

Illinois Theatre Association

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ITA ANNOUNCEMENTS

REGISTRATION IS NOW AVAILABLE for the ITA's Annual Statewide Non-Equity Professional Auditions on 2/7 and 2/8. The deadline for applications is 1/16.

[Click here for details.](#)

Are YOU interested in getting involved with the 2016 Illinois High School Theatre Festival? Send an email to Carmel DeStefano, 2016 IHSTF Executive Director, to inquire about positions

eFOLLOWSPOT December, 2014

Introducing - Ted!

By Dinah Barthelmeß, ITA President

December in a junior high school is a really fun month. We enjoy holiday concerts, festive gatherings, energized kids, and even ugly sweater competitions! The camaraderie around the building seems to build as we all look forward, kids and teachers alike, to a few weeks of winter break. The winter months that follow December, however, can drag in their dreary darkness, and maintaining one's motivation can at times be difficult.



This fall I took part in a course offered by my district in which we watched and discussed a number of TED Talks. If you are not yet familiar with www.ted.com, stop reading, open your browser and look it

up right this minute. TED is a nonprofit devoted to spreading ideas, usually in the form of short, powerful talks. One of the talks we watched in this course really stuck with me, and I wanted to share it with all of you.

As his TED bio indicates, Shawn Achor is the winner of over a dozen distinguished teaching awards at [Harvard University](#), where he delivered lectures on positive psychology in the most popular class at Harvard. His talk "The Happy Secret To Better Work" is inspiring. Simple, small changes in your outlook can really make a difference.

Take a look [at this link!](#) Let me know what you think!

As always, if you have questions, ideas, concerns or just want to say hello, please reach out to me. I'd love to hear your thoughts.

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ATTENTION ACTORS AND CASTING REPRESENTATIVES

ITA'S 2015 STATEWIDE PROFESSIONAL AUDITIONS

February 7-8, 2015

open on the Planning Committee!

**Actors - the deadline for submissions is in two weeks.
Casting Reps - registration form are available on-line.**

ITA EVENTS

Limited Slots Available!

January 8-10, 2015

Illinois High School
Theatre Festival
Ignite the Passion Within
U of I Urbana-Champaign

SIGN UP FOR AUDITIONS TODAY

MOCK AUDITION CLINICS* AVAILABLE:

February 7-8, 2015

ITA's Annual Professional
State-Wide Non-Equity
Auditions

January 11, 2015 - time tba

Location TBA, (near Champaign/Urbana or Springfield)
Stay Tuned for Registration Info

March 7, 2015

ITA's Annual Creative
Drama and Theatre for
Young Audiences
Conference - stay tuned
for details.

January 12 - 6:30p-9:00p

The Foxhole Chicago
2444 W. Montrose Ave. (Store Front)
Chicago, IL 60618
[Click Here to Register](#)

ITA Member Events

March 7, 2015

Chicago Spotlight, Inc.
Theatrical Skills Workshop:
"Safe Rigging - Heads Up!"
New Lenox

January 17 - 1:00p-4:00p

Elmhurst College, Elmhurst
Mill Theatre - 253 Walter St., Elmhurst IL
[Click Here to Register](#)

[Submit an Event!](#)

January 25, 9:30a-12:00p

The Foxhole Chicago
2444 W. Montrose Ave. (Store Front)
Chicago, IL 60618
[Click Here to Register](#)

JOB POSTINGS

Cutting Hall Performing

Arts Center is looking for a
part-time theatre technician to
work supporting events in its
theatres.

February 1, 2015 - 1:00p-3:30p

Millikin University
Kaeuper Hall
Decatur, IL
[Click Here to Register](#)

Lake Park High School is
looking for a
choreographer for the
musical *Annie*.

*These clinics are available FREE to ITA members. All others must pay a \$10 registration fee. Not yet a member of the ITA? It's not too late to sign up! Join the ITA.

[Click here to visit the ITA's Job Board for details.](#)

Description:

Each year the ITA hosts its Professional Auditions, where more than 300 auditionees are provided the opportunity to audition in front of a theatre full of Directors and Casting Representatives from throughout the state and beyond.

