

Illinois Theatre Association

In This Edition...

[ITA Events and ITA Member Events](#)

[Job Postings & Audition Announcements](#)

[Featured Performances](#)

[About the ITA](#)

[ITA Links](#)

[ITA Announcements](#)

[2016 Membership Survey](#)

[An Interview with Michael Potsic](#)

[Being Prepared for the "Big Ask"](#)

[Puppies and Actors: A Training Manual](#)

[ITA Convention Gets a Makeover](#)

[Summering at Ten Chimneys](#)

[Reflection on a Middle School Costume Design Unit](#)

[Illinois Talent Showcased](#)

[ITA Member Spotlight: Toni Higgins-Thrash](#)

[ITA Updates](#)

ITA EVENTS

September 17, 2016

ITA's Annual Awards Gala and Membership Meeting
Harper College

October 8, 2016

College/University Division
Hand to God
Victory Gardens Theatre
Features a Wine and Cheese Reception and a Post-Show After Glow.

eFOLLOWSPOT July, 2016

2016 Membership Survey

by Faye Ryan
First Vice-President

Thank you to everyone who completed the 2016 ITA Membership Survey. Over 20% of our membership responded and the ITA's Membership Committee is currently analyzing the data, and exploring ideas to improve your membership experience. At the May ITA Board Meeting, we drew the name of one respondent who will receive a year's extension on her membership. Congratulations to Rebecca Walker from Metea Valley High School as the winner!

[Back to Top](#)

An Interview with Michael Potsic

Written by Brenna C. Cronin
ITA Theatre for Young Audiences Representative

*My dear friend and colleague, Michael Postic, is a flourishing composer and teaching artist in Illinois and I had the privilege of interviewing him for this article. We met through the 2005 All-State production and went on to study together at Western Michigan University's College of Fine Arts in Kalamazoo. Michael's musical, *Flight*, is a brilliantly moving journey through the mythological tale of Icarus. Like the title character, Michael is taking flight in his own way; as a professional composer, teaching artist, writer, and voice teacher. We met in Burbank for a lunch time coffee break - read more below.*

Brenna: How long have you been a theatre educator? Have you always worked in Illinois?

Michael: I've been teaching for about nine years. I started music directing for a camp in Michigan, taught some music and theatre in New York, and came back to Illinois where I've worked throughout Chicagoland.

Brenna: You went to Shepard High School - are you loyal to the south side? How have those roots transformed or inspired your work?



Brenna Cronin

Michael: I did go to Shepard. Go Astros! Most of my work has been on the south side and really came about from the contacts I had there. I directed at Plainfield South High School through

November 4-6, 2016

ITA's 2nd Bi-Annual
Statewide Community
Theatre Festival
Illinois AACTFest
*commUNITY Theatre: One
Heart, One Vision, One
Voice*
Engle Lane Theatre
Streator

January 5-7, 2017

**Illinois High School
Theatre Festival 2017**
*"Find Your Truth: Discover,
Uncover, Reveal"*
University of Illinois,
Urbana Champaign

February, 2017

*37th Annual Statewide
Non-Equity Professional
Theatre Auditions*
Location TBA

**EVENTS OF INTEREST
FROM ITA MEMBERS**

No Postings at this time.

JOB POSTINGS

ColorBox Theatre is
seeking a **Stage Manager**
for *The Medium*.

ColorBox Theatre is
seeking a **Light/Sound
Designer** for *The Medium*.

Glencoe Park District is
seeking an **Improv
Artist/Teacher**.

Oak Park River Forest
High School is seeking
a **Technical Director/
Assistant Auditorium
Manager**.

UNO Charter School
Network - Rogers Park
Charter High School is
seeking a **maternity-
leave position**.

Cary-Grove High School is
seeking a **Scenic
Designer to serve as
Technical Director** for the
2016 Fall Play and 2017
Spring Musical.



Michael Potsic

a college friend, I did some music directing at Oak Lawn Park District, where I did some theatre as a teen, and now I'm at the Beverly Arts Center, where I took class as a kid. So, things have been very full circle.

Brenna: What's one lesson you wish you didn't have to learn as an artist?

Michael: That you really have to put yourself first as an artist. Not everyone who wants to have you teach or work for them has your best interest in mind.

It's easier to say this now because it's all retrospect, but if you really want to make your craft your life and income, know what you will work for. What kind of environment you want to be in. Don't be afraid to say no and let gigs pass by.

