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Janet Albanese is a strong supporter of Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards and a native of Des Moines. Janet has worked professionally as a production manager and stage manager on both coasts. She has taught stage management to students in undergraduate programs and mentored young stage managers at a variety of professional theaters and academic programs. Janet brings over 20 years of experience working on productions from concept to realized design. She is passionate about communicating this collaborative experience to liberal arts students so they can grow in whatever capacity they are interested—as actors, designers, directors, or stage managers. Janet is the director of production and building services at Des Moines Performing Arts. Previously she has stage managed Iowa's longest running show, *Triple Espresso*, as well as shows around the country, including in Los Angeles and New York.

Robert Barry is a retired vocal music instructor from Sioux City, Iowa. He possesses a Bachelor of Music Education degree from Morningside College, and Master of Science in School Administration degree from Wayne State College. Bob spent 38 years teaching vocal and instrumental music in public and private schools in Northwest Iowa, covering all aspects of music education in primary, secondary and collegiate settings. Bob has extensive experience as a performer, director, accompanist and musical director. His work extends from middle and high school productions in the Sioux City area, regional theater work at Lamb Arts Regional Theater and professional productions at the Betty Ling Tsang Summer Theater Series at Morningside College. Bob maintains a private voice studio, and mentors new choral conductors through the Iowa Alliance for Arts Education and the Iowa Choral Director's Association and appears often on adjudication panels with the Iowa High School Music Association.

Janice Bear is semi-retired and a 1968 TV grad living in West Union, Iowa. With a BA in English & Creative Writing and an MBA from the University of Iowa, she worked in the Washington DC, Cincinnati, and Boston areas prior to returning to northeast Iowa in 1990 with her son Brian Frenzen. In Iowa, she lent her talents in marketing and sales, accounting, computers, teaching at NICC, property management, and more. For the last 20 years or more, you can see her judging high school speech contests, playing trombone in the Community Band, singing in the West Union Messiah and offering her comedic skills in local melodrama and community performances. She has been the Secretary for Classic Tractors of Northeast Iowa for the 20 years, organizing rides to raise scholarship funds for Northeast Iowa Community College and local Food Banks. She enjoys her flower gardens, collecting hats, and making people laugh!!

Ashley Becher is an active professional actor, director, choreographer, and creator who truly loves the transformative magic of theatre and the way it can bring us together! After receiving her B.F.A. in Musical Theatre (Viterbo University), Ashley spent more than a decade as an NYC-based actor, creating in professional theatres around the country, and three years developing and performing in TYA shows in South Korea. While you'll only see Ashley perform at professional theatres, her Directing/Choreography resume includes work at the professional level, as well as collegiate, high school, youth, and community theatre. In addition to these roles, Ashley is the current Artistic Director for Davenport Junior Theatre in Davenport, Iowa. As an avid theatre fan, she loves to consume as much theatre as possible, and has seen 100 Broadway shows.

Bobby Becher is a professional musical theatre actor and creator, originally from Huntsville, Alabama. A 2011 graduate of the University of Alabama, Bobby has since made his living acting, writing, teaching, and working in various creative positions in the theatre. A performer primarily, some of his favorite acting credits include: *The Play That Goes Wrong*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Million Dollar Quartet*, and *Disaster!* Bobby has also written original scripts and scores for several Theatre for Young Audiences musicals and is the co-owner of the TYA company WhatFun! Theatre with his wife, Ashley. Bobby also continuously works as a music director and arranger and has produced the tracks for several professional shows and concerts. www.abBecher.com @bobbybecher11



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Scott Bertelsen taught at Forest City High School for 39 years and is now retired from this role. While teaching, he co-directed 35 musicals and 30 plays. During his time as co-director of the high school musical, the Forest City community abundantly supported him with sold-out shows. In 2015, Scott and Michele Jacobsen, vocal instructor at the time, were highlighted as high school musical directors on an IPTV special. In 2018, Scott was the recipient of the IHSMTA Impact Award and was inducted into the IHSSA Hall of Fame.

Linda Brant spent her career teaching high school College Prep. English, speech, and drama, most recently at Charles City. She also taught college English and drama courses for Iowa State University, Upper Iowa University, and NIACC. She designed and directed numerous high school and community theatre plays and musicals, as well as over a hundred All-State speech casts. Her favorite shows to design are realistic interiors and her favorite to direct are period shows with historic costumes. Among her recognitions are Iowa High School Speech Association Hall of Fame, Wartburg College's Outstanding Teacher of the Year, Charles City's Woman of the Year, and Rotary's Vocational Service Award.

Kendra Breitsprecher has a BA in theatre/English/secondary education and a MA in literature with an emphasis on Shakespeare. She has been a high school speech coach and drama director for over twenty years, as well as a classroom teacher. In addition to directing, Breitsprecher herself has appeared in several musicals, including a leading role in the Commedia Musica Players version of *Camelot*. Most important, Breitsprecher is a musical theatre lover.

Joshua Brown has been active in the musical theatre community for the past 14+ years. He has served a variety of roles at Class Act Productions, Inc. including serving as the President of the Board of Directors and in other leadership positions. In addition, he served in multiple other roles as a volunteer including education director and technical director. Joshua also has directed musical theatre productions at Goodrell Middle School where he taught for many years before becoming the President of the Des Moines Education Association. Joshua recently has also started adjudicating community theatre productions in central Iowa with the Cloris Award program.

John Busbee has served in variety of roles in theater, having managed and performed in a national touring company he co-founded, to lead roles in regional theater and musicals, to design work at the university and professional level. He also has been reviewing theatrical productions for more than 20 years, and, since 2007, continues to produce a weekly arts and culture radio show that is anchored by the performing arts. He was awarded the 2014 Iowa Governor's Award for Collaboration and Partnership in the Arts.

