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Ming Cho Lee was a large part of USITT's 2006 Annual Conference & Stage Expo. He received a Distinguished Achievement Award, presented an outstanding session on his work, and signed copies of the new USITT Monograph on his life's work. Much more about the Conference is included in this issue. Or, to read more about the Monograph, visit USITT's online bookstore.

Photo/R. Finklestein



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Bruce Brockman, left, was on hand at the 2006 Keynote to receive his Joel E. Rubin Founder's Award. Randy Earle, left, with Richard Arnold, was honored at the Keynote but received his plaque at the All-Conference Reception & Fellows Address.

Photos/R. Finklestein, Tom Thatcher

Two Receive USITT's Joel E. Rubin Founder's Award

The Joel E. Rubin Founder's Award is given each year to recognize outstanding and continued service to the Institute. The awards are kept secret until they are presented. In 2006, USITT honored two men with Founder's Awards. The remarks introducing them are presented below.

James R. Earle, Jr.

by **Richard Arnold**
USITT Past President and Fellow

The Joel E. Rubin Founder's Award is the highest honor USITT can bestow on a member of the Institute. It recognizes the most outstanding service to the organization. It is my honor, on behalf of the Institute, to introduce a recipient of this award today.

James R. Earle, Jr. (*known to many as Randy*) began as a student member of USITT and worked up through the ranks of service to the organization to become the 12th President of the Institute. In 1965, as a sophomore at Purdue University, Randy heard about USITT and became a student member. After he graduated from Purdue with his master's degree, he taught there for a couple of years. Then, in 1970, he joined the theatre faculty at San Jose State University.

He had arrived in California in time to help establish the Northern California Regional Section of USITT. He was a charter member of the committee to organize the regional section and was responsible for its incorporation. He chaired its Membership Committee, served as a committee chair when the new section

hosted the 1972 San Francisco USITT Conference, and he shortly became the Chair of the section.

Randy has a long record of service to USITT nationally. In 1972, he became Commissioner for Performing Arts Training and Education (PATE), the early form of the Education Commission. He started several worthy projects during his leadership. Then he became Vice-President for Commissions and Projects. In this office he inaugurated the tradition of USITT August "retreats" for work on Commission projects. He established the Commission's role in creating annual conference programming. Through his efforts the first Commission Handbook was written and he brought many new leaders into the Commissions and thus into the Institute.

Later Randy became Vice-President for Relations. In this role, he worked to develop new regional sections and prepared the first Regional Section Handbook.

From 1984 to 1986 Randy served as President of the Institute and undertook several formidable tasks. He was responsible for moving the national office from its Broadway address to 42nd Street when more space was needed and at a reduced cost. He hired new office staff to replace the operation that had been established by Herb Greggs. He was the first to bring USITT out of the "card file stone age" into the modern computer age by supplying the first computers in the office. During his presidency he worked to expand contributing and sustaining memberships.

The Institute has received numerous other contributions from Randy including his serving on the Membership Committee, the Planned Giving Committee, and the Grants & Fellowship Committee where he continues as a member. If this service was not considerable enough, he also became the faculty sponsor for the USITT Student Chapter at San Jose State University.

In 1982 he was named a Fellow of the Institute, and he currently is Chair of the Fellows.

Randy is a full Professor at San Jose State University and is a past chair of the theatre program there. In his teaching career, he has achieved a record of grants and awards. He is a very active lighting designer and a theatre consultant.

Bruce Brockman

by **Lawrence J. Hill**
USITT Treasurer

The Joel E. Rubin Founder's Award is given to a USITT member to recognize outstanding and continued service to the Institute.

It is my pleasure to take on a task so evident in its applicability that you will realize how much fun it can be up here. The Institute, from time to time, takes the opportunity to recognize an individual whose contributions to the organization and its members are continuously outstanding. We are a volunteer organization, whose members give untold hours, energy, and talents. In some cases we

can't seem to wear them out. They just keep on and on and on -- and in this case we are grateful for that desire and talent.

I have been accused of creating soporifics in the dealing with the finances of USITT with such phrases as "declining equity escalating index hedge fund." Usually this individual's head is nodding by the words "escalating index" and maybe the individual will drop off while I list a few of his contributions to USITT. You folks stay awake.

Our honored member's first experience at a USITT Annual Conference & Stage Expo was in 1980 at Kansas City. These are *some* of the highlights from the intervening years:

- Seven contributions to *TD&T*;
- Recipient of the Herb Greggs Award for the *TD&T* article, "Revisiting the Twin Cities Collection;"
- Editor of the revised *USITT Tenure and Promotion Guidelines*;
- USITT Design Expo Committee Chair 1990 to 1994;
- Co-Designer of the USITT National Exhibit for PQ 1999
- Vice-President for Commissions;
- At least 16 panels and workshops for USITT, and other theatre organizations, and;
- Founding Chair of the Inland Northwest Regional Section of the Institute

He is attracted to those positions that take enormous amounts of personal time: a dedicated educator; a scenic designer whose work has been exhibited in the USITT Prague Quadrennial exhibit; whose work has been produced at the University of Michigan, Montana Repertory Theatre, Music-Theatre of Wichita, and Colorado Shakespeare Festival in addition to his contributions to Idaho State University and Oklahoma State University; and who has spent 19 years as a department head. Somewhere he finds the energy to flog, pounce, scumble, and paint up a storm as a wonderful scenic artist.

Oh, yes! He managed to find the time to serve as President of USITT from 2002 to 2004 and is now part of the troupe putting together the USITT Prague Quadrennial exhibit for 2007 -- and he goes on and on and on!

Bruce Brockman was inducted as a Fellow of the Institute in 2003, and today it gives me great pleasure to put some "gold metallic highlight" on that honor and present him the Joel E. Rubin Founder's Award for his continuing excellence in service to the United States Institute for Theatre Technology.

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Dues to Rise in July

Several categories of USITT membership will see an increase in dues as of July 1, 2006 following action by the Board of Directors at its March meeting.

This is the first increase in five years for the Contributing and Sustaining levels of membership, which will rise to \$1,100 and \$660 respectively. Organizational membership will increase to \$200. Dues for Individual members have been set at \$102 yearly. Dues for Student, Senior, and Professional members will continue at 2005 levels.

Holly Monsos, USITT VP-Members, Sections & Chapters, noted that USITT continues as an excellent value for members at all levels, returning dividends in the form of discounts and networking opportunities. The changes were part of the organization's overall budget process, and were discussed extensively at both the committee and board levels.

Ms. Monsos said, "We take any change in dues very seriously, and are mindful of our need to keep the organization financially healthy while not imposing a too great a burden on those who play such a key role in our success: our members. Our membership rates continue to increase at less than the current inflation rate, which is quite an accomplishment in this economic climate."

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Planning Begins for Scenofest 2007

Many different activities are currently being created for Scenofest, to be held June 2007 in Prague, Czech Republic. Scenofest is a shared project of the OISTAT Education Commission and the Theatre Institute Prague. Some projects are mainly for students, but teachers, and well-known theatre and performance practitioners will also be participating.

Initial application periods for some projects start in May 2006, and complete project details including costs and application process are scheduled to be at www.scenofest.org by mid-May.

To become part of the Scenofest mailing list, e-mail info@scenofest.org. E-mail updates will be mailed every other month, according to organizers.

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Scenofest 2007

Chain Hoists

Architecture Conference

TCG Travel Grants

Golden Pen Entries

Chain Hoists Draft Standard Available

BSR E1.6-2, Entertainment Technology-Serial Manufactured Electric Chain Hoists, is available for public review through May 22.

