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Illinois Theatre Association

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JOB POSTINGS

Downers Grove North H.S. is interviewing for an Auditorium Manager to coordinate all aspects of the auditorium and similar facilities

North Shore Country Day School in Winnetka, IL, is seeking a costumer for the 2020/2021 school year.

Lincoln College seeks a part-time Technical Director to supervise backstage production

eFOLLOWSPOT May , 2020

ITA UPDATES:

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT!

Due to concerns about the spread of COVID-19, the 2021 Illinois High School Theatre Festival's All-State Auditions have been postponed and the registration deadline has been extended.

needs for the academic year 2020-2021.

Saint Viator HS in Arlington Heights is seeking a Theatre Director and part-time Theatre Teacher for the 2020-2021 school year.

Parkland College is searching for an Assistant Technical Director responsible for assisting the Theatre Director.

Grand Stage Company has a full time Field Service & Repair Engineer position available at its North Knox location.

Geneva Chamber of Commerce needs "street" performers for a 2-hour gig on June 23 from 6 pm to 8 pm.

Lindblom Math and Science Academy is seeking a permanent full-time Theatre & Dance Teacher for the 2020-2021 school year.

[Click Here](#) for ALL Job Details, or to Submit a Job Posting.

AUDITION ANNOUNCEMENTS

No Items to Report.

[Click here](#) for ALL Audition Details, or to Submit an Audition.

FEATURED PERFORMANCES

No Items to Report.

Visit the [ITA Performance Calendar](#) for all performance details, and to submit **YOUR** performance.

Deadline Extended
Due June 22
AUDITIONS
Actors, Crew, & Orchestra
The Illinois Theatre Association Production
CABARET
All-State 2021
INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE
At www.illinoistheatrefest.org
COME TOGETHER
FROM ALL OVER ILLINOIS
ALL BACKGROUNDS!
ALL PEOPLE!
SCHOLARSHIPS
AVAILABLE

[Click here](#) for audition information.

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LETTER FROM THE ITA PRESIDENT!

"...s symbol of rebirth, ongoing hope, and renewal."

Dear ITA Members,

I was working outside on my back porch, responding to emails and preparing for my classes, when I noticed the bright yellow blooms of our forsythia bushes. It's one of my favorite sites signifying the shift from winter to spring. Flowers are blooming, the days are getting longer, and the sounds of nature are returning. We also have a lilac bush in our yard which will soon bloom. Walt Whitman and other poets use lilac blossoms as a seasonal symbol for rebirth, ongoing hope, and renewal. It is with this in mind that we too can envision our own future knowing that brighter days are coming. As we continue to adjust to the current health situation, my positive thoughts and well wishes are with you, your families, and those whom you love. I hope you are keeping safe and that you remain in good health.

ITA Links:

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Join the ITA on Facebook:

- ITA Fan Page
- IHSTF Fan Page
- 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



This has been, and continues to be, an emotionally trying time for us all. So many of us have been pushed out of our comfort zones to incorporate new practices and new technologies in order to create engaging and meaningful experiences for those we teach, coach, and work with. Productions, conventions, travel, family gatherings and important milestone events have been cancelled. Many days it's "...hard to see the light now." "Just don't let it go." My spirit has been uplifted by hearing and seeing stories highlighting the true goodness and kindness of people during this crisis. This gives me hope that when we emerge from our current state, we will do so with a greater sense of community, unity and purpose. "Things will come out right now. We can make it so."



During these past weeks, we have all realized how important it is to stay connected. To this end, the Illinois Theatre



Kevin Long, ITA President

Association and your board members are making the commitment to keep in touch with you. We want to hear how you are doing and we want you to share your stories. Over the next few weeks, you'll receive a phone call from a board member reaching out to remind you that "No one is alone." We are here for you and want to know how the Illinois Theatre Association can be of service to you - our members. You are appreciated, you are valued, and you are needed.

