The Department of Theater
Year In Review
2012-2013
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Looking ahead to 2013-2014

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Our Season
The 2012-2013 season was the Department of Theater’s 40th. We celebrated it by scheduling a slate of works by women in honor of the late Doris Abramson, who was among the department’s founding members in 1973, when the papers were signed that turned us from a part of the speech department into our own department proper.

Over the course of the season, we were joined by friends from the past, including alumni in the audience, as guest speakers, and in one case, as playwright (Connie Congdon ’82G wrote Casanova). We also made new friends, most notably in South Africa’s Magnet Theater, who brought their work Every Year, Every Day, I Am Walking to us for its Massachusetts premiere.

We brought back an old favorite when we mounted a production of Machinal, Abramson’s last directorial project, as well as new work in Suzan-Lori Parks’ Venus, a show that also tipped its hat to Abramson’s interest in African-American Theater.

Box office results for 2011-2012
The 2012-2013 box office season offered a number of new or low-profile shows. Still, we achieved our projected box office, and one of the least known shows, at least to our audience, Every Year, Every Day, I Am Walking, took in the biggest numbers for the year. We installed direct links to the Fine Arts Center Box Office on our website this year.

<table>
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<th>Performance</th>
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<td>Every Year Every Day I Am Walking</td>
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<td>Venus</td>
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<td>Casanova</td>
<td>$4,278.00</td>
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SUBTOTAL                                 $31,835.53
less 72% box office fee                  $ 2,292.16
TOTAL                                    $29,543.37
In 1985, Doris Abramson chose *Machinal* as her final directing project before her retirement. We thought it fitting to open our tribute to her with a new production of a mesmerizing play that challenges us to reconsider our feelings about our industrialized society. What happens when we worship a machine? In the mechanized world of *Machinal*, everyone and everything is a cog in the function of the machine: simple, elegant, terrible. A young woman is trapped in a world without empathy, and the clock is ticking. As the play unfolds, Treadwell’s expressionist masterpiece explores what might drive her to the desperate actions she eventually takes to be free.

WORTH NOTING: This production was a direct tribute to Doris Abramson, who chose it as her final directing project before her retirement. We kicked off a year in tribute to Doris with a special dinner and show night for alumni, current and former colleagues, and friends, who also joined us for a toast in the newly-renovated Rand Theater afterward. We were joined by a number of university officials, including Dean Julie Hayes, who has historically helped the Department of Theater as we have sought support for our efforts to upgrade the facility. It was an opportunity to thank her and to welcome new Chancellor Kumble Subbaswamy, whom we are thrilled to have as a member of the UMass family. The event kicked off our Shed the Shag campaign to upgrade the Rand Lobby, an ambitious plan to outfit the space with accessible bathrooms, energy-efficient lighting, and a new box office.
Violet
Music by Jeanine Tesori, libretto by Brian Crawley,
based on the short story “The Ugliest Pilgrim” by Doris Betts  Directed by Carol Becker
Nov. 29, 30, Dec. 1, 6, 7, 8 at 8 p.m.
Dec. 1 and 8 at 2 p.m.
School matinee Dec. 5 at 10 p.m.
The Rand Theater

What does it mean to be truly healed? This is the central question behind Violet: The Musical. Disfigured by an axe blade as a child, Violet embarks on an emotional journey to have her facial scar healed by a televangelist. On her cross-country travels, she encounters two soldiers, Flick and Monty, who challenge how she sees herself. As their friendship grows, Violet realizes that she shares a common bond with Flick as they both yearn to be connected to a world that has criticized and mocked them. Flick and Violet must make the decision to either submit to the ignorance of those around them – or to rise above it.

WORTH NOTING: This production was our sole matinee for school children this year, and it was attended by 300 students from 7 schools. We also invited Dean Julie Hayes and Provost James Stavros to join us for a special toast on the Rand Theater stage, since this was the first show mounted there since the house received an extensive upgrade.
Special event

Every Year, Every Day, I Am Walking

By Magnet Theater from South Africa

Created by Magnet Theatre

Jan. 30, 31, Feb. 1, 2 at 8 p.m.

The Rand Theater

The play, Every Year, Every Day, I Am Walking, traces the story of a young refugee in Africa who loses family and home brutally and irrevocably and is forced to journey to a new place through many dangers and uncertainties. It is a piece about dislocation, about what home means, about Africa, about loss and about the first tentative steps towards healing and recovery. A moving contemporary story told through evocative physical images by two of South Africa’s foremost actresses, Jennie Reznek and Faniswa Yisa, and scored with live music by composer Neo Muyanga, Every Year, Every Day, I Am Walking celebrates the ability of human beings to heal and regain a sense of dignity and identity through the power of the imagination.

WORTH NOTING: Professor Megan Lewis raised over $30,000 in grants to bring the Magnet Theatre to UMass from South Africa. (Public Relations Director Anna-Maria Goossens also arranged reduced-cost accommodations at the Campus Hotel.) During their weeklong residency, the group’s members made appearances in a number of classes, delivered the Rand Lecture, and visited two other campuses for workshops.

The full list:
- 4 performances with post-show Q&As
- Rand Lecture and Q&A
- Class visits to: Contemporary Rep, Dramaturgy Workshop, Theater 100, Music 150, Music 100 at UMass
- Mark Fleischman lecture at Amherst College
- Social Justice and Devising Theatre-making workshop at Hampshire College

Suitors

By Ana Caro and Feliciana Enríquez, translated and adapted by Harley Erdman

Directed by Kara-Lynn Vaeni

Feb. 28, March 1, 2, 7, 8, 9 at 8 p.m.

March 2 and 9 at 2 p.m.

The Rand Theater

In early 17th-century Spain, women playwrights turned out reams of scripts that were by turns imaginative, magical, funny and raunchy. Department of Theater professor Harley Erdman is on a mission to help the world rediscover these talented women and brought us Suitors, an interpolation of two plays about women with multiple suitors who have to figure out how to get what they want from their situations. The main play, Count Partinuples by Ana Caro, is a magical fairy tale. With the help of her cousin (who is conveniently a sorceress), the empress Rosaura puts a magical spell on the man of her dreams. Invisible, she puts him to a test of love, all the while putting off these three shallow suitors whom her advisors want her to marry. The
interlude, *The Moldy Graces* by Feliciana Enriquez, is a farce in which six grotesque, drunken suitors serenade three very horny sisters. Each play is outrageous in its own way, and both will have you wondering how it’s possible that no one has seen these fabulous works in English before.

WORTH NOTING: Lisa Vollendorf, Professor of Spanish and Chair of Romance, German, Russian Languages and Literatures at California State University and Nieves Romero-Diaz, Professor of Spanish, Latina/o, Latin American Studies at Mount Holyoke College, joined the department during *Suitors’* opening weekend for a panel discussion about female playwrights of the Spanish Golden Age, and the First Friday Q&A.

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*Venus*
By Suzan-Lori Parks
Directed by Judyie Al-Bilali
March 28, 29 April 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 at 8 p.m.
March 30 and April 6 at 2 p.m.
The Curtain Theater

In *Venus*, Suzan-Lori Parks remembers and re-imagines the historical figure of Sarah Baartman, known to the world as “the Hottentot Venus.” In the early 19th century, Baartman, a Khoisan woman from South Africa, was taken from her country and displayed across Europe as a freak and a medical anomaly for her large buttocks. *Venus* examines how mainstream culture views Black bodies, specifically Black female bodies. Parks uses Baartman’s story and the medium of theater as a powerful platform to ask audience members to consider what it means to watch, to be seen, and
to engage in a performance. Because Venus’ sexuality is taboo, is it not indecent for the audience to watch her? Is Venus, in re-imagining Baartman, objectifying her all over again? Expect to leave Parks’ Obie Award-winning play engaged in passionate discussions with your fellow audience members.

WORTH NOTING: In conjunction with our production, dramaturg Adewunmi Oke secured grants to organize a free panel discussion and live demonstration examining the relationship between Baartman’s image and the image of “Video Vixens” in Hip Hop today, featuring Hip Hop activist Rosa Clemente and DJ Reborn.

