New at NU
By Steven Braddock, director of NU Theatre

What an exciting time to start a new chapter here in the NU Theatre community. I hope I speak for other NU newbies (David Dwyer, assistant professor, scenic designer/production manager; and, of course, the Class of 2015) when I say the first semester has felt much like a roller coaster ride. And I suppose I should mention that I really like roller coasters.

Our first offering of the year, The Women of Lockerbie, was both a critical and box office success, showcasing poignantly luminous work from the cast, insightfully directed by Amanda Lytle Sharpe. An added bonus was that the playwright, Deborah Brevoort, was on hand for two of the performances and generously spent time with the cast and other NU Theatre students, faculty and staff. She also participated in a postshow discussion for our audience. For more on Deborah Brevoort, please see Ann Heuer’s article on page 2.

Up next to the plate was Damn Yankees, my introduction to directing at NU. Working with a cast of 25 gifted students, a large and talented crew, and my terrific artistic cohorts certainly made the learning curve infinitely easier. Icing on the cake was making the acquaintance of Vin Russo, NU Class of ‘68, who generously donated baseball caps, memorabilia, decorations and artwork for a lobby raffle — lots of little extras that extended the audience’s baseball experience from the stage into our lobby. Vin Russo also connected us with the National Baseball Hall of Fame, which kindly donated yearbooks and passes to the Hall of Fame to raffle off for our patrons. Thanks, Vin, from all of us!

As of this writing, The Boy Who Could Sing Pictures is getting ready to move into the theatre and reports continued on page 3


Pictured below: The suave devil, played by David Spychalski, ’13, and seductive Lola, played by Ashley Marie DeMar, ’14.

Pictured bottom: From top to bottom, Chelsey M. Zimmerman, ’12, and child actors Jadyn Wagner (left) and her sister Kelsey Wagner, and Charlie Hearn.

Pictured below: In the foreground at bat is Mike Van Dyke, ’12. Behind him from left are Steven Foote, ’13, Andrew Adolf, ’13, Nathanial W. C. Higgins, ’15, Alex A. Garcia, ’14, Eric Madia, ’12, Bobby Hall, ’14, and Alan Trinca, ’13.
The Angels of Lockerbie, Scotland

By Ann Heuer, ’78 and research assistant Aaron Moseley, ’12

One of playwright Deborah Brevoort’s most critically acclaimed plays, The Women of Lockerbie, was inspired by a group of real-life angels. Brevoort visited Niagara University Theatre this fall to see her production at the Leary Theatre and to explain how the play came to be.

“I want you to know how impressed I was with your performance and how spectacular it was,” she told the student cast members at an informal question and answer session at NU in October. “After seeing my play a couple hundred times, I’m not moved by it anymore. But I was moved by your performance. I think actors are nervous around playwrights, thinking their performances might not be what the writer had in mind. But it’s not about what I want – it’s your interpretation that matters. And I’ve seen radically different interpretations of this play.”

Brevoort continued, “It’s wonderful when you see something new about your play that the director and actors have brought to it. I had about five of these moments last night seeing your interpretation of the play – and I think it’s great if I just have one.”

Brevoort explained that she did not have a personal connection to the terrorist bombing of Pan Am Flight 103, which occurred over Lockerbie, Scotland on Dec. 21, 1988. “On the ninth anniversary of the event, I was channel surfing, just looking for Jay Leno’s TV show, and instead I watched Ted Koppel’s Nightline documentary about the men and women whose lives were affected by this event – the first terrorist attack against American interests. It was a profoundly moving and terrifying event for the U.S. It was like the first 9-11 for our country.”

Within the Nightline program was a short segment about the “Laundry Project” in Lockerbie.

“This is the only remaining footage of the real women of Lockerbie,” Brevoort said. “They were a group of over 30 Scottish women who made it their mission to get permission from the U.S. government to launder over 11,000 pieces of clothing from the 270 victims involved in the crash – the 243 passengers, 16 crew members and 11 residents of Lockerbie who were killed by parts of the disintegrating plane.” These personal affects were scheduled to be incinerated by the U.S. government due to their grisly condition, but the women fought for permission to clean and iron the clothing and return these personal items to the families who lost someone in the terrorist attack.

The women of Lockerbie realized that for many families, these items might be the only remains of a loved one. Like earthbound angels, they sought to comfort. As one of them noted during the documentary, “The only way to overcome evil and nastiness in the world is through love.”

Brevoort admittedly sobbed when she watched the documentary. The next morning, before she opened her
eyes, she was convinced that she had seen a Greek tragedy in a contemporary event. "I woke up and wrote for several hours," she said. "I realized that terrorism is going to be our Trojan War and the women in Lockerbie are our Trojan women. I knew I'd been handed an important play to write."

It took Brevoort five years and more than 25 revisions and thousands of discarded pages to write her award-winning play. When she started work on the play, she didn’t have enough money to pay her rent, so she accepted a grant to write in Denmark, and she completed her first draft there.

She explained that seeing the documentary about the women of Lockerbie provided “lightning bolt inspiration,” but cautioned the students that the way inspiration works is much more mundane. “We have rather romantic ideas about how writers are inspired,” she quipped. "It's about being engaged in the world and reading widely. It’s about connections. I had studied Greek tragedy – which is about big emotions and large scale suffering – and I was up on current events and terrorism. The key (for actors, directors, playwrights) is to literally get out of the theatre and into the world in order to bring the world back into the theatre.”

Brevoort added that she had a very difficult time getting the play produced. “Before 9-11, no one would touch it,” she said. “Producers said it was morbid. I had 20 workshops before I was able to produce this play. And I had 20 directors and 14 dramaturgs trying to get rid of the Greek tragedy form. Even my agent said ‘The play’s dead.’ But then I submitted it to the Onassis International Playwriting Competition in Greece, and it won the silver medal.” It was produced in Greece and in Poland and went on to win the Kennedy Center’s Fund for New American Plays Award. The play truly resonated with audiences and critics after the Sept. 11, 2001 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City. Since then, it has been performed across the U.S. and in Spain, England, Italy and Australia.

A compelling drama, The Women of Lockerbie is about choices, and as one critic noted, the evolution of grief. Do we respond to grief with bitterness or with hope? The characters in her play speak about the moment when they decide not to be broken human beings, when they choose to not respond with rage, hate and revenge. “I knew this story had the power to give transcendence to an audience,” Brevoort said. “It’s something you don’t get often in theater.”

Like the real women of Lockerbie, who defied government regulations so they could wash the victims’ clothing, Brevoort stood firm against her play’s initial critics. And in the end – like the spirited, selfless women she pays homage to in her drama -- she too has comforted countless individuals around the world with this story of hope and healing in the face of unimaginable tragedy.

For more information about Brevoort’s career, visit www.DeborahBrevoort.com.
Happy Birthday Elizabeth!

By Ann Heuer, ’78

On Friday, Aug. 26, a surprise 35th birthday party was held for Elizabeth Ann Clune, a dear friend of the university. The event was hosted by the Rev. Joseph L. Levesque, C.M., Niagara University president; Dr. Sharon Watkinson, chair of the department of theatre and fine arts; and Brother Martin Schneider, C.M, administrative assistant in the department of theatre and fine arts.

The event was attended by NU theatre faculty, staff, students and university administrators, as well as board members of the Friends of Niagara University Theatre. Highlights included a performance of several children’s stories by N.U.R.T. (Niagara University Repertory Theatre) and a delightful song and dance performance of Bye, Bye Blackbird by Miss Clune. The party took place in the lobby of NU’s new Elizabeth Ann Clune Center for Theatre in Clet Hall.

