Lucas Pawelski may have grown up in the college town of Stevens Point, Wisconsin (pop. 25,692), but since 2015 this Midwesterner has called the Berkshires home, most recently as Production Manager for The Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center.

Responsible for everything from figuring out the logistics of getting artists and equipment into a historic theater building to designing the lighting that makes stars like Leslie Odom, Jr. and Arlo Guthrie shine, we talked to this 31-year-old artist about the trajectory of his regional creative career.

What brought you to the Berkshires originally?

The college professor I studied under at UW-Platteville had worked for Berkshire Theatre Group as the Paint Charge and said it would be a great place to intern and work. I graduated with a degree in liberal arts with an emphasis in theater and lighting so, based on his recommendation and the fact that an opportunity came up for both my partner at the time and me to find work here, we decided to stay.

And what’s kept you in the region since that first foray?

The amount of work that’s available here and the quality of productions and arts coming to the area. The Berkshires are sort of a rare combination of allowing you to live a rural or small-town lifestyle while still being in a place where really fantastic art is being produced.

What’s a typical day like as a production manager for The Mahaiwe?

We don’t produce ourselves; we’re a presenting organization. So my job is to help artists and performing arts organizations present themselves and their art at their best, acting as a technical guide and helping them design their shows. This means not only physically
making their productions happen but also sitting in the light booth creating the lighting looks for their shows.

How did you learn the technical skills needed for lighting design?

I learned some in college because our university had a touring or roadhouse venue; I did work there as a lighting designer and production tech. I then came to the Berkshires and worked at Berkshire Theatre Group at the Colonial Theatre, where I was their house electrician, which essentially meant being the lighting designer and master electrician.

Now at The Mahaiwe, where I've been since 2020, I feel like I'm applying all the skills I learned throughout my career to take us to the forefront of theatrical production.

What's a show you've worked on at The Mahaiwe -- or a person you've worked with -- who made you star-struck?

I've gotten to work with Arlo Guthrie -- that was a really great show to design. Leslie Odom, Jr. was cool. I did Pink Martini; they're always a blast to see on stage. Gin Blossoms was really good, too.

What's coming to The Mahaiwe in 2023 that most excites you?

Since I've been here we've done a lot of major capital projects. We replaced our film projector system in 2020. We did a $400K LED lighting upgrade in 2021, so the whole venue is all LED now. We replaced our entire sound system in 2022. We just replaced most of the stage drapery and added a star drop. So we've really been pushing to get the venue to the latest production capabilities for our artists, and it's exciting that we have it all ready for our 2023 season. In terms of upcoming shows, we've got two this spring that I'm excited about: Postmodern Jukebox in March and a new young artist from Iceland: Laufey.

And what do you do for fun after a show lets out for the night?

I'm a model railroader and collect and watch vintage 16 mm films. I mostly look for old railroad documentaries and cartoon shorts. I even have a black-and-white version of Disney's Snow White. In Great Barrington, to go out, Moon Cloud is always a good time. I usually go to Number 10, because it's right next door and they're a business partner. I like Vern, the gentleman who runs it. When I'm in Lee, where I live downtown, we go to all the restaurants there. Moe's Tavern is great.
Great Barrington Arts Market (GBAM) is excited to announce its new monthly winter market being held over three months at the beautifully restored Saint James Place. The Winter Market takes place Sunday, February 19th, Sunday, March 19th, and Sunday, April 23rd, and features a rotating roster of local and regional artists. For more information, write gbartsmarket@gmail.com or find them on Facebook @GB_Arts_Market and Instagram @gbartsmarket.

GBAM's mission is to provide revenue for Berkshire-based and regional artists & offer locally-made products to consumers year-round.

Local Creative Economy Jobs

Find Berkshire County in-person, remote, and hybrid jobs that pay a minimum of $40K a year in all fields, including arts, education, nonprofits, and related, at 1Berkshire’s The Jobs Thing. Three sample and current openings of interest include:

- Museum Project Director, Williams College
- Facility Manager, Berkshire Lake Camp
- Library Assistant III, Berkshire Community College

You can also find exclusively creative economy jobs, including remote and hybrid opportunities, at MCC'sHireCulture. Three sample and current job openings are below.

Chief Operating Officer, Fractured Atlas (100% remote)
Artists Funding and Resources

Curated information about funding and financial assistance for those working in the creative economy.

Mass Cultural Council

Funding Opportunities to June 30, 2023
Mass Cultural Council highlights grants, action alerts, community events, opportunities, and resources. Find fellowships, explore artists' galleries, discover apprenticeships, and identify art spaces and resources by subscribing to MCC's Monthly Newsletter.

Creative Capital

Artist Opportunities for February and March 2023
Creative Capital is a nonprofit, grantmaking organization funding artists in the creation of groundbreaking new work, amplifying the impact of their work, and fostering sustainable artistic careers. Examples of current grants from other funders on their site include Sustainable Arts Foundation (Deadline: 2/27/23) and NEA: Creative Writing Fellowships (Deadline: 3/28/23).

New England Foundation for the Arts

New England Foundation for the Arts cultivates and promotes the arts in New England and beyond. Among their upcoming grants are Jazz Road Tours (Deadline: 3/1/23) and National Dance Project Production Grant (Deadline: 3/1/23).

ArtsHub

ArtsHub is an ever-evolving idea designed to highlight and bring together artists, organizations, and events in the creative communities of Western Massachusetts. Among current Calls for Art are The Tiny Art For All Gallery Project (Zoom Q&A: 3/7/23 @ 6 pm) and Artery-Holyoke.

Artist Impact Coalition

Artist Impact Coalition provides resources for artists to live and thrive in Northern Berkshires and county-wide. Check out their monthly e-resources here.

MASSCreative

MASSCreative advocates for a well-
What: Local Theater Auditions

When: March 19

Where: The Sharon Playhouse

Details: The Sharon Playhouse is holding local auditions for its 2023 season on Sunday, March 19. All roles are currently available in Something Rotten, Oliver, Our Town, and The Lifespan of a Fact. Actors of all ethnicities and gender identities are encouraged to audition. All shows are pending approval from Actors’ Equity Association. See more regional theater news at BerkshireonStage.

What: My Neighbor Totoro (film)

When: February 25 @ 7:00 PM

Where: Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center

Details: Hayo Miyazaki’s My Neighbor Totoro is a fantasy favorite for all ages. Centered around a family that moves to the country, this anime follows sisters Satsuki and Mei as they discover the wonders of their lush new environment. (G, 1 hour, 26 min.)

What: Berkshire International Film Festival

When: June 1-4, 2023

Where: Berkshire International Film Festival

Details: Buy passes now to this summer’s international film festival. Passes are available at levels priced from $650 to $200 with both in-person and streaming options.
Mass Office of Travel and Tourism

The Massachusetts Official Travel and Tourism (MOTT) website includes a FREE business database where you can list your business! To get started, visit their website, where you can sign on as a new business or update your information if you are already registered.

Are you making the most of the #mylocalMA campaign? Submit Your Story for a chance to be featured on social media and in MOTT's My Local MA e-newsletter. You can find more information and resources at Lovemylocalma.com.

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