Dynamic Theater: The Campaign for Transforming the Rand Theater

A Big Moment

This is a big moment for the UMass Amherst Department of Theater.

The University has launched its official fundraising campaign to revitalize our main stage — the space known as the Rand Theater, infamous for its vintage-1973 orange carpet and endless rows of dividers. Most of you know it well.

As you see in these pages, we have big plans. They involve remaking the theater into something far more dynamic, flexible, sparkling, and inviting.

We are proud to be part of a long tradition of outstanding theater students, staff, and faculty at UMass Amherst. When these plans are realized, we will finally have equally outstanding facilities as well. Your support is vital to our reaching this goal.

Best,
Harley Erdman
Chair
Department of Theater

The Campaign Begins

Our People

Inspiring Faculty. Gifted Students. AwardWinning Alumni. Those are the pillars of strength in the Department of Theater at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Our faculty transform lives with their dedication to mentoring undergraduate and graduate students and by their commitment to the highest professional standards. Faculty

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include a Pulitzer-Prize nominee, award-winning authors and playwrights, and nationally recognized actors, directors, and designers whose work is produced at major theaters around the country. Our students enrich the campus with their creative ideas and energy. Undergraduates and graduates pursue multi-faceted studies. They graduate to become well-rounded artists who are able to find work in highly competitive fields. Our alumni work in theater, film and television. They are actors, designers, stage managers, production managers, technical directors, scriptwriters, directors, and theater teachers. All use their UMass Amherst experience to influence culture around the world.

Our Place

From Shakespeare to Sam Shepard. From Euripides to Emerging Playwrights. Live stage performances that provide hands-on learning experiences are the hallmarks of the Department of Theater. For more than 30 years, the Department has been in residence at the Fine Arts Center, occupying two theaters, backstage support facilities, classrooms, and offices. Every year, between four and six major productions are mounted in either the black box Curtain Theater or the proscenium Rand Theater, along with dozens of smaller, more experimental shows driven by student initiative. This production work is central to our mission, which links learning to real-life experience.

Our Performance

Sold-out shows. Strong Educational Experience. Extensive Community Outreach. This proven record of achievement is at the core of the Department of Theater and its future. Each year, our productions are selected for the season from proposals from faculty, guest artists, and students, in a process that focuses on the needs of students and serves as an extension of the classroom. Reviewers praise these productions. Student-initiated experimental projects are also part of the department’s repertoire and have received critical acclaim.

Each year productions attract some 6,500 campus members as well as the general public. A dynamic outreach effort enables the department to serve the larger community. Thousands of high school students have been exposed to the world of theater via affordable student matinees, study guides, special workshops, and back stage tours. The caliber of our guest artists is another measurement of achievement. We have welcomed Tony-nominated choreographers, up-and-coming...
Alumni, students, faculty, and staff updates

I think I’ll let Rachel Reinheimer Iarossi ’93 lead off this one, since she sums up what I was going to say so nicely: “I just thought I’d send a note to say hello, since I love reading the other posts from alumni. It’s really great to read all the wonderful news about what everyone is doing in the theater world and beyond.”

If you weren’t in this latest batch to send us your news, put it on your calendar to get us an update for the spring issue. Here’s the latest:

Alumni

- Courtney Berne ’01 did a shortened version of her one-woman show Choice for the Stockyards Theatre Arts Project Play for Keeps reading series this fall. She was also involved with the Seventh Annual Women’s Performance Art Festival in late October, doing a short reading of her piece. In January she will be doing a full run of the show in Chicago, this time in preparation for touring next spring within the local and suburban school systems.

- Margo Caddell ’06G got a job as Lighting Designer at Tufts University.

- Megan Cannon ’96 has been seeing

to the entertainment of children (and adults) at Six Flags New England. She is part of the Batman and Robin show and reports that they added Wonder Woman, Aquaman, the Flash and Green Lantern to the mix this year. She also initiated and coordinated a new Parade for six flags this year. "When I wasn’t blowing things up, parading around and helping with the Looney Tunes, I also directed a Pirate gameshow and a comic showdown show," she added. On an educational front, she has taken a job as Production Manager at Foodplay, which is a touring theatre troupe that teaches children good nutrition habits.

- Chris Darland ’87 sent in news about a classmate, Mark Ellmore ’87. Mark lives in Brooklyn, and has been acting in NYC for many years. He landed a role on an episode of ABC’s Six Degrees this fall.

- Melissa Fendell ’03 won Best Play at New York City’s 5th Annual Downtown Urban Theater Festival at the Cherry Lane Theatre in June 2006 for her full-length play When Santo Domingo Isn’t Enough.

- Erin Greene ’02 started her own Western Massachusetts theater and educational outreach company, Greene Room Productions, in Monson.

