

MTSU Students and Faculty Participate in Off-Broadway Internship

Scott Boyd, resident scenic designer and technical direction faculty member, brought a wonderful opportunity for our students when he arrived on campus in fall 2004 - the prospect of participation in an Off-Broadway production through an internship affiliation with New York's Flying Fig Theatre Company. That opportunity became reality this spring as six (6) students were selected to serve as technicians for scenic production, props, and lighting for the world premiere of "Sus Manos" (Her Hands) by Lauren Gunderson. The students built the scenery on-campus at MTSU and then traveled to NYC to install the production into the performance space.

Boyd designed the scenery and lighting while fellow faculty member **Todd Edwards** designed sound for the play that ran February 25 – March 14, 2005 in the E.A.T. Space, located at 432 West 42nd Street. Two students, **Katie Gant** and **Amanda Hodge**, also received their first New York assistant design credit for lighting and scenery respectively. Officials with Flying Fig were impressed with the quality and enthusiasm of MTSU's students and have committed to provide future internship opportunities.

MTSU Students Continue Winning Tradition in KCACTF Awards

For the sixth consecutive year, MTSU student playwrights and directors brought home awards from the Region IV Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF). This year, MTSU students finished 1, 2, 3 in the Ten Minute Play Competition. "Bellerophon's Fall" by **James Houk** placed first in the competition, and Houk will travel to Washington, D.C., in April to represent the university and the region in the national festival.

Deborah Anderson, MTSU Professor of Playwriting and Directing, is the KCACTF Region IV Playwriting Vice-Chair. Her guidance and mentorship have led to recognized success for our playwriting program and directing students on the regional and national level. MTSU's past playwriting and directing award recipients and regional representatives to the national festival have included **Anna Gorish** (2002), **Mack Williams** and **Paul Daniel Bond** (2003), and **Austin Sanders** and **Jon Royal** (2004). Gorish was winner of the KCACTF National Ten Minute Play Competition in 2002 and Bond won the award for the National Critics Institute in 2003. In addition, Bond and **Josh Dunkin** were co-winners of the Region IV Short Play Competition in 2003; their plays were performed at the regional festival in Birmingham, AL, in 2004.

Youth Theatre Supports Scholarships

Each year, MTSU Theatre youth performances provide educational entertainment for thousands of area school children through school matinees. The youth theatre program, directed by **Dr. Jette Halladay**, also provides workshops for area schools and produces educational packets designed to enhance the experience of play attendance. Proceeds generated from ticket sales to the matinee series directly support the various scholarship funds of MTSU Theatre. In February 2005, performances of "Conestoga Stories," a play that depicts the life of settlers along the Oregon Trail, generated \$7,225 in scholarship funds.

During the 2004-2005 academic year, ten theatre students received total scholarship awards in the amount of \$4,300. Awards were distributed from the Dorethe Tucker, Bobby Aden, Richie Smith, and Clayton Hawes Scholarship Funds. To receive awards, students submit a letter of application and proof of academic progress. They must also demonstrate participation in departmental activities and receive positive recommendation of departmental faculty members.

MTSU Dance Program Under New Leadership

MTSU Dance Theatre, under the new artistic leadership of **Kim Neal Nofsinger**, has had a bustling 2004-2005 academic year. In the fall, they sold out two performances at the Murfreesboro Center for the Arts. The show featured choreography by Nofsinger, **Nancy Ammerman**, and award-winning choreographer Laurie Merriman. The performance also featured guest dancers Sara Semonis from Normal, IL, and Heidi Clemmens of Macomb, IL. In November 2004, Dr. Zelma Badu-Younge, internationally renowned African dance choreographer and dancer, was in residence with the Dance program. She taught master classes and choreographed a dance for MTSU Dance Theatre that will be featured in the spring dance concert on April 21-23, 2005.

