

Friends of Niagara University Theatre

For those who love theatre at Niagara University

Summer 2005

NU Theatre Director Brother Towey, C.M., Retires; Powers Appointed Artistic Director and Schultz Named Artist in Residence

By Jason Mollica



Brother Augustine Towey, C.M.

program, retired on May 23, ending a 40-year run during which he directed more than 120 plays.



Brendan Powers, '96

title of artistic director of the theater department. Dr. Bonnie Rose, executive vice president/vice president for academic affairs, said, "Brendan Powers has proven himself to be an outstanding choice as the new artistic director of the Niagara University

Brother Augustine Towey, C.M., Ph.D., the person credited with developing Niagara University Theatre into a nationally-

recognized program, retired on May 23, ending a 40-year run during which he directed more than 120 plays.

NU alumnus Brendan Powers, '96, most recently the interim director of NU Theatre, has succeeded him under the new

Theatre. He knows, loves, and graduated from our program. He brings an excellent blend of knowledge and experience to it."

In addition, Niagara alumnus, has been named artist in residence. A veteran of stage and screen, last fall Schultz served as a guest director for Niagara University Theatre's production of the musical, "The Spitfire Grill."

Brother Augustine joined Niagara in 1964, becoming an English instructor and director of the Niagara University Players. In 1973, he was instrumental in forming and developing the theater studies program. Dr. Sharon Watkinson, chairperson of the department of theater and fine arts, said, "Not only is Brother the founder of the theater program at Niagara University, but he also is, and will continue to be, the inspiration that moves this jewel of a program into the future." Watkinson added, "Brother's contributions, over the past 40-plus years, to the quality of theater on campus and in the community are inestimable and magical." One of those contributions was the establishment of the bachelor of fine arts degree, which received New York state certification in 1988.

Brother Augustine holds a Ph.D.



Armand Schultz, '81

in theater from New York University, a certificate in Shakespeare and Elizabethan theater from the University of Birmingham (Stratford-upon-Avon, England) and a master's in dramatic literature from St. John's University (New York).

In addition to directing, he has also written for the stage and television. His works include "The Guardian" for NBC-TV network, "The Little Prince," "Edmund's Magic," "The Common

Room," "Vincent in Heaven," the libretto for the opera "The Beggar's Christmas," "Memento Mori," and most recently a television script, "The Anniversary," which was written for the late Irish actor Cyril Cusack.

Five volumes of his poetry have been published: "Waiting for Snow in Lewiston," "The Things of Man," "Silences," "Later Enchantments," and most recently, "The Anna Poems." In August of 1994, Brother Augustine was honored by Artpark and Company for his contributions to Artpark and the arts in Western New York. He was also awarded an honorary doctor of fine arts degree from St. John's University and the Medal of Honor by Niagara University, both in 1989. In 1997, he was awarded the Career Achievement Award from ArtVoice. Brother

See BROTHER, cont. on page 10

20th Annual Gala Most Successful To Date

By Ann Heuer, '78

The food was delectable and the array of auction items exciting, yet the crown of this year's annual Friends of Niagara University Theatre Gala was the nostalgic musical, "Flora, the Red Menace," directed by Brother Augustine Towey, C.M., director of Niagara University Theatre for the past four decades. Featuring music by John Kander and lyrics by the late Fred Ebb, the musical set in the 1930s is based on the novel "Love is Just Around the Corner" by Lester Atwell. The production underwent a major revival in New York City in 1987. In its original incarnation, the show brought Liza Minelli to stardom.

Friends of Niagara University Theatre Newsletter

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The gala's 150 attendees were thrilled that John Kander, the show's composer, flew in from New York City to be on hand for the gala and the musical. When he addressed the appreciative crowd, Kander was given a standing ovation. He generously thanked the attendees for their support of Niagara University Theatre, its administrators and students.

Chairpersons John and Karen Sanderson and auction chairpersons Michael and Maria Arena planned an evening that was both elegant and fun to support the Niagara University Theatre program and its students. The gala was the most successful to date.

During the dinner, Brother Augustine graciously thanked all the guests for supporting Niagara University Theatre. "Without you, we could not survive," he said. "Like man himself, the arts survive by the skin of their teeth and often the skin of their purse strings."

Brother Augustine offered special thanks to the Rev. Joseph Levesque, C.M., university president, for his "beautiful invocation and for his important support of the theater and all of our activities." He acknowledged his "dearest friend," Dr. Sharon Watkinson, chairman of the department of theater and fine arts. Dr. Nancy McGlen, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and Dr.



At an April 6 "Behind the Scenes" event for Friends of Niagara University Theatre, about 50 Friends attended to watch Brother Augustine Towey, C.M., director of "Flora, the Red Menace," and his colleagues rehearse with the cast and crew of the musical. From left, John and Karen Sanderson, gala chairs, and Maria and Mike Arena, auction chairs, were among the attendees.

