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OTAND Alumni Network Newsletter

Otterbein University Theatre & Dance Department

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OTTERBEIN THEATRE & DANCE

OTAND

ALUMNI NETWORK

Issue 4 - May 2018



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OTTERBEIN
UNIVERSITY



PITCH HER PRODUCTIONS: A PLATFORM FOR THE FEMALE VOICE THROUGH FILM

By: Caitlin Morris ('09)

As the female protagonist onscreen overtakes her would-be attacker and knocks him to the ground, I can feel the palpable shift in the room. I nervously munch my straw and my eyes dart around, registering the mixture of discomfort, vindication, glee, and shock clouding the faces of these young observing New Yorkers. With a distinct primal rage familiar to every woman in the room, our heroine flips the predator on his back and lunges at him. The audience nervously titters, unsure how to respond to such a display of feminine power and fury. I grin to myself thinking, "Yep. This is why we do it."

This film, *Consommé*, a short by Catherine Fordham, subverts the hackneyed woman-as-victim story by showing a woman who fights back - or rather bites the ear off of her attacker - in a fit of defiant rage. The short was one of six films screened at Pitch Her Productions' #MeToo Riveter Series. All films screened were made by women and dealt with, you guessed it, the pervasive problem of sexual harassment.

Pitch Her Productions is a nonprofit production company dedicated to promoting women in film. Pitch Her was founded in 2014 by myself and two of my oldest and dearest friends, Gloria Muñoz and Chanel Waterhouse, with whom I frolicked around Tampa Bay, Florida, doing high school theatre as a pimply teen. The idea for the company was initially born out of our desire to stop whining about the lack of unique, nuanced stories about women and make some film content that we'd want to see. The more we dug and researched, the more disheartening the reality proved to be. For instance, according to the annual Celluloid Ceiling report released by the Center for the Study of Women in Television

and Film at San Diego State University, "women accounted for 11% of directors working on the top 250 films in 2017." Considering women make up 51.9% of the total population, this number seems depressingly low. In the words of Jill Soloway, creator of the acclaimed series *Transparent*, "We f*cking grew up doing it! It's dolls. How did men make us think we weren't good at this? It's dolls and feelings. And women are fighting to become directors?"

With stats like these motivating us to elevate women in film, we've created and produced two short films, co-produced Hillary Nussbaum's web series *Keep Me Posted* (www.keeptopostedsseries.com), and produced two music videos. We host Riveter screenings once a quarter, educational panels and networking events. We're also acting as fiscal sponsors and producers on a few upcoming women-led projects, including a doc about vernacular comedy in South Africa, and we have several projects in development. In honor of our mission to connect female filmmakers, we're also mid-production on *Run-Ins*, a comedy series that we're approaching as an episodic lab - each episode is directed and shot by a different pair of women. Needless to say, we are keeping busy.

None of us went to film school, or business school for that matter. We don't have backgrounds in marketing or law or accounting. What we have is a fervent desire to flip the script. We are self-taught, self-motivated and self-directed. Learning the ropes of film production has been at times trying and overwhelming, but our conviction to change the norm has served as a North Star, guiding us to remain tenacious and single-minded.

My journey toward Producer-dom started with the essential step of co-creating, producing, and

starring in *Sublets* (www.watchsublets.com).

This comedy series was my first endeavor into filmmaking. With the audaciously positive Dolan Bloom ('11) and our stalwart writer-extraordinaire Sean Murphy ('14) by my side, our series turned into a veritable parade of Otterbein alums and wound up taking home the coveted Best Comedy Series award at Vancouver Web Fest last year!



The truth is, there is something incredibly disempowering about being an actor. The industry requires you to sit around and wait your turn; you are constantly at the mercy of another's vision. This form of latency doesn't sit well with me. I like being in control; I like steering the ship, and making the calls; I like self-actuating. A single series blossomed into a complete shift in my interests and path. Now I can say with conviction, I am an Actor/Producer.

For me, Pitch Her Productions was the answer to a lot of questions. In light of certain world events (notwithstanding the 2016 election), I found my desire to actively make a difference, to boost representation of women in film and modify the narrative, intensified dramatically. Suddenly, auditioning for generic office assistant #3 on a network procedural felt decidedly off-message. I needed to create space for the type of representation I craved. Nothing like creation to feed a creative soul. Highly, highly recommended.



