

Illinois Theatre Association

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ITA EVENTS

ITA Mock Audition Clinics:

February 4, 2017

at Engle Lane Theatre

Streator

February 12, 2017

at The Foxhole Chicago

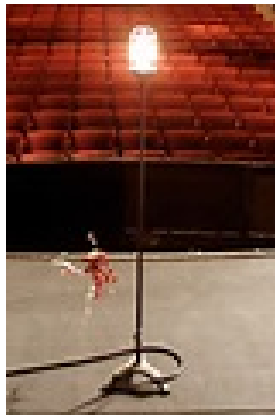
February 13, 2017

eFOLLOWSPOT January, 2017

CREATING "LIGHT" FOR CHALLENGING TIMES by Don Shandrow

Following is announcement made by the Ghostlight Project - theghostlightproject.com.

The Ghostlight Project's purpose is to create a movement for theaters from across the country to take a stand for social justice. An opportunity to vow that, "Over the next four years we, as an individual theatre together with theatres across the country, vow to be a brave space - a space of diversity and inclusion." This is something all theaters in Illinois should do. Make this choice for your theater if you haven't already.



On January 19, 2017 at 5:30 p.m. in each time zone across the country, members of the theater community - from Broadway to regional theaters to high schools and colleges and community theaters - will come together to launch The Ghostlight Project. Gathering outside of theaters on the eve of the Presidential Inauguration, people will join in a collective, simultaneous action, together creating "light" for challenging times ahead. Inspired by the tradition of leaving a "ghost light"

on in a darkened theater, artists and communities will make or renew a pledge to stand for and protect the values of inclusion, participation, and compassion for everyone-- regardless of race, class, religion, country of origin, immigration status, (dis)ability, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

January 19th is a moment of gathering within a larger resistance to intolerance at all levels. We aim to create brave spaces that will serve as lights in the coming years. We aim to activate a network of people across the country working to support vulnerable communities. This is not a substitution for protests or direct action, but rather a pledge for continued vigilance and increased advocacy.

We define "a brave space" as a space where:

- It is safe to be who you are, regardless of race, class, religion, country of origin, immigration status, (dis)ability, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

at The Foxhole Chicago

Visit

www.illinoistheatre.org for more details

February 25-26, 2017
37th Annual Statewide Non-Equity Professional Theatre Auditions

University of Illinois at Chicago

- Diverse opinions, dissent, and argument are not only tolerated, but invited.
- Active listening and courageous exchange are fundamental values.
- Collective action, activism, and community engagement, both within and outside the walls of the theater, are cultivated, encouraged, and supported.

The event on January 19th marks the initiation for some artists and theaters, and marks another step for others with a long history of fighting for social justice and equity. As the participants all have varied backgrounds, so too is it up to each institution and individual to determine what ongoing action will best serve their institution and community.

EVENTS OF INTEREST FROM ITA MEMBERS

February 1-2, 2017

Intelligent Lighting Creations:

Lighting Technology Chicago 2017

Arlington Heights

[Click Here](#)

February 4, 2017

Grand Stage Theatrical Skills Workshop:

ETC's Ion Consol Training Level 1: Essentials

Hammond Academy for the Performing Arts

[Click Here](#)

March 4, 2017

Grand Stage Theatrical Skills Workshop:

Safe Rigging: "Heads up!"

Streamwood High School

[Click Here](#)

INITIATING ACTION: January 19, 2017

On January 19, 2017 at 5:30pm across time zones, we will gather in front of theaters and art spaces across the country. This collective action will signify an ongoing commitment to social justice in the coming years, taking a variety of forms and actions for individual artists and institutions.

