

There's no such thing as "too safe"

INTERAMERICA STAGE INC. (IASI) HAS RECENTLY BECOME one of the foremost employers of ETCP Certified Riggers in North America, with our technicians holding a total of 15 ETCP certifications.

IASI founder, Mark Thomas Black was an early supporter of ETCP and has encouraged and assisted his employees to take the important career step towards certification. Mark's own stage rigging career started overseas in 1978 and he has been involved with the planning and outfitting of many major performing arts centers and opera houses throughout the world.

We often works under short deadlines and must complete work within tight time spans. One day we could be dealing with a custom

show control system for a theme park or a theatre rigging system in a performing arts center. Sometimes we even install priceless works of art, fall protection, lifts, netting systems, and so on. Our riggers must make the right choices at the right times under substantial time, cost, and safety pressures. Our employees come from a wide background: union stagehands and ironworkers make up the majority of field personnel. The field teams are supplemented by specialists from regional theatre, entertainment automation, and the construction industry. ETCP Certification gives us a common ground from which to consider safety.

"We sometimes joke about 'making the world safe for theatre' but in the process of studying for and taking the ETCP rigging exams, our employees cross a boundary in the professional world that cannot be obtained thru hands-on experience alone" says, Mark. "ETCP certification measures a technician's competency. With knowledge and skill you enable an effective performance team. Having a certified technical staff sends a message to clients that our people are well trained and provide more than just the basic skill set."

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To prepare for the arena exam, all of our candidates studied Harry Donovan's *Entertainment Rigging* and Jay Glerum's *Stage Rigging Handbook*, attended workshops, and reviewed lecture notes from a variety of sources. Classes, patent applications, materials specifications, product data sheets, and practical experience make up the remainder of the study aides. The candidate needs to be proficient with all of the common rigging materials, their safe working loads, and how those loads are determined.

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tremendous when taking your first exam in 20 years. When asked about the best way to tackle the exam, certificants said, "Save the hardest questions for last, put your name on your paper, check your work, stay calm and focused. Use all of the information provided and take a few minutes to look over the whole test before you answer any questions."

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Jack Hoffend, Sales Director, relates that "IASI benefits in several ways from the certifications. When bidding projects abroad; pricing is only a minor concern in relation to obtaining the services of a reliable qualified company." A job of size and substance will attract bidders from all levels of experience and backgrounds; the initial bid process may include a list of pre-approved installers and manufacturers; but often your company must provide a detailed profile to be approved before a proposal will be considered. The time, effort, and expense all pay off well for InterAmerica Stage.

ETCP certification goes hand in hand with our first-aid certifications and OSHA outreach training courses to provide our

technicians with the necessary credentials that enable them to work on substantial projects. "Safety is the most profitable option," states John Gitzy, General Manager. "Preventing one accident in a ten year span can pay for the entirety of our safety and ETCP training programs, including the ongoing classes and re-certification process."

"Since initiating our safety program in 1989 we have seen a steady reduction in our insurance premiums" continued John. "We certify all of our field supervisors and project managers thru ETCP and the OSHA 30 hour outreach program. Our workplace can range from a school in Florida or a theme park in Hong Kong. OSHA may only legally apply in the US but safe rigging practices are as universal as the laws of gravity." ■



Tyler Smith, MFA, is the Project Manager and Safety Director for InterAmerica Stage, Inc. which specializes in rigging services for all types of museums, theatres, schools, theme parks, and government facilities. Tyler worked in educational and regional theatre before joining the construction industry. He is trained as an OSHA Competent Person and holds ETCP Certification for both Arena and Theatre Rigging.

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