



The Fellows Gazette

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Summer 2019

From the Dean



Attendance was up for our most recent annual meeting, which was a pleasant surprise since it occurred over a busy holiday week. I hope that's a good sign for our 2020 gathering, and I look forward to seeing many of

you there.

We had everything that makes a great gathering: wonderful fellowship with friends and colleagues, the opportunity to celebrate and welcome new Fellows, and a moving Roger L. Stevens address, all within the glorious settings of the Cosmos Club and the Kennedy Center. It was a personal highlight for me to welcome back our first Arts Impact Award recipient, Alex Tolle, who spoke for a few minutes about her experience at Arts Advocacy Day and made clear why she was such a great choice. I believe the opportunity to follow up in this manner and see the fruits of our advocacy, outreach, and philanthropy was heartening for all in attendance.

Our web site now features a wonderful piece by our videographer, Scott Bruffey. It captures the sense of celebration and camaraderie that highlighted our time together, and I encourage you to take a few moments to look it over. You'll also notice differences in the Fellows Directory that should make it easier to locate each member if you need to do so and easier for us to make changes to your information as necessary. By spring you'll be able to register for the weekend and pay on line. Soon, you'll also be able to donate online as you are able and inclined to do so. You will also find the most recent Financial Report in the Members Only section. It seems prudent to begin putting it there—where all members can access it—rather than in the public section. As in not-for-profit theatre, our price of admission pays only for the first act in terms of our annual operating costs. Fortunately, the generosity of the fellowship has put us on solid

financial footing for the present time. I encourage us all to continue to be generous when we are in a position to be so.

Because we were incorporated in California, it has always seemed logical that our Corporate Secretary be a California resident, and Jim Volz has served in that capacity for a number of years. Because he has retired from full-time teaching and relocated to Utah, it is time for another Fellow from California to assume this duty. A brief overview of the responsibilities appears below the minutes of the business meeting. Please let me know if you would like to serve in this way.

I wish you all continued success and joy throughout the year.

Dan Carter, Dean



Members of the Aspire Leadership Program pose with some Fellows in front of the commemorative board provided by KCACTF

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**Mark Your Calendars Now.
The Fellows Weekend
April 10-12, 2020**

Seven New Fellows Inducted



Julia Curtis, citation by Robert A. Schanke

Dr. Julia Curtis received her BA from the Oberlin College, her MA from Stanford University, and her Ph.D. from Indiana University with Fellow Hubert Heffner as her advisor. Following nine years teaching at Indiana State in Terre Haute, she joined the faculty of the University of Nebraska at Omaha where she remained for 25 years until retirement in 1999. As proof of her reputation and standing at the university, she was elected to serve as President of the Faculty Senate for two years.

Soon after joining the faculty at Omaha, she became active in Region 6 of the five-year-old ACTF. She was an adjudicator for several years and went on to become the chair of the region for two years. Her production of *Tartuffe* was selected for production in the regional festival. But her interest and energy were not limited to the regional level. She served on the National Committee of KCACTF 1985-86, and she sat on the Michael Kanin Playwrights Award Committee. For her "strong commitment to the values and goals of KCACTF and to excellence in educational theatre," in 1986 she received the prestigious KCACTF Gold Medallion which is "considered one of the great honors in theatre education."

Dr. Curtis was extremely active in major theatre organizations. She served on the Board, became Vice-President, and eventually President of the Women's Theatre Program of American Theatre Association. She served on the board of the National Theatre Conference and was its Treasurer.

In 1979, along with current Fellows Tice Miller, Rose Bank, Ron Engle, Felicia Londré, and Robert Schanke, she became one of the founders of the Mid-American Theatre Conference and served as

the conference planner for the first annual convention which was held in Omaha. When the organization was experiencing financial problems in the late 1980s, she volunteered to single-handedly host another convention in Omaha. She often presented papers at the Theatre History Symposium of MATC. In 1981, the organization decided to establish *Theatre History Studies*, an annual journal, and Dr. Curtis was selected to serve on its editorial board, where she remained for 20 years. In gratitude for her extraordinary service to the organization, she became a Fellow of MATC in 1999, joining other MATC Fellows—Tice Miller, Rose Bank, Cheryl Black, Ron Engle, Weldon Durham, Burnet Hobgood, Billy Harbin, Jed Davis, and Robert Schanke—who are also Fellows of our College of Fellows of the American Theatre.

It is with great pleasure that I present Julia Curtis to the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.

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James Fisher, citation by Felicia Londré

James Fisher's accomplishments as scholar, academic administrator, teacher, and stage director can scarcely be conveyed in a summary of high points. The quantity and quality of his publications and artistic work are all the more amazing in that he achieved so much while chairing theatre departments for a total of twenty years at two universities.

As head of Theatre at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro from 2007 to 2014, Jim Fisher faced financial challenges and changes in higher administration yet boosted his faculty's morale. He fostered a relationship with Triad Stage, directed full productions, and continued teaching an impressive range of courses. With the 2017 Mary

Settle Sharpe Award for Teaching Excellence, his university held a major love-fest for him. The respect Jim has earned on his campus comes clear in Fellow Cheryl Black's seconding letter: "There is a profound social and communal dimension to all of Jim's work. His compassion, his generosity, his concern for social justice, and his love for humanity permeate all he does." Besides his many teaching awards, Jim received Alpha Psi Omega's Distinguished Service Award for two decades of "selfless service."

Jim Fisher's scholarship is prodigious and first-rate. Besides an endless list of articles and book reviews, he has nineteen published books and three more in progress, plus having edited six volumes of the *Puppetry Yearbook*. Four of his books are on Tony Kushner, for whose work Jim was an early champion. As chair of theatre at Wabash College, Jim finessed the situation when he directed *Angels in America, Part I* in 1996 and alumni threatened to withdraw financial support. He seized the opportunity for dialogue among alums, administrators, and students, then went ahead with the production. It got statewide press coverage and record-setting attendance. No funding was withdrawn. In 1997 Jim Fisher was named Indiana Theatre Person of the Year.

