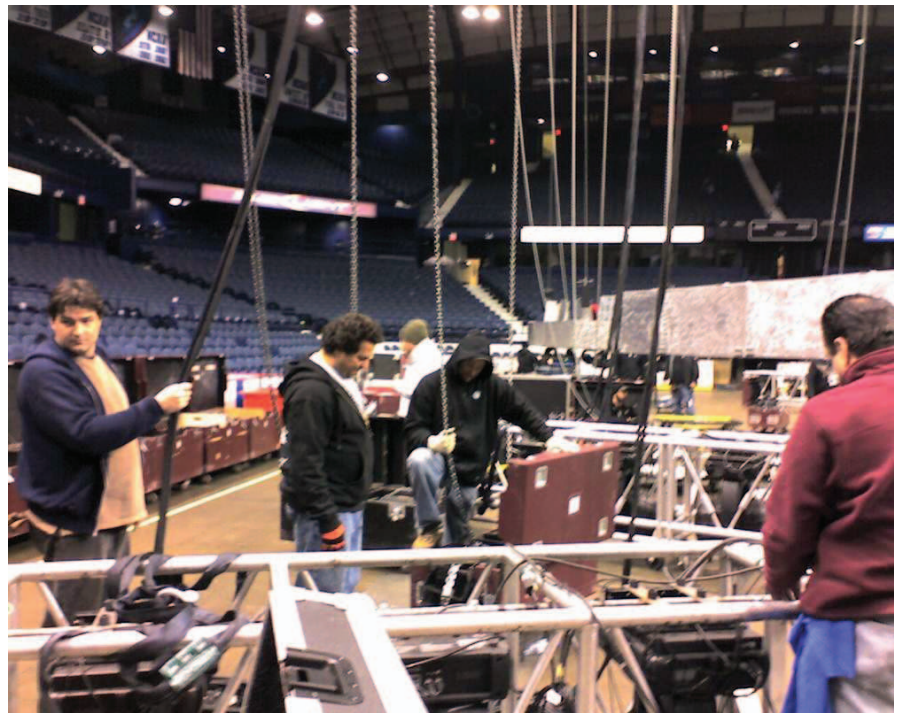


Local 2 emphasizes ongoing training, safety, and ETCP certification for their members

FOR MORE THAN 120 YEARS, the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) has been the leader in furnishing workers to facilitate every need of the entertainment industry. It's our union's ability to supply endless numbers of the best qualified people to perform each job safely and efficiently that will help maintain our status as the premier work force in the entertainment industry. To help make that goal certain, International President Matthew D. Loeb has made training a number one priority. He broadened training throughout the IATSE by making education available to all members. Whether in stagecraft, motion picture, trade show, television, or broadcast production, training is available and encouraged. He spearheaded an international training fund that helps defray all costs. President Loeb's foresight will keep IATSE well prepared, able to operate cutting edge technology, and relevant for generations to come.

“The stage crew is the last line of defense between the designer's dreams and the reality for the audience.”

The entertainment industry is often perceived as glamorous, but it's actually very dangerous. Major Broadway productions today typically have more winch automation and chain motors used to move scenic elements than a traditional theatre's counter-weighted house system pipes. Rock and roll production has become more



Large rigs of audio and lighting equipment are suspended above the talent and audience in major arena shows.

reliant on flying artists and moving lighting trusses over audiences. A large rock show today hangs more than fifty tons of audio and lighting gear from the structural steel of major arenas. Often, spotlight operators perform their work 40-50' overhead, suspended by portable structures that were installed just hours before.

Outdoor concerts are even more reliant on precision, as the stage and steel used to suspend audio and lighting needs is itself portable and built onsite. The utilization of mechanized special effects has grown exponentially. Chicagoland's classical music

venues such as Lyric Opera and Symphony Center find themselves relying on chain hoists to move anything from 50' wide movie screens to huge scenic units, which weigh tens of thousands of pounds. The stage crew is the last line of defense between the designer's dreams and the reality for the audience. It is incumbent on IATSE members to safely and efficiently mesh the two into a successful and memorable event.