- Maura Henry ’02 made a big career and life changes: She left the American Repertory Theatre where she was the assistant to the Executive and Artistic Directors to live in Poland, teaching English.

- Joan Jubett ’91 played Rosalind this summer at the Stonington Opera House on Deer Isle, Maine.

- Tanya Kane-Parry ’01G conceived and directed Tosca Jumps! a new piece inspired by Tosca, this November at the Luckman Intimate Theatre at Cal State Los Angeles.

- Jennifer Keating ’99 writes that her son: “Daegan Michael Roca was born on Feb. 18, 2006. ... Most of my theater endeavors are on hold for a season, but I did write a musical for my church which is being performed this fall, and I’m directing the kids’ play there as well.”

- Traci Klainer received a Drama Desk Award nomination for her design for The Asphalt Kiss.

- Linda McNerney ’97G directed Women in Arms for Old Deerfield Productions, the group’s first production at Northampton Academy of Music, where it was in residence this fall.

- Jennie Mead ’04 writes that she finished a long run of Assassins at the Signature Theatre in DC as a production assistant. After a little time off, she’ll be assistant stage managing A Midsummer Nights Dream at the Folger Shakespeare Library. Then, she will be assistant stage managing for Signature on Crave, by Sarah Kane. “All the while still planning a wedding for next October,” she noted.

- Sean Middlebrook ’06 sent us a kind message thanking us for his experiences in the department and letting us know he had settled in and was working for Walt Disney World Resort in the Transportation department.

- Robin Reed ’04 writes that she has been enjoying Rome, where she has lived for the past half year. She had lunch with Melissa Fendell ’03 in Florence while she was doing a workshop in Spoleto. Before she left New York, she wrote reviews for nytheatre.com and the Brooklyn-based L Magazine, did some voiceover work at CNN and was part of the musical adaptation of the Caveman Robot comic book. ”Yeah, normally I don’t do musicals, but I got to wear all kinds of crazy costumes and be a supervillain, so I thought it was a fair trade.”

- Rachel Reinheimer Iarossi ’93 resurfaced to send us a noisy email: “I am living in the Merrimack Valley (north of Boston), working in the accounting field (www.fortunabookkeeping.com), and spending time with family and friends (some of whom graduated from the Theater Dept. in the early nineties, too). I have a very dramatic three-year old little boy (I have NO idea where he

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gets that dramatic streak from...), and he is one of the funniest people I know.” Her daughter arrived in November.

■ Joe Salvatore ’97G wrote us with sad news: his partner Craig passed away this fall after a long battle with colon cancer.

■ Lauryn Sasso ’06 was hired as the Literary Associate and Assistant to the Producing Director for the Asolo Repertory Theatre in Sarasota, Florida. The director of the FSU conservatory associated with the Asolo is UMass Amherst alum, Greg Leaming ’83G, and Dolph Paulsen ’06 will be a MFA student in their conservatory this fall, so there’ll be a couple of familiar faces around.

■ Jeremy Schwartz ’03 has had a busy year. A recap, culled from his newsy email: "[Last] spring I had a brief but exciting journey with the Holland America Line working as the Stage Manager and Lighting Tech aboard the ms Statendam. My itinerary took me to China, Japan, South Korea, Eastern Russia and Alaska. Now I’m back in Cambridge.” He’s doing part-time work as Repertory Electrician for the American Repertory Theatre at Harvard University, now with two theaters — a black box was added in 2004. He’s also been involved with installing and operating a brand new theater at the Institute of Contemporary Art on the Boston Waterfront.

■ Lian Amaris Sifuentes ’02 graduated with her second New York University Master’s degree, in Interactive Telecommunications, last May. She focused on performance installation and multimedia performance. Her first was in Performance Studies in 2004. In June, Lian presented a media theory paper on online gaming at the Media Ecology Association Conference. It was published in their journal last fall. This summer, she relocated to Colorado Springs, CO, to accept her position as a tenure-track Assistant Professor of Performance Studies and Digital Media, in the Drama and Dance Department, at Colorado College. She will be teaching five classes over the year, over-seeing two senior projects, and will be directing her first mainstage show for the department next season.

■ Charlotte Williams ’05 joined the UMass-Chicago outpost this summer.

Students

■ Kristi Barron was in the apprentice program at the Berkshire Theatre Festival all summer and was in the ensemble of their production of Terence McNally’s Where Has Tommy Flowers Gone? (which, she was pleased to report, Terence himself came up to see!)

■ This past summer graduate directing student Shawn LaCount acted in and produced the Boston premiere of Stephen Adly Guirgis’ The Last Days of Judas Iscariot. He played Satan to flattering reviews. Shawn is the Artistic Director of Company One, which was named The Best Fringe Theater in Boston in The Improper Bostonian’s Best of Boston Issue this summer.