Miss Clune was accompanied by her parents, and she was thoroughly surprised and pleased with everything from the entertainment to the gifts, cards, flowers and cake. She told the guests that she was very happy to celebrate her big day a bit early, because Aug. 29 was her actual birthday.

On May 1, 2010, Niagara University officially opened the $3.1 million Elizabeth Ann Clune Center for Theatre and renovated William P. and Marie Leary Theatre with a blessing, dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony. The new center is named after the daughter of Niagara University alumnus Robert J. Clune, Esq., a member of the university’s board of trustees, and his wife JoAnn G. Clune, both members of NU’s Class of 1958. George A. Wiegers, a classmate of theirs, donated $850,000 to the capital campaign for the theatre renovation. Wiegers asked that the new theatre complex be named for Elizabeth, an ardent fan of Niagara University Theatre and Broadway.

The Elizabeth Ann Clune Center for Theatre houses a three-level lobby, box office, lounge with a mural exhibition, concession stand, and the renovated Leary Theatre, which was initially created out of a former Clet Hall gymnasium in 1972, and named in honor of William P. and Marie Leary in 1998. William Leary, an alumnus, graduated in 1950.
Braddock, Dwyer Take Lead Roles in NU’s Theatre Department

By Michael Freedman, assistant director of public relations and manager of online content

Steve Braddock admits it’s a good thing that he’s fond of puzzles. As Niagara University’s new director of theatre, he’ll be responsible for ensuring that the classical and contemporary performances he selects are compatible with and challenging to his students. Braddock will also have to make sure that the quality of the shows live up to the expectations of the university’s loyal theatre audience and appeal to a wider demographic.

At least he’ll have David Dwyer to help him.

Braddock and Dwyer, NU’s new assistant professor of theatre and principal scenic designer, joined Niagara in July following the departure of former theatre director Gregory Fletcher, who is renewing his career as a playwright and director in New York City.

Braddock comes to Niagara University from Syracuse, where he served as the artistic director of the Gifford Family Theatre, a professional theatre for young audiences at Le Moyne College. Instituted with a grant from the Gifford Foundation in 2000, the funding was originally intended to serve the theatre for three years. However, thanks to Braddock’s creative staging and strong box office numbers, the theatre has flourished for 11 years, and intends to produce a mainstage show in spring 2012.

“To be honest, I wasn’t actively looking for something new (before coming across the position at Niagara),” Braddock says. “But when the position presented itself, I took a close look and realized that it offered me an opportunity to grow, push myself and continue to develop as a producer, director and educator. I talked it over with my wife, Bonnie, and she encouraged me to apply. Also, both of our sons are in college, so having the empty nest gave us the flexibility to make the change.”

One thing that won’t change much is Niagara’s 2011-2012 theatre schedule, a lineup that was in place before Braddock landed on Monteagle Ridge. And while he concedes that working with a framework constructed by someone else requires an accelerated acclimation process, he’s up for the challenge.

“I have to play catch-up a little so that I can make sure I’m on the same page with the shows’ directors,” he says. “When I began, I was given the opportunity to review and suggest any season changes that might benefit the program. After many illuminating conversations with the other faculty members, we decided to change one show, and it’s one I’ll be directing, so I’m very happy about that.”

That show is Damn Yankees (Nov. 10 - 20, 2011), an interesting choice given the allegiance to the Boston Red Sox that Braddock acquired during the seven years that he spent as an instructor and artist-in-residence in Worcester, Mass. Despite the selection, Braddock says that he hasn’t received too much grief from baseball aficionados in what is historically a New York Yankees-supporting area.

“It hasn’t been too bad. There’s the usual good-natured banter between the Yankees fans and myself, which I appreciate,” he says.

A native of New Jersey, Braddock earned a bachelor’s degree in fine arts from Colorado College in 1981 and a master’s in acting from USC in 1984. He went on to teach theater at middle and high schools in Worcester, and then at Anna Maria College and Worcester State College. After moving to Syracuse in 1997, Braddock served as the director of education at Syracuse Stage from 1998 to 2000 before launching the Gifford Family Theatre (GFT). While running the GFT, Braddock taught classes at Le Moyne College and Syracuse University. His directing credits include a wide range of works from Shakespeare, Oscar Wilde and Henrik Ibsen, Paula Vogel, Suzan Zeder, Jason Robert Brown and Kristine Thatcher, to name a few.

Meanwhile, Dwyer holds a bachelor’s degree (along with an oral communication certificate with distinction) from Marietta College and a master of fine arts in production design from Michigan State University. As a freelance designer, he has worked primarily in the eastern United States, including at The Boarshead Theatre, Theatre Winterhaven, Dance Ocala, Gemstone Productions, The Gorilla Theatre and the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian. He has served as technical director for the Showboat Becky Thatcher and Northern Michigan University, as well as technical director and scenic and lighting designer at Southern Virginia University. Dwyer also maintains his own website, www.dwyerdesignstudio.com.

The duo geared up for The Women of Lockerbie, which kicked off Niagara’s theatrical schedule on Oct. 20. According to Braddock, he and Dwyer have a great working relationship,

continued on page 6
making the transition to NU easier for both of them.

“David’s set for The Women of Lockerbie, which Amanda Sharpe directed, was gorgeous and evocative of the Scottish lowlands,” he says. “And I’m really enjoying the process of working on the Damn Yankees set with him. His ideas are fueling some of the approach I’m taking to the actors in rehearsal.”

In terms of pleasant surprises since coming to Niagara, Braddock says that the university’s training program is among the strongest he’s ever seen.

“A B.F.A. program, fused with a liberal arts core curriculum, provides our graduates with the tools they’ll need to be successful, whether in the theatre or in other fields they might pursue. The faculty and staff are as talented, committed and caring a group of people as I’ve been privileged to work with. If my children were theatrically inclined, this is where I’d like them to be.”

Conversely?

“I did learn that you don’t leave your office for home at 6:15 p.m. on a Tuesday night during the summer if you live in Lewiston. When Artpark hosted Lynyrd Skynyrd (July 26), it took me 75 minutes to drive three miles.”

To view Niagara University’s full 2011-2012 theatre schedule, please visit http://theatre.niagara.edu.

**Behind the Scenes with Steven Braddock**

*By Ann Heuer, ’78*

This summer, NU’s department of theatre and fine arts held a farewell party for former director of NU Theatre, Gregory Fletcher, and a welcome party for Steven Braddock, his successor, and David Dwyer, a new assistant professor and scenic director/production manager for NU Theatre.

A multi-talented educator/administrator/director/actor, Steven Braddock is a passionate artist and collaborator. It’s clear to all who work with him, he is genuinely relishing all the opportunities he has at Niagara for discovery – for himself, his students, his colleagues, and the cast members he worked with this fall as director of NU Theatre’s production of the hit Broadway musical, Damn Yankees.

**Q. You’ve achieved a lot during your career in the arts and education. As a youngster, what did you dream of becoming?**

A. As a youngster? Depending on my age: superhero, astronaut, fireman, Olympic skier, shortstop … the places my overly active imagination took me might well have foreshadowed a career in the theatre, but sadly, I didn’t pick up on it then.

**Q. You’re a major league sports fan and, not surprisingly, you remind me of a seasoned coach. You excel at what you do – and you collaborate with faculty and students in an effective, supportive, enthusiastic way. Still, when you’re in the middle of a production like Damn Yankees and putting in 14- to 15-hour days for about seven weeks in a row, where does your energy come from to keep the “team” revved up and focused on winning?**

A. Honestly, the energy comes from the collaboration. There’s a great give and take in the rehearsal process that feeds us all, I think. It’s infectious. Throwing ideas back and forth with Terri (Filips Vaughan), Jason (Bravo) and Adriano (Gatto) is great fun. The cast is really strong; they’re making great choices, they’re making me laugh, and I’m probably having more fun in rehearsal than may be legally allowed. I mean, this is my job, right?