Pitch Her is a tri-state endeavor, with Caitlin in New York, New York, Gloria in St. Pete, Florida, and Chanel in Columbus, Ohio. You can keep up with Pitch Her Productions at www.pitchherproductions.org, as well find them on Twitter @pitchherpro and IG @pitchherproductions.

Into the Habit

Emma Brock ('12) opens up about the joys (and challenges) of touring as a performing artist.

By: Berlyn Drabik Martin ('12)

"Be patient," Emma advises when asked about navigating international airports. "There are so many different rules...just be as nice as possible, because they could be the ones who upgrade you to first class!"

For those lucky enough to know Emma Brock ('12), chances are you've spent time drooling over her enviable Instagram. Often clad in the sequined nun's habit she donned to portray Sister Mary Patrick on the international tour of Sister Act: The Musical; her infectious smile will greet you from the world's highest infinity pool in Singapore, the Great Wall of China, and the towering bamboo forests of Tokyo.

In a whirlwind audition, Brock landed her first national tour in 2015 on a referral from Binder Casting, where she interned in 2012. She prepared for and completed all three portions of the audition in under 24 hours, booked the event the same afternoon, and departed on tour a mere five days after that. When the opportunity came to join the international tour in 2017, it was a natural progression for the actress. Brock's tour lasted a total of nine months and was the first to bring Sister Act: The Musical to Singapore, the Philippines, China, Japan, and South Korea.

Acclimating to a new theatre every few weeks is a daunting task. On their first day in a new space cast and crew arrive around noon to explore their new digs (e.g., finding dressing rooms, getting used to the stage, etc.). Questions are addressed in the following meeting, which transitions directly into sound check, after which the cast has free time to use for walking around the neighborhood, stretching, or warming-up for the show that evening.



TOP 5 TRAVEL ESSENTIALS

- **Sleeping Pillow** - The most important thing you can do for your health is sleep. Especially with international tours where the flights were up to 16 hours on a plane!
- **Headphones** - I would die if I lost my Beats. They provide me with sanity. Plus keeping up with my podcasts helps me feel connected while on the other side of the world!
- **Nightstand Decor** - I always carry with me a candle, a little dish for jewelry and a framed picture of Sam (fiance) & it always makes my

hotel room my own personal space. It's nice to have a little bit of home with you.

- **HDMI Cable** - I love connecting my computer to the hotel tv with the HDMI cord. I always host Game of Thrones viewing parties in my room. It's a great way to rest and be social!

- **French Press and Coffee** - I CANNOT deal with bad coffee. I always pack my own coffee and French press so I can make my own and not have instant. YUCK!

Brock affectionately refers to the travelling 13 person crew and 3 managers as "the backbone of the production". A non-union actress, she was grateful for the opportunity to focus on her performance without the stress of added duties.

The most surprising thing about touring internationally? The love. Love's ability to transcend language barriers has stuck with Emma. Platforms like Instagram help her stay in touch with those she's met along the way. She formed a particularly close bond with her Korean dresser with whom she worked for almost eight weeks. "I never thought I would make friends with people who did not speak English at all! But my local dressers have become my best friends!"

The one piece of advice Emma wishes someone had given her starting out? This is not a job for the faint hearted. The work is hard, the hours are long, and people will play games trying to psych you out. Don't take the bait. Know in your heart you are good enough and persevere. "It's so easy to be mean and get a result. It's much more inspiring and healthy to be a nice HUMAN! If you're mean to me, I'll do what you ask because it's my job... but if you can inspire me to be better, I will give you EVERYTHING I've got."





Living the Swing Life

By Lili Froehlich ('13)

Swings are some of the most important components of a theatrical production. While every aspect is vital, swings ensure that the show goes on. Whether it be sickness, injury, vacation, or personal days, our job is to pick up the slack at any and every moment. Like doctors, we live our lives in a constant state of being "on call," and we have to take extra care of ourselves to ensure that we are capable of being ready at all times.