Brenna: I remember watching your musical, *Flight*, as a staged reading in Kalamazoo, Michigan. What version was that? How has the piece changed from then to now?

Michael: Well the first incarnation of the show was when I just graduated high school. It was the summer before I left for school and I wanted to write a show and put it up. I don't remember how I finagled it, but we performed on my high school stage that summer with a small band. I had no fear back then. It was maybe a 30 minute piece and the starting ground for what it is now. In fact, the first song I ever wrote is still in the show, "Sail For You." Well, the chorus is anyway. The show has matured as I've matured. I like to play with perspective, to think of the story as a three dimensional object. When you can see it from all angles, there's a different view on each side. With that in mind, how can I tell this story in a way that is exciting and surprising to an audience? And that's what *Flight* has become. A new take and new perspective of the ancient Greek myth of Icarus.

Brenna: You've done more readings in Chicago, yes? You mentioned that a positive working environment is important to you. Was there a particular theatre or individual that really helped you develop this maturity? Either musically or personally?

Michael: Allison Hendrix is the Co-Artistic Director of Kokandy Productions and really close friend. She has been someone whose opinion I trust. She has been there as a dramaturg, she offered me a reading through Kokandy, and will be directing the Chicago Musical Theatre Festival production in August.

Brenna: I was thrilled to hear about your work being chosen for the Chicago Musical Theatre Festival in August. Tell us everything!

Michael: I'm very excited. Performance info will be announced on July 1st, but I can share that we'll be performing at Victory Gardens in August. Right now, we're getting our cast together and it's shaping up to be some of Chicago's best. Some new faces to the show, some returning. It's a great mix. It's going to be exciting to get this thing on its feet. I feel very confident with it in Allison's hands. I still have one more song to write, so I have to get on that!



Amos Alonzo Stagg High School is seeking a full-time **Auditorium Director**.

Arlington Heights School District 25 is seeking a full-time **Middle School Drama Teacher** at South Middle School.

[Click here to visit the ITA's Job Board for details and more postings!](#)

AUCTION ANNOUNCEMENTS

There are no auditions posted at this time.

[Click here to visit the ITA's Audition Announcements for more details.](#)

FEATURED PERFORMANCES

[Azusa Productions in Association with Redtwist Theatre](#)
Eroica

July 13 - August 7
Sun at 7:30 pm
Tues at 7:30 pm
Wed at 7:30 pm
Sat at 3pm
Region 3: Chicago

[Red Barn Theatre](#)
Lucky Me

July 13 - July 24
Wed-Sat at 8 pm
Sun at 2 pm
Region: Florida

[DLO Musical Theatre](#)
Zanadu Jr.

July 22 - 24
Fri and Sat at 7 pm
Sun at 2 pm
Region 5: Danville

[Rock Falls Public Library and danact3 Productions](#)
RangerManDan

July 26
Tues at 10 am
Region 1: Rock Falls

[Red Barn Theatre](#)

Brenna: How do you find the balance between being a composer/working artist and a teaching artist? What has worked for you and what hasn't?

Michael: The biggest thing I learned is composing and teaching take time and you have to make sure you make that time. When I was just out of college, I literally said yes to anything. I was just happy to work! But, I took on so many projects, I didn't leave time for composing or anything creative. Which is part of the reason I left New York and moved back to Chicago. I was able to find a way to make both work. I love being in the classroom, and I love creating theatre, but it's a constant balancing act.

Brenna: What advice do you have for others pursuing new works in our state?

Michael: Figure out how to get your work up in front of people. My grandmother says it best, "You have to spend money to make money." Get your show up at a venue that people know of; invite, invite, invite; and repeat. New work is hard to get out there, let alone find a company that will help develop or produce. Especially your first time out. That's where I'm at. I'm still learning as I go. What I can say is since 2012, I've had three readings, and I'm just now feel like I'm getting it in the right place. There's no set timeline for creation, no manual or how-to guide. You have to keep yourself open and ready. I am constantly learning and growing. And I love that.

You can catch *Flight* this August at the Chicago Musical Theatre Festival.

The 2016 Chicago Musical Theatre Festival

Produced by: **UNDERScore** THEATRE COMPANY
Producing at: **VICTORY GARDENS THEATRE**
Produced in association with: **kokandy PRODUCTIONS**, **BALWICK THEATRE CHICAGO**, **CPA THEATRICALS**

The Chicago Musical Theatre Festival will be presented at Victory Gardens in August. For complete listings of shows and performance schedules visit www.cmtf.org.