FEATURED PERFORMANCES

Palatine High School

Annie
February 4 - 7
7:00pm
Region 2

This clinic will give you "insider information" about these auditions (from how applications are chosen to what to expect on the day of auditions), and focus on how you can make the most out of your 90 seconds on stage, including:

Want your performance to be featured here?

Be sure to list your performance on the [ITA](#)

- *your entrance onto the stage
- *your introduction

Performance Calendar!

- *your choice of material
- *your ability to connect to your audition pieces
- *your exit

ITA Links:

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College/University Group Discussion

Community Theatre Group Discussion

Creative Drama Group Discussion

Professional Theatre Group Discussion

Secondary School Theatre Group Discussion

Theatre for Young Audiences Group Discussion

FOLLOW OUR TWEETS:

Illinois Theatre Association

IHSTF

The clinic will also include a discussion on headshot and resume submissions, and include helpful hints on how to best prepare for this very important audition. A select number of auditionees will be chosen to perform their audition pieces in front of the audience, and be given feedback by the facilitators. Musical theatre auditionees: an accompanist will NOT be provided. Be prepared to sing without music, or bring a CD with tracks on it. A CD player will be provided.

It's Audition Time!

By Allan Kimball, ITA University/College Division Representative

Whether you are a professional pursuing the ITA's Annual Statewide Auditions in February, or a student working on an audition for the spring musical or college scholarships, knowing how to put together an effective audition package is a must. Working with the Illinois High School Theatre Festival, we have put together a series of Audition Tips. While this is by no means everything you should know about preparing for an audition, it can be used as a great starting point.



TYPES OF MONOLOGUES TO AVOID

Monologues Not in the Style of the Show. Your monologue choice should show that you have done your homework and have some knowledge about the show being cast. If you are not auditioning for a specific show but for a college, pick a monologue that is more universal and not "show/type" specific. Show the College Representatives the best you have to offer.

Monologues Requiring Accents. Normally it's best to audition with your actual voice. Let them see and hear the real you and how you'll sound if cast in their show. NOTE: Accents you are GOOD at should be included on your resume.

Monologues that Aren't Age Appropriate. While it is true that in high school productions you may have played an old man or woman, but chances are once you leave your school, you are not likely going to be cast as an old lady or gentleman. When auditioning it is best to play close to your age, so you can help the college representatives see you in potential roles instead of unrealistic ones.



Monologues that Are Too Long. READ INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY! If they request 2 minutes...that is what they mean. Don't abuse the requested monologue or monologue/song combo length by pushing the time limit.

Illinois Theatre Association

The ITA is a network of dedicated theatre artists and educators advocating quality theatre throughout Illinois. Please join us!

123 Mill Pond Dr.
Glendale Heights, IL
60139
312-265-5922 (office)
312-265-6101 (fax)
www.illinoistheatre.org

Please Visit ITA's Corporate Sponsors:

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DesignLab

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Intelligent Lighting

Light Chicago

USITT Midwest

Associate Corporate Sponsor:

Music Makers Theatre



The Illinois Theatre
Association is partially

Practice...Practice...Practice until your entire audition package fits WITHIN the time limit!

Monologues that Are Too Short. The opposite is true, too! You don't have a whole lot of time in that audition room, so you've got to make every second count. You should not take less than a minute and a half. You're only doing yourself a disservice by not showing off for as long as they'll allow. Again, Practice...Practice...Practice until your entire audition package fits WITHIN the time limit!

Monologues that Are Really Dialogues. Your favorite scene from your favorite play would make such a perfect monologue, but there are other characters in it. Trying to cut out people and piece it together can create a finished product that sounds awkward and could be mistaken for insecurity/unfamiliarity on your part. Be sure your cutting works.

Monologues from Monologue Books. This is a definite NO NO! If you can find books like The Best Monologues for Girls or The Best Monologues for Boys, everyone else has probably found them, too. Be original. Be consumers of dramatic literature and search for wonderful moments in these works.

Monologues from Movies. You are NOT auditioning for a movie (unless you are ☺). There is a wealth of beautiful dramatic works out there. Show the college representatives that you know your stuff.

Monologues that Try to Cover Too Many Emotions. If your monologue requires you to scream, laugh, cry, and whisper all in one sixty-second period, it's time to find a new monologue. Pick a monologue that focuses on one emotion (two at most), and take the time to prove you can play it convincingly. Sometimes less IS more!



