JANE GREENWOOD
Surviving (and Thriving) on Broadway for 55 Years

SUZAN ZEDER
Theatre Can Bridge Our Divides

CHRIS CHALK
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Our regular column on newly available plays and musicals focuses in this issue on works for young audiences. Whether you’re looking for a play for children or a musical to engage young performers, the American playwriting landscape is full of possibilities. Here are some wonderful works for the young … and the young at heart! To develop the following list of suggested titles, we surveyed major play publishers’ offerings during the past six months. With each play, you’ll find the cast breakdown and a referral to the publisher who holds the rights.

**A Thai Tale, by Nikki Harmon**  
Beautiful birds, a shape-shifting magician and a huge banyan tree more than three centuries old: these are the ingredients for Harmon’s folk tale centered on kindness and good deeds. The Queen of Thailand’s favorite birds have been kidnapped by an evil bird vendor. A traveling songster brings just the lesson the vendor needs to set the birds, and himself, free.  
**Cast breakdown:** 3 females; 2 males; 3 either  
**Publisher:** Dramatic Publishing  
www.dramaticpublishing.com

**The Princess Capers, by Taryn Temple**  
Life as a princess can be perfect … ideal … BORING. So when a super-villain with a taste for rhyme steals the youth of all the children in the land, five princesses join forces to save them. Join them on their funny and fast-paced adventure – but buckle your seat belt, because your Narrators may or may not remember the end of the story!  
**Cast breakdown:** 9-43 females; 3-38 males  
**Publisher:** Playscripts, Inc.  
www.playscripts.com

**The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane, adapted by Dwayne Hartford**  
Faithfully following the story from Kate DiCamillo’s award-winning 2006 novel, this “most charming of narratives” won praise from the Chicago Tribune as “beautifully written … a far more profound exploration of loneliness than you find in most works for children.” Follow the journey of Adeline Tulane and her favorite toy, a porcelain rabbit who travels far and wide to learn a deep lesson about love.  
**Cast breakdown:** 2 females; 2 males (minimum); can accommodate a larger cast  
**Publisher:** Dramatic Publishing  
www.dramaticpublishing.com

**Othello: The Remix, by The Q Brothers**  
Take Shakespeare’s classic, shake it up with today’s highest-energy musical idioms, and what do you get? “A rip-roaring, rapped one-act rich with dizzying rhymes … clever and exhilarating,” says Time Out NY. Created by the Chicago-based Q Brothers, this adaptation turns bloody tragedy to tickling comedy, sending the audience out with smiling faces and dancing feet.  
**Cast breakdown:** 6 females; 3 males  
**Publisher:** Dramatists Play Service, Inc.  
www.dramatists.com

**Ruby: The Story of Ruby Bridges, by Christina M. Ham, music by Gary Rue**  
Drawing on American history, this musical recounts the bravery of the first black child to attend her New Orleans public elementary school. This key moment in the civil rights movement tests first-grader Ruby, but she meets adversity with an undaunted spirit and a song on her lips. The score, inspired by the music of the Shirelles, Sam Cooke and Smokey Robinson, is sure to bring the audience to its feet.  
**Cast breakdown:** 11-20 females; 11-16 males; 5-9 either  
**Publisher:** Dramatic Publishing  
www.dramaticpublishing.com

**A Doublewide, Texas Christmas, by Jessie Jones, Nicholas Hope and Jamie Wooten**  
Texas’ tiniest town is getting ready to celebrate Christmas, come what may! And there’s trouble afoot – their Alamo Nativity HAS to win the big county competition, or Doublewide will disappear from the map. Will Mayor Joveeta Crumpler and her celebrity-obsessed mother, lovelorn best friend and raccoon-fighting brother pull it off and save their little home?  
**Cast breakdown:** 6 females; 3 males  
**Publisher:** Dramatists Play Service, Inc.  
www.dramatists.com

Megan Monaghan Rivas is an associate professor of dramaturgy in the School of Drama at Carnegie Mellon University. Recipient of the Elliott Hayes Prize in Dramaturgy, she served as literary manager of South Coast Repertory Theatre in Costa Mesa, CA; the Alliance Theatre in Atlanta; and Frontera @ Hyde Park Theatre in Austin, TX. She is a member of the Southern Theatre Editorial Board.
This issue of Southern Theatre celebrates the people, events and ideas that took center stage at the 2018 SETC Convention. Featuring thoughtful perspectives from distinguished artists, reflections on a visionary leader and useful insights for daily use, it provides opportunities for both contemplation and application.

Can you imagine working on Broadway successfully as a costume designer for more than 50 years? The legendary Jane Greenwood has done just that. She outlined the road she followed in her amazing career – from her first show in 1963 to the latest, a production of Saint Joan that began previews in April 2018 – in a Saturday keynote presentation before accepting 2018 SETC’s Distinguished Career Award. Martha A. Marking shares Greenwood’s fascinating story, along with her astute advice on the role of the costume designer.

The capacity of theatre to transcend divides and dimensions was the focus of theatre for youth playwright Suzan Zeder’s Friday keynote presentation. Zeder urged SETC members to use their talents to make a difference in today’s challenging times. Amy Cuomo shares the key points from Zeder’s keynote, in addition to detailing the lessons in creativity that Zeder and her husband, movement specialist Jim Hancock, provided to educators as leaders of this year’s Teachers Institute.

Students of all ages absorbed energy and valuable career advice from actor Chris Chalk, Thursday’s keynote speaker. Chalk discussed his own struggles on the path to success as an actor – and urged audience members to take charge of their careers and their lives. Tom Alsip shares Chalk’s personal journey, from a “super-poor” childhood to a successful career on stage and screen.

At the annual SETC Awards Banquet, we surprised SETC Executive Director Betsey Horth with the Suzanne M. Davis Memorial Award, our most prestigious award for one of SETC’s own. We celebrate Betsey and the major impact she has had on this organization on Page 34.

In our regular “Outside the Box” column, Jim Lile details a process for creating a star drop inexpensively using crystals. Megan Monaghan Rivas shares recently published shows for young audiences in our new plays column. And in our “Words, Words, Words…” book column, Bradley Branham reviews Leadership in the Performing Arts by Tobie S. Stein. We close out the magazine with the abstract from the undergraduate winner of SETC’s Young Scholars Award.

What strikes me most about the experiences reflected in these writings is the gift of stories, ideas and knowledge that they represent. Whether shared by a student or a legend, on a stage or in a workshop, these gifts are yours to celebrate, use and enjoy.
Crystal Star Drop
Create a Starry Night Illusion Inexpensively in Your Shop

by Jim Lile

A truly great theatrical moment occurs when a production can effectively produce a change in time with light. Real satisfaction occurs when the lighting designer can transition from bright sunset/twilight into a starry night.

Many methods can be used to produce star field illusions—some that are expensive, and others that tend to be labor-intensive. The options range from purchasing or renting LED or fiber-optic star drops (the most expensive options) to punching holes in a backdrop and sending a backlight through it or stringing Christmas lights tied to scenic netting (both inexpensive methods, but labor-intensive with limited effectiveness).

There is another alternative method—the crystal star drop—that is effective, inexpensive, simple to build, easily adjustable to fit any width and height, and creates random twinkling star points. It is also very easy to store and ship.

Creating a Crystal Star Drop
Here is an overview of this technique, with more detailed instructions on the next page. This type of star drop requires only three materials: spools of black thread, crystal jewels, and a little tie line. The crystal jewels are arranged on spools of common black sewing thread, hung from a batten and lit from each side with ellipsoids.

The crystals are randomly spaced onto each spool by looping the thread through the hole in the crystal. After the desired number of crystals is attached to the thread, the thread and crystals are wrapped back on the spool, with the loose end secured via a small piece of gaff tape until load-in. The thread should not be cut off the spool. Each finished spool should be stored individually in a zip-close bag to prevent tangling. The total length and the number of crystals on the thread can be determined by desired height. Attaching the crystals to the thread can be accomplished almost anywhere and completed prior to load-in.