This spring, the trend of guest artists continues as Travis Gatling will be a guest dancer for "An Evening of Dance" as he performs in "King, Man, Servant", which was choreographed by New York choreographer Ronald K. Brown. Also this spring, ten dance students took part in the American College Dance Festival. Their participation included a performance of "Sherd", which was choreographed by Nofsinger.

Honduras Research & Tour

MTSU Theatre & Dance is leading a coalition of campus academic units in a new project that will eventually take a large contingent of students to La Cane, La Paz, Honduras. The project was conceived and developed by faculty members **Dr. Jette Halladay**, **Deborah Anderson**, **Dr. Crosby Hunt**, **Jeff Gibson**, and theatre student **Jenny Rogers**.

The first phase of the project will occur in May 2005 as a group of faculty members and Rogers travel to Honduras to conduct research and to explore the needs of the village and possibilities for future student trips to the region. During the visit, workshops will be conducted to aid in gathering short stories written by the children of La Cane. These stories, along with those collected from middle Tennessee students, will be used as the basis for a script for a youth theatre performance that will be written by Crosby Hunt. During the 2005-2006 academic year, students will develop the script into a performance that will perform at MTSU and tour locally.

In May 2006, students and faculty will tour the play to Honduras and take part in an extended residency. During the residency, students will lead workshops with children and tour the performance to area orphanages. They will also participate in the construction of a community resource and development facility that will house a soup kitchen, first-aid clinic and other needed units. Other MTSU programs involved include Art, Audio/Visual Services, Concrete Management, Foreign Languages, and Social Work. In addition, individuals from Cornell University and the University of Alabama at Birmingham will participate in the project.

BDA Shuts Down for HVAC Renovation

Boutwell Dramatic Arts Building and the Tucker Theatre are in the process of receiving a much-needed renovation to the heating and air-conditioning system. The project will replace original equipment in the 40+ year old facility and will allow for flexible climate control of classrooms and offices. The facility was closed during Spring Break and will be closed for approximately three months during the summer of 2005 to accommodate the renovation. During the summer closure, departmental and faculty offices will be relocated to the Fairview Building on Greenland Drive.

MTSU Theatre performs for Nissan North America

For the second year, Nissan North America purchased blocks of tickets to MTSU Theatre performances for its employees and their families. This year, Nissan bought all 985 seats to two performances of "Conestoga Stories." Last year, they did the same for performances of "The Music Man." Nissan purchases the tickets for employees and their families.

"Cabaret" Performs for Family Weekend

In Fall 2004, MTSU Theatre performed "Cabaret" for students and families participating in MTSU's Family Weekend. The show was directed by **Dale McGilliard** and choreographed by **Kim Neal Nofsinger**. The Division of Student Affairs program promotes active family involvement in a student's collegiate experience and awareness of cultural and entertainment opportunities on campus. Participants were treated to a pep rally, tailgating, football game, address by MTSU President Sydney McPhee, performances by MTSU Theatre and the MTSU School of Music, and a Sunday morning ecumenical service. Approximately 600-800 parents and students take part in the annual event.

"Vagina Monologues" Raises Funds for Great Causes

MTSU was among the 600 colleges who participated in 2005 V-Day activities throughout the world. V-Day events are designed to raise funds for and awareness of issues related to violence against women. For its part, MTSU Theatre and Dance produced two performances of Eve Ensler's "Vagina Monologues." **Deborah Anderson** coordinated and directed the event, which raised over \$2,500 to support the V-Day International Spotlight cause of "Women of Iraq: Under Siege" and the local Rape Recovery and Prevention Center of Murfreesboro. Plans are already underway to produce the event for February 2006 with a goal of raising additional funds for these great causes.

Freshperson's Showcase

New to the line-up this year is a great new opportunity for our young performance students -- "Freshperson's Showcase." The showcase gives freshman, sophomore, and new transfer students the chance to display their abilities to faculty, directing students, upperclassmen, and the general public. The showcase is collaboratively directed by faculty members **Jacqueline Holmes, John Mauldin, and Kyle Zimmerman**. Students perform a series of songs, monologues, scenes, or short plays in the event which is scheduled for both the fall and spring semesters. The spring "Freshperson's Showcase" is scheduled for March 21, 2005, in the BDA Studio Theatre.

