

# spotlight

March/April 2017 \$2.50

american association of community theatre

## AACTFest 2017

**AACT TEAM**  
**Conference 2017**



**AACT**  
**NewPlayFest**

**Trending**  
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**Murray Chase**  
AACT President  
2015-2017

God bless the artist.

No matter your political bent, your religious convictions, your race, creed, or nationality, the arts are integral to your life.

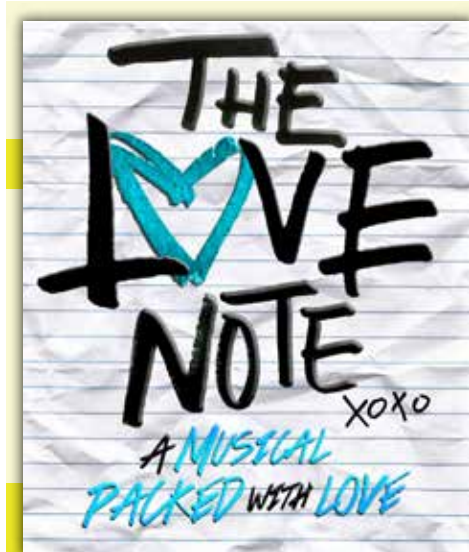
**We are inundated and surrounded by art of some nature at every waking moment of our lives.**

That statement may meet skepticism or ridicule; it is true, nonetheless. We are inundated and surrounded by art of some nature at every waking moment of our lives. Whether it's music, literature, visual art, graphic arts, dance, sculpture, architecture, beautiful botany, someone made the things we view every day. It took artists—good, bad, or indifferent—to make these things. These reflections of our larger world show us moments we can digest, a way to better appreciate

our more stunning surroundings, our lives, and the nature in which we live.

If you're reading this note, chances are you agree with me. You have interest in the most communal of all the arts—theatre—and the most inclusive of all theatre genres (community). You celebrate and explore the arts at our grass-roots level, where the arts—and theatre—begin. You understand that the arts must continue, must develop for us to appreciate our world...and to make good decisions about living in it. You work the extra hour, give the extra dollar, recruit a friend, help a student...make a difference in your community, and your community theatre.

So God bless the artists. They help us breathe.



**BY GAIL PHANEUF**

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Heather Forte and Mike Campbell in the world premiere of *Get Out of Dodge* at Venice Theatre in Venice, Florida

Photo by Renee McVety

## Contacting AACT

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AACT welcomes *Spotlight* input and requests for advertising rates. Contact David Cockerell at david@aact.org to submit content. Contact Darlene DeLorenzo at darlene@aact.org for advertising rates and specs. David and Darlene are also available at the phone number above.



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Tupelo, MS
- V Nancy Eppert  
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Boerne, TX
- VII Donna Fisher  
Casper, WY
- VIII Dennis Gilmore  
Indio, CA
- IX Jon Douglas Rake  
Tacoma, WA
- X Dane Winters  
Germany (US Army)

**Upcoming Meetings****AACT Summer Meetings**

June 26 - July 1, 2017 Rochester, MN  
Mayo Civic Center & Rochester Civic Theatre

**AACT Membership Meeting**

June 30, 2017, 1:00 pm Rochester, MN  
Rochester Civic Theatre

**National Community Theatre Management Conference**

June 25 - 27, 2017 Rochester, MN  
Mayo Civic Center

**AACTFest Adjudication Training**

June 26 - July 1, 2017 Rochester, MN  
Mayo Civic Center & Rochester Civic Theatre

**Youth Leadership Conference**

June 26 - July 1, 2017 Rochester, MN  
Mayo Civic Center & Rochester Civic Theatre

**National TEAM Conference**

August 17 - 19, 2017. Arlington, TX  
Co-sponsored by Theatre Arlington & University of Texas at Arlington

**National Community Theatre Managing Directors Conference**

November 3 - 6, 2017 Madison, WI - University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Co-sponsored by AACT

**AACT Staff**

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David Cockerell, Marketing/Communications Director  
Cranston Dodds, Member Engagement Director  
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**Spotlight**

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**AACT  
Insurance Program**

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



For more information, contact:  
325-486-5150  
610-362-8832 Fax  
ken.roberts@usi.com

# Welcome to AACTFest 2017 in Rochester, Minnesota June 26 - July 1, 2017



The national festival of AACTFest 2017 will take place in Rochester, Minnesota where twelve winning productions will be presented. The AACTFest 2017 national festival includes a theatre management conference, a youth leadership conference and youth festival, educational workshops, top vendor displays, the design exhibition and competition, a new monologue competition, social events, sightseeing and networking. Register now and attend this great celebration of American community theatre! AACTFest 2017, the national community theatre festival, will be held June 26-July 1, 2017.

Registration and more information is available at [aact.org/17](http://aact.org/17).

AACTFest 2017 National Festival Schedule is available at [aact.org/17](http://aact.org/17)

The Moving On section (page 10) lists theatres that have just been selected to advance to Regional Festivals. See all theatres advancing from their state festivals at [aact.org/moving-2017](http://aact.org/moving-2017). And keep up with the AACT Calendar (page 42) or [aact.org/calendar](http://aact.org/calendar) for upcoming state and regional festivals. Leading up to the excitement of the national festival are approximately 40 state festivals with more than 200 theatre productions, followed by nearly 60 theatre companies performing in regional festivals.

The national festival will feature 12 productions that have received top honors in their respective state and regional festivals. All participating theatre companies adhere to a common set of rules documented in the AACTFest 2017 Handbook (available at [aact.org/handbook](http://aact.org/handbook)).



*The recently expanded Mayo Civic Center in downtown Rochester, Minnesota*

Workshops and meetings will be in the Mayo Civic Center, with performances in the Rochester Civic Theatre, also located in the Civic Center complex. A complete list of workshops is available at [aact.org/17](http://aact.org/17).

Rochester Civic Theatre is situated in downtown Rochester adjacent to the Mayo Civic Center and accessible from the host hotels via skyway. For information on host hotels and airline discounts, go to [aact.org/17](http://aact.org/17).

*Rochester Civic Theatre entrance*







Peace Plaza is located in the heart of the city at 1st Ave SW & 1st St SW in Rochester, Minnesota. A public park, the Peace Plaza is open to the public to enjoy. A Summer Market & Music Festival is a weekly outdoor market of over 100 art, craft and food vendors and live entertainment every Thursday throughout the summer.

*Peace Plaza in downtown Rochester*



Explore the city, calendar of events, restaurants, shopping, the expanded Civic Center, the friendly people, and everything Rochester at [VisitRochesterMN.com](http://VisitRochesterMN.com)

More AACTFest 2017 ►

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# AACTFest 2017 YouthFest



AACT will present the very first national AACT YouthFest as an integral part of the national festival of AACTFest 2017. During AACTFest, five youth theatre companies will perform afternoons Tuesday through Friday. All five will again perform and be adjudicated on Saturday afternoon. All Youth Festival performances are included in AACTFest 2017 registration.

## AACT YouthFest 2017 National Companies:

### Inspiration Stage Sugar Land, Texas

#### *Roald Dahl's James and the Giant Peach JR.*

A delightfully offbeat adaptation of the classic Roald Dahl adventure, a boy and his insect friends take an amazing journey across the ocean.

Inspiration Stage is a national award-winning performing arts studio and theatre offering classes for ages four to teens and performance opportunities for youth and adults.

[inspirationstage.com](http://inspirationstage.com)



### Venice Theatre's Education and Outreach Department Venice, Florida

#### *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* by Celeste Raspanti

Raja, a child who survived Terezin, shares her story of living in the concentration camp, while retaining a world filled with butterflies and flowers with other children in the camp.

Venice Theatre's Education and Outreach Department operates year-round with daily classes—during and after school—summer and spring camps, conservatory training, technical apprenticeships accredited by the Florida Department of Education, college internships, and school partnerships. Additionally, Venice Theatre partners with various human services organizations, using arts training to improve life skills for youth and adults.

[venicestage.com](http://venicestage.com)



### Rochester Civic Theatre Company's Education Department Rochester, Minnesota

#### *Show TBA*

Rochester Civic Theatre Company's Education Department offers integrated and comprehensive Theatre Arts classes and performance opportunities for students, ages 5 through the first years of college. Featuring a year round curriculum, multiple performance troupes, and conservatory level training; as well as award winning theatre based community outreach initiatives created in response to bullying, teen suicide, sexual abuse, and other important societal issues.

[rochestercivictheatre.org/education](http://rochestercivictheatre.org/education)



## Moving On

Theatres recently selected to represent their states in AACTFest 2017

Some states qualify to send two shows to the regional festival.

Region	Theatre	From	Production
II	Montgomery Playhouse	Gaithersburg MD	<i>Virtual Reality</i> by Alan Arkin
II	Silver Spring Stage	Silver Spring MD	<i>The Pirate and the Caterpillar</i> by Macy D'Aiutoto
IV	Starkville Community Theatre	Starkville MS	<i>Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike</i> by Christopher Durang
IV	Tupelo Community Theatre	Tupelo MS	<i>Cicada</i> by Jerre Dye



**Minnesota SkyVault Theatre Company** Rochester, Minnesota

*Show TBA*

The Minnesota SkyVault Theatre Company is a youth theatre organization that cultivates growth and creativity. It encourages youth involvement in every facet of operations. Students are involved in and consistently responsible for set design and construction, props and costumes, stage managing, sound and lighting design. All members of this ensemble contribute to the theatre productions. Actors, students, teachers, audience members are all considered part of the ensemble that creates and tells stories together. [facebook.com/weareskyvault](https://www.facebook.com/weareskyvault)

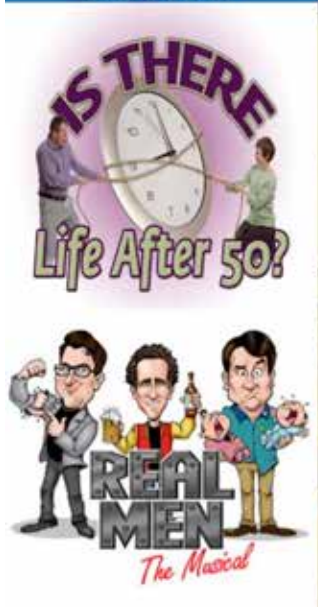
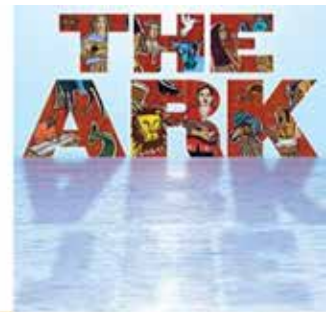
**Clark Youth Theatre** Tulsa, Oklahoma

*Show TBA*

Clark Youth Theatre is Tulsa's longest running youth arts program outside the public school system. The City of Tulsa turned a former Lutheran church into a youth theatre in 1978, and Clark operated as part of the Tulsa Park and Recreation Department for 36 seasons. In the summer of 2015, Clark Youth Theatre became a private entity and continues to offer award-winning, quality programs to Tulsa and the surrounding area. Clark Youth Theatre offers a full season of main stage productions along with improv and acting classes, homeschool drama classes, and camps to those ages 8-18 from the beginner to the advanced student. [clarkyouththeatre.com](http://clarkyouththeatre.com)



*YouthFest continues on the next page*



YouthFest continued from previous page

Bill Anderson, Jr., Penelope Notter, and Sara Phoenix will adjudicate the AACT Youth Festival productions. Do not miss this exciting new component to the Rochester, Minnesota AACTFest 2017 national festival!