It is so appropriate that our newsletter is called the *e-Followspot*. Our art as makers of theatre has shined the most during dark and trying times. I recently reread the article, "A 9/11 Reflection: Broadway Look Back" published by Playbill in 2016. All Broadway shows - all New York shows, period - closed on September 11th. They remained shuttered for the matinees and evening performances of Wednesday, September 12th. But by Thursday, they were back open. City Hall saw that they were. "We had gotten a very strong message from the Mayor and the Deputy Mayors that the Mayor wanted Broadway open as quickly as possible," recalled Jed Bernstein, then president of the League of Broadway Theatres and Producers (now called The Broadway League), "not only for the economic benefits that getting the city back to work would provide, but also for the psychological benefits that Broadway being up and running would contribute." [Click here](#) to read the entire article.



Even though we are currently navigating through the dark days of COVID-19, we know that we, as makers of theatre, will find a way for our vital light to shine once again.

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

113 Fairfield Way,
Studio 108
Bloomington, IL 60108
312-265-5922 (office)
www.illinoistheatre.org
www.illinoistheatrefest.org

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School of Theatre and
Dance

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I hope you and your loved ones continue to be well.

Kevin Long, President

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HAVING FUN YET? by Stacy Deemar, ITA Member

**"If we couldn't laugh we would all go insane."
Robert Frost**

Are you having just as much fun as I am teaching drama from your digital device? Have you been waking up every day asking yourself if you are really living in a pandemic or if you are the star of Groundhog Day? Regardless of whether you are a novice or a seasoned teacher, I know you have been scurrying around creating lessons and working diligently to adapt your drama lessons for digital learning. The situation is less than ideal, but there is a silver lining to sheltering in place as a drama teacher.



Stacy Deemar

Here are the top 50 benefits to teaching drama remotely:

1. There are no auditorium scheduling conflicts.
2. The best sound effects are delivery trucks.
3. With one click, a disruptive student is gone.
4. Your life is no longer dictated by 40 minute increments.
5. How much money have you saved on gas?
6. No worries about finding a parking spot in the school parking lot.
7. Rolling out of bed and going to class without a shower is now an option.
8. There are no excuses for not cleaning your house and doing laundry.
9. Background music includes a leaf blower, washing machine, siren, and street cleaner.
10. Lunch no longer requires waiting for a microwave that has not been cleaned in years.
11. Free at last from school bathrooms.
12. Loud speaker interruptions have been replaced by family members in the background.
13. Heating and cooling your work space can be controlled by an app on your phone.
14. Someone asking to use the bathroom every two minutes is now the family dog.
15. Finding your mark is replaced with finding your power cord.
16. A captive audience has a new meaning.
17. The theatre concession stand is your pantry.
18. Use your bathroom whenever you want.
19. You can sit on a clean floor and it does not have to be for a tornado drill.
20. The house lights are now the lights in your house.
21. Multi-tasking at a virtual meeting has taken on a whole new meaning.
22. Anyone can get a tissue without pomp and circumstance.
23. If you never see or hear a fidget disruptor again, it will be too soon.

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

24. With one click on your keyboard, you can silence a student at a Google meeting.
25. You do not miss body odor drifting through your theatre after gym class.
26. Your daily rehearsals include multiple trips to the refrigerator.
27. Your broken record that said "get in line, tie your shoe, stop talking, and raise your hand" finally stopped playing.
28. The best part about department meetings use to be the snacks and now it's volume control.
29. Every day is bring your pet to work day.
30. A vocal warm-up is singing in the shower.
31. Now you want students on their digital devices in class.
32. Every day can be pajama day.
33. What are formal observations?
34. The morning announcement is about how many days you have been social distancing.
35. Peanut free zones have moved into personal preferences.
36. Stage managing means commandeering home office space.
37. YouTube has replaced the school library.
38. Leaving your id and lanyard at home or in the car are not an issue.
39. A field trip is now rolling in your garbage cans.
40. "I forgot my book in my locker" is no longer applicable.
41. Your eyes get googly with your new expanded relationship with Google.
42. An apple a day is really about Silicon Valley.
43. An ergonomic office is the latest trend in home design.
44. You have a better appreciation for your friends who sit in front of a computer all day.
45. The desk lamp has now become the fill light.
46. Everyone now gets their own close up, Mr. DeMille.
47. Dropping the curtain down has been replaced by swiping and/or powering off.
48. It's about time everyone got their own cordless microphone.
49. Set designs closely resemble teen bedrooms.
50. Who would have thought that the tech people at school would become the most valuable people in education?