Publications/Presentations/Appointments

Deborah Anderson has been appointed as the Region IV Vice-Chair for Playwriting for the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. Anderson is also Director of OnStage Discovery Camp, a summer program for high school students housed at MTSU. The camp is part of a federal Geier grant that is designed to encourage college attendance, participation, and success of African-American students. Anderson also works with local community theatre organizations, especially the Murfreesboro Ensemble Theatre (MET). Most recently, Anderson and **Dr. Crosby Hunt** co-directed "Last Night of Ballyhoo" for the Murfreesboro Ensemble Theatre at the Murfreesboro Center for the Arts. Anderson serves on the Board of Directors for MET. In addition, Anderson has served as Chair of the Charles M. Getchell Playwriting Competition at SETC for the past two years.

Dr. Virginia Donnell received her Ed.D. in Educational Administration in Higher Education from Tennessee State University in August of 2004. On February 5, 2005, Dr. Donnell was appointed to a three year term of the Editorial Board of the National Education Association Higher Education Journal – *Thought & Action*, Washington, DC. On March 3, 2005, Dr. Donnell received the USITT-SE Founder's Award for Outstanding Educator in Theatrical Design and Technology for 2003-2004. Dr. Donnell has published and presented numerous times over the past year, including: *Gender Differences in Student Perceptions of Effectiveness of Computer-mediated Communication Used for Collaboration* in the Journal of Interdisciplinary Education; *Gender and Multi-Media Communication Used for Collaboration* in the National Social Science Perspectives Journal; *The Relationship Between Student and Faculty Attitudes Toward Computer Technology in Advanced Arts Classes* was presented in January 2005 at the International Conference for Arts and Humanities in Honolulu.

Jeff Gibson will present *A-Z Funding Models for the Academic Theatre Season* at the 2005 Conference of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) in San Francisco, CA in July 2005. In addition, Gibson will coordinate a session entitled, "Arts Management Training in the Undergraduate Academy" for the conference. He serves as conference planner for the ATHE Theatre Management focus group. Gibson recently completed MTSU's Faculty Leadership Academy and serves as the Theatre Division Chair for the Tennessee Governor's School for the Arts.

Dr. Richard Hansen led six students on a two-week trip to London over the semester break in December 2004. The trip is organized through the Cooperative Center for Study Abroad. Students enjoyed six theatrical performances, two backstage tours, and three day-long coach trips to areas around London. This trip marked Hansen's 3rd trip in the past five years. Next year, **Scott Boyd** will lead the London theatre excursion.

In March, **Jacqueline Holmes, John Mauldin, and Kyle Zimmerman** presented a workshop entitled, "How to be a Royal Pop" at the 2005 Southeastern Theatre Conference in Greensboro, North Carolina. The performance workshop demonstrated the language of fans and handkerchiefs and other acting techniques of Restoration Comedy.

For the past nine years, **Crosby Hunt** has been Director of the National Critics Institute for Region IV of the KCACTF. Hunt was also guest director of the Critics Institute for the Region VI KCACTF Festival held in Fayetteville, AR in February 2005. In 2004, Hunt was the only faculty member in the country who was selected to participate in the O'Neill Critics Institute Summer Intensive at the O'Neill Playwright's Retreat.

John Mauldin recently performed in "How We First Met" with the improv troupe, Ideapro, at the Gibson Showcase at Opry Mills in Nashville in February 2005.

Dale E. McGilliard has served as Director of the Tennessee Governor's School for the Arts since 2003. In addition to directing plays in the MTSU Theatre and Dance season, McGilliard is active as a director for MTSU Opera. He most recently directed its fall production of "Hansel & Gretel."

Melinda Wilson presented her doctoral dissertation, "The Bookends: The Construction of Youth Identity in African American Drama, 1950-1980," on March 18, 2005.

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