

# Indiana State University

2004 - 2005 Academic Annual Report

Department of Theater

Year in Review

## Accomplishments

**As you have heard, increasing public awareness of Indiana State University's accomplishments is crucial to building student enrollment, influencing policy makers, and developing a place of pre-eminence in the Midwest. What do you consider to be your department's 5-10 top accomplishments for the 2004-2005 year that will help contribute to this effort?**

1. This year we chose three student-written plays to lead off the mainstage FallStage season in a bill entitled Fever or Forgotten Wings. It was submitted as an American College Theatre Festival Participating Entry, which means that one, two or three of the plays (or none) could be selected to advance to the highly selective regional competition at Illinois State University in Normal. All plays were written by undergraduate playwrights and directed by undergraduates. One of the three plays, theater major Jonathan Golembiecki's *The Mechanics of Flight* directed by another theater major Andrea Swift, was performed in January in Normal before the largest number of attendees in the history of American College Theatre Festival (I believe the number was 1600). Hundreds of people saw our particular production. While we did not advance to Washington D.C. (a rare and very difficult to achieve honor), we received kudos from professors of playwright, directing and other areas of theater. I received an inquiry from a student at an Ohio junior college who wanted to apply to ISU based on seeing this production. 2. We also submitted ten-minute and one-act plays written by our students and, like every year since I arrived at ISU, at least one of our playwriting students was selected to have his play read publicly at the Festival. Steve Yeagley's play *Red Moon* was successfully given a staged reading at the Festival and received second prize or honorable mention from among the other five one-act plays that competed. The extraordinary achievement this year is that both plays that won distinctions were written by undergraduates, whereas in previous years it was always our graduate student plays that won similar honors. Interestingly, one of the outstanding playwriting professors from the NYU Graduate Dramatic Writing programs attended the reading of *Red Moon* and approached Steve Yeagley, urging him to apply to the NYU MFA program after he is graduated from ISU. This program is one of the most selective and prestigious in the nation. 3. A number of other students competed strongly at ACTF. Kelsey Hanlon was nominated for a Irene Ryan award and though she did not advance, she received very strong compliments from a number of the judges. Undergraduate theater major Nolan Brokamp's lighting design for the FallStage production of *Red Moon* was displayed at ACTF, along with designs by four other students concentrating in Design and Technology from our Department. It was a respectable showing in both of these areas, and we look forward to receiving more recognition in these areas in the future. 4. We also completed a successful search for a faculty member in the areas of Acting and Playwriting. The three candidates invited to campus were all superb, and we would have been fortunate to sign up any of the three. All three expressed unreserved and passionate interest in the job, but we finally selected Peter Papadopoulos, who was already teaching with us as a Full-Time Temp. With Peter, we now have two faculty members teaching in each the following areas: Acting, Directing, Playwriting, as well as Theater History, Literature and Theory. This provides theater students wanting to focus in these areas exposure to two different points of view and approaches, which gives them added dimension in their theater educations than is possible with only one faculty member in a given area. With our three strong faculty members in the area of Design and Technology, we finally have a

