



Notes from the President - Brad Yarhouse

Here in the great midwest the fall is quickly giving way to winter as we move from one season to another. The fall for me is marked every year by not just the turning of the leaves but by International Animation Day. I have been celebrating and organizing IAD for ASIFA Central for the past six years. Last year we showed in 2 locations. This year was one of our most successful with showings in 7 locations: South Bend Indiana, Detroit, Allendale, Mt. Pleasant, and Grand Rapids, Michigan, St. Louis Missouri, and Rochester, Minnesota.

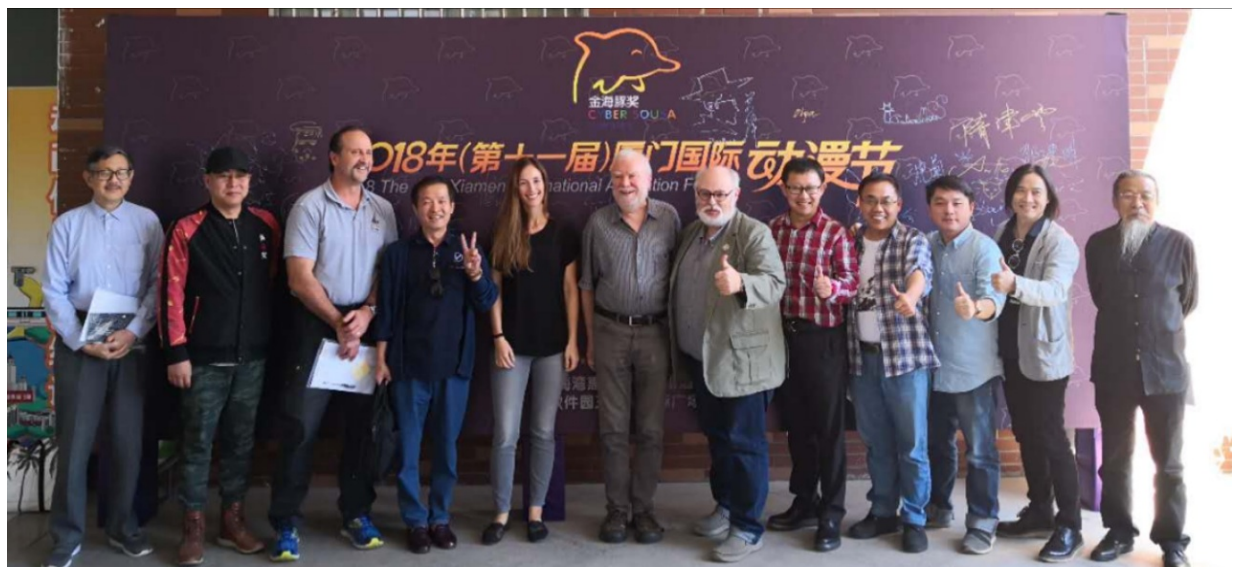
While this was going on throughout the midwest, I had the opportunity to travel to Xiamen China and act as a judge for the Xiamen International Animation Festival. International Animation Day happened to fall during my time in Xiamen and I had the opportunity to celebrate it with the ASIFA leadership from China.

Surprisingly, we watched few animations, much of our time was spent with a question and answer session between animators, students, visiting judges, local professors, and general public. It was amazing to be sitting in China watching films from Poland and Mexico and sharing ideas, concerns and information across cultures.

This year I took on the position of interim coordinator for the global ASIFA IAD and we are already preparing for next year's events. With the success of ASIFA Central's ANI-JAM based on this year's IAD poster I will be proposing a new ANI-JAM for 2019 potentially based on the new poster being developed in Greece by Giannis Koutsouris. Look for information about how you can participate after the first of the year.

Also launching after the first of the year will be our new updated website for ASIFA Central. Look for an announcement early in January about the relaunch.