Bonnie Rose, executive vice president/vice president for academic affairs, were also thanked for their staunch support of the theater, while Dr. Laurene Buckley, director of the Castellani Art Museum, was praised for the beautiful museum that has served as the location for the gala for the past few years.

Brother Augustine also thanked John and Karen Sanderson, chairs of this year's gala; auction chairs Mike and Maria Arena; and the president and vice president of the Friends of Niagara University Theatre, Art and Barbara Traver. He also expressed gratitude to the Hon. John J. LaFalce and his wife, Patricia, for the LaFalce Scholarship fund, established several years ago to benefit area Niagara University Theatre students.

"Another of my dearest friends is here — someone to whom some



Among the guests at the Friends of Niagara University Theatre Gala were, from left: Christopher Blake and his wife, Colleen Blake, executive director of the Shaw Festival; Dr. Walter Kubiski and his wife, Dr. Bonnie Rose, executive vice president/vice president for academic affairs; and the Rev. Joseph Levesque, C.M., Niagara University president.

years ago I offered a choice of careers,” noted Brother Augustine. “He could either be a famous actor or a basketball coach. He chose the latter,” Brother Augustine said, applauding special guest Frank Layden, former NU basketball coach and a veteran of the Leary Theatre stage.

Brother Augustine also saluted Broadway playwright Joe Di Pietro, whose latest show, “All Shook Up,” is now on Broadway and whose musical “I Love You, You’re Perfect, Now Change,” was performed at Niagara University Theatre-at-the-Church during the past two summers. He also acknowledged Dr. Joffre Moses and his late wife, Rose, “a cherished member of our board, a genuine friend of the theater, of the university and numerous civic organizations.



Brother Augustine Towey, C.M., shares a happy reunion at the gala with NU Theatre alumni Lauren Arena, '04, left, and Tarrah Hirsch, '04.

“Some months ago,” Brother Augustine continued, “the American theater lost an enormously gifted lyricist and we lost a friend, Fred Ebb. We miss you, Freddie, and we dedicate this production of ‘Flora’ to you.

“Tonight,” Brother Augustine told the audience, “you will spend an evening among the neophytes and the veterans; that is, among performers who are just beginning to stretch their wings — to use a time-worn phrase — and among the work of artists who have reached the maturity and perfection of their craft. You will see students perform on a



Tony-award winning composer John Kander visited the Leary Theatre on April 17. A highlight for NU Theatre students was when Kander, right, sat down at the piano and coached juniors Katherine Swimm, left, and Adriano Gatto, center, the leads in the theater's production of the Kander and Ebb musical, “Flora, the Red Menace.” Seated next to Kander is the theater's musical director, Don Shrimpton.

set designed by a master designer (Robert T. Williams) in a musical comedy created by two other masters, John Kander and Fred Ebb.”

For two weeks in April, Williams was an artist-in-residence at the Leary Theatre. “It has been a delight to watch him work with the students and the students work with him: painting the set, setting light cues, creating properties, and every detail which makes the setting of any production unique,” noted Brother Augustine.

“When John Kander visited the campus on April 17, I was able to see a similar dynamic in practice when my students rehearsed ‘Flora, the Red Menace’ in his presence,” he added. “During a given moment of the rehearsal John Kander took several of the student actors to the piano to coach them. It was literally the apprentice learning at the hands of the master, at close range and in full throttle. Here, I thought, is this great man of the theater — composer of ‘Cabaret,’ ‘Chicago,’ ‘Zorba,’ ‘New York, New York,’ winner of the Kennedy Center Honors, of several Tony Awards, of Emmies, of every honor the American theater has to bestow, coaching our students at our modest spinet in our unpretentious theater in a manner that was both effective and humble. It was a thrilling afternoon, the kind of which

both student and teacher can only dream. This will embarrass him, but I learned once again something I have long known, of the kindness, the generosity, the humility and the grace of John Kander, our guest of honor.”

Another Kander and Ebb musical, the smash hit “Chicago,” will be spotlighted during next year’s 21st annual Friends of Niagara University Theatre Gala. Please mark your calendars for April 29, 2006, for a “razzle dazzle” dining and entertainment experience!



Dr. Sharon Watkinson, chair of the department of theater and fine arts, thanks gala co-chair John Sanderson, one of her former students.



Lucky bidder Angelo Onevelo, left, Dr. Sharon Watkinson's brother, won the Frank Layden bobblehead as part of a sports package at the gala's silent auction. Onevelo was delighted to meet Frank Layden, former Niagara University coach and fellow theater lover.

Niagara University Theatre Appoints Eric Appleton Scenic and Lighting Designer

Eric Appleton, a lighting and set designer with more than a decade of experience in the theater and the classroom, has been appointed an assistant professor in the university's department of theater and fine arts and scenic and lighting designer for Niagara University Theatre. He succeeds Michael Ballard, a veteran lighting and scenic designer who has served in the position for the past four years.