Casanova
UMass alumna Connie Congdon
Directed by Brianna Sloane
April 18, 19, 20, 25, 26, 27 at 8 p.m.
April 20 and 27 at 2 p.m.
The Rand Theater

The University of Massachusetts-Amherst Department of Theater is fortunate to count renowned playwright Constance Congdon among its alumnae. We are pleased to end our celebrating of women playwrights with one of her favorite works, Casanova. This play nimbly examines the story of the famous Italian seducer and across time and space, weaving memory with fantasy and prompting intriguing questions about the nature of love and remembrance. Sensual and rich, elements that include touches of Restoration comedy, hints of Commedia dell’Arte and allusions to the lavish and bawdy European capitals of the 18th century come together to create a delightful and insightful whole.

WORTH NOTING: Professor Harley Erdman and Playwright Constance Congdon ‘82G joined us for Gender in Adaptation: A Discussion.
People

This year, we were joined by one new faculty member, one guest lecturer and quite a few guest artists. Some of the latter were with us over a longer stretch of time, while others came on to work with our students for a single project or workshop. We appreciate the skills and talents each one of them brought to the Department of Theater, and the invaluable ways they enhanced the curriculum for our students.

New faculty

Amy Altadonna
Lecturer in Sound Design and Technology
BA The College of William and Mary
MFA Yale School of Drama

Amy Altadonna is a sound designer and composer.

She has collaborated on the world premieres of Seven Minutes in Heaven (HERE Arts Center) and Recall (Wild Project) with Adrienne Campbell-Holt and Colt Coeur, and on Milk (New Georges), Uncle Vanya (Bard Summer-scape) with Erica Schmidt, The Unmentionables (Yale Rep) with Anna Shapiro, Twelfth Night (Pearl Theatre), Psycho Therapy (Cherry Lane), Private Lives and Foxfire (Utah Shakespearean Festival), On the Verge (Warehouse Theatre), and Skin of Our Teeth (Perseverance Theatre).

Many of her other favorite productions have been at universities, including The Last Days of Judas Iscariot at Yale (another collaboration with Adrienne Campbell-Holt), The Who's Tommy, Orpheus Descending and Spelling Bee at American University, and Medea, The Seagull and Sarah Ruhl’s Eurydice at Columbia.

She has done location sound and post production sound on film and video projects, including work for the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and two upcoming feature films.

She received her BA in Music from The College of William and Mary -- where she studied composition with Dan Gutwein -- and her Masters Degree in Sound Design from the Yale School of Drama. She was most recently the adjunct lecturer of Live Sound at American University; previously, she was Instructor of Sound Design at the Professional Performing Arts School (Manhattan). She was also a Guest Lecturer at Columbia University and presented a masterclass at Yale.

An excerpt from her profile in our Stages newsletter:

Eventually, she came to the realization that teaching was offering an irresistible new challenge. “I was starting to get to a point where I was comfortable (with sound design),” Altadonna said, “and comfortable is not a place I am comfortable being.” However, communicating her knowledge about sound design to students, she said, “invigorated my mind and my intellect.” “Teaching is the hardest thing I’ve ever done, but it came at such a perfect time,” she said. Her goal isn’t solely to create sound designers. “If no one I teach ever becomes a professional sound designer, but they learn to trust their instincts and to take initiative, it’s worthwhile,” she said. Altadonna’s thrilled to have found a place at UMass Amherst. “I cannot believe how smart these kids are! They’re really just powerfully attuned to theater by the time they get to my class. They’re good to work with,” said Altadonna. She feels equally warmly toward her colleagues, who are mentors to her as she settles in to her job. “I’ve been made to feel like a member of the family.”
Guest Lecturer

Daniel Beaty
Lecturer, Playwriting
B.A. English and Music, Yale University
M.F.A. Acting, American Conservatory Theatre

Daniel Beaty is an award-winning actor, singer, writer, and composer. Most recently, Theater Communications Group awarded Daniel the 2011 Peter Zeisler Memorial Award that recognizes an individual or organization whose work exemplifies pioneering practices in theatre, are dedicated to the freedom of expression, and are unafraid of taking risks for the advancement of the art form.

He is the recipient of the 2007 Scotsman Fringe First Award for the best new writer at the Edinburgh Festival and was presented with a Lamplighter Award from the Black Leadership Forum in Washington D.C. In February 2008, he received two Helen Hayes Award nominations for the best in theater in Washington D.C. and in June 2008, he was the winner of the Unique Theatrical Experience Award from the New Jersey Star Ledger for his production at the Crossroads Theater Company in New Brunswick, New Jersey. In the spring of 2008, Emergency had a sold-out seven-week engagement at the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles. This production was directed by Charles Randolph-Wright and was awarded two 2009 NAACP Theater Awards including Best Actor.

As a playwright and composer, Daniel’s work has been performed, staged and work-shopped at the Public Theater, BAM, New York Theater Workshop, La Mama, Arena Stage, Harford Stage, Philadelphia Theater Company, Alliance Theatre, True Colors Theater Company, Crossroads Theater Company, American Conservatory Theater, Yale University, The Geffen Playhouse and various other academic institutions and civic organizations.

Guest Artists

Judyie Al-Bilali ’00G — Directed Venus and came to campus for a short residency in collaboration with the Augusta Savage Gallery
Sharon Bridgeforth — Delivered lecture to Playwrights of Color and Research to Performance classes
Builders Association — Led a Q&A in conjunction with a performance at the Fine Arts Center
Paul Dennis — Choreographed Violet
Carole Gaunt — Participated in a residency for the staged reading of her play adaptation of Hungry Hill
Imago Theatre — Led a workshop in conjunction with a performance at the Fine Arts Center
Kidd Pivot — Led a workshop in conjunction with a performance at the Fine Arts Center
Kali Quinn — Led a commedia workshop for department students
Amy Levinson ’97G — Spoke with students in several classes about dramaturgy and professional opportunities
Scott McArthur — Sound designed Violet
Chris Rohmann — Led a workshop on grant-writing for graduate students
Bill Sapsis of Sapsis Rigging — Led a rigging workshop in our spaces
Upright Citizens Brigade — Led an improv workshop in conjunction with a performance at the Fine Arts Center
Kara-Lynn Vaeni — Directed Suitors and the Hungry Hill reading
David Wiggall — Designed and programmed projection for Violet
Outreach

Our First Friday Q&A is an institution at this point — we continue to offer our audiences the opportunity to learn about our shows by offering them a chance to talk with members of the production team and cast.

Our dramaturgs aggressively pursued a number of grants this year that allowed them to bring in a number of guest artists. Many of those guests interacted not only with department members but with the public at large. Public, community outreach events included:

• Lisa Vollendorf, Professor of Spanish and Chair of Romance, German, Russian Languages and Literatures at California State University and Nieves Romero-Diaz, Professor of Spanish, Latina/o, Latin American Studies at Mount Holyoke College — panel on female playwrights during Spain’s Golden Age

• Rosa Clemente, hip hop activist and DJ Reborn, DJ — lecture/demonstration, “Video Vixens” in conjunction with Venus.

• Playwright Constance Congdon ‘82G and Professor Harley Erdman — panel discussion, “Gender in Adaptation.”

Our production of *Violet: The Musical*, came as there were many conversations happening about bullying prejudice and other related topics. Because we felt that the musical’s message was relevant to that conversation, we offered schools the opportunity to attend the show for free. Seven schools took us up on the offer — about 300 students. All received our free study guide, and we gave pre-show workshops to 2 classes, as well as a post-show Q&A to several schools.

Our neighbors across the way at the Fine Arts Center invited Professor Megan Lewis to deliver a public lecture on the “Poetics and Politics of Hair!” in April as part of the FAC’s season.
Curriculum Enhancement

Undergraduate Advisory Council Activities
Our Undergraduate Advisory Council continues to offer invaluable assistance to both prospective and current students. These students take time out of their busy schedules to welcome prospective students to our department, both on an ad hoc basis, and during the busy open house time in the spring, when they lead group tours of the Theater Department and provide insights into the Theater major.