Bill Anderson, Jr. has been an avid volunteer for Center Stage Theatre in Midland, Michigan for 25 seasons. He has worked in nearly every facet of community theatre including performing, stage management, lighting design, set design, and directing. Bill's list of directing credits include titles such as *Avenue Q*, *Annie*, *Ragtime*, *Shrek*, *The 39*

*Steps*, and a production of *Urinetown* that placed 2nd at the 2011 National AACTFest. Most recently for AACT, Bill completed the adjudication workshop at the National Festival in Grand Rapids. Bill has also served for the past 8 years as an adjudicator for the Michigan Interscholastic Forensics Association and its forensics tournaments and One-Act festivals.



Penelope Notter served for many years as Associate Director and Director of Education for Grand Rapids Civic Theatre School of Theatre Arts. *A Christmas Carol*, *Pinkalicious*, and *Hairspray* are shining examples of her directing talent and love for theatre. She has over 150 professional productions to



her credit and several Grand Rapids regional Grand Awards (2 Outstanding Direction and Best Supporting Actress). Notter has been honored with AACT's Distinguished Merit Award, and Community Theatre Association of Michigan's prestigious Robert A. McKenna Community Theatre Achievement Award. Both honors recognize Notter for her contributions to community theatre. In 2015 Notter was inducted into AACT's elite group of "Fellows" the national organization's highest honor.



Sara Phoenix serves as Executive Artistic Director for Theatre Tulsa in Tulsa, Oklahoma. A child of community theatre, she has directed and choreographed numerous productions for various theatres and schools and holds a BFA in theatre from the University of Oklahoma. Sara is a certified drama teacher and co-founded Poteet Theatre Arts Education

in Oklahoma City. Sara has both performed in and directed award-winning productions at the national AACTFest, including *John and Jen* in 2009 and *Over the River and Through the Woods* in 2001. Sara has served on several committees for AACT, including Workshops, Education, and Festival Adjudication. Sara currently serves as Chairman of AACT's Education Committee, was co-facilitator of AACT's Youth Summit in 2015, and is excited to be involved with AACT's first Youth Festival. ♦

## AACTFest Myth to dispel common myths related to festival participation

**You will go into debt to enter a show!** To debunk this myth, I will be using words of wisdom from sources who have "been there, done that":

**Gil Savage** from San Diego advises, "Promote to your community that you are representing them (emphasis added) ... They love it! It can be a terrific fund-raising and profile raising opportunity. Fire up the imagination and interest of your group - get everyone thinking in new directions."

**Jim Walker**, Artistic/Managing Director of Aberdeen Community Theatre in South Dakota shares, "Although we did the typical things like benefit performances, raffles and bake sales, these were very minimal compared to the amount raised by personal asks, via letter and more productively by personal calls and visits. We raised \$75,000 to get the 22 member cast and crew of *Honk!* to Japan. At least 85% was raised by sitting down and talking the need and benefits to patrons."

**Steve Hughes**, Executive Director Kokomo Civic Theatre in Indiana says, "We held two fund raising performances of *Freud's Last Session*, admission was \$5 or a greater donation, and most people gave considerably more. The local

newspaper gave us good coverage, and we utilized Facebook to get the word out about our fundraising needs. We actually received more in direct donations than we received from a 50/50 raffle. In our newsletter and at performances, we announced how much we were trying to raise. One thing that I have tried to emphasize at a local level is that we have award-winning community theatre right here in our community. People like to support a person or organization that is considered a winner."

The bottom line is that with planning, imagination, personal contacts, and zeal, a theatre company can get the money to participate and compete. Who doesn't want to share their best efforts and perhaps, as Gil puts it "Bring Home the Bacon and Reap Rewards!?"

*Submitted by Nancy Eppert, AACT Education Committee member. Nancy is pleased to share what she has learned from participating in all aspects of AACTFest (workshops, shows, networking, etc.), and notes that her experience is assisted by the insights of many theatre friends she has acquired by attending every AACTFest national festival since 2003. She looks forward to meeting you at the AACTFest 2017 National Festival in Rochester.*

# Contribute Items to Add to the Silent Auction Fun

Contributing to the fun of the national festival are the fundraisers for the AACT Endowment Fund. Even if you can't attend the festival, you are urged to contribute a special item to the Silent Auction to be held at the AACTFest national festival in Rochester, Minnesota in June.

Items are requested with minimum value of \$100 per item, basket, or group of items to auction together. Suggestions for best sellers:

- Fine jewelry, gourmet candy or chocolate (from your state or region)
- Fine works of art
- Destination experiences or entertainment (gift passes to movies, etc.)
- Gift cards to national chain restaurants, department stores, Amazon, etc.
- 2 or 3 bottles of wine for the Wine Pull (you can buy the wine near or next door to the hotel)
- Surprise us with something fantastic

The Festival will also be enlivened by a People's Choice Award competition and a raffle. The People's Choice Awards allow company fans and festival attendees to vote with their pocketbooks for their favorite company, actor, and actress. One dollar buys one vote or six votes for five dollars. Voting can be done at the festival or on the benefactor.org website. Website votes will be six votes for five dollars. Fans do not have to attend the festival to vote.

The AACT Endowment funds serve two purposes: to sustain the mission and longevity of AACT and to provide travel assistance to the performing companies representing their regions at the national festival. Proceeds from the Silent Auction will go into the AACT Endowment Mission Fund and those from the People's Choice Awards and the raffle will benefit the Travel Fund.

The twelve companies participating in the national AACTFest 2017 will each receive \$2690 to help cover expenses of traveling to the national festival.

Please send items for the Silent Auction to arrive by June 22 to: AACT Silent Auction, Attn: Janet Roeder, Rochester Civic Theatre, 20 Civic Center Drive, SE, Rochester, MN 55904. You may also bring items with you to the festival. Deliver to the Festival Registration desk located in the lobby of the Rochester Civic Theatre Monday afternoon, June 26.

In order to prepare bid sheets, etc., we need to know by June 15 what you intend to contribute. Please go to the AACT website - [aact.org/auction](http://aact.org/auction) and complete the Auction Contribution form or email [info@aact.org](mailto:info@aact.org) a description of the items you are sending, their value, the method you intend to use for delivery, and when they will arrive.

Questions? Contact the AACT office at 817-732-3177 or [info@aact.org](mailto:info@aact.org). ♦

At the Rochester, New York 2011 National AACTFest, the state of Alabama in Region IV brought the hilarious and heartwarming *Second Samuel* by Pamela Parker. Although the script had been around for years, it hadn't experienced much exposure outside of the South. The Alabama production put that script on the map. Not only did the production earn a rare standing ovation, it had everyone clamoring to bring the script home to their local theatres. At the national AACTFest 2015 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, I had lunch with playwright Paul Elliot. Now his AACT NewPlayFest winning comedy, *Enter Laughing* is on my radar for a production at my theatre. Attend an AACTFest state, regional, or national festival and you'll bring home lasting memories, wonderful new friends, and potential new productions to delight your audiences.

*Sue Ellen Gerrels, Artistic Director  
South City Theatre  
Pelham, Alabama  
[southcitytheatre.com](http://southcitytheatre.com)*



*Sue Ellen Gerrels and Paul Elliot*

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# AACTFest 2017 Design Competition and Exhibition

AACTFest17 is THE place for designers who create the magic on community theatre stages and those who promote theatrical magic to receive deserved recognition for the work they do! Organizational or individual members can share their technical work at this national festival which celebrates some of the best theatre produced in America. You don't have to travel to Rochester, Minnesota (but if you do you will have an experience you will never forget), you can ship your entry and we will take care of giving it a proper display. Following are highlights of the guidelines, and you can download the full guidelines at [aact.org/design17](http://aact.org/design17). It's not hard to enter so what are you waiting for? You want to take this opportunity to proudly exhibit your work.

**Design Categories:** Scenic, Costume/Make-up/Hair, Lighting, Sound, Special Effects/Technical Design, Graphics, Website

**Awards** will be given based on concept, creativity, originality, effectiveness, and execution. Awards will be presented for Outstanding Overall Design and Outstanding in the individual categories (as warranted).

- Outstanding Overall Design will receive a \$300 cash prize.
- Individual Category Design Winners will receive a \$100 cash prize.

**Guidelines and entry forms** are available at [aact.org/design17](http://aact.org/design17).

- **Entry Form** must be submitted online by June 12, 2017.
- **Entry Fee** of \$20 must be submitted for each design.
- **Qualification:** Each entry must have been designed for an AACT member theatre production or by an AACT

Individual Member designed for a community theatre. Productions must have been staged between July 2015 and June 2017.

- **Location:** Entries will be displayed in the Mayo Civic Center Conference Center. The Design Competition and Exhibition opens to the public at 8:30 am, Thursday June 29.

## Requirements for All Entries (except Website Entries)

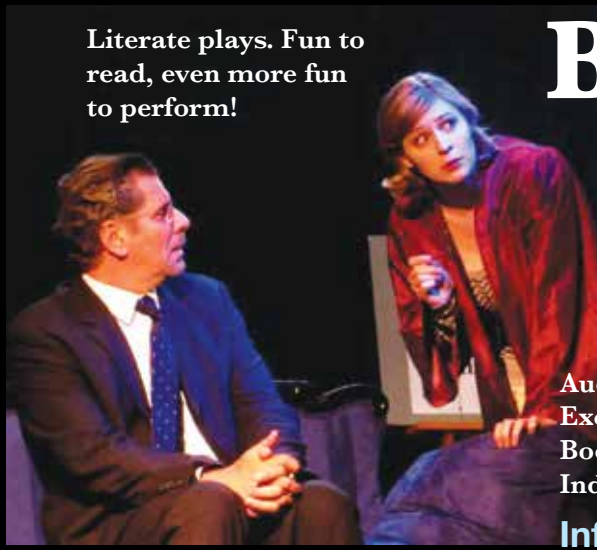
1. Every entry exhibit must include a written **Design Statement** in which the designer states the objective and challenges of the design.
2. Photos, videos, or original items of the design as it was originally presented ARE required.  
Sound Design entry will need an audio playback rather than visual.

See all **General Guidelines** at [aact.org/design17](http://aact.org/design17) before entering.

For further information contact

Bob Frame: 315-294-8640, [framer@cayuga-cc.edu](mailto:framer@cayuga-cc.edu)  
or Rich Gannon: 630-415-3682, [rgannon49@gmail.com](mailto:rgannon49@gmail.com)  
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# AACTFest 2017 Youth Leadership Conference

The AACT Youth Leadership Conference will focus on cultivating youth who aspire to be leaders in their communities. The conference is open to ages 14-18 and will consist of round-table discussions, youth activities, educational workshops, and enlightening sessions. The goal of this exciting conference is to instill confidence, knowledge, and team building skills in an exhilarating and stimulating experience.



Jennifer Hamilton will facilitate this conference. Jennifer served as the Education Director for Topeka Civic Theatre & Academy from 2002 to 2014. During her time there, she directed over 50 fully produced Youth and Theatre for Young Audiences productions, created curriculum for after school theatre classes, created and managed summer camps, and provided theatre-based outreach programming to area schools. She received her Masters Degree in Theatre from the University of Kansas in 2003 where she taught Improvisation, Introduction to Theatre, and directed for the University Theatre.

Jennifer has been an active member of AACT for many years. She facilitated the AACT Education Directors Conference in Kansas City in 2008, presented a workshop at the national AACTFest in 2009, served on the Education and Workshops committees, contributed to *Spotlight*, and even enjoyed singing for the awards shows in 2009 and 2011. She is thrilled to see old friends and meet new ones at AACTFest 2017! ♦

Register for AACTFest 2017 Youth Leadership Conference by registering for AACTFest 2017, and receive a discount for youth. [aact.org/17](http://aact.org/17)

The AACT National Theatre Festival is the culmination of months of hard work by those amazing theatre companies who make it to the "finals." But it is so much more than that. The opportunities to learn, to network, and to be a part of this experience/lifestyle/obsession we call "community theatre" are also endless -- and incredibly rewarding. Come see what all the fuss is about!