In his seconding letter, Fellows Dean Dan Carter regards Jim Fisher "first and foremost as 'a man of the theatre'." They worked together in 1977 when Jim was resident director of the West Side Theatre in Knoxville. Dan credits Jim's "craft in the rehearsal hall" as well as how "smart and knowledgeable," "savvy and discerning" he was. My own words for Jim come from the perspective of a co-author and contributor to two of his edited books: knowledgeable, organized, thorough, diplomatic, and above all, generous.

It is with great pleasure that I present James Fisher to the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.

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Ed Herendeen, citation by David Leong

In 1991 Ed Herendeen was hired as a consultant to ascertain the feasibility of creating a Shakespeare festival for the State of West Virginia. He quickly pointed out that one of the best Shakespeare theatres in the nation was just down the road in Washington DC. "What the world needs is a festival dedicated to the development of new American works: a theatre focused not on the past but on the future; one that nurtures new talent and gives voice to the diverse experiences that shape this nation." He was hired on the spot, and his vision is the Contemporary American Theatre Festival cited by the *New York Times* as one of the "50 essential summer festivals in the nation."

In 2010, Senator Jay Rockefeller read a statement into the official record of the United States Congress. "Mr. President, today I congratulate and commend the Contemporary American Theater Festival. The annual event brings people from more than 35 States to West Virginia to enjoy theater, immerse themselves in our community, and explore our beautiful natural surroundings. And as the crowds fill our theaters, restaurants, shops, and hotels, their support creates employment and boosts local businesses."

CATF—hosted on the campus of Shepherd University—has produced 127 new plays and has gained a reputation as one of America's most important producers of new work. For CATF, Ed has directed such notable new works as *Miss Golden Dreams: A Play Cycle* by Joyce Carol Oates and *Compleat Female Stage Beauty* by Jeffrey Hatcher (which was later produced as the film *Stage Beauty*). His other professional work has

been seen at Williamstown Theater Festival, Milwaukee Repertory Theater and the Walnut Street Theatre.

Ed Herendeen is a recipient of the College of Fine Arts Distinguished Alumni Award from Ohio University. He served on the Admissions Committee for New Dramatists and as a panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts. From 2011-2017, he served on the board of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national service organization for American theaters.

It is with great pride that I present producer, director, and teaching artist Ed Herendeen to the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.

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Bobbi Owen, citation by William Ivey Long

Bobbi Owen has spent her career at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where she has been on the faculty in the Department of Dramatic Art since 1974 and is currently the Michael R. McVaugh Distinguished Professor of Dramatic Art. She teaches courses in both Western and non-Western Costume History as well as in design. She has been resident costume designer for PlayMakers Repertory Company since it was founded in 1977 except for the ten-year period from 2004 to 2014 when she served as the Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education in the College of Arts and Sciences.

She has designed more than 50 productions for PlayMakers Repertory Company and has also designed for the Indiana Repertory Theatre, the American Place and WestBeth theatres in New

York, the Alcazar Theatre in San Francisco, and the North Carolina Shakespeare Festival.

Bobbi Owen has a well-deserved reputation for being thoughtful and thorough in everything she does. Costume design is all about details, and she represents the “gold standard” against which details are measured. The same exhaustive research process she brings to design is also evident in her extensive writing. She has published eight books and monographs, a body of work that documents the careers and lives of theatrical designers from the end of the 19th century through the beginning of the 21st Century. She has published numerous articles and essays in principal theatre/design publications, such as *TD&T: Theatre Design and Technology*, entries in the *Cambridge Guide to American Theatre*, and in *American National Biography*. She edited *Late & Great: American Designers 1860-2010* and co-authored *Design USA* (the Exhibition Catalog for the 2007 United States entry in the Prague Quadrennial). She has written books on costume, lighting, and scenic design, among them *The Designs of Willa Kim*. Her most recent book, *The Designs of William Ivey Long*, was published in 2018.

It is with pleasure that I present this accomplished author, designer, and teacher, who is held in high esteem by students and colleagues alike, to the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.

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Scot M. Reese, citation by Kim Peter Kovac

Director, Actor, Singer, Educator, and Activist Scot M. Reese is arguably the beating heart of the School of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies at the University of Maryland at College Park where he has taught for twenty-five years and is presently a full professor and Head of the Performance Area.

Scot has directed over fifty plays and musicals at the Kennedy Center, University of Maryland, Round House Theatre, Olney Theatre Center, Woolly Mammoth, African Continuum Theatre Company, L.A. Theatre Works, and others. He has been a major architect for five years of the annual Black Theatre and Dance Symposium, conducted countless workshops and conference presentations, received multiple faculty honors, and taught a gazillion students. In 2016, he was one of the prime movers and brought the University of Maryland into the Kennedy Center's New Visions/New Voices groundbreaking International Playwrights Intensive, a 7-organization 4-country project that helped develop nine plays for young audiences from South Africa, India, and Korea.

However, the story of who Scot Reese is is much more than a recitation of his CV – it's a direct reflection of his origin story. In 1959, a white couple named Betty and Jim Reese, in the all-white town of Wilmington, Illinois, 60 miles south of Chicago, population 2,650, adopted Scot, the second of 4 adopted children—two black and two white. At the time, transracial adoptions were illegal in most states, but they somehow pulled it off. When Betty tragically died young, Jim suddenly became a single dad of an interracial family with four kids under 12, raising them by himself at the height of the civil rights movement.

So, it's not really a surprise that Scot brings so much empathy, humor, grace, and passion to everything he undertakes, and it's not a surprise that he is a much-loved and respected teacher and mentor with networks of former students all over the country.

I am proud to consider him my friend, and it is my great pleasure and honor to present Scot M. Reese for induction into the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.

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Randy Reinholz, citation by Dan Carter

Artist, educator, administrator, Randy Reinholz is most widely known for his signature creation, Native Voices, the country's only Equity theatre company dedicated to developing and producing new works by Native American, First Nations, Alaska Native, and Hawaiian Native playwrights and championing Native theatre artists. During its first quarter century, this unique organization, which Randy conceived and—along with his wife and partner Jean Bruce Scott—brought to life and nurtured, has produced thirty-four productions, including twenty-one world premieres, thirteen playwrights' retreats, twenty national and international tours, fifteen radio plays, twenty-three new play festivals, and six short play festivals. In addition to its core work with playwrights, Native Voices has assisted in the development and career launch of many Native actors and directors.

