THE WIZ
ADAPTED FROM "THE WONDERFUL WIZARD OF OZ"
BY L. FRANK BAUM
BOOK BY WILLIAM F. BROWN
ADDITIONAL MATERIALS BY TINA TIPPIT
MUSIC AND LYRICS BY CHARLIE SMALLS
Directed and Choreographed by Tomé Cousin
Musical Direction by Thomas Douglas
Welcome to the Spring Newsletter of 2015.

I have just returned from a three-week trip to Europe. The school successfully raised the funds to take 28 students and six faculty members to Prague to attend the Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space. It was a wonderful trip that presented the students with a raft of exhibition, performance and workshop activities. Sixty countries participated with over 4,000 exhibits. International exposure to theater making in a global context is, in my view, of invaluable experiential and educational value to our students and faculty alike. To all those friends of the school who made the trip possible through their generous contributions, my sincere thanks.

I went on after Prague to visit the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London, (RADA), the Drama Center in London and the Royal College of Music and Drama in Cardiff, Wales. All three schools are premier institutions with which the School of Drama has excellent relationships. Interacting with major schools around the world expands CMU’s footprint, encourages interaction between faculty members and builds strong pedagogical bonds through the interchange of ideas.

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Best Wishes,

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“It’s okay to be afraid because it means that something is at stake for you. I’ve learned to make friends with my fear and use it for the character.”
Holly Hunter (A’80)
Academy Award-Winning Actress

“We transform a space when we don’t have a theater. You see, we can do theater everywhere.”
Jean-Guy LeCat
Scenic Designer and frequent collaborator with Peter Brook

“We’re not a political theater per se; we’re interested in theater as art, in human needs.”
Oleg Sidorchek
Member of the Belarus Free Theatre

“As artists and actors, your humanity is your greatest gift.”
Phylicia Rashad
Tony Award-winning Actress

“I believe in putting yourself into the rooms you actually want to work in.”
Leigh Silverman (A’96)
Tony-Nominated, Obie Award-winning Director
Collaborating Outside the Classroom: 
*All the Names* at Quantum Theatre

By Erin Keane Scott

This spring six faculty members collaborated on Quantum Theatre’s production of *All the Names*, an adaptation of José Saramago’s eponymous novel about a low-level civil servant who finds himself on a mysterious, psychological quest.

The performance took place in the original Carnegie Free Library on Pittsburgh’s Northside. Associate Professor of Design Narelle Sissons co-designed sets and Professor of Lighting Design Cindy Limauro lit the action, which moved among several rooms in the library.

“I was excited to design site specific theater,” says Limauro. “While I have done theater in non-conventional spaces, Quantum finds just the right environment to surround the story. The design process for this kind of theater is very organic and thrives best when all of the artists are creating the story together, something that doesn’t always happen in other professional situations.”

Additional members of the production team from the School of Drama faculty included Assistant Professor of Sound Design Sarah Pickett; Associate Teaching Professor of Stage Management Tina Shackleford; and Associate Professor of Dramaturgy Megan Monaghan Rivas. Former Assistant Professor of Acting Cameron Knight played the Registrar.

“Working with my CMU colleagues in design, stage management and performance was such a fantastic opportunity,” says Monaghan Rivas. “We collaborate all the time inside the School of Drama as we team-teach courses, plan seasons and advise our students in teams on productions, but we are rarely called upon to work directly with each other as artists inside the school walls. The experience Quantum offered represented a wonderful opportunity that I gladly embraced.”

Cameron Knight as the Registrar in *All the Names* at Quantum Theatre. Set design by Narelle Sissons.
CMU STARS ON BROADWAY’S BIGGEST NIGHT

From the red carpet to the awards ceremony Carnegie Mellon’s presence at the 69th Tony Awards was truly award-winning.

By Pam Wigley

The stars came out on Broadway for the 69th Annual Tony Awards, but none shone as brightly as Carnegie Mellon.

From the red carpet strolled by President and Mrs. Suresh, the CBS telecast viewed by millions, to events throughout the weekend, university leaders and high-powered alumni represented CMU well as the first exclusive higher education partner of the Tony Awards.