Monologues that Aren't Really "You." The most important part of choosing a monologue is choosing one that represents you, the actor behind the character. Choose a monologue that you care about, one that means something to you. You need to connect to the monologue on an emotional level.

Monologues about Suicide. Sadly people do commit suicide. In the context of a show, it is worth exploring, but as a monologue, it brings everyone in the room down and deals with a topic some people may not want to think about. Just saying...

Monologues about Sex. The topic of sex and sexual exploits from a high school student to an adult is awkward and can make people uncomfortable. It is probably best to avoid this topic. Just saying...

Monologues about Abortion. They can be too controversial, they can be inappropriate, and they can become too dramatic. Again, just saying...

Monologues about How My Life Sucks/Teenage angst. We have all been there and know that being a teenager is tough. However, "my life sucks" is not the message you want to give

supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.

in an audition. You should strive to grow beyond the "teenager" and search for the talent within.

Monologues that Say, "Haha, look how funny I am." You're trying too hard; just be you. If you're funny, then a simple comedic monologue will read funny. Don't push the humor.

Monologues using "F\$%^ that S&@#, I mean #\$!%." A monologue is not a contest to see how many times you can swear in one minute. While it does happen in adult theatre, you're still in high school. Use age appropriate language.

SOME TIPS AS YOU LOOK FOR A PIECE

Look for a monologue...

that does not come from a monologue book or movie. Audition monologues ideally should be from published plays. NOTE: It is a GOOD IDEA to read the entire play the piece comes from.



that is active as opposed to passive. Make sure you are talking mostly in the present tense as opposed to talking about what you did yesterday or last year. We want to feel like a fly on the wall witnessing a conversation as opposed to hearing it second hand.

that doesn't try to shock by being offensive, using excessive swear words, or being inappropriately loud or negative. **that** has a clear audience. Who are you talking to? Why do you feel the need to tell them this? What do you want from them?

that has a clear super objective: What do you ultimately want from the person you are talking to by the end of the monologue?

that follows all guidelines, time limits and general requirements for each audition.

that is age appropriate!

In short, think of your monologue as a **Verbal Headshot**. This piece should be a representation of who you are and what you have to offer. Don't try to impress. The only thing that is really impressive is when a young person walks in the room, stays true to himself/herself, presents a simple but well thought out package, and shows confidence, intelligence, and maturity.

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THE PENGUIN PROJECT: Creating Access to Community Theatre for Young Artists with Special Needs

By Andy Morgan, ITA Theatre for Young Audiences Division
Representative

The saying goes... "If it plays in Peoria, it will play anywhere!" Well, it has played in Peoria, and it is now in its 11th year of production. But this is not your typical theatre production...

Once a year, a magical and touching celebration of the human spirit unfolds at Eastlight Theatre in East Peoria, Illinois.

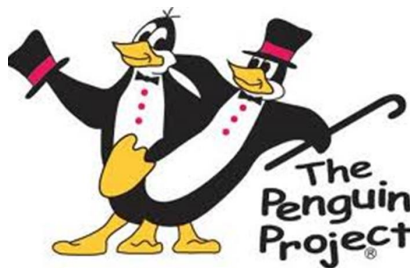
A group of children in a program called *The Penguin Project* take to the stage to perform a modified version of a well-

known Broadway musical. These productions are unique, however, because all of the roles are filled by young artists with developmental disabilities. They are joined on stage by a dedicated group of "peer mentors" - children the same age without disabilities - who have volunteered to work side-by-side with them for 4 months of rehearsals and through the final performance.



The Penguin Project has been a life-changing experience for everyone involved. The program provides a supportive environment for children with special needs to explore their creative talents, the mentors learn the values of being a "special friend," and families have the opportunity to see their children succeed in ways they never thought were possible. The impact of the program has reached beyond the stage, as new relationships are forged among the children, their families, and members of the community.

In response to the tremendous success of the program in Peoria, *The Penguin Project* has developed a comprehensive replication process to assist other community theatres in creating their own *Penguin Projects*. There are currently three replication sites in Illinois - in Bloomington-Normal, DeKalb, and Barrington, and four in other states - Lincoln, NE; Gettysburg, PA; Murray, KY; and Wausau, KY.