During three decades in higher education, Randy has established himself as a leader in the fields of actor training and university administration and is a highly sought-after panelist and presenter. The first phase of his career was as an actor, where he performed on stage at the Old Globe, Court Theatre, Illinois Shakespeare Festival, Hanger Theatre, and Pennsylvania Centre Stage and on screen in film and television, where he appeared as guest star or series regular on all three major networks. After pursuing graduate study, he sought a home in academia, establishing himself as an inspiring teacher at Duke, Illinois State, and San Diego State, where he also served as the School of Theatre, Television and Film's Director and later as the university's Director of Community Engagement and Innovation.

He is also a prolific director and in recent years has established himself as a playwright of note,

achieving early success with his play *Off the Rails*, which premiered at Oregon Shakespeare Festival. The play was inspired by Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and addresses the troubling historical issue of Federal Indian Schools.

Randy has directed productions and play readings at Perseverance Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, Alaska Native Heritage Center, Mark Taper Forum, Atrium National Center, Wells Fargo Theatre, Montana Repertory Theatre, Alaska Native Heritage Center, Last Frontier Theatre Conference, Red Path Theatre, Native Earth Performing Arts, American Indian Community House, and the Kennedy Center.

It is my privilege and pleasure to present Randy Reinholz for induction to the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.

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Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei citation by Kim Marra

Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei is regarded, both nationally and internationally, as a founding figure in the field of contemporary Japanese theatre research and performance.

After studying with Fellow Leonard Pronko at Pomona College, Carol went on to an MA in Dramatic Art: Playwriting and then a PhD in Dramatic Art at the University of California Santa Barbara where she completed a dissertation entitled "Shuji Terayama: Avant Garde Dramatist of Japan" (1978), the first major study in English of this "enfant terrible" of Japanese theatre. Along the way, she wrote *Medea: A Noh Cycle Based on the Greek Myth* (1975), which incorporated a series of five Noh plays into five acts. She also directed this play, making effective use of both Noh and Kabuki techniques, and won an award from the American

College Theatre Festival. Published by Samuel French, the play is still performed today.

Carol joined the faculty at UCLA in 1980 where she built her long and influential career as a scholar-practitioner. She has written a dozen more plays exploring the possibilities of "fusion theatre" combining several different cultures and traditions. Most recently, *Ghost Light: The Haunting* played Off-Broadway in 2015. Carol's many scholarly articles and essays illuminate such topics as fusion theatre's challenges to cultural imperialism and the tensions between political imperatives and artistic freedom. Her book *Unspeakable Acts* (2005) is structured with several chapters placing Terayama's work in multiple historical and cultural contexts that then frame our readings of her included translations of three of his plays and excerpts of his dramatic theory. This multi-layered analytical approach and global vision also characterize *Theatre Histories: An Introduction*, first published in 2006, which Carol co-authored with Bruce McConachie, Gary Jay Williams, and Phillip Zarilli, and for the third (2016) edition with Tobin Nellhaus. *Theatre Histories* has become a leading text in our field, influencing generations of students.

Carol has been involved with the Association for Asian Performance since the organization's inception as an officer and editor. In addition, she has served on numerous review committees for the American Society for Theatre Research and KCACTF. No less in service than in scholarship, creative work, and teaching, Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei has instrumentally shaped global theatre studies.

It is my pleasure to present Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei for induction to the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.

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Ed Herendeen signs the Membership Book

Class of 2020

Five new Fellows were approved by the board at its most recent meeting,

Dorothy Chansky

John MacKenzie Clum

Naomi Iizuka

Rhona Justice-Malloy

Risa Brainen

Risa is unable to attend in 2020 due to a directing conflict and will be invested in 2021.

The class of 2020 will also include three new Fellows who were unable to attend in the year of their election:

Benny Sato Ambush

Lee Breuer

Molly Smith

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Advocacy & Awards



2018 Arts Impact Award winner Alex Tolle reports to the Fellowship on her experience at the National Arts Action Summit.

Kelly Quinnett, professor and head of acting at the University of Idaho, received the **Uta Hagen Award** presented by the College in association with KCACTF and Uta Hagen Studios as part of the centenary celebration of the iconic actor and teacher.



Jacob Santos, one of two recipients of the **John Cauble Award** is currently a Fellow at Newman's Own Foundation and Managing Director Fellow at Westport Country Playhouse. Also receiving the award was **Isabella O'Keeffe**, of the College of the Sequoias

Shanel Smith, of North Carolina A&T State University, received the **Arts Impact Award**.

LaShondra Hood, of the University of Louisville, received the **Jane Alexander Emerging Artist Award**.



Minutes of the General Business Meeting

Kennedy Center Terrace
Sunday, April 21, 2019
10:00-11:00 a.m.

Present: Dan Carter, Kim Marra, Cheryl Black, Bill Doane, Katie Robinson, Frank Hildy, Bob Schanke, Henry Bial, Scott Parker, Karen Berman, Michael Dinwiddie. Gail Humphries Mardirosian, Cindy Melby Phaneuf, Michael Hood, Bobbi Owen, Sandra Shannon, Ethel Pitts Walker, Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei, Kim Peter Kovac, Felicia Londré, Milly Barranger

Regrets: Leonard Pronko, Jean Korf, Gil Lazier, Winona Fletcher, Diane Rodriguez, Beverly Byers-Pevitts, Bob Benedetti, Rex McGraw, Julie Jensen, and Jim O'Connor

Dean Dan Carter called meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

Benny Sato Ambush and Lee Breuer were slated for induction, but could not participate.

2018 Minutes: approval moved by Scott Parker, Cheryl Black seconded – approved by acclamation

Dean Carter extended thanks to Karen Berman as Immediate Past Dean and noted that our relationship with KC ACTF is much improved over the terms of the last two Deans – thank you.

Thanks to Gregg Henry for his support and that of the entire staff at KCACTF.

Bonnie and Karen Report: Uta Hagen Award – going into 2020 which is the anniversary of Suffrage. HB Studio is celebrating the centennial of Uta Hagen. Recipient should be actor-teacher in style of Uta. Karen thanked Katie Robinson for helping with the selection process. Eight women nominated with huge dossiers, letters. Committee members all picked the same person. Offered scholarship to Uta Hagen Theatre Lab. Karen funded expenses of Hagen winner related to NYC residency. Bonnie talked about Fellows at presentation, Mark Nelson announced winner who came up with *Respect for Acting* in hand. Dan handed the award to Kelly Quinnett who gave a beautiful speech. Three generations of the Hagen family were in attendance. Bonnie: each time we mentor, it brings us together.