*Wally Hurst*  
Director of the Norris Theatre  
Louisburg College, Louisburg, North Carolina  
[louisburg.edu](http://louisburg.edu)

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<p><i>Himself</i> AND <i>Nora</i></p> <p>THE GREATEST LOVE STORY NEVER TOLD</p> <p>"SMART, LIVELY AND TUNEFUL!" -HUFFINGTON POST</p>  <p>"A ROBUST ROMANTIC MUSICAL." -THE NEW YORK TIMES</p> <p>AN ACCLAIMED HIT DIRECT FROM ITS OFF-BROADWAY RUN!</p>	<p><b>LIFE</b></p> <p>Could Be A Dream</p> <p>"ENTERTAINMENT GOLD!" -BACKSTAGE</p> <p>"CRITICS' CHOICE! DREAM IS SO FROTHY IT FLOATS!" -LA TIMES</p>

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# Community Theatre Management Conference

June 25-27, 2017  
Rochester, Minnesota

The National Community Theatre Management Conference will be held Sunday June 25 – Tuesday June 27 just prior to AACTFest 2017 national festival at the Mayo Civic Center in Rochester, Minnesota.



Ron Ziegler will facilitate the conference. Ron serves as Festivals Coordinator for the American Association of Community Theatre and free-lances as a director and teacher. He resides in North Port, Florida, and is "mostly retired." He has directed productions for Venice (FL) Theatre, Ocala (FL) Civic Theatre, and most frequently for Iowa's Des Moines Community Playhouse and

he was the first Artistic/Managing Director for the Playhouse's Kate Goldman Children's Theatre. Ron founded and managed the Iowa Fringe Festival and was the first executive director for Orlando (FL) Repertory Theatre. He is a past president of the AACT, was named an AACT Fellow, and served twice previously as facilitator for the National Artistic Directors Conference.

The Community Theatre Management Conference (CTMC) is modeled after the renowned National Full Time Community Theatre Managing Directors Conference (often called the "Madison Conference"), and is for anyone with responsibility for managing a community theatre. This educational gathering brings together administrators from all levels of theatre. From the volunteer who "runs things around

here" to the "just starting" part-time administrator to the full time professional manager... all are welcome. Learning is through a series of intensive, topic specific, round table discussions with participants sharing experiences - both problems and solutions. Participants will prioritize and suggest topics through a pre-conference questionnaire.

The Community Theatre Management Conference can send you home with ideas that will pay for your trip, a renewed enthusiasm for your theatre management job, and a nationwide network of colleagues! And because the CTMC will be held immediately preceding the national festival in Rochester, you can attend two events in one trip.

## Community Theatre Management Conference

### AACT Member

by June 1 - \$260

after June 1 - \$290

Discount if also registering for national festival - \$15

### Non-member

by June 1 - \$335

After June 1 - \$365

Covers all sessions, materials, snacks, and a copy of *Boards in the Spotlight* by Twink Lynch

Hotel & Ground Transportation for the CMTC are the same as AACTFest rates and discounts. Visit [aact.org/17](http://aact.org/17), Transportation & Hotels.

Registration information and more details available at [aact.org/17](http://aact.org/17) or the AACT office 817-732-3177 or [info@aact.org](mailto:info@aact.org). ♦

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# AACT TEAM Conference 2017

August 17-19, 2017

Co-hosted by Theatre Arlington and  
The University of Texas at Arlington,  
Arlington, Texas

AACT is again offering an expanded educational conference with four tracks, focusing on **theatre education programs, artistic direction of a theatre, development and marketing, and technical theatre.**

Come as an individual or a team: Select the track that best suits your individual needs. Get even more out of the conference by putting together a group--the four tracks will be held simultaneously, so participants can share rides and rooms. The insights you gain can pay for the conference registration many times over.

## Educational Programing Directors Track

Boost your theatre's education program, exchange ideas and experiences, and learn skills to better manage your programs. The Educational Programing Directors track will give you skills to tackle theatre education issues, a renewed enthusiasm to build your educational programs, and provide you with a network of colleagues from all over the country.



**Cindy Honeycutt** from Fort Worth, Texas will facilitate the Educational Programing Directors track. She is currently the Education Director at Theatre Arlington, and has excelled as a teaching artist specializing in acting, musical theatre, and creative dramatics. Cindy has years of experience in theatre instruction having held the position of Education Director at Casa Mañana in Fort Worth, and at Texas Creative Arts Theatre and School (CATS) in Arlington Texas, where she directed productions and the TOPCATS touring group. In addition, Cindy has taught in public schools, Montessori academies, private schools, and after-school enrichment programs. Cindy holds a BA in Theatre Arts from St. Edwards University.

*The Educational Programing Directors track is for anyone, whatever his or her title, who is responsible for their theatre's education program.*

## Directing the Theatre's Artistic Vision Track

Choose the right plays for your next season; learn solutions for choosing directors, recruiting actors, and solving technical problems; and examine long-range planning. Discover and re- envision exciting ways to produce high quality theatre as you exchange ideas and experiences with fellow producers and artistic directors.



**Dennis Yslas** from Fort Worth, Texas will facilitate Directing the Theatre's Artistic Vision track. Dennis is the Administrator for MainStage Irving-Las Colinas in Irving, Texas and has worked in artistic administration for over 15 years - as an Artistic Director, stage director, and Vice President of Administration for The Column Awards, a theatre awards organization. He is Vice President of Strategic Planning on the Board of Governors for Texas Nonprofit Theatres. He is a member of Actors' Equity Association, serving as the North Texas Liaison Committee Chair.

*Directing the Theatre's Artistic Vision track is for anyone, whatever his or her title, who is responsible for the overall artistic direction of their theatre.*



Nancy Brozek leads a session in the Development/Marketing Skills Track at AACT TEAM Conference 2016

## Development/Marketing Skills Track

Discover strategies and tactics to increase your fundraising and marketing abilities, and learn ways to create loyalty to your organization and its place in your community. The Development/Marketing Skills track will help you understand methods for small, medium, and large sized arts groups to enlist donors and sponsors, build audiences, and to use marketing and branding in today's changing social media world.



**Nancy Brozek** from New Era, Michigan will facilitate the Development/Marketing Skills track. Nancy has served as the Director of Development and Community Relations for Grand Rapids Civic Theatre (GRCT) since 2010. She is responsible for the management and integration of development and marketing strategies promoting GRCT's brand. She specializes in developing relationships; media support; and individual, corporate, and community partnerships that result in increased general public ticket

sales, season ticket subscriptions, and contributions. Prior to GRCT, she was the Executive Director of the Down Syndrome Association of West Michigan, the Development Director of the Grand Rapids Children's Museum, and the Executive Director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of West Michigan. She holds a Bachelors Degree in Business Leadership and a Masters Degree in Marketing from Baker College School of Graduate Studies.

*The Development/Marketing Skills track is for anyone from board members to staff who raises funds or promotes their theatre.*

### Technical Theatre Skills Track

The Technical Theatre Skills track is for those who work behind the scenes. Learn to master the challenges you face as you work within the amenities of your theatre, from stage size, lighting systems, and scenery to costumes. Experts will give hands-on training in several areas of technical theatre. This track will help you find resources and supplies you can utilize in your theatre, increase your excitement in the magic of technical theatre, and provide you with a nationwide network of fellow techies! A team of technicians will facilitate this track.

Jared Land and Michelle Harvey from Arlington, Texas will lead the Technical Theatre Skills track.



**Jared Land** currently teaches lighting and sound design at the University of Texas at Arlington, and is the department's resident lighting/sound designer and production manager. In the Dallas/Fort Worth area, Jared's work has been featured with Shakespeare Dallas, WaterTower Theatre, McKinney Repertory Theatre, Switch Lighting, Stage 2, Theatre Three, The Festival of Independent Theatres,

Church Mouse Productions, and the University of North Texas. Outside of this area he has worked with Pacific Conservatory of Performing Arts (PCPA) Theatrefest, Voices of the South, Theatre Memphis, Stagedoor Manor, Galveston Summer

Musicals, and Project Motion. Jared received his MFA in Theatrical Design from the University of Memphis.



**Michelle Harvey** is the resident scenic design faculty member for the University of Texas at Arlington's Department of Theatre Arts and Maverick Theatre Company. She teaches scenic design, scenic painting, and properties and oversees these areas for departmental productions. In the Dallas/Fort Worth area Michelle regularly designs for the Maverick Theatre Company and the Turtle Creek Chorale, and has designed for

Theatre Three, Dallas Children's Theatre, Theatre Arlington, Uptown Players, Mainstage Irving – Las Colinas, and The Spectacular Senior Follies.

*No technical theatre training is required; even experienced techies will benefit.*

Visit [aact.org/team](http://aact.org/team) for details and more information

The fee and the schedule are the same for each of the four tracks of the AACT 2017 TEAM Conference. ♦



Cian Dooris

*A lighting session in the Technical Theatre Skills Track at AACT TEAM Conference 2016*

*AACT TEAM Conference continues on page 21*

# Hilarious Comedy Plays!





**'Twas the Fight Before Christmas!**  
**Cast:** 4 Female, 2 Male **Length:** Two Acts  
 Think your family is complicated? Meet the most dysfunctional family you can imagine as they try to navigate Christmas. Peace on earth and good will to all men? Not likely! Ever since her husband died, Mary's horrible adult children have been ruining Christmas. This year, with the help of a suicidal French psychiatrist, Mary is determined to take Christmas back. Hilarious and uplifting Christmas comedy.

**My In-laws are Outlaws!**  
**Cast:** 5 Female, 2 Male **Length:** Two Acts  
 Annie discovers her in-laws are outlaws... and her mother-in-law has hired a mad group of assassins to kill her! How will Annie, a mild mannered Librarian, outwit the best of the Italian, Russian and Irish contract killers? This is outrageous, laugh out loud comedy at its best.

**The Old People Are Revolting!**  
**Cast:** 5 Female, 2 Male **Length:** Two Acts  
 Hilarious comedy about seniors seeking revenge! The residents of the Sunshine Retirement Village have had enough: they're revolting! Bursting with eccentric characters and crazy shenanigans the play is great fun to stage and a huge audience pleaser.

**Also available...**  
 How To Train Your Husband, Understanding Women, Menopause Made Me Do It, Crazy Ladies! ... and many more!

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# AACT Shaw Fest Adventure 2017

September 19 - 22, 2017

Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario

3 Nights, 4 Shows & more!

The AACT Shaw Fest Adventure 2017 begins Tuesday, September 19, 2017 with a night in Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada at the beautiful Marriott Niagara Falls Hotel Fallsview & Spa. Tuesday evening will be free to enjoy awesome Niagara Falls, experience amazing restaurants, sightsee, and visit the fabulous casino next to the hotel.

The adventure continues Wednesday through Friday at the Queens Landing Niagara-on-the-Lake Hotel and Spa, where participants will attend four Shaw Festival productions. In addition to the four shows, the AACT Shaw Fest Adventure includes a backstage tour, post-show chat, and more!



Productions & Activities Include:

Wednesday 11:30 am

**Wilde Tales** (Lunchtime One-Act)

*Stories for Young and Old* by Oscar Wilde

Adapted for the stage by Kate Hennig

Directed by Christine Brubaker

Four beautiful and funny tales, with an interactive twist: each show will be different. Great for adults and children.

Wednesday 8:00 pm

**Androcles and the Lion**

By Bernard Shaw

Directed by Tim Carroll

A fable more than eighteen centuries old, Shaw's version borrows a pagan tale to take on the unholy alliance of religion and power.