As my grandmother use to say, "this too shall pass." In the meantime, while we are having so much fun on our digital devices all day, take a moment to laugh. Our predicament is no laughing matter, but laughter is the best medicine.



Perhaps Mark Twain understood humanity at its best with the following maxim:

"[Humanity] has unquestionably one really effective weapon - laughter. Power, money, persuasion, supplication, persecution - these can lift at a colossal humbug - push it a little - weaken it a little, century by century; but only laughter can blow it to rags and atoms at a blast. Against the assault of laughter nothing can stand."

Your homework assignment is to make someone you love laugh.

Enjoy and stay safe.

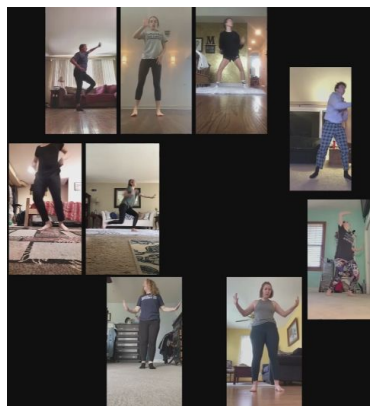
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HOW DO WE DO WHAT WE DO... AND CONTINUE TO

by Richard Arnold, Jr., ITA College/University Rep.

The last eight weeks have been very interesting for all of us in higher education. March 13th (Friday) was my last day in the classroom. I was lucky enough to have class one more time before 'distance learning'. The next week brought about the cancellation of our production of *A Doll's House, Part 2*, our Dance Concert, and two evenings of one-acts directed by student directors. Additionally, I had three other projects that were eventually 'postponed'. How do the arts, that are dependent on a collected audience continue?

I think we, those in theatre, are pretty lucky. Limitations and roadblocks are what we overcome every day. It is part of the way we work. We evolve, pivot, adjust, take advantage of whatever limits us, or offers advantage. At Elmhurst, our director of *A Doll's House, Part 2* adapted. Rehearsals began



online as we waited word on how the world would proceed, and it seemed only natural that it became a virtual performance. The dance concert became a video project. Choreography was taught via Zoom, and dancers recorded themselves. Several pieces focused on containment, including duets with dancers creating together, but separately. The opportunity to choreograph for the camera

was a gift.

The other side of our job is education. We all had to shift existing courses, with plans and goals outlined in a very tidy syllabus. Suddenly these are tested by a new way of teaching - online. We all adjusted to the new form, and we learned how to use the new tools at our disposal. There is a lot of sharing of information and resources. I now belong to several new Facebook groups dealing with theatre education, theatre freelancing, scene painting, theatre history, rigging, lighting, and architecture. Each of these groups have given me a vast amount of information and perspective. Well, we made it through this semester and now look towards the fall. What awaits us? Will it be back to the classroom, or still online? We will hope for the best and plan for both.

We are well trained in adapting. We are collaborators. We are planners. We are creative. We develop these talents and skills through the process of creating our art. We will continue to share with our fellow artists. And, if history tells us anything about what the future holds, we will be creating wonderfully new art after this pandemic.