This is a win-win situation for any community theatre. You have a unique opportunity to provide a valuable community service while also realizing significant benefits for your theatre. Our model has proven to be financially viable, with revenue exceeding

expenses for every production at every site. The program will also increase awareness of your theatre throughout your community, creating new opportunities for donations. Finally, this new program will increase your ticket sales to your other productions and develop a new source of company members, since children with special needs and their families represent a new, untapped source of theatre-goers.

If you want to see the magic first hand, come join us at Eastlight Theater in East Peoria on January 23, 24, and 25 for our production of *Seussical, Jr.* Tickets are available on-line at www.eastlighttheatre.com or by calling (309) 699-7469. If you

are interested in exploring the possibility of becoming the next *Penguin Project* replication site, contact Dr. Andy Morgan at (309) 691-5315. Please look us up on Facebook or on YouTube, and visit our website at www.penguinproject.org for more information about the program.

"Our penguins may not be able to fly, but that does not prevent their spirits from soaring."

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Fire Up Your Passion

By Karen Hall, ITA Secondary Theatre Division Representative

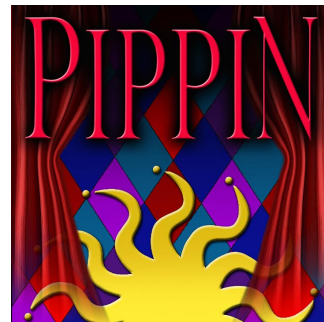


The 40th Annual Illinois High School Theatre Festival, *ignite the PASSION Within*, is almost here! The committee has worked hard and enjoyed putting together a memorable Festival for all students and sponsors with a variety of workshops, events and performances. Brian Alexander, Executive Director, points out, "One exciting change for this year's Festival is the addition of the IHSTF app for smart phones! Students and sponsors can access all the information for the Festival right from their phones!!!"

Sandra Symdz and Nathaniel Haywood from the Play Selection Committee report that 37 full-length productions and showcases were responded to this fall by our incredible respondents. 9 schools submitted for the first time and 2 shows were submitted and selected from region 6 - a FIRST!! In total, 15 full-lengths and 6 showcases were selected.

The Workshop Committee, headed by LaDonna Wilson and Christopher Thomas, is very excited about the number of theatre professionals who will be leading discussion panels about many different aspects of theatre. In addition, there is a flying workshop and lots of dance this year.

The All-State production of *Pippin* has been working hard since August. The crew has built some amazing set pieces and has had the chance to build some magic illusions as well. The cast, aside from working hard on their singing, dancing and acting, has been working hard to perfect their circus skills as well. Sylvia Hernandez-DiStasi, Co-Artistic Director of the Actors Gymnasium, has served as the circus choreographer, and the cast has had the chance to learn how



to perform on the Spanish Web and Silks. They've also been working on their Adagio Acrobatics, globe walking, unicycling and juggling.

It's going to be another exciting Festival this year. Make sure you are checking your email and the Festival website for updates. The committee is looking forward to seeing everyone January 8-10!

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Resources for Nonprofits

By Jim De Young, ITA Member



has a number of publications that large and small theatre companies might find interesting. If you are not already on their list, consider signing up. The December 1st issue had a nice article on Internet security for Nonprofits. I doubt you would be surprised to know that most nonprofits have little or no security for their on-line activities. There is an interesting rundown on stocks of companies that serve and service nonprofits. If you personally like to invest in that kind of company, or if your organization has or is considering starting an endowment, there is a list of possible companies that are in your corner. You have access to job announcements and, of course, advertising for services to nonprofits. A supplement in the issue I just received was a Buyers Guide Directory of suppliers to nonprofit organizations. One item in that directory was a list of over thirty companies that specialize in Donor Recognition Products.

Get more information about all of this at
<http://www.thenonproffitimes.com/>.

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Advocacy Tidbits

By Jim De Young, ITA Member

The omnibus spending bill passed by congress and signed by the president contains the following items that benefit the arts:

- Level funding for the NEA at \$146.021 million
- \$25 million for arts education programs at the Department of Education
- Arts in Education remains a stand-alone program; it will not be combined into a funding pool with other academic disciplines.

The NEA's funding guidelines for 2015 are now available online. The first application deadline is February 19, 2015.