While I was in Xiamen celebrating International Animation Day I was struck by how connected I felt to all these people for whom I couldn't even speak their language. We were gathered for our love of animation. Animators are the storytellers, the communicators of ideas and emotions. We inspire, and move people young or old, rich or poor from all ethnicities. Around the world, the pursuit of animation is an opportunity for our many voices to be visually expressed. I am excited about how we at ASIFA Central are sharing our vision with the rest of the world. My thanks to all of you for contributing and making our community possible.



ASIFA Central Retreat - Floating in the Lip Synch - Jim Middleton
The Retreat Date, encoded: 81118, or as it appears upside-down, 81118
Regardless, it was August 11, 2018.

On the moon
Marooned baboons
Consume balloons
To make cartoons"

Repeat after me, "On the moon, marooned baboons consume balloons to make cartoons." These words became a part of the ASIFA Central DNA during the first day of its August Retreat of 2018. The artists-in-their-new residence gathered in triumphant triumvirates to dissect and digest Dragonframe at the Grand Rapids Community Media Center. Each team was given the magic lunar incantation and all the resources and carbohydrates necessary to complete their mission.

Snowball iCE microphonetics captured the aural moment, and everyone had until lunch to wrap up their respective contributions for an afternoon showing. Some cut it close, some just skipped lunch. Some may still be there, pondering the meaning of marooned baboons.



After the consequences of undiluted animatistic activity, came the lively stepping of seeking undiluted technical difficulties, because as we all know, there is a war amid computers to prove which system is the most loaded with obsequious convolutions (that last phrase appeared in your humble typist's head following some general anesthesia, and it demanded inclusion somewhere in print. That somewhere is here. The humble typist apologizes).

In a darkened, hushed, expectant micro cinema, the "marooned baboons" came to life, the ASIFA Central anijam was premiered in its IAD format, and then came some "open mike" screenings:

Jim Middleton shared scar tissue from his Photoshop-centric Anijammery process, one he has promised himself to never attempt again.

Chris DeWitt discussed animation history and theory, with a theme of common growth in the process.

Dylan Shay went positively pickles with his "dirty farm animals" using TV Paint and an emphasis on hitting deadlines and completing the workflow.

Chris Sagovac brought out strips of blank 16mm film and dared the attendants to get all inky on them, with enhancements from 1980s era press-on letters (with Bombay India Ink being all that and a bag of chips, I can tell you!) for an upcoming analog experience he is working on. This is the first mail-order animation, and Blue Cross doesn't cover the copays.



Mack Mayo shared a six week project with a nod to Napoleon Dynamite and Sweetwater Sound.

Lindsay Moore of CMU modestly shared her delicate watercolor abstractions, animated to accompany a soundtrack she also wrote and performed.

And to round things up, Steve Leeper shared his process within Photoshop to create sequential animation cut from rectangular snips of a 1920 x 1080 size abstraction he created. The file size was immense, but with very satisfying results (this could be a group tutorial in itself).

The final keyframe was a nearly complete presentation of the Ottawa '18 showreel. The snoozing gremlins returned to wreck plans with their diabolical sabotage (gremlins...oh murder).

Nothing remained but to plan for the Sunday picnic, the three-legged races, the official falling cake ceremony, and a shared discussion of essential animation library basics, and whether cheese or humus makes for a better dip with nacho chips. It will take a few more picnics to reach a consensus on that controversy.

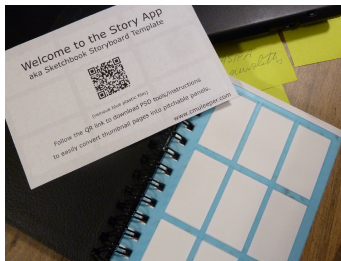




72 frames from each contributor created this Jam Session for ASIFA Central's tribute to the IAD 2018



The Amazing Storyboarding Notebook - It Practically Tells its Own Story



Steve Leeper, now guiding the expanding animation program at Central Michigan University, premiered his storyboarding notebook at the August retreat as well - a template aligns the image, the binder stores the ideas, and it's very analog and very portable! It was put to immediate use during the lip synch exercise. Holy Maroon baboons, Batman, it came with its own mechanical pencil!