One such high-powered alum, Joe Manganiello (A’04), recognized the winner of the first Excellence in Theatre Education Award — created by CMU and the Tonys. Corey Mitchell, a theater arts teacher from Charlotte, N.C., was chosen from more than 4,000 nominees.

While introducing Mitchell, the Carnegie Mellon University wordmark flashed on the television screen as Manganiello made his way to Mitchell in the audience. Along the way he stopped and introduced CMU alumna Sutton Foster (A’92, ’93), one of the award presenters during the show, to ask who inspired her theater career. It was her teacher, Rick Bodick.

“We never forget the names of people who are there to give us inspiration and guide us,” Manganiello said.

Prior to the telecast, in the Creative Arts portion of the awards ceremony, President Suresh, Peter Cooke, head of the School of Drama, and Judith Light (A’70) presented the award to Mitchell.

“I don’t accept this just for me. I accept this on behalf of every theater teacher and every young student out there who aspires to this stage and to Broadway,” Mitchell said. “I am overwhelmed and so appreciative. Thank you for legitimizing us. Theater education matters and art matters, and we thank you.”

Two alumni took home awards. Christian Borle (A’95) earned the Tony for Best Performance by a Featured Actor in a Musical for his role in “Something Rotten!” raising the number of Tony Award-winning alumni to 41.

“This is terrific recognition for Christian’s hard work and dedication to his role in ‘Something Rotten!’ It is just one of his many truly transformational and remarkable performances in film, television and on stage,” Martin said. “We are very proud of Christian as a CMU alumnus. He is an exemplary graduate and deserves this recognition.”

Stephen Schwartz (A’68) won the Isabelle Stevenson Award for his work with the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers and the Dramatists Guild.

Alumni Corey Cott (A’12) and Michelle Veintimilla (A’14) starred in the show’s performances of “Gigi” and “The Visit,” respectively. CMU’s commercial, “Ideas That Shape The World Start Here,” narrated by Josh Gad (A’03), aired twice. And commercial breaks were hosted by Patina Miller (A’06).

Behind the scenes, approximately 15 alumni, including David Tepper (TPR’82), joined the Sureshes, Martin, Cooke and other university leaders, including Pam Eager (E’87, TPR’95), interim vice president for University Advancement, for VIP alumni events held throughout the weekend.

These events included a talkback hosted by Borle and Cooke at St. James Theatre after his Saturday afternoon performance; a dinner hosted by Light and CMU Trustee Paula Wagner (A’69) at the Baccarat Hotel with special guest Tamara Tunie (A’81); a lunch hosted by Holly Hunter (A’80) at the Redeye Grill; and a pre-performance reception hosted by Billy Porter (A’91) and David Steiner (E’51, H’11) in the Roxy Suite at Radio City Music Hall.
CMU TAKES PQ

A Crowdfunding Campaign in the fall took close to 30 School of Drama Students and Faculty to the Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space this Summer.

By Erin Keane Scott

The Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space is the veritable Olympics of theater. You might say the SXSW for scenographers, costumers and technicians, who create spectacle, onstage or off.

At this year’s festival in June, 28 students from Carnegie Mellon University’s School of Drama and eight School of Drama faculty participated.

“The Prague Quadrennial is the pre-eminent scenographic exhibition in the world, and one of the theater design community’s most important international competitions and events,” said Susan Tsu, the Bessie F. Anathan Professor of Costume Design at CMU. “The PQ celebrates innovations in theater design by exhibiting thousands of creations from as many as 70 countries around the world … and has been a major factor in shaping the direction of international theater for the past 30 years.”

One of the events at PQ is Sound Kitchen, a curated selection of performances by nearly 50 international sound artists. The event is billed as “a place of presentations and exchange in the field of sound design for performance.”

Just four sound artists were chosen to represent the United States at Sound Kitchen in 2015, three of whom were affiliated with CMU’s School of Drama.

