The Department of Theater
Year In Review
2013-2014
# Table of Contents

## 2013-2014

- **Our Season** | Page 3
- **Faculty and Staff News and Achievements** | Page 8
- **Outreach** | Page 15
- **Curricular Enhancement** | Page 16
- **Development** | Page 18
- **News and Achievements** | Page 22

## Looking ahead to 2014-2015

- **Our Season** | Page 25
- **People** | Page 27
- **Outreach** | Page 28
- **Development** | Page 29

Appendix: 2013-2014 Season Survey Analysis
**2013-2014**

**Our Season**

**Box office results for 2013-2014**
The 2013-2014 season in box office numbers was a dramatic one. While the Red Sox run at the World Series gave us lower-than-hoped-for numbers for our season opener, the show was rapturously reviewed, and our number rebounded beyond our projections thanks to our two biggest shows, *Street Scene* and *Peter Pan*, which brought in huge crowds and box office receipts.

Of particular note, also, was our *Peter Pan* matinee, which was a sell-out and drew a number of elementary schools in addition to our usual middle- and high-school crowd.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE SHOW</th>
<th>SPACE</th>
<th>EST #</th>
<th>ACTUAL</th>
<th>+/-</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Liar</td>
<td>Rand</td>
<td>$6,000.00</td>
<td>$3,924.20</td>
<td>$(2,075.80)</td>
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<td>Detroit</td>
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<td>$3,583.36</td>
<td>$(916.64)</td>
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<td>Street Scene</td>
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<td>$10,634.77</td>
<td>$5,134.77</td>
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<td>$(709.46)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peter Pan</td>
<td>Rand</td>
<td>$6,000.00</td>
<td>$11,258.63</td>
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<td>Rand</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
<td>$1,932.00</td>
<td>$932.00</td>
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</table>

$25,000.00   $32,623.50
less 72%
TOTAL BOX OFFICE $23,200.00   $30,274.61   $7,074.61  5479

That outcome, we are pleased to note, compares favorably to last year’s box office total of $29,543.37.

**Audience survey**
To better understand who is in our audience, we included a survey in all of our programs for the year that asked audience members to tell us about themselves, their arts-consumption habits, and their feelings about theater and us. (The survey is included as an appendix to this report.)

We learned that our audience is largely Five-College and UMass affiliated, enthusiastically consumes multiple art forms, especially theater, and is in the typical, older-skewing demographic for theatergoers.

At right is the word cloud that reflects some of the most commonly-used, overwhelmingly-positive adjectives with which people described our productions. We will use the information in the surveys and the conclusions we drew from the data to more accurately direct our marketing efforts in the coming season, and will continue to survey our patrons next season.
Notes about our productions

Special Event:
The Massachusetts Dance Festival
Sept. 27 & 28 at 8 p.m.
The Rand Theater

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 across campus for the Massachusetts Dance Festival. Organized by members of the UMass Dance Program, 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.

Our season opening event was one we hosted for the Dance Department. In addition to bringing talented dance companies to our space for a performance, the festival offered our students the opportunity to participate in a dance workshop with dancer-choreographer Eric Sciotto.

The Liar
by David Ives, adapted from the comedy by Pierre Corneille
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 theatergoers into a compelling physical and verbally over-the-top comedy for today’s audiences.
We tried some unique promotions this year to entice people to attend our shows, and we began with *The Liar*, offering a “Mustache Student Rush,” with a dollar off to anyone who wore a mustache (a reference to our title character). Our survey asked, among other things, for three words people would use to describe the show. The show’s small but enthusiastic audiences showered it with praise such as: hilarious, enthralling, brilliant, and clever.

*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 disillusionment leavened with humor, and destruction tempered by hope.

In our surveys, Lisa D’Amour’s *Detroit* evoked such descriptors as: thought-provoking, intense, amazing.

*Street Scene*
by Kurt Weill, Elmer Rice, and Langston Hughes
directed by Gina Kaufmann
musical direction by Mark Swanson
choreography by Erica Wilson Perkins
special guests: bass-baritone John Cheek and soprano Dana Schnitzer
Feb. 21, 26, 28, March 1 at 8 p.m.
Feb. 23 at 2 p.m.
The Rand Theater
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.

*Street Scene* was a coproduction with Five College Opera and one of the most ambitious undertakings of the past few years. The piece included musical direction by Amherst College’s Mark Swanson, choreography by UMass Dance Department’s Erica Wilson Perkins and special guests bass-baritone John Cheek and soprano Dana Schnitzer. In addition to his work on the production, dramaturg Paul Adolphsen pulled together
numerous sources to organize a trio of events to augment the community’s enjoyment and understanding of the piece and its creators. Among the audience members were 30 members of Amherst’s Learning in Retirement.

*This production was funded in part by the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc., New York, NY*

UMass New Play Lab

**directed by Jared Culverhouse**

*Variations of Fucked* by Liz Duffy Adams: March 27, April 4, and April 5 at 8 p.m., March 29 at 2 p.m.

*And Then They Fell* by Tira Palmquist: March 28, March 29, and 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 Play Lab 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 in a series of staged readings. Can you imagine being in the room when a future classic is performed for the first time? You could be...

This year we began what we hope will be a new tradition, headed by dramaturgs Amy Brooks and Paul Adolphsen and director Jared Culverhouse, all MFA candidates. In the summer, we put out a call for scripts, which netted us nearly 700 to choose from. Our team selected 2 from the pile, *Variations of Fucked* by Greenfield playwright Liz Duffy Adams, and *And Then They Fell* by California writer Tira Palmquist. The playwrights came to sit in on the rehearsal and performance process, using what they learned to revise their scripts for the final week of performances. Both playwrights told us the process was very helpful.

Here is an excerpt from an email interview they did with the team after the fact:

**What did you discover about your play as a result of UMass New Play Lab?**

LDA: That it has an audience, that it connects strongly with some people, that it works on its own weird terms. I discovered a new title [Liz switched the title from *Variations of Fucked* to *Off the Clock* on the last day of her residency – ed.]. I discovered ideas about potential staging and design; how it could work visually and spatially. I got to make some useful cuts and tweaks and rearrange a couple of scenes which made it work much better. I discovered that the characters have life outside of my head.

TP: Happily, I learned that much of the play is, in fact, working well. I was also happy to be encouraged to lean into the poetry of the play — subtly, but appropriately. This was a surprise to me, because I wasn’t sure that the naturalistic genre of the play would support that direction. I was surprised when Paul and Jared encouraged me to go in that direction, and that happily surprised that it worked.

