

usitt

Design & Production Review

Summer 2016

Midwest
Regional Section

Editor's Report from Salt Lake City

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

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I don't know about you, but it always takes me a month or two to really recover from USITT and start to digest some of the great bits of information I gleaned. This year I was really energized by some of the programming offered by the Education Commission. Jeromy Hopgood organized a great session titled *Successful Collaborations with Theatre and Dance*, featuring Matthew Allar and Patt Ness. In the session they focused on how language and jargon can be the first and largest barrier to successful collaboration. I've featured Hopgood's recent book, *Dance Production: Design & Technology* on page 5 of this review- check it out for new ideas on creating and maintaining good working relationships between theatre & dance. I was also really energized by the amount of people in the room for the *Women in Leadership Roles: Training and Mentoring*. M.C. Friedrich did an amazing job moderating the large panel that included Midwest Section Director at Large, Paul Brunner. The room was packed with students, teachers, mentors, people of all genders, race and ethnicities- it was inspiring. The take away for me was that we are all in control of our own career path, what are you going to do about it?

In this Summer edition of the Midwest Regional Section DPR, we are featuring new ideas to invigorate your teaching (and learning), as well as some amazing upcoming programming information for the upcoming year. As always, if you are interested in putting something together for this review please send me an email at snewport@umflint.edu.

Happy Summer!

Shelby Newport
DPR Editor
Associate Professor, University of Michigan-Flint



CONGRATULATIONS to Shane Kelly, the 2015 Founder's Member Award Winner! Thank you for your service to the section!

Midwest Section Board of Directors 2016-2017

**Board election of a new
Chair position will take place
on July 9, 2016.**

Steve Jacobs, Vice Chair for
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stevejacobs.mrsusitt@gmail.com

Mick Alderson, Vice Chair for
Membership
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Ryan Retartha, Vice Chair for
Communication
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R.J. Mike Nielsen, Treasurer
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Rich Dionne, Secretary
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Shane Kelly, Immediate Past
Chair

Directors at Large

Sarah Schreiber Prince
Marty Lazarus
Dan Lisowski
Paul Brunner
Vic Pilolla
Ellen White
Mary Black
Heather Milam

Deb Sherrer, Webmaster
(Ex-Officio)
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Shelby Newport, DPR Editor
(Ex-Officio)
snewport@umflint.edu

Tom Korder, Awards
Committee Chair (Ex-Officio)

Thank you Beth for your service!

Verda Beth Martell, long standing supporter of the Midwest section and incoming chair of the section is changing jobs, careers, and unfortunately for USITT Midwest, regions. Beth and her family will soon be moving to Phoenix, where she will join the theatre consulting and sustainable technologies group at the architecture firm of Westlake, Reed, Leskosky. Because of this move, she has resigned as incoming chair. Beth's replacement will be approved by the board at the July Meeting.

Meet a Director: Sarah Schreiber Prince

Name: Sarah Schreiber Prince

Title: Director of Technical Services,
DeBartolo Performing Arts Center,
University of Notre Dame

Production I'm currently working

on: Notre Dame Commencement
Ceremonies. I stage manage 7
different ceremonies in 2 venues in 3
days, which is challenging, because
while all of the ceremonies have similar

parts (processions, Pomp & Circumstance, graduates, diplomas, speakers), each department puts them together in different ways that I have to keep track of and make happen. It is a particularly joyful time on campus, so full of promise and pretty sundresses.

Favorite thing about my job: I love working with a team of dedicated and talented people on a wide variety of productions. Probably my favorite moment on any show I work on, is being backstage with artists and presenters right before I open the door for them to go on stage. It is a privilege to share that moment as they put on their show face.

Piece of advice for young theatre artists: Learn as much as you can about things outside of your particular area of focus. I personally wish I knew more about business, because once you get to a certain level in the industry it is about running a business and you have to know how to do things like write a mission statement, create a budget, manage employees, set organizational goals, etc.

