

spotlight

July/August 2014 \$2.50

Join the Fun - Participate in AACTFest 2015

AACTFest is an exciting process, involving community theatres in every corner of the country, and on military bases in Europe. Participating in AACTFest is fun, rewarding, and sometimes challenging. But the process need not be intimidating: any theatre of any size can be, and has been, part of the festival.

There are lots of great reasons to enter a festival!

Here are just a few:

- Let others see the great work you're doing, and learn from your experience.
- Fire up the imagination and interest of your group, and motivate them to think in new directions.
- See some of the best theatre around, and get great ideas for your next season.
- Meet terrific people who are doing excellent theatre.
- Stimulate creativity in your group, and inspire them to reach for higher ideals.
- Make the festival experience habit-forming by producing and watching great shows, meeting wonderful people, and attending great parties.

If you're not all that familiar with how the festival system works, and you're considering entering a show this time around, it will be helpful to review and see how your theatre will fit in!

AACTFest festivals are organized on three levels: state, regional, and national. Productions are judged at each level by adjudicators who choose the shows that advance from state, through regional, to the national festival. AACTFest state festivals begin more than a year prior to the national festival. All regional festivals must be completed by the first weekend in May prior to the national festival, to give advancing companies enough time to prepare.

The AACTFest 2015 cycle is already underway.

AACTFest 2015 kicked off in June with the Eastern Massachusetts festival in Tewksbury, MA. The Oklahoma, Colorado and Ohio festivals will have taken place by the end of this summer.

Why do we do it?

According to the AACTFest 2015 Handbook, the goals of AACTFest are fourfold:

- To provide an optimum learning experience through festival entry at state, regional, and national levels, which

affirm, support, and nurture community theatre companies as they strive toward excellence in theatrical production.

- To stimulate and inspire community theatre companies to strive for the best work possible and to recognize companies for achievement through an appropriate adjudication process.
- To provide learning experiences in artistic, technical, and management areas through performances, adjudication, and workshops.
- To develop enlightened and discerning audiences for community theatre.



Plans, plans and more plans

Planning for the 2015 festival cycle began before the 2013 cycle ended. The AACT Festival Commission solicits input during each cycle, so the process may be fine-tuned for the next cycle to provide the best experience possible for participants. The AACT Vice President for Festivals, with assistance from the Festival Commission Chair and AACT staff, updated the Festival Handbook, and the revised *AACT 2015 Handbook* has been published (aact.org/aactfest/handbook) to ensure that all participating companies follow the same set of rules.

State Festivals

State festival sites are chosen by the state associations or by a volunteering theatre, and the preparations begin. A state festival chair is chosen and that person recruits other volunteers and starts to organize the process.

State festival preparation begins as much as two years prior to the event to help prevent last minute surprises. A theatre facility will be secured, and a hotel (or hotels) reserved, adjudicators selected, and volunteers chosen and assigned. Details on the process can be

continued on page 11

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Gary Walker
AACT President
2013-2015

As our name implies, AACT is all about community theatre. And when I talk with people about AACT and the services we provide, theatre certainly takes the lead. We have benefits for licensing shows, insurance programs for the theatre, ASCAP discounts, and guidance on how to start and run a theatre.

But In the last few weeks I have been thinking about the **community** part of our name and mission.

It started when I read an interview with Carol Channing in Eddie Shapiro's new book *Nothing Like A Dame*. She said "... once you are exposed to the arts, you don't have to be an artist. Not all of us are. Some of us are mathematicians or engineers or things that have nothing to do with the arts. But once you're exposed to the arts, the whole world looks like a work of art."

"Once you're exposed to the arts, the whole world looks like a work of art."

Ms. Channing certainly got that right – and she got it from her father, who was not an artist, but a legislator.

And it is true as we look about our communities. Attending or working on a production at a community theatre makes the individual and the community look at the world in a different way, with a different eye. We may not see Harold Hill marching down our streets leading 76 trombones, but we do bring a fresh eye on the world around us, and in how our community works.

Becoming involved with community theatre expands our communities, by giving all of us a new way of looking at problems, challenges, and successes.

The other very happy event was attending the opening performance in the recently rebuilt space of a community

theatre, which had been a restored former vaudeville and movie house. This theatre had come back from a terrible challenge: A fire had completely gutted the theatre, burning it to the walls and requiring a total reconstruction.

It certainly took leadership and vision to believe this theatre could be rebuilt, and the evening celebrated the many individuals and their contributions that made the restoration possible. More importantly, it took a **community** who believed in the value of the theatre; the impact of theatre itself; and the absolute need for this particular theatre in their community to make this rebirth a reality.

I'm not insightful enough to explain why theatre engenders such passion, but I know our communities are better for it, and communities continue to seek out this special art form that we support and celebrate every day.

Gary Walker

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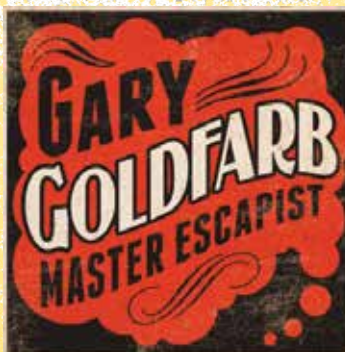
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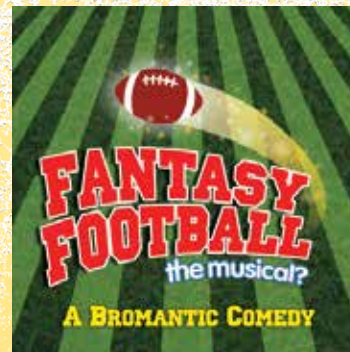
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Upcoming AACT Meetings**AACT Executive Committee**

October 10-11, 2014
Grand Rapids, MI
Hosted by Grand Rapids Civic Theatre

AACT Winter Meetings 2015 for AACT Board & Committees

February 18-21, 2015
Charlotte, NC

Meetings are open. Contact the AACT office for details.

Upcoming Conferences**Education Directors Conference**

August 22-23, 2014
Tulsa, OK
Hosted by Theatre Tulsa

Artistic Directors Conference

August 22-23, 2014
Tulsa, OK
Hosted by Theatre Tulsa

Technical Theatre Conference

August 8-10, 2014
Grand Rapids, MI
Hosted by Grand Rapids Civic Theatre

For details: www.aact.org/conf/or 866-Our-AACT (687-2228)

Thanks

Thanks to the new AACT Membership Services Team for updating theatre information in the AACT database.

Spotlight

Spotlight is published bimonthly by the American Association of Community Theatre for its members and is annually distributed to an expanded list of known community theatre organizations and interested individuals.

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**AACT
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AACT organizational members are eligible to participate in property, liability, and other coverages of the AACT Insurance Program.