The IRA Charitable Rollover. This important incentive allows individual donors age 70½ and older to make tax-free monetary gifts directly from their Individual Retirement Account (IRA) to charitable organizations. Congress has reinstated this

for 2014. At this point it is uncertain whether it will be re-approved for 2015.

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A Safe Theatre

By Stacy Deemar, ITA Member

During parent-teacher conferences, a seventh grade father expressed his amazement over how his son was uninhibited in drama. He was so impressed with his son's ability to improvise scenes without reservation. He argued that as a middle school student, he did not have the fortitude to speak in front of his peers like his son. He asked me how I enticed students to improvise scenes and take part in class discussion. This father also inquired about how he could elicit the same type of enthusiasm his son had in drama at home.



My next appointment was with a seventh grade mother who attended her daughter's seventh grade drama class during Take Your Parent to School. This parent admitted that she had never observed a drama class and was intrigued. We discussed

the [District 65](#) drama philosophy and how "creative drama is an improvisational, non-exhibition, process-centered form of drama where the participants develop language and communication abilities, problem solving skills, and creativity and promotes positive self-concept, social awareness, empathy, a clarification of values and attitudes, and an understanding of theatre." The mother was so delighted that her daughter was simultaneously working on so many creative and social skills. And then she asked the same question as the previous parent. How am I able to get middle school students engaged and excited in drama?

The foundation of a respectful, responsible and ready to learn drama classroom is built on establishing a safe environment. The drama classroom must be physically safe as well as emotionally safe. The greatest strength in drama is that it can reach all students at varying academic levels. Because reading and writing are primarily absent from the drama classroom with most dramatic material approached via improvisation, this type of setting is an equalizer for all of the students.

Building the foundation of a safe environment begins on the first day of class, regardless if the students had me last year for sixth grade drama. I provide students with a rules and grading contract so the expectations are clear.

Rule number seven on my policy form states, "Discounting, belittling and/or ridiculing your fellow classmates and peers will not be tolerated." I emphasize that only constructive criticism is acceptable.



Furthermore, I argue that no one is perfect, including myself. And if we were flawless, we would be working professionally making large sums of money. I get lots of chuckles and smiles after that comment, which suggests that they concur.

During the discussion part of the class, students are required to make a constructive comment about the scene using a theatre/drama vocabulary word and citing evidence from the scene to support their argument. On the first day of class, I give examples of both appropriate and inappropriate comments. For example, stating that a student is bad in the scene is unacceptable. Instead, a constructive critique may include, "Next time project your voice and cheat out because it was difficult to hear you," or "I saw you laughing in the scene. Work on concentrating next time." When I start to hear a comment having negative undertones, I redirect the student's comment. For example, if a student says, "You skipped your dialogue and the scene did not make sense." This is an accusatory comment that has the potential to make the student feel inferior. I suggest that the student begin his comment with, "If you forget your dialogue, you can..." and I have the student finish the sentence. Providing a student with a sentence starter is a simple and effective tool to keep the comments safe. Other sentence starters that work well include: I noticed, I saw, I heard, and I wondered.

Another method I utilize to establish a safe learning environment is I model all the scenes for the class prior to having them cast themselves in their desired parts. I play all of the character's dialogue, pantomime, body language, facial expressions, blocking, etc., in order to meet the needs of my visual learners and to build student confidence. When the students see me crawling and rolling on the floor like a rabid dog, crawling under a fence, playing an elementary student wearing a yam costume or playing an elderly racist lady confined to a wheel chair, many students are more confident in selecting a role because they have seen a sampling. Modeling is also motivational because the message being sent is that if the teacher can take creative risks, so can I.



Throughout the rotation, I remind students about the difference between "B" scene work and "A" scene work. "B" work is exactly like "A" work with one exception. To earn an "A", the actor must create "something" that I did not model nor explain as a scene requirement. I provide examples such as creating additional dialogue, using an accent, sounds, facial expression, trips and falls, pantomime, body language, gait, movement to adapt to the character, etc. I encourage students to take risks and think beyond what I have provided as an outline. Furthermore, I emphasize that if they take a creative risk and display originality, they will be rewarded regardless if the choice works in the scene. Many students will take the opportunity to engage in such a process only because they feel safe to experiment.