Appleton earned his master of fine arts degree in lighting design at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1994 and a bachelor's degree in science communication at Valparaiso University in Valparaiso, Ind., in 1987. He served as a technical director and set designer for five years at Niles North High School in Skokie, Ill., and as an adjunct and guest designer for the theater department at Elmhurst College in Elmhurst, Ill.

In recent years, he has produced lighting designs for more than 20 theatrical and operatic productions staged in Milwaukee, Wis.; and Chicago. He also is credited with the scenic design for numerous productions staged at Chicago's Bailiwick Repertory Theatre, Irish Repertory Theatre and Prop Theatre, among others. He also provided sets for a number of productions at Niles North High School. In his spare time, Appleton is a playwright.

Ward Inducted Into Sigma Alpha Sigma

By Ann Heuer, '78 and Katie Mallinson, '05

Established at Niagara University in 1933, the Sigma Alpha Sigma Honor Society recognizes and rewards the academic and extracurricular achievements of outstanding students. Through the years, some traditions have been broken, while others have been instituted. For example, in recent years, a number of professors and staff members have been tapped as honorary members, receiving nominations from members of the society.

This year, along with several dozen Niagara University students, a handful of staff and faculty members were inducted at a ceremony at the Castellani Art Museum on April 17. Tim Ward, Niagara University Theatre associate director of theater and fine arts, was among the honorees.

Senior Katie Mallinson, a Niagara University Theatre student, spoke eloquently on why Ward was given this honor.

"The Russian novelist Feodor Dostoyevsky once said, 'If you wish to glimpse inside a human soul and get to know a man . . . just watch him laugh,'" she said. "If he laughs well, he's a good man.'

"Tim Ward, professor and adviser, leader and listener, father and friend, has an unmistakable laugh. Like all that Tim offers, it is strong and resounding, stemming from true generosity and sincerity. His warm laughter is so inviting: bursting suddenly from an unassuming, yet powerful, presence. Tim knows the value of silence; and it is in his calmness that we find unobtrusive, but imminently supportive guidance. Professionally, he has found success from San Francisco to New York as director, stage manager and educator, to name a few of his roles.

"Aside from his numerous professional successes," she continued, "he has also worked extensively within his community, working with everyone from children to inmates. For Niagara University, his greatest success can be found within the uncountable number of people that he has affected throughout his long and distinguished career here. In the four years that I have known Tim, I can honestly say that I have never heard him referenced without the utmost respect and veneration. No student who has worked with him goes unnoticed, and in his quiet leadership, he demonstrates the value of hard work, dedication and understanding, which we all seek to emulate.

"I wouldn't be standing here today if it wasn't for Tim's influence, guidance and support. I know that I am not alone in saying that he truly defines the Vincentian spirit of love and service. Selfless and genuine with all he does, he is a man that 'laughs well.'"



This spring, Niagara University Theatre's beloved professor Tim Ward was honored to be recommended for induction into the university's prestigious Sigma Alpha Sigma honor society. Here he poses outside the Castellani Art Museum with senior Katie Mallinson, a member of the honor society. Mallinson wrote a heartfelt tribute to Ward that she read at the induction ceremony.

NU Theatre Students Entertain and Educate Children During Spring and Summer

By Ann Heuer, '78

This spring, a number of Niagara University Theatre students participated in theater performances at area schools. Under the coordination of lecturer Amanda Sharpe, several students presented two different educational productions at Lewiston-Porter elementary and middle schools in Lewiston, N.Y., to educate youngsters about what constitutes good and bad touching from acquaintances and strangers.

Sharpe noted that the production, entitled "Touch," educated second-grade students about the sensitive issue in an age-appropriate way. "No Easy Answers" was geared for eighth-grade students, informing them about the issue of appropriate and inappropriate touching in relationship to peer pressure, advertising and actions of older peers and adults. The goal of both productions was to educate students, offer them solutions, and encourage them learn to be responsible for their own actions.

The Niagara University students who were involved in the production included: Cassie Gorniewicz of Liverpool, N.Y. (stage manager); and actors Kyle Atkins of Jamestown, N.Y.; Shannon Bloomquist of Buffalo, N.Y.; Alexandra Guyker of Gaithersburg, Md.; Myles Jordan of Bar Harbor, Maine; David Ryan of Buffalo; and Kristen Smiley of Erie, Pa. "Touch" and "No Easy Answers" have been

presented at area schools by Niagara University students for many years under the direction of Tim Ward, the department's associate director of theater and fine arts. This is the first year Sharpe coordinated the productions with Lewiston-Porter's staff.

Acting professor Paul Todaro also organized "Shakespeare" workshops for Lewiston-Porter High School's ninth- and 11th-grade students. The following NU theater studies students participated: Adriano Gatto and Victoria Kuper of Rochester, N.Y.; Andrew Liegl of Kenmore, N.Y.; and Melissa Sims of Albion, N.Y.

