A new focus on theatre at U-M

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LETTERS FROM THE CHAIRS

FROM THE (FORMER) CHAIR

“Each changing place with that which goes before, In sequent toil all forwards to contend. The constancy of ending and beginning, the inevitability of cessation and reproduction.”

A few years ago the quotation above was part of a short program note regarding a remounting of Shakespeare’s The Tempest, directed by colleague Philip Kerr. This successful production involving faculty and students from the Theatre Department and the broader School of Music was to note—indeed welcome—Dean Karen Wolff as she took the baton from Dean Paul C. Boylan. The original presentation, a season earlier, was in dedication of his service and vision over many years as leader of the School.

As the department prepares for a move to new quarters, slated to occur one short year from now, it is with pleasure and gratitude that this chair reviews 15 years in post. This past April colleague John Neville-Andrews organized a beautiful surprise party that continues to buoy my spirits as a curious combination of cherished life moment and delicious, blushing embarrassment. Perhaps Richard Russo is correct; the role of chair is that of “straight man.” Thank God I wasn’t wearing yellow garters!

This fall, among our many talented incoming students is a young actress named Margaret Ferguson-Wagstaff. Her mother and father hold key artistic and administrative posts at the Indiana Repertory Theatre in Indianapolis, and they are both alumni of this department from the golden days of Bill and Claribel Baird Halstead.

This fall, Dr. Greg Poggi, with whom I worked for the first time at the Indiana Repertory Theatre in 1974 shortly after he helped found that enormously successful theatre, will assume leadership of this department, directing us into brand new facilities barely a year after his arrival.

In Shahatto, an iaido form, a sword is drawn, a cut made, the sword sheathed, and still the moment is not over—the constancy of ending and beginning. At this moment, I enthusiastically welcome Dr. Greg Poggi, thank you very generous alums and long-time supporters, and extend my heartfelt gratitude to an array of talented colleagues and staff; yes, some I have known and respected years before beginning these past 15 years serving as department chair.

Yet, as “the waves make towards the pebbled shore,” this moment, hope, already has become belief.

Gratefully,

Erik Fredricksen
FROM THE (NEW) CHAIR

A standing ovation is in order to Erik Fredricksen for a job so wonderfully well done! I hope and pray that I will successfully expand on his rich legacy and work with you, our students, alumni and friends to further the mission of the Department of Theatre and Drama. Erik has eloquently spoken of “our commitment to a tradition founded in and fueled by our connectivity to you.” As your new chair, this relationship and rapport with you is at the heart of what I want to embrace and to nurture.

It is an enormous honor to be asked to lead this distinguished program in the years ahead. I am optimistic that working with a gifted faculty, a committed staff, such talented students and so many accomplished alumni, that we can advance the department’s pre-eminence as an invaluable resource to the School of Music, the University of Michigan and the American theatre.

Like all of you, I eagerly look forward to the opening of the Walgreen Drama Center. I know that all of us are very grateful for the generous philanthropic support of this exciting state-of-the-art facility. Since there will be the Arthur Miller Theatre in our new quarters, it is fitting that this legendary man of the theatre and U-M alumnus remind us of what makes the live stage performance such a unique and compelling event. In the Michigan Quarterly Review of 1967, he observed: “I personally feel that the theater has to confront the basic themes always. And the faces change from generation to generation, but their roots are generally the same, and that is a question of man’s increasing awareness of himself and his environment, his quest for justice and for the right to be human. That’s a big order, but I don’t know where else, excepting at a playhouse where there’s reasonable freedom, one should hope to see that.”

See you soon,

Gregory Poggi

NEW DEAN AND DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL OF MUSIC ANNOUNCED

Christopher Kendall, an award-winning conductor, lutist, and accomplished administrator, became the sixth dean of the School of Music on August 1st, following Karen Wolff who returned to teaching.

Kendall, who since 1996 was director of the University of Maryland School of Music, guided tremendous programmatic growth and a new performing arts center. Here at Michigan, Kendall will oversee the completion of the Walgreen Drama Center on North Campus that will house the Arthur Miller Theatre, along with the Departments of Theatre and Drama and Musical Theatre.

“It’s a great honor to be invited to this extraordinary institution,” Kendall said. “The University of Michigan School of Music is recognized far and wide for its outstanding faculty and programs, offering its students an unbroken continuum from the deepest traditions to the creation of brand new work.”

Kendall earned a Bachelor of Music degree from Antioch College in 1972 and a Master of Music degree from the University of Cincinnati, College Conservatory of Music in 1974.

Carrie Throm has been named Director of Development for the School, beginning September 1st. She was Director of Development and External Relations at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music since 1998 and earned a B.A. from the University of California, San Diego, (where she minored in French horn performance) and her Master of Arts Administration from Indiana University.
STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

A POSTCARD FROM STRATFORD

By Stephen Sposito, Junior, BFA in Directing

Steve spent the summer with England’s Royal Shakespeare Company, taking classes with the company, doing warm-ups, and standing in for people in As You Like It.