Erin Bustin's parents returned from London when she was five years old with recordings: *Les Misérables*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Chess*, and more. She was swept away by the music, the stories, and especially by the power of the human voice. From that moment on, she found every possible opportunity to sing. Erin lives in Grinnell, Iowa where she is the founding director of the Grinnell Children's Choir and co-founder and singer in Vox Feminae, a women's chamber ensemble. She teaches voice lessons, music theory, and Music Together - an early childhood music and movement class - at Studio E Grinnell. Erin holds a Bachelor of Music in Voice Performance from the University of Prince Edward Island and a Master of Arts in Musicology from the University of Toronto. Before moving to Iowa in 2014, Erin worked in non-profit arts management, including positions at prestigious Canadian organizations Soundstreams and Choral Canada, and was a professional member of the Toronto Bach Festival Singers (Doreen Rao) and Toronto Choral Artists (Mark Vuorinen). While choral singing is her first love, Erin is also an active soprano recitalist. Erin is a passionate advocate for music education and accessibility. She believes singing develops invaluable life and leadership skills and creates happier, healthier communities.



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Susan Cantine-Maxson received her BA from Wartburg College with majors in English, Speech and Theatre, and received her MA from University of Northern Iowa in Communications/Theatre. She is a 2005 IHSSA Hall of Fame member, and directed high school musicals, theatre, variety shows and speech contest for almost 30 years at Decorah High School (DHS). She directed numerous Outstanding Performance Groups for IHSSA and has been an All-State critic 6 times. As most high school directors, she actively participated in all technical aspects of the show. She worked closely with choreographer Valerie Williams from Ames when Williams worked as an Artist-in Residence for twelve DHS musicals. She was assistant to the director for Luther College's Dorian Opera Theatre for 7 summers. She also was actively involved in community theater productions. After her retirement from teaching, she became the executive director of a 100-year-old restored opera house in Kansas for 8 years.

Daniel Chase has a BME in music education from Iowa Wesleyan College with graduate studies in music education and musical theater from the University of Northern Iowa, VanderCook College of Music and Drake University. He was a music educator for 27 years, teaching choral music and voice around the state and continues to shape high school musicians as an adjudicator for Iowa High School Music Association and Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards. In addition, Dan directed Cardinal KeyNotes vocal jazz ensemble at Iowa State University and has guest-directed musicals at area high schools and community theaters. Dan has also performed in more than 30 dramas, comedies, and musicals. Favorite acting roles include Rote in *Wait Until Dark*, Carmichael in McDonagh's *A Behanding In Spokane*, Arvide Abernathy in *Guys And Dolls*, and John Wilkes Booth in Stephen Sondheim's *Assassins*.

Jeff Chelesvig is President and CEO of Des Moines Performing Arts. Under his leadership, Des Moines Performing Arts presents seven performance series and serves over 300,000 people annually. Chelesvig plays an integral role in the Broadway theater community, serving on The Broadway League's Board of Governors and Executive Committee. He is Iowa's only voter for Broadway's highest honor, the Tony Awards.

Stephanie Coble-Day has her degree in Speech, Communications and Theater Arts Teaching from the University of Northern Iowa. With over 25 years of experience Stephanie has directed actors as young as 3 and as old as 80 in plays and musicals for community theater and school productions. She has also taught theater and speech and coached speech teams. Stephanie has served as a judge for IHSSA for the past 11 years, judging many areas including one act play, musical theater, radio news broadcasting, choral reading, and readers theater. When not working on a production, Stephanie is a Principal at Community Christian School, volunteers at her church First United Methodist Church, and serves on the Comedia Musical Players and the Hawkeye Community Theater boards in Ft. Dodge, Iowa. Stephanie and her husband Scott enjoy traveling and spending time with family, especially all of their wonderful grandchildren.

Jim Cross is a graduate of Greenville University, with a BA in Theatre with an emphasis in artistic direction. Jim Cross's career has included doing high school productions and community theatre in both Illinois and Iowa. In addition, he has been a speech coach for the Iowa High School Speech Association for over 10 years in the Riceville Community School District and more recently Northwest High School in Waukee.

Peter Dean is a local actor, director, IHSSA Large Group Speech judge and Assistant Large Group Speech coach for Dallas Center-Grimes High School. He has performed numerous roles with the Des Moines Community Playhouse on both the main stage and the Kate Goldman Children's Theatre, as well as performed with other local theater companies. Peter is also part of the educational staff at the Playhouse. Most recently, Peter has directed *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus*, *The Musical* and *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical*, both at the Des Moines Community Playhouse and on stage, reprising the role of "Sheriff Tom Lane" in *Girls' Weekend 2*. Some of Peter's favorite roles to date have been



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“Sharktooth” in *How I Became a Pirate* (Dionysus Award winner), “Cowardly Lion” in *The Wizard of Oz*, “Gaston” in *Disney’s Beauty and the Beast* and “Sheriff Tom” in *Girls’ Weekend* and *Girls Weekend 2*.

Dave DeChristopher recently moved to Iowa from Rapid City, South Dakota, where he was the Director of Education and Outreach at Black Hills Community Theatre from 2018 until 2022. At BHCT, he started a playwriting group, brought drama as a learning tool into classrooms, adapted several books for performance, and directed multiple productions. Dave, who is a member of Actors’ Equity Association and the Dramatists Guild, worked in New York as a professional actor, playwright, director, and artist-in-the-schools from 1980 until the mid-aughts. While there, he served for many years on AEA’s Theatre for Young Audiences Committee. He returned to his native Toledo in 2004, where he co-founded the Glacity Theatre Collective, taught at the University of Toledo, served as Artistic Director of the Toledo Repertoire Theatre, and was the Director of Theatre at Clay High School for seven years. Dave currently works as a freelance writer, teacher, and director.

Jason Dernay is a professional performer and arts educator based in Des Moines, Iowa. Jason holds a BFA in Theatre and a BA in Management from Michigan State University. In his professional career, Jason works primarily as a physical performer, with experience in performance capture, creature work, mascots, puppetry, stunts, fight choreography, and more. Jason is a proud supporter of educational theatre in Iowa and is honored to serve and support the schools and students participating in the Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards.