Notes from Canada - Another Festival Experience - Charles Wilson

There are a lot of great festivals in Ontario, like the Ottawa International Animation Festival, the Toronto International Film Festival, and even the Montreal Stop Motion Festival in neighboring Quebec. However, there are also some smaller festivals out there in Canada that are worth a look. For example: the Toronto Animation Arts Festival International, where I spent the first weekend in November.

The Toronto Animation Arts Festival International will always hold a special place in my heart.

Back in 2014, after seventeen years of monthly payments, I had finally paid off my student loans. And as I wanted to do something special in order to celebrate my newfound financial freedom, and since I had been previously invited to TAAFI by friend and fellow animator Ben McAvoy (one of the co-founders of TAAFI), forty-eight hours after sending in that final payment and seeing that "\$0.00" balance on my account, I found a cheap hotel, bought my festival pass, and hightailed it to Canada yelling "Freedom" at the top of my lungs as I crossed the border.



Four years ago, TAAFI was a weekend event filled with presentations from industry insiders, short film screenings (and the occasional feature), a robust artists alley where students and professionals sold their art, a relaxed figure drawing arena where you could hang out and draw models, and the ever entertaining Nelvana bouncing ball party on Saturday night -- where I first saw the Cybertronic Spree.

This year was different. As I encountered Ben in the Corus building down by the harbor on Saturday morning, he stated that the responses which they had been receiving indicated there was so much to see and do at TAAFI that it was becoming a little challenging for attendees. If you wanted to see a film screening, it meant that you would miss out on one, or more, of the industry insider presentations (and vice versa). So this year, the leadership of TAAFI decided to test out an idea: break the festival into two dates and hold them several months apart.



The iconic CN tower identifies Toronto

This worked out well for me as the first weekend of November was the newly christened "TAAFI Industry Animation Conference" filled to the brim with the industry presentations I love so much. And as always, TAAFI did not disappoint!

The opening keynote was headlined by none other than Fred Siebert who delighted us with stories about how he fell into a career in animation almost by accident. My schedule then followed with a presentation from Jessica Borutski and Dan Haskett, all dealing with the challenges of character design. For those who don't know, Jessica is the Canadian animator whose work includes Ren and Stimpy, the Looney Tunes, and Bunnicula. And you may know Dan Haskett from his character designs seen in this little arthouse film produced by Disney called 'The Little Mermaid'. Yes, Dan was the man who did the initial designs for Ariel, Sebastian, and Ursula. And Belle for Beauty and the Beast.



Jessica Borutski and Dan Haskett from Friday's Character Design discussion with Barry Sanders moderating



Linda Siemensky, Jen Oxley, Austen Payne, and Michelle Melanson

Saturday was also filled with presentations about the state of the Canadian animation industry which left me interested in checking out the web series 'Gary and his Demons' and the show hilariously named 'Captain Canuck' -- both darkly humorous looks at the horror and superhero genres respectively. Fun fact: The Canadian comic book industry imploded shortly after World War II due to the lifting of trade restrictions and the imposition of censorship. So when "Captain Canuck" debuted in 1975, it became 'the first successful Canadian comic book' since 1947, according to Wikipedia anyways.