This production was made possible in part by Hotel UMass, which generously helped provide accommodations for our guest artists.
Peter Pan
by J. M. Barrie
directed by Brianna Sloane
April 10, 11, 12, 18 at 8 p.m.
April 12 and 19 at 2 p.m.
School matinee April 17 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!

The final production on our slate for 2013-2014 was a children's classic, and it afforded us an opportunity to reach out to families with younger children, community members who aren't usually in our theaters. We ran a witty promotional campaign together with the Black Sheep Deli, offering discounts to anyone who bought one of their special Peter Pan cupcakes. We also offered a special event to parents and children, showing them some of the magic of theater with a pre-show event and an opportunity to see how the flying and other elements of the show come together.

Our student matinee was a sell-out, with 3 elementary schools joining our usual middle and high school crowd; among the groups was Holyoke Community Charter School. For many of the students, the younger ones especially, it was a first theater experience, and they enjoyed it thoroughly by all accounts.
Faculty and Staff News and Achievements

This year, we were joined by one tenure-track faculty member, five lecturers 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. We also searched for a visiting lecturer in playwriting, who will join us next year (more about her in the 2014-2015 section of this report).

We also must take note of two departures. June Gaeke, our costume designer for 41 years and a member of the department since its founding, retired this winter. She leaves a rich legacy of teaching and creative inspiration, with many students successfully working in costume design and related fields.

More somberly, we were saddened to lose Professor Emerita Virginia Scott to a battle with cancer this March. Virginia, too, was a member of the founding faculty of the department, and it is she who first shaped our renowned dramaturgy program. She was a titan in her field and still active as a scholar and artist well into her retirement, publishing books on French theater and collaborating with playwright (and one-time student) Constance Congdon '82G.

One alumna wrote a short piece that summed up many people’s thoughts about Virginia:

**Amy Levinson ’94, ’97G remembers Virginia Scott**

Virginia Scott was a force. My first interaction with her was as an undergraduate student in her theater history class and frankly, she scared the crap out of most of her students. But not me. To me, she was brilliant and wry—a wellspring of fascinating ideas that set my imagination on fire. She loved the subject of history and she taught the analysis of drama—dramaturgy—through a historical lens. And man, did she not suffer fools. During the second course I took with her that focused on her greatest passion, Molière, she asked to see me during her office hours. I was sure I was in trouble. As someone who had always underachieved academically, this was my default response. But instead, she said the thing that would change my life, “Amy, I think you may be a dramaturg.” For the next few years, Virginia shepherded my learning, but for every year after that, she shaped my life. I am, in fact, a dramaturg—and I might have never known that were it not for the formidable, indomitable Virginia Scott. And I am only one of so, so many. A good professor enriches young minds. A great professor enriches their lives. While I have thanked her many times over the years, I wanted one more opportunity to do so. The world has lost a tremendous woman, mother, teacher and friend. I love you and thank you, Virginia.

Amy originally published this tribute to Virginia on her blog: http://pairofgenes.com/2014/03/04/saying-goodbye-to-the-woman-who-changed-my-life/
While we mourned Virginia's passing and wished June all the best as she embarked on the adventures her retirement would bring, we had the good fortune to welcome a number of people to the department—some of them new faces, others familiar to us—as instructors and guest artists in various capacities.

**New Faculty Member**

**Judyie Al-Bilali**
Commonwealth Honors College Coordinator  
Assistant Professor, Performance and Theater for Social Change  
B.A. University of Massachusetts-Amherst  
M.F.A. University of Massachusetts-Amherst

Judyie is a familiar friendly face to the Department of Theater thanks to her work here as an graduate student. After spending time in South Africa as a Fulbright Scholar and teaching at New York University, she has returned to her home with us in a joint appointment with Commonwealth College, teaching Performance and Theater for Social Change.

Judyie's bio:  
For over three decades Judyie Al-Bilali has been an innovator in the fields of performing arts, arts education and applied theatre. As an actor, director, and playwright she has worked off-Broadway and in regional theater nationwide. She taught at NYU's Educational Theatre Program, the MA in Applied Theatre Program at CUNY, Amherst College, Hampshire College and the University of Virginia's Semester at Sea program. She received her BA in African American Performing Arts and her MFA in Theater from the University of Massachusetts/Amherst.

Currently a Fulbright Senior Specialist in Theatre, Judyie was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of the Western Cape in Cape Town, South Africa where she created Brown Paper Studio, an applied theatre company.

Judyie is the recipient of a Jacob 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. As an arts administrator she was the Development Director for Crossroads Theatre Company, a program officer for the New York State Council on the Arts, the Festival Coordinator for Actors Theatre of Louisville's Humana and Shorts Festivals and a Board Member on the Kentucky Arts Council.

*For the Feeling: Love & Transformation from New York to Cape Town* is a memoir about Judyie’s work in South Africa. She has also written a book of haiku poetry, *Halcyon Days*.

**Lecturers**

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

Margo Caddell is teaching lighting design classes as well as serving as an advisor for lighting designer on our shows.

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 Robsharn 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.

Lena Cuomo
Lecturer, Performance
B.A. University of Chicago
M.F.A. Acting, Columbia University

Lena Cuomo joined our performance faculty this year.

Lena has performed a variety of roles in regional theater and Off-Broadway. Most recently, she worked on a production of Macbeth at Classic Stage Company. Before moving to New York, Lena acted and danced in a Vaudeville company in the Boston area for many years. She integrates this extensive background in physical theater with her work on Shakespeare and other classical material. Her favorite roles include Electra, Goneril (King Lear), Dorine (Tartuffe), Anna (Ivanov), and Natella Abashvili (Caucasian Chalk Circle).

Collaborating with playwrights, directors, and dramaturgs under the direction of Anne Bogart, Lena deepened her interest in creating original works. She also worked with an ensemble developing different facets of Joan of Arc in Joan: Voices in the Fire, a devised piece directed by Kristin Linklater.

Lena received her MFA in Acting from Columbia University, where she directed and acted in studies of classical works (Shakespeare, Chekhov, and American playwrights) under the guidance of her mentor, Andrei Serban. Lena also studied voice, text, and Shakespeare extensively with Kristin Linklater and Andrea Haring. The physiological, emotional, and psycho-physical fundamentals of the Linklater voice work are an important influence on Lena’s acting and teaching.