For more information, contact:



800-749-5646
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kenneth.roberts@usi.biz

Insurance Shopping: *Full disclosure is always the best policy!*



by Ken Roberts

We get calls almost every day from theatres that are shopping their insurance coverage to make sure they're getting the best deal. If they've been through the process before, they're prepared for the barrage of questions and requests for information that accompany the quoting process, but if they are insurance "rookies," they often get frustrated, and many of them even pull the plug on the entire process once they find out that you can't give them a quote over the phone in just a few minutes with very little information. The biggest obstacle for many of them is providing full disclosure regarding their current insurance program. They believe that insurance coverage can and should be quoted without any of the information about the

There is no such thing as too much information when it comes to what is necessary to quote comprehensive theatre insurance.

expiring premiums, coverage limits, and loss history. This could not be further from the truth, as there are valid reasons why every piece of information requested is relevant and essential to getting an accurate and comprehensive quote.

The reasons for not providing the necessary information vary, and can be warranted. Many theatres don't want to rock the boat with their current agent until they know for sure that a better program is available, so they hesitate to request the

coverage and premium details and claims history. The local agent may be on their board, or he/she may be a theatre supporter financially. In those cases, we usually suggest that we partner with their agent to get them a quote. Then there are the theatres who think that the expiring limits and premiums shouldn't be any of our concern, just wanting us to quote blindly, without knowing what we're up against. Most insurance underwriters will not quote this way, as it's like handcuffing their hands behind their back and asking them to put a jigsaw puzzle together. Companies like to have a target. They understand that everyone's time is important, and if they have a target, they don't waste any of their time or the theatre's in cases where they know they can't be competitive.

In short, there is no such thing as too much information when it comes to what is necessary to quote comprehensive theatre insurance. Serious shoppers should be prepared to answer a wide variety of questions, and to request any coverage, premium, and claims information that will help insurance underwriters develop a clearer picture about the specific exposures pertaining to that theatre. In most cases, the clearer the picture, the better the pricing will be, and nobody wants to overpay for insurance premiums when there are so many other more important and entertaining things to spend theatre dollars on. ♦



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Join in AACTFest 2015 *continued from page 1*

found on the AACT Website in *A Guide to Hosting AACTFest* (aact.org/aactfest/AACTFest_Hosting_Guide.pdf).

Regional Festivals

Productions advance from the state festivals to regional festivals. Regional festivals are structured with the same attention to detail as the state festivals, with the added complications of out-of-state guests (lodging, long distance arrangements, etc.). Details of regional festivals are also available in *A Guide to Hosting AACTFest*.

AACTFest 2015 National Festival

AACTFest 2015 culminates in Grand Rapids, MI, June 23-27, 2015 at the beautiful, state-of-the-art Grand Rapids Civic Theatre. Twelve performances from the regional festivals (one representative each from nine of the regions and two from Region IV, plus an at-large

selection) will take place in the Civic Theatre Complex. Workshops and meetings will be held a few blocks away in the festival hotel, the historic Amway Grand Plaza in downtown Grand Rapids.

By the time AACTFest 2015 ends, there will have been approximately 40 state festivals with more than 200 theatre productions at the state level, and 80 or so theatres performing in regional festivals representing more than 40 states and up to 17 U.S. military bases in Europe.

So get involved! Learn more about the AACTFest experience (aact.org/aactfest), check the AACT calendar of events (aact.org) for information on your state festival, review the *AACTFest 2015 Handbook* (aact.org/handbook), and join in the fun by participating in AACTFest 2015. It's an invigorating process, and one worth being part of as a celebration of American Community Theatre! ♦

Scripts Accepted Beginning September 1 for AACT NewPlayFest 2016 • Apply Now to be a Reviewer

AACT NewPlayFest is exciting experience for playwrights, producing theatres, and audiences.

This national new play festival provides winning scripts with a full production at selected AACT member theatres between July 2015 and December 2016. The playwright is paid a royalty by the producing theatre and provided with an expense-paid trip to the theatre for a rehearsal or performance.

Dramatic Publishing Company will publish an anthology of the winning plays, which can then be produced by other theatres after the AACT NewPlayFest 2016 has been completed.

In the first important steps, AACT is now looking for both scripts and script reviewers.

Call for Scripts

Scripts will be accepted September 1 through November 1, 2014. Plays must be full-length, non-musical plays, written in English, and must never have received a full production. Only one script per playwright will be accepted. AACT member playwrights submit without a fee; the non-member fee is \$10. Submissions will only be accepted electronically through the AACT website, where submission guidelines are also posted [aact.org/newplayfest].

Productions from the 2014 contest continue to premiere with *End Papers* by Barry Weinberg of Bethesda, MD opening July 24 at Little Theatre of Mechanicsburg in Mechanicsburg, PA, and *The Boatwright* by Bo Wilson of Richmond, VA opening September 13 at Grand Rapids Civic Theatre in Grand Rapids, MI. You can follow the contest on Facebook (facebook.com/AACTNewPlayFest) or at aact.org/newplayfest.

Will your script be a part of our next set of premieres? *You must enter to win!*



Call for Reviewers

AACT is seeking volunteers with the time, interest, and theatre expertise to review and score the scripts submitted for AACT NewPlayFest 2016. Each script will be adjudicated by at least three reviewers. Those that rise to the top will be read by a second set of reviewers, whose scores will determine the finalists. The winning plays will be selected from the finalists by the producing theatres.

Reviewer applications are being accepted online now (aact.org/newplayfest).

If you have questions, contact Susan Austin at newplayfest@aact.org, or contact the AACT office. ♦

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Fourth AACT NewPlayFest Production Premieres at Phoenix Stage Company

Jellofish by Jim Henry of Chicago, opened at Phoenix Stage Company in Naugatuck, CT on May 2, as the fourth production of the inaugural AACT NewPlayFest.

Opening night and a gala reception were attended by playwright Jim Henry and his wife Dona, AACT Executive Director Julie Crawford, AACT Past President and Jack K. Ayre Theatre Fund representative Linda M. Lee, Jack K. Ayre Theatre Fund representative Cliff Lee and his wife Cathy, and Dramatic Publishing's Gayle Sergel.

to promoting emerging writers made me confident that *Jellofish* is in great hands as it goes to print. In fact, Dramatic Publishing has already scheduled another production of the play. With the double benefit of production and publishing, the AACT NewPlayFest has become one of the premier competitions for playwrights worldwide."

Jellofish focuses on four World War II veterans who have been playing a monthly game of poker since 1945, putting



Linda M. Lee

on the set at Phoenix Stage Company's (PSC) production of *Jellofish*
standing, l-r: Cliff Lee (Jack K. Ayre Theatre Fund), Linda M. Lee (AACT past President, Jack K. Ayre Theatre Fund), Debbie Forish (cast), Leland Schick (crew) Julie Crawford (AACT Executive Director), Jim Henry (playwright), Agnes Dann (stage manager and PSC co-founder), seated: Tim Phillips (cast), Timothy Cleary (cast), Ed Bassett (director, cast and PSC co-founder)

"Most, if not all playwrights, have two ultimate dreams for their plays," says playwright Jim Henry, "to have them produced and to have them published. As a winner in the AACT NewPlayFest, both of these lofty goals were realized at the same time for my play *Jellofish*. I was nothing short of blessed to have my play selected and produced by the wonderful artists at Phoenix Stage Company.