Thursday 9:00 am **Backstage Tour**

Thursday 2:00 pm

**Me and My Girl**

Book and Lyrics by L. Arthur Rose and Douglas Furber

Book revised by Stephen Fry, with contributions by Mike Ockrent

Music by Noel Gay

Directed by Ashlie Corcoran

A joyous Pygmalion-inspired musical reworked with great success by Stephen Fry.

Thursday 8:00 pm

**Dancing at Lughnasa**

By Brian Friel

Directed by Krista Jackson

Brian Friel's masterpiece about the lives and dreams of five sisters in rural Ireland

Join your AACT friends for this exciting adventure.

Visit [aact.org/shaw-fest-adventure](http://aact.org/shaw-fest-adventure) for registration, hotel and transportation information, and links to the Shaw Festival. ♦



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AACT Member \$235  
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After July 10

AACT Member \$260  
Non-member \$335

After August 7

AACT Member \$290  
Non-member \$365

**AACT 2017 TEAM Conference Schedule:**

**Thursday, August 17, 2017**

5 – 6 pm Opening Meet and Greet and Tour of Theatre  
Arlington  
6:30 – 9:30 pm Session 1

**Friday, August 18, 2017**

8:30 am – 12:30 pm Session 2  
12:30 – 1:30 pm Lunch provided onsite  
1:30 – 5:30 pm Session 3  
Optional Evening Activities: see a show, etc.

**Saturday August 19, 2017**

8:30 – 12:30 Session 4

Sessions will be held at **Theatre Arlington**  
305 W Main St  
Arlington, Texas 76010  
theatrealington.org

and the **University of Texas at Arlington**  
701 S Neddermann Dr  
Arlington, Texas 76019  
uta.edu/theatre/

Register at [aact.org/team](http://aact.org/team)

For more information contact the AACT office 817-732-3177  
or [info@aact.org](mailto:info@aact.org). ♦

**AACTEd Hours**

AACT will provide you with documentation of your participation in quality educational activities through AACT.

Full participation in a track earns **17 AACTEd Hours**  
*A symbol of your commitment to continuing education.*

**SIDE-SPLITTING COMEDIES!**

<p><b>"PURE FUN!"</b> -Entertainment Weekly</p> <p><b>Miss Abigail's</b> <i>guide to</i> <b>Dating, Mating, &amp; Marriage!</b></p> <p><b>"Date night done right!"</b> -Harper's Bazaar</p>	<p><b>3 AMAZING PLAYS!</b></p> <p><b>"Hysterically funny!"</b> -Stage and Cinema</p> <p><b>THE FRIED MEAT TRILOGY</b></p> <p><b>"Delightfully quirky comedy!"</b> -Stage Raw</p>
<p><b>A RIP-ROARING SPAGHETTI WESTERN!</b></p> <p><b>RIO HONDO</b></p> <p><b>"Affably goofy!"</b> -LA Times</p>	<p><b>"SPOT ON!"</b> -The New York Times</p> <p><b>SHE-RANTULAS FROM OUTER SPACE</b></p> <p><b>IN 30!</b></p> <p><b>"New! Crisp! Funny!"</b> -Examiner</p>
<p><b>DIRECT FROM NEW YORK</b></p> <p><b>APPLICATION PENDING</b></p> <p><b>Up to 43 Wacky Characters!</b> ★★★★</p> <p><b>"CRITICS PICK! FOUR STARS!"</b> -TimeOut NY</p> <p><b>"Must we trot out the phrase 'tour de force'? Yes, we must!"</b> -The New York Times</p>	<p><b>Divinity Place</b></p> <p><b>It's a Bumpy Road to the Altar in This Hilarious Romp!</b></p>

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# How to Raise Cash to Take Your Company to AACTFest

By Liz Lydic and Gil Savage

So you're participating in AACTFest 17 but the expense is an obstacle? Take heart! Many companies have creatively raised the money to be a part of this networking and skill-building event. Here they share some of their ideas with you.

Theatre companies participating in AACTFest, whether at the state, regional, or national level, find it an exhilarating, fascinating, and a unique experience. It's also a challenging one.

Most of the challenges are artistic (selecting the right production, for example) and logistical (transporting people, sets and costumes). However, financing festival participation may call on unfamiliar knowledge and skills.

The good news is that many theatres have developed successful fundraising techniques geared toward travel and other expenses associated with AACTFest.

## Start with a Plan

Planning for AACTFest is the first important step toward reaching your fundraising goals. The further you progress in an AACTFest cycle (from local to state, from regional to national), the more expenses you need to cover.

In all cases, the common success factor is good planning for both travel expenses and logistics. For starters, producing a traveling show with a small cast and simple set makes transportation easier and less expensive. There have been many fine productions that have moved on to the National level with few set pieces and three actors or less. Equally fine productions with elaborate sets and large casts have gone the same route, thanks to determination and sufficient funding.

Once you have done your production planning, setting a specific financial goal is a next critical step. Do your homework to understand each of these costs in detail for the state, regional, and national AACTFests:

- Creating your production, licensing, sets, effects, etc.
- Getting the set, cast, and crew to the festival—and back
- Festival participation costs
- Food and lodging expenses

## Funding Sources

Many theatres report funding opportunities with foundations, arts councils, and civic clubs. If there is no grant to apply for, sometimes a phone call or personal appeal to one of the aforementioned entities will produce a contribution—typically after you've moved up a level of the festival cycle. For example, one company that made a call to a community foundation received a \$5,000 donation. In addition, AACT's Endowment Fund provides grants to theatre companies representing their regions, specifically to help offset travel expenses to the national festival.

Here are a few other examples of fundraising strategies shared by companies:

## Written "Asks"

- One successful letter writing campaign to our patrons offered them a way to take some ownership in their community theatre being in the national spotlight.
- The fundraising committee wrote a donation solicitation letter and shared it with company members. They were then asked to share it via email with friends, family, and colleagues. The letter was also sent to our mailing list, and shared on Facebook and other social media sites.
- Our president sent a personal letter to our theatre patrons, asking them to consider donating. We received several large donations and lots of small ones.

## Community Engagement

- Solicited support from our donors with a 'buy-a-mile' campaign.
- A stage plea for support from our patrons, with the cast and crew holding buckets at the door.
- Before the performance, announce a challenge to the audience, "We need to raise \$X at today's performance to pay for our traveling expenses to X Festival."
- Ask a local business to help underwrite a specific cost, like shipping the set, travel, etc.
- A giant poster in our lobby, reading "Help Us Get to Nationals" along with a fundraising "thermometer" colored in red as the funds increased. It was a fun way for everyone to see our progress and it inspired patrons to help.
- The local newspaper gave good coverage for winning at State and Regional levels and publicized our fundraising performances.

## Use the Show Itself

One popular fundraising method is to perform special benefit performances in various community venues or in your own space. (It's also great practice for setting up and striking your set.)

- A dinner prior to a performance of the AACTFest show. The dinner was about an hour, and then an hour for the show, so it was a short evening. We did really well with that—had the food donated, and everyone loved it.
- A snazzy dinner hosted in a patron's home. Patrons paid \$50 for dinner and some time with the theatre group traveling to the festival.
- Two fundraising performances—one for the regional festival and one for the national. Admission was a donation of \$5 or more, and most people gave at least \$10—and in some cases considerably more. In fact, we received a number of \$100 donations and a few that were greater than that.

- Additional performances at donated venues, and offered a talkback about the festival process and an opportunity to meet the cast.

- Produced a separate show for school audiences. The schools loved it and the income from those showings funded state travel expenses.

### Getting Together

- Partnered with the other winning company from our state, and performed both our shows for one weekend in our theatre. It was unique entertainment for our patrons, and the two companies split the proceeds. That put us over our goal.

- Our theater and one across town were both invited to the state festival. We sold sponsorships for a joint T-Shirt, then sold the T-Shirts.

### Tried and True Strategies, Top Tips

- A couple of fundraisers at local eateries, which donated 10% or 20% of sales when a special coupon was presented.

- Utilized Facebook to get the word out about our success and our fundraising needs. We also talked about winning at regionals and going to nationals in our newsletter.

- Kickstarter [“the world’s largest funding platform for creative projects”]

- Amazon Smile [“automatically donates 0.5% of your purchases to the charity you select”]

- We asked members of the company traveling to nationals to commit to do their best to fundraise \$1000 each. Where one member fell a little short, another would exceed the \$1000, thus filling the gap.

- Have each cast and crew member pledge to help raise a specific amount of money— for example, to cover the cost of individual travel or plane fare.

- Avoid bake sales, car washes, etc. Instead, work smarter on one or two major events.

- gofundme.com was enormously useful for tracking who donated and how much, and also made the “thank-you” process much easier to manage. Having a good email campaign message that our friends and fans could forward or post directly to their social media was a great tool.

- The single most critical piece [for an online campaign] was a PayPal “Donate Now” button. The ability to donate immediately by simply clicking the button, instead of sending in a check brought results: More than 70% of our donations came in via PayPal.

- I emphasize that we have award-winning community theatre right here in our community. People like to support a person or organization they consider as a winner.

- It was obvious when we met our goal (and then some) that the relationships we had cultivated over 32 years with our patrons, the business community and school systems, were key to our success. We invited all donors to one of our musicals and treated them to a dessert reception. The cast/crew and board of directors were all on hand to personally thank donors for their support.

As these tips and success stories prove, there are many ways to fund your AACTFest adventure. In fact, most theatres use several different methods. Take a little inspiration from these folks and let their ideas and techniques help you take your show on the road. In the words of the Burlington (MA) Players’ Rachel Fennell, “I would strongly encourage any group to go for it. The generosity of your community will amaze and humble you.” ♦

*Excerpted from "How They Raised The Cash and Hit The Road to AACTFest" by Liz Lydic and Gil Savage – published in the January/February 2016 issue of Spotlight. Full article available at [aact.org/spotlight](http://aact.org/spotlight)*



## Murder Inn

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# AACT NewPlayFest Produces Seven World Premieres Across the Country



Venice Theatre in Venice, Florida presented the AACT NewPlayFest world premiere of *Get out of Dodge* by Jeanne Drennan as the final play of the AACT NewPlayFest 2016 cycle. Attending the opening night on November 3, 2016 were playwright Jeanne Drennan, AACT Executive Director Julie Crawford, AACT President Murray Chase, Janet Salters and Linda M. Lee of the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation, and Carrie Granatelli of Dramatic Publishing Company. The production directed by Kathy Pingel ran through November 20.

Of her experience with the AACT NewPlayFest, playwright Jeanne Drennan shared, “With any new play moving into its first full production, you can’t entirely know what you’ve got until the actors start speaking their lines and moving around a stage. Fortunately for me and *Get out of Dodge*, we had Kathy Pingel directing and being a really effective dramaturg at the

engaged with the show. This of course led to more rewriting on my part so that I could send Dramatic Publishing (on a very tight deadline) the best version I could manage within four days after the opening weekend. I know the next production will be using an even newer draft, but that still-unwritten draft will be made possible by this experience. So I’m grateful to AACT for running a competition that holds out as a prize, not just a reading or even a staged reading with an honorarium, but a real production. That’s what playwrights want and need.”

*Get out of Dodge* tells the story of Molly Hamilton, who apart from a mother-in-law who drinks, has an enviable east-coast liberal’s life, with a great job, an equally great husband, and talented kids. Then one hot July day, her long-missing father Schuyler knocks on the door. His plan? Molly should join him on a road trip back to Idaho, the place where he left her at seventeen to mop up way too much blood, some of it oozing from a wounded U.S. marshal. As family alliances shift, sixteen-year-old Phoebe embraces Schuyler’s world while Molly fights her husband over how to handle the fugitive under their roof. Worse, Schuyler’s story keeps changing, and yes, that is a thirty-eight in his bag. It takes a DUI, an ill-timed communal prayer, a food fight, and three lawyers named Henry to reveal Molly’s path. There are all kinds of second chances, and the family learns it’s best to grab one.

