



The Encore

VOLUME 13 NUMBER 1

September, 2013

Call Board

Ned Startzel ('41), is still active and performing with the very successful "Spectacular Senior Follies of Dallas", Sept 12-15, 2013. This is a musical variety review complete with showgirls featuring a cast of folks ages 55 plus benefitting a local charity.

Harold P. Wright, Sr. ('53) appears as the 1950 lighthouse keeper at the 1821 Burnt Island Light Station, Maine's second oldest original tower. He portrays the father of the lighthouse family as they tell about their life as it would have been in 1950 for tour groups.

Jeffrey B. Moss ('66), is directing the 50th anniversary tour of "Hello, Dolly!" starring Sally Struthers. The tour kicks off in New Jersey in October and will visit more than 70 cities.

Kevin Warner ('88) was recently named the Chair of the Department of Dance at the State University of New York, College at Brockport. He will oversee six degree programs involving 150 graduate and undergraduate students there.

TAIG Calendar

October 24, 25, & 26, 2013
Chicago
Schwab Auditorium

October 26, 2013 (5—7 pm)
Reception at Chili's
139 South Allen Street

October 26, 2012 (11 am EDT)
TAIG Board Meeting

April 3, 4, & 5, 2014
In the Heights
Schwab Auditorium

April 5, 2014 (11 am EDT)
TAIG Board Meeting

From the Desk of the Editor

This issue of *The Encore* we decided to focus on our alumni. I find myself in constant awe of our alumni. Whether you are touring around sharing your art, running your first marathon, just successfully landed your dream job - to quote Dr. Seuss "you're off to great places, you're off and away!"

Not only are you doing amazing things, but you are also sharing and supporting each other. At the time this publication will go to print, it will be a week after my wedding, which will have lots of Thespians in attendance. Not only am I getting married, but I'll be in the process of moving to Hawaii. Needless to say, this is a crazy time to put together a newsletter. All I had to do was put out a call and Sean Meadows, Eliza Altenderfer, and Guy Fissel were there to help make sure everything gets done on time. I'd like to give a huge thank you to those three as well as Luanne Russell, Fred Leuschner, and Eric Minford for meeting the early deadline to accommodate the life that happens.

Be sure to keep us posted on your accomplishments at taig.newsletter@gmail.com. We love to hear the wonderful things you are up to in life and would love to get more alumni news in our newsletter. And no matter what dream you're currently chasing, "Break a leg!"

Andrea Schwander '10
TAIG Newsletter Editor
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Alumni Profile: Bob Buckler

Many Thespians are not theatre majors, let alone continue with theatre for the rest of their careers. However, there are a few including Bob Buckler, Penn State Class of 1968.

As a Penn State Thespians, Bob worked as a draftsman on *Brigadoon* but was noted for his costumes. He designed costumes for "Guys and Dolls" which cast other successful theatre professionals including a future Grammy winner and a dancer who went on to create the Jazz Nutcracker at Point Park University. Bob's costumes were memorable. One of the most memorable for him was the Hot Box chorus girls who wore hot pink outfits for "Take Back Your Mink." His final work with Thespians was set designer

for *West Side Story*.

After leaving Penn State, Bob did one semester of graduate study at Boston University in design. He then embarked on his professional career of more than 30 years in various areas of technical theatre.

Bob did one season of summer stock in Hampton, New Hampshire. He then moved to Philadelphia where he recalls sleeping on fellow Thespians Barbara Schwab's couch in Center City. He was hired at the Theatre of the Living Arts as technical director for the 1969-70 season, which turned out to be their last one. That season gave Bob the opportunity to work with such people as Judd Hirsch, Morgan Freeman, Sally Kellerman, and Danny DeVito... in their much

younger days. Bob recalled one show in particular where Danny played the family dog and Bob built his doghouse.

While he "kicked around" Philadelphia for a few years doing odd jobs, even selling falafel in the square, he received a call from the producers of Living Arts. He was offered a position to go on tour with the Acting Company from Julliard for 1973. That year he ended up back in New York on Broadway with Patty Lupone, Kevin Kline, and David Ogden Stiers. Years later, Bob would end his Broadway career with Patty Lupone, loading in for *Gypsy*. He considers her one of the finest actresses of our time.

In between, he served as technical director of the Manhattan Theatre Club, Off Off Broadway, for 3 seasons. Then there was a stretch of working in scene shops. In 1981, he started at the Metropolitan Opera scene shop building scenery to a scale "like no other in legitimate theatre."

Next, Bob followed a couple of carpenters to Hudson Scenic Studios in



TAIG and Thespians News

Thespians and TAIG will be represented in the Homecoming parade. Be sure to look out for them Friday, October 11th. Or better yet get involved by e-mailing TAIG President Guy Fissel taig.president97@gmail.com!

Thespians is looking for photos from shows throughout the years to update the website! If you have any pictures you would be willing to share, please contact Alex Annunziato (alexanderannunziato@gmail.com)

TAIG E-mail LISTSERV

Make sure you stay connected with TAIG by subscribing to our listserv. We use the listserv to send out details about our receptions and newsletters for the spring and summer. If you are not already subscribed please log onto our website and sign up today! Or send an e-mail to taig.secretary@gmail.com.

Rather receive this electronically?

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Questions and comments regarding the content of this publication as well as suggestions for future articles may be sent to *Andrea Schwander '10*, TAIG Newsletter Editor at taig.newsletter@gmail.com

Questions regarding TAIG may be sent to TAIG President *Guy Fissel '77* at taig.president97@gmail.com

2011-2012 TAIG Board Members

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Stacy Reck '88
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Kevin Warner '88
Ruth Yeaton '53, '59(g)

original set for *Saturday Night Live*, he built the chairs on the big round base of the set. He also recalls working at a small dinner theatre where they finished building the set during the performance of Act One.