**Q. You’ve been an artistic director, director of education, artist-in-residence, teacher and actor over the past three decades. Can you share a few career highlights that stand out for you?**

A. For starters, I’m writing this the day after Deborah Brevoort (playwright, The Women of Lockerbie) was on campus to see our production and share with the students and our audience. It was a pretty incredible weekend. She had such amazing stories to share with us about the writing process and subsequent productions of the play.

While I was at the Gifford Family Theatre (Le Moyne College) I had the good fortune to adapt two Theatre for Young Audience (TYA) novels for the stage. Both by acclaimed author Laurie Halse Anderson, one (FEVER 1793) was professionally produced by GFT and the other (speak) by two different high schools where I could work as a playwright-in-residence during the process. Laurie attended performances of each and was thrilled by the adaptations.

One of my last acting jobs was one of the most delightful times I’ve had on stage. I appeared as Don, the win-at-all-costs coach of a Little League baseball team in Richard Dresser’s two-hander, Rounding Third. Now, I’m usually cast as the nice guy, best friend, next door neighbor, so I figured I’d be offered the role of Michael, the everybody-deserves-a-chance-to-play assistant coach. But at the Redhouse in Syracuse, director Peter Moller opted to have me play the jerk. It was glorious, self-indulgent good fun! (In real life, I was the annoyingly equitable guy when I coached both of my kids...
through Little League.)

Q. Anyone who meets you can tell that you’re passionate about teaching and quality theatre. What’s your mission as an acting teacher and as a director of theatre?
A. I would have to say, in both cases, to encourage the students to grow, to take risks, to push themselves. No actor should ever feel that there’s nothing left to explore, whether in class or while developing a role for the stage. I use the word discovery a lot in class. And I find that I discover a lot about myself as well through teaching and directing. If I ever stop learning new things during the process, then it will be time for me to do something else!

Q. Are there any career mentors that have influenced you along the way?
A. There’s not a single person who’s influenced me more than any other. But as for folks whose guidance and friendship I carry with me every day, there are more than I can name. And it’s an ongoing journey. From my instructors at Colorado College and USC, to the directors and actors and designers I’ve been privileged to work with along the way, I’ve learned and developed as an actor, a director, a teacher and a collaborator. My colleagues at Le Moyne College, with whom I shared work and play for the last 11 years, have a special place in my heart.

Q. You’ve directed a wide array of productions, from classic dramas to newer, cutting-edge pieces, children’s theatre to musicals. What kinds of productions do you plan for NU Theatre in the coming years?
A. Sshhh. It’s a secret. No, really, I hope my exposure to the gamut of material will be helpful in choosing seasons for the theatre. I’m currently enjoying my conversations with the other faculty about potential productions. I’d like to be able to offer some Theatre for Young Audiences, not only because it’s a great audience, but because there’s a strong TYA job market for our graduates. And patrons can expect a couple of musicals per year, as always. I hope to balance some of the easily recognizable titles with some newer offerings that will pleasantly surprise. Ask me again in the spring, and I can tell you about season 2012 - 2013.

Q. How does your experience as an Equity actor give you an edge as an administrator and director of our productions?
A. I suppose if we have the opportunity to offer more summer productions with Equity contracts to alumni, it will be easier to negotiate because I’ve been on both sides of the fence. As a producer at Le Moyne, I negotiated several AEA contracts. And having worked professionally has given me exposure to directors that I’ve learned a great deal from, and I suppose some of that translates to my own directing process. But, more importantly for our students is that those of us with Equity experience can better prepare our students for the professional theatre once they leave us, just by relating our experiences. Doug (Zschiegner), Josie (DiVincenzo), Paul (Todaro) and Derek (Campbell), as well as myself, have acted and/or directed in Equity theatres. And the other faculty have designed, choreographed, music-directed, or otherwise worked professionally. Across the board, I’d say we’re a pretty good resource for our students.

Q. You’ve been in your position at NU since the summer. What has impressed you so far about Niagara University Theatre and its students, faculty, staff, patrons and the Friends of NU Theatre?
A. Two words: passion and commitment.

Q. And finally, it’s obvious to your theatre colleagues that your wonderful wife and sons mean the world to you. Can you tell us a little about them and how they support you in your career? And are there any other thespians in the family tree?
A. I’m very proud of my family. My wife, Bonnie, is a genetic counselor at Upstate Medical University in Syracuse, working primarily in cancer genetics. I’m constantly amazed at her breadth of knowledge and skill in working with families. My sons, Ethan and Seth, are pursuing degrees at St. Lawrence and the University of Wisconsin, respectively. I’m afraid I’m the only thespian, though. When he was younger, Seth performed in a professional production in Syracuse, but gave it up for sports once he reached high school. And as for Ethan, baseball always trumped the arts – he plays for the St. Lawrence team. And all three are 100 percent behind my relocation to NU, even though it means not seeing me quite as often. They really understand how important it is to me to be here.

Q. Are there any other thoughts you care to share (e.g. plans for NU Theatre, work with the Friends of NU Theatre, more reaching out into the community etc.?)
A. I just hope I’ll be able to help the theatre and the program move forward. Now that I’m becoming acclimated, I’m looking forward to exploring any and all avenues for doing just that.
David Dwyer joined Niagara University’s department of theatre and fine arts this fall as an assistant professor (design/technology) and the new scenic designer/production manager. An incredibly talented individual with an engaging sense of humor, David shared his thoughts about his career path, the impact he hopes to have on his students and the admirable work ethic he and his wife model every day for their children.

Q. You’ve achieved a lot during your career in the arts and education. As a youngster, what did you dream of becoming? Did your parents influence your choices? And did you build anything—like a treehouse or fort?

A. As a youngster the first thing I dreamed of becoming was a pirate, however when the legality of such a profession was drawn into question, I decided on a different course of action. When it comes to parental influence, one thing I am grateful for is that my parents never discouraged me in my chosen career path; they always supported my interests and explorations.

I suppose I was like many children in that I had dreams and visions of one day becoming a famous actor. I began acting in community productions as a child, and by the time I reached college age I had about 25 shows under my belt. The dream of being an actor persisted until as a young adult I worked a summer as an actor in summer stock where I quickly gave up that notion when the realities of life as an actor set in. I designed my first set while a senior at Kirtland High School in Northern Ohio in 1988. I am the son of a pipefitter and consequently learned many practical skills from my father in building and repairing just about everything. Somewhere I inherited some artistic skills, and well, scenic design, for me, seems to combine my practical and artistic skills, along with the driving interest in the theatre I developed as a youth.

My brother and I had an incredible tree fort. It was four stories high and sprawled out on the ground to something like 10 or 12 rooms. Even though my father called it the “Roach Motel,” it was pretty cool.

Q. Can you share a few career achievements that stand out for you?

A. I am particularly proud of my work at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. I’ve designed two productions for the NMAI, The Conversion of Ka’Ahumanu and The Grandchildren of the Buffalo Soldiers; in both cases it was an incredible experience to work with an amazing production team. I feel the designs I produced were simple, yet evocative of the moods and themes and captured the essence of each production.

Q. Anyone who meets you can tell that you love what you do. What’s your mission as an assistant professor and as NU Theatre’s new scenic designer/production manager?