Sabrina Duke graduated from the University of Iowa with a BFA in Dance (choreography concentration) and BA in Theatre Arts (musical theatre track). Originally from Cleveland, Ohio, she began dancing and performing at the age of three and trained with Cleveland professionals Gladisa Guadalupe, Jamie Koeth, Leslie Varnick, Melanie Szucs, and Heidi Glynias. She participated in the Dazzle Awards (Jimmy Awards-affiliate program) for all four years of high school. As an Iowa student, she performed in many dance department shows including Dance Gala 2022 at Hancher Auditorium, Faculty/Graduate concert, was a member of the touring University of Iowa Dance Company, and wrote her honors thesis on Agnes de Mille’s *Oklahoma!*’s “Dream Ballet.” She played Atropos in the Theatre Arts department’s production of *String* and choreographed their production of *Something Rotten!*. She now works for Iowa as an admissions counselor and research assistant for dance historian Professor Rebekah Kowal.

V~ Dumas-Wines began performing more than 68 years ago, and never stopped. She was a Master Teacher at the Des Moines Playhouse and was a member of their professional troupe Actors On Tour. She has worked as an actor, director, acting coach, writer, and taught acting workshops all over Iowa. V~’s company Allegro Children’s Theatre Productions produced plays around Central Iowa, many at the state Historical Building. For Allegro, she was producer, director, costumer, sound, stage manager, props, and, in a pinch, actor. She just directed *Steel Magnolias* for Actors in Ames. She most recently appeared in *The Full Monty* at Stephens Auditorium in Ames, and directed *The Savannah Sipping Society*, also at Stephens. She received Best Supporting Actress for Iowa/South Dakota Theater AACT/Fest for her roles in *From The Window*. Other credits include: *Nunsense*, *The Cemetery Club*, *I Do! I Do!*, *Company*, *Zorba*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Absurd Person Singular*.

Natalie Ervolino recently returned to her roots in Dubuque, Iowa last year after pursuing her graduate education and professional career in theatre design and technology. She is an alumni of the BA program at the University of Northern Iowa and the MFA program at the University of Memphis. While she has had the joy of working in regional and academic theatres across the country in various design and technical capacities, Natalie still credits most of who she is as an artist today to the wealth of resources and mentorship made available to her as a theatre kid growing up in Iowa. It is both an honor and a privilege to transition into roles that support the next generation of young artists. She is still active in the theatre communities in both Iowa and Memphis, and currently works with several community organizations to



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promote creativity and literacy programs for youth. She specializes in scenic and digital media design, scenic art, props, production management, creative pedagogy, and theatre for young audiences.

Mic Evans is the Education Director for Theatre Cedar Rapids (TCR), one of the largest not-for-profit community-based theaters in the United States. Mic oversees the adult, youth and special needs educational programming all under a "Pay What You Can" umbrella- ensuring that any student, of any age, can receive a comprehensive theatre arts education. When he isn't teaching, Mic is a freelance director, having worked with Cedar Rapids area high schools, TCR and the Giving Tree Theatre. He's also a local actor having played roles such as Spongebob Squarepants in the Iowa premiere of *The Spongebob Squarepants Musical*, Quasimodo in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, Monty Navarro in *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* and so many more. He has also served as a guest critic for the IHSSA All-State convention and looks forward to giving back to a new generation of theatre lovers!

David Felton has been involved in theater since his middle school production of *The Wizard of Oz*. Throughout high school he stayed on stage, and once he got to college he started exploring the backstage world of theater. It was during college that he found his love of directing. Since then he has directed multiple shows for Carousel Theatre of Indianola, as well as stage managed and assisted with stage management on multiple shows through the Des Moines community. He has served on the board of directors for both Carousel Theatre of Indianola and Des Moines Young Artists' Theatre. He is also a judge and coach for the Iowa High School Speech Association and Des Moines contributing editor for *BroadwayWorld*.

Eric Field is a former teacher who has taught and coached speech and drama at the middle and high school level for thirteen years. Eric is glad to return for a second year of adjudicating for IHSMTA. Although he is currently getting his doctoral degree in school psychology at University of Iowa, he still serves as an experienced judge for Iowa High School Speech Association and has judged both Solo and Large Group Musical Theatre. Eric also has performed in amateur and semiprofessional theatre for 30+ years, with favorite roles including Nathan Detroit (*Guys and Dolls*), Mr. Boddy (*Clue the Musical*), Herman (*Sweet Charity*), Jeter (*Footloose*), and Levi/Baker (*Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*). Favorite productions he has directed include *Footloose*, *My Fair Lady*, *Hello Dolly!*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, and *Copacabana*.

Olivia Forney is a mom of three young children, all of whom have come to love musicals (mostly because that is what Mom forces them to listen to at home). Olivia grew up in Storm Lake, Iowa, where she was active in theatre and speech. She attended the University of Iowa and has degrees in English and Theatre Arts. While working as a camp counselor, she found her husband and they bonded over their love for musical theatre (he has been found both in the pit and on stage). In college, Olivia was active in the theatre and fell in love with life behind-the-scenes. After graduation, Olivia coached both individual and large group speech. She also directed high school plays and musicals. Today, time doesn't allow for coaching and directing (see "three young children" mentioned above), but Olivia is still often seen judging at IHSSA events and sitting in the audience of local high school, college, community, and professional shows.

Lynnea Fredrickson-Smith is a Forest City native and a passionate proponent of creating quality theatre in rural areas. She earned her BFA in Musical Theatre from Nebraska Wesleyan University and a BA in Theatre Arts at Bowling Green State University. In the summer of 2015, she organized and directed Brickstreet Theatre's revival production of *Carousel*. Since then, she has directed four more musicals, acted in three productions, and has costumed twelve. She currently serves as the artistic director of Brickstreet Theatre.

Anne Frett is an English and Drama teacher at Dallas Center-Grimes High School, where she also coaches large group speech. Anne has appeared in more than 25 Des Moines area shows as an actor in



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the last 20 years. As a long-time member of the education staff at The Des Moines Community Playhouse, she now focuses most of her energy on directing and has directed several shows in the Kate Goldman Children's Theater in the last 10 years, including *Alice in Wonderland* and this season's production of *Ivy and Bean*. Other directing/choreography credits include work for Epic Stage Productions and Urbandale Community Theater. In her free time, Anne loves to travel with her husband and three daughters.