ONGOING ACTIONS

The Ghostlight Project will be a resource for theaters, arts communities, and individuals to identify and create meaningful action steps, or to continue in the social justice work already underway. Here are some initial suggestions to serve as inspiration for those interested in additional action:

INDIVIDUALS:

- Rally a team of actors, staff, and artists to make monthly donations (through platforms like Charity Navigator) to organizations supporting people within vulnerable communities.
- Create a volunteer team of colleagues and fellow artists to do a monthly "Service Monday."
- Become an expert on a topic, state, or key issue vulnerable in the next six months. Be a resource hub for that issue, sharing your knowledge and expertise with others to become more informed.
- Make daily or weekly calls to local and state representatives regarding issues important to you.
- Create a fellow artist phone tree to call elected officials.
- Connect people with organizations and nonprofits supporting various issues. Become a resource for sharing and disseminating information.

INSTITUTIONS:

- Pledge that you want to be a place of diversity and inclusion. Acknowledge if this hasn't historically been true.
- Listen to the communities and organizations you want to support. What are their concerns and needs?
- Build (or strengthen) a one-on-one relationship with a single organization to whom you can devote time, human resources, and resource resources. Offer tickets, talkbacks, and tours, and give them space to get

Submit an Event**JOB POSTINGS**

The Latin School of Chicago announces an opening for a Technical Theatre position.

Glenbard North High School seeks a tech person interested in doing any or all of the following (scenery, lights, sound, props, publicity, costumes, etc.).

Click here to visit the ITA's Job Board for details and more postings!

Submit a Job Posting

to know you as deeply as possible, and so they can make informed decisions and asks. Re-envision what true partnership and collaboration might look like together.

- Shedule meetings with organizations your theater has interfaced with through outreach and education programs to hear how they might be interested in partnering with your theater down the road. What are their needs within the current landscape?
- Share knowledge of social justice actions, programs, and initiatives your institution has created and sustained that others may learn from.
- Connect with social justice and POC-focused theaters to amplify and magnify collective efforts.
- Set benchmarks/be knowledgeable about the demographics of your board, staff, and audiences. Get a demographic breakdown of your city and set a goal that in X years, you will match it.
- Offer space for meetings, events, fundraisers, and trainings to social justice organizations.
- Host community meals for staff, community members, and neighbors to build connections.
- Connect with institutions in your neighborhood. Visit the mosque down the street every week. Visit the LGBTQIA club at the nearest high school and empower them to tell their stories.

AUDITION ANNOUNCEMENTS

2/25-2/26

ITA's Statewide Professional Non-Equity Auditions

Click here to visit the ITA's Audition Announcements for more details.

Submit an Audition

FEATURED PERFORMANCES**DLO Musical Theatre**

Violet

2/17/17-2/19/17

Fri. at 7p

Sat. at 6:30p

Sun. at 12:30p

PLEASE JOIN US!

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THEATRE, PERFORMANCE, AND SOCIETY

The following is an excerpt from article by Vikas Shah in the May 8th, 2016 edition of *Thought Economics*

In this exclusive series of interviews, we speak to six world experts on theatre and performance. Sir Howard Panter (Founder of the Ambassador Theatre Group Ltd, Chairman of Rambert Dance Company), Gilles Ste-Croix (co-founder of Cirque du Soleil), Joanna Read (Principal of the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art - LAMDA), James Houghton (Director of the Drama Division of The Juilliard School, and Director of New York's Signature Theatre Company), Tamara Rojo (English National Ballet Artistic Director and Lead Principal Dancer) and Darcey Bussell (President of the Royal Academy of Dance). We discuss the role of theatre and performance in culture, look at the secrets of the performing arts and discuss the future of theatre in the modern world.

Performance is key to human experience. There is not one of us on this planet who hasn't captivated an audience as a baby with our gurgles, squeaks and steps; nor is there one of us who will fail to move an audience when our shell plays the central role at the spectacle of our own funerals. The intervening period- regardless of its length- is a series of scenes where the protagonist (as self) plays the lead in a tale of joy, tragedy, comedy, farce and errors. The beautiful paradox however, is that in life we are simultaneously the central-actor of our own narrative alongside being the support

Region 5: Danville

for hundreds of other stories, and the spectator of millions- perhaps billions more.

