



The Encore

VOLUME 14 NUMBER 1

September, 2014

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TAIG Calendar

September 26, 2014
Homecoming Parade
State College

October 9, 10, & 11, 2014
Catch Me If You Can
Schwab Auditorium

October 11, 2014 (11 EST)
TAIG Board Meeting

March 26, 27, & 28, 2015
Spamalot
Schwab Auditorium

April 28, 2015 (11 am EDT)
TAIG Board Meeting

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

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From the Desk of the Editor

Welcome back to another edition of The Encore. In this issue you will read about Jim Hartzell, an alumni involved in his local community theatre, Possum Point Players, from my home state, Delaware. Do you know a fellow Thespian alum who is still having continued success in the arts? Feel free to send us suggestions for future alumni profiles at taig.newsletter@gmail.com

Guy Fissel, TAIG President, gives us an update on what's happening in the world of TAIG including recognizing two award winners and the efforts of the actives in selling out Schwab for a performance of *Chicago*. Vince Roscioli, TAIG Treasurer, gives us an update on the endowment fund. Thank you to all who have already donated to the endowment and the continued success of Thespians.

If you're feeling a little home sick for the blue and white, there are a lot of activities coming up with the Thespians in State College. On September 22nd, the actives are participating in the homecoming parade through campus. In just a few weeks after that, it's time for *Catch Me If You Can*, October 9—11. Tickets will be available for purchase online and at the door, so be sure to keep an eye on our social media pages for the latest news.

Andrea (Schwander) Fisher '10
TAIG Newsletter Editor
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Alumni Profile: Jim Hartzell

We know Penn State Thespian Alumni are involved in theatrical and artistic activities all over the world. Now here is one you may not have heard about, Possum Point Players in Sussex County, Delaware. One of the movers and shakers of this community theatre is Jim Hartzell, (1964, B.A. Secondary Education) who appeared in four Thespian shows in the early 60s.

Actually, Jim got his first taste of performing on stage in 6th grade playing Hansel in the operetta *Hansel and Gretel*, starting him on about 59 years of theatre experience. He moved on to major roles in his sophomore, junior, and senior class plays at Central Dauphin High School. In those days, schools usually did one or two act formulaic comedies unlike today's often elaborate musical productions. When he got to Penn State, Jim and Penn State Thespians discovered each other. He appeared as a teenager in *Bye, Bye Birdie* and as a dancer in *Bells Are Ringing*. And these were the days when Thespians still produced original musicals. Jim was in two of these: a member of the

chorus in *Razzle McDazzle* and one of the leads in *Fair Weather*.

After graduation from Penn State, Jim taught high school for 8 years at Sussex Central in Georgetown, Delaware, directing the junior class plays for five of those years. This gave him a great love for and significant experience in theatre.

He earned his MBE from Shippensburg and spent 19 years as an administrator. When Delaware offered early retirement in 1991, a friend of many years who knew Jim's background said he needed someone to work in public relations and graduate education programs in Wilmington College's site in Sussex County, Delaware. So Jim took advantage of the early retirement option and went to work for

Wilmington College. After being promoted to Marketing Manager, Jim retired again six years ago. He and his wife Louise, whom he met in their high school band, live in Georgetown, the county seat, located about 17 miles west/northwest of Rehoboth Beach.

About 41 years ago, Jim and Louise were asked to be two of the founding members of the Possum Point Players, a community theatre group starting up in Sussex County. The name comes from a little development where some of the founders lived and is a unique name for a marquee. The Possums are from Sussex and surrounding communities and have been very successful. They have



President's Corner

TAIG is proud to announce that two Thespians have been awarded the Thespians Alumni Award for Distinguished Contributions to the Performing Arts.

Donald "Ned" Startzel (1941), who wrote and performed in several Thespian musicals while at Penn State, has continued his theater connection over the years by singing with the Greater Dallas Rotary. In 2008 the stars aligned for Ned to put into action a long-held dream. With Mark Carroll, Ned co-founded the Dallas Spectacular Senior Follies in Texas to benefit local charities. In the beginning, Ned sang and danced as well as produced the show. Now 96, Ned has scaled back his activities a little but keeps very active and still produces the Follies.

