The Department of Theater Year in Review 2011-2012
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## 2011-2012

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## Looking ahead to 2012-2013

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The 2011-2012 season was one that took us from the Deep South to the Greek Islands, and from the Spanish Golden Age to the Atomic Age. Our students worked with each other, with faculty and staff, and with distinguished guests to mount a number of shows that expanded the breadth of their theater knowledge and skills.

The quality is no different than that of commercial productions, and it brought home to me a sense of what amazing talent exists here in the department — students, staff, and faculty alike. Audiences loved the work, as did our special guests: we entertained deans, vice provosts, provosts, vice chancellors, and a group of Commonwealth College alumni this year.

Box office results for 2011-2012
The 2011-2012 box office season was an excellent one for the Department of Theater. We exceeded our box office projections for five out of six shows, making over $5,000 more than projected. It was a strong year for Rand Theater shows in particular, as we seated over 1,000 more audience members in those shows combined than we did last year. In total, in fact, we sold almost 1,000 more tickets and made $3,000 more, that we did in 2010-2011.

We held a promotion on Groupon which netted us 24 new subscribers, and 100 single-ticket sales.

We were also happy to welcome a nearly full house to our A Midsummer Night’s Dream matinee and our musical, Urinetown, netted fantastic reviews from critics and audience members alike that translated to big box office numbers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOX OFFICE</th>
<th># Tickets Sold</th>
<th>Actual</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Love The Doctor-Curtain</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>$3,631.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hell In High Water-Rand</td>
<td>1252</td>
<td>$7,102.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solstice-Curtain</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>$2,583.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urinetown - Rand</td>
<td>1897</td>
<td>$12,555.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizon-Curtain</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>$3,262.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midsummer - Rand</td>
<td>1516</td>
<td>$8,311.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midsummer - School Matinee</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>$2,346.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUBTOTAL</td>
<td>6788</td>
<td>$39,792.21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Less 8%</td>
<td></td>
<td>$3,183.38</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>$36,608.83</td>
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</table>

Curtain Shows 1662
Rand Shows 4665
School Matinee (Rand) 461
Notes about our productions
The Department of Theater tackled an ambitious slate of six productions plus one special presentation during the 2011-2012 school year. All six were produced in-house, including one from a completely original script and one brand new translation/English-language premiere. Our students, faculty, and staff, with the assistance of some amazingly talented guest artists, rose ably to the challenge.

Love the Doctor
by Tirso de Molina, in a new translation by Sarah Brew and Josephine Hardman
The Curtain Theater
Oct. 13, 14 and 15 at 8 p.m., Oct. 15 at 2 p.m.

She was born in the mind of a Golden-Age Spaniard, but Jeronima is a heroine for any age. Ambitious, clever, and unwilling to be bounded by notions of what’s proper for a woman, she sets out to become a learned woman and a doctor, and employs her considerable skills at subterfuge and disguise to achieve her ends. This quick-witted comedy from one of Spain’s great, iconoclastic playwrights has never been performed in English; two UMass-Amherst graduate students created this translation/adaptation to show the English-speaking world what it’s been missing.

WORTH NOTING: This production featured a rare undergraduate director. While undergraduates often serve in various capacities supporting the director, it’s rare for one to be given the reins. In this case, senior Noah Simes ably handled the task. The script has already attracted the notice of other artists interested in the Spanish Golden Age. It was produced as part of Ohio State University’s second-stage season this spring.

Hell in High Water
by Marcus Gardley
The Rand Theater
Nov. 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19 at 8 p.m.
Nov. 12 and 19 at 2 p.m.

Set on a levee mound in Greenville Mississippi, Hell in High Water is a play that uproots the almost forgotten story of the Mississippi flood of 1927, the worst in U.S. history. At the heart of the story are two fathers and sons: LeRoy Percy, a white cotton farmer and his son Will who grapple with preserving their farm and labor force, and Joe Goodin, an African-American bootblack and his son James. Stranded on the levee with 180,000 other black folk, Joe tries to preserve his way of life while James hopes to inspire change for his people.

WORTH NOTING: Although we are sad to
note that Marcus Gardley has moved on, we were pleased to have him as a member of the Department of Theater and privileged to have been given the chance to mount this production. In conjunction with the opening of this brand-new version of a story he has worked on in various incarnations, Arena Stage’s artistic director Molly Smith joined us for opening night and delivered the Rand Lecture.

**Solstice**
a puppetry piece devised by Miguel Romero and students
The Curtain Theater
Dec. 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 at 8 p.m., Dec. 3 and 10 at 2 p.m.

Many cultures share a holiday in late December — a return to the light, whether symbolic or literal, after months of shrinking days. Puppeteer and scenic design professor Miguel Romero takes this impetus for revelry and combines the traditions into a delightful, carnival-esque atmosphere in his new puppetry piece, *Solstice*. Created by Romero with students from the UMass Department of Theater and new music by Amherst College music professor Eric Sawyer, is intended as a celebration for the whole family.

WORTH NOTING: The opening of *Solstice* afforded us a perfect opportunity to celebrate the completion of the renovations to the Curtain Theater. We invited Dean Julie Hayes, Associate Provost Joel Martin and Provost James Staros to toast the occasion with us. Together with cast, crew and audience members, we raised our glasses to their support.

**The Tailor of Inverness**
created and performed by Matthew Zajac
a touring production presented by The Edinburgh Fringe Summer Program, the Dean of HFA, and 5 College Performance Studies, and hosted by the Department of Theater
The Curtain Theater
Jan. 31, Feb. 1, 2, 3 at 8 p.m.

*The Tailor of Inverness* is a story of journeys, of how a boy who grew up on a farm in Galicia (Eastern Poland, now Western Ukraine) came to be a tailor in Inverness. His life spanned most of the 20th century. His story is not straightforward. He was taken prisoner by the Soviets in 1939 and forced to work east of the Urals, then freed in an amnesty after the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. He then joined the thousands of Poles who travelled to Tehran, then Egypt, to be integrated into the British Army, fighting in North Africa and Italy. He was then resettled in Britain in 1948, joining his brother in Glasgow. This is the story he told.