Jessica Fridley has been involved in the performing arts for the last 15 years whether as a performer, a coach/director, or a judge for the IHSSA. She has taken multiple classes that assist in enhancing her knowledge of staging, acting, and speaking. She has been a coach for the AC/GC individual speech team for 3 years as well as assisted in coaching both large group and individual events at numerous schools throughout her career. She also teaches a speech class at the high school. She has experience with staging and choreography during her time as a color/winter guard coach and has experience competing as a color guard member in drum corps..

Peggy George recently played the role of Grandma in Ankeny Community Theatre's production of *The Addams Family*. She's also performed several seasons at the Thunder Bay Theater (Summer stock,) The Olde Creamery Theater, and the former Dorian Opera Theater. Too, Peggy's performed in many shows with The Des Moines Playhouse, the former Ingersoll and Charlie's Showplace Dinner Theaters, and the former Drama Workshop. With the latter, she played Fraulein Kost in *Cabaret* and, 25 years later, played Frau Schneider in the same musical as a graduate student at U.N.I.! She's also served as alto soloist in choral ensembles, most notably the Dubuque Chorale, with whom she did two European tours. Peggy is a Voice and Music Ed. graduate of Simpson College and has done graduate work in Education and Theater at U.N.I. She's taught music in several schools. Currently, she teaches voice, piano, guitar, and stage dialects at her private studio.

John Gibson is a retired theater teacher of 44 years. He was introduced to theater when he was in 5th grade growing up in Chicago. He has directed/choreographed many types of musicals and has a career in community theater, at local universities, and also on the junior/senior high school level. Since he retired, he has worked as an adjudicator for Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards, Iowa High School Speech, and many high school festivals. Mr. Gibson loves to see what high schools are presenting in so many different theater spaces and is amazed at the quality work that is produced.

Michelle Grob is a retired teacher who has spent the last 30 years involved in school and community theatre. She loves all aspects of theatre: acting, choreographing, costuming, stage crew, tech, and directing. To date, Michelle has been part of 60+ productions. With no formal training in theatre, she credits amazing directors, mentors, and actors for everything she has learned and the successful shows they have been able to bring to the stage. "Theatre is a living entity that gets in your blood and helps you to learn and grow. Like any passion, theatre is where one truly finds themselves."

Kenneth Hayes went to Northwestern College, Orange City, Iowa. While attending Northwestern College, he was awarded a theatre scholarship to study under Jeff and Karen Barker where he performed in numerous plays and musicals. After graduating, Dr. Hayes was a high school business teacher where he also served as the advisor/coach for the school plays, musicals, large group and individual speech. He is author to several published monologues and continues to write scripts in his spare time. He has acted and directed in community theater plays and musicals with Orange City's Tulip Festival and Starfighter's Theatre in Anamosa. In 2000, Dr. Hayes became a principal and was awarded the Fine Arts Administrator of the Year by the Iowa High School Speech Association (IHSSA) in 2009. Dr. Hayes has served as a judge/coach/parent for the IHSSA for many years in the past three decades. He currently works at UNI.



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De Heaton is the Executive Director of Corning Opera House Cultural Center in Corning, located in southwest Iowa. She has a bachelor's degree in music education from Morningside College and a master's in education from Viterbo University. After teaching vocal and instrumental music for many years and watching the music programming being cut from so many school districts in the early 2000s, De became the director of the opera house to keep the arts alive. For community plays and musicals at the opera house, she has helped in many capacities from directing, stage manager, costumes, set design and build, lighting design and light operator in local musical productions, plays and youth musicals. In the summer of 2023 De was honored as the Iowan of the Day from the Iowa State Fair Blue-Ribbon Foundation and received the Iowa Governor Volunteer of the Year Award.

William Hickman is very proud to serve as head of TheatreUNI. He comes to Iowa from Pasadena, California, where he was the chair of theatre and dance at Pasadena City College. William received his MFA in acting from UCLA, and his BFA in acting/directing from the University of Montevallo. Favorite directing credits include *Metamorphoses*, *Cabaret*, *Shhh...The Library Musical*, and *She Kills Monsters*. He is a member of Actor's Equity Association and the Society of American Fight Directors.

Laura Hinspeter is the owner and instructor at L.A.H. Music Studio in Waukee, teaching private voice, piano and flute lessons year-round. She is an active music educator: clinician, adjudicator, and studio instructor. She has her Bachelor of Music Education from Wartburg College. Laura started her career teaching 6th-12th grade vocal music for the St. Ansgar Schools. Her career continued in the West Des Moines Schools where she taught 7-8 grade vocal music at Stilwell Junior High School (2001-2005). When at Stilwell her students sang on the east staircase at the Des Moines Civic Center before attending opening night of *Les Misérables*. Laura has been a member of the Iowa Choral Directors Association, an adjudicator for the Iowa High School Music Association and Iowa All-State Jazz Choir and serves as clinician and festival director throughout the state of Iowa. She has been a member of the IHSMTA adjudication team since 2016.

Monté J. Howell is a New York City based actor who's currently pursuing his MFA at the University of Iowa (Acting), where he also serves as a graduate teaching assistant. In addition to his studies, Mr. Howell currently serves as an adjudicator and educator for Des Moines Performing Arts', Iowa High School Musical Theatre Awards. Mr. Howell has also served as a teaching artist for Riverside Theatre, Iowa City's: Will Power program and the Coralville Center of Performing Arts! Recent Credits: *Twelfth Night* (Riverside Theatre) and *Lil' G, A Gatsby Remix* (Univ of Iowa). Selected Credits: *Les Misérables* (Broadway National Tour), *The Golden Apple* (New York City Center: Encores!), *The Countess of Storyville* (NYC Lab), *Les Misérables* (The MUNY), *Shrek* (Alliance Theatre), *Sister Act* (Arkansas Rep), *The Music Man* (Flat Rock Playhouse), *Porgy and Bess* (Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh), and *Little Shop of Horrors* (Stages St. Louis). Upcoming: *The Mountaintop* (Riverside Theatre). Proud member of Actors Equity Association. Jude 1:24-25

Braxten Jones graduated from the University of Iowa receiving a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Arts on the acting track. Within her time in Iowa City, she learned acting methods to expand the movement of the body and extend vocal presence. In new work productions she used acting, singing, dancing to connect with university audiences. While in school she went on to be a Theatre Representative and originator of The Producers Club to foster undergraduate creativity. In her coursework, she gained interest in sound design and went on to produce music compositions. Before college, Braxten was active in high school theatre culture, performing in ensembles, supporting, and lead roles in musicals such as *Young Frankenstein*, *The Wedding Singer*, *Heathers*, and *Urinetown*. Additionally, she was student leader in Group Speech and received All-State Performing Rankings. Currently, Braxten studies vocal techniques through studio lessons and produces music and independent film work.