stellar seven-member faculty in theater, with a rich mix of experiences and approaches. Happily, this has been the first year that we have not submitted a request for a new position since I arrived here in August 2001. 5. As a full-time temporary this year, Peter contributed mightily to the department's objectives. With the help of three students, he began a Midwest Playwriting Contest for High School Students. It attracted interest from high school students throughout the Midwest and the three-winning plays (from as far as away as North Dakota) will be read as part of SummerStage 2005. We hope that this contest will help spread our name among high school playwriting hopefuls so that high school students and their drama teachers throughout the Midwest look to us as the outstanding school for playwriting (which we are, but not everybody knows it quite yet). 6. 7. and 8. SummerStage continues to win accolades world-wide. Our four-year International Initiative began with Russians from the Moscow Art Theatre, was followed by German actors from Mannheim and Heidelberg, and was followed in turn by an original musical presented by us in conjunction with Trinidadian theater artists from Trinidad, Canada and around the United States. The International Initiative culminates this summer with a world-famous Irish director and a lead actor from Sligo, Ireland. In May, our three one-act plays presented with German actors during SummerStage 2003 were the centerpiece of an English-speaking festival in Mannheim and Heidelberg, where we received excellent reviews from the German press as well as public recognition by the Mayor of Mannheim, who welcomed and honored us as American ambassadors of the arts. The Trinidadian musical from last summer (featuring David Rudder's music and Tony Hall's text), which began here in Terre Haute, will be one of the highlighted productions at the world-famous 2006 Trinidadian Carnival, and will be presented at the largest performance venue in the West Indies. And the seventh notable accomplishment is coming up. Years ago I adapted all of the Yeats plays and poems involving the legendary figure Cuchulain into one night of theater. Before I arrived here in Terre Haute, it was approved by the Yeats Estate for world-wide presentation and publication. It has been officially represented by Samuel French since 2003. This summer we have Belfast director Sam McCready, undoubtedly the finest director of Yeats' plays in the world, directing *Sword Against the Sea* as part of SummerStage 2005. This production has been invited to be performed at the Yeats International Summer School in Sligo, Ireland in August. The Summer School has been a gathering place for Irish literati since 1960 and typically attracts Nobel Prize laureates such as Seamus Heaney and Yeats scholars such as Helen Vendler from Harvard. To present this adaptation to this audience, with four of our ISU faculty members and five ISU theater students participating in the production, will be a major accomplishment for SummerStage and Indiana State University. We also hope this production and the related events that are before it will lead the way toward a partnership with IT Sligo, the only institution of higher education in Sligo and an institution that is intimately connected to the Yeats Society and the Yeats International Summer School We have already begun discussions between their higher administration and ours and we look forward to a official partnership within the next year. 9. This year our multi-talented theater scholar Christopher Berchild, who also is a wiz with computer graphics, designed a brilliant brochure for the undergraduate theater department. Dean Diane Michelfelder was so impressed with it that she had me pass it around the Department Chairs Council meeting and, besides the oos and ahhs there, I received at least one inquiry from another faculty member about what professional firm designed our brochure. They were quite surprised to hear it was our own theater scholar. Our newly appointed tenure-track faculty member Peter Papadopoulos took the brochures to the National Thespian Conference and distributed them, and we believe we will receive benefits from it in terms of recruitment for many years to come. Chris Berchild, by the way, is also the department webmaster and I urge you to check out our website. I believe it is user-friendly, visually exciting and quite informative about who we are a

### Research and Scholarship

**What is your assessment of accomplishments in the area of research and scholarship? Are you satisfied overall? In which areas do you feel your department does particularly well? In which areas do you feel your department needs to improve?**