The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) is the heart of Stratford-upon-Avon, UK. This icon is the city’s largest employer and feeds Stratford’s important tourist industry. The RSC is made up of three venues that host a different series of plays. I spent the summer working on As You Like It directed by Dominic Cooke. It was a time of tremendous growth, both professionally and personally.

This was my first experience with classical theatre, and there was no better place than the RSC to first encounter this genre. Not only is the RSC one of the leading classical theatres in the world, but also creates an amazing learning environment that nurtures the actor as an artist and person. With its rich and successful history, I admit that I was more than a little terrified during my first few weeks.

A normal rehearsal day was eight to twelve hours long, the bulk of which was spent in an amazingly straightforward process of dissecting the text. When a word or passage was unclear or confusing, we simply looked it up or consulted one of the various footnoted versions of the play. Everyone felt free to ask questions and discuss passages. This comfortable and open atmosphere relieved any fear I had of classical texts and provided a better understanding of the play as a whole.

Next, we would read the scene and discuss it. My favorite part was seeing actors develop their characters, finding things they liked and didn’t like about them. We named each scene with a transitive action (i.e. Rosalind rallies Celia) to help us remember the action and who the scene belonged to. The thing I loved most about this step was the degree of accuracy Dominic demanded from the actors.

The next step involved blocking the scene. Dominic would usually give the actors entrances and exits and let them improvise the rest. The final stage was to clean up the blocking. We made definite choices, introduced props, and added detail work, all culminating in press night when the show officially opened.

Many other activities were a part of the rehearsal process. Fight director Terry King explored the characters’ story through the actions of the fight. We also worked with composer Gary Yershon on original music. Our movement coach, Liz Ranken, worked with us on stylistic differences between the court and the country and how people behave in those settings. Liz choreographed a magnificent dance for the end of the show embodying the contrast between country and court life, which combined modern dance, ballet, and historical styles. Rae Smith designed the set and costumes. She condensed the Forest of Arden into one enormous tree that towers over the stage. Instead of sketches or paintings, Rae improvised the costumes by conducting sessions where the actors selected their character’s outfits from racks of clothing. She took photographs and created the costume designs from this research. Thus, the designs were born from the actors’ impulses.

The great thing about having three months to rehearse was the tremendous freedom to experiment. There is a scene in the play that occurs after a grand Christmas dinner. The audience never actually sees this dinner, but in rehearsal we improvised the entire meal before doing the scene that follows. This included having all the traditional fixings that the (very dedicated) assistant stage manager had to prepare! It was amazing to watch the cast do a 30 minute improv in character while eating. When we finally did the actual scene, it had an amazingly vibrant sense.

“I am here from first rehearsal to press night, so I really get to see the entire process,” —Stephen Sposito

The RSC is truly an amazing organization, possessing a strong sense of community and working in an extremely nurturing environment. The company stresses continued learning and regularly takes part in activities that are not directly related to the finished production—like yoga, Alexander technique classes, lessons on Shakespeare’s sonnets with the legendary John Barton, and lectures from other leading theatre artists.

In the truest sense of the word, the RSC is a company. It is a group of artists who live together, work together, and drink at the pub together. The sense of community and collaboration is what continues to make the RSC the best classical theatre company in the world.
Mikala Bierma (BFA in Acting) performed last March with the Witt’s End Improv Comedy Troupe (with acting majors Daniel Strauss and Rebecca Watley) at the Dirty South Improv Festival. In April she directed and performed in a sketch piece that she had written, Kapowski, produced by Basement Arts. She also won second place in the National Society of Arts and Letters comedic acting contest last spring. Mikala spent May, June, and July in Tibet through a study abroad program, and in August she studied improv and sketch comedy at Second City in Chicago.

Erin Farrell (BFA in Acting) directed Dreamgirls in the Power Center last November for the U-M student theatre company, MUSKET.

Beckah Gluckstein (BFA in Acting) traveled to Moscow this summer with the University of Michigan’s Global Intercultural Experience for Undergraduates, where she performed in the play Flying We Fall at the Chekhov International Festival. Beckah also danced in a Javanese dance concert choreographed and composed by U-M visiting artist Wasi Bantolo, and in a U-M Asian Theatre Workshop production, Embang/Fukinkou.

Kimberly Harberg (BFA in Acting) attended the actor’s intensive workshop run by Michael Miller at The Actors Center in New York.

Beth Hoyt (BFA in Acting) received this year’s Earl V. Moore Commencement Award in Theatre for her contributions to the School of Music.

Theo Klose (BFA in Acting) won the Michigan Chapter of the National Society of Arts and Letters competition for best dramatic comedy. He won $500 and an all-expense-paid trip to Hawaii for the national competition.