David Kilpatrick is the executive director of The Des Moines Community Playhouse. Prior he was the executive director of La Crosse Community Theatre and The Old Creamery Theatre. In addition to



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business, David is also very experienced on the show side of the industry. He has directed musicals (*Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella*, *Newsies*, *Catch Me If You Can* and *Titanic* to name a few), and straight plays, (*Murder on the Orient Express*, *Weekend Comedy* and *Boeing Boeing*). David's career has also included owner of a dinner theatre, lighting designer and production manager and stage manager. David has enjoyed working for theatres in such diverse communities as Iowa, Wisconsin, Missouri, Virginia, Georgia, California, and Upstate New York. His education includes degrees from George Mason University, Missouri State and University of Missouri, where his dissertation was the exploration of the audience preparing for the show.

Wyn Kischer has been active in theatre from the age of five, participating in all aspects, on stage and behind the scenes, ever since. He is truly devoted to providing qualitative experienced-based theatre training to today's youth. Wyn recently retired after 36 years involvement in theatre education in Hawai'i, North Dakota, Minnesota, and most recently, in Iowa at Waukee Schools. He received his undergraduate B.A. and his M.F.A. from the graduate theatre and dance program of the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. He is a member of the Screen Actors Guild/AFTRA, Artists Equity Association, and the United States Institute for Theatre Technology. He is also a Resident Artist Company member of the Iowa Stage Theatre Company. Wyn can be seen in several television episodes of the original "Magnum, P.I." and in "Hawaiian Heat." He also played the leading role of Professor Swan at LaMaMa, ETC's Off-Broadway production of *Dark is the Night* by Serbian playwright, Aleksandar Popovic. Wyn is an award-winning director/producer, scenic and lighting designer, and performer, and has been fortunate enough to witness seven of his former students perform on Broadway and five on television or in movies.

Doug Krejci is a performing arts educator and visual digital content creator with over 35 years of experience in middle school, high school, and college theatrical productions. He is frequently sought out for his expertise of stagecraft, stage design, lighting design, sound design, and new media usage in theatrical productions. Credits include: *Sweeney Todd*, *Company*, *Oklahoma!*, *Peter and the Star Catcher*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *42nd Street*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Skin of our Teeth*, *The Baache*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *The Music Man*, *Madagascar Jr.*, and *Noises Off* among many other productions. Mr. Krejci has also supported national touring productions, touring rock concerts, and mounted a production at the International Thespian Festival. Mr. Krejci is a percussion adjudicator nationally for USBands and statewide for IHSMA (Iowa) and WSMA (Wisconsin). Mr. Krejci also adjudicates for IHSSA (Speech) specializing in the theatre, digital media and motion media categories.

Emily Kruse is a development manager at Des Moines Performing Arts (DMPA). While growing up in Libertyville, Illinois, a northern Chicago suburb, she attended many performances at the Marriott Lincolnshire Theater in Lincolnshire and the Auditorium Theater in Chicago. She began playing French horn in fourth grade and was in the pit orchestra for her high school performances of *My Fair Lady* and *Into the Woods*, the latter of which was selected for the Illinois High School Theatre Festival. Emily was a four-year member of the Hawkeye Marching Band and continued to play her instrument after college. She is a season ticket holder at the Civic Center and donor to DMPA in addition to being one of DMPA's development managers. Emily has a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Iowa and a Master's Degree in Communication from the University of Dubuque.

Valerie Lenderink is a long-time theater lover. She grew up singing and dancing on stage at a very young age. Since high school, Valerie has been involved in a show every year, whether through high school, college, or the local community theater. For the past 5 years, Valerie has directed adult plays and children's musicals. Valerie is excited to see the fine arts continue to grow and flourish through this opportunity the Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards has presented.

Andy Lesieur began his directing/choreographing career in 2005 with Kirkwood Community College's *The Mikado*. He went on to study music and theatre at Simpson College where he Assistant Directed/Stage Managed two operas. He also served as Assistant Company Coordinator for the Des



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Moines Metro Opera company. Andy left Simpson College to become the Drama Director at Assembly of God Church in Cedar Rapids in 2008, helping them reimagine and rebuild their drama ministry. In 2012, Andy revived his teaching and performance career at Theatre Cedar Rapids (TCR). There he taught classes to children of all ages, as well as adults, worked extensively with TCR's autism spectrum program, and spearheaded their improvised "Play in a Day" program for elementary aged children. In 2015, he began creating shows and interactive programs for the nationally renowned Cedar Rapids Downtown Public Library, bringing in record numbers - from hundreds up to over 5,000 depending on the program's capacity. Andy also sat as the Education Committee Chair for Playtime Poppy Children's Theatre in Cedar Rapids during this time. In 2018, Andy took on the children's ministry at River of Life Church, adding six interactive larger-than-life projection screens transforming traditional Sunday School into an immersive worship and education experience. The ministry grew over 25 percent in his first year before Covid changed the world. Andy has held multiple lead, ensemble and dance roles in many Cedar Rapids area and touring productions throughout his lifetime. He currently leads theatre camps and teaches private lessons in acting, singing, dance, piano, strings, and other creative fields both online and in person through his own lesson studio: Your Voice Found.