Our faculty continues to produce very well and we are building a reputation that is not only in the state but throughout the nation and the world. Linda Janosko continues to receive design assignments from professional theaters from throughout the state – particularly Fort Wayne and Indianapolis – where she continues to impress producers, directors and critics with her stellar designs. The Cunningham Library honored Linda's numerous professional accomplishments with an award this spring. David Del Colletti received the prestigious Founders Award from USITT, the largest organization for theater design and technology for higher education in the United States, for his outstanding work with this organization spanning two decades of service. He continues to go to other university campuses to design lights. This academic year he designed lights for *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* at the University of Northern Iowa, for a musical, *Merrily We Roll Along*, at Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee and, locally, *Picasso at the Lapin Agile* at Rose Hulman. Sherry McFadden and Theresa McCullough, who received International Travel grants as well as support from the ISU Theater Department, both did important research in January in Trinidad where they visited costume shops and dance studios where preparations for Trinidadian carnival had already begun. That experience fed directly into their work in *The Brand New Lucky Diamond Horseshoe Club* for SummerStage 2004 as well as *Dance Carnival*, which was presented as part of our 2004 SpringStage season. The bond that these two faculty members have created will go another step next year: they are creating a theater/dance troupe called Fusion. They plan to create a company that utilizes puppets, dance, theater, masks and other imaginative resources to create an exciting vital theater that can be presented for children audiences as well as adult ones. Supported by grants, the hope is that Fusion will open up many marvelous opportunities for our students to develop skills in many kinds of theater art. Fusion is slotted to create a piece that will be our final mainstage production next spring. Julie Dixon received a travel grant and received rave reviews in Germany in May 2004 for her one-woman show, *Blown Sideways Through Life*. She also received strong reviews for her performance in February 2005 of the same piece at the Phoenix Theatre, the second most popular professional theater in Indianapolis. Christopher Berchild presented well-received papers on the Irish urban drama at two conferences for Irish studies: at the New England Conference for Irish Studies held in New Hampshire in October 2004, Chris presented a paper entitled: "Paul Mercier and the Passion Machine Theatre: Creating an Urban Irish Populist Theater." At the American Conference for Irish Studies held at Notre Dame in April 2005, he presented a paper entitled: "Mapping Alternative Irish Space: Dermott Bulger and the Irish Sub-Urban Utopian Wasteland." He also received word that Catholic University Press has agreed to consider his dissertation on the Irish urban drama for possible book publication. Peter Papadopoulos received readings of his play *Last Love* at major professional theaters in Minneapolis, Boston and New York over the last academic year. Three monologues from this play have been accepted for publication in a book of monologues published by Smith and Kraus and will come out this coming July. Peter played the lead in *The Glass Menagerie* at SummerStage last summer and will be playing a leading role in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare (Abridged)* this coming summer. I am in the final stages of negotiation with Prentice Hall with regards to a major Humanities textbook entitled *Humanities and the Spirit of the Times*. I will be writing on all the arts (visual arts, music, theater, opera, dance and all forms of literature) for this major humanities textbook designed for humanities programs across the country at the college and junior college levels. It is due to be published in June 2009. I am slated to be the first author. As with all the other years I have been Artistic Director of SummerStage, all of our tenure-track faculty and staff have continued their involvement in SummerStage, which is the only professional theater company in the Wabash Valley. One of the reasons for our excellence in the classroom can be traced to the fact that we all have a chance to apply our skills professionally, together, every summer, side by side with professional theater artists from around the country and the world. With the International Initiative and my desire to bring to SummerStage outstanding professional theater artists from at least one other country each summer, we are constantly learning from a diversified range of intellectually and artistically challenging

theater professionals who expose us to different styles and approaches. Performing in Germany and Ireland has allowed us to test our work in international forums. This is why our departmental P and T document places a high premium on professional work with SummerStage for tenure and promotion as evaluated by me and our Personnel Committee. Our excellence continues to be reinforced by letters and comments by some of the most highly recognized professionals in the field, such as award-winning playwrights and screenwriters Christopher Kyle and Stephen Belber as well as Tennessee Williams authority Kenneth Holditch (who is co-editing the complete works of Tennessee Williams with Mel Gussow of the New York Times) enthusiastically praised our production of Glass Menagerie last summer. With all of these accomplishments, you can probably see why I am so pleased with the achievements of my faculty. I don't know how they continue to achieve on a national and international level in theater while maintaining excellence in the classroom and in their departmental and university service but somehow they do.

### Grants, Contracts & Off Campus Professional Service

**What is your assessment of accomplishments in the area of grants, contracts, and off campus professional service? Are you satisfied overall? In which areas do you feel your department does particularly well? In which areas do you feel your department needs to improve?**

Over the last two years, we had employed Mary Kramer to write grants for the Department and SummerStage, but we can no longer afford to do that. Consequently, the number of grants that we have sent out has diminished and those we sent out were not of the quality that we had come to expect with Mary writing for us. We continue to do well with local and campus grants. Last spring Julie Dixon and I received travel grants to Germany and this summer Chris Berchild and I received travel grants to Ireland. We have been fortunate to have won National Endowment for the Arts funds that are funneled through the Indiana Arts Commission and are available to us through Arts Iliana. We feel confident that we can continue to be granted money from that source, but it is only \$2500 a year. We received a sponsorship of our 2005 SpringStage production of Twelfth Night from Terre Haute Savings Bank, which we made available free to high school students from local schools. We also were the recipients of a generous \$20,000 gift from Phyllis Dye Turner to take our production of Sword Against the Sea to Ireland. We continue to receive funds from Friends of SummerStage and local businesses to support SummerStage productions.