Grants
Our students are motivated and talented not only in the artistic aspects of theater but in the administrative side as well. To supplement the budgets of season productions as well as their own independent pieces, both graduate and undergraduate students applied successfully for grants from the UMass Arts Council. Those grants paid production costs for independent student work and special events related to our season productions such as guest artists/speakers. Turn to the next page, please, for the full list of grants received this fiscal year.
### FACULTY AWARDS/GRANTS

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### GRANTS GRAD STUDENT TRAVEL

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### MAGNET THEATRE RESIDENCY

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### STUDENT - ARTS COUNCIL ARTS

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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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**TOTAL GRANTS/AWARDS FOR FY13** $52,638.41
Development

2012-2013 was a big one for us on the Development front. Over the summer of 2012, we were lucky enough to have funding from the University — with big thank yous to Dean Julie Hayes and Provost James Staros for advocating on our behalf — to refurbish the house of the Rand Theater.

With the money, we refurbished the Rand seating and tore out the orange carpeting. In addition the walls between the rows were removed, and a handicapped-accessible section was created.

The final result was a stunner:

With the theater now looking its best, the push was on to bring the Rand Lobby up to the same standards. With that in mind, we implemented an ambitious campaign to raise funds to upgrade the Rand Lobby.

We created a campaign, under the motto of “Shed the Shag,” that tapped people’s ironic nostalgia for the orange shag and the warm feelings they have about their UMass Theater experience.

Chair Penny Remsen recorded a video in which she hilariously offered to give people t-shirts, pieces of carpet, or even cat scratch posts made from shag carpeting as gifts in exchange for donations.

We connected with Development at the CHFA and university-wide level to do special mailings and phone campaigns in an effort to encourage donors to give generously, all calling back to the carpet. We publicized our efforts via facebook, our website, and our newsletter. Penny met with donors of means to encourage larger gifts, for whom we created a naming opportunity leave-behind piece, and we organized a series of events to show off our new space as well as our creativity.
As we have for several years now, we selected several department supporters to profile. These are donors from all walks of life, the idea being to encourage friends and alumni in similar circumstances to start thinking of themselves as donors, as well. This year we profiled 4 donors; below are excerpts of the stories we wrote about them.

Chris Darland ‘87
Graduating Year: 1987
Major: Theater
A favorite UMass Theater memory: In his sophomore year Chris was cast in his first (and, as it turned out, his last) major lead role in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead. On the night his parents and their friends came to the show, an audience member took flash photos, and Chris railed angrily about the rudeness — until he realized the culprits were his parents’ friends. "I have the photos. I look like a startled possum in Renaissance garb, with a cape, arms akimbo, about to be run over by a car."

Why do you donate to the Department of Theater?
In a very broad, social, human way, those of us who are doing well are bound to share with others — including your alma mater. I really enjoyed going to UMass. Theater was my outlet; it let me grow up. You have an obligation to support the place that supported you. Most of us get support, and that’s really what the giving back is about.

In the past few years, UMass Theater alumnus Chris Darland ’87 has been to Hong Kong, South Korea, China, Ukraine, Iceland, and Hungary, among others. It’s easy to drop a “how far you’ve come” comment here, but it happens to be accurate. It’s quite a distance from being a kid who found theater in high school and planned to become an actor at UMass, to Darland’s current position as associate partner at Artec, one of the world’s pre-eminent companies “in the design and planning of innovative performing arts facilities,” as it says on their website.

In his 15 years with the company, Darland has been all over the world to help plan, design, build and renovate performing arts spaces, from the brand-new showpiece that is HARPA: Reykjavick Concert and Conference Center in Iceland to the 39-year-old Chapel on Fir Hill in Akron, OH, which needed a thorough acoustical overhaul.

Darland, who now lives and works in New York City when he’s not traveling, thinks back with fondness and gratitude on Amherst, MA, where his high school and university experiences combined to give him the base in theater that’s led him where he is today. That’s why he supports the Department of Theater through donations and by helping out on projects, like turning a disused stretch of lobby into the Upper Rand Studio.

“I really enjoyed going to UMass,” he said, and donating, whether financially or with his skills, is a “pay it forward sort of thing” for him. A lot of students nowadays, he feels, approach higher education “like it’s a service they’re buying. I don’t think that’s what college is. You’re there to become a useful member of society.”

The Hoyt Family
Graduating Year: Son, Gregory Hoyt graduated in 2002
Major: Theater
A favorite UMass Theater memory: We had such a good time going out to see his shows,” said Patricia Hoyt. “It was such a fun way to be part of our kid’s life.” Emblematic of Greg’s time at UMass is a family photo at a formal event in which Greg’s hair is almost platinum blond — he’d had to dye it for a role.

Why do you donate to the Department of Theater? We donate to make a statement about the importance of the program. We’re big proponents of the state (university) system,” says Peter Hoyt, adding that they support it “whole-heartedly” and have been impressed “with the quality and rigor of the program at UMass. It was an incredible experience that really defined his professional life.” His wife agrees. The training at UMass Theater
“is an important foundation and we want to pay it forward,” she says.

When their son, Gregory Hoyt ’02, started looking at colleges, Peter and Patricia Hoyt knew the UMass Amherst would be the best fit for nurturing his dreams of an acting career, dreams they’d been supporting and encouraging since his appearances as a young boy in his mom’s productions. But unlike the bossy stage parents trainwrecking all over reality TV, the Hoyts are pretty level-headed and realized that this had to be his decision. “We had taken him there (to UMass) as a high school senior,” said Peter, “and he would have nothing to do with it.”

Instead, he chose Emerson College. After a year, though, Greg realized that his parents had been right — the program, good as it was, just wasn’t for him, and he transferred to UMass, where he quickly found his niche. He proceeded to appear in a number of mainstage and student shows. He has lived in Los Angeles for nearly a decade now, making a living acting in commercials and TV series. He recently made his film debut in Clint Eastwood’s J. Edgar, and in an interview with Stages early this year, spoke with fondness and gratitude of his training here.

That positive experience is why Peter and Patricia have donated to UMass Theater yearly, even though Greg has long since graduated.

Stephen Driscoll
Graduating Year: 1972
Major: Speech

A favorite UMass Theater memory: Professor Harry Mahnken directed the end of season production of Anouilh’s Becket. I played the Archbishop of Canterbury. I played a lot of old guys! David Zucker, my fraternity big brother, and with whom I was later a member of the Boston Repertory Theater, played Henry II. The same week as opening, the shootings at Kent State occurred. There was considerable discussion about whether the show should go on in light of the enormous upheaval and protests around the country. In fact, the UMass academic year was curtailed. Harry insisted we proceed. I was ambivalent. I was President of my class, back when they still had class officers, and adamantly opposed to the Vietnam War. On the other hand, I was not only a cast member but a work-study employee in the costume shop (which was located in the basement of South College). I had constructed some of the costumes (designed by Professor Liz Weiss-
including gluing the pearls and beads on my Archbishop's mitre and staff. I vividly remember standing backstage on opening night, in full ecclesiastical drag and old man make-up, engaged in a very spirited political discussion while everyone, including Harry and the stage crew, chain-smoked cigarettes on stage to create a smoky effect for the opening cathedral scene. Surreal.

*Why do you donate to the Department of Theater?* Because even before it was a department, it provided me the opportunity to immerse myself in theater arts, year-round, for the 5 years I was a student at UMass. It made me a well-rounded theater practitioner and prepared me for my work with the National Mime Theatre, my teaching at MIT and my 15 year career as Associate Director and Resident Choreographer of Sarah Caldwell's Opera Company of Boston.

When Stephen Driscoll graduated from the University of Massachusetts, it was with a degree in speech because there simply wasn’t a degree in theater to be had yet. “I was there for the advent of the Department of Theater,” he wrote — after several years’ work, the department was officially founded in spring 1973. Stephen also minored in Dance, noting that at the time that discipline came under the auspices of physical education. Like many a theater major today, Stephen’s days were long and included frequent stints on stage, backstage, and in the shops — so much so that his graduation was at one point imperiled.