A. I’m interested in doing the best design work possible, but I am also driven to inspire young theatre design/technology majors at NU to rise to the potential within them, to strive for excellence, and be the best they can be. I want to encourage them to design everything they can. Take many, many art classes and build skills. Find a designer whose style you like, and learn all you can about their process and how they got to where they are – never settle for the easy way out, but take the design to the next level. In the words of scenic designer David Gallo, “If you can be happy doing anything else, do it.” His meaning is that this is a challenging career; you have to love it.

Q. Who and what has influenced your set designs?

A. Early on, much of my interest and inspiration can be attributed to my undergraduate friend and mentor, the late R.L. Loreman at Marietta College. I can honestly say that without his influence, I would not be where I am today. Professionally, I admire the design work of Ming Cho Lee and David Gallo.

Q. Do you think there are any trends today in theatre design? Are we finding more simplicity or complexity with sets and lighting?

A. The major trend I am noticing in scenic design is striking a balance between presentational and representational styles. When is it appropriate to accurately present a location on stage, and when is it necessary to only represent ideas, moods and themes on the stage? Striking the balance seems to be the challenge that many designers are experimenting with these days.

Q. What kinds of productions do you especially enjoy designing for?

A. I enjoy designing any production that presents a challenge; great or small. I enjoy those that involve a good deal of research. I love the exploration and discovery in the research process. With that said, I enjoy designing musicals. They often present the challenge and complexity of multiple locations in a finite theatrical space. Two summers ago, I designed seven musicals that opened within 10 weeks of each other. That was a challenge, but also very rewarding.
Q. What has impressed you during your first semester here about Niagara University Theatre and its students, faculty, staff?

A. First, and foremost, I have been impressed by the fine colleagues I am working with. Their dedication and professionalism is inspiring. I am impressed by how well the theatre and fine arts department prepares theatre majors for a professional career in the theatre. Finally, I am impressed by how kind and welcoming everyone has been; students, faculty, and staff alike.

Q. And finally, it’s obvious to your theatre colleagues that your wonderful wife and children mean everything to you. Can you tell us a little about them and how they support you in your career?

A. I am blessed with a wonderful wife and children. They do indeed mean the world to me. I thank my Father in Heaven for them each day.

Dana and I have been married for 14 years, and our children: Garrett, 14; Patrick, 11; Larcey, 8; Connor, 5; and Moira, 3, keep us on our toes every day. There is never a dull moment in our house. I guess the best way my family supports my career is by understanding the crazy schedule this career espouses. They also try to see every show I design. Dana is also my most honest critic; I greatly appreciate her insights.

Q. Any hobbies you care to mention? I heard that you and Dana grow your own crops.

A. I do have a few hobbies. I love working on my family history. It is the ultimate research puzzle. I have all of my family traced back to immigrant ancestors, and some of my family traced back to the mid-1600s.

Dana and I also love to garden. One of the reasons we're buying a property out in Hartland, N.Y., is so we can have the space to have a huge garden, fruit trees and animals. We have a goal to get as close to self-sustaining as possible. We’re raising a family, not a farm. We feel very strongly that we need to teach our children to work hard.

Q. Are there any websites people can visit to learn more about your work as a designer?

A. Here are a few:


A YouTube interview I did for the Smithsonian:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bE1G5Oy30Q8

And my webpage:

http://dwyerdesignstudio.com/index.htm

An example of Dwyer’s award-winning set design. This is the set for Dancing at Lughnasa, produced at Southern Virginia University in 2005. This production received the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival Meritorious Achievement Award in Scenic Design.

Niagara University Theatre Director Emeritus Brother Augustine Towey, C.M., (center) is busy at work writing new poems at his home in Philadelphia. He loves to hear from alumni, current students, faculty members, friends and family. Here he enjoys a post-Thanksgiving 2011 visit with Buffalo-area reporter Doug Smith and his wife, Polly, treasured longtime friends. To send “Bro” a card or letter, please mail to: Brother Augustine Towey, C.M., St. Vincent’s Seminary, 500 E. Chelten Ave., Philadelphia, Pa. 19144.

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Deadline for submissions for the spring issue is April 1, 2012.
Hometown Boy Co-Creates Hit Musical For London Stage

By Ann Heuer, ’78

According to Dr. Sharon Watkinson, chair of NU’s department of theatre and fine arts, one of the thrills of being in London this summer was the opportunity to see Lend Me A Tenor, a riotous musical set in 1930s Cleveland, Ohio, where an imported Italian tenor goes AWOL just before an opera company’s prestigious production of Verdi’s Otello. What made the evening especially rich was a chance for Sharon and nine NU theatre studies students to meet by the stage door with Peter Sham, the creator of this musical comedy adaptation’s book and lyrics – and a former Niagara University student.

Peter Sham attended NU from 1978 through 1981, appearing in many NU Theatre productions and learning from several revered NU Theatre professors, including the theatre’s three founders, Brother Augustine Towey, C.M., the late Tim Ward, and Dr. Watkinson.

“To see this glorious production at London’s Gielgud Theatre in June was exciting for us all,” said Dr. Watkinson. “And Peter was so generous to meet all of us at the theatre after the show and to talk to our students about his work. His career story is certainly one of ‘hometown boy makes good!’”

And how! Sham is the author of several musicals, including: Lend Me A Tenor (based on a play by Ken Ludwig which had its London premiere in 1986); Toyland; It’s a Dog’s Life: Man’s Best Musical; and Waxworks; and the plays Shakespeare’s Moby Dick; Twinkle, Twinkle, ‘Killer’ Kane (written with Peter Blatty – The Exorcist); and A Christmas Carol: on the Air (written with Brad Carroll). He is also a veteran regional actor with 30 years experience and he was a principal member of the Tony Award-winning Utah Shakespearean Festival for 11 years. As an educator, he has taught at several universities across the United States, and he is currently the director of theatre and associate chair for Southern Utah University’s department of theatre arts and dance (www.suu.edu). He holds an MFA from the University of Delaware’s nationally acclaimed Professional Theatre Training Program.

Sham was gracious enough to offer background on his accomplishments and some sage advice for NU’s theatre students.

Q. You’ve achieved so much in the three decades since you were a Niagara University student. Were there any courses or professors that really impacted your career path?
A. I learned so much from everyone – Bro (Brother Augustine Towey, C.M.), Sharon (Dr. Sharon Watkinson), Miss Bev (Beverly Fletcher), and Naomi Neimanis. However, Tim Ward was my mentor and greatest acting teacher.

Q. Can you recall any of the roles you played for NU Theatre?
A. Some especially memorable ones include Spettigue in Charley’s Aunt, directed by Tim Ward; Capulet in Romeo and Juliet, directed by Brother Augustine; Starkey in Peter Pan at Artpark, directed by Brother Augustine; Pseudolus in A Funny Thing Happened On the Way to the Forum, directed by Tim Ward; Luther Billis in South Pacific, directed by Brother Augustine; Lennie in Of Mice and Men, directed by Tim Ward; Mangiacavallo in The Rose Tattoo, directed by Brother Augustine; Snoopy in You’re a Good Man Charlie Brown at Artpark, directed by Brother Augustine; and Rueben in Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat at Artpark. This was NU’s first production of the musical and Tim Ward was the director.

Q. Dr. Watkinson said of you, “Hometown boy makes good.” Is it true that you’re a Grand Island, N.Y., native?
A. Actually, I’m a North Buffalo native who moved to Grand Island, but I’m a hometown boy, yes, and a DIEHARD Buffalo Bills fan, even now.