Want your performance to be featured here? Visit the [ITA Performance Calendar](#) for details.

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College/University Group Discussion

Community Theatre Group Discussion

Creative Drama Group Discussion

Professional Theatre Group Discussion

This view of life in context of creative culture is shared across the arts. Speaking on literature, Maya Angelou said "We write for the same reason that we walk, talk, climb mountains or swim the oceans- because we can... We have some impulse within us that makes us want to explain ourselves to other human beings... That's why we paint, that's why we dare to love someone- because we have the impulse to explain who we are. Not just how tall we are, or thin... but who we are internally... perhaps even spiritually. There's something, which impels us to show our inner-souls. The more courageous we are, the more we succeed in explaining what we know." (Thought Economics, October 2012). Speaking on music, Hans Zimmer said, "...If you go to any rave, or any football event, you will find people chanting in a rhythm- human beings do that. We have this sense to participate and organise- Music lets you rediscover your humanity, and your connection to humanity. When you listen to Mozart with other people, you feel that somehow- we're all in this together...." (Thought Economics, March 2013)

Theatre and performing arts are also hugely important to economies and communities. The US Bureau of Economic Analysis showed that 3.2 percent of US GDP (around US\$ 504 billion) is attributable to arts and culture (compared with the entire US travel and tourism industry, which accounts for 2.8 percent of GDP). Alongside this, Americans for the Arts also showed that the arts and cultural industries support over 5.4 million jobs in the US alone. This picture of economic impact and significance is the same in country after country, around the world- and doesn't even begin to include the intangible- the social capital brought to communities as a result of the existence of arts.

So what is the true relationship of theatre and performance to human society? In this exclusive series of interviews, we speak to six world experts on theatre and performance. Sir Howard Panter (Founder of the Ambassador Theatre Group Ltd, Chairman of Rambert Dance Company), Gilles Ste-Croix (co-founder of Cirque du Soleil), Joanna Read (Principal of the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art - LAMDA), James Houghton (Director of the Drama Division of The Juilliard School, and Director of New York's Signature Theatre Company), Tamara Rojo (English National Ballet Artistic Director and Lead Principal Dancer) and Darcey Bussell (President of the Royal Academy of Dance). We discuss the role of theatre and performance in culture, look at the secrets of the performing arts and discuss the future of theatre in the modern world.

Q: What is theatre?

[Sir Howard Panter] Theatre is a place where one group of people- on stage- tell stories to another group of people who are sitting... usually in an auditorium... usually in the dark... listening to, and watching these stories.

[Gilles Ste-Croix] Since human beings started to gather in groups and communities, they sensed the necessity to transmit their experiences and knowledge- fundamentally- through

Secondary School Theatre Group Discussion

Theatre for Young Audiences Group Discussion

FOLLOW OUR TWEETS:

Illinois Theatre Association

IHSTF



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

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storytelling. The transmission of these stories, through the ages moved from shamanism to modern forms of art on and off stage. Theatre is a tool that has existed for thousands of years. I imagine that from the first moments people wanted to transmit their experiences of the hunt, or their father and grandfather. It is both the wish and necessity of human beings to tell stories.

[Joanna Read] Theatre is an art form that brings people together to celebrate, challenge and provoke through the telling of stories.

Theatre is unique, you see transformation right in front of you- created in the moment. In a book; you pick it up, put it down and it remains - similarly with film- but with theatre, what you witness in any given moment is unique and only you and the audience will ever experience that.

[James Houghton] Theatre is a moment of intersection between people where events collide or reveal conflict through storytelling. It is an art-form that always has, and always will be, important and relevant. I think we have an insatiable appetite to understand our relevance; in context of our human relationships and our existence. Theatre is a moment where we stop our lives long enough to reflect off each other. Ultimately, that leads to context which- in turns- gives perspective on life and circumstances.