During load-in, the finished spools with crystals are attached to a batten using loops of tie line and unspool to meet the preferred height. After unspooling, the small piece of gaff tape used earlier to secure the loose end needs to be replaced to keep the thread secured to the spool and to prevent further unspooling in the air. The spools should be randomly spaced along the batten, between 8” and 15” apart, depending on the desired star density.

The horizontal density is determined by how close the spools are spaced on the batten. The vertical density is determined by how close the spools of crystals are to each other when looped on the thread. The best way to deploy each spool is from a personnel lift with the batten at the desired trim.

Choosing the Crystals
Shape and Finish: The most effective crystal shape and finish are found in Swarovski crystal faceted bicone beads with AB (aura borealis) finish. The bicone shape is important because it keeps the jewels in line with the thread and prevents them from tangling with other jewels and wrapping around the thread. Note: Other shapes, such as teardrop or pendant, will get wrapped around the thread and become hopelessly tangled. The crystal AB finish is highly reflective and creates a twinkle effect when the crystals twist on the thread.

Size: Use the largest crystals available, typically 10 mm, for a majority of the stars.

Color: The crystals come in a variety of colors with the AB finish. Add a few colored crystals to create different colored stars. Varying the size and color adds randomness to the star field.
Lighting the Star Drop

After each spool is positioned on the batten, place an ellipsoidal on each side of the stage, as low as possible in line with the batten. Focus the lights from the sides onto the line of crystals and tightly shutter in so the light hits only the star field. For the best effect, place a black scrim in front of the star drop to hide the crystals until the sidelights are illuminated.

To create a twilight effect, place the crystals behind a black scrim but in front of a white scrim or bounce. Light the white scrim/bounce from the top with far cyc lights and with a ground row of lights at the bottom to represent a sunset. As the white scrim front light dims, the crystals are slowly lit and bleed though the black scrim. If the cues are done slowly enough, you can create a beautiful day-to-night transition featuring the stars.

Jim Lile is an assistant professor of technical production and management at Florida State University.

Step-by-Step Instructions

**Preparation**
1. Randomly loop crystals onto thread. Leave thread on spool. Do not cut thread.
2. After the desired number of crystals are attached, wrap the thread and crystals back onto the spool to prevent tangling.
3. Loop a 15”-18” piece of tie line through the hole in each spool.
4. Tie the tie line into a loop.
5. Place each finished spool in a zip-close bag to keep the spools tidy.

**Installation**
1. Using the tie line, loop spools onto the batten at the desired horizontal spacing.
2. Unspool each spool of crystals to the desired height and location of crystals.
3. Place a small piece of gaff tape on the side of each spool to keep the thread from unspooling.
4. Using a personnel lift, adjust the horizontal and vertical spacing of each spool.
5. Place appropriately sized ellipsoidal instruments on each side of stage in line with batten. The lights should be as low as possible and tightly focused on the crystals.
6. Hang a black scrim downstream of the crystals to hide them until lit up.
7. Hang white scrim/bounce upstage of crystals to transition from blue sky to twilight.

Materials

- Spools of black thread (total count depends on proscenium opening width and desired density)
- Swarovski bicone crystals with AB finish (shown above are 10 mm Bicone AB Crystals; total count depends on height and desired density)
- Tie line

**Recommended Vendors**
- www.rings-things.com/Products/Swarovski-10mm-Bicone-Beads-5328/Swarovski-5328-Faceted-XILION-Bicone-Beads-10mm-AB.html
- www.firemountaingems.com/itemdetails/h208093cy

Cost Breakdown (for 30 spools with 6 crystals each)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of spools</th>
<th>Price per spool</th>
<th>Total cost/30 spools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>$1.79</td>
<td>$53.70</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of crystals needed</th>
<th>Price per dozen</th>
<th>Total cost/15 dozen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 x 30 spools = 180</td>
<td>$5.98</td>
<td>$89.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL COST:
- Per spool: $4.78
- Per star drop: $143.40

Labor Breakdown (for 30 spools with 6 crystals each)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of spools</th>
<th>Time per spool</th>
<th>Total for star drop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>5 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you have a design/tech solution that would make a great Outside the Box column?

Send a brief summary of your idea to Outside the Box Editor F. Randy deCelle at rdecelle@ua.edu.
JANE GREENWOOD

Surviving (and Thriving) on Broadway for 55 Years

Porfirio Solorzano
Standing before a packed crowd at her 2018 SETC Convention keynote, Jane Greenwood epitomized the image of the costume designer with her shock of white, gently spiked hair and piercing blue eyes, wearing a full black skirt, an oversized striped white jacket and short black booties. With a melodic voice and a spry step that belied her more than 50-year career on Broadway, Greenwood captivated her audience as she described the path she followed from her days as a young girl in the English countryside to the moment when her name was finally called, after 21 nominations, to accept the 2017 Tony Award for costume design on The Little Foxes.

“I walked across the stage, and the audience stood up,” she said, recalling the 2017 Tony Awards. “And there were 4,000 people in Radio City Music Hall. I saw a sea of people and so many friends, and it was – it was staggering. I was so grateful for having had the career I’ve had and the friends and the actors and the people that I’ve been able to work with, and it all seemed to come together, and I was – I was thrilled.”

Finally winning the Tony Award for costume design wasn’t a signal for Greenwood, the 2018 recipient of SETC’s Distinguished Career Award, to rest on her laurels. As she spoke at the SETC Convention in Mobile, AL, she was in final preparations for her latest Broadway production, Saint Joan, which began previews April 3, 2018, at the Manhattan Theatre Club – after having designed the costumes for Parisian Woman on Broadway in fall 2017.

In her keynote address and in a pre-convention interview, Greenwood shared career highlights, the changes she has seen in costume design over the years, and the joy she experiences in continuing to bring works of theatre to life.

From Liverpool to Shropshire and back

Greenwood’s journey to the stage began in Liverpool, England, where she was born in 1934. Greenwood was evacuated with her grandmother to the small rural village of Church Stretton in Shropshire during World War II to avoid the bombing in Liverpool. “I spent the formative years in the country enjoying the hills and valleys of Shropshire, watching convoys of American soldiers as they drove along the great Roman road, tossing us children Lifesavers [candy] as they traveled,” she recalled.

She remembers wandering “around the fields looking at the flowers and climbing trees with friends and going to the local school. It was a great outdoor life.”

Her mother stayed in Liverpool to work, and her father “chased Rommel [the German general known as the Desert Fox] across the desert as a tank commander during the war,” Greenwood said. After the war she returned to Liverpool, which was “a gray, wounded city.” There, she immersed herself in school and “put together a book on the history of costume,” which she told the audience she still has today. She credits her Aunt Kate and her grandmother as significant influences in her life.

Costume design instead of fashion design

With her Aunt Kate as her companion, Greenwood went to shows in Liverpool and in London’s West End and attended productions that toured the provinces. While studying costume history at the Liverpool Art School with Arthur Ballard, she “learned the rudiments of drawing, architecture, dress design and pattern making, and embraced the idea of going into the fashion world.” When she was in high school on a visit to the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool she “came face-to-face with one of the famous paintings of Queen Elizabeth I.” Rather than being drawn to the queen’s face or hands, Greenwood found the “real wonder” to be the dress. “I was hooked,” Greenwood said.

While Greenwood envisioned a career in dress design, Ballard had “other ideas” for her, suggesting that she take her portfolio and apply for admission to the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London. Greenwood said she went for an interview with some trepidation and was accepted. “This is sort of where the light bulb went off,” she said. “Costume design, rather than dress design” became her passion.

“As part of the curriculum, we went to the Victoria and Albert Museum every Friday to the print room, where we were shown prints by the Keeper of Prints...
and Drawings, James Laver,” whom she remembers as “scholarly and entertaining.” Greenwood credited Laver with opening her eyes to works by “Hogarth, Daumier, Watteau and many other artists that stay with me always.” Viewing these works of art showed her the value of research. “The clothes in those drawings were what people were wearing, not costumes,” she said.

