

## Member Spotlight: Rachel Richardson



**How did you get your start in the Industry?** After graduate school, I returned to the Los Angeles area where I grew up and ended up waitressing while trying to make my way in life. A co-worker introduced me to a friend who was crewing up an indy film. I interviewed and was accepted as Set PA Intern with an up and coming independent film company call IRS Media located in Universal City. They were a sister company to the independent recording label, IRS Records. They liked me and my work and invited me to be on the crew as the Key Set PA for their next feature film. After that, they hired me to work on their staff and trained me to fill their need of a Production Accountant assistant. I did string of low-budget, career launching feature films with them over the following two years before free-lancing. Eventually I moved over to HBO with the line producer who had originally hired me as an intern. I worked with HBO on a pilot for a mini-series which shot on location in St Paul, and then an HBO Anniversary show back in Hollywood. After marrying, my husband and I moved to the Twin Cities to raise a family. As a MN freelancer, I have been fortunate to work on most of the studio produced films and larger independent films over the past 20 years in the Twin Cities. Once my last of three children entered 1<sup>st</sup> grade, I was available to take regular full time employment which lead me to Best Buy's Yellow Tag Video Production Team nearly three years ago.

**What influenced you to enter into the Entertainment world?** My older sister introduced me to stage performance, choir and band when she was in high school. My dad provided the opportunity to take piano lessons at a young age and always made sure we had a piano in our homes as children and as adults. This type of exposure lead to a great appreciation for the arts. My dad was self- employed and ran a sign company. During the summer months while in college, I worked in his office taking care of the financials and running errands. Little did I know at the time how valuable that experience would be to my livelihood as an adult.

**What is your educational background?** BA in Theater Arts from California State University, Long Beach and a Master of Fine Arts in Theatrical Directing from the University of Arizona.

**What are you currently working on?** I am the Senior Production Accountant on the Operations Team for Yellow Tag Productions. This team primarily produces internal and external video communication pieces for Best Buy. I handle their financial activity and business affairs. I am currently working on a Sharepoint site design and implementation for my team that will increase production efficiencies and project management.

**What is your favorite story to tell about working in this industry?** One of the fascinating aspects of film production are the mechanics that occur just outside of the camera frame. The massive amount of coordination and activities that are divided up among a cast and crew of film makers is a work of art in itself. It is like big con game in which a city is set up for only a given period of time to achieve a specific goal for, then it completely vanishes as though it never existed. It was a special treat to be part of the Coen brothers production team for A Serious Man because they were an ensemble of key players who arrived with a history of working together. It was a well-oiled machine with high levels of creativity and organization which resulted in masterful execution of feature film production. Everyone fortunate enough to be involved in an experience like that walks away just a little bit sharper than when they started. We had a spacious production office setup and the Coen brothers were there regularly during pre-production as well as for the dailies during the shoot. This was definitely a perk for a fan like me, especially when I was able to see dailies with one or both of the famous brothers in the small crowd of viewers.

**What is your most memorable/favorite project?** My most favorite project was working on Robert Altman's A Prairie Home Companion. It was exciting to be able to work on a project with some of my all-time favorite actors and director. The production itself was very well coordinated and the shooting location was easy because we mainly worked in the beautiful Fitzgerald Theater in St Paul. The crew was treated to wonderful stage performances take after take.

**What inspires you?** My family inspires me daily. Beyond that, Walt Disney and his influence in storytelling and production presentation has had a prominent place in my life for as long as I can recall.

**What are some of your hobbies and interests?** As a hobby farm, four year ago my husband and I launched a theater company in St. Louis Park called Maggie's Farm Theater. It had been a long-time dream that we were finally able to act on. It has been a great source of inspiration and fulfillment as well as requiring a great deal of energy and effort. We have been able to incorporate strengths we have from our production experience and access our original passion for live theater. It is especially meaningful to be able to partner with my husband on this endeavor. We have found ways to include the strengths of our children as well. The outcomes have been successful and it is exciting to see the city support grow from year to year.

**Where do you see yourself in 5 years? In ten?** In five years I see myself as a key participant on the operations team at Yellow Tag by day and a theater producer by night. In 10 years I see myself supporting live theater to a great extent.

**What advice would you offer to a young female looking to get into this industry?**

Develop and diversify your skills. Networking is key. Be aware when opportunity presents itself then have the courage to take action. Confidence and proactive behavior are essential tools. Consider that notion that sometimes you find success through a sideways door. Keep a hobby going that brings you personal joy and satisfaction.

**If you could work with anyone (dead or alive) who would it be and why?** Walt Disney. I would love to witness his style of communication. I would love to hear how ideas come to him and understand his process for actualizing those ideas. I would also love to work with Judy Garland and Vivian Leigh to watch them in action and to hear stories of old Hollywood.

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