[Darcey Bussell] Theatre is a sense of escape, it transforms you into a new space. It can however, be many things. Theatre can be a source of intellectual learning, inspiration, and can even reflect your life. Theatre is live, and that's important. So much of our art is consumed through live-streams, through computers and so on - and this misses that extraordinary atmosphere, and sense of grounding and presence that theatre gives.

read the rest of this article:

<https://thoughteconomics.com/theatre-performance-and-society>

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SPOTLIGHT ON COLLEGE THEATRE PROGRAMS

by John Curran

One of my main goals in being involved in ITA was to really get to know other colleges and universities in Illinois. With that goal in mind, I would love to turn the Spotlight on the great work being done in higher education theatre programs across the state. To get the ball rolling, I wanted to share a little about my academic home for the last 11 years: Aurora University.

Aurora University traces its origins to the 1893 founding of a seminary in the small town of Mendota, Illinois. In 1912, the school moved to a new campus on the western edge of the nearby community of Aurora. With this change came a different name, Aurora College. From the beginning, the school had a



Intelligent Lighting

very active music and theatre community, but only started offering a theatre degree 10 years ago, and a new Musical Theatre program began this year.

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Our mission is to try to bring a professional experience to our students each time they take the stage. We model our rehearsals and productions on our own professional



experiences so the students get the opportunity to live the demands of the field while still learning their place in it. We explore a variety of different

Midwest Event Solutions

kind of plays to not only push the boundaries for our students, but also for our audiences. Highlights of our current season include *Our Town*, a new play workshop and production with Chicago playwright, Sean Graney, and *Little Shop of Horrors*.

Northern Illinois University School of Theatre and Dance

Spotlight Youth Theatre

So, what should we all know about **YOUR** theatre program? I would love to showcase the work of as many colleges and universities as I can. Please send me info about your school. I know we are all doing amazing work that deserves to be shared.



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HOW IMPROV CAN OPEN UP THE MIND TO LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM AND BEYOND
by Linda Flanagan (January 30, 2015)

Music Makers Theatre



Long before Amy Poehler became famous for her comic roles as Hillary Clinton on "Saturday Night Live," and as indefatigable bureaucrat Leslie Knope on "Parks and Recreation," she was a college freshman looking for something to do outside class. During her first week on campus, she auditioned for the school's improvisational theater group, "My Mother's Fleabag," and discovered a passion. "Everyone was getting to act and be funny and write and direct and edit all at the same time," she writes in her memoir, *Yes, Please*. "My college life sort of exploded in happiness," she adds. What Poehler found liberating as a performer - the free-wheeling, creative and judgment-free nature of improv - is what makes it an appealing way to learn.



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

Improvisation is well-known as comedy and entertainment, but during the past decade it has grown as a method of teaching and learning as well, says Robert Kulhan, adjunct professor of business administration at Duke's Fuqua School of Business, and CEO of Business Improvisations. Today, improv is offered in the theater departments of many colleges and some high schools. Improv troupes around the country offer workshops to school kids on specific subjects, and teach the basics of the art form.

The first rule of improvisation is "yes, and," meaning that anyone's contribution to the group discussion is accepted without judgment. "We always talk about the four 'c's' of improv: creativity, critical thinking, collaboration and communication,"

says Deana Criess, director of ImprovBoston's National Touring Company. To persuade students to abandon their fear of mistakes, she insists on unconditional support to all answers, then works to build trust among the group and invite risk-taking. "Once we have confidence in our ideas and in our teammates, we can free ourselves up to have fun," she says. "So support, trust, risk, confidence and fun. That's what improv is all about," Criess says.

Improv enthusiasts rave about its educational value. Not only does it hone communication and public speaking skills, it also stimulates fast thinking and engagement with ideas. On a deeper level, improv chips away at mental barriers that block creative thinking - that internal editor who crosses out every word before it appears on a page - and rewards spontaneous, intuitive responses, Criess says. Because improv depends on the group providing categorical support for every answer, participants also grow in confidence and feel more connected to others.