Favorite thing about USITT: I love being a part of community of people interested in the same things I am, each willing to share new ideas, expertise and a laugh.



Welcome New Board of Directors!

New board members will begin their terms July 1, 2016
Thank you to those board members who are ending their
terms and have served the region well. Thank you David
Leugs, Chris Hoffman and Ken Franza!



MARK YOUR CALENDERS:

Upcoming Programming for Section Members

Our confirmed programming for summer and early fall includes the following events. [Please go to the Section website for more detailed descriptions and registration information.](#)

Please direct questions to Steve Jacobs, Vice Chair-Programming at stevejacobs.mrsusitt@gmail.com.

July 8, 9 & 10, 2016: Door County, WI Summer Theatre Tour

Join us for an enjoyable weekend of theatre tours and performances in scenic Door County!

Although we will have activities together, everyone is responsible for their own lodging and transportation and performance tickets. **We must have a minimum of 10 to hold this event. DEADLINE IS JUNE 24th**

As Door County is a very popular destination, it is highly recommended you make reservations ASAP.



For all questions regarding the arrangements, please contact Kate Wulle: <mailto:katewulledugan@gmail.com>

September 10, 2016 So You Want to Fly: Have You Thought About...? Rockford Fine Arts Auditorium, Rockford Michigan (outside Grand Rapids, MI)

Are you considering a production involving flying a performer or special effects flying tricks? Tracy Nunnally of *Vertigo* (Formerly Hall Flying Associates) will demonstrate necessary rigs, equipment, and all that you should consider as far as safety, staffing, and budgets. *ETCP renewal credit available for participation

September 24th, 2016 Lighting/Sound, Costuming and More at Indiana University, Bloomington, IN

The IU Department of Theatre, Drama and Contemporary Dance opens its doors to us with several sessions in the day. An optional free performance of *Dancing at Lughnasa* is offered that evening.

Workshop Sessions:

- Projection/Video Design Demystified
- Digitizing Historical Patterns
- Fundamentals of Show Control for Lighting and Sound
- Study Abroad and Course Field Trips



MARK YOUR CALENDERS:

Upcoming Programming for Section Members

Looking Ahead....

Plans are still being worked out for some of the following; continue to check the website for updates and our Section brochure mailed to members in late summer.

We are partnering with Corporate Sponsor Grand Stage to present these as part of their Theatrical Skills Workshop program:

October 29: Scene Painting at Oakton Community College

December 3: Show Control at Stevenson High School



Other events and tentative dates in the works but not confirmed follow. Please continue to check for updates at the website.

Tentative Workshop: Mod Truss Inc., makers of modular component pieces designed to build almost anything will hold a workshop at The Theatre School of DePaul. **Tentative Date: November 5, 2016**

Tentative date: December 10, 2016- The ins and outs of planning an outdoor lighting installation, behind the scenes at *Illumination: Tree Lights at The Morton Arboretum*

January 21, 2017 Sketch-Up Workshop will be held at the University of Wisconsin, Whitewater

Tentative date: April 22, 2017-A Health and Safety

Workshop will be held at Notre Dame University, South Bend, IN

Interested in hosting an event, contact Steve Jacobs, Vice Chair-Programming at stevejacobs.mrsusitt@gmail.com.

Membership Updates

Report as of 3/17/2016

Current 134

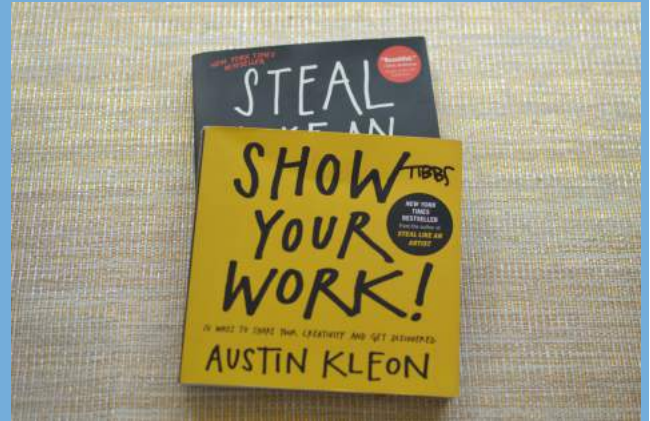
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|------------------|----|
| Individual | 67 |
| Student | 19 |
| Organization | 21 |
| Professional | 13 |
| Corporate | 12 |
| Founders members | 19 |

Not a paying member? Sign up and pay your dues on our website.