### Best Practices

**Describe the progress your unit has made thus far. Were you able to take these steps? What steps or goals have been particularly difficult to achieve and why? What practices, actions, initiatives are you doing that could be considered eminent?**

You have identified the following best practices you would like to see implemented as well as steps you would take toward each in 2004-05: Under Best Practices in last year's report, I wrote about the Humanities Program at the University of North Carolina at Asheville, which has been my ideal for a solid, broad and globally inclusive liberal arts education that is missing at ISU. Unfortunately the Humanities program has shamefully been eliminated from ISU and so my hopes and dreams for a humanities-based liberal arts education for ISU students has had no place to go. I have put together a proposal for a humanities-based honors college and have recommended that we accept a gift of ten acres from Harriet McNeal for a future site for such an honors college, but now with Diane Michelfelder leaving, it doesn't seem to have enough support with the higher administration for it to go through. I have retained a humanities-based focus in my department, however, and in my own research. In my department, I have built a strong humanities component into the History of Styles in Theater and Dance Performance. I co-teach the course with Sherry McFadden and there show a lot of slides, trying to help our students understand visual styles so they can connect it with theater history. Unfortunately, I feel that I am fighting the ISU culture (or lack thereof) by trying to force a

humanities program on a student body that seems more focused on the major and just getting through the general education maze as painlessly as possible. I don't see much hope for that to change. That is why I have taken big steps with Prentice Hall to write the arts sections of what is hoped with be a humanities textbooks. If I can't accomplish a humanities program here at ISU, I will at least try to find a way to involve myself with it on a national level. Describe the progress your unit has made thus far. Were you able to take these steps? What steps or goals have been particularly difficult to achieve and why? What practices, actions, initiatives are you doing that could be considered eminent? Throughout this document, I have shown over and over again that we are leaders in the state and region in terms of student playwriting and that assessment has been reinforced over and over in our successes at ACTF with student-written plays. We are holding our own in the areas of acting, directing and design/technology but it is in the area of playwriting that we continue to have a major impact in the regionally. By changing the name of SummerStage and positioning it as a regional art theater doing work during the summer rather than just another summer stock company, I feel that we are taking a huge step forward to getting the national recognition we have deserved for the high quality work being done at SummerStage and its objectives of reaching out to other cultures, both nationally and internationally. Once The Brand New Lucky Diamond Horseshoe Club is produced in Trinidad as part of Carnival 2006 with our name all over it, and Sword Against the Sea is presented in Sligo, Ireland in front of the world's most eminent Yeats scholars and literati in general, I hope that we will be securely planted on the international map for producing innovative theater. All my initiatives towards an honors college with a humanities-based focus have hit stone walls, and I will probably stop trying, but it is a shame to turn down Harriet McNeal's generous offer of ten stunning acres for an honors college located only ten minutes away from campus, but I don't see how we can turn around a student, faculty and administrative culture that seems apathetic towards this kind of goal.

### Student Credit Hours

#### **What did you learn? What steps will you take during 2004-05 to meet your department's student credit hour target by fall 2005?**

Last year, you identified the following steps you would take to meet targeted student credit hour production by fall 2005: In last year's annual report I wrote of the dip in the student credit hours from Theater 174. I am happy to report that those numbers have turned around nicely. The big step forward was the result of last year's Theater Department Retreat. We discussed how to improve the 174 course whose numbers had slipped over the previous two years. Even though I do not teach Theater 174 I had some specific suggestions of how it might be improved in terms of the new emphasis on experiential learning. At the retreat we went over my outline and out of that came a far more hands-on experiential learning approach to this Introduction to Theater course, which included active performance of ten-minute plays rather than just reading about theater and having very general lectures about the material which they read. The result has been greater popularity among the 174 classes and a step increase in the number of students becoming majors and minors after taking the 174 course. Another great addition was having Peter Papadopoulos as a 174 teacher. He enjoyed teaching the class and his classes seem to have enjoyed him as a teacher. Because he was a full-time temp, his student credit hours haven't counted, but since he will continue to teach 174 sections, I think we can look forward to a big increase in student credit hour production through the 174 classes, which have always been our largest credit hour producers and continues to be our most notable contribution to the general education mission of the university. Dean Darlene Hantzis' suggestion about registering students for a single credit for production participation has also given us a bump in our student credit hour production. The culture has started to change and most students who audition and perform in a play are beginning to sign up for a credit. This has helped eliminate our "shadow credit hours" problem, where so many of our hours working in productions yielded so few credit hours. Now that has started to change, thanks to this excellent advice from the Dean's

Office. What did you learn? What steps will you take during 2004-05 to meet your department's student credit hour target by fall 2005? We feel we are further along in reaching our credit hour target with the more experientially-oriented 174 courses and the production credits.