WORTH NOTING: For several years now, we have enjoyed an association with Jenny Spencer and her Edinburgh course, which professor Harley Erdman is part of. This production was an opportunity to bring to the Valley one of the incredible artists students on this traveling course have an opportunity to get to know.
Urinetown
music by Mark Hollmann, lyrics by Mark Hollmann and Greg Kotis, and book by Greg Kotis
The Rand Theater
March 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10 at 8 p.m., March 3 and 10 at 2 p.m.
School matinee March 7 at 10 a.m.

What if we stressed our natural resources to the point where people had to line up to pay for the privilege of using the privy? That’s what happens in the world described in Urinetown the Musical, a smart Broadway hit that takes the serious environmental issues we face today and approaches them from a playfully self-aware, absurdist — not to mention very funny — perspective. Director Gina Kaufmann and Composer Mark Hollman worked together early in their careers at The Unusual Cabaret developing new musical work, and Urinetown has a cabaret influence despite its epic-sized cast. The story pits the haves of Urine Good Company, owners of the public potties, against the rebellious poor who don’t want to pay any longer, but are the right and wrong sides really so clear as they seem at first?

WORTH NOTING: Urinetown was a blockbuster production for us both in terms of the critical reception and the audience size. The show brought in numerous guest artists to work with our students, including creator Mark Hollmann, who led workshops and sat in on a rehearsal; musical director Andrew Lichtenberg; and choreographer Paul Dennis.

Beyond the Horizon Festival
addressing the Dean’s Theme of “The Gulf Oil Spill Crisis: Lessons for the Future” with original theater pieces to be created and performed by members of the Department of Theater and special guests.
The Curtain Theater
April 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 at 8 p.m., April 7 and 14 at 2 p.m.

In the wake of the devastating 2010 BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, officials at UMass Amherst issued a challenge to all departments to respond to the issues raised by the crisis. The Department of Theater’s response is a festival of devised theater, organized under the artistic direction of dramaturgy MFA student Megan McClain. She will guide several groups of artists, both students and professionals, as they create a handful of new pieces that offer different perspectives on the theme and the questions it raises about how we relate to the physical world, what our responsibility is to repair what we harm, and our place in the community and this ecosystem.

WORTH NOTING: Beyond the Horizon was our response to the Dean’s Theme challenge and also an opportunity for our first-year directors and dramaturgs to show their stuff. The piece also served as the thesis for dramaturgy MFA student Megan McClain. The work was attended by the Dean and Associate Provost. The project lent itself well to advertising via social media, and cast members attracted the attention of their fellow students with two well-staged flash mobs.
In 1978, Tony Simotes, Artistic Director of the Berkshire’s world-renowned Shakespeare & Co., played the part of Puck in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. It was his inaugural role with the company, and so the play holds a special place in his heart. The UMass Department of Theater is thrilled to have Simotes aboard as he returns to his theatrical roots with a new production of this play. Follow Simotes and his cast on a journey to a Greece where magic still happens and love is in the air.

WORTH NOTING: *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* netted us our first sold-out school matinee in several years, as groups from schools as far away as Connecticut attended the performance. We received enthusiastic feedback from a number of schools, as well as from general audience members, all of whom were thrilled to enjoy the work of one of the country’s pre-eminent Shakespeare directors, Shakespeare & Co.’s Tony Simotes, in a different setting. The work received write-ups in several local newspapers. Among the attendees were about 20 guests of the Commonwealth College, which hosted its reunion weekend on the last weekend of the show’s run.
People

We welcomed four people to the Department of Theater family this year, and we saw some previous members of the family move into new positions: Harley Erdman was promoted to full professor. We were sad to see the departure of Mark Dean, who had most recently served as our General Manager but who has held several posts with the department over the years. We also bid adieu to Ted Hodgen, our scene shop manager, who retired after 35 years with us.

Read on for more about the new folks:

Margo Caddell
margocaddell@yahoo.com
Lecturer, Lighting Design
B.A. Dance, University of California-Long Beach
M.F.A. Lighting Design, University of Massachusetts- Amherst

Margo Caddell is a lighting designer for theater and dance. She has designed for numerous companies in Boston, Los Angeles and Atlanta areas including The Lyric Stage (Broke-ology, Groundswell, Speech and Debate), ART (When It’s Hot, It’s Cole) and The Nora (Moon For The Misbegotten). For the past three years she has collaborated with Daniel McCusker and other wonderful Boston area choreographers for the This That Show in Cambridge which promotes choreographers and their new works.

Most recently Margo has turned her love of lighting towards educating. From 2007-2011 she was the lighting design and stage management lecturer in the Department of Drama & Dance at Tufts University in Medford, MA and from 2008-2009 she was the Associate Production Manager at the Robsham Theater on the campus of Boston College. Margo received her MFA in theater from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and a BFA in Dance from California State University, Long Beach.

Willow Cohen
Business Manager
BA University of Massachusetts — Amherst

Willow Cohen is the Department of Theater Business Manager. She stepped into that role this year when Mark Dean took a year-long leave from the department. Now that Mark has left the department, she is staying on in the position while a search is conducted for a permanent replacement.

Willow oversees budget management and reconciliation, human resource support, course schedule coordination, and manages the Department’s theater refurbishment and renovations.

Prior to joining the Department, Willow served as the Development and Marketing Manager for a chamber music summer festival in Putney, VT, Assistant Production Manager for the Calvin Theater in Northampton, and the Production Stage Manager for Commonwealth Opera, also in Northampton. Willow has stage managed more than 50 productions in New York City, Boston, Boulder, and Western Mass, and was the Founder and General Manager of Sweet Youth Productions, a nationally touring theater for children. She has been actively involved in educating young children in the arts, music, literacy, and health for more than 15 years.

Willow holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Marketing from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. She also served as stage manager for many Department of Theater shows, including its 25th anniversary production.