Developing her long-standing interest in classical theater, Lena majored in Shakespeare and Ancient Greek as a BA student at the University of Chicago.

Lena taught Shakespeare in New York City public schools with Classic Stage Company’s Teaching Artists program, having taught dance in Boston for over a decade. She draws on her diverse background in theater to help students discover their voices and inhabit their bodies on stage.

Andrea Lauer
Lecturer, Costume Design
B.F.A. University of Texas, Austin
M.F.A. New York University, TISCH: Design for Stage and Film

When June Gaeke retired, Andrea Lauer was appointed to lead costume design, a position she filled this spring and will continue to hold into next year as we search for a tenure-track replacement for June.

Andrea Lauer is a Costume/Set Designer and Stylist, as well as a multimedia artist working with clothing and interactive, responsive technologies.

Her recent design credits include Broadway’s Bring It On, American Idiot (Broadway and touring productions), STREB’s: Forces and the 2012 London Cultural Olympiad, in addition to theatrical, dance, and opera productions in New York and around the country.
Lauer is also a stylist for various artists, musicians and publications. Her work can be seen in *Rolling Stone*, *Vogue*, *Interview*, *OUT Magazine*, The 52nd Annual Grammy Awards, The Tony Awards, red carpet events, music videos, and promo shoots.

Honors: Baryshnikov Fellow (NYU), NYSCA Grant 2011 as a STREB innovative collaborator, Clothing design inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Nominee for the 2012 Lucille Lortel Awards and the NAACP Theatre Awards for costume design.

John O’Neal
Lecturer, Playwriting
BA, Southern Illinois University

John O’Neal joined us to teach playwriting for the 2013-2014 school year.

Since 1963, John O’Neal has been a leading advocate of the view that “politics” and “art” are complementary, not opposing terms. His work as a writer, performer, educator and director has taken him to audiences throughout North America and to Europe. He is the founder and Artistic Director of Junebug Productions, which is the organizational successor to the Free Southern Theater of which O’Neal was also a cofounder and director. O’Neal was a Field Secretary of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and worked as an organizer with the United Church of Christ Committee for Racial Justice. O’Neal has authored more than 20 plays, several essays, and poetry. He has numerous credits as an actor and has toured widely in the mythic character of Junebug Jabbo Jones, which was created by people involved in SNCC to symbolize the wisdom of common people.

John has been a leader in the field of artists who work in communities of oppressed and exploited African Americans and others who are similarly situated. John has won twice the Louisiana Artists Fellowship for playwriting and the National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship for Playwriting. He also received the Ford Foundation Leadership for a Changing World Award (with colleague Theresa Holden for their work on the Color Line Project), the USArtists Foundation Fellowship in support of his writing work. He has published numerous articles, essays, poetry plays and is currently at work on a soon to be published volume of collected plays.

O’Neal is recently retired from the post of Artistic Director of Junebug Productions which he has held since founding the organization in 1980. Upon his retirement, the distinguished actor, writer, educator and director was honored with the title of Artistic Director Emeritus.

Sheila Siragusa
Lecturer, Directing
B.A. University of Massachusetts- Amherst
M.F.A. Directing, University of Massachusetts- Amherst

Like Judyie Al-Bilali, Sheila Siragusa is an alumna of our directing MFA program. She joined us to teach performance courses, as Gilbert McCauley has had his teaching workload reduced to accommodate his work with the Bridges program.

Sheila Siragusa is a director and playwright, specializing in creation of new work and first folio Shakespeare in performance. Her production of Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* was a living art installation in which museum patrons could observe the company rehearsing in floor to ceiling sheets of first folio text, culminating in a performance under an actual-size tree of words in Northampton’s A.P.E. Gallery.

She has directed at numerous venues nationally, including Theatre Three in Dallas, Abington Theatre, Manhattan Class Company, the RAW Space, the Village Gate, New Century Theatre, Chester Theatre Company, KO Theatre Works, and the August Company.
As one of the founders of both KO Theatre Festival and The August Company, Sheila has directed, acted, composed and written on more than 15 original plays. Notably, she worked with Peter Lobdell on his highly acclaimed play, *Immunity*, and with Liesel de Boor on her productions entitled *OnWords: Gone, OnWords: Chekhov and OnWords: Terror*.

At UMass, her productions include *Othello, Some Asians, The Reincarnation of Jamie Brown* and *True West*. She has been recently at work with librettist Harley Erdman and composer Eric Sawyer on their original opera, *Garden of Martyrs*, and actor Gilbert McCauley in Cormac McCarthy’s *Sunset Limited* at New Century Theatre.

Her recent piece on Rwandan radio drama is in the Fall 2013 issue of *Ecumenica: Journal of Theatre and Performance*. Her original play about privatization of natural resources, entitled *Water*, was awarded the theatre for social justice award at the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival in 2009.

Sheila has served on the faculty at NYU’s Stella Adler Conservatory, State University of New York in Oneonta and Central Connecticut State University and is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers.

**Guest Artists**

Liz Duffy Adams, playwright — playwright in residence, UMass New Play Lab
Frank Aronson, Equity actor — guest artist, *Street Scene*
Trey Anthony, playwright and performer — guest artist
Mara Blumenfeld, costume designer — workshop
Sharon Bridgeforth, playwright and performer — guest artist
John Cheek, internationally-renowned singer — guest artist, *Street Scene*
Rodney Cottier, Head, LAMDA — workshop
Jonathan Curelop, writer — panelist
Benjamin Durfee, musician — guest instructor musical theater class
John Harper, lighting director for Time Lapse Dance Company — guest speaker
Ryan Hartigan, dramaturg — guest lecturer, dramaturgy
William Hite — guest instructor musical theater class
David Korins, lighting designer — guest speaker, Theater 100
Edward Maeder, curator and textile artist — guest speaker, costume design
Annelise Nielsen, choreographer — guest artist, *Peter Pan*
Tira Palmquist, playwright — playwright in residence, UMass New Play Lab
Nissa Perrot, performer and teacher, Fitzmaurice voice technique — workshop instructor
Andrew Roberts, fight choreographer — guest artist, *Peter Pan*
Dana Schnitzer, nationally-renowned singer — guest artist, *Street Scene*
Eric Sciotto, Broadway performer and choreographer — guest workshop
Mark Swanson, Amherst College music faculty member — musical director of *Street Scene*
Justin Townsend, lighting designer — guest speaker, Theater 100
Liz Washer, make-up artist — guest workshop
Erica Wilson-Perkins, choreographer — guest instructor in musical theater class, choreographer in *Street Scene*
ZFX Rigging — guest instructors and artists for flying, *Peter Pan*

**Updates from Faculty**

Sound Design Lecturer Amy Altadonna designed sound for *Take Me Back* at Walkerspace in Soho. Her work
got a positive mention in the New York Times review of the piece.