Several theatre majors worked with the Michigan Shakespeare Festival this summer. Ed Morris (BFA in Design & Production) was properties master and scenic artist. John Jarboe and Andy Neuenschwander (both BFA in Acting majors) were acting interns and production run crew members. Angela Wetherby (BFA in Directing) was the assistant to director John Neville Andrews for The Merchant of Venice.

In January ten Design and Production students traveled to Bloomington, IL., for the American College Theatre Festival’s Region III design competitions, hosted by Illinois State University and Eureka College. BFA seniors Jennifer Nweke and Janine Woods received design project awards—Jennifer for costume designs for The Frogs and Janine for her Macbeth lighting design.

Design and Production major Joe Schlenke was the assistant orchestra/production services supervisor for the Santa Fe Opera this summer.

Christopher Shand (BFA in Acting) appeared in an episode of Law & Order last year.

Stephen Siercks (BFA in Design and Production) spent the summer working at Universal Studios Hollywood as a stage manager within the theme park. He worked on Terminator 2: 3D and the new Fear Factor Live, as part of the opening crew helping to get the show on its feet.
New Digs for Theatre and Drama

The Walgreen Drama Center will shine a beacon on North Campus by creating a new focus on theatre at U-M. The Theatre Department will move from the Frieze Building to become a key tenant in this magnificent new building designed especially for theatre.

“The new Center will allow us to expand the teaching and research excellence carried on by our fine faculty.”
—Erik Fredericksen

A new focus on theatre

Renderings and plans courtesy Kuwabara Payne McKenna and Blumberg Architects.
“This building marks a major step forward for the Theatre Department,” said Karen Wolff, outgoing Dean of the School of Music, who reviewed plans for the new Drama Center with Arthur Miller himself. “The new buildings will provide all the technical elements that budding theatre professionals need, and it will be beautiful! Knowing that the theatre is named for Arthur Miller is a source of inspiration into the future.”

For the first time in U-M history, the Department of Theatre and Drama will be housed in a building specifically designed for the discipline with specialized studios for theatre crafts and skills such as voice, acting for the camera, and design. Acting studios will have natural lighting and superior acoustics and will double in the evenings as rehearsal rooms sized for the Power Center and Mendelssohn stages. A light lab will allow students to experiment with a wide variety of lighting instruments.

“The University of Michigan now has state-of-the-art facilities that distinguish its history, which will encourage the finest educational experiences for our talented students in a highly competitive environment,” said outgoing chair Erik Fredricksen. “The new Center will allow us to expand the teaching and research excellence carried on by our fine faculty.”

Designed as a luminescent glass cube to beckon visitors with its welcoming glow during evening performances, the Arthur Miller Theatre will be the venue for several fully-staged student-performed productions during each academic year. The theatre is a flexible performance space convertible to thrust or end-stage configurations, allowing artists to design stagings that best suit a particular script.
“The Arthur Miller Theatre is an ideal theatre for the 21st century because it’s like a blank canvas in the sense that it has substantial flexibility. You can imagine different ways to envision plays and provide a good experience for audiences as well. The space will enable us to create new ways of thinking about plays and how they come to life,” said Gregory Poggi, newly named chair of the department, who co-founded the Indiana Repertory Theater in 1971.

“It will be a great recruitment tool because it will be a terrific space in which to collaborate. The Walgreen Drama Center will bring the Theatre and Musical Theatre departments closer together. The Center will increase interactions among student actors and faculty by being in one location,” said Poggi.

A ceremonial groundbreaking is slated for October 14, although construction has already begun and is moving quickly, with the department fast-tracked to move into its new learning loft in fall 2006.

“The architectural team truly understands theatrical spaces and requirements,” said Jeffrey Kuras, Director of University Productions, who guided the recent $40 million renovation of Hill Auditorium.

Kuras, a member of the five-person Facilities Planning Committee, has worked closely with the building architects from Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg Associates, who specialize in performance facilities.

“The architects can discuss in detail various performance spaces across the country—what works well and what doesn’t—as well as the pros and cons of esoteric theatrical equipment to meet our specific needs on campus. They are enormously inventive.”

Not uncommon in a project of this scope, the U-M community has a positive driving force behind it.

“Most gratifying is the team’s personal connection to the project. Principal architect Thomas Payne’s daughter is an actor in New York City, and the firm’s acoustician, Rick Talaske, is a U-M grad with a child currently enrolled at the U-M.”

Arthur Miller attended U-M during the Depression, winning two Hopwood Awards, which he relied upon to help him pay his tuition. It was during spring break in 1936 that he wrote his first play, The Grass Still Grows. Miller maintained regular ties to his alma mater over the decades and last visited U-M in April 2004 for the Theatre Department’s tribute, An Arthur Miller Celebration, and a round of well-attended public appearances at the Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre and the Trueblood Theatre. Miller was also honored on Broadway by the University of Michigan in November 2004 with a revue performed by U-M alumni and faculty.