Dan gave a financial update – report can't be completed until statements from meeting weekend are accounted for. Sizeable donations from Thomas Schumacher and Charlene Gordon have made these awards possible. However, we have an operating shortfall every year for KC, Cosmos Club. Look in Gazette for ways you can donate. A little money goes a long way. Also look for ways you can get involved.

Orlin Corey Toast – reminds us we are an honorary society with membership for life. But last two years we have moved toward advocacy. Dan read anecdote re: In 1905, William James declined membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters in New York City citing his “life-long practice of not letting my name figure where there is not some definite work doing in which I am willing to bear a share.” This was an appeal to advocacy to pay it forward for next generation.

Gail Humphries Mardirosian thanked Bob Schanke for calling her to this advocacy work. She introduced Alex Tolle to speak to us as the winner of Arts Advocacy Award. Alex talked about attending the National Arts Action Summit and how inspiring it was to encounter people there from all different arts, including Brian Stokes Mitchell who sang. She got to walk with him through the Capitol. Then she returned to Everyman Theatre to begin her position. She learned so much at the Summit re: tax law reform to help arts. She emphasized the importance of sharing personal stories about how the impact of the arts. “Speak from the heart, and people will remember,” she said.

Dan quoted William James: “Act as though what you do makes a difference; it does.” We need an Archivist and a Finance Committee. We are always looking for the next editor of the Fellows Gazette.

Members of this year's Inspire Arts Leadership Program will join us for lunch

Dan stated the board's interpretation of bylaws as intending to have Secretary and Treasurer in addition to six board members in order to increase participation and presented the Slate for Board for next year: Gail Humphries Mardirosian as Dean; David Leong and Cheryl Black as Board Members for another term; two one-year replacements, Henry Bial and Kathy Ervin; one two-year replacement, Cindy Phaneuf. Moved by Michael Hood, seconded by Kim Peter Kovac. Approved by acclamation.

Dan suggested that New Fellow nominations be done on line. Also, sometimes the nomination

packet does not fully represent why the nominee is truly special. Therefore, the nominator should prepare the formal citation as part of the nomination package. It can be updated later if needed. The nominator can also include a personal statement.

Regarding member contact information: On the annual RSVP card for the meeting, include our addresses only if they change. All of us should go into Members Only (password protected: contact Dan if you need it) and make sure our contact info is correct.

There was no old business.

Floor open for new business.

10:00 meeting time for Business Meeting. We also decided to try the Stevens Address as part of the Investiture Lunch. We are always flexible if this doesn't work. When we go in, eat salads, introductions. Then the Stevens Address, then lunch and dessert.

Eight students from Aspire Leadership Program will be with us for lunch.

During break between lunch and panel, we will gather in front of wall—Board members, former deans—for photo

Michael Hood motioned to adjourn, Bill Doan seconded. Meeting adjourned at 10:32 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted
Kim Marra, Secretary

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Corporate Secretary Brief Overview:

The key role of the Corporate Secretary is to file the annual 990N Postcard with the IRS in an online process that includes communicating data from the College of Fellows Annual Financial Report. Since the organization was originally filed in California, it has been recommended that the report be filed by a California resident. Typically, the one-page report, is filed each August, following the release of the College of Fellow Financial Report.



2020 Roger L. Stevens Address

**How Do You Fill the Gap?
By David Leong**



Fellow David Leong

It's July 24th, 2014, I'm in upstate New York - and it's my first day in prison.

Scattered all around me are a group of inmates that

look like they're about to start a riot! And, right in front of me stands Tafari - 6'4" and built like a heavyweight boxer - and Dee, a head shorter but bulked up with muscles out top of his muscles.

All of a sudden – bam - they lunge and start punching away at each other! The rest of the inmates start screaming - but instead of spreading out to get away, they move in closer, trapping me and I'm stuck right in the middle of this mayhem.

Well, the fact of the matter was, I was *stuck* in more ways than one. I'd reached the point in my life where I was asking myself "Is this *it*? Is this what my life has become? Maybe it's time I start thinking about retirement."

OK. I know what you're probably thinking: how can you retire from prison? I promise I'll get back to that. But first, let's have a show of hands. How many of you are retired? And those of you that aren't, how many of you have given it some thought? Right. Then you know what I was feeling - all of a sudden life seemed kind of...uncertain.

So, right before I went to prison, I started asking

myself the questions we all ask ourselves when we reach “that age.” You know the ones. Will I have enough money? What about health care? Should we downsize to a smaller house? Where should we live?

The search for those answers is what I’d like to talk about today. And, strangely enough, it’s also what put me in prison in the first place.

But, before that, in the spirit of full disclosure, I am not now - nor have I ever been - an inmate. I choreographed that fight for a production of *Macbeth*, performed by inmates at the Woodbourne Correctional Facility in upstate New York as part of “Rehabilitation Through the Arts,” a program designed to teach inmates the life skills they need on the outside once they’re released. You see, I’m a fight master.

I don’t know about you, but if you’re like me, you do a little research before quitting your job. So, I started looking everywhere for some answers to the question how do you prepare for retirement? I asked my wife who had just retired, I asked my friends, I read a lot of books and of course, searched the internet.

The information was helpful but it didn’t really give me the answers I was looking for. What I didn’t know then was that I didn’t really know the right questions to ask.

And then one day, I was in the office of my financial advisor talking about how to stretch my pension savings. Sound familiar? As I started to leave he says “David, so what are you going to do when you retire? And, I’m not talking about your portfolio, but, when you stop doing what you’re doing, how will you fill the gap?”

When I stop doing what I’m doing, how will I fill the gap?

And, that’s when it hit me: Being in the arts isn’t just what we do for a living. Making a living in the arts isn’t just a way to earn a paycheck. Being an artist is a part of who I am. It’s a part of all of us, isn’t it?

