

# the **ASTC** letter

The Newsletter of the AMERICAN SOCIETY OF THEATRE CONSULTANTS

## LOOKING AT THE FUTURE OF THEATRES

The theme of the recent ASTC Forum 2003 was *The Past, Present and Future* in reference to the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of ASTC. To kick-off the two and a half day event, founding members reminisced about the formation of the association in 1983 and others re-capped recent and ongoing ASTC activities. The focus then moved to a wide-ranging discussion of what the future might hold for theatre consultants and the ASTC. Topics ranged from innovative light sources to the future of the theatre in general. The following is a glimpse at the collective ASTC crystal ball.

ASTC futurists still see “two planks and a passion” as describing the essence of the audience / stage relationship, but agree that future audience members will be increasingly discriminating about seat comfort, participatory theatre environments, cross-media presentations, optimum acoustical response and the importance of audience amenities. There is an increasing need for performing arts facilities to be designed to support true multi-use activities in order to be in the best position for financial resourcefulness. The design of traditional, single-purpose facilities such as concert halls will also need to embrace alternative performance uses in order to be financially competitive. Automation will be applied more readily to theatre design to allow auditoriums to be reconfigured quickly so that these spaces can be used

more frequently to increase revenues. Changes in local and national building codes, government statutes including ADA legislation and interpretation, and concerns about the safety and security of large public assembly spaces will affect the design of performing arts facilities as we move forward.

The need to optimize labor costs, reduce energy consumption, and to respond to health and safety concerns are encouraging theatre designers toward the use of more motorized performance equipment systems. Higher initial investments in non-manual systems such as motorized rigging and “intelligent” performance lighting technology will be

ASTC members predict that private / public partnerships will be used more frequently for financing and operating performing arts facilities. Public high school auditoriums will more often be partially funded by municipalities, foundations, corporations and local arts groups, the additional funds being used to upgrade the facilities for an expanded range of presentation and conference types.

In a discussion of the future impact on design and consulting tools, ASTC members unanimously describe a current work environment where more information is demanded in a shorter time frame than in the past. The transfer of

CAD-based information via the Internet is a major change in the work method of theatre consultants. Consultants describe a situation where more information is required in the early design phases to

support end-of-phase costing exercises and “guaranteed maximum price” predictions. Electronic visualization software is already allowing theatre consultants to create virtual reality environments for mock-up presentations. A general concern within the ASTC membership is the choice of long-range archival systems that will allow information to be stored now and retrieved later without concern that the storage technology will become quickly outdated or that information will be “stranded” in storage due to the rapid evolution of

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offset by reductions in labor costs. The use of HID and LED light sources will initially supplement and may gradually replace the less efficient incandescent light source that has been the mainstay of performance lighting for the last century. The new, efficient light sources may result in additional cost savings due to reductions in energy consumption. Auditoriums and stages will be equipped with wireless, “smart” technology systems to support performance requirements as well as educational and corporate uses to augment operating income.

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# ROLAND FINE ARTS CENTER

## HANNIBAL LaGRANGE COLLEGE

### HANNIBAL, MISSOURI

This campus has been without a performing venue since June 1989, when their McKenzie Hall burned. That theatre had contained a 600 seat auditorium. During the interim they utilized an early 1900's Orpheum Theater located in downtown Hannibal. While providing a facility, technical provisions were almost non-existent. The new Roland Fine Arts Center includes a 564 seat theatre, along with associated lobby, art gallery, dressing rooms, green room, scene shop, and faculty offices. The center also includes a music wing, with music rehearsal rooms, practice rooms, classrooms, and offices, and an art wing, with design and sculpture studios, classrooms, and offices. Total gross square footage is 50,130.

When the new Fine Arts project was conceived it was designed and built with the pre-knowledge that the budget would be very tight. The resulting spaces all display quality material and workmanship. In order to reach the final building budget, various "plug-in" items were deferred, to be acquired as funds become available. This approach was preferred to the acceptance of sub-standard materials or compromises in performance systems. The building was dedicated May 3, 2003. Final construction cost was \$6,266,290.00.

The theatre's proscenium is 40'0" wide x 20'0" high, and the stage is 84'-3" wide x 27'-6" deep, plus a 4'-6" apron. Below the apron is an orchestra pit covered by a removable forestage platform



### Project Team

Architect: Peckham, Guyton,  
Albers & Viets, Inc., Kansas City,  
MO

Theatre & Acoustic Consultant:  
Lustig & Associates, Inc., St. Louis,  
MO

Structural Engineer: Walter P.  
Moore, Inc., Kansas City, MO

Mechanical & Electrical Engineer:  
Smith & Boucher, Inc., Kansas  
City, MO

General Contractor: Bliagh Con-  
struction, Hannibal, MO

Stage Rigging/Drapery Contractor:  
Allied Theatre Crafts, Inc., Kansas  
City, MO

system. The stage floor is of a "basket-weave" design for resiliency, with a black lineoleum top surface. The gridiron is at 55'-0" above the stage floor.

The stage rigging system includes provisions for 25 manual counterweight line sets on 8" centers, with 16 line sets initially installed. The loft blocks are under-hung pivot type for mounting to the roof beams, which slope up to upstage. Other stage equipment includes a full complement of stage curtains and a front projection screen.

The stage lighting system is "dimmer at the light," built around Entertainment Technology IPS dimmers, controlled by a Colortran "Innovator 600" console. The theatre is wired for 198 1,200-watt dimmers, with 126 dimmers

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# ASTC NEWS

## Forum 03 – Newport, Rhode Island

In celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding, the American Society of Theatre Consultants gathered at the Goat Island Hyatt in Newport, Rhode Island for their 40<sup>th</sup> ASTC meeting. The highlight of Forum 03, titled “Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow” was a lively roundtable discussion amongst founding members S. Leonard Auerbach, Teddy Dean Boys, Robert Davis, Ron Jerit, and Edgar L. Lustig, detailing the formation of the organization in 1983.