It is a continuation of the BSR E1.6 powered rigging system project which has been split into two parts: BSR E1.6-2 dealing with electrical chain hoists used in entertainment applications and BSR E1.6-1 dealing with other powered winches. This document, BSR E1.6-2, covers the design, inspection, and maintenance of serially manufactured electric chain hoists having capacities of two tons or less and used in the entertainment industry as part of a performance or in preparation for a performance.

The public review response form and the draft standard, which is free, are available at www.esta.org/tsp/documents/public_review_docs.php.

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ABTT Sponsors Event

ABTT, the Association of British Theatre Technicians, will hold its second Theatre Engineering and Architecture Conference from June 11 to 13, 2006 in London. The event is sponsored by Stage Technologies, and will provide a structured review and discussion about historic, recent, and planned performance arts projects while, at the same time, allowing those new to planning or constructing such building an opportunity to learn from the experts.

For full information about speakers, updates, papers, and registration, visit www.theatre-event.com. USITT members, as members of the United States OISTAT Centre, are eligible to register at the member rate. This is made possible by an invitation extended by Richard Brett, long-time OISTAT and ABTT member.

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TCG Travel Grants

Plan now to apply for a Theatre Communications Group/International Theatre Institute (TCG/ITI) Travel Grant. Application deadline for the fall is October 27, 2006, and applications may be made by theatres applying on behalf of theatre professional(s) or individual theatre professional(s).

Grants will support travel either into the United States by professional counterparts in specific portions of Central/Eastern Europe and Russia, or US professionals traveling to those locations.

For complete information on the grants, which cover up to \$2,500, is available at www.tcg.com.

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Nominate Now for 2007 Golden Pen Award

Deadline is June 15, 2006 for any USITT members who wishes to nominate a book or books for the 2007 Golden Pen Award. The award honors an outstanding publication in the field of design and production for the performing arts. Books are eligible for a three-year period from the date of publication but nominations do not automatically carry over from one year to the next. It is possible for a book to be nominated more than once.

Use the link [here](#) to learn more about the process and nominate a book. Anyone with questions may contact a member of the Golden Pen subcommittee of the USITT Publications Committee: Lance Brockman at brock001@tc.umn.edu, Martha Marking at markngma@appstate.edu, Rich Dunham at rdunham@arches.uga.edu, or Mike Monsos at michael.monsos@umontana.edu.

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Steve Terry, center, accepts his Fellows plaque from Ken Vannice, right, as the current Fellows of the Institute look on and applaud.

Photo/R. Finklestein

by **Mitch Hefter**
USITT Fellow

Terry Named USITT Fellow

Mitch Hefter was originally scheduled to deliver these remarks at the Fellows Induction at the 2006 Conference & Stage Expo in Louisville, Kentucky. When Mr. Hefter was unable to attend, Ken Vannice read them on Mr. Hefter's behalf.

I'm Mitch Hefter. Dr. Joel Rubin and I were pleased to prepare the nomination qualifications for USITT's newest Fellow and to collaborate on this presentation.

Our newest Fellow has been working in Technical Theatre for about 40 years, starting in Technical Theatre in junior high, and working summer stock at 16. He built on that experience working as a production electrician for the Dance Theatre of Harlem, touring in that capacity for more than five years. The knowledge gained in that position served as the basis for many of his designs of touring equipment for the lighting rental market. As a production electrician on Broadway, Steve Terry was responsible for the care and feeding of Broadway's first lighting control memory system used for *Chorus Line* in 1976.

For anyone involved in theatre technology, Steve is considered to be the ultimate resource for good engineering practice in entertainment lighting. He has been a leader in promoting effective electrical codes and in the development of protocols for the transmission of lighting data.

As chief engineer and later executive vice president of Production Arts Lighting, Steve developed and advanced "Systems Integration" in the entertainment lighting industry, now a common practice for the design, engineering, furnishing integration, and

installation of entertainment technology systems.

Steve founded the USITT National Electrical Code Committee in 1980, in part to gain a better understanding because of a challenge from a competitor that his Multi-Conductor Cable breakouts wouldn't pass Code. He was the Chair of the USITT Engineering Commission Committee that wrote the internationally accepted DMX512 Standard. This is one of USITT's greatest successes and brings substantial international acclaim to USITT. Steve was a co-recipient (with Ken Vannice and me) of the 1993 USITT Founders Award for work on Codes and Standards.

Steve currently serves as Fellow Ken Vannice's alternate member to the National Electrical Code Panel 15 of the National Fire Protection Association. He is currently co-chair of the ESTA Technical Standards Program's Control Protocols Working Group, and is a founding member of the ESTA Technical Standards Committee.

Steve has been a stalwart among those who feel that USITT limits its potential when it fails to appeal to more than a largely academic membership. Hence his many labors within USITT, which go back to 1980, have been largely directed to areas that require industry-wide participation from a large number of academic and professional practitioners, dealers, and manufacturing firms.

More than that, Steve has also been a mentor and leader to those who work in the lighting industry. Both the lighting shop and the management team he led, together with John McGraw and Peter Forward, for two decades at Production Arts Lighting were equal-opportunity and fully-integrated, including a substantial percentage of both women and other minorities. Many found their first New York jobs at Production Arts and many have subsequently maintained professional careers in theatre.

Steve has already achieved a proud record that continues in his present work. He proposes high standards for our industry -- to make things work better and to advance the state of the art. Just as important, as many of us are privileged to know, his service to the industry is accompanied hand-in-hand by loyalty and dedication to his friends.

To colleague Steven R. Terry, we are honored to be in your company as Fellows of USITT.

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USITT Treasurer Larry Hill is always looking for opportunities to promote USITT's future. He is shown here during the organization's Annual Meeting in Louisville, Kentucky in March 2006.

Photo/R. Finkelstein

by **Barbara E.R. Lucas**
Sightlines *Editor*

Many Helping to Secure USITT's Future

"Now is the time to join your friends" urged Larry Hill, USITT's Treasurer, as he talked recently about the continuing USITT@50 fundraising effort.

Why? For Mr. Hill, the answer is simple. "It is time to step up and ensure a continuing financial base for our efforts supporting and rewarding excellence. At the conclusion of the 2006 Annual Conference & Stage Expo in Louisville, the USITT@ 50 fundraising campaign has commitments of \$339,875 toward 'Securing Our Future.' "

In addition to the \$96,125 of five-year gifting to celebrate USITT's 50th year, the total reflects direct and estate gifts, the permanent funding of The Rising Star Award and two Young Designers and Technicians Awards -- the Robert E. Cohen award in Sound Achievement and the KM Fabrics, Inc. Technical Production award.

Individual givers, led by the Board of Directors 97 percent participation rate and 29 Fellows of the Institute, have stepped forward with significant support. This provides a solid foundation for awards, grants, and supporting student and international activities.

The dollars already received or committed will go toward these critical mission-driven activities.

Corporate members of the Institute, such as Entertainment Lighting Services and Rosco Laboratories, Inc. have begun or continue to support its mission and specific programs. Another example of this is support from Vincent Lighting Systems. All these gifts are greatly appreciated and these and other corporate givers are esteemed for their long-term commitments.

Mr. Hill urged all members to take the time to download a letter of intent, available [here](#), for the five-year giving campaign. USITT @ 50 intentions made by June 30 are eligible for a 50 percent match to the gift. Members can direct their money be placed in the special ***USITT Fund***, the ***International Fund***, the ***Edward F. Kook Fund***, or the ***Student Activities Program*** of the New Century Fund. "If you direct \$100 a year to the fund of your choice, the result at the end of five years is \$750 added to the principal" Mr. Hill said.

