



# STAGE CALL

## IATSE 205 PO BOX 142 AUSTIN, TEXAS 78767

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### International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees Local 205

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#### Stage Call Newsletter

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Editors Rachel Magee & Jeff Ellinger

What does labor want? We want more schoolhouses and less jails; more books and less arsenals; more learning and less vice; more leisure and less greed; more justice and less revenge; in fact, more of the opportunities to cultivate our better natures, to make manhood more noble, womanhood more beautiful, and childhood more happy and bright.

-Samuel Gompers

### Message from President Keith Harris

By the time you read this, another Labor Day will have come and gone without much thought given to the significance of the holiday. Ask your typical Austin slacker about Labor Day and you will probably get an answer that references the end of summer (the season, not the heat), a telethon, or a shrug of the shoulders.

For us, however, Labor Day means a whole lot more. Ostensibly, it is a day to honor and recognize ourselves, the workers. More importantly, it is a time to reflect on all that the labor movement has achieved.

So many take the eight-hour workday, overtime, health insurance and other job benefits for granted. They figure the boss just gives us these things because we deserve them, right?

Wrong!

Were it not for some Stonemasons in Melbourne, Australia back in 1856 that stopped work and marched on the government, we may never have achieved an eight-hour day without a loss of pay. This early action by organized workers was an inspiration for the celebration of Labor Day.

May 1, 1886, in Chicago, the president of the Knights of Labor and his family led 80,000 people in protest for an eight-hour workday. That same year in New York City, the Theatrical Protective Union was formed and stagehands went on strike seeking wages of a \$1.00 a day. As the story goes, the stagehands prevailed when a famous actor demanded union labor after being injured by a flat improperly rigged by strikebreakers.

It was a tumultuous time for workers marked by the Haymarket Square killings just days after that May Day parade in Chicago. Four workers had been killed on May third when police opened fire on picketers rallying in favor of the eight-hour day. A demonstration was called for the following evening at Haymarket Square. The peaceful protest was shattered when a bomb was thrown at the police killing seven officers. Four workers were killed and many more injured when the police fired into the crowd.

Eight men were arrested, among them labor leaders, and were framed for murder without any evidence. Four were executed by hanging, one committed suicide in jail and the others were later pardoned.

President Grover Cleveland thought he might appease the labor movement by establishing a holiday on May first to commemorate the Haymarket Square tragedy. Fearing, however, that a May Day Holiday would be seen as a support for socialists, Cleveland moved in 1887 to support the position of the Knights of Labor and their date for Labor Day.

So, now that we have covered a bit of the origins of Labor Day, ask yourself what Labor Day means to you. Would you sacrifice your life in the name of trade unionism?

Don't worry; you probably won't ever need to. What you do have to do though, is participate in your union to keep it alive.

Come to meetings. Spread the union word to friends and family. Celebrate the true meaning of Labor Day.

“—to realize that labor unions have meant new dignity and pride to millions of our countrymen—human companionship on the job, and music in the home—to be able to see what larger pay checks mean, not to a man as an employee, but as a husband and as a father—to know these things is to understand what American labor means.”

-Adlai Ewing Stevenson (1900-65)

# Sponsor Spotlight – Walter Olden and Olden Lighting



Many of us in the Local know Walter Olden as the businessman who runs Olden Lighting. But there's a lot more to brother Olden than that.

Originally from Chicago, Walter moved to Austin in 1981. With a degree in radio, TV and film production from Northwestern, Walter began his Austin career by taking calls at the PAC, the Erwin Center, and KLRU. At KLRU he teamed up with Bob Selby, the Production Manager. Both enjoyed lighting and began designing lighting packages for other agencies. Through their work in television and video production they recognized the need for available equipment. Seizing the opportunity, they began buying equipment for rental, establishing a small joint inventory in Walter's garage.

In 1989 Olden Lighting graduated from a garage to a warehouse space rented from Eichenbaum Displays, whose events Walter was lighting. In the mid 90's Olden Lighting was able to grow and expand with the help of his partner Patti Shook, and today includes Dwayne McFarland. Olden was not only designing lighting packages for TV, film and video, but also installing equipment for organizations such as the State Theatre and the Round Top Music Institute. In 1997 Olden Lighting moved to its current location on Alexander Avenue.