While she was a student, she also worked for the milliner Frank Winter. In her keynote address, she regaled the audience with a story about a time the two were making headdresses for *Aladdin on Ice*. “For the finale, the skaters wore three-tiered pagoda headdresses with bells sewn on every point,” she recalled. “Forty-two skaters went on the ice. The noise was deafening.” She “learned that the bells had to go, and that theatre was not going to be a predictable road to travel.”

Greenwood recounted that she got her “real theatre training” from Norah Waugh (*Corsets and Crinolines*) and shared a room in a hostel with another student, Janet Arnold, who went on to do the *Patterns of Fashion* series.

**On to Oxford, Stratford and beyond**

Greenwood’s first professional job was at the Oxford Playhouse. Over the course of her career, Greenwood has worked with a “Who’s Who” list of theatre designers and practitioners: Desmond Heeley (British costume and set designer), Ann Curtis (costume designer, *Jekyll & Hyde: The Musical* on Broadway), Anthony Powell (three-time Academy Award-winning costume designer), Ray Diffen (costume maker and designer), Irene Sharaff (five-time Academy Award-winning costume designer) and the ubiquitous Tanya Moiseiwitsch (founding set and costume designer of the Stratford Festival and stage designer of the Guthrie Theater). Heeley and Moiseiwitsch helped her “really think about clothes” and what they “looked like in the third dimension.” They encouraged her to “look at the way clothing was diagramed” and suggested that renderings were “more than an illustration.” They taught her “truthful costumes are developed in the fitting room and that clear communication is the key to the success of the costumes.”

Greenwood said the “brilliant costume tailor Ivan Alderman” took her under his wing at Stratford in Ontario and that she “learned a great deal about costume construction from him,” which has held her “in good stead in many costume shops.” Ray Diffen opened a costume shop in New York City and, “with Norah Waugh’s book tucked under my arm,” Greenwood said, she went to work for him.

Greenwood told her SETC audience that one of the favorite shows she designed during her long career was the 1964 production of *Hamlet* on Broadway starring Richard Burton.
**The silhouette’s the thing**

One of Greenwood’s strongest professional influences was Norah Waugh. “Norah’s message was that the silhouette was governed by the underpinning,” Greenwood said. “If the silhouette is not correct, the dress will never look right” and “you might as well forget what’s on top.”

Greenwood told her SETC audience that while she worked at Diffen’s studio, the famous couturier Charles James was working on a collection in the same space. They would “have long conversations about the architecture of clothes and changing the shape of the body with the underpinnings,” she said.

**Costume design: the basics**

“Whatever you’re working on, first it is necessary to read the script,” Greenwood told her SETC audience, which responded with a full round of applause.

**SELECTED FILM CREDITS:**
- Glengary Glen Ross
- Sweet Liberty
- Arthur
- The Four Seasons
- Can’t Stop the Music
- Hamlet
- 84 Charing Cross Road

**SELECTED TV CREDITS:**
- Heartbreak House
- Horizons
- Kennedy (1983 mini-series)

**SELECTED REGIONAL THEATRE CREDITS:**
- Guthrie Theater
- New York Shakespeare Festival
- Long Wharf Theatre
- McCarter Theatre
- American Shakespeare Festival
- the Studio Arena Theatre
- American Repertory Theatre
- Playwrights Horizons
- Manhattan Theatre Club
- Roundabout Theatre
- Lincoln Center Theater
- Shakespeare in the Park

**SELECTED AWARDS:**
- 2017, Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Costume Design for a Play (*The Little Foxes*)
- 2017, Tony Award for Costume Design of a Play (*The Little Foxes*)
- 2014, Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement
- 2006, Helen Hayes Lifetime Achievement Award
- 2003, American Theatre Hall of Fame
- 2001, Lucille Lortel Award (*Old Money*)
- 1998, Theatre Development Fund Irene Sharaff Award for Lifetime Achievement
“You have to understand it and know it backwards before you begin to think about how you’re going to design it. After you read and understand the piece, then you need to talk to the director, who will have ideas about where it is set and the look of the characters. This gives you a more precise starting point to look at the research. Then, together with the director and the other designers, you move forward with the same ideas in mind.”

The time spent actually designing, “putting the sketches on paper, is very personal,” she said. “It is the one time I have on my own to really think in-depth about each character and how I want them to look.”

**Research, research, research**

Going to the library, reading plays carefully and other forms of research are essential for a designer’s success, Greenwood said. “Research is one of my favorite aspects of designing,” she said, noting that she “enjoys the rush of doing research for the shows” she works on. “Costume designers are the best dramaturgs,” she said, adding that she likes to design shows where she is “learning something new: a new time, new people, new places.” She gathers the information she needs and “looks intensively, not just a cursory examination, but in-depth, to see all the various aspects of what it is I’m designing.” The “wonder of designing” she said is that “you never stop learning.”

Even though research is different today than when she started designing, “looking has not changed,” Greenwood said. While she “values books and trips to museums to see exhibitions or permanent collections
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- Student-directed and designed theatre productions
- Conference participation and travel opportunities
- Strong alumni contacts
of paintings” which enrich her knowledge, she noted that today’s designers “can bring the collection from an art gallery onto their computers.”

“Designers have to have very strong eye muscles, always recording what people around them are wearing,” she said. “It can be quite fascinating sitting in an airport, waiting for a plane and thinking what all the people around you are doing and what their lives are from the way they look and the way they are dressed.”

**The design process**

Greenwood prefers to draw on tracing paper because she can “trace, retrace and draw over what she might not like until it is satisfactory.” She uses a computer to push the work darker or lighter, but doesn’t use it for color rendering.

A number of productions stand out for her from her long and storied career, which has included costume design for more than 130 Broadway shows, as well as for opera, film, TV and dance. When asked by an audience member about her favorite productions, she mentioned her work on the 1964 production of *Hamlet* with Richard Burton and her work this year on the Broadway production of *Saint Joan*. Other favorites included *The Heiress* with Cherry Jones and *Dialogue of the Carmelites* at the Met. “That was a long time ago, a very memorable experience,” she said. The current national tour of *The Sound of Music*, directed by Jack O’Brien, is another favorite. For that production, “everything came together,” she said. “I enjoyed the actors and everyone involved in the production, and we had the opportunity to go to Salzburg and purchase fabric and various Austrian garments, including lederhosen, while there.”

When asked what draws her to the work she accepts at this stage in her career, she said she is “happy to do anything that is interesting. Working with interesting writers like William Inge, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, Pete Gurney, John Guare, David Mamet, Edward Albee, among others, has been as exhilarating as working with Shakespeare, who I never met!” The audience enjoyed the tongue-in-cheek reference to her age.

**Period versus modern costumes**

In a pre-convention interview, Greenwood said she doesn’t like to do modern dress shows as much as “period” productions, although in many ways “it is more difficult to design modern dress shows.” At her convention keynote, she noted that “there’s always been an understanding that period clothes are designed by a costume designer, and audiences are not always aware that contemporary clothes are designed every bit as much as period clothes.” Another aspect of designing modern costumes is that “quite often it is difficult for the actors to detach themselves from what they know they look well in, and that everyone involved in a modern production tends to have an opinion about the clothes.”

*I chose teaching*

In addition to maintaining a busy design schedule, Greenwood has worked as a professor of design at the Yale School of Drama since 1976. She enjoys teaching and finds that her students’ enthusiasm helps keep her fresh and encourages her to rethink choices.

“I am grateful to the students for helping me accept changes in style and not rely on proven solutions,” she said. “You know, teaching is a two-way street. I’m constantly learning from my students. Over the years, some – like Cathy Zuber, Susan Hilferty, Jess Goldstein, Judianna Makovsky, Rita Ryack and Donna Zakowska, just to name a few – have gone on to great careers, but many more have as well, and it’s very satisfying.”

