



## Irene Byrne Ohl

The well-known industry figure discusses her new company, *piVot<sup>2</sup>*—a unique service designed for this industry

**Lighting&Sound America:** How did you get started in the industry?

**Irene ('Rene) Byrne Ohl (RBO):** My first professional experience was as the PA with Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera the summer before entering University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music (CCM). CCM was a young program and my freshman class of 12 was the fifth and the largest they had accepted. At the end of the year, I was the only freshman remaining. The fall of my junior year, I interned at The Juilliard School for the American Opera Center (AOC). Juilliard offered me the PSM job, but I returned to CCM, completed my degree, then returned to AOC. Within my first year I assumed PSM responsibilities for Juilliard's Dance Division and NYCB's School of American Ballet. I became an entrepreneur in 1982, participating in the founding of Pook Diemont & Ohl, Inc. (PDO) and four other related companies until they were sold in November 2016.

**LSA:** What is *piVot<sup>2</sup>*?

**RBO:** *piVot<sup>2</sup>* stands for Professional Industry Vetting of Theatre Technicians. Our mission is to expand career opportunities for the next generation of technical theatre professionals in the sectors of contractors, consultants, and manufacturers through a tailored recruiting method. In other words, getting the quality talent I would have hired for PDO to the rest of our industry without the typical time drain on decision makers. This includes making the talent aware of the design/build sector of the entertainment industry and how their technical skills easily translate.

**LSA:** How did you conceive *piVot<sup>2</sup>*?

**RBO:** One must always start with WHY? How does it add value and solve a problem? I saw how the process typically proceeded—a few emails/conversations within the office, people call their networks, then everyone gets back to doing their job and the search is put on the back burner. I utilize a broader network and cut out the time drain, only presenting candidates I would hire myself.

**LSA:** How is it progressing?

**RBO:** From a thought-kernel on January 1, 2019 to debuting at USITT three months later was a phenomenal launch.

2020 was certainly a challenge, but I viewed it as a time to invent creative products. 2021 is going to be a fantastic year of opportunities as our industry comes back online.

**LSA:** Tell us about working with USITT's employment portal.

**RBO:** As a professional recruiter, the concept of USITT's employment portal is gold. I have searched every portal entry, looking for talent since it debuted in 2017—thousands of resumes! Most employers are not going to dive that deep. I believe the 2021 reconstructed portal will function productively for both sides of the hiring equation. Viewing the portal's LinkedIn profiles (LIP) lead me to create my LIP coaching business. Job seekers need to fully embrace their virtual handshake.

We live in a buyers' market now where a power LIP and zoom interview savvy dominate first impressions. As part of my exclusive sponsorship, I am offering pre-show specials to upgrade job seekers' presentations.

**LSA:** What is your proudest achievement?

**RBO:** In September 2019, I launched a hand-picked Mastermind group, consisting of students and young professionals from technical theatre schools across the US. I invite a guest speaker from my network to chat about their industry story. Guests share the diverse employment opportunities our industry provides plus afford a huge networking upgrade. We fold in Ben Hardy's Future Self Focus. Our December 2020 guest is a member of Dan Sullivan's Strategic Coach! We reviewed 2020 and plotted how to crush 2021. Look for our USITT 2021 session!

**LSA:** What does the future hold?

**RBO:** My primary goal remains fitting talent-to-team and keeping in touch with my clients and the candidates they have hired. (Nothing makes my heart swell more than hearing, six months or a year after the contract closed, about how amazing the talent-to-team fit is working for both parties.) For 2021, I am focused on developing intern programs that I can deploy for any organization and designing methods to locate and cultivate industry diversity beginning at the high school level, bringing amazing talent into the industry to grow and secure its future. I love my job! 📡