

UMKC THEATRE

2017 Theatre Training News



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Cast of *Imeasurable Heaven*, UMKC Theatre, 2016.
PHOTO BY BRIAN PAULETTE



Edwin Brown, *Imeasurable Heaven*
UMKC Theatre, 2016.
PHOTO BY BRIAN PAULETTE



Caroline Vuchetich in *And Justice for Some: The Freedom
Trial of Anthony Burns (1858)*, Coterie Theatre, 2016.
PHOTO COURTESY OF COTERIE THEATRE

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Cast of *Imeasurable
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Theatre, 2016.
PHOTO BY BRIAN PAULETTE



Cast of *O Beautiful*. UMKC Theatre, 2016.
PHOTO BY BRIAN PAULETTE



Katie Schiefrecke and Steven Miles in *Comedy of Errors*, UMKC Theatre, 2016
PHOTO BY BRIAN PAULETTE

UMKC's Department of Theatre Mission

UMKC Theatre has been ranked by U.S. News & World Report among the top graduate theatre training programs in the country. Graduates from UMKC Theatre are invited to the most prestigious New York and Los Angeles professional reviews and auditions to exhibit their work and secure positions with national and international performing companies. We build bridges. We assist the creative student in making the journey to becoming a creative professional. The practice of the department is to vigorously educate students in the many arts, crafts and traditions of theatre, and

provide a basis for future careers in the creative industries. Our program offers intensive hands-on experience while at the same time fostering analytical and contextual skills. The practical experience of theatre-making occurs not only within the performing venues of UMKC, but also in professional theatres in Kansas City. Theatre is a passion. We seek it, we train for it and we embody it.

UMKC Theatre is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST) and the University/Resident Theatre Association (U/RTA).



Cast of *O Beautiful*. UMKC Theatre, 2016.
PHOTO BY BRIAN PAULETTE



Cast of *Mr. Burns*, Unicorn Theatre, 2015.
PHOTO COURTESY OF UNICORN THEATRE



Cast of *An Octoroon*, Unicorn Theatre 2016.
PHOTO BY CYNTHIA LEVIN

CO-PRODUCTIONS

Professional RELATIONSHIPS

by Dalton Pierce

While many graduate programs offer their students an opportunity to work within the school, those who attend UMKC are given something more. The department has a long established series of professional co-productions from the on-going work with the KC Rep to the plays presented at the Unicorn and The Coterie. These relationships provide the graduate students with opportunities to earn professional experience.

One of the most exciting relationships for UMKC Theatre is with the Unicorn Theatre. The department has a tradition of performing new plays with the Unicorn and has provided many UMKC students with an opportunity to present their work. This year, several students worked on *An Octoroon* by Brendon Jacobs-Jenkins. This adaptation of a 19th-century melodrama provides a satirical look at racial issues, as well as the occasional ridiculousness of melodrama.

Paige Beltowski (MFA Costume 2016) worked on the previous year's co-production with the Unicorn. She designed costumes for *Mr. Burns, a post-electric play*, a show which explores how a reenactment of an episode of *The Simpsons* can transform into something sacred.

"Working on a co-production with the Unicorn has allowed me to form connections with working professionals in area," said Beltowski. "It has also given me insight into the world of Equity theatre and how to work with Equity actors. UMKC has made these opportunities possible, and working



Cast of *Mr. Burns*, Unicorn Theatre, 2015
PHOTO COURTESY OF UNICORN THEATRE

“Working with professional theatres while I am still in school has boosted my confidence in talking to other professional designers.”

– Paige Beltowski,
Costume Design,
2016

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The Coterie Theatre also provides students with an opportunity to work professionally, although their crowd is significantly different. The Coterie offers children’s and youth theatre for Kansas City and has earned national attention for its work. Last year UMKC Theatre teamed up with The Coterie to perform *And Justice For Some: The Freedom Trial of Anthony Burns*, which tells the story of a court case involving an escaped slave. The co-production this year is *Hana’s Suitcase: A Holocaust Mystery* by Emil Sher. This play shows a Japanese Holocaust instructor and her class



Cast of *And Justice for Some: The Freedom Trial of Anthony Burns (1858)*, The Coterie, 2016
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE COTERIE

decipher the mystery behind a suitcase from Auschwitz. Spanning the course of 70 years, this play provides a touching global perspective on the issue, as well as a human story of tragedy and love.

A truly thrilling co-production this year is undoubtedly UMKC’s upcoming work with the KC Rep in presenting *Antony and Cleopatra* by William Shakespeare in a new translation by Christopher Chen, as commissioned by Oregon Shakespeare Festival’s Play On! Program. Playwright Chen will be in residence doing rewrites during much of the rehearsal process, with exciting challenges for young actors in MFA training. The play will be mounted in Spencer Theatre in May 2017 and will be part of KC Rep’s Origins KC new play program.

The co-productions with the Unicorn Theatre, The Coterie, and KC Rep all provide students with the skills necessary to compete in professional world. Their work will lead to connections, which will eventually lead to other jobs. These young, emerging professionals who graduate from UMKC Theatre are prepared for the professional world.



Caroline Allander costume design for *Cymbeline*, Charrette 2016
PHOTO BY DARCI CLARK

CHARRETTE

Under the Tutelage OF MASTERS

by *Ethan Zogg*

One of the difficulties of any training program, especially in the arts, is making the jump from academic classwork to professional application. Whether it's painting, composing music, or theatrical design, applying a new technique to a professional project, though tricky, holds the greatest promise for future success in the profession.

In 1994 John Ezell, head of the scenic design program and Hall Family Foundation Professor, started the design charrette, a week-long intensive project with a visiting artist, or 'Charrette Master.' These masters have included designers and directors such as Mary Zimmerman, David and Karen Sulz-Gropman, Fiona Shaw, Santo Loquasto, Tom Walsh (president of the Art Directors Guild in Hollywood), Deborah Landis (President of the Costume Designers Guild), and Willa Kim.

The charrette master leads the MFA design students in a week-long process, during which they conceive a theoretical production for a specific project (for example, Victoria Morgan, artistic director of the Cincinnati Ballet, led a charrette focused on a new ballet based on *The Wizard of Oz* in 2015). The 2016 charrette master Michael Ganio, whose work has been seen all over the country – most notably at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival – chose Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and *Cymbeline*, and each student chose one of the two plays to design over the six-day process. Scenic design student Mark Exline (MFA Scenic Design 2018) describes the process:

"We spent three days exploring Shakespeare, the Oregon Shakespeare

Festival, and our individual scripts. We were asked during that time to create art pieces which reflected our emotional reactions to our scripts. Those art pieces directly informed the designs we created for our final charrette presentations.”

During the following days, each MFA design student created a full design, under the guidance of the charrette master and the UMKC faculty. “The opportunity to have full concentration on a single design project is a dream. Add to that the imaginations of your mentors...and peers, you are in a think tank with no limits,” said past charrette masters Karen and David Shulz-Gropman. When asked how it affected his design process, Mark Exline said, “I now have a much stronger understanding of how to connect my and my team’s reaction to a script with an actual design. [Michael] Ganio gave us the tools to link abstract concepts with strong visual and audible representations... one of the most difficult aspects of design.”

Work with charrette masters has had consequence outside of the charrette as well. Costume design students Caroline Allander and Paige Beltowski (both MFA Costume Design 2018) had their costume designs featured in the West 18th St. Fashion Show, run by members of the Kansas City design and fashion industry. When asked how her work in the charrette translated to the fashion show, Allander had this to say:

“Michael Ganio locked us in a room and wrung out every creative impulse we had. He pushed me past my fears and my artistic hang-ups and my wishy-washy, approval-seeking habits. Designs poured out of me. I don’t like admitting this, but I didn’t feel like a real artist before charrette, much less a fashion designer. Our collection at West 18th Street Fashion Show was a direct result of the time Paige and I spent with Ganio. I’ll carry that experience with me to every show, including next year’s West 18th.”

The 2017 charrette will be led by Ricardo Khan, founder of Crossroads Theatre Company, and Micah Thomas of Quixotic Cirque Nouveau (formerly Quixotic Fusion), a “performance art collective that fuses imagination with technology, dance, projection mapping and live music to create fully-immersive, multi-sensory experiences.” The two recently collaborated on a performance celebrating The Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, which opened in September of 2016. Khan’s ability to bring immediacy to the stage and Quixotic’s cutting edge style and technique should prove to be a stimulating charrette.



Trevor Frederiksen’s conceptual scenic design, Charrette 2016



2016 Charrette master Michael Ganio mentoring costume design student, Paige Beltowski
PHOTO BY SARAH M. OLIVER

SCENIC

Growing ARTISTS

by *Ethan Zogg*

UMKC's Professional Scenic Design Training Program is renowned for its course of study, which includes a multi-disciplinary approach, including design and rendering training, firm foundations in historic precedents and professional ethics. Designers who have graduated from UMKC work in New York City, at major regional theaters and opera companies, and even at Disney where graduate Alexander LaFrance (MFA Scenic Design 2016) won the highly competitive and coveted design internship and designed there directly after he graduated.

But our track record is not the only thing that attracts students to UMKC. The newest class of graduate scene design students, who come from a variety of backgrounds, came to UMKC to become not only better designers, but better artists. I interviewed the new class and asked them about their artistic backgrounds and why they chose UMKC over other programs.

Kelli Harrod (MFA Scenic Design 2019) came to UMKC from a fine arts background. Originally, Harrod studied to be an architect. Then one day she discovered the world of scenic design.

"I figured out there was this world of technical theatre where I could do both painting and drawing while designing and building architectural forms."

Harrod kept up with her fine arts training, getting a BFA in studio art, and then decided to go to the University Resident Theatre Association's annual recruiting conference to apply for M.F.A. theatre programs. While there she received several inquiries, from those interviewing her, as to why she didn't pursue an undergraduate theatre degree. While several were perplexed about why she had not chosen a theatre major, another school was excited for the unique perspective she could bring to the table. That school was UMKC.

"Gene Emerson Friedman [UMKC Associate Professor of Scene Design] told me that UMKC is a school for people who have a much broader perspective on art, rather than just focusing on the theatre itself," Harrod said during our interview.

Rafael Toribio (MFA Scenic Design 2019) comes to UMKC from California, where he was trained as a folklórico dancer. While working for a dance company, he started working as a scenic carpenter as well, working his way up to master carpenter and then technical director. But he didn't want to just build other people's sets. During our interview he said, "I wanted something more to play with; I wanted to design!"

So Rafael started to build his portfolio, and then went to URTAs and talked to UMKC. I asked him what drew him to the program, and he responded, "I'm going to school to learn scenic design specifically, not general theatre. They're willing to teach me art skills like drawing, rendering and life drawing. Being from a dance background, that is something important to me."



First year MFA scenic students.
PHOTO BY SARAH M. OLIVER

Austin Aschbrenner (MFA Scenic Design 2019) agreed. "The UMKC scenic design program is as close as one can find that is like going to a fine art school without leaving the theatre world!"

Aschbrenner, who hails from Arkansas, came to UMKC to study scenic design and technical direction. He has worked for the Santa Fe Opera and designed for New Ventures Theatre in Baton Rouge before coming here. "Most schools want you to stick to one discipline. UMKC was one of the few that offered the possibility to learn more."