"I join Dick Durst, Honorary Campaign Chair, in giving our thanks to everyone who has joined in this campaign. We hope donors saw the smiles of people receiving awards and grants at the Conference in Louisville, and understand what a vital part they have played in creating those programs," Mr. Hill said. "We hope others will join them in 'Securing our Future.' so that vital work can continue."

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Great Discounts on Testing

Michelle L. Smith
Membership & Ad Sales Manager

Electrical Certification

USITT members receive a \$100 discount on the examination fees for the industry's first electrical certification exams. The ETCP electrical exams will be held October 19, 2006 at the LDI tradeshow in Las Vegas. Candidates who pass the examinations will be the first ETCP Certified Entertainment Electricians.

Individuals must meet eligibility requirements to apply. Candidate information, including eligibility requirements, the handbook, and application forms, are available on the [ETCP website](#). To receive the discount, members must provide proof of current membership (such as a copy of current membership card) with the application. Application deadline is July 1.

Click [here](#) for a complete list of member discounts. For instructions on accessing a discount, select the item of interest and enter user name (USITT member number) and password (last name, case specific) at the prompt.

If you have questions or suggestions for a new benefit, contact Membership & Ad Sales Manager Michelle L. Smith at 800-938-7488 or michelle@office.usitt.org.

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Entertainment Technician
Certification Program

USITT has been a strong supporter of ETCP certification. USITT members receive a \$100 discount on the new Entertainment Electrician certification exam or the rigging certification exams.



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Lester Polakov Honored

USITT's 1999 Distinguished Achievement Award in Scene Design winner has been honored with the TDF/Irene Sharaff Lifetime Achievement Award. **Lester Polakov** is noted for both his work as a designer and as founder of the Lester Polakov Studio of Stage Design, later known as the Studio and Forum of Stage Design. His extensive credits include scenic, costume, and lighting design.

We congratulate Mr. Polakov, who has been in ill health, on this most recent honor.

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The cover photograph on the April issue of *Sightlines* included an incorrect attribution. The great indoor pyro picture was shot by Tom Thatcher, Conference Photographer. We apologize for the error.

[To Top](#) ↑**Stroemel Stars in Nashville**

Those traveling to the recent USITT Annual Conference & Stage Expo via Nashville had an opportunity to see USITT's own **Mo Stroemel** performing at the famed Bluebird Cafe. This is not the only venue in the Nashville area where Mr. Stroemel has displayed his musical talents, but it is the one most familiar with those outside the country music scene.

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We again want to thank all those who participated in the 2006 Annual Conference & Stage Expo. From the first Professional Development Workshop to the closing remarks, nothing would have been possible without the hundreds of volunteers who give their time, experience, and knowledge to make the Conference a success.

As we all catch our breaths, planning for the 2007 event in Phoenix is already underway, with Houston in 2008 not far behind.

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Creative Stage Lighting Welcomed

USITT welcomes **Creative Stage Lighting Co. Inc.**, as a new Contributing member of the Institute. Creative Stage Lighting Co. Inc. is based in North Creek, New York and has a well presence at www.creativestagelighting.com. George B. Studnicky III serves as president of the company which lists itself as "wholesale supplier to the entertainment industry." It prides itself on its knowledgeable sales people who help ensure projects are completed on time and on budget.

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Co. Inc.

J.R. Clancy

PRG

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J.R. Clancy Automates Counterweight Sets

Existing counterweight sets can be automated simply and economically using **J. R. Clancy's** PowerAssist winch. Specifically designed for retrofitting existing counterweight rigging systems, the PowerAssist can be used to automate just a few sets or a complete rigging system. This eliminates both the need to handle counterweights and the concerns associated with out of balance sets. Fixed speed units are available for motorizing lighting sets, shell ceilings, and other utility sets. Variable speed units allow automation of scenery sets providing a complete range of dynamic movement. Since PowerAssist upgrades existing sets, the cost is as little as half the cost of replacing sets with conventional winches yet provides the same versatility as a new, motorized rigging system -- at tremendous savings.

For smaller systems, basic pushbutton controls are included on the face of the winch. Or, to take full advantage of automated rigging, the SceneControl 500 console offers the ability to program cues to control your rigging movement. PowerAssist replaces the floor block, rope lock, and hand line of an existing set, and reuses the remaining components. It uses a fixed counterweight to assist the winch motor giving it a greater capacity range with an economical motor. The PowerAssist™ winch was introduced by J. R. Clancy during this year's USITT Stage Expo in Louisville, Kentucky. More information can be found on Clancy's web site: www.jrclancy.com.

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PRG Introduces Autopar™ at Auto Show

Production Resource Group, LLC (PRG) provided 600 of its new AutoPar Wash Luminaires to the North American International Auto Show last month. Designer Howard Werner, of Lightswitch New York, needed a specialty fixture for trade show exhibits and PRG responded. "I was looking for an automated fixture to serve the needs of auto show clients. The fixture needed to have a daylight color temperature with a lens that rotated, but it didn't need a lot of other bells and whistles," explained Mr. Werner. The result was PRG's AutoPar, which debuted at LDI 2005.

The AutoPar is a compact, automated fixture with a 700-watt arc lamp that features a fully DMX-programmable, rotating lens assembly. "The AutoPar is much smaller and lighter than a standard moving light," noted PRG Vice Chairman and Chief Technology Officer Rusty Brutsché.

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InterAmerica Names General Sales Manager

InterAmerica Stage, Inc. announced the addition of Jack Hoffend to its staff as General Sales Director at the Sanford, Florida facility. With more than 35 years of comprehensive experience within the Specialty Performance Rigging industry, Mr. Hoffend is eager to develop increased contact and service between InterAmerica Stage and theatrical and stage performance facilities throughout the world. InterAmerica Stage, Inc. has earned a distinguished reputation as a premier manufacturer/installer of a wide variety of performance rigging equipment within the Amusement Theme Park venue, as well as traditional professional performance theatres and school stages.

InterAmerica is proud to offer turn-key services for both new construction and renovation performance rigging projects in conjunction with **J.R. Clancy Co.**, which has designed and manufactured numerous innovations for the entertainment industry.

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Kerwath Becomes TMB Sales Manager

Lisa Kerwath recently was promoted to Sales Manager at **TMB**. She will coordinate global sales with TMB's European general manager, Paul Hartley, and will oversee TMB sales operations in the Western Hemisphere and Asia. Ms. Kerwath also will help implement a restructuring to accommodate the company's OEM and new architectural divisions.

Ms. Kerwath joined TMB in 2001 and is based at the headquarters in Los Angeles. Having worked in TMB's Los Angeles, New York, and United Kingdom offices, she will help continue strengthening of TMB's global reach.

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Vivien Virtual Event Designer Easier to Use

Event designers and planners leery of complicated CAD or dreary room planning software can take heart. **Cast Software** says the newest release of Vivien Virtual Event Designer is now easier to use with its streamlined user interface and more intuitive and user-friendly tools. For more information visit www.viviendesign.com, or call Alban at 416-597-2278 or 877-989-2278, extension. 263.

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Musson Theatrical Launches New Web Site

Musson Theatrical, Inc. has announced the launch of its new web site, www.musson.com. Marking a vast improvement over its old site, Musson's new site features complete detailed information about the company as well as a fully searchable database of most of the products the company sells complete with product images and descriptions.

The company can also be reached at 800-THEATER.

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TOMCAT Provides Hoist, Rigging Workshop

TOMCAT USA celebrated 14 years of in-depth industry training courses with a successful Hoist and Rigging Workshop in Midland, Texas. This year also marked the second annual Advanced Workshop with 13 participants from around the United States.