Brandon Hall
Scene Shop Manager
BA University of Massachusetts-Amherst

Brandon has been in the construction industry since 1993. He has worked on a wide range of projects from custom woodwork to large-scale commercial and state contracts. His skills as a carpenter and project manager, as well as his extensive
knowledge of materials and methods, and construction and fabrication techniques have brought him to an environment he is also passionate about: the theater.

In 2011, Brandon served as the project manager for the Curtain Theater renovation. Since then, as Scenic Construction Director, he has worked through the 2011-2012 season on Love the Doctor, Hell in High Water, Solstice, The Tailor of Inverness, Urinetown and A Midsummer Night’s Dream.

In his free time, Brandon enjoys spending time outdoors with family and friends.

Kristin Jensen
Costume Shop Manager
BS Miami University
MA University of Kentucky
MFA University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Kristin Jensen comes to UMass Amherst after nine years as Costume Shop Supervisor in the Undergraduate Drama Department of NYU Tisch School of the Arts, where she also taught draping, pattern making, advanced costume techniques, and fundamentals of stagecraft.

Before moving to academia, Kristin spent six years as a draper at Carelli Costumes, a prominent Broadway costume house, creating costumes for theatre and opera productions in New York and across the country. She also worked as draper, crafts-person, and dyer at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago and at Chicago’s Costume Exchange (Steppenwolf), and as a first hand for several seasons at the Santa Fe Opera. Outside the theatre, she executed several projects for the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.

In addition to her technical experience, she was the assistant designer to celebrated costume designers William Ivy Long and Martin Pakledinaz on productions from Broadway to Europe. Her own design work earned her a Joseph Jefferson Citation nomination and an ACTF National Award.

Kristin earned an MFA in costume design and technology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, an MA in textiles and clothing from the University of Kentucky, and a BS in education from Miami University.

Her fascination with costumes has been fed by her extensive travels, from Asia to North Africa. Outside of work, she enjoys hiking and the outdoors with her husband and eight-year-old son.

Megan Lewis
Assistant Professor, Theater History & Criticism
BA Kenyon College
MA Johns Hopkins University
PhD University of Minnesota

Dr. Megan Lewis is a South African-American theatre, performance, & film scholar concerned with the staging of national identity, gender, and race in a variety of performance media—including monuments and public pageants, traditional staged texts, and documentary and narrative films. She is currently working on her first book on stagings of the Afrikaner in theatrical and public life, a study of the manner in which Afrikaner whiteness, masculinity, and national identity are staged and enacted before and during the apartheid era and within contemporary, democratic South Africa.

Prof. Lewis is a multidisciplinary educator with a passion for inspiring intellectual curiosity and advocating for the performing arts as a powerful force for social change. Her teaching passions include African film, the politics of performance, non-Western performance traditions, performance of race (particularly whiteness), and genderplay. Lewis has published on South African performance in Theatre Journal, Performing Arts
Journal and Text & Performance and currently has articles under review in Theatre Topics and The Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism.

She taught theatre, media, and film courses at the University of Minnesota (2006-2011) before joining the faculty at UMass Amherst. Lewis balances her scholarly life with a professional career as a documentary filmmaker, videographer, producer, and director.

Bethany Sherwood
Administrative Assistant
BA University of Massachusetts-Amherst

Bethany Sherwood is the Administrative Assistant for the Department of Theater.

She graduated from UMass Amherst in 2010, with a degree in English. While a student, she worked for the Office of Information Technologies as a technical consultant, as an account management consultant, and as a liaison to the New Students’ Orientation department.

Her interests outside of work include fantasy and science fiction literature, medieval women writers and mystics, textile arts, and Shakespeare’s historical plays.

**Guest Artists**

As we do every year, we invited a number of special guests to join us in a variety of roles to augment our students’ curriculum and enrich their production experience.

Arena Stage Artistic Director Molly Smith delivered the Rand Lecture and engaged our students in small discussion sections in connection with the opening of *Hell in High Water*. For that show, we were also joined by actor-musician Cedric Turner, who took one of the main roles in the piece.

For *Urinetown*, director Gina Kaufmann called upon her long acquaintanceship with musical creator Mark Hollmann, and he joined us for a series of events that included a Five College music workshop, discussions with our students, and sitting in on a rehearsal. Other guest artists for that production included musical director Andrew Lichtenberg and choreographer Paul Dennis, both of whom have worked fruitfully with us on several previous musical productions. The same goes for sound designer Scott Macarthur, whom we happily welcomed back to our crew. English Department MFA student Daniel Sack was one of the directors of the devised theater work, *Beyond the Horizon*. Shakespeare & Co. Artistic Director Tony Simotes, who taught stage combat to our students last year, returned this year to direct our production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Composer Bill Barclay created music for the piece.

We hosted a number of guests who were not directly related to our season productions, as well. Puppeteer Mattias Kuchta performed and taught a workshop. Actor Jack Knight spoke to our students, as did alumnus Greg Hoyt ’02, who led a workshop and discussion about his time in Los Angeles.

We welcomed alumnas Margo Caddell to the department to teach lighting design and advise students during productions, while Kara-Lynn Vaeni returned to teach performance classes and help create pieces for the Renaissance Festival. She also brought to campus her friend and occasional collaborator, playwright Delaney Britt Brewer, for a staged reading. Alumna Michelle Hendrick also taught performance classes. Artist Will Power stepped in to teach playwriting and devised theater classes. David Wiggall taught sound design.
Outreach

As we do every year, we encouraged our audience members to learn more about the shows they attended by staying for the First Friday Q&A. For every show we produced, we held a Q&A with selected members of the cast and production team speaking about their experiences onstage and behind the scenes.

Matinees for local school children are our biggest outreach events, encompassing not only the performances but such additional resources as study guides, pre-show visits, post-show Q&A’s and backstage tours. Our matinee performance of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* was our first sold-out school matinee in some time and it was very well received. To augment the event, we crafted a study guide that was posted online, and after the performance several schools stayed behind to ask questions of our production team and cast members.