New this year, professor Judyie Al-Bilali was an actor for our New Play Lab and directed a staged reading for Adewunmi Oke’s thesis, trey anthony’s Da Kink In My Hair. She will be traveling to South Africa for the first year of the Grahamstown Festival Course’s inaugural year.

The just-published African American Connecticut Explored (Wesleyan University Press) features an essay about actress Gwen Reed by Assistant Professor Christopher Baker. Reed, born in 1912, grew up working the tobacco fields in Connecticut. Her love of Shakespeare drew her to acting and she eventually was part of the Federal Theater Project’s Negro Unit in Hartford, one of the few cities that had both black and white companies. For twenty years she earned her living as a spokesperson for Quaker Oats, impersonated Aunt Jemima at store openings and civic events. Her later career included roles at Hartford Stage and as a well-loved children’s storyteller on local television. “Reed was part of theater history,” says Baker, “from One Third of a Nation with the Federal Theater Project to productions at a young Hartford Stage at the beginning of the regional theater movement. She never made much money as a performer—she died in poverty—but she was tenacious. She stuck to the thing she loved.” Baker was also was dramaturg/adaptor of Shakespeare’s Two Gentlemen of Verona for Hartford Stage’s Educational program, Breakdancing Shakespeare, and served as chair of the semi-final selection committee for the Horton Foote Prize for New American Plays. He directed a 10-minute opera about Paula Deen for Hartford Opera Theatre. It was written before the racial slurs controversy and was about Paula Deen going to heaven and being challenged for using all that butter and sugar; ultimately she seduces the angels with her cooking. It’s called Krispy Kremes and Butter Queens by Jennifer Jolley and Vynnie Meli.

Milan Dragicevich wrapped up his final year serving as Undergraduate Program Director and appeared in Shaw’s witty exploration of romantic ideals, Arms and the Man, with the Northern New England Repertory Theatre Company.

Faculty member Harley Erdman wrote the libretto for Garden of Martyrs, a new opera that opened in September at Northampton’s Academy of Music. Also involved in the production were current lecturers Margo Caddell and Sheila Siragusa. He completed an original screwball comedy, entitled Nobody’s Girl, commissioned by the Northampton Academy of Music, to be produced there in October 2014, with Sheila Siragusa directing, and to feature alums Keith Langsdale and Sam Rush, and current student Mac Leslie. It’s about the first woman manager of the Northampton Academy of Music and the controversy that ensued when she was appointed to this position in the early 1940s. Harley co-edited an anthology about Spanish Golden Theater in adaptation, to be published by Tamesis Press (UK) late in 2014 or early in 2015. He is starting a new opera with composer Eric Sawyer, The Scarlet Professor, based on Barry Werth’s biography of Newton Arvin, the Smith College professor whose career was ruined when he was arrested in 1960 for possessing softcore gay pornography. In November 2013, he presented at an international symposium on Spanish Golden Age theater in Bath, UK, focusing on our UMass production of Suitors. In November 2013, he spoke on a panel at the University of North Carolina/Charlotte for the production of alumna Sarah Brew’s translation of Love the Doctor. The chair of the Theater Department there is alum James Vesce—also a former teacher of Sarah’s.

Gina Kaufmann and Constance Congdon had a TCG grant through Shakespeare & Company and the Colorado Shakespeare Festival to develop No Little Rebellion. She was accepted into and attended the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers “Symposium on Musical Theatre” in New York in April. She was also accepted into the 15th International Michael Chekhov Workshop and International Festival for which she received a $500 Flex Grant for Teaching/Faculty Development.

Profs Megan Lewis and Judyie Al-Bilali are taking 14 students (from UMass, UC Irvine, SUNY Buffalo, Yale, York University in Canada, undergrads and grads) to the 40th anniversary National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, South Africa this summer. This brand new study abroad course will introduce students to the second largest theatre festival in the world (outside Edinburgh in Scotland) and the largest in the southern hemisphere. Students will learn how the performing arts can offer us a lens through which to examine questions of social justice, race, class and gender politics, history, language, memory, and the role of the arts in our global world.

Gilbert McCauley has received a Mellon Fellowship. Supported by the UMass Center for Public Policy and Administration, the Fellowship supports faculty members as they develop classes to connect the theoretical
with real-world applications. In Gil’s case, he plans to use the opportunity to create a course with a social justice perspective, in which students would work with inner-city teens to create theater pieces exploring “the roles social and cultural diversity, or lack thereof, and oppression have played in our own academic lives and in educational access more generally.”

Performance faculty member Julie Nelson played Grace in *Vigil*, by Canadian playwright Morris Panych, at Portland Stage Company in Portland, Maine. This winter, renowned pianist Estela Olevsky invited her to perform as the narrator in collaboration with her and Charles Bestor on his composition, *13 Ways of Looking at a Blackbird*. The piece is in response to and includes the Wallace Stevens poem of the same title. Finally, she performed in a workshop reading of *No Little Rebellion*, a play by Connie Congdon. The reading included actors from the UMass Department of Theater and Shakespeare & Company.

Puppetry International featured scenic design faculty member Miguel Romero’s article on the Parque de las Ciencias (Museum of Natural History and Technology, Granada, Spain) exhibit in honor of 30 years of brilliant work by the company Titeres Etcetera, Spain’s Illustrious puppet company.

Guest lecturer Sheila Siragusa ’03G assistant directed Harley Erdman’s opera *Garden of Martyrs* in the fall. She is directing Sarah Treem’s play *The How and the Why* at New Century in July, and *Nobody’s Girl* in the fall for the grand reopening of the Academy of Music after its renovation.
Outreach

In addition to its primary educational mission, the Department of Theater strives to connect with the community through not only its productions, but a number of additional events that offer ways to enhance our base offerings, as well as separate special events.

Our First Friday Q&A is an institution — 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. For a number of our productions, including the Play Lab, we offered multiple opportunities for people to interact with the production artists during the run through additional Q&As.