Proposed in 1997, the new 80,000 square-foot Walgreen Drama Center will be completed in 2007 for an estimated cost of $42.8 million. A gift of $10 million from U-M alum Charles Walgreen, Jr. and his wife Jean provided crucial support. The School of Music continues its fund-raising efforts toward a goal of an additional $4 million.

For a gift of $10,000, alumni and friends may name a seat in the theatre. Donor names will be placed on the seats and on a plaque. So far, 17 seats have been named.

“The space will enable us to create new ways of thinking about plays and how they come to life,”

—Dr. Gregory Poggi
Toni Auletti (Lecturer, Scene Painting) recently appointed paint shop supervisor for University Productions, was the charge scenic artist for Bus Stop at the Purple Rose Theatre. The play, directed by Guy Sanville, opened in April.

George Bacon (Lecturer, Costume Construction) designed Seussical the Musical for Music Theatre of Wichita. The production, which opened in July, will be remounted here next spring for the U-M Musical Theatre Department. Both will be directed by MT faculty member Linda Goodrich.

Gary Decker (Assistant Professor, Design and Production) was scenic designer for Guys on Ice, directed by Curt Wollan and co-produced by Troupe America, Inc. and the historic Paramount Theatre in St. Cloud, Minnesota. He also designed sets for Don Pasquale at the Pine Mountain Music Festival in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula and served as adjudicator and workshop presenter (“The Theatrical Design Process”) at the Michigan High School Thespian Conference.

Glenda Dickerson (Professor of Theatre Studies and Director of the Center for World Performance Studies) has headed the center’s Transforming Performing project, supported by the Ford Foundation. The project produced the Kitchen Prayers performance dialogue series which will culminate in a DVD documentary and archive to be housed at the university. As part of the collaborative project, the Center for World Performance Studies also convened workshops at which the participants developed dramatized vignettes from stories collected by Glenda and others.

In April, Erik Fredricksen (Professor, Acting and Stage Combat) presented master classes to students in the Washington Shakespeare Theatre’s classical acting MFA program in Washington, D.C., followed by master classes for the American College Theatre Festival’s Irene Ryan finalists at the Kennedy Center. At the end of the XXXVII ACTF finals, he presented the Society of American Fight Directors’ National Stage Combat Workshop Scholarship to an outstanding Irene Ryan finalist. Last December Erik was invited to join a national actor-training advisory board headed by the Actors Center in New York.

In June, Erik taught at the 10th-anniversary celebration of the Nordic Society of Stage Combat, which he helped found, in Linköping, Sweden. This year’s workshop, held in Pärnu, Estonia, included more than 65 students from Lithuania, Latvia, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and England.

Elizabeth Gunderson, (Costume Craftsperson for University Productions) was the Michigan Shakespeare Festival’s costume shop manager and lead hand this summer. Frieze scene shop supervisor Rich Lindsay was the festival’s production manager.

Philip Kerr (Professor, Acting) performed as Le Beau in Shakespeare’s As You Like It, directed by Mark Lamos, at the Public Theater in New York City this summer.

Annette Masson (Associate Professor, Voice) organized the National Society of Arts and Letters Acting for Comedy Competition. This statewide event was open to any actor under the age of 28. National Society of Arts and Letters is a member organization that is dedicated to assisting young Americans aspiring to a career in one of the five visual and performing arts. This year’s competition was held in March at the Arena Theatre in the Frieze Building on the U-M campus.

Janet Maylie (Assistant Professor, Acting) conducted a graduate course this summer in Acting for the Camera for the Film and Performance concentration within the Master of Arts and Humanities program at SUNY Buffalo. The program is under the direction of Linda Reisman, a film producer affiliated with Francis Ford Coppola’s American Zoetrope.

Joan Morris (Adjunct Associate Professor, Cabaret Performance) presented three public lecture-demonstrations at the San Francisco Conservatory on American popular song with her husband, composer and professor William Bolcom. In February, Joan performed in Bolcom and Weinstein’s Casino Paradise at the Allen Room at Lincoln

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Guest Artists

Center in New York City. Joan and Bill also performed selected cabaret songs by Bolcom and Weinstein in Utrecht, Holland.

Rob Murphy (Associate Professor, Design) was the scenic and lighting designer for the Michigan Shakespeare Festival.

Christianne Myers (Assistant Professor, Costume Design) designed several productions at the Purple Rose Theatre recently, including Mitch Albom’s new play, Duck Hunter Shoots Angel, which enjoyed a sold-out run last summer, and Jeff Daniels’ new play Norma Wanda. She also worked with director Tim Ocel again last fall (the first time was in March 2004 with University Productions’ Don Giovanni) on I Do! I Do! at the Indiana Repertory Theatre. In February she designed a production of Macbeth at the Juilliard School in New York. Hansel and Gretel, for which she designed the original costumes, was remounted in July at the Pine Mountain Music Festival in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula.