Improv is especially beneficial for atypical kids, no matter their stripe. It helps children with learning and physical disabilities develop a sense of play, and enables the socially awkward intellectual to socialize more easily, Kulhan explains. Run-of-the-mill introverts, who might be reluctant to raise their hands or audition for the play, also gain from the experience, Criess says. When they know they'll be supported no matter their answer, introspective kids thrive. "Introverts give improv its richness," she says.

A Student's Perspective

Lilly Hartman, now a junior at Brookline High School in Brookline, Massachusetts, took her first improv class in eighth grade, and remembers thinking it seemed cool but kind of nerve-racking. Her first few times on stage she felt anxious about what her peers would think of her, worrying that she might do something foolish or embarrassing. But the more times Hartman did it, the less self-conscious she became, and the quicker she began to trust her own ideas and to think on her feet. "It's about deciding to go with the flow, acting on what's around you, and making decisions based on that," she says. "And then feeling good about those decisions," she adds. "When you're performing, it's not competitive, and the trust that the performers build with one another is rewarding in itself." Acknowledging that math and English classes teach important skills, Hartman says that her improv work has been more personally transformative. "Improv helps you change on the inside," she says. Without it, "I would be a more scared and quiet person," she says. In fact, she adds, "I wouldn't be the same person."

An Aid for Teachers and Schools

Inviting kids of all types to engage together in improv exercises reinforces the values that most schools seek, Criess says. With its emphasis on support and acceptance of all ideas, improv's "yes, and" code teaches kids to see the positive in their peers, creating a healthier climate at school. "It helps kids be positive community members," she says.

It also reminds teachers that listening and responding to students, and adapting to their needs, is more educational than obeying a rigid teaching plan, Kulhan explains. "It's

communication based on observation, collaboration, and not teaching with blinders on," he says. Teachers might also find that kids are energized and more attentive after engaging in simple improv exercises. "Improv says yes to the idea of ideas," Criss says. "Let's set up a culture where risks are encouraged, and greeted positively and with respect."

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TO ATTEND OR NOT TO ATTEND. . .

THAT IS THE QUESTION

by Jonathan Meier - Secondary Division

One of the exciting things that I have observed in my tenure as an ITA member is the increase in events produced by the different divisions within our organization. This year alone we have seen the College/University Division sponsor a trip to Victory Gardens Theatre for a networking reception and performance of *Hand to God*. Our Creative Drama and TYA Division sponsored a fun filled trip to Bughouse Theatre to see an improv show by Hogwash After Dark. The ITA recently sponsored a day of seminars to educate our members on the new Illinois Arts Learning Standards, as well as the Community Theatre Division Bi-Annual Statewide Community Theatre Festival. And of course, we have our larger events, the Professional Division's Non-Equity Professional Theatre Auditions, and the Secondary Division's Illinois High School Theatre Festival. The list goes on.

During a conversation at a recent Board meeting, I heard someone observe that they knew that all ITA members were invited to our annual Gala each fall, but they did not realize that they could attend the events sponsored by other divisions. This made me think that if this person had that perception, perhaps others did as well. I was also quite excited because I knew that I had a subject for my next Followspot article.

All events within the ITA are open to all members. I find this to be one of the more valuable parts of my membership. As a secondary teacher, I naturally attend events with other teachers. But I find the opportunity to network and learn from others across our divisions to be invaluable. In this same conversation, I was asked if anyone could attend Theatre Fest. The answer to that question is no, but...Only schools can attend this event, but we are always looking for individuals and organizations to present workshops at the Festival. That is a great way to give back to the organization and attend a wonderful, energetic event.

So I would urge all our members to get out and get more value from their memberships by attending all of the events sponsored by all of our divisions. You will be glad you did.

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SAFE OR UNSAFE? THAT IS THE QUESTION Where Does Your Theatre Stand?

by Stacy Deemar

As theatre educators, most of our attention focuses on curriculum, standards, assessments, and productions. Our priority is to assure our students that their environment is safe. When was the last time you took a moment to consider how safe your theatre is that you spend countless hours in every week? If your local fire marshal were to assess your theatre today, do all aspects of your theatre comply with the Illinois State Board of Education and the International Fire Code?