Q. Can you give a brief overview of the highlights of your career path since your NU days?
A. Certainly Delaware’s Professional Theatre Training Program, as well as being a co-founder of the Core Theatre Group (with longtime friend, Randy Kramer) in Buffalo, where I played...
Niagara University Theatre Newsletter

Sister Mary Ignatius. I was artistic director for Bristol Valley Playhouse in Naples, N.Y., for three years and acted with Milwaukee Repertory Theatre and Asolo Theatre Company, among others. I enjoyed 11 seasons as a principle actor with Utah Shakespeare Festival. Now my passion, in addition to writing, is as an educator here at Southern Utah University where I’m director of theatre.

Q. You do it all – act, direct, teach, and write musicals and plays. What motivates you?
A. It’s all about enjoying life and being open for opportunities when they come. Tim Ward taught me, and what’s more, believed that I could do anything I chose to do, so I do – for myself and to honor his beloved memory.

Q. Tell us about Lend Me a Tenor – how did this amazing opportunity come about? What have you enjoyed about co-creating a hit musical for the London stage?
A. It’s going to sound very cliché, but here it is: don’t give up your dream. But more importantly, know in your heart that everything that happens, happens perfectly. There is no such thing as shoulds or shouldn’ts, and never regret a decision made in earnest with your heart. If you can get that, you’ll have a very rewarding life.

Peter Sham’s musical, Lend Me A Tenor, has been met with critical acclaim:

“A musical farce is a tricky thing to pull off, but Lend Me A Tenor shows us how it’s done. Plenty of laughs … an enchanting piece.”

“This is by far and away the most accomplished musical comedy opening in the West End this season.”
— Paul Vale, The Stage, June 16, 2011

“I loved Ken Ludwig’s operatic backstage farce, Lend Me A Tenor, when it was produced on the same stage 25 years ago; and I love this new musical comedy adaptation – by unknown Americans Peter Sham (book and lyrics) and Brad Carroll (music) – even more.”

“There’s a different kind of summery fun to be had in the new light-as-froth musical Lend Me A Tenor by Peter Sham and Brad Carroll at the Gielgud Theatre. There’s a decent laugh every 30 seconds. It’s just the sort of show that got America through the Depression, and do we ever need it now.”
— Warwick Thompson, The Bloomberg News, July 1, 2011

Q. Who or what have been the biggest inspirations in your career?
A. Tim Ward; Jackie Gleason; Zero Mostel; NU alumni Russ Papia, Patrick Markle, Army Schultz, my college roommates; my SUU students; my brother Norm Sham for his heart; my brother Michael for his brains; my mom for her courage; my daughter, Olivia, and son, Orlando, the greatest teachers I know; my inspiring wife, Kirsten; and, of course, the man upstairs.

Q. In your free time, are there any hobbies that you particularly enjoy?
A. Yes, I draw. I’m a closet graphic artist.

Q. What would you tell your college-age self if you knew then what you know now?
A. The same thing I tell my undergraduates now, “FINISH SCHOOL!” Stop procrastinating and do the things you set out to do. Life is short and so precious, every second counts. Every second.
Updates!
Coordinated by Ann Heuer, ’78

Andrea Andolina, ’07 (Audrey), former NU theatre studies student Nick Lama (Lord), former artist-in-residence Steve Vaughan (Duke Frederick) and his son, Will Vaughan, ’11 (Charles), starred in Buffalo’s Shakespeare in Delaware Park production of As You Like It this summer. Lama was also in Buffalo’s O’Connell & Company June presentation of Gentlemen’s Gentleman, an original cabaret revue. Lama was in the world premiere of The Ghost of Fort Niagara with Nathan Andrew Miller, ’14, for Buffalo’s Alleyway Theatre in September. That same month, he was in Ravings for Buffalo’s New Alt Performance Group.

Theatre studies majors Emily Aguilar, ’12, Mary Boatman, ’12, Kathleen Denecke, ’14, Renee Landrigan, ’13, Brianna Lanoye, ’13, and Michael Sheridan, ’14, along with NU student Jeannine Alsous, ’13, and theatre studies alumni Adrian Gatto, ’06, and Cory McCants, ’11, all filmed segments this summer for NU’s new virtual tour map, which is now online at http://map.niagara.edu (just click on any building to view the segments). The students and alumni act as “tour guides,” providing pertinent information about each building on campus and NU’s many academic programs, extracurricular activities and services, from housing to dining.

Becky Berowski, ’07, is living in New York City doing a lot of improv and comedy. She writes and films sketches and has a small hosting series as well. Her improv team, “Space Camp,” is performing again this fall and her series, A Blonde, A Brunette and a Redhead, has its third and fourth episodes on YouTube http://www.youtube.com/user/WatchBBR.

She is also a writer for a new website, “Dishin Out Beauty” which focuses on healthy lifestyles; visit www.dishinoutbeauty.com.

Emily Boudreau, ’09, is now certified to teach theatre K-12 in New York state. She is now teaching public speaking at a middle school in Westchester County. She previously worked in Switzerland.

Jason Bravo, voice lecturer, provided musical direction for One More For My Baby at MusicalFare Theatre as well as Fame at Artpark last summer. In addition, he subbed on keyboards for the national tour of Jersey Boys in Cleveland. This December, Jason music-directed James Joyce’s The Dead for Buffalo’s Irish Classical Theatre.

Joey Bucheker, ’09, directed Nunsenstional! – The Nunsense Vegas Revue for Lewiston’s Theatre in the Mist in April. Susan Laxton, ’08, and Melissa Seifert Leventhal, ’01, were in the cast. Bucheker directed Recovery Mode for Buffalo United Artists this summer. The cast included alumnus Marc Sacco, ’00.

Derek Campbell, senior acting lecturer, directed Playboy of the Western World starring alumna Cassie Gorniewicz, ’08, for the Irish Classical Theatre in June. He was nominated for Buffalo’s Artie Award this spring for “outstanding direction of a musical” for James Joyce’s The Dead for the Irish Classical Theatre. In October, Campbell directed The Turn of the Screw for the Irish Classical Theatre, and in December, he directed the Tony Award-winning musical, The Dead, for the second year in a row for Irish Classical Theatre. Renee Landrigan, ’13, and Cassie Gorniewicz, ’08, were among the cast members in The Dead. Susan Drozd, ’02, was hair and make-up designer.

Jayson D. Clark, ’12, is the lead guitarist/vocalist for the band, Stone Row. Sound lecturer/designer Glenn Bernardis is a performer and co-founder of the band, a popular progressive Celtic and world music group.

Kevin Craig, ’08, was in Pinkalicious: The Musical for Buffalo’s Theatre of Youth in October.

Leo DiBello, ’11, Elexa Kopyt, ’11, and Justin Mitchell Krall, ’11, were in Marat/Sade, a Curtain Up! production for Buffalo’s Subversive Theatre in September and October. Also, Victoria Wolcott, ’10, served as stage manager; Emily Pedersen, ’11, was assistant stage manager/actor/fight captain and props mistress; and Jessica Stahr, ’08, was an assistant stage manager/actor in the production. Krall also served as fight choreographer. Kopyt and DiBello were also in Fred’s Requiem for ART of WNY in November.

Erin Daley, ’11, and Joe Liolos, ’11, have just completed a three-month children’s theatre tour with the prestigious Theatre Four, based in Richmond, Va.