When Greenwood’s career took off, she “had to make a choice, because of the conflicting schedules, between movies or teaching,” Greenwood said. She chose teaching. When she “went for an interview with the dean, Robert Brustein, he asked if I would be prepared to teach every Wednesday morning,” Greenwood recalled in her keynote. “I gulped, saying yes, as I knew I had a busy design schedule already. Forty-two years later, I’m still traveling to Yale on Wednesdays.”
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Martha A. Marking is a costume and makeup design/technology professor at Appalachian State University. She designed costumes at the Utah Shakespearean Festival for seven years.

**Broadway, then and now**

Over the course of her half-century of working on Broadway, Greenwood has seen change in many areas. Broadway is “bigger, more corporate, more pressure-filled, and it is more about the money,” she said. It also has become more difficult to find supplies, she said, as many of the fabric houses of yesteryear have now closed. She used to shop in the garment district in New York City and could find everything she needed there. Now she goes to “mills in England to get heavy wools for productions” and to California, Italy or London to find items that need to be rented. Skilled laborers have been forced out of New York City by high rents and it is “difficult to find feathers, boots and millinery supplies,” she said. There is “no longer enough room for the smaller shops or vendors,” she said.

**The Little Foxes**

Greenwood received the 2014 Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Theatre, but had come to believe, by 2017, that she would never receive a Tony Award for costume design. She “dreaded going to the Tonys again” in 2017, and told her friend “this would be the last time she would attend.” When her name was announced, she thought, “Oh, no. Oh, no.” When she went to the stage, actor Kevin Kline, “such a gentleman,” “stood up and held my hand, getting me onto the stage.”

The show she won for, *The Little Foxes*, “was very interesting to design because the two actresses changed roles each night, so one night they would be Regina and the other night they’d be Birdie.” She had to “make the clothes twice so that they each had their own set of clothes,” with the proportions altered to fit each actress.

**Work/life balance**

When asked how she has maintained a work-life balance during her long career, Greenwood said that she “probably neglected a lot of things that I should have worried about.” She credited her husband, the late set designer and producer Ben Edwards, with encouraging her and also being her harshest critic. Greenwood met her husband through a mutual friend, the costume designer Ann Roth. Greenwood let Edwards use her apartment to finish work on a project after his own apartment, located across the street from hers, burned. They went on not only to marry, but also to work on many projects together, including her first Broadway show, *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe*, in 1963. “He let me have opportunities and never complained about how busy” she was, Greenwood said. “When young designers ask me how to get their first Broadway show,” she quipped, “I tell them to marry the producer.”

Her influence in the costume world does not stop with her students. Both of her daughters are in the business as well. Her daughter Sarah is a costume designer who has worked on movies such as *Ocean’s 8*, *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, *Igby Goes Down* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (2014)*. Her other daughter, Kate, has made a career as a wardrobe supervisor.

**How to make it**

Greenwood shared some career advice with her SETC audience.

“Talent is crucial if you want to be a costume designer or practice any of the design disciplines in the theatre,” Greenwood said. But she added a warning: “There is more to designing than talent.” Costume design is a collaborative art and “having the ability to be flexible is important,” she said. The designer “must have the ability to get along with other artists” and “know when to say something isn’t right.”

She recommended that young designers “do anything they can to get their foot in the door, even if it means getting coffee for someone. Go for it, and take every opportunity to work with good people.”

Martha A. Marking is a costume and makeup design/technology professor at Appalachian State University. She designed costumes at the Utah Shakespearean Festival for seven years.
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ATLANTIC ACTING SCHOOL
SETC President Tiza Garland (left) passed the gavel to incoming President Jeff Gibson at Saturday’s business meeting, as SETC held its 69th annual convention in Mobile, AL. On these pages, we revisit scenes from the event, which was attended by more than 4,500 theatre artists, managers, teachers, students and volunteers. The convention provided members with an opportunity to audition, find a job, perform, hear keynote speakers, learn new techniques, network, view exhibits, hire employees, watch top-notch theatre and much more.

*Photos by Porfirio Solorzano*
69th in Mobile
When Suzan Zeder was five years old, her mother gave her a choice: to have a birthday party with all of her friends, complete with cake and clown, or to see a Broadway play. Fortunately for future audiences, she chose the play. “I was so excited by everything I saw,” she recalled, “I had to be put to bed with a fever after it.” From that moment on, Zeder knew that she would have a life in the theatre.

She credits her early experiences seeing plays in New York with shaping her aesthetic and setting the bar high. “It was the golden age of Broadway theatre, and it was still reasonable enough [in cost] that even a besotted kid could take her allowance and go into a theatre. I was given permission to go in by myself, buy my own theatre tickets and see anything I wanted. I was the only 13-year-old I knew that had my own subscription to Variety.”

These early interactions with the theatre illuminated the artistic career path that Zeder would follow. “This crystallizing experience of the velocity of a child’s imagination and a young person’s passion, married to seeing some really great theatre, not only catapulted me into theatre but also catapulted me into writing about kids,” she said.
As a playwright and an educator, Zeder believes in the power of theatre – and her respect for the intelligence of young audiences has led to a remarkable career. She is recognized in the U.S. and abroad as one of the premier playwrights of theatre for young and family audiences. The American Alliance of Theatre and Education (AATE) has awarded her its Distinguished Play Award six times.

In introducing Zeder as the Friday keynote speaker at the 2018 SETC Convention, Elaine Malone, chair of SETC’s Teachers Institute, shared a quote that captures the magic Zeder strives to create in her plays. Responding to the question, “Why are you a playwright?” Zeder told the website DC Theatre Scene: “I write because I cannot fly. But words can, and where they land worlds appear. Characters move and breathe, and audiences come together in the alchemy of the moment.”

In addition to her own award-winning work as a playwright, Zeder helped develop the skills of many other playwrights and theatre artists during a long career as an educator. She recently “graduated” to retirement after 23 years as head of playwriting and directing at the University of Texas at Austin. Her career, however, is far from over. She is focusing on the next phase of her artistic life, which includes work on two plays and her volunteer role as the new president of the Children’s Theatre Foundation of America (CTFA).

It is from this vantage point that she gave her keynote presentation, “Survival in Times of Challenge and Change,” encouraging her listeners to use the transformational power of theatre to survive and thrive in difficult times. In opening her keynote, Zeder posed the question, “How can I use my gifts at this time, when I think...”

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**Suzan Zeder: Bio and Career Highlights**

**EDUCATION:**
BFA, Trinity University, San Antonio, TX  
MFA, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX  
Fulbright-Hayes Scholar to England, Institute of Education, University of London  
PhD, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL

**TEACHING POSITIONS:**
Professor, Head of Playwriting/Directing, University of Texas at Austin, and Endowed Chair in Theatre for Youth/Playwriting, 1991-2013  
Previously taught at Southern Methodist University, the University of Dallas and the University of Washington, Seattle

**SELECTED WORKS:**
PLAYS: The Death and Life of Sherlock Holmes; Do Not Go Gentle; In a Room Somewhere; Doors; Ozma of Oz: A Tale of Time; Skinfoints and Scoundrels: Moliere’s Miser; Step on a Crack; The Ware Trilogy: Mother Hicks, The Taste of Sunrise and The Edge of Peace; When She Had Wings; Wiley and the Hairy Man (also a musical version)
BOOKS: Space of Creation: The Creative Process of Playwriting (with Jim Hancock)

**SELECTED AWARDS:**
Six-time winner, Distinguished Play Award, American Alliance of Theatre and Education (AATE)  
Medallion Award for Lifetime Achievement, Children’s Theatre Foundation of America  
Campton Bell Lifetime Achievement Award, AATE  
Charlotte B. Chorpenning Playwright Award, AATE

**CURRENT PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES:**
President, Children’s Theatre Foundation of America  
Working on an ensemble musical based on the life of Clara Barton, Civil War nurse and founder of the American Red Cross, The Battlefields of Clara Barton  
Working on a collaborative project, Gretel!, a musical for three actors and a cello, with composer Jennifer Hartmann Luck and the script of deceased playwright Jason Tremblay.
our world has never, ever, ever been in more need of what the artist can contribute and of what we as artists and we as collaborators can do for each other and for our world?”