“It’s pretty remarkable that three of the four U.S. sound artists that were selected are connected to Carnegie Mellon,” said Joseph Pino, associate professor of Sound Design and one of the three representatives chosen to perform. “It means that roughly 10 percent of the Sound Kitchen — 10 percent of the sound work being showcased from sound designers around the globe — will be from Carnegie Mellon artists.”

Pino’s project “Room Temperature” evaluated the eternal subject of time. He took a high/low approach to creating the design by using gear he built that feeds and processes into Kyma, an extremely high-end audio design environment.

“It’s a sound piece about the perception of time, particularly the phenomenon of elastic time — for instance, when you’re excited time flies, when you’re bored time crawls — and about how sound affects memory,” Pino said.

Alumnus Erik T. Lawson (A’12) also presented at Sound Kitchen. “The Mercury Survey” used climate change data and harp phrases and textures to illustrate the effects of climate change such as destabilized marine environments and deteriorating polar ice. Additionally, his work for the production “Victor Frange Presents Gas!” represented the United States in the exhibit “SharedSpace: Music Weather Politics.”

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“The Prague Quadrennial is a wonderful opportunity for theater artists to explore contemporary theater and performance design from around the globe,” said Lawson, who also attended the 2011 PQ.

Nicholas Erickson, a first year graduate student at the School of Drama, was taken off guard when his proposal to perform a semi-improvised sound design created out of field recordings from PQ was accepted for Sound Kitchen.

“If you’d asked me anytime before this past December, I never thought I’d be participating,” Erickson said. “I thought my odds of getting selected were slim.”

This was Erickson’s first time at Prague Quadrennial, and he wasn’t alone. Many of the students traveling from Carnegie Mellon to the Czech Republic were newcomers to the festival experience.

The Road to Prague

To help make the experience happen, School of Drama students used Carnegie Mellon’s propriety fundraising site, CMU Crowdfunding to raise money for the trip.

The participating students sought to raise $10,000 to help cover travel expenses, including airfare and accommodations. They created a video describing the significance of the festival and worked to get the word out via personal and social media channels. The campaign raised $17,854.

“Seeing the best work being done around the world and meeting their international peers is life-altering for the students,” Pino said of PQ. “In a few days they are exposed to more ideas and exceptional art than we could ever hope for them to absorb in a class or three we offer here. That’s why we’ve made it such a huge priority to help make it accessible to as many students as we can.”

Ultimately the Prague Quadrennial was an eye-opening experience for students and faculty who learned about new applications of their talents as well as witnessed innovative collaborations in the world of theater art.

“Immersed in new ideas is really exciting.”

Nicholas Erickson, first year graduate student in sound design, presented in Sound Kitchen at the Prague Quadrennial.

Additional PQ performances by School of Drama students and alumni include:

- “The Lady in Red,” with scenic design by Bryce Cutler (A’13);
- Daniel T. Mathews (A’15), DeLisle Merrill (A’15), and Jamie Gross (A’15) will showcase costume designs in the festival Maker space;
- Joe Hill (A’17), Michael James (A’17) and Molly Griggs (A’16) will perform a piece called “Surrounded”;
- Zoe Clayton (A’17), Olivia Hern (A’18) and Dani Kling-Joseph (A’18) will perform a piece called “Enfantine.”
On the Journey

Guest Director Pamela Berlin guides students through the complex layers of Chekhov’s Three Sisters

By Amy Gijsbers van Wijk

One of the School of Drama’s many strengths lies in its ability not only to maintain professional-level standards for its students, but also to bring in professional influences from the outside world. This occurred recently, when director and teacher Pamela Berlin directed Anton Chekhov’s Three Sisters translated by Paul Schmidt.

“Pam was this beacon of light,” graduate stage management student Christina Benvegnu (A’14) says. “Just seeing someone who is as seasoned as her, and so successful, but also so full of passion and dedication—it was honestly so inspiring.”

Berlin is a respected Broadway and Off-Broadway director known for her work on plays including Steel Magnolias and The Cemetery Club.

For graduating students, the opportunity to collaborate with Berlin represented their first foray into the professional world, encountering different expectations, standards and outlook. Berlin’s take on Three Sisters focused heavily on the characters’ journeys, which in some ways was a perfect metaphor for her work with the School of Drama students, many of whom were on the brink of graduation.