The Street Scene team also offered a trio of events to increase people’s understanding of the context in which the opera was created. The event descriptions were as follows:

**Cabaret! Songs of Kurt Weill**
Sunday, February 2, 4 p.m.
Sweeney Concert Hall, Smith College
Kurt Weill, composer of “Mack the Knife” and so many other standards from the 1940s, has had a huge impact on popular music. His songs have been recorded by performers as diverse as Nina Simone, PJ Harvey, The Doors and Sting. Clifton Noble, a renowned pianist with many ties to the Five Colleges, performs some of Weill’s best known songs alongside of many of his lesser known pieces with Five College student singers.

**Hold Fast to Dreams: The Poetry of Langston Hughes**
Sunday, February 9, 4 p.m.
Bezanson Recital Hall, Fine Arts Center, UMass
Langston Hughes, jazz poet, social activist, novelist and playwright, portrayed the lives of working class blacks in America. UMass professor Steven Tracy hosts an evening of recitations and musical performances of Hughes’ greatest works.

**Stirring The Melting Pot: Elmer Rice’s We, The People**
Sunday, February 16, 2 p.m.
University Museum of Contemporary Art, Fine Arts Center, UMass
Elmer Rice was an American playwright noted for his often experimental and politically charged plays. This will be a reading of his great polemical work We, The People.
Each show is free and open to the public.
A coproduction of Five College Opera and the 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.

The Peter Pan production us an opportunity to reach out to community members who aren’t usually in our theater. We offered a special event to parents and children, showing them some of the magic of theater. Pre-show, actors from the production offered a sneak preview into the way their prepare for their characters. Post-show, other members of the production team demonstrated flying, talked about costume elements, and signed autographs. Our student matinee was a sell-out, with 3 elementary schools joining our usual middle and high school crowd. Among the groups was Holyoke Community Charter School. For many of the students, the younger ones especially, it was a first theater experience, and they enjoyed it thoroughly by all accounts. Several schools stayed for the post-show Q&A.

We hosted Phallacies in the Rand Theater for a special performance on April 23.
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
Department members are motivated not only in the artistic and academic aspects of theater but in the administrative as well. To supplement the budgets for season productions, independent pieces, scholarly research and artistic side projects, our students (graduate and undergraduate), as well as our faculty successfully applied for grants from a variety of local and national sources.

FACULTY

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STUDENT

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Scholarships

The Department has three scholarships specifically given to its majors and students taking its courses.

The Susan M. and Larry G. Benedict Scholarship Endowment was created to provide undergraduate scholarship support for students within the Department of Theater who are studying theater design, production, and management. The Chair of the Department of Theater or designee, in consultation with key faculty and staff, will select each year’s recipient(s). Special consideration will be given to sophomores and juniors who have demonstrated technical proficiency and a commitment of professionalism.

The Frank Prentice Rand Scholarship in Drama, funded by the generous bequest of the late Margarita H. Rand, honors Professor Frank Prentice Rand, who taught dramatic literature at UMass in the English Department. Our Rand Theater is named for him because he and Mrs. Rand loved theater and promoted the founding of our department. Nominees for the Frank Prentice Rand Scholarship in Drama should be undergraduate theater majors of exceptional scholarship and outstanding achievement in the areas of directing, producing, playwriting, and/or dramaturgy.

The College of Humanities and Fine Arts has generously made scholarship funds available to assist UMass undergraduate or graduate students in making the Grahamstown Festival Course possible as a study abroad option. These funds are awarded based on need and/or merit. Priority is given to Theater majors, but all UMass students can apply for consideration.

The Denise Wagner Community Spirit Award does not come with a cash prize but acknowledges students who have contributed to the community spirit of the Department of Theater.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Peter Caleb Vaiknoras</td>
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<td>Sylvia Barjolo</td>
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Development

The Department of Theater used 2013-2014 to continue the development momentum it had gained from the 2012-2013 40th anniversary season.

Now that the Rand Theater is refurbished, we shifted away from nostalgia for its orange carpet and toward an appreciation of the legacy yet to be created in the new purple iteration of the theater. We do, however, remain as irreverent as ever in our approach to development.

To that end, we crafted a seat-buying campaign called Mark Your Spot. We recruited department dogs to pose in the theater with chair Penny Remsen and encouraged donors to “mark their spot” and claim a seat for themselves or a loved one in the Rand. We offered seating at two purchase levels, $200 for the loge and balcony and $400 for the orchestra seats. Alumni, emeriti and current faculty stepped up to purchase seats, and plaques are to be installed this summer.

We courted our alumni and other donors during a series of dinners held with chair Penny Remsen as well as HFA officials including Dean Julie Hayes and development officer Lucia Miller both on-campus and throughout the country.

As we did last year, 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 have 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.

The image below shows the buckslip included in year-end giving solicitations by the university for a targeted list of potential donors, and nicely sums up the fun tone of our Mark Your Spot efforts.
People

Continuing our tradition of encouraging our friends to think of themselves as donors by introducing them to people from all walks of life who support us, we profiled three donors this year who remember theater during their giving. The following are the posters created from those donor profiles, which were displayed in the lobby at all shows and inserted into programs at all events.

Mathew Sgan

Graduating Year: 1956
Major: Sociology

A favorite UMass Theater memory: I was in a number of productions. My most memorable experiences were as a cast member in Shaw’s Arms and the Man and Giraudoux’s The Madwoman of Chaillot. I also directed the winning interclass play (one act) in 1954. I have many fond memories of participating in theatrical productions and the student group Roister Doisters at UMass.

Why do you donate to the Department of Theater? I would like UMass students to be exposed to theatrical opportunities and to theatrical experiences, either as production participants or as appreciative audience members. Too many, I think, have never had that experience and, if they don’t have an opportunity to do so at UMass, will not appreciate how enjoyable and educational stage productions are. When I read about the performances, alumni, faculty, and staff associated with the UMass Department of Theater, I am impressed with their accomplishments.
Dee Waterman

Department Affiliation: Friend and fellow artist, actor in many Department of Theater productions

A Favorite UMass Theater Memory: Greg Leaming directed Samuel Beckett’s *Endgame* at UMass, and the role Dee Waterman played called for her to hide under the stage for the whole production “until we came up through trash cans. So I had to go, get under there with my candy and my lozenges and things, and lie there under the stage.”

Why do you donate to the Department of Theater: Because some of my happiest and most productive moments were spent on the stage and working in rehearsals. I made such wonderful friends!
Graduating Year: 1966

Major: MFA in technical theater and design

A favorite UMass Theater memory: Stockman met his late first wife, Maxine (Forward) Stockman in 1964 while working on a production of Streets of New York in Bowker — he had a rare acting gig, and she was on the crew.