John Neville-Andrews (Professor, Acting and Directing) directed Shakespeare’s The Merry Wives of Windsor this summer for the American Players Theatre in Spring Green, Wis. He continues his artistic directorship for the Michigan Shakespeare Festival, directing The Merchant of Venice for the 2005 summer season.

OyamO (Professor, Playwriting) participated in Atlanta’s Alliance Theatre’s Collision Project this summer in which a playwright works with 15 to 20 high school theater students. They examined King Lear and began the process of creating a hip-hop Lear. He is working on a collaboration with the Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit, creating a holiday show for the 2006–07 season.

Last fall, Malcolm Tulip (Assistant Professor, Acting, Movement, Directing) directed Humble Boy by Charlotte Jones at the Performance Network, and he was the emcee and puppeteer for Fair and Balanced: A Political Cabaret at the Milwaukee Dance Theatre. In March he played Malcolm’s Dad with Holly Hughes and Nick Tobier in Dr. Presto’s Travelling Lectures at PSI#11 at Brown University.

In April, Leigh Woods (Professor, Theatre Studies) read sonnets by Michelangelo for School of Music professor Theo Morrison’s retirement concert in Hill Auditorium. Leigh is spending the fall term on sabbatical to research his project, “Playing the Hero,” concerning famous athletes who have gone on to careers as professional performers, religious advocates or politicians.

During the weekend of February 19 and 20, the junior-year actors were led through audition workshops by New York City casting agents Richard Fisher of the Abrams Artists Agency and Arnold Mungioli of Mungioli Casting. This marks the second year that Arnold and Richard have conducted the weekend intensive for our students. They conducted group sessions and individual monologue workshops, providing valuable feedback to the actors as they progressed through prepared audition pieces and one-on-one interviews. They also discussed some of the challenges facing today’s professional actor. One student remarked, “Arnold Mungioli talked about our duty as actors to speak our truths, because if we won’t, who will? I just sat there listening to him, thinking, Yes! This is what it’s all about! It was such a galvanizing moment, I’m sure I will carry it with me for the rest of my life.”
Donn Finn, casting partner with Mali Finn, C.S.A., one of the leading casting agencies in the country, conducted an audition workshop last December for juniors in the acting program. He presented videotaped auditions for the film *Eight Mile*, for which he was casting director, using the tape to illustrate why he chose certain actors. He watched audition monologues presented by the students and provided feedback on their technique and presentation. One of the students said “I learned a lot from watching two different actors audition for the same role. It was clear that one actor was better for the part.”

Andrea Frye, guest director of this year’s *Hot L Baltimore*, is artist-in-residence at Dillard University in New Orleans, and co-founder and former artistic director of Black Image Theatre. She has directed at a number of theatres including the Georgia Ensemble Theatre, the Black Repertory Theatre, Springer Opera House and Freedom Repertory Theatre. She also has been a resident actor/director with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and has performed at the Alliance Theatre Company and Horizon Theatre Company in Atlanta, Georgia. She created Cassie in *Sisters* for Jomandi Productions in Atlanta and Off-Broadway at the Joyce Theatre. She’s won a number of awards including the Woodie award for Best Director (*Blues for an Alabama Sky*). Andrea’s visit was supported by Philip and Nancy Binkow.

John Neville-Andrews asked several theatre professionals to visit his senior seminar last fall, to discuss preparation for the profession. Wendy Goldberg, an alumna of our program (B.A. 1995), Artistic Associate of the Arena Stage in Washington, D.C. and Artistic Director of the National Playwrights Conference at the Eugene O’Neill Theater Center, visited the class in November. Guy Sanville, Artistic Director at Jeff Daniels’ Purple Rose Theatre, visited the class in December. Each spent several hours with the class, discussing audition preparation, the audition process, and follow-up steps. Voice-over artist Pamela Lewis, author of *Talking Funny for Money*, presented a demonstration of her craft and discussed how she developed a successful career in the business.

Ernie Lane, industrial and business theatre stage manager, spent time with the stage management students on April 8, 2005. Mr. Lane spoke passionately about stage managing industrials and business theatre, the variety within the field and the many places his career has taken him. The students were very pleased to have their eyes opened to this rarely discussed, slightly mysterious and lucrative career option. Mr. Lane is also the proud father of Musical Theatre student Jessica Lukasik.