The last presentation for the day was "The Big Pitch". Moderated by animation director Barry Sanders, two teams presented their ideas for animated shows to a jury consisting of Jessica Borutski, Jen Oxley, and Linda Siemensky. The winner was Hamin Yang, a scriptwriter who was working on a pilot for his show idea. For those interested, Hamin's show is about an aging movie star who wants to

be in the reboot of the show that launched his now flagging career. But in his misguided quest for a treatment that would make him young again, he ends up becoming a white man trapped in a young Chinese man's body. The rest of Yang's pilot was a funny and touching series of events as the main character learned the trials and tribulations of navigating Hollywood as an Asian. Hamin Yang filled his time telling stories relating frustrations with Asian stereotypes, dealing with the hypocrisy in PC culture, and the problems of trying to find an Asian woman who is interested in dating an Asian man -- most of which made it into the animated clips seen in his self-financed pilot. Afterwards, I had to congratulate him and thank him for pitching a show that I found immediately relatable given that part of my extended family is Vietnamese.

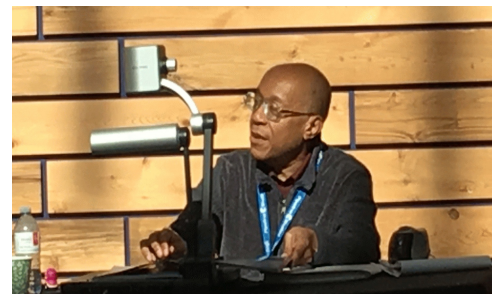
My Saturday ended early as I skipped the annual Bouncing Ball party -- was fighting a sore throat so figured a couple extra hours of sleep would do me some good.

Sunday began on a very strong note as, for two-and-a-half hours, Dan Haskett detailed his career in animation working on such varied properties as the Little Mermaid, Alvin and the Chipmunks, Looney Tunes, Raggedy Ann & Andy: A Musical Adventure, and the Simpsons, among others. Soft spoken and engaging, Dan punctuated his presentation by drawing characters under the camera and gifting students and professionals alike advice from his forty-two years of life spent working in animated film.

Next, TAAFI brought Michelle Melanson, Jen Oxley, and Austen Payne to the stage for a discussion on women working in the field of animation ably moderated by Linda Siemensky. Austen, the youngest of the group, talked about facing the challenges of breaking into the industry as a young woman. The more mature Michelle and Jen discussed the work/life balance especially when you want to have a family but still maintain a career. All the while, Linda would interject stories about what the American animation industry was like for women ranging from the 1980's to the present day.

The rest of the day was a blur as attendees shuffled from one lecture hall to the other in order to hear about building an animation career in the Canadian market and working (and surviving) as an independent animator.

When I left Toronto for my five hour drive back to Michigan, I was already constructing plans for making the drive back in February for TAAFI part two: the animation screenings.



Dan Haskett discussing his animated career

International ASIFA - Compai! Cheers! Domo Arigato Gozaimasu! Thank you!
Some notes from the Hiroshima International Animation Festival 2018 - Deanna Morse



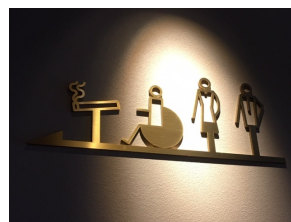
This year marked the 17th International Animation Festival, held in Hiroshima, Japan at the end of August. Founded in 1985 by husband and wife animators Renzo and Sayoko Kinoshita, the festival runs every two years, with the theme Love and Peace. It is one of a very few festivals sanctioned by ASIFA. This honor comes from the way the festival is organized, honoring filmmakers and animation art.

I have had the honor of attending every festival since 1998, when I served on the selection committee viewing 1127 entries and selecting only 64 for competition. This year, they screened 2,842 entries, with only 75 selected for competition. It is a very competitive festival!

However, some of the films are in other programs, too – Student Programs, Animation from the World, Animation for Children, Animations for Peace. And the Animation Workshop Group Premiere! ASIFA/Central was represented with our children’s film under the theme “A Funny Story.” There are three screening halls with programs all day, each day.

In addition, there are more informal ways to connect with others. There is the annual picnic, hands on activities, art exhibits, a school exhibition area, two meeting rooms for behind the scenes talks with filmmakers. There are DVD and book sales, and snacks. There is a Seven Eleven store right across the street.