Henry called opening night "an amazing experience as I watched my play come to life on the stage under the skillful direction of Ed Bassett. At the opening I had the opportunity to spend time with Linda Lee and her brother Cliff Lee, executives of the Jack K. Ayre Theatre Fund, which is providing funds to support the productions of AACT NewPlayFest. They are both true angels of American theatre. Gayle Sergel from Dramatic Publishing was in attendance and her commitment

five percent from every pot into a "side pot" that has grown to a sizable fortune. Who will survive this game of wits and be the heir presumptive to the poker fortune? Or will competition and resentment destroy their friendships and the game itself?

The next NewPlayFest production, **End Papers** by Barry Weinberg of Bethesda, MD opens at Little Theatre of Mechanicsburg (PA) on July 24, followed by **The Boatwright** by Bo Wilson of Richmond, VA, which opens at Grand Rapids (MI) Civic Theatre on September 13.

These three plays in the AACT NewPlayFest join previous winners **Exit Laughing** by Paul Elliott, which opened at the Springfield (MO) Little Theatre last November, **The Seamstress** by Cece Dwyer, which opened at Hickory (NC) Community Theatre in January, and **The Vanishing Point** by Nedra

Roberts, which opened at Sacramento's California Stage Company in March. Each reflects AACT's initiative to address the need for new, high-quality plays for community theatre audiences around the globe.

The six winning plays of AACT NewPlayFest are now in the Dramatic Publishing Company database, and are available for production after their respective AACT NewPlayFest production. Dramatic Publishing Company will publish the six plays nationally in an anthology later this year.

Each producing theatre company of AACT NewPlayFest 2014 receives \$4,000 to aid in producing and marketing these new works. The estate of the late Mr. Jack K. Ayre of Sunnyvale, CA is providing these funds. Linda M. Lee, AACT Past President, and her siblings were beneficiaries of his estate and made the decision to help finance the new play productions of AACT NewPlayFest 2014. ♦



Linda M. Lee

Opening reception for Jellofish at Phoenix Stage Company
l-r: Agnes Dann (PSC co-founder), Julie Crawford (AACT Executive Director), Jim Henry (playwright), Beverley Lord, (AACT Region I representative), Gayle Sergel (Dramatic Publishing)



Springfield Little Theatre Springfield, MO	Paul Elliott Los Angeles, CA	<i>Exit Laughing</i> November 15 – 24, 2013
Hickory Community Theatre, Hickory, NC	Cece Dwyer Sarasota, FL	<i>The Seamstress</i> January 10 – 26, 2014
California Stage Company Sacramento, CA	Nedra Roberts Atlanta, GA	<i>The Vanishing Point</i> March 27 – April 28, 2014
Phoenix Stage Company Naugatuck, CT	Jim Henry Chicago, IL	<i>Jellofish</i> May 2 - 11, 2014
Little Theatre of Mechanicsburg Mechanicsburg, PA	Barry Weinberg Bethesda, MD	<i>End Papers</i> July 24 – 27, 2014
Grand Rapids Civic Theatre Grand Rapids, MI	Bo Wilson Richmond, VA	<i>The Boatwright</i> September 13 – 29, 2014

The producing theatres, playwrights, titles, and production dates for the six winning plays in AACT's first AACT NewPlayFest.



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Arts Advocacy Day Brings Supporters to Washington, D.C.

by David Cockerell

March 25 was a cold snowy day in Washington, D.C. But the weather did not dampen the spirits of arts enthusiasts and representatives of arts organizations from across the country at the 27th annual Arts Advocacy Day. Attendees braved the blustery day to meet with members of the U.S. Congress and advocate for the promotion and support of the Arts.

Organized by Americans for the Arts, the event brought together a broad cross-section of America's cultural and civic organizations, along with nearly 500 grassroots advocates representing 45 states. Individuals and groups of art advocates met with political leaders to underscore the importance of developing strong public policies and appropriating increased public funding for the arts.

AACT was once again a co-sponsor of this important national event, attended by AACT Board Member, Advocacy Committee Member, and Region III Representative Joanne Berry and AACT Marketing/Communications Director David Cockerell.

This year's goals were to encourage U.S. Representatives and Senators to support a budget of \$155 million for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in the fiscal year 2015. With this effort we were asking to insure and preserve citizen access to the cultural, educational, and economic benefits of the arts, and to advance creativity and innovation in communities across the United States. NEA programs reach more than 38 million people attending live arts events, including nearly 7 million children.

The NEA affects every community and community theatre across the country. You may not receive funding directly from the NEA, but every U.S. congressional district benefits from an NEA grant. The NEA awarded more than 2,100 grants in 2013, totaling more than \$112 million



Cody Lindley

AACT Marketing/Communications Director David Cockerell braves the weather at the Capitol to join in Arts Advocacy Day.

in appropriated funds. Forty percent of all NEA program funds – approximately \$46 million in 2013 – are re-granted through state arts agencies. In partnership with the NEA, state arts agencies awarded more than 22,000 grants to organizations, schools, and artists in 5,000 communities across the United States.

BEST ALL 'ROUND

by Marsha Lee Sheiness

Full Length Play, Comedy 3f

A teenage high school senior, Michael Lee, struggles with homework, dating, her reputation and her self-esteem alongside her best friend, Nickie. *Best All 'Round* is a story about growing up in Texas, circa 1958.



"Sheiness writes with strength and delicacy about the delicious agonies of youth..."

Sheiness has come up with a funny and terribly touching symbol of adolescent innocence, 50's style."

–Marilyn Stasio, NY Post

www.Marshasheiness.com

Published by Samuel French, Inc.

The arts are part of a well-diversified 21st-century economy. Along with nonprofit arts organizations, creative enterprises make significant contributions to state and local economies, generating employment and tax revenues and providing goods and services sought by the public. On average, each NEA grant leverages at least \$9 from other state, local, and private sources, generating roughly \$600 million in matching support. The nonprofit arts industry contributes \$132.5 billion to the nation's economy and maintains 4.1 million full-time jobs.

Learn more about the current economic impact of the arts by reviewing the *Preliminary Report on Impact of Arts and Culture on U.S. Economy* provided by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) (aact.org/impact). This study presented in December 2013 is a measure of arts and culture in the Gross Domestic Product. What's new is that an agency of BEA's stature has undertaken the research, finding that arts and culture activity produce \$504 billion dollars in goods and services annually in the U.S.—representing 3.25 percent of the nation's economy—numbers larger than transportation (\$448 billion) and agriculture (\$174 billion), and only slightly behind construction (\$530 billion). The arts numbers were much larger than expected and turned heads throughout Congress and the arts community.