“The catalyst to the action had to go into a burning building and rescue a receipt, a cursed receipt... And he’s on fire and the curtain closes and all sorts of wonderful things. And the young lady who the technical director got to set that fire every night, I married!”

Why do you donate to the Department of Theater? “If you ask me what I owe to this university: I got married!” Stockman said. He also feels loyal to a program that gave him a chance, and feels it’s important to give back. “You ask, ‘Why give?’ Well, number one, I’m able to. I think that’s the bottom line. I wish I could do more.”
NEWS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Our Stages newsletter goes out 5 to 6 times a year to our friends, alumni, donors, and fellow theater artists. Each one features news from current and past department members and invites people to send in updates. It is an all-digital format, which has as its bonus the possibility of including youtube clips, audio files, and websites our friends share with us, as well as the possibility of creating short podcast clips that people can listen to. Updates and excerpts below are the year’s issues. Full stories and back issues are at umass.edu/theater/stages.php

UPDATES FROM ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

Midori Harris ’05 makes the most of a dream deferred

Sometimes a dream deferred leads to a different way to find fulfillment. Midori Harris ’05 had intended to pursue a career as a director until her health put her off that path five years ago. A conversation with a friend in need of a producer, director Paul Takacs, gave her a new way to be part of New York City’s theater community. Fast forward to this winter, and Harris and Takacs are the founders and producing directors of the Shop Theater. The company has just closed its second production, a sold-out, rave-reviewed-in-the-Times run of Jon Fosse’s I Am the Wind. Given that their first outing, Philip Ridley’s Tender N-palm, was also sold out and rave-reviewed by Ben Brantley, that’s a pretty good track record.

Harris’s foray into producing has its foundations in her time at UMass Theater. When she was a sophomore, she and fellow theater major Shannon Stillings (now Dupont) founded the Shakespeare Festival. It has morphed, over the years

After graduating, Harris had her sights set firmly on directing. Five years ago, she landed one of 6 spots in the New School for Drama’s prestigious directing program. Only a semester in, though, things went wrong — she became ill with what was eventually diagnosed as Graves disease, and her doctors said there was no way she was in any kind of shape to continue the program.

Ironically, the illness that felled her may have been prompted by her life’s passion. “I think that grad school was actually a cause of me getting sick. Graves’ disease is an emotionally stress-induced illness... As a director I get pretty involved emotionally,” Harris explained.

“When I got sick, it was really devastating for me,” she said, and she freely admits that she misses directing every single day and hopes to return to it one day.

Producing isn’t exactly a piece of cake, but its demands weigh differently on Harris.

“I feel like when I’m producing I can be removed enough from the emotional aspects. It still matters to me, and it’s still important, and I can get stressed at times, but it’s not on the same level,” Harris explained.
Although they have the same title — co-producing director — Paul Takacs’ role is more akin to that of an artistic director, while Harris handles more of the business aspects, dealing with contracts and the like. “We complement each other,” she said of their friendship and business relationship. “He respects me, and we make decisions together.”

One afternoon shortly after his graduation, the two had lunch and he talked to her about a play he’d like to mount that was in need of a producer.

“He wasn’t even asking me to produce necessarily, just talking to me about it. But I said ‘Oh I have a lot of producing experience, so if you need some help with that, then just let me know,’” Harris recalled. “It was just sort of this magical moment where we said, ‘Oh yeah, that could work!’”

***

After a successful crowd-funded campaign in the summer of 2013, Lian Amaris ’02 produced and directed her original play The Video Game Monologues at The Phoenix Theater in San Francisco and Nuyorican Poets Cafe in New York City this Fall. Lian continues to write, perform, and direct original genre-bending work as she has every year since her graduation from UMass and looks forward to touring TVGM in 2014. For the past year, she has worked at a video game company in San Francisco as Director of User Engagement, translating her creative communication expertise into great audience experiences.

Laura Bailey ’03 is a script supervisor for independent films. She works all over New England and New York, and makes her home in Connecticut. “I’m the eyes and ears for every department,” Bailey explained. “I keep track of continuity... I make sure everything is going to edit together seamlessly.”

Recent grads Daniel Cuff, Thomas Kelsey, Annelise Nielsen, Julia Piker, Linda Tardiff, Peter Staley and Zach Smith formed The Deer Players to perform The Brink of Us in New York City this spring. They learned about Delaney Britt Brewer’s play from guest UMass instructor Kara-Lynn Vaeni, who brought the playwright to UMass for a reading and directed this production as well.

On page 209 of Jonathan Curelop ’87’s book, Tanker 10, there’s a description theater alumni will find immediately familiar. “The lobby was carpeted entirely in an ugly red-orange and gave way to two sets of staircases going up and down, deeper into the lobby, out of sight.”

Yes, that’s the Rand Theater lobby he’s describing, all right, in its vintage, pre-renovation state. Tanker 10 is Curelop’s debut novel. The last quarter of the book takes place at UMass, and the Department of Theater features significantly.

Andrew DiBartolomeo ’11 stopped by to let us know his stint as a stunt performer in China was up — he moving on to Singapore Universal Studios. This show, which is based on the Kevin Costner flick, Water World, has more water stunts than his previous show, including lots of jet skiing.

Jessica Hegarty ’11 emailed us to say she’s currently the Assistant Box Office Manager for the Charles Playhouse, the theater made notable by Blue Man Group and Broadway in Boston.

Troy Hourie went on a two month artist residency in a rural village in Portugal. He built four installations in an exhibit in a glass gallery in the town square. He has compiled images and an archival video for his Escape to Beira installation in Portugal at http://troyhourie.com/escape-to-beira-portugal

Alison Maloof moved to Florida where I worked at Asolo Repertory Theater as the Literary Assistant and Dramaturg for almost a year an half. “I then left that job for Florida Stage: I worked as the Artistic Associate and Dramaturg. Sadly, Florida Stage had to declare bankruptcy and I lost my job. This experience sent me on quite a journey: I became a certified a yoga teacher, experimented with being a trail worker in the backcountry of California, and now I am currently pursuing a doctorate in Naturopathic Medicine. Harley encouraged me to write to because I have recently had a realization about some of my studies in science and I have as he called it ’one of those ‘why majoring in theater prepares you for other things’ testimonials.’ My background in theater definitely stands out amongst my peers here in medical school, most of whom have Bachelor of Science in chemistry, biology, or neuroscience. For many of them its difficult to see how theater could be useful
at all as a doctor, but ultimately I know my background in theater will serve me in ways yet to be determined and in ways that have already come to light.