This winter, as part of the Stage Make-Up course, Arts at Michigan’s Course Connections program funded a two-day workshop with guest wig designer Dawn Rivard. Dawn has been a guest designer for University Production’s *Oklahoma*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Don Giovanni*, *Tartuffe*, *The Rover* and *City of Angels*. We were pleased to have had her come to two class sessions and discuss her craft. Students learned how to do a wig prep, make a wig “bubble,” and basic knotting techniques. There was also a lively discussion about the theatrical wig business and a new-found appreciation for the amount of time and energy that goes into making a wig. There were many examples of wigs to examine—discussing their different attributes—and to try on.
Theatre alum, what are you up to? Please send us your latest news. Mail in the update form included on page 14 of this newsletter or email us at theatre.info@umich.edu.

...affirmation of my work

“To be given this award is both a welcome affirmation of my work thus far, and a great encouragement for the work I have yet to tackle.”

1960s

Dr. Linda Burson (BA Theatre, 1964) was elected to the board of trustees for the National Theatre Conference. Dr. Burson directed Alice in Wonderland and The Emperor’s New Clothes for GMT Productions’ national tour. She was also a multiple festival winner of Guys and Dolls. Adventures of a Dim Sun in Search of His Wanton Father by with Richard Chang. She also directed South Pacific and The King and I in Great Neck, N.Y., and That Is the Question at the Kraine Theatre in New York City.

James Berton Harris (BA, 1963) recently designed costumes for In Real Life directed by Daniel Sullivan. The play opened at the Seattle Repertory Theatre and was remounted at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles and at the Manhattan Theatre Club in New York City. James continues as Associate Head of Theatre and Director of the Design division for the Department of Theatre at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. Last summer he completed his fourth season as producing director of the Professional Summer Theatre Company at the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts in Urbana, Ill.

Jack O’Brien (BA, 1961; MA, 1962) directed the Old Globe Theatre’s world premiere of the musical Dirty Rotten Scoundrels, starring John Lithgow and Norbert Leo Butz. The show, created by composer/lyricist David Yazbek and writer Jeffrey Lane, moved to Broadway’s Imperial Theatre in March, where it has received rave reviews. Theatre Department alumnus Gregory Ibara (BA, 1981) also performs in Scoundrels as Andre.

Carl Schurr (BA, 1962, MA, 1963) has been an actor, director and a member of the AEA for 35 years. From 1984–2004, he was producing artistic director of Totem Pole Playhouse in Fayetteville, Pa. In 2003, he played Serge in the premiere of Art at Philadelphia’s Walnut Street Theatre. In 2004, Schurr played Robert in the premiere of Proof at Everyman Theatre in Baltimore.

1970s

Suzanne Burgoyne (Ph.D., 1975) has been voted President-Elect of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education, to take office at the conference in July 2005. She will serve two years as President-Elect, two as President, and one as Immediate Past-President.

Marcy Froehlich (MFA, 1979) was a costume designer for the Miss America Pageant. Previously, she designed at the Beckett Festival, including Waiting for Godot for the Ruibon Theatre in Ventura, Calif.

Steve Gilliam (MFA Scene Design, 1979) was appointed Director of Theatre at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. He has completed a design for Sea World of San Antonio’s 2005 Sea Lion, Otter and Walrus show.

Sharon Jensen (BA, 1969; MA, 1971) has completed a comprehensive Artist Files Online, the largest talent data base of its kind in the country, for her Non-Traditional Casting Project. AFO is available online and free of charge to artistic directors, producers, directors, and casting directors.

Roberta Raider (Ph.D., 1979) has become the new chair of the University of Central Florida Conservatory Theatre in Orlando, Fla. She directed Diary of Anne Frank at the Orlando Repertory Theatre.

James Symmons (MA Theatre, 1974) was recently in Madrid and Granada, Spain, to research the life of Federico Garcia Lorca to prepare for a course on Garcia Lorca and contemporary Spanish drama. He traveled to Paris with a group of Penn State University students completing a course, Theatre and Politics: The French Revolution. “It was a marvelous opportunity to combine my interests in international relations and theater,” says Symmons.

1980s

Karen Cherksasky (BA, 1989) is no longer teaching drama and is now a web designer; however, she continues to explore her love for the theater through directing and acting in local theater companies near Las Cruces, N.M. Most recently she directed Two Rooms by Lee Blessing for the Blackbox Theatre. Karen also portrayed Denise Savage in Savage In Limbo by John Patrick Shanley for Lo-Fi Productions. Meanwhile, she volunteers her services in designing some of the posters and programs for local productions.

Paul “Rock” Eblen (MA, 1982) recently completed a professional run of his original creation Rockula! A Very Vampire Musical at the BeBe Theatre in his hometown of Asheville, N.C. The piece was entirely self-produced and contained 12 of Eblen’s original songs with a modern twist on the traditional Bram Stoker story. The show also featured a set, special effects, and magic designed by Eblen.