The basic tasks of being a swing include learning multiple tracks and/or roles at the same time and being ready to perform them at a moment's notice. You are learning on the sides while the onstage cast rehearses. This can be hard because your body never gets to fully do the movement and spacing in the actual space with people and in real time. Sometimes you might get a put-in before your first performance. A put-in is a rehearsal with just the swing/understudy/cover and the onstage cast usually on the actual stage and with the swing in costume so they get a run

through of the show with most of the elements before they make their debut. This rarely happens, so a swing usually steps on stage for their first performance having never performed the track with the cast or other theatrical elements. That first debut feels like an assault to the senses, but of course is very thrilling!

Recently, I made my Broadway debut in the revival of *Cats*, and I was what is called an internal swing. I had a role on stage every day but also understudied three other roles. If one of those roles needed filling, I would move into that position and an external swing would have to play my part. It was extremely challenging doing a show eight times a week (not to mention performing one of the most, if not the most, physically demanding dance show of all time) and also rehearsing during the day to learn all of my understudy roles. Sometimes I would be rehearsing during the day for one role and then get asked last minute to go on for one of my other roles. It takes a certain kind of mind to be able to maneuver multiple tracks. It's like having tight

three or four part harmony and having to know every individual line of music and switch back and fourth whenever asked (and sometimes we have to do that as well!).

One of the craziest moments of my time with *Cats* was doing a split track. A split track is something that happens when there are too many people out for one reason or another, and so the swing must combine two or more roles together. Needless to say, it is a crazy experience! I had to play both my role of Electra and the role of Rumpleteazer simultaneously. They are two of the hardest dance roles in the show! When this happens there will inevitably be holes on stage. Spacing has to be adjusted, and sometimes things have to be cut. I felt like I had multiple personalities! I was running around the stage like a chicken (cat!?) with its head cut off! My brain was on complete overload and was running a thousand miles a second. It was both the most exhausting show of my career and also the most thrilling. Thankfully it only happened once.

Photos: Lili (third from the left) during bows at a Seattle, Washington, performance of "Hamilton." (Inset Image): Lili, posing back stage in her show corset during another "Hamilton" performance in Portland, Oregon. She covers five different women, numbered 1-5 and was onstage as Woman 5 that day.

I also became one of the dance captains of *Cats*, which is an entirely different set of responsibilities and a lot more added stress. I would wake up, learn whatever role I was going to have to teach that day, go to rehearsal to teach what I had learned, work on notes that I needed to give out before the show, give out the notes, rush to do my cat makeup and somehow make it onto the stage playing one of four of my characters. I grew exponentially having this job with all of its responsibilities. I also barely slept and felt more exhausted than I ever have in my life, and never want to do it again . . . we live and we learn.

I am now the dance captain and one of the swings of the *Hamilton Philip Tour*. I cover the roles of five ensemble women and have to eventually know the specifics of every single role on stage. I think being a swing/dance captain is much more manageable than being on stage and being a dance captain. You are able to actually watch the show and see what is going on from different angles. You are able to dedicate more of your time to helping people and problem solving. I have a little more time to work on all that I need to know for all of my roles as well as taking care of my dance captain responsibilities. That being said, it is still a time-consuming job. I have worked many 16 hour days on this contract. There is so much more paperwork to be done than I ever anticipated. Organization is key (which isn't my strongest suit). Like any management position, something is always wrong and you are always putting out fires. It feels a bit less artistic and more logistic. My brain is definitely being employed in many new ways!

Being a swing and/or dance captain is not for everyone, but I always hope people will get the chance to be a swing at least once, because it instills within you an awareness and compassion that can sometimes be lost on the onstage company. It is one of the hardest jobs and one of the most thankless jobs. It makes you a stronger person and performer, and forever changes your perspective working in theatre.

communications corner

By: Trenton I. Weaver ('11)

One of OTAND's overarching goals is to bring our Otterbein Theatre and Dance community together, transcending the boundaries of class year and degree type. In this vein, the OTAND board is working to create a list of class agents - a go-to individual from each class year responsible for ensuring each member of his or her class receives updates and information regarding all things OTAND.

Class Agents are the official voices of their respective graduating classes and will work closely with the Department to ensure efficient, open communication with alumni and also suggest ways to improve OTAND processes. When the Department sends a newsletter, event invitation, or announcement, the Class Agent will check in with former classmates to ensure the communication has been received and to encourage participation when applicable.