Carl Lindberg is an educator, actor, and director originally from northern California. He is the Chair of DMACC's Ankeny Theatre Program—a flagship department within The Simon Estes School of Fine Arts. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Acting from California State University, Stanislaus, and a Master of Fine Arts in Directing from Western Illinois University. He has trained with Steppenwolf, The Second City, Shakespeare & Co., and has worked professionally as an actor, director, educator, designer, and administrator throughout the country. Most recently, Carl lived and worked in Chicago where he performed on stage with professional Equity companies such as Lookingglass, Remy Bumppo, About Face Theatre, Buffalo Theatre Ensemble, Oak Park Festival Theatre, and many others. Carl has appeared in national and regional commercials and short films. He also taught at the College of DuPage and the Chicago Academy for the Arts, Chicago's only private performing arts high school.

Brett Logsdon is an accountant at Des Moines Performing Arts (DMPA). While growing up in Lawton, Iowa, Brett participated in many productions through school and the community theatre's. He began playing the trumpet and french horn in grade school and continued his passion of the arts while studying at Simpson College. Brett graduated from Simpson College in 2021 with a degree in accounting, music and arts management.

Justin McDermott is a graduate from the University of Northern Iowa where he received his degree in Theatre for Youth. After graduating from UNI, Justin has performed, choreographed, and worked professionally for multiple theatre companies throughout the Midwest. Some recent theatrical credits include *Newsies*, *Hello, Dolly!*, *Bright Star*, *Bring It On!*, *Cabaret*, *Wizard of Oz*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and more. Justin has sailed the seas while performing onboard Disney Cruise Line and most recently, was a dancer at ValleyFair in Minnesota. Justin has a passion for helping young theatre artists find their love for the arts and always encourages them to keep dancing!

Andy McGuire is the Executive Director at the George Daily Community Auditorium in Oskaloosa, Iowa. For the past ten years, he's been working with a passion to help grow creative ecosystems and economic impact of the arts to benefit communities. Before transitioning to the Executive Director Position, Andy was the George Daily Auditorium's first full-time Education Director. He began his professional career as a theatre teaching artist and stage director for multiple theatres around the Midwest in Minneapolis, Des Moines, and Chicago. He's made it a goal to be a part of a community where he can participate. Andy has found that if you give more than you take, work together, make everything count, and share what you can, a lot of little can build an awful lot.

Tim Mitchell is a retired 34-year veteran Iowa high school vocal music and musical theatre director. During that tenure, he co-built strong programs in three schools: South Winneshiek, Waukon High School



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and Union Community Schools (LaPorte City). He has directed forty full scale musicals at the high school, community and semi-professional level. Tim was very active in the Iowa High School Speech Association where 32 of Union Community's 37 musical theatre entries under his co-guidance were named All-State, earning the Critic's Choice Banner three times. During his last seven years at Union Community, the Annual Spring Musical was an active participant in the Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards program sponsored by Des Moines Performing Arts. After their initial year, Union earned the top production award being invited to perform 6 straight times as part of the Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards Showcase at the Des Moines Civic Center.

Julie Murren is a long-time board member, actor, and director of adult and youth productions for community theatres in southwest Iowa. In addition to directing many productions, she founded and serves as director of the youth programs for Southwest Iowa Theatre Group in Shenandoah, Iowa. Due to the creation of the youth program, the proceeds from those youth camps provided a fund to create a scholarship for graduating seniors for their contributions to musical theatre in their school programs as well as community theatre, a dream Julie had had since joining the SWITG Board in 2013. Julie enjoys all kinds of theatre but enjoys working with children of all ages most because of their enthusiasm, growth mindset, and willingness to try new things.

Kellie Motter Praised for her "moving, involved expression" soprano Kellie Motter is a versatile artist in repertoire ranging from baroque to contemporary. On the opera stage, Kellie has been engaged with regional houses such as Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Central City Opera, Opera Naples, and Des Moines Metro Opera. Notable performance credits include the roles of Marie (*La fille du régiment*), Despina (*Così fan tutte*), Sivia (*L'isola disabitata*), La Fée (*Cendrillon*), Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), Galatea (*Acis & Galatea*), Fiona (*Brigadoon*), Morgana (*Alcina*) and the title role in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. She received her masters and doctor of music degrees at Indiana University, where she held the prestigious Georgina Joshi Graduate Fellowship. She currently serves on the full-time voice faculty at Simpson College.

Jeffrey Neary judges musical theatre at district and state speech contests. He has performed lead and supporting roles in musicals at LeMars Community Theatre: played Gomez in *Addams Family* and supporting role in *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*. In college, he was a vocal music scholarship recipient with participation in Chorale, Madrigals and presented a senior voice recital. He is a tenor all-state qualifier for two years

Chris Nemec has had a love for theatre since they were young participating in church and local productions. When they joined their high school's production of *Crazy for You* they learned they were going to be doing this forever. Currently they work as school tour leader at an orchard. They also participate and attend community productions and loves to support students in theatre.

Elizabeth Nye has worked as a theatre artist and educator in Nebraska, Colorado, and Germany. She received an MA in Theatre from the University of Nebraska at Omaha and has spent her time working primarily in community theatre as a director and in schools and theaters as an education director and teacher.

Patricia Olson is from Lansing, Iowa. She got her start at Kee High School, earning membership into the International Thespian Society. After graduating from the University of Northern Iowa, Ms. Olson returned to her hometown and was the speech sponsor from 2012-2017. During this time, she attended her first IHSSA coaches convention where she earned her judging certificate, and still judges today.

Shawn Pavlik did three shows in high school, and they were his fondest memories looking back. At Westmar University he participated in two shows alongside theatre majors and learned a ton. Since that time, Shawn has done theatre, particularly musical theatre, in towns and cities across Iowa, including



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LeMars, Marshalltown, Conrad, Cedar Rapids, Ankeny, Des Moines, Newton, Pella, Knoxville, and Leon. He has multiple lead roles in musicals, including Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*, Javert in *Les Miserables*, Curly in *Oklahoma!*, Judas in *Godspell*, and the Baker in *Into the Woods* (twice). He has also directed *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *The Fantasticks*, and *25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. He currently serves on the board of directors for Carousel Theatre in Indianola.