“I was supposed to graduate in 1971 but I never completed the science/math requirement. I would register for an 8 am math or entomology (or whatever) class but never make it, generally being in rehearsal or working in the costume shop until late at night, and generally not predisposed to rising early. So toward the end of 5 years at UMass I got special ‘dispensation’ from Dean Jeremiah Allen who had just seen me perform in *The Threepenny Opera* and kindly waived the requirements,” he recalled.

Not surprisingly, Driscoll’s interest in theater predated his time at UMass. “I began performing at an early age, tap dancing with my sister at USO shows and staging my own epics like my 3rd grade *Pennies From Heaven* with umbrellas and real pennies,” he recalled. As a teenager, he became even more ambitious, condensing *The Merchant of Venice* “to what I thought was doable and easily understood by 13 year olds.” Driscoll not only played Shylock, he toured the other junior high schools in Quincy.

**Céline Perron ’90G**

Graduating Year: 1990  
Major: Master’s of Fine Arts, Scenic Design  

*A favorite UMass Theater memory:* Perron, whose first language is French, remembers the way the faculty and students banded together to help her learn English, and recalled being perplexed by Professor Penny Remsen’s friendly “What’s up?” “I had no idea what’s the appropriate response!” she said.

*Why do you donate to the Department of Theater?* “I felt so happy in the three years that I was there, so blessed... I promised myself that if I was able to make my living in the field (of theater) I would give back.” Furthermore, Perron said, she wants to make sure students attending UMass Amherst now have the same opportunities.

When Céline Perron came to UMass Amherst as a graduate student, she already knew quite a bit about theater, having graduated with a BFA in Scenography from Concordia University in Montreal. What she did not know, however, was English. By her own admission, Perron, who is French Canadian, had never even read an entire book in the language. Now, she was planning to make her way through a graduate program in an extremely collaborative field in the language. Two decades later, she is a scenic and lighting design professor and theater chair of an American — read, English-language — college, the Keene State College Theater and Dance Depart-
ment. She spoke with fondness and gratitude about the way UMass Amherst helped her make her way to her current post, teaching her much more than theater design.

“I got degrees in speaking English and in theater,” she said.

**Events**

Our 40th anniversary season began with an opportunity to connect the past with the present, as we mounted Machinal, the play chosen by the late, beloved professor Doris Abramson as her final directing project.

We invited her family and friends, alumni and emeriti, and a number of VIPs to join us for a special performance, preceded by dinner and followed by a toast on the renovated Rand stage. The event was a sell-out success, attended by officials including the Chancellor, and an emotional opening to this 40th anniversary season.

In December, we opened Violet, our first production in the renovated theater. After opening night, we gathered on the stage, with a view of the spectacular house, to celebrate the completion of the aforementioned house. We were joined by Dean Julie Hayes and Provost James Staros for the occasion.

After that celebration, we turned our attentions to the end of the year, as the costume department unleashed its talents to mount the incomparable Shed the Shag Fashion Show.

Students and staff members joined forces to create stunning outfits for department staff, faculty, select students, and a number of VIPs, all arrayed in outfits that incorporated either the carpet or the seat covering, or both. The group struttled the catwalk before an appreciative audience on April 20, and a number of the outfits and accessories were snapped up in the silent auction that followed. The event created considerable buzz online as well, and served as a fantastic capper to a busy development year.
Facility

If a picture is worth a thousand words, here are 2,000 to tell the story of the Rand Theater, where we removed the continental walls, refurbished the seating, created an accessible seating section, and installed new carpeting and acoustical paneling:
News and Achievements

First, a note of congratulations to this year’s class:

... and then, on to news about our friends, alumni, and current members. Below are excerpts from some of this year’s Stages articles, as well as select updates:

David Korins ’99 Designs Annie for Broadway
If you were a set designer working on Broadway, you’d probably consider yourself pretty successful in your field. If you were a set designer re-imagining the sets to one of the most well-known musicals of the last half-century, you’d probably feel pretty lucky to get such an interesting creative challenge. And if you got to bring your daughter to the opening night of the new Annie, the aforementioned back-on-Broadway, all-new classic that you designed? Well, then you’d be David Korins, who got to do just that this winter.

“It’s such a profound experience to work on a show that is really embedded in people’s DNA,” he said. “It was an incredible task. I felt a responsibility to the writers, and a major responsibility to the legions and legions of fans, young and old, to create something that was new and fresh and yet not something they wouldn’t recognize.”

Korins ’99 is a busy man. The design studio he heads has over a dozen Broadway shows under its belt or currently in the works. Korins just did the sets for Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike, Christopher Durang’s latest, well-reviewed Broadway outing (fellow UMass Theater alumnus Justin Townsend did the lights). He’s worked on plenty of off Broadway and regional pieces, too. The studio also creates pieces for big-time music festivals like Bonnaroo and acts like Kanye West, and has a healthy amount of TV and film credits on the books as well. Korins likes this mix, which allows him to reach different audiences. He takes on a mix of jobs — some offer more financial reward, while others offer opportunities for satisfying collaborations with other artists. “Your work gets you more work,” he said. He has a healthy appreciation for his good fortune. “It’s an embarrassment of riches, such an honor. I just try really hard to be thankful,” he said.

Imani Denson-Pittman ’06 Designs at the Famous Ford’s Theater
Years before Imani Denson-Pittman began working as the assistant set designer on Hello Dolly! at Ford’s Theater in Washington DC, he had wanted to visit the theater where Abraham Lincoln was assassinated.

“I’m a huge history buff,” Denson-Pittman said in an email interview. “I wanted to see the box and touch the wood.”
Little did he predict that one day, he would be working at the very same theater. In fact, the box that he had wanted to touch played a key role in his work. Denson-Pittman came to work on the production through his collaboration with set designer and 2009 Helen Hayes nominee Adam Koch.

Denson-Pittman was well-prepared for the project. “I always use skills I learned from the Department. There isn’t one show I have worked on since graduation that I haven’t utilized something culled from a class I took,” Denson-Pittman explained. “On this particular show however, I owe everything I did to Miguel. I find myself hearing his voice in my head asking me all those questions he did in class about painting, or how often to change the blade on the exacto knife, or does this serve the purpose of the story?”

Amy Levinson ’04/’07G shares Career Insights
As Amy Levinson ’04/’07G described her first encounter with renowned playwright Donald Margulies, the students listening to her account shared in the thrill of meeting such a renowned figure. “For my masters thesis, I translated a Yiddish play, God of Vengeance. I’m all excited, because it looks like they’re going to publish my version. I see that Donald Margulies has written a version of it. Skip to two years later, and Donald’s in the theater for the first time, and I’m like ‘So, Mr. Margulies, you did God of Vengeance. We completely bonded over the fact we’ve done this obscure Yiddish play,’” she said.

These encounters with the famous of the theater world have become familiar territory to Levinson. As literary manager and dramaturg at the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles, she has worked with the likes of not only Margulies, but also Neil LaBute and Neil Simon. After 15 years with the Geffen Playhouse, she has served as an artistic associate, literary director and a resident dramaturg. Since a great portion of her job involves reading plays, she has developed a system of making one of the more difficult decisions her job involves: deciding if a play should be considered for production. “I decide to put a play through solely based on if I’ve read 10 pages, and I want to read page 11.” It is a simple, but perfected system. With so much of her job revolving around new play development, Levinson found it difficult to find a negative side of her position. “On my worst day, I read plays for a living. That will never get old for me.”