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DEFIANT! LIVE THEATRE IN THE AGE OF CORONAVIRUS

by **Joan McGrath, ITA Professional Rep.**

I was recently thrilled with the National Theatre's outstanding production of "Frankenstein," brilliantly performed by Jonny Lee Miller and Benedict Cumberbatch. And was moved to tears by the sensitive staged reading Pride Films and Plays produced of Terrence McNally's "Mothers and Sons." I had front row seats to both, courtesy of my 15" computer screen.

The coronavirus has decimated live theatre, as we who love it all mourn. Enterprising companies are producing plays online with a surprising degree of theatrical integrity. The virtual productions (some free, some with reduced ticket prices) are enabling professional theatres to sustain their connection with regular audiences and attract a few newcomers to their companies. As Jennifer Bielstein, Executive Director of American Conservatory Theatre, says in the Wall Street Journal article reprinted below:

"Despite (financial) loss, (Bielstein) describes the ticketed webcasts as a big success in the midst of a crisis.



San Francisco's American Conservatory Theater's production of 'Toni Stone' opened the day before California banned gatherings of more than 250 people.

PHOTO: KEVIN BERNE

They helped the shows get seen, prevented refunds to existing ticket holders, and maintained ties with an audience that is physically cut off from the theater indefinitely. The durability of that relationship will be key for the nonprofit theater as it tries to weather a forecasted hit of \$4.5 million for the fiscal year. 'We don't have a financial cushion. We don't have a cash reserve. There's no way to absorb that kind of sudden loss'."

No one knows the timing, the vigor or the success of any return to "normal" live theatre in Illinois or throughout the country. Hope springs eternal but the challenges are huge.

John Jurgensen's article in The Wall Street Journal of April 20, 2020, "Harsh Realities For Theaters Closed by Coronavirus After Plays Go Online," is a sobering but hopeful assessment for a defiant industry.

[Click here](#) for the article.

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DEAR THEATRE EDUCATORS, by Annaliisa Ahlman, ITA Secondary Rep.

Though we're keeping our physical distance, please know that I'm thinking of my colleagues and friends across the state during this time, and I sincerely hope this message finds you healthy and well. The end of the school year always presents a moment of reflection for me, and though this end of year is less celebratory and a little quieter than I would like, the time for reflection and planning is certainly heightened. As high school teachers, and certainly teachers of all age groups, prepare to end one strange school year and contemplate what the next year might look like, I would like to invite you to browse two of my favorite online resources. I thought I might simply share these with you here today, rather than try to reinvent the wheel myself.

My first resource is on Facebook, but they do have a shared open-source Google doc available if Facebook isn't your platform of choice. The full title of the group is [Teaching Theatre Online: COVID-19](#). It is a private group, which simply means you need to answer a couple of questions in order to get started. Once in the group, use the search function to browse previously posted items to discover posts on topics like best practices for Zoom, lesson/idea sharing, digital resources for watching or creating theatre, and many more. If you don't find what you were looking for in previously shared posts, then post a new question or idea yourself! The admins are also maintaining a list of resources shared in one Google doc in case searching that page is simpler for you than the group itself.

My second resource to share is [Howlround Theatre Commons](#). I've been an avid reader of Howlround since they began in 2011, as I always find something new to challenge my perspective, deepen my understanding of an issue in the theatre, or inspire my creative thinking. Since so much of our



lives have shifted online in the last few months, Howlround has remained a source of ideas and the site helps me feel better connected to the wider world of theatre. The "commons" part of the name means that it is a free and open platform; anyone in any part of the world and any area of the theatre can post, which allows and encourages information and perspective sharing by many different people and groups. From the "about us" section of the site, Howlround welcomes all people who share their values:

- **Generosity and abundance** - all are welcome and necessary
- **Community and collaboration** over isolation and competition
- Diverse aesthetics and the evolution of forms of theatre practice
- Equity, inclusivity, and accessibility for marginalized theatre communities and practices
- Global citizenship-local communities intersecting with global practice

Friends, I hope that these resources might help you stay connected. Please feel free to reach out and share your current favorites as well! Though theatre in COVID-19 may not look like the community gathering place that we have such shared love for, I hope you discover some new ways in which theatre can take shape for you and your students. I hope that you will continue to be reflective, creative, inspired, and joyful during this difficult time. To paraphrase a video recently released by the Guthrie, the theatre has survived for over 2000 years....I have no doubt that it will prevail, and I look forward to seeing all of you 'telling stories around the campfire' again very soon.

