



Sightlines

The monthly newsletter for USITT members

August 2017

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News & Notices

Member Spotlight: Dennis Dorn

Q&A with Dennis Dorn, technical director, set designer, and USITT Fellow**How did you get involved with technical theatre?**

I was playing saxophone in a pit orchestra when I was a freshman in college and watched what was happening onstage. I thought it looked interesting and wanted to find out more about it. The following year, I transferred schools and one of the first things I did was go over to the theatre and met people backstage. They took me under their wing and from there I found it enthralling and I stayed with it.

**Do you have a show or event that influenced you or was pivotal in your career?**

My very first production experience was on *The Threepenny Opera*. I helped build a bit of it and I was on the stage crew. There was a revolve and we moved it by hand, onstage and in costume. That was my first time on stage and it was a neat experience to be on both sides of things for this introduction.

What is a favorite moment from your career?

I was involved in the creation of the USITT Tech Expo, which offered opportunities to create a forum for juried work and publication. It's been an important aspect in helping students develop their careers and young academics and professionals receive promotion and recognition.

Is there anyone from the Institute who has influenced you?

There were many, of course, but there are three to whom I feel especially grateful. One is Rick Stephens another is Richard Arnold and the third, my lifelong friend and colleague Mark Shanda. Both Rick and Dick encouraged my involvement in the Institute, in writing books, and the pursuit of research and leadership opportunities. There were a lot of different ways in which people were in my life, but these three encouraged and assisted me in becoming more

involved in the Institute and the field of theatre technology.

What do you look forward to at the Conference each year?

In particular, not going to meetings! Finally, I have time to go to sessions, chat with people, and walk the Expo floor. University of Wisconsin-Madison has for many years had informal alumni gatherings at USITT. In the best Wisconsin tradition, we hold it at a bar. It has worked out well, attended and enjoyed by many each year.

How has USITT played a role in your life?

It gave me the opportunity to meet a lot of outstanding people and to be involved in doing things that I think were either personally of interest or became of interest just by doing. Rick Stephens was particularly influential in this way. He encouraged people to dream up projects or get involved in things and that's how I ended up securing some project funding and generating ideas. In general, my modus operandi has been to serve in a position for a couple of terms, then move on to something else. I figure if the work was fun for me to do, it probably would be equally as much fun for someone else.

What does being a Fellow of the Institute mean to you?

It's a high honor that impacts the organization and the profession. It has been extremely gratifying to develop these friendships, be a part of getting people's careers started, and just developing a second family. I'm in the position now to help people who are in the same position that I was so many years ago.

Suggest a USITT Member for the Spotlight!

If you know of USITT members whose work should be in the Spotlight, please feel free to suggest them. Contact Lynne Dundas at lynne@usitt.org.

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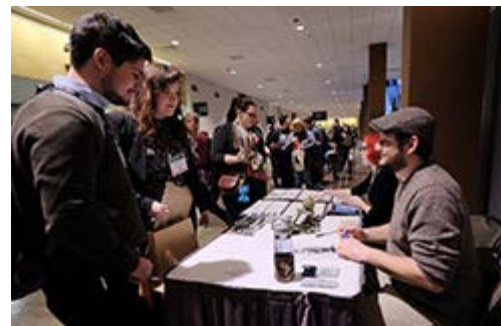
2018 Member Author Book Signing Event

We are gearing up for the USITT 2018 Member Author Book Signing event in Fort Lauderdale!

USITT members can participate if they have authored a theatre design or technology book within the past year. All books must be published and available by December 31, 2017 to be included in the program.

Members interested in participating should e-mail [Carol Carrigan](#) with the book title, ISBN number, and publisher contact information by December 31, 2017.

USITT will promote the event, coordinate the purchase of the books, and arrange shipment to the Conference. If you have recently authored a book on theatre design or technology, we look forward to sharing your success at this event.



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USITT Presents Goes to Hawaii



Train with industry leaders Joe Aldridge, Coordinator for EED, and Eddie Raymond, ETCP Recognized Trainer, on September 11-14 for OSHA 10 and Rigging Training in Honolulu, HI.