During April, adjunct professor of theater Lori Granchelli took her mime class to Dodge Elementary School in Williamsville, N.Y., to perform a puppet show. The students created and designed their own puppets and wrote and presented a fairy tale. Those involved included

Christopher Arnau of Brooklyn, N.Y.; Sara Caliva of Syracuse, N.Y.; Lindsie Detota of Liverpool, N.Y.; Elizabeth Fallesen of Youngstown, N.Y.; Amanda Jones of Beaverton, Ore; Myles Jordan of Bar Harbor, Maine; Andrew Liegl of Kenmore, N.Y.; Jerry McGrier of Buffalo, N.Y.; and Michael Thompson of Wyomissing, Pa. Also,

a group of seniors presented a "Senior Clown Soiree," a funny production for the community at Niagara University Theatre-at-the-Church under the direction of adjunct theater studies professors Renee Baillargeon and Robin Patterson. The production included European clown entertainment, including monologues, Shakespearean-inspired vignettes, and interactions with the audience.

The community outreach will continue this summer as members of the Niagara University Repertory Theatre will perform stories throughout Western New York to the delight of hundreds of youngsters.

According to Brother Martin Schneider, C.M., assistant to the director of Niagara University Theatre and coordinator of N.U.R.T., theater students will perform at dozens of locations this summer between July 25 and Aug. 19, including the Castellani Art Museum's summer art camp. The department sends out letters to area child-care centers and organizations each spring and is flooded with requests for performances during the summer. The troupe is so popular, more requests are received than can be accommodated, so it's first come, first served.

Auditions for N.U.R.T. were held in early spring. This year's troupe includes Niagara University theater students Brendan Cataldo of Albany, N.Y.; Amanda Jones of Beaverton, Ore.; Sara Kovacs of Amherst, N.Y.; Tara Lawton of Syracuse, N.Y.; David Ryan of Buffalo, N.Y.; Kristen Smiley of Erie, Pa.; and Charles Wahl of Buffalo, N.Y. Senior Tim Stuff of Tonawanda, N.Y., is director of the troupe, while Lauren Sale of Durham, N.C., is stage manager.



Talking Back: A Visit From Hollywood's Brendan Connor, '94

By Ann Heuer, '78

Because he's the son of a New York City "cop," Brendan Connor thinks it's ironic and fun that he's often cast as a policeman. He was a policeman in the film "Spider-Man 2" and has played the same role for the TV hit, "NYPD Blue." He also played a nursing home orderly in the recent Sandra Bullock film, "Miss Congeniality 2 — Armed and Fabulous" and has worked in dozens of plays and countless student films, trying on an assortment of personas. Like his fellow alumnus and friend, Brendan Powers, '96, he even played a part on HBO's popular TV series, "Sex & the City."

Connor was a guest artist at an impromptu talk-back session with NU's theater studies students in early April. An engaging Irish-American raconteur, he offered humorous and practical advice about working in theater, film and television and answered questions about making a living as an actor, focusing his comments on his experiences in New York City and Los Angeles. Students asked about everything from salary to networking, graduate school to agents. He recommended that new graduates put together reels of any student films they appear in and have current head shots created. He also suggested sending postcards to announce every show they're in and finding an agent. "Getting an agent is the bane of most actors' existence," he quipped, "but most agents are great."

A communications major at Niagara University, Connor minored in theater while an undergraduate. "I adore acting," he said. "It's in my blood."

Before college, Connor did a lot of improvisational work in his theater classes at Holy Trinity High School in Hicksville, N.Y. "It's terrifying,"

he said, "but the ability to do improv sets you apart, especially at commercial auditions. Casting directors remember you."

While at NU, Connor was cast in a number of NU Theatre productions including "On A Clear Day, You Can See Forever," "Some Americans Abroad," "As You Like It," and "Murder on the Orient Express," to name a few. The thrill of being on stage made Connor reconsider his career plans of getting involved in TV production.

After graduating from Niagara University, Connor worked in a production company and he and some high school friends formed a sketch comedy group. "We rented theater space and produced our own shows," he said. He also did routines in comedy clubs, lined up a commercial agent and networked day and night.

"You've got to make your own opportunities," he told the students. "No one will be beating down your door after graduation, so you have to put yourself out there. As soon as you land there (New York City or Los Angeles), get your face out there. And remember that you're there to act, not to temp or wait tables. You only hold those jobs to survive."

Clearly, Connor has followed his own advice. After eight years in Manhattan, he had appeared in countless student films, produced 10 plays, and made a variety of commercials (e.g. T-Mobile Corp.). For about two days work, he said, actors can earn about \$20,000 when starring in national commercials. He added that a percentage of that goes to actors' commercial agents and theatrical agents, as well as "Uncle Sam." The good thing about commercials, he noted, is that even if you're a non-SAG (Screen Actor's

Guild) actor, commercial agents will still consider you for commercials.