Exit signs in the theatre must be illuminated, located by exit doors or exit access areas, and readily visible. The placement of the exit signs must be clear of



decorations, furnishings or equipment that impairs the visibility of the sign. If an exit sign is flashing and/or not illuminated, request that the light bulbs be replaced immediately.

During performances, exit signs must always be illuminated and uncovered. A glowing exit sign can disrupt the mood of a scene and/or ruin the lighting design. If a change is made to an exit or an exit sign even temporarily, a fire marshal's assistance is required.

Emergency lighting is required in the theatre. When the main power supply fails, emergency lighting automatically activates. The illumination from the emergency lights is sufficient to allow occupants to identify aisles, doors, stairwells and exits to evacuate the theatre safely. The stage, as well as accessory areas, are required to have emergency lights.

In public schools built prior to October 3, 2005, The Illinois State Board of Education requires periodical testing of emergency lighting equipment. A functional test should be conducted monthly for not less than thirty seconds in addition to an annual test for not less than one hour if the emergency lighting system is battery powered. Written records of visual inspections and test results should be preserved in the school.

Fire detectors are required in all stages, dressing rooms, and storage rooms. The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) is responsible for conducting an annual fire safety inspection in public schools by a qualified school inspector. The inspection must be conducted using the fire prevention and safety standard adopted by the Illinois Board of Education (ISBE). Annual inspection results from each building are available at the Regional Office of Education. Also, a summary report is filed annually with the Illinois State Board of Education as required by law.

The stage curtains draping the front of the proscenium stage are required to be flameproof or fire retardant. A certification and guarantee that the curtains have been treated with a flame-retardant application should be conspicuously posted in the theatre. The flame retardant is effective for approximately three years. Confirm the theatre's certificate is compliant. For further information, contact American Drapery Cleaners & Flameproofing, Inc. at 773-472-4066 or www.americandraperyflame.com.

What is the theatre's occupancy? Any room, including a theatre, that is used as an assembly occupancy shall post the occupancy load in a noticeable place near the main exit or exit access doorway from the room. The posting states in all

capital letters, "NOTICE; FOR YOUR SAFETY; OCCUPANCY; IS LIMITED TO: _(number)_ PERSON; BY ORDER OF; THE CODE OFFICIAL; KEEP POSTED UNDER PENALTY OF LAW".

What if there is a need to exceed the capacity by two or three people? This is like driving three or four miles over the speed limit. In other words, increasing the capacity by two or three people or slightly going over the speed limit might not cause any attention. On the other hand, if the capacity increases by ten people or the driver goes ten miles over the speed limit, the situation becomes unsafe and the probability of getting fined in both scenarios is higher.

There are three components of a theatre's egress which include: exit access, exit, and exit discharge. The exit access is the portion of an exit route that leads to an exit. The exit is the portion of the exit route that is generally separated from other areas to provide a protected way of travel to the exit discharge. The exit discharge is the part of the exit route that leads directly outside.

Whether moving along the exit access, exit or exit discharge, all aisles in the theatre must have a clear unobstructed access to the egress. Aisles cannot be converted into storage areas. Chairs, boxes, benches, music stands, sets and other objects can never be placed in the aisles as they would obstruct the egress. Books and other personal belongings can be placed in and/or under the seats during classes and performances.

The theatre's stage staircases are also part of the exit access, exit and exit discharge and therefore must also have a clear unobstructed access to the egress. Stage staircase landings are not repositories. Placing Promethean Boards, music stands, chairs, boxes, flags, and sets on a staircase landing impedes on the safety of the egress.

Lighting booths also require a clear unobstructed access to the egress. Boxes, sets, costumes, chairs, and other objects stored in a lighting booth impair the outlet and can be a fire hazard.