She encouraged her audience to read a book she recently discovered, How Lovely the Ruins, as they search for their own answers to that question.

“It’s a book of poetry, the poems for – and words for – difficult times,” she said. “It’s been a rough couple of years for ourselves as a nation, for ourselves in families and in communities, and I think we are called to this time of challenge and change.”

The issues facing the country today are wide-ranging, Zeder noted.

“I’m deeply concerned about the future of this planet in terms of what we’re doing to our natural resources,” Zeder said. “I’m concerned about what’s happening in our schools. I’m concerned about the amount of violence that’s in our culture right now and our seeming inability to do anything about it. I’m deeply concerned about the future of the arts and the various forces that are conspiring to either terminate or reduce funding sources. So, all of these things go into what I’m calling the difficult times.”

She urged audience members to ask, “What can I do to be something that bridges that? How can we each dedicate ourselves to not just reinventing the polarities and the division and the anger?”

All of us should “step up to the plate and do what we can not to give in to pessimism or hopelessness or frustration,” she said.

**Theatre: the key to bridging differences**

Theatre artists can play an important role in overcoming divisions, she said, because the power of theatre helps us transcend our differences.

“Theatre reverberates across the divides that separate us, reverberates across the economic divides, the gender divides, the generational divides, and even the divides inside ourselves,” Zeder said.

Theatre, she said, begs us to ask the question, “What can I possibly do as an individual?” The answer, she said, is for artists to do what artists do best. They create. The power of creation and the transformative power of art will build bridges between those whose ideologies differ.

“A good poem [or] a good play is the beginning of...
a new idea in the mind and heart of everybody who receives it,” she said. “[Poems and plays] have the ability to expand our understanding, to challenge our assumptions, to renew our faith, to help us confront despair, and to create a sense of community.”

Theatre practitioners know how to work together, she said. “The very act of putting on a play demands collaboration. It demands that people listen to each other. It demands that people honor each other. And I can think of no greater or better model or metaphor for how we ideally exist in community together than we bring our best selves to the table constantly.”

Any suggestion that the arts are a luxury is simply not true; the arts, Zeder said, define us. From the earliest times, the arts have told us, “This is who we are. This is where we live. This is what we believe in. This is what we long for, mourn, covet and cry about. This is what we laugh about. We do it together – and in a public place.”

**Reaching across dimensions**

To illustrate the power of theatre to reach not just across divides but also across dimensions, Zeder told the story of one of her former students, Jason Tremblay, who died far too young, leaving behind a widow, a two-year-old son and a play that he had not finished, *Gretel!* It is based on the story of *Hansel and Gretel* and the Russian fairy tale *Vasilisa*, which includes the famous witch Baba Yaga.

When Tremblay died, the work consisted of a rough draft of the text, a song and a set of notes that stopped midway through the script. His widow asked Zeder to look at the script and see if there was enough of the play to put a version together and get it into rehearsal. She agreed. She read through the musical and created a new draft, making two significant plot changes that were not in the original.

“I was worried because I wanted to serve Jason’s vision, but I also had to listen to the play to determine what it needed,” Zeder said. The two plot changes I was suggesting were quite different from what appeared in this partial first draft.”

The first change she made was to have Gretel’s nemesis in the play, Baba Yaga, become Gretel’s grandmother. All of the “trials and tribulations” that Baba Yaga put her granddaughter through were “training her to be a strong and vibrant young woman.” The second change was that the character of the goose was, in reality, Gretel’s father, who was bewitched. After reworking the script, Zeder received Tremblay’s notes, and with them came quite a surprise.

“I was looking through his scribbled notes,” Zeder said. “At the very end, on the final page, in Jason’s handwriting, was the notation – and I’m not kidding you – ‘Baba Yaga equals grandmother. Father equals goose.’”

When Zeder revealed this, an audible buzz went through the audience. She concluded the tale by saying, “At that point I knew that I was in touch with something that was so much bigger than me, so much bigger than this story, and literally had the ability to reach beyond dimensions. So, when I say

‘Theatre reverberates across the divides that separate us, reverberates across the economic divides, the gender divides, the generational divides, and even the divides inside ourselves.’
theatre has the power to reach you and touch you through dimensions, I am talking about something that’s not hypothetical or metaphoric. We know that we have this power in our hands. It’s up to all of us to try to figure out how we can use this most effectively.”

**Challenges for writers of Theatre for Young Audiences**

As a young playwright, Zeder noted, she struggled to find her voice. She had a breakthrough with *Wiley and the Hairy Man*, which was written while she was in rehearsal with actors who worked improvisationally.

“We started with the story, and every night we took it a little farther,” she said. “I would write pages and slide them underneath Charlie Helfert’s door – he was my teacher at that time. And the next thing I knew, I really had found my voice, and I had found my calling.”

At that time, producing Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) plays wasn’t easy. Zeder remembers performing in cafeterias and trying to fundraise when the theatre had only one phone located in the box office. “We’d have to bring the phone into the bathroom,” she recalled. “I remember kids saying, ‘I’m fundraising. Don’t flush.’”

These hardships helped her grow as a playwright. Because TYA was in its early stages, Zeder noted, “People could afford to take risks.”

Today, she pointed out, that is often not the case, and unless the play has name recognition, there is a deep-rooted fear that audiences won’t come. This is difficult for writers, Zeder said, noting that her career would not have been as fruitful if she were beginning her work in the theatre now.

“In many cases with the big mainstream theatres, they literally can’t afford to do a season of new work or a season of work nobody’s ever heard of,” she said.

These days, Zeder has gone back to basics. She is working with universities to produce plays that she is passionate about. In addition to the Gretel play, the playwright is working on a new musical, *The Battlefields of Clara Barton*, which is about the Civil War nurse who was also the founder of the American Red Cross. Zeder finds universities to be filled with students who are energized by new work.

Her advice to playwrights in these challenging times is to search for opportunities. “As you’re developing things, look to the resources in your own yard,” she said. “Look to your own communities. Look to your own artists around you. Form those groups and remake the future.”

As the new president of the Children’s Theatre Foundation of America (CTFA), which gave Zeder her first playwriting grant decades ago, Zeder has a forum to serve as an advocate for Theatre for Young Audiences. One of the organization’s current quests is to promote greater diversity and inclusion on its board and in its grants, its initiatives and the recognition it provides through awards and honors.

CTFA also is seeking to raise awareness of the importance of those who teach theatre through a campaign, “We Heart Drama Teachers.” People can contribute money to this campaign to honor a particular theatre teacher, whose name is “enshrined” on a Drama Teachers Honor Roll on the CTFA website. Money raised through this campaign supports the Reba R. Robertson Award, which provides $5,000 to a high school educator and $1,000 to that teacher’s school to help support its theatre program.
The maximum good

Recently, Zeder celebrated a birthday, “one of those really big birthdays with a zero in it, and it’s not 60,” she said. “And I have never been more excited in my life. It has taken me my whole life to get to be this old. I’ve been working on it for 70 years.”

She sees this time as an opportunity to focus and to make a difference in these challenging times, and she invited her audience to do the same, no matter what their age. She shared the ideas found in Kathleen Dean Moore’s inspirational book, Great Tide Rising: Towards Clarity and Moral Courage in a Time of Planetary Change, which asks the question, “What can we do as artists to use the gifts that we are given to the maximum possible good?”

Moore proposes four gifts that artists can give to their community, which Zeder described: “One is the gift of memory, that we can write about the wonders of our world.”

“She talks about the gift of imagination, where we can reimagine the ancient stories of this earth as we dream new dreams of new worlds.”

“She talks about the gift of wonder. And this is a fragile and an ephemeral gift that posits that humans alone in the animal kingdom have the capacity to be astonished and to share that astonishment with those around you.”

“Then she talks about the gift of the audience. We are given a gift and an invitation to come to others and share what’s most important to us about ourselves and about our time.”

