



Assignment to Design Auditorium Lobby Renovation and Major Donor Costume

FEBRUARY 15, 2022

A class assignment by [Kirk Domer](#), Professor of Scene Design, and [Lucas Nunn](#), Academic Specialist of Sound Design, had their [MSU Department of Theatre](#) students thinking about renovating the MSU Auditorium Lobby for a mock grand reopening that also included the creation of a costume design for a “major donor.”

The MFA in Theatre students each worked in their field of expertise — costume, lighting, sound, and scene design — and also had the opportunity to experiment in other areas of design for the assignment.



MFA Theatre students present their lobby renovation and costume designs to Theatre alumna Jeanie Croope (far left).

Theatre alumna Jeanie Croope, a longtime member of MSU’s Friends of Theatre, played the part of the major donor. Two weeks prior to the “grand reopening,” Croope visited the class to share the story of her involvement in the arts, which served as inspiration for the students’ costume and renovation sketches.

With two weeks to execute their designs, the students each produced their own interpretation on how to enhance the Auditorium Lobby to make it a more engaging space for students and visitors alike, weaving in Croope’s love of art, history, and theatre, as well as her personal anecdotes, into their work. While many had fun celebrating Croope’s love of color and visual arts to brighten the lobby with new paint, flooring, and light fixtures, others choose to embrace the community with the addition of art display cases and refreshment booths stocked with locally made snacks.



Theatre alumna Jeanie Croope (far right) with Professor Kirk Domer (second from right) and his class of MFA Theatre class in the MSU Auditorium Lobby during the mock grand reopening of the lobby.

“I liked the idea of having cases to display work by students or art organizations and there were several floor treatments that I loved,” Croope said. “Lots of the students recommended painting and incorporated removable seating, which was very nice, while a couple had performance spaces, which I could see working well.”

Despite being a hypothetical assignment without a budget, Domer, Nunn, and Croope say a lot of the ideas explored during the presentations could be accomplished inexpensively. Beyond a new coat of paint or set of lights, the addition of display cases, refreshment booths, interchangeable theatre posters, and photo booth opportunities are all accessible resources to help reinvigorate the Auditorium Lobby and make it interactive for visitors.

“I was both honored and delighted to be part of this project and loved every minute of it. There is an abundance of talent in this group of MFAs and I look forward to following them throughout their careers here and beyond.”

Jeanie Croope, MSU Theatre alumna

For the costume design portion of the assignment, many students made specific references to Croope’s life.

“I mentioned the first play I saw as a 4-year-old was a production of *Robin Hood* and how I was mesmerized by a storybook coming to life. One student remembered that and did the ‘Maid Marion’

costume,” Croope said. “I also mentioned my interest in visual arts and the student who did their design based on the Spartan Rose said they were inspired by some of my art that I shared.” When asked about her most memorable costume design, Croope said, “I would probably have a tough time deciding between Kasee’s blue jumpsuit and Mona’s transformable art dress. Although if it was a casual event, I loved that comfy-looking poncho outfit Zech came up with!”



Academic Specialist Lucas Nunn (top row far left) with Professor Kirk Domer (top row second from left), Theatre alumna Jeanie Croope (sitting center wearing light blue sweater), and the MFA Theatre students, joined by Larry and Linda Stone over Zoom.

Joining Domer, Nunn, and Croope as judges for the assignment at the “grand reopening” were Larry and Linda Stone.

“I met Linda Stone when I was a junior and she was a new drama teacher at Lansing Sexton High School. She built a healthy theatre department at Sexton with shows that toured to area elementary schools,” Croope said. “After graduation, she and Larry became lifelong friends of my family. She’s like a big sister to me.”

The range of designs the students provided, along with their careful incorporation of Croope’s interests, made for an entertaining and imaginative hour of student presentations.

“I was both honored and delighted to be part of this project and loved every minute of it,” Croope said. “There is an abundance of talent in this group of MFAs and I look forward to following them throughout their careers here and beyond.”