Connor unabashedly loves New York City and considers it a great place to start out after college, especially for work in the theater and in commercials. He says there are "a bunch" of theaters in the "Big Apple," including off Broadway, and said that "tons of commercials are shot in New York City." He reminded the students that Los Angeles has only two Broadway-size theaters and some "underground theater," yet television opportunities abound there. On the other hand, he added, only five or six TV shows are currently shot in New York City.

"I prefer New York City for business," he said. "If you can handle the mechanisms of being an actor there, you can handle it anywhere even though you have to struggle. It's a special place." He added that casting directors in Los Angeles love New York actors since they're better trained than many actors on the West coast.

Connor added that, surprisingly, there are many pretty faces and "many bad actors" in the industry. He believes this gives NU students an edge. "From my experience in Niagara University Theatre," he said, "you students are put through the wringer, in a good way. You're given a lot of opportunities to act and you really prepare for your career while you're in school." He's impressed by the caliber of actors Niagara University graduates and he seeks out opportunities to work with fellow alumni on the stage, in TV or in film.

Several years ago he made the theater community aware of the talent coming out of NU when he co-wrote an outrageously funny whodunit, "Who Killed Woody

Allen,” along with two longtime friends, Dan Callahan and Tom Dunn.

“Who Killed Woody Allen?” was first produced off-Broadway by the Empty Stage Theatre Company/Gin & Tonic Productions in November 2002. It had

a second run in March 2003 and the cast then took the show to Los Angeles, where it continued to receive rave reviews.

The NU connection to “Who Killed Woody Allen?” was strong. The show benefited from the talents of several NU theater alumni, including playwright Connor (Leonardo DiCaprio) and cast members Jillann Dugan, '91 (Diane Keaton), Shaun Sheley, '96 (a very special guest), and Christopher Wisner, '97 (Billy Crystal), along with backstage professionals Aron Deyo (tech director), and Dennis Keefe, '99 (sound design). The six alumni are either old or new friends, and several have worked together on other off-Broadway productions.

Brother Augustine Towey, C.M., director of Niagara University Theatre, is also a fan of the play. “It’s great fun,” he said after seeing the production. “It’s always wonderful to see our alumni working with other New York City actors.”

Connor also has had the opportunity to work with fellow NU alumni in film. For example, NU was well represented on the “Spider-Man 2” set. “My friend, alumnus Bac DeLorme, '94, was second assistant director of the film. We considered



ourselves the NU contingent on the project,” Connor said.

“I am a huge fan of the film’s director, Sam Raimi,” Connor added. “Even though the film takes place in New York, it was shot on the Universal lot in Burbank. One day, the set was just crazy and it was my turn to be filmed. Sam couldn’t recall my name so he kept calling me ‘officer.’ First they did a master shot with wide shots of the scene, then they did close ups of the main actors. Finally, it was my turn for a close up and Sam said to me, ‘Don’t screw it up or we might cut you.’” Fortunately, the filming went well, and Connor’s role as the policeman is intact, forever a part of this mega-hit. “Spider-Man” and “Spider-Man 2” have already grossed nearly \$2 billion.

Connor noted that acting for the camera is an acquired talent. “You do get stereotyped,” he said, “but that’s what they hire you for. Work is work, and I don’t mind being cast as a cop. Most of all, though, I love the stage. You can learn so much from doing and seeing bad theater, and I’ve done so much bad theater on purpose through the years. You never know who you’ll meet in New York or Los Angeles when you just dive in and get out there. Like my brother always

NU Class of 1994 alumnus Brendan Connor, center, shared humorous and helpful insights about being a successful actor in New York and Los Angeles at a talk-back session for Niagara University theater students on April 1.

says,” he continued, “a great football player will get noticed, but a great actor right out of college has to be aggressive to get noticed.”

When asked by talk-back moderator Brendan Powers what he’d love to do if he could get into a time-machine and have a chance to come back to Niagara

University and do it all over again, Connor kidded that he’d “get a few girls’ phone numbers that he didn’t get the last time around.” In a more serious tone, he added that the students in the theater program are so fortunate to have such accomplished professionals to learn from, like Brother Augustine Towey, C.M., Dr. Sharon Watkinson, Tim Ward and Brendan Powers. “I miss the opportunities we had at NU to be on stage,” he said. “When I was here in the 1990s, all day long we’d be living theater.”

Connor still lives theater, every day, whether he’s acting on stage or on a TV or film set. “Nothing is more fulfilling and exciting for me,” he said, “than getting called for jobs.”

Please e-mail alumni news and story ideas to Brendan Powers at bpowers@niagara.edu or to Ann Heuer at arh@niagara.edu.

News and photos can also be mailed to: Ann Heuer
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Deadline for submissions for the fall 2005 issue is Aug. 19.

Kovacsi Awarded Inaugural Tara Laurie Memorial Scholarship



Sara Kovacsi

This spring, Niagara University theater studies student Sara Kovacsi, a junior from Amherst, N.Y., was the first recipient of

the Tara Laurie Memorial Scholarship. Tara's parents, Janice and Donald Laurie, established the scholarship this year to assist Niagara University theater studies students who apply to the department's summer theater program at Schiller International University in London.