[Back to Top](#)

Being Prepared for the "Big Ask"

Don Shandrow
ITA Community Theatre Representative



This last week [New Route Theatre](#) was approached about putting together a production for a central Illinois museum sometime in 2018. I met with the executive director of the museum and was prepared to discuss the project and how well we were equipped to work with this potential partner. We were ready to discuss the project, but I stumbled when I was asked, "How much do you need from us?" In being eager to tackle this

Urinetown

July 28 - August 13

Wed-Sat at 8 pm

Sun at 2 pm

Region: Florida

DLO Musical Theatre**Grease**

July 29 - 31

Fri and Sat at 7 pm

Sat and Sun at 2 pm

Region 5: Danville

Need more information**on the above shows?****Want your performance****to be featured here? Visit**the [ITA Performance](#)[Calendar](#) for details.**ITA Links:**[ITA Home Page](#)[About the ITA](#)[Advocacy](#)[Board of Directors](#)[Job Postings](#)[Audition Announcements](#)[ITA Divisons](#)[eFollowspot](#)[Join the ITA](#)[Membership Directory](#)[Performance Calendar](#)[Submit an Announcement](#)**Join the ITA on
Facebook:**[ITA Fan Page](#)[IHSTF Fan Page](#)[College/University Group
Discussion](#)[Community Theatre Group
Discussion](#)[Creative Drama Group
Discussion](#)

opportunity and work with a new potential partner, I wasn't prepared for the big ask...the question that requires a fiscally well thought out response. I'd forgotten a lesson I'd learned several years ago.

In 2005, I'd written an historical play with information based on hours of research into an organization that had a vested interest in reminding their members of the roots of their organization. I spent time with older members, retired employees and directors of the organization making sure that I was able to discover all of the nuances surrounding the founding of the organization in order to create a compelling theatrical work.

After workshopping the play, I was approached by a group that wanted to produce it. A budget was set and I volunteered to introduce them to the CEO of the organization to discuss the organization's financial involvement. The CEO had been involved on a weekly basis as I researched and wrote the script. The CEO had an understanding of what I was writing, a recognition that the play could engage his membership, and had been personally involved in the playwriting process. The CEO had a sense of personal ownership in the project.

Along with the development director and the marketing director of the production company, we met the CEO in the board room of the organization. My thought was that they were prepared to ask for, if not all, a substantial portion of the production expenses. After a half hour of discussing the play and how much the play meant to the organization, the CEO asked, "What do you need?" The marketing director of the production company quickly responded, "\$3,000 will do." I was surprised by the question and the response of the marketing director when the CEO quickly responded, "We can do that."

After the meeting, I asked the development director and marketing director why they only asked for \$3,000 when they could have gotten much more. The marketing director explained, "This was the amount that we agreed on asking for prior to the meeting." The development director added, "We wanted to keep it low because we plan on coming back later to ask for money for other events."

This one negative experience taught me five lessons on how to avoid mistakes when approaching potential donors for money or in working with potential partners:

1. Be enthusiastic about the importance of your work - be confident in your mission and project.
2. Show fiscal responsibility - be prepared to explain what you need and how the money will be spent.
3. Explain what the potential donor/partner will get in return - being part of something important with your money is an investment in the community.
4. Don't predetermine an outcome - be ready for a positive response.
5. Be willing to ask for what you need - show the potential donor/partner the full need and let them decide how much their financial participation will be.

This last week, when I was confronted with the big ask, I was so eager to create the partnership that I threw out a figure that sounded "doable." Fortunately, the potential partner threw out some variables that allowed me to back track. I've set up a

Professional Theatre Group Discussion

Secondary School Theatre Group Discussion

Theatre for Young Audiences Group Discussion

follow up where I will be prepared to answer the financial questions as well as the artistic...to respond to the "big ask."

[Back to Top](#)

Puppies and Actors: A Training Manual

By Karen Hall
ITA Secondary Division Representative

FOLLOW OUR TWEETS:

Illinois Theatre Association

IHSTF



Just over a year ago I became a pet parent when I adopted the most adorable Cavapoo named Millie. I can honestly say that this 13 pound bundle of joy has changed my life. She's taught me a lot the past year - especially about leaving work early so I can go home and see my fur baby. She's also made me do some reflecting about the process of teaching and how I work with my students in the classroom as we have been going through training together. Here are a few connections I've made:



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

REPETITION IS A NECESSITY: Sometimes I get frustrated with my students when they can't remember something we've already covered - stage directions being quite high on my list. I often find myself wondering "why they can't remember the difference between upstage and downstage - didn't we spend an entire day practicing that." We sure did - but then we never go back to it. If Millie has taught me anything it's that you've got to keep drilling the things you want people (or puppy dogs) to retain. We've been practicing sit, down, stay, and come for a year now - almost everyday - so those are things she remembers and is consistently successful at. So more repetition of simple skills is of the things I plan to incorporate into my classroom next year.