It was at the 2006 IATSE summer executive board meeting that I first heard about the Entertainment Technician Certification Program (ETCP). The

Stagecraft Department Directors, Brian Lawlor and Tony DePaulo, informed those present of the various credentials that were fast becoming an industry standard and an internationally recognized program. The three ETCP credentials: arena rigging, theatre rigging, and entertainment electrician certifications all cover major portions of work as it relates to stagecraft. Those three areas of our craft also involve the most risk of injury, to not only the people who perform those duties but to all

that work or perform on the job site, and spectators that attend the production.

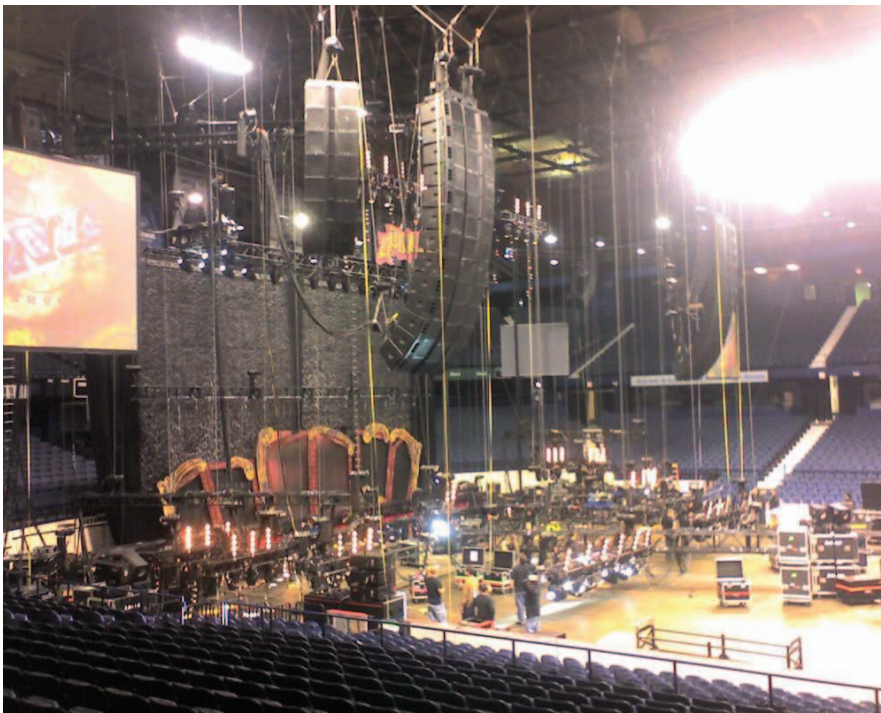
It was very apparent that when the IATSE embraced this initiative along with employer sponsors such as Disney Theatrical Productions, Live Nation, NBC Universal, and others, that ETCP credentials would become essential and could potentially be a prerequisite to perform the work to which it relates. It didn't take long for that requirement to become even more obvious.

At the following winter executive

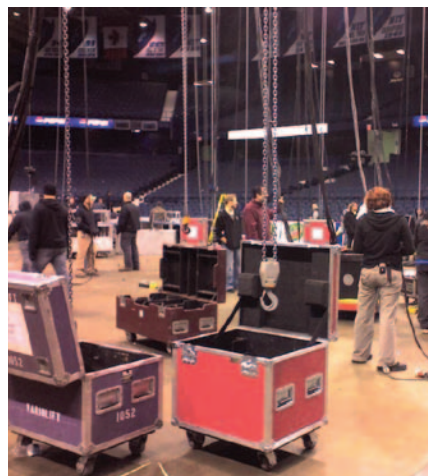
board meeting, members learned that the Washington State Convention Center mandated an ETCP rigging certification be held by all people performing any rigging work in that building. That stipulation earned the Washington State Convention Center a liability insurance discount, which further validated the ETCP credential. An insurance company actually recognized that people credentialed through ETCP limits rigging liabilities by helping assure that the job is done using safe practices by qualified people. That made a lot of sense; it sure received the attention of the IATSE. Its locals began to mobilize toward attaining ETCP credentials, and Chicago Stagehands Local 2 was no exception. We began to explore ways to get our members better trained through ETCP.