Don Dimitroff of Columbus McKinnon coached participants on the sue of Lodestar electric chain hoists. Rocky Paulson, recently retired president of Stage Rigging Inc., stressed safe rigging techniques and Morgan Neff of Mine Safety Appliances gave instruction on proper use of fall protection equipment. Training was rounded out by Keith Bohn's truss class. The TOMCAT Design Manager course covered truss design, use, and theory.

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Mehron Gains Endorsement

This month:

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Musson Theatrical Inc.
TOMCAT
Mehron Inc.
Staging Concepts, Inc.
Strong Entertainment Lighting
Stage Technologies

For nearly 80 years **Mehron, Inc.** has supplied many of the great theatrical shows and circuses. The company recently announced it has become the official make-up of *The Greatest Little Show on Earth*, the PAL Sailor Circus. The PAL Sailor Circus, based in Sarasota, Florida has been the training ground for many of the stars in the circus and theatre since 1949.

Mehron performance make-up, made in the United States, has been the choice of many large productions including Blue Man Group, Cirque du Soleil, The Metropolitan Opera, Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus, and The American Ballet Theatre.

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Rogers Named to Staging Concepts Post

Chuck Rogers has joined **Staging Concepts, Inc.** as its central sales manager. Mr. Rogers has 20 years of experience in the public assembly industry. He is based in Dallas, Texas and covers the central region of the United States.

Mr. Rogers serves IAAM on a range of committees and as an allied representative on its board of directors. He is a 1998 graduate of the Oglebay Public Assembly Facility Management Program, where he was co-president of his class. For more information, visit [Staging Concepts](#) on the Web, or call toll- free at 800-337-5339.

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Strong Offers Followspot Training

To ensure proper installation, use, and safety education on its industry-leading lighting products, **Strong Entertainment Lighting** recently completed the first class in its Authorized Service Center program. Through this program, Strong provides training to local dealers worldwide who will provide end users with expert customer service on the company's line of lighting products.

Strong notes it is the only followspot manufacturer in the United States or Canada offering training comparable to the Authorized Service Center program. Through Strong, local dealers receive formal training through lectures and practical work.

For information regarding the program, dealers can contact Jack Gallagher, product sales manager, at jackg@strong-lighting.com. Additional information can be found at www.strong-lighting.com.

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Chitty's on the Road with Stage Technologies

Following *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang's* successful three and a half year run at the London Palladium, the production took to the road last December to embark on a three-year National Tour. Currently being staged at the Manchester Palace Theatre, the show is set to move to Birmingham, Liverpool, Edinburgh, Bristol, and Southampton.

The show's automation supplier, **Stage Technologies**, has been working with Delstar Engineering and Stage Services on this project to make a number of significant changes to the original control system especially for the touring production.

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Opening Night was again a great success, with an opportunity to meet and mingle in the wonderful Kentucky Center lobby areas.

Photos/Tom Thatcher

by **John S. Uthoff**
USITT President

Thanks for the Memories!

As I write this, the Conference in Louisville has been over for about a week. Since the conference, I have opened and closed a dance concert, am preparing for technical rehearsals for *Metamorphoses*, and am planning to leave for the Kennedy Center on April 20 for KCACTF. Yet, I wanted to take a few moments to reflect on this year's USITT Conference & Stage Expo and think about all the wonderful sessions and events.

Prior to the Conference, many of us had the opportunity to enjoy the hospitality of the Actors Theatre of Louisville and catch one or more wonderful productions of the Humana Festival. I was able to attend *The Scene* by Theresa Rebeck; a well acted and exciting production. Other members were busy participating PDWs, extended workshops dealing with such diverse topics as stage rigging, costume drawing and rendering, indoor pyrotechnics, leadership trends, performer flying effects, hat construction, color rendering, light and shadow, LD Assistant, and sound reinforcement.

The conference kicked off at the Kentucky Center's Whitney Hall, home of this year's Light Lab, with a wonderful Keynote Address by Jon Jory, founder of the Humana Festival and former artistic director of the Actors Theatre, which kept all attending laughing with joy and thinking about the important part that design and technology has in our shared art. This was followed by a moving tribute by Ming Cho Lee, our Distinguished Achievement in Education Award winner, to this year's USITT Award Winner Zelda Fichandler that left us all appreciative of her work with the

At the New Products Showcase it's all about the swag and new toys. Disney created a wonderful offering which got the crowd reaching for wallets.



Arena Stage and the establishment of the regional theatre movement in America.

The Light Lab and all the other programming at the conference started immediately after the Keynote, and the large assembled group dispersed throughout the conference center. Exciting sessions sponsored by the Commissions and our exhibitor members covered the full spectrum of our activities and were available to all. That evening we all returned to the lobby of the Kentucky Center for our Opening Night party. All who attended enjoyed the food and drink, and all rubbed elbows and talked into the night.

Thursday marked the opening of the largest Stage Expo in our history. Vice-President for Conferences Joe Aldridge cut the USITT Gaff Tape and everyone descended on Syracuse Scenery & Stage Lighting Co. Inc. for the mandatory velour bag prior to spreading out through all the exciting booths and exhibits. Then there were more sessions, book signings, design exhibits, the Art Auction, and more.

That evening we were all moved by the funny and touching address by USITT Fellow Rick Stephens that left us all thinking about the important role that USITT has played in our lives. This was followed by naming Steve Terry as our newest Fellow, and honoring those who will succeed us with Awards for Young Designer & Technician. The evening wrapped up with the ever popular New Products Showcase, and just a few more programming sessions that needed to be worked in.

Friday marked the opening of the Young Designers' Forum, more sessions, more Stage Expo, and an evening where the alumni of our many theatre programs get together and catch up on what happened last year and old times. The last event of the day is the Tech Olympics where teams of students compete and test their skills in events such as quick changes, shifting props, and wiring a connector. Three teams from the North Carolina School of the Arts made a clean sweep this year, challenging us all to do better next year.

Saturday is the last day of the Conference. There were still plenty of sessions, the Stage Expo Continental Breakfast, and other events. Stage Expo was still available to get that last glimpse of the newest equipment, or to place the last order, but the work on next year's conference in Phoenix has already begun. The programming for Phoenix is being considered and will be set in May. The Conference Committee looks for improvements, or new events for next year. But this is not just a time of looking ahead. Many exciting and important sessions are scheduled on Saturday each year.

The end was near. Stage Expo closed at 3 p.m. The last programming sessions ended at 5:20 p.m. By 6 p.m., the All Conference Happy Hour had begun, and it was soon time to start the Annual Awards Banquet. USITT honored those who helped

make this year's conference a success, honored the winners of Design Expo and Tech Olympics, awarded the grants, recognized those who won the Distinguished Achievement Awards and the Special Citations, and highlighted those who have given their talents to make our art and our business a success.

After the last of the applause, and much more conversation and toasts of good cheer with our friends, it was time say farewell to the 2006 version of the USITT Annual Conference & Stage Expo. We soon have to return to the realities of our jobs, and soon start to think about that time when we meet again in Phoenix in March 2007.

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Upstate Plans Extend into 2007

Upstate New York Regional Section firmed up plans for activities that will extend into spring 2007. Three venues and dates include a repeat of last year's fall kick-off meeting, a January job fair and day of workshops, and a spring end-of-the-academic-year round-up.

This fall's workshops and meeting will be at SUNY-Geneseo September 16. Plans include activities for students, faculty and professionals. Lighting Designer and Technical Director Johnnie Ferrell is spearheading the Saturday meeting.