### Budget

**Identify and describe any collaborative efforts that have been undertaken by your department with other academic or administrative units to maximize resources to meet departmental goals. Please also consider collaborative opportunities with external partners.**

We partnered with a number of departments and programs to make the Hate Crimes Conference and the Human Rights Day Event happen, most notably Social Work, Sociology, Women Studies and Political Science. All the participating departments contributed funds and we, in turn, received some of those funds to produce the plays that have become centerpieces for both of these campus-wide events. The contributions enabled us to utilize our funds efficiently in making these programs happen successfully.

### Assessment

**For each program in the department, provide one or two examples of how the program is using assessment and evaluation (student outcomes, program review, and/or accreditation) to enhance student learning and program strength this year.**

1. For each program in the department, provide one or two examples of how the program is using assessment and evaluation (student outcomes, program review, and/or accreditation) to enhance student learning and program strength this year. There is only one program in the Department of Theater, the undergraduate theater major, since our graduate program in theater is housed in the English Department. \*During the later half of the Spring 2005 semester, the faculty hosted student reviews. The reviews were scheduled in 15-minute segments. During the reviews faculty give the student feedback on how he or she is doing in the program and the student is asked for feedback about the department and how it is serving his or her educational needs. Information received from the students is noted and discussed in faculty meetings. These reviews have been in place for four years. \*Students enrolled in a production for credit are assessed on one production each semester. Participation can be anything from tech, to acting, to stage management. The student being assessed and his or her production advisor sits down prior to the production process and fills out the "prior" section of the assessment form. This will serve several purposes. First, the student gets an idea of what is involved in the assessment and what level he or she feels they are. The faculty advisor will have an opportunity to do a pre production evaluation to let the student know exactly what areas need attention and how these areas will be interpreted within the specific project. After the production and the post mortem, the advisor and student sit down to fill out the "post" section and discuss the student's progress. Both parties can use the comment area. A copy of this evaluation goes in their portfolio and in their department file. These rubrics have been in place for four years. Each production is also critiqued in an Open Forum in the Theater-at-Four venue. Students and faculty, both involved in the production and not involved in the production offer feedback on the production and constructive criticism. The discussion is open to the public and led by a faculty member who is not involved in that particular production. \*In preparation for the annual Faculty Retreat, held in April 2005, the Department held an Open Forum and asked students to complete two anonymous surveys. The first survey was specifically targeted to student work load, the second was a general satisfaction instrument. At the Faculty Retreat, the faculty discussed the survey responses. Several changes came about as a response to the surveys. The faculty committed to holding an Open Forum for a Theater-at-Four in order to allow students input into the production season. The Department also committed to smaller cast shows and changed audition requirements. Further student input had to do with the number of credits received for one or two credit courses

within the Department. As we cannot make changes to the curriculum at the present time, those issues are still under discussion. \*Each year the Department submits a show to KC/ACTF for adjudication. The Kennedy Center for Performing Arts in Washington D.C. sponsors the American College Theater Festival. Colleges and Universities from across the United States participate in regional competitions by submitting productions. This year we submitted *Fever or Forgotten Wings*, a bill of three student-directed, student-written one-act plays, as a participating production, which allowed two adjudicators from the region to give feedback on the production. Adjudicators then submitted a written critique to the directors and to the Chair and chose one of the one-acts, *The Mechanics of Flight*, to be performed at the Regional Festival. Additionally, three students were nominated to compete for the prestigious Irene Ryan Acting Award, three design students participated by designing a non-realized play from a list chosen by the Regional Design Chair, one student's play was chosen to compete in the playwriting competition, and one student's lighting design was entered in the National Design Competition. Participation in the Festival allows students the chance to receive feedback from theater people outside the Department. \*Finally, the Department has decided that we will begin the process to receive N.A.S.T. (National Association of Schools of Theatre) accreditation in conjunction with our program review, scheduled for the 2006 – 2007 academic year.

### **Strategic Initiatives**

#### Development Activities

**What steps have you taken to support development activities in your department? How can your efforts be supported?**

We hope someday to have a faculty member in the area of theater management. That person would not only teach courses in that area, but also would lead our development and publicity activities. Having leadership stemming from a tenure-track faculty line could tease out a stronger development capacity, especially if it is backed up by graduate and undergraduate student assistants who can help carry out the plans and vision of our Theater Management expert.