Shaping New Plays: Scenic Designer John McDermott ’92 Carves a Niche for Himself
During a conversation with John McDermott ’92, you start to notice that when he talks about the plays for which he’s doing the scenic design, he uses “new” as a modifier a good bit. There’s a reason for it: New plays have become something of a niche for him over his time as a scenic designer, and it’s one he values. “You’re the first person ever to give it a shape,” he said of the charms of working with previously untried work. “What I do is sort of a service — and since I do mostly new plays, it’s to the play.” Currently he’s working on a new play by a fairly new playwright, albeit one with a familiar name — Jesse Eisenberg’s The Revisionist opens this spring; it’s the second of Eisenberg’s works to include McDermott on the design team. McDermott has a long-standing relationship with Rattlestick, which specializes in new and up-and-coming work — his first design gig in New York was with the company, and he’s been a mainstay of their creative teams ever since. The Revisionist is by Jesse Eisenberg — yep, the actor from that facebook movie. Eisenberg made a well-received Off-Broadway debut in 2011 as a playwright with Asuncion, with Rattlestick, and McDermott designed that one, too.

Aside from that project, he’s got a repeat customer in Karen Allen. She was recently in the cast of a play he designed, and is now back as a director of western Massachusetts native Lucy Thurber’s Asheville — which he’s also designing. Rattlestick is doing a festival of Thurber’s work later this year, and he’s slated to design some of those as well. The Mentor Project at the Cherry Lane (Rattlestick and Cherry Lane are separate entities, although Rattlestick uses the venue to produce some of its work) brings new playwrights together with established mentors, and McDermott will design sets for a number of those productions.

A school in the Inwood neighborhood where he lives has become home to a company founded by a number of theater artists who live nearby and were tired of trekking to the other end of the island — he did a show there in the fall.
“I love stuff like that. If somebody really wants to do a play and they really want me to do it, I will do it,” McDermott said. “I’ve turned down 1 show in New York and it ran 6 months. I’m never going to do that again!”

**Meg Bashwiner ’08 Writes the Neo-Future**

Thirty plays in 60 minutes — that’s the challenge the Neo-Futurists tackle nightly in their long-running *Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind.*

The piece, an ever-changing mélange of funny and serious, scripted and improvised short pieces performed by a rotating cast of writer-performers, is famously associated with the Chicago theater scene. However, for almost a decade, that group has had a successful creative outpost in New York City known by the acronym NYNF, and for over four years now, UMass Theater alumna Meg Bashwiner ’08 has been working with the New York Neo-Futurists, most recently as one of the cast of writer-performers.

It’s a job that extends far beyond the hour she spends onstage several nights a week, and even beyond the time she spends writing, submitting and rehearsing new pieces under consideration for the show. The company takes off-site gigs with high schools and in other settings and crafts full-length pieces. The artists run the company and are involved in steering its future, so in addition to her creative roles, Bashwiner is tasked with development work and grant-writing.

“It’s very much a lifestyle, not so much a job,” she laughed.

Bashwiner started working with the company shortly after she graduated, taking an internship on the technical side. It was not her area of expertise, but, she said, “My great UMass education made me hang lights and stuff so I knew how to do that.” From there, she transitioned to a more in-depth internship, then to designing *Too Much Light.* She began producing what the company calls its “primetime shows” — the full-length works the group creates that often run concurrently with *Too Much Light* or in other venues. Finally, in 2011, Bashwiner auditioned for the company as a writer and actor and was accepted.

**Andrew DiBartolomeo ’11 Flips for Stunt Work in China**

UMass Theater folks travel pretty far afield after they graduate, but even so, it’s not every day an alumnus comes back all the way from China to visit us here in Amherst. Andrew DiBartolomeo ’11 holds the distinction of being the only one, so far, and he brought a good story.

Since several months after his graduation, he’s been living and working in China, being part of what he says is one of the largest theme park stunt shows in the world.

Stunt work is something DiBartolomeo has been interested in for some time. “They’re the guys who could do the stuff the lead guys wouldn’t,” he said, and he wanted in.

Interested in learning more, he hit the internet and Googled his way to the International Stunt School in Seattle, WA.

“My parents paid half as a graduation present,” he said, and during an intensive course in August 2011, he learned his way around a variety of stunt work: “fighting, cars, rappel work, wire work.”

After graduation, he spent about a month and a half casting about for work until the school’s director called him — a theme park in China was looking to hire, and they needed tall guys.

**Maari Suorsa ’09 Improvises a Career That Takes Her From Chicago to New York**

If you spend any time with the alumni mailing lists, it quickly becomes obvious that there’s an impressive UMass Theater outpost in Chicago. For years now, alumni have headed there to make a name for themselves in a vibrant theater, comedy, and improv scene. Case in point: Maari Suorsa ’09, who is currently playing Dale in *Five Lesbians Eating a Quiche.*

Created by The New Colony, this hilarious show’s premise is pretty much what the title says, with the addition of audience interaction, 1950s atom bomb jokes, and some twisty family secrets. After well-received runs in Chicago and elsewhere, and making a splash at the 2012 Fringe Festival, *Five Lesbians* was picked up for an extended run at New York’s Soho Playhouse from August to December and is now running a weekend a month.

“It’s been insane, insanely cool and kind of unheard-of,” Suorsa said of the gathering momentum behind the piece, which got a boost from, among others, the New York Times’ Ben Brantley. Suorsa and her cohorts have
spent much of the past 6 months flying back and forth between Chicago and New York. They log a few days at home and at their day jobs (Suorsa works at a home brewing supply store, others have jobs with understanding fellow theater artists or flexible employers like Groupon) before heading back east. Not bad for a woman who self-identified as “the bottom of the barrel theater student. Every teacher was like, ‘why are you here?’”

Fellow theater alumnus Kevin McClintock designed the set. Some casting changes occurred along the way, and the group has gone from Fringe to Off-Broadway. The piece has been picked up by Samuel French (with Suorsa and the other actors getting credit along with the writers for their work on creating the characters). “It took Kevin McClintock to be like, ‘You know that you’re an all-female cast, and that girls are going to be picking up this play to find a contemporary comedic monologue…. What’re you going to do when you’re 50 and on the other side of the table and like, some girl whips out Dale’s Dad monologue? I would just lose my mind!” said Suorsa with a laugh.

UMass Theater makes a summer home in the Berkshires

After a vibrant spring of theater performed on our main stages and in every available corner of the building, the sudden quiet of summer can leave a UMass Theater fan feeling a bit bereft. This year, those hankering for a dose of our best just had to drive down the road a stretch to the bucolic grounds of the world-renowned Shakespeare & Company. There, no less than eight current students and recent graduates, as well as one of our faculty members, have set up camp for the summer.

Among their number: recent undergraduates Erica Simpson and Kim Feener participated in the Summer Training Institute, and current student Devon Drohan worked in the scene shop. On stage, you could find current and past undergrads Greg Boover, Monica Giordano, and Sam Perry onstage in the company’s production of The Tempest, directed by Artistic Director — and erstwhile UMass Theater guest artist — Tony Simotes. And just down the hill in the Bankside Festival, they also appeared in faculty member Gina Kaufmann’s production of Tartuffe: The Impostor, a musical version taken from Connie Congdon ‘82G’s adaptation of the piece. Recent graduate Luke Reed was both a cast member and the composer of the piece’s music, and current grad student Brianna Sloane was in the cast as well as serving as Kaufmann’s assistant.

Said Simotes, “the entire presence of UMass students is the highest of any University program ever to my knowledge.” Impressed yet? Wait’ll you read what else Simotes had to say. In an email, he wrote: “I am proud to have had the opportunity to work so closely with the students and faculty to bring a cadre of young talented artists to our Berkshire Campus. Shakespeare & Company is looking forward to even more professional collaborations down the road.”

As for our students and alumni, Luke Reed summed up their reaction to the experiences of the summer: “I’m beyond giddy about it!”

BRIEF UPDATES, ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

Alan Ball ’87 is very happy to have earned his MFA in Acting and returned to the working world. This year that means a lot of traveling, with shows in Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, Nevada and four shows in Michigan, including a third season at the Michigan Shakespeare Festival, where he has been named an Artistic Associate.