■ Michael Marceline worked with several UMass Amherst students on a project this past summer. He wrote a full length play, Cowboys (Straight, Queer, Quixotic, and Otherwise Allegorical) for fellow students Joël Avilés, Eliza Greene-Smith, and Alec Nelson who worked with him over the summer to produce a workshop performance of the play at the Hallie Flanagan Theater at Smith College. It was the first project of a theater company that Joël and Michael are starting, The Actors Project.

■ Anna Norcross worked as an assistant stage manager at The Theater At Monmouth (located in Monmouth, ME) for eleven weeks over the summer. She was an assistant stage manager for three productions and the lead stage manager for two others.

■ This summer, Kyle Pasciutti was Set Designer, Stage Manager, Assistant Technical Director, and Set Build Coordinator for the Comedy 101 (“LOL or 101 depending on your point of view,” he notes) Production of Rick Abbot’s Dracula: The Musical? in Cheshire, CT.

Faculty

■ Professor Emeritus Doris Abramson ’49 has a new book out, entitled Time Will Tell: Poems and Profiles.

■ The Captivation of Eunice Williams continues to appear before new audiences. The opera, with music by Paula M. Kimper and words by faculty member Harley Erdman, and directed by Linda McInerney ’97G, was performed for two nights in October at the Rasmussen Theater at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC.

■ Julie Nelson was the dialect coach on Merrimack Rep’s Aunt Dan and Lemon.

■ Paul Walsh participated as Lead Dramaturg in the 20th annual New Harmony Project, a new play development workshop centered in New Harmony, Indiana, and dedicated to “serving writers and
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opening of the new Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis and moderated a panel entitled “Hooked on Classics: Old and New,” at the Annual Conference of Literary Managers of Dramaturgs of the Americas (LMDA) that was convened in Minneapolis to help celebrate the opening of the new $90 million Guthrie. He served on the adjudication and selection committee for “The 10th Annual Best of PlayGround Festival of 10-Minute Plays” and the “June Ann Baker Prize” awarded annually by the San Francisco-based new play organization, PlayGround. Finally, he was a member of the adjudication and selection committee for LMDA Summer Play Festivals Travel Grants (to allow early career dramaturgs to travel to selected summer new play festivals).

Staff

—Anna-Maria Goossens

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directors, and award-winning designers.

Our Needs

The process of making theater on a college campus requires appropriate facilities and support. The Department’s spaces, notably the Rand Theater, are fundamentally unchanged since their inauguration in 1974. They suffer from obsolescence, design problems, inflexibility, and general wear-and-tear. Furthermore, the number of theater majors has nearly doubled between 1993 and 2005, bringing more pressure to overhaul our spaces.

We believe our students deserve facilities that match their excellence and provide them with conditions similar to what they will encounter in real-life work. We believe our audiences deserve to be welcomed into theaters that are inviting, dynamic, and state-of-the-art. We believe our program will flourish in facilities that are flexible, multi-purpose, and allow for future growth.

To this end, the Department of Theater and the College of Humanities and Fine Arts commissioned Kuhn-Riddle Architects and Artec Consultants to create a feasibility study for the rebuilding of the theaters at the Fine Arts Center. Their study focused on reconfiguring the Rand Theater and constructing a new laboratory theater.

Specifically, they recommend:

- Transform the Rand Theater into a smaller, 350-seat theater, thereby creating more intimate, dynamic, and engaging performance space.
- Improve the seating in the Rand by removing the balcony and loge and creating semi-circular seating pattern, as well as removing the isolating barriers placed between the rows of seats.
- Create wheelchair seating and offer assisted listening technology.
- Build a multi-faceted all new studio theater suitable for special class projects, rehearsals, and laboratory performances.

Our Vision

The Department of Theater is dedicated to offering a comprehensive study of theater. Implicit in those studies are learning skills in creative problem-solving, effective teamwork, and interpersonal communications. Students leave our classrooms, laboratories, and stages as polished professionals and as men and women ready to navigate life in and out of the theater world. These skills and values, perhaps more important today than ever, change lives and are essential to developing rewarding careers.

Our Campaign

Dynamic Theater: The Campaign for Transforming the Rand Theater seeks to raise $12 million to expand programs and create conditions that will maintain the excellence of the Department of Theater well into the 21st century. The campaign’s centerpiece is the remodeling of the Rand Theater and the creation of a new multi-purpose theater space. Funds also are needed to update equipment as well as improve accessibility and incorporate new building standards.
We'll take New York:
UMass Amherst lighting and technical alumni make their mark

by ANNA-MARIA GOOSSENS

If all of the UMass Amherst lighting and technical theater alumni went on vacation, would New York City’s theaters have to go dark? It’s not an unreasonable question, given the numbers who count themselves among Penny Remsen/UMass Lighting Design Mafia.