I asked Gene Friedman what UMKC offered potential students that drew such a variety of students, even though they have a singular goal. He answered, "It is our mission and mandate; at UMKC we offer real plays, with real directors, and real budgets, in real theaters."

This focus on artistry helps each student realize a design that is his or her own, while building the flexibility to navigate all design challenges in any project for stage, film or themed entertainments. This new class, though from differing backgrounds, came to UMKC for exactly that.

FACULTY

Professors STAY SHARP

Chaz Bell

Teaching Assistant
Professor of Technical
Theatre

Chaz Bell served as
Technical Director for the
UMKC Conservatory of
Music's productions of *Turn
of the Screw* and *The Magic
Flute*. He also served as

Technical Director for the Heart of America Shakespeare
Festival's production of *Twelfth Night*.



Lindsay W. Davis

Professor of
Costume Design

Lindsay W. Davis designed
the costumes for *The Last
Night of Ballyhoo* at the
Bay Street Theatre in New
York. He also designed *Evita*
at the Kansas City Repertory
Theatre which was directed
by Eric Rosen. Mr. Davis has 10 sketches in a new costume
design textbook, "The Art and Practice of Costume Design,"
as well as two former students who are also included in this
new national publication. Currently Mr. Davis is actively
working on his own original musical, *Wand'ring Blind*, and
steeped in his metaphysical writings.



Evita at the Kansas City Repertory Theatre, 2016. Costume design by Lindsay W. Davis.
PHOTO BY MIKKI SCHNAFFER



The Magic Flute, UMKC Conservatory Opera, 2015.
PHOTO COURTESY OF UMKC



Twelfth Night, Heart of America Shakespeare Festival,
2016. Technical Direction by Chaz Bell.
PHOTO BY CHAZ BELL



Satchel Paige and the Kansas City Swing!, Repertory Theatre St. Louis, 2016. Scenic design by John Ezell.
PHOTO BY MIKKI SCHNAFFER

University in St. Louis, and he is a member of the College of Fellows of the American Theater at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C.

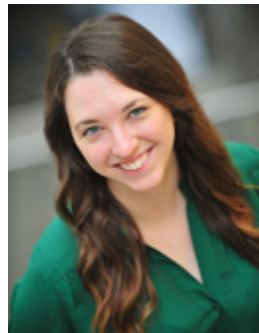
Ricardo Khan
Directing/New Project
Development



Ricardo Khan's most recent play *Freedom Rider*, was produced at the University of Missouri-Kansas City in 2015, and the next in its series, *Freedom Summer*,

is currently in development at UMKC and slated to be produced in the spring of 2018. *Kansas City Swing*, originally presented at UMKC in 2013, was just recently produced by the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis and at Cincinnati at the Playhouse in the Park, and featured a design team composed entirely of UMKC faculty, students and alums. The goal, through these plays and the others which came before— *Quindaro and Train To 2010*, has been to create new and provocative plays at UMKC for the American stage, and through workshops devoted to the scripts' development and to the students' active involvement in the 2-3 year process, to provide a rich and challenging experience for the students, resulting in their participation with the play's eventual world premiere. Khan was also involved with work for the National Museum of African-American Culture and History, and attended the grand opening with celebrities such as Stevie Wonder and Barack Obama. Additionally, Khan leads and participates instructionally in formal theatre classes, forums, workshops and collabs when in town.

Sadie DeSantis
Assistant Teaching
Professor of Stage
Management and
Production Manager
for UMKC Theatre



Sadie DeSantis currently serves as the production manager and head of the Stage Management program at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. She serves as a freelance stage manager and has production experience in concerts, ballet, opera, musical theatre, outdoor production, and corporate galas. She was the assistant stage manager for director Phillip William McKinley's *Mary Poppins* at Starlight Theatre. Most recently, Ms. DeSantis was the stage manager for *Rusalka* at the Lyric Opera of Kansas City.

John Ezell
Hall Family Foundation
Professor of Design



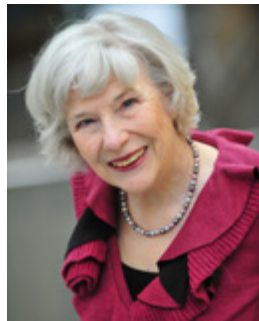
John Ezell recently designed *Disgraced* for Arizona Theatre Company – Tucson and Phoenix. He designed the world premiere of *Satchel Paige and the Kansas City Swing!* for the Repertory Theater of St. Louis and Cincinnati Playhouse. He designed the current revivals of *A Christmas Carol* at the Kansas City Repertory Theater and the Great Lakes Theater Festival. He designed The Cincinnati Ballet's multi-million dollar production of *The Nutcracker*, now touring nationally. He serves on the National Advisory Committee of the Sam Fox School of Art and Architecture, Washington



Robert Karma Robinson and cast in *Satchel Paige and the Kansas City Swing!* Cincinnati Playhouse, 2016.
PHOTO BY MIKKI SCHNAFFER

Felicia Hardison Londré
Curators' Distinguished
Professor of Theatre

Felicia Hardison Londré completed work on her fifteenth book, "Modern American Drama: Playwriting in the 1940s," to be published by Methuen in October 2017. This book – which focuses on Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, and Thornton Wilder – is part of a seven-volume set, one for each decade from the 1930s. Meanwhile, Dr. Londré has embarked upon another book project for Methuen for a series on Great Directors. Her



book in that series will cover Jean-Louis Barrault, Ariane Mnouchkine, and Peter Stein. As part of her preparation for a Brown Symposium XXXVIII lecture at Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas, on 3 March 2017, she offered a fall-semester four-session Continuing Education course on Theatre and Revolution in Eastern Europe, 1989-90, which examines theatre's role in the collapse of Communism and the Soviet empire, especially in Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. In summer 2016 she gave nine evenings of ShowTalks for Heart of America Shakespeare Festival's *Twelfth Night*. She also continues research for an eventual book on French and American theatre people as contributors to the Allied cause in the Great War.

Gregory Mackender
Assistant Teaching
Professor of Sound
Design

Gregory Mackender wrote original music for Heart of America Shakespeare Festival's production of *Twelfth Night*, to all of the traditional songs, but done in a 1920's early jazz style. They were sung by "Feste" (Phil Fiorini) and performed live by pianist Bram Wijnands and Greg on vibraphone.



Tom Mardikes

Chair of UMKC Theatre
& Professor of Sound
Design

Tom Mardikes designed sound for the production of *Satchel Paige & the Kansas City Swing* for the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis and Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park in the spring of 2016. He has also led the faculty through successful reaccreditation with both the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST) and the University/Resident Theatre Association (U/RTA). He is again designing audio tours for the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, updating the "Manet to Matisse" exhibit for Impressionist Painting, and creating an audio collage to accompany an exhibit of the photography of David Heath.





Carla Noack in *Lot's Wife*, Origins KC New Play Festival at Kansas City Repertory Theatre, 2016.
PHOTO COURTESY OF KC REP

Carla Noack
Assistant Professor
of Acting

Carla Noack relished another year of life in the “Stretch Zone” with her students and colleagues at UMKC. In addition to teaching the MFA acting progression, she played

Joan Kay in Eric Rosen’s original play, *Lot’s Wife*, part of KC Rep’s inaugural “Origins KC” New Play Festival, directed by Joanie Shultz. She was also invited back to NYC this summer to participate in the second annual Actors Center’s “Craftsmen of Dionysus” National Congress, where she enjoyed connecting with fellow acting teachers from around the country and contributing to discussions of best practices in our field. She looks forward to playing Jennifer Jones in the Kansas City Actors Theatre’s production of *The Realistic Jones* in the spring, and also to enjoying her most significant role ever as wife to Drew Hemphill.



Chicago at the New Theatre Restaurant, 2016.
Costume design by Sarah M. Oliver.
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NEW THEATRE RESTAURANT

Sarah M. Oliver
Assistant Teaching
Professor of Costume
Technology

Sarah M. Oliver designed costumes for *Chicago* at the New Theatre Restaurant as well as the world premiere of *Have You met Miss Jones?*

She joined the board and artistic committee of the Kansas City Actors Theatre (KCAT) and designed costumes for *The Island* and *I’m Not Rappaport* at



KCAT. This fall she designed the opera *Suor Angelica* for the UMKC Conservatory of Music. Sarah also had the great pleasure of working with two graduates of the UMKC MFA costume program this past year. First serving as assistant costume designer for Lauren T. Roark (MFA Costume Design and Technology 2014) on *Satchel Paige and the Kansas City Swing!* at the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, and for Lauren Gaston (MFA Costume Design and Technology 2014), Sarah built costumes for *My Fair Lady* at the Gulfshore Playhouse in Naples FL.

Stephanie Roberts
Associate Professor
of Theatre

Stephanie Roberts continued her research into the actor/creator this summer through presenting “Perspectives on Devising” at the Association of Theatre Movement Educators conference and attending the Association of Theatre Movement Educators conference, both in Chicago. Last fall she co-directed the graduate production of *O Beautiful* by Theresa Rebeck in the Spencer Theatre, as well as began research on a new interdisciplinary theatre project.



Stephanie Roberts with guest artist Andrew Palermo and fellow ATME members.



An UnCommon Core: the spoken word journey of one middle school classroom,
 KC Fringe Festival, 2016.
 PHOTO COURTESY OF THEODORE SWETZ



A Dream of Red Pavilions, Pan Asian Repertory Theatre, 2016.
 Lighting design by Victor En Yu Tan.
 PHOTO COURTESY OF VICTOR EN YU TAN.

Theodore Swetz
 The Patricia McIlrath
 Endowed Chair
 in Theater Arts, Acting

Theodore Swetz spent some time this summer as a Master Teacher of “Classical Acting” at the Perry-Mansfield Performing Arts School & Camp located in the beautiful town of Steamboat Springs CO. He then produced and directed his daughter Abigail in her original play, *An UnCommon Core: the spoken word journey of one middle school classroom*. Happy to say this world premiere was received enthusiastically at the KC Fringe Festival.



Victor Tan
 Professor of
 Lighting Design

Victor Tan designed the lights for *A Dream of Red Pavilions* for the Pan Asian Repertory Theatre in the Clurman Theatre on NYC Theatre Row last January. All three first-year lighting students came to assist him and the projection designer, Douglas Macur (UMKC Lighting & Projections MFA ‘14), and were paid to hang and focus the show. In March and April, Tan designed the lights for *Satchel Paige* and *the Kansas City Swing!* the professional co-production



premiere between the Repertory Theatre St. Louis and the Cincinnati Playhouse. This play was commissioned by UMKC Theatre and the entire design team were either UMKC faculty or UMKC alumni: John Ezell, scenery; Tom Mardikes, sound; along with UMKC alumni, Lauren Roark, costumes; and Rocco DiSanti, projections. This production was directed by visiting professor, Ricardo Khan. Kris Kirkwood who graduated in May 2016 assisted Tan in St Louis and assisted Rocco in Cincinnati. In August Tan went to Norfolk VA to design the world premiere of a new musical, *I Sing the Rising Sea* for the Virginia Stage Company. This would make his fifth design for VSC in the past decade. In September he designed *Single Black Female* for Crossroads Theatre.