Please Visit ITA's Corporate Sponsors:

A&B Photo and Print

A. Bartucci Professional Audio

Broadway Costumes

DesignLab

GRAND STAGE - Chicago Spotlight

Intelligent Lighting

Light Chicago

Northern Illinois University

Spotlight Youth Theatre

USITT Midwest

YOU HAVE TO FOCUS ON THE HARD STUFF MORE THAN THE EASY STUFF:

Millie is pretty darn awesome at sit, down, stay, and come. She also LOVES to play her party tricks of under/over and stick 'em up. Those are easy to practice everyday. What she's not good at it is Leave It and Off. And some of that is my fault because those are really hard for her and it's not so rewarding for us, so sometimes I don't practice them as much. As our trainer, Brandi, pointed out - those are the one's we have to train twice as hard at and then use the fun ones as a reward for the hard work. The same is probably true in my classroom. My kids love movement and character exercises - they do really well at them. But they also need some serious work on their vocal skills - especially articulation. But they aren't too fond of doing the work and the results don't come as quickly so I don't work on that as much with them. I plan on following Brandi's advice more next year - you've got to train the hard stuff twice as much as the easy stuff.

TAKING A RISK IS HARD: Millie is an awesome dog - but at times she can be a really big chicken. It took her two months of practice with me as a spotter before she had the confidence to jump up on our sofa by herself. And she is still scared of long staircases. Anything past three stairs and she wants to be carried up or down. I'm baffled by this and sometimes point to some of her smaller and younger puppy friends and say to

Vertigo

Associate Corporate Sponsor:

All Dressed Up Costumes

Bill Conner Associates
LLC

Music Makers Theatre

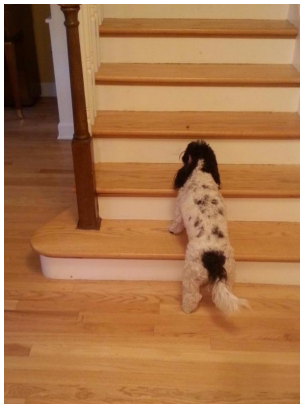


The Illinois Theatre Association is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.

ITA ANNOUNCEMENTS

Each week the ITA sends out "Friday Announcements" to its Listserve (currently comprised of more than 3,000 theatre artists and educators from throughout the state). If you'd like to submit an item for inclusion in the weekly announcements, please click [here](#). [Suggestions for inclusion include: audition announcements, job postings, interesting theatre stories/experiences, lesson plans, community/life events, etc., theatre opportunities, etc.).

Also, please remember to submit your upcoming performances and/or events to the ITA's on-line performance calendar!!! Click [here](#).



her "Look - Daisy can run up and down the stairs. Why can't you?" I find myself wondering about the same thing with my students at times. "Everyone else is taking big risks in their characters. Why can't you?" Now when that happens, I remind myself about Millie - sometimes the "scary" things (like taking a risk) take longer for some puppies (and actors) to master. So now Millie and I are taking baby steps (literally) as she is starting to really work on climbing up and

down stairs. Right now we are trying steps that aren't that steep or high. I was so proud of her when she walked down our neighbor's front steps by herself.

Millie has been such an amazing addition to my family, and I value all of the lessons she has taught me this past year. She is very proud of her work as official Thespian mascot of Troupe 1792 and as the ITA Board cheerleader. Millie loves coming to rehearsal and to board meetings. She's also quite theatrical. She made her acting debut in our fall play, *Once in a Lifetime* and was the voice of Willoughby in our production of *Mary Poppins*. I know she is going to miss all of her ITA Board friends when my term ends this fall.