“Chekhov’s writing is really quite funny, while also being about, I think, these characters who are struggling to accept the gap between what they wanted to happen in their lives and what really happens,” Berlin says. “That’s really important, and I think that each character goes on his or her journey in that way.”

A Layered Approach

Three Sisters proved to be an exciting challenge for School of Drama students both artistically and educationally, allowing the production and creative teams to dig into the revered Russian playwright’s complex material.

“I love Chekhov,” Berlin says—apt for a director who took many a psychology course during her undergraduate work at Harvard. “One of the great things about Chekhov, for actors, are the layers and subtext involved. You know, in the opening at the birthday party, so much is happening. It’s a great challenge for actors, because they have to really dig in and find what those moments are about, especially when there are so many people on stage.”

Indeed, Three Sisters provided a good test for the actors, as the text offered a different experience than previous plays on which the students had worked. “A lot of times, a text is pretty explicit about what it wants from its actors,” says Colleen Pulavski (A’14), who played Masha. “Chekhov isn’t like that though. There were spaces to fill in what we thought was happening. It was sometimes challenging because figuring out these small intimate details of your character’s life—we spent a lot of time doing that—is hard because you’re making up these elaborate stories and details and that takes a lot of time and thought. It takes a lot of creative energy and it’s challenging in the best of ways.”

She remembers a specific moment from the play where this rehearsal experience served her as an actor. “When the play starts, I’m on stage but I don’t speak for the first forty minutes, and then when I do I just have one line,” Pulavski says. “I think [the cast] really found how to riff off of each other. It brought a need for specificity and really strong listening skills.”

Beyond delving into the strata of Chekhov’s script, the actors were also tasked with meeting the expectations of a professional director. Berlin expects the same level of commitment from student actors that she does of professionals. “I really don’t treat student actors differently than professional actors,” Berlin says. “I might have more teaching moments, which is fun for me, but I expected everything from this cast that I expect when I work with professionals. I want them to be on time, be off-book and do the homework that is required of them for the production.”

Producing a Character

The creative team also found that this layered element of Chekhov felt like both a challenge and a reward. “My first meeting about the play with Pam was one-on-one, and we spent an hour talking about each of the characters and what was wanted out of this production,” says Sophie Schneider, graduate costume design student. “Because [Three Sisters] is such a character-driven piece, it was really important to visually establish the journeys these characters go on, in addition to staying historically relevant. We wanted the costumes to be a strong visual element.”

The character-driven element of the piece was essential to the experience of the play for all of the cast and crew. “Even before rehearsal started, I realized that Pam wanted a lot of rehearsal pieces for the actors to work in, and she really wanted people to be wearing a lot of stuff that people were incorporating into their character work,” Schneider says. “That was really great because it made it a part of them as much as the jewelry you might wear every day is a part of you.”

Journeying As One

The creative and production teams worked together with Berlin to build moments of journey and community into this rendition of Three Sisters.

“It was so cool getting to work with such a large cast,” Pulavski says. “At any given time there are eight people on stage, and so what are you doing when people are having a scene and you’re downstage and sitting there for twenty minutes. When are you supposed to be looking at them, even when you’re not talking?”

Though this production relied heavily on character work, Berlin relied on the designers to create a world for them to inhabit, furthering their understanding of the collaborative process and connecting them to the materials. “One of the things that stood out to me when I was working was the group of CMU students in the show—they are about to go out into the world and start their careers,” Schneider says. “And Three Sisters is about these young people who have this dream and keep deferring it. And that gave it a sense of immediacy to me, as it was really about something I could relate to.”
WOLVES
STEVE YOCKEY
Directed by Ian-Julian Williams

STEUBENVILLE
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY
ELEANOR BISHOP