F I L M

On & Off Both

STAGE & SCREEN

Jonathan Knipscher worked as lead tailor on TV series, *Vinyl*
PHOTO COURTESY OF JONATHAN KNIPSCHER

by *Ethan Zogg*

The complex relationship between film, television, and theatre has been a favorite topic of critics and artists since the invention of the camera. Though the forms each have their strengths and weaknesses, people love to compare them, and the theatre has long viewed film as a competitor.

Whether you view this comparison as healthy or a nuisance, many young artists have struggled with the question: do I work on stage or on screen? For many UMKC alumni, the answer is both.

For alumnus Nick Gehlfuss (MFA Acting 2010), television has offered him success on many network shows. Not only has he had small roles on shows like *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*, *Shameless*, and *Person of Interest*, he has had a recurring role in the "Chicago" television franchise (*Chicago Fire*, *Chicago PD*, and *Chicago Med*) where his character, Dr. Will Halstead, is a leading role.

Serial dramas are not the only shows offering opportunity to actors. Paolo Andino (MFA Acting 1997) has performed on stage in New York City and Los Angeles, but has also found work in television. He has had roles in *Modern Family*, *Law & Order*, *Scandal*, and *The People v. O.J. Simpson: American Crime*

Story. He was also a part of LOGO's *The Big Gay Sketch Show*, a sketch-comedy series from 2008-2010. His film work includes *Casanova Was a Woman*, a story of a second sexual awakening.

Acting is not the only field however. Jonathan Knipscher (MFA Costume Design 2006), who has designed for Operas both in the United States and abroad, recently worked as a milliner, tailor, and dyer on high-profile television shows such as *Boardwalk Empire* and *Vinyl*, where he was lead tailor. David Hawkinson (MFA Scenic Design 2010) also worked as a scenic artist on *Boardwalk Empire* and *Vinyl*, as well as working the technical department on the FX series *Louie*, written and directed by the famous comic/writer/actor Louis C.K.

Sound designers and voice-over actors have had their fair share of success as well. The résumé of William R. Dean (MFA Sound Design 1999) is extensive. He has worked in the sound department on films such as *Treasure Planet*, *The Matrix Reloaded*, *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*, *The Hunger Games*, *The Bourne Legacy*, *Skyfall*, *Selma*, and *The Revenant*, winning awards for more than a few. Dean hasn't been limited to films either, and has worked in the sound department on major video-games such as *Saints Row* and *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within*. Paolo Andino (MFA Acting 1997) worked on *Uncharted 4* as a voice actor, and Rick D. Wasserman (MFA Acting 1998) has been the signature voice of the AMC network, home of shows like *Breaking Bad* and *The Walking Dead*.

Matthew Janszen (MFA Sound Design 2008), who has worked in the sound department on films like *Red*, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief*; and *Inside Out*, had this to say about his time at UMKC:

“While logistically theatre and TV/Film are quite different, the need of the composer to analyze a scene and figure out musically what it needs is the same. Composing good music is just half of the battle. You have to be able to understand character and plot development as well as emotional nuance, all the while being sensitive to the director's vision. My time at UMKC, writing the music for various plays, was what prepared me for the scoring aspect of my job. When I scored my first full-length film I just looked at each scene and had a natural instinct on how to tackle it. I didn't realize it till after, but my time studying and working on a classic and diverse set of plays cultivated that 'natural instinct'.”

Though film and the theatre are perceived as divided, UMKC alumni have found success in both, both on-stage and off-screen.



Nick Gehlfuss



David Bianco, class of 2007
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE REPERTORY PHILIPPINES

A C T I N G

Acting Internationally **DAVID BIANCO**

by Amanda Davison

David Bianco, who graduated from the University of Missouri-Kansas City in 2007 with an M.F.A. in Acting, has been experiencing considerable success in several countries around the world. He owes this success to his own initiative, talent, and the training he received at UMKC. When he reminisces about the time he spent at UMKC, the first person he remembers is his teacher, Gary Holcombe, of whom he has fond memories.

“He was an old Broadway star, an old battle axe who was so loved by our class, particularly.” The next thing he talks about is his clown training, under the tutelage of Joe Krienke and Stephanie Thompson, which he says has been “... critical. I have since looked at every single role that I’ve ever played as some version of a clown. There’s the idea of the tragic hero and how every hero has a flaw, and every clown has a flaw! If you look through this lens – it could be any kind of role – I’ve taken this lens of the clown and I’ve been able to make each role personal and unique. It helps me to keep things fresh and I don’t take the process too seriously then.” Bianco claims his time in the UMKC acting program helped stretch him as an actor and gave him tools which have become invaluable in the professional world, enabling him to “just step into this environment feeling comfortable and confident with the skills I’d been given.”

David has taken these skills around the world with him – from Kansas City to New York, London, Singapore, the Philippines, and China – using his innate talent and the skills he honed at UMKC every step of the way. In New York City, he and his wife Jennifer Blair-Bianco worked for the Manhattan School of Visual Arts, where they were able to gain experience



David Bianco in *Marco Polo: An Untold Love Story*, Shaw Theatre, London 2016.

PHOTO BY MIO INFANTE

and develop mentorships with Oscar-winning filmmakers. In New York he acted in independent films and in plays for Dangerous Ground Productions. In the Philippines, he worked for the Repertory Philippines, the oldest English-speaking theatre in the country in productions like *Boeing Boeing* and *Next Fall*. There, he also became a well-recognized movie and soap-opera star, known for leading roles in TV shows like *The Boston*. He has acted in films like *Heneral Luna*, the highest-grossing independent Filipino film of all time, which premiered at Cannes Film Festival and came to United States cinemas with a theatrical release. Most recently, Bianco has starred in the title role of the musical *Marco Polo: An Untold Love Story*, which originated in Manila and traveled to London. The play has rave reviews, with talks of a European tour and a West End revival.

Not only has David Bianco used his training and talents to travel and live

abroad, he has also used them to help make the world a better place. In China, while working with Nanjing ENREACH International Education, he has designed and helped build several different theatre programs for students, bringing Western theatre and acting to many parts of the country where previously none existed. Bianco has also helped design two separate theatres for schools that did not have them. He has enjoyed the satisfaction of opening his students' minds to the possibilities of Western theatre, watching these same students move on to enjoy success in a nationwide theatre competition in Shanghai for English drama. Indeed, Bianco's work in China has touched lives across the country. With awe and reverence, he talks about an experience designing a theatre for a school in China, wherein the principal told him, "I've been wanting to build a theatre for thirty-five years. David, I've been waiting for you."



Lot's Wife, Origin KC 2016. Costumes by Gretchen Halle.
PHOTO BY RINNE GROFF



Nicole Green in *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Kansas City Repertory Theatre, 2016.
PHOTO COURTESY OF KC REP

KANSAS CITY REPERTORY THEATRE

UMKC & The KC Rep

by Ellen Hayek

The Kansas City Repertory Theatre is a major regional theatre in residence on the campus of UMKC. UMKC Theatre and KC Rep work to provide many professional opportunities for Theatre graduate students. To this effect, UMKC Theatre graduate students have worked as designers, actors, technicians and dramaturgs with KC Rep.

Jason Chanos (MFA Acting 1997), the associate artistic director of KC Rep, says that in some ways there are always more roles at KC Rep for UMKC students than there are students to fill them.

There are many examples of past students getting involved. Chanos himself served as a search committee member for a new undergrad teaching

position and taught a two-class seminar on audition technique for Professor Carla Noack. He also coordinated dramaturgical assignments with Felicia Londre's MA students. Assistant artistic director Chip Miller hired undergraduate student Jamie Leonard (BA Lighting Design) as a lighting designer for an outside professional production. Marissa Wolf, director of New Works, cast UMKC alumna Nicole Green in *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Eric Rosen, the artistic director of the KC Rep, is always in attendance for any MFA production. And the list goes on and on.

UMKC Theatre has also given its students opportunities to get involved in the Origin KC festival that is scheduled at the end of KC Rep's season. Max Levitt (MFA Costume Design 2016) designed costumes for last season's



Victor Raider-Wexler in *A Christmas Carol*, KC Rep, 2016. Costumes by Gretchen Halle.
PHOTO BY COREY WEAVER



Bree Elrod in *Fire in Dreamland*, Origin KC 2016. Costumes by Max Levitt.
PHOTO BY RINNE GROFF

production of *Fire in Dreamland* while Gretchen Halle (MFA Costume 2017) designed costumes for *Lot's Wife*.

"I have been fortunate enough to work with the KC Rep a few times now and I have really enjoyed it. This particular project was also exciting because it was my first time designing a new play, which comes with some different challenges, as things are always changing. I was very proud of the show, and hope to design for the festival again this season," said Halle.

Levitt believed that festival was a great environment that allowed

him to not only work closely with the director but with the playwright as well and says he was impressed by the size and scale of these premiere plays.

"I remember thinking, forget doing this in grad school, I am doing this for life," said Levitt.

This year, KC Rep and UMKC Theatre will be presenting *Antony and Cleopatra* by William Shakespeare in a new translation by Christophe Chen, a part of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's new PLAY ON! program. This is a project that centers upon creating new adaptations of every

William Shakespeare play written by 30 top national American playwrights. These playwrights will take Shakespeare's stories and craft new original plays.

"We are excited about this collaboration. It needs powerhouse skills which we have in these directors. The plays manage to be a new creation that still has its roots in the classics," said director of New Works, Marissa Wolf.

This co-production with KC Rep will provide exacting and exciting challenges to the many MFA students involved.

"I remember thinking, forget doing this in grad school, I am doing this for life."

– Max Levitt,
Costume Design 2016



Jonathan Robertson
PHOTO BY MANON HALLIBURTON

S O U N D

The Sound **OF SUCCESS**

by Calan Welder

Every year UMKC Theatre graduates a handful of freshly trained sound designers eager to enter the freelance world. Some go on to work in the theatre, others go into television and film sound.

Megan Henninger (MFA Sound Design 2003) began her career as a freelance sound technician and designer in Kansas City under the local International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees chapter working for the Starlight Theatre. Henninger found freelancing gives young artists the freedom to move in the industry and explore their craft, and was able to forge connections while exploring the industry.

To strengthen those connections, each young artist develops a set of skills through engaging with the “other people in the room.” UMKC Theatre fosters a community of unity, inspiring a healthy work ethic and promoting strong communication skills. Students, faculty, and practicing professionals alike are encouraged to share spaces and ideas, a practice Henninger says helped her to think outside her own discipline when working with other designers.

These tools only become more valuable once students leave the university. Henninger, in her work as a freelancer, says, “I never got a job just by sending in a resume A ‘foot in the door’ is always great, but your performance is what really matters.” And that “foot in the

door” can come anywhere, at any time.

When Henninger moved to Massachusetts, she ran into Peter Fitzgerald, owner of Sound Associates Inc, at Barrington Stage Company. When she moved on to New York City, Henninger was offered a position with Sound Associates, where she worked as Fitzgerald’s assistant for many years, frequently working on Broadway shows. She now resides in Milwaukee, designing sound for the Milwaukee Repertory Theater, but has also worked with Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park and large-scale live sound events in Chicago.

Jon Robertson (MFA Sound Design 2016) has taken a different road in his career. Having gravitated towards education from early in his college years, Robertson now teaches music technology for Missouri Western State University as an adjunct professor in theatre and dance.