Commonwealth College brought guests to the same production, and they, too, enjoyed the post-show Q&A we organized especially for them.
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. In addition, the UAC helped organize the discussions with actors Jack Knight and Greg Hoyt, who work in LA and spoke about their experiences.

**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.

The list of grants:

**Travel Grants**

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<tr>
<td>$300</td>
<td>Sarah Brew</td>
<td>ATHE Conference</td>
<td>Graduate Travel Grant</td>
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<tr>
<td>$300</td>
<td>Sarah Brew</td>
<td>Texas-Assoc for Hispanic Classical Theater</td>
<td>Graduate Travel Grant</td>
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<td>$2,000</td>
<td>Julie Nelson</td>
<td>Actor Center Teacher Development Prog. - NYC</td>
<td>CHFA Research Council</td>
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<td>$400</td>
<td>Alison Bowie</td>
<td>Liverpool, England-Int’l Conf. on Arts in Society</td>
<td>Graduate Travel Grant</td>
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<td>$1,000</td>
<td>Harley Erdman</td>
<td>USITT</td>
<td>CHFA Conference Presenter Funds</td>
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<td>$850</td>
<td>Gina Kaufmann</td>
<td>USITT</td>
<td>CHFA Conference Presenter Funds</td>
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<td>$1,500</td>
<td>Megan Lewis</td>
<td>Travel for S.Africa Trip</td>
<td>ASTR Targeted Research Fellowship</td>
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<td>$5,000</td>
<td>Megan Lewis</td>
<td>S.Africa Performing Arts Summer Program</td>
<td>CHFA Research Council</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(SPLIT 50% between CHFA and International Studies Council/the International Programs Office)</td>
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<tr>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td>Megan Lewis</td>
<td>Mid-Atlantic Theater Conference</td>
<td>Prof Pres. Award</td>
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**Projects/Guests/Productions**

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<td>$750</td>
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<td>Arts Council</td>
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<td>$500</td>
<td>Megan McClain</td>
<td>Workshop with Quinn Bauriedel</td>
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<td>$1,700</td>
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<td>$1,000</td>
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<td>Mark Hollman visit/workshops</td>
<td>Five College Theater Chairs Group</td>
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<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Gil McCauley</td>
<td>Cedric Turner/Hell in High Water</td>
<td>5 College Multicultural Committee</td>
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<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Megan Lewis</td>
<td>Research DVD Project - Payroll</td>
<td>CHFA Research Council</td>
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$24,300.00  TOTAL GRANTS
Development

The 2011-2012 school year was one in which we continued to cultivate friendships and support; during the spring semester, we started to gear up for our ambitious 2012-2013 fundraising plans, during which we hope that our current efforts to build bridges to the people who support us will yield results.

People

As we did the year before, we selected several department supporters to profile; below are excerpts of the two articles:

Patricia Naughton: A Show of Support
Affiliation: Mother of Thomas Naughton ‘05
Why do you donate to the UMass Amherst Department of Theater? Actually, coming up to see Tommy in shows is the reason I started contributing to UMass. Well—the theater is so dated! The Rand with all that orange wool? It’s cringe worthy! I knew that my little contribution might not do much, but I’ve been in education for years (I worked at a small Catholic college), and they once told us that if they could get every alum to donate $5 a year, they’d never be in trouble and they would be able to develop an endowment very quickly. I was really grateful for the good experience Tommy had up there at UMass, so it’s because of that that I started donating.

Ronni Marshak ‘71: Success On and Off Stage
Graduating Year: 1971
Major: Theater
Favorite UMass Theater memory: During my senior year at UMass, Don Nigro, who’s still doing well as a playwright, wrote a play called Seascape With Sharks and Dancer. Well, I remember once in conversation that Don and I were sitting around with a bunch of our friends talking about who we had crushes on when we were little. I told him that my first crush ever was Mighty Mouse—that tenor voice! The way he was always saving all of those people! I mean, really! I told Don that Mighty Mouse remained my hero—until it became Dick Cavett. Later that year, I was watching two friends of mine in a performance of Seascape, when all of a sudden I hear the female lead say, “Well I had a crush on Mighty Mouse...Until I fell in love with Dick Cavett.” Since the play was being performed in the round, I looked up to see Don smiling right at me from across the space, and I just thought, I am immortalized!
Why do you donate to the Department of Theater? I donate to UMass because I felt I got a really good theater education there. I know the arts are always underfunded, and though I don’t have much to give, I figured—might as well! I know how much every little bit helps.
Events — beginning to Shed the Shag

This spring, Penny Remsen and our friends in the Development Office at the College of Humanities and Fine Arts began making the case to potential donors for a big project the department has planned: This summer, thanks to the support of the Dean and Provost, the Rand Theater carpeting and seating is being refurbished. The Department of Theater is now inaugurating efforts to raise money to finish the job, which focuses on rehabbing the lobby with a new box office, redone restrooms, and better lighting.

We’re calling the campaign Shed the Shag, in honor of the orange carpeting whose removal will be the most dramatic change to the theater and lobby.

Penny began our efforts with a trip to Los Angeles, where she participated in a number of events, all centered around Bill Pullman ‘80G’s appearance in Beth Henley’s The Jacksonian at the Geffen Playhouse.

The play offered a wonderful opportunity since two alumni were actually involved — the other being Amy Levinson ‘04/07G. Bill and Amy had met during another of Penny’s LA trips a few years ago, had clicked, and were hoping for an opportunity to work together. This play, which Bill had been a part of since early readings in Beth Henley’s living room, proved to be the winning project.

The play was well-received — here’s an excerpt from the Los Angeles Times:

In “Crimes of the Heart,” playwright Beth Henley wrung laughs from suicide, with a report of a mother who killed herself alongside her precious kitty and a scene with a grown daughter so mired in scandal that she sticks her head in the oven as though it were a Bundt cake.

Well, that’s nothing compared with the outrageous goings-on in Henley’s latest play, “The Jacksonian,” which is receiving its world premiere in a Geffen Playhouse production featuring Ed Harris, Amy Madigan and Bill Pullman at their creepy-comic best. This black comedy, set in Jackson, Miss., in the tinderbox year of 1964, proudly waves its Southern Gothic flag. You know you’re deep in Flannery O’Connor country when the quotidian merges with the grotesque and genteel manners are accompanied by a fist in the face.