The OSHA 10-hour program (September 11-12) provides training on OSHA general industry safety and health regulations for entertainment professionals of all skill levels. Special emphasis is placed on those areas that are the most hazardous, using OSHA standards as a guide. Upon completion of both days you will have earned your OSHA 10 card.

This customized OSHA 10 training is brought to you by the IATSE Entertainment and Exhibition Industries Training Trust Fund and USITT as part of the alliance between these organizations and OSHA.

Stay for all four days to include the Theatrical Rigging Course, ideal for individuals that need to refresh or update their procedures, secondary educators who work with auditorium rigging, and entry level riggers. If you have ever wanted to know how to fly scenery, or to reinforce the skills that you already have, this is the course for you.

Early registration ends August 15, so register and book your travel now before this deal sails away!

For more information, go to www.usitt.org/hawaii/

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News & Notices

Jay O. Glerum Advanced Rigging Masterclass

Learn the basics of fall protection, arrest, and rescue plans from top industry trainers at the Hartford Stage in Hartford, CT.

Early Bird rates end August 5, so register now to secure your spot.

Ideal for arena and ETCP certified riggers, the advanced track will be taught for ETCP renewal credit and include training on the latest innovations in rigging as well as advanced safety such as life rescue and other topics.

[Click here for more information and to register.](#)

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Be Recognized as a Rising Star

Are you a professional in the early years of your career developing your artistry and portfolio of achievements? You could be eligible to receive the 2018 Rising Star Award in lighting, sound, scenic, or projection.

USITT members are invited to nominate deserving young professionals for the [Rising Star Award](#), sponsored by **LDI/Live Design**. Winners will be recognized for their achievements with a \$1,000 award, and free one-year USITT membership and Conference registration as well as editorial coverage in Live Design.

The [Rising Star Award](#), established by LDI/Live Design in 2005, recognizes excellence and artistic achievement in: scenic, lighting, sound, projection design, and convergence of these design disciplines.

For eligibility requirements and criteria for entry, [click here](#).

Nominations are now open, at usitt.org/risingstar.

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USITT Board Mentorship Program

Q&A with former Board mentees Deb Sherrer and Pinky Estell and current Board mentee Jessica Bergson.

[Tell me about the USITT Board Mentorship Program](#)



Pinky: It's an avenue for those who are looking to explore the upper management of an arts organization.

It's getting access to a background of knowledge that is not readily taught and having that avenue available to all disciplines.

You don't have to be an arts management or a technical director major, though you certainly can be. This was a great avenue for me to explore how a large organization works and in turn, help my career. It's about building connections with successful folks from other arts organizations and having them mentor you over the course of a year and answer questions.

Deb: We are siloed sometimes and as an industry we're trying to get better at teaching transferrable skills. Just because you're a technical director major doesn't mean you can't take advanced costuming. We're getting better at that.

However, we aren't getting better at the balance between the folks in the office and the folks in the shop. How do we bridge that gap and how do we understand more about how we collectively make this thing happen? USITT is one of the most fiscally sound non-profits in the country as well, so it's one of the few times a mentee can come in and see it done well.

USITT is an organization doing it well and having high level conversations about governance. Seeing that passed down to operations and seeing it happen when you're at the Conference is beneficial. It's being able to see that and seeing it done well to prep someone to do it well somewhere else.

What is the dynamic between Board mentors and Board mentees?

Pinky: I think one of the great values is in the diversity of the Board itself. You're getting a perspective of, for example, what a cruise line is doing versus a regional

theatre versus a college program and the different inputs they all have. They all don't agree, but they can come to an agreement and move forward.

It's interesting to watch that collaboration. It really is a collaborative process and watching that unfold was extremely informative, and at times a bit entertaining.

Deb: How do you disagree with your friends and colleagues and people who were your mentors who are now your colleagues? How do you disagree with them and then have a drink later? It's interesting to watch the passion. Not all our ideas pass with 100 percent "yes" and that's ok, but everyone is heard and it's great to see how passionate people can wholeheartedly disagree and have a passionate conversation about it, and then be fine.