Renee McVey



Rebecca Holaban (Caroline), Tim Wisgerhof (Chip), Heather Forte (Molly), Megan Hartnett (Phoebe), and Mike Campbell (Schuyler) in the AACT NewPlayFest 2016 world premiere of *Get out of Dodge* by Jeanne Drennan at Venice Theatre in Venice, Florida

same time. She warned her cast that I would be revising and sending new pages as questions arose and then got answered. The cast probably got their biggest dose of this when the theatre brought me in for several days of rehearsal early in the process. Previously rewritten pages got rewritten again; we sat around the rehearsal room as actors read a beat in one version and then in another; we argued (but in a nice collaborative way) and found solutions. This is one of my favorite parts of playwriting: working on the script in collaboration with the people who are bringing it to life. And bring it to life they did. I was very happy with the production in Venice, and the theatre’s generosity in bringing me in early on made me feel really connected to the entire process. We had an outstanding post-show discussion led by playwright Arthur Kopit and terrific comments and observations came sailing out of the audience, who seemed fully



Linda M. Lee

Murray Chase, Venice Theatre Executive Director and AACT President, visits with Playwright Jeanne Drennan on opening night at Venice Theatre November 3, 2016

Jeanne Drennan is a playwright, librettist, and lyricist whose works have brought her seven fellowships from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. Her plays have been produced or developed at theatres across the country, from Under St. Marks in New York to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Recent activity has included a new production of *Asparagus* in Pittsburgh; a





Opening Night of the AACT World Premiere of *Get out of Dodge* by Jeanne Drennan at Venice Theatre in Venice, Florida  
 Seated (left to right): Megan Hartnett, cast/Phoebe; Heather Forte, cast/Molly; Tim Wisgerhof, cast/Chip; Mike Campbell, cast/Schuyler; Rebecca Holahan, cast/Caroline; Jeanne Drennan, Playwright  
 Standing (left to right): Jennifer Woodford, Stage Manager, Light Board Operator; Janice Alexander, running crew; Janet Salters, Jack K Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation; Rachel Weaver, Assistant Director; Kathy Pingel, Director; Linda M. Lee, Jack K Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation; Carrie Granatelli, Dramatic Publishing Company; Julie Crawford, AACT Executive Director  
 Photo by Linda M. Lee

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workshop of *Waxworks* with PICT Classic Theatre and another with the Blank Theater Company in Los Angeles; a workshop of *Atlas of Longing* at the 2010 Bay Area Playwrights Festival; and a workshop of her musical with composer David Berlin, *Dear Boy*, produced by Pittsburgh's PICT Classic Theatre. Her play *12 Dogs* was the 2008 winner of Boston TheatreWorks's new play festival, after development at the Open Stage Theatre, the InterAct Theatre, and the North Coast Repertory Theatre. In progress are *Whiteface*, and the small musical *Juiced!* Jeanne is managing director of Musical Theatre Artists of Pittsburgh, an incubator for new works of musical theatre, and is a member of the Dramatists' Guild.

Here is a recap of the world premiere productions and thoughts from some of those involved with AACT NewPlayFest 2016.

***Lighthouse*** by William Baer  
at the Windsor Community Playhouse in Windsor, Colorado  
September 25 – October 10, 2015



*Sarah Robertson and Lindsay Savage in Lighthouse*

Playwright William Bear was honored to be an AACT NewPlayFest winning playwright. He stated, "Seeing my play *Lighthouse* produced at the Windsor Community Playhouse was a wonderful experience! I'm extremely grateful to AACT and the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation for making everything possible and to the play's director Tim Bernhardt and his excellent cast and crew. It was very exciting to have Julie Crawford, AACT executive director, Linda Lee, director of the Ayre Theatre Foundation, and Linda Habjan of Dramatic Publishing all present for opening night. The NewPlayFest is every playwright's dream!"

***Laguna Beach, Ohio*** by Malcolm MacDonald  
at Stage Right Productions/2nd Street Theatre in Bend, Oregon  
March 25 – April 9, 2016



*Kate Andrews, Fred Giacomini, Shane Ketterman, Patricia West-Del Ruth, CJ Wurm, and Jim Wurm in Laguna Beach, Ohio*

Playwright Malcolm MacDonald was honored and thrilled his play was an AACT NewPlayFest winner. He shared, "My play was very fortunate to have ended up with the talented, perfect cast that Stage Right Productions assembled. I was so impressed with everyone involved with the production, and the strong support from the audience. Opening night was wonderful and was sold out, and the audience laughed, gasped, and related to the characters more than I anticipated. The whole production was more than I expected, and the process was so filled with love and intelligence and professionalism. It really was a highlight for me as a playwright."

***Wash, Dry, Fold*** by Nedra Pezold Roberts  
at Chicago Street Theatre/Community Theatre Guild in Vaparaíso, Indiana May 20 – June 4, 2016



*Barbara Baker Malangoni, Caity Mullen, and Mary DeBoer in Wash, Dry, Fold*

Playwright Nedra Pezold Roberts conveyed, "I had maybe the best learning session with the two directors, Jonnie Pera and Traci Brant. My whole focus is to learn everything I can about the playwriting craft and particularly about what would make my play stronger. Traci and Jonni were amazing; these two women gave me insights into what a director looks for when reading a new script, what strategies they use in solving staging issues, what few but specific spots in my script could be smoothed out to make the flow of the action stream better. It was like mining gold. The actors were also another enlightening resource. I traded insights into the script, joked about the rich back stories they created for my characters, and shared emotional reactions to intense moments in the play. They made me more aware of the process they use in breathing life into my characters. The whole AACT experience has enriched my perspective and my work. The thrill is wonderful, but the education and opportunity are priceless."

***Gracefully Ending*** by A.J. DeLauder  
at Theatre Arlington in Arlington, Texas July 1 – July 17



*Parker Fitzgerald, Sherri Britton, and Lindsay Hayward in Gracefully Ending*

Playwright A. J. DeLauder stated, "Working with director Jim Johnson and Theatre Arlington was a dream. They took my script and formed a personal connection with it, making it their own. As a result, what I witnessed on opening night was much more than what I'd imagined. The performance became an accumulation of my dreams for the script and theirs. Or to phrase it another way, I felt like I drew a rough outline with my script, and they painted a beautiful picture. That's not to say I don't still have work to do as a playwright – that work never ends – but I now fully know what needs to be done, thanks to the work of the talented cast, director, and crew of Theatre Arlington."

***The Emperor of North America*** by Thomas Hischak  
at Silver Spring Stage in Silver Spring, Maryland  
September 16 – October 1, 2016



Linda M. Lee

*Pamela Northrup,  
Lena Winter,  
Brendan Murray,  
and Lenora Spahn  
in The Emperor of  
North America*

Playwright Thomas S. Hischak attended the opening, and expressed his thoughts on AACT NewPlayFest, "Having one's play selected and produced by AACT was a terrific experience for me. The community theatres that are chosen are among the best in the nation so one's play is given a first-class production. My play was expertly directed and acted by Silver Spring Stage. The production was so well done that I am incorporating some of the director's and actors' interpretations into the script before it is published by Dramatic Publishing Company. The AACT NewPlayFest is an outstanding opportunity for both new and seasoned playwrights!"

***Shades of Valor*** by Karen L. Lewis  
at Twin City Stage in Winston-Salem, North Carolina,  
October 28 - 30, 2016



Linda M. Lee

*Kathryn Mobley and  
Garry C. Wadell in  
Shades of Valour*

Playwright Karen L. Lewis attended the opening and said, "It was wonderful. The level of professionalism from the moment

*Shades of Valor* was accepted as a finalist through the run of the play matched (or surpassed) that of any regional or NYC group I've encountered. I'll admit that I couldn't have been more pleased with the talented cast Twin City Stage assembled; and that the production values were impeccable; the fierce commitment to my play from every individual I met - ushers to artistic and executive directors to board members - made me want to draft a Tony acceptance speech. After opening night I wanted to stay a day or two longer in hopes of interesting Twin City Stage in future projects or simply to party with Julie of AACT, Janet & Linda from the Ayre Theatre Foundation, and Carrie of Dramatic Publishing Company."

*continued on next page*

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AACT NewPlayFest continued from page 27

*Get out of Dodge* by Jeanne Drennan  
at Venice Theatre in Venice, Florida  
November 3 - 20, 2016



Heather Forte and  
Tim Wisgerhof in  
*Get out of Dodge*

Venice Theatre Executive Director Murray Chase said of producing an AACT NewPlayFest world premiere, “The creation of a new work is always exciting. Our director having access to the playwright helped make this more exciting, because it became more of a collaborative show.”

### AACT NewPlayFest 2018

Scripts have been submitted for AACT NewPlayFest 2018. Reviewers are currently reading plays and the winning plays and playwrights will be announced in the July/August 2017 *Spotlight*. ♦

For more information visit [aact.org/newplayfest](http://aact.org/newplayfest)



*AACT NewPlayFest Winning Plays Volume 2 (2016)* is available from Dramatic Publishing. This anthology contains all seven winning plays from the second AACT NewPlayFest: *Lighthouse* by William Baer, *Laguna Beach, Ohio* by Malcolm MacDonald, *Wash, Dry, Fold* by Nedra Pezold Roberts, *Gracefully Ending* by A.J. Delauder, *The Emperor of North America* by Thomas Hischak, *Shades of Valor* by Karen L. Lewis, and *Get out of Dodge* by Jeanne Drennan are all included in this anthology. [aact.org/npfv1](http://aact.org/npfv1)

*AACT NewPlayFest Winning Plays: Volume 1 (2014)* is also available from Dramatic Publishing Company or from the AACT Bookstore. This anthology contains all six winning plays from the inaugural AACTNewPlayFest: *Exit Laughing* by Paul Elliott, *End Papers* by Barry Weinberg, *Jellofish* by Jim Henry, *The Seamstress* by Cece Dwyer, *The Boatwright* by Bo Wilson, and *The Vanishing Point* by Nedra Pezold Roberts. [aact.org/npfv2](http://aact.org/npfv2)

Linda Habjan, Acquisitions Editor at Dramatic Publishing, states, “We just don’t provide plays to our customers--we also like to be an advocate for our playwrights to get their work out there to potential customers, and our partnership with AACT

has done a wonderful job of facilitating that. We are proud to be a part of AACT NewPlayFest.”

Dramatic Publishing is handling the performance rights, and the plays may be performed individually or in any combination. All plays are available for licensing now.



AACT NewPlayFest 2014 and 2016 world premier productions were made possible in part by a grant from the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation. Each Producing Theatre received \$4,000 to support the world premiere of an AACT NewPlayFest winning play. AACT greatly appreciates the generous support from the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation and appreciates its partnership in making this play festival a great success.



Jack K. Ayre



Frank Ayre Lee

Jack K. Ayre celebrated his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday before passing away in December 2011. At his birthday party he sang with a barbershop quartet – one of his favorite activities – and celebrated with his cousin and lifelong friend, Frank Ayre Lee. Though as adults they lived on opposite sides of the country, the cousins kept in touch through letters that displayed a love for the written word and an irreverent sense of humor. Jack had participated in theatre productions at Drew University in New Jersey and at a community theatre in Connecticut in his younger years and continued that interest when he moved to California. Mr. Lee was also an avid aficionado of theatre and had dabbled in playwriting, adapting Rudyard Kipling’s *The Jungle Book* for a children’s theatre production, and penning *McSteg*, a tongue-in-cheek discourse ribbing his cousin Jack and based on a scene in Shakespeare’s *MacBeth*. Upon Jack’s death, resources he left were used to create the Jack K. Ayre Foundation for the United States Coast Guard, of which he was a member during WWII, and the Jack K. and Agnes K. Ayre Foundation for Blind Children – his mother, Agnes, was a teacher and pioneer in educating the blind. In addition, the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation was created by the children of Frank Ayre Lee as a tribute to their father, who passed away in August 2012, and a legacy for the creative endeavors of Jack, who was an advertising executive and public relations director. The family is pleased to honor both men through a lasting legacy promoting new works for theatre through AACT NewPlayFest. ♦



## What's Trending: Attracting a Younger Audience

By Julie Crawford, AACT Executive Director

Trends can help you understand what is happening or assist you in preparing before a trend impacts your theatre.