Like Henninger, Robertson says exposure to “other communities” like the Kansas City Repertory Theatre was among the key helping factors in transitioning into the professional theatre. UMKC Theatre blurs the lines between the two – aspiring designers may find themselves working for KC Rep as part of their graduate education. Robertson recently had a thrilling experience serving as assistant sound designer for the KC Rep’s production of *Evita*, where he worked directly with sound designer Alex Hawthorn on a major musical system and design.

While at UMKC, Robertson was also introduced to Ian Belknap, artistic director of The Acting Company in New York City, who would eventually review Robertson’s portfolio at the National Design Portfolio Review in New York. This connection led to Robertson being hired as assistant sound designer for the 2017 season for The Acting Company, which he will accompany as sound supervisor for their national tour.

As part of the design curriculum, Robertson was also trained as a recording engineer, a skill that would land him a job producing music after graduation. Robertson adds that access to professional quality equipment gave him the tools to “stay busy” after graduation – maintaining his own website, networking, and continuing to whet his wit on personal projects.

Continuing its tradition of excellence and student success, UMKC Theatre continues to grow and invest itself in the future of their students – and the arts.



Jonathan Robertson
PHOTO BY MANON HALLIBURTON

*“I never got a job just by sending in a resume
.... A ‘foot in the door’ is always great, but your
performance is what really matters.”*

– Megan Henninger,
Sound Design 2003



Mitch Critel's set for *Disney's Tarzan*, Barter Theatre
PHOTO BY DEREK SMITH

T E C H

Technically FANTASTIC

by Dalton Pierce

Building a theatre program is one of the most challenging tasks one can undertake. It requires a level of dedication and commitment as well as the patience to train future professionals. The University of Missouri–Kansas City's graduate theatre program has trained many educators, but technical direction alumnus Mitch Critel has used that training to go beyond the duties of a normal professor.

Mitch Critel, Assistant Professor of Practice in Technical Direction at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, works in the Johnny Carson School of Theatre & Film there. His work before entering the educational field included projects with Wide Awake Film LLC of Kansas City,

which won two Emmy Awards, as well as a job at the Barter Theatre, a LORT theatre in Abingdon, Virginia. At the Carson School he leads a program that trains both undergraduate and graduate students. His professional training and experience gave him the skills necessary to train others in his field, thus developing new generations of TDs.

One of the most formative aspects of UMKC Theatre is its relationship with the Kansas City Repertory Theatre, states Critel. His work with the shows at KC Rep provided him with a different set of challenges, all of which prepared Critel for his professional career. He observes that the two years he spent with the UMKC Theatre program provided him with the most growth as a technical

director. Of the many skills that he learned, Critel mentions that the most effective is that of time management. “Understanding time management is huge for a technical director, and UMKC helped me find my skills by allowing me time to explore those opportunities.” These skills show the level of professionalism the program seeks to achieve.

Of all of Critel’s achievements since completing his MFA at UMKC, his proudest is undoubtedly the work he has done with the Carson School at UNL. His undergrad program has gained national attention and his graduate program currently accepts only 10% of applicants for each class. The professional work Critel accomplished as a graduate of UMKC Theatre gave him the tools for working on the educational level. Critel notes “While in the professional realm I was able to just make a decision and go with it. In the educational setting, I empower my students to make those calls, after advising from me. I am with my students through every step of a project.”

This duality makes Critel a shining example of the dedicated individuals who come from UMKC Theatre.



Mitch Critel’s set design for *The Glass Menagerie*. Barter Theatre.
PHOTO BY DEREK SMITH



Mitch Critel’s model for *Disney’s Tarzan*



Stage Management by Alayna Powell, *Dido and Aeneas*, Lawrence Opera Theatre's Summer Festival, 2016.

PHOTO BY MATTHEW HANEY



Heathers: The Musical, Unicorn Theatre, 2016.

PHOTO BY MANON HALLIBURTON



Scenic design by Tristan James for *Rock of Ages*, Forestburgh Playhouse, 2016. PHOTO BY JONATHAN CHARLES FOX

CURRENT STUDENTS

Graduate Students: SUMMER WORK

MFA STAGE MANAGEMENT

Afton Earp (MFA Stage Management 2017)

This summer Afton was a production assistant at the Unicorn Theatre for the production of *Heathers: The Musical*. Not only did she get a chance to work alongside some amazing Kansas City designers and performers, Afton even had a few of her own moments onstage.

Paula Fritz (MFA Stage Management 2018)

Paula served as the stage manager for a production of *A Little Night Music* at the Permian Playhouse in Odessa, Texas, during the summer of 2016.

Katherine Gehrlein (MFA Stage Management 2017)

Katherine spent the summer of 2016 working as the assistant stage manager for the Heart of America Shakespeare Festival's production of *Twelfth Night*.

Alayna Powell (MFA Stage Management 2018)

Alayna served as the production manager and stage production for Lawrence Opera Theatre's 7th Summer Festival, which included a music theatre cabaret, a night of opera scenes, and two performances of the full-length opera *Dido and Aeneas* as well as other small performances around Lawrence, KS.

Elizabeth Sampley (MFA Stage Management 2017)

During the summer of 2016, Elizabeth served as the stage manager for *Once Upon a Mattress* at the Leawood Stage Company. She was also the production assistant for *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill* at the Spinning Tree Theatre.

MFA SCENIC DESIGN

Austin Aschbrenner (MFA Scenic Design and Technical Direction 2019)

Austin was part of the stage crew at the Santa Fe Opera during the summer of 2016. He also served as a scenic designer at the New Venture Theatre where he helped design *Hands Up: 7 Playwrights*, *7 Testaments* and *Satchmo at the Waldorf*.

Tristan James (MFA Scenic Design 2018)

During the summer of 2016, Tristan served as a scenic painter for the Heart of America Shakespeare Festival. He also designed scenery for the musical, *Rock of Ages*, and worked as a professional scenic designer with the Forestburgh Playhouse.

Christian Tayler (MFA Scenic Design 2019)

Christian spent the summer of 2016 working as the staff painter with the Arkansas Shakespeare Festival.

Rafael Toribio (MFA Scenic Design 2019)

Rafael served as the scenic designer, master carpenter, and Technical Director for the world premiere of a devised, immersive piece at the El Teatro Campesino in San Juan Bautista, California during the summer of 2016.

MFA COSTUME DESIGN

Caroline Allander (MFA Costume Design 2018)

During the summer of 2016, Caroline designed a fashion show with Paige Beltowski (MFA Costume Design 2018). The collection was called “Tribunes and Their Tongues” and included five unique, new looks. Caroline was able to work with Kansas City’s top fashion minds throughout this process and the collection was a great success.

L.A. Clevenson (MFA Costume Design 2019)

L.A. served as the seamstress for a Nike advertisement for their fall line, which featured Simone Biles. During the summer of 2016, she also had the opportunity to design costumes for the following: *The All Night Strut*, which was produced through the Texas Repertory Theatre, *Working*, which was produced at the Main Street Theatre, and *Ten Ways on a Gun*, which was produced by the Landing Theatre Company.

Gretchen Halle (MFA Costume Design 2017)

During the summer of 2016, Gretchen served as the first hand with the Illinois Shakespeare Festival in Norman, Illinois, for their production of *Hamlet*, a show designed by UMKC Graduates Lauren Roark and Tyler Wilson.



L.A. Clevenson worked as seamstress on a Nike ad campaign featuring Simone Biles



Costume construction by Gretchen Halle for Ophelia in *Hamlet*, Illinois Shakespeare Festival, 2016.



Megan Sells and Duncan McIntyre in *Coriolanus*, Great River Shakespeare Festival, 2016.

PHOTO BY SYDNEY SWANSON

MFA ACTING

Heather Michele Lawler (MFA Acting 2018)

During the summer of 2016, Heather played Ivey Compton in the world premiere of the musical, *Story of the Century*, which was produced through the KC Fringe Festival at the Unicorn Theatre: Levin Stage. In addition to performing, Heather was also able to teach and co-direct a high school intensive titled “Shakespeare Exploration” and “Camp Shakespeare” with UMKC alum, Collin Vorbeck. She had the opportunity to read various roles for the annual Bloomsday Festival play reading of *Bloomsday* for the Kansas City Irish Theatre. Finally, Heather had the opportunity to be the spokesperson for the Route 66 RV Network.

Duncan McIntyre (MFA Acting 2018)

Duncan served as an apprentice actor at the Great River Shakespeare Festival in Winona, Minn., over the summer of 2016. He understudied Duke Senior, Duke Frederick, Silvius Corin, and Lord #1 in their production of *As You Like It*. In addition to those roles, he understudied for the part of the Piano Player and the Chapman/Pastor in *Georama*. Duncan also played the role of Sicinius Velutus in the apprentice production of Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus*.

Ken Sandberg (MFA Acting 2018)

This summer Ken acted in *The Fall of the House of Usher* as part of the Kansas City Fringe Festival, performed at the Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre.

Megan Sells (MFA Acting 2018)

Over the summer of 2016, Megan served as an apprentice actor with the Great River Shakespeare Festival.

MFA LIGHTING DESIGN

Brian Moore (MFA Lighting Design 2019)

Brian served as the APSM, head pyro, rigger, and assistant electrician for the Asia, Australian, and New Zealand tour of *Disney on Ice* during the summer of 2016.

MFA SOUND DESIGN

Jae Shanks (MFA Sound Design 2016)

Jae was the sound technician at the Unicorn Theatre for the production of *Heathers: The Musical*. She ran all the sound and mic elements for a 19 person cast and band. Jae also opened the Unicorn Theatre’s 43rd season as their sound designer on *Hand to God*.

MA THEATRE HISTORY/DRAMATURGY/ PLAYWRITING

Amanda Davison (MA Playwriting 2017)

During the summer of 2016, Amanda wrote and performed in her one-woman play, *Seneca*, which was produced as part of the KC Fringe Festival at the Paul Mesner Puppet Theater.

Whitney Jury (MA Theatre History/ Dramaturgy 2017)

Whitney had the opportunity to be a part of Amanda Davison’s play, *Seneca*, which was produced through the KC Fringe Festival during the summer of 2016. She performed the voiceover of Ezra in the production.

Dalton Pierce (MA Theatre History/ Dramaturgy 2017)

Dalton had the opportunity to work as a stagehand for Amanda Davison’s play, *Seneca*, which was produced as part of the KC Fringe Festival during the summer of 2016. He also worked as co-dramaturg for the Kansas City Repertory Theatre’s production of *Evita* with fellow MA Ethan Zogg.

Ethan Zogg (MA Theatre History/Dramaturgy 2017)

During the summer of 2016, Ethan served as dramaturg for the Kansas City Repertory Theatre’s production of *Evita* with fellow MA Dalton Pierce. He also performed the voiceover for the character Seneca in Amanda Davison’s play, *Seneca*, during the KC Fringe Festival.

PLAYWRITING

Producing PLAYWRIGHTS

by Amanda Davison

In addition to the study of theatre history and dramatic literature, the Master of Arts in Theatre program at UMKC offers an educational track which emphasizes playwriting. Sydney Harvey enrolled this past year in the graduate theatre department to focus on writing plays like her most recent one, *Falling in Love on Stage*. A Kansas City native, Sydney says of her hometown, “The theatre culture in this town is magnificent and feels like one giant community of creative minds inspiring each other. I am excited to produce my own work and see it performed in the city where I live.”