Tim Matos ’00 wrote us a newsy email about his latest doings: "It’s been a long time since I’ve checked in. It is so nice to see so many familiar names in Stages. My new book, a prose-poem novella titled The Secret Correspondence of Loon and Fiasco, has just been accepted for publication by Mayapple Press. It is slotted to be released in Dec 2014. In the last five years I have also published three other books of poetry and a book of scholarship on the productions of Ibsen’s plays in late nineteenth-century London. It was based on the dissertation I wrote at UMass. Harley was the second reader on my dissertation committee. It is called Ibsen’s Foreign Contagion: Henrik Ibsen, Arthur Wing Pinero and Modernism on the London Stage. I don’t publish under the name, Tim, however. I publish under Carlo Matos.”

John McDermott ’92 recently designed Hope and Gravity at Creede Repertory Theater in Colorado, Henry IV and V for Shakespeare in Clark Park, Philadelphia, Benefactors at Berkshire Theater Festival, Red at Dorset Theater Festival, Bright Light City at Los Angeles Theater Center, Broad Channel for UP Theater, A Fable at the Cherry Lane Theater, Ethel Sings at the Beckett Theater and 17 Orchard Point at Theater Row. He was just appointed Assistant Professor of Set Design at Adelphi University.

Nissa Perrot graduated from UMass already a strong, creative voice — she acted in a number of mainstage productions, she mounted her own piece her senior year, and she took a turn at the helm of the then-student-run Renaissance Festival at the Center for Renaissance Studies. She headed to graduate school a few years later intent on building her skills as an actor. Along the way, she has found a new way to express herself, as a proponent and instructor of Fitzmaurice Voicework, a voicework approach created and championed by Catherine Fitzmaurice. Perrot is now living in New York, acting, teaching and voice-coaching. Although the latter two are a direction she didn’t anticipate in 2006 as she prepared to leave UMass, Perrot sees the work she’s doing now as a natural progression of the passions she pursued at UMass.

Justin Townsend ’97 won an award for Sustained Excellence of Lighting Design at the Obies.

**Updates from Students**

Dramaturgy MFA student Alison Bowie published an article entitled "Identity and Collective Memory: Theatre’s Role in Memorializing War" in The International Journal of Social, Political, and Community Agendas in the Arts.

Like many other students, Anna Engelsman joined UMass Theater intent on performance. Like many, she found something else to love in our “try everything” curriculum. For Engelsman, it was stage management and event planning. Those interests led her to spend the fall of 2013 in New York City where she interned for event production company Van Wyck and Van Wyck. The company, which is based in New York but operates all over the US, puts on everything from large-scale weddings to industry events. Among the clients Engelsman named were the New York City Ballet, Bulgari and Beyoncé, whose perfume launch the company planned.

Student Philip James Montaño’s play, American Empire, was part of the Provincetown Theater’s Spring Playwrights Festival this April.

Brianna Sloane ’14G premiered an original work co-written with UMass student Emma Ayres entitled The Emily Dickinson Project, which was funded by a grant from the UMass Arts Council. The piece is a 9-woman promenade play moving the audience through variations of Dickinson’s life and voice, while literally moving them through her home. All the spoken text was drawn from Emily Dickinson’s personal letters. Brianna is also directing a production of Shakespeare’s Comedy of Errors, part of Hampshire Shakespeare Company’s 2014 Mainstage Season.
Looking ahead to 2014-2015

Our Season

We’ve made a few changes to the way we run our season this year. Our show runs will begin with a half-price preview night intended to draw our students to see and support their classmates, and to entice local theater lovers to be the first to see our shows. We also hope the lower price brings new folks thinking about taking a risk on us. Since word of mouth is the single biggest motivator cited by our audiences, we hope that this new structure helps us create the buzz that will help us grow audiences for our second week of performances.

The shows will officially open on Saturdays, now, and all evening performances will begin at 7:30 in response to feedback from students reluctant to begin their evening’s entertainment at 8 p.m.

Our audience surveys told us that some of our most loyal attendees are community patrons over 60, that most of our patrons are consumers of multiple cultural events every year, so our advertising strategies will focus on venues that reach an older demographic and arts patrons to draw in that already-inclined audience.

The Merchant of Venice
By William Shakespeare
Directed by Shakespeare & Co. Artistic Director Tony Simotes
Preview night: Oct. 23 at 7:30 p.m.
Regular performances: Oct. 25 at 3 p.m.*, Oct. 29 at 7:30 p.m., Oct. 30 at 7:30 p.m., Nov. 1 at 2 and 7:30 p.m.
School matinee: Oct. 28 at 10 a.m.
The Rand Theater
*Our opening day performance is a special fundraising event and will have assigned seating.

“All that glisters is not gold.” To fund his friend’s efforts to court the resourceful lady Portia, Venetian merchant Antonio borrows money from the much-abused Shylock. When Antonio defaults on his loan, Shylock demands his due: a pound of the merchant’s flesh. Shakespeare’s provocative comedy asks tough questions about mercy, justice, and belonging that resonate today. Tony Simotes, artistic director of Shakespeare & Company, returns to UMass to direct alumnus Stephen Driscoll ’73 as Shylock in this production.

A New Brain
Music and lyrics by William Finn, book by William Finn and James Lapine
Directed by Glenn Proud
Preview night: Nov. 13 at 7:30 p.m.
Regular performances: Nov. 15 at 7:30 p.m., Nov. 18 at 7:30 p.m., Nov. 19 at 7:30 p.m., Nov. 20 at 7:30 p.m., Nov. 21, Nov. 22 at 2 and 7:30 p.m.
The Curtain Theater

“Those who are marking time, wake up/Life is a cause that you have to take up.” Who says death can’t be funny? Certainly not William Finn and James Lapine, whose bittersweet comic musical A New Brain strikes chords of exaltation and despair in turn. When blocked songwriter Gordon Schwinn is diagnosed with arteriovenous malformation, the prospect of high-risk brain surgery propels him into a frenzy of composing—but will this newfound creative zeal see him safely through the ordeal he faces? A New Brain treads the tenuous boundaries of life and death with charm, gusto, and a breath of spring in its step.
Cat on a Hot Tin Roof
By Tennessee Williams
Directed by Jared Culverhouse
Preview night: Feb. 26 at 7:30 p.m.
Regular performances: Feb. 28 at 7:30 p.m., March 4 at 7:30 p.m., March 5, at 7:30 p.m., March 6 at 7:30 p.m.,
March 7 at 2 and 7:30 p.m.
School matinee: March 3 at 10 a.m.
The Rand Theater

“What is the victory of a cat on a hot tin roof? ...Just staying on it, I guess, as long as she can...” Sixty years
after its premiere, Tennessee Williams's thundering masterpiece has lost none of its impact. An American
classic, Cat serves up an explosive Southern cocktail of sex, death, and revelation in the form of its unforget-
table heroine, Maggie, and her struggle for dominance on the “hot tin roof” of her marriage bed. As the em-
battled Pollitt clan gathers to celebrate a dying patriarch's birthday, will Maggie emerge victorious?