**Attracting a younger audience** was the subject of a Trends survey distributed in January. Responses were received from board members and staff who work with audience development in 58 theatres in 25 states. The responders were mostly volunteers and were pretty equally divided between four groups: presidents, executive directors, other board members, and "Others." A wide range of theatres responded, with budgets from \$1,600 to \$2.4 million, but most were small; the median budget was \$84,000. Although most theatres responding have small budgets, only 31% are entirely volunteer; 69% have some paid staff or pay some positions on a per show basis (some do both).

Concern about attracting younger audiences is high; 81% said they feel it is very important and 12% said it is important, but not a priority. Of theatres responding 3.45% aren't worried about it and another 3.45% specified they already attract younger people.

Aiken Community Playhouse in South Carolina expressed a concern long heard from theatres, "As our loyal membership base dies off, we need to cultivate an interest and passion for theater

**"Young people are literally the future of our organization!"**

in younger generations to continue to thrive in our community." Concern about older, long-time patrons dying off was expressed by 22.4% of theatres responding. The importance of younger people as the future of the theatre was expressed by Clearfield Arts Studio Theatre in Pennsylvania saying, "Young people are literally the future of our organization! Getting them involved in the arts, whether actively participating on stage, or simply enjoy a performance, is vital to the longevity of the theater." Fremont Community Theatre in Ohio testified to the value of a youth program, "I think our greatest success has been our youth theater. Parents of our youth have started attending our regular season shows on occasion." Youth as the future was mentioned by 12% of theatres.

Theatres lamenting that their audiences are growing older is nothing new, so it was surprising when 56.9% of theatres checked 45-60 years as the predominant age demographic of their audiences for main stage and second

stage shows. Over 60 years old is the largest group for 32.76% of theatres. Only 8.62% said the largest group is 30-40 years and only one theatre checked 20-30 years as its largest group. Responses to which age group has increased the most in the past three years showed the largest increase (41.38%) was 45-60 years, with 30-45 years the most increased group for 29.3% of theatres and 15.52% said it was 20-30 year olds. Only 12% said it was those over 60 years old.

**"We have done a much larger push with social media!"**

The age group that has decreased the most in the past three years is over 60 years with 46.55% of theatres checking that demographic. That might indicate audiences are not getting older. However, the most decreased group for 34.48% of theatres is 20-30 years. 12% of theatres reported the most decreased group is 30-45 years. Audience members can be hard to retain no matter their age.

Despite high concern about the need to attract younger audiences, only 15.5% of theatres have set a specific goal for increasing and only 6.9% have a written plan. A few have quantified their goals; Adams Community Theatre in Wisconsin has a goal "To increase event attendance of those 25 and up by at least 10% over this year." Theatre Charlotte (North Carolina) sees it as a longer-term project, "To increase the percentage of millennials by 15% in 3 years." Others set their goals on accomplishing specific activities that are outside their norm. Broken Arrow Community Playhouse in Oklahoma has decided to "Take chances. This past season we took a chance on offending our core patrons and did *Young Frankenstein*. It was very successful. We have to take chances like this and it is very daunting since we could also lose some of our core patron group." In Nebraska, the Kearney Community Theatre has set its sights on a new direction, "We recently created a new strategic plan, and part of that plan is to hire a manager (as our current manager is retiring), whose focus will be on marketing, and building relationships. We want to branch out and try new things and take a few risks." The Morgan-Wixson Theatre in Santa Monica, California has seen some results from the goals it set, "We have done a much larger push with social media - a new app, snapchat filters, instagram following. We are relying on our younger volunteers (20s-30s) to drive how to use all of the media. We have seen increased followers/participation in social media over

the last year and that is starting to translate into a younger audience. The key is to listen to what gets them excited about your theatre and/or the shows you are doing. Younger audiences are attracted to excitement and buzz and fun. I believe older audience members are too, but they are much less vocal about it.”

Many theatres, while not having specific goals set, have conducted activities to increase attendance and participation by younger adults. Port Angeles Community Players in Washington takes it to the top, “We consciously chose some younger people for our board. They have tremendous energy, ideas and are kicking butt and making changes we have needed for years.” The Reading Civic Theatre (Pennsylvania), like many theatres, is “Using more social media as they tend to look there rather than standard print media.” Little Theatre of Watertown, New York is “trying to do some edgier, well-known shows. We also offer a student discount.” The Sauk in Jonestown, Michigan shared, “Programming ‘hipper’ and newer shows in our season has proved very successful. Offering a ‘Pay What You Can’ night has helped enormously.” Manhattan Arts Center in Kansas also has had some success. “Started with staged readings and a summer show that were ‘edgier’ than we could normally do in our season. This has spilled over somewhat into our season as many of our season ticket holders took us up on the option of including the summer show with their season ticket.”

**"If we cast them, they come, but they don't have staying power."**

Community Players Theatre in Bloomington, Illinois reported, “We have been focusing on newer productions with a great deal of success. It’s a tightrope but balancing classic productions like *West Side Story* with newer edgier shows like *Rent* and *Ave Q* seems to be paying off regarding audience attraction.” Theatre Charlotte (North Carolina) has measured its success, “We have lowered our median audience age from 62+ to 45-54. We attracted a large audience of 20 and 30 somethings to *Hair*, *Saturday Night Fever*, *The Addams Family* and *The Normal Heart*, as well as *The Miracle Worker* and others.” Actors Guild of Parkersburg (West Virginia), “Attendance is up for our plays and musicals, and we now have more younger Guild Members paying dues and attending meetings.”

Other theatres have found the effort to attract younger audiences frustrating. Kearney Community Theatre (Nebraska) bluntly admitted, “Trying new things, and seeing no return on investment.” Denton Community Theatre in Texas noted, “Even with shows geared more to that demographic, live theatre is just not on a lot of younger people’s radars. We get tons of likes on social media sites but that does not always equate to ticket sales.” Jewel Box in Poulsbo, Washington, “If we cast them - they come, but they don’t have staying power. The younger audience doesn’t have the loyalty or commitment to season tickets.” Ankeny Community Theatre in Iowa, “As

we expand the types of shows we offer to attract new audiences (while still also offering our traditional genre for our traditional patrons....), some of our regular patrons become critical of us and are very vocal about ‘this theatre is not what it used to be!’ VERY frustrating!”

Several theatres have found language in many newer plays offend some of their older, core audience members. Paramount Players - Paramount Arts Center, Ashland, Kentucky has found “shows containing language or adult material have to be very carefully identified so audiences know exactly what to expect.” Duncanville Community Theatre in Texas has taken another action, “producing some more recently written shows with author’s permission to remove or reduce profanity.”

Muskegon Civic Theatre in Oklahoma, like other theatres, knows the effort is worth it. “When you are in a smaller community the public isn’t always happy with change and they get set in their ways, yet change is necessary to build our future audiences.”

**Next up in “What’s Trending”** is producing new works. Check it out in the May-June issue of *Spotlight*.

To participate in “Trending” surveys, be sure your theatre contact’s email is in the AACT database. Check your record online or contact the AACT office.

## AACT Web Power

One of our site’s most popular features is the AACTivity Productions List [[aact.org/production-list](http://aact.org/production-list)]. Maintained by AACT-member companies, it tells you which plays and musicals are being produced around the country, and how well they fared financially. Want to take part? Enroll your theatre in AACTivity [[aact.org/aactivity](http://aact.org/aactivity)]. If your company is already an AACTivity member, now’s a good time to update the list of your productions.

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*The AACT Legacy Society was established to provide long-term sustainability of AACT's mission and to support theatre participation in AACT national festivals. Visit [aact.org/aact-legacy](http://aact.org/aact-legacy) for more information.*

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who pay their own travel expenses to attend meetings, and to those theatres that help with their travel expenses

## Thanks to all our contributors!

Due to space, only contributions over \$30 are listed above. Visit the website for a complete list. [aact.org/donor-list](http://aact.org/donor-list)

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## Make A Legacy Gift

Please consider including American Association of Community Theatre in your legacy plans through a will, trust, life insurance gift, or other legacy gift. Through these special gifts, friends like you are able to sustain AACT's mission and provide learning experiences for AACT member companies participating in the AACTFest national festivals.

To learn more about AACT's Legacy Society, visit [aact.org/legacy](http://aact.org/legacy)

Please contact Julie Crawford, AACT Executive Director, for more information at [julie@aact.org](mailto:julie@aact.org)



# Careers in Theatre

## Highlighting Professional Staff Changes in Theatre

Los Angeles, California - **East West Players (EWP)** selected **Snehal Desai** as artistic director, following an executive search process led by Arts Consulting Group (ACG). He took over for outgoing Producing Artistic Director Tim Dang. In making the announcement, Board Co-Chair Daniel Mayeda said, "We are excited that Snehal will be EWP's next artistic leader. He has a national reputation in the theater world as a fierce proponent of diversity, multi-culturalism, and new Asian American artistic work."

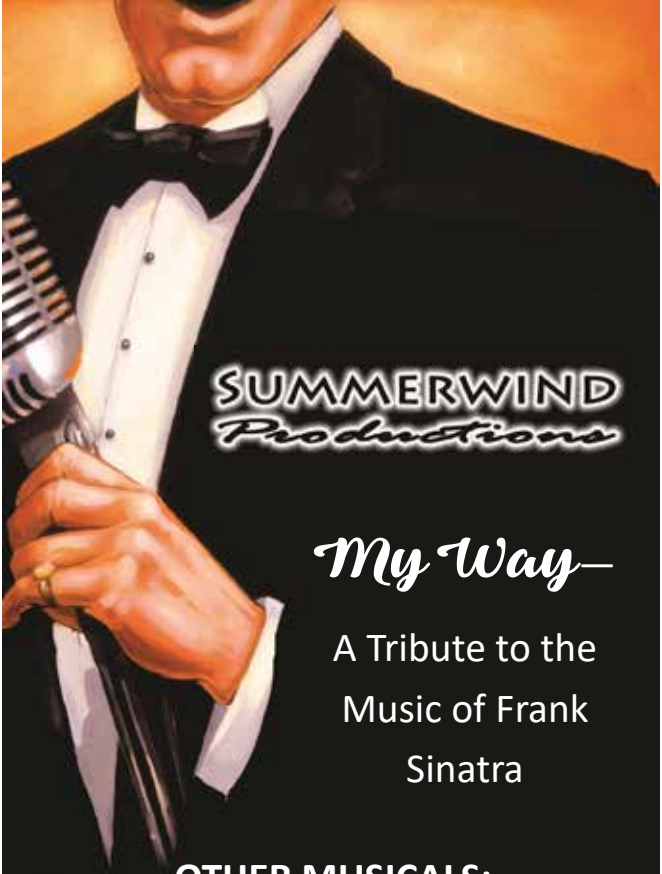
Brookfield, Wisconsin - **Sharon Lynne Wilson Center for the Arts (Wilson Center)** selected **Lynn Sprangers** as President & CEO, following an executive search process led by Arts Consulting Group (ACG). Her background in journalism, government, professional sports, and higher education gives her a unique set of leadership, fundraising, team-building, and special event skills that she will now bring to the Wilson Center.