Stage doors are exits that must be kept clear of debris. The minimum width of the door can be thirty-two inches and it must open at least 90 degrees outside of the theatre. Sets, furniture, and other objects cannot be placed in the exit discharge.

Theatre seating is for patrons to sit. Placing sets, props, costumes and other objects on top of the seats is prohibited. Educational theatres should uphold the same immaculate standards as professional theatres. This sets the appropriate precedent for future theatregoers.

For theatres that have fixed seating, the International Fire Code has a formula to determine the maximum floor area allowance per occupant. Multiple the net width and net length of the stage and divide the product by fifteen. The quotient is the total number of occupants for the stage. For example, if the width of the stage is 33 feet and the length is 20 feet, the total square footage of the stage is 660. Take the product, 660 square feet, and divide it by 15. The quotient is 44. Thus, the total number of people that can be on the stage simultaneously is 44. If there are other objects on the stage such as

instruments, stands, or sets, the occupancy rate will be reduced.

Placing actors, musician, and dancers on staircase landings and aisles creates an obstructed egress. Exceptions to increasing the occupancy load must be approved by a fire code official.

For further information regarding public school theatre safety, go to the Illinois State Board of Education Health/Life Safety Glossary at <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/glossary.pdf> and the International Fire Code at:

http://codes.iccsafe.org/app/book/toc/2015/International-Codes/2015_IFC_HTML/index.html

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LaDonna Wilson - 2017 IHSTF Executive Director and 2018 All-State Director

Is there a story behind your unique first name?

My dad used to drive by a dairy and egg farm called The Donna Marie Farm. He said it fast as a child and called it LaDonna Marie, thus my first name.

Please tell us about your education/training in theatre.

I used to write and direct plays for my neighborhood when I was little. I was President of my Thespian troupe in high school and performed often, but didn't pursue it in college as a degree. I took Acting and Oral Interp and Directing. My first English teaching job asked me to direct, and I jumped at the chance. I have since taken many graduate courses in Theatre. I have also done improv, helping found a group and doing workshops with IO in Chicago.

What is the best thing about your job?

Students. I love how they grow in a theatre program, and I love how loving they are to each other and to the rest of the student body. True theatre students have great empathy and kindness (along with their egos), and I find them to be the best of the student body in schools.



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

I have a conservative principal in a not very conservative school. We have a strong program, and I often have to convince him of the merit of the work we want to do. We continue to grow and understand each other, but it is frustrating when I have to balance what I know my kids can do and what the school would prefer.

Of what theatrical accomplishment are you most proud?

Recently we performed Chicago at the International Thespian Festival on the main stage, which made me very proud. We have no financial help from our district and create all our own sets and costumes. We were featured with schools that had 20 times our budget and did an impressive job. Like all teachers,

though, just seeing each child grow from freshman to senior year in confidence and ability is also rewarding.

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

I have been attending as a sponsor for over about 20 years. I have been lucky enough to directed students from four different schools to perform at the Festival. I have been on the committee for several years now and am the Executive Director for 2017 and the All-State Director for 2018.

Describe the inspiration and/or motivation for the theme you chose for Theatre Fest 2017.

As an improviser, I learned that no scene was funny if it didn't come from truth; as an actor and director, I felt good work came from revealing the truth of the character. On a side note, though, I think that students are struggling as seniors to decide what their path in life will be. Finding and knowing their truth will lead them to happiness.

Describe the most challenging/rewarding parts of being the Executive Director for the Illinois High School Theatre Festival.

Illinois is a large state, and it is challenging to get participation from all parts of the state. It is rewarding to see the joy on student's faces when they get to share their love of theatre with others from around the state that feel likewise.

How can members from ITA divisions other than Secondary get involved in next year's Theatre Festival?

Present workshops or be on Committee!

The ITA website has emails from every committee for the Illinois High School Theatre Festival. Contact someone from a group that seems interesting and they will tell you what they do and help facilitate ways you can get more involved. If you want to present a workshop, contact the Workshop Committee and they can guide you through the process.

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