Arts Advocacy Day was preceded on Monday evening by the annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on the Arts and Public Policy held at Lincoln Center. This year's keynote speaker was acclaimed *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd. She delivered a moving message about how the arts have affected her professional, emotional, and spiritual life. She emphasized the importance of federal funding of the arts and detailed why life without culture would be a calamity.

With all of this information in hand and Ms. Dowd's inspiration, delegates met with members of Congress on Tuesday. It takes a lot of work to make your opinion heard by

those on Capitol Hill! I had the opportunity, along with other Texas delegates, to promote support for this economic engine called the arts as we met with Senator Ted Cruz. He confirmed his stance that "Government should not support the arts." The Texas group of delegates asked him to reconsider his position, citing the recent BEA economic report, and asked him to consider how his children and their generation would be affected without exposure to the arts.

I also had the privilege to meet with staff at the office of U.S. Representative Kay Granger who is a member of the Congressional Arts Caucus and continues to champion the support of the arts. I gratefully expressed my appreciation for her work and questioned how I could assist in her efforts.

Participating in Arts Advocacy Day 2014 was extremely valuable to my understanding of how the arts enrich both our culture and economy. I urge you to understand the concept of advocacy, and to get involved with all aspects of government on all levels. Tell your story of what the arts mean to you. Ask for support from your local, state, regional, and national leaders. Thank those who advocate for the arts and support them. The arts are crucial to our nation's well-being and economic vitality. For this country to thrive, the arts must thrive. ♦



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Length: Two Acts

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Blocking as a Visual Score

by James Carver

Man, oh man, oh man. In the past two weeks, I have seen three productions in which the blocking was so bad, I thought “What was the director thinking?” In one, the cast of six was lined up, shoulder to shoulder, facing front, and talking to each other. In another, all the “important” lines were delivered by having the actor turn and speak directly to the audience. Once, the lady next to me said, “Who is he talking to?” In that same production, a couple was having an important conversation while seated at a table. Suddenly, for no apparent reason, the woman got up, crossed all the way to the left of the stage and continued talking. She then crossed all the way back and sat down. In the third, the blocking made no sense. One actor, to move from Down Left to Down Right, got there by going Up Left to Up Right then to Down Right. I found out later, that director lets the actors “find their space.” OMG!

We directors are storytellers. We use all the tools available to us to tell the story: scenery, costumes, lighting, music, actors; and actor’s movements. Actor movement and placement on the stage are vital in telling the story. One of America’s premier directors, Jon Jory, calls blocking, the movement of actors, the “visual score” of a production. The script doesn’t come with a “score.” We have to create it. If we’re going to tell the story, the way we see the story, then we need to create the movement that helps the audience

understand our interpretation. This “visual score” has several aspects to it. There is behavioral blocking, the kind of movement that is indicated in stage directions: “He exits into the kitchen,” or is implicit in a line: “I’ll see you to the door.” The point is, someone goes someplace to do something. This kind of blocking is the easiest to create.

We directors are storytellers.

Psychological blocking is more difficult and, yet, more interesting to create. It deals with the state of mind of the characters and is directly related to the action of the play. We know what the characters are doing, but what is really important is what they are thinking. The way they move, in relationship to one another, helps to reveal their state of mind and thus the subtext and consequently the story. Here’s a quick example:

“She” is seated on the left side of the sofa. “He” is standing right of the sofa.

HE: But don’t you see? It’s not that important.

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WHAT IS HE THINKING?

- A. It isn't important. Convince her.
- B. It is extremely important, but don't let her know.

If he's thinking A, he might move to the sofa and sit next to her.

If he's thinking B, he might move away from her.

In either case, a movement would allow for the actor to reveal his state of mind.

There is another aspect of the visual score that is important. That is composition. The scenic design may give us some elements to use to create interesting pictures and tell the story at the same time. They include stairs, platforms, levels, doorways, archways, windows, shadows, etc. For example, a director might want to draw attention to a very important speech; if he has an archway, he might place the speaking person there to "frame" the speech; if he has a stairway, or a raised platform, he might place the speaking person above the other characters with them turning to give focus.

Too many times we are subjected to "musical chairs" blocking. We see characters stand, cross and sit again elsewhere. I have adjudicated play festivals all over the country and without fail, somewhere in the festival I will see

this blocking: Two people are sitting on a couch center and a third person is sitting in a chair stage right center. They have been sitting there two or three minutes. What they are talking about is engrossing and important to the story, but the director feels they have been sitting there too long, so he has the character stage right get up and cross upstage of the couch. For no reason. Then, to make matters worse, the director has one of the seated characters stand and cross and sit in the chair that was just vacated. First of all, the director failed to realize that the *action* of the play was moving forward with the dialogue and didn't trust that it held the audience's attention.

Too often *activity* is confused with *action*.

So he decided to add some *activity* to make it visually more interesting. Think about a living room scene in real life. People actually do just sit and talk. We don't just change chairs for no reason. And aren't we trying to create a naturalism in our "fourth wall" productions?

continued on page 19

take the drama out of your theatre productions

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August 8-10 in Grand Rapids, MI

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Open to anyone, whatever his or her title, who is responsible for their theatre's educational programs. Share materials, exchange ideas, and tackle theatre education issues guided by an experienced education director, April Cochran, Education Director for Market House Theatre in Paducah, KY.

August 22-23 in Tulsa, OK

Artistic Directors Conference

Open to anyone, whatever his or her title, who is responsible for the artistic direction of their theatre. Roundtable discussions will address hot topics chosen in advance by the participants. Facilitated by Tim Jebsen, Executive/Artistic Director of Midland (TX) Community Theatre.

August 22-23 in Tulsa, OK

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The point of all this is that too often *activity* is confused with *action*. Let me hammer this home one more time. *Activity* is what we are doing: setting the table for dinner, fixing a drink at the bar, bringing in a tea tray. “Business.” *Action* is what is happening in terms of moving the play forward, either to a crisis or to a conclusion. It is filled with tensions and conflicts. The *action* is in the steps the characters are taking to get what they want. When a director says, “Play the action of the scene,” he means the dynamics, not the “business.”

In any play there are several moments, perhaps ten or twelve, that tell the entire story.

Another aspect of blocking that needs examination has to do with “Storytelling Moments.” In any play there are several moments, perhaps ten or twelve, that tell the entire story. If you were to tell someone the story of *Macbeth*, you’d probably start with the moment the character Macbeth learns that he is to be king. The next moment might be when the king, Duncan plans to visit Macbeth. Certainly, a storytelling moment is when Lady Macbeth steels her husband to murder Duncan. These three moments are only the beginning of a series that tell the entire story. Since they are important to the story, they deserve our close attention. In all things, not just blocking. But blocking a scene correctly to give focus to the moment is important. In little ways. For example, it’s very important that the audience see a character’s reaction to something that’s being said. His *reaction* to what is being

said is more important than *what* is being said. By placing the listening character facing front and the speaking character facing him, in profile, we have given the listener focus and the audience is looking at him.

