Section and the national Institute. I can't wait to learn more from all of the amazing people I meet.

# 2015 Midwest Regional Section Award Recipients

Five awards were given out at this year's section meeting in Cincinnati. Check the section website for the nomination process and deadlines for application for next year's awards.

## Student Digital Design Competition

Emily Lotz, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point for her design for *Radium Girls*

Christopher Rhoton, University of Indiana for his design for *King Lear*

## Founder's Awards

### High School Student

Alexis Handler,  
Adlai E. Stevenson High School

### College Student

David Millard,  
DePaul University

### Section Member

M.C. Friedrich,  
Michigan Technical University

David Krajec and Bernie Works explain the origins of the Midwest Regional Section before presenting the awards.



David Millard  
receives College  
Student  
Founder's Award



David Krajec,  
Bernie Works and  
Steve Jacobs  
present the  
Section Member  
Founder's Award  
to M.C. Friedrich

# Upcoming Section Events

More Details & Registration for Section Events can be completed on our website: <http://midwest.usitt.org/programs>

## 2015 Summer Events

**Saturday June 27:** Fort Wayne, IN Apollo Technologies and Embassy Theatre Tour

**Saturday, August 29:** Valparaiso University host Scenic Painting Workshop and Working with Wigs/Practical Makeup

**Saturday, September 26:** University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire hosts Digital Costume Designer and ETC Ion/Gio Console Training

## Apollo Technologies and Embassy Theatre

**Event Date: Saturday, June 27, 2015 9:30 - 4 PM EST, Ft. Wayne, Indiana**

**9:30-12:30- Apollo Design Technology, Inc.**

**4130 Fourier Dr., Ft. Wayne, IN**

<http://internetapollo.com/>

Host Joel Nichols, President of Apollo Technologies and his staff open their offices and manufacturing plant to our Section. We will learn how to create a custom gobo and take it through to actual production. Participants are encouraged to bring a clean image they want to produce. We will also experience some of Apollo's product line and learn about their associated industries, Blue Pony and Avid Labs. Take advantage of this unique opportunity to see how one of the top theatrical manufacturers produces products we all use. Lunch will be provided courtesy of our hosts at Apollo!



**2:00 - 4:00- Historic Embassy Theatre**

**125 W. Jefferson Blvd., Ft. Wayne, IN**

<http://www.fwembassytheatre.org>

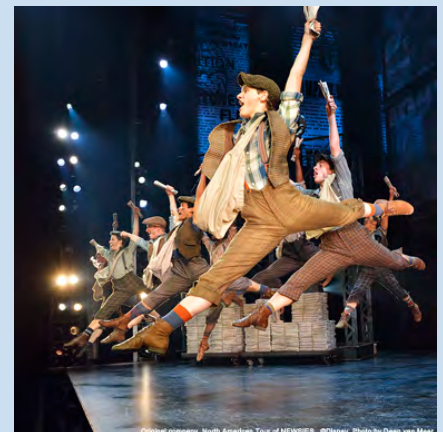
Built in 1928 and opened as a movie palace and vaudeville house, the Embassy has gone through many stages of production and renovation over time, hosting numerous celebrities of the day. The historic Embassy Theatre currently hosts numerous productions throughout the year. Join us to experience the history, architecture and production facilities of this theatre listed in the National Register of Historic Places and see one of very few brenograph projectors still in use today!



## Winter Events Review

by Steve Jacobs

The third Midwest event of the season took place at the Oriental Theatre/Ford Center for the Performing Arts in Chicago on December 12, 2014 where Section members toured "Onstage and Backstage" of the touring production of *Newsies*. Participants toured the backstage during the morning session while members of the road and house crew described some of the challenges of mounting this particular traveling production and answered questions from participants. After lunch, the twenty individuals who had purchased group tickets saw the matinee of the show. Those who attended this event said they enjoyed the day, especially being able to see the stage and understand the requirements of the production first hand before seeing the show.



Original company, North American Tour of NEWSIES. ©Disney. Photo by Deen van Meer.

# Wrap up from the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Midwest Mechanical Design Competition

by Verda Beth Martell

It started with a contest to define the contest. This year, the Ninth Annual Midwest Mechanical Design Competition started with a call for proposals to write the rules for the competition. Last December seven proposals were submitted for contests. They ranged from shooting galleries to basketball drills to can crushers. Ultimately, thanks to proposal judges Tracy Nunnally, Steve Jacobs, and Marty Lazarus, Roy Howington's competition proposal won out and a few weeks ago, seven Rube Goldberg-styled machines came to life to try to win it.