We heard a rumor that Kevin Barry ’95 was working on one of the newer shows on Broadway, and when we got in touch, he confirmed it for us: “Currently I am working as the Head Electrician on the Broadway revival of Evita starring Ricky Martin and Elena Roger. I am also working on the new production of Annie on Broad-
way. Last year I became an ETCP certified Entertainment Electrician, and I recently joined up as the US sales and service representative for FocusTrack Lighting documentation software.

Almost exactly one year ago, Naomi Bennett ’01 made the move from Cambridge, MA to L.A. to study for her MFA in TV, Film, and Theatre production at Cal State LA. Since arriving, she has directed a show for the Hollywood Fringe Festival (nominated for best in physical theatre and dance), interned at the Directors Lab West, Assistant Directed for The Government Inspector at the Theatre@Boston Court (Pasadena), and moved three times! She is excited to start the second year of her MFA program and to teach Beginning Acting at CSULA in the fall (normally taught by Professor Tanya Kane-Parry ’02G, with whom she has been training all summer).

Rob Corddry ’93 has been on a roll lately, with a new movie (Warm Bodies) talks of a sequel (Hot Tub Time Machine), and a TV pilot (Spy), as well as time spent at Sundance plugging upcoming projects. The films Pain and Gain and Rapture-Palooza premier in April and May respectively.

Three of this year’s five Lucille Lortel nominations for Lighting Design of a Play have studied with lighting design professor and current chair, Penny Remsen. One-time exchange student and former guest lecturer Jane Cox is nominated for The Flick and Ben Stanton ’99 is nominated for Belleville and Murder Ballad.

Christine Crowley ’68 is the board president of the Boerne Community Theater near San Antonio, where she acts, directs, and does public relations.

Jess Greenberg ’12G waved at us from across town to let us know that this coming academic year, she will be a Visiting Assistant Professor of Theatre Design at Hampshire. “I’m replacing the wonderful Peter Kallok who will be taking a well-deserved sabbatical. I’m looking forward to returning to my alma mater with a new perspective,” she wrote.

Jay Herzog ’87G has completed 17 years as the professor of lighting design at Towson University in Maryland. He serves as the resident lighting designer for the Everyman Theatre, which is moving into a magnificent new space in Baltimore with a production of August: Osage County in January 2013. He has been busy with the planning for the new theater opening and will be on sabbatical this fall semester researching how to best teach board operation and lighting design through the use of visualization software.

Jonathan Hicks ’11G is beginning his second year at Huntington University as Assistant Professor of Theater Design and Technology. In October, he will be a guest artist at Westmont College for the lighting design of Much Ado About Nothing. This past summer he wrote an article about lighting design for non-conventional performance spaces for the International Museum Theater Alliance (IMTAL) magazine INSIGHTS. He is proud to announce the birth of his third child, Levi Nathan Hicks, on July 19th, 2012!

Jacob Hellman announced that his short play Anchored received its American premiere in January as a part of the Taste of Honey Theater Festival in New Haven, Connecticut.

Tanya Kane-Parry ’02G sent us an email from Bordeaux, France: “I am filled with gratitude for all the amazing opportunities to travel and make art this past and coming year! After last Fall’s gig assisting a Spanish director, choreographer and design team on a new production of The Barber of Seville at Houston Grand Opera, I returned to LA and had an amazing year of creating and presenting new site-specific productions and performance work with my company, Opera del Espacio. Now I am in Bordeaux, assisting on the remount of The Barber of Seville at L’Opera National de Bordeaux. From here I go directly to Houston to assist this same director and team on the remount of The Italian Girl in Algiers. After that I return to LA to begin rehearsals with my company on a new production that examines architecture and emotions that will be presented from January-March 2013. I’ll go back to CSULA to teach some undergrad and grad acting and Viewpoints classes in January, and then in February I’ll be working again with the same director and team on a remount of Cinderella at LA Opera. Then, sometime in late spring, along with my company, I’ll be directing/choreographing a new site-specific opera that will premiere along the Russian River in Santa Rosa (northern CA). After that, who knows!”

Shawn LaCount ’09G directed a production for Company One (the Boston theater company for which he’s Artistic Director) that’s gotten a lot of good press. The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity, by Kris Diaz, is a su-
premely beautiful, hilarious and dangerously physical play about race, politics and America all framed in the wacky world of professional wrestling.

Mark O'Maley '07 writes: “Just completed my MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts at Goddard College, and have been appointed assistant professor of theater and dance at Franklin Pierce University in New Hampshire. The first week of December '12 will find me at Indiana University of Pennsylvania collaborating with Jeannie-Maria Brown '06G, where she is on the faculty. A new piece, *The Livingstone Project* is based on the journals of Dr. David Livingstone that have undergone Spectral Imaging to reveal more of his writings. Fingers crossed the piece will then head to Scotland for performances there. Additionally I’m working on another new piece, Lean Back with Brattleboro, VT based performer Bronwyn Sims. James McNamara '08G is the sound designer. The piece will have a work-in-progress showing the 14th of December at Franklin Pierce University.

Bill Pullman '80G is currently playing the fictional President Dale Gilchrist on NBC’s new comedy, *1600 PENN*. Pullman was also recently featured in the documentary, *The Fruit Hunters*, which chronicles what it is like to search for rare and exotic fruits around the world.

Joe Salvatore '97G recently directed the National YoungArts Foundation’s annual gala performance in Miami. He also will be creating and directing the U.S. Presidential Scholars in Arts Performance in June in addition to receiving a commission from the Gloucester County Cultural and Heritage Commission of New Jersey to create an interactive theatre piece for the Red Bank Battlefield and Whithall House, which played key roles in the American Revolution.

Alumna Simone Shenny ’11 moved to Hartford, where she got a full time job at Channel 3 Eyewitness News.

Sheila Siragusa ’03G will be directing *Sunset Limited* at New Century Theatre this summer, and the play will feature Gil McCauley as an actor.

Peter Tolan is the producer for *Rake*, an upcoming television show on Fox about a lawyer based on an Australian show of the same name, as well as being the executive producer of NBC’s upcoming *Brenda Forever*. He is also the writer for comedian Jim Gaffigan’s new television show entitled *Gaffigan*.

Alumna Dawn Monique Williams ’11G wrote: “I’m writing to share the news that I have just been named Oregon Shakespeare Festival’s 2013 Phil Killian Directing Fellow. With this fellowship I will spend 6 months in residence at OSF serving as directing fellow (assistant director) on two season productions as well as working on new play development in their Black Swan Lab. Before I head up to Ashland, I will direct the English premiere of contemporary Spanish play *NN12* by Gracia Morales, at Cal State East Bay.”

Andy Wittkamper ’97 sent us a report of his production’s exciting journey to the American College Theatre Festival. Recently, devised production *The Icarus Project* secured national recognition from the Kennedy Center following its performance at the regional American College Theatre Festival in Fitchburg, MA. He conceived, co-wrote, and co-directed the devised production, which incorporated puppetry and dance along with lush visual and aural landscapes. The Icarus Project represented several “firsts” in his department, first attempt at devised theatre, first attempt at creating and performing with puppets, and first attempt at anything other than costumes and makeup—thus he was incredibly proud that it was so well received.

Dawn Monique Williams ’11G, recently relocated back to the San Francisco Bay Area where she is a lecturer at Cal State East Bay with fellow UMass Alum, Ulises Alcala ’94G. She directed Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* for the CSUEB summer theatre program and is teaching performance theory. In the fall, also at CSUEB, she will direct the English language premiere of the contemporary Spanish play *NN12* by Gracia Morales translated by Della Peretti and Beverly Bevis. Williams let us know that Alcala just completed costume designs for Mozart’s *La Finta Giardiniera* for the San Francisco Opera’s Summer 2012 Merola Program. He continues to teach costume history, design, and make up as well as manage the costume shop at CSUEB.