Book Review: *How to Steal Like an Artist*

By Matthew Tibbs, Assistant Professor of Sound Design
Department of Theatre and Dance, Ball State University

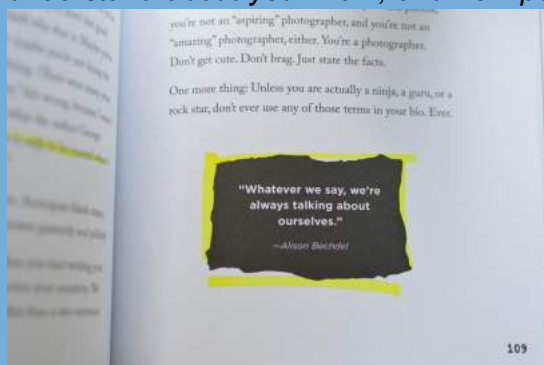
I like maxims and lists. I think David Foster Wallace was the person I first heard validate clichés as distilled wisdom. When it comes to the task of teaching design, it can feel imposing. Sure, there are practical tools and principles that can be clearly mastered. However, at its core theatrical design is about synthesis, smashing the words of the playwright and the movement of the actor together with everything else: architecture, fashion (both high and pedestrian), music, photography, fine art, personal experience, ad infinitum.



Teaching how to unlock that magic, how to extrapolate and make those unobvious (until they're found) connections, is my goal in the ambiguously titled "Design Awareness" course I teach at Ball State University. The students and I are particularly fond of one of the three texts I use: Austin Kleon's *Show Your Work!*

Show Your Work! is a breezy little book of ten imperatives, and it follows up Austin Kleon's previous book *Steal Like An Artist* (which I use in a freshman course called "Styles and Concept"). Though it be short, it is packed to the gills with insight. Kleon has amassed a variety of voices and disciplines that open this book to anyone interested in creative activity. Theatre in general has the potential to become an echo chamber, and for my class *Show Your Work!* is instructive on two levels. In a chapter titled "Tell Good Stories" Kleon writes:

"The stories you tell about the work you do have a huge effect on how people feel and what they understand about your work, and how people feel and what they understand about your work affects how they value it."



That statement has a tangible impact on why I encourage students to communicate well in design meetings or in their discussions with directors. Beyond the surface level lesson however, students are also exposed to quotes from Jim Jarmusch, Charles Eames, Alison Bechdel, and Kurt Vonnegut. Kleon provides a compressed dose of a greater artistic and

intellectual community of which many students may not be aware. {continued on page 5}

Students wrote responses to the weekly reading, and here are a couple excerpts of candid opinions:

"What I really like about this book is that I can tell that it could apply to any artist at any level. I'm sure non-artists can benefit as well." J.O.

"I adore Austin Kleon for many reasons (obviously) but one main reason is that he tells you how to get started. He doesn't leave you hanging at the end of his books with all this inspiration and nothing to do with it." S.L.

If you're teaching or learning design and need an interdisciplinary, cheap text that will blow the proverbial doors off, I highly recommend you consider Austin Kleon's *Show Your Work!*

Follow Matt on social media @mdtibbs on Instagram and Twitter
Follow Austin Kleon on social media @austinkleon or check out his website at <http://austinkleon.com/>



New Book Featured from our Region: *Dance Production: Design & Technology* by Jeromy Hopgood, Eastern Michigan University

Dance Production: Design and Technology introduces you to the skills you need to plan, design, and execute the technical aspects of a dance production. While it may not seem that staging a dance production is that different from a play or musical, in reality a dance performance offers up unique intricacies and challenges all its own, from scenery that accommodates choreography, to lighting design that sculpts the body, and costumes that complement movement. This unique book approaches the process of staging a dance production from a balanced perspective, making it an essential resource for dancers and designers alike.

