

# ON CUE



What's with the Zap and Zoom on this page? It's a Superheroes thing. There are many Superheroes inside. Click or slide onward to meet them!



## Upcoming Events: March - July

<b>IMPORTANT!</b>	<b>PUT THESE IN YOUR CALENDAR!! RIGHT NOW!!!</b>
March 9 – April 1	<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 Ballroom)
April 15 5:00 – 6:30	Tech Dinner: <i>The Trials of Sam Houston</i> (Wyly)
Apr 20 – May 13	<i>The Trials of Sam Houston</i> (Kalita Humphreys)
April 30 6:00 – 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)
TBA	Meet & Greet, Tech Dinner for <i>Hairspray</i>
July 7 – 15	<i>Hairspray (The Broadway Musical)</i> (At Winspear Opera House) (Directed by Joel Ferrell)
TBA	Guild Matinee at DTC ( <i>Hairspray</i> , at Winspear)

Make sure to enjoy the Come Early and Stay Late sessions for each play!

### What's Inside:

- > Member News and Information
  - > Staff Appreciation Luncheon
  - > General Meeting
  - > Theater Backstage: Lighting and Sound
- Don Warnecke, Editor and Writer    Judy Birchfield, Photographer

## Member News

With great excitement, we welcome these new members:

- **Cindy Branch**
- **Penny & Matt Gunther**
- **Mary & Pat Scully**
- **Barbara Figurelli (renewal)**
- **Mary Piirto (renewal)**

We look forward to meeting them at Guild events. See the article on the General Meeting for more about Matt and Penny.

-----

Long time Guild member **Karol Omlor** also has long associations with Second Thought Theatre, TACA, WaterTower Theatre and other arts groups. WaterTower Theatre recently honored Karol by dedicating a performance space as **The Karol Omlor Studio Theatre!** Like the Studio Theater in the Wyly, The Karol Omlor Studio Theatre will feature intimate and unique productions, and is already booked for several. *On Cue* salutes Karol for her achievements and her support for the arts of Dallas!

(Photos by friends of Karol Omlor)



## Salon Series – Table Sales Committee

The Guild's premiere event – the Salon Series – will unfold at the Bush Presidential Center on April 30. **Judy Birchfield** is leading this committee of beautiful, cheerful and energetic ladies who are selling tables faster than an escaping Roadrunner! No one can turn down their invitations!

Sign up now – there is no delayed replay of the intriguing panel discussion and delightful dinner!

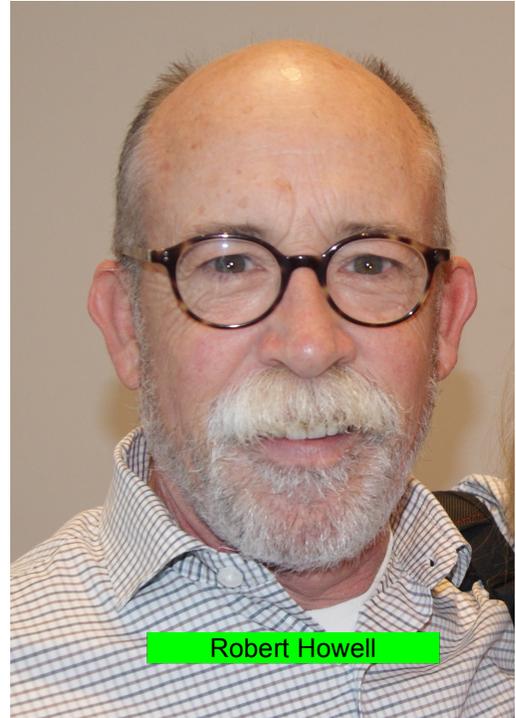


## Member News

*On Cue* also salutes **Marla and Howard Janco** for their leadership of the Guild's Tech Dinners and new member **Robert Howell**, who has taken on leadership of our Meet & Greet series! These are two of the Guild's most important and demanding jobs. The DTC staff appreciates their dedication and hard work, and the millions of calories they put on the table!

Guild members, you really need to participate in these valuable events. It's easy and fun! You can have one-on-one time with actors and DTC staff at both types of events, and at the Meet & Greets you'll get the director's perspective on the next play, including its cultural and historical context and its relevance for us today.

All of that for the price of some deviled eggs or brownies!



(Photos by Don Warnecke)

The smiling crew at a recent Tech Dinner, with Marla and Howard Janco in the center. They just finished setting up the bounteous buffet that they all prepared, and are eager to serve it to the DTC Staff.



