

# ON CUE

Wow, there is a lot happening in the months ahead! **MAKE SURE** to check out “Upcoming Events” below and **GET THEM IN YOUR CALENDAR!** The Guild does not accept Bitcoin or lame excuses!

(At right: Angela Howell, Howard Janco)



## Upcoming Events: January - June

<b>IMPORTANT!</b>	<b>PUT THESE IN YOUR CALENDAR!! RIGHT NOW!!!</b>
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Jan. 28 5:00 – 6:30	Tech Dinner: <i>Frankenstein</i> (Kalita Humphreys)
Feb. 2 – Mar. 4	<i>Frankenstein</i> (Kalita Humphreys)
Feb. 12 6:00 – 7:30	General Meeting, at home of Suzanne Caruso
Feb. 23 11:00 – 1:00	Staff Appreciation Luncheon (One Arts Plaza)
March 6 5:00 – 6:30	Tech Dinner: <i>The Great Society</i> (Wyly)
March 19 12:00 – 1:30	Meet & Greet: <i>The Trials of Sam Houston</i> (Wyly)
March 20 Noon	TACA Silver Cup Award Luncheon (honoring Julie Hersh and Don Stone) (Hilton Anatole)

April 15 5:00 – 6:30	Tech Dinner: <i>The Trials of Sam Houston</i> (Wyly)
April 20 – May 13	<i>The Trials of Sam Houston</i> (Kalita Humphreys)
April 30 6:30 – 9:00	Salon Series: <i>The Trials of Sam Houston</i> (George W. Bush Presidential Center)
May 6 (tentative)	Spring musical event with Dallas Opera Guild (Location TBA)
May 12 6:30 - midnight	DTC CenterStage Gala (Wyly)
May 30 – July 1	<i>White Rabbit, Red Rabbit</i> (Wyly Studio Theatre)
June 11 6:00 – 7:30	General Meeting (Location TBA)

### What's Inside:

- > Member News and Information
- > Theater Insights: *Frankenstein*
- > Guild Holiday Party!
- > Theater Backstage: Props

Don Warnecke, Editor and Writer    Judy Birchfield, Photographer

## Member News

With great excitement, we welcome these new members:

- **Greg Patterson**
- **Chantell Smithey**
- **Diana & Bill Winkelmann**

They have been participating in Guild activities.

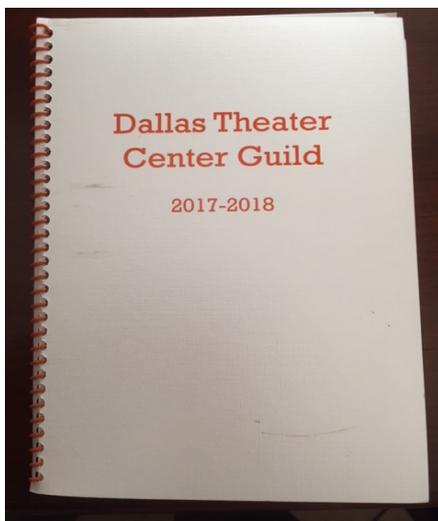
**Judy Birchfield** has brought in three new members and spouses! The rest of us need to follow her fine action to grow the Guild.

The Guild joins **Al Anderson** in mourning the loss of Jill, his wife of 63 years. Jill was active in many arts and civic organizations.

A fitting way to remember deceased members and to honor living members is to make gifts in their names to the DTC Guild Endowment Fund. Your tax-deductible gift will be communicated to honorees or relatives and announced within the Guild. Your gift also helps assure the future of DTC. On page 57 of your Guild Yearbook (behind the "Tributes" tab), JB Nehlich explains how the Guild Endowment Fund works.

## The Guild Yearbook

Do you recognize the item below? You received one when you joined the Guild or renewed your membership.



This is the Guild Yearbook for the current Guild year (September 2017 – August 2018) The Yearbook Team devoted many hours to compiling the information inside and demonstrated whiz-bang technical expertise in wrestling it all into this multifaceted handbook which is essential to real Guildsmanship.

