

ESTA's Midwest Rigging Intensive returns with a focus on touring rigging

ESTA's MIDWEST RIGGING INTENSIVE (MRI) will make its exciting return August 14–16, 2025 and will offer riggers across the industry an outstanding opportunity to build skills, earn ETCP continuing education credits, and connect with like-minded professionals. Hosted this year at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, MRI 2025 will deliver a unique training occasion with a specialized focus: Touring Rigging.

In 2022, the focus was on theatre rigging and in 2023, the focus was on arena rigging. This year offers elements of both rigging styles as a comprehensive approach to touring rigging. This intensive two-and-a-half-day event goes beyond lecture presentations to provide practical, hands-on training tailored to the challenges of touring productions. Whether navigating large arenas, traditional theatrical fly systems, or adapting to unconventional venues, riggers will leave MRI with insights that apply directly to the job. With sessions including: “Order of Operations for Tour Planning,” “Challenging Venues,” “Special Considerations,” “Dealing with Heavy Components,” and troubleshooting exercises, the curriculum reflects the evolving complexity of modern touring shows.

What sets MRI apart is not only its hands-on instruction but the instructors themselves. An impressive roster of ETCP Recognized Trainers—who are experts in entertainment rigging—collaborate to deliver training that is current, relevant, and based on real-life rigging situations. Attendees will learn more than one way to approach challenges when rigging a tour.

This year's training team:

- Bennett Brian, Reed Rigging
- Tyler DeLong, DeLong Rigging Solutions
- Mickey Henry, ETC
- Shane Kelly, Shane Kelly Rigging and DePaul University
- Rebecca Knipfer, ETC
- Ed Leahy, Chicago Flyhouse
- Verda Beth Martell, Theatre Consultants Collaborative
- Tracy Nunnally, Vertigo and Northern Illinois University
- Bridget Solini, Athena Theatrical
- Patrick Stewart, ETC
- Phil Van Hest, Bigger Hammer

For riggers at any stage of their career—from those early in their first few years to seasoned professionals—MRI offers an excellent chance to sharpen skills, learn new techniques, and network with peers committed to safety, professionalism, and best practices. Participants who are ETCP certified can earn all of their continuing education credits by attending.

The sense of community is a defining element of MRI. Beyond the rigging points and safety standards, this event fosters networking among professionals who are dedicated to the craft of rigging. Whether you are already ETCP certified or planning to become certified, MRI is an ideal training event to connect with others who share your commitment to excellence.

Registration is now open and runs through August 13. (Please note: Early bird registration ended June 27.) General registration is \$600, and students can attend for just \$300.

To register, visit esta.org/mri. Don't miss your chance to take part in this event.

Thank you to our Chain Level Sponsor, DeLong Rigging Solutions, for their generous support of MRI. Sponsorship opportunities are still available. If your company or organization would like to become a sponsor, please reach out to Program Manager for Membership & Events, Xenia Lappo, at xenia.lappo@esta.org.

In a field where precision and preparedness are everything, ESTA's MRI is a top-tier training choice. ■



Christina Smith is currently the Program Manager for the Entertainment Technician Certification Program (ETCP). She built a career in entertainment, working in both theatre and live events. She is part of the leadership team for Long

Reach Long Riders (LRLR) and has served on the Executive Committee of USITT Chesapeake. You can connect with her at christina.smith@esta.org.