[Back to Top](#)**ITA Convention Gets a Makeover**

Submitted by Jonathan Meier
ITA Secondary Division Representative

Hopefully you have saved the dates for the [ITA Convention](#), Saturday September 17 and Sunday September 18. But based on feedback from our membership, we are giving the event a makeover. One of the most constant bits of feedback we received from our membership is that members would like more time to network and socialize at the convention. In the past, workshops have been centerpieces of the convention. But since most of our divisions are now doing their own events, which usually involve workshops, we thought we would take the convention and use it to focus on networking, socializing, and celebrating the great work the ITA does throughout the year. So we give you *Opening Night - The ITA Inaugural Gala*.

Break out your fancy clothes and get ready to celebrate. And since it is celebration, we strongly encourage you to bring your spouse or significant others. This black tie optional event will take place at the [Wojcik Center](#) on the campus of [Harper College](#) in Palatine, IL. The evening will start at 5:30 pm on Saturday with a red carpet arrival. You can have your picture taken in your fancy threads, and then proceed out to the lakeside cocktail hour, with hors d'oeuvres and a beer and wine cash bar available. We will then proceed inside for a lovely dinner. During dinner, we will present our annual Awards of Excellence. The evening will culminate in a

wonderful cabaret show, presented by four of Chicago's hottest young singer/actors. They are designing this show especially for the ITA. It will be a great ending to an amazing evening. And if you are not done partying yet, we will be arranging an after-party at a local establishment where the revelry will continue.



The event will continue on Sunday morning. We will be returning to Harper College, but for this portion of the day we will be in the lobby of the Harper Performing Arts Center. There will be a light breakfast and networking at 9:30 am. At 10:15 am, Michael Halberstam, the Artistic Director of Writers Theatre in Glencoe, IL, will treat us to a keynote address. There will also be a short question and answer session following the address. We will then have the ITA Annual Business Meeting, followed by our division meetings. The event should wrap up by 12:30 pm.

The annual convention is the one time each year when all of our members from all across the state and from across all of our six divisions get a chance to spend time together to forge new relationships and strengthen existing friendships. You don't want to miss this opportunity. Registration and cost information will be available very soon. See you on the 17th at Harper College!

[Back to Top](#)

Summering at Ten Chimneys

by Kevin Long
College/University Division Representative

*To solemnize this day, the glorious sun
Stays in his course and plays the alchemist,
Turning with speldor of his precious eye
The meagre cloddy earth to glittering gold.
The yearly course that brings this day about
Shall never see it but a holy day.
--King John, III, 1*

We did it! We made it! It is S-U-M-M-E-R! Don't you just love what Bill beautifully wrote above? The sun in his orbit is an alchemist. Its bright warm rays turn our pitiful earth into magnificent glittering gold! The sun makes this day special and holy and will do so each year.

S-U-M-M-E-R!

It's such a cherished time of year. It's a time for us to get back to US -- our friends, our family and ourselves. But if you're like me, because of the stress that has accumulated from the work during the school year, it takes some time to recover and let that stress melt away.

Summer offers us the opportunity to deepen our knowledge, our pedagogy and our practice while also helping to rejuvenate our energy and reaffirm our commitment to teaching and working in the theatre.



I just came back from teaching folio technique at a place called Ten Chimneys. As their website (www.tenchimneys.org) states, "Ten Chimneys is the estate lovingly created by Broadway legends Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. Those who visit, like guests of the Lunts, are welcomed into the Lunts' extraordinary home without the fuss of ropes or barriers. Tours of Ten Chimneys not only celebrate the one-of-a-kind collection the Lunts amassed during their lifetimes, but also honor the values found in every corner of the Lunts' lives, both on the stage and in the house they called home for more than half a century."

Friends, if you are looking for a place that will touch your heart, fill your soul and provide visceral confirmation of why we are missionaries of theatre, this is the place for you to visit! I take an annual pilgrimage to Ten Chimneys bringing with me new friends and family so that they can experience the magic of this wonderful place. Each time we leave, you can see the fire that has been lit in their soul. Okay, I know that sounds dramatic, but people leave truly inspired! It was said that if the Lunts invited you to Ten Chimneys, it meant that you had earned great respect for your craft. It was an elite honor to be invited to vacation with the Lunts. Well, being invited to teach Shakespeare at this historic home this past week made me feel incredibly honored and valued as a theatre practitioner. Do yourself a favor and schedule your visit now. I can guarantee that you will not be sorry!



[Back to Top](#)

Reflection on a Middle School Costume Design Unit

By Stacy Deemar
ITA Member

The right costume determines the character, helps the actor feel who he is, and serves the story.