Everyone in this room has already grappled with or will have to grapple with these same questions sooner or later. When you stop doing what you’re doing, how will you fill the gap? Is that even possible? Many of us are defined by our careers, right? I know mine was. David Leong, the fight guy,

or David Leong, the Chair of Theatre.

I worked hard to build a career and I’m proud of that. But, I don’t know about you but I never liked being solely defined by my job. However, the challenge is, if we’re not defined by our job, then who are we? Sometimes, we’re so busy building a career that we forget why we do what we do. And, if we forget, then how do we fill the gap when we retire?

To answer these questions for myself I had to dig much deeper into why I choose my career in the first place.

Okay now, when people learn that I’m a fight master they always want to know three things. 1. What’s a fight master? 2. Do you know martial arts and, 3. Am I Bruce Lee? I swear that I’m asked that question at least 50 times a year!

The answer to the first question “what’s a fight master?” Well, when you were a kid, did you ever pretend you were Batman, or Roy Rogers, or, maybe Wonder Woman? Well, in the theatre and for the movies, someone has choreographed those fights. And, that person is a fight master.

Does anyone remember the Walt Disney TV show Zorro starting Guy Williams? Every Thursday night in the late 1950’s I’d grab my plastic sword, don my cape and mask, turn up the volume on our black and white Zenith TV, and buckle my swash all over the house. My hero was Zorro - and I still have the costume to prove it. I was going to wear it today but if I did, my wife said she’d stay home. I guess that was the beginning of my stage combat career.

And, the other questions? Okay, I get it...when people see me - a small Asian man - and learn that I choreograph fights, well, no matter what I say, I can’t win!

Do I know martial arts? Yes, I do. And, are you Bruce Lee? Are you Bruce Lee? Please tell me that you’re Bruce Lee?

No, I’m not Bruce Lee. Don’t you know that Bruce Lee died over 40 years ago. My name is not Bruce Lee. It’s Jackie Chan.

The truth is, it’s quite an honor to be confused with Bruce and Jackie - but they choreographed Asian martial arts for film and I stage American and European fights for the theatre...you know, sword fights, gun-fights, comedy fights, even domestic

violence and sexual assault.

So, in June of 2014, my good friend Gary Sloan told me he was volunteering at the Woodbourne Correctional Facility in upstate New York. He was teaching acting and directing *Macbeth*.

“Wow, that sounds really cool Gary! Can I choreograph the fights? I’ll do it for free.”

He looked at me and said “We’ll, the price is right - and I’d love to have you!”

Okay, let’s see a show of hands if either you or someone you know has worked with inmates in prison. Yes, it’s great way to give back, isn’t it?

Well, I was so excited about this project that I forgot to think about the reality of what I had just volunteered to do. I didn’t volunteer to teach poetry or painting. I volunteered to go to prison – to start some fights. What the hell had I gotten myself into?

So, let’s go to the Woodbourne Correctional Facility. It’s my first day as a “guest of the state.”

After passing through 5 sets of jail bars the guards whisk me into a large, low-ceilinged room – and standing right in front of me is the cast of *Macbeth*. Nineteen inmates, all glaring at me dressed in dark green jumpsuits with *name tags* – Tafari, Dee, Ya Prince, Kozo, Bey, *Angel*...and a bunch of others.

With names like that, I’m beginning to think the name “David” may not cut it and I start wishing that my name tag said “*Zorro*.”

And then my good friend Gary Sloan, the director of the play steps into the center of the room: “Alright guys, I’ve told you that David is here to choreograph the fights for *Macbeth*. He’s one of only 16 Fight Masters in the U.S. and his sword fight teacher was the man who choreographed and doubled for Errol Flynn. He’s done over 20 Broadway shows and coached some big stars like Sam Rockwell, Don Cheadle, and Woody Harrelson. He’s even worked with Sigourney Weaver on *Aliens*. So, before we begin, you guys have any questions?”

And Tafari stands up, walks up to me, stops about 12 inches from my face, looks down at me - *way* down - and says:

“Okay, so we know all about your *fake* fights with

movie stars – but, have you ever been in a *real* fight?”

I can assure you that at that very moment, I was not thinking about my retirement.

“Have I ever been in a real fight?” My God... These guys are criminals. What can I say to impress them? Nothing but the truth.

So, I look him right in the eyes and say, “OK, I’m ashamed to admit it - but when I was growing up I used to fight my father every time he went after my mother. Had to do it for years. So, yeah - I’ve been in a lot of fights. More than I want to remember.”

After a long moment, he looks at me and says “Alright, so, when do we get to fight, Bruce Lee?”

From that point on, we were all cool. Actually, from the second I entered the classroom, I could feel the vibe. I could read their body language and I knew who was in charge - and it wasn’t me. But...that was fine. Tafari didn’t care about my stage cred. He was looking for my *street* cred.

The truth is when you grow up with domestic violence you very quickly learn to gauge the temperature of the room. The ability to read the room and build a bridge between people is a skill that I had to master to survive my family upbringing. For most of my life, I was ashamed of my childhood and never talked about it. But, on that day in prison, when I stood challenged in front of 19 inmates, I knew that the only way I could gain their trust was to build a bridge between them and me.

That very thing- the ability to build a bridge between people is what drew me to the theater in the first place. It also saved my life.

And, ironically, it would help me answer the questions “Who am I and how do I fill the gap?”

You know how a major life event can flash right through your mind in just a fleeting moment? And, if you take the time to write it down or tell it to someone, it would take an hour right? Well, at that moment when I telling the inmates my childhood story, I flashed right back to 1982.

I was a young college professor at Northern Kentucky University directing a play called *Extremities* about a woman who defends herself

from a man who breaks into her home and tries to rape her.

As it happens, at the same time I was in rehearsal, I'd started seeing a therapist for PTSD about all the stuff I dealt with when I was growing up. A lifetime of hiding the truth of my childhood had taken its toll and I'd finally reached out for help.

After a few sessions together, my therapist Dr. Ann Wierwille, said "David, I have an idea. I don't normally make a habit of seeing my patients outside the office but I want to come watch you work."

"Ah, hmm, are you *sure* you want to do that?" (Pause) So, two days later, she came to the theatre and watched me work with my actors as I staged the brutal sexual assault.