Jessica: The mentorship program is really a two-way street. Something that I've learned a lot about, not necessarily just from being here but also in college classes, is that a best practice of a Board is to include the perspective of young, early-career people. I think that's an important part of the program. As an incoming Board mentee, I'm not going to just take advice and perspective from other people, I'm going to give it back from how I experience the organization and with a fresh perspective, because I really wasn't involved with it beforehand.

Have there been any pivotal moments or big changes in the program since its beginnings?

Pinky: When we first started, it was going to be two folks who would get together and have some back and forth. My committees were chosen for me and then they said, "Well that seems kind of silly, why don't we let them choose?"

The process of how they choose who you will be mentored by has also changed. In the beginning, it was more or less assigned. You were assigned to people who were in your field.

Can you explain the application process?

Jessica: The application requirements included an essay on why I wanted to do it, what I hoped to gain from the experience, and what I hoped to give. I had a phone interview with Pinky, Deb, and a few other Board members. It was a pretty easy process. I was told a week later that I was chosen.

As far as being matched with your mentor, how did that work?

Deb: When I took over the operational aspect of the mentorship, I reached out to Jessica and said to go on the website and look at the Board of Directors and see what they did, who looked interesting, and who she might have questions for. The point was to maybe not pick the person you know the best or the person who perfectly aligns with your job. She had mentioned both Kim Scott and David Stewart so I emailed them and said our Board mentee is interested in getting connected with you and learning a little bit more. Of course, they both jumped. You get mentored by everyone, but I wanted to make it a "build your own adventure mentorship" because you get out of it what you put into it.

The initial investment of time and energy to really kick it off is vital as we could connect Jessica with them via email but also at the reception and Board

meetings. She now has two solid people on the Board who she goes to and asks questions to throughout the year. We want to make sure that we do a better job of communicating that these are people you can connect with forever. I also told her to go onto the list of committees and see what looked interesting and to reach out to those people ahead of the Conference. She has been to a ton of committee meetings so far.

Jessica: Kim and David are my core people, though I consider everyone on the Board as my mentor.

Pinky: Everyone on the Board will answer questions, but two are assigned as your go-to mentors and are as invested at the same level as the student.

Applications for the Board Mentorship Program are now open! [For more information and to apply, click here.](#)

Stay tuned for “Part-2” in the next issue of *College2Career*, launching August 17 where Deb, Jessica, and Pinky go even more in-depth with their mentorship experience.

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Long Reach Riders

The Long Reach Long Riders have announced that their 14th annual charity motorcycle ride, dubbed *The Avocado Adventure*, raised over \$57,000 for Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS and Behind the Scenes Charity, bringing the total raised since the rides began in 2004 to over \$600,000.

Entertainment Services and Technology Association's Annual Benefit

ESTA's annual Happy Hour to benefit Behind the Scenes will take place on Thursday, November 16 from 6-8p.m. at the Havana Room located in the Tropicana Hotel in Las Vegas. Tickets are \$65 in advance and are on sale now at www.behindthescenescharity.org/btshh.

Matthew D. Loeb Re-Elected International President at IATSE

IATSE International President Matthew D. Loeb was re-elected by acclamation during the IATSE 68th Quadrennial Convention.

Wireless Mics and the FCC

Thank you to Shure and Sennheiser for leading the charge to secure Part 47 Licenses. [To read the official statement, click here.](#)

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OISTAT

Congratulations to USITT members Kevin Rigdon and Hazem Shebl on their election to the Executive Committee of OISTAT. Kevin was elected Secretary of the Executive Committee.

[View the Latest OISTAT newsletter, here.](#)



Thank you for being part of World Stage Design and OISTAT World Congress
Here are some highlights from WSD 2017.

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Thoughts from Mark Shanda USITT President

They all open and they all close.

When people occasionally ask me what I like about working in the theatre industry, one of the qualities that I cite is, "They all open and they all close." While I am no fan of the term "the magic of theatre," I find something almost magical about openings and closings.

As I write, I am nearing a closing, for I am retiring after 31 years of being on the faculty at The Ohio State University. This closing, as with all in our industry, gives me a brief time to reflect and celebrate. As I continue to go into work each day with my countdown clock ticking away toward my last day in August, my thoughts turn to what has been accomplished during my tenure.