Henley, like all good practitioners of the Southern Gothic genre, observes the bizarre customs of her characters without much editorial commentary. (No need for a soapbox with behavior this self-incriminating.) In setting the work in her birthplace during a pivotal moment in the civil rights movement, the playwright gets to sift through sepia-tinged memories and examine the pretense of normality in white folks’ lives as churches were burned and black people were lynched. Yet she’s also fabricating a farfetched story that’s as eccentrically stylized as any by David Lynch.

A shadowy, small-scale work that’s determined to stay one step ahead of the audience (and possibly even the author), “The Jacksonian” is masterfully staged by Robert Falls, the Tony-winning artistic director of Chicago’s Goodman Theatre. His production doesn’t attempt to neatly sort out a tale that still seems a bit unsettled. Instead, it luxuriates in the ripe outlandishness of characters whose flamboyant theatricality and curveball humor are always engaging even when completely baffling.

Penny was joined by Dean Julie Hayes and Lucia Miller, who is in charge of CHFA development efforts, and together, they put together a reception for not only Department of Theater alumni and friends, but UMass alumni from the LA area. It was an opportunity for the Dean to meet the Pullmans, and for Penny to connect with UMass alumnus and critic Bob Verini.

Penny also traveled to Miami, FL to spend time with several alumni and supporters there. She was finally able to thank alumnus Stephen Driscoll and his friend Ed Rudner for helping put us over the top in our Pennies for Drama Nerds campaign to upgrade the Upper Rand Lobby, now the Upper Rand Studio. She also had the opportunity to visit with Jeffrey Donovan ’91, star of Burn Notice. The pair hung out in the editing bay for a day while Jeff edited an episode of Burn Notice which he had directed. They shared a pizza, just like in the old days of rehearsals-and-pizza in the Curtain Theater.

Finally, Penny visited alumnus Larry Wilker. He was one of the producers of the original production of Urinetown and a student of Doris Abramson, so Penny updated him on the Department of Theater and shared with him the upcoming season and the plans to renovate the Rand Theater.
At these and other events, Penny handed out a witty leave-behind piece designed by Rob Kimmel, pictured below. The orange area in his mock-up is, in the actual piece, a small square of the orange shag.
Facility

During the summer of 2011, the Curtain Theater was barred to us as workers overhauled the space top to bottom. We celebrated this momentous occasion, which has been several years in the making, with an official dedication during the run of Miguel Romero’s enchanting puppetry piece, *Solstice*. That night, those of us who had worked in the theater for years could scarcely recognize it.

The renovation is spectacular and has brought the theater back to its original intended use as a truly flexible performance space.

The old, substandard lighting grid was replaced with a state-of-the-art wire-tension grid complete with all new lighting positions, electrical raceways, and circuits. The permanent seating risers and stair units were replaced with an attractive flexible seating system, allowing the Department to alter the space more effectively for each production.

In addition, several of the mezzanine walls were removed to add even more flexibility and excitement to the space. The new performance space maintains its current maximum capacity of nearly 100 patrons, but now meets all building codes and conditions.

With great support from CHFA Dean Julie Hayes and Vice Provost Joel Martin, as well as Provost James Staros, The Department of Theater will continue to provide the New England region an ever-increasing selection of creative work in a unique performance space rich with possibilities.

Before:

![Before](image1)

During (Tension wire grid installation):

![During](image2)

After:

![After](image3)
... and in action: the Curtain Theater during a performance of *Solstice*.
News and Achievements

Students, faculty, staff and alumni continue to achieve in theater, film, and related industries. We’re proud of all of them, but a few had a particularly noteworthy year.

Alumnus Greg Hoyt ’02 made his film debut, and in a Clint Eastwood flick, no less. Here’s an excerpt from an article about him in Stages, our newsletter.

Among the things Clint Eastwood is known for as a director is that he doesn’t call “Action” to start a scene; rather, the set goes quiet and whoever’s got the first line in the scene starts things off. Put yourself in Greg Hoyt ’02’s shoes for a minute then, and imagine what it must’ve been like for him on the set of J. Edgar. It’s his first film, he’s working with a director he’s admired for years, and he’s just realized that, “Oh s____, I’m the first line!” Hoyt laughed as he recounts his momentary panic, but then goes on to say that impressive though the experience was, he didn’t stay nervous for long.

“The set was so quiet, professional and efficient — it was an environment that made you feel at ease,” he said.

Hoyt has a small role in the film as an FBI Agent assisting during the Lindbergh baby’s kidnapping. It’s his first role in a film, but Hoyt’s been supporting himself as an actor in Los Angeles for years, making a good living doing commercials, some voice-over, and television parts.

“As an actor, you want as many revenue streams flowing as possible,” he said.

As pragmatic as he sounded, though, it was obvious from his enthusiastic recounting of some of his experiences that really, he’s in the business because he loves it.

When Hoyt graduated from UMass with his BA in theater, he knew he wanted to head to LA. First, however, he moved back to eastern Massachusetts, where he worked in construction and painting to build up his bank account.

He also had a stint on the lighting crew at the North Shore Music Theater. He tips his hat to Penny Remsen’s lighting design class and, more generally, to the liberal-arts, some-of-everything, make-your-own-opportunities approach the department takes to theater for making that possible.

It’s worth noting that also appearing in the film was Jeff Donovan ’91. He and Greg go way back, it turns out — Greg’s mother was Jeff’s drama teacher in high school.