Andrew Hagerty, who graduated with his M.A. in Theatre in spring of 2016, says about his experience studying playwriting under Professor Frank Higgins, “His teaching style was really conducive to helping my creativity expand and learning how to apply fundamental philosophies to my own process and beliefs. I was able to dig in and discover what is theatrically important to me, and I was able to share that with audiences.” Among Andrew’s other accomplishments, this past year the Shawnee Mission Education



Marica Davis and Catherine Mungai in *A Night of Growing Up*
by Andrew Hagerty at UMKC, The Playwright Project
PHOTO BY MICAH THOMPSON

Foundation commissioned him to write a play for the hearing impaired. His play, *We Share a Language*, was performed by students from Westridge Middle School and the Kansas School for the Deaf in American Sign Language with shadow interpreting.

The playwriting class is unique in that it is open to students at the university from various disciplines. Sabrina Verozci, a Creative Writing graduate student, has achieved considerable success as a result of Frank Higgins’ methods. Sabrina says, “Frank Higgins is just amazing to work with. I’ve never had a teacher who was so generous with his time and resources.” Her play *The Fledgling* is a finalist in the Adirondack

Shakespeare Company’s 2016 Dramatic Writing contest and is being workshopped at the HAMLET Conference in upstate New York this October.

“The theatre culture in this town is magnificent and feels like one giant community of creative minds inspiring each other.”

– Sydney Harvey,
Playwriting



Cast of *Immeasurable Heaven*. UMKC Theatre, 2016.
PHOTO BY BRIAN PAULETTE



Lighting design by Victor En Yu Tan for *A Dream of Red Pavilions*
Pan Asian Repertory Theatre, 2016.
PHOTO COURTESY OF VICTOR EN YU TAN

LIGHTING

Projections IN PLACE

by Calan Welder

There comes a time in every painter's life when they break open a fresh set of brushes, every sculptor a chisel, every architect a rule. Improving their tools gives artists breathing room to focus on their expression. So it is with UMKC Theatre, whose lighting department upgraded their lighting and projection systems, broadening student artists' toolkits while adding a new dimension to UMKC productions.

Investing in 20 state of the art LED fixtures, UMKC Theatre ushers in a new age in color mixing and design theory for its students that translates into design opportunities in the industry.

As film shifts from traditional fixtures to LEDs, filmmakers seek out skilled designers like Steve Dubay (1999) who has made a business of renting his lighting

control console to filmmakers. With a better understanding of LEDs' complex controls than current gaffers, Dubay is tasked with the design and control of lighting effects in his projects while working directly with directors.

Along with new LED fixtures and access to Kansas City Repertory Theatre's 20K projector, UMKC Theatre has a growing projection inventory with six long and three short throw projectors capable of a variety of effects. And no projection designer would be left without their companion software. On a computer dedicated to projections, the Adobe suite supplements an array of media server programs like Arkaos and Isadora for creating advanced effects, creating a near limitless manipulation of media content.

But the pride of programming is in UMKC Theatre's use of The Green Hippo, a powerful control

module used in the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics. The hippotizer allows for real-time changes to projection effects on virtually any system and can be run from a light board, making it an ideal module for developing skills in cross-discipline design.

The hippotizer is used in theatres nationwide, but its high learning curve leaves technicians in the know in short supply. UMKC Theatre trains students on the module, and has trained the country's foremost experts: Adam Dunaway (1998) and Jeffery Cady (1996). Cady returned this year to teach a class in projection technology while designing lights and projections for KC Rep, and Dunaway has become a prized projection designer in corporate circles for his use of the system.

Designers also find themselves in high demand while at the university. The Conservatory of Music and Dance always has lighting students design its events, dance concerts, and operas – a chance for students to put their study in dance and opera lighting into practice.

The study sticks, and some students make their careers in dance or opera, while others put their skills to work for concert lighting. Now with D.K. Production Design in Chicago, Brandon Clark (2013) made his professional debut designing lights for Missy Elliot on the Isle of Wright before touring Japan with Carly Rae Jepsen. Julian Pike (2003) worked for three years as the assistant light supervisor for the Lyric Opera of Chicago and went on to become the resident designer for the Chicago Opera Theatre.

A working professional and head of the lighting department, Victor En Yu Tan frequently



Lighting design by Victor En Yu Tan for *Black Pearl Sings!*. Spinning Tree Theatre, 2016.
PHOTO BY JEFF RUMANS

designs for major regional theatres across the country and off-Broadway theatres in NYC, with his students assisting. This winter, Tan and all of his first years traveled to the Pan-Asian Repertory Theatre in New York City, where he designed *Dream of the Red Pavillions*. Lighting students also assist professional lighting and projection designers for the KC Rep season. Most lighting students graduate with half a dozen or more professional credits from these opportunities, as well as with Kansas City theatres like Unicorn Theatre, the Coterie, and the Living Room.

With these shows under their belts, students take their work to the Hemsley Annual Lighting

Portfolio Review, as they have every year since its founding in 2004. The same students excel at the Hemsley Lighting Intern Fellowship competition, with back-to-back winners in 2000 and 2001, and seven other finalists to date.

Producing a body of talent in so many areas, it's no wonder the UMKC campus attracts such distinguished guest designers as Donald Holder. With more than 45 of its 50 lighting alumni still working in the industry – whether in stage or concert lighting, in projections, or in education, UMKC Theatre continues to graduate professional artists well practiced beyond their years.



Shane Rowse

PHOTO BY MANON HALLIBURTON



Emily Peterson and Phillip Shinn in *Picnic*,
Kansas City Actors Theatre, 2013.

PHOTO BY BRIAN PAULETTE

S P O T L I G H T

Teaching Theatre TECHNOLOGY

by Calan Welder

For over sixty years, UMKC Theatre has devoted itself to training tomorrow's theatre artists by creating a supportive relationship between students and working professionals. The university continues the tradition today by inviting seasoned specialists to guide students as they develop their craft.

Joining UMKC Theatre's creative team this year, Shane Rowse has worked as a designer and technician in Kansas City area theatres like The American Heartland Theatre and Kansas City Actors Theatre for over 30 years. A prolific professional, Rowse has mounted hundreds of lighting designs – both his own and those of other designers – giving him the insight to guide students through the organization and execution of complex designs.

Though this was his first year teaching majors in a classroom setting, Rowse has trained technicians for years, developing a unique teaching method steeped in practical application that employs his extensive experience as a lighting technician and light board programmer

to help students develop the skills needed to meet the demands of complex design challenges.

With a temporal design discipline like lighting, document creation is an integral part of the design process. Rowse stresses the potential for the tools designers use to communicate their design ideas, such as computer drafting programs, to become powerful creative tools when students develop the foundation needed to use them to their full potential.

One of Rowse's emphases is in the use of Vectorworks 3D beam modeling, which allows designers to better visualize their lighting focus in the early stages of the design process, enabling them to make informed changes when troubleshooting their designs.

"These tools allow the designers to replace a lot of guess work with calculated decision making," said Rowse, "and the outcome is that designers are more effective, more efficient, and more confident both as they create their plots and as they execute their lighting focus in the theatre".

Rowse also promotes an attitude of inclusion to build a broader community that supports



From my Hometown, American Heartland Theatre, 2005
PHOTO BY SHANE ROWSE



The Gin Game, Kansas City Actors Theatre, 2015
PHOTO BY BRIAN PAULETTE

working artists. As an eyewitness to Kansas City’s exponential artistic growth, Rowse sees opportunities in the theatre expanding, and like UMKC Theatre, sees a bright future for young theatre professionals throughout the country.

Apart from teaching classes, Rowse serves as an invaluable member to UMKC Theatre’s collaborative team, taking on many of the lighting department’s directive duties. Under Rowse’s supervision, the lighting inventory has been reorganized, making instruments more accessible to designers by organizing students’ sharing of lighting and projection equipment for design projects. Rowse also serves as a liaison between lighting students and the Kansas City

Repertory Theatre, managing opportunities for students to work with the KC Rep.

“I’ve never been happier about having a partner,” said professor of lighting design and head of the lighting department, Victor En Yu Tan. “I was flying solo for over 20 years, and having Shane here has been a huge help. Under his supervision, the students are better prepared for the work calls while the hangs and focuses are handled more efficiently. With his extensive background in the technical theatre as well as his long career as a professional lighting designer, Shane is an excellent and invaluable additional mentor for the lighting students.”

“I’ve never been happier about having a partner. I was flying solo for over 20 years, and having Shane here has been a huge help.”

-Victor En Yu Tan



Katherine Gehrlein working backstage at Heart of America Shakespeare Festival

S T A G E
M A N A G E M E N T

The Personality
OF A STAGE MANAGER

by Whitney Jury

Katherine Gehrlein is in her second year with the MFA Stage Management program at UMKC. When she is not out in the field exploring and enhancing the world of stage management, you can find her doing office hours at the Olson Performing Arts Center on campus, always ready to help out when needed. While Katherine has found success within the UMKC Theatre program, stage management was not her initial career choice.

“While in undergrad, [stage management] was something I fell into because in that theatre program you did everything. I loved it, but I felt like it was too late for me to drop my education major by the time I realized it was something I really enjoyed.”

Katherine spent the four years following her graduation teaching theatre at a local middle school. While her job title did not specify “stage manager,” the tasks she was performing and the requirements of her teaching position brought out many of the same personality traits she remembers were flourishing while she was doing stage management jobs at her undergraduate



Angela Hagenbach with Ladies of *Folies Bergere*, Spinning Tree Theatre, 2016.
PHOTO BY J. ROBERT SCHRAEDER



Cinnamon Shultz and Thomas Gorrebeeck in *Streetcar Named Desire*,
Kansas City Actors Theatre, 2016. PHOTO BY BRIAN PAULETTE

school. “A stage manager needs to be confident and approachable. Everyone in the show is looking to you for organization.”

Once Katherine realized stage management was where she would flourish the most, she left her teaching job to pursue her MFA at UMKC. “It’s important to emphasize I am always an educator. Don’t be afraid to take the risk and be open to change and changing the way you do things.”

Katherine’s success through UMKC was made possible by the hands-on opportunities offered by the stage management program. Sadie DeSantis, Assistant Teaching Professor of Stage Management and head of the program, believes that becoming a stage manager is possible for anyone with the right personality. Sadie graduated from the program herself and works to

enhance the experience for her students.

“Skill sets and professionalism can be learned, experience can be gained, but a stage manager needs a certain adaptable personality no matter his or her background. The hands-on experience gained from the program is the best part, because you are able to work with several companies and stage managers from different demographics and experience levels in only two years. Because they work with a wide range of professionals, students can observe the kind of personality and confidence that is needed to become a professional stage manager. Confidence comes from feeling secure in one’s own knowledge, which in turn allows students to showcase their true talents, true selves, and not be afraid to get out there and make connections.” At UMKC,

students get to work with professional American Guild of Musical Artists and Actors Equity Association stage managers from venues across the city and earn weeks towards obtaining their Equity Card.