In addition, Class Agents will assist in the collection and verification of contact information (email, address, phone) from classmates to ensure all alumni are receiving updates, the newsletter, etc.

At least once per year, Class Agents will request updates regarding professional and personal achievement (no matter the career or life path chosen) but will encourage classmates to submit updates throughout the year as changes arise.

The current list is a work in progress, but we are happy to announce that so far we have confirmed agents for 13 classes.

If you are interested in serving as a class agent, please contact Elizabeth Saltzgiver at ESaltzgiver@otterbein.edu.



CLASS AGENT LIST

2018	???	2007	Kate Murphy
2017	Annie Schroeder	2006	???
2016	???	2005	Tyler TerMeer
2015	???	2004	???
2014	Hayden Clifton	2003	Matthew Sherr/ Krista Lively
2013	Evan Zimmerman	2002	Chris VanHoy
2012	Emma Brock	2001	???
2011	Seth Cotterman	2000	???
2010	Amanda Huxtable/Tina Scariano	
2009	Andy Baker	
2008	Elizabeth Couture Cantley	1978	Cindi Macioce

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!



Stay in touch
with OTAND!

We would love to know what
you're up to these days.

Complete your OTAND
Update here:

www.otterbein.edu/TheatreAlumniUpdate

BRING IT HOME 2020

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Please join us in the planning and coordination of the 2020 Alumni Celebration. Committees are forming now for:

- Logistics
- Communications
- Workshops & Panels
- Social Events
- Legacy Presentations

If interested, please email Christina Kirk:
ckirk@otterbein.edu

DEPARTMENT NEWS

Otterbein University 2018 Teacher of the Year: Melissa Lusher

By: Elizabeth Saltzgiver

We are thrilled to announce that Associate Professor Melissa Lusher has been named the Otterbein University "Teacher of the Year."

The award, which is open to all full-time members of the Otterbein University faculty, recognizes those whose excellence has been contributing to the institution after three years of service.

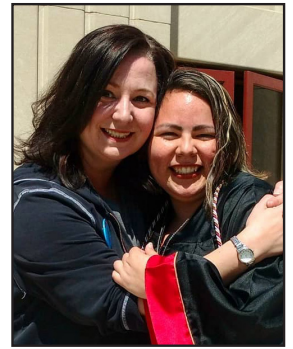
In her presentation of the award at the Academic Honors Convocation, Interim Provost Wendy Sherman-Heckler said that current and former students specifically cited Melissa's "commitment to quality and professionalism," and "incredible, compassionate mentoring."

She also quoted faculty colleagues who described Melissa as a "compassionate listener, a direct communicator, and an astute judge

of when to step in and when to allow a student to wrestle with their own demons."

We in the Department of Theatre & Dance have always treasured Melissa's contributions to all aspects of our training program, but her dedication to our students' combined academic, artistic and emotional well-being is beyond measure.

Congratulations, Melissa!



Melissa Lusher and Grace Hoover ('18) after graduation.

Melissa's Rules for Teaching

Make learning **JOYFUL**
(especially when it's hard)

Speak each student's
language



GUIDE,
don't dictate

Create a **safe** space to learn

Intentionally develop a positive
rapport with students

Be organized, **CLEAR**,
and transparent

Foster students'
development as
HUMAN BEINGS



Julia Ferreri has been building and designing costumes for over fifteen years. Favorite Otterbein designs include *Fiddler on the Roof*, *The Crucible*, *Les Misérables*, and *The Full Monty*. Around Columbus, she has designed for Actors Theatre: *Winter's Tale*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *Beaux Stratagem*. Available Light: *She Kills Monsters* and *Cymbeline*. Columbus Opera: *Il Tabarro* and *Gianni Schicchi*. Julia has also worked at Glimmerglass Opera, The Shakespeare Theatre in Washington DC, The Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, Utah Shakespeare Festival, and Berkshire Theatre Festival. Julia received her MFA in Costume Technology from Ohio University-Athens.

Faculty Spotlight

Julia Ferreri, Costume Shop Supervisor

Interview by: Sandy Quinn ('10)

What classes do you teach?

Do you have a favorite?