-Colleen Atwood
American Costume Designer

The costume design unit commences with a power point presentation. In this compact informative session, the following

material is covered: function of a costume, role of the costume designer, analysis of historical context during Shakespeare's time, introduction to common garments worn by the peasantry, middle class, and aristocracy, study of color and fabrics, and various costume designs for many of the characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The highlight of the presentation for most students was on color. I displayed a chart that listed the colors that the peasantry, middle class and aristocracy wore. Students were intrigued by how color determined a person's socioeconomic status. For example, peasants wore mostly earth tones including green, brown, yellow, orange, rust, gray, and blue and were forbidden to wear aqua, fuchsia, neon, teal, turquoise, purple, pink, and black.



Being limited to wearing specific colors evoked provocative questions about color such as why were peasants restricted in their color choices and what would happen if a peasant wore colors suited for the aristocracy. We discussed how the aristocrat associated only with others in their class and how color identified socioeconomic status and segregated people. Students were flabbergasted when they learned about sumptuary laws that regulated restrictions on clothing expenditures. Only the wealthy were entitled to luxury items; therefore, commoners were prohibited from purchasing materials to imitate the appearance of aristocrats.

I inquired as to whether an individual's socioeconomic status today can be identified based on their attire. I posed the following question: "Can we judge a book by its cover?" There were mixed opinions about the correct answer. One student was adamant that if a lady is carrying a Chanel purse, she is wealthy. I then asked the student if she could decipher between an authentic and a counterfeit Chanel at a glance. No one challenged this point. Finally, the class came to a consensus that today's fashion does not determine an individual's economic status. We used Facebook founder, Mark Zuckerberg, as an example to support our argument. Mr. Zuckerberg, who is worth \$46 billion dollars, dresses in ripped jeans and t-shirts like many of us who are not even millionaires.



Prior to selecting a character of their choice, we discussed the socioeconomic status of all the characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and reviewed the color palette for each economic class. Students were given a costume design worksheet

that included three areas: three thumbnail sketches, one large neutral body for the costume design, and blank lines.

I developed a costume design rubric for the assignment. The rubric was distributed before students started their work so

they were abreast of how they were being assessed. The rubric included four categories: creativity, color, design, and a design statement. Each category included a 1 to 4 scale and an explanation for each number. The goals of the assignment were to: create unique drawings that were well suited to the character; use colors to establish character, time, location, and enhance the mood of the piece; the design of the costume shows an excellent understanding of social class, age and historical period; the design statement was five to seven sentences long with vivid details about the personality and traits of the character the costume is intended. The statement also explains the designer's choices of clothes in detail.

The rubric included a sufficient amount of criteria, it was well organized, and easy to comprehend. By sharing the rubric and setting high expectations before the work commenced, students produced quality work and some even exceeded the expectations. Not only were many of the drawings exquisite, but the design statements included connections between character traits, social class, and the historical period. Kudos!

For this project, I also created a female costume dictionary and a male costume dictionary that I furnished to each student. These costume dictionaries included common garments worn during the time period, pictures, pronunciation key, and definitions for each article of clothing. The costume dictionaries were an excellent resource that students utilized throughout their design. Students found them to be easily accessible, practical, and convenient. If I had not supplied students with the information organized in a simple manner, students would not have been as independent and confident in creating their designs.



Each design was presented to the class in an informal setting. The class sat in a circle as each student took a turn sharing their design and design statement. In addition to using the costume design rubric, I also implemented formative assessment for this assignment. If a student made an error with a costume garment, color, and/or character trait, we discussed the situation while the presentation was in progress. A volunteer made a suggestion about what needed to be corrected, and the presenter incorporated the changes to the drawing and/or design statement prior to submitting their assignment.

The costume design was an in-class assignment. With the material being mostly foreign, I wanted to afford students the opportunity to ask questions throughout the process and assist one another if needed. Moreover, colored pencil and dictionaries were readily available, whereas at home, most students do not have these materials at their disposal.

In our costume design debrief, students shared similar candid responses about their experience with costume design. After completing the assignment, several students felt that they now had a greater appreciation for costume designers. Many students were enamored with the number of layers of clothes people wore and how color defined an individual's economic status. One student shared his interest in fashion and enjoyed

comparing various designs his classmates created for the same character.

The costume design assignment was a success. After closely examining each component of the assignment, it truly includes all levels of Bloom's Taxonomy learning objectives. Students were creating, evaluating, analyzing, applying, comprehending and remembering throughout the project.