Have a question about what's happening in the Guild or about who does what? Answers to these and many other questions await you inside those white covers with the orange spiral binding. The contents, with page numbers, include:

- A message from DTC Managing Director Jeff Woodward (page 2)
- Key people at DTC (3)
- Plays in the DTC season (5-8)
- The Guild's Mission and Vision Statements (9)
- Overview of Guild activities (Please select one as your volunteer opportunity!) (10)
- Guild Board of Directors and their responsibilities (11-12)
- Guild schedules: member benefit events, Meet and Greet sessions, Tech Dinners, Guild Board meetings, Presidents' Council meetings (13-16)
- Member directory, including contact information (23-49) (Note: updates are sent as needed as individual pages)
- Guild Bylaws (51-56)
- The Guild Endowment Fund (57-58)

and other information. No, it does not contain your horoscope or recipes for rattlesnake confit.

**PLEASE make the Yearbook your FIRST place to look for Guild information!**

## Theater Insights – *Frankenstein*

Editor's Note: The Theater Insights series summarizes the director's introduction to the next DTC play in a Guild-sponsored Meet & Greet. It is intended to give members some background BEFORE seeing the play. Each Theater Insights is normally published as a separate document a few days after the Meet & Greet. In this case, the timing made it advantageous to include Theater Insights in this Guild newsletter.

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Quick, what happened 200 years ago? 1) The United States adopted the 13 stripe and multiple star flag. 2) Warnecke graduated from high school. 3) Mary Shelley completed writing *Frankenstein*, somewhat on a dare, and the world's most intelligent humanoid monster came into being!

What will happen in February? You will thrill and shriek to see the Creature on the Kalita Humphreys stage – if you can handle the stress and fear!

At the January 2 Meet & Greet, Director Joel Ferrell explained that the play is being co-produced with SMU, and that three SMU faculty members and 13 current and prior SMU students are intimately involved in the production. He also explained that Shelley's novel focused heavily on the science and philosophy of the early 1800s and on the work of Dr. Victor Frankenstein – the Creature's "father". Nick Dear's contemporary adaptation that will play on the Kalita stage focuses heavily on the Creature (aka "It") and its life, thoughts and survival in the face of human brutality. (Dear's play sold out its 2011 premiere at London's National Theatre, and has been staged around the world.)

The power of the story lies in the exploration of two issues. First, science enables man to control, to synthesize, to create. Genetically modified organisms, including human genes; artificial and trans-species body parts; artificial intelligence. These things can be and are being done – but



should they? Where are the limits? Second, when man creates, what responsibility does he have for his creation? Victor Frankenstein built the eight foot tall Creature, but then saw that it was ugly, and rejected it. The Creature found other humans who taught it to read, to communicate, to function in a human world.

"It" appealed to Victor to create a wife, which he did, but with a very short life span. And then ridicule and brutality by humans led the Creature to acts of evil. Oddly, the story ends near the North Pole, where the Creature disappears.

Note that the subtitle of *Frankenstein* is *The Modern Prometheus*. In Greek legend, Prometheus created man in the image of the gods as requested by god-in-chief Zeus, and taught the Creature to hunt, read and heal the sick. But Zeus was not pleased with the results and condemned Prometheus to an eternity of torture. Victor apparently didn't get the memo on this outcome.

## Frankenstein

Now back to reality in 1818. Earlier, 18-year old Mary Godwin, her boyfriend/future husband and famous English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley visited Lord Byron and a friend near Lake Geneva. The world was darkened by the eruption of an Indonesian volcano, so rather than picking berries and sipping champagne on a sailboat, they were hanging out in Lord Byron's lake house. A game was invented – who could write the best horror story. Mary recalled a trip to the Frankenstein castle near the Rhine River (5132 miles from Dallas according to an iPhone) and the weird alchemy experiments done there. She pondered the then current science of Galvanism, including stimulating a nerve with an electrical current to produce a muscle twitch.