Within her first two years of the program, Katherine has had the opportunity to work as stage manager or production assistant with such professional theatres as Unicorn Theatre, Spinning Tree Theatre, Kansas City Actors Theatre, and the Kansas City Repertory Theatre. Her choice to shift her career by attending graduate school will continue to enhance the future she has as a stage manager. “Don’t be afraid to take the risk. It is going to be what you make it, but if you never take the risk you will never know,” she said.



Amanda Davison in *Seneca*, KC Fringe Festival
PHOTO BY TROY DIEHL

K C F R I N G E F E S T I V A L

Independent **ARTISTS**

by Dalton Pierce

Every summer, Kansas City becomes home to an 11-day event promoting the independent theatre scene. The KC Fringe Festival, which has continued for the past 12 years, gives local artists an opportunity to showcase work that they might not otherwise get an opportunity to present. Several theatres in the city offer their venues for this event and a host of different shows can be seen, from revisions of classics, to existentialist science fiction dramas. The MFA and MA Programs at UMKC Theatre had several participants this past summer, displaying the wealth of talent that is to be expected from the department. These students were Ken Sandberg, Heather Lawler and Amanda Davison.

Ken Sandberg (MFA Acting 2018) performed in an adaptation of Edgar Allen Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*. Sandberg secured his work through UMKC faculty member Jeff Church, who connected him with Heidi Van who runs The Fishtank, a local KC theatre which promotes independent theatre. "This one was a unique process," states Sandberg "With only a couple weeks to rehearse, most of our time was spent working on the physical stuff, and the text work was largely left up to us." Sandberg notes that he had an excellent team, one of the key factors to putting together a successful Fringe show.

One of the most successful shows at this year's Fringe was *Story of the Century*, a one-act musical which won the "Best in Venue" award at the Unicorn Theatre. This show featured, among others, Heather Lawler, a 3rd year MFA Acting student. Like many Fringe shows, this production was a workshop and the creators intend to turn it into a full two-act musical later



The Fall of the House of Usher, KC Fringe Festival
PHOTO BY BOB PAISLEY



Heather Lawler and cast in *Story of the Century*, KC Fringe Festival
PHOTO BY TRACY MAJKOL

on. Shows like this exist because of the wonderful opportunities given by the Fringe Festival. Lawler stated that “there was a lot of improv scene work in the rehearsal room, and my training from our acting classes was vital to this openness and freedom to explore.”

Amanda Davison (MA Playwriting 2017) put together a one-woman show titled *Seneca*, which depicts a futuristic society that keeps one young woman from discovering who she really is. Davison states that her professors are a large part of her success. Her connections with these professionals is what led to her success as an artist. Davison notes on the KC theatre scene, “Part of what makes Kansas City so great is the incredible amount of enthusiasm for local plays. Producing, writing, and acting in a one-person show is challenging, but the atmosphere of creative engagement you get from KC Fringe really helped”.

These students are only a few of the many artists gracing Kansas City right now. The KC Fringe Festival promotes new works and gives performers like Sandberg, Lawler, and Davison an opportunity to create something unique. They all have different reasons for participating in the festival, but they are united in their love of creating fresh theatre.



Amanda Davison in *Seneca*, KC Fringe Festival
PHOTO BY MARK MCCURNIN



Costume design by Lauren T. Roark for *Hamlet*. Illinois Shakespeare Festival, 2016.
PHOTO COURTESY OF LAUREN T. TOARK

A L U M N I

Alumni at Work: PROFESSIONAL APPLICATION

SOUND DESIGN

Kristian Ball (MFA Sound Design 2007) has been teaching Sound Art at Muhlenberg College in Allentown PA, has created sound designs for Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, and has worked as an independent audio contractor for music and corporate events in NYC and DC. He serves as a member of the Education Committee of TSDCA.

Joe Concha (MFA Sound Design 2012) has spent the past few years designing sound for the gaming industry. Most recently he was sound designer (largely responsible for voice-over, localization, and implementation) on *Skylanders Imaginators*, developed by Toys For Bob (Activision-Blizzard) and released October 2016. It won Best Family Game at E3 (Electronic Entertainment Expo) this year.

Ryan Kleeman (MFA Sound Design 2006) is working as a recording/mixing/mastering engineer and sound designer at Studio Guapo, Overlap Studio, and Ghostcat Studios. He recently started teaching at the California Jazz Conservatory in Berkeley, a new audio production program in collaboration with Fantasy Studios. He mixed a feature documentary for the San Francisco Chronicle *Last Men Standing* and has mastered many albums, including ones for Swiss Artist Tilia, Pattern for Ambulance Recordings, The Living Earth Show, Dance Music for New Amsterdam Records and Andy Meyerson, and My Side of the Story for Slash Records.

So Jung Park (MFA Sound Design 2003) is a freelance sound designer in Seoul, South Korea. She has worked with Australian theatre group Imaginary Theatre. *I See You* was presented at the International Association of Theater for Children and Young People Festival in Seoul after its premiere in Brisbane, Australia.

Sarah Putts (MFA Sound Design 2015) is currently in the Chicagoland area working as a sound designer/engineer. Current credits include: *Grizzly Mama* with Rivendell Theatre, *The Way She Spoke* with Greenhouse Theatre, *Dryland* with Rivendell Theatre Ensemble, *The New Sincerity* with Theater Wit, *Beautiful Autistic* with Chicago Dramatists, *Rutherford's Travels* with Pegasus Theatre Company, and *[Trans]formation*

with Living Canvas. She works freelance on a regular basis with: Sound Production & Lighting, Writers Theatre, Dreamtek, the Ruth Page Center for the Arts, and the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts in Skokie.

Joey Skidmore (MFA Sound Design 2004) completed editing, sound design and music for the samurai sword film *Smoke Tribes*. He produced the new album for the French band Les Fossoyeurs (the Gravediggers) and is completing a documentary film about semi-forgotten anomaly Jim Dandy of Black Oak, Arkansas.

John Story (MFA Sound Design 2003) in addition to regional design, recording, and consulting, has done work that has been featured at various international theatre festivals from Europe to Australia, including a run at the 2013 Edinburgh Fringe.

Rusty Wandall (MFA Sound Design 2008) recently started his ninth year as the head of sound design at Webster University and the resident sound designer for the Repertory Theatre of Saint Louis. This past March, Wandall was honored along with Professor Greg Mackender with the 2016 St. Louis Theater Circle Award for Outstanding Sound Design of a Play, for the St. Louis Shakespeare Festival production of *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Eric Webster (MFA Sound Design 1998) is actively involved with the IA Local 31 in Kansas City, where he serves as master carpenter for Starlight Theatre, mixing events at Folly Theatre, Kauffmann Performing Arts Center and Sprint Center, and teaching training sessions for technology and safety certifications for the union members.

LIGHTING DESIGN

Steve Dubay (MFA Lighting Design 1999) is the lighting console programmer (Rigging and B Unit) for The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts of the United States, Local 479 in Atlanta, Georgia. Feature films he worked on this past year include *Passengers*, *Baby Driver*, *Fast and Furious 8*, *Life of the Party*, and *Jumanji*. He also is the LED programmer for New York artist Grimanesa Amoros.

Jeffrey Cady (MFA Lighting Design 1996) designed lighting at the Kansas City Repertory Theatre including *Christmas Carol*, *Sticky Traps*, *Sunday in the Park with George*, and *Evita*. He did projection designs for *Hair*, *Christmas Carol*, and *The Roof of the World*. He also did designs for *The Great Divorce* in New York, and *Chicago* at the New Theatre in KC. He designed projections for *Rebecca* at the LG Arts Center in Seoul and was the head programmer and engineer for *American Idiot* on Broadway. He is the head projection programmer for Jason Aldean, Jennifer Lopez, and Imagine Dragons.



Costume design by Lauren Gaston for *My Fair Lady*, Gulfshore Playhouse, 2016.
PHOTO BY DAVID L. ARSENAULT

COSTUME DESIGN

Genevieve V. Beller (MFA Costume Design 2013) designed *In the Soundless Awe* for the New Light Theatre Project (New York), *Informed Consent* for the Gulfshore Playhouse (Naples, Fla.), and *STEAM Plays Project* for the MCVTS School of the Arts in partnership with the McCarter Theatre. She partnered with Kate Mott to design the summer season at Summer Repertory Theatre in Santa Rosa, California. Currently, she is designing costumes for *Constellations* at the Gulfshore Playhouse, *Two of Us* for Access Theatre in New York City, and *The Happy Elf* for the Orlando Repertory Theatre.

Lauren Gaston (MFA Costume Design 2014) is a proud new member of United Scenic Artists, Local 829. She is thrilled to tackle her first union job this spring with *The Merchant of Venice* at Gulfshore Playhouse in Naples, Florida! Ms. Gaston recently opened a production of *My Fair Lady* and is currently designing four one acts for The Drama League's 2016 DirectorFest in New York City. In addition to design work in and outside of New York, Ms. Gaston works part-time at The Juilliard School as a freelancer, most recently building costumes for Austin Scarlett's design of *La Calisto*.

Whitney Locher (MFA Costume Design 2005) lives in New York on famed 42nd Street. Current productions she is working on include *Into The Woods* at the Menier Chocolate Factory in London. Her recent Off-Broadway credits include *Dead Dog Park* at



Logan Black with Amy Attaway in *I'm not Rappaport*, Kansas City Actors Theatre
 PHOTO BY BRIAN PAULETTE



Ryan J. Zirngibl and cast in *Cabaret* at the University of Wisconsin
 PHOTO COURTESY OF RYAN J. ZIRNGIBL

59E59 Theaters. Regional credits include *Measure For Measure* at the Long Wharf Theatre in Connecticut and *The Underpants* and *Velocity of Autumn* for White Heron Theatre Company (Nantucket, Mass.). Whitney is currently preparing *Sex With Strangers* for Cleveland Play House and the U.S. National Tour of *Into The Woods*.

Kate Mincer (MFA Costume Design 2008) recently designed her 50th show, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and is currently working on a production of *The Birds* at the 59E59 Theater in New York City. This past year, she co-designed costumes for the New York City Children's Theater, for *Young Charles Dickens*, *Ballerina Swan*, and *Wringer*. She created dark fairy tale costumes for *The Secret in the Wings* and opened *Julius Caesar* at Opera House Arts in Stonington, Maine. Kate was part of the design team for *Romeo + Juliet + Zombies* at New Ohio Theatre in New York City, which received a NY Innovative Theatre Award for Best Innovative Design.

Lauren T. Roark (MFA Costume Design 2014) currently resides in Beloit WI, serving as the costume shop manager/costume designer at Beloit College. She most recently designed *Hamlet* at the Illinois Shakespeare Festival and earlier this year designed *Satchel Paige and the Kansas City Swing!* (which had its world premiere at UMKC in 2013), a co-production with The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis and Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park. Lauren is also a proud new member of United Scenic Artists, Local 829.

ACTING

Logan Black (MFA Acting 2014) was most recently seen as the Cowboy in the Kansas City Actors Theatre's *I'm Not Rappaport* and as the Playwright in the Unicorn's production of *An Octoroon*, which featured many other UMKC alumni. He was also seen at the Fish Tank, The National World War I Museum, Johnson County Community College and Bridge Street Theater in New York state in *Bond: A Soldier and His Dog*, his one-man show about a year in Iraq with his bomb sniffing partner Diego.