THE MAIDS
JEAN GENET
Translated by Bernard Frechtman
Directed by Patrick Zakem

in a word
LAUREN YEE
Directed by Rachel Pustejovsky
PLAYGROUND FESTIVAL

DANCE LIGHT

SPRING 2015 DRAMA NEWSLETTER
NEW WORKS SERIES

WINNEBAGO
JULIE JIGOUR
Directed by Eleanor Bishop

PLASTIC NEST
TRACY HELD POTTER
Directed by Terrence Mosley

THE THINGS WE DO TO SURVIVE YOUTH
WEI HE
Directed by Ben Gansky
CIRCUS MANAGEMENT
AN INTERVIEW WITH STAGE MANAGEMENT ALUMNA ALANA CLAPP
BY AUBREY SIRTAUTAS

Current Stage and Production Management graduate student, Aubrey Sirtautas chatted with alumna Alana Clapp (A’10) to talk about how she became interested in theater management and how the School of Drama helped her land a gig with Cirque du Soleil.

What have you been up to since you graduated?
I have been living in Las Vegas working as a stage manager for Cirque du Soleil. I was with O for three of those years and Mystère for the last two.

How did you become interested in stage management?
I grew up in St. Petersburg, Fla., where we were fortunate to have a few performing arts schools. I went to a brilliant magnet school called Perkins Elementary, and in high school, I went to an arts magnet program called Pinellas County Center for the Arts that had a drama program with a technical theater option. I started learning about lights, sound, costumes, and all the things that went into the non-performance aspect of theater. Originally, I wanted to be a lighting designer, but later in high school, I discovered that stage management was something I wanted to pursue as a possible career.

How did the School of Drama prepare you for life after graduation?
The School is unique because, especially in the undergraduate program, you are getting a graduate level education. I was very happy that I was given opportunities to work on productions fairly early in my education. I like that the program is a combination of stage and production management, and I also like that you declare your intentions after a few semesters at the School, which gives you an opportunity to explore. I think it’s rare to be 100 percent certain of what it is you want to do when you get to college. Even for me upon graduation, I wasn’t sure that stage management was something that I was going to continue doing after school, but I felt confident that I was well rounded enough between the programs in stage and production management that I could go off and do something that I enjoyed in the entertainment industry.

How did you decide on Cirque right after graduation?
Between my Junior and Senior years at the School of Drama, I was accepted to do a 12-week, summer internship at O. I had a great time and I learned a lot. Then, a few months before graduation, I got a call that they were looking for someone in a temporary position. I asked the option coordinator at the time if I would be able to leave a few weeks early, which I kindly allowed. I am so grateful for that because I don’t think I would be here now if I hadn’t been able to go early. I came back for graduation, and then the position that started out as temporary was extended for months until it became a permanent position as an assistant stage manager at O.

What was the biggest adjustment you had to make after graduation?
The acceptance of that transition from the educational world into the full-time professional industry because in education, we are so used to waiting for a critique. Then, when you go into the workforce, it is your responsibility to understand your job and to get that job accomplished.

Were there any faculty or mentors that shaped your education and helped you lay your foundation?
There were so many: Tina Shackleford was my faculty advisor; she was and is still very close to me. Miss Judy [Conte], I hope she knows how much it meant to me, being allowed to continue in dance. That ability to take classes with her as a freeing moment for me. Catherine Moore, Dick Block, David Holcomb, Joe Pino, David Boevers; the School of Drama has a really great faculty.

Matt Bomer (A’00) and Joe Manganiello (A’00) reprised their roles as Ken and Richie in the Magic Mike sequel, Magic Mike XXL. Manganiello reprised Carnegie Mellon at the Tony Awards.

Christian Borle (A’95) won a Tony award and Drama Desk Award for “Outstanding Featured Actor in a Musical” for his role as William Shakespeare in Something Rotten!

Gaius Charles (A’07) took on a recurring role in NBC’s Aquarius, playing Bunchy Carter, a fanatical member of the Nation of Islam.

Rhys Coiro (A’02) played Vern Elwood in History Channel mini-series Texas Rising.

Nick Cosgrove (A’10) won “Best Actor in a Play or Musical” at the 2014 BroadwayWorld Detroit Regional Theatre Awards for his performance as Frankie Vail in Jersey Boys.

