

The SETC/IOT organizations recently lost a great leader in David Weiss as he was instrumental in the Institute of Outdoor Drama as a board member and served as a consultant on feasibility studies for new outdoor drama projects. His reach was far as he aided in the design of outdoor drama facilities and forty-seven indoor theatres as well. In addition he was a Past President of SETC. And his connections to our nation's rich tradition of theatre went beyond our organizations. He was a founder of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education and active in the US Institute for Theatre Technology. In 2003 year, he was inducted into the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.



DAVID WEISS (Feb. 26, 1928 – Dec. 18, 2017)

David W. Weiss held the title of Professor Emeritus at the University of Virginia where he taught for thirty-seven years, including a total of sixteen years as Drama Department chair. Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, he was educated at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where he took his Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees. After teaching two years at Montana State University in Missoula, Prof. Weiss entered the doctoral program at the University of Utah but accepted the position at Virginia in 1954 before completing the degree. In 1960 he entered the doctoral program at Indiana University where he eventually concluded his studies for the degree in 1965 with a dissertation on the work of the late Jo Mielziner, one of America's foremost designers of scenery and lighting.

David began his career in the theatre at the age of fifteen when he was employed by a professional summer stock company in Milwaukee; beginning as an apprentice without pay he was placed on the staff as a full salaried technician by mid-season and continued with the company for two additional seasons as an actor and technician. The training he received with this company—presenting a different play each week for eleven weeks—proved invaluable. During his high school years David was fortunate to be in a school with an extensive and very active theatre program in a new 1,300 seat theatre with a fully rigged stage and a state of the art, for the time, lighting system. The school produced five productions each year. In addition to working on those productions David was involved with many community theatre productions produced in the same theatre. He also served as the house manager at the Pabst Theatre in downtown Milwaukee during his junior and senior years, thus getting an opportunity to see a broad range of performing arts and major theatre artists.

Following high school David toured the United States from coast to coast in a children's theatre company with which he served as driver, stage manager, technical director and actor. He was seventeen years old when he started on that adventure. A year on the road convinced him of the need for further education and he began preparation for his career in teaching. His interest and involvement in non-academic theatre continued throughout his career as an educator. He has directed two outdoor historical dramas and designed scenery and/or lighting for fifteen dramas throughout the United States. In addition he has designed for various professional venues including a production of La Boheme for the New York City Opera's performance-in-the-schools program.

The primary educational focus for David was always scenery and lighting design but he also taught theatre history, dramatic literature and acting. At the University of Virginia he designed more than 150 productions and directed at least thirty. During his tenure as chair David established a Master of Fine Arts program, saw to the planning and completion of a two theatre home for the Drama Department, opened in 1974, and founded the Heritage Repertory Theatre, also in 1974, serving as its producing director for ten years. Under the auspices of the Heritage Rep the initial production of the Broadway version of *A Few Good Men*, starring Tom Hulce, was presented at the University of Virginia before continuing on to Washington and New York where it had a successful run of nearly two years before being filmed with Tom Cruise.

A founder of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education, David was active in the US Institute for Theatre Technology and two of its regional sections, as well as the Southeastern Theatre Conference of which he was a past president. His work with USITT brought him to the attention of the Scandinavian equivalent of USITT and he was invited to address the inaugural meeting of their organization, NOTT 83, in Stockholm in 1983. He was also invited to teach a special short course in stage lighting to the Norwegian Directors Union in Oslo. David was a member and Trustee of the National Theatre Conference and a Fellow of the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.

In 1995 Region IV of Kennedy Center/American College Theatre Festival honored David by presenting him with a Kennedy Center Medallion for his continuing work and interest in ACTF; on that occasion the design awards presented annually to students in the ten Southeastern states comprising ACTF Region IV were declared the David W. Weiss Awards for Excellence in Design.

Though retired from teaching full time, David continued to serve as a guest designer and frequently offered master classes in scenery and stage lighting design. He also maintained a practice in theatre design consultation and in 2003 received the USITT Architectural Award of Merit for his work on the Performing Arts Center at Alfred University in New York. He was frequently asked to consult on theatre projects at educational institutions and specialized in the development of adaptive spaces as well as new theatres. Over the years, beginning during his teaching career, David aided in the design of nineteen outdoor drama facilities, was involved as a team member on twenty-four feasibility studies for new outdoor drama projects and served as a consultant on the design of forty-seven indoor theatres. Two of his latest indoor theatres recently completed construction and a new amphitheatre in Pennsylvania is in the planning stages.

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