Not every spoken line needs movement. It is possible to overblock with characters in continual movement, with no one ever sitting and having a conversation. They’re up and down and crossing, sometimes crossing each other. Often you’ll see two characters standing on stage talking and the director wants to make it more interesting so he has one character cross to the other side of the other character, then cross back. The moves don’t help define character, they’re just busy. It’s almost as if the director doesn’t understand the *action* of the play at that moment.

The point of all this is that blocking is a tool we should use to tell the story. As the “visual score” it should be planned out carefully and in detail, not left to whim. ♦

Carver’s Manual For Directing Community Theatre by James Carver is available in the AACT bookstore (aact.org/bookstore).

James Carver comes from a long line of theatre people. He claims to have learned his craft by osmosis from the back row of the theatre where his parents propped him up while they rehearsed. Educated at Michigan State University, he joined the staff of The Kalamazoo Civic Theatre in 1958. In 1974 Jim was named Managing Director. Under Jim’s guidance the theatre grew to be one of the largest in the country, presenting twenty-two productions a year with a staff of seventeen and eight hundred volunteers. Jim has directed hundreds of plays and acted almost that many roles. He has adjudicated countless festivals for AACT, including twice at the national festival. He is in constant demand as a director and workshop leader. Jim has served as AACT President, and has also served on several AACT committees. He has received AACT’s highest award for lifetime leadership in community theatre. Jim presently lives in Colorado and directs for community theatres nationwide.

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AACT Election Results

Congratulations to the winners of AACT's annual elections:

Vice President for Planning and Development Chris Serface

Vice President for Education Penelope Notter

Secretary Frank Peot

Board Members at Large

Emily Anderson

Rick Kerby

Jim Walker

Nominating Committee

Jim Carver

Lynn Nelson

Thanks to all who ran! - and to all who voted!

Introducing the AACT Membership Services Team

AACT recently initiated a new support group, the AACT Membership Services Team. The group's purpose is to research known theatres across the country, to collect accurate data and contact information. In addition, the group is charged with assistance in membership recruitment and retention, especially organizational members.

Current Member Service Team members are Susan Austin (Texas), Scott Bloom (Maryland), Allen Ebert (Wisconsin), Nancy Eppert (Missouri), Michael Fox (Utah), Sue Ellen Gerrells (Alabama), Ginger Heath (North Carolina), Eugene Irby (New Mexico), Tim Jebson (Texas), Rick Kerby (Florida), Dawna Kornick (Ohio), Stephen Krempasky (Tennessee), Liz Lydic (California), Linda Miller (Arizona), Ted Miller (Washington), Jill Patchin (Michigan), Kristi Quinn (Nebraska), Gil Savage (California), Jon Skaalen (Minnesota) and Susan Smith (South Carolina).

"Ideally, there should be at least one Membership Services Team member for each state," said Ron Ziegler, AACT Field Services Director. "We hope to recruit a full complement of members before the new membership year begins."

For more information or to sign up as a Team member, contact Ron at ron@aact.org or 515-778-2374. ♦





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Call for AACTFest 2015 Workshops

by Chris Serface, AACT Workshops Chair

The AACT Workshops Committee is offering you the opportunity to share your expertise with others at AACTFest 2015 in Grand Rapids, MI next June. Send your proposal for a workshop and don't be afraid to think outside the box. Proposals need to be received by September 1, 2014.

Some popular workshops in the past have covered these subjects:

- Acting (various styles and techniques)
- Musical Theatre
- Directing

We would also love to see more proposals for workshops on:

- Theatre Administration
- Youth theatre or programs
- Technical theatre
- Anything else you can think of!!!

Workshops are well received when those in attendance have a chance to learn by doing so please keep that in mind as you put together your proposal. Most workshops will be in the traditional 75-minute format, but we're open to ideas for longer and shorter presentations.

The RFP (Request for Proposals) form is now available online. You will be able to complete and submit the form online. Just go to www.aact.org/rfp and scroll down for the RFP form.

The Committee is also interested in suggestions for topics. Email your ideas to Chris Serface (chris@tacomalittletheatre.com). We are looking for new and exciting workshops.

Help us enrich the creative experience in Grand Rapids at AACTFest 2015. ♦



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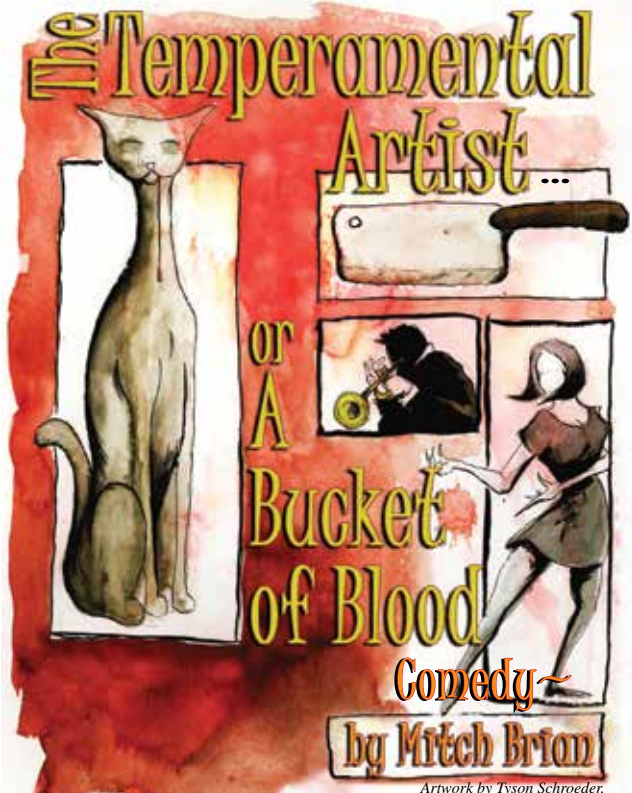
Stephen Bird

Ed Linderman leads the "Joy of Singing" workshop at AACTFest 2013

Maynard G. Krebs turns Sweeney Todd

"Tongue-in-cheek postmodernism gets a thorough work-out [in this adaptation of] a horror flick that satirized beatnik culture and the modern art world."

(*Kansas City Star*)



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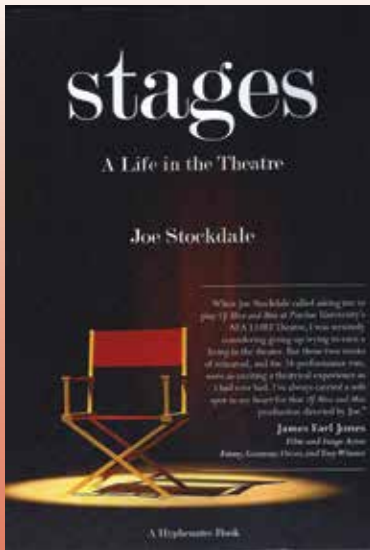
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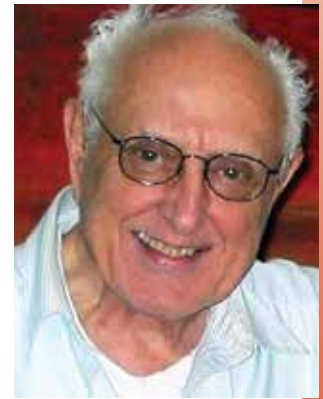
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I am Joe Stockdale, a Purdue University Professor and artistic director of its legendary AEA and League of Resident Theatre Company (1964-1970); and also Professor and Dean Emeritus, Theatre, School of the Arts, SUNY Purchase, N.Y. As such, I worked with others to help launch the theatre careers of hundreds of students.

