There are many roles to fill with Indiana University Opera and Ballet Theater in order to get productions from concept to opening night. One of the most important roles is the position of painting and props assistant, which is currently held by Gwen Law. Originally from Minneapolis, Law traveled to Bloomington with her husband, who is pursuing a doctoral degree in the Department of Communication and Culture. With her, came a wealth of artistic and theatrical experience that began at a very young age because both of her parents are fine artists, as are her two grandmothers and sister.

It is natural that she feels at home in the art profession— theater in particular—after discovering that working in the theatrical props field combined the best of both worlds for her between studio art and theatrical production. This led to professional employment as a set designer/dresser at ShopNBC, the third largest shopping network in America, and the Chanhassen Dinner Theatres in Chanhassen, Minn., the largest professional dinner theater complex in the country.

Not knowing what to expect in Bloomington, Law was surprised to find just the right balance of culture, art, and diversity to satisfy her lifestyle.

“There are so many artistic things going on here,” she said.

Bloomington’s diverse culture has allowed her to take part in a variety of activities, including becoming a member of the Bleeding Heartland Rollergirls roller derby team.

Regarding the talents needed to mount a full-scale production, Mark Smith, director of the paint and props shop, stated, “The 2012-13 season has been one of our most challenging, and it requires individuals with a perfect blend of creativity, range of skills, artistic eye, and enthusiasm for the project. It isn’t easy finding someone who covers it all, so the school is very fortunate to have Gwen’s talent.”

Gold sculptures (prepared above) by Gwen Law glint in the recent IU Opera Theater production of Akhnaten.
Throughout the world, an ever-increasing number of fans of Jacobs School of Music performances enjoy spectacular performances from the Musical Arts Center stage, thanks to the work of students and faculty in the Department of Recording Arts and their creative partners at IU Radio and Television Services, the IU Department of Telecommunications, and University Information Technology Services.

With most operas, ballets, and a number of special events live-streamed in HD—as well as a growing number of performances available on demand through the online viewing portal—the IUMusic Live! streaming project has reached a rapidly growing number of viewers.

In the six months from August 2012 to March 2013, the page received almost 60,000 hits from 110 countries and all 50 U.S. states. Almost 4,000 hours of on-demand video were served, and close to 8,000 people watched live performances from the Jacobs School via the portal.

The most watched webcasts were the four 2012 performances of The Nutcracker—at 1,700 viewers—followed by the opening weekend of IU Opera Theater’s production of Akhnaten by Philip Glass—at almost 1,400 viewers. Mozart’s Don Giovanni, the opening production of the season, was watched live online by almost 1,200 opera lovers and their friends.

The enterprise was pioneered by Professor Konrad Strauss, Recording Arts chair, with a November 2007 live webcast of Puccini’s La Bohème. Since then, under Strauss’s direction, more than 300,000 viewers around the globe have enjoyed Jacobs performances.

“I began this project because I wanted to bring the wonderful performances of the Jacobs School of Music to a wider audience,” said Strauss. “IUMusicLive! leverages cutting-edge technology to present live performance to a worldwide audience in a compelling interface, easily accessible to anyone with a computer and an internet connection.”

In recent years, the Jacobs Musicology Department has partnered to provide live blogging along with the webcast. Students contribute musical and historical commentary, and field audience questions in real time, further enhancing the online viewing experience.

Since 2011, the school has worked with IU Radio and Television Services, which provides production support, including collaboration with Emmy-winning director Jay Kincaid and producer/director John Winninger.

In 2012-13, students from the IU Department of Telecommunications, supervised by Senior Lecturer John Walsh, joined the team to assist with production and produce short documentaries on current opera productions.

Strauss feels that cross-departmental collaborations like these are one of the more exciting aspects of the undertaking: “As we move forward, I anticipate that these collaborations will grow, making IUMusicLive! a truly interdisciplinary project.”

Integrated into the educational program of Recording Arts, all IUMusicLive! production is done by students as part of their class work.

Established in 1982, the Jacobs School of Music Department of Recording Arts is one of the leading programs in the country. Students have gone on to careers in all areas of the recording and entertainment industry to become record company executives, Oscar and Grammy winners, and gold and platinum record recipients.