Covering a broad range of topics, author Jeromy Hopgood takes the reader through the process of producing dance from start to finish – including pre-production planning (collaboration, production process, personnel, performance spaces), design disciplines (lighting, sound, scenery, costumes, projections), stage management, and more. Bridging the gap between theatrical and dance design, the book includes a quick reference guide for theatrical and dance terminology, useful in giving dancers and designers a common working vocabulary that will ensure productive communication across the different fields. [Check it out!](#)



Check Out This Cool Thing We Did:

University of Wisconsin- Oshkosh, *Our Trifles Quilt*

Our first show next year is Trifles, written in 1916 by Susan Glaspell, which requires a partially assembled Log Cabin quilt top. We had a little free time between our 3rd and 4th show this spring, so dug into our fabric stores, found the right calico fabrics and began cutting strips and had the students assemble the quilt squares in preparation for next year.

We used the traditional 1/4" quilt seam allowance and had all of our shop students using the sewing machine to assemble squares. Each square has 13 pieces but assembles quickly, as the longest seam is 7".

We discovered that the quick assembly allowed the students to see a "finished product" in one shop session or less. They learned the importance of sewing a straight seam, as they saw how quickly one bad seam effected the whole block. They learned skills in seam ripping and following directions when a strip inserted in the wrong place had to be removed. Their sewing machine skills increased quickly, partially because the 1/4" seam allowance is unforgiving, and the fast assembly allowed the quality of their work to be visible to them quickly. The show quilt is partially assembled, so we need some squares in a basket waiting to be attached to the assembled top -- this allows the "less than perfect" squares to still be used in the show. The less skilled students are able to contribute squares, while becoming more skilled. Our newbies were happy to be a part of this project and within a few sessions in the shop were sewing 1 to 3 completed squares an hour. They like seeing the results of their work quickly and have become more accurate stitchers because of the practice.

This project required lots of ironing, so the students learned that skill and its' importance during assembly.

You may not be doing Trifles, but consider this shop project to help your students improve their machine sewing skills. If you are using calico fabrics for other costumes, consider a Crazy Quilt made of the scraps from the cutting table. This would be a project for your advanced students. Or check out quilt pattern books from the local library. The "Nine Square" pattern is easy as all the pieces are the same size, there are no angles or curves to sew, and there are only 2 fabrics per square.

Quilt squares can be assembled into a quilt with the addition of batting, a backing, and binding. Tied quilts can be completed with a small amount of yarn. These quilts can be given to any number of charitable organizations like local hospitals for newborns, or senior citizens/nursing homes for lap quilts. Both of these projects require smaller quilts so less fabric, fewer squares and quicker finishing. Your squares can be donated to a local quilting group who sew quilts for the needy.
{continued on page 7}



Student, Lacey Van Stappen holds partially assembled quilt

This is a great way to improve the skills of your students, clean out some fabric remnants that have few other uses, and give back to your community.

Kathleen Donnelly
Costume Designer
UW Oshkosh Theatre Dept.

&
Teri Alderson
UW Oshkosh Costume Shop Manager
Member IATSE Local 470



One Log Cabin Quilt Square.

Founder's Award Winners

Student Awards: Active Section members may nominate their 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.

Matthew Chase of Adlai E. Stevenson High School

Alon Stotter of the University of Illinois



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. Shane's nomination included these words, "Your Work as Section Chair, Programming Chair, and Webmaster, and Your Outstanding Service to the Midwest Section Has Played A Significant Role in the Institute's Success. "



Shane Kelly, outgoing Chair of USITT Midwest Section
(pictured with Founder, Bernie Works)