Today Olden Lighting is a dealer for many manufacturers in the lighting industry, has an extensive equipment inventory, and seven employees. They supply schools with equipment and materials, rent grip equipment to movies, and assist smaller companies with their lighting packages, sub-renting any extra equipment they need to complete a job. This year marks their 10th anniversary lighting UT's *Gone to Texas* and Walter's 24<sup>th</sup> season with the nationally-broadcast Austin City Limits TV show and his first as Lighting Director. Career highlights for Walter include lighting Willie Nelson's Farm Aid benefits in Dallas, and being flown to India last year to execute a set and lighting package he designed for a new TV studio in New Delhi.

## What Came First: the collar or the sleeve?

– Jon Maloy, Business Agent, Local 205

If you are going to study archeology or anthropology today, you get a degree in genetics it seems. A modern dig is spelled DNA. By tracking both dominant and recessive traits, which makes its own point I think, you find that man came out of Africa and overwhelmed all, including European Neolithic man. The chain of events that explains our ancestors is a most interesting story. When they came down from the trees and started moving about they needed more muscle mass, which needed a bigger heart. Greater physical needs and the increased stimuli from their larger range required a bigger brain. All of these demands for more oxygen resulted in meat eating. That probably ties in with our warlike character. Or so I am told. All caused by an opposing thumb, which predates coming down from the trees. A digit for hanging on to limbs and vines was perfect for tools.

That's why you are required to have the proper tools for a call. Honor the tradition of your ancestors. That may mean only a good pair of gloves. It certainly means more than just hand tools. The number one tool is a smile. Whether it be a quirky little one, or a sarcastic cheek to cheeker, it is good for the attitude. As with swinging through the trees, sleeveless t-shirts and cut-offs are but a faint memory. Clean clothes with collars, sleeves and legs are the new environment. As our work opportunities change so will our genes, or jeans. Hotel display and convention work brings us into contact with other customers and clients of our employer and we are expected to put forth a good picture. Our new contract with Austin Lyric Opera will be a wake up call to Neolithic stagehands. "Proper attire will help make friends and influence people", says Andrew Carnegie. By my nature I resist uniformity and applying doctrine outside its intended purpose, but it seems that blacks that were meant to keep deck hands invisible in theatrical events, are now the wardrobe of choice for all types of work where invisibility is not an issue. But they are just hot. Overcoming this Neolithic DNA is hard work. At least we do not have to wear bell-bottoms. To summarize, Black collared shirts are required for hotel and convention calls. The Paramount Theatre requires show blacks on performance calls.

## Local News

- Congratulations to brother Dwight Markus who has accepted the position of Technical Director with Texas State University in San Marcos.
- Fond farewells to brother Jerry Reed who recently moved to Colorado to work for a cabinetry workshop.
- Congratulations to brother Britton Parnell who resumes the position of Head Sound at the Paramount Theatre.
- And congratulations to brother Pasquale Del Villaggio for his appointment at the Paramount Theatre as Head Carpenter.
- State Theatre closes indefinitely, laying off its staff and canceling its producing program.

## Get Info From Local 205 On The Web

Missed the general meeting or want to know upcoming events? Go to [www.iatse205.org](http://www.iatse205.org) and select 'Links' then the link '<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Local205>'. To join, click the link "Join" and a moderator will send an invitation e-mail to you. Follow the instructions contained in that e-mail. Once a member, revisit the site and "sign in". You can then choose what to browse from a list at the top left. 'Files' is where you will find meeting minutes and 'calendar' is where you will be able to view upcoming events. Internet access is free at any Austin Public Library.