Sherry Locher (BA, 1986) appeared as Catherine in the film The Crucible. Sherry also appeared as Gladia Pelbeam in the Off-Broadway production of Second Annual Heart O’Texas Eczema Thelathon by Mark Dunn at the Actors Playhouse. For one year, she also played Ursula in Sonia Piler’s I-Land at the 13th Street Repertory Company. She did a vocal performance with the French American Conservatory of music at Florence Gould Hall.

Lauren Press (AB, 1982) was the assistant costume designer for the “Rat Pack” episode of HBO’s The Sopranos.

Eric Renschler (MFA Design, 1989) recently designed As Long As We Both Shall Laugh on...
“It’s a wonderful feeling when the hard work you’ve put into your craft is rewarded.”

Bernardo DePaula (BFA Performance, 1998) has a recurring role on FX TV’s Rescue Me, the critically acclaimed series about New York fire fighters. His character is an apparition of Jesus who keeps appearing to the lead character played by Dennis Leary.

Heather Dilly (BFA Performance, 1997) performed in Julia Jordan’s Walk Two Moons this summer at the Lucille Lortel Theatre with the newly formed TheatreWorks/ NYC. Heather played multiple roles in the play, adapted from the Newbery Medal-winning book by Sharon Creech, and her performances were very well received by the critics.

Joe Gold (BFA Performance, 1994) has just produced, written and starred in a feature film called Never Say Macbeth. It can be seen at different festivals throughout 2005 and 2006.

Wendy Goldberg (BA Theatre, 1995) has been appointed artistic director of the Eugene O’Neill Theatre Center in Waterford, Conn.


Robert Knopf (Ph.D., 1996) is professor and chair of Theatre and Dance at SUNY-Buffalo. His radio drama, Hidden Dragon, was broadcast by Radio Works this year for National Public Radio.

Matt Letscher (BA, 1992) played Jack Absolute in The Rivals at Lincoln Center, directed by Mark Lamos.

James Ludwig (BA Theatre, 1990) made his Broadway debut in Little Shop of Horrors at the Virginia Theatre, directed by Jerry Zaks. James also did a guest spot on NBC’s Law & Order: Criminal Intent. He is currently doing the Broadway production of Spamalot starring David Hyde Pierce, Tim Curry, and Hank Azaria, directed by Mike Nichols.

James also started his own film company, Back40 Films, which has produced two short films and he is working on a feature film. He is also on the faculty of Franklin and Marshall College, teaching acting in their Department of Theatre, Dance and Film.

Stacy Mayer (BFA Performance, 1997) is head director for a show called Saturday Night Rewritten, where the actors watch the previous night’s Saturday Night Live and use it as a starting point to create an entirely new show in seven hours. Stacy has also joined a new improv team, ¡Festante!

Paul Molnar (BFA Performance, 1996) just started his first year in the Asolo Conservatory Master’s Program at Florida State University. He is still doing productions with Tangent Theatre Company in New York.

Ryan Palmer (BFA Design & Production, 1997) is now living in Brooklyn, New York. Ryan has most recently designed productions of The Threepenny Opera and Guys and Dolls for Light Opera Oklahoma.

2000s


Audra Ewing (BFA Performance, 2003) recently joined the Araca Group as a producing assistant.

Brad Frazier (BFA Performance, 2004) appeared at Ford’s Theatre in Mark Lamos’s production of The Matchmaker by Thornton Wilder.

Marc Kamler (BFA, 2001) has recently been hired at Broder Webb Chervin Silbermann, one of the premiere television agencies.
Marc will be heading up the television hosting division as well as handling writers, producers, and directors for alternative (reality) television.

**Ethan Kogan** (BFA Performance, 2003) starred in Matthew Wolf’s debut feature film *It’s Not That Simple* at the Little Theatre on the Fox Lot.

**Josh Lefkowitz** (BFA Performance, 2003) was cast as SP5 Marion Johnson in the musical *One Red Flower*, the revised musical by Paris Barclay (once called *Letters From ‘Nam*) at the Signature Theatre in Arlington, Va. Josh is currently living in New York and has written a full-length epic autobiographical piece. The piece received a reading at CENTERSTAGE in Baltimore in March.

**Aubrey Levy** (BFA Performance, 2004) has recently signed with the Abrams Group Theatrical Agency.


**Sheila McClear** (BFA, Design & Production, 2004) lives in Detroit and is a labor reporter and freelance writer. Recent theater credits include the wardrobe crew for the Detroit production of Mitch Albom’s new play *Duck Hunter Shoots Angel*, which ran for four months at the City Theatre. She also designed costumes for *The Golden Goose* at the Performance Network’s Mosh Pit Theater. Along with writing, she currently is working part-time as a wig stylist.

**Dara Seitzman** (BFA Performance, 2000) had another busy year doing a variety of staged readings in New York.

**Julie Strassel** (BFA Performance, 2003) was cast as Miranda and Trinculo in William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* with the Manhattan Repertory Theatre in June 2005, at Producers Club II in New York City.