The founders spoke of the formation of the Society and its subsequent first meeting on January 14, 1983. Intended as a divergent group with

common needs, the Founders believed that a Society of Theater Consultants would legitimize the Profession and strengthen the relationship between Architecture, Theatrical Design, and Performance. The founding members agreed that the development of quality theatres and high design standards were more important than creating an organization of marquee status.



The “Today” session featured members’ presentations comparing their first projects with their most recently completed ones. The “Tomorrow” session featured an upbeat exchange of ideas focused on anticipated advances in technology, production design, and audience

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## Membership News

At the 2003 Annual Meeting, the membership elected these officers of the society:

- Todd Hensley, President
- Michael McMackin, Vice-President
- Edgar L. Lustig, Secretary-Treasurer
- James Read, Director
- Robin Crews, Director

In other membership news, Scott Crossfield, Sarah Schreiber Prince, and David Rosenburg have been upgraded to full membership. And Van Phillips has been accepted as a full member.

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preferences, as well as the development of the next generation of Theater Consultants.

Next year’s Forum will be held in Las Vegas and will feature a discussion on casino showroom requirements, as well as a tour of some recently completed showrooms.



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installed initially. The inventory of stage lighting instruments includes Colortran and Altman ellipsoidals, Colortran and Altman fresnels, Altman cyclorama lights, and Altman “Voyager” follow spots.

The sound system includes Renkus Heinz speakers, Crown amplifiers, Shure equalizers, and an Allen & Heath GL-2200-24 mixer. The system also includes Shure wireless mics, TOA stage monitor speakers, and Tascam DAT, CD, and cassette playback devices. The 2-channel intercom system is by Telex, and the FM assistive listening system is by Listen.

Edgar L. Lustig, ASTC

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## Theatre projects in progress

*The following theatre and assembly projects are in various stages of design and construction in ASTC members' offices:*

### ARTEC CONSULTANTS, INC.

Jazz at Lincoln Center, New York NY  
Four Rivers Center for the Performing Arts, Paducah, KY

### AUERBACH POLLOCK FRIEDLANDER

Zumanity, Another Side of Cirque du Soleil, New York New York Hotel Casino Theatre, Las Vegas, NV  
Judy and Arthur Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall, New York, NY

### CDAI

Nova Southeastern Performing Arts Center, Ft. Lauderdale, FL  
Riverside Military Academy Auditorium, Gainesville, GA

### DAVIS CROSSFIELD ASSOCIATES

Contemporary Arts Center, Shepherd College and the Contemporary American Theater Festival, Shepherdstown, WV  
The Southwest Performing Arts Center, Amarillo, TX

### FISHER/DACHS ASSOCIATES INC.

Four Seasons Center for the Performing Arts (for the Toronto Opera), Toronto, ON  
Guthrie Theatre, Minneapolis, MN

### GEORGE C. IZENOUR ASSOCIATES

Mathena Center for Performing Arts, Princeton, WV  
Boulevard Theater adaptive re-use, Salisbury, MD

### J&M ASSOCIATES

Hanover High School, Hanover, NH  
Richmond Middle School, Hanover, NH

### JERIT/BOYS, INC.

Fine Arts Addition, College of Southern Idaho, Twin Falls ID  
Theatre Arts Center, Northwestern College, Orange City, IA

### JONES & PHILLIPS ASSOCIATES, INC.

Red Skelton Performing Arts Center, Vincennes, IN  
Lively Arts Center, Daytona Beach, FL

### LANDRY & BOGAN

New Theatre, Concert Hall, Black Box, and Studios, California State University Fullerton, CA  
New two-theatre home for Portland Center Stage Company, Portland, OR

### ROBERT LORELLI ASSOCIATES, INC.

Performing And Visual Arts Center, American University In Cairo, Cairo, Egypt  
Schaumburg Center For Performing Arts, Schaumburg, IL

### SCHULER & SHOOK, INC.

Fine, Performing, and Communication Arts High School, Detroit, MI  
Paramount Theatre, Charlottesville, VA

### KYLE SMITH THEATRE CONSULTING

Dallas Theater, Dallas, GA  
Berry College Arena, Rome, GA

### THEATER DESIGN, INC.

Turning Stone Resort and Casino Events Center, Verona, NY  
Constans Theatre Addition, Gainesville, FL

### THEATRE PROJECTS CONSULTANTS, INC.

Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles, CA  
Winspear Opera House & Multiform Theatre, Dallas, TX

### WRIGHTSON, JOHNSON, HADDON & WILLIAMS, INC.

West Texas A&M University Fine Arts Building, Canyon, TX  
Howard College Fine Arts Building, Big Spring, TX

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data storage devices.

Methods of developing and nurturing the next generation of theatre consultants have been an ongoing discussion within the ASTC since its inception twenty years ago. How to define the skills needed to be a theatre consultant fully prepared for the future will be regularly debated for years to come. The willingness and ability to embrace new tools and technologies, combined with exceptional communications skills and a strong, intuitive theatre instinct, remain for now the foundation

stones of effective theatre consulting.

ASTC members see in the future wholesale changes in technology in the design and production of effective performing arts facilities. We can predict and prepare for some of these changes, but for others we will have to wait and see. The "two planks" continue to evolve with ever-changing regularity, but the "passion" will remain as a guiding element in theatre building design.

Robert Long, ASTC

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To learn more about the ASTC, visit our website:

[www.theatreconsultants.org](http://www.theatreconsultants.org)