To cite a few examples: Kevin Barry is the associate production electrician for Broadway’s Mary Poppins. Ben Stanton received rave reviews for his designs for Godspell at the Paper Mill Playhouse in New Jersey. Traci Klainer—a Smith alumna but a Remsen devotee nonetheless —has received nominations for Lortel and Drama Desk Awards. Annmarie Duggan is freelance designing and lectures at the University of Pittsburgh. Sarah Jakubasz swung a wrench for a Norwegian Cruise Lines show. In response, Remsen handed him the script for Curse of the Starving Class and told him to read it. It was hard — “She pushed me quite a lot,” he said, but she was also unstinting in her praise when he proved himself.

He credits her with his current success. “For a year out, I have a national tour and I get a design credit and a fee. I am very content with where I am now,” Jahoda said.

Jakubasz thinks that the trajectory Jahoda described is part of a larger vision on Remsen’s part. “She has a plan for you. You’ve got to prove yourself through your career in college, from class to working with Michael Dubin to summer work to eventually designing stuff in the Rand. It’s all in her head all the time,” Jakubasz theorized. “She just knows she wants to help you.”

Remsen knows to push students outside their comfort zone when necessary. “She’s doing it for your own good — even if it hurts!” laughed Jakubasz, who added that she sometimes has moments when she finds herself saying, “Yeah, now I get it.”

That help takes the form of teaching and advising, but it doesn’t stop there. One after another, Remsen’s former students described introductions to leaders in the field that became valuable networking contacts, alerts about summer positions that led to other jobs.

“She opened doors,” said Jakubasz, who benefited from Remsen’s pushing her toward an internship at Williamstown Theater Festival. When the possibility continued on page 7
was first raised, Jakubasz worried about making ends meet, but Remsen was so committed to helping her have this experience that she tracked down an obscure internship scholarship. It was a great move for Jakubasz’s career. The people she met over several summers at Williamstown, she said, provided an entry into the New York tech and design network that has enabled her to focus on assisting and designing exclusively.

"Had I not gone to Williamstown..." she mused.

Making one's way

The UMass Amherst connection to Williamstown has helped a number of students transition from school to the professional world.

"After I graduated, I was a lighting intern at the Williamstown Theater Festival," emailed Ben Stanton, who counts himself among the group. "I spent the next few years assisting off Broadway, designing off Broadway, and I was hired as the associate lighting supervisor at Williamstown for my summer job."

That position put him in line for better design jobs at companies including the New York Theater Workshop in the city, the Intiman theater in Seattle, and Hartford Stage. It also connected him to better assisting jobs on Broadway musicals—including Wicked and The Frogs. His career has now progressed to the point where he has stopped assisting and works full time as a lighting designer for theater, with sidelines in dance, opera, concert lighting, cruise ship lighting, and corporate event lighting.

Kevin Barry headed not to Williamstown but to Huntington Stage. He knew early on that his talent and interest lay in the technical side of theater, and he built a career beginning with a tour of Disney on Ice. That job led to a position with a lighting shop. Now, with a toddler son at home, "I'm not going out of town anymore," Barry said. He parlayed his work on various Disney-related projects into a gig at the New Amsterdam theater, working as part of a team on the new production of Mary Poppins.

Some, like Traci Klainer, go for an advanced degree. Klainer actually went to Smith College and only signed up for Remsen’s class because there was no lighting professor at Smith during her senior year. The courses she took her put her in classes together with Remsen’s grad students, one of whom she assisted on a mainstage production.

"I have my MFA in lighting design from NYU," Klainer emailed. "Penny changed my thinking about lighting design. She took my education to the next level in both drafting and artistic thinking. It is because of her that I decided to go to graduate school and am now a lighting designer."

Klainer works freelance in theater and also has her own architectural and exhibit design company, Luce Group.

Well-established in the field now, Klainer has been able to extend a helping hand to up-and-coming Remsen acolytes.

Connections

One of these is Michael Salvas. Remsen brought Klainer back into her classes as a guest lecturer, and through the class she met Salvas, whom she subsequently recommended to the Boston Lyric Opera. Salvas now has a flourishing career designing lights for operas and musicals — he was slated to assist on, and then design, back-to-back productions of M. Butterfly for two companies. In addition, he is the lighting director for the New York Musical Theatre Festival, a rapidly growing festival familiar to some as the first venue for the popular show Altar Boys. Though he laments that he doesn’t have enough time to do plays, Salvas finds opera and musicals to be a good fit, since he has a strong interest in music.

This Klainer-Salvas connection is an example of the way Remsen can connect promising students with established professionals.