Marilyn Deighton, assistant professor of theatre and fine arts/costume technologist, has been invited to present a master class on lightweight body padding at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston-Salem, N.C. Last spring, the Niagara University Research Council awarded a $5,000 summer research grant to Dr. Henrik Borgstrom, chair, department of modern and classical languages, and Deighton. The two colleagues collaborated on a new production of La Farce de Maitre Pathelin (The Farce of Mr. Pathelin) by
During July 2011, nine multi-talented individuals worked together to present an exciting production of the musical revue The World Goes ’Round by John Kander and Fred Ebb on the Leary Theatre stage. The production was performed, designed, and stage-managed by a company of NU Theatre alumni, and directed and choreographed by Derek Roland, ’00. Actors who starred in the production included from left: Carmen Ruby Floyd, ’00; Louis Colaiacovo, ’99; Michele Marie Roberts Benzin, ’99; Paschal Frisina III, ’00; and Vanessa Gawinski, ’01. Stage manager was Kurt Erb, ’09, while Ian Twedt, ’05, served as light and sound designer, and Sarah Cymba, ’11, was set designer.

Susan Drozd, ’02, received Buffalo’s Artie Award for “outstanding direction of a musical” for MusicalFare’s production of My Fair Lady. Several other alumni were nominated for Artie Awards this spring for their performances in locally staged musicals, including: Louis Colaiacovo, ’99 (outstanding supporting actor in a musical for The Dead), Michele Marie Roberts (Benzin), ’99 (outstanding actress in a musical for The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee), and Marc Sacco, ’00 (outstanding actor in a musical for (Title of Show)). Since its inception 21 years ago, the Artie Awards have been called “Buffalo’s answer to the Tony Awards” and have raised an estimated $200,000 for AIDS-related charities, primarily Buffalo’s Benedict House. Colaiacovo also starred in Buffalo United Artist’s concert production of Sondheim’s Follies with Sacco in July. Colaiacovo was in the musical A Class Act for Buffalo’s MusicalFare Theatre in November with fellow alumni Adrienne Lewis, ’09, and Marc Sacco. Sacco was in Bent for Buffalo United Artists in October. Lewis starred in The Last Days of Judas Iscariot for Buffalo’s Road Less Traveled Theater in April and May. She also reprised her role in Insidious for Road Less Traveled Theater last summer. The play was directed for the second summer in a row by Doug Zschiegner, associate professor/associate director of NU Theatre. Lewis and Sacco will be in Avenue Q at MusicalFare Theatre from Jan. 25 – March 4. Lewis is also featured in the Buffalo: All The City’s A Stage video on the Theatre Alliance of Buffalo website.

Kurt Erb, ’09, was in the cast of Buffalo United Artist’s production of the dark comedy Fit to be Tied in May. He was in the cast of Peter Pan at Buffalo’s New Phoenix Theatre in December.

Josie DiVincenzo, lecturer (acting and theatre appreciation) and freelance scenic painter, has been commissioned to paint two huge murals (interior and exterior) for the new SPoT Coffee on Hertel Avenue in North Buffalo which opened this fall. Josie said, “This is a special honor for me since I grew up in that neighborhood, and the interior mural, which is comprised of a street scene, brings back a sweet nostalgia as I paint the landmark buildings. NU is particularly special to me since I have been allowed to use the Annex for the projects, and I’ve been able to employ students to assist. The NU staff has been terrifically supportive.” Josie visited London in November to see Les Misérables on the West End. She was thrilled to meet its star, Alfie Boe (Jean Valjean), Britain’s leading tenor.

Susan Drozd, ’02 (Portia), center, Adriano Gatto, ’06 (Bassanio), second from right, former NU theatre student David Lundy (Old Gobbo), left, and former adjunct theatre professor Larry Smith (Prince of Arragon), right, starred in The Merchant of Venice with alumnus David Antovino, ’03 (Gratiano), second from left, at Buffalo’s Shakespeare in Delaware Park this summer.

Gregory Fletcher (former director of NU Theatre) directed the new musical Destinations at Le Poisson Rouge as part of the Fringe/NYC festival in August. In September, he directed a staged reading of the new musical The Fairy Hoax at the WorkShop Theatre Company. In October, he directed a reading of the new play Free Country and was a groomsman in the wedding of Charlie Wahl, ’08, and Noelle Wright, ’09, in Disney World. In December, he directed an investor’s presentation of Separations by Martin Halpern, featuring the amazing cast of Chazz Palminteri, J. Smith-Cameron, and Matt Cavenaugh. Greg has also been writing theater interviews that can be found at www.stageandcinema.com/category/interviews/

Steven Foote, ’13, directed You’re A Good Man, Charlie Brown for the “Kids in Drama Studies” in Ellicott City, Md., last summer. He also danced in Buffalo’s Infringement Festival with NU adjunct professor (dance) Stacy Zawadzki-Janusz.

Paschal Frisina III, ’00, was in the cast of Fame: The Musical last summer at Artspark in Lewiston, N.Y. He is guest director for NU Theatre’s production of ART, which will be presented at the Castellani Art Museum from Feb. 16–19. He is currently pursuing a master’s degree at NU, with a focus on theatre arts in education.
Adriano Gatto, ’06, recently played Philip the Bastard in a reading of Anthony Chase’s adaptation of King John. He did the fight direction/choreography for a number of productions, including a production of Tracey Lett’s Superior Donuts for Buffalo’s Road Less Traveled Productions, directed by Scott Behrend.


Below: Cassie Gorniewicz, ’08, right, as the Artful Dodger in Buffalo’s MusicalFare Theatre Curtain Up! production of Oliver this fall. At left is Adam Kluge as Oliver. Photo courtesy of Chris Cavanagh.

Shannon Hardy, ’11, a theatre minor who earned degrees in international studies and political science at Niagara University in May, is the first NU student to be awarded a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant Scholarship while enrolled at NU. She is teaching English and American Culture at Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University in Turkey. While an undergraduate at NU, she was a student aide in the theatre’s costume shop.

Maria Nicole Held, ’11, was in Ladykillers, a performance piece, for Buffalo’s Rust Belt Books in October.

Jared Hoyt, ’09, and Kelly (Konecko) Hoyt, ’09, are employed by Sight and Sound Theatre in Branson, Mo., where Kelly is a wardrobe supervisor and Jared is a deck technician. Kelly supervises a team of five staff members who assist with quick changes, laundry, costume maintenance, hair and wig styling, fittings and prep for shows with casts of 45 people. Examples of Jared’s various jobs include assisting with moving some massive sets which weigh several tons (like the life size Noah’s Ark), working on extremely tall sets (45 feet), and supervising a menagerie of animals who appear in the theatre’s productions (goats, lamas, donkeys, camels, birds, Highlander cows). He will be an actor in the theatre’s Christmas show this December. Kelly and Jared previously worked for Sight and Sound Theatre in Lancaster, Pa. They moved to Branson in June of this year.

Shannon Hardy, ’11, a theatre minor who earned degrees in international studies and political science at Niagara University in May, is the first

Kevin Kreczko, ’05, is currently freelance producing and directing. He will be the associate producer for the new 2012 rollercoaster at Busch Gardens in Williamsburg, Va. He is also producing a number of Halloween and Christmas events around the country and will be directing the opening of the Women’s Final Four Basketball Tournament.

Kayla Kreis, ’11, a double major in theatre performance and hospitality, was employed by the historic Otesaga Resort in Cooperstown, N.Y., this past summer.

David Lundy, former NU theatre student, directed Medea for Buffalo’s ALT Theater in May. He was also in The Second Time Around at the Lancaster Opera House in November.