The third annual Job Fair and day of workshops is set for January 27. SUNY-Oswego's technical director, Johan Godwaldt, will again be the on-campus workshop coordinator for this event, and Glimmerglass Opera TD, Abby Rodd, the employer contact. Director of design and technology at SUNY-Albany, Andi Lyons, will host the spring round-up in the new theatre facilities.

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New York Area Annual Meeting May 22

New York Area Regional Section will hold its section Annual Meeting at 5 p.m. Monday, May 22 at NYU, NYU, 721 Broadway, New York City.

At this time, section membership renewals may be due. Business to be conducted at the meeting includes: voting for new board of directors executive committee members; voting for new members at large board members (nominations are welcome); discussing the path of the section for the next year; desired workshops and events; and a potential membership drive.

Following the meeting, members are invited to attend a reception at 7 p.m. at the Jack H. Skirball Center for the Performing Arts.

For more information about the meeting, visit www.usittny.org

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Midwest Thanked by Penn High Students

This month:

Upstate New York

New York Area

Midwest

Penn High School in Mishawaka, Indiana is a huge consolidated high school with somewhere between 2,000 and 3,000 students. (Mishawaka is the "twin city" to South Bend and is on the east side of South Bend.) Its theatre department is fairly large and includes two theatres (a proscenium theatre and a studio theatre), two drama directors (so each only has to direct one show per year), and a full time technical director.

The school's Tech Olympics team won first place, the ETC Source Four ellipsoid, and had some individual winners. Bill Heimann also served as the Indiana Thespians State Director for nine years, stepping down this past May. He was very supportive when the Section offered to do the Tech Olympics at the State Thespian Conference.

Mr. Heimann wrote the following thank-you note to the Section:

A big thanks from Penn High School to USITT Midwest Region, to ETC, and Indianapolis Stage. The structure of the event and the awarding of the valued prizes makes for a very exciting event that highlights the importance of technical theater.

Our tech team was very enthusiastic about the event. They filled me in on the bus ride home on all the details of their great adventure. When we stopped for food, they ordered carry-out and went to a card store. They bought bows and a card which they attached to the Source Four box.

They left this present in Byron Welker's office for him to find.

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Architecture Issues Highlight Commission Events

Kimberly A. Corbett
Architecture Commission

The 2006 USITT Conference was another exciting one for the Architecture Commission with continued variety in sessions and increases in attendance.

Among the Conference highlights was the annual presentation of this year's Architecture Award winners. With 40 submissions, the industry certainly is healthy and the jurors were treated to some interesting discussion. In all, three projects were selected for Merit Awards and two for the high Honor Award as showcased on the Institute's web site. Congratulations to all on the award-winning design teams. Look for more information about these projects in an upcoming edition of *TD&T*.

Timothy Hartung of Polshek Partnership led the Saturday morning discussion of the Architecture Awards and mentioned the jurors' excitement at the innovation and intervention demonstrated by the winners. The winners were projects "where people have found opportunities within their work to do something in a new way...to create opportunities that traditionally are not available."

Beside being an in-depth look at the winning projects, this session, as always, featured conversation about current trends in performance hall construction. This year, talk addressed the audience's relationship to theatre technology. As one attendee mentioned, once there is an "understanding [of] the basic tenets and concepts of what the [theatre] machine has to do, you can cover it up or pull the skin back a bit and expose it."

There was only one architectural tour this year -- a backstage look at the Actors' Theatre of Louisville. Thank you to our hosts for showing us around this space! Other sessions examined a wide cross-section of our Commission, beginning with a discussion of the architectural lighting field.

Active discussion accompanied *So You're Being Given a Theatre for Christmas -- Now What?* which highlighted the importance of collaboration between designers and users and addressed the process of performing arts center construction. *Balancing the Eye and Ear: Things That Go Bump in the Night* considered noise control both in new construction techniques and for existing



All of the 2006 USITT Architecture Award winners, including the KA Theatre, above, were discussed during a special session at the 2006 Annual Conference & Stage Expo.

facilities. Those attending *Displacement Air Systems* agreed that the session helped them better understand this alternative HVAC delivery system and its pros and cons. *Budgeting for Your Arts Project* was an intense, in-depth look at how all the various construction divisions work together and how cuts in one area may affect others. Predicted cost escalations for the next few years were also examined.

Architectural design sessions included a charette on costume shop design, an examination of the role of natural light in performing arts spaces, and discussion of multi-purpose music spaces and concert halls.


Throughout the Conference, it was exciting to see both familiar and new faces. Those who could not make it this year were missed.

Deadline Looms for PQ Architecture Exhibit

The annual Commission meeting was well attended and focused on programming for the 2007 Conference in Phoenix and an American Architectural exhibit at the 2007 Prague Quadrennial. Richard Pilbrow, of Theatre Projects Consultants, is leading this latter project. The theme is "Architecture for Education in the Arts," showcasing a variety of American projects designed specifically for teaching programs over the last five years.

Projects will be evaluated on their architectural distinction, context within and contribution to the community, and theatrical and acoustical quality. The client, consultant, acoustician, or architect may submit a project. The deadline to express interest in the PQ2007 exhibit is early May 2006 April 28, with preliminary project information due in June. It is hoped the excitement for this project will extend throughout the industry. Also in the works is a student design competition to bring together college and university students from schools of architecture, theatre, and acoustics. The competition is still being developed but is a priority for the Commission.

As always, the Architecture Commission is interested in your involvement! Opportunities still exist to chair or co-chair sessions at next year's USITT Conference. If you have any ideas or submissions for articles related to the meeting of architecture and performing arts, pass them along to Raymond Kent at rkent@wrlsdesign.com or Kimberly Corbett at kcorbett@schulershook.com.

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My Fair Lady, right, represents some of the tailoring techniques which may be part of the 2006 USITT Costume Symposium in Cedar City, Utah.

Photo/Courtesy Utah Shakespearean Festival

Symposium to Focus on Tailoring Techniques

Kristina Tollefson

Costume Design & Technology Co-Commissioner

Cedar City, Utah is the place to be this August for an exciting learning experience in the costume shops of the Utah Shakespearean Festival. Those who attend USITT's Costume Symposium, A Master Class in Tailoring Techniques for Men's Wear, will learn the intricacies of 19th and 20th century tailoring techniques presented by outstanding master teachers. There are two sessions, August 6 to 8 or August 10 to 12, each covering the same material.

Because each session is limited to 22 participants, there will be plenty of individualized instruction and attention! Follow the links [here](#) for a complete schedule and registration information.

This symposium targets those who have sewing experience and are ready to master the challenging details found in men's wear and those wishing to hone their skills. Participants will have the opportunity to practice techniques such as welt pockets, pad stitching, taping, lining, pressing, and other important skills needed to create beautiful clothing.

The 2006 events are an outgrowth of the popular 2003 Symposium, but it is not necessary to have attended that class to

benefit from this one.

Each of the two sessions covers identical material. All supplies for samples as well as a complete coat (wool, interfacing, lining, and pattern) are included in the registration fee. Also included are tickets to two evening productions at the Utah Shakespearean Festival, a private backstage tour, three continental breakfasts and three lunches.

Susan Davis has been a cutter and tailor since the mid-1980s working for such companies as the Shakespeare Theatre, Arena Stage, and the Santa Fe Opera. She worked for six years as head cutter for Seattle Opera, then started Kaufman-Davis Studio in 1996. She was co-instructor of the 2003 USITT Costume Symposium, *Drafting Patterns for Menswear*, and recently guest-lectured at the University of Washington (*Theatrical Pattern Drafting and Draping*). Ms. Davis has been the Costume Shop Manager at Seattle Opera since 2002, and co-owns and operates Period Corsets®, a line of historic undergarments, with Becky Kaufman.