Now, it's important to note here that, like all of you, actors have their own comfort zones, their own boundaries. Some actors are comfortable with the athleticism needed to perform a fight scene, others are fearful. Some are comfortable with the physicality needed to communicate intimacy – or, in this instance, a sexual assault - others are timid and more vulnerable.

Immediately, after the rehearsal, out of the corner of my eye I can see my therapist walking toward me *deep* in thought and I'm thinking "Oh, shit. She's gonna tell me I'm *really* messed up and if I want to continue my therapy, she's gonna double my fee."

And, then she says "I thought I was just going to watch you choreograph fights - but I wasn't expecting to see what you did *before* that. You did all those exercises to make them feel emotionally and physically safe before you even started to choreograph. And, more than anything else, you made it look so real! You don't choreograph fights, David. You choreograph trust." And then with a smile, she says "We have a lot to talk about. See you Monday."

That was a "eureka moment" for me. We all have eureka moments in our lives but sometimes we're too busy to recognize them. You know what I'm talking about...sometimes months or years go by before the light bulb goes off!

With her help, I eventually realized what actually compelled me to work in the theatre. It's not the

choreography of violence but the protection *from* violence...much like what that 8 year-old Zorro was trying to do for his family. And *that* is what informs my work in the theatre. That's my underlying reason why I do what I do. And that's how I can fill the gap.

So, to close this story out, let me take you back one more time to prison.

As you may know, the entire last act of *Macbeth* takes place on the battlefield and it ends with Macbeth and Macduff fighting to the death. The only problem was, as soon as we started to rehearse, the prison guards told me that "No physical contact between inmates is allowed. Ever!"

"Excuse me?"

They told me that even *casual* physical contact could mask suspicious behavior...like delivering contraband or perhaps passing off a shiv which is a self-made knife or razor.

"Handshakes *are* allowed, yes. But anything else, boom! They're marched into solitary, no questions asked. You understand, Bruce Lee!"

How do you choreograph fights if they can't touch each other? What could I do – have Macbeth and Macduff *handshake* each other into submission?

But after explaining the challenge this understandable guideline presented, we got "special permission" to, thankfully, do more than handshakes. But...no swords of any kind. Not even little plastic Zorro swords!

I was stuck, I didn't have a clue! So I ended up doing something that was virtually alien to the prison culture: I listened to them. I asked questions. I asked for their opinions and I incorporated their ideas.

"Guys, we got a problem, we can't use theatrical swords. You see, they're made of steel. The edges are dull and the points are blunt, but we still can't use them."

The inmates jump right into the discussion and say "How about we use *rubber* swords? Or, *cardboard*. What about *cardboard* swords?"

These guys were really invested in this! On the outside, I'm amazed and excited. I was proud. They

were collaborators. But, on the inside, I'm about to bust a gut cause it's hard to keep a straight face when hardened criminals suggest they fight with rubber swords.

So, this is how we fought without real theatrical weapons. Everyone – from where you're sitting – hold your right arm like this.

Good. That is your sword. Now, hold your left arm like this.

OK. That is your shield. Now, everyone, do and repeat after me.

“CUT. PARRY. CUT. PARRY. THRUST.”

See? Because they used their arms as weapons, the fights still looked rough and tough and it gave them a sense of really fighting with each other.

Alright! So...it's Opening Night – actually Opening Afternoon - of *Macbeth*. It's a full house – made up of administrators, personnel from Rehabilitation Through the Arts, prison officials and inmates - quite literally a captive audience!

Anyway, it's the end of the play and Macduff, seeking revenge for the massacre of his family, confronts Macbeth. It's a classic battle of good vs. evil.

Macbeth and Macduff exchange a few blows, back and forth. Then Tafari as Macbeth (and, of course, you just knew Tafari was going to play the title role, didn't you?) gets ready for the kill. Looking at the short, stocky, muscular Dee he booms out "Lay on Macduff. And damned be him that cries hold enough!"

And then...they go for it. I mean *really* go for it!

Now, in rehearsal – after they'd learned to trust each other, after they'd mastered the choreography, and after they'd learned how to not really kill each other while fake fighting, we kept having to say "Slow down, slow down...hold back a little! Someone's gonna get hurt." And they'd reluctantly pull back.

But if we thought they were going fast in rehearsal, that was nothing compared to the bright lights of Opening Afternoon! Now the guys have an audience – and their adrenaline kicks in! Tafari and Dee start going fast... I mean *really* fast. The faster they move, the happier they are. And the happier they

are, the wilder they get! They are so wild at times they forget the choreography!

They keep blanking out but somehow, they always find their way back to the choreography they'd practiced for weeks. They're in it one minute and out of it the next. In, out, in, out and until finally - thank God, the choreography stops - But they don't.

Now, they begin to improvise! But here's the thing – Tafari and Dee are so in the moment, so focused, and they trust each other so completely, that in those moments they are like great jazz musicians, anticipating each other, supporting each other, building the fight together through eye contact and silently communicating to each other what their next move was.

I'm watching this with both fascination and horrified pride. Finally, stocky little Macduff picks up giant Macbeth...and throws him off the stage!

Yup! Dee picks Tafari up and literally tosses him off the stage!

There is a gasp from the audience then silence as everyone stares at Tafari lying in a motionless, heap on the floor in front of the stage. And in that stunned silence I'm thinking "Well Dee *just killed* Tafari in a fight I choreographed. They'll convict me of manslaughter and I'll never leave here."

But, suddenly...Tafari pops up - in one piece - and runs up the aisle happy as a lark! The audience goes berserk – clapping, yelling, standing up, stomping feet, whistling...the most satisfying ovation I've ever been a part on Broadway or beyond!

It was...magical - one of the best moments of my career – and not just because I made it out of prison alive!

You know, not too long after "Opening afternoon", the guys sent some of their thoughts about working on *Macbeth* and I'd like to share a couple of them with you.

"I learned how to be flexible." This from a man whose life lessons had taught him "Stand your ground. Never give an inch." Another said "I learned how not get caught up in selfish issues." That's quite different from "Look out for number one" isn't it?

And then there was this one. "I learned what it's like to step outside myself to benefit the group."

Hear that? Empathy. Empathy from prison.