Michael Petkewec has been an IHSMTA adjudicator for several years and loves to see the work of high school theatre artists and all the people who produce the shows. Michael has a BA in Theatre and English and an MA in Arts Administration/Non-profit Administration. He has lived and worked as an artist and arts administrator across the country for over thirty years as a director, actor, designer, producing artistic director, gallery director consultant, marketing director, and development director. Currently living in Iowa City since 2010 with his wonderful wife Megan, Michael works for the UI REACH program as a Senior Program Specialist and coordinates marketing and recruitment efforts at the department as well since 2015.

Michael Powers started in Theatre as a dancer in 1958. Since that time he has worked professionally as an Iowa stagehand and an AEA stage manager and performer. After serving in the US Marine Corps, he received his BA from Oklahoma City University in 1981 and his MFA from Carnegie Mellon University. In the academic world, Michael has taught at Central College in Pella, Iowa, the University of Maine Orono, and at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. In the professional world, he has served as a technical director for several LORT Theatre Companies: GeVa Theatre in Rochester, N.Y. and the Meadow Brook Theatre in Rochester, Michigan. Other professional theatres include the Lyric Theatre, Oklahoma City, The Cherry County Playhouse in Traverse City, Michigan, the Pittsburgh Public Theatre in Pittsburgh, Northshore Music Theatre in Beverly, Massachusetts, Monmouth Summer Theatre in Monmouth, Maine, and Wildwood Park for the Performing Arts, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Bonnie Ruble is the current Production Manager of the Waterloo Community Playhouse and Blackhawk Children's Theatre. Overseeing 10+ productions a year at this company, they lead, train, and manage the volunteers' guild program, giving locals in the community a chance to be a part of shows, ranging from adult shows to children's productions. Additionally, they mentor and lead volunteer stage managers for each production. Lastly, they take and maintain all inventory in the theatre and maintain the building to continue safe working conditions for their volunteers.

Bre Ruiz is a lover of all things music and theatre. She graduated with her Bachelor of Arts in Music from Iowa State University in 2018, where she was a member of Iowa State Singers and countless other music activities on campus. She has since been active in her community with her leadership on her church worship team and vocal music lessons to middle and high school students. Bre took a break from adjudicating last year to raise her daughter alongside her husband but is excited to be back this year and can't wait to see all the productions our Iowa schools have brought together!

Donna Scarfe did the film *The Miracle Worker* at age 7. She had a Fulbright Fellowship for ballet in Bucharest, Romania then choreographed and performed Liturgical Dance with the Epiphany Dancers in London. She's acted with the National Theatre of the Deaf (CT, Los Angeles), Deaf West Theatre (Los Angeles) and interpreting theatre for Deaf audiences. In Iowa, she has performed at the Des Moines Playhouse, Stage West Theatre, and was a founding member of the Repertory Theatre of Iowa (2008-Now Iowa Stage Theatre Company). Donna acted in *Crowns*, *A Christmas Carol*, *The Woman in Black*, *God of Carnage*, *Sense & Sensibility*, *The Crucible*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *King Lear* and *Romeo & Juliet*. She teaches yearly in California at Costume College. Donna has an M.A. in Theatre/Deaf Studies, is a professional ASL interpreter and owner /designer of Fyne Hats by Felicity creating Period and Contemporary hats.



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Nicole Schumacher is excited for the opportunity to participate with IHSTMA again this year. She loves to watch the growth and development of students through performance and in life lessons off stage. One of Nicole's joys comes in watching individuals on the far edges in large ensembles still giving full dedication to their character choices. There is no small role and every player can bring something to the performance. She finds just as much enjoyment in a standard as written to a new twist to an old classic. Let the joy of theatre pour out and engulf each and every individual in attendance.

Cary Shaprio has been a theatre educator for over 28 years, with 25 years as the drama director at Ankeny High School. Cary received his Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Arts and his Master of Arts in Theatre Directing and has taken numerous classes and workshops over the years. He was named a national finalist for the American High School Theatre Festival in 2005, 2007, 2010 and 2013; as such, he was able to take performing arts students to Edinburgh, Scotland to perform at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. He has former students performing in various venues across the U.S. and internationally and was named the 2012-2013 Iowa Speech/Theatre/Debate Teacher of the Year by the National Federation of High Schools, and the 2012 Ankeny Teacher of the Year (presented by the Ankeny Masonic Lodge). He has been a judge for the Iowa High School Speech Association since 1975, and in 2015, Cary was inducted into the Iowa High School Speech Association Hall of Fame.

Kara Sherman has played an active role in the arts in Iowa for many years. Most recently serving as the Executive Director of the Wilson Performing Arts Center in Red Oak, Iowa. Kara has performed in numerous roles of her own on stage, served as a producer, director, theatre camp leader and as a private vocal coach as well.

Robin Suing has been working in the collegiate theatre world since 2015 and been heavily involved in the dance studio world since she was very young. Robin has choreography experience in many dance styles, but musical theatre is her focus. She holds a Master of Arts degree in Dance Education from the University of Northern Colorado and teaches dance curriculum at Dordt University as part of the theatre program. She has worked with high schoolers through dance team and dance classes for 10 years prior to her role in a college setting. In addition to her dance and choreography knowledge, Robin's "day job" consists of office and marketing management of the Dordt University theatre department -- which has brought along many odd jobs that have immersed her deep in the theatre world.

Laura Sweet has served as the Vice President and Chief Operating Officer for Des Moines Performing Arts since 2012. Sweet is past chair of the International Association of Venue Managers (IAVM) Performing Arts Managers Committee and co-chairs the Association of Performing Arts Professionals (APAP) new colleague orientation program. Sweet has a Master of Arts and a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the University of Kansas, respectively. She has played the flute and piccolo since childhood as well as serving in various positions with the Lincoln Community Playhouse and Lincoln Symphony Orchestra.

