

## Special Feature – CITT/ICTS 2006 AWARD RECIPIENT

On August 12 2006, Toronto hosted the 9th Annual CITT/ICTS Award Banquet in recognition of individuals and companies that excel in their field of live performance in Canada. Starting this month, StageWorks will feature a portrait of this year's CITT/ICTS Annual Awards Recipients.

This month we feature the Dieter Penzhorn Memorial Award recipient. The CITT/ICTS Dieter Penzhorn Memorial is Awarded to an Individual who has provided significant and sustained service to the Canadian Institute for Theatre Technology/Institut canadien des technologies scénographiques, while playing an active role in the development of the greater Canadian cultural community. **This years recipient is Robert Vernon.**

### Dieter Penzhorn Memorial Award Acceptance Speech

It is an honor to receive the Dieter Penzhorn Memorial Award. Particularly so for me, since Dieter was a respected colleague and friend. Dieter was a man dedicated to the theatre. He could tell you how to build a point shoe one minute and just how many trucks it would take for a North American Ballet Tour the next. His dedication extended to the CITT. His was the calming and sage wisdom at many a heated Ontario Section Board meeting. He was looking forward to chairing the organizing committee of the 1999 USITT Toronto Conference before his untimely death in 1996.

By definition, this award is presented to an "individual who has provided significant and sustained service to CITT/ICTS while playing an active role in the development of the greater Canadian cultural community." Like most theatre technicians, I shun the limelight, preferring the anonymity of the backstage. I will admit to certain trepidation at my worthiness for this award until I reflected upon my career and my work as a member of CITT/ICTS.

So how does a shy, wood beautician from Waterdown, Ontario end up standing here before you tonight? As a young man, I had little knowledge of theatre and certainly no aspirations to pursue theatre as a career. I owe my vocational selection to three close friends: Mike and Lisbie Rae, founding members of Village Theatre in Waterdown and the late Mr. Sandy Black, former Director of the Tech Production Program and a past chair of The Ryerson Theatre School. Their dedication to the craft of theatre motivated me to seek out the challenge of a career in live theatre. That was in 1976 when I landed a part in a Village Theatre Production. I had a total of 15 words, not lines, but in the grand tradition of the theatre, "there are no small parts, just small actors", I proceeded to learn my part and attend rehearsals. Come opening night, centre

stage in all my glory, I forgot half of my fifteen words. It was at that moment I decided that maybe my talents lay in the backstage.

Fast forward to a summer day in 1987, at the offices of Théâtre français de Toronto, on Dufferin Street, Graham Frampton, Chris Walworth, Victor Svenningson, Bob Johnston, James Carrite, and myself, in a planning meeting to resurrect the Algonquin Section of USITT. I realized at that time, this was the start of something that will be a great benefit to theatre technicians and the Canadian theatre community.

Little did I realize at that meeting, that I would soon be thrust into the management of CITT. It was my passion to participate in CITT programming. It was my duty to help in the organization of that programming as a member of the CITT Ontario Board of Directors. My fifteen minutes of fame came in 1994 as Chair of the organizing committee for the Stratford Conference. Those fifteen minutes of fame stretched into three years as the Chair of the Ontario Section.

In 1997 the CITT was in a minor crisis with the resignation of the sitting president. Vice-President Bob Eberle asked me if I could handle a barrage of dissension and contradictory opinions. When I answered that I did not know, he said that was good enough for him, and I was sworn in as Interim National President.

I am pleased to have held the reigns, of the CITT when we hired our first full-time National Office Coordinator, moved the National Office to Toronto and made the first inroads into La Belle Province with the 1997 Montreal Conference, and help The USITT to select Toronto for their conference in 1999.

This award is recognition of dedication and achievement. I chose this career not for this recognition but as an outlet for my passion for the arts, an outlet for my creative and technical talent, and for the community of friends it has given me. I thank my nominators and the community of the CITT/ICTS for giving me this recognition.

In closing, I say to the student members and to the young professionals just starting out as members of CITT/ICTS, "If you have true passion for theatre, you will never have to go to work!"

Thank you

Robert Vernon  
August 12, 2006

Robert Vernon receiving  
his award, with  
Graham Frampton and  
Heather Kent.

photo: Tedfred Myers



### ROBERT VERNON CAREER HIGHLIGHTS AND THEATRE EXPERIENCE

#### Shaw Festival 2003 - 2006

- Scenic construction and stagehand, Stage Crew (IATSE Local 461)

#### Humber College 2002 - 2006

- Stagecraft Instructor, Theatre Production Program

#### Ryerson Theatre School 1987 - 1998

- Supervisor for student productions in the Ryerson Theatre

#### The Blyth Festival 1983 - 1987

- Head Carpenter and Technical Director

#### York University Theatre Department 1984 - 1986

- Senior Technician, Supervisor for student production assignments.

#### Alberta Theatre Projects 1981 - 1983

- Head Carpenter, Stage Crew

#### Magnus Theatre 1980 - 1981

- Technical Director, Stage Crew, LX Operator

#### The Gryphon Theatre 1980 - 1984

- Head Carpenter, Stage carpenter, Flyman

### RELATED EMPLOYMENT

- BLT Construction Services, Toronto - Estimator, 2002.
- Holman Exhibits Ltd. Toronto - Project Coordinator, 1998 - 2002.
- Otis Elevator Ltd. Hamilton, Drafter/Specifications Writer

### CITT/ICTS ACTIVITY

- Moderator for the Job-Announcements folder on Callboard since July 2003
- Ontario Section Representative to the CITT National Board, 2001 - 2003
- Interim National President, 1997 - 1998
- Chair of the CITT Ontario Section - 1994-1999
- Steering Committee - to help bring USITT conference to Toronto - 1996
- Conference Committee Chair - 1994 Stratford Conference
- Participation in the resurrection of the Algonquin Section of USITT - 1987