The festival mascot is a sort of a white seal like character, with a big red nose, called Lappy, and the local Lappy club organizes some cultural activities – visit a temple, have a tea ceremony, tour the Peace Park, how to wear a kimono. The last night, a young Estonia animator proudly wore his kimono to the bar after party, held at the tex-mex bar across the street. It is a bustling festival, with much to do. Lappy made several on stage and lobby appearances, and that ballooned up mascot can dance! There is always something happening. The main lobby had a great seating area for meet and greet.



Lappy and a full moon!



Deanna with festival volunteers

Oh, and this year, there was the ASIFA General Assembly, held every three years, and we had preparatory board meetings and executive board meetings.

And, of course, the traditional parties. The rooftop party, the ASIFA Japan party, and the elegantly catered opening and closing receptions. You won’t go hungry at this festival.

All of this based just steps away from the Hiroshima Peace Park, such a profound and beautiful memorial of war and destruction. It is hot and muggy outside in August, and the cicadas are in concert. But in the air-conditioned festival hall, the warmth comes from the friendships and the connections with other animators.

Next festival is August 2020. Put it on your calendars. You will be so welcomed there. It is a bucket list festival, well worth the long flight to go there.

More at: Hiroanim.org

Animation Clips

Gary Schwartz in Armenia - *Locomotion* - <https://youtu.be/DPaGIM5QVH4>

Students at the Tumo Center for Creative Technologies created an animated film expressing the power & movement of locomotion in this animation workshop. It’s an intensive hands-on kinetic visual storytelling animation workshop project.

Rudolph the Reindeer (not a red scent here!)

Here is a link to a Christmas themed video by Chelsea Manifold and former ASIFA Central member, now living and working in NYC. She made this for College Humor (update provided by Gretchen Vinnedge). *Rudolph the Reindeer* - <https://youtu.be/n-BreS9xQSk>



TUMO Animation Crew

Potential CMCFunding Disaster

The date has passed for public comments, but it is important that we are all aware that, even with a slight tilt to governmental direction in November, there remain many things being manipulated to tighten access and release of information. Here are some excerpts from a letter recently sent to Gretchen Vinnedge, Education Director for the CMC, who has always been open to hosting activities for ASIFA Central.

Jim Middleton, ASIFA Central Secretary

We here at Community Media Center want to let you know about a threat to the organization's funding that is on the verge of being implemented.

A proposed policy change from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) could have the effect of eliminating a primary source of funding for Community Media Center. That threatened funding is referred to as "franchise fees," and pays for the Public and Education cable television channels operated by CMC's GRTV. These channels are free speech platforms and exist for providing a place for the voices of our community.

Here are some of the details:

The proposed FCC policy would significantly change the structure in place for "franchise fees" – a structure that has been in place since the 1980s. The change would allow cable companies to essentially charge local municipalities for access to historically "in-kind" resources such as cable channels, I-net services, and access to the system to deliver content over these channels.

These in-kind resources are part of the public service obligation of cable companies for the ability to use public land to run their cable and fiber network for profit.

The ability for a cable company to charge municipalities for these in-kind services would cost our local governments millions of dollars. Local governments would be forced to choose between supporting community media or the millions of dollars of lost revenue.

This policy could eliminate the free access that community media centers provide to people to create their own media and broadcast it over the cable system. You could lose government transparency provided through televised local government meetings. This policy change could reduce your access to diverse information, the arts, and local voices in media. One of our most powerful and democratic community resources could be lost.

This is a historic decision-making process and today is the deadline for you to comment with your concerns.

CMC is working diligently to protect this community-benefit funding, and will continue to protect free speech platforms. With your help, we are here to do the vital work of "Building Community Through Media."
Linda Gallesch, Executive Director, Community Media Center

The Very Late ASIFA Central Autumn Newsletter - typist, edit, technical difficulties and errors by Jim Middleton, ASIFA Central Secretary (jim.middletonrx@gmail.com)
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