Now, make no mistake. These were men who were living in a place that some of them would never leave. But for a brief moment, they worked together to move beyond the circumstances of their lives and, through vulnerability, emotional honesty, and trust, they learned to “walk in one another’s shoes.”

Isn’t that ultimately, the value in what we do?

So, that was the “eureka moment” I walked away with from my time in prison. And, that’s is how I’m going to fill the gap. I’m not talking about working in prisons, although that would be a worthy thing to do. What I learned from the inmates at the Woodbourne Correctional Facility will remain with me for the rest of my life...because they helped me figure out the next chapter.

You see, I’m now Certified in Conflict resolution and Mediation so that I can use my skills of looking and listening, perception, and building trust and safety. In fact, my wife Patti and I both earned our certification in conflict resolution and mediation and now, instead of *only* getting paid to start fights, I get paid to stop them as well! I guess that’s one way of guaranteeing that I’m never out of work!

Yes, I’m still going to choreograph fights. In fact, later on this year, they’ll be seen in Porgy and Bess at the New York Metropolitan Opera and this winter I’ll choreograph the fights for a world premier of Peter Pan at the Shakespeare Theatre in Washington, DC. But now I’ve found a way to enrich my life both inside and outside the theatre.

I’m not sure where all this is going to take me so I’ll end with this.

You know, it’s not news to say we’re living in such contentious times – we all know it, we all experience it in our daily lives, this continual, hostility we see on the streets, in the news and on the internet, everywhere. It’s infecting all walks of our life. Friends turn against friends, families split over politics. Our differences are pronounced. The need for resolution and mediation, for finding some way to bridge the widening gaps that separate us are more essential now than perhaps any other time in our recent history. And we need empathy and trust more than ever.

Today is Sunday, April 21st and in 12 days I’m retiring. Twelve days. After forty-three years in

higher education and professional theatre I’m about to start a new chapter in my life. Wow.

Mark Twain said “The two most important days of your life are the day you were born and the day you find out why.”

I think I may have discovered an answer to the last part of his quote. I hope so – and I hope by sharing my journey with you today that you have taken one of your own.

So, whatever your profession, what’s your life’s journey? And, more importantly what underlying need brought you to your profession - and, can you use it to fill the gap?

Maybe you’re living it already...or, maybe, you’re as clueless as I was in the middle of those inmates.

Whatever it is, I hope you don’t have to go to prison to find it. Thank you.

* * * *

News of the Fellows

Kathleen Conlin successfully completed her two-year position as Frank B. Weeks Visiting Professor and Department Chair at Wesleyan University in Connecticut. This summer she directs *The Price* for the Utah Shakespeare Festival.

Rosemarie Bank presented the following papers: *Knowing Differently: Reexamining the Connections between Conquest and Performance* (MATC 2016), *When is an Artefact not a Fact of Art?* (IFTR Historiography Group, 2016), *Cultural Work: Identifying the 'American' in American Theatre before 1900* (ATHE 2016), *Tangled Webs: Theatre History in the Borderlands* (MATC 2018), *Revolting: Moses Kimball and the Boston Museum Perform American History* (ATHE, 2018), and *Archiving 'Others': Seventeenth-Century English Thoughts about America during the Commonwealth* (IFTR Historiography Group Berlin Meeting, 2019). She published the following: *Ethics and Bias: Historiography and Anti-Theatrical Prejudice in Nineteenth-Century America* in *Theatre History and Historiography: Ethics, Evidence, and Truth*, eds. Cochrane and Robinson, Palgrave 2016; *A-foot in Time: Temporality in the Space of a Moment in Theatre History* (Bloomsbury Companion to Theatre History and Historiography, eds. Cochrane and Robinson, Bloomsbury, 2019). She continues to work on her book Staging The 'Native'.

David Leong's book *Real-World Public Speaking: Great Presentations as Theatre* will be released as an ebook on Amazon beginning mid-August. The book helps turn every speech into a winning presentation by describing how theatre artists grab the attention of, inspire and influence an audience.

He serves as fight choreographer for *Porgy and Bess*, for the New York Metropolitan Opera, which opens on September 23rd, and the next day his talk *How to Stop Conflict Before It Even Starts* will be seen at this year's Broadway TedX.

<https://www.tedxroadway.com/2019>

In late October, he collaborates on a new adaptation of *Peter Pan* at the Shakespeare Theatre in DC opening in early December.

Bob Benedetti has completed the fourth season of his Santa Fe company, the New Mexico Actors

Lab, directing two of the four shows: *A Doll's House, Part 2* and *4000 Miles*. The community support has been so strong that next year he will expand the season to five plays, climaxed by his fourth production of *The Cradle Will Rock*, which will be his sixteenth show with the company.



Nicholas Ballas as Torvald and Leslie Dillen as Nora.
Photos by Lynn Roylance.

Tice Miller received The Legacy of the Arts Award at the 41st Annual Mayor's Arts Awards festivities in Lincoln in May.

Michael Dinwiddie produced a research and development lab to explore James Fritz's play *The Fall* at NYU's Gallatin School. He was a consultant offering historical perspective for the Acting Company's production of Nambi Kelley's *Native Son* at the Duke Theatre in New York and contributed a chapter entitled *The Harlem Hell Fighters*, focused on the bandleader and conductor James Reese Europe (1880-1919) to Sarah Mahler Kraaz's textbook Music and War in the United States and presented a paper at the Historic Brass Society Conference at the CUNY Graduate Center entitled '*Racing*' towards *Respectability: James Reese Europe's Ragtime Odyssey*.

He also wrote an essay entitled *Black Panther Meets Pink Panther* for the collection Black Panther: Paradigm Shift Or Not?, which was edited by Haki R. Madhubuti and Herb Boyd (Third World Press).

Tom Markus directed a reading of retired Federal Judge H. Lee Sarokin's newest play, *No Choice*, for the North Coast Repertory Theatre in

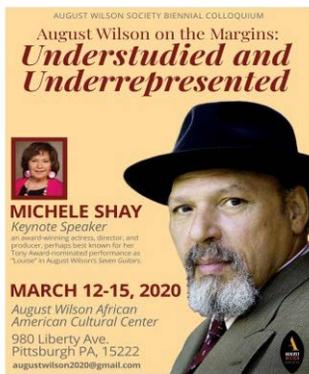
California. The play and post-performance discussion led by Judge Sarokin dealt with the current Indiana law restricting abortion. Markus is assisting Sarokin in preparing an anthology of ten plays for publication.