I teach all the costume construction classes. This includes Costumes for the Theatre, Advanced Draping, and a multitude of independent studies in different costume areas. Last year I did a class on tutu construction. My favorite is probably Costumes for the Theatre. It's the most basic class, so I get a lot of students who don't know how to sew. Most are nervous and sure they won't be able to do it, but by the end of the semester they are very comfortable around a sewing machine. They go from having never threaded a needle to sewing a fully-boned corset. It's fun to watch their skills and confidence grow.

What set of sewing/costume related skills are you most excited about passing on to current students?

Draping skills. Draping is the art of manipulating fabric on a dress form to create costume patterns from scratch. Most undergraduate universities don't teach draping or allow their students to take on so much responsibility, but I feel it's a valuable skill for them all to possess, and puts them at an advantage over other recent graduates.

What are the most important skills you hope graduates focusing in costumes will take with them?

Excellent sewing skills and a good grasp on pattern drafting and draping.

What is the event in your career so far that has left the greatest impression on you?

It was probably my first professional job out of undergrad. I was a stitcher at Utah Shakespeare Festival, and I was completely unqualified for that position. I realized just how unprepared my undergraduate education had made me, and I vowed that I would never allow any of my future students to feel as unprepared and lost as I was. This is why I try to make my shop as professional

as possible, so students won't be in for a shock when they get out into the real world.



Jessica Metcalf ('19) models a tutu draped by Design Technology student, Melissa Schlect ('18).

Musical Theatre Divas

By: Christina Kirk

Stella Hiatt Kane and Lori Kay Harvey have the distinct honor to be the first ever in Otterbein University's history to receive Earned Professional Degree Equivalencies and have been granted the status of tenure-track Associate Professors. Their extraordinary practical and tested experience as theatre professionals has paved the way for this ground-breaking achievement.

Stella's experiences performing in National Tours of *Bob Fosse's Dancin'* and in *Sugar* and her appearances on *PBS Dance in America* and *The Ann Reinking Television Special with Ben Vereen and Chita Rivera* have afforded her professional experience at the national level, dancing with legends in the field. As a dancer with the National and International Companies of *The American Dance Machine* from 1977 to 1982, Stella contributed to the living archive of Broadway theatrical dance.

"She knew that one day I would originate a role on Broadway."

- Lindsay Nicole Chambers ('02)

Stella served as an adjunct faculty member in Otterbein's Department of Theatre and Dance from 1989 to 1995. She has been a Non-Tenure Track Senior Instructor at Otterbein since 1996, serving as Director of Dance and the Artistic Director of the annual Dance Concert since 1996. Since 2012, Stella has also served as Director of the Musical Theatre Area.

Stella's choreographic credits include choreographing 36 musicals for Otterbein University Theatre and Otterbein Summer Theatre while also consistently choreographing in the annual Dance Concert. She has also choreographed for Ballet Met, Columbus Dance Theatre and Catco. She has taught Master Classes at The Ohio State University, Bowling Green State University, and Columbus Dance Theatre.

Dan Knechtges ('94 BFA Musical Theatre), Tony nominated director and choreographer and current Artistic Director at Theatre Under the Stars, credits Stella with being the one who told him he could be a choreographer.

Lindsay Nicole Chambers ('02 BFA Musical Theatre with Dance Concentration), with multiple National Tours and Broadway credits under her belt, says of Stella, "She knew that one day I would originate a role on Broadway."



Stella Kane with Madison Tinder ('15) in rehearsal for "Sweet Charity."



"To watch Stella and Lori Kay teach, coach and direct is to be in the presence of master teachers."

- Christina Kirk

Lori Kay's professional work experience includes national and Brazilian tours, regional theatre, concerts, television, commercials and resort entertainment.

She has played everything from a socialite in "Sex in the City" to a Candy Striper in "Guiding Light."

The production companies associated with Lori Kay's professional credits include Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, John F. Kennedy Center, HBO and CBS networks, Cincinnati Pops Orchestra, etc. Lori Kay is also a member of Actors' Equity Association.

In addition to performing in the National Tour of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* with Patrick Cassidy and Deborah Gibson, she played the role of Cha-Cha and served as Dance Captain for the Brazilian tour of *Grease*, directed by Joanna Settle. She has played everything from a socialite in *Sex in the City* to a Candy Striper in *Guiding Light*. Locally, she was nominated for Best Leading Actress in a Musical by BroadwayWorld

Columbus and by the 10th Annual Jebby Awards for her portrayal of Diana Goodman in SRO Theatre Company's *Next to Normal*.