## Staff Appreciation Lunch!

February 23 was a good day for celebrating the success and the great work of the DTC staff at the Staff Appreciation Lunch. *Frankenstein* was on stage and was thrilling audiences (even scaring a few) at each performance! *The Great Society* was about to open and will be a great follow-on to *All the Way*. Work is also underway on *The Trials of Sam Houston*. Wow, all are interesting, powerful dramas, brought to full throttle by the ever clever, dedicated DTC staff!

The Guild is pleased to salute and honor all members of the DTC staff at this annual luncheon event. DTC Managing Director Jeff Woodward and Associate Artistic Director Joel Ferrell led the Wyly delegation of nearly 50 staff members, and expressed the staff's appreciation for the support received from the Guild throughout the year. Among the photos in this article is the traditional "class picture" taken at each year's event.

Guild members and event planners **Ginger Snider** and **Hamilton Sneed** organized this important event, which was held in a spacious conference room in One Arts Plaza, right across the street from the Wyly. Hamilton arranged the room and catering by the neighboring restaurants: Jorge's (jicama tacos, tostados y quesadillas), Yolk (salads), and Proof + Pantry (smoked salmon, quinoa salad). He described the whole gastronomic array as "protein packed", and was on hand to assure that we always had an abundance of their specialties. Both the ravenous



(author included) and the dainty were well pleased with the varied, tasty and healthful buffet offerings. A featured item at the beverage counter was "Arnold Palmer" – half lemonade and half tea. Once again, the author attempted to complete his designated responsibility of eating everything remaining after the DTC staff left, but once again it was "close, but no cigar".

Ginger set the theme of **Superheroes!** – which the DTC staff members certainly are! Signs, table decorations, and even the potted plants carried that theme throughout the room, empowering each person to



enjoy the festivities. Staff members found a Starbucks gift card and flavored popcorn at their place settings, and one lucky person at each table won the table centerpiece. It was all very festive!

Guild president Lance Hancock and ten other Guild members welcomed, thanked, and enjoyed talking with staff members. The people from the Artistic, Development, Education, Finance and Accounting, Marketing, Production and Public Works Dallas Departments are a really interesting bunch, with many perspectives and stories to tell about their work at DTC and other theaters. Guild members should make a strong effort to participate in next year's Staff Appreciation Lunch and in the Tech Dinners and Meet & Greet sessions throughout each season to learn about what's happening and about the myriad of decisions and actions needed to put a play on stage. It's fascinating!

Thanks again to Ginger and Hamilton for making it happen, and to all Guild members who came to keep it all rolling!



(Photos by Ginger Snider)

## February General Meeting!



That dynamic duo of party planners extraordinaire did it again! **Suzanne Caruso** and **Eleanor Casey** hosted the February 12 General Meeting at Suzanne's lovely home. Over 50 Guild members were there to enjoy a tasty buffet with well-selected wines, and to hear DTC Associate Artistic Director **Joel Ferrell's** comments on *Frankenstein* and other plays ahead in this season. More on that in a minute.

Guild President **Lance Hancock** thanked Suzanne and Eleanor for hosting and for adding another member to the host committee - a blow-up *Frankenstein* Creature figure who greeted everyone. (Despite the green creature's imposing stature, its smile was disarming, and no screams or calls for mob vengeance were heard.) Lance introduced new members **Penny & Matt Gunther**, who are associated with The Core Theater in Richardson (as are several other new Guild members). Matt wrote and starred in *Postcards from Uncle Al*, a clever play staged at The Core Theater later in February. Matt gave an overview of his play, for which Penny served as stage manager.



Now back to the real *Frankenstein*. Joel does a tremendous amount of research about the plays and people he directs. He summarized the fascinating story of how Mary Shelley wrote the novel in 1818 in response to Lord Byron's challenge to write a ghost story. Her winning entry might be considered the first science fiction novel. He explained that the story has two central themes: 1) science gives humans the power to create – but should they? And 2) what responsibility does the creator have for the results, whether good or bad?

Joel said that this play has been one of his most fun projects, for a number of reasons. One is that it was a very successful collaboration with SMU's theater program, which supplied many of the actors (13 of the 18 actors are SMU students or faculty), and an SMU student did the very clever set design. Joel said that it is quite unusual for a student design to be so effective in supporting the story and in being easy for the actors to navigate and move around on stage. For Joel, Fun = Success, and *Frankenstein* has been a stellar success!. Your editor saw it three times.



Matt & Penny Gunther



Joel also reported that he is very excited about *The Trials of Sam Houston*, which will have its world premiere at the Kalita Humphreys Theater in April. This play will be the focus of the “Salon Series”, to be held on April 30 at the Bush Presidential Center. Joel encouraged everyone to attend this important and valuable Guild event.

The Guild thanks Joel for his superb work over many years, and for his support of the Guild!