Robert Buckler (1968) had a very active theater career after Thespians behind the scenes. Bob's post-graduation credits include Theater of the Living Arts, Julliard's The Acting Company, the Metropolitan Opera, *Saturday Night Live*

as well as many Broadway, Off-Broadway and Off-Off-Broadway shows. Bob has worked with Mel Brooks, Morgan Freeman and Patti Lupone among others.

Congratulations are also in order for Thespians. For the Fall show, Thespians ran the front of house for the first time since the early 90s to great success: the Friday evening performance of *Chicago* was sold out. The last time there was a sold out show was for the run of *Jesus Christ Superstar* in 2002. It was amazing to see Schwab packed to the rafters. The Saturday evening performance was almost as well attended.

Last Fall, TAIG, in conjunction with Thespians, participated in the Homecoming Parade. Thespians created a float with "Chicago" in lights and handed out flyers to promote the Fall show. Thespian alumni and students both escorted the float on its parade route through campus and downtown. We plan on working together for Homecoming again this year and at the time this article

owned their own 183-seat theatre, a former youth center, for close to 30 years. Fifteen years ago, they raised over \$800,000 to renovate the building.

Jim attributes the success and longevity of PPP to the fact that the founding members were not just a group of actors looking for a venue in which to perform, but people with interest and expertise in all necessary aspects of theatre including directors, musicians, designers, techies, and more.

For PPP, Jim has directed 27 shows, 14 of them musicals, and has appeared in about 50 shows, playing leads in 20 of them. Among his favorite directorial experiences are *Bye, Bye Birdie*, *South Pacific*, *Oklahoma*, *Big River*, *The King and I*, *Pirates of Penzance*, *Jekyll and Hyde*, *Urinetown*, and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. As far as performing, his favorite role is John Adams in *1776*, which he has done twice, the most fun was Pseudolus in *A*

Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum and he enjoyed doing Harold Hill in *The Music Man*. He did the latter role once with the Possums and then was asked to do it with another group as well. He has also appeared as the Chairman in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, Paul Bertholet in *Carnival*, and Robert Baker in *Wonderful Town*.

The Possum Point Players do five shows a year including a drama, a comedy, a musical, a Christmas show, and dinner theatre. They do not pre-cast shows but Jim and his fellow main stage directors do approach specific people about auditions.

Jim and Louise are current trustees of PPP, having served in that capacity for most of the years of its existence. He has been president, secretary, and chair of many committees while Louise has also served as president, is the current treasurer and has served a number of years as costumes chair. She has also

goes to print we have a group of **XX** walking in the parade. Watch for our banner if you attend the parade!

The endowment has continued to grow to 65% of our goal for a total of \$81,816. Many thanks to all those who have contributed so far! Your donations are greatly appreciated by student Thespians who are energized by your continued support. There is an insert to this newsletter listing all donors. On the reverse, there is a donor form if you would like to add your name to the donor list.

Guy Fissel '77
TAIG President
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appeared in a number of productions. The Hartzells recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.

And the tale goes on. They have two sons, both of them theatre enthusiasts. Tom, the elder, lives in Maryland and has acted in and directed a number of amateur theatrical productions in the Delaware, Maryland, and Philadelphia areas. Younger son John is in New York City and has appeared in three shows Off-Broadway including *De La Guarda*, *Fuerza Bruta*, and *Blue Man Group*. He toured with *De La Guarda* and *Fuerza Bruta*, which feature aerial work and dancing, to Tel Aviv, Seoul, and Chicago, and has appeared with a number of community theatre groups in New York City and Northern New Jersey.

Jim Hartzell and family...the Thespian tradition carries on.

Luanne Russell '63
TAIG Historian

Schwab's Facelift

Schwab Auditorium is many things to many people. To some, an old, weathered building passed daily on a walk to class. To others, it is a forum to listen to speakers, or for the older alumni, maybe even a place you would have class in. But to Thespians, Schwab Auditorium has always been different. Schwab is our home, and thanks to Penn State, our home is receiving a major facelift.

Over the last year, Schwab has undergone a wide array of changes ranging from updates to the façade and repair work on damaged pieces of the interior to three massive changes that you're going to have to keep reading to find out.