Greg Brostrom (MFA Acting 2012) currently lives in Brooklyn and has acted in several roles this past year including in *Ghost Light*, a *Macbeth*/Japanese ghost story hybrid and *The Good Neighbor*. He has been cast in a leading role with Triad Stage (Greensboro NC) in their holiday show called *Beautiful Star*. He has filmed a small role on the Starz show *Power*, and is performing in a showcase called *The Boy in the Painting* with Playthings Theatre Company (New York, NY).

Angela Cristantello (MFA Acting 2008) has migrated from New York City to Los Angeles, and has been working steadily. Most recently, she was featured in a recurring role on ABC's/ Marvel's *Agent Carter*, and has shot a handful of national commercials, including a Progressive ad that is airing presently.

Patrick Du Laney (MFA Acting 2009) played Mr. Zero in *The Adding Machine* for the Hypocrites (Chicago) for which he was nominated for Best Actor by Time Out Chicago. He is playing Eddie Carbone in *The View from the Bridge* for Riverside Theatre (Iowa City). He currently teaches Acting at Coe College in Cedar Rapids.

Kelly Gibson (MFA Acting 2012) recently played Madge in *Picnic* at Palm Beach Dramaworks (West Palm Beach, Fla.). In New York, Kelly is involved with various projects including a short new play *Blue into Black*, being a reader for casting offices, as well as reading the role of Betty Davis in development of a new musical *Swing Sisters*. In November, Kelly will take part in a 10-actor workshop in Costa Rica, founded and lead by Alaine Alldaffer, the casting director at Playwrights Horizons (New York, N.Y.).

Billicia Hines (MFA Acting 2004) is an assistant professor and is director of the Black Theatre Program at Wayne State University. Recently she was awarded a Michigan Heritage Grant from the Michigan Humanities Council to work with students at Old Redford Academy, where she is helping her students develop a theatre piece inspired by the 1967 Detroit Rebellion. She also recently finished directing the one-man show *Mr. Joy* by Daniel Beaty at Theatre Nova in Ann Arbor.

Hollis McCarthy (MFA Acting 1990) is currently playing Ross in *Macbeth* at Northern Stage in Vermont, and played Cassius this summer in *Julius Caesar* at Swine Palace Theatre in Louisiana. Last season she played the President of Ireland on CBS' *Blue Bloods*.

Ben Newman (MFA Acting 2007) was a recurring guest star on NBC's *Grimm*, Seasons 5 and 6. He was in Sarah Ruhl's *Orlando* at Profile Theatre and in *A Doll's House* at Shaking the Tree Theatre, both in Portland, OR. He is set to act in *Astoria: Part One* at Portland Center Stage. Ben is a faculty member at Portland Actors Conservatory where he teaches Mask, Clown, Shakespeare, and directs the graduation showcase.

Saren Nofs Snyder (MFA Acting 2002) teaches acting at the Chicago Academy for the Arts, a private arts high school. She was most recently seen as Regan in *King Lear* and Lady Percy/Doll Tearsheet in *Henry IV, part 2* in the 2015 season of the Utah Shakespeare Festival.

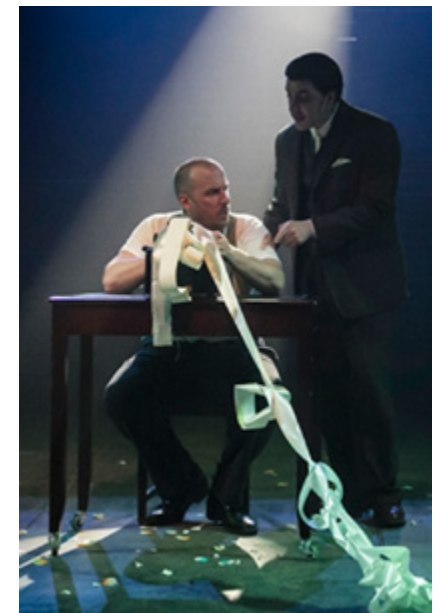
Dina Thomas (MFA Acting 2011) has been busy this last year playing the role of Jess in *Everything You Touch* at the Contemporary American Theater Festival in West Virginia, returning to Off-Broadway to play Marlo Thomas's daughter-in-law in *Clever Little Lies* and reprising her role of Lisette in David Ives's *Metromaniacs* at the Old Globe Theater in San Diego.



Ben Newman with Nick Ferrucci in *True West* at Profile Theatre
PHOTO BY KINDER



Dina Thomas and Adam LeFevre in *The Metromaniacs* at the Old Globe
PHOTO BY JIM COX



Patrick Du Laney in *Adding Machine: A Musical*, *The Hypocrites*, 2016.
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE HYPOCRITES



Dramaturg Alyson Germinder with Bob Linebarger in *Hand to God*, Unicorn Theatre
PHOTO BY NICK SAWIN

MASTER OF ARTS

Tanya Barber Dugas (MA Theater 2010) has been the in-house graphic designer for Taproot Theatre Company in Seattle since January 2011. She has also done some acting, teaching, directing, and a bit of playwriting for Taproot.

Alyson Germinder (MA Theatre 2015) is the associate producer and dramaturg for Heart of America Shakespeare Festival as well as literary manager and dramaturg for Unicorn Theatre. Alyson's dramaturgy work has been seen at the Shakespeare Festival (*Twelfth Night*, *The Merchant of Venice*), Unicorn (*Hand to God*, *The Whale*), and Kansas City Actors Theatre (Seasons 11 and 12).

Andrew Hagerty (MA Theatre 2016) was a finalist for Project Playwright 4.0 in Kansas City. His short play *A Night of Growing Up* was performed at UMKC in the Spring of 2016. His ten-minute play *Rocking Horse* was read at the Guthrie Theatre for the Kennedy Center American Theatre Festival Region 8. He also wrote a play for the first Kansas City One-Minute Play Festival.

Lori Lee Triplett (MA Theater 1988) is the Artistic Director for LLT Productions in Overland Park, Kansas. She recently directed *Seussical: The Musical*.

Melonnie Walker (MA Theatre 2016) presented a paper at Howard University for the August Wilson Society.

TECHNICAL DIRECTION

Matt Carter (MFA Technical Direction 2014) is an Automation Engineer at Hudson Scenic Studio in New York City. At Hudson, he works on scenic fabrication projects for Broadway shows, Disney Theatrical, and international Disney parks.

Matt Francis (MFA Theatrical Design and Technology 2012) has been the Goodspeed Musicals Technical Director for four seasons. Matt previously was the Assistant Technical Director at Goodspeed, Lead Carpenter at the Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Technical Director at Barrington Stage Company, and Carpenter at the Barnstormers Theatre.

Steve Haase (MFA Technical Direction 2013) built sets for *King Lear* and *Love's Labours Lost* last year at Calvin College (Grand Rapids, Michigan). This year in his new position as Technical Director for the Van Singel Fine Arts Center in Byron Center, Michigan, he will be bringing in five professional shows as well as building the scenery for *A Christmas Story* and *The Wizard of Oz*. He is also currently working as the head of sound and lighting at his church and doing freelance consulting in the Grand Rapids Area.

Jason Rasinowich (MFA Technical Direction 2014) assists with the design and commissioning of theatrical equipment as a Consultant for Theatre Projects. Over the past year, he has assisted with the commissioning and opening of performing spaces at Eastern Connecticut State University, the Whitney Museum of Modern Art (New York City), and the new Hancher Auditorium at the University of Iowa.

SCENIC DESIGN

Alexander LaFrance (MFA Scenic Design and Technology 2015) was hired as concept creator, librettist, and designer for an original ballet to be produced by the Cincinnati Ballet as part of their 2017-18 season. While initially hired as a professional intern by Walt Disney Creative Entertainment, he is now on an extended contract and worked on the opening ceremony of Disneyland Shanghai. He has worked on *Jedi Training: Trials of the Temple* and a recently opened immersive Halloween at Hong Kong Disneyland.

Jeff Ridenour (MFA Scenic Design 2014) was the assistant scenic designer on the new *Nutcracker* ballet for the Kansas City Ballet. He was a guest designer/instructor for *Cabaret* at Austin College. In opera he has now designed a total of eight professional productions with director Fenlon Lamb, including *La Traviata* for the Finger Lakes Opera in upstate New York, and *Suor Angelica/Gianni Schicchi* for UMKC. In January 2017, he is designing an immersive scenic installation/set for Elvis Costello's *The Juliet Letters* for the Lyric Opera of Kansas City with Lamb.

Sarah White (MFA Scenic Design 2015) designed eleven productions this past year, including the world premiere of *Puddin' and the Grumble*, an original musical about hunger in America today, which premiered at the Lied Center for Performing Arts in Lincoln, NE. She currently teaches Scenic Design and Painting at Hollins University in Roanoke, Virginia.



Scenic design by Jeff Ridenour *Suor Angelica* UMKC Conservatory of Music, 2016.
PHOTO BY JEFF RIDENOUR

Ryan J. Zirngibl (MFA Scenic Design 2009) designed sets, lights and projections for over two dozen shows at half a dozen different companies this past year. He has surpassed 100 professional designs since graduating from UMKC.

STAGE MANAGEMENT

Sara Beatty (MFA Stage Management 2007) is the event and scheduling supervisor for the Kauffman Center for Performing Arts in Kansas City, MO. She has been at the Kauffman Center since 2012.

April Brewer (MFA Stage Management 2015) is an Equity stage manager currently living in Kansas City. This past season, she worked on four productions with the Kansas City Repertory Theatre.

Jennifer DeSimone (MFA Stage Management 2009) has recently been hired as assistant director of the education production at Carnegie Hall, and is continuing to produce and manage events for the New York Times and other clients as time allows.

Emily E. Duffin (MFA Stage Management 2014) was the third assistant stage manager this past year on *The Merry Widow* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. She was the second Assistant stage manager on the world premiere opera *JFK* at Fort Worth Opera. This past summer she worked with the Grant Park Music Festival Orchestra in Chicago as their stage manager. She will also be joining the San Antonio Opera team on *Carmen*, and Palm Beach Opera for their season.



Sarah White's scenic design for *Puddin' and the Grumble* at Clinton Elementary
PHOTO BY SARAH WHITE

Victoria Frank (MFA Stage Management 2009) worked on *The Witches of Venice*, the American premiere of the Philip Glass opera with Opera Saratoga (Saratoga Springs, New York state), *Three Musketeers*, *The Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake* and a mixed repertory production with the Kansas City Ballet. She is in her fourth season as the stage manager for the Kansas City Ballet.

Daniel J. Hanson (MFA Stage Management 2005) is currently the production stage manager at Skylight Music Theatre in Milwaukee. He has spent the last year as stage manager in various theaters in both Milwaukee and Chicago.

Matthew Henrickson (MFA Stage Management 2015) has stage-managed productions at KC MeltingPot and MET KC, where he was the production manager for their 2015–16 season. He was the stage manager for *Grand Illusion*, which won Best of Venue for the 2015 KC Fringe Festival. He is currently the production stage manager for *Songs of the Great War* at Musical Theater Heritage in Kansas City.

Morgan Lea Palmer (MFA Stage Management 2016) is currently working as a production manager for Celebrity Cruises Ltd., sailing through the West Coast, Alaska, Japan, South Korea, and Central and South America.