Serving at various times as Resident Technical Director; Assistant, Associate, and Full Professor; Associate Chair, Department Chair of the Theatre Department; Divisional Dean of Arts and Humanities; and most recently Season Producer and classroom teacher, I have had quite a run. I have worked with thousands of students, been involved with hundreds of productions, and have partnered with numerous faculty and staff. I have been part of many renovation projects, including new overhead rigging in both theatres, the retrofit of "found spaces" into a new works labs and television studios, and have helped reorganize the scenic studio nearly each year. I have dreamed about future facilities and accepted the reality that the current spaces will likely remain for some time to come.

What is next for me is a new opportunity to serve in higher education as the Dean of the College of Fine Arts at the University of Kentucky. My opening there is on September 1, launching what will be an indefinite run. My excitement is building each day in thinking of the possibilities that await. Plans for that new future are just now being discussed, critical meetings scheduled to connect with key players in my new environment, and I am challenged to learn the skill sets of the very talented production team that is already assembled on that campus. But I need to get my Ohio State run closed first, before I can fully devote myself to my opening in Kentucky.

Closings often can bring a level of loss or sorrow, but those feelings are easily tempered by the next opening that lies ahead. Here's how my current path parallels theatrical production. I am sad about some aspects of this change and will miss the most my many friends and colleagues in Columbus. But I can find

joy in a job well done, shelve the book titled, *Mark at Ohio State*, and begin a new volume entitled *Mark at Kentucky*, featuring new opportunities, colleagues, and venues that contain the excitement of the unknown.

Theatre provides an excellent background to take on a life of change and uncertainty. I look forward to completing my strike very soon, plan for a great opening, and a long and successful run.

We'd like to hear your comments on this story.

Please e-mail Mark at Shanda.1@osu.edu.



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Spotlight on Giving: Michael Katz

"USITT has been there for me from my freshman year of college in 1973 until my retirement from the "day-to-day" life of being a working TD 44 years later. While working, and now as a retiree, USITT has been a place to learn, to communicate, to teach, and to connect with friends and colleagues old and new. It is natural and necessary for me to support USITT by donating what I can as it continues to be a great resource to the live performance industry that I love."

- **Michael Katz**, Technical Director, University of Massachusetts Boston



Kook Fund

- Sandy Bonds
- Dennis Dorn
- Andi Lyons
- Sylvia Pannell
- Loren Schreiber
- Charles Williams

New Century Fund

- Robert Breen: *In Memory of Herbert Camburn*
- Kathryn Eader: *In Honor of Ken Billington and Duane Schuler*
- Tammy Honesty
- Andi Lyons
- David Ward: *In Memory of Herbert L Camburn*
- Charles Williams

New Century Fund - Diversity

- Kasey L. Allee-Foreman

- Rafael Jaen
- Michael Katz
- Andi Lyons
- Michael Mehler
- Linda Pisano: *In Memory of Tayneshia Jefferson*
- Jessie Portillo
- David Stewart: *In Memory of Tayneshia Jefferson*
- James Streeter

New Century Fund - Rigging Safety

- Verda Beth Martell
- Martin Simonsen

Samuel Scripps International Fund

- Sandy Bonds
- Kevin Rigdon
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USITT Fund

- Rafael Jaen
- Andi Lyons
- Mark Shanda

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- Daniel Culhane
- Dennis L. Dorn
- Emily Gill
- David Grindle
- Mickey Henry
- Michael Katz
- Carl Lefko
- Barbara Lucas: *In Memory of Richard Arnold and In Honor of Joe Aldridge*
- Andi Lyons
- Martha Marking
- Leslie Marqua
- Sylvia Pannell
- Carolyn Satter
- Loren Schreiber
- MJ Sedlock
- Sherry Wagner-Henry
-

- Kimb Williamson

Fellows Fund

- Sandy Bonds

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Thoughts from David Grindle USITT Executive Director

Conference location is one of the great questions at USITT. Where will the Conference be held? We answer that question often. Periodically, I try to visit the “why” behind that question in this column and I think now is as good a time as any to return to that topic. Why do we choose a city, what are the factors, and why are those choices made?