## Current Committees

**Volunteer Organizing:** Chair, Brad Wilson

**Communications:** Chair, Bon Davis

**Ballet Austin Organizing:** Chair,  
Valerie Sadorra-Banks

**Newsletter:** Chair, Rachel Magee

## Be Part of the Process!

## WHY WE NEED UNIONS

by Rachel Magee

I joined Local 205 because I love working in the theatre, but not necessarily as a stagehand. Although I still get a buzz from being part of the unseen magic backstage, what I really love is building a show: being part of its development, and then sitting back and watching my work being used on stage. I am a props artisan, and when I first moved to Austin there was a fair amount of work in Austin for someone like me. Like many in 205, Austin Musical Theatre kept me busy practically year round. Then I moved to the State Theatre where I didn't get to build quite so much, but I did get to work with an incredible team of people and be part of a producing program that grew stronger and more impressive with each show. Our last one, "*American Fiesta*" will be remounted again this month to court a couple of New York producers who will be flying down especially to see it. Meanwhile KLRU is raising funds so they can tape the production in their studios to air later on TV. What a time to close the theatre. With AMT and now the State gone there really is little work left for me and the other artists involved. I guess this is how it felt for all our projectionists when movie theatres started closing down. But, before I lose my train of thought, here is something I learned from losing my job that I wanted to share with you. Unfortunately, when you work for an employer you are simply a number on a balance sheet. It doesn't matter what industry you work in, they ultimately all bow to the same god: money. To emphasize my point, here's the advice imparted to my co-workers and I when we were told the theatre was closing, "Don't love the company because the company can't love you back." That was kind of hard to swallow, but I guess it is a fact, and to me it screams the need for unions. Companies are always going to put the dollar first; remember the Wal-Mart movie? So, while your employer or company is not loving you, how are you going to protect your pay, your rights and your conditions? President Harris put a slightly more positive spin on the situation for me, recounting the old adage, "you don't get what you deserve, you get what you negotiate. Thus the existence of unions." With these thoughts in mind, cherish your union membership. If you haven't already done so, pay your dues so that your union can survive. It's a dog-eat-dog world out there, so make sure you have a strong team on your side.

# Build a Stewards Council from the Bottom Up

by Paul Krehbiel July 2006  
from Labornotes.org

Want a stronger union at work? Consider building a stewards council.

I was a rank-and-file worker at a company with a good steward structure years ago, so I knew something about how it worked. After I began working as a union representative for Service Employees (SEIU) Local 660, I was assigned to Harbor-UCLA Medical Center in Los Angeles. I saw immediately that the union there was weak.

With only five stewards for 1,700 workers, demoralization was high. Many members complained that the union did nothing, and they wanted out. The only solution was to build the union at the facility.

I met with three interested stewards and we came up with an assessment and a plan. We knew we couldn't handle every problem at once, so we decided to concentrate on one work area of about 20-30 workers at a time. We used three criteria to decide where to focus:

First, there needed to be a problem that affected most workers in the area. Additionally, it needed to be a problem that people felt strongly about. Finally, we wanted to focus on areas where there was a leader or potential leader in the group.

## SETTING GUIDELINES

Once we found such a group, we had three goals: (1) organize an issue campaign that would involve a significant majority, (2) try to win a victory, and (3) recruit at least one leader to become a steward. Our long-term goal was to have at least one steward in every work area, on every shift, in a ratio of at least one steward for every 20 workers.

Once we had recruited at least 12 stewards who were representative of the workforce in the different areas, we would set up an interim stewards council. When we had 20, we would establish the permanent stewards council.

The council would function as a democratic body—we would elect officers and write a simple constitution, bylaws, and mission statement that mandated member input and democratic practices. All the while, we would need to keep recruiting.

We received a call from two workers on the hospital's 4 West ward who complained that management had issued a memo stating that workers had to bring in a doctor's note if they were off one day sick in December. The usual policy required a doctor's note after three days.

I went with one of the stewards to meet with the callers. We asked if everyone was strongly opposed to this change, and they said "yes." We decided that a petition could gauge the level of support while teaching petition circulators leadership skills.

Within three days, 23 of 25 workers signed. We then developed a draft campaign outline: we would file a group grievance and have as many people come into the grievance meeting as possible.

The lead workers mapped their work area by making a list of all the workers there, and got 12 workers to agree to come and speak at the grievance meeting. We could only get two workers released for the meeting, so the others came in on their breaks, two at a time, every 15 minutes, spread over an hour and a half. Work slowed down considerably.

Management was worried, and backed off on enforcing the new rule. Workers were happy and one leader became a steward.

We repeated this process in other work areas and within four months we formed the interim stewards council. Within eight months, we had built a permanent stewards council that had elected its own officers.

## LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATION

The council put out letters and leaflets, conducted larger campaigns at the facility, and was soon seen by workers and management as the union at the work site. As the full-time union rep, I worked most closely with the elected leaders of the council. Working together, we developed plans and campaigns to further strengthen the union.