Accepting the challenge, Mary started writing a science fiction novel, which clearly won the foursome's "best horror story" contest! Her companions were enthralled and helped bring the novel to fruition. It was first published anonymously in London in 1818, and three years later in France with Shelley's name. The initial reception was tepid, but then took off like a NASA rocket.

Over the centuries, *Frankenstein* has been the subject of hundreds of books, plays, films, TV shows, music – even breakfast cereal. English actor Boris Karloff (see image) played the Creature in three 1930s *Frankenstein* films, which for many Guild members would be the iconic representation. The cultural pinnacle of the Frankenstein genre is of course Mel Brooks' 1974 film *Young Frankenstein!* It was far better than the 1948 film *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*. Another data point: according to the Columbia University Open Syllabus Project, *Frankenstein* is the most assigned book in college curricula.

Which leads to your assignment. Get yourself to the Kalita Humphreys Theater, February 2 – March 4. Perhaps have a few drinks at the lobby bar to boost your courage. And then step into a world both bizarre and increasingly believable to see a strong bit of classical sci-fi reinterpreted. You'll be glad you did – and at risk from creatures in the dark if you don't!

## The Guild Holiday Party!



Sarah Warnecke

Kaki Hopkins

Let me ask you, Guild members, is it acceptable to brag, just a bit? I mean when there is something truly braggable? You said "yes"? OK, here we go.

The December 11 Guild Holiday Party was spectacular! It was warm, convivial, engaging, a great step towards the official holidays, and just downright wonderful! The Warnecke home was decorated like a *Neiman's* holiday brochure page, and over 80 festively dressed members and guests fit right into that picture. A pianist played holiday tunes.

The magnificent buffet focused on hand-crafted savory soups, grilled cheese sandwiches, spicy appetizers and a stellar array of cookies and chocolate items that together would blow away a whole convention of celebrity chefs. And there was theater! Guild members James Prince and Eric Hanson (leaders of The Core Theatre, in Richardson) performed a heart-warming mini-play that James wrote for this occasion. Wow!

Great thanks go to Sarah Warnecke and Kaki Hopkins, who planned and orchestrated the event, and who spent many hours cooking. They and spouses Don and Shelton hosted the whole affair, and sommelier Shelton procured the wines. Thanks also to party committee members Andrea and Keith Redmon, Judy Mathis, Vicki Newsom, Judy Birchfield and bartender Hugh Adams. Guild President Lance Hancock was on hand to introduce new members and to exhort the guests to enjoy the season and all that this event had to offer. Before heading out to the valet parkers, guests collected party favor bags offered from a not-so-little red wagon that Vicki provided.

Here are some details for the foodies (including your editor). It is well known that you never outgrow your need for .... grilled cheese sandwiches. But these were a step above. Andrea and Keith set up a chef's station and turned out dozens of these gourmet delights. Another featured item was soup of many types: cheese, cream of mushroom, butternut squash, tomato basil, and cream of asparagus. Hors d' oeuvres included stuffed jalapenos and spicy snack items. There were chocolate desert items and a stellar array of cookies designed and baked by Judy Mathis.

The mini-play was a real treat! Two long-ago acquaintances see each other in the street and strike up a conversation, catching up on years of personal history. One of them tells the story of a young girl spotting a homeless guy



James Prince    Judy Birchfield    Eric Hanson

and giving him a hug – a “new heart”. This act of holiday-linked compassion and simple interaction brings their emotions to the surface, spurring memories of past family pleasures. The play ends with one of the men saying he had planned to serve divorce papers to his wife this day, but instead he will give her a heart.

Altogether, it was a grand and glorious gathering, with mild gluttony as befits the season!



Lance Hancock    Diana & Bill Winkelmann



Barbara & Sam McKenney



Joan Flatt

Joan Collins



Judy Mathis

Pat Hastings



Karen Randle

Roger Ostroski

**Editor's Note** – In the previous edition (September), *On Cue* started a series called **Theater Backstage!** The objective is to introduce you to the designs, people and physical things you see on the stage – except the actors – and things behind the stage. It's where many technical elements that support the excitement, drama and impact of a play come together.