Traci Mariano, the wife of NU alumnus Mike Mariano, ’85, directed an open rehearsal workshop in California last April for All That Remains, a play about Japanese American soldiers in World War II. The production was conceived by Mona Z. Smith, and Mariano, and was written by Smith. The two women conceived this project in 1994 while conducting in an experimental workshop for theatre students at Niagara University. Mariano writes, “We explored a few fragments of text written by Japanese American soldiers who served in some of the bloodiest battles of World War II. We had every intention of continuing this work, but life intervened. After the invasion of Iraq in 2003, we knew it was time to return to this play. In 2006, we met in Chicago and spent two days talking and making notes. The text began to take the shape of a ghost story – a structure inspired by ghost-warrior plays of Japan’s Noh theater. As a ghost story, All That Remains is clearly a work of fiction, but it draws on the real and harrowing experiences of the celebrated but segregated 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team. The play’s title is from an English translation of the poem by Matsuo Basho: “Summer grass: All that remains Of warriors’ dreams.”
**Gary Marino**, dance lecturer, performed the role of Drosselmeyer in The American Academy of Ballet’s production of *The Nutcracker* for the University of Buffalo’s Center for the Arts in December. The production featured principal dancers from the New York City Ballet.

**Ryan Masline**, ’14, was the costume designer for Wayne Central High School’s production of *Into the Woods* last spring.

**Gerard Miller III**, ’01, reports that his two-man sketch comedy show with co-writer/performer Will Nunziata, *Dystopia Gardens*, was performed last spring and also received rave reviews this summer. According to www.examiner.com, “Dystopia Gardens is among the best of what the Fringe Festival has to offer.”

**Elizabeth Oddy**, ’03, was in *Clintons Ditch: The Story of the Building of the Erie Canal* for the Erie Canal Drama Theater this summer. The production was presented on the Buffalo Harbor with free admission.

**Robin Patterson** and **Terry Judd**, adjunct professors of physical theatre, and their company, Theatre Beyond Words, hosted the sixth Annual Physical Theatre Symposium in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, Canada, in June. Lively discussions centered around two topics in particular: the various teaching methods used by the participants who came from across Canada; and the new artistic work they were creating. Information about the next symposium to be held in June 2012 will be published on the company website: www.theatrebeyondwords.ca.

**Lindsay Pizzuto**, ’07, is enjoying her work as an administrative assistant with the Finger Lakes Musical Theatre Festival in Auburn, N.Y. The Festival will be up and running by May 2012 and tickets will be on sale by April. The Festival will initially operate for 12 weeks in the summer, with the eventual goal of expanding operations to April through October. A diverse offering of musical theatre productions ranging from revivals of the most storied classics, to cutting-edge experiments, will be presented in several venues. Visit http://fingerlakesmtf.com/. **Brendan Powers**, ’96, is busy acting and directing. One of his most memorable jobs this fall was a six-day commercial shoot for Alabama Tourism. Three TV spots will air in the Southeast in January that feature Brendan driving to various scenic locations in the state in a vintage 1953 baby blue Cadillac convertible. The tag line: “Alabama’s got a hundred road trips.” On Jan. 27, 2012, Powers will appear with Alec Baldwin, **Cassie Gorniewicz**, ’08, and **Brian Mysliwy**, ’96, in Road Less Traveled Productions’ reading of the Clifford Odets play, *The Big Knife*. This is the third time Mr. Baldwin has graciously participated in a reading to benefit the Buffalo based non-profit theatre, and the second time Powers and Mysliwy have appeared in a staged reading for RLTP with him. The reading will take place at the University at Buffalo Center for the Arts. For more information, visit http://roadlesstraveledproductions.org/2011/10/rltp-announces-return-of-alec-baldwin/.

**Michele Ragusa**, ’87, just finished a run of the new musical *For The Boys* at the Marriott Lincolnshire Hotel in Chicago.

**Geoffrey Redick**, ’11, a communications major and theatre minor, has been employed as a producer/anchor at WBTA Radio in Batavia, N.Y. In October, he landed a position as associate morning producer at WHEC-TV “News10NBC” in Rochester, N.Y.
Whitney Walker, ‘08, is attending SUNY at Buffalo for a master’s degree in social work. She plans to be a clinical mental health counselor and is currently director of her church’s praise dance choir and vocal coach of the church’s choir. She did a children’s tour with Bright Star Children’s Theatre of Asheville, N.C., following graduation from NU and has worked in a variety of positions in Buffalo since then. She also volunteers as an assistant director for plays produced at Buffalo’s St. Mary’s School for the Deaf each year.

Kelsey Wright, ‘11, is enrolled in a one-year master’s degree program in English and education certification at Niagara University.

Jessica Young, ‘07, was in a four-woman show, The MoMologues, this summer at Blackfriars Theatre in Rochester, N.Y.

Adjunct professor of dance Stacy Zawadzki-Janusz and her ZPAC dance company, which includes several NU theatre studies students and alumni, have been invited to perform a variety show on the Carnival Cruise Lines en route to the Bahamas next December. Theatre performance majors Kelsey M. Anderson, ‘14, and Miranda Jaworski, ‘14, and theatre minor Amanda Williamson, ‘14, will participate in this production. The ZPAC Company competed at the Erie County Fair this summer and won an award. They also competed at the Syracuse State Fair. In addition, Stacy will be the choreographer for A Chorus Line at the Lancaster Opera House in January and February. She will be attending three dance conferences in the fall and summer: NYCDA, Jump Tour and Access Broadway.
In the Spotlight: *Christmas Cabaret*


Seniors Mike Van Dyke and Mary Boatman entertained the audience with their intricate juggling routine.

Guest musical director Donald Shrimpton rehearses before the show with junior Celine Keefe.

Sophomores Kathleen R. Denecke, left, and Ashley Marie DeMar, sang duets from the classic film *White Christmas* and the bewitching Broadway hit, *Wicked*, among other songs. The rest of the Christmas Cabaret cast offered selections from a wide variety of old and new Broadway favorites, from *Hair* to *Spring Awakening*, *West Side Story* to *Sweeney Todd* and much more.
A Powerhouse Summer

By Meghan Deanna Smith, ’12

The summer of 2011 proved to be one of my best summers ever. Through the generosity of the Friends of Niagara University Theatre, The Powerhouse Theatre Training Program and NU alumnus Ed Cheetham, ’87, I was able to spend six weeks at the Vassar College and New York Stage and Film’s Powerhouse Theater Program. This unique apprentice training program was founded by Cheetham, who is producing director of the program.

While dorming at Vassar College’s beautiful campus in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., I was one of 36 acting students from across the country who was fortunate enough to be immersed in theatre morning, noon and night – from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. each day. As acting apprentices, we attended acting, text, movement, and voice classes four days a week – but we did so much more.

In the first days of the program, we auditioned and were cast in one of three main stage productions to be performed at the Vassar College’s outdoor amphitheatre. I was thrilled to be cast as Helena in Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream, which we rehearsed and performed in only two weeks.

As actors, we were also involved in devised theatre pieces – shows that we literally created in a week’s time. Also, the four playwright apprentices wrote pieces in which the acting apprentices performed and the directing apprentices directed. There were many performance opportunities for the actors, ages 16 to 22.

In addition to the apprentice portion of the program, we also saw numerous pieces of Vassar and New York Stage and Film theatre which were performed, written, and directed by working theatre professionals. Among the productions presented were F2M with Ken Olin, written by Patricia Wettig. We also had the pleasure of viewing plays still in the workshop process that were being prepared for their Broadway debuts, such as Margaret and Craig starring Mario Cantone.

The Vassar College and New York Stage and Film’s Powerhouse Theater Program was a fantastic experience for which I will forever be grateful.
In December, NU Theatre presented a magical production of *The Boy Who Could Sing Pictures* in collaboration with Theatre Beyond Words. The production was directed by adjunct professors Robin Patterson and Terry Judd. Clockwise from top left:

- From left, Mary Boatman, ’12, and Dan Urtz, ’14.
NU Students Perform at the Tower of London

By Ann Heuer, ’78

According to Dino Petrera, ’12, one of the 16 theatre and business majors from Niagara University who participated in study abroad in London during the summer of 2011, the cast of the hit TV show Glee was in London and even toured the Tower of London around the same time NU students were there. Dino admits that it would have been exciting to meet Lea Michele and others in the cast, but it was even more thrilling that he and his nine NU theatre studies peers actually performed a condensed version of Shakespeare’s Henry VIII in lavish period costumes at this historic castle that very same day. The whole trip, in fact, was a dream come true for the students who participated.