#### Experiential Learning

**Please provide examples of experiential learning in which your department was engaged in 2004-2005.**

There is hardly a course in our department that doesn't directly involve Experiential Learning on same level. Throughout our students' theater education, they learn and they immediately apply. They learn in the application as much if not more than in the classroom. For example, all our playwriting students write plays. Those plays are first read publicly at the end of the Fall Semester. We coordinate this with the Intermediate Acting Class whose members serve as readers for those productions, with the acting and playwriting teachers working closely in monitoring the whole process, from writing to rewriting to performing the plays publicly. A number of the original plays that are read at the end of the Fall Semester are selected to be performed as part of our widely popular New Play Festival in the Spring Semester and those are directed by students in the Advanced Directing Class. Some of the strongest plays even go on to main-stage productions. These productions are supervised and receive feedback from the acting, directing and playwriting teachers whose students are involved in these productions.

### **Future Goals**

#### Future Goals

**The University is highlighting experiential learning, community engagement, and eminent programs as aspects of our campus that will attract students and resources. How is your**

## **department planning to contribute to these strategic initiatives in ways that will help ISU be recognized as a Pre-eminent University?**

We will continue to produce new student plays at all levels of the curriculum. From Theater 101, which is the Introduction of Theater class for majors and minors, up through the Advanced Playwriting and Advanced Directing courses, we will continue to teach our students about theater by creating it from the ground up. By writing, directing and acting plays, they are learning how to be theater artists in the fullest sense of the term. Through the Midwest High School Playwriting Contest, started by Peter Papadopoulos and slated to be continued next year, and participating in American College Theatre Festival by continually submitting new plays, we hope to continue increasing our reputation for being the best school in the Midwest in the area of playwriting. Next fall, I will be directing a brilliant student-written play, *Leavesakes*, by graduating senior Rachelle Martin, and in the spring, Assistant Professor Chris Berchild will direct an equally fascinating play, *Medea: The Origination of the Happenings* by undergraduate playwright Jonathan Golembiecki. The former will be submitted as a Participating Production at ACTF. We hope to keep hammering away at the ACTF playwriting categories so that we continue our dominance in that category while improving in areas where we have definitely been holding our own over the last four years but have not yet shined, i.e. in acting, directing and design. Hopefully, over the next five years, we will start to win some of the spotlight in those areas as well. We are also very interested in building on our experiential learning and community engagement initiatives. We believe that the acting class being taught at Vigo County Juvenile Detention Center is one that will afford wonderful opportunities for all our students who plan to teach theater in the future. The four students and one graduate alumnus who participated in it came away from it reinvigorated about theater as a means for social correction and even subtle but effective therapy. Having gone to the NAST meeting this spring, I feel it is time for us to put ourselves up for accreditation. It generally takes two years to prepare the Department for accreditation and a commitment on the part of the University to support the Department with adequate funding to bring physical resources up to standard so it can seek this status. With the recent administrative changeovers and the decision to call off all reviews for next year, we are taking a step back and adopting a wait-and-see position in relation to accreditation until the dust clears and we can see what portends for the ISU administration and its potential to support the Department's accreditation-seeking efforts. Once we feel there is enough stability in the upper administration for meeting the needs, we will officially apply to NAST to move toward accreditation consideration. As for SummerStage and its future as Crossroads Repertory Theatre (CRT), we have now finished the four-year International Initiative and will embark on a four-year Cultural Diversity Initiative, which will start with combining forces with the National Theater of the Deaf and doing plays with deaf actors that will open our work up to deaf audiences without losing our hearing audiences. The second year we will partner with Native Americans, the third year with African Americans, many from Terre Haute itself, and for the fourth year, we will partner with the Hispanic theater community. For each summer we will do at least one piece that will feature an original collaboration between our actors and those of another community in a project that raises consciousness and provides an opportunity for audience members and theater artists from different cultures to cross roads and join together in peaceful acceptance through collaborative projects of mutual benefit and awareness. We look forward to this new initiative and will constantly find ways for these efforts to spill over from the summer so that our academic-year students can also reap the benefits.