Sarah Zsohar (MFA Stage Management 2005) is the production and facilities associate for Lyric Opera of Kansas City, starting on her sixth season.

C O S T U M E

The Kismet of **S U C C E E D I N G** **T O G E T H E R**

by Ellen Hayek

When Katherine Mott (MFA Costume Design 2014) and Genevieve V. Beller (MFA Costume Design 2013) graduated from the University of Missouri-Kansas City they could not have known that they would soon be working together professionally. Although both recent UMKC graduates, Mott and Beller seemed to be each separately on successful but disparate tracks. Mott was working in Colorado and Beller was in New York. The two graduates, however, both applied to work at the Summer Repertory Theater at Santa Rosa Junior College in California. Although they had interviewed and applied separately, they had no idea that the other was interested in the design position. It was actually Mott who found out first.

Says Mott, "I asked the artistic director, James Newman, who else was being interviewed and he said Genevieve Beller. I told him what a great designer she is and how well we had worked together in the past. He ended up hiring both of us! We did five shows in a seven-week build. I was designing one musical and two stage plays as well as running the costume shop, while Genevieve was doing two musicals and one stage play. We also had



Nice Work If You Can Get It, Summer Repertory Theatre 2016 Costumes by Genevieve Beller
PHOTO BY TOM CHOWN



Costume sketches by Genevieve Beller for *Nice Work If You Can Get It*, Summer Repertory Theatre 2016.



Rock of Ages, Summer Repertory Theatre 2016 Costumes by Genevieve Beller
PHOTO BY TOM CHOWN



Boeing Boeing, Summer Repertory Theatre 2016 Costumes by Katherine Mott
PHOTO BY TOM CHOWN

ten undergraduate stitchers working with us. It was intense.” Despite the tall order, the two women had strong allies in each other and the shows ran smoothly and successfully. The MFA costume students are routinely told that after they graduate, they will be nationally competitive for most jobs within the costume field. There is always a twinge of student disbelief in this notion, but living out this proposition first-hand was undeniable proof for Mott and Beller. Even though based in New York and Colorado, when applying for this West Coast design job, the two UMKC grads were considered by the artistic director to be the best applicants, and consequently hired.

When asked about what helped their careers both the women say that an advantage that they had over others was having an education in both design and technology.

As stated by Beller, “Being educated in both design and tech meant the difference between

surviving and thriving in the theatre community. My two-pronged education allows me when I am designing to see the technical side of any situation and to solve problems that might present themselves. It also allows me to communicate on the technical level, and that makes the process so much smoother and easier.”

Beller also commented that she appreciated the camaraderie that Professors Lindsay W. Davis and Sarah M. Oliver promote in the UMKC costume department.

“Lindsay and Sarah foster an environment of open communication so there were no hang ups between students. When Kate and I were working together, both at school and this summer, I could count on her to be honest with me and tell me when I was being stubborn or ridiculous. You need someone like that working with you.”

Beller believes that part of this comes from the fact that she was educated not just as a student

but also as a person, and Mott concurred. Beller explained that the costume department also assisted their students by helping form a network of both past and present students. This is achieved by inviting past students to come to the portfolio presentations of current students at various national venues.

Says Beller, “One of the first jobs that I got in New York was at a place called Parsons-Meares Ltd, where a former student, Megan Turek, was working and that made my progress go easier since they already knew about the good UMKC work ethic.”

Through both their education and the connections UMKC Theatre has given them, these two recent grads seem to have already begun establishing themselves in the professional costume design world. They are confident that just as their friendship has continued throughout the years, their success will also.



David Ruis, class of 2016.

“I’ve always had an end-goal of professorship on some level or another, but Dr. Londré’s guidance, both in the classroom and during side coaching sessions, truly inspired me to take this next step.”

– Collin Vorbeck, class of 2016

MASTER OF ARTS

Preparing FUTURE PH.D.s

by Amanda Davison

Students from the Master of Arts in Theatre program at the University of Missouri-Kansas City are flourishing in Ph.D. programs across the country. With the opportunity to learn from internationally respected professors like Dr. Felicia Londré as well as opportunities to gain dramaturgy experience at professional theatres like the Kansas City Repertory Theatre, universities across the country receive prospective doctoral students from UMKC’s graduate theatre program as the highly qualified scholars they are.

From the 2016 class, Collin Vorbeck and David Ruis were both accepted into Ph.D. programs. David Ruis is attending the University of Kansas, where he is co-chair of KU’s Theatre Graduate Students Organization and is serving as dramaturg for

several productions, including Sarah Ruhl’s *Late, a Cowboy Song* under the mentorship of Dr. Jane Barnette at KU, as well as for Angelina Weld Grimké’s *Rachel* at the KC MeltingPot Theatre under the direction of Dr. Nicole Hodges Persley.

Collin Vorbeck started his first year at Texas Tech University to work towards his Ph.D., and is currently acting in a production of the musical *Heathers: The Musical*. He was drawn to Texas Tech because its program emphasizes the necessity of interdisciplinary work. “I’ve always had an end-goal of professorship on some level or another,” Collin says, “but Dr. Londré’s guidance, both in the classroom and during side coaching sessions, truly inspired me to take this next step.”

Three other graduates of the UMKC Masters in Theatre program have recently obtained their Ph.D.s: two at the University

“My time at UMKC was, without a doubt, a positive, life-changing experience. There are so many elements of the UMKC experience that have made me who I am.”

-Amanda Dawson Boyle, class of 2012



Amanda Dawson Boyle, class of 2012
PHOTO BY MANON HALLIBURTON

of Missouri-Columbia and one at the University of Kansas. This past May, Dr. Andy Pierce (2007) obtained his Ph.D. from MU. He is currently the education coordinator at Starlight Theatre, where he has been for the past ten years in different capacities. His position allows him to be part of twelve different education programs, working with five-year-old campers all the way up to college-aged interns. Dr. Pierce says, “attending UMKC was the best choice of my professional and academic career.”

Dr. Amanda Dawson (Boyle) from the class of 2012 obtained her Ph.D. this past spring from the

University of Kansas. Currently, she is an assistant professor of speech and theatre at Brescia University in Owensboro, Kentucky. Dr. Dawson says, “My time at UMKC was, without a doubt, a positive, life-changing experience. There are so many elements of the UMKC experience that have made me who I am. For starters, Dr. Londré quickly became my mentor and remains in that role to this day. She taught me a passion for theatre and dramaturgy that I could not have imagined. I met a group of theatre artists that today remain some of my closest friends.”

Before attending KU, Dr. Dawson was the literary manager

and resident dramaturg at the Unicorn Theatre. She says, “When I started at UMKC I had no intention of going on to the Ph.D., but because of Felicia Londré’s confidence and encouragement, I applied for Ph.D. programs. Dr. Londré helped me to apply and I was accepted into numerous programs.”

Dr. Vanessa Campagna (2012) went directly from the M.A. program at UMKC into the Ph.D. program at UM-C. She graduated as the Doctoral Marshal in May 2015 and is in her second year as an assistant professor of theatre at Monmouth College (Monmouth IL). She teaches Classical Theatre

History, Modern Theatre History, World Dramatic Literature, and Script Analysis. She also directs one mainstage production per year, such as the upcoming *Meet Me in St. Louis*, as well as supervising student directing projects. She says, “My time at UMKC is the time I became a historian. It was at UMKC that I learned to love the history of theatre, and that I began to understand and appreciate that history’s breadth and depth. Additionally, Dr. Londré’s sharp editorial eye helped me to become a strong writer. In short, I am absolutely indebted to the education I received in those two years!”

UMKC THEATRE 2016 – 2017 Scholars

Bill Baker, Jr. Scholarship
Sandra Lopez

Baker Thomas Scholarship
Chioma Anyanwu

*Jeanne McIlrath Finter
Memorial Scholarship
in Costume*
Gretchen Halle

*The Mary Ellen Fowler
Award Fund*
Zoe Still
Gretchen Halle

*Patricia A. McIlrath
Scholarship*
Paula Fritz

*Patricia Crowe Morgan
Acting Internship*
Jamarr Love
Duncan McIntyre
Megan Sells
Charlie Spillers

*Morgan-Oppenstein
Acting Award*
Jamarr Love
Amy Billroth-Maclurg
Ken Sandberg

*Jeanne McIlrath Finter
Acting Award*
Heather Michele Lawler

*The Darker Face of the Earth
Benefit Scholarship*
Stella Tag

*Three Sisters Benefit
Scholarship*
Afton Earp

Noises Off Benefit Scholarship
Robert Ortiz

*Francis J. Cullinan & Baker
S. Smith, Jr. Scholarship*
Amanda Davison

*Ingram Family
Scholarship Fund*
Pamela Meadows

*Lee & Nadine Marts
Scholarship*
Nils Emerson

*Honorable Karen McCarthy
Scholarship for Theatre*
Caroline Allander

Jeannette Nichols Scholarship
Kelli Harrod

SCS Scholarship
Wallace McCanless

*Gretel Sigmund Scholarship
in Theatre*
Glenn Linder

*William & Fay Sollner
Scholarship*
Lisa Tinker

*Douglas Enderle Honorary
Scholarship in Theatre Design*
Paige Beltowski

*Richard J. Stern Foundation
Scholarship for Theatre
Arts – Costume*
Zoe Still

*Linda H. and Thomas H.
Talbot Scholarship for
Performing Arts*
Marianne McKenzie

Privately Awarded Scholarships

**The New Theatre Guild
Scholarships 2016 – 2017**

*The New Theatre Guild
Richard Carothers and Dennis
D. Hennessy Scholarship*
Duncan McIntyre,
MFA Acting

*The Virginia Kelley
Scholarship*
Ethan Zogg, MA

*The Julia Boutross
Scholarship*
Chelsea Leaver, BA in Theatre

*The Michelle Bushman
Scholarship*
Heather Lawler, MFA Acting

Stern Fellowship: Costume
Katherine Davis

Stern Fellowship: Sound
Jessica Shanks

*John D. Ezell Design
Scholarship*
Mark Exline
Tristan James
Sandra Lopez

The Hall Family Foundation Fellows

Caroline Allander
Austin Aschbrenner
Shannon Barondeau
Paige Beltowski
Tzu-Ching Cheng
Afton Earp
Mark Exline
Paula Fritz
Katherine Gehrlein
Tristan James

Glenn Linder
Wallace McCanless
Pamela Meadows
Brian Moore
Robert Ortiz
Zachary Pierson
Hector Quintero
Jesus Rivera
Colleen Shea
Andrew Steele
Zoe Still
Lisa Tinker
TJ Toribio
Daniel Wally

KC Rep and UMKC Theatre work in partnership to prepare talented young artists for a future in theatre. Financial assistance from generous donors is essential to sustain UMKC's acclaimed theatre training programs.

If you are interested in contributing or establishing a scholarship, please contact Jason Elliott at elliottjas@umkc.edu or 816.235.5776.



Lindsay Lillig, *Medea*, UMKC Theatre, 2016
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Ken Sandberg and Chioma Anyanwu in *O Beautiful*, UMKC Theatre, 2016
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Master of Fine Arts: Theatre

Acting and Directing

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Design and Technology: Technology

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Cast of Desire, UMKC Theatre, 2016.
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