



**CATTLE CALL**  
**NEWS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE**  
Spring Semester 2007

**GUEST:** In February, the Department was honored with a visit from prominent Broadway producer **Marty Bell**. Brought to us by Broadway Across America Education Fund, students and faculty gained valuable insight into the complex process of bringing a play to Broadway. Mr. Bell's engaging discussion included excellent advice for theatre graduates to get their careers started.

**ALUMNI:** The Department of Theatre hosted a gathering January 17 for **Wasatch Front Alumni** in conjunction with opening night of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* at the Babcock Theatre. Alumni shared dinner, attended the play, and enjoyed catching up with one another.

On **April 5**, the **East Coast Alumni** gathered at Don't Tell Mama restaurant in New York City to share news and memories. Bob Nelson (Department Chair) and Anne Cullimore Decker were there to enjoy the company of a wonderful mix of graduates.

**OUTREACH:** The Department co-hosted this year's **Utah Theatre Association** Annual Convention with Westminster College. Over 1,200 students from across the state gathered on campus to attend workshops and performances at this very successful event.

### Faculty News

**Youth Theatre at the U**, in partnership with Kingsbury Hall and the Salt Lake City School District, has been selected as one of 14 national *Partners in Education* teams by the **John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts**. The program provides training institutes and seminars, consultation, and ongoing assistance to partnership teams for professional development of teachers to increase the artistic literacy of young people. **Penelope Caywood** will represent Youth Theatre at the U in the partnership program. For more information about the Partners in Education program, visit [www.kennedy-center.org/education/partners](http://www.kennedy-center.org/education/partners).

**Bob Nelson** spent a week in Cedar City in February at the 39<sup>th</sup> annual American College Theatre Festival for Region VIII. He served as one of the team who conducted the four-day Respondents' Workshop. He was named the "Director Who Best Served a New Play at the Festival" for directing *Eighteen*, by Hank Willenbrink of the University of California-Santa Barbara. *Eighteen* is one of four national finalists for the John Cauble

Award for Best Short Play at the April 17-24 Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival in Washington, D.C.

Other department faculty who participated in the ACTF in February were **Tim Slover**, who served as dramaturg on two original ten-minute plays workshopped at the festival, and **Tommie St Cyr**, who presented a Feldenkrais Method workshop. Professor Emeritus **Richard Scharine** participated as a panelist in the town hall discussion for "Is Theatre a Safe Place to Talk About Race?"

Associate Professor **Jerry Gardner** is on sabbatical and hard at work during Spring Semester. On March 1<sup>st</sup>, his Rokan Butoh Company performed at the Salt Lake City Library in conjunction with artist Trent Alvey's mixed-media exhibit titled "Tribal Portrait: Beauty and Brutality." In February, Jerry's Theatre Department students performed "On Fractured Mist" for attendees of the Utah Theatre Association's Annual Conference. Jerry traveled to Toronto, Ontario to participate in Butoh dance and theatre workshops at the Can-Asian Festival, then to northern France to present workshops and performances.

**Penelope Caywood** was Musical Director for *The Alienation Effekt*, presented by Plan-B Theatre Company at the Rose Wagner Studio Theatre in March.

Emeritus faculty **Richard Scharine** produces and directs People Productions' *Topdog/Underdog* in April, starring two Department of Theatre Actor Training Program students, **Anthony Gaskins** and **Jonah Taylor**.

**Larry West**, adjunct Assistant Professor, directed *Mozart Alive!*, a drama-concert with the Utah Symphony in February. He directed *Rounding Third* for Salt Lake Acting Company (opened in March), and then staged *Gianni Schicchi* for the Department of Music's Lyric Opera (April 20-21.)

**Sarah Shippobotham**, Associate Professor and Head of the Actor Training Program, and Associate Professor **Jerry Gardner** auditioned applicants for the Actor Training Program as part of the Unified Auditions Tour in New York, Chicago, Las Vegas, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.

**Margo Andrews**, Assistant Professor (Lecturer), will write and direct a play to accompany the Utah Museum of Natural History's new exhibit "Toadally Frogs," which opens in June. The play is geared for 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> graders and their families, and presents a message of conservation and biodiversity. This is the first in a series of theatrical interpretation pieces that Margo will produce for the museum.

Professor **Xan Johnson** traveled to Indianapolis in March to serve as a mentor for one of the finalists presenting a new script at the 1007 Bonderman National Youth Playwriting Development Workshop, hosted by the Indiana Repertory Theatre. He is

then directing Youth Theatre's annual outreach project for public education, *Zink: The Myth, The Legend, The Zebra*, which will play at the Babcock Theatre May 16-19. This project is designed to show teachers and parents the power of theatre as a learning medium for teaching many aspects of the state's core curricula. Twenty-eight 5<sup>th</sup>-graders from Indian Hills Elementary School will participate in the production. *Zink*, written by nationally award-winning Utah playwright Cherie Bennett, is based on the true story of an 11-year-old's battle with leukemia and her relationship with a herd of zebras.

**Barbara Smith** cast and rehearsed a number of Youth Theatre actors for assistance with a Modern Dance Department elementary school initiative. Kaye Richards, Modern Dance faculty, worked with the entire student body of Edison Elementary School in Salt Lake (approximately 600 students), to engage them in a dance concert about the earth. Each grade provided a piece of the dance story, and the Youth Theatre actors provided the dialog that connects each piece of the story.

Professor **Gage Williams** returned to Aspen, CO, in February for his thirteenth year as Art Director for the US Comedy Arts Festival, sponsored by HBO. He is also designing sets for a production at the Great Lakes Theatre Festival in Cleveland, then will move to Idaho to open the summer season of the Idaho Shakespeare Festival.

Theatre faculty and students were featured guests at the February and March "Dining for the Arts" dinners for the College of Fine Arts Advisory Board. In February, adjunct faculty member **Barbara Smith** directed students **Melissa Clason Burns, Eb Madson**, and **Stacy Sobieski** in selections from classic Greek theatre. In March, **Sarah Shippobotham** presented "Irish Luck," complete with dialect lessons for the audience, with the assistance of students **Jesse Dornan** and **Patrick Harris**.

Assistant Professor **Peder Melhuse** and ATP student **Lauren Bradley** appeared in February in the excellent *Sexsting* at Salt Lake Acting Company.

**Barbara Smith** participated as a panel member in the discussion held in conjunction with this *Sexsting*, and she also starred in Westminster Players' *The House of Bernarda Alba* in March.

In February, faculty **Morgan Lund** starred in *A Thousand Clowns*, and in March **Robin Wilks-Dunn** directed *Nunsense*, both at The Grand Theatre and both to rave reviews.

## Student News

Congratulations to our students who achieved honors at the 39<sup>th</sup> Annual American College Theatre Festival in Cedar City. **Jennifer Johnson**, a senior in the Performing Arts Design Program, received the Regional Sound Design Award for her work on

*Urinetown*. **Chris Hill**, a Theatre Studies senior, received Honorable Mention in the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas (LMDA) Student Dramaturg Award category.

**Erica Richardson**, ATP freshman, has been signed for a principal role in *Thoroughly Modern Millie* at the Hale Centre Theatre, running April 18 through June 9.

ATP Junior **Shanna Jones** will be an ensemble member for Pioneer Theatre Company's recordbreaking production of *Les Misérables*, which opens April 27 and runs through at least June 16.

**Leticia Vélez**, ATP sophomore, participated in a reader's theatre workshop of a new work in progress by the authors of *Sexsting* at Salt Lake Acting Company. Entitled *In Corrections*, the new play is a modern adaptation of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*. Authors Doris Baizley and Susan Raffanti sought feedback from the audience.

**Stacy Sobieski** appeared in *The Alienation Effekt* at Plan-B Theatre Company in March, along with department alumnus **Jay Perry**. Playwright/Director **Tobin Atkinson** is also an alumnus of the Department of Theatre.

Alumni News [Send your good news to [tillie.wilber@theatre.utah.edu](mailto:tillie.wilber@theatre.utah.edu)]

**Marilyn Stout** just accepted a dream job in London's West End, as Technical Facilities Manager at The Actors Centre. She previously divided her time between working as an Assistant Production Manager at the Edinburgh Festival in Scotland and in various theatres in Chicago.

**J. Nicole Christensen** is working in the costume shops at Arizona Broadway Theatre and Valley Youth Theatre in Phoenix, AZ.

**Shane Mozaffari** is working in real estate and training for endurance races in Salt Lake City.

Three Actor Training Program graduates were featured in the first production of Shakespeare to play on the Guthrie Theater's new Wurtele Thrust Stage (Minneapolis). *The Merchant of Venice* featured **Michelle O'Neill** as Portia, **Mark Nelson** as Gratiano, and **Kris Nelson** as Leonardo. View photos from this incredible production at [www.boneaubryanbrown.com/GuthrieTheater.htm](http://www.boneaubryanbrown.com/GuthrieTheater.htm).

**Molly Mackin Fowler** is in and out of the country currently, working on a film in South Africa, but makes her home in NYC.

**Leo Geter** has been in Southern California, writing for the television drama *Close to Home*. He and partner Tim Mason are looking forward to the opportunity for another Broadway run of *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas* again this coming year.

**Emily B. Heugatter-Mathias** joins the faculty at Centenary College in Shreveport, LA, as a full-time tenure-track Assistant Professor. She will be developing an actor training program and building an educational outreach program. She will continue to return to Wisconsin in the summer to co-teach the youth theatre program with our own **Xan S. Johnson**.

BFA alum **Joel Huff** has joined the resident company of the Organic Theatre in Chicago, working with former U professor **Alex Gelman**. Catch up with Joel and Alex at [www.organictheatre.com/organic/](http://www.organictheatre.com/organic/).

PhD alum **Shaun Nethercott** continues as Executive Director of Matrix Theatre Company in Detroit, MI. Founded in 1991 by Shaun and her husband Wes, Matrix is a true community theatre, devoted to producing new works through a collective playwriting process with, for, and about the people of Southwest Detroit. For more information on their award-winning work, see [www.matrixtheatre.org](http://www.matrixtheatre.org).

Catch up with alum **Klea Blackhurst** on her beautiful website at [www.kleablackhurst.com](http://www.kleablackhurst.com).