Joel Ferrell provided the information and insights for the first article in the series, which focused on directing. We now move to the fascinating area of props.

## Theater Backstage! – Props

OK reader, memorize these numbers: **30; 50,000; 100,000**. In its own context, each one is **BIG!** We'll come back to them later.

Now imagine the set of *A Christmas Carol*. There are many objects on stage, but focus on these: the large pipes running above and around the stage; the Cratchit dinner table, complete with plates, a large cooked goose, and drinking cups; Scrooge's bed. Which one(s) are "scenery" items? Which one(s) are "props"? Right you are! The pipes are parts of the set. The dinner table and stuff on it are props. Scrooge's bed can be a part of the set, as in the current production of ACC – BUT, if it's mobile, it has wheels and pneumatic lifters added by wizards in the DTC Properties Department and is a prop. A carpet is part of a set, but an Oriental rug is a prop. An umbrella is a prop, but a parasol that matches a costume is considered a costume item. In this scenario, three DTC departments are involved: Scenery, Properties (Props), and Costumes.

Many of these distinctions are understood through oral tradition shared by those in the trade. Back to *A Christmas Carol* – it isn't clear how to classify the imaginary "bowl of smoking bishop" mentioned by Scrooge.

Historical note: in long-ago runs of *A Christmas Carol* at the Kalita Humphreys, a stage hand was strapped to the underside of Scrooge's bed,

equipped with a compass to help stay on course toward a marked point on the stage!

Props are essential elements of the visual appeal of the stage and may be important to how the set operates (for example, the make-up tables and the suitcases in *Dreamgirls*). Props may support the image of the character using them. Would Sherlock Holmes be himself without a meerschaum pipe?

DTC Properties Master **John Slauson** (in photo) defines "props" as anything you can take with you when you leave your home or office. And he definitely would know. He has been working on props and other aspects of theater for nearly **30** years, starting at age 15.

John earned his bachelor's degree at SUNY-Oswego in upstate New York and worked at South Coast Repertory in Costa Mesa, California for many important years. South Coast did and does a lot of new works, providing opportunities for innovation.



John Slauson in the Paint shop with a prop for *Frankenstein*.

He recalls one, *Lonesome West*, in which a main character shoots a real shotgun (loaded with blanks) into an old stove for the first time. The burners and other parts blew off and the stage filled with real gunsmoke (James Arness would get excited about that smell). Rather than using a fog machine, they had to suck the stuff out with a long, well-concealed pipe. Another formative experience was serving as one of the models for casting a collection of human figures which hung upside down in body bags, twitching, in a haunted house. John is big on haunted houses, since each calls for a boatload of very interesting – and scary – props.

John joined DTC shortly after Kevin did, while DTC was running *Superman*. He came on board as the Props Master, which means he has both artistic and management responsibilities. Props Masters are a rare and highly valuable breed. Across the country's 72 LORT theaters there are maybe 150 of them. Their professional association is called "S\*P\*A\*M", or Society of Properties Artisan Managers. (Sure glad they added the asterisks!). Members use the website to share designs, ideas, technical solutions, etc.

John and his two Properties colleagues work in the Potter Production Studio. This warehouse-like building of nearly **50,000** square feet contains carpentry, assembly, paint and other shops; Production staff offices; and many rooms, bays, racks and closets for storage for sets, costumes and a mind-blowing array of props! Props are as small as coins and matchbooks to as large as furniture. Think framed pictures, musical instruments, laboratory glassware, swords and rifles (in a secured area), and crutches. Remember the giant, black-clad Ghost of Christmas Future, circa 1990s? Its head hangs in the Potter, along with the rocket ship from *Superman*, and the cage-like metal ball with a casket lock from *Rocky Horror Show*, into which a 6 foot tall actor was folded and crammed. Props may also include fire effects (no real flames) and lighting inside of props.