Also notable was the recognition bestowed upon Professor Emerita Virginia Scott:

Professor Emerita Virginia Scott’s Women on the Stage in Early Modern France won the 2011 Barnard Hewitt Award for Outstanding Research in Theatre History. This prize is funded by the University of Illinois in honor of the late Professor Hewitt, and administered by the American Society for Theatre Research. It was awarded at the Annual Meeting of ASTR in Montréal. This is one of two awards given every year in the US for a work in theatre studies. The other is the George Freedley Award, which she won in 1991 for her book on the Commedia dell’arte in Paris. Virginia made a short speech which included the following comment:

Several months ago I encountered in the New York Times Sunday Book Review a reviewer who accused the author of ‘practicing history without a license.’ That got me thinking about what constitutes a license to practice history. Not the PhD—that’s just the learner’s permit—but maybe it’s the book revised from the dissertation, or maybe the first few articles in peer-reviewed journals, or a fellowship from the NEH or the Guggenheim Foundation. But the thing is, every license—like all licenses—has to be renewed. Another book, more articles, another grant here, another fellowship there, all forms of renewal. The Hewitt Award? A very important renewal, for which I am deeply grateful and which I hope will last me out. In any case, I’m still practising.
Kyle Pasciutti ‘08, meanwhile, didn’t make it on screen himself, but one of his creations was featured in a popular TV show. Another Stages excerpt:

If you are a fan of making over the disastrously-clad, you may already be familiar with Kyle Pasciutti ‘08’s work. In September 2010, he got a call from the wardrobe revamp show, What Not to Wear. The plan for an upcoming episode involved having co-host Stacy London jump out of a cake, and they had ordered one online. It had arrived and it was awful, and the producers called Pasciutti with about 24 hours to go before shooting was supposed to commence to ask, “could he make them a cake?”

Together with some friends, that’s exactly what he did. (You can watch a test run of a cake-popping-out on youtube.) Pasciutti graduated from the Department of Theater with interests in several areas of theater, but more than that, he says, he left with an education in the mindset and business approach that he has parlayed into the kind of career that makes a story like the above par for the course. “My day-to-day is not average,” he said, and encompasses make-up, special effects, puppets, props and more for theater, TV, film and special events.

“Everybody kept saying ‘specialize,’ but what I went for while I was here was collecting skills, and acquiring the right frame of mind for the business,” Pasciutti explained.

Like all undergraduates, Pasciutti took classes in all areas of theater, and he is a proponent of the approach. “I fully appreciated lighting design and scenic design, but they’re not things I have within me to do,” he said. “But (for example) if you don’t do scenic design, you don’t know how something is going to move in the space.”

Dawn Monique Williams, meanwhile, was selected for a prestigious fellowship. From Stages:

Among the many endeavors pursued by the New York-based Drama League is the Directors Project, a series of programs meant to give up and coming directors opportunities to work with mentors and develop as artists in their own right. The University of Massachusetts-Amherst Department of Theater now counts two of its own among the Project’s alumni: professor Gilbert McCauley participated as a newly-minted MFA in 1985, and this past semester, Dawn Monique Williams was among the directors.

On its website, the Drama League describes the Directors Project as “the country’s leading career development program for early and mid-career directors.” The Directors Project actually consists of 5 different programs, with the Fall Fellowship, the one in which McCauley and Williams participated, being “the most coveted,” Williams said.

“Four of us were selected out of over 100 applicants,” she said. Once in the program, participants typically assistant direct two productions, one in New York and one regionally, although in Williams’ case, both ended up being regional productions, one in Hartford and one at Shakespeare & Company.

It was a coincidence, but a happy one. Williams explained that she is a single parent to her daughter, Jordyn, and being a commutable distance from their Amherst home for much of the fellowship’s run eased some logistical challenges.

At the end of the fall, the Fellowship participants go on to direct a one-act piece in a showcase with the other Fellows. Throughout the semester, they also have opportunities to work with mentors, network with people in the business, and see other works.

Other alumni, student and faculty achievements:

Toby Bercovici ‘11G adapted and directed King Lear for Serious Play! Theatre Ensemble, scenes from which have been remounted twice at Amherst High School, then directed Deb Margolin’s O Yes I Will (I will remember the spirit and texture of this conversation) for Pauline Productions. This summer, she’ll co-direct a devised piece - META/PINA - exploring the complex dynamic between a director-choreographer and her performers and utilizing the gestural life of German choreographer Pina Bausch.

Sarah Brew ‘12G co-wrote a play, I Could Swear I Heard a Voice, which will be performed at the ArtsFest in Saratoga Springs, NY this June. Her translation of Love the Doctor was produced as part of Ohio State University’s second-stage season this spring.
Lisa Channer ’89 was pleased to receive great press for *Picnic on the Battlefield*, the latest production by her company Theatre Novi Most.

Children’s Hospital star Rob Corddry ’93 joined Mark Wahlberg, Dwayne Johnson and Ed Harris in Michael Bay’s *Pain and Gain*. This low-budget pic is based on a true story about the criminal doings of a group of bodybuilders in Florida. He’s also set to appear in *Hell Baby* with Leslie Bibb. *Butter*, a comedy about the competitive world of butter carving includes him among its stars. Rob is also set to be part of *Sketchy*, billed as a weekly video series featuring comedy shorts on the newly-formed Yahoo Comedy Channel. He’s also got a role in the upcoming zombie flick, *Warm Bodies*.

Ruth Countryman ’71 checked in to give us an update of all the goings-on in her life: She married to Dr. John C. Countryman, who is director of Theatre at Berry College in GA. She teaches middle school reading and language arts in Floyd County, GA, but continues to write historic clothing/pattern books with former UMass prof, Elizabeth Weiss Hopper. Their third book is at the publisher now. The first book, published in 2000, is on women’s wear of the 1920s; the second book is on women’s wear of the 1930s. The latest one is about a small trousseau collection from 1933.

Jane Cox lit Cincinnati Playhouse’s *Merrily We Roll Along*, which ran this past March.

Professor Milan Dragicevich writes, “I’ll be performing the wonderful (and challenging) role of Mat Burke in Eugene O’Neill’s 1922 Pulitzer Prize-winning drama, *Anna Christie*, for the Northern New England Repertory Theatre Company in New Hampshire.”