Early in the recruitment process we decided to hold steward training classes. We held them after work at the hospital, once a week, to make it easy for stewards to attend. Topics included "Rights and Responsibilities of Stewards," "Communication and Informal Problem Solving," and "Organizing Around Worksite Issues."

Most of the classes emphasized looking for group issues, because fighting for a group would strengthen the union much more than fighting for just one person. I involved the stewards in the classes as much as possible, including as presenters (when they felt comfortable).

We also set up a mentoring program. New stewards would go with more experienced ones or with me to meetings with management to see first-hand how issues were handled. As they gained knowledge, skills, and confidence, they began to participate more.

Our goal was to get as many stewards as possible to run meetings with co-workers and management by themselves. This gave the union a big boost. We also publicized our activities, especially our victories.

## BRINGING PEOPLE IN

Soon, word was out that the union was alive and growing. Workers in other areas asked to become stewards. We asked them to help on a project and then brought them aboard.

Within a year and a half, we had 35 stewards and the union was winning some victories. Things were far from perfect, but management knew that the union was there.

I was then re-assigned to LAC-USC Medical Center, with over 3,500 workers. There was already a council there of about 40 stewards. Working with the leadership, we organized more issue campaigns and recruited many more stewards.

The council put out a monthly newsletter with three regular articles: (1) a victory that the union had won at the facility, (2) a current campaign that we invited workers to join, and (3) an invitation to become a steward.

Stewards councils make a big difference. When workers have one, they feel that they are the union—and that they have power.

Paul Krehbiel is a Field Representative/Organizer with SEIU Local 660 in Los Angeles. For more information about building a stewards council at your workplace, contact him at paulkrehbiel@earthlink.net or 626-398-5101.

*Health and Welfare  
Fund Questions?*

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**Class  
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**Mailbox 3**

## **The song remains the same if we let it**

– Jon Maloy

Business Agent, Local 205

Being alive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can be a big deal. A new century, a new millennium, seems a good time to stop and take stock of things. One hundred years ago the IA was a newbie in the entertainment world. Local 205 was still five years away. One thousand years ago things were extremely different. The state of the human condition was a product of a lack of knowledge of the world around us. Populations were beset with famine, disease, pestilence and war. We haven't the luxury this millennium of ignorance. Today people can live without these scourges if they can afford to. Two thousand, five hundred kids go to school hungry, today, here, in Austin. I don't get it. We have world-renowned electronics, music, football, cyclists, and hunger.

Dolly Parton got me thinking. I listened to her sing "Stairway to Heaven" many times. I was working at the Varsity on the Drag in the late 70's showing the Led Zeppelin movie for six weeks while the owners were trying to sell the theatre. I like that song, and her version is amazing. Later that day on ACL John Fogerty played "Fortunate One". I pondered the rediscovery of these two songs and tried to see the connection. About a week later I watched the movie "V" for vendetta. The character Gordon ended my dilemma with this statement: "You wear a mask for so long you forget who you were beneath it". Time is not meant to make those things that are not acceptable the norm. Ignorance is the only excuse for hunger and disease and war. There is enough food to feed all the world. That we are beset with a group of people on this planet determined to accumulate as much wealth as possible by maintaining a price on the necessities of life is why we have hungry kids in Austin. A far cry from the ignorance of 1006 AD.

Volunteer to help with some organization. Address those concerns that may have been behind the mask for too long. As an organization we can adopt a charity and contribute our combined efforts. As an individual you are the most powerful force around. This year we helped out at an elementary school, the Paramount and some area high schools. We can show the best of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but we need you to do it. Thank you to all the volunteers.

## **The Organizing Fund Needs You!**

**Membership contributions are needed.  
Please donate what you can. If you  
cannot donate money, please donate  
some time.**

### **Steward's Corner**

Sisters and Brothers,

Some of you already know, but for others: Local 205 has created a Stewards Council, Brother Martin Blacker is the chairman.

We've worked with the BA to create a steward's packet for each job that includes things like the contract, accident report forms, steward's report forms, and other tools to help the job steward fulfill their duty of representing the Local and enforcing the contract in effect.