[Back to Top](#)

Illinois Talent Showcased

Submitted by Carmel DeStefano
ITA Member

A spotlight shined on Illinois last Friday at the [International Thespian Festival as Champaign Central High School's](#) production of *Chicago* performed on the main stage for high school teachers and students from all over the USA.



With its two performances, *Chicago* was one of only five high school shows chosen for the Lied Auditorium at the University of Nebraska. The Champaign Central Company of 28 actors, 11 crew, and 11 musicians spent the rest of the week attending performances and workshops during this five day Festival.

Chicago's director, LaDonna Wilson, also the 2017 Executive Director of the [Illinois High School Theatre Festival](#), explained that she decided to submit this production for adjudication because she had so many talented seniors who never had a chance to tour with a production. LaDonna also wanted her students to experience the energy a performance receives from an audience that loves theatre because they appreciate every aspect of a production.



The road to Nebraska started last summer with a series of dance workshops to introduce the performers to the style of Fosse. Although *Chicago* was Central's fall musical, LaDonna decided to remount the production in January for adjudication by two EDTA representatives. The show was strongly recommended, and the process of fundraising began. In addition to raising the money to cover the cost for transporting the set and company to the Thespian Festival, brush-up rehearsals had to be included during the school's other six productions to keep the show fresh.

With standing ovations at the end of *Chicago's* performances a glowing memory, LaDonna wishes that more Illinois schools would benefit from this wonderful Festival and perhaps think of bringing a show to spotlight more Illinois talent.

[Back to Top](#)

ITA Member Spotlight: Toni Higgins-Thrash, ITA Member
Submitted by Judy Klingner, ITA Second Vice-President



What is your name?

Toni Higgins-Thrash. My first name is really Antoinette...Toni is my 'nick name'. I'm named after my Father Anthony (Tony) Leszczynski...my Mom and Dad expected a boy, and the nurse actually named me because they didn't have a name for a baby girl.

Please tell us about your background in theatre.

Toni received her BA in Theatre and Dance from Barat College, and her MPA from Roosevelt University. Currently Toni serves as a volunteer reporter for Schaumburg Cable Station WSPD "Heartbeat Show". Prior to retirement she served as Cultural Arts Programmer for Arlington Heights, Schaumburg, and Northbrook Park Districts. As a Charter Member of the National Association of Dance and Affiliated Artists, she continues to take dance classes, has performed in many theatrical productions, and is the Founder/Director of Triumphal Entry Dance Worship Ministry Team.

Tell us about your current career endeavors.

Currently my career path is focused on Volunteering: I retired from public service from the Schaumburg Park District, Schaumburg, IL in December of 2007. Since I love to keep busy and have something in my schedule to look forward to, I was asked to be a volunteer for the Schaumburg Park District cable station WSPD as a reporter for the Heartbeat Show. I am now on my 8th year volunteering with the Schaumburg Park district cable station. As a volunteer reporter for the Heartbeat Show (geared to the Senior population) I can submit ideas that I'd like to cover. I submitted an idea to cover a story on the Lutheran Church Charities Golden Retriever Comfort Dog Ministry. It was approved, and we did do a taping of this ministry for the Heartbeat Show. At the end of the taping I was overcome with sadness, as I had two Golden Retrievers that previously had passed away, and I forgot how much dogs could benefit people in so many ways. When the executive director of Lutheran Church Charities saw my emotion, he approached me to volunteer for the organization. I am now on my fourth year volunteering with the Lutheran Church Charities Comfort Dogs, Northbrook, IL. I am a handler and secondary caregiver for these beautiful, well-trained Golden Retrievers that visit schools, nursing homes, funerals, disasters, community events, etc. The benefits of using dogs in healing the human spirit is well documented.

Seeing the benefits of bringing information to the Community through my role as a reporter, and witnessing first hand the joy that the Comfort Dogs can bring to people at community events and disaster related ones, brings peace to my soul, and provides me with a sense of usefulness. Before retirement my focus was solely on providing for family, but now due to my retirement my focus has changed to helping others.

I have also done volunteer work even when I was employed. As an example, I founded and currently direct Triumphal Entry Dance Worship Ministry Team, going on my 35th year. Triumphal Entry is a dance worship ministry team composed of

dancers from varying churches that uses dance and movement to Worship God and spread the Good News of the Gospel.

Going into my 4th year working backstage on scenery for Willow Creek Community Church and Promiseland Sunday School, South Barrington, IL, Environment/Scenic Construction Ministries. I have been going to Willow Creek Church for some 30 plus years now, and during that time have volunteered in varying capacities along this particular journey.

