

## Two views from the air on ETCP

ZFX and ETCP

### ETCP is not just a card in my wallet

AT ZFX, WE GET ASKED A LOT OF QUESTIONS. “What do you guys do? Why do you wear kilts? Can you rig in our space?” And more recently, “What do you know about ETCP?”

Well, ZFX is a *flying* company. We provide flying effects for all types of live performance. When you specialize within the entertainment industry like we do, it means you have to deal with a broad market. We work all over the United States, and all over the world. We work in schools, theatres, arenas, churches, cruise ships, and just about any other type of venue. With 300+ shows a year, we see a lot of venues, collaborate with a lot of people, and we answer a lot of questions.

As I mentioned before, more and more we get asked about ETCP. Our Flying Directors on location get questioned by riggers, stagehands, unions, students, technical directors and production managers, parents, and teachers. It is not just our flying directors that get asked, but our producers too, the guys and gals who work to set up the contracts for our jobs. They regularly field questions about ETCP during the first few interactions with our clients. Some just want to know if we are “ETCP certified,” and others are seeking information about the program. Whatever the questions

are, we have quite a few responses, because as ETCP becomes more established in our industry, it has become more useful to ZFX.

The most noticed aspect of ETCP for ZFX is the individual certifications for our flying directors. Now as I stated before, ZFX is a *flying effects* company, we are not a *rigging* company. We not only provide and install the gear needed for flying, but we also train the cast how to perform in the air, the crew how to operate and maintain the flying system, and work with the creative team to create the choreography for desired effect. Rigging is only a means of getting our flying equipment into place. This being said, the rigging of our gear is still incredibly important for safety and performance reasons. It is typically the first thing that we do on location. The rigging also tends to be the part that most people backstage can relate to the easiest. So this means many of the first impressions that are formed on “Location – Day One,” focus on the rigging. “What does the equipment look like? How easily does it go together? How fast will it make it into the air? Does the ZFX person know what he or she is doing?”

“Every person who goes through the testing and certification process cannot help but increase their knowledge and reexamine the choices they make in their daily work.”

Having flying directors that are ETCP Theatre and Arena Riggers help get that first day off to a smooth start. It does not mean that we swagger around on stage, flash rigging badges, or commandeer lifts, but it allows our clients, and their crews, to know that while ZFX flying directors are artists, (and believe me, you *have* to be an artist to make an effective flying sequence) they are also experienced and knowledgeable riggers. It acts almost like a business reference for us. Those not so familiar with ETCP can go to the ETCP website to learn what the certification means and how it functions. Adding



flying to any show is exciting, but it also creates anxiety in terms of safety, art, and money. Making the decision to have our staff ETCP Certified has helped ZFX alleviate some of that anxiety, allowing us and our clients to get focused on the flying.

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While these on-site benefits are easy to see, ETCP has many others as well:

- ZFX is an ETCP Recognized Employer, meaning both our company and our ETCP Rigger flying directors are listed on the ETCP website.
- Networking within the ETCP community has led to more than a couple jobs for ZFX.
- We come across clients and venues that now request or even require ETCP.
- It has made working in Canada, where several venues and locals had adopted ETCP, easier for ZFX.
- ETCP visibly integrates ZFX, a special effects provider, into the rigging, and more general entertainment industry.
- Every person who goes through the testing and certification process cannot help but increase their knowledge and reexamine the choices they make in their daily work.
- It serves as a great starting point for students and younger technicians, pointing out resource individuals, outlining the areas of rigging and electrics knowledge they will need to be among the top in their field, and how to start keeping track of hours whether they will ever test or not.
- ETCP fosters a spirit of responsibility in its members.



that promotes safety, knowledge, and communication on the individual and community levels. **STU COX**

Personally, one of the things I like most about the program is that the concept for ETCP was not something forced onto our industry from outside. It was developed, and is maintained, by the input and support of our own vendors, service providers, employers, organizations, and individuals. The administrators of the program are names we recognize, and they are accessible. This makes ETCP not just a card in my wallet or a marketing tool for ZFX, but an ongoing process

## The knowledge from becoming ETCP Certified helps complete my job more efficiently

AS THE ONLY FEMALE FLYING DIRECTOR FOR ZFX, I run into a few different issues on the road. I doubt the guys get called “little lady” much (although they are wearing kilts), but who knows. Certainly that attitude is not as prevalent as it used to be, but when I run into doubters, it’s nice to have my little certification card.

I am glad I have both of my rigging certifications (and I am happy the test taking portion is over), and not just for show. Studying for the exams made me take more time to think about why we do things a certain way, instead of just accepting the way we have always done them. We are instructed to use design factors and consider safe working loads when rigging, but it is so easy to do things the way you were taught without understanding all the reasons why (in more than just an abstract way).



Studying for the exams also made me relearn the math and physics I didn’t think I would need when I was in school. I remember having to complete a project for my algebra class where we explained how math was used in a real-life context, via a profession of our choice. I thought it was a complete crock, and a waste of my time. Now of course, I do math all the time. Now, because it’s applicable, it is interesting.

“Studying for the exams made me take more time to think about why we do things a certain way, instead of just accepting the way we have always done them.”

If I hadn’t been prompted to take my exams, I don’t know that I ever would have used Harry Donovan’s book as more than a reference. Taking the time to go through and work out all the practice problems made me think about each of the steps in more

detail, and made me think things through even more thoroughly when on-site. One of my co-workers got very tired of me mumbling about resultant forces when we were rigging a complicated audience flight for a *Peter Pan*, but having all of that information in the back of my mind helped us wring out the system in a shorter period of time.

It has also been a confidence builder and an ice-breaker when I am out on the road. I have discussed test taking strategies and experiences with riggers from D.C. to Vancouver, and it has helped develop a rapport when working with new crew members. If we run into an issue on-site, I feel more confident that I can intelligently discuss different ways of doing something, because I now have a greater understanding of the rationales and objectives involved in how to rig the job safely and efficiently. **SANDY HARNED** ■



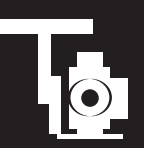







**Stu Cox** is an ETCP Certified Theatre and Arena Rigger, and the Manager of Flying Directors at ZFX, Inc. Besides keeping the flying directors focused on safety, creativity, and customer satisfaction, he can be found on location flying


Broadway shows like *Wicked* or installing ZFX gear for special events or large aerial effects.



**Sandy Harned** is an ETCP Certified Theatre and Arena Rigger, and a ZFX Flying Director. She has recently worked at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics providing the automated flag raisings, and will return

to Seoul this summer for her fifth South Korean tour of *Peter Pan*.



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### Upcoming exams at LDI

All three examinations will be offered for the first time at LDI2010 in Las Vegas. The deadline for submitting applications to sit for the paper and pencil examinations is **September 24**.

**Entertainment Electrical Exam:**  
**October 22, 2010 (2:00 pm)**

**Arena Rigging Exam:**  
**October 23, 2010 (9:00 am)**

**Theatre Rigging Exam:**  
**October 23, 2010 (2:00 pm)**

### Are you up for ETCP renewal?

If you were part of the inaugural class of riggers in 2005, your certification will come up for renewal in November 2010. The first group of Entertainment Electricians will need to renew in the fall of 2011. If you would like to move forward and get your recertification out of the way, you can send your logbook to the ETCP office along with your fee, and your certification will be valid for an additional five years from your recertification date. Don't have a logbook? Contact the ETCP office or download a copy on the ETCP website at <http://etcp.esta.org/>.