

# Alumni

**Kenneth Titus** ('63 B.S. Science, Glee Club, Concert and Marching Blue Bands) recently retired as a senior project engineer for McDonnell Douglas Aerospace, Division of Missiles and Aerospace Development. He is a member emeritus of the Wolf Trap Performing Artists, and has appeared in more than 200 musical theatre productions.

## Theatre

**Maryann Pasda DiEdwardo** ('75 B.A.) has written a new book, *The Legacy of Katherine Hepburn: Fine Art as a Way of Life*, a copy of which she will donate to the Penn State Lehigh Valley Library. In this combination of research and memoir, DiEdwardo analyzes Katharine Hepburn's role in the development of arts and education throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. DiEdwardo, an adjunct professor at Penn State Lehigh Valley, has been promoting fine arts education for more than 40 years and received the American Biographical Institute's Woman of the Year Award in 2006. Her family includes three generations of Penn Staters: Maryann; her father, Joseph J. Pasda ('49 B.S. Physical Education); and her son, Joe DiEdwardo, a student in integrative arts.

**Michael Smanko** ('77 M.F.A.) is an emeritus member of the College of Arts Advisory Board at Montclair State University, having just completed his three-year term. He is presently employed as the prop supervisor for the New York City production of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, currently showing at the Richard Rogers Theatre and starring Kevin Kline and Jennifer Garner. Smanko is also the creative director and owner of Prism Props LLC, which he established in 1985. Prism Props supplies props and décor for stage, film, television and themed events ([www.prismprops.com](http://www.prismprops.com)).

**David Holzmer** ('85 B.A.) recently received a master of public administration degree with high honors, specializing in nonprofit leadership, from Waldon University. He is now pursuing a Ph.D. in nonprofit organizational development. His research focuses on the organizational psychology of health care and social service environments. Holzmer attributes his understanding of human behavior to the conceptual tools he acquired studying theatre.

**Nancy Resnick** ('87 B.A.) is a board member of the Hershey Area Playhouse, a community theatre founded in 1999. She is also a member of the National Storytellers Network, which supports advancing the art of storytelling as a performing art, teaching tool and cultural aid.

**Kelly Collins Lintz** ('91 B.A.) was a series regular on NBC's *Surface*, where she portrayed Tracy Connelly (season one is available on DVD). She can next be seen as Steff Drayton in *The Mist*, a Stephen King thriller scheduled for release in theaters on November 21, 2007. Lintz and her husband, Marc, have four children and reside in Atlanta, Ga.

**Emily Richmond Carpenter** ('02 B.F.A.) and her husband, Seth, welcomed their first child, a daughter named Zoe Morgen, on July 11, 2007.

**Jennifer Case** ('04 B.A.) was the sole costume designer for *Revolution*, a show featuring tap, modern jazz and live rock music that had its debut at The Joyce ([www.joyce.org](http://www.joyce.org)), one of the premiere performance venues for dance. The Joyce annually attracts audiences of more than 140,000 people in New York City. Case continues to work full-time as a buyer and manager of two boutiques in SoHo, Chelsea Girl and Chelsea Girl Couture ([www.chelsea-girl.com](http://www.chelsea-girl.com)), and has plans to open a café.

## COLLEGE OF ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE ALUMNI AWARD WINNER

### THEATRE ALUMNUS ENJOYS HIGH-FLYING CAREER

**W**hat happens in Vegas doesn't necessarily stay in Vegas—at least not for **Joseph Champelli** ('92 M.F.A. Theatre Technology). He got his start in theatre automation working in Sin City, but now his work can be seen in theme parks, in theatres and on movie screens across the United States.

Champelli is co-founder of Fisher Technical Services, a company specializing in automated machinery for the entertainment industry. The company has completed projects for Cirque du Soleil, The Wynn and Venetian hotels in Las Vegas, the *Spiderman* film series, the Blue Man Group and Disneyland, to name a few.

Champelli's first job in Vegas was working in the CAD drafting department for the company that built the "Buccaneer Bay Pirate Battle" in front of the Treasure Island resort. "I remember interviewing at 10 a.m. on a Monday, getting an offer on the spot, and by 3 p.m. I had an apartment—that certainly set the tone for the fast-paced Vegas environment," he says.

Jobs with Cirque du Soleil, Siegfried and Roy, and Flying by Foy followed, allowing him to gain experience in drafting, rigging and other aspects of entertainment engineering. In the summer of 1997, Scott Fisher approached him about starting a company that built automation equipment with performance and functionality in mind.

"Most entertainment automation equipment at the time came out of scene shops that took on automation as a means to sell more scenery or more rigging equipment, and here we were looking to start an automation-only company. It sounded right."

Fisher Technical Services, Inc. (FTSI) was incorporated a few months later. Some of Champelli's favorite projects include the Tinker Bell flying effect at Disneyland (on which he worked with fellow Penn State alumnus **Steven Michelman**, '99 M.F.A. Theatre), the opening curtain for "O" at the Bellagio in Vegas and the flying machines for *Spiderman 2*. "Anything high speed is fun," he says. "When you see and hear a flying machine wind up to full speed, it gets your adrenaline pumping just looking at it."

In the 10 years since Champelli and Fisher started FTSI (Joe is an invested partner), it has grown from a two-man operation working out of a small warehouse into a multi-million dollar corporation in a 25,000-square-foot facility with more than 45 employees. "The thing I find most personally gratifying is the growth of the company paralleled with the growth of my family in the past 10 years," says Joe. He and his wife, Christine Scally, have three children: Peter, age 9; Audrey, age 6; and Lucy, age 3.

According to Champelli, his experience at Penn State provided him with both professional and "life" skills. "It prepped me as much with skills for team-building and creating something out of nothing as it did for calculation of horsepower or determining which bearings to use on a machine," he says, adding professor **Rick Gray** and fellow student **Jeff Kovac** ('81 B.A. Labor Studies, '95 M.F.A. Theatre) also set great examples for balancing work and family.

Champelli, who earned his bachelor's degree at Illinois State University, chose Penn State in large part because of Gray, whom he had met during a University/Resident Theatre Association conference. "The Penn State facilities and Rick's program really impressed me and despite being accepted to Yale, I chose Penn State," he says. "Classes with Rick and my time in the shop were invaluable."

Drawing on his own positive university experiences, in 2004 Joe joined the faculty of the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, where he taught courses in technical theatre through summer 2007. During his final year at the university, he also served as production manager for the Clarence Brown Theatre, the professional arm of the University of Tennessee theatre program. He says his professional experience allowed him to bring a "fresh perspective" to the classroom and to meetings. "While teaching I was able to draw upon examples of past and concurrent work that helped students see the practical applications of their studies."

According to Champelli, understanding the practical applications is just part of what students need for a successful career in theatre technology. His advice is three-fold: 1) learn a foreign language—Chinese, Spanish or French, in that order; 2) learn CAD; and 3) learn as much as possible about engineering.

Although Champelli enjoyed his stint in academia, he says he's happy to focus 100 percent on his work with FTSI. Joe is currently working with FTSI management and engineering on the next phase of company growth. "The next decade will be as much about developing a line of stock equipment as the past 10 years were about doing cool custom projects." —*AMM*



JOSEPH CHAMPELLI

## Visual Arts

**Thomas Slettehaugh** ('56 D.Ed. Art Ed.) was named one of 100 distinguished alumni award winners in 2006 by the College of Education and Development at the

University of Minnesota, where he is an art professor emeritus.

**Stephen March** ('66 B.A. Art) held his fourth solo exhibition in May–June 2007 at 55 Mercer Gallery, New York City. The exhibition featured mixed media