“One of the main reasons I wanted to go abroad, and to London specifically, was for the history. Whenever I study something in a book, there is always something inside me longing for more information that a text just can’t give me. Even watching a video can’t do it. Being able to sense with your own body the height, the color, the proximity of the things around it, these unmistakable places that have touched so much of history, it allows one to really know and understand the subject to the core.

“While in London, I had the ability to walk amongst the ruins of the Roman civilization. I had the privilege to experience a Mass at Westminster Abby, a place where great people and commoners have worshipped since the Middle Ages. I got to witness firsthand the history and evolution of the city that is London. The way I will read a play written by a British playwright will never be the same. Now when I read Pygmalion, I can know what it feels like to sit on the columns of the Actor’s Church in Covent Garden. When I watch the award-winning film The King’s Speech I will remember seeing with my very eyes the coronation chair in Westminster Abby. When I read a work by Shakespeare, I will have more depth of understanding because I have seen where he was born, where his parents came from, and where he lived and worked.

“My favorite experience from this trip, without a doubt, was the unbelievable opportunity our class had to perform scenes from Henry VIII at the Tower of London. I have been in love with the work of Shakespeare for as long as I can remember, but I have never gotten the chance to perform anything I have prepared for a real audience. Not only did I perform, but I was also given the opportunity to play the role of Katherine of Aragon, one of my favorite women in Shakespeare, and in Tudor history. Being in London really allowed me to dig into her character, and what Shakespeare intended when he wrote the play.

“I would not trade my experience abroad for anything in the world.”
– Andrea Gollhardt, Class of 2012

“Studying abroad was one of the best decisions I have made in my life. The many theatre workshops and productions have opened my eyes to how diverse and strong theatre can be. This experience has allowed me to be completely confident in my decision to pursue a life in theatre and it has opened my eyes to so many different aspects of theatre that I would love to explore.

“One of the great things about living in London this summer was all the history and art at my fingertips. The number of museums, galleries, and historical spots to discover seemed endless. Attending theatre in London was by far my favorite experience; not only can you find a theatre or show anywhere, the tickets are also reasonably priced.

“I never imagined when I boarded the plane for London that I would return to the same airport with a new outlook on my life. But I did. I feel more confident in knowing who and what is most important in life, who and what are the right influences to guide my everyday decisions, and I have a keener sense of pride in where I come from, where I am going, and most importantly, who I am. There is no way I can forget or be ungrateful.
for the people, art, and experiences this summer that have brought me to such a beautiful point in my life.”
– Brittany Gabryel, Class of 2012

“Words cannot describe how much I will treasure my summer in London. Looking back, I have to admit that I am most grateful not only for the memories of the many good times I had there, but also for the person I have become as a result of the experiences studying abroad gave me.

“As I had expected – though not to such an extreme degree – the theatrical experiences I enjoyed during my time in England as a performer and an audience member have allowed me to grow tremendously as an actor. The intensity of the program forced me out of my own comfort zone, encouraging me to reflect on myself as a performer and to make stronger observations of my own strengths and weaknesses. Both in the spotlight (as Shakespeare’s Henry VIII at the Tower of London and as a model for the Vidal Sassoon Academy) and out of it (seeing Patrick Stewart as Shylock in the Royal Shakespeare Company’s production of The Merchant of Venice and Ruthie Henshall as Elvira in Noël Coward’s Blithe Spirit on the West End), London was the perfect supplement for my theatrical studies at Niagara.”
– Dino Petrera, Class of 2012

“What can I say about London? If I wasn’t rushing to the tube station to catch the next train to get to class on time, then going to a rehearsal at the Tower of London or a meeting with a director in the West End, I was roving through the city streets reveling in the sights and smells, like walking through a history book.
London was nothing like I could’ve imagined, nothing I’d even dreamed before. I ended up falling in love with the city before I knew it. I learned that study abroad is about making oneself open, vulnerable in a new place. It’s almost comparable to being a child again, willing to cling to every bit of information, cherish every memory, embrace every opportunity, and truthfully, there was always something more to learn in London.

“Perhaps my favorite part of the trip was performing at the Tower of London. Not only were the authentic costumes amazing (I was quite fond of my ermine hat), but being able to act in the open air at one of the most prominent historical places in the world was astounding in itself. Before that, I had never performed in a “promenade” style. Projecting Shakespearean lines out into audiences that most often consisted of non-English speakers was challenging and exciting; we had to find different physical ways to share what was happening in the scenes so that everyone could understand the story, despite their language. It was always inspiring to see people of all ages and ethnicities stopping their sight-seeing and crowding around our space to watch the entire performance.

“London, with its history and

majesty, its beauty and vibrance, is a city thriving with life and worldly culture. From the main streets, to the markets in tiny burrows, the famous attractions, and the lesser known treasures hidden in back alleys, London has something for everyone, so long as they are willing to find it. Samuel Johnson, author of The Dictionary of English Language, once said, “You find no man, at all intellectual, who is willing to leave London. No, Sir, when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford.” After my study-abroad experience, I’m more than willing to agree with him.”
– Rachel Macklin Olszewski, Class of 2012

“Studying abroad in London was, without a doubt, a life changing experience. My favorite part of living in London was how much there was to do. There was something new to experience every day. Here there are not many free events or museums or concerts to see on a regular basis. You either have to pay money or stay home to keep occupied in America. I loved being able to explore the city and see museums and so much history for free. It creates a love for the city for not only the residents but the visitors.”
– Rachel Macklin Olszewski, Class of 2012
“Everywhere I went I met someone who was excited about their city and wanted to tell me all about it. Since our accents were so recognizable, people would instantly want to share all they knew about London. Most of their knowledge was about London’s history. I thought that was wonderful. Not many people know about the history of where they live and are as eager to share it here in America. Their knowledge and passion created an enjoyable environment to be around.

“Going to London inspired me to do more with my life – to travel the world and get out of my comfort zone. I have learned that taking chances in life can teach you a lot. I learned so much about myself and life because I took a risk and studied abroad.”

– Callie Bush, Class of 2012, and the 2011 recipient of the Tara Laurie Memorial Award for NU Theatre students who participate in the London study-abroad program.
Membership Levels
Your donation is 100 percent tax deductible.

- **New Member**
  - Archangel - $1,000
  - Producer - $500
  - Backer - $200
  - Assistant Director - $100
  - Production Assistant - $50

- **Renewal**
  - Angel - $750
  - Co-Producer - $250
  - Director - $150
  - Stage Manager - $75
  - Rising Star - $25

(29 years old and younger)

- **Annual Friends of NU Theatre Gala** - $150
  A special evening of great theatre, fine food, auctions and fabulous Friends to support the NU Theatre program. For more information, please call 716.286.8483.

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For further information, call 716.286.8483.
Mail to: Friends of Niagara University Theatre, P.O. Box 1913,
Niagara University, NY 14109-1913
Left: During December, NU Theatre presented a magical production of *The Boy Who Could Sing Pictures* in collaboration with Theatre Beyond Words and directed by adjunct professors Robin Patterson and Terry Judd. From left, Patrick J. Tighe, ’14, and Leanne Troutman, ’12.