Why am I writing you? Because the 100 most important newspapers in America used to have a Sunday book review section; this is no longer the case. So I thought it a good idea to inform you, the largest accessible group of theatre-minded people I can think of.



My writing includes a Theatre history, *The Man in the Spangled Pants*, *The Architecture of Drama* (with co-author David Letwin) recently cited as one of seven essential books if one wants to be a playwright; half a dozen produced plays; articles as a contributing editor for N.Y. based national magazine *TheatreWeek*; others for Broadway's *Playbill*, *Equity News*, and a best-of-the-year short story for *Argosy* magazine.

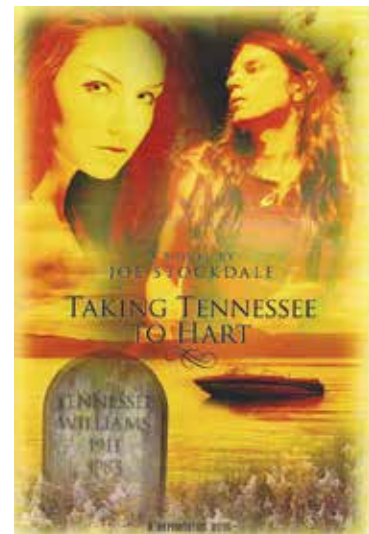
My most recent works are a novel, *Taking Tennessee To Hart*, and a memoir, *Stages a Life in the Theatre*. I believe all of you will be interested in these books. May I suggest starting with the memoir by accessing it via Amazon Books on your computer? Click on the number to the right of the star ratings to access the postings which rate the book followed by comments by the readers.

Please take time reading these postings. (Incidentally, click on "yes" or "no" to the question were they helpful to you?). You may want to read only the headlines, and/or skim some of the longer ones, but I believe by the time you finish you will have made a decision to buy the book.

Stages is not just about theatre. It's an adult read that covers the stages of my life, as well as my theatre career, from birth to the present. As such you will find much that is familiar. Among those who have given blurbs on the covers of *Stages* are: Grammy, Oscar and Tony Award winner **James Earl Jones**; Oscar Award winner, **Melissa Leo**, 5-time Tony Award winner as Lighting Designer, **Brian MacDevitt**; famed 1930/40 screen/stage star **Frances Farmer**; Stage/screen/Tony and Oscar winner, **Anne Revere**; Disney president and head of animation, **Peter Schneider** (*The Lion King*) and others; etc.

You will also find that the price of the paperback or Kindle edition is not expensive. Thanks for listening and after your day job enjoy your work in the theatre.

Best, Joe



How is the decision made to select directors for your theatres productions? Do you select directors for shows, or shows for directors?

Responses on AACTList

(to sign up for AACTList, go to www.aact.org/aactlist)

We have a play selection committee that, in conjunction with our board, chooses the plays for the season. Then we send the list of plays to our list of prospective directors, and ask them to respond with their choices. We let them pick 3 in order of their preference. Then the board meets and chooses the director for each play for the season.

Bob La Salle, President

Lemon Bay Playhouse, Englewood, FL
www.lemonbayplayhouse.com

We have a committee of four that meets all year to select a slate of plays: two Board members, one individual from our general membership and me as the Artistic Director. The slate of plays is chosen and approved by the Board of Directors (which has never been an issue). We have a pool of directors that work with us on a regular basis. We select directors by matching the director's interest and skills to specific plays.

Steven Brewer, Managing/Artistic Director

Old Opera House Theatre Company and Arts Centre
Charles Town, WV
www.oldoperahouse.org

As Executive/Artistic Director, I select the plays and the directors for our 12 to 14 shows a year. I have a cadre of directors that work for me usually every other year. I know the kinds of shows each director has an affinity for, so I try to

match the directors to the shows that I have selected. And of course, I always add new directors to the corps each year.

Lou Ursone, Executive Director
Curtain Call, Inc., Stamford, CT
www.curtaincallinc.com

Responses on Facebook

(www.facebook.com/AACT.org)

We ask for shows from directors because we want them to have a passion for their work. This year, for the first time, we've asked local actors to submit shows they want to do also. In this case, we'll search for directors.

Margaret Morneau

Resurrection Theatre, Sacramento, CA
www.resurrectiontheatre.com

We always select the show that fits our needs and then select a director. We welcome input from potential directors on shows, but that does not mean they will be chosen to direct the submitted show.

Tom Booth, Executive Director

Tupelo Community Theatre, Tupelo, MS
www.tct.ms

Kankakee Valley Theatre selects the five shows for the season, and then puts out a call for directors. Interested parties fill out an application form and have an interview with the board of directors. Most times we have 2-4 people apply for each show.

Paula Hartman Sutter

Kankakee Valley Theatre Association, Kankakee, IL
www.kvta.org



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Bravo!

Jim Sohre was presented with a National Seat of Honor by Ms. Kathleen Marin, Europe Region Director, and Dane Winters, Europe US Army Entertainment Director on April 26 at the US Army Entertainment Tournament of Plays (TOPPERS) Awards.

Jim began his career as a Music Specialist at Fort Dix, NJ in January 1974. Starting in 1980 he served as Entertainment Director in Mainz, Frankfurt, Heidelberg, and Kaiserslautern. His final position was as the IMCOM-Europe Region Entertainment Director. He has had an incredible impact on Army Entertainment. In 1996, he reestablished the Tournament of Plays and the One Act Play Festivals. With AACT he served as the Region X representative and is the current Chair of the AACT International Committee. Jim retired in November of 2012, but he continues to be a champion and an invaluable asset to Army Entertainment and to AACT.

The National Seat of Honor was given by US Army Europe Entertainment Directors and staff in gratitude for Jim's 39 years of selfless service, inspired leadership, and enduring friendship. The seat is A 106 in the Center Mezzanine of "The Theater of the Presidents" in the Washington, D.C.'s National Theater, three blocks from the White House. ♦



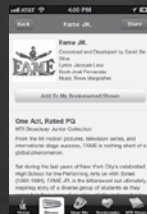
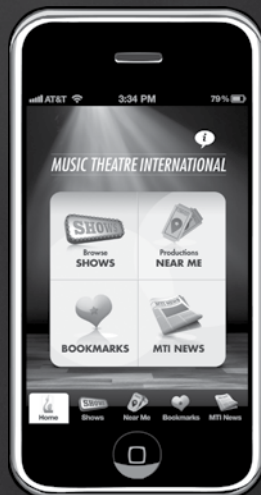
Martin Gresson

Kathleen Marin presenting Jim Sohre's National Theater Seat of Honor, April 26 at the U.S. Army Entertainment Tournament of Plays (TOPPERS) Awards.



