

Theatre Student Spotlight

Shane Birtzer

By Hayley Bahnemann



Whenever “good” theatre is mentioned, it is assumed that this is because of the actors on the stage, but sometimes the magic of the theater is created back-stage. In fall of 2010, here at CSP, Shane Birtzer took a lighting class taught by Sue Ellen Berger, the resident lighting designer at the Chanhassen Dinner Theater. According to Shane, it was sheer chance that he became interested in lighting; during a break another theatre student needed “someone tall to help her hang the lights, and I [Shane] was the only one not going home for break.”

This random coincidence got Shane really interested in the lighting aspect of the theatre and when he found out the lighting class was being offered he jumped at the idea. As an already active member of the theater department he figured this sounded like a “cool niche.” Due to this new found interest in the lighting Shane started helping Zach Humes, the technical director of the Theatre Department, in the tech shop and ended up working on the lights for shows.

In spring of 2011, the student directed show was called UP and Shane was cast as Walter, the main character. On top of having one of the lead roles, Shane was also the lighting designer for the show. According to Shane this was not as easy to balance as had been earlier anticipated. The pressures fell on his different parts at different times; the lighting designer has responsibilities to get the lighting done before tech week and then does “more supporting” of the actors than actual work, whereas the actors have more of the stress put on them when they get to tech week because they need

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to be prepared for the actual performance date. Shane also mentioned that “as an actor, I tended to detach myself from the back-stage portion and I would just come to rehearsals, see that parts of the set were coming together, and then not give it a second thought.”

Being involved in both the offstage and the onstage portions have their perks as well as the stress of trying to pull it all together. By being a part of the show Shane was already emotionally attached, had an understanding of how the show worked, and already knew the characters’ relationships with one another. If a lighting designer comes in as a third party they have to spend time becoming familiar with the play and the blocking (where the actors stand and move) and take that into consideration when they are working on the lights.

Since the performances of *UP*, Shane has also designed lights for *Dracula*, *Pippin*, and the upcoming musical *The Robber Bridegroom*. According to Shane, lighting design is his favorite because he seems to gravitate towards things in which he does well. As an actor, you don’t really get to see the “magic you create” on stage (unless you watch it back after the performances). However, as a lighting designer the effects are immediate because it is a very visual effect. He compared this to “being a painter, the lighting can add or detract from the scene.”

To see Shane’s work in action attend the performances of *The Robber Bridegroom* on Oct. 25, 26, and 27 at 7:30pm and October 28th at 2:00pm in the E.M Pearson Theatre. Shane is also in a bluegrass band, entitled Sawtooth Bluegrass Band, who will be playing the music for the musical.

“We can always use more hands to work in the shop and help focus lights,” says Shane. “If interested just come into the scene shop and find Zach or me or someone else who works there, or sign up for STAGE to be on the email list for opportunities to help.” Last words of wisdom, “This one choice defined my career path [so] keep an open mind because you might find something that you love will come out of nowhere.”

Art Student Spotlight

Catherine Ries

By Hayley Bahnemann



Art is one of those subjects that most people shy away from because they don’t think that they will be good at it. This apprehension is part of the reason why many students are not completely conscious of the goings-on within the Art Department. Many are not even aware that Concordia has an art gallery in which students can display their work.

Catherine Ries, a senior in the Art Department, did not always know that she wanted to work in art for the rest of her life. She had always been artistic but had originally decided she wanted

to go to school for physics. Eventually she decided that she wanted to work in an area of expertise that she loved, rather than just an expertise that would provide an extensive list of jobs. And now, as a senior she is involved in Art Club, has a work study job in the Art Department and, this April will be having an art show of her work.

According to Catherine, the Art Department is a “hidden gem on campus,” the professors are “very helpful and caring and they

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