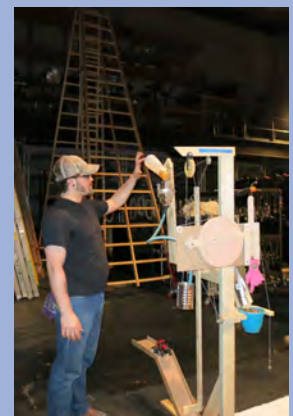
As Roy was happy to explain, Rube Goldberg set up an interesting challenge when he began to illustrate his convoluted machines to accomplish ordinary, sometimes absurdly simple tasks. While having inspired numerous contests, commercials, artwork, ad campaigns, and more, the cartoonist best known for these complex contraptions never built any of them. Perhaps the greatest challenge that Rube Goldberg left was to achieve the insanity of his drawings in real life. That was the intent of Roy's contest.

Each competitor was charged to create a device that used simple machines to accomplish a mundane task. For this competition, no motors or pneumatic devices were allowed. A chain-reaction, containing a minimum of 10 steps, had to be driven by gravity or springs or other non-commercial means. More steps gained more points. The more absurd or mundane the end goal, the better.

Again, seven entries were submitted, or appropriately cobbled together, for the competition that took place in the Colwell Playhouse at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts on the University of Illinois Campus on May 9<sup>th</sup>. This stage of the competition was judged by Joel Nichols, president of Apollo Lighting, Cory Rodeheaver from design/build firm Taylor Studios, and Aaron Pijanowski of DePaul University.

The various entries used Hot Wheels cars, plinko boards, pin wheels, falling weights, battering rams, and the classic domino run to activate a whoopee cushion, lift a toilet seat, trap a rat, plant a seed, and feed the dog. One crowd favorite spilled some water and then cleaned it up. The winning device, created by MJ Sedlock for her second win in three years, poured a beer using a series of marble runs and changing counterweights. MJ's device worked flawlessly for two of the three runs – a significant feat. The first run required a small nudge, before cascading beautifully into a calculatedly foamy pour.

For her efforts, MJ wins a conference pass to the 2016 USITT National Conference in Salt Lake City. Other notable achievements include Robert Jenista's runner up toilet seat opening design. In a contest judged on a 125 point scale, the difference between first and second place was a slim four points. Every year, the MMDC awards the best overall designs, but also recognizes the completeness and clarity of the documentation that accompanies the machines. For the third year in a row, Brian Morgan, took the award for the best documentation. It is the longest string of consecutive wins in any category in the nine years of competition. Brian and MJ both graduated from the University of Illinois Scenic Technology program this year. Robert, though, will be happy to take on all comers for the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Midwest Mechanical Design Competition next Spring. Look for new proposal guidelines in August.



"Planting a Seed" by  
Roy Howington

Photo by Jean Korder

# Midwest's Involvement at the 2015 Prague Quadrennial

by Shane Kelly

This summer, thousands of theatre artists from around the world will gather for eleven days in Prague for this year's Prague Quadrennial and several students from the Midwest Regional Section will be a part of creating this collection of designs, performances and ideas. The Prague Quadrennial offers 11 days, 64 national expositions, more than 500 live events at more than 100 locations in the center of Prague, and 50,000 visitors. Thirteen B.F.A. theatre technology, stage management and lighting design students from The Theatre School at DePaul University are a part of the SpaceLab production team helping to produce upwards of 50 performances from around the world. These performances will take place in the theatres of The Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague and outside in Jungannova Square in the center of Prague. This is the culmination of nine months of planning for these performances for these students from selecting the performances from hundreds of applications to communicating with the performers about their needs and plans and will culminate with meeting in Prague and presenting these performances. The DePaul students are collaborating on SpaceLab, which is the educational section of the Prague Quadrennial, with fellow students from The Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, York University in Toronto, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in London, and Czech theatre professionals.

Another key component of the Prague Quadrennial are the national design exhibits and students from Indiana



University have built the United States national exhibit. Back in July 2014, eight graduate students were selected by Paul Brunner, the Technical Director and Project Coordinator for the National Exhibit, to participate in a lifetime opportunity to build the USA National and Student Exhibit for the Prague Quadrennial 2015. They have been working hard for almost a year to create the incredible National Exhibit designed by the renowned international designer, Klara Zieglerova, and the Student Exhibit designed by students Joe Klug, John Mitchell, Jenna Moran,

Meghan Raham and Tyler Kinney. The national exhibit will be staffed in Prague by one professor, 3 recent M.F.A. graduates, 5 M.F.A. candidates, and a Staff member to help represent the United States.

We at USITT Midwest Regional Section are excited for the experiences and connections that the students from Indiana University and DePaul University will make this summer in Prague and we look forward to hearing about their adventures and to learn from them how to work in this multi-national environment.