The playwright added her own vision to Moore’s, noting that those involved in theatre have the gift of collaboration, of immediacy: “Live theatre happens right now, in this moment.”

Theatre artists also have the gift of new beginnings, she said. “Every time we start a new play, every time we start a new program, every time we teach a new class, every time we go to an audition or watch an audition, there is the possibility of something wonderful happening.”

Our final gift, according to Zeder, is that of endings: “The play ends. We leave the imaginal world of wonder, and we carry it with us always in our own lives. How can we do anything but be grateful as we welcome each other into the theatres of our imagination?”

Find renewal in your work

Finally, Zeder impressed upon the audience the restorative power of work. Years ago, after battling breast cancer, she had the opportunity to go to the New Harmony Writers Project, an annual gathering where writers who are striving to make a difference through empowering and uplifting works can come together. There, she reconnected to her identity as an artist and began her play The Taste of Sunrise.

While working at New Harmony, Zeder was introduced to writer and poet John O’Donohue. She ended her keynote in Mobile with a blessing from O’Donohue’s international best-selling book, Anam Cara:

“May the light of your soul bless the work that you do with the secret love and the warmth of your heart. May the sacredness of your work bring healing, light, renewal to those who work with you and to those who see and receive your work. May your work never worry or weary you. May it release in you the wellsprings of imagination, inspiration and excitement. May you be present in the work you do. May you never become lost or blind in absence. May the day never burden. May the dawn find you awake and alert. May evening find you gracious and fulfilled. May you go into the night sheltered and protected. And may your work calm, console and renew you.”

Amy Cuomo is a professor of theatre at the University of West Georgia. Her short plays have been produced in several states and her play Happy was a finalist for the Heideman Award.
Years ago, celebrated Irish actor Siobhán McKenna gave a lecture to an entranced crowd. At the end, she took questions. A brave soul raised a hand and asked, “Ms. McKenna, if you were to teach acting, what would you teach?” She answered immediately, “Joy and confidence.” That said, she promptly left the stage!

This anecdote, shared by movement specialist Jim Hancock, captures guiding principles for SETC’s 13th annual Teachers Institute, a joyful and confident approach to tapping into creativity. The seminar, conducted by Hancock and noted playwright Suzan Zeder on Wednesday, March 7, in Mobile, AL, was devoted to reigniting educators’ creative spark. Titled “A Day of Creative Renewal,” it was based in part on the book that the couple coauthored, Spaces of Creation: The Creative Process of Playwriting. Working in tandem, Hancock and Zeder presented a series of activities designed to awaken the imagination. Hancock succinctly explained their collaborative process, stating, “I move. She speaks.”

Tensegrity

The word for the day was “tensegrity.” Based on the combination of tension and integrity, the term is defined by the Medical Dictionary for the Health Professions and Nursing as referring “to the forces of tension (provided by muscles, tendons, ligaments and fascia) pulling on structure (bones and joints) that help keep the body both stable and efficient in mass and movement.” The definition is daunting, but the workshop proved quite lively. Throughout the day, participants engaged in exercises designed to demonstrate the importance of tensional relationships.

Hancock helped people connect with their bodies and check their physical alignment. “How are you standing?” he would ask. “How do you breathe?” At one point, he told members of the group to find chairs and sit. He then instructed them to get up and move. “You dipped down to get up, didn’t you?” he asked. Many looked sheepish, but Hancock was quick to say the question wasn’t designed to point out right or wrong. Rather, it was to encourage them to notice how they moved. He had the students think about their cerebral cortex, the powerhouse thought processor located at the front of the brain. Then he asked participants to think about where they were going and follow their brains as they rose. The dip “magically” disappeared.

Process before product

Moving better became the process by which creativity was unleashed – and eventually led to writing, Zeder’s area of expertise. The playwright divided the creative process into three central parts: perception, conception and expression. She asked participants to give their own definitions of creativity. Responses came quickly: “following an impulse,” “something original,” “new ideas,” “taking something that exists and making it new.” Zeder observed that often we spend too much time focused on the creative product and dismiss the importance of
the creative process. All of the day’s activities, which included clustering, analog drawing and structural story building, were devoted to engaging in the process of art, and judgment was left at the door.

**Analog/abstract drawing**

Zeder’s first exercise was a brainstorming session. First, the participants shared words connected to their writing aspirations: excitement, jolt, liberation, collaboration, pride, confidence, joy, supportive and validate. Next, they were asked to name the obstacles that writers face: doubt, helplessness, frustration, uncertainty, insecurity and complacency. Participants then picked three words from the columns and created abstract (analog) drawings to express them. Using techniques outlined by artist Betty Edwards, who authored *Drawing on the Artist Within*, Zeder had students create visual metaphors for their aspirations and obstacles. By drawing, students were able to understand the emotional impact of their aspirations and obstacles while refraining from judgment. Eventually participants wrote a monologue, prayer, letter or poem based on one of the drawings. Several participants read their work. One shared a rap and was rewarded with spontaneous applause.

The exercise demonstrated perceptional shifts between the positive and negative aspects of words linked to creativity. Many of those who attended experienced breakthroughs, with writing that began negatively taking on a more positive tone. Zeder expanded on the use of analog drawings, noting that they are a powerful and versatile creative tool. Analog drawings can help actors find their characters’ emotional through-line, she noted, and help playwrights understand the impact of a specific scene upon a play.

**Tensegrity and the tarot**

The importance of tensegrity to creation was reiterated in the final exercise. Inspired by the ancient practice of reading tarot cards, Zeder devised an activity that allows writers to look at the relationships among the structural parts of a story. Described fully in *Spaces of Creation*, this exercise calls for a story to be divided into nine components, which are written out on note cards and placed in a circular pattern demonstrating the relationship between the parts. This process can be used to develop a play or screenplay, or it can be used to analyze a play in the classroom or in rehearsal. During the seminar, participants used the exercise to create a personal narrative mapping out the way in which aspirations and obstacles are connected to each other. The exercise demonstrated that once the tensions between aspiration and obstacle are revealed, creativity can flourish. Participants also used the exercise to lay the groundwork for a new story that they wanted to develop.

At the end of this “Day of Creative Renewal,” participants sat in a circle and shared “takeaways.” Some said they gained an appreciation for the tool of analog drawing. Others mentioned the importance of ensemble building, discovered in the movement exercises. Still more were inspired by the guiding principles that defined the seminar, saying they would return to their schools with new joy and confidence in their roles as educators.

- Amy Cuomo

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**One Teacher’s Takeaway**

E ric Reid-St. John, one of more than 30 participants in the 2018 Teachers Institute, says he discovered new instructional ideas — and got a dose of inspiration — at the daylong seminar.

He found Suzan Zeder’s tarot card exercise to be a particularly helpful tool.

“The tarot deck method allowed us to consider the parts of the story individually, and then to represent those elements visually,” he said. “By asking us to break the story into its constituent parts, Suzan tasked us with considering the key components and clarifying them. Structuring it as a tarot reading made the connection of the elements more obvious, and enabled us to see new connections and to realize the pattern of the story.”

Reid-St. John, a theatre teacher at Spain Park High School in Hoover, AL, plans to use the tarot card exercise with his students the next time they create a devised theatre piece.

“I believe that the clarity it affords will be exceptionally helpful as students map out plot and characterization,” he said.

In addition to practical tips, he says he also gained new inspiration for his work in the classroom at the Teachers Institute.

“Perhaps what I found most helpful was the reminder to keep the joy in learning front and center and to reinforce the confidence to take chances — even to fail — as we help our students grow as artists,” he said.
Goals. Confidence. A positive attitude. These are essential requisites for performers to succeed, according to actor Chris Chalk, who earned a Drama Desk Award nomination and a Theatre World Award for his role as Cory in Fences on Broadway and went on to win praise for numerous other film and TV roles, including his current portrayal of Lucius Fox on TV’s Gotham.

His message at the 2018 SETC Convention was the same in a room full of high school theatre hopefuls on Wednesday night, in his electrifying Thursday keynote address, and in an interview with Southern Theatre magazine: There is no goal that is too big if you are willing to make it specific, approach it with confidence and a positive attitude, and put in the work necessary to achieve it.