Lori Kay initially taught at Otterbein from 2006-2008, then returned to teach in 2010 where she has taught since then. First as part-time faculty and then as full-time faculty, she has served as Musical Director of the BFA Musical Theatre Program, executing music direction for the production program, and teaching musical theatre curriculum including Senior Showcase, Junior Musical Theatre Studio, Freshman Musical Theatre Ensemble, and Applied Voice.

Jeremy Hurr, a sophomore BFA Musical Theatre major with a dance concentration, says, "Lori Kay has made me feel like I'm capable of doing more than I let myself. She has sparked something in me to keep working hard and improve and have the confidence to show everyone what kind of voice I have."

Stella and Lori Kay's years of experience in the field, working in every conceivable style and genre of musical theatre, and having worked with leaders in the industry, provide them both with a store of knowledge that only a handful of individuals in the world possess. We are thrilled to celebrate this important milestone in their careers.



Lori Kay Harvey performing for "The Launch" in 2017.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Oklahoma!

1959



2001



Join us this summer!

Otterbein Summer Theatre will continue to produce big-spirited shows with freshly minted imagination in the 2018 season. Artistic Director Lenny Leibowitz has programmed two musicals that investigate and celebrate the pioneering, go-getter,

can-do American spirit: "Oklahoma!" (May 31-June 22) and "Snoopy!" (July 5-21).

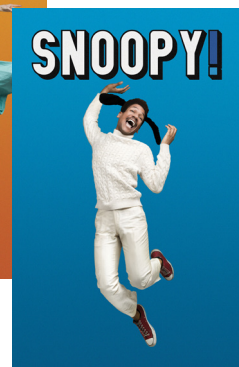
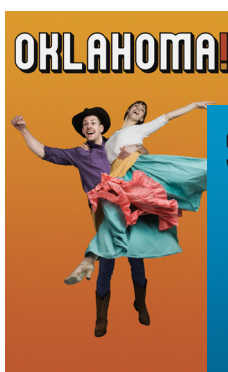
Both productions will be staged in the Fritsche Theatre at Cowan Hall in the traditional seating style, unlike years past when Otterbein Summer Theatre was produced with the audience seated on three sides of the action in portable seating banks.

"We are devoted to making the audience experience at the theatre more comfortable and enjoyable than ever before. So, visitors will experience Cowan Hall in its traditional, easy access, roomy and riser-free seating arrangement," Artistic Director Lenny Leibowitz explained. "Our scenic and lighting artists will be creating an overall ambiance that embraces the

grandeur of the space while preserving that magical sense of intimacy that makes OST experiences so special."

New this season at Otterbein, is a staged reading series, "Rare Sightings" which will provide theatre lovers the experience of rarely-produced plays in an informal style. The readings will take place on June 9 & 10. Titles, schedules and locations will be announced prior to the beginning of the season.

For more information about Otterbein Summer Theatre and the 2018 Season, please contact Otterbein University Theatre at 614-823-1109 or visit the Otterbein University website, www.otterbein.edu/summertheatre.



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Otterbein Theatre & Dance Alumni Network

The Otterbein Theatre & Dance Alumni Network brings together graduates of the Department of Theatre and Dance, as well as alumni who participated in theatre and dance activities before we became an official department, to provide networking support for each other, mentoring of current students, assistance with recruiting, and fundraising for the department.



STAY INFORMED

Otterbein Theatre & Dance
Alumni Network

OTAND Executive Board

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AT LARGE REPRESENTATIVE	Trenton I. Weaver ('11)
BA REPRESENTATIVE	Randy Adams ('76)
DANCE MINOR REPRESENTATIVE	Cassandra Cardenas ('10)
DESIGN/TECHNOLOGY REPRESENTATIVE	Sandy Quinn ('10)
MUSICAL THEATRE REPRESENTATIVE	David Caldwell ('86)
DEPARTMENT CHAIR	Christina Kirk
DEPARTMENT REPRESENTATIVE	Elizabeth Saltzgiver ('99)

Contact the Executive Board:
OTAND@otterbein.edu