Until then,

Annaliisa Ahlman
Secondary Representative

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FREE THEATRE ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN **Submitted by Jacqui Siegel, ITA Creative Drama Rep.**

Here is a great resource for children: Disney on Stage. Students can get creative with art, music, dancing, and acting!

We know that many families and young people will be learning at



home for a while, so over the coming weeks we'll be showcasing some of the most popular parts of Disney Theatrical's free education programs. Discover exciting activities from *The Lion King*, *Mary Poppins*, *Aladdin*, *Frozen*, and a selection of Careers in Theatres videos and podcasts. [Click here](#) for the website.

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SHARE YOUR THEATRE'S CHALLENGES, HOPES, & TRIUMPHS

Intro by Don Shandrow, ITA Community Theatre Rep.
Article by Nicki Haschke, Peoria Players, Business Administrator

Peoria Players is now entering their 101st anniversary. Like all community theatres they are facing the financial, emotional and artistic challenges of COVID-19. In 2019, Peoria Players hosted ITA's Statewide Community Theatre Festival and was presented with the ITA's Award of Excellence in Community Theatre. Nicki Haschke, Business Manager of Peoria Players, shares some of the challenges they are confronted with during the pandemic.

Share the challenges, hopes and triumphs that your theatre has been experiencing for our next *e-Followspot*, to Aimee-Lynn Newlan, Executive Director at aimeelynn@illinoistheatre.org.

Last year, Peoria Players Theatre celebrated its 100th consecutive season. It was a tremendous experience that created new friends and lasting memories. As we proudly moved on to our 101st season, little did we know what was in

store. As we planned to bring back a successful production from a past season, *Mamma Mia!*, that excitement was



100 YEARS

stopped in its tracks as the world faced the unprecedented pandemic, COVID-19. As with all other non-profits and small businesses, our budget took a substantial hit. We were

forced to cancel several fundraisers and postpone our production of *Mamma Mia!*, causing us to end our fiscal year with a \$50,000 deficit.

It's a helpless feeling as we observe our fellow theatre companies also cancelling shows and in some cases, full seasons. These are all non-profits struggling to keep up with this ever-changing environment. How can we predict what will happen tomorrow? How do we make up the lost income that was budgeted over a year ago? There have been webinars, grant and loan applications, virtual fundraisers, and patron donations, all of which have thus far proved quite beneficial. It has been heartwarming to receive correspondence from theatre friends reaching out to offer their help and support. The theatre community is a family, and the theater is our second home. It is a cultural outlet and a source of refuge for so many.

We still hope we can open with *Mamma Mia!* in August and proceed with our season as planned beginning in September. However, this is all subject to what may happen with the direction of the virus. And if it is safe to reopen, we will need to honor the social distancing rule, which will most likely limit our occupancy. For the first time in 23 years, we had to cancel our Summer Youth Theatre. This was one of the toughest decisions we had to make, especially because nurturing younger talent is one of our goals to help ensure the future of our theatre.



Peoria Players has endured many hardships in its vast history, including the Great Depression, a change in several venues, and taking our show on the road while our current theater in Lakeview Park was being built. We are confident that the COVID-19 pandemic will be one more hardship that we can survive. Peoria Players has come this far and we can't let this dampen our spirits. We want to remain a staple in this community, not just for ourselves but also for our performers, our artists and our audiences.

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OF INTEREST FROM ITA MEMBERS:

Is your venue in need of some TLC?

During this time, Vertigo is still available for rigging inspections and maintenance! Visit our website for more information on how we can service your space with proper social distance and protective measures. [Click here](#) for more information.

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