**Brief Updates, Students**

Current undergraduate Kari Collins wrote from East Haven, CT: “For my summer, we finally got some community summer theater for my town! We worked with the town arts commission to create what we hope is a permanent program. It was often difficult, with challenges finding a performance space and the town forcing us at one point to change locations, but eventually it all came together. We did a production of *Xanadu*, the
musical, with a 13-person cast in the age range of 15-25. I was in the production and choreographed. With the town’s blessing we hope to start a full-fledged program with two productions, one for young people in middle and early high school, and one for late high school and college age. It was an extremely rewarding and exciting experience! ’Like Collins, student Ryan Hill also brought a little theater home: ’I was in charge of the theater program at a summer camp in my hometown of Sandwich, MA. Our final production of The Little Mermaid Finds Nemo was a great success despite several cast members not present and access to costumes cut off on the day of our performance! Definitely a summer unlike any other!’

Two students will be going to Shakespeare and Company this summer. Devon Drohan ’13 will be a props artisan and serve on the changeover crew, while Alissa Mesibov ’13 will be a dramaturg for Mother Courage and Her Children and a communications associate. Alissa is also the dramaturg of the UK-based Entita Theatre production of Turbulence, a physical theatre adaptation of The Tempest, which will be playing at this year’s Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Arielle Herold ’14 will be a stage management intern at Bard SummerScape’s world premiere of a new adaptation of The Master and Margarita. She will be working under recent American Repertory Theater assistant stage manager Taylor Adamik.

Student Daniel Kadish had one of the cooler internships we’ve ever heard of during the summer: he was a Development Intern at ScottFree Productions (Ridley and the late Tony Scott, directors). He read scripts and ran errands. He tells us actually had footage of in-production projects in his hands and did not watch any of it, which we thinks speaks to his professionalism, because, boy, would that be tempting. Daniel expressed his sadness at the passing of Tony Scott, whom he had a chance to meet during his time working for the production company.

Graduate student Brianna Sloane had her hand in several theater endeavors this summer: ’I traveled to Chicago to teach mask, movement and ensemble workshops for The Viola Project and The Seelie Players. I also spent a week with Piccolo Theatre, working as artistic advisor on their production of Six Dead Queens & an Inflatable Henry! which opens September 7th at Chicago’s Greenhouse Theatre. More locally, I worked as Gina Kaufmann’s Assistant Director on her production of Molière’s Tartuffe: the Imposter, (trans. Connie Congdon) at Shakespeare & Co. I ended up taking a role in the production and performing in several roles as understudy to the women of the cast. Finally, I will be participating in a workshop of a new play by Jeffrey Stingerstein, which will be part of the Fall Reading Series at Smith College on September 22.”

Graduate student Emily Taradash designed the costumes for Willy Wonka at Prescott Park in Portsmouth, NH. She let us know that Erin Mabee, a TH160 student from the spring 2012 semester, has done a great job as wardrobe supervisor for the 40-show run. Emily has also been performing in the summer tour of 2010: Our Hideous Future, the Musical. This is a piece she’s been performing in for the past 2 years and, she wrote, “it was a joy to bring it to Providence, RI, Salem, MA, Brooklyn, NY and Pi-Con in CT.” In her free time, she helped on costumes for the reprise of The Odyssey, the Double Edge Theatre’s summer spectacle.

Brief Updates, Faculty and Staff:
Professor Milan Dragicevich played the lead in an upcoming short film, SEED, directed by Hampshire College Professor and former technical director for Pixar Films, Chris Perry. The film “is a story about a dystopian post-agricultural world where giant agro corporations control the world’s dwindling food supply,” Dragecevich wrote. Graduate students in costume design Emily Taradash and Elizabeth Pangburn are on the crew. Dragicevich will also be playing Lovborg in Hedda Gabler at the Northern New England Repertory Theatre Company. Last summer, he played the leading role of Mat Burke in Eugene O’Neill’s Pulitzer Prize-winning play, Anna Christie, with the Northern New England Repertory Theatre Company of New London, NH. This production was recognized and favorably reviewed by the Eugene O’Neill Society of America in its national newsletter (Summer 2012 issue). He also recently finished a half-day workshop on Shakespearean Rhetoric for the Los Angeles-based Will Geer Theatricum Botanicum, working with their company members and Academy students.

Professor Harley Erdman tells us he’s been commissioned by the Northampton Academy of Music to write a play about its first female Director, set in the 1940s. He is also directing the Edinburgh study abroad course this summer.
Faculty member Gilbert McCauley and graduate student Adewunmi Oke spent time in Arkansas this January, where Gilbert directed *Gee’s Bend* for Arkansas Repertory Theatre, while Adewunmi served as dramaturg. He directed *Looking Over the President’s Shoulder*, by James Still, at the University of South Carolina, Department of Theater & Dance, September 4-15, 2012. While this project was initially supposed to be a “remount” of a production done in 2009 it ended up being fully produced and completely re-imagined production in a new venue.

Professor Emeritus Julian Olf let us know a number of his works reviewed a public viewing in the valley and beyond and that he’d love to see you there. “My play, *Twins*, will be read this month by the Northampton Playwrights Lab. The lead female role will be read by alum Eliza Greene-Smith. In March, my play *War Hero* will be staged by Theatre Odyssey of Sarasota. The biggest piece of news concerns a staged reading of my new play *PERSONALS: A Love Story For The Stage*. The reading will occur on February 23 at 7 p.m. as part of the Playwrights Reading Series at the Abingdon Theatre on 312 West 36th Street, 1st Floor, between 8th & 9th Avenues, Midtown Manhattan. Admission is free. The reading was directed by alum Sheila Siragusa and performed by alums Claire Kavanah and Matt Perry!”
Looking ahead to 2013-2014

Our Season

Special Event:
The Massachusetts Dance Festival
Sept. 27 & 28 at 8 p.m.
The Rand Theater
Special event pricing:
General admission: $20 online or advance sales, $25 at the door
Students, Seniors and Boston Dance Alliance members: $15 online or advance sales, $20 at the door

Theater is our game, but we love all the performing arts. That’s why we’re excited to announce that in September, we will host our friends from the opposite side of the Fine Arts Center for the Massachusetts Dance Festival. Organized by members of the Music and Dance Department, the festival offers two evening concerts of select professional dance companies in Massachusetts. On Saturday during the day, community members are invited to participate in dance workshops by renowned special guest teachers in the field.

Presented by the Music and Dance Department, hosted by the Department of Theater.

The Liar
Adapted from Pierre Corneille by David Ives
directed by Glenn Proud
Oct. 24, 25, 26, 31, Nov. 1 at 8 p.m.
Nov. 2 at 2 p.m.
The Rand Theater

David Ives describes Corneille’s effervescent play as “one of the world’s great comedies.” A simple misunderstanding snowballs into a case of mistaken identity and romantic complications ensue in this joyous, playful romp. Corneille wrote The Liar over 350 years ago, and Ives’ adaptation has beautifully translated the crisp wit that delighted French theater-goers into a compelling physical and verbally over-the-top comedy for today’s audiences.

Detroit
by Lisa D’Amour
directed by Jared Culverhouse
Nov. 14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22 at 8 p.m.
Nov. 16 and 23 at 2 p.m.
The Curtain Theater

Two couples meet over the proverbial backyard fence, but when Ben and Mary invite fresh-from-rehab Kenny and Sharon over on a hot summer afternoon for a get-to-know-you barbecue, the result isn’t what anyone expected. Secrets are spilled and raw truth exposed in this bold, aggressive, and sexy comedy about how the things we covet only get in our way. This is a story of disillusion leavened with humor, and destruction tempered by hope.

Street Scene
by Kurt Weill (music), Langston Hughes (lyrics), and Elmer Rice (book)
directed by Gina Kaufmann
Feb. 21, 26, 28, March 1 at 8 p.m.
Feb. 23 at 2 p.m.
In 1946, German composer Kurt Weill and playwright Elmer Rice came together with poet Langston Hughes to create Street Scene, a riveting artistic hybrid of musical theater, opera, and spoken-word poetry. The gritty story, based on Rice's Pulitzer Prize-winning play of the same name, focuses on the residents of a run-down tenement in a multi-ethnic, working class area of Manhattan. The action centers around a romance between a Jewish and a gentile teenager and on the consequences of an extramarital affair, but it is the rich undertones of longing and the layered relationships bring the complex world of Street Scene to life. With elements that encompass classical music forms and the jazz esthetic, and a uniquely poetic sensibility, this piece stretches the art of opera in fascinating directions.