Here's the Council's mission statement:

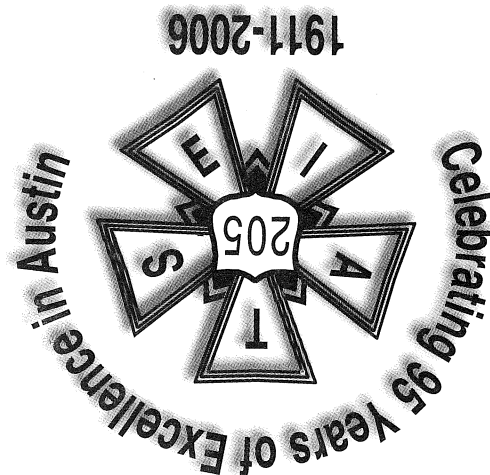
To assist the Business Agent and improve solidarity in Local 205 by:

1. formalizing steward training,
2. establishing a list of steward qualifications,
3. creating a stewards certification test for the Local to administer,
4. establishing an open forum for communication among the local's stewards,
5. creating a system of mutual support among the Local 205 stewards.

That's all for now. Look for more editions of the "Steward's Corner" in upcoming issues of Stage Call.

In solidarity,  
Brad Wilson





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STAGE CALL Newsletter

This issue of Stage Call sponsored by Walter Olden and Olden Lighting!

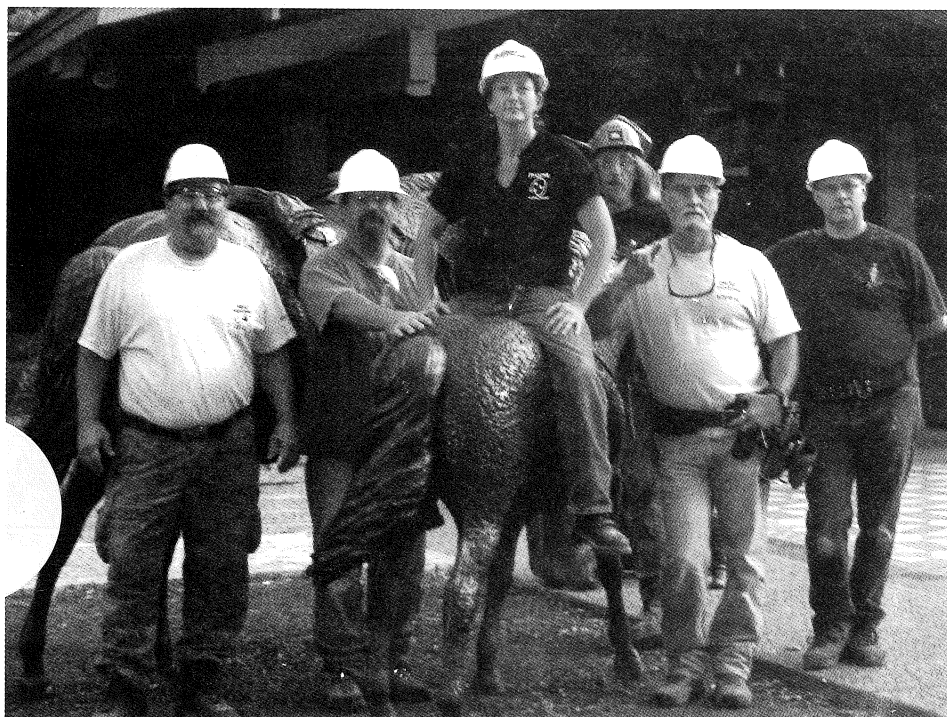


### IATSE Local 205

For ninety-five years, the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Local 205, has been serving the Austin area as the labor union representing technicians, artisans and crafts persons in the entertainment industry, including live theatre, concert and convention events. We are the source for professional experienced personnel, including Stagehands, Scenic Carpenters, Properties Personnel, Projectionists, Riggers, Wardrobe Personnel, Lighting Technicians, Sound Technicians, Audio/Visual Technicians, Camera Operators, and Decorators. We can cover your stagecraft needs from corporate meeting to musical theatre. Contact the Business Representative of Local 205 for information on staffing your production.

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### IATSE Local 205 Installs Equipment at the University of Texas at Austin

Our local worked five weeks last summer for Southwest Sound from San Antonio installing audio, video and computer wiring and flat screen TVs in the press boxes at the UT-Austin Memorial Stadium. It was a pleasure working with another local company. Above, from left, brother Jim Willis brother Pete Burns, sister Maverick Goodson, brother Charlie King, brother Jim Fr other Britton Parnell.