Laurie L. Kurutz's 26-year career in theatre began at the Oregon Shakespearean Festival as a draper/tailor working with top-notch designers on lavish period productions. Between her 11 seasons at OSF, she worked at the Seattle Opera, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Arizona Theatre Company, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, and others. While Chair of USITT Pacific Northwest Regional Section, she hosted Master Tailor R.I. Davis from England to teach a Tailoring Master Class in 1999. After 13 years as lead costumer at the University of Washington, she joined the faculty of Southern Oregon University in Ashland.

Jeffrey Lieder has supervised more than 130 productions at the Tony award-winning Utah Shakespearean Festival since 1986. He is also associate professor of theatre at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He has designed costumes for the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, First Stage, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, and the Utah Shakespearean Festival. He created headpieces and hats for *The Nutcracker* at the Milwaukee Ballet, American Repertory Ballet, and Pennsylvania Ballet, all designed by Zack Brown. He coordinated three USITT Symposia and conducts master classes and workshops for USITT and many universities around the country.

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Dr. Randall Davidson, Commissioner Emeritus of the Health & Safety Commission, was on hand in Louisville, Kentucky. He was honored as a USITT Member Author and signed books in addition to offering his expert opinions on a wide variety of topics.

Photo/R. Finkelstein

Changes Ahead for Health & Safety Commission

James Cooper

Outgoing Health & Safety Commissioner

Louisville was one of the best conferences in recent years. The facilities were new and generally well run (there were some HVAC issues), but Expo had many new items, the sessions proved to be interesting, with multiple highlights for all of the commissions, and everyone seemed to have a good time.

There were some changes made in the Health & Safety Commission. After five years, I stepped down as Commissioner and the position was taken over by Nate Otto. Mr Otto is the technical director at Vanderbilt University. You may have seen him at the Conference. He was everywhere. Besides taking over the Commission, he was also one of the regional planners, a troubleshooter, and a member of the Conference Committee. He is also a new daddy (you may have seen Caitlin, in her stroller, sporting a full conference badge even if she was not allowed into any sessions).

Mr. Otto has several ideas for changing the direction and scope of the Commission which I believe will make it more up-to-date and interesting to a wider group of conference attendees.

Also, at Louisville, Dave Glowacki of Hawkin School in Ohio stepped up as Vice-Commissioner for Programming, generally a thankless but probably the busiest position in any of the Commissions. He will be responsible for coordinating all of the Health & Safety sessions for Phoenix and, if we are lucky, several years into the future.


Mr. Otto and Mr. Glowacki, working with the Commission members and the Commissioners from the rest of the Institute, have come up with a great program for the conference in Phoenix and are already working on Houston and the 50-year spectacular in 2010.

Over the next few issues of *Sightlines*, I hope to recap the sessions from Louisville and introduce the sessions for next year. CPR training will be offered, and I recommend it to everyone attending.

One final note, it was a pleasure to see Dr. Randy Davidson (Dr. Doom) bedecked in purple, at his 43rd(?) conference. Few have done more for the health and safety in our industry than he has. He will be offering a session next year on waste management, another critical topic in our field.

It was wonderful to see many old friends at Louisville, and I look forward to making new friends in Phoenix.

Be Safe!

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Seek Project Input for Teaching Costume Design

Judy Adamson

Costume Design & Technology Commission

USITT's Costume Design & Technology Commission continues to solicit ideas for Volume 2 of *Projects for Teaching Costume Design and Technology*. As the spring semester winds down, take a moment to identify projects that have been successful this past year and submit them for publication review.

In Volume 1, published in 1998, costume educators shared ideas, and the compilation inspired everyone, from the instructor entering the profession to the experienced teacher looking for a fresh approach. This is a project Commission members have been enthusiastic about, endorsing it without reservation. Many have used the original publication to enrich courses.

It is very easy to submit a project. A Project Submission Form is available [here](#). Under Commission News, a link will lead you to a pdf form that can be submitted electronically or printed and mailed.

The membership of the Commission represents diverse teaching challenges -- graduates interested in education or in following professional careers as well as undergraduates with all levels of interest or talent. The editors hope the new volume will address everyone's needs.

In addition to soliciting submissions, the editors seek educators willing to try the projects in their classrooms and provide feedback. Those interested in seeing a list of the submissions to date in "teaser" form should e-mail jadamson@email.unc.edu. A complete submission will be sent to those who want to try one of the projects. Feedback will be instrumental in providing levels of approach in the final publication.

Those wishing to contribute can contact editors Judy Adamson at CB# 3230, Center for Dramatic Art, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3230, adamson@email.unc.edu; or Martha Marking, Department of Theatre and Dance, Appalachian State University, 480 Howard Street, Boone, NC, markngma@appstate.edu.



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Founded in 1929, The Heard Museum has become a Phoenix landmark by showcasing numerous impressive displays of Native American art.

Photo/Courtesy Greater Phoenix Convention & Visitors Bureau

Stage Expo Says Goodbye Louisville, Hello Phoenix

Helen Willard

Stage Expo Sales Manager

Goodbye Louisville, hello Phoenix. The ink is barely dry in the record books, and already we are busy planning ways to break the new records set this year in Louisville. With 193 exhibitors in 27,300 square feet of exhibit space, Stage Expo 2006 demolished the records set last year in Toronto, where we had 177 exhibitors in 26,000 square feet of exhibit space.

The final exhibitor signed up on Friday, less than a week before Stage Expo opened, and although all of the booths were sold, luckily we had a table space available for him to set up his display. Stage Expo 2006 opened with the "Call to the Post" by the bugler from Churchill Downs, who then played "My Old Kentucky Home" as hundreds of attendees flooded into the exhibit hall to grab swag and check out new products. Exhibitors were happy with the turnout, and more than 80 of the 127 booth exhibitors lined up to reserve a booth space for 2007.

Priority booth space selection for the next year's show is held on Saturday, the final day of Stage Expo. Exhibitors are scheduled in five-minute intervals, and there was a steady stream of people at the Show Office from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. Over 80 percent of the

available booth space was booked for next year's show, so Stage Expo 2007 is already well on its way to once again breaking the records for number of exhibitors and square footage of booth sales.

The 47th Annual USITT Conference & Stage Expo will be held in the Phoenix Civic Plaza, which is located in downtown Phoenix. Stage Expo 2007 will be in the PCP's Exhibit Halls D/E and the adjacent Ballroom, with the Tucson and Yuma meeting rooms located just outside the exhibit halls.

Conference hotels include the Hyatt Regency, the headquarters hotel, and the Wyndham.

Booth space selection will continue until all available booth spaces are sold. Priority space selection for table spaces will be conducted in the fall. Anyone who would like to exhibit at Stage Expo 2007 in Phoenix should contact hpwillard@aol.com for more information.

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Valley of the Sun Offers Many Wonders

Jeff Brown

Phoenix Conference Promotions Coordinator

David Rodger's articles about Louisville in *Sightlines* over the past year have highlighted many features of that city. Looking forward, there are many points of interest unique to the Phoenix metro area that those going to the 2007 Conference & Stage Expo might enjoy if they have time.

Let's start with Phoenix's most famous attributes -- the landscape and the weather. Phoenix is located in the Sonoran Desert. It is nestled in a valley and surrounded by rugged mountain ranges. The Sonoran Desert is the only region in the world where the saguaro cacti naturally grow. It is not hard to figure out why Phoenix is called the Valley of the Sun, when even in March the average daily high is 75 degrees, with 85 percent sunshine and only one inch of rain for the month. The spring months are a wonderful time to enjoy the outdoor pleasures of the region.

