



Research & Creative Activity Statement

First and foremost, I am a theatrical scene designer. My membership in the United Scenic Artists, Local USA 829—the premier labor organization for professional scenic design—is a significant recognition of my excellence within the profession. My design portfolio review for USA 829 was supported by two USA 829 designers from NYC and Houston, Texas, as well as the Artistic Director of the Williamston Theatre and allowed me to join an association of designers, artists, and craftspeople who are organized to protect craft standards, working conditions, and wages for the entertainment and decorative arts industries. My portfolio is notable for its innovative approach, enabling me to communicate my work uniquely and authentically to directors and fellow designers. I work regularly and closely with projection and media designers (sometimes using my own projection designs) to create scenic landscapes that reflect the demands and specifications of this newer area of design.

My professional activity has been regular and varied across the country and beyond. My designs and technical supervision for the internationally renowned, best-selling author, journalist, screenwriter, and playwright Mitch Albom include *Ernie* about Detroit Tiger American Sportscaster Ernie Harwell, *Hockey, the Musical*, and his world-renowned memoir adapted to a play, *Tuesdays with Morrie*. The first two titles originated at Detroit's City Theatre, and *Hockey* was extended for an additional month due to sold-out performances. *Ernie's* success was evident as it was extended for six years in Detroit, MI, and has toured throughout MI to Grand Rapids, Traverse City, East Lansing, as well as Lakeland, FL. *Ernie* was a tremendous experience following an extensive interview process with Mr. Albom to select the perfect creative team for this media-based theatrical docudrama due to his personal history with Mr. Harwell. The scene design process showcased a 3D virtual model with animated tours communicating an environment that blended the realistic base of Comerica Park and the romanticized history of Harwell's life in the sportscasters' booth at Detroit's Tiger Stadium. Video moments were integrated from the vast collection of primary sources and disseminated the heritage of America's pastime, made available by the Major League Baseball Association. These media moments were as valuable as the text in creating the digital legacy of Mr. Harwell's life. *Ernie* is the highest-grossing and highest-attended production in the history of Detroit's City Theatre.

I am a regular designer with Stages, A.D. Players at the George Theatre, and 4th Wall Theatre Co. in Houston, TX. I also work annually with Williamston Theatre, resulting in 17 shows (several world and MI premieres). Other professional venues I have designed include The Ohio Light Opera, Meadow Brook Theatre, City Opera House, Walla Wall Summer Theatre, and Wharton Center for Performing Arts, and sadly, too many defunct MI theatres, including BorasHead Theatre, Jewish Ensemble Theatre, Kickshaw Theatre, Performance Network, Stormfield Theatre. My work as a designer within the academy includes my designs for the MSU Department of Theatre, the MSU College of Music Opera Program, and various other academic and non-academic units. These productions are entirely collaborative; they regularly engage other professional designers, directors, and community partners.

My philosophy of combining the technical and the artistic is described in a book I co-authored entitled [Collaboration in Theatre: A Practical Guide for Designers and Directors](#) (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009). Reviews of this book have lauded the value and practicality of the text stating, "This book will surely become a handy guide to all who venture to collaborate in theatre—and in life" (Kathryn Wagner, *Theatre Topics*) and "Co-authors Rob Roznowski and Kirk Domer have made an important first contribution to this unexplored field..." (Beth Watkins and Michael Mehler, *Theatre Design & Technology*). This collaboration of skill and art has also been evidenced at my numerous presentations as an active member of the University/Resident Theatre Association (U/RTA), United States Institute for Theatre Technology (USITT), serving on the Midwest Board of Directors (2011-2013), and as a member of the Tenure Review Network. Over the years, I have exhibited my work, presented panels, and provided portfolio/poster critiques at this organization's regional

and national levels. My other conference presentations include several panels at the Association for Theatre in Higher Education, the Digital Humanities Symposium in York, UK, and the American University Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates. These appearances showcase my innovative digital design techniques, online/blended learning through design strategies, and my ability to work collaboratively with media.

My contributions to scholarship on design and its pedagogy extend to serving as a reviewer and technical editor on several books, including *Teaching Practical Theatrical 3D Printing: Creating Props for Production* for Routledge/Focal Press, *Scenic Painting for Performance* for Focal Press | Taylor & Francis Group; a peer reviewer for Michael Gillette's *Theatrical Design and Production Connect*, SmartBook (adaptive e-book); and Michael Gillette's *Theatrical Design and Production* 7th Edition for McGraw-Hill Companies. I was also a book proposal reviewer on *Scenic Painting for Performance* for Focal Press | Taylor & Francis Group.

My artistic abilities have reached audiences beyond traditional theatre in ways that show the importance of scenic design to other fields. Most recently, with the help of a team of graduate and undergraduate research assistants, I wrote, captured, and edited a series of ten videos surrounding the scene design process for high school teachers for the Providence Performing Arts Center's Reignite Professional Development Series, Disney Musicals in Schools Program (Providence, RI). I also served as the Installation Designer for the "Tech Transport Bus," developed by the Information Technology Empowerment Center (ITEC), and created an immersive environment to stimulate learning. The "Tech Transport Bus" is a mobile classroom that provides effective and engaging content at locations with insufficient technology resources throughout Michigan. My scene design work was selected for a corporate exhibition by J.R. Clancy in automated rigging simulation demonstrations at USITT. I consulted as an environmental designer for customer service experiences at boutique hotels connected to performing arts facilities in Miami, FL, and several outdoor amphitheaters throughout Michigan. These experiences have impacted a significant portion of my creative activity related to facility design and renovation.

My expertise as a scene designer was proven through four unique renovation projects in which I served as the design consultant at MSU. During my time as chairperson, the Department of Theatre experienced considerable growth in enrollment, faculty composition, and real estate related to our expanded scholarship and programming. The first renovation project was a 5,000-square-foot scene shop (nearly doubling our previous space) that was later annexed for a new construction project at MSU. As a scene designer, I was tasked with leading and corralling numerous architects, engineers, and construction managers from multiple companies to create a third scene shop of nearly 10,000 square feet and technological innovations unrivaled by many throughout the United States. My design acumen was also tapped as the theatrical consultant for the renovation of the WPA-constructed proscenium Fairchild Theatre on the MSU campus. My expertise on this project included drafting and working in concert with acousticians, lighting consultants, and hydraulic lift technicians in conjunction with SmithGroup Architecture Engineering Interiors and Planning. This two-year+ project resulted in a complete state-of-the-art overhaul of an outdated theatre for a budget of approximately \$25,000,000. My work as a scene designer has been featured regularly on the new stage with opera productions from the MSU College of Music, including the recent 2023 production of Giuseppe Verdi's *Falstaff*.

The fourth renovation project I oversaw, the Summer Circle Courtyard, has significantly impacted the departmental, university, and community levels. Through my fundraising efforts with the Friends of Theatre at MSU and private donors, I assisted in raising \$1,150,000 to create a permanent home for our now sixty-six-year-old professional Summer Circle Theatre, for which I annually also serve as producer and designer. This outdoor theatrical space also offers a venue for university and community artists to share their work. My designs for the inaugural production in this new space for the apocalyptic musical *Mr. Burns, a post-electric play*, and the more recent *The One-Act Play That Goes Wrong* truly blended my two worlds of innovation and renovation.