

UC San Diego

UC San Diego News Center

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Renowned Set Designer Brings New Perspective to UC San Diego



Set of "Sideways," which ran in 2013 at the La Jolla Playhouse; written by UC San Diego Alumnus Rex Pickett, featured Alumna Zoe Chao (front center). Photo: La Jolla Playhouse

The Division of Arts and Humanities at the University of California, San Diego announces the appointment of Tony-nominated set designer Robert Brill as the newest faculty member in the top-ranked Department of Theatre and Dance.

“Robert Brill’s appointment is a major addition to our faculty that will solidify our reputation as a top national program for the next generation,” said Jim Carmody, chair of the department. “His national network of connections will be an asset for new student recruitment and in placing graduates in the professional world.”

Brill, a 1988 alumnus of UC San Diego's undergraduate program in theater and dance, is considered a leading figure in American theater. His set designs for theater, opera and dance have been featured on and off Broadway, in every major U.S. city and internationally during the past three decades. He is a founding member of Sledgehammer Theatre, and he received the Michael Merritt Award for Excellence in Design, as well as other drama distinctions.



Award-winning Set Designer Robert Brill. Photo: Robert Brill.

“This is such a wonderful opportunity to return to San Diego, an area that for the past 30 years has had a profound influence on the trajectory of my life and my career,” said Brill of his new role.

Returning to UC San Diego as a faculty member, Brill will teach set design and manage curriculum design in the university's M.F.A. scenic design program. He also will be responsible for recruiting, admitting, mentoring and supervising M.F.A. scenic design students. Importantly, Brill will be involved in the theater and dance department's season selection process and production supervision.

“He will bring new energy to the department as a whole and to the teaching of design at both the undergraduate and graduate levels,” said Carmody.

Student productions in the division's theater and dance department are integrally tied to curriculum: Hands-on, collaborative work provides an ideal

environment for students to make significant contributions on all aspects of a production, from lighting and sound design to acting, dance, directing and choreography. UC San Diego, in a unique and enterprising partnership with the La Jolla Playhouse, creates a vibrant, integrated environment for students.

Brill has a strong connection to the La Jolla Playhouse where he has designed nearly 20 productions and served as its first artist-in-residence during the 2013 – 2014 season. That relationship complements the support that students gain from the partnership between UC San Diego and the playhouse, which remains a wholly separate organization from the university.



Brill-designed set of "The Creditors," a 2009 La Jolla Playhouse production. Photo: La Jolla Playhouse

"I am eager to be at the creative epicenter of these dynamic institutions," said Brill, who begins teaching courses at the university Sept. 24, 2015 when the fall quarter begins. His best advice to students is to allow failure, which he deems as important as success.

"There's no right or wrong when it comes to the creative process, only finding a different perspective," offered Brill.

Brill's outlook has earned him several credits, including: "Assassins," (Broadway) for which he received a Tony nomination; the critically acclaimed revival of "Cabaret" at the Kit Kat Club and Studio 54; recent Broadway revivals of "Jesus Christ Superstar" and "Guys and Dolls," for which he received a Tony nomination. His work was also featured in Christopher Plummer's, "A Word for Two (Stratford Festival and Ahmanson Theater); the Broadway-bound musical, "Robin and the Seven Hoods," directed by Casey Nicholaw (Old Globe); "Sinatra: His Voice. His World. His Way" (Radio City Music Hall); "American in Paris" (Boston Ballet); "The Wiz" (La Jolla Playhouse); "Wozzeck" (San Diego Opera) and numerous additional productions.

For more information, visit the UC San Diego [Department of Theatre and Dance](#) and the [Division of Arts and Humanities](#) websites.

The Department of Theatre and Dance welcomes support through its [Student Production Fund](#) which helps to ensure the continuation of the exciting work that its students create at UC San Diego, known for its innovation.

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