“You have a question to ask yourself: What are you seeking to achieve?” he told his keynote audience. “Start to develop [your goals], because that will give you drive. You’ll start to find your inspiration. You’ll start to find the thing that makes you tick as you continue to explore yourself. Start, honestly, even having a mantra. I have a mantra that I use every single day. Every morning I wake up and I say this thing, and this thing was built of my dreams, meaning I know who I want to be, where I want to be, how I want to be, and how I want
the world to see me. It’s the thing that focuses my day, and it is all derived from my goals.”

Though goal-setting is integral to Chalk’s life and success today, it took several years as a struggling actor in New York, followed by a near-death experience, for Chalk to understand the importance of setting goals and taking control of his life and his career.

Humble beginnings

Chalk grew up in Asheville, NC, where his family was, in his own words, “super-poor.” His parents divorced early, and he was raised primarily by his mother, spending every other weekend with his dad until he was about 7. He was active in theatre from a young age in grade school and in the community. In school, he was put in an academically gifted class, which separated him from his friends but gave him new opportunities. At the age of 11, he began helping his mother raise his nephew, which had a profound effect on him.

“Honestly, my nephew being born kept me focused,” he said.

In high school, he not only was elected student body president but also was part of a show, Endangered Species, that his theatre department created. The students both wrote and performed in the show, which was about people of color as an endangered species. The show was so successful it toured the state.

He never thought about college until his mother informed him that he would be going, the first member of his family to do so. He chose the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), one of the schools he had visited with Endangered Species. It wasn’t until he got to UNCG that he realized you could act for a living. He decided that would be his goal.

Showing potential as an underdog

At UNCG, Chalk quickly attracted attention for his work in theatre.

“Even as a young undergraduate student, Chris was someone your eye was drawn to on the stage,” said Jim Wren, a professor of acting and directing at UNCG who has stayed in touch with Chalk and introduced him at his SETC keynote.

As Chalk settled in to college life at UNCG, he auditioned for and was accepted into the BFA program. Although Chalk’s talent was obvious, Wren said it was other elements that set him apart. “Chris understands the tightrope of abandon and control,” Wren said. “He had the ability to fall off either way, and it’s fascinating to watch him find his balance. I love Chris’ ability to live in the moment … to be present.”

Chalk was cast in numerous roles in college productions and learned a lot about acting technique and scoring a role. While he received helpful training in college, he said his education would have been stronger if he had invested more in the process. “I actually tried to bomb my audition senior year because I wanted to focus on prepping for the future,” he said.

He especially wishes he had learned information in college that would have been useful to him, as an African American, seeking to be an actor at the professional level. Chalk said that he had no idea what it was like to be a person of color working in theatre and never had any training or education in the diversity of theatre. Looking back, he believes it was on him to fill that educational gap, stressing in his keynote the importance of making things happen for yourself.

“Those of you that are going into university and those of you that are at university and you’re sitting around like, ‘Well, they’re not teaching me, da, da, da,’ well, you’re not asking,” he said.

If there’s something missing from your curriculum, it’s your responsibility to go to the professor and ask for more info on that topic, he said. If he had asked for

Chris Chalk: Bio and Career Highlights

EDUCATION:
BFA, Acting, University of North Carolina at Greensboro

SELECTED BROADWAY/OFF-BROADWAY CREDITS:

SELECTED FILM CREDITS:
12 Years a Slave, Come and Find Me, Lila and Eve, Before the Devil Knows You’re Dead, The Red Sea Diving Resort (to be released in 2018)

SELECTED TV CREDITS:

SELECTED AWARDS:
2010, Drama Desk Award nomination, Outstanding Featured Actor in a Play (for Fences)
2010, Theatre World Award for a debut performance off-Broadway or on Broadway (for Fences)
more education in black theatre history, his professor would have delivered, Chalk said. “He would have been like, ‘Cool. Let me teach you some. Sorry. My bad. Let’s go.’”

Chalk also urged students to recognize the value of an education, noting that it is critical to keep learning throughout your career.

“I knew the importance of education,” he said. “Some people think they will go to L.A. or New York and start acting. That’s good. But keep learning. People may like your work, but you must keep learning.”

New York – and a wake-up call

Soon after graduation, Chalk took the bold step of moving to New York and, like many young actors, struggled mightily. He spent two years not working in theatre at all and barely left his apartment. “I was 251 pounds, I was a doorman, in a bad relationship, and I almost died,” he said.

This was the darkest stretch of Chalk’s professional career. But, when asked what he would do differently in retrospect, his answer was: “I wouldn’t change a thing. Because I learned a lot about myself, about my journey. All my experiences have made me who I am today.”

The wake-up call that would change Chalk’s perspective came when he nearly drowned while swimming with friends in a Vermont lake. After that frightening experience, he took stock of his life – and began creating goals and advancing them.

He says he thought to himself, “I’m not living my authentic life. Not only am I not being my authentic self … but I’m not even, like, living. I am existing, and I am being tossed around. And that was the day that I decided to, like, get it together.”

Chalk had already begun working as a reader for Labyrinth Theater Company, meeting great actors and seeing their work. He realized there was no reason he couldn’t be doing the same thing. He set goals. He auditioned for roles off-Broadway and in TV and film. He won a small role in the movie *Rent* in 2005, began working in television and off-Broadway as well, and by 2010 was appearing on Broadway as Cory in *Fences*, starring Denzel Washington and Viola Davis.

Since then, he has devoted himself primarily to film and TV roles – including his portrayal since 2015 of Lucius Fox in the popular TV series *Gotham*. His move to film and TV work was a product of his exercise in goal-setting, which included gauging

‘Ninety percent of successful people are themselves. Don’t be what you think others want you to be.’
where he wanted to go in life and the steps needed to achieve both the career and the lifestyle he wanted.

“I’d done a bunch of off-Broadway theatre, and then I did the Broadway play with Denzel and Viola, and I was still broke,” he told his keynote audience. “And I was like, I’m not living this life. I’ve been poor. I’m done. This isn’t enough money. I’ll go back to theatre when they can afford me. They’ve yet to be able to do that.”

A positive attitude

Wren attributes much of Chalk’s success as an actor to his attitude and his approach to working. “Chris always exhibited an energy and a passion that was infectious. People wanted to work with Chris.”

In addition, Wren said, “I always hope for students to take ownership of their process … for them to be able to give themselves permission to play a truthful action. I think Chris owns his process.”

Along the same line, Chalk urged his audience to know themselves and their processes – and embrace who they are. “Ninety percent of successful people are themselves,” he said. “Don’t be what you think others want you to be.”

Looking back on his days as an undergraduate and a young actor, he says, “There’s no reason that, on paper, I should be on TV.”

He believes the people who get work aren’t always the most talented, but instead are the ones who are good to work with, don’t give up easily and are willing to invest time and hard work.

“Work ethic is everything,” he said. “I am not more talented than very many people, but I work really very hard, and I’m easy to work with, and I enjoy my job. And that’s why I work. There’s no other reason.”

You are enough

It’s easy to talk about being positive, working hard and having confidence, but how do you do that in an industry that is overrun with talented individuals and when most auditions end with a negative result? For Chalk, it’s about knowing you are enough.

“Ther e are people who look just like you, that have more or less talent than anyone in this room, that are working right now in the business,” he said.

Chalk believes many of his struggles early in his life came from not setting goals for himself. “I was just turning in the wind,” he said.

He encouraged his audience to follow his lead in setting specific goals and sticking with them – and he also urged young actors to reach out to people already in the business and learn from them.
“Start interning, start sending your picture and resume, and start asking advice from everyone around you, because everyone knows more than you, and we all love to be asked questions,” he said.