Kovacsi is among a group of 16 NU theater students who will study at Schiller International University this summer.

"The Tara Laurie Memorial Scholarship is our way of keeping our daughter's song alive and her spirit of joy and love soaring," Tara's parents noted. "It is our hope that her legacy will live on and the recipient of this award will realize all of their dreams, hopes and aspirations through participation in Niagara University Theatre's study abroad program."

Tara Laurie, a senior theater studies student from Ransomville, N.Y., passed away suddenly in October of 2004. Her parents accepted a bachelor's degree in her honor at Niagara University's undergraduate commencement ceremony on May 22.

POETRY IN MOTION

By Jason Mollica

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
"The Road Not Taken"
by Robert Frost*

Brother Augustine Towey, C.M., has actually traveled more than one road in his life. The recently retired director of Niagara University Theatre, Brother Augustine is a professor of theater and fine arts who is also an accomplished poet and the author of five volumes of poetry. The most recent is a chapbook entitled "The Anna Poems," a series written in memory of his mother.

Brother Augustine began writing poetry while at Hempstead (N.Y.) High School and was motivated by two English teachers.

"Miss Bernice Ford was a very influential lady," he said, "She was very strict, but wonderfully inspiring." The other was Matt Murphy. While not as strict as Ford, "Matt tended to be very loose," Brother Augustine remarked. "He was an old Irishman, and I related to that aspect because I'm Irish too."

As the son of Irish immigrant parents, Brother Augustine also received plenty of inspiration from family. "My mother and father never got past the eighth grade, but they loved poetry and music. We had it around us all the time in the house, and that influenced me a great deal."

There is a state of mind when writing poetry. Most important is being relaxed. "It has to be quiet and peaceful," Brother Augustine said. By escaping from the everyday distractions, it allows his mind to be clear. "I like to spend some time away, especially if I have a group of poems that I'm trying to really finish up and polish." "The Anna Poems," which has sold more than 100 copies since April, is

told as if Brother Augustine's mother is speaking them. "It's her narrating. They are about her, my grandfather, my father, a childhood friend, and about praying." There is even one poem about a tasty Irish treat. "I turned her recipe of Irish soda bread into a poem. It's that simple!"

Some of the poems have been used as Christmas greetings over the years. However, one of them is written in honor of victims of the attacks on 9/11, called "Recovery." Brother Augustine recalled that, "I wrote it at the request of Father Levesque for commencement a few years ago." The television images of the flag-draped stretchers struck him. "I was helped in writing the piece by looking at photographs and seeing the 9/11 special by two French filmmakers (Jules and Gedeon Naudet)." Although the photos and the TV film were a small guide, the poem is Brother Augustine's own take on the tragic events.

Volume five of Brother Augustine's poetry may be the last about his mother. "I'll see what inspiration hits me. Once I got the (most recent) book in hand I thought there's so much more (to write). But, it's hard to say." Regardless, "The Anna Poems" will be a collector's item. The printer will break the mold after only 185 copies are made.

*Every phrase and every sentence is an
end and a beginning,
Every poem an epitaph. And any action
Is a step to the block, to the fire, down
the sea's throat
Or to an illegible stone: and that is
where we start.*

"Four Quartets" by T.S. Eliot

If you would like a copy of Brother Augustine's work, it can be ordered on Amazon.com or at Borders in Cheektowaga. "The Anna Poems" is a limited edition and can be purchased for \$20 by calling Peg Lacki at the theater offices at 716-286-8483.



On March 30, John Plumpis, center, visited Niagara University Theatre to provide an acting workshop for the students. Plumpis is an accomplished Broadway, television and film actor who is currently playing "Timon" in the national company of "The Lion King" directed by Julie Taymor. From left, Sarah Orloff, Sarah Neffke, Plumpis, Amie Schirching, Sara Bentley and Jessica Young. Also, Adrian Borden strikes a theatrical pose on the floor.

NU Actors to Enchant Audiences at Shakespeare in Delaware Park

By Ann Heuer, '78

A loaf of bread, a jug of wine and superb theater under the stars. According to Niagara University Theatre acting professor Paul Todaro, '87, "there's nothing like" Buffalo, New York's "Shakespeare in Delaware Park."

Every summer, audiences bring picnic baskets and blankets and sit on the lawn of Shakespeare Hill in Delaware Park to experience this famed outdoor summer theater experience. As in the past, a number of Niagara University Theatre alumni and students will be involved in this renowned theater project, now celebrating its 30th year. Gems offered this summer include "Hamlet" and "Romeo and Juliet."

This year, Todaro will play the lead in "Hamlet" as well as "Mercutio" in "Romeo and Juliet." Other alumni who will be involved with the productions are: Louis Colaiacono, '99; Susan Drozd, '02; and Joseph Wiens, '04. Current students and recent graduates who will also participate in the productions include: Sara Bentley, '05; Tara Lawton, '07; William Patti, '05; and Meaghan Reilly, '07.