Professor Harley Erdman has two books upcoming for publication this year, both translations of Spanish Golden Age plays, in bilingual editions published by Aris & Phillips (Oxford, UK): *Marta the Divine* by Tirso de Molina and *Jealous of Herself* by Tirso de Molina. *Marta the Divine* was also showcased at Washington DC’s Shakespeare Theatre this past September, as part of their ReDiscovery Theater. Erdman is also making progress on the opera he is creating (libretto) with composer Eric Sawyer. Adapted from Michael White’s novel, *The Garden of Martyrs*, this opera of the same title dramatizes true historical events involving the case of Halligan and Daley, two Irish immigrants executed in Northampton in 1806 for a murder they very likely did not commit.

Troy Hourie ’97G designed the sets for Chicago’s Court Theatre’s world premiere of *Invisible Man*, adapted from Ralph Ellison’s novel by Oren Jacoby.

Professor Gina Kaufmann is going to be directing Moliere’s *Tartuffe* at the Rose Theatre at Shakespeare & Co. in Lenox this summer.

Arbrenne Kelly ’11 was hired for summerstock at Acadia Repertory Theatre in Bar Harbor, Maine this summer. Out of the five shows, she will be in three: Noel Coward’s *Private Lives*, John Cariani’s *Almost, Maine*, and a children’s show of Charlotte’s *Web*. “I am extremely excited to be paid to do theatre for the first time, not to mention the fact that I’ll be by the sea, in a national park (Acadia National Park), and in Maine,” Arbrenne writes.

Traci Klainer designed lights for the world premiere of Sharyn Rothstein’s *The Invested at the 4th Street Theatre*.

David Korins ’99 headed up production design for *An Evening with Patti LuPone and Mandy Patinkin*. The show, according to press notes, “reunites these Tony Award-winning virtuosos (and lifelong friends) for the first time since *Evita*. Much more than a concert, this is a unique musical love story told entirely through a masterful selection of the greatest songs ever written for the stage. Funny, passionate, intimate and utterly unforgettable, this is An Evening no fan of musical theatre — or of these two acclaimed performers — can afford to miss.”

Thad Kramer ’11G got married September 8, 2011 in Las Vegas, NV. He was also promoted to Technical Coordinator at Swank Audio Visuals, the in-house audio/visual provider for the Four Seasons Hotel Las Vegas.

Christopher Lockheardt (né Stearns) let us know that MadLab Theatre in Columbus, OH, produced a collection of his short plays, titled *Happy 9/11! (and Other Completely Non-Offensive Tales)* this March.

Priscilla Page ’03G will be working with Ping Chong and Company this summer while they are in residence at Amherst College.

In addition to being the proud owner of two dogs, named Gobo and Leko, and a cat named Wifi, Celine Perron ’90, recently
Became an American citizen and the chair of the theatre department at Keene State College in New Hampshire.

**Bill Pullman ’80G** brings his Presidential gravitas to TV—he’s set to star in a new NBC comedy, *1600 Penn*, about a dysfunctional White House family. He’s also in the film *Lola Versus*, and in actress Famke Janssen’s directorial debut, *Bringing up Bobby*, and earlier this year appeared in TNT’s *Innocent*.

“First-rate, taut, well-acted” and “penetrating” were the words used to describe **Sheila Siragusa ’04**’s production of *Crime and Punishment*, which she directed at Chester Theater last summer. The show (adapted by Marilyn Campbell and Curt Columbus from the novel by Dostoyevsky), received glowing reviews from the *Boston Globe*. Of this powerful production, the *Globe*’s Don Aucion said “even guiltless audience members are likely to feel what Porfiry describes as “that cold shiver than never stops.”

**Ben Stanton ’99** made his Broadway debut this year with *Seminar* by Theresa Rebeck, starring Alan Rickman. He designed lights for the world premiere of Gabe McKinley’s drama *CQ/CX* which opened off-Broadway at the Peter Norton Space in February. He also designed lights for Playwrights Horizons’ New York premiere of *Assistance*, a new play by Leslye Headland (*Bachelorette*) which opened in March. Fellow alumnus **David Korins ’99** designed scenery. Ben worked on The Civilians’ *You Better Sit Down: Tales from My Parents’ Divorce*, and Ethan Lipton’s *No Place to Go* at Joe’s Pub.

The World Premiere of *You, My Mother* at La MaMa’s Ellen Stewart Theatre in February included lighting design by **Justin Townsend ’97**, as did Classic Stage Company’s new off-Broadway production of Bertolt Brecht’s *Galileo* and Huntington Theatre Company’s *Luck of the Irish*.

The Festival Theatre Company announced the world premiere production of **Michael Walker**’s play *Dancing in the Garden*, as part of the 15th annual New York International Fringe Festival. Michael lives outside of Boston, and is a published poet and the author of dramas, mysteries and thrillers.
Looking ahead to 2012-2013

Our Season

DEDICATED TO DORIS

The 2012-2013 season is The Department of Theater’s 40th. We have made all those years count, racking up a rich production history that spans the classics and the cutting edge, created by students who have gone on to make outstanding contributions to the world of theater, and by the gifted faculty and staff who have helped them get their start.

It only seems right to dedicate the season to one of the great lights of this department, the late, beloved Professor Emeritus Doris Abramson. Doris came to the university as a student in 1942, then returned in 1952 as a faculty member teaching theater courses, before the department even existed. She became one of the founders of the department in 1973. Her 1969 book, Negro Playwrights in the American Theater, 1925-1959, was based on her dissertation and established her as a leading scholar on African-American theater.

Doris was also an advocate for women playwrights. Accordingly, the six works that will grace our mainstage during the 40th anniversary season are all by women. Some of these pieces were well-known to Doris — including the season opener, Machinal, which was the last piece she ever directed for us — and we would like to think that she would have been equally inspired and impressed by the work of those that would have been unfamiliar to her.

We hope you will join us during this momentous season.

Machinal
By Sophie Treadwell
Directed by Brianna Sloane
Nov. 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 at 8 p.m., Nov. 3 and 10 at 2 p.m.
The Curtain Theater

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.
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 at 8 p.m., Dec. 1 and 8 at 2 p.m.
School matinee on Dec. 5 at 10 a.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.