UMass New Play Lab
By TBD
Directed by Jared Culverhouse
Performances for the two plays selected will alternate. Please check our website for updates about the plays
and their scheduled performances. There will not be a preview night. Because this is a staged reading, all
performances will be half price to encourage patrons to attend performances of both plays.
March 25 at 7:30 p.m., March 267 at 7:30 p.m., March 27 at 7:30 p.m., March 28 at 2 p.m., April 1 at 7:30 p.m.,
April 2 at 7:30 p.m., April 3 at 7:30 p.m., April 4 at 2 and 7:30 p.m.
The Curtain Theater

Fresh plays...served raw. Now in its second year, the UMass New Play Lab exists to develop exceptional new
plays in collaboration with visionary playwrights. This nationally-recognized playwriting festival will show-
case two innovative, challenging new works in staged readings that follow ten intensive days of rehearsal
with the authors in residence. Raw, unpredictable, and fun, the UMass New Play Lab will redefine how you
experience theater.

Dead Man's Cell Phone
By Sarah Ruhl
Directed by Glenn Proud
Preview night: April 16 at 7:30 p.m.
Regular performances: April 18 at 7:30 p.m., April 22 at 7:30 p.m., April 23 at 7:30 p.m., April 24 at 7:30 p.m.,
April 25 at 2 and 7:30 p.m.
The Rand Theater

“When something rings you have to answer it. Don't you?” A ringing cell phone, an empty bowl of lobster
bisque, and a dead man one table over—so begins Sarah Ruhl’s wildly imaginative Dead Man's Cell Phone.
When Jean answers the phone of a recently deceased stranger, she unwittingly embarks on a transforma-
tional journey of family deception, international intrigue, and romantic discovery. By turns touching and
harrowing, Ruhl’s play is a whimsical and whip-smart meditation on the pleasures and pains of love in an
increasingly digitized world.
The beginning of the next year will see us joined by playwright Kim Euell. She will teach playwriting and advise our graduate students as they work on the UMass New Play Lab.

Kim Euell
euell@theater.umass.edu
Visiting Artist in Playwriting
BA, Stanford University
MFA, Theatre Arts, University of Iowa Playwrights Workshop

Kim Euell is a playwright, dramaturg and arts educator who is passionately committed to promoting socially relevant new plays. She has headed play development programs at Center Theater Group’s Mark Taper Forum, the Tony Award-winning Hartford Stage Company, San Jose Repertory Theatre and The Robey Theatre Company where she was the California Arts Council’s Playwright in Residence. She has served as director of the New America Playwrights Festival and The Taper’s Juneteenth Festival of New Plays. Kim has also worked as a new play dramaturg at the Sundance Institute’s Theatre Lab and the Eugene O’Neill Playwrights Conference. Voices!, the play development program she founded at Hartford Stage to promote new plays by under-represented writers, recently yielded the Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Water By The Spoonful*.

Kim’s plays have been performed in cities across the country including New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle, Portland, Detroit, Savannah and Louisville. Penumbra Theatre Company’s production of *The Diva Daughters DuPree* was named Outstanding New Show of The Year by the Minneapolis-St. Paul Star Tribune in their yearend review. A winner of the Theodore Ward Prize, this play was published in an anthology entitled *Best Black Plays* by Northwestern University Press.

Kim edited for TCG Publications, *Plays from the Boom Box Galaxy*, the first anthology exclusively devoted to theatre informed by spoken word poetry and the Hip Hop aesthetic (with Robert Alexander). She has published articles and reviews in *American Theatre Magazine*, *The African American Review* and *The Oakland Tribune*.

Kim has taught at the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Iowa, Wesleyan University, Trinity College and the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, where she was a Writer in Residence. She is a Fulbright Senior Specialist in Playwriting.

Kim has served as a performance site evaluator for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and a panelist for the NEA, Alpert Awards in the Arts, Rockefeller Foundation, Pew Charitable Trust, Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation, California Arts Council, Seattle Arts Commission and the New Jersey Arts Commission’s Playwrights Fellowship Awards.

An Honors Graduate of Stanford University, Kim received her MFA in Theatre Arts from the University of Iowa’s Playwrights Workshop, where she was a Dean’s Fellow and a Stanley International Research Fellow.
Outreach

During the 2014-2015 we will be offering two student matinee performances: one each for *The Merchant of Venice* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. 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.

In addition, we plan to offer events related to many of our productions that will add to patrons’ enjoyment and understanding of the work we produce.
Development

The opening of the 2014-2015 will see patrons take seats that have been “Marked” for our “Mark Your Spot” campaign, as we plan to install the plaques for the seats our patrons have purchased over the previous season. Between the seat plaques and a new lobby display about the campaign, we hope to generate new interest in the campaign and prompt additional seat purchases.

Pre-department-but-nonetheless-loyal alumnus Stephen Driscoll ’73 will be part of the department for real come October, when he appears in our upcoming production of The Merchant of Venice as Shylock. We’ plan to use the opening performance as an opportunity to fund raise for our Rand Lobby renovation by inviting friends — of ours, of Stephen's, and of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts — to join us for the performance and a reception after the show.

Tony Simotes, artistic director of SHakespeare & Co., will add additional lustre to the event as the director of this production.

Starting the season thusly, will, we hope give us momentum on our fund-raising efforts to carry us into a fall that will include a renewed pitch to Mark Your Spot via mailings, emails, and a phone campus through the university’s development arm.

Department Chair Penny Remsen will continue to reach out to alumni and friends in hopes of finding support for the ongoing project — we are moving steadily toward our goal of completing the renovation but have some work left to do before we reach our goal.

All of our program will continue to include the donor profiles, which will also be displayed in the lobby, to continue to encourage our patrons and other friends to think of themselves as donors.