Hugh Adams  
Judy Birchfield



Dorothy & Steve Davis

## Theater Backstage: Lighting and Sound

Think back a bit. You are sitting in the Kalita Humphreys Theater for *Frankenstein*. You are surrounded by a low, ominous rumble, and you subconsciously think there is unknown danger in this place. Suddenly there is an explosion of light and sound – and a writhing figure, an anguished scream. Another flash, and then another. This has gone from vaguely ominous to scary! There are lightning flashes, clouds and creatures on the curved walls of the set. Brilliant, moving things. Perhaps your heart rate is up a bit and you are gripping something tightly, intently focused on those moving things. There is magic happening!

OK, relax. You are now in a calm setting reading this article, and probably wondering how all that magic happened. Perhaps you realize that there is a ton of technology behind that magic. It's over your head, around you, on the actors, and sometimes even right on you (think headphones, in *Electra*). Yes, there are hundreds of lighting and sound instruments, miles of cables, and very sophisticated control boards operated with split-second coordination. Wow, all of this stuff must be really complicated!



*On Cue* met with two of DTC's finest magicians to follow the cables – and the process – of making magic on stage. Brian McDonald is DTC's Sound Supervisor and Nicole Iannaccone is the Lighting Supervisor. They are very experienced people.



Nicole was inspired by a high school teacher, and along the way through college and into theaters, realized that the Pythagorean Theorem and other math methods are essential to doing technical theater. (Tell your kids/grandkids about that connection when they complain about having to grind through math homework, saying “I’ll never use this stuff”.) Brian was (still is) a multiple-instrument musician who got interested in technology; add that together with a bunch of experience and you have a sound supervisor. He occasionally plays an instrument or serves as an off-stage announcer in DTC productions.

In their experience, sound, lighting and projections help tell the story. They add mood, emotion and excitement! They lead the audience to focus on some thing, person or place, and may help that thing appear, move and disappear. During the last perhaps 10 years, projections have become an important tool in the kit. *Frankenstein* was a dramatic demonstration, and *Fortress of Solitude* and *All the Way* also benefitted.

Brian and Nicole talked about their favorite DTC plays from their technical perspectives. They like challenges! The multiple outdoor and indoor spaces of Annette Strauss Square offered many technical complexities in staging *Electra*. *Hair* was another challenge; the Wyly was emptied, equipped with an orchestra pit, and set for groups of actors moving everywhere in that vast space that lacked the usual stage structures that hold lighting instruments and speakers.

How does it all happen? Well, it's complicated. Let's use *Frankenstein* as a recent and very good example. The DTC artistic staff develops the overall concepts for a play. Outside designers then submit proposals based on those concepts – for sets, lighting, sound, projections, and costumes. DTC staff members advise the designers on the unique aspects of the performance space, the capabilities available, the budget, and other aspects. Director Joel Ferrell brought the all of the *Frankenstein* design teams together on stage at the same time to assure effective coordination and communications.

The designers prepare very detailed drawings and specifications, showing the nature, location, utilization, and unique requirements of each sound, lighting and projection device. The DTC technical staff reviews these documents, checking the math, and determines what devices are on hand. They may borrow (and lend) devices from The Dallas Opera and other theaters, or rent or purchase them. Projection devices could cost \$100K!

The staff works with the designers in fine tuning; here is one example. An objective of sound design is to have each audience member hear the same thing at the same time, anywhere in the theater. As sound travels through space it loses intensity and quality, making that sound unequal across the theater. To eliminate this problem, Brian's people add some secondary speakers around the space to supplement the sound projection of the primary speakers. Lots of math.

$$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$$

Nicole's people hang a variety of lighting instruments around the theater. Some are simple spotlights, while others can change position, focus, color, projection patterns, etc. They weigh 10 – 110 lbs., and are attached to the latticework around the catwalks above the stage (it's a jungle up there) and to other racks and structures around the stage. There are many – over 450 for *The Great Society* and over 600 for *Hair!* Lots of math.



Sound board with cue book

All of these instruments – sound, lights, projections – are wired to lighting and sound control boards. In the Kalita, you can see one in center back row. These control boards are very sophisticated, and can be programmed by people with heavy experience (say 4+ years). Lights and speakers may be programmed together into groups that are activated by the press of a button. Yep, it still takes a button press rather than being fully automated – so that humans react to situations on stage. Binders containing many pages list what is to be done, identified by cue numbers. The stage manager, who sits just offstage and watches everything, signals the board operators when to act on the next cue. Actors are individually miked and each is wired to a control. The sound board operator changes the volume on individual mikes as each actor speaks, while also operating any sound effects.

Wow! It takes a lot of experience and skill, a lot of sophisticated equipment, and a bunch of money to make a play all that it can be. And to you, audience member, it just happens! Magic!

(Photos by Don Warnecke)