**Matthew Urban** (BFA Performance, 2001) is living in Zaandam, the Netherlands, about a 15-minute train ride northwest of Amsterdam. Last fall his Navy reserve unit was transferred to JAC Molesworth in England, about 70 miles north of London, for a few months, where he did some intelligence work.

**Sean Ward** (BFA Performance, 2004) played Sebastian in *Twelfth Night* with Water Works Theatre Company in Royal Oak, MI. and Oliver in *As You Like It, Man*. Sean also played J.R. Jones in *Democracy on the Green*, an interactive program for school children about the Constitution at Greenfield Village. He is returning for a second year to play young Scrooge and to sing as a lobby caroler in *A Christmas Carol* at Meadowbrook Theatre. Sean played Wilbur in *Charlotte’s Web* with September Productions, which has toured the state of Michigan, and he also played Dromio of Ephesus in *The Comedy of Errors* at BoarsHead Theatre in Lansing. Sean has been accepted to the Hilberry Theatre Repertory Company at Wayne State University where he’ll be working on an MFA in its three-year program.

**Ruth Hussey**, who was nominated for a 1940 Academy Award for her role as James Stewart’s wisecracking girlfriend in *The Philadelphia Story*, died on April 19 at the age of 93. According to her son, John Longnecker, she succumbed to complications following an appendectomy.

Ruth made dozens of films and appeared with such leading men as Spencer Tracy (*Big City* and *Northwest Passage*), Clifton Webb (*Stars and Stripes Forever*), and Robert Young (*Honolulu*). Her last feature film role was in 1960 in *The Facts of Life*, as Bob Hope’s wife. She also was a stage actress, appearing on Broadway in the 1945 hit *State of the Union* and in the 1949 comedy *Goodbye, My Fancy*. Ruth also had a long career in television, including guest appearances in *The Magnificent Ambersons* and *Time Out for Ginger*, and as Robert Young’s love interest in the 1973 television movie *My Darling Daughter’s Anniversary*.

Ruth was a Theatre Department graduate student in 1933–34.
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PERFORMANCE AWARDS IN ACTING

Irene Bychinsky Bendler Award in Theatre Performance
Anna Heinl
Rebecca Gluckstein

Hal Cooper Scholarship
Adam Caplan

William and Claribel Halstead Scholarship
Sari Goldberg

Jim and Millie Irwin Performance Award
James Wolk

Betty Jean Jones Performance Scholarship
Cynthia London

Ruth and Monroe Lippman Scholarship
Mikala Bierma

Julian and Vera McIntosh Memorial Scholarship
Kirsten Benjamin
Kyla Embrey
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Anna Heinl
Nicholas Lang
Rachael Soglin
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Matthew Smith

Alan F. Smith Scholarship
Erik Farrell

U-M Theatre Associates Tempest Tribute Award
Nicholas Lang

Phyllis Wright Scholarship
Rachael Soglin

Theatre Department Merit Awards
Cara Akselrad
Mikala Bierma
Kyla Embrey
Brian Holden
John Jarboe
Alexandra Odell
Alexander Polcyn

WANDALIE HENSHAW SCHOLARSHIP

Esther Neff

Julian and Vera McIntosh Memorial Scholarship
Esther Neff

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Gina Rattan

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Stephanie Anderson
Colin Miller
Kathryn Shattock
Jessica-Eli Weiss

Julian and Vera McIntosh Memorial Scholarship
Edward Morris

Betty Pease Scholarship
Joseph Schlenke

Trueblood Scholarship
Jamie Burke

U-M Theatre Associates Design Award
Janine Woods

U-M Theatre Associates Stage Manager’s Award
Joseph Schlenke

U-M Theatre Associates Peter Wilde Lighting Excellence Award
Andrew Fritsch

Zelma Weisfeld Scholarship
Taran Muller

THEATRE DEPARTMENT MERIT AWARDS

Rachel Arnsdorf
Cassidy Bloom
Elyse Handelman
Lena Sands
Stephen Siercks

BACHELOR OF THEATRE ARTS AWARD

U-M Theatre Associates BTA Award
Amy Duffy

BACHELOR OF ARTS AWARD

U-M Theatre Associates BA Award
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The Laramie Project
By Moisés Kaufman and the
Tectonic Theatre Project
Directed by Robert Chapel
Mendelssohn Theatre
November 17–20, 2005

A Flea in Her Ear
by Georges Feydeau,
translated by Kenneth McLeish
Directed by John Neville-Andrews
Power Center
December 8–11, 2005

The Gold Diggers
by Avery Hopwood
Directed by Philip Kerr
Mendelssohn Theatre
February 9–12, 2006

The Burial at Thebes
by Seamus Heaney
Directed by Malcolm Tulip
Trueblood Theatre
March 30–April 9, 2006

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