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DTA enthusiastically welcomed J&G Unlimited LLC to the 2014 Short Play Festival. Both their production scripts and personalities were contagious leading to many participants taking home free perusal scripts for later production.

Their discounted production license raffle had one very happy theatre leaving the festival. **J&G is a theatrical force to be reckoned with!!**

Ruth K Brown
2014 DTA Festival Chair



J&G Unlimited was a wonderful interactive addition to our last TANYS theater festival in 2013 with something for everyone from drama to comedy, from satire to musicals and children's theatre. Eager festival goers were able to listen to, view and obtain FREE copies of scripts and materials.

I highly recommend you invite J&G Unlimited to your next festival and their works to your stage. **Their uplifting, positive attitude is contagious and wonderful to work with!**

Cynthia M. Appleton
President, TANYS



What a wonderful experience to have J&G at ESTA-Eastern States Theater Association's ESTAFest Original Works 2014 Festival hosted at The Barnstormers in Ridley Park PA where they gave out free perusals. **No other licensing company gives the personal touch that J&G Unlimited provides and its obvious they really care about your theatre, what you do and what you need!**

They aren't just a licensing house, **they are theatre people who have worked in theatre and know what community theatres need** while taking the time to get to know you. What a joy it is to have fun working with a licensing house -- and you can really get to know who you are working with! Not to mention, the scripts are really good! **We are so proud to have J&G Unlimited LLC (Judie, Gary and Tracy) as a part of ESTA!**

Marsha L. Amato-Greenspan,
President ESTA-Eastern States Theater Association



Maryland welcomed J&G Unlimited, LLC to our annual festival in 2014. J&G is a licensing company for their theatrical productions using their unique approach to music and sound effects called Press Play and comes included free with each production.

Their willingness to do what is necessary to support local theatres is a god-send for those of us working in community theatre.

Cindy Johnson
MCTFAfest

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David Cockerell

AACT Marketing/Communications Director David Cockerell and AACT Advocacy Committee Member and Region III Representative on the AACT Board Joanne Berry attend a briefing at the White House, March 25 during Arts Advocacy Day 2014. Representatives of the National Endowment for the Arts and other senior White House officials discussed the impact of the arts on our country at the event.



Linda Lee

AACT Executive Director Julie Crawford, Playwright Jim Henry, and AACT Immediate Past President Linda Lee strike a pose at the opening night reception for the premiere of Jim's Play, Jellofish, at Phoenix Stage Company in Naugatuck, CT on May 2. The play is one of the AACT NewPlayFest winners.



Ron Ziegler

AACT Executive Vice President and Venice Theatre Executive Director Murray Chase (center) serves dinner to the volunteers of the theatre at their annual recognition event on May 4. The event preceded the aactWorldFest 2014, which occurred at the theatre in June.



Ron Ziegler

AACT Conference Coordinator Jill Patchin walks through Times Square in New York City on May 6. Jill and AACT Field Services Director Ron Ziegler were in the city to begin preparations for AACT's next New York Convention, which will take place in July 2016.



Jill Patchin

Community Theatre Association of Michigan President Mary Lou Britton, Owosso Community Players Managing Director Ryan Bladzick, and AACT President Gary Walker attend the grand re-opening of the company's Lebowsky Center Theatre in Owosso, MI on May 9. The theatre had been destroyed by fire in 2007.



Raindrops keep Falling on My Head

by Twink Lynch

This chapter is based on a real letter, written by a real president of a real organization (not a community theatre, but it could be). I have changed the names “to protect the innocent.”

“To the Board and General Members of ABC Agency:

I have been with this organization for close to seven years. At one point, we had 200 members with nearly 75 to 100 attending meetings regularly. The original purpose of this group was to assist individuals in all areas of their spiritual, mental, emotional and physical health and to promote the well being of our members.

Over the past few years, this organization has deteriorated greatly. We now have, at best, an average of 3 or 4 members attending regularly. We no longer assist individuals as stated above. We have terminated four of our basic programs, allowed the scholarship program to become inactive, maintain no fundraising procedures, and continue to violate our own bylaws.

There is constant turmoil, constant arguing, constant power struggles, constant over-spending, and people doing unauthorized activities. The organization is greatly lacking in unity, respect, dignity, and purpose.

During my six months in office, I have dealt with: fraud; embezzlement; \$4703.46 worth of delinquent bills; a non-existent Certificate of Deposit; missing records; missing documents; missing property; overcharged accounts; incorrect grant contracts and applications; failure to follow grant guidelines; bank searches; police detectives; police reports; anonymous letters; life-threatening phone calls; extensive questioning from the IRS about this organization’s financial dealings, its honesty or lack thereof; questions from the IRS concerning individuals on the Board and general members receiving miscellaneous income from this organization and not reporting it to the IRS; continuing questions from the community about misappropriation of former special project funds which didn’t go to the designated program as advertised; and, most recently, badgering and ultimatums.

I feel used and abused by the Board and certainly not appreciated, even though I’ve been through one chaotic mess after another, with little or no support, trying to keep this organization from collapsing. I have tried to make good, constructive changes to bring growth to this organization. My opinions, suggestions, and ideas have always been

quickly discarded. I no longer have the time or interest for all this negative chaos. Therefore, effective immediately, I am resigning as president of the ABC Agency.”

Sad to say, I don’t believe this organization can be saved. It has obviously lost the trust of most of its members, the bank, its granting agency, the IRS, and the greater community it serves. Some Board Members may face criminal charges. The biggest losers, of course, are the members whose needs are no longer being met.

I counted at least eight of the fourteen “basic responsibilities of Boards” which were being violated by this group. Worst of all were the legal and ethical violations. How in the world could this have happened?

It is unlikely that the Board Members are all thieves and scofflaws. More probably they simply do not know how to be Board Members at all, let alone how to be effective ones. They certainly demonstrate the worst that can happen when Board Members do not know what’s expected of them and what the laws are concerning nonprofit organizations.

What are you and your Board doing to prevent such a scenario from taking place in your theatre? Resolve now to make Board development, *especially training*, a number one priority for your theatre. Buy at least two of the books suggested in *Boards in the Spotlight* and circulate them among your Board Members. Copy other articles and distribute them. Invite a local or nearby expert in communications or human relations to do an hour of Board training as part of a regular Board meeting. Write your long-range plan and/or job descriptions. Do at least one thing better! ♦

Another book for your theatre library: William G. Bowen’s *Inside the Boardroom* (1994), available from the AACT Bookstore (www.aact.org/bookstore)

Twink Lynch wrote a regular column on boardmanship for *Spotlight* for many years. Her early articles are compiled into a still relevant book for boards: *Boards in the Spotlight*. See ad on page 30 for ordering information. Reprinted from *Boards in the Spotlight* (page 43). Originally appeared in *Spotlight*, January 1995.