A co-production of Five College Opera and the UMass Amherst Department of Theater.

A series of events and concerts highlighting works by Weill, Rice and Hughes, and celebrating their collaboration, will take place on Five College campuses. Please visit our website for updates.

UMass New Play Lab
by TBD
directed by Jared Culverhouse
Play #1 performances: March 27 and April 4, 5 at 8 p.m., March 29 at 2 p.m.
Play #2 performances: March 28, 29, April 3 at 8 p.m., April 5 at 2 p.m.
The Curtain Theater

Imagine the exhilaration of being one of the first people to witness the words of a new great play being spoken. That's the position in which audience members of our Playlab will find themselves. Over the summer, we put out a call for subversive, fresh, new work, and come spring, we'll invite the playwrights of our two favorite plays to join us to polish those pieces and put them in front of an audience. Can you imagine being in the room when a future classic is performed for the first time? You could be...

Please note: because we want our audience members to experience both works, 1 ticket will get you into performances of both works on consecutive weeks. I.e. a Thursday night ticket will admit you to Play #1 during the first week, and Play #2 during the second week of the run.

Peter Pan
by J. M. Barrie
directed by Brianna Sloane
April 10, 11, 12, 18, 19 at 8 p.m.
April 12 and 19 at 2 p.m.
School matinee April 16 at 10 a.m.

Remarkable, fantastical, and a little bit strange — the tale of Peter Pan has captivated people for over 100 years. UMass Theater is thrilled to be part of that legacy of theater magic in its production of J.M. Barrie's original play. Ours will be a production that confronts the story's melancholy aspects — the fear of growing up, of lost children, of longing — and counters them with a joy born of the power of creativity, play and joy. The pretend is near!
People

Current department members
Department of Theater Associate Professor Gilbert McCauley has been appointed the new Faculty Advisor for the Student Bridges Program. He will begin this summer and serve in the position for two years. He will remain an active member of the Department of Theater.

Student Bridges is a student-initiated outreach program that connects UMass Amherst students with local community-based organizations and schools through: 1) tutoring-mentoring partnerships; 2) college awareness activities; 3) advocacy for increased college access for underrepresented students; and, 4) retention of under-represented college students. Student Bridges is supported collaboratively by the Center for Student Development, the Student Government Association, the Student Bridges Advisory Board, and the Office of the Provost.

The faculty advisor will support and oversee the fiscal, administrative, and programmatic operation of Student Bridges, including: developing and supporting community and K-16 partnerships; seeking out and managing external grants; supporting programmatic evaluation; engaging in policy advocacy to increase access to higher education for underrepresented students; and supporting students’ and student organizations’ integration of a curricular focus using the best practices of community-based learning and culturally-competent, reciprocal forms of civic engagement.

Using his skills as a theater artist and scholar to make meaningful and transformative connections has long been Gil’s passion. This position offers him a fantastic opportunity to forge new connections between the community and the university.

Joining us next year
Chris Baker is not exactly new to the department, as he has been a lecturer with us for some time. However, this spring, we searched for a new dramaturgy professor. After interviewing a number of qualified candidates, we came to the conclusion that the best of the group was Chris, and we are thrilled to have him joining us as an Assistant Professor next year.

Chris’s bio:

Christopher Baker has worked as a production dramaturg Off-Broadway and at resident theatres across the country. As part of the artistic staff of Hartford Stage for fourteen years, his positions included Associate Artistic Director, Associate Producer and Senior Dramaturg. He was also the dramaturg at The Shakespeare Theatre, PlayMakers Repertory Company and the Alley Theatre. He has worked with such artists as Elizabeth Ashley, Anne Bogart, Ellen Burstyn, Olympia Dukakis, Eve Ensler, Horton Foote, Michael Kahn, Tina Landau, William Luce, Andrew McCarthy, Andrei Serban, Bart Sher, Michael Wilson and Robert Wilson. Mr. Baker was a Visiting Assistant Professor of Dramaturgy at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and has taught at the Hartt School, Moscow Art Theatre School and the International School of the Philippines and served as a literary advisor to the Julliard School of Drama. He has directed productions at the Alley Theatre, PlayMakers, and the University of North Carolina. His play for children, *Calliope Jam*, premiered in Houston and his adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* was commissioned by Hartford Stage. His books, *Shakespeare in an Hour* and *Molière in an Hour*, are published by Smith and Kraus. He is a contributor to the books *The Production Notebooks*, *The Lively ART* and the upcoming *The First 300 Years: Stories of the African American Experience in Connecticut* and his articles have appeared in *Theatre Journal*, *Hog River Journal*, *American Theatre* magazine and the *Hartford Courant*. Mr. Baker received a BS from Northwestern University and an MFA from the American Repertory Theatre Institute for Advanced Theatre Training at Harvard/Moscow Art Theatre School, where he received the Janus Award.

We were also very fortunate to search for a joint hire with the Commonwealth College this year, a new faculty member with a focus on performance and social justice. For that position, we hired Judyie Al-Bilali,
who studied at UMass for her undergraduate and graduate degrees, and holds her MFA in Theater from the Department of Theater.

For over thirty years, Judyie Ella Al-Bilali has been an innovator in the field of performing arts and arts education. As an actor, director and playwright she has performed and directed off-Broadway and in regional theater. She has taught at Amherst College, Hampshire College, and University of Virginia's Semester at Sea program. She currently teaches at NYU Steinhardt’s Program in Educational Theatre. As a Fulbright Scholar she taught at the University of the Western Cape in Cape Town, South Africa. While there she established and directed Brown Paper Studio, an applied theatre company. Judyie received a BA in African American Performing Arts and a MFA in Theatre from the University of Massachusetts. She is the recipient of a Javits Fellowship in Arts and Humanities, along with grants from the Rockefeller Foundation, the New York State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts. In the field of arts administration she was the Development Director for Crossroads Theatre Company, the Festival Coordinator for Actors Theatre of Louisville's Humana and Shorts Festivals and a Board Member on the Kentucky Arts Council. She is the author of a book of haiku poetry, Halcyon Days. Judyie is completing a memoir about her years in South Africa entitled For the Feeling: Love & Transformation from New York to Cape Town.
Outreach

During the 2013-2014 we will be focusing our outreach for local students on the season-ending production of *Peter Pan*. Student matinees help teachers meet requirements of the state’s Arts Curriculum Frameworks by introducing children to live performance and serving as a springboard to the kind of critical thinking about the arts that the frameworks wants every child to learn. We keep them affordable so the greatest possible number of students can go: $8 per student, only $6 per student for groups of 20 or more. Chaperones are FREE, a courtesy we extend to schools to ensure that they can afford to send a full complement of teachers with their students.

Because this show is a childhood classic, it will offer us an opportunity to connect with younger children, who usually aren’t an audience for our shows due to their subject matter. We look forward to seeing elementary school kids in the Rand Theater next year; we have already had a reservation from the Holyoke Community Charter School.
Development

We kicked off our campaign to raise money to upgrade the Lobby with a look back at where we came from. As we move on from our 40th anniversary and the orange shag carpet recedes into people’s memories, we will begin to shift our campaign to look ahead, too. Rather than getting a souvenir of the past, next year, we hope to offer people a chance to leave their mark on our future by buying a chair in our new Rand Theater.

We will continue to build relationships with our donors, both in person with a series of events that are in the planning stages, as well as through the continuation of the donor profile series.
Facility

With the Rand Theater renovated, the work ahead for summer 2013 and beyond is, for the time being, less noticeable but so less crucial.

Workers are taking the summer to address the sprinkler system in the department and give it a much-needed upgrade. In addition, Wi-Fi is being installed throughout the building.

As we move into next year, we hope to continue our planning for the Rand Lobby and anticipate moving forward with early parts of that project.