Corey cott (A’12) starred alongside Vanessa Hudgens as Gaston in the Broadway remount of Gigi.

Cote de Pablo (A’00) starred as Shirah in the CBS mini-series Dovekeepers in March.

Three alumni won Helen Hayes Awards for their roles in The Three Penny Opera at Signature Theatre in Arlington, Virg. Natascia Diaz (A’91) won “Outstanding Supporting actress in a Musical,” Matthew Gardiner (A’06) won “Outstanding Director of a Musical and Mitchell Jarvis (A’02) won “Outstanding Lead Actor in a Musical.”

Josh Gad (A’03) starred opposite Billy Crystal in the FX series The Comedians. Matthew Gardiner (A’06) won an additional Helen Hayes Award for “Outstanding Choreography in a Play” for his work on Tender Napalm at Signature Theatre.

Renée Elise Goldsberry (A’93) won a Lucille Lortel Award and a Drama Desk Award for her performance as Angelica Schuyler in Hamilton. The musical recently moved from the Public Theatre to Broadway.

Joshua Harmon (A’10) saw the world premier production of his play Significant Other with Roundabout Theatre Company. Additionally, The Studio Theatre in Washington D.C.’s production of Bad Jews won the Helen Hayes award for “Outstanding Play.”

Billy Porter (A’91) returned to Pittsburgh to play Lola with the touring company of Kinky Boots. He also announced he will be leaving Kinky Boots to play the cast of the revival of Shuffle Along. Earlier this spring he directed The Colored Museum at Huntington Theatre Company in Boston.

Stephen Schwartz (A’68) was the recipient of the 2015 Isabelle Stevenson Award at the Tony Awards. He received the award for his philanthropy and charitable work within the theater community.

Becca Stoll (A’14) was the inaugural recipient of the United States Institute for Theatre Technology’s (USITT) Early Career Women in Sound Scholarship.

Michelle Veintimilla (A’14) starred alongside Chita Rivera as Young Claire in the Broadway revival of Kander and Ebb’s The Visit.
In 2014 Prof. Wendy Arons began co-facilitating, with Prof. Kristina Straub of CMU’s English department, three projects under the rubric of “Performance” sponsored by CMU’s Center for the Arts in Society. In March she traveled to Zurich, Switzerland to give a talk on the international influence of the Zurich Schauspielhaus and dramaturg Kurt Hirschfeld at the conference “Weltbühne Zürich” sponsored by the Leo Baeck Institute of New York and London. She has been invited to re-present the talk as a keynote address to the Leo Baeck Institute of New York in December 2015. In addition, Arons worked as script advisor to the new play, JH: Mechanics of a Legend, which received a workshop production in April. Prof. Arons also has a chapter in the forthcoming in the new series Deadlines: Modern American Playwriting 2000-2009 (ed. Julia Listengarten and Cindy Rosenthal). In June, she traveled to Prague to research and document the 2015 Prague Quadrennial; she is represented by new play festivals in Berlin, also includes recent graduate Ananya Martin (A’03) who died with his hammer in his hand. A full run is slated for February of 2017.

In May, Tomé Cousin directed the revival of the Susan Stroman / John Weidman musical Contact at the Daguang Theatre in Shanghai, China. He taught masterclasses for The American Dance Machine for the 21st Century at STEPS NYC, took company notes for the London West End production of the Broadway bound musical Miss Saigon, and directed Uncle Tom’s Cabin as part of the Lincoln Center Theater’s Directors Lab. This fall he will be directing Terrell McCrane’s Boy Boy at the REP and directing/choreographing the Luigi Theatre at the Short North Theatre in Columbus.

Head of the School of Drama, Peter Cooke, co-presented the “Excellence in Theatre Education Awards” at the Tony Awards Ceremony at Radio City Music Hall in New York on June 7. He then led a Design/Directing workshop with the final year students at the National School of Drama (NSD) in New Delhi, India. Dr. Cooke also visited the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA), Drama Center and The Royal College of Music and Drama in Cardiff, Wales over the summer. Dr. Cooke was recently appointed to the Programming Advisory Committee of the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust.

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