Now retired and living in the Pittsburgh area, when Thespians presented *The Producers* in the fall of 2012, Bob travelled to Penn State for the dress rehearsal and talked with the cast and crew about his experiences with the original production.

Bob Buckler considers himself a man who found his niche in the world of technical theatre and made his career there.

He also offers this bit of wisdom learned from Broadway even older old timers... "if it hangs down, it's scenery, if it hangs up, it's props".

Luanne Russell '63
TAIG Historian

In 1991, Bob went to work on Broadway as part of the running crew for *Crazy For You* and spent 18 years on the Great White Way. Shows he worked included Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, *The King and I* with Lou Diamond Philips, and *A Christmas Carol* at Madison Square Garden. And he worked props for the entire run of Mel Brooks' *The Producers*. When he was not working full time, he would fill in on other shows. Bob was asked to take over props for *Sunset Boulevard* the week it was announced the show was closing.

It may have been his work, but Bob recalls that working on *Crazy For You* and *The Producers* was like going to a party 8 times a week, with fun casts, crew, and staff. He says that Mel Brooks is a truly nice, generous person who came up through the ranks and has not forgotten that.

Outside of theatre, Bob worked on the

the Bronx where he worked from 1984 to 1991 building scenery for Broadway shows, displays, and industrials. The owners were friends of Robin Wagner and built all of his Broadway shows. Bob worked on the original sets of *Les Miserables*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, and *Miss Saigon*. For *Les Miz*, he worked on the original stage turntable of wood, then later built the metal replacement. He also worked on the turntables for all the tours, eventually building more turntables than there were companies. Since he was good at details, he built the overhead sewer grates for *Les Miz*, then the chandelier and throne for *Phantom*. He drilled approximately 3,400 holes in the chandelier for the crystals. And he built the Phantom's throne completely by himself including the mechanics of it and shopping for the parts, woodwork, trim, and so forth... all but the sculptural details, that's a different union. Bob also built the nearly full stage banister for the Masquerade staircase.

A Standing Ovation to Thespian Alums

Thanks to the generosity of many Thespians, friends and family members, the campaign to fund the McTurk Thespian Endowment has reached approximately \$50,000 in contributions and pledges, 40 percent of our \$125,000 goal. Thespians have already started to receive interest from Endowment donations to help the club continue to stage outstanding shows. When we reach our goal, the funds will earn approximately \$5,625 annually at current rates.

The TAIG Board expresses its heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to these donors for their enthusiastic support of the Endowment.

We feel that this is a major accomplishment as the donations and pledges have come from 60 donors (see the Donor page), which is a small percentage of our 3,220 alumni. While we have yet to achieve our goal for the Endowment, we are making great strides.

We also thank Ray Fortunato, former Thespian pianist, vocalist, writer, producer and adviser for 44 years, and honorary Endowment campaign chair, for his encouragement and support. He is the first to step forward with a pledge at the Stage Manager level.

Comments from alumni continue to inspire the TAIG Board as many have praised the experiences they had during their undergraduate years, how much their involvement with Thespians meant to them and how it benefited their lives and careers. Many have mentioned that they established friendships during their undergrad years that have lasted throughout their lifetimes. Some have even married!

Those of us on the TAIG Board are dedicated to this project, giving time and effort to make certain Thespians have the funds to continue to produce outstanding musical shows. Please join your fellow Thespians in helping to ensure the long-term viability of the club that has meant so much to all of us.

Fred Leuschner, 1950, 1951g; Eric Minford, 1976, 1983g
TAIG Board members

President's Corner

Big changes are happening at Schwab. The building is closed and the \$1.5 million renovation work is in full swing. Michael Blake was hired as Schwab Manager in June and has been overseeing the effort. While there are some challenges as with any 110-year old building, progress is being made. The organ pipes have been removed. Plaster is being repaired, as is the roof. However, asbestos has been discovered; remediation work is underway. Some flooding in the basement has been addressed. The plan calls for Schwab to reopen the first week of October. While not all renovations will be complete at that time, the Grand Traveler Drapes and Grand Border will in place along with new rigging. I am excited to see the renovations when Thespians presents *Chicago* in October.

Elsewhere in the newsletter, you will read about the upcoming wedding of a board member. Another board member, Vince Roscioli (2009), married a fellow Thespian, Kate Proulx (2010), in June. And Laura Keenan (2009) married Dave Petterson in May. Congratulations to all the newlyweds! Thespians were not all about weddings however. We could be found on stage as well. Two board members, Eric Minford (1976, 1983g) as Fauchelevent and Evan Smith (2001) as Grantaire, gave fine performances in Notre Dame Summer Theatre's production of *Les Miserables* in Easton, Pennsylvania. I am not sure about Eric but being cast in *Les Miz* was a dream come true for Evan, as it is his favorite show of all time. Senior Andrew Adamietz landed the role of Jean Valjean in Winding River Player's production of the same show in Towanda, Pennsyl-

vania. These are just the events I know about. If you have an upcoming show or event you would like us to mention, please email us and we will put it on the Call Board.

As I write this, we are finalizing our plans for the Homecoming Parade on Friday, October 11. If you would like more information on attending or helping out, please email me at the address below.

Guy Fissel '77
TAIG President
taig.president97@gmail.com