One breathtaking way to get acquainted with the offerings of the desert is to tour the Desert Botanical Gardens (www.dbg.org). The gardens are located in northern Phoenix, 8.5 miles from the Phoenix Convention Center (site of the 2007 conference). The Desert Botanical Gardens boasts 50 acres of beautiful outdoor exhibits featuring hundreds of types of cacti from around the world. It is also home to 139 rare, threatened, or endangered plant species from around the world. The gardens are open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily with an admission price of \$10.

Phoenix and the southwest region also have a rich tradition of arts and culture. The native peoples of the Southwest are celebrated at the Heard Museum (www.heard.org), which has one of the most outstanding collections of Native American artwork in the country. The museum houses collections from indigenous cultures throughout the world but focuses on the native people of the Southwest. The collections range from historic artifacts to contemporary fine art. The museum is open 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Admission is \$10 for adults and \$5 for students. The Heard Museum is less than two miles from the Phoenix Convention Center.

For the sports fan, one exciting event that takes place in the



Phoenix has a distinctive skyline that will soon become familiar to USITT members.

Photo/Courtesy Greater Phoenix Convention & Visitors Bureau

Phoenix area each March is Major League Baseball's spring training. The greater Phoenix area and Tucson, Arizona are home to the Cactus League, which consists of the Anaheim Angels, Arizona Diamondbacks, Chicago Cubs, Chicago White Sox, Colorado Rockies, Kansas Royals, Milwaukee Brewers, Oakland Athletics, San Diego Padres, San Francisco Giants, Seattle Mariners, and Texas Rangers. Each of the teams involved in the Cactus League plays a game nearly every day in March. Tickets range in price from \$5 to \$25.

Of course another great attraction in Phoenix during the "winter" season is golf, golf, and more golf. The Phoenix area is home to 200-plus golf courses. Arizona prides itself on maintaining some of the finest courses in the nation. Book an early tee time and then head to the USITT conference for an informative day of sessions and the Stage Expo.

This is just a sampling of the unique local opportunities that can enhance your 2007 conference experience. Start planning next year's trip now and watch this space for more ideas for making the most out of your journey to the Valley of the Sun!

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A Magical Tour of Southeast Asia

In the middle of January, 29 weary, travel-worn souls returned from an exhilarating trip to Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam as part of the most recent Study Tour sponsored by USITT.

Once again, participants celebrated the creative cultures of other countries, met counterparts in the business of theatre in its broadest scope, saw incredible sites (among the most beautiful in the world), made good friends with fellow USITT travelers, and met some lovely, gracious people in every country. The memories of every stop, layers of images of Royal Palaces and floating markets are with tour goers always, just on the edges of consciousness.

Participants traveled to Bangkok, the first stop, in two groups, departing from both east and west coasts of the United States. In either instance, it was one *long* flight and the group staggered to the common meeting spot in Taipei to finish the last leg of the journey, bleary from nearly 20 hours in transit.

Group members arrived at the Bangkok hotel, checked in and, rather than waste precious time, a few immediately set off for the Jim Thompson House of Silk museum. Mr. Thompson was an American entrepreneur who is credited with saving the silk industry in Thailand. He brought good old American business acumen to Bangkok, and relocated a series of structures to

Ayuthaya is the site of the ancient ruins of the temples of the early ages in Thailand work (example left), one of many stops for those on the Southeast Asia Study Tour.

by **Richard Durst**
Tours Coordinator,
International Committee

At Angkor Wat, tour participants came upon a monk at the base of the Buddha inside the central tower.

Below, Thailand's Royal Palace was a series of visual delights.

Photos/Richard Durst

assemble a lovely traditional-styled home and business on the bank of a canal -- the primary, efficient mode of transportation throughout the city. While the silk fabrics and clothes on sale in the shop were lovely, this was the first introduction to the domestic architectural style, very stunning, yet charming and comfortable.

Travelers endured an endless coach ride through traffic to get to this site. We did discover that every journey across Bangkok was a trial. Two and a half million citizens of Bangkok travel by motorbike, darting in and out of the traffic, swirling, and swerving around cars, buses, and startled Americans. The noise when any traffic light turns green is like the starting flag at Indy, but with a slightly higher-pitched whine and roar. As the group traversed the city, we quickly understood why the motorbikes and tuk-tuks (*below*) were the preferred method of travel rather than a lumbering tour bus.



That night, members had the first of a marvelous set of adventures with Thai massage, courtesy of our travel partners, Mongol Global Travel, and Owner/President Russ Oquist. Everyone had a lovely time and what a relaxing way to finally get ready for a sleep that seemed days in coming!

The sights of the next few days were stunning as we crisscrossed Bangkok, then in and out of the city, seeing one incredible site or structure after the other. These digital photos may give you a sense of the experience, but without the sounds, smells and voices, they are but a hollow replica. The Reclining Buddha Temple and the acres of gold-laden structures, bas-reliefs, and statuary of the surrounding Royal Palace are almost beyond even a designer's imagination. The broken-tile work of the facades is like pointillism as viewed from even a few feet away. The symmetry of the majestic rooftops and arches is simply breathtaking.

The connections made with people were the highlights of this tour. The memory of the students at the several academies visited, including the Wittayalai Natthasin, the College of Dramatic Arts (grades 7-12) in Bangkok, evokes a smile. The training for careers in traditional music, dance, and acrobatics (*below*) is a way out of poverty, yet also serves to pass these cultural touchstones on from older generations to the youth. The seriousness and dedication is phenomenal -- the angle of the arm, the impossible curve of the



fingers, the relationships of the feet, every gesture and pose is practiced to perfection.



Of course, many know the mask and puppet theatre traditions of the Far East. The group's first formal introduction and instruction was at the Joe Louis (not the boxer) Puppet Theatre. As participants arrived early at the theatre, the mask-makers invited them to watch their process. Then we were invited into the dressing rooms to see, handle, and operate the sophisticated puppets seen in the production that evening. The craftsmanship was superb, so detailed and precise.

Our first journey into the countryside, with a planned visit to the Floating Markets, was a sensory delight -- nothing to do with theatre and everything to do with it. Travelers left early to be the first on the grounds of the Imperial Summer Palace, the first stop. The temperature was perfect with bright sun as we walked the parkland.

The grounds were reminiscent of English formal gardens with Capability Brown-like lakes in the foreground and stunning flowers and architecture from the Chinese pagoda (a gift to the Royal family) to Baroque, to Art Deco. It was difficult to leave this place. But, on to the markets!



The coach dropped the group canal-side, where members rode longboats, each powered by a monstrous engine hooked to an ingenious, direct drive propeller that provided a ride almost as scary as dodging the motorbikes in the city, lunging through back-alley canals, with houses on stilts



on both sides, through narrow passages, until they arrived at the markets. Looking past the tourist stalls selling T-shirts along the canals, there were people selling food clothing, drinks -- almost every essential -- right out of the boats. Previously unknown fruits that were out of this world were sampled. While slurping them down, travelers wondered what the Center for Disease Control would say about eating this fruit right from the vendor, and where, and if, that fruit had been washed.

Late that afternoon, the group returned to the city for a lovely, official visit to the Thai National Theatre of Bangkok. We accepted an invitation to a traditional dance and music performance that evening. All enjoyed seeing the similarities of the traditional performances, whether the live performers in this space, or the puppet theatre the night before; the mythologies and characters were so similar, and it was enjoyable to begin to understand and appreciate the stories every child in Thailand knows. The costume technicians volunteered to dress three of the performers while the group watched, to see the intricate wrapping and folding of the costumes. The process took over an hour! A lesson, repeated several times over the course of the almost-three weeks, was learned: traditional performances are *very* long, and often there are no breaks -- you simply get up when you need to.