"Shakespeare in the Park" is the country's second largest free Shakespeare festival. "Romeo and Juliet" will be on stage from June 23-July 17, and "Hamlet" will be presented from July 28-Aug. 21. Productions are on stage Tuesday through Sunday evenings from 7:30 to 10 p.m. For more information, visit www.shakespeareindelawarepark.org/ or call 856-4533.

NU Theatre's 2005 – 2006 Season Announced; "Greater Tuna" Canned

Niagara University Theatre will not be presenting the comedy, "Greater Tuna," this summer at Niagara University Theatre-at-the-Church, as originally planned. The rights for the production were not available. The 2005-2006 season, however, is firmly in place, and filled with an array of exciting productions.

"Lovers," a readers' theater production, from Sept. 23-25 (The Church)

The musical "Gypsy" from Oct. 6-16 (Leary Theatre)

"The Fan" from Nov. 10-20 (Leary Theatre)

"Christmas Concert" from Dec. 8-11 (The Church)

"The One Act Festival" from Jan. 27-Feb. 5 (Leary Theatre)

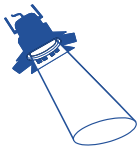
"The Princess and the Pea" (children's theater) from Feb. 17-19 (The Church)

"A View from the Bridge" from March 2-12 (Leary Theatre)

"Mystery Plays" from March 31-April 2 (NU's Alumni Chapel) and April 4-5 (the Buffalo Cathedral)

The musical "Chicago" from April 27-May 7 (Leary Theatre)

For information about tickets, please contact the Niagara University Theatre box office after Sept. 12 at 716-286-8622.



Alumni News . . .



Heather Adair, '04, will spend the summer in Colorado performing with the Diamond Circle Melodrama.

This spring, **Neil Casey, '91**, played Mason in "Take Me Out" at the Speakeasy Theatre in Boston. This year, he received the Best Actor Award from the Independent Press of New England for his performance in "The Dazzle" at The Stoneham Theatre.

Each Saturday and Sunday in June, **Dan Coyle, '04**, will play Charles and Sylvius in "As You Like It" in Theatre Hikes' outdoor Shakespeare Festival in Chicago.

Justin Dimieri, '03, is serving as a production assistant for the David Letterman Show.

Shannon George, '91, is a producer of Nickelodeon's "Blue's Clues." She recently was nominated for an Emmy in the category of "Outstanding Children's Pre-School Series" for her work on the series.

Kevin Henderson, '89, is the top winner of the "All Genre Category" in the Nashville Screenwriters Conference inaugural "Screenplay Showdown." Henderson won the award for his submission, "Term Life," a dark comedy about an adulterous couple and a hefty life insurance policy.

Candy Lawrence, '02, is in two improv groups, "Clemetine" (Chemically Imbalanced Comedy) and Project Sunshine (Playground Theatre). She was asked to be an artistic associate for Chemically Imbalanced Comedy and reports that Project Sunshine will be presented at the Del Close Marathon in New York City this summer. Lawrence also recently played Blanche DuBois in the Wooden Allen play, "God."

Michelle Ragusa, '87, was recently seen in "She Loves Me" at the celebrated Paper Mill Playhouse in New Jersey.

Dan Schmidt, '05, is a production assistant at Buffalo's Studio Arena Theatre.

Natalie Slipko, '93, has been cast in "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas" on stage at the Ogunquit Playhouse in Maine from July 25- Aug. 6. Richard Stafford will direct the production and Sally Struthers will play Miss Mona. Slipko was also cast in "George M" at this theater in 2003.

Zak Ward, '04, has recently shot commercials for Papa Gino's Pizza and for GWILine Internet Service.

Chris Wisner, '97, was recently seen on "Law and Order," and on a commercial for Spike TV.

Nicole Wood, '04, is stage manager with BroadHollow Theatre Co. in East Islip, N.Y. She recently stage managed "The Last Night of Ballyhoo" and "I Do, I Do," and will be stage managing "Ten Little Indians" (featuring alumnus **Nick Santasier, '04**) and "Oklahoma" this summer.

Correction: Michele Maier, '99 (not Michael Maier Brown, as stated in the spring 2005 newsletter) starred as Percy in MusicalFare's production of "The Spitfire Grill" in Buffalo this spring.

BROTHER, cont. from page 1

Augustine is a member of the board of trustees of St. John's University.

Brendan Powers holds a bachelor of fine arts degree in theater studies and a bachelor of arts in English from Niagara University, as well as a master's degree in English from St. John's University. Since graduating from NU in 1996, he has pursued acting in New York City, where his credits include "Oh, Coward! Off-Broadway," directed by Brother Augustine; "Ruddygore"; "The Drama League's Tribute to Liza Minnelli"; "Sex & the City"; and "All My Children."