"She opened doors. She knows the New York Community very well," Jakubasz said.

It’s also an example of the way Remsen’s alumni look out for each other once they hit the ground in New York. All the alumni regularly dropped names, not only of classmates who’d made the trip to New York City with them, but of people a few years older who’d extended job leads, and people a few years younger to whom they’d extended a helping hand in turn.

Salvas got one of those M. Butterfly jobs thanks to Ben Stanton. They’d met at Williamstown, and when Salvas moved to New York he assisted Stanton on several productions. When Stanton, who had an existing relationship with the opera company, couldn’t take the job, he recommended Salvas for the job.

He is now able to do the same. "When I have something I can’t do, I pass it along," he said adding that when it comes to Remsen’s former students, he can feel confident that person will do good work and the recommendation will reflect well on him — and UMass Amherst.

All the alumni stories are a little different, but Ben Stanton put his finger on the common thread that runs through all these tales of success:

"Penny gave me both a strong grasp of the trade craft skills that are so important for a young lighting designer as they go out into the profession and try to be an assist designer, and an essential foundation for the artistry of the discipline; she taught me how to read light to someone who may not have a vocabulary for that kind of discussion. How to walk into a first meeting with a director you’ve never met before and discuss design ideas."

"I would not be half as successful now if I hadn’t been to college and learned to do the work," said Barry.
Nick Keenan builds a career in sound design

Nick Keenan ’00 is part of what we here like to refer to as our UMass-Chicago outpost. Since moving there several years ago, Nick has made a name and a career for himself working in theater, and he’s found his sound design skills are especially in demand. In his opinion, it’s a growing field, particularly in Chicago. With the Department of Theater mid-search for a 5-College Sound Design faculty member, who will start in 2007 and be based at UMass-Amherst, I wanted to find out more about Nick’s experiences in the field, so we conducted an interview by email, excerpted below.

Question: What drew you to sound design?

Nick Keenan: I helped produce an undergraduate show with alum Justin McClintock ’01, The Revenger’s Tragedy, a lesser-produced work from the Jacobean era. Harley had encouraged us to adapt the script, which involved analyzing each word and line for meaning, subtext, and rhythm. The process was grueling, but as we got deeper into the text I started seeing each word as a note, and I started hearing music in my head as we went through each scene. I put together music selections for that show, and as it was all found music, I started to nip and tuck the found music to fit the musicality of the language and the rhythm of the performances, and, Pop! We had something exciting. Sound design for me has always been closely associated with dramaturgy and text, and it’s less of just creating a soundtrack for a show. It’s one of the most powerful and expressive mediums to design in, and I’ve found that many directors use music as a first and last step to inform their work, so it’s also been an occupation where I get to work very closely with the folks choosing the plays. That’s a plus.

Q: When you were here, I don’t believe we were offering sound design classes — how did you learn about your field? Are there particular experiences or people that stand out?

NK: It all came from seeing other shows in the Curtain and being enraptured with the sound choices and how they were used to set a specific and rich tone in each piece. I didn’t learn about the field until I started designing on a regular basis, which started when I came back as an alum the year after I graduated and designed most of the 2000-2001 Season. There was one show in particular, Dr. Faustus, where the director, Tanya Kane-Parry ’01G, gave me free reign to come in to blocking rehearsals and experiment with a constant underscore. We ended up stuffing the show with layers upon layers of sound, and through that process I got my first lesson in configuring sound for operation. The sound operator, a genius, had to run four minidisc players and had so many pan changes and level shifts his hands were a blur for the entire show.

Q: How have you continued to develop your skills in sound design?

NK: Most of it is just focusing on listening — to the needs of the work, to the needs of collaborators, to the work and process of my peers, and to the limitations of my own time and energy. I refine the process each time, and try to both learn from my mistakes and take just a few more risks with each show. Most of it is just staying calm and reliable and still approaching the work passionately and honestly.

I also like to learn voraciously. I have pack-ratted my way into an encyclopedic music collection that I draw research from; I test and use and play with new technology as often as possible and I keep a close eye on what works for theater and what doesn’t. You never know what’s going to come in handy, so the more skills and knowledge you have, the better off you are when you are presented with a challenge.

Q: How did you work your way into the Chicago sound design community?

NK: There is a community of sound designers and designers in general in Chicago that are very supportive to developing artists. Most of us freely share contacts, available jobs, equipment, and time. Once I worked as an assistant to a couple of the more established designers, I suddenly started getting phone calls from every theater in town. Too many phone calls, actually.

The hardest part is staying passionate about the work after 25 shows a year. That’s where Cherubs comes in for me.

Q: Tell me a little more about your work with the Cherub program (also known as the National High School Institute at Northwestern University, a summer program that allows high school students to explore possible careers).