Leslie Tyler has been involved in Music and Dance for over four decades. A trained dancer, performer and dance studio owner, Musical Theatre has always been one of her favorite genres to choreograph. On the stage through High School Musical choreography or with Dance Teams winning at Dance Competitions performing musical theatre routines, Leslie has a varied knowledge of creating stage movement. She is certified by test to be a dance teacher through four major dance organizations in the US. Her involvement with Dance Masters of America ranges from holding every office, chairman of competition and convention classes, examiner for others wishing to join DMA and a delegate at DMA National conventions. Leslie has a knack for transforming non dancers into polished performers in high school musicals.

Lainie Vansant is an Assistant Professor of Directing at the University of South Dakota with a PhD in Theatre and Performance Studies. She has worked in many areas of theatre, including acting, directing,



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playwriting, stage managing, and more. Some of her favorite musical theatre roles include Cosette in *Les Misérables* and Luisa in *The Fantasticks*.

Libby Waterbury is a writer, actor, director, choreographer, and arts educator. She graduated from the University of Iowa—where she performed for two years as the university mascot “Herky the Hawk”—with degrees in theater and speech education and from the American Musical and Dramatic Academy (AMDA) in New York City with an emphasis in musical theater. After AMDA, she joined the touring cast of *Four Score and Seven Years Ago*, an educational musical about the Civil War. Over the years Libby has performed in, directed, and choreographed touring, regional, community, and school productions, but she has a particular affinity for helping young artists grow in their craft. Locally, she co-directed *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* at Des Moines Young Artists' Theatre. Libby is a proud member of Actors' Equity.

Kyle N. Weber graduated from University of Northern Iowa in Community Communication with his primary collegiate work in the Interpreters Theatre and additional coursework in Performance Studies. His love for theatre took early root in performance. He began volunteering as an actor with the Waterloo Playhouse/Black Hawk Children's Theatre which led to multiple terms on their Board of Directors chairing many committees and events. The network he built there took him for an unexpected turn. He helped with a few area high school shows in various capacities and was eventually asked to join one school as their theatre director and speech coach. He has been their sole director since January 2014. Kyle has continued working with community theatre as well, including directing summer musicals in Cedar Falls and Waterloo. As an IHSSA judge, he has found great reward offering feedback for students beyond the ones under his immediate direction.

Julia Weisshaar-Mullin is a veteran music educator (Pk-12 instrumental and vocal) from southwest Iowa. She received her degree in music education with additional studies in theatre and vocal jazz from the University of Kansas and also a Masters of Music at Simpson College. Julia has extensive performance, technical, and directing experience in professional repertory and community theatre in Kansas, Missouri and Iowa; producing and directing shows in school and community settings, collaborating with musicians and actors of all ages and experience levels. Her goal is to give each and every participant in her productions ownership in the creative process so they feel they are a valued, essential part of a cooperative artistic community. Julia also adjudicates for IHSMTA and IHSSA, teaches privately, and - as often as possible- plays music gigs with her family.

David Wendt has over 40 years of educational performance experience. He was a K-12 educator for 32 years where he coached Individual Events, Large Group and Debate. He also directed numerous high school productions. He acted, directed and produced community productions for two theater groups. He was inducted into the Iowa High School Speech Association Hall of Fame in 2016. After retiring from K-12 teaching, he was an Assistant Professor at Iowa Wesleyan University where he served as the Director of Writing Center and taught a variety of English, Communication and Theater courses for seven years. After IWU closed in May 2023, he returned to K-12 teaching at West Burlington High School where he teaches dual credit Freshman Composition, high school composition and speech courses.

Valerie Williams started working in musical theater at age 12 and hasn't stopped since. Performing as a featured dancer in shows produced by both professional and amateur theaters, she toured throughout the Midwest, dancing, singing and acting in shows such as *Godspell* and *Company*. She became a choreographer and has since made dances for over 100 shows for professional theater, opera, community theater and high schools. Making the move to modern dance, she co-founded Co'Motion Dance Theater in 1978 as a professional modern dance company, and with that company and the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company she has toured throughout North America, Europe and New Zealand. She believes the spirit of live performance makes the world a better place.



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Ann Woldt is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Theatre department at Simpson College where she has taught classes in acting, voice, script analysis, and arts management. Recent directing credits include, *Good Kids*, *Little Women*, and *Fefu and Her Friends*. In addition to teaching and directing, Ann has worked as a professional voiceover artist for the past 25 years where she has been featured in numerous national, regional, and local radio and television commercials as well as documentaries and books on tape. Ann holds an MFA in Acting from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and a BA in Theatre from Olivet College.

Nancy Wright is a retired elementary teacher from the Glenwood Community School District. She minored in music education at NWMSU. She has been actively involved as a board member for the Mills Masquers Community Theater and has played numerous roles in their productions over the past forty years. She has served as music director or director of many productions along with children's theater camp. Nancy directed two productions at the Glenwood Community High School, and two productions at the Wilson Performing Arts Center in Red Oak. Nancy is a certified IHSSA judge for individual and large group speech contests. She is the choir director and organist for her local church and sings with the praise band.

Megan Young performed in two musicals and one play during high school: *Camelot* (small role), *The Comedy of Errors* (small role), and *The King and I* (wife). In college, she helped create and perform short skits to raise awareness in a social outreach theatre class. She received a minor in theatre arts. She is certified to teach speech communication and theatre K-12. Megan has coached speech club through the IHSSA for 8 years. She has served on several committees as well as hosted contests. Her students have received All-State nominations for the past 4 years. She enjoys working with students and wishes to provide feedback for students in the performing arts field.

Tyler Youngers is currently an Independent Educational Consultant, Online Professional Learning Provider, and Farmer. Prior to these roles, Tyler taught in two different school districts. During his teaching career, he directed Fall & Spring play productions and served as an assistant speech coach. Tyler's background in musical theater started as a young man in community theatre productions in his hometown of Sheldon, Iowa and he has gone on to perform in productions throughout high school, college, and in any community productions he can find. Tyler has his bachelor's degree in vocal performance from St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota and currently adjudicates for the Iowa High School Speech Association.