Many of you might remember that in the past, the Center for the Performing Arts managed Schwab, but starting last academic year, the Association of Student Activities took over that responsibility. With that transition, Penn State hired a full time manager for Schwab, Michael Blake, to oversee day-to-day operations. Michael has been an invaluable friend and asset to our club and is someone we see fostering a relationship with for many years to come. The combination of these two changes is what paved the way for many of the aesthetic improvements to our home.

So what has actually changed around Schwab? Well no need to worry, the building we know and love still stands with some major improvements to its look and functionality. Let's work from the outside in. On the exterior, Schwab has been renovated so that all of the tan brick on the walls, roof, and roof ledging match. Schwab's drainage system was designed to collect water on the roof, channel it into pipes built into the walls and disperse it into the ground, which led to numerous aesthetic and structural problems. Thanks to Michael and Penn State, the building has been redesigned to have proper drainage. While the exterior now exudes beauty, it is the inside of Schwab that truly shines.

When Schwab auditorium was initially designed, it was a masterpiece of architecture, and thanks to Michael and Penn State, the windows, walls, and floors of the building have all been updated while still maintaining the classic charm of the

building. Do you remember the old barren room that used to exist behind the light booth on the second floor of Schwab? Last year it was revitalized to be a room for gatherings and event receptions and is now ours to use. Last spring, Thespians and TAIG had a post-show reception in there! How about that drainage system I mentioned earlier? Well those pipes had run through the walls of Schwab and throughout the winters had expanded and contracted, damaging the uniformity of the walls. Those walls are all in the process of being refinished and the plumbing inside them properly fitted. Again, Michael and Penn State have put an incredible amount of time and effort into bringing our home back to its former glory and we couldn't be more thankful.

So what are the massive changes to Schwab that you've been waiting for? Remember the old pipe organ that hung over the back half of the stage? Gone. The stage floor that had seen far too many scuffs and scratches? Replaced. The fly space added by removing the pipe organ combined with the new floor, gives Thespians a lot of options for set design and lighting going forward and will help improve our ability to put on high quality shows. The amount of space the pipe organ freed up might surprise you. The last renovation might come as slightly less happy news.

The upstairs of Schwab where Thespians have signed their names for many years has very recently been renovated and the floor that once held a trap door and pulley system to aid us in building our sets has been replaced with metal cat walks. Thespians no longer have access to the walls to write on them, but all of the names through the years are still visible. While disappointing, this change is for the betterment of Schwab. After doing some structural analysis, it was found that the area where our dolly system and the names stood was actually exerting an enormous amount of pressure on the ceiling of the stage and could have collapsed at any second. For the safety of anyone using the stage, the room was renovated and the pressure alleviated. Fortunately, thanks to Michael, we are working on finding a new place within the building to sign names.

Schwab is still the home we know and love, but thanks to a lot of hard work, the building looks and works better. Thespians is grateful for the time and money Penn State has put into our home and I encourage you all to come see the new, improved Schwab this October 9-11th for *Catch Me If You Can!* If you are curious about Schwab or the current state of Thespians, please reach out to me at alexanderannunziato@gmail.com. I love talking to alumni (former HAL talking here)! Hope to see you in October!

Alex Annunziato '15
President, Penn State Thespians

P.S. Keep an eye out for an email from our Historian / Alumni Liaison about purchasing a piece of the old stage floorboards from Schwab!

Endowment Update

The McTurk Thespians Endowment continues to grow! As of the beginning of September, it has reached \$82,131--over 65% of our goal. The Club has begun receiving yearly disbursements from the Endowment and is putting the money to work, helping to offset show costs and to make necessary capital purchases.

While the size of the Endowment is impressive, we would like to see it continue to grow as we work toward our \$125,000 goal. To that end, I'd like to challenge us all to help grow the Endowment to \$90,000 by March 2015. A variety of means for donating to the Endowment are available, including one-time and automatic monthly EFT payments. Information on the insert for donation can be found in this newsletter. As always, thank you to all of our donors, who are listed on the included insert. Without your support, this effort would not be possible.

Vince Roscioli '05
TAIG Treasurer