NK: I teach sound and design the ten shows we produce with the students each year, but it is definitely more than that. Our students are between their junior and senior year of high school, so they’re about to apply for colleges (and of course they’re all trying to figure out what they want to do in life), and each of them comes with an amazing passion for theater, but a different understanding of what theater can be and can accomplish. In many ways the faculty are counselors, and we’re giving personalized training... continued on page 9
Building a career in sound design

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and encouragement to each student. It's incredibly rewarding — life-changing for me — and frankly has kept me excited year after year about the possibilities of theater for — gasp — actually improving society and people's lives.

I'm hoping, actually, to get a few UMass Amherst folks into Cherubs as Faculty Associates. It's a great way to build a crazy amount of strong contacts in a short period of time — the Cherub program has been around for 75 years, and you can find Cherub alums everywhere. Do I sound like a recruiter yet? Good. We need more UMass Amherst blood over here.

Q: You say the field is full of opportunities — can you talk a little about what you've observed from your vantage point?

NK: The biggest opportunity comes from the fact that the field currently doesn't have enough people to do all the jobs. In Chicago, there are probably 10 to 12 full-time and another 10 hobbyist freelance sound designers, half of whom work only at the 10 largest (not including the road houses) theaters in town, whose show budgets typically pay the equivalent of a month's salary. The 30 or so mid-sized theaters, which all do three to five shows a year and can pay a reasonably healthy fee for each show, are being served by about only seven sound designers. Then there are around 70 storefront and itinerant theaters that produce two to five shows a year.

The other opportunity is the sheer number of projects and artists that you can work with in a year as a freelance designer. I've just described an annual season of 500 shows in Chicagoland, and that's an extremely conservative estimate. Most sound designers I know can design a maximum of 40 shows a season of 500 shows in Chicagoland, and that's an extremely conservative estimate. Most sound designers I know can design a maximum of 40 shows a year, around one a week. That's a lot of under-designed productions.

If you can shape a process for yourself that allows you to overlap shows without compromising your sanity or the work, you can do the projects you love to do, and also do the projects that will pay your bills.

Q: You work with theaters all over the city, but you are especially closely involved with New Leaf and Side Project. What draws you to those companies?

NK: There's a peculiar life cycle to theaters in Chicago. They ALL begin with a group of about a dozen college friends who move to town and want to take over the theatrical world. So they put up a show, do so with some success, and then get caught up in the unexpected complications of running a business with friends as the company expands its audience. There's a lot of burnout, and young theater companies are very lucky or smart to live past 2-5 seasons. Both New Leaf and the Side Project are actively working to improve that situation by helping to develop individual talents, careers, and providing space and opportunities. The collaborative atmosphere in Chicago is dear to my heart, and I hope I can do my part to preserve and expand it.

I think that decision to help others move forward rather than focusing on a solo vision has also greatly accelerated my career. I've been able to work on more projects and am involved in the play selection process in both theaters. I've also had an opportunity to develop my own audio play, Lexicon, which has performed in several venues across town (and is available on my website, http://nikku.net).

For both New Leaf and The Side Project I'm functioning as a resident sound designer and increasingly, production manager. I feel at home in both those roles thanks to all that UMass Amherst experience, of course.

For the Side Project (one of Chicago's most intimate spaces — 50 seats no more than 15' from center stage) I've helped them build a second space, grid, booth and lobby, and create all their marketing materials, from ads to postcards to their new website, http://thesideproject.net. They're a real playwrights' theater, and the new space has allowed them to ramp up their schedule. There are 14 productions in one space this year, plus monthly readings, plus 8 productions and rehearsals in the old space.

New Leaf is a ensemble of production artists, dedicated to producing theater that renews artist and audience. Where The Side Project is a busy theater developing works, New Leaf is a venue where developing artists are brought together and whipped into a collaborative frenzy. We have one of the strongest resident design teams for a theater of our size, and we also are the resident theater at a park district space. Rent is so low for us that we can really produce risky shows with strong design without too much fear of bankruptcy. This January, we'll be doing a show I'm particularly excited about, the U.S. premiere of David Hare's The Permanent Way.

Q: As you look at where you are now — is this where you expected to be when you contemplated your career?

NK: It's certainly where I hoped to be five, ten years ago, to the extend that I thought about it. I wanted to make a reasonable living doing what I love, and I think I'm doing that. I'm buying a condo in a couple weeks and getting married this year, and I have several very fun jobs that make ends meet.