Ayuthaya is the site of the ancient ruins of the temples of the early ages in Thailand. This place was very similar in feel to those seen later in the tour at Angkor Wat in Cambodia. Several group members climbed the central tower, a trek repeated in Cambodia. The land is so flat, you can see for several kilometers between the trees.

Once back in Bangkok (hey, this is New Years Eve!), some of the brave souls ventured back into the city for the celebration. Oh, do the Thai love fireworks...loud fireworks.

The Ruins of Cambodia

It was the New Year, and the group departed for Cambodia and some of the most spectacular temple ruins on the planet -- Angkor Wat. The people were among the most gracious we encountered -- courteous and generous in spite of the poverty. Siem Reap, the only city of any size near the mega-complex of the Wats, is a maze of tourist hotels, many in various stages of construction, as the city and government try to capitalize on the interest in what has to be one of the true wonders of the world.

Angkor Wat is perhaps the best known, but not the largest, of the various walled "cities" that surround the city of Siem Reap. Because much of the land has been cleared around Angkor Wat, at least on some of the approaches, it is perhaps the most dramatic, since you can get far enough away from it to really appreciate the scale. Unlike so many monuments in other parts of the world that have been barricaded to keep tourists from contributing to the

decay of millennia, most of the Wats are open and you can climb any portions you dare. OSHA would have a field day here. The steps to the central tower in Angkor Wat are incredibly treacherous, rather like climbing Coba in the Yucatan of Mexico, where you have to transverse the steps to find a reasonable way to get up and down.

One of the most remarkable experiences was coming upon a monk at the base of the Buddha inside the central tower. The sound of his instrument, the heavy, sweet smell of the incense, and the flickering light from the small fires, then rounding the corner to see him, was almost mystical.

When the walled temples were "rediscovered" and the government realized the potential for worldwide interest, each temple was assigned to archeological teams from different countries. A brilliant move, it meant that Cambodia didn't have to pay for the unbelievable task of rescuing the temples from the clutches of the jungle. Each country mounted an effort to rebuild "its" site.

To illustrate, you have to understand what the temples were like before these efforts began. Only one, Ta Prohm, remains in the original state. Nothing escapes popular culture. Some of the location shots for *Laura Croft*, *Tomb Raider* were done here. Over the span of 900 years, you can see that the jungle, the elements, even earthquakes began to reclaim these man-made sites. Only when you see Ta Prohm, do you begin to understand the enormity of the conservation and stabilization efforts required to extricate the entire complex of temples. A favorite photo is of one of the far corners of Ta Prohm (*below*) almost like a Disney World construction.



That evening, exhausted but exhilarated, we were treated to a traditional Cambodian music and dance show at a purpose-built presentation hall and restaurant. Again, the similarities of the dances and mythology to those in Thailand were striking. The group was invited on stage to view the costumes, adding to the

sensory stimulation of the day. Most collapsed, exhausted, at the end of the day.

Even with the overwhelming visual sites of Angkor Wat, the next day at Banteay Srei, was a favorite in Cambodia. This comparatively small temple was very accessible and the sandstone carvings are remarkable and inexplicably preserved. The intricacy of the detail is stunning and the site is serene (few tourists journey this far from the main temples), about an hour into the jungle. On the way back the group stopped at a small village to purchase some fabrics, carvings, and palm sugar delicacies. The oxcart transport joined the road with the vans and trucks in an unusual juxtaposition. The ever-present water buffalo simply grazed outside the stilted houses.

On to Saigon and Beyond

"The American War is forgotten; what's in the past is in the past." The first guide in Vietnam provided this quote as the mantra for tourism in Vietnam; seemingly, the major hope out of the extreme poverty, especially in the north, brought about by the economic sanctions that were lifted in the late 1990s.

The grand historical structures of Saigon are lovely, majestic remnants of the early French years. The group visited Notre Dame and the City Post Office, side by side in the center of the city, beautifully preserved. Much of the afternoon and evening were spent first in official meetings with the Director of the National Theatre Opera House Nguyễn Thị Thủ Nga and Vietnamese government and cultural representatives, and then in tours of the beautiful neoclassical building, and finally as guests for a contemporary music event being broadcast live on Vietnam television. The theatre is the finest in the country, and the technicians welcomed participants as colleagues and were eager to show them around the facility.

The group flew to Danang, known to many as the site of the major American military location during the war. The Museum of Antiquities and most of the city remains as it was 35 years ago. This was a very fast stop since the group was to drive through the countryside to Hue, the cultural capital of Vietnam -- the last city before crossing the old Demilitarized Zone. Before dusk, members saw miles of rice paddies still planted and cultivated with the same techniques used for hundreds of years.

Unfortunately, after the first morning at the Mieu Temple and Pagoda in Hue, the skies opened, reminiscent of tropical monsoons. The group had a lovely visit to the Imperial Citadel built in 1805, which survived the Tet Offensive bombing of 1968. We were invited to a very special ethnic music and dance performance inside the Citadel. The performance is so important in the Vietnam history that it has been conferred with World Heritage status. Late in the afternoon, part of the group relaxed in the hotel to escape the rain, while the remainder toured the fantastic Royal Tombs, so similar in feel to those in China outside

Beijing.

The farther the group traveled north, the more we seemed headed back in time. More sidewalk vendors sold food from poles balanced across their shoulders which, while not unusual in Saigon, appeared commonplace in the north particularly in the Dong Ba Market in Hue and in Hanoi, the last major stop on the tour. The hotel in Hanoi was lovely and an easy walk from the Old Quarter of the city, a maze of streets and shops.



The Museum of Ethnology was simply stunning -- a visual history of the country and its people: homes reconstructed on the site, traditional costumes separated by region and ethnicity, even videos of marriage ceremonies from the historic cultures. This wonderful museum, an attempt to preserve the cultural heritage of fast-disappearing ethnic groups, was a gift to the people of Vietnam from the French government.

The highlight of the tour was a visit to the countryside, to one of the training centers of water puppetry in Vietnam. The water puppet theatre is at the heart of this small village where the puppeteers stand in the water behind a screen and manipulate the puppets, with rods and poles under the water, accompanied by music. The historical aspects were worth the visit, as the secrets of the water puppets have been guarded through generations. Traditionally, even family members were not permitted "back stage." It was a tribute to the connections of Mongol Global Tours that the group was afforded this rare opportunity. However, it was the interactions with the townspeople and children that made this visit so special. Children who were studying rudimentary English were brought to meet us by their teacher. The village is far into the countryside, well off the beaten track, and USITT group members were truly unusual. There was no begging, no hawking of goods, just people intrigued by the very tall Americans. It was spectacular and moving. A little one cautiously took my wife's finger and walked alongside her to the theatre.

Ha Long Bay

Ha Long Bay has been described as one of the jewels of the world (*below*) so remote and so beautiful, compared by many to the Yellow River in China. The group of islands that make up Ha Long Bay are themselves a World Heritage site, and participants spent the night onboard two ships. The camaraderie of the evening was particularly enjoyable because members knew the adventure was about to end.

Sadly, these photos do not do justice to the majesty and serenity of this place. The juxtaposition of the cave on one of the islands, the junks floating in the harbors, the sunset (after days of gray clouds), which magically appeared at the very moment the group sailed out of one of the harbors. The climb to the pagoda... memories, and friendships.



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