Winston-Salem, North Carolina - **Connie Schroeder** joined **Twin City Stage (TCS)** as Executive Director. She has been dedicating herself to learning all things TCS and preparing for their 82nd season. A native of Merritt Island, Florida, Connie has lived in Winston-Salem for more than twenty years. She previously worked for the Piedmont Opera, the March of Dimes, Crisis Control Ministry, and most recently, as the Director of Operations and Development for the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art. Connie says, "It has been a great first few weeks! The TCS family has welcomed me with open arms...my heart is full. I can't wait to get to know everyone!" Congratulations, Connie! ♦

Visit the Job Postings on the AACT website at [aact.org/jobs](http://aact.org/jobs).

Job postings are frequently added, so check back often.

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# AACT Elections: Meet the Candidates

Ballots will be mailed in April for the annual AACT election, with each voting member receiving one ballot to be returned by May 1. (Associate Members are non-voting.)

The Nominating Committee has prepared a slate it feels is representative of the membership, and provides the organization with skills and knowledge needed to conduct the affairs and further the mission of AACT.

Following are this year's candidates and those who are continuing on the Board and the Nominating Committee.

For full bio and photos of the candidates visit [aact.org/aact-elections-2017](http://aact.org/aact-elections-2017).

## Officer Candidates

Candidate for President

Carole Ries, Topeka, Kansas (Region V)

Candidate for Executive Vice President

Rick Kerby, Bradenton, Florida (Region IV)

Candidate for Vice President for Festivals

Jim Walker, Aberdeen, South Dakota (Region V)

Candidate for Treasurer

Michael Fox, North Salt Lake, Utah (Region VII)

## Board Member at Large Candidates

Emily Anderson, Midland, Michigan (Region III)

Chad-Alan Carr, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania (Region II)

Michael Cochran, Paduka, Kentucky (Region IV)

Allen Ebert, Madison, Wisconsin (Region III)

Kristi Quinn, Dakota City, Nebraska (Region V)

Jamie Ulmer, Beatrice, Nebraska (Region V)

## Nominating Committee Candidates

John Davis, Evergreen, Colorado (Region VII)

Dennis Gilmore, Indio, California (Region VIII)

Rod McCullough, Urbandale, Iowa (Region V)

Eugene Irby, Artesia, New Mexico (Region VI)

## Continuing Board Members

These persons' terms end in 2018 and 2019, so they will serve with those elected in spring 2017.

### Region I

Bevie Lord, Massachusetts, Region Rep

### Region II

Susanne Caviness, Maryland, Region Rep

Bob Frame, New York, Member at Large

### Region III

Richard Gannon, Illinois, Member at Large

Frank Peot, Wisconsin, Secretary

TBA, Region Rep

### Region IV

Kristofer Geddie, Florida, Member at Large

Lynn Nelson, Mississippi, Region Rep

### Region V

Nancy Eppert, Missouri, Region Rep

### Region VI

TBA, Texas, Region Rep

Sharon Burum, Oklahoma, Member at Large

Sara Phoenix, Oklahoma, Member at Large

### Region VII

Donna Fisher, Wyoming, Region Rep

### Region VIII

Liz Lydic, California, Member at Large

Dennis Gilmore, California, Region Rep

### Region IX

Jon Douglas Rake, Washington, Region Rep

Chris Surface, Washington, Member at Large

### Region X

Dane Winters, Germany, Region Rep

### International

Ron Cameron-Lewis, Canada, Member at Large

## Continuing Nominating Committee Members

Penelope Notter, Michigan, Region III

John W. Viars, Iowa, Region V

Linda M. Lee



## AACT Staff Retreat

The AACT Staff assembled at the AACT offices in Fort Worth, Texas for a staff retreat January 4 – 6, 2017. Pictured from left are (onscreen) Events Coordinator Mary Jo DeNolf, Festivals Coordinator Ron Ziegler, (seated front row) Corporate Partners Manager Jill Patchin, Marketing/Communications Director David Cockerell, Office Support Manager Karen Matheny, (standing back row) Office/Festivals Assistant Winston Daniels, Vendor Services Coordinator Darlene DeLorenzo, Executive Director Julie Crawford, and Member Engagement Director Cranston Dodds.

Julie Crawford



AACT Executive Director Julie Crawford visits with SETC Executive Director in the Southeastern Theatre Conference offices in Greensboro, South Carolina October 28, 2016

Cran Dodds



AACT Member Engagement Director Cran Dodds enjoys meeting Sandy Boren-Barrett, Stages Theatre Company, Hopkins, Minnesota October 13, 2016

Cran Dodds



Susan Dill, President of The Royal Players, Benton, Arkansas gives a tour of the theatre to AACT Member Engagement Director Cran Dodds November 3, 2016.

Lucinda Lawrence



ITA Festival co-chair Don Shandrow, ITA Executive Director and AACT Illinois State Contact Aimee-Lynn Newlan, President of Community Players of Streator David Reed, Festival Commissioner Lori Chase, and ITA Festival co-chair Kathy Missel meet to review the rehearsal and performance schedules at the Illinois Theatre Association's Illinois state AACT festival hosted by Community Players of Streator at Engle Lane Theatre in Streator, Illinois November 4, 2016



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# The Bikinis

a new musical beach party





Cran Dodds

Arkansas Community Theatre Association Chair Shann Nobles receives a spirited visit from AACT Member Engagement Director Cran Dodds during the Arkansas state theatre festival in Little Rock, Arkansas November 5, 2016



Cran Dodds

AACT Member Engagement Director Cran Dodds enjoys a wonder visit with Melissa Sonnen, President of the Hot Springs Village Players in Hot Springs, Arkansas November 5, 2016.



Cran Dodds

Cran Dodds, AACT Member Engagement Director, proudly presents the AACT 15-year service pin to Lisa Bell, President of the Little Theatre of Crittendon County in Little Rock, Arkansas November 5, 2016.



Wanda Schenk

Holly Hearn, President of Arkansas Community Theater Association, presents Wanda Schenk a certificate of appreciation for being the AACT Festival Commissioner for the Arkansas Theatre Festival 2016 in Little Rock, Arkansas November 5, 2016.



Cran Dodds

Darlene DeLorenzo, AACT Vendor Services Coordinator, receives her 15-year AACT staff pin from AACT Executive Director Julie Crawford on January 5, 2017 in Fort Worth, Texas.

## What are you doing to attract younger audiences (20's, 30's, 40's)? Are Millennials auditioning for shows?

*Responses from AACTList  
(to sign up for AACTList, go to [aact.org/aactlist](http://aact.org/aactlist))*

The Evergreen Players started an improv group that performs twice a year. It brings in an entirely different audience. Since it is part of our season, there is some cross over of patrons. Our improv performances sell out by just using social media. The contacts that we get from the improv are used when we advertise our other productions.

John Davis  
Evergreen Players, Evergreen, Colorado  
[evergreenplayers.org](http://evergreenplayers.org)

In the past several years, Aiken Community Playhouse (ACP) has made a concerted effort to attract younger generations to our theatre. The majority of our loyal audience base is 65 and older, and we know they will not be with us forever. It is vital to engage younger people (Gen Y, Millennials, Gen Z) to ACP because they are our future. Their participation will ensure ACP continues to thrive in our community.

When the PokemonGO app exploded onto the scene in 2016, we found out that ACP was a PokeStop. We organized two drop-in open houses, dropped lures at the PokeStop, handed out free ACP swag, and asked attendees to post screen shots of their catch to social media using the branded hashtag #acppokemon. We also handed out brochures and encouraged people to sign up to volunteer and to receive our newsletter. Both drop-ins were very well attended, with the majority of attendees being pre-teens, teens and college age.

ACP has also significantly ramped up its social media presence in the past 3 years. We utilize Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to share news about auditions, show openings, funny memes about theatre, Throwback Thursday photos, theatre class registration, etc. A typical engagement rate on Facebook is approximately 500-900. We look at social media trends and replicate them to stay current.

Our Play Selection Committee also is committed to choosing shows that can attract younger audiences - to audition and to watch. For instance, our 2016-17 Season opened with Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*. The number of younger people that auditioned for the show was probably the largest we've ever seen. And, the number of people of the same ages who attended the show was very high.

Haley Hughes, Board of Directors  
Aiken Community Playhouse, Aiken, South Carolina  
[aikenplayhouse.us](http://aikenplayhouse.us)

*continued on page 39*

Listings do not imply AACT endorsement

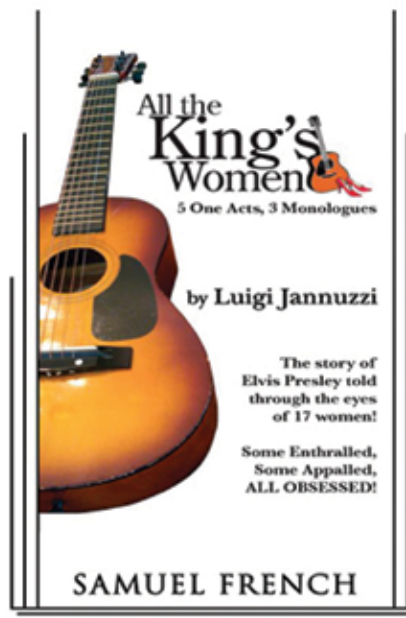


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# Workers Compensation: Who's an Employee?

by Ken Roberts



There has always been a great deal of confusion regarding whether a theatre must purchase workers compensation insurance. Specifically, what constitutes an employee for our "all-volunteer" organizations? The answer, as is usually the case with commercial insurance, varies by the state the theatre operates in.

Most of our members have incredible volunteer board members and operate with a wonderfully diverse group of dedicated volunteer directors, actors and builders, all focused on creating the magic and art of community theatre as we know it. But what happens when

**The thought behind all of this was to not only protect the workers, but to protect the employers as well.**

directors and/or actors are paid a stipend for their efforts? And what happens when it's time for the annual musical that precipitates the need for a band or an orchestra? In my experience, the majority of musicians will charge some sort of stipend, usually on a nightly basis. Very few theatres are lucky enough to locate volunteer musicians. All states, with the exception of Texas, require workers compensation coverage for anyone who receives compensation, regardless of whether they are a regular employee or a contract worker who only receives a 1099 form. Even though Texas is an *elective* state when

it comes to workers compensation insurance, the lack of an insurance policy does not relieve the Texas employers of their legal liability for covering injuries to anyone who receives some sort of compensation.

While some of the rules may vary from state to state, the basic coverage for every workers compensation policy is structured and regulated by the federal government. States will take the federal framework and fine-tune their policies to account for the labor force and state workers compensation commissions. The common aspect of every policy is that if anyone receives any type of compensation for their activities for any organization, they must be covered by workers compensation, and their compensation must be included in rating the workers compensation policy. Thus, any injuries suffered during the course and scope of those paid activities will be covered by insurance. Any organization paying stipends are considered to be paying wages, and become legally liable for injuries that occur.

The thought behind all of this was to not only protect the workers, but to protect the employers as well. If you make an employer legally liable for injuries to its compensated participants, there should also be a remedy to pay for those injuries, hence the birth of the workers compensation policy. Even though there may be some slight variations in the rules from state to state, the basic rule is simple – if you pay your volunteers *anything*, you're probably required to purchase workers compensation insurance. ♦

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Sometimes just getting millennials in the door and making them aware of our existence is key. We use the opportunity to make them aware of all our other offerings. Such as:

- At least one edgy play or musical, which is outside our usual "safe" surefire ticket seller. This as an opportunity to build an audience for our future and the outcome often surprises us. Many of our regular audiences appreciate the more challenging material.
- Discounted tickets to college students
- Scholarships to our youngest camp students - often they are the children of millennials. Getting the kids involved often brings along the parents who become involved in giving or volunteering.
- The use of our theatre for local garage band concerts on dark nights - this has become very popular in our community and creates a whole new audience.
- Collaboration with local colleges and universities to feature young visual artists. We turn lobby into an art gallery and host an after work wine/cheese event to kick it off.
- Collaboration with local film societies - we let young movie makers use our facility to film when not in use.