As for the next five years, I'm getting to that point where making a difference in the community is important to me, and I'm grappling with how to do that in the context of theater. The biggest challenge for theater as a cultural institution is that it continues to need to prove its vitality and value to society. I think it does prove that to the people that get to experience it, but it's becoming harder to show the value of theatrical experiences to a television culture. Having a community that cares about the creation of a communal art is important to me, and I think my next five years will be focused on how to make storefront theater a more visible and vital part of Chicago, and, hopefully, beyond.
Patricia Warner bids teaching goodbye

by ANNA-MARIA GOOSSENS

Almost a decade ago, the University of Massachusetts Amherst dissolved its Consumer Studies department.

“Go and find someplace else to be,” was the directive given to Patricia Warner, the costume historian who was that department’s only full professor. The Department of Theater turned out to be the place. After being at UMass Amherst since 1988, she joined us in 2002, and she retires at the end of this school year after five productive years with us.

“June Gaeke and I have traded students forever,” Warner said, explaining how the initial contact was made, “and when she heard this was going on, she said ‘Come to theater’.”

Initially, Warner demurred. “I don’t know anything about theater!” Gaeke kept pushing, pointing out that she loves the theater. Additionally, there was the fact that one of Warner’s classes studied 20th century fashion by examining film costumes, not far removed from theater costume design.

Warner made the leap and, she said, “I love my colleagues. They welcomed me and made me a part of the department without hesitation.” Warner kept on teaching the costume history courses, and she designed other courses that meshed tightly with her new home. “When I’ve taught theater students, I hope I’ve given them an awareness of costume. It’s been fun to make up new courses that do what I do yet fit into theater.”

“It never ever would have crossed my mind that I would end up where I am now,” Warner said, “but I absolutely love it.”

**Gym Suits**

Warner came to the department with a project in the works, and it has reached its conclusion this year with the publication of her book, *When the Girls Came Out to Play: The Birth of American Sportswear*.

It’s a subject that has occupied her time for a good 20 years now, but it came to her accidentally. As Warner tells the story, she was working on her doctorate and got involved with a traveling exhibition mounted by the University of Minnesota Art Museum, *America at Play 1860-1940*.

The museum asked her to travel with the exhibit and give a talk about clothing of the period. Warner agreed, but thought it might be more interesting if she focused on clothing for sports. When she headed to the library, however, she discovered to her amazement, “Nobody had done anything on this!”

The only thing she found in the stacks were 19th-century magazines. “I started looking for anything to do with women in sports and outdoor activity,” she said. She tracked down what they wore for social activities like tennis and croquet, and for the more private (and away from the eyes of men) exercise. In articles, advertisements, prints and photos, she found enough for her talk.

Her talk included a mention of gym suits, and as she traveled around, she found this section, in particular, struck a nerve. “Women not only remembered the gym suits, but they wanted to talk about them,” she said.

Warner remembers wearing one of these suits. “God, I really hated mine! But it’s part of our common history,” she said. Many women had this mixed reaction to the suits. “They laugh at it, but it’s a very warm, reminiscent laugh.”

Meanwhile, Warner’s proposed dissertation — about Bakelite jewelry — had stalled. Her advisor pointed out that she’d been doing a lot of original research on the clothing for sports and suggested she switch topics. “That was 20 years ago, and I’ve been thinking about it ever since,” said Warner, joking that in some circles she’s known as “the gymsuit lady.”

In her research, she traced two separate strands that played a part in the clothing that evolved into American sportswear. The first was the participation by women, with men, in sports like croquet and tennis, once only the province of men — and how the fashionable clothing gradually adapted to women’s needs. Meanwhile, in girls’ schools and women’s colleges — the private sphere — serious strides were made in exercise for women alone. Eventually, these two strands merged to make clothing that allowed greater freedom of movement the standard in the public as well as the private sphere.

“It’s interesting to read about the struggles women have had, how long it’s taken to achieve equality,” she said. And though it took her two decades to write the book, Warner has no regrets. “It’s a far better book than it would have been 20 years ago.”

**Next up**

Warner is not coasting on her accomplishment. She spoke about her book in Boston at the Old South Meeting House in February as part of their series this year on fashion. In May, she will speak at the 2007 Massachusetts History Conference about museums’ collecting and interpreting dress for the Twentieth Century. She has also been invited to chair a session on moving from abstracts to talks to journal articles for publication at Costume Society of America’s national symposium in San Diego in June.

Less concretely mapped out but also on the docket are two more books. For the first, about clothing in the movies, Warner has already written a published chapter — the book to come will be an expansion upon her popular course on 20th-century dress. She also wants to write a book about clothing in the 1950s, which she sees as a sort of corrective to the conventional wisdom that 1950s clothing was tight and unyielding.

“I loved my clothes,” she said. She hopes to make that a joint project with some friends in the field — several have tentatively signed on already.

“It’s safe to assume, in other words, that she was joking when she said that her upcoming plans were to “read novels and eat bonbons.”
Patricia Warner: Friend and colleague

Chance and circumstance are glorious things. We owe many of the best aspects of our lives to them.