In the spring of 2007, Local 2 set up the first of many rigging seminars to help better train riggers in the various math formulas, geometry, load ratings, and other safe practices related to rigging in order to help create safer and more efficient work sites. The first seminar we hosted was taught by Harry Donovan, and almost 60 people attended. After a five day seminar, which was eight hours per day, I was stunned that nobody immediately applied to be tested for a certification. In hindsight, our mistake was that we didn't set up onsite testing to take place immediately after our seminar. Although we had several members become ETCP certified in 2007, it wasn't until we began linking the timing of the ETCP test to the rigging seminars that we began getting more people credentialed. We began the practice of immediately testing post-seminar in 2009.

In June of 2009, we reached out to Stage Rigging's (now a Freeman Company) Chris Schmidt to establish regularly scheduled rigging seminars followed by an ETCP test. The testing was arranged through ETCP's Meredith Moseley-Bennett. We found it to be very important to schedule the test to follow the seminar, preferably the afternoon of the last seminar day. Rocky Paulson, former owner of Stage Rigging and an old



Training is IATSE's number one priority—to keep the audience, talent, and crew safe. IATSE is providing the training for our members to be knowledgeable, well educated in their craft, skilled to recognize potential problems early, and safety conscious on the job.



roadie, taught the class. Rocky is a solid choice, as he does a great job explaining the math formulas and well tested safety practices to the group. Rocky is also trusted and respected by many, if not all, of the local riggers throughout North America, as he worked personally with them throughout his career.

“... the Washington State Convention Center mandated an ETCP rigging certification be held by all people performing any rigging work in that building.”

We began our Entertainment Electrician Seminars in 2010. Instructor Richard Cadena was recruited to help us train our people on portions of the content outline. Richard is also well known and respected in the entertainment industry. Local 2's membership has been terrific in attending classes and following through by taking the exams. It hasn't been easy for the members, but they are committed to being the best in the industry; they sacrifice by foregoing paying jobs in order to attend seminars and often pass on a well deserved night off to study for a test. They are a dedicated membership, and their results have been tremendous. Local 2 currently has more ETCP Certified Riggers and Electricians than any other organization in the world. As of this writing, we have more than 100 ETCP certified technicians who hold more than 130 certifications with some members credentialed in all three disciplines.

“The ETCP certifications... have paid huge dividends in keeping people safe and making us more efficient.”

The importance of training and ETCP credentials has the full attention of New York's Local One (read the ETCP News column in the Winter 2013 issue of *Protocol* for an update on Local One's ongoing training efforts). In the last year, their



It is not unusual today for tons of audio and lighting gear to be hung over people's heads.



educational program has produced more than 100 ETCP certifications. Philadelphia, Las Vegas, and other locals have also stressed the importance of ETCP certification and they've been diligently training their memberships.

The ETCP certifications, along with educational classes in other areas of our craft, have paid huge dividends in keeping people safe and making us more efficient. Our employers, audience, talent, and our fellow workers count on our ability to do it right the first time. Production schedules allow for nothing less than perfection. Unlike a .300 batting average or a 75% pass completion statistic, we must be right 100% of the time. Training our people to be

more aware of safe practices, to recognize potential problems, and to correct them in a timely fashion will help us keep our industry safe. ■



Craig Carlson began in Local 2 as an apprentice at Chicago's Lyric Opera in 1979. In 1988 he studied sound reinforcement at Columbia College and joined the Ravinia Festival audio crew in 1990. Ravinia hired

Craig in 1999 as master carpenter and technical director. He was hired by Freeman Companies as technical director for the National Association of Homebuilders show opening ceremonies from 2000-2009. Craig was elected Local 2 Business Manager in 2005 and has been re-elected by acclamation in 2008 and 2011. He was elected President of the Chicago Entertainment Industry Labor Council in 2007 and 2011. In 2008 Craig was elected IATSE Vice President and re-elected in 2011.