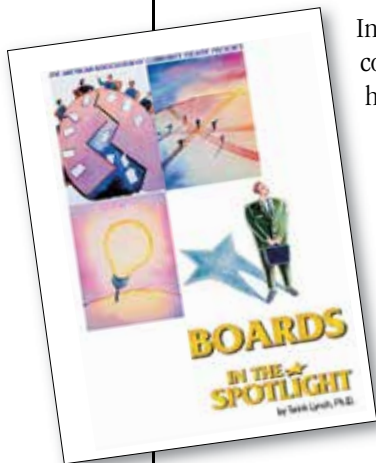
- Turning our theatre into a cinema to host a young director film festival.
- Hosting our local young professional group - we sell discounted tickets to the group and give a chance to mix with a wine/cheese reception prior to show.
- Partnering with local chamber of commerce to host a young leadership breakfast or cocktail party.
- Allowing other young, upstart companies to use our facility when schedule allows.

Rick Kerby, Producing Artistic Director  
 Manatee Performing Arts Center, Bradenton, Florida  
[manateeperformingartscenter.com](http://manateeperformingartscenter.com)

Regional Theatre Of the Palouse started a season called **AfterDark**, with edger, more current subject matter. The curtain is later, casts are not necessary young, but it is attracting a younger patron base.

John Rich, Executive Director  
 Regional Theatre Of the Palouse, Pullman, Washington  
[rtoptheatre.org](http://rtoptheatre.org) ♦

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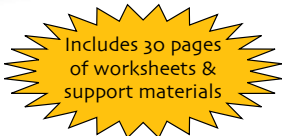
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## Huh?

by Twink Lynch

A major issue confronting all of us – in life, as well as in community theatre – is effective communication. It is at the heart of an effective organization, and it is at work (or not) in everything we do, including producing a play, running a box office, or governing the organization. There are two major components in effective communication: the intellectual content or what information needs to be communicated, and the emotional content, or how we feel about what we're trying to communicate. Of the two, the second may be the more important.

First, let's look at what information needs to be communicated to our Boards. Beginning with the first interview regarding possible Board service, the mission, the history, goals and objectives of the organization need to be shared, not to mention the financial condition and specific information regarding job descriptions, Board Members' expectations of each other, frequency of meetings.

Then, every month an agenda should be thoughtfully prepared and sent to Board Members ahead of the upcoming meeting. This should include:

- minutes of the previous meeting,
- rationale for any action items,
- updates from active committees or task forces,
- any reports from staff (e.g., cast for the next show, production reports against budget, membership/season ticket sales, facilities needs),
- if possible, a cheerleading item or two — a good review, an editorial, a letter of praise from a parent.

If anything of major importance occurs between scheduled Board meetings, such as a flood, an accident at the theatre, a lawsuit, or a million dollar lead gift for the capital campaign, Board Members should be notified at once, even at night or on the weekend. It is very important for Board Members to be “in the loop.” [Depending upon the situation, it might be by email or email followed by phone calls.] If there is anything Board Members hate, it's finding out about a major event, good or bad, “on the street” — it makes them feel (and look!) stupid, or, perhaps worse, too unimportant to have been informed.

This sharing of information is not a one-way street, however. Board Members who are confused or troubled about what they are hearing at a meeting or have heard elsewhere need to ask questions, request additional information, perhaps ask to serve on a committee that addresses the theatre program/policy they care most deeply about. (That may need to be finessed by the President — we can't

have the entire Board serving on the Play Reading Committee!) It is not okay for Board Members who keep silent during meetings to light up telephones all over town afterwards, possibly “stirring the pot” with misinformation or distortions, leading to bad feelings and unnecessary stress. (Such conversations can be a red flag that power issues are at work; and presiding officers need to be diligent, especially during times of controversy, to encourage silent Board Members to share their thoughts and feelings at Board meetings, thus hopefully flushing out any hidden agendas.)

### The single most important skill needed for effective communication is active listening

It's important to note, however, that asking “stupid questions” or sharing what may be trivial concerns with the President and/or the Board will not guarantee that the Board Member will be satisfied with the response. Communicating effectively does not necessarily result in 100 percent agreement or harmony. Too often we speak of “break-downs in communication” when what we are really saying is that the other person doesn't agree with me and at least one of us is not happy about the outcome. I believe one of the most important functions of effective communication is to allow us to discover where we disagree as well as where we agree, since disagreement on an issue is often a precursor to needed change.

The single most important skill needed for effective communication is active listening, in which the listener looks for nonverbal as well as verbal cues, not only to the intellectual content but also to the emotional significance of the communication. In regard to intellectual content, a friend of mine says we all speak the same language but carry around different dictionaries — so it's critical that we check what we think we heard with the sender of the message. Did we hear it right? Do the words mean the same thing to both of us? Does “on time” mean we commit to arriving at 7:00 on the dot or “7-ish” — or, in my case, a compulsive 5-10 minutes early?

In regard to emotional significance, it can be unfortunate-to-tragic to not “get it” as far as the sender of the message is concerned. Suppose a Board Member suggests that the theatre establish an endowment for future financial security. The rest of the Board Members acknowledge the desirability of an endowment, but they are currently focused on getting the next show up or on the co-producer campaign or on finding a new home for the theatre (or whatever). Several months go by. The Board Member raises the issue again. A committee is appointed to look into it. More months go by — the issue is just not on any one else's front burner. Maybe the Board Member starts a move to unseat the President; at the



very least he circulates a letter to the entire Board explaining in no uncertain terms how unacceptable the delay is. Maybe he throws a temper tantrum at the next Board meeting. People who feel they are not heard will escalate their demand for attention. Maybe the Board Member quits the Board. This kind of conflict occurs every day, often because the emotional significance of the original communication was not understood — perhaps it was even discounted. I'm not saying that we have to do everything each Board Member wants because he/she feels strongly about it. I am saying pay attention to how important a particular issue is and deal with it in the open.

**E**motional significance can work for you, too. Thinking back to the initial interview with a prospective Board Member, in the midst of sharing all the written documents of the theatre, what about communicating the passion? Why do people give hours and hours of their lives to be in a production or work backstage? What impact does the theatre have on the lives of its participants and on the quality of life in our community? Our programs need to light up the skies in our communities, and Board Members have to help us do it. After all, we are “the Torch-Bearers” — not just minders of the store. Turning Board Members into “True Believers” who will communicate passionately on our behalf, who will give and get money, and who will pass the torch on to the next generation starts with that first interview. Let's be sure we send effective communicators to do that job. ♦

*Reprinted from Boards in the Spotlight, page 81*

*Twink Lynch wrote a regular column on boardmanship for Spotlight for many years. Many of her articles are compiled into a relevant book for boards: Boards in the Spotlight, available at [aact.org/store](http://aact.org/store).*

## New England Theatre Conference 19th Annual Aurand Harris Memorial Playwriting Award

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Mar 1-5	<b>SETC Community Festival*</b> Region IV AACTFest 2017	KY Lexington	205-936-9162 setc.org
Mar 1-5	<b>Kaleidoscope 2017</b> Washington State AACTFest 2017	WA Tacoma	253-565-6867 tmp.org
Mar 2-5	<b>Theatre New Mexico (TNM) AACTFest*</b> New Mexico State AACTFest 2017	NM Las Cruces	575-496-8332 theatrenm.org
Mar 16-19	<b>IACT Play Festival*</b> Iowa State AACTFest 2017	IA Marshalltown	641-752-4601 marshalltowncommunitytheater.org
Mar 17-19	<b>Texas AACTFest*</b> Texas State AACTFest 2017	TX Lewisville	817-731-2238 texas theatres.org
Mar 17-19	<b>2017 ICTA Festival*</b> Indiana State AACTFest 2017	IN Kokomo	765-860-0747
Mar 17-20	<b>PACTFest 2017*</b> Pennsylvania State AACTFest 2017	PA Williamsport	302-547-6206 ctlshows.com
Mar 18	<b>Oregon Community Theatre Festival*</b> Oregon State AACTFest 2017	OR Salem	971-237-6971
Mar 30 - Apr 2	<b>South Dakota Theatre Festival*</b> South Dakota State AACTFest 2017	SD Sioux Falls	605-940-5147
Mar 31 - Apr 2	<b>Region IX AACTFest 2017*</b>	ID Boise	208-571-8964
Apr 6-9	<b>Region VI AACTFest 2017*</b>	LA Lafayette	337-849-6385
Apr 6-9	<b>ESTAFest 2017*</b> Region II AACTFest 2017	DE Wilmington	302-547-4541 wilmingtondramaleague.org
Apr 27-30	<b>Region V AACTFest 2017*</b>	MN Brainerd	952-758-3450 mact.net
Apr 27-30	<b>Region III AACTFest 2017*</b>	IL Champaign	217-722-4432 theatre.parkland.edu
Apr 29	<b>U.S. Army Europe IMCOM Entertainment Tournament of Plays (TOPPERS) Awards</b>	Wiesbaden, Germany	011-49-631-411-6532

\* Indicates festival in the 2017 AACTFest Cycle

For dates farther ahead, check the website: [aact.org/calendar](http://aact.org/calendar)

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**Get Out of Dodge**

By Jeanne Drennan. Molly's comfortable existence is threatened by the return of her fugitive father, who upsets the family relationships, leaving Molly to navigate a path to second chances. Code: GD5.

**Shades of Valor**

By Karen L. Lewis. The mothers of two Vietnam-era soldiers try to come to terms with the incident that changed their lives 10 years before, as knowledge of events they never imagined change their ideas about the nature of valor. Code: S2H.

**Gracefully Ending**

By A.J. DeLauder. Beth Fuller is divorced, soon to be homeless and estranged from her son, Andrew. As she tries to move in with her ailing mother, both struggle against self-interest to find love and dignity. Code: GD4.

**The Emperor of North America**

By Thomas S. Hischak. Leo, a hack writer of rewrites and novelizations, questions his sanity when characters from his stories begin to show up at his house. It seems his only option is to assassinate the subject of the biography he's writing. Code: E90.

**Laguna Beach, Ohio**

By Malcolm MacDonald. Dove, a middle-aged surfer/stoner, invites his teenage-era friends to his bungalow after his wife and daughter move out. The reunion ignites old passions, as they try to come to terms with their past, their present and their future. Code: LL7.

**Lighthouse**

By William Baer. Luce, a lighthouse keeper and travel writer, is surprised by a visit from Michael, a detective with whom she's been having a long correspondence. Together, they are forced to deal with her suspicions about the doctor who is treating her and her best friend for a rare form of skin cancer. Code: LL6.

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Technical Design,  
Graphics, Website

complete guidelines at  
[aact.org/design17](http://aact.org/design17)

Entry deadline June 12, 2017

### AACT YOUTHfest

Performances of five  
Youth Theatre Companies

### AACT YOUTH LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

During  
AACTFest 2017  
[aact.org/17](http://aact.org/17)



Helping Theatres Thrive

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Fort Worth, TX 76107

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### AACT ADJUDICATION TRAINING

During  
AACTFest 2017  
[aact.org/at](http://aact.org/at)

[aact.org](http://aact.org)

Questions? 817-732-3177  
or [info@aact.org](mailto:info@aact.org)

Conference program, schedule, and participants  
are subject to change.

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### TOP VENDOR EXHIBITS

During  
AACTFest 2017

### MONOLOGUE COMPETITION