The first and biggest question is: will we fit? The Conference and Expo have grown incredibly fast over the past five years. While there are many convention centers in America, not all of them can handle 40 session rooms (at least four of which seat 400 or more) and 200,000 square feet of exhibit space that can handle rigging at the height our exhibitors need. That narrows the list quickly.

The list of potential venues drops down even further with the next factor— hotel rates. March is high season in many places. We know our attendees can’t afford some of the housing rates we are quoted. Recently we turned down an incredible convention center and city because room rates were priced at \$245 per night at the lowest rates. Even five years from now I can’t see that as viable for our attendees.

There are cities we can’t bid on because we don’t meet the city’s requirements for room tax revenue. We use lots of space but book fewer than 10,000 hotel room nights during the week.

What is there to do in the city that is unique? This year we have access to cruise lines and outdoor venues. For the first time, some of our hotels break the \$200 mark, because we are in Fort Lauderdale at Spring Break. While we are still looking for lower rates, we are also working on cruise ship tours, guest presenters, and sessions at outdoor venues that will make this a unique investment and opportunity.

Finally, have we been there before and where were we the year previous? Our event has moved every year and that is one of the things people like about it. We



don't go back to the same or nearby city year after year because our members have made it clear that they like this about our conference.

We also look at labor rates for exhibitors, customs regulations for exhibitors, and the challenge for some of crossing borders.

Finally, I am often asked if we could make the Conference cheaper if we didn't have big parties like opening and closing night. Oddly, if we didn't do those, the Conference would cost more. Food and beverage costs offset convention center and hotel meeting space rental. Most rental fees have a minimum food and beverage spend at the facility. While we negotiate diligently, we know that this is an area we must invest in. Without that, we would have very expensive venues.

These are just a few of the considerations in getting our event to a city year to year. I am constantly on the lookout for centers that are expanding and might fit us. It is how we are able to go back to Louisville in 2019—they are expanding their venue and we will fit—for now.

I hope this gives you a bit of insight in to what it takes to find a Conference location and some of the questions we ask. If you ever have an idea for a host city, drop me a line, and I'll let you know what our history is with that city and what its possibilities are.

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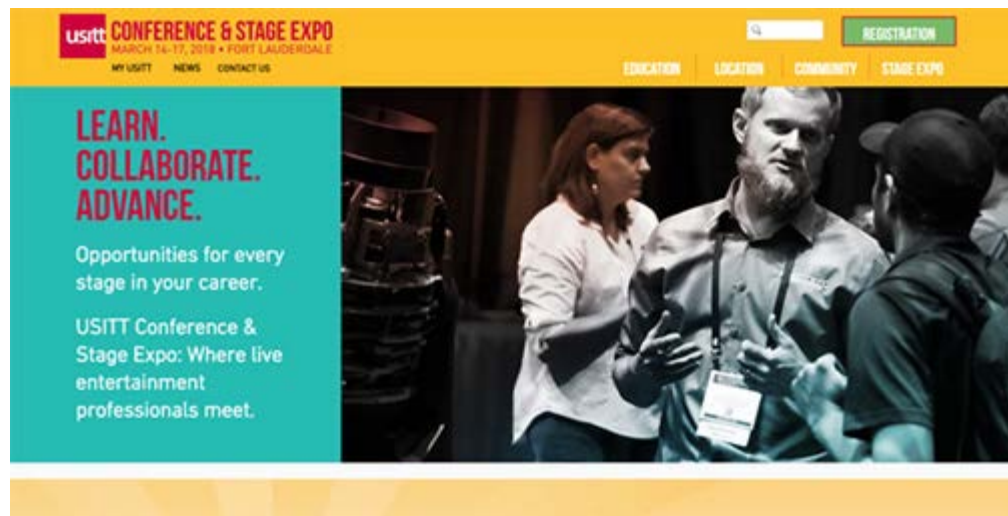
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Last Word

USITT 2018 Show Site is Live!



The website for the 2018 Annual Conference & Stage Expo in Fort Lauderdale is officially live!

Our new site is easy to use and is also home to our Conference Newsletter, so staying up-to-date with deadlines, registration, and new events is now easier than ever.

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