There are numerous creative ways to improvise a scene in drama. Each actor makes his own individual artistic choices based on personal experience and perspective. Unlike a math class where an equation has only one correct answer, drama is

a medium where students can explore multiple interpretations. Whether presenting, rehearsing, observing or critiquing a scene, the diverse group of learners with their multiple perspectives collaborate to create the dramatic experience. And when they achieve individual and group success, I praise, encourage and recognize their efforts during the class discussion. For many of my students, drama may be the only place they receive praise and recognition, and this makes them feel safe.

Every child's emotional safety is paramount. Are your drama classes secure for students to take creative risks?

1. Anne Lefkowitz, Kathleen Phipps and and Laurel Serleth, *K-5 Drama Curriculum Guide*. (Evanston, 1995) vi.

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ITA Member Spotlight: Annaliisa Ahlman

Submitted by Judy Klingner, ITA Second Vice President



What is your name?

My name is Annaliisa Ahlman.

Please tell us about your education/training in theatre.

I graduated from [Illinois State University](#) with majors in theatre education and musical theatre performance. I'm currently working on my M.A. in Directing at [Roosevelt University](#) with Jerry Proffit.

Please share details about a theatre project/production with which you are currently involved.

I teach at [Niles North High School](#), and we have just begun work on our spring musical, *Hairspray*. This is the 50th anniversary of the school, so alumni were invited to audition and be a part of the cast and crew as a part of the anniversary celebration. Working with alums who are also professional designers is a really invigorating experience for me as a teacher/technical director. We start rehearsals and building very soon, and I'm excited to see what magic we can make when talented and committed students work alongside adults of varied and interesting backgrounds.

What is the best thing about your job?

I love that I have a job where I can play and create art with fascinating and energetic students. Finding ways to challenge my students and celebrate their growth over the course of a day, a rehearsal period, or a semester, is very gratifying.

Have you ever worked with theatre in a different capacity than you do now?

While I was in college, I spent most of my summers at the [Illinois Shakespeare Festival](#). I held a variety of positions - I worked everything from the costume shop to company management. Before I started at Niles North full time, I also directed the Festival's first educational outreach program.

What is the biggest challenge you face related to your work in the theatre?

Like so many artists, my biggest challenge is finding enough time in the day to get it all done!

Of what theatrical accomplishment are you most proud?

I recently directed Tina Howe's *Museum* at my school, and collaborated with the visual art department to create all of the artwork for the play. I learned a lot from my work with the art teachers and students. In the end, I was really happy with the artwork and the production overall. It was a challenging piece of theatre, and my students rose to the occasion.

Who is/was your mentor?

I have been lucky to have many great teachers in my life, but one stands above the rest. After student teaching with Tim Ortmann, I knew I had found someone who could help me grow in exponential ways. Tim helped me hone my talents in the classroom and learn how to focus my energy in production. I have learned one of the most important lessons through his constant example: it's not about what I do, but it's about what my students do. Tim is my greatest mentor in teaching, directing, and life. I am challenged and supported by him, and I feel privileged to call him my mentor and dear friend.

Please describe your personal history with the Illinois High School Theatre Festival.

I attended the Illinois High School Theatre Festival as a high school student, and I was in the All-State casts for *The Pirates of Penzance* and *Macbeth*. I then volunteered to help with the Festival as a college student, and I've since served on the IHSTF planning committee in a few different capacities.

In what ways are you currently involved with the Illinois High School Theatre Festival?

This year I am managing the box office for the Festival, which includes the All-State musical *Pippin*, the Opening Ceremonies, and the full-length and showcase productions being brought to the Festival from around the state. It's ticketing season right now!

Do you have a memory of a specific ITA event that you would care to share?

When I was in high school, the all-state choreographer told my *Pirates of Penzance* cast to treasure our time together because we'd be the ones working together to make theatre happen in the future. I'm still connected to some of my cast mates, and it's nice to remember that moment in context of what I do now as a high school theatre teacher. I was reminded of this experience when I attended my first ITA convention as a college student - I felt like such an adult going to a meeting downtown at the Merchandise Mart. I remember there was a palpable buzz in the air at that convention, and it again seemed like the whole world was before me. Our work in the theatre is all about the present moment, and we must treasure the times when that moment seems to stand still. (Full disclosure: Judy Klingner was that choreographer. Thanks, Judy ☺)

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