Listings do not imply AACT endorsement



NRDC Theatre Greening Advisor
a co-production of NRDC
and BGA

The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) has teamed up with the Broadway Green Alliance (BGA) to create the NRDC Theatre Greening Advisor—a guide to help theatres across the country implement eco-intelligent practices.

This online guide provides information for all six of the BGA's committees: Pre/Post Production, Production, Venues, Touring, Education and Outreach.

Each of the sections, starting with "Why Be Green," includes a variety of subsections with a wealth of information on ways to make your theatre a greener operation, from the office to the details of production and ways to communicate your efforts to your audience.

broadwaygreeningadvisor.org



Directing Plays, Directing People
A Collaborative Art
by Mary B. Robinson

Directing Plays, Directing People is a vivid, engaging, personal journey through the process of making theatre, written from a director's perspective. Mary B. Robinson, an award-winning director whose career in both professional and university theatre spans many decades, shares her own experience and adds perspective from a number of actors, playwrights, designers, and stage managers with whom she has collaborated over the years. This is a book for all theatre lovers - for the curious theatregoer and seasoned professional as well as the aspiring theatre artist.

Includes a foreword by Cynthia Nixon.

"Mary Robinson has taken her years on the boards and in the classroom and made a noteworthy contribution to books on stagecraft. "Directing Plays, Directing People" is more than a pithy nuts-and-bolts manual on directing, it is also a frank and entertaining memoir of a life in the theater."
Donald Margulies, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright

Available in the AACT Bookstore for \$16.73
aact.org/bookstore

The Global Age Project

Aurora Theatre Company
2081 Addison Street
Berkeley, CA 94704

The Global Age Project seeks plays that directly respond to our complicated present and our possible futures. The festival celebrates the diversity of perspectives, voices, and stories that make up the world today. The project is particularly interested in plays that might be considered for the theatre's mainstage season: plays that work well in an intimate thrust space, that engage the audience on an intellectual as well as a visceral level, and that celebrate the art of storytelling in both nuanced and surprising ways.

See the website for important guidelines.

Three winning playwrights receive \$1,000 prize, plus travel and accomodation, and a staged reading during the GAP Festival.

Electronic submission only, via the website

Deadline: July 16, 2014

Details: auroratheatre.org

Yale Drama Series David C. Horn Prize

Yale Drama Series
PO Box 209040
New Haven, CT 06520-9040

The Yale Drama Series is intended to support emerging playwrights. Submissions must be original, unpublished full-length plays written in English. No musicals, children's plays or translations. Plays must not have been professionally produced.

There is no application form or entry fee.

The winner of this annual competition will be awarded the David Charles Horn Prize of \$10,000, publication of his/her manuscript by Yale University Press, and a staged reading at Lincoln Center Theater. The winning play will be selected by the series' current judge, award-winning playwright Marsha Norman.

Deadline: Submit between June 1 and August 15, 2014
Electronic submission strongly advised, hard copy also possible.

See the website for more details:
dchornfoundation.org/competition-rules

New Roles

Coeur d'Alene, Idaho – **Lake City Playhouse** announces the promotion of Box Office Manager **Hannah Paton** to the position of Managing Director. A long-time artist and performer, Hannah studied at the University of Montana earning a BFA in Acting in 2010. While studying in Missoula, she worked with the Montana Actor's Theatre for several years, and moved to Coeur d'Alene in 2011. Before accepting her current position, she spent many hours at the Playhouse on stage and off, acting, stage managing, and volunteering. She began her new position in April.

Des Moines, Iowa – **StageWest** announces the hiring of **Todd Buchacker** as Producing Artistic Director. He takes the reigns of the organization from founding director Ron Lambert, who stepped down after a bout of health troubles last August. Todd previously served as the theatre's Artistic Director and has worked for the last dozen years as a Des Moines-based consultant for Planned Parenthood, helping the national organization improve its affiliate branches across the country. He began his new position in April. ♦

Artie's Advocacy Tip



State your case clearly and briefly.

You may have enjoyed preparing the analysis, but your listener may not wish to wade through it. Be brief and to the point.



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When	Who/What	Where	Information
July 10-13	Oklahoma Community Theatre Association ★ OCTAFest	OK Duncan	580-252-0317 www.oktheatre.org
July 18-20	Community Theatre Association of Michigan Master Class Weekend	MI Higgins Lake	989-463-1252 www.communitytheatre.org
August 8-10	American Association of Community Theatre Technical Theatre Conference	MI Grand Rapids	886-687-2228 www.aact.org/conf
August 13-16	Colorado Community Theatre Coalition ★ Colorado Theatre Festival 2014	CO Denver	303-674-5037 www.cctcfestival.com
August 22-23	American Association of Community Theatre Artistic Directors Conference	OK Tulsa	886-687-2228 www.aact.org/conf
August 22-23	American Association of Community Theatre Education Directors Conference	OK Tulsa	886-687-2228 www.aact.org/conf
Aug 29 - Sept 1	Ohio Community Theatre Association ★ State Conference 2014	OH Perrysburg	740-403-8969 www.ohiocommunitytheatre.org

★ Indicates festival in the AACTFest 2015 Cycle

For dates farther ahead, check the website: www.aact.org

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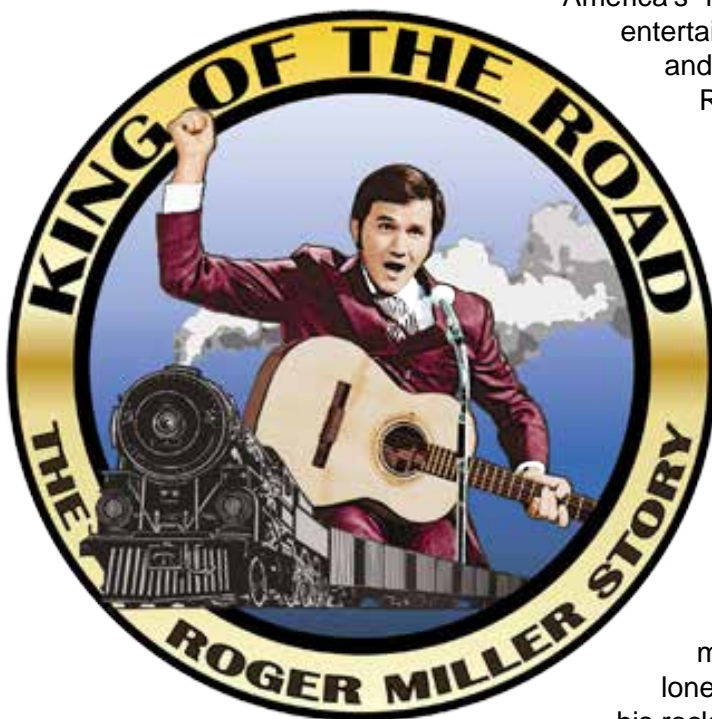
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