

## Barbizon benefits from ETCP certification

IT SEEMS LIKE only a few years ago that the ETCP program was being announced, tests were being organized, and the industry was trying to figure out what ETCP Certification was all about. How would this new certification be incorporated into the fabric of our business? When the first testing date was announced, I knew I had to take part and be among the first to receive this new rigging certification.

I originally looked upon ETCP rigging certification as an endorsement of my knowledge base and a way to help others understand that rigging was not just a word used in theatre, but a skill and level of knowledge that held weight and meaning. If one proclaimed themselves “a rigger” it meant you had an understanding

of the forces at work overhead, on stage, and over the audience. The safety of fellow technicians, actors, students, or anyone on stage, was an overriding importance and following the correct procedures both when installing and operating stage rigging equipment makes a difference to our fellow workers.

In the years that followed after the first exams were instituted, something wonderful started to happen. At first, the established rigging installation companies sent their workers to be certified. This was great for them, but how would the rest of the industry respond?

For me at Barbizon, it meant I could proclaim to architects and engineers that I had ETCP Theatre – Rigging certification, adding a level of credibility and authenticity to my work that had not existed before in our industry. Over the next few years, it became apparent that rigging certification would become much more. I started incorporating requirements for rigging companies to have an ETCP Certified rigger on staff, as part of their quotation to us on projects. As more and more stage stagehands became certified, I was able to request that only ETCP Certified riggers be used for Barbizon installation work. Even though this did not always work out, it gave notice that Barbizon was looking for and expected riggers working with us to have ETCP rigging certification. What I did learn over the course of this process was that the quality of personnel we had on site kept improving. The IATSE had embraced the certification process early on and was actively promoting ETCP to its membership. Since we were constantly being pushed to use carpenters on some jobs and iron works on others, this allowed Barbizon to standardize and press general contractors to realize that that IATSE personnel with ETCP certification were a viable solution for installation projects.

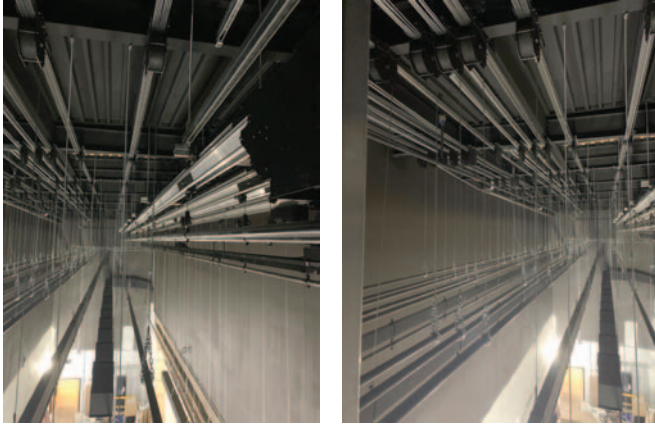


Barbizon installed the rigging system in the East Providence High School Performing Arts Center in Rhode Island. It was completed in November 2021.

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Once on site, having ETCP Certified riggers meant a lot. Now we have personnel that know and understand safe working loads, that are aware of what might be an unsafe condition and are able to bring it to our attention. Workers who are checking the mousing

conditions of shackles and turnbuckles, pointing out frayed wire rope, and comprehend the installation practices for chain. It also means they keep a look-out for our service techs when they are on site together, they can operate the rigging equipment for them, and keep everyone on site safe. From our project managers point of view,



Durfee High School in Fall River, MA, uses a hybrid rigging system of counterweight and motorized line sets. It was completed in December 2021.

they now have an added level of confidence in whom they hire to do work for us, knowing that it will be done correctly and not have to second guess if the work was completed safely. That level of comfort allows them to “get a better night’s sleep” according to one of our senior project managers.

An added benefit of having and using ETCP Certified riggers is the advanced knowledge of lift operation, safety and harness procedures, and the OSHA guidelines that go hand in hand with working around lifts and ladders.

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Finally, there is the continuous training component that comes from being ETCP Certified. The constant availability for continuing education, both on a local level, provided by ETCP Recognized Trainers, or on a national level at USITT, NAMM, and LDI conferences, has been a huge benefit for all. The abundance of training provides the opportunity to learn about new equipment, skills, and techniques and helps those with certification stay up to date with some of the latest innovations and safe practices.

For me, having and maintaining my ETCP certification over the last 16 years has been a privilege. It has allowed me to get to know other ETCP riggers, share experiences, and pick up a few new ways to do things. For many years prior, I observed questionable rigging practices in many areas. With the awareness that ETCP has brought to the industry and the training it has made available, I see a safer future for many theatre operations in the years to come. ■



**Scott Stipetic** is the Senior Systems Integrator for Barbizon Light of New England. He is responsible for new construction projects, renovations, rigging, lighting specifications, and sales for the New England area. Scott got his start working for Walt Disney World during the final months of construction of Epcot Center. He has a BFA in production from Carnegie Mellon University and an MFA from the University of Wisconsin. Scott is ETCP Theatre – Rigging Certified.

### Interested in learning about becoming ETCP Certified?

ETCP Certified technicians represent the top third of the industry! ETCP offers four certifications: Arena – Rigging, Theatre – Rigging, Entertainment Electrician, and Portable Power Distribution Technician.

Are you attending the USITT Conference and Stage Expo March 2 – 5? Check the ETCP website for more details on the ETCP Information Session at USITT. Find the date, time, and location at <https://etcp.esta.org/>. See you there.