Powers' regional credits include "The Laramie Project," "Wit," "Arsenic and Old Lace," "Woman in Black," "Brigadoon," "My Fair Lady," "Forever Plaid," "Chicago," and several seasons at Artpark, as well as voice-overs and commercials in the Buffalo area. When able, Powers also conducts performance workshops at area high schools.

Niagara University alumnus Armand Schultz holds a master of fine arts degree from The Catholic University of America and a bachelor of arts from NU. On Broadway he appeared in "The Herbal Bed," "A View From the Bridge," and "The Secret Rapture." He has performed extensively throughout the country in such productions as "The Spitfire Grill," "Y2K," "Seeking the Genesis," "Sight Unseen," "Cyrano de Bergerac," and "Hotel Universe." Other theaters include The Public Theatre, The Williamstown Theatre Festival, George Street Playhouse, The Olney Theatre, Baltimore Center Stage, Geva Theatre Center, and the Fort Worth Shakespeare Festival. At Artpark, he performed Don Quixote in "Man of La Mancha," and Nathan Detroit in "Guys and Dolls." Television and film credits include "Vanilla Sky" (with Tom Cruise), "Malcolm X," "The Practice," "Law and Order," and "Star Trek: Voyager." In 1987, he received the Patrick Crean Award, Society of American Fight Directors.

Theater Students Build Plays in a Day

By Jessica Knoerl, '06

Imagine being told that you have only 24 hours to complete a major project. Now imagine that the project will be presented in front of your entire department. This is the challenge that four teams of theater majors took upon themselves when they were chosen to take part in the inaugural 24 Hour Project.

I was lucky enough to be chosen as a director for this year's project. It truly was one of the best things I have done at Niagara University and with my department.

The 24 Hour Project started at 8 p.m. Friday, April 1, and ended at 8 p.m. Saturday, April 2, with the presentation of four shows. The *real story* about writing, directing, stage managing and acting is what happened during those 24 hours.

On April 1 at 8 p.m., theater studies students who had volunteered to serve as writers, directors, actors and stage managers met in the theater wing of Clet Hall. Larry Smith, a lecturer of theater and fine arts and moderator of the event, announced the theme that every play had to adhere to: time. The four teams then dispersed to begin

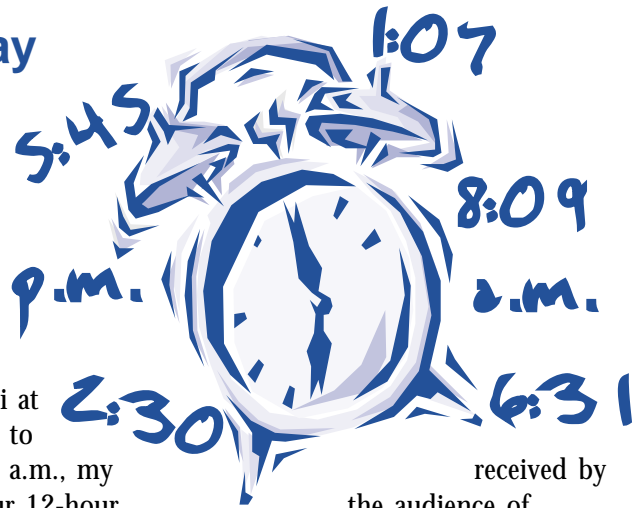
working on their productions.

The playwrights wrote and wrote and wrote some more, knowing they had to be done by 8 a.m. I received my script from senior Bill Patti at 2 a.m., and then had time to sleep for a few hours. At 8 a.m., my cast and I met to begin our 12-hour countdown until showtime. Little by little, the production came together with lights, costumes, blocking and props.

When the clock chimed 7 p.m., all the participants went to their dressing rooms and got into their costumes and makeup. At 8 p.m., the show began.

The students produced four shows, each exploring a different way to think about time. The one I directed centered on the difficulties of having a friend of the opposite sex while you're growing up. The other plays included scenarios that offered scary glimpses into the future, zombies, and characters waiting until sunrise to escape creatures in the forest.

The productions were well



received by the audience of approximately 100 students and faculty members. The entire project was a complete success. I could not be prouder of every person who took part in this endeavor. All the hard work and lack of sleep came together for a truly unique presentation of the extraordinary talent we have on this campus. If you missed the 24 Hour Project this year, stay tuned for next year. I promise you that the fun is just beginning.

Editor's Note: During the 2005-2006 academic year, two 24 Hour Projects will be held. All Friends of Niagara University Theatre will be invited to attend these creative, free theatrical events. Dates and times will be included in future newsletters.



Talk about a mutual admiration society! Several Broadway luminaries who are friends of Brother Augustine Towey, C.M., former director of Niagara University Theatre, graciously visited Niagara University on April 17 to talk to the department's students about the entertainment industry. From left: David Thompson, Broadway playwright; Brother Augustine; Tony-Award winning Broadway, film and TV actress, Debra Monk; Tony-Award winning composer John Kander; and Brother Martin Schneider, C.M., assistant to the director, theater and fine arts department.



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