But we academics normally don't trust in them much. Take faculty searches. These are elaborate rituals extending over many months, even years. They involve the meticulous crafting of job descriptions, the sifting through of hundreds of applications, and interviews that can extend into the better part of a week, with a gauntlet of wining and dining and meetings and protocols to be negotiated. All in search of that perfect match.

And every now then, without all this strategic hoopla, things happen fortuitously, and for the best.

This was the case with Pat Warner.

The elimination of the Consumer Studies Program in 2001 resulted in a number of tenured UMass Amherst faculty suddenly without a department. Among these was Pat, an expert in the history of dress and a teacher admired by a generation of our students who had taken her outstanding costume history courses. With the help of June Gaekte, Pat came to us in search of an academic home.

It has been a perfect match for us.

Into this group of often temperamental artists doing this “theater” thing in the curious hothouse environment of our black boxes (both literal and figurative), Pat came as a breath of fresh Canadian air. She has been that essential “outside eye” that helps puts things in perspective, keeps things in balance, and reminds us of the world around us. She is funny and unpretentious, astute and grounded. She appreciates language, understands theater, is thrilled by the world of design, and loves delving into those material expressions of everyday life that somehow manage to be both beautiful and practical. Most especially, she is a figure our students have turned to over and over again for support, encouragement, wisdom, and advice.

Taking over Theater and Society, a core course in our graduate curriculum, Pat has taught young theater practitioners the value of rigorous research and the power of history. Creating new courses in our undergraduate curriculum, Pat has explored the intersection of theater, film, and fashion with originality and flair. As for her famous costume history classes, Pat has shown over and over again why she is internationally renowned in her field. In all her teaching and service, Pat has proved that she is (dare I say it?) at heart a darn good dramaturg as well—somebody who mixes scholarship and creativity, who yearns to connect her work to a larger audience, and who provides critical context for, asks tough questions about, and ultimately celebrates and enriches the collaborations at the center of our enterprise.

I should also mention that Pat is an extraordinary scholar. Her book When the Girls Came Out To Pay is as lively, readable, and informative a piece of “academic” cultural history as you’re liable to find. Her professional expertise is in frequent demand, and she keeps us as active a public speaking and consulting schedule as any member of our faculty.

More personally, I’m lucky to have become Pat’s friend. A few summers ago, we visited her at her family cottage on Cawaja Beach on the shores of Georgian Bay. My children were in heaven: a private beach fifty paces from their doorstep, warm shallow water as far as they could wade, and acres of rocky coastline to explore. As for the adults—we had all of the above plus wine, laughter, great stories, and Pat’s impeccable hospitality. Somehow, improbably, it also worked out the following summer that Pat’s family (including the French wing of the Campbell-Warners) and my family (including the French wing of the Erdmans) shared a picnic together on the banks of the Seine at twilight, and then, as the sun set (around eleven p.m. or so) went for ice cream on the Ile St. Louis.

To me, Pat represents the best in academics: a passion for one’s subject matter; the highest standards in teaching and research; a sense of humor and sense of balance; wisdom without egotism; a wit that prods gently at times but never scathes; and an empathic, humane concern for students and colleagues alike. I guess you could call her my role model.

Pat, thank you for being the perfect match these past five years.

—Harley Erdman, Chair

It must be very nice being Patricia Warner. If you were Patricia you would be ever so intelligent, artistic, inquisitive, witty and wise. You would be an artist as well as a musician. You would love and know the theater and fine music. You would be an entertaining and witty dinner companion. There would never be an unflattering photograph taken of you and your smile would stun the viewer. New and clever ideas would constantly appear as the possible next paper or better yet, book on some yet to be explored, aspect of costume (clothes to the rest of us).

Teaching would be your passion and you would never find a student paper that did not deserve a slight edit. Students would find you a very tough teacher but admit that they learned more in your class than virtually any other UMass Amherst course.

Of course, being Patricia Warner, you would have more jewelry than a queen and wear it just as regally, even better! You would exude style in your dress and always have a “retro” thing or two to add that special touch.

If one can not be Patricia Warner, (and how would that be possible, given that the original mold has been lost!) the next best thing is to be her friend and colleague and enjoy with her, the many special things she brings to that friendship and professional relationship.

—Catharine Porter, ombudsperson
UMass Amherst
Dynamic Theater: *The Campaign for Transforming the Rand Theater*

A vision of the future: Above, a rendering by Kuhn Riddle Architects imagines a renovated and reoriented box office for the Department of Theater. Please look inside to learn more about the campaign we are launching this year to renovate the Rand Theater and its adjoining facilities.

**Also in this issue:** Pat Warner retires, the New York City lighting and tech mafia, Nick Keenan and sound design in Chicago, updates