Harry J. Elam, Jr. was elected in April to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Sandra Shannon is President of the August Wilson Society, which is excited to announce the following events:

The September 19, 2019, launch of *The August Wilson's Ground Lecture Series (AWGLS)*, an annual forum whose mission is to advance August Wilson Studies with new critical treatments and fresh perspectives on his American Century Cycle plays.

The March 12-15, 2020 August Wilson Society Colloquium, at the August Wilson African American Cultural Center in Pittsburgh, PA (See attached flier.)



Diane Rodriguez left Center Theatre Group at the end of June after nearly 25 years and has launched Rodriguez Projects, which will explore new theatre and artistic partnerships. Diane helms as director, writer, and creative producer. Her website is:

www.diane-rodriguez.com

Her new work email address is:

drodriguezprojects@gmail.com

Ed Herendeen is in the middle of their Festival: Six New American Plays in Rotating Rep.

www.catf.org .

Gail Humphries Mardirosian created and directed a theatre piece about seeing and hearing the trauma of violence against women shouting out for social justice based on the writings of three women of courage, survivors of the Holocaust. So far, performances have included a premiere at The International Psychoanalytical Association Conference in Washington, DC, Embassy of the Czech Republic in DC, TheaterWorks in Arizona, and Mercersburg Academy.

Development of the piece is chronicled in *The Courage to Fight: Violence against Women, Psychoanalytic and Multidisciplinary Perspectives*: (Routledge, 2018: Chapter 25).

Laurence Senelick received the Oscar Brockett Outstanding Teacher of Theatre in Higher Education Award from the Association for Theatre in Higher Education. In connection with the Offenbach bicentennial he lectured on the composer in Frankfurt and Paris while his book *Jacques Offenbach and the Making of Modern Culture* was named by *Choice* an Outstanding Academic Title for 2018. He published *Cyrano's Sodomitical Circle* in *Gay & Lesbian Review Worldwide*.

Jim Volz, as a Series Editor for London's Methuen Drama, has edited three published books on Directing, Stage Management and Arts Management and currently has two additional books in progress, including Robert Mark Morgan's *The Art of Scene Design* and a new book on *Writing for the Theatre*. Jim now resides in Cedar City, Utah, and returns as a guest professor to California State University, Fullerton for one semester each year.

Dorothy Webb participated in the Write/Now conference in February sponsored by ChildsPlay, the theatre founded by Fellow **David Saar**, and presented the four winning playwrights with "the Webb prizes" graciously named in her honor. Write/Now is a reiteration of the Bonderman Playwriting for Young Audiences event that she founded in 1985.

Alan Woods' 3 minute play, *I'm Herbert* was performed at the Women's Theatre Festival of Memphis in July. Other pieces have been presented in the last couple of months at the Senior Players of the Abbey Theatre of Dublin

(Ohio, that is), the Red Herring Theatre of Franklinton, Ohio, and in readings at the Columbus Civic Theatre, Evolution Theatre, and Short North Stage (all Columbus). He and his wife, Ann Alaia Woods, were participants in the Story Corps residency in Columbus this summer, and their contribution will be added to the archive at the Library of Congress.

Peter Sargent retired as Dean of the Leigh Gerdine College of Fine Arts at Webster in May and happily continues as full-time faculty teaching Lighting Design and Stage Management. He will design a production of *Thanksgiving Play* for The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis in January and is currently designing *Shakespeare in Love* for the Hope Summer Repertory Theatre.

Randy Reinholz received ATHE's *Ellen Stewart Career Achievement in Professional Theatre Award* at their recent Annual Conference in Orlando. Randy was nominated by Dr. Courtney Elkin Mohler of Butler University, who praised his career and the path he has led for Native playwrights, saying: "Randy has nurtured hundreds of new works and provided continued support for Native artists at all points of their careers over the past twenty-five years."

James Still received performance of his plays *I Love to Eat* (about culinary icon James Beard) at Theatrical Outfit in Atlanta; *Amber Waves* at Indiana Repertory Theatre; and *Iron Kisses* at Theatre Above the Law in Chicago. He also directed *A Doll's House, Part 2* at Indiana Rep and spent three days in residence at the University of Michigan teaching master classes and interacting with students and faculty there. This fall, his new play *Black Beauty* will open the season at Seattle Children's Theatre, *The Little Choo-Choo That Thinks She Can* premieres at Indiana Repertory Theatre, and his play *Looking Over the President's Shoulder* will be presented at Act Two Playhouse in Philadelphia. He will also Direct *Twelve Angry Men* in a co-production with Indiana Repertory Theatre and Syracuse.

Jim O'Connor spent a week in France and two weeks in Kenya, part of which was devoted to a photographic safari at a number of National Parks. His training before Theatre was in painting and the visual treats offered by the astounding variety of animals in Kenya and sights in France more than satisfied the visual artistic impulse. He put the

camera from his last theatre gig in Malaysia thru its paces.



Franklin J Hildy is completing his third year as director of the International Program for Creative Collaboration and Research (IPCCR), the global outreach component of the ten-year investigation into "**Defining the Future of the Performing Arts in the 21st Century**" –funded by the Robert H. Smith Family Foundation. The IPCCR initiates international collaborations for the School of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies at the University of Maryland, awards collaborative initiative grants to its faculty and graduate students, develops grant proposals to support the school's work and manages its World Outreach classrooms and studios.

In collaboration with the Victoria & Albert Museum (London), The Prado (Madrid) and the Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels; he has produced the **Triumph of Isabella Experience**, a combination of live performances in theatre, dance and music; digital animation, augmented reality displays, multimedia talks; and an exhibition, bring to life 8 painting documenting a pageant which took place in Brussels in 1615. The digital portion of the Triumph of Isabella Experience was shown in the V&A and Shakespeare Globe in London in the spring, at the Bodleian Library in Oxford this summer and at the ATHE conference in Orlando in August.

His essay on the history of "The Broadway Theatre District" will appear in the Theatre Library Association's Performing Arts Resources volume on Theatre Architecture edited by John Calhoun and Nancy Friedland, in fall 2019.