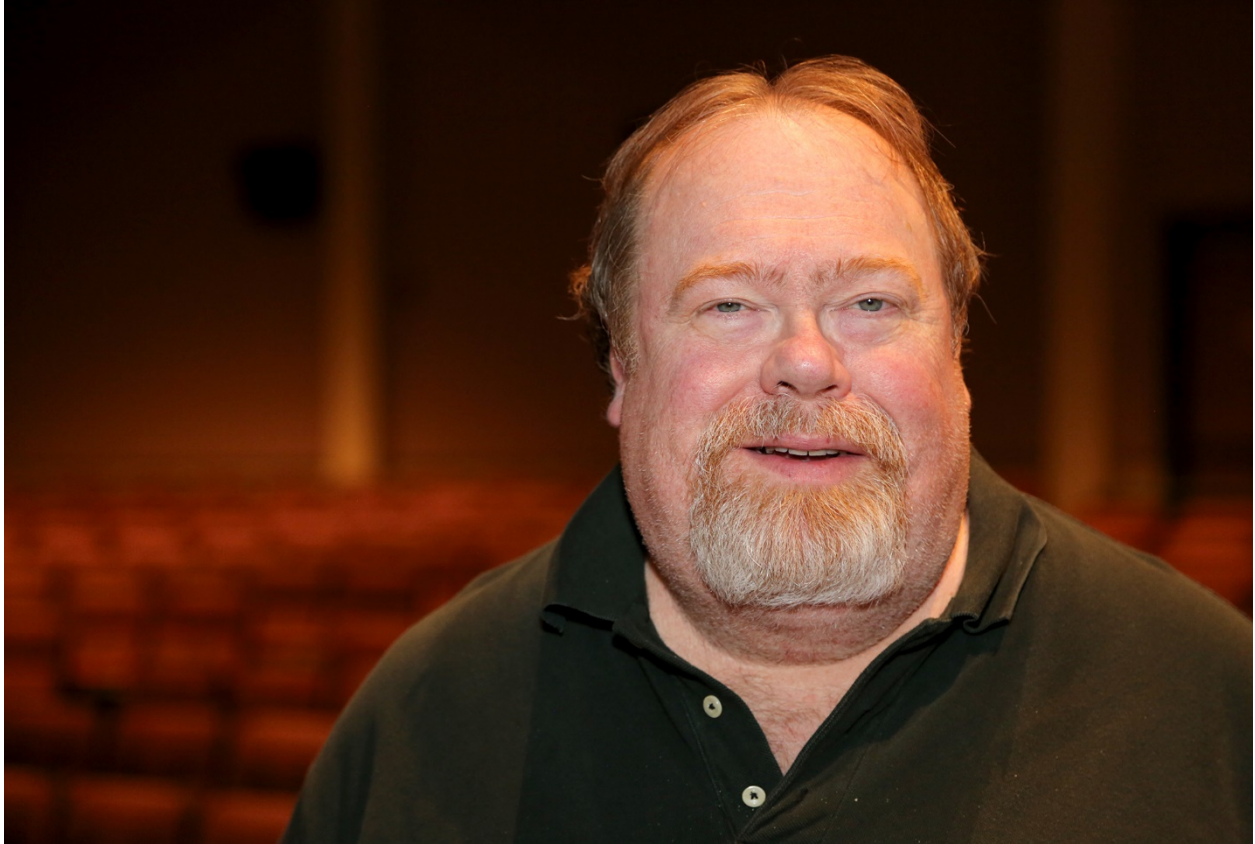


Succop Theater's leading man exits BC3 stage

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Larry Stock, of Butler, is shown in Butler County Community College's Succop Theater in this Nov. 1, 2019, file photo. Stock, who curated BC3's Performing Arts Series and helped to stage community and other organizations' performances, has retired after nearly 19 years as director of BC3's Cultural Center.

(Butler, PA) Rarely was Larry Stock in the floodlights, more likely viewing them from his spot facing a dashboard of consoles and monitors and keyboards behind Row L in Butler County Community College's Succop Theater.

While himself not awash in the blues and reds and greens alternating from lamps concealed by the Succop Theater's proscenium arch, it was Stock who had been at center stage for nearly 19 years as director of BC3's Cultural Center.