Whether encouraging high school students at his Wednesday night master-class or speaking from a podium to an all-convention audience at his Thursday keynote, Chris Chalk exuded confidence and positivity that was contagious. He made his audiences laugh. He challenged them to be themselves and to be their best selves as well. He presented himself as one of them – who had made it. And he offered a hand up to those in the audience who were looking for advice, even offering his email address and promising to answer every email he received. Two weeks after the convention, he said he had heard from more people than he expected, with some writing multiple times. “I have answered every email I have received,” he said.

In a business with so much negativity and mystery about “success,” Chalk’s voice carries a welcome message of optimism. “Everything that you are and have is an asset,” he told his SETC audience. “Learn how to monetize it. Learn how to love it.”

Tom Alsip is a graduate teaching assistant at the University of Alabama, where he is pursuing an MFA in directing. Previously, he spent 10 years in New York as an actor, director, educator and voice-over artist.
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Executive Director Betsey Horth Honored with SETC’s 2018 Suzanne M. Davis Memorial Award

Award Presentation by Past President Jack Benjamin

The Suzanne M. Davis Memorial Award was established to honor one person a year (provided a suitable recipient is found) for distinguished service to SETC and theatre in the Southeastern region over a number of years. Administration of this award is assigned to the Nominations Committee, with the final choice made by vote of the Board of Directors.

It is tradition to keep the name of the honoree secret until it is announced at this event each year, and we intend to hopefully keep this tradition intact until the end of this presentation.

Tonight’s honoree first came to SETC in the 1990s and has served the organization ever since. From the time that our honoree got involved with SETC, they have impacted many facets of the organization. In fact, as I began to contemplate how to best describe our honoree, it became evident that I needed to reach out to various individuals who have served alongside our honoree. I asked one simple question of these folks: Please describe our honoree in one word. Here are some examples of what they said:

**Eternal optimist:** There is a certain quality about them and their approach to life’s challenges that lets you know that everything is going to be okay.

**Visionary:** They see how things can be, not how they have been!

**Dynamic:** Because of their unbounded energy – even when the going gets tough.

**Resourceful:** Because they are a great problem-solver and will always find a way of solving the most difficult challenges while finding a way to continue the dialogue and come to a successful conclusion.

I have had the privilege of knowing our recipient since they came (Continued on next page)
This prestigious award was established following the death in 1964 of SETC member Suzanne Davis, costume designer for *Unto These Hills* and wife of SETC’s 10th president, Harry Davis. Alvin Cohen, then owner of Paramount Theatrical Supplies in New York, approached the SETC president and said he wanted to sponsor an annual award in Suzanne’s name to honor her, as well as an individual who had given outstanding service to SETC. The board accepted the offer, and the Suzanne Davis Award was born.

(Continued from Page 34) on the SETC scene. I wholeheartedly agree with these descriptive terms and can add the following descriptors: caring, helpful, connector and friendship.

Going back to something I said earlier, not only has our honoree impacted many facets of SETC, they have impacted every facet. Our honoree has been a driving force for the prominence of SETC in the Southeast and beyond. During their service, SETC has grown in numbers, both physically as well as financially. They have been the cornerstone for the national distinction SETC has gained due to our convention, publications and relationships with many other theatre organizations across the country.

As Past President David Wohl, AACT’s Executive Director Quiana Clark-Roland, as well as the SETC Central Office staff and our honoree’s husband, David, join together to escort our recipient, it is my distinct honor to present the 2018 Suzanne Davis Award to my colleague and friend, SETC’s Executive Director Betsey Horth.

### ABOUT THE AWARD

This prestigious award was established following the death in 1964 of SETC member Suzanne Davis, costume designer for *Unto These Hills* and wife of SETC’s 10th president, Harry Davis. Alvin Cohen, then owner of Paramount Theatrical Supplies in New York, approached the SETC president and said he wanted to sponsor an annual award in Suzanne’s name to honor her, as well as an individual who had given outstanding service to SETC. The board accepted the offer, and the Suzanne Davis Award was born.

### 2018 SETC YOUNG SCHOLARS AWARD

**Undergraduate Winner: Sage Dunn**

**Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder and Adaptation in Fun Home**

Sage Dunn is a senior at Auburn University, pursuing dual degrees in English literature and mathematics.

**Abstract:** This essay analyzes both Alison Bechdel’s 2006 graphic novel *Fun Home* and the 2015 musical of the same title, using ideas from adaptation theory to consider what changes when the story moves from the page to the stage. I place the character of “Small Alison” of the musical in contrast with the depiction of the author’s self when she was at the same age as the character in the musical. Notably, one character trait of young Bechdel from the graphic novel does not transfer to the musical adaptation’s corresponding character. In the graphic novel, Bechdel characterizes herself as having expressed symptoms of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) while in the musical, Small Alison does not exhibit any of the obsessions or compulsions that Bechdel reported in her autobiography. In this paper, I examine the exhibition of OCD in the graphic novel and its effect on the narrative of Bechdel’s work and how this exclusion from the musical affects the characterization of Small Alison and the musical as a whole.

**MORE INFORMATION:**

setc.org/young-scholars-awards

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Leadership in the Performing Arts
by Tobie S. Stein
2016, Allworth Press
allworth.com/titles/1064-9781621535126-leadership-in-the-performing-arts
ISBN: 9781621535126
Pages: 252
Price: $19.99 (paperback and ebook)

by Bradley Branham

Beginning work as a manager at a performing arts organization can be a daunting proposition. Finding steady ground can prove difficult because of the need to constantly adapt to a changing culture. College classes aren’t always of help. Best practices listed in lengthy textbooks are often not paired with experiential learning in the world beyond the classroom. Or, as one of my professors in college used to say, “Staring at a book won’t do you any good unless you exert that knowledge onto the stage.”

So how do we help new managers in the arts develop leadership strategies? Tobie S. Stein’s Leadership in the Performing Arts is an excellent place to start. This book illuminates the cornerstone of core organizational practices in a performing arts organization, provides key strategies for becoming a leader within those walls, and offers cogent advice for executing decisions as a leader once you have been positioned to do so. Stein outlines exceptional principles that should be at the core of every arts manager’s learning curve.

Key to the real-world usability of the book is the expertise of Stein, director of the graduate program in performing arts management at Brooklyn College, and a well-published author of handbooks that cover aspects of leadership ranging from theatrical vision to transitioning into the nonprofit sector.

Leadership in the Performing Arts includes 10 chapters covering the arts leader’s journey from multiple perspectives: (1) Becoming a Leader; (2) Leadership Cultures and Core Values; (3) The Leader’s Vision; (4) The Leader’s Style and Interpersonal Skills; (5) Strategic Leadership Priorities: Planning and People; (6) Leading the Decision-Making Process; (7) Leading Transparent Communication; (8) Leading Accountability and Measuring Success; (9) Leading Change; and (10) What it Means to Be a Performing Arts Leader.

One of the most valuable aspects of the book is that Stein explores performing arts leadership through the personal lenses of men and women who lead some of the major performing arts venues and organizations of our time. For example, Chapter Three, which discusses the implementation of an organization’s vision, pulls from the wisdom of the leaders behind the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Ford’s Theatre, Metropolitan Opera, New York City Center, American Theatre Wing, and the Mark Morris Dance Group. By using a variety of sources, Stein allows the reader to grasp diverse strategies.

Arlene Shuler (New York City Center) shares her process of developing a vision that would transform the rental hall into a home for dance – the historical basis for its founding. In the same chapter, Peter Gelb (Metropolitan Opera) discusses his strategy for making the organization more accessible – including reduced pricing, open rehearsals, and the use of HD transmission to share each performance with an international audience. In each chapter, young artists are able to read through the decision-making processes of the leaders.

I highly recommend Leadership in the Performing Arts to anyone seeking to engage with or become an arts manager. The text leads readers through practical examples while offering insights, reflections and strategies for becoming a successful leader and an integral part of an organization. Above all, Stein provides some intriguing answers to the question, “What makes an arts leader?”

Bradley Branham is the program manager for SETC. A graduate of Lynchburg College, he has worked in arts administration for the past four years. Before joining SETC, he served as the managing director for the Virginia Theatre Association.
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