Special event
Every Year, Every Day, I Am Walking
By Magnet Theatre from South Africa
Created by Magnet Theatre
Jan. 29, 30, 31, Feb. 1, 2 at 8 p.m.
The Curtain 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.

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.
Student matinee on March 6 at 10 a.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 brings 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 Enríquez, 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.

Venus
By Suzan-Lori Parks
Directed by Carol Becker
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.

Casanova
By UMass alumna Constance Congdon ‘82G
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 celebration of women playwrights with one of her favorite works, Casanova. This play nimbly examines the story of the famous Italian seducer and intellectual 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 16th century come together to create a delightful and insightful whole.
People

Dean Julie Hayes proved her support of our efforts to introduce instruction in sound design to our department. There had previously been a Five College position in that discipline, but now we have a faculty member all to ourselves in that area of theater. After a search, we found an excellent candidate for the position.

We also searched for a new Scene Shop Manager. In a stroke of luck, that search resulted in the permanent hiring of Brandon Hall, who took the position in a temporary appointment at the beginning of the year and will now continue on with us.

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 Summerscape) 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.

Guest Artist

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.

His critically acclaimed solo show Through the Night ran off-Broadway last season at the Union Square Theatre produced by Daryl Roth. For this performance Daniel has received the 2010 NAACP Theater Award for Best Solo Show, 2010 Audelco Award for Solo Performance and the 2010 Ovation Award for Best Leading Actor in a Play. He also received Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, and Drama League Nominations.

His critically acclaimed solo play Emergency (formerly Emergence-SEE!) directed by Kenny Leon ran off-Broadway to a sold-out, extended run at The Public Theater in the fall of 2006. For this production, he received the 2007 Obie Award for Excellence in
Off-Broadway Theater for Writing & Performing and the 2007 AUDELCO Award for Solo Performance. New York Magazine awarded him a 2007 Culture Award for Best in Theater. Daniel has toured Emergency nationally and internationally.

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.

He was awarded the 2007-08 AETNA American Voices Playwright-in-Residence position at Hartford Stage, and a commission to write a new play. His play Resurrection received its world premiere production at Arena Stage in Washington D.C. in August 2008 (where he was awarded the 2008 Edgerton Foundation’s new American Play Award); followed by engagements at Hartford Stage, the Philadelphia Theatre Company, and ETA Theater in Chicago. Daniel is currently developing a new play on the life of Paul Robeson – The Tallest Tree in the Forest - directed by Moises Kaufman, as well as a musical on the life of Roland Hayes entitled Breath & Imagination, directed by Sheryl Kaller.

As an actor, singer, and poet, Daniel has worked throughout the U.S., Europe, and Africa performing on television, acting in theatrical productions, singing leading roles in operas, and giving solo concerts of his own work. He has performed at The White House and has graced the stage of The Kennedy Center in tribute to Ruby Dee and Ossie Davis. Daniel is the 2004 Grand Slam Champion at the world famous Nuyorican Poet’s Café and The Fox Networks National Redemption Slam Champion. He has performed on programs with artists such as Jill Scott, Sonia Sanchez, MC Lyte, Mos Def, Tracy Chapman, Deepak Chopra, and Phylicia Rashad.

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, Hartford 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.
Outreach

The 2012-2013 season will include two matinees for local school groups. 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.

The matinees will be the musical, *Violet*, and our Spanish Golden Age adaptation, *Suitors*. Because of the subject matter of these two works, we hope to reach beyond our usual drama/English constituency and draw social studies, foreign language and cultural classes into our theater.

**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, 5, 6, 7 at 8 p.m., Dec. 1 and 8 at 2 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.

**Suitors**
By Ana Caro and Feliciana Enríquez, translated and adapted by Harley Erdman
Directed by Kara-Lynn Vaeni
Feb. 28, March 1, 2, 6, 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 brings 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 Enríquez, 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.
Development

2012-2013 will be a big one for us on the Development front. The Department of Theater has received the funds to refurbish the Rand seating and tear out the orange carpeting, and now the push is on to raise the funds necessary to finish the Rand Theater lobby. About $500,000 will need to be raised, and planning started this spring on our strategy to achieve that goal.

We are working closely with HFA Development to make our goals a reality; a number of events to reach out to donors able to give significant sums is already underway, with Department chair Penny Remsen traveling to meet with selected donors.

In addition, the department will seek the buy-in of its many alumni and friends through the Shed the Shag campaign, to be officially launched shortly. Donors will receive pieces of the Rand carpeting (long a source of chagrin as well as humor in the department) and other gifts for donating at various price points. We will also continue with our strategy of profiling donors who are “just like you” in an effort to help friends and alumni see themselves as able to give at some level.

Additionally, there will be a fashion show and silent auction of items made by costume shop students and staff from the remnants of the carpeting and seating.

Our hope is to kick the Shed the Shag effort off over the summer and wrap it with a celebration at the end of the school year; we hope to end our run of Casanova with the announcement that we have, indeed, achieved our fundraising goal.
**Facility**

**Rand Renovation**

Thanks to the support of Dean Julie Hayes and Provost James Staros, we have received a generous gift of $860,000 from the University of Massachusetts to refurbish the house of the Rand Theater over the summer in 2012. Their support is invaluable. They are truly part of this department, attending shows, special events and celebrations with us. Their commitment to our work is so much more than lip service.

Thus it happens that after many years of planning and hoping, we are tearing out the carpet in the theater and lobby, refurbishing the seats, taking down the walls between rows, and creating a wheelchair-accessible seating section.

However, this gift does not cover everything that needs to be done, especially to our lobby. Currently, the lobby is dimly lit, making it both aesthetically unpleasing and unsafe. And in the original design of the space, the planners forgot to include a box office; the one that was shoehorned in later has always been a poor fit and lacks any modern box office amenities. The less said about the restrooms, the better.

The price tag to address these problems runs to $500,000, and our efforts in the coming fiscal year will be concentrated on raising that sum to complete the renovations.

The Rand renovation, just getting underway: