

eFollowspot

Report from “On the Road: Convention 2008”

By Mark Begovich and Tim Ortmann



Well, we are on the bus heading back from the Stratford Shakespeare Festival. Tim and I are a bit exhausted, but we wanted to take a moment and thank everyone in the ITA for supporting our attempts to try something new. We have been listening and wanted to create an adventure. As an entire group we saw *Taming of the Shrew* and *Caesar and Cleopatra*. We had a wonderful talk back with actors and presented the 2008 Award of Honor to the amazing Ms. Kristin Mackie. At this time, we want to turn it over to few of the attendees to reflect on their experiences honestly and to share.

Mary Luckritz

“The weekend was AWESOME!!!!

I’m totally in love with Stratford Shakespeare Festival. I’ve never been. It was a blast! The shows were great! Stratford is quaint. Mark Begovich and Tim Ortmann were fabulous hosts serving champagne, cheese and crackers on the bus. Make no mistake, they made traveling eight hours with twenty-four theatre people on a coach bus much more fun than it sounds. I saw *Romeo & Juliet*, *The Music Man*, *Taming of the Shrew* and *Caesar and Cleopatra*! Shaw’s *Caesar & Cleopatra* was the highlight! Not only had I never seen a production, but also I had never read it. Christopher Plummer was amazing! The show was fabulous from start to finish! The tours of the warehouse and backstage were great! John Muszynski has long touted how good Stratford is, but I never made time to visit. I’ll be returning next year! Thank you to Mark & Tim!”

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Judy Klingner

“What a wonderful gift—a weekend of theatre spent with theatre-lovers from across the state. Four shows, a warehouse tour, and a backstage tour in 48 hours was exhausting and exhilarating at the same time! Although *Caesar and Cleopatra* was my personal favorite, I thoroughly enjoyed every moment of the trip. Even the weather cooperated. A big “Thank you!” goes out to Mark and Tim for dreaming up the idea of taking ITA on the road. Let’s do it again!!”

Beth Barber

“I hesitated to go on this trip at first. What a mistake it would have been if I did not attend. What an incredible weekend of theatre spent with wonderful people. I can’t thank Tim and Mark enough for making the whole experience perfect! *Caesar and Cleopatra* was, without a doubt, my favorite. I definitely plan to return, as this was my first trip to the Stratford Shakespeare Festival. I hope others will have the chance to experience another experience like this in the future.”

Dinah Barthelmess

“This Stratford Trip, the “On the Road” portion of our annual convention, is, I am hopeful, the beginning of a long tradition. Somehow a nine-hour bus ride flew by, likely due to the expert planning of our “cruise directors” Mark and Tim, who had Shakespearean games, champagne, cheese and crackers, and lots of laughs easily followed. Our hotel was welcoming, comfortable, and in very close proximity to the festival theaters. I saw four shows in the quick weekend and was mesmerized by all. The tours of both the Festival Theater and the Costume and Prop Warehouse left me drooling for more and watching the magic of the subsequent performances with increased attentiveness. I loved the shows, the lovely town, the superb weather, but most of all, I have LOVED the chance to wander, dine, laugh, share, and learn more about some amazing colleagues. I am sure I’ll be contacting many of these fun folks and look forward to the beginning of a new tradition! And all hail Mark and Tim for outstanding planning and hosting!”

Linnea Forsberg

“I cannot think of a way in which the Stratford Trip could have been more perfect. From the bus ride with games, movies, champagne and snacks to watching Christopher Plummer play Caesar— it was wonderful. We saw shows ranging from the so-so to great. The group had lively conversations about the shows. In addition, we toured backstage, costume storage, and met with some of the actors. It was educational, friendly and fun. Mark and Tim did a great job.”

So, the battery is dying as we continue our ride home. We just want to thank everyone for the support. ITA will hit the road again someday soon, so everyone— come join us for our next adventure.

New ITA Members

Small Organization

Gordon Tech High School, Chicago (Secondary)
Carmel Catholic High School, Mundelein (Secondary)
West Carroll High School, Savanna (Secondary)

Individual

Steve Leaver, Chicago (Children's Theatre)
James D. Smith, Norridge (Secondary)
Marge Uhlarik-Boller (Geneva)

USITT *Sightlines*, November 2008

Here are some of this issue's highlights:

- 2009 Art Auction
- Student Architecture Awards
- Advanced Model Making Workshop
- News from USITT's President
- Contributing & Sustaining Member News
- The Last Word

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November Board Meeting at Niles North High School

By Aimee-Lynn Newlan



In attendance were: Timothy Ortmann (President), Norm Engstrom (First Vice-President), Mel Ludington (Second Vice-President), Kristen Mackie (Secretary), Kurt Steinhauser (Treasurer), Aimee-Lynn Newlan (Managing Director), Betsy Driver (Children's Theatre), Steve Leaver (Children's Theatre), Karen Fort (Community Theatre), Dinah Barthelmess (Creative Dramatics), Rob Chambers (Professional Theatre), Brad Lyons (Professional Theatre), Anna Louise Jakubka (Secondary Education), Judy Klingner (Secondary Education), and Jim DeYoung (Director of Advocacy).

Items on the Agenda included:

I. Call to Order and Opening Remarks - Board President Timothy Ortmann expressed excitement for the new year, and welcomed new and returning board members. "The membership has entrusted us with the leadership of the association. I am confident that together, through our vision, clear-minded planning, and responsible implementation of ideas, we can take the organization a bold step into the future."

II. Board Treasurer, Kurt Steinhauser, presented the financial reports. These included a draft copy of last fiscal year's audit, a budget vs. actual report from 9/1/08-current, and a revised budget for the 2008-2009 fiscal year, which was approved.

III. Timothy Ortmann took a moment to discuss the various Committees on the ITA Board (structure, roles and expectations), and made appointments. This year's Committees include: Communications, Executive, Financial, Membership, and Nominations. In addition, the Board discussed the need for a Long Range Planning Committee.

IV. Second Vice-President, Norm Engstrom, presented the Membership Report: For historical perspective, here are the numbers of total members as reported at the first Board Meeting each of the last five years. FALL 2004—233; FALL 2005—217; FALL 2006—204; FALL 2007—291; FALL 2008—306

After some years of decline the ITA has now regained membership, added new members and standardized a procedure for welcoming new members and encouraging present members to annually renew. This system is under the control of the Managing Director with oversight from the President and First Vice President.

Numbers by Membership Type:

Individual—161; Small Organization—45; Lifetime—30; Undergrad—27; Large Organization—24; Seniors—13; Corporate—5; Associate Corporate—1

Interest Area Numbers:

Secondary—150; College—63; Children's Theatre/Creative Dramatics—28; Professional—24; Community—20; Undesignated—13 (12 of these are undergrads) Indicating All Interest Areas—8;

V. Discussion of the success of ITA's recent 2008 Convention

Close to Home - More than 100 members participated in this "region by region" event held on September 27, 2008. The connection of the regions through the use of video conferencing was



successful, and all expressed the need to host more regional events.

On the Road - The trip to the Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Canada, was a huge success. 26 participants were treated to invaluable networking, theatre productions, backstage and warehouse tours, a meet and greet with actors, and a nice reception.

Board members then **reviewed the final reports** from each region and discussed ways in which ITA can better serve the regions, and membership as a whole. (Final reports for regions can be found in the October Followspot, this issue and on-line). Initial ideas included: on-line props/costumes exchange; lesson swaps; searchable database to connect actors, technicians, and those seeking employment with directors, and theatre companies seeking talent; merchandise available on the website (t-shirts, hats, mugs, etc.); mailing list exchange; and health insurance. This will be an ongoing dialogue throughout the year.

VI. Judy Klingner, Secondary Education Division Representative, provided an update on the Illinois High School Theatre Festival. Registration for participants is closed (the waiting list is now being looked at), but there is still some room for exhibitors. For more information on the Festival, visit www.illinoistheatrefest.org.

VII. Brad Lyons, Professional Division Representative, announced that ITA's 30th Annual Professional Auditions will take place on 1/31/09 and 2/1/09 at the University of Illinois at Chicago. All information is available on our website.

VIII. Dinah Barthelme, CD Representative, reported on the status of planning for the Children's Theatre/Creative Dramatics Conference, which will likely be held in mid-March at Northwestern University. Similar to last year, the event is being co-produced with the American Alliance for Theatre and Education. Dinah engaged the Board in dialogue about the target audience for this event, and the types of workshops that might be presented.

IX. Aimee-Lynn Newlan submitted her "Managing Director's Report," which focused on various administrative and legal issues. She reported that all is running smoothly in the office. She also reported on the website. "This week our on-line searchable database should be up and running! Recent updates to the site include the addition of award recipient photos, a "board of directors only" page, and an updated performance calendar."

X. Followspot - it was reported that readership is up 150%, with 146 people accessing October's Followspot on-line. Previous tracking of Followspot visits indicated less than 50 members were accessing it. The increase is due to ITA now providing a direct link to Followspot in an email. Members no longer have to log-in to view the current month's Followspot.

XI. Jonathan Meier, Co-Chair for the 2009 Convention, led the Board in discussions about ideas for the 2009 Convention, which will likely take place in Chicago at the end of September. Mr. Meier and Co-Chair Jerry Proffit are at the very beginning phases of planning for this event, and appreciated the numerous ideas given by members of the Board.



November Advocacy Report

By *Jim De Young*



We have just completed an historic election. What can you expect from the new administration on arts policies and/or issues? Check the following site: [http://blog.artsusa.org/2008/11/05/americans-for-the-arts-action-fund-](http://blog.artsusa.org/2008/11/05/americans-for-the-arts-action-fund-statement-on-the-2008-election/#more-300)

[statement-on-the-2008-election/#more-300](http://blog.artsusa.org/2008/11/05/americans-for-the-arts-action-fund-statement-on-the-2008-election/#more-300) for an outline of what might be a bold new initiative for the arts under the leadership of President-Elect Obama.

Arts issues may not be on the top ten list of problems for our new president and the members of congress, but this is still the opportune time for you to re-connect with your elected officials and remind them of your interest in promoting theatre and the arts. The ideal vehicle is a short phone call, fax, letter, or e-mail that congratulates them on their election or re-election as the case may be. Then you add a short paragraph that tells them that you work in the arts. Mention that you belong to or support arts groups—including the Illinois Theatre Association—and that you would hope that they would be amenable in the future to legislation that encourages the development of the arts and arts education. Find appropriate addresses below: <http://www.usa.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml> or for state addresses go to <http://capwiz.com/nea/il/directory/statedir.tt?state=IL&lvl=state>

At our recent board meeting some members called for more information on the support for our belief that theatre and arts instruction is beneficial to all learning. So here are two more sources that say exactly that. The first one is out of Colorado and contends that “creativity in the curriculum boosts academic performance.” http://www.denverpost.com/breakingnews/ci_10655058 If your tastes run to the more academic you might look up a new book by two



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Britons titled **The Social Impact of the Arts** Palgrave Macmillan, 2008 <http://www.palgrave.com/products/title.aspx?PID=281230>

The volume traces the history of this debate from classical Greece to the present day.

Have you noticed that your audience is graying? Most surveys suggest that the average age of arts attendees is rising, but here is an intelligent article that makes an argument that this is not a new insight and might not be all bad. <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/news/arts/la-ca-newgray5-2008oct05,0,4427896.story?track=rss>

The NEA has announced significant funding for its New Play Development Program. Illinois did not have a theatre that will be featured this time around, but the program itself is fascinating. Read about it at: <http://arts.endow.gov/news/newso8/NPDP2.html>

Secondary School Veteran Takes Top ITA Honors

Presented by Tim Ortmann October 9, 2008, in Stratford, Canada.



Kristen Mackie is a veteran school teacher, spending her early years moving from school to school, establishing herself with the Archdiocese of Chicago's Catholic school system, first at Marrilac High School, and spending the bulk of her years at Mother Guerin (now Guerin Prep) High School. The rich tradition of Mother Guerin as a devotee of the Arts made Guerin an ideal fit for Miss Mackie.

We are all familiar with the artistic challenges of creating theatre, the extra challenges of creating it with teenagers, and the extra-special financial challenges that seem almost inherent to the arts – and certainly to high school drama at a Catholic school. Miss Mackie has joyfully met all those challenges. She has been tireless in her pursuit of excellence for her speech, literature, and drama students in the classroom, taking advantage of any tie-in she could find to bring her students to Chicago's professional theatres. She fought against the odds creating a full extra-curricular drama season, paying herself far too little and doing far too much as the Director, Designer, Tech Director, (and most recently) Costumer of her productions. As if that weren't enough, she also runs a program for area middle school students.

She has taken students to ITA's Illinois High School Theatre Festival, making the extra effort to bring both showcase and full-length productions more times than I could possibly recall. Anyone who's gone down this road even once knows the added effort it takes – not to mention the courage and faith – to present your work to four thousand students and colleagues from across the State of Illinois. She has twice been selected, by the American High School Theatre Festival, to take her students to perform at Scotland's Edinburgh Fringe Festival, affording her students an opportunity to be seen on an international stage.

Going the extra mile, Miss Mackie joined the Illinois High School Theatre Festival Committee each year from 1989 to 1996, serving as Chair of Workshops, Exhibits, Auditions – you name it. Ultimately, she took the helm, serving as Executive Director of the Festival. Outside of the '89-'96 realm, she was the All-State producer of *The Wiz*, All-State Tech Director for *Big River* and *A Chorus Line*, and attaining arguably one of the highest achievements in All-State history, she directed her beautiful, heart-rending production of *Ragtime*.

Mackie was recently elected the ITA Secretary, having served previously as the Secondary School Representative and chairing our 2005 Chicago ITA Convention. We all work hard at what we do. As I look around, I see an exceptional group of theatre artists. So Kristen, please know that this group recognizes excellence when they see it: excellence in education, such extraordinary artistic achievements, such *tirelessness* in longevity, and ongoing generosity toward colleagues in the theatre. We are thrilled to acknowledge Kristen Mackie as the Illinois Theatre Association's Award of Honor recipient for 2008.

Suzanne Aldridge: the 2008 Secondary Division Award Winner

By Mark Begovich and Karen Hall

It was our pleasure to attend an amazing evening of theatre and be a part of the Celebration of Suzanne Aldridge at Centennial High School on October 25th. We drove to Bloomington to attend Sue's production of *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown*, only to be swept into this incredible event. When Division Representative Judy Klingner nominated Sue for the award, Sue was humble and honored. Then her alums and faculty members found out about the presentation and created a reunion and reception honoring her. When the Mayor of Champaign found out he proclaimed October 25th **Honorary Suzanne Aldridge Day**. We were astounded by the reunion and event for Sue as family, friends, colleagues, and students-- past and present surrounded her. Everyone recognized Sue, because of her commitment to the Arts **and** her commitment to championing diversity in schools. Her production exemplified multi-culturalism and her focus on inclusion of children with special needs into the production. Sue has also been a champion bridge maker bringing together all different "social groups" into a supportive environment. It was our pleasure to be a part of the much-deserved event. *You're a good woman, Suzanne Aldridge.*



(Dean Richards admiring ITA Award of Honor in the WGN Studios.)

(Above: Karen Hall presenting Award to Suzanne Aldridge)

WGN's Dean Richards Receives ITA Award of Honor

The 2008 ITA Award of Honor has presented by Tim Ortmann to WGN TV and Radio critic/entertainment reporter Dean Richards for his significant contributions to the promotion of quality theatre throughout Illinois. "I'm very flattered and appreciative," said Richards. "As a native Chicagoan, I'm always proud to brag about an amazingly vibrant performing arts community that is second to none. I'm also very gratified that both of the WGNs understand that arts and entertainment are a vital part of what makes Chicago so special."

On WGN-TV, Richards' entertainment reports and reviews are seen on "WGN Morning News", "WGN News at Noon" and "WGN News at Nine", where he interviews national and local celebrities, reports on showbiz, and reviews the latest movies and theater. On News/Talk 720 WGN Radio, "Dean Richards' Sunday Morning" covers Chicago's entertainment and lifestyle scene including movies, theater, food, and dining, Sundays from 9am-noon.



(Cyndee Brown presents the University/College Division Award to Eric Thibodeau-Thompson)



**2011 IHSTF
Executive Director
Named**

By Timothy Ortmann, ITA President.

I am pleased to announce Larry Williams as the Executive Director of the 2011 Illinois High School Theatre Festival. The Selection Committee, comprised of past executive directors and your elected secondary school representative, recommended the selection of this fine candidate who will shadow the 2010 Festival process as it begins this January along side Karen Hall, next year's executive director.

Larry is a twenty-five year teaching veteran from St. Joseph-Ogden High School, bringing students to the festival virtually every year. He has presented fourteen full-length and showcase productions at the Festival, and over the years, has served as the Associate Director for both Exhibits and Workshops. For this January's Festival, he is again on the team planning Workshops.

For a dozen years, Larry served as Illinois Director for the Educational Theatre Association. You may have encountered Larry through the TALENT workshops offered each fall or at the workshops he lead at the Illinois High School Theatre Festival. The Illinois Theatre Association presented Larry with the Secondary School Award for his work with Thespians throughout the state of Illinois in 1996.

We congratulate Larry Williams on this appointment, and look forward to the creativity and far-sightedness he will surely bring to the event.

IHSTF Workshop Leaders Needed

Additional workshops are still needed for the High School Theatre Festival on January 9 and 10. If you can present a practical, hands-on one-hour, 10 minute workshop for students or teachers please go to www.illinoistheatrefest.org/workshops.htm to fill out an on-line application.

High School Sponsors are reminded that Fest Gear pre-orders must be received by Nov. 21. Please place your order on-line or encourage your students to place their own orders: <http://www.minervapromotions.com/ihstf/>

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Region 2 “Close to Home” Report

Conant High School (Host – Marti Jean Goughnour/Board Rep – Mark Begovich)

Attendance: 15

Discussion:

- Made announcements about deadline dates for Theatrefest; made pleas for workshops and exhibits.
- Intelligent Lighting (Professional Division) discussed student internships that they offer and announced an
- Open House/product demonstration on Oct 16.
- Professional groups expressed concern about difficulty getting approvals/funding from schools to bring their productions to schools; some K-12 educators are having a hard time getting approvals/funding to take field trips.
- Discussion about how ITA and Divisions can help each other:
 - o College and University groups can be advocates for HS/Middle School theatre. Harper College is inviting student groups from nearby schools to see a production and get a tour of their facilities.
 - o ITA can draft a letter with research supporting the academic benefits of Theatrefest.
 - o ITA can look at the Illinois State Standards and approach the Illinois State Board of Education for support.
 - o Invite school board members, principals, administrators to school productions/Theatrefest.
 - o Solicit letters from local professionals about the validity of Theatre Arts Education/Theatrefest.
- Discussion about an AP level class for Theatre.

All in attendance were grateful for the opportunity to meet within the regions, calling the meeting a

“therapy session.”potential of the theater to bring disparate communities together over moments of humanity which we all recognize and share. This is what we strive for, and what we are in our best moments.



**This fall, The Mime Company is offering classes in mime for actors, performers, teachers and theater newcomers for the first time outside of the NU Theater Department. Interested teens/adults can visit www.themimecompany.com or call 847-869-5640 for schedules and fees.

Diction and Projection Exercise

By Dinah Barthelmess

While at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival with an amazingly fun group of ITA theater people, I got to chatting with other teachers about working with middle school kids and Shakespeare. Currently, I don't incorporate Shakespeare into my curriculum, though after this trip, I'm determined to work on changing that. However, I do have a silly voice and diction assignment that was passed to me when I started teaching drama. It uses Shakespearean insults, and I have added Shakespearean rubric. While the Great Bard is still close in my thoughts after visiting his players in Canada, I thought I'd share the assignment and rubric here. *(Continued on Page 10)*

For the assignment, I hand out Shakespearean insults. You can find them online easily or there are many books that include them. Each student is assigned one insult, and they use it to practice excellent diction and projection. I then sit in the last row of the auditorium, and call them to the stage, one by one. Each student reads their insult aloud and I grant them five points for excellent volume, and five for excellent diction. I am a long way from being an expert on all things Shakespeare, but we have big fun, and I think it gets the kids excited about dipping their toes into a little Shakespeare! Other ways you introduce Shakespeare to middle schoolers?

We'd love to hear about it! Enjoy!

The eFollowspot

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Technical Workshops Presented by Chicago Spotlight, Inc.

By Steve Jacobs

ITA Corporate Member Chicago Spotlight, Inc. has kicked off its first year of workshops geared to students, teachers and staff. The idea for the workshops was really a blending of ideas. When I retired from teaching and TD at Glenbard North High School, I wanted to continue with some type of technical theatre education for students and teachers, focusing on the smaller school programs. Having worked in a large school and attended the Illinois High School Theatre Festival for 30 years, I knew that there was a need for additional educational support for schools. Technology changes, new product development, and safety issues sometimes are not the main thinking of overworked high school teacher-directors or within their budgets to bring in experts. I wanted to provide some additional, low cost programs to assist them. I talked to Marty Lazarus, President of Chicago Spotlight, whom I have known for many years through our mutual involvement with USITT. As it turned out, what I had in mind was something that Marty had been thinking about but never had the time to develop. Together we put together a series of programs that brought one of his dreams to life.

Each workshop focuses on a different technical theatre skill. The presenters come from education and business, all with a vast amount of experience in theatre and their specific field. Programs take place one Saturday a month and last about 6 hours including lunch, which is provided. A major part of each workshop is "hands-on" along with demonstration and discussion. The venues are Chicago area high schools and Chicago Spotlight, Inc. near downtown Chicago. Once we get the first year behind us, we hope to expand the program and provide workshops in different parts of the state. One change we have already made is to open up the workshops to college students and staff. Marty says that Chicago Spotlight is committed to keeping the cost of the program very nominal so as many students and educators can take advantage as possible.

The workshops for this year are: ETC console operation, Scene painting, Creative Lighting, Make-up, Rigging, Conventional Stage Lighting Fixtures, Scenic Textures, and Atmospheric Effects. More information on dates, programs, and registration is available at ChicagoSpotlight.com. You can reach Steve Jacobs, Director of Training Workshops with questions or to be put on his contact list at Steve@ChicagoSpotlight.com.