Stock, who retired Nov. 13, curated up to 12 performances in each of 18 seasons as part of BC3's Performing Arts Series, which brought to Butler shows that entertained audiences "with things," he said, "they normally wouldn't see in Butler."

He sold tickets, at times transported performers to and from the Pittsburgh International Airport, organized their lodging, helped to unload their equipment.

He planned for performers' hot meals – “working with local restaurants to cater,” he said, “and arranging for meals to be delivered and set up” – and cold snacks, some of which were “just a little strange.”

“People who wanted a certain type of cereal bar or yogurt or hummus, some kind of organic juice. Something that we normally wouldn't have,” Stock said. “It was up to me to secure all that. I would actually go to the grocery store, buy it and set it up in the green room.”

Lineups of national, international acts

He greeted guests as they mingled outside the Succop Theater, in AK Steel Lobby, then returned inside the 442-seat venue, behind Row L, as the house lights dimmed, the red curtains parted and the floodlights introduced the audience to singers or dancers or orchestras.

His efforts, outside the floodlights, repeated show after show after show, season after season after season, “just make sure that everyone who came into the Succop Theater had a wonderful experience,” Stock said.

Stock, of Butler, is among BC3 employees who have retired this fall or will retire by Dec. 31 as part of early retirement options made available to eligible employees.

In Stock's nearly 19 years as director of BC3's Cultural Center, the Succop Theater drew an average of 7,000 visitors annually to community performances and to BC3's Performing Arts Series events.

He worked to stage productions in the Succop Theater by community organizations such as the Greater Harmony Chorus, the Hob Nob Theatre, Butler's Musical Theatre Guild, Sing Hosanna! and the Summer Dramatics Project.

Helped to stage performances in the Succop Theater by Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania's dance department during the university's renovation of Miller Auditorium.

Helped to showcase special performances in the Succop Theater by the Gatlin Brothers and Sammy Kershaw.

He brought to Butler the Tamburitians and The National Players as part of BC3's Performing Arts Series. Canadian fiddlers The Fitzgeralds. Israeli dancers Sheketak. Mexican musicians Tlen Huicani. India sitar player Shafaatullah Khan.

Fears of leaving Civic Light Opera in dark

He brought to Butler the Pittsburgh Philharmonic, whose December 2005 show – one of dozens at the Succop Theater – was delayed nearly an hour by an ice storm that closed Route 8, stranded the conductor on Route 228 and 20 members of the symphony orchestra, dapperly attired, at a gasoline station 12 miles south.

“Anybody who could perform anything, we put them on the stage,” Stock said.

He brought to Butler the Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera, whose Aug. 10, 2002, performance was to shine the floodlights on BC3’s new Succop Theater – as well as on the musicians.

Except there were no floodlights.

Construction of the venue was completed Aug. 6, when Stock first toured the stage – three days before the Aug. 9 ribbon-cutting with Butler dignitaries, and four nights before the “big, black-tie gala for the opening.”

The company with which Stock consulted in designing the stage had forgotten to place the order for the 44 floodlights Stock expected to be concealed by the Succop Theater’s proscenium arch – or at least ready to be concealed by it.

Stock, up to 30 community members, theater consultants and their friends quickly “did everything we could with the other lights that we had,” he said. “Trying to put the lights together, to get them hung, to get them circuited.

“I was thinking, ‘This is it. I’m done. It’s not going to work.’”

During the ribbon-cutting, Stock saw a lighting company truck approach a loading dock behind the Succop Theater, left the ceremony, ran backstage and shouted: “The lights are here!”

Within hours, “a huge sigh of relief,” he said. “It did work, and it was a glorious evening.”

Much like those Stock curated, outside the floodlights, outside the alternating blues and reds and greens, for the next 18 seasons at BC3.

“A wonderful, wonderful experience”

“The most rewarding part was when we would get everything done, and I would be able to sit in the back and watch what was going on, see the reaction of the audience and how much they appreciated it,” Stock said.

“That is such a nice feeling, to be able to present these performances to our community. That made the job worthwhile. There were a lot of things going on in the background.

“But when we finally got to the performance, it just made it all worth it. It was just such a wonderful, wonderful experience.”