Other current volunteer activities include:

Appointed Volunteer Commissioner to the Village of Arlington Heights, Arts Commission, Arlington Hts., IL since 2009.

Served in various volunteer capacities and Committees for the American Association of Community Theatre (AACT) for over ten years. Currently serving as the AACT Illinois State Contact, and looking forward to the upcoming AACT/ITA Illinois State Festival in 2016 and the Regional in 2017.

I have a very busy volunteer schedule, and I simply love using my time in 'Helping and Serving Others'... "Keeps You Young At Heart"!

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

In the past having a production meeting where you have to balance and negotiate all the awesome creative ideas.

Of what theatrical accomplishment are you most proud?

Offering artists an opportunity to be employed and flourish in their particular art passion.

Over the years, how you have participated in the ITA?

Current member of the Illinois Theatre Association, and previously served as the ITA Community Theatre Representative. In 2010, I was honored to receive the Award of Excellence in Community Theatre. During this particular time frame I was involved with Chairing two Illinois State Festivals and one American Association of Community Theatre Regional Festival.

Currently Serving on the ITA Planning Committee for the 2nd Bi-Annual Statewide Community Theatre Festival, which will take place at the beginning of November.

In this capacity I'm looking forward to others experiencing the awesome artistic talent, networking, shared information, collaboration, and of course great fun and parties.

Why do you believe that community theatre is important?

Community Theatre is important because those who participate learn or enhance on skills such as memorizing, discipline, coordination, self confidence, etc., and those who attend a production can experience a moment where they can learn, laugh, contemplate, and enjoy a moment away from their busy schedule. It's like going on vacation, reading a book, etc. Theatre is the greatest escape to relax and enjoy life.

Being part of both ITA and AACT has been very instrumental in enhancing my career, knowledge and networking in the realm of theatrical arts, and I enjoy sharing that information with others.

Do you have any concluding thoughts?

Since I believe God created me I think my final journey is to use my time, talent and treasures to help others experience life to the fullest through God's gifting of theatrical arts.

[Back to Top](#)

ITA UPDATES**42nd Annual Illinois High School Theatre Festival 2017**

Find Your Truth: Discover, Uncover, Reveal

January 5-7, 2017

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Announcing the 2017 All-State Company of "Sweeney Todd!"
[Click Here.](#)

Currently Available On-Line:

Lead a Workshop, Bring a Play, Respond to a Production,
Submit a Nomination for the IHSTF's Administrator Support
Award

To receive email updates about the IHSTF, register your email address on the Festival website. Any questions may be directed to info@ihstf.org or call 217-244-8174.

Never been to the Festival? Associate Director Judy Swiger would love to help your students join the fun. Call her at 217-840-7255 or email judyannswiger@gmail.com.

Community Theatre News

SAVE THE DATE: November 4-6, 2016

The Illinois Theatre Association Presents its

Bi-Annual Statewide Community Theatre Festival

commUNITY theatre: One Heart, One Vision, One Voice

Illinois AACTFest

Engle Lane Theatre (Streator)

Featuring: dynamic workshops, engaging roundtable discussions, a compelling keynote presentation, fun afterglow parties, an awards brunch, and six MainStage community theatre presentations competing for a chance to represent Illinois in the American Association for Community Theatre's 2017 Regional Festival (AACTFest 2017)!

General registration for the Festival will be available next month. Please spread the word and save the date!

New Event!

[Back to Top](#)

Illinois Theatre Association	Save The Date Saturday, October 8, 2016
---	---



THE ILLINOIS THEATRE ASSOCIATION
COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY DIVISION
INVITES YOU TO JOIN US
FOR
HAND TO GOD AT VICTORY GARDENS THEATRE

"IF BOOK OF MORMON AND AVENUE Q
HAD A BABY, IT WOULD BE..."

HAND TO GOD
—A NEW PLAY



"Sesame Street meets The Exorcist." —The New Yorker

6:30 pm: Wine and Cheese Reception
7:30 pm: Performance of *Hand to God* directed by Gary Griffin
Post show After Glow at a nearby bar T.B.A.

Ticket Prices: \$45.00 for ITA Member; \$50.00 Non-Member

**JOIN US FOR A WONDERFUL EVENING OF THEATRE,
NETWORKING, FELLOWSHIP AND FUN!**

For More Information
<http://victorygardens.org/our-season/2016-17-season>