A *Christmas Carol* ghost from the pre-Wyly era

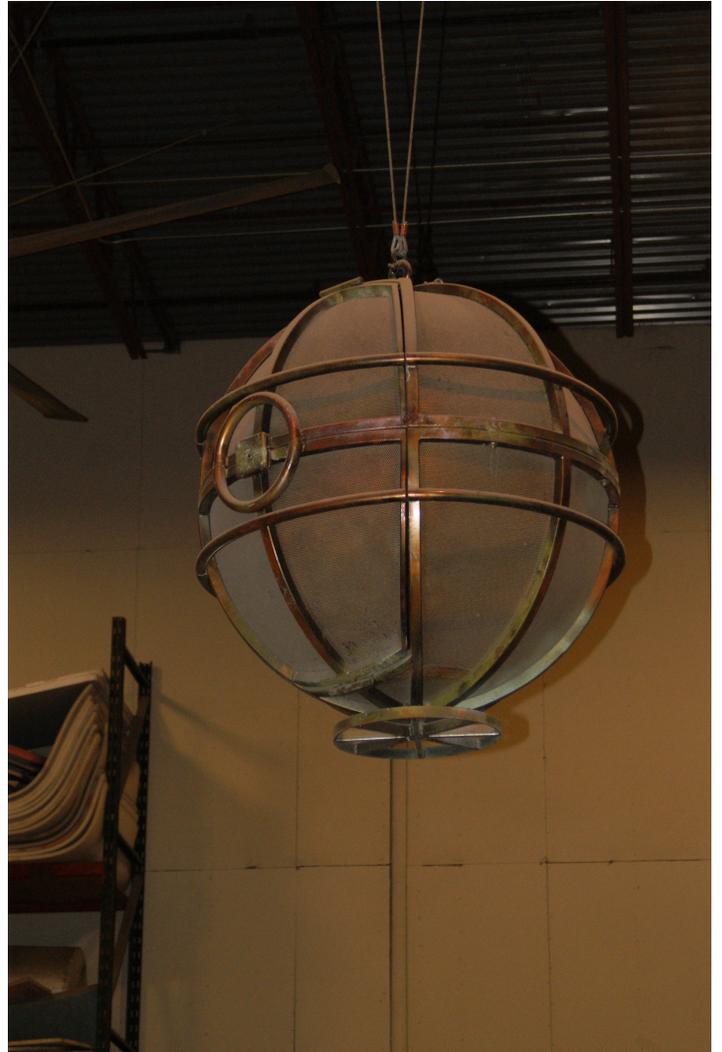
And there are bigger projects! The department has skilled sculptors who sometimes build scenery pieces having complex shapes like the tree from *The Trinity River Plays*. Do you remember the reception area of the studio theater when *Oedipus El Rey* was running? It was complete with a bar, sofas and coffee tables, and period-specific décor. John designed it and he and his crew equipped it all. (And provided the fake blood that hit several patrons in the "splatter zone" on the front row of the theater.) This year his team was invited to design and build a Christmas window for Neiman Marcus. Assistant Prop Master Nicole Gaignat designed the window and the entire team implemented it with the help of Brian McDonald, the head of the Sound Department.

The process of providing props for a play starts with a reading of the script, which may be accompanied by research notes and photos or drawings. Let's say the script indicates that an actor in a comfortable 1960s living room receives a telephone call. The Props wizards may conclude they need to provide the telephone (one with a dial or push buttons), and to work with the sound department for the sound effect of the ringing;

the table under the phone; a lamp on the table, along with a notepad and pen; a chair next to the table. The set designer, collaborating with the director, calls the shots regarding props, giving general or specific instructions. John may find appropriate items in his inventory of well over **100,000** items, or may conclude that DTC should buy or build the props. The production budget defines some limits here, and compromises are made through collaboration. The time from initial specification to starting previews is often about one month, which is achievable since DTC receives a lot of items from Amazon Prime in about an hour!

Now that you know about these wizards, keep your eyes open for all manner of objects on stage and held by the actors!

(